# THE IMPACTS OF OPINION LEADERS TOWARDS PURCHASE DECISION UNDER DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRODUCT INVOLVEMENT: A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Business Administration Program in Business Administration
Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy
Chulalongkorn University
Academic Year 2011

# ผลกระทบของผู้นำทางความคิดต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อภายใต้ความเกี่ยวพันกับสินค้าที่มีลักษณะต่างกัน: การศึกษาข้ามวัฒนธรรม

นายพงศ์สิริ เตชะวิบูลย์

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาบริหารธุรกิจดุษฎีบัณฑิต
สาขาวิชาบริหารธุรกิจ
คณะพาณิชยศาสตร์และการบัญชี จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
ปีการศึกษา 2554

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| Thesis Title | THE IMPACTS OF OPINION LEADERS TOWARDS PURCHASE DECISION UNDER DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRODUCT INVOLVEMENT: A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY |
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| Field of Study | Business Administration |
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พงศ์สิริ เตชะวิบูลย์ : ผลกระทบของผู้นำทางความคิดต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อภายใต้ความเกี่ยวพันกับสินค้าที่มีลักษณะต่างกัน: การศึกษาข้ามวัฒนธรรม (THE IMPACTS OF OPINION LEADERS TOWARDS PURCHASE DECISION UNDER DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRODUCT INVOLVEMENT: A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY)

อ. ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก : รศ.ดร. สมเกียรติ เอี่ยมกาญจนาลัย, 256 หน้า.

การศึกษานี้ มุ่งที่จะวัดอิทธิพลของผู้นำทางความคิด ต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อของผู้ที่ค้นหาข้อมูล จากผู้นำทางความคิด การวัดนี้มุ่งดูปัจจัยเฉพาะตัว คือ ความชำนาญของผู้ค้นหาข้อมูล และ ความชำนาญของผู้นำทางความคิด และปัจจัยความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบุคคล คือ ความใกล้ชิดสนิทสนมของผู้ให้และผู้รับข้อมูล และ ความคล้ายคลึงกันทางความคิดของผู้ให้และผู้รับข้อมูล การศึกษานี้เลือกหาคำอธิบายเพิ่มเติมจากปัจจัยด้านวัฒนธรรม และปัจจัยด้านความเกี่ยวพันของสินค้าแต่ละประเภท ผลการศึกษานี้พบว่าอิทธิพลของผู้นำทางความคิด ต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อของผู้ที่ค้นหาข้อมูล มีผลกระทบไม่เท่ากัน สืบเนื่องจากปัจจัยเฉพาะตัวและปัจจัยความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบุคคลดังกล่าว อีกทั้งอิทธิพลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อที่มีผลกระทบในระดับที่แตกต่างกัน ก็เป็นผลมาจากปัจจัยด้านวัฒนธรรม โดย บุคคลที่มีความเชื่อในกรรมสิทธิร่วมกัน จะได้รับอิทธิพลมากกว่าบุคคลที่มีความเชื่อในปัจเจกนิยม ซึ่งปัจจัยด้านวัฒนธรรมไม่ได้มีผลเพียงข้ามประเทศ ผลกระทบดังกล่าวยังเกิดขึ้นภายในประเทศอีกด้วย อีกทั้งปัจจัยด้านความเกี่ยวพันของสินค้าแต่ละประเภท ก็มีผลต่ออิทธิพลของปัจจัยเฉพาะตัว และปัจจัยความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบุคคลที่มีนัยแตกต่างกันไป ดังนั้นนักวิชาการ และผู้จัดการฝ่ายการตลาด ควรพบว่า สินค้าที่ต่างประเภท และกลุ่มลูกค้าเป้าหมายที่ต่างวัฒนธรรมกัน ควรใช้แผนการตลาดที่แตกต่างกัน ผลจากการศึกษานี้จะช่วยให้สามารถนำผลไปประยุกต์ใช้เพื่อวางกลยุทธ์การตลาดอย่างเหมาะสมและมีประสิทธิผล

สาขาวิชา: .....บริหารธุรกิจ..... ลายมือชื่อนิสิต.....

ปีการศึกษา 2554 ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก .....

# # 5293170226: MAJOR BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
KEYWORDS: OPINION LEADERS/PURCHASE DECISION/PRODUCT INVOLVEMENT/CROSS-CULTURE/OPINION LEADER'S EXPERTISE/OPINION SEEKER'S EXPERTISE/TIE STRENGTH/HOMOPHILY

PONGSIRI TEJAVIBULYA: THE IMPACTS OF OPINION LEADERS TOWARDS PURCHASE DECISION UNDER DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRODUCT INVOLVEMENT: A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY
ADVISOR: ASSOC. PROF. SOMKIAT EIAMKANCHANALAI, Ph.D., 256 pp.

This study aims to measure the influence of opinion leaders towards purchase decisions of opinion seekers through personal forces of opinion seeker's expertise and opinion leader's expertise, and interpersonal forces of tie strength and homophily. This study also seeks further explanation from cross-cultural dimensions, and product-category involvement. This findings show that the influence of opinion leaders towards purchase decision of opinion seekers do not have equal weighting on the purchase decision due to those personal and interpersonal forces. It is also found that varied level of influence on purchase decisions is due to cultural background. Collectivists are influenced by opinion leaders more than individualists. This is not only true across countries, but also within both countries themselves. In addition, different types of product-category involvement result in dissimilar significant personal and interpersonal forces. Thus, marketing academics and marketing managers should find that different types of product-category involvement as well as different cultural background may require different marketing. As such, they can utilise this study to plan a more suitable and effective marketing strategy.

Field of Study:....Business Administration...Student's Signature……...
Academic Year:..2011....……..Advisor's Signature……..

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My dissertation will never be completed without tremendous support, valuable advice, and recommendation from my dissertation advisor Associate Professor Dr. Somkiat Eiamkanchanalai. His kindness, professional judgment, and great advice immensely contributes to the completion of this study. It is truly an honour to have worked with him.

I owe my heartfelt gratitude also to Ajarn Dr. Nuttapol Assarut for his great advice, suggestion, and support throughout my study. Every time I encounter problems, Ajarn Dr. Nuttapol will enlighten me with great solutions and invaluable advice. His genuine devotion to help me through tough times with no prejudice will always be remembered. My study will be much more difficult and will take much longer time without his great guidance and recommendation.

I am also indebted to other dissertation committee. They are Associate Professor Dr.Suwanee Surasiengsunk, Assistant Professor Dr. Chatpong Tangmanee, Associate Professor Dr. Boonchai Hongcharu and Professor Dr. Robert T. Green for their time, professional judgment, and valuable guidance. Their helpful comments and suggestions significantly improved the quality of my dissertation.

In highest regards, I cannot find words to express my gratitude to my parents, Mr. Prasert and Mrs. Suwanna Tejavibulya for their immeasurable love, understanding and endless patience throughout my study. I would not be as I am here today without their endless and unconditional love.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Mr. Pongdej, Miss Pratana, Miss Punjaporn Tejavibulya, and Mr. Grisana Punpeng for their love, relentless offer to help, and moral support. It is because of their sincere support that propels me to complete this study. Further, I offer my best regards and blessings to all those friends who supported me in any respect during completion of this dissertation.

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# Chapter I

# Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the Study

When consumers select between different products or services, we know that they will not make their decisions by evaluating every alternative available to them and selecting the best. As Herbert Simon's (1982) theory of bounded rationality proposed, this is due to two reasons. First, only limited information is available regarding the range of alternatives and their consequences after purchase. Second, the ability of the consumers to process and evaluate the information that is available to them is limited. Theory of bounded rationality states that people will therefore make decisions by choosing the first satisfactory alternative that emerges. It seems that nowadays we place even more bounds on our rationality—we have less time available and less money to spend on the evaluation of increasing alternatives. In other words, the opportunity cost is too high for us to waste excessive time and money on making evaluation of alternatives. We want to find out all there is to know about a particular product or service but at the same time do it as swiftly as possible and then make our decisions. Consequently, people seek advice from opinion leaders. Many studies have shown that opinion leadership is in many markets the single strongest factor causing a purchase decision, making them a very important segment of the target market (e.g. Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Kohli, 1989; Webster, 1988).

While opinion leadership is an important observable fact, it has actually not received adequate attention in the advertising literature of the past decade. The research on opinion leadership that is published in the business and marketing literature mainly deals with the identification of opinion leaders (e.g. King and Summers, 1970; Childers, 1986; Flynn et al., 1994); the development and refinement of measurement scales (e.g. Flynn, Goldsmith & Eastman, 1996); its importance in the social sciences (e.g. Burt, 1999); its application to various areas related to marketing, such as the health care industry, political science, and public relations (e.g.

Locock, Dopson, Chambers & Gabbay, 2001; Howard, Rogers, Howard- Pitney & Flora, 2000; Hoekstra, 1995; Kern-Foxworth, 1992); and social contagion (e.g. Valente et al., 2010). Brown and Reingen (1987) further notes that there has been surprising little research conducted that has examined the effect of word-of-mouth on the receiver's purchase decisions.

The importance of social influences has been established in a classic consumer behaviour theory, Theory of Reasoned Action by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), which specifies that individuals' behavioural intentions are predicated by their own internal attitudes and their motivation to comply with others. Firms and marketers acknowledge that successful marketing of new/existing products or services depend on the impacts that the important others have on their potential customers. Hence they are increasingly experimenting and placing an emphasis on various forms of network marketing. The rationale of such strategies rests on three key Assumptions: (1) social contagion among customers is at work, (2) some customers' adoptions and opinions have a disproportionate influence on others' adoptions, and (3) firms are able to identify and target those influentials or opinion leaders. These Assumptions are quite reasonable, as the first two are consistent with several sociological and marketing theories and all three have been supported in at least some studies (e.g. Godes and Mayzlin, 2009; Goldenberg et al., 2006; Rogers, 2003; Tucker, 2008; Valente et al., 2003; Weimann, 1994). Abundant literature can be found especially in the case of Assumption (3), firms are able to identify and target those influentials or opinion leaders, where abundant literature that deals with measurement and identification of opinion leadership can be found. Most of the literature either used one or two of the three well-established methods to identify opinion leaders (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, 1987). They are Self-Reporting Method, Sociometric Method, and Key Informant Method. As for Assumption (1), recent research has explicitly established the fact of the social contagion phenomenon, and has identified its operation in a number of areas of social life. The implications of this social contagion research are thorough: The evidence suggests that under certain circumstances, a mere contact appears to be a sufficient condition for social transmission to occur (Valente, 2010).

The focus of this study rests on Assumption (2), some customers' adoptions and opinions have a disproportionate influence on others' adoption. Evidence of interpersonal influences, such as that of word-of-mouth, has already been found and established (e.g. Bansal and Voyer, 2000; Gilly et al., 1998; Reagans, 2005; von Wangenheim and Bayon, 2003). Research conducted has shown that interpersonal influence arising from opinion exchange behaviour is an important factor in consumers' product adoption and brand choice (Dawar et al., 1996). As such, it is of managerial significance to discover similar trend in the context of products in an international arena and whether information-giving and seeking behaviours depend on cultural background. Although differences were illustrious in the Thorelli and Becker studies in the number of information–seekers across industrialised countries, explanation from this study was limited to the influence of education and affluence on consumerist tendencies with society (Thorelli and Becker, 1980). While education and affluence may partly explain differences across countries in consumer behaviour activities, aspects of the cultural environment may also play an important contributing role (Clark, 1990). In order to improve our general understanding of international consumer behaviour, it may be useful to investigate culture's impact on opinion leadership.

Numerous research papers have been conducted using Hofstede's cross-cultural dimensions. These are: Collectivism-Individualism influences Fishbein behavioural intentions (Lee and Green, 1991), group support system (Morales et al., 1995; Tan et al., 1998), innovativeness (Steenkamp et al., 1999; Yaveroglu and Donthu, 2002;Yeniyurt and Townsend, 2003; and van Everdingen and Waarts, 2003), service performance (Birgelen et al., 2002), social influence (Kongsompong et al., 2009), and advertising appeals (Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996). Uncertainty avoidance impacts information exchange behaviour (Dawar et al., 1996), opinion seeking (Pornpitakpan, 2004), innovativeness (Steenkamp et al., 1999; Yaveroglu and Donthu, 2002; van Everdingen and Waarts, 2003; and Yeniyurt and Townsend, 2003), and advertising appeals (Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996). Power distance affects advertising appeals

(Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996), group support system (Atkinson and Pervan, 1998; Griffiths, 1998; Morales, et al., 1995; Smith and Dodds, 1994; Tan et al., 1995, 1998), information exchange behavior (Dawar et al., 1996), opinion seeking (Pornpitakpan, 2004), innovativeness (Yaveroglu and Donthu, 2002; Yeniyurt and Townsend, 2003; and van Everdingen and Waarts, 2003), and service performance (Birgelen et al., 2002). Masculinity impacts innovation (van Everdingen and Waarts, 2003), and service performance (Birgelen et al., 2002). Finally, long-term orientation influences innovativeness (van Everdingen and Waarts, 2003).

As such, the only related literature on culture to our study are those of Dawar et al. (1996) for information exchange, Lee and Green (1991) for Fishbein behavioural intentions, Kongsompong et al. (2009), and Pornpitakpan (2004) for opinion seeking. Dawar et al.'s study was conducted across eleven nationalities. It was found that cultural dimensions of uncertainty avoidance and power distance increases the use of personal sources as opposed to impersonal sources such as consumer report magazines. Lee and Green found that subjective norms are more important for Korean samples, while attitude towards the act is more important for US samples. Kongsompong et al. found that consumers with a collectivist orientation are more susceptible to social influences in their purchase intention than their individualist counterparts. Pornpitakpan found positive correlation for power distance and opinion seeking across 15 cultures. Negative correlation was also found for both masculinity and uncertainty avoidance, and opinion seeking. However, Lee and Green, and Pornpitakpan did not attempt to measure the influence of opinion leaders towards the purchase decisions of the opinion seekers. Although Kongsompong et al. attempted to measure social influence across cultural contexts on purchase decisions, their study is an extension of Lee and Green's study which asked respondents to imagine a scenario where they decide to make a purchase and hence is not based on real purchase. In addition, all three studies did not look into interpersonal forces such as tie strength and homophily between the opinion leaders and opinion seekers or personal forces such as expertise of either side of information exchange.

In addition, many studies in Western cultures have documented the importance of social influence on consumers' product evaluations (Bearden and Etzel, 1982; Foumier, 1998; Moore et al., 2002; Price et al., 1987; Ward and Reingen, 1990). It has been documented that there is a strong relationship between the level of product involvements and the use of social influences, including immediate family, friends, acquaintances, employers and coworkers (Coulter et al., 2003). It was also found that cultural intermediaries and cultural ideologies play their roles in activating product involvement (Thompson and Haytko, 1997). However, no research has looked into the influence the opinion leaders may have towards the purchase decision of opinion seekers on different product category involvement. The closest that most research has achieved is to look at the influence of opinion leaders on a high involvement product (e.g. cosmetics) only.

This study will set out to look at information exchange between opinion leaders and opinion seekers that leads the opinion seekers to the decision to purchase. Firstly, how interpersonal forces of the two sides such as tie strength and homophily and personal forces such as the expertise of the opinion leaders and opinion seekers may influence the decision to purchase of the opinion seekers. Secondly, how cultural background of each individual together with interpersonal forces and personal forces may influence the decision to purchase. Lastly, how types of product category involvement may also play a part in the decision to purchase of the opinion seekers.

### 1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

In this study, questions on how opinion leadership affects purchase decision of the opinion seekers will be assessed. First, to what extent do interpersonal forces (tie strength and homophily), and personal forces (expertise of opinion leaders and opinion seekers) influence the purchase decision of opinion seekers. Second, to what extent do cultural dimensions (collectivism-individualism and power distance) impact the influence of opinion leaders on the purchase decision of opinion seekers. Last, to what extent do the types of product category involvement impacts the influence of opinion leader on the purchase decision of opinion seekers. In order to facilitate this

setting, culture and types of product involvement are set as controlled variables, while the interpersonal forces and personal forces vary.

Not only do the findings provide venues to gain richer theoretical understanding of the influence of opinion leaders on opinion seekers, but they also provide ways through which marketing scholars and managers alike can categorise and segment consumers and products in such a way that would increase the effectiveness of communication and increase purchase decision through network marketing.

1. To examine how different levels of interpersonal forces (tie strength and homophily) between opinion leaders and opinion seekers impact opinion seeker's purchase decision;
2. To examine how different levels of personal forces (opinion leader's expertise and opinion seeker's expertise) impact opinion seeker's purchase decision;
3. To examine how cultural dimension of collectivism-individualism impacts opinion leader's influence on purchase decision of opinion seekers;
4. To examine how cultural dimension of power distance impacts opinion leader's influence on purchase decision of opinion seekers;
5. To examine how different types of product category involvement impacts opinion leader's influence on purchase decision of opinion seekers.

# Chapter II

# Literature Overview

## 2.1 Opinion leadership

The study of opinion leadership has its beginning in the work by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1948) in which they discovered that voting decisions were strongly influenced by relatives, friends and co-workers. Rogers (1962) defined opinion leadership as 'the degree to which an individual is able to influence other individuals' opinions or behaviour in a preferred way with relative frequency' (Jamrozy et al., 1996). Burt (1999) provided the business viewpoint by defining opinion leaders as 'people whose conversations make innovations contagious for the people with whom they speak'. Flynn et al.(1994) applied the concept to marketing and argued that 'as consumers regularly rely upon other people as sources of information, in addition to advertisements and media, opinion leaders exert a disproportionate amount of influence on the decisions of other consumers.' All these definitions are expanded on the central idea of opinion leadership as defined by King and Summers (1970), who stated that 'influence through communication is the hallmark of the opinion leader.' They distinguished between influence and communication by arguing that 'influence refers to an effect, while communication refers merely to an exchange of information between individuals' (Childers, 1986; Flynn et al., 1994).

One commonly cited reasons as to why consumers seek input from others before making a purchase is that of gaining credible idea about product information (Price and Feick, 1984). Empirical studies show that informational influence tends to dominate in United States samples, particularly when products are technologically complex (Feick et al., 1986).

In line with the finding of strong informational purchase influence is the conclusion that opinion leaders are often selected because of their product knowledge or expertise (Jacoby and Hoyer, 1981; Leonard-Barton, 1985; Thomas, 1982). Furthermore, it was found that opinion leadership for many products has been positively related to demographic variables such as education and income in U.S. samples (Feick et al., 1986; Reynolds and Darden, 1971).

Opinion leaders can influence the information receivers in several ways. Chau and Hui (1998) identify three main ways in which opinion leaders exert an influence on the decisions of others. They are '(1) acting as role models thus inspiring imitation; (2) spreading information via word-of-mouth; and (3) giving advice and direction for search, purchase, and use'. It seems that consumers often trust the opinions of others more than they trust formal marketing sources of information such as advertising (Flynn, et al., 1996).

Opinion leadership is almost always perceived to be domain-specific or monomorphic—in other words, related to a specific area of influence in which the opinion leader is perceived to be knowledgeable. This idea is reinforced in most consumer behaviour texts. Schiffman and Kanuk (1999) state that opinion leaders usually offer advice or information about a product or service, such as which is best amongst several brands, or how to use a particular product. Grewal et al. (2000) defined opinion leadership as 'an individual's ability to influence other individuals' attitudes or behaviour in a desired way in a particular domain'.

Early studies by Katz (1953) and Lazersfield et al. (1948) assume domain specificity throughout their research and writing on opinion leadership, referring to 'marketing leaders', 'fashion leaders' and 'public affairs leaders', among others. They go on to argue that it is reasonable to assume a person who becomes sufficiently interested in an area and/or an active participant in it will be turned to for advice by others. This would suggest that interest in a given area might be enough to make an opinion leader. Cartwright and Zander (1968) picked up on this idea when they

developed a model for personal influence. They stated that one cannot meaningfully speak of influence or power without specifying its content. They gave an example of a foreman who may be able to influence a worker's behaviour on the job and yet be powerless when it comes to his political activities.

Nevertheless, consumer behaviour literature does provide opportunity for a counter-argument in the form of so-called 'market mavens'. Market mavens are defined as 'individuals who have information about many kinds of products, places to shop, and other facets of markets, and initiate discussions with consumers and respond to requests from consumers for market information' (Feick & Price, 1987). In essence they are opinion leaders on a wide range of subjects. Williams and Slamal (1995) argue that market mavens are likely to influence the buying decisions of a variety of people who seek and/or receive their advice. Many studies have shown that market mavens can influence a wide range of buyer behaviour (e.g. Walsh & Mitchell, 2001; Williams & Slama, 1995; Feick & Price, 1987). Nevertheless, there is not a large enough support on the subject beyond a few empirical studies and a brief discussion in consumer behaviour textbooks. The domain-specific view of opinion leadership is still widely accepted.

## 2.2 Culture

Tylor (1871) provides one of the earliest definitions of culture: 'the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habit acquired by man as a member of society'. Subsequent contributions share the grand idea of culture as affecting aspects of human life in a society. In general, culture refers to the total patterns which make a society distinct. Culture also serves as a framework for shaping and guiding the thoughts, actions, and practices as well as the creativity of its members. Culture can be transmitted, learned and shared. Therefore, it can be argued that people are culturally conditioned. The difficulty in distinguishing cultural factors from the big picture at macro-level further complicates defining culture. Culture differs fundamentally from other macro-

environmental factors: Sekaran (1983) argued that culture is distinct from the economic, political, legal, religious, linguistic, educational, technological and industrial environment. But to separate culture from other macro-environmental influences might be impossible. This is because culturally-normed behaviour and patterns of socialisation could often stem from such mixes as religious beliefs, economic and political constraints. Hence, separating these out in a precise fashion would be extremely difficult, if not totally impossible.

Scholars discuss the choice of dimensions most appropriate for conceptualising and operationalising culture. It was found that Hofstede's framework is the most widely used national cultural framework in psychology, sociology, marketing, or management studies (Sondergaard, 1994; and Steenkamp, 2001). Hofstede used 116,000 questionnaires from over 60,000 respondents in seventy countries in his empirical study (Hofstede, 1984; Hofstede, 1991; and Hofstede, 2001). He created five dimensions, assigned indexes on each to all nations, and linked the dimensions with demographic, geographic, economic, and political aspects of a society (Kale and Barnes, 1992), a feature unmatched by other frameworks. It is the most comprehensive and robust in terms of the number of national cultures samples (Smith et al., 1996). Although Hofstede used a work-related context and originally applied his framework to human resources management, his work is being used increasingly in business and marketing studies (Sondergaard 1994; Engel et al., 1995; Dawar et al., 1996; and Sivakumar and Nakata, 2001). Moreover, the framework is useful in formulating hypotheses for comparative cross-cultural studies. Consequently, Hofstede's operationalisation of cultures (1984) is the norm used in international marketing studies, including this study.

Clark (1999) notes a high level of agreement amongst social scientists on two dimensions of national character reflecting: firstly, relation to self, secondly, relation to authority. These frameworks have been found in Hofstede's individualism–collectivism and power distance. Hofstede (1980) identifies individualism-

collectivism as a reflection of self-orientation, and power distance as a reflection of authority orientation. Using this framework as basis for investigating cultural variation in information use might allow decision to purchase to be attributed to cultural factors which would enrich our understanding of the results.

Hofstede's dimensions have been used to compare nations, to support hypotheses, and as a theoretical framework for comparing cultures. Notably, individualism-collectivism influences the Fishbein behavioural intentions (Lee and Green, 1991), group support system (Morales et al., 1995; Tan et al., 1998), innovativeness (Steenkamp et al., 1999; Yaveroglu and Donthu, 2002; Yeniyurt and Townsend, 2003; and van Everdingen and Waarts 2003), self-relvance (Chung and Darke, 2006), service performance (Birgelen et al., 2002), social influence (Kongsompong et al., 2009), and advertising appeals (Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996). Uncertainty avoidance impacts information exchange behavior (Dawar et al., 1996), opinion seeking (Pornpitakpan, 2004), innovativeness (Steenkamp et al., 1999; Yaveroglu and Donthu, 2002; van Everdingen and Waarts, 2003; and Yeniyurt and Townsend, 2003), and advertising appeals (Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996). Power distance affects advertising appeals (Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996), group support system (Atkinson and Pervan, 1998; Griffiths, 1998; Morales et al., 1995, Smith and Dodds, 1994; Tan et al., 1995, 1998) information exchange behavior (Dawar et al., 1996), opinion seeking (Pornpitakpan, 2004), innovativeness (Yaveroglu and Donthu, 2002; Yeniyurt and Townsend, 2003; and van Everdingen and Waarts, 2003), and service performance (Birgelen et al., 2002). Masculinity impacts innovation (van Everdingen and Waarts, 2003), opinion seeking (Pornpitakpan, 2004) and service performance (van Birgelen et al., 2002). Finally, long-term orientation influences innovativeness (van Everdingen and Waarts, 2003).

**Table 2.1: Previous Literature on Hofstede's Five Cultural Dimensions**

| No. | Theoretical Framework | Individualism-Collectivism | Uncertainty avoidance | Power distance | Masculinity | Long-term orientation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Behavioural Intentions | X | | | | |
| 2 | Group System Support | X | | X | | |
| 3 | Innovativeness | X | X | X | X | X |
| 4 | Self-relevance | X | | | | |
| 5 | Service performance | X | | X | X | |
| 6 | Social Influence | X | | | | |
| 7 | Advertising appeals | X | X | X | | |
| 8 | Information exchange behavior | | X | X | | |
| 9 | Opinion seeking | | X | X | X | |

### ***2.2.1 Collectivism–Individualism***

#### ***2.2.1.1 Attributes of Collectivists***

Collectivists are likely to value belonging to their in-group or culture and relating one's self to the group (e.g. family, tribe, or nation). The influence of the in-group is much stronger on collectivists (Triandis, 1989). Belonging to the group is not just a matter of identification, it is subordination of personal goals to the collective's goals and taking into account the needs of others. This is because collectivists give more weight to group-norms as determinants of their social behaviour. They identify themselves as members of a group to which they belong, and thus they internalise the group's goals and values into their mindsets and give these higher priority. In a more distinct way, Triandis (2000) suggests that collectivists tend to be very sensitive to other in-group members, and can be quite distant from out-group people (Oyserman, 1993 and Schwartz, 1990), and even hostile when conflict arises from out groups.

There are a number of dimensions, which can distinguish individualists from collectivists, such as the relation to the group, the role of hierarchy, the need to belong to a group, the use of language, and the role of family.

An important component of belonging to a group is focusing on in-group relationships and seeking for harmony among the in-group. Morling and Fiske (1999) found that harmony correlated with interdependence and collectivism. The value of keeping harmony and 'saving face' is most present in conflict situations. Ohbuchi, Fukushima and Tedeschi (1999) showed that collectivists prefer to deal with conflicts by methods that maintain relationships with others through mediation while individualists seek justice.

One of the symptoms of group binding is a sense of hierarchy. Hierarchy can be a collectivist as well as an individualist attribute (Triandis, 1995, Singelis et al., 1995). For collectivists hierarchy acts as a reference that shows them their position or rank within their in-group, whereas for individualists hierarchy relates more to competition as individualists are seeking to move higher than others on the social scale/level (Triandis, 1995; and Singelis et al., 1995).

The sense of belonging to the group among collectivists affects their well-being as their life satisfaction depends more on their ability to fulfill social obligations, roles and expectations (Kim, 1994 and Kwan et al., 1997). Singelis (1994) suggested that the collectivists are duty-bound to their in-group, sacrificing the self for the good of the collective.

The communication style of the collectivists is characterised by a tendency to use indirect language (Triandis, 1995). Such indirect communication is associated with emotional restraint and the desire to keep harmony and save face within the group.

Some authors have argued that collectivists place high value on belonging to their in-group and particularly their family (Hofstede, 1980; Hsu, 1983 and Kim, 1994). In contrast, Fischer (2000) found that North Americans, who are often considered the model of individualism, favoured immediate family interests over their own interest. Such findings have led researchers, such as Gaines, Marelich, Bledsoe et al. (1997), to claim that familialism may be a separate domain from collectivism. This disagreement in the literature lead Oyserman et al. (2002) to argue that familialism is a distinct domain, which does not relate to the collectivism-individualism polarity.

Last but not least is the question on self-esteem and self-confidence. Kitayama (1993) studied American samples (individualists) and Japanese samples (collectivists) on success and failure situations. The subjects were asked whether their self-esteem would be affected if they were in each situation. It was found that American (individualists) rated success situations as more likely to affect them, thus boosting their self-esteem. Such situations had self-enhancing effects for Americans (individualists). In short, individualists are therefore more sensitive to success situations than are collectivists and thus increase their self-esteem by success. In relation to this study, it can be inferred that collectivists tend to be lower in self-esteem and self-confidence. As such they tend to comply with others' suggestions to avoid social disapproval.

#### ***2.2.1.2 Attributes of Individualists***

Individualism refers to a preference for a loose knit social framework in society in which individuals are only supposed to take care of themselves and their immediate families. This is the opposite of collectivism, which implies a preference for a tightly knit social framework in which individuals can expect their relatives and clan to protect them in exchange for loyalty.

It has been found that individualists are more likely to prioritise the self and be explicit in enhancing their self-esteem (Triandis, 1996). They also desire to enhance or emphasise their personal goals, interests and values over the society they relate or

belong to. Attributes of individualists include an emphasis on personal responsibility and freedom of choice (Waterman, 1984) personal autonomy and self-fulfilment (Hofstede, 1980), distinctive personal attitudes and opinions (Oyserman & Markus, 1993; Triandis 1995), autonomous behaviour independence of groups (Reykowski, 1994), need for detachment from others and individual autonomy (Andersen et al., 1997) and functioning according to personal choices (Walsh & Banaji, 1997). Individualism also relates to attributes of personal success, status and competitive characteristics. The distinction of an individualist from others is defined in terms of the uniqueness of the self in comparison to the other.

Triandis & Suh (2002) showed that direct as opposed to indirect communication was a typical behaviour of individualists, and there is a higher likelihood of using 'I' more than 'we'. Individualists also tend to be more assertive (Wu & Rubin, 2000).

In relation to social influence, Kongsompong et al. (2009) found that collectivists are more susceptible to social influence in buying situations than individualists. This finding is consistent with collectivists' trait of prioritising group harmony and avoiding conflicts. 'The maintenance of harmony requires some level of conformity with what the group thinks is appropriate. If relevant others are expressing opinions contrary to one's own, the collectivist is more likely to incorporate them into his/her decision making than is the individualist in order to avoid conflict and to maintain harmony within the group', Kongsompong et al. (2009)

In summary, collectivism includes a sense of belonging and duty to in-groups, interdependence with group members, maintenance of one's social status, seeking harmony and avoiding conflicts, and a preference for an indirect communication style. Individualism includes distinction of the self from others, a dominance of self-reliance, values self-interest and personal goals over those of society striving for personal goals, and a preference for a direct communication style. It is unclear whether familialism relates to collectivism and individualism. It may be that

relationships with wider family members may be associated to collectivism, however relationships with the immediate family members are probably similar in both types of cultural constructs.

**Table 2.2: Collectivism**

| Domain Name | Description | Sample Item |
|---|---|---|
| **Related** | Considering close others an integral part of the self | To understand who I am, you must see me with members of my group. |
| **Belong** | Wanting to belong to and enjoy being part of groups | To me, pleasure is spending time with others. |
| **Duty** | The duties and sacrifices being a group member entails | I would help, within my means, if a relative were in financial difficulty. |
| **Harmony** | Concern for group harmony and that groups get along | I make an effort to avoid disagreements with my group members. |
| **Advice** | Turning to close others for decision help | Before making a decision, I always consult with others. |
| **Context** | Self changes according to context or situation | How I behave depends on who I am with, where I am, or both. |
| **Hierarchy** | Focus on hierarchy and status issues | I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact. |
| **Group** | A preference for group work | I would rather do a group paper or lab than do one alone. |

**Table 2.3: Individualism**

| Domain Name | Description | Sample Item |
|---|---|---|
| **Independent** | Freedom, self-sufficiency, and control over one's life | I tend to do my own things, and others in my family do the same. |
| **Goals** | Striving for one's own goals, desires, and achievement | I take great pride in accomplishing what no one else can accomplish. |
| **Compete** | Personal competition and winning | It is important to me that I perform better than others in many respects. |
| **Unique** | Focus on one's unique, idiosyncratic qualities | I am unique – different from others in many respects. |
| **Private** | Thoughts and actions private from others | I like my privacy. |
| **Self-know** | Knowing oneself; having a strong identity | I know my weaknesses and strengths. |
| **Direct Communicate** | Clearly articulating one's wants and needs | I always state my opinions very clearly. |

Previous literature have established the effects of word-of-mouth communications towards non-interpersonal forces (expertise of senders: Bansal and Voyer, 2000; Dholakia and Sternthal, 1977; Gilly et al., 1998; and receivers: Bansal and Voyer, 2000; Brucks, 1985; Gilly et al., 1998), and interpersonal forces (tie strength: Bansal and Voyer, 2002; Brown and Reingen, 1987; Bristor, 1990; and Reagans, 2005; and homophily: Brown and Reingen, 1987; Feldman and Spencer, 1965; Gilly et al., 1998; and Reagans, 2005) on purchase decisions. In relation to culture, Lee and Green (1991), aiming to validate Fishbein's behavioural intention theory for application outside of the United States, found that subjective norms are more important to Korean samples (collectivists) than American samples (individualists). Their study provides an insightful ground for our study that the interpersonal forces have varying influence subject to differences in collectivism – individualism. Lee and Green provided ground for Kongsompong et al. (2009) to use the same purchase scenario on student respondents in Australia, Singapore, Thailand, and USA to test social influence. However, it must be noted that the final construct or the eventual findings are different to this study. Both studies aimed to measure

behavioural intentions, which is a different construct to this study's aim to measure purchase decisions with actual past-purchase. As such, this research aims to further add to the body of knowledge in purchase decisions with comparative study in Thailand (collectivist society) and USA (individualist society) investigating into different types of product involvement.

### ***2.2.2 Power Distance***

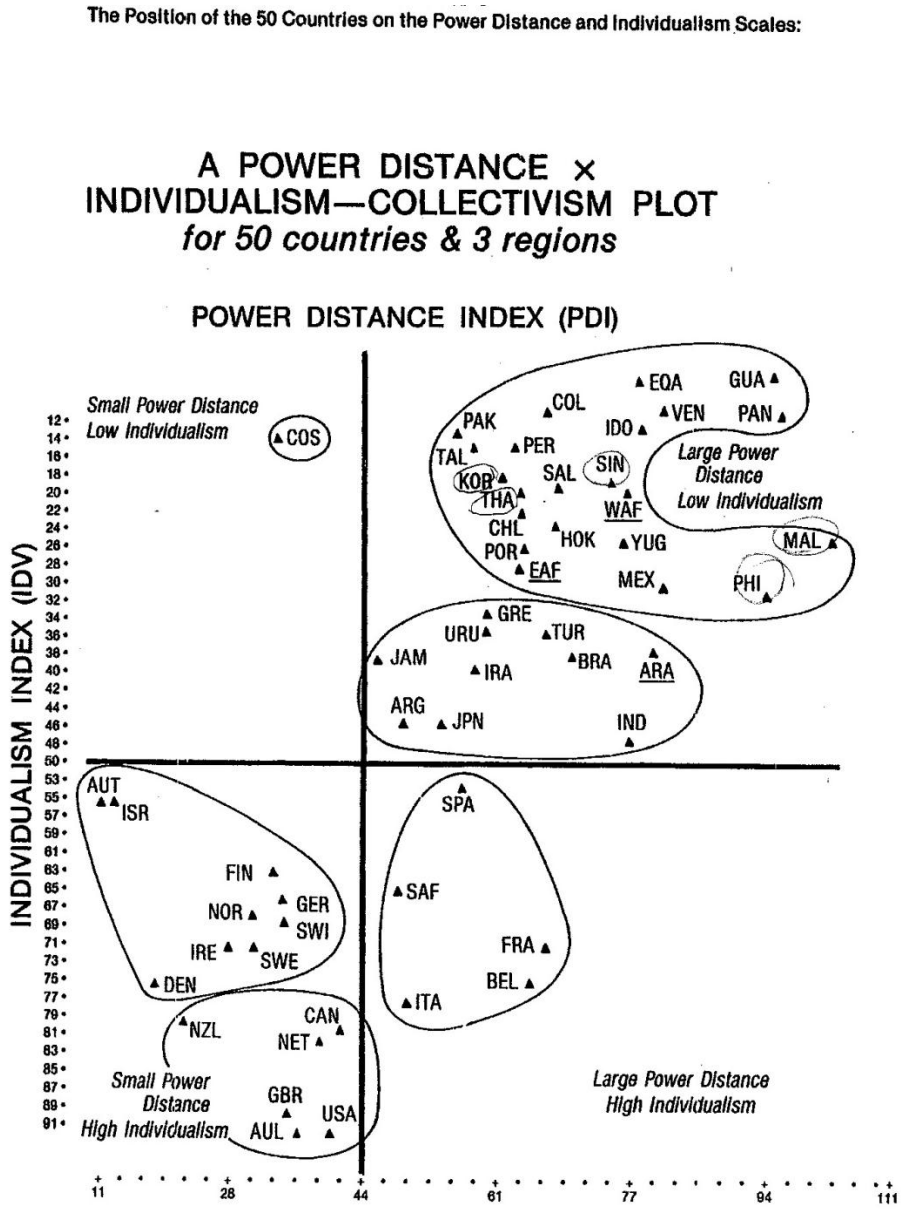
Power distance is the extent to which society accepts the fact that power in communal groups, institutions and organisations is distributed unequally. In measurement term, power distance measures the degree of power inequality between superiors and subordinates within a social system.

Cultures with high power distance scores tend to be hierarchical, with members citing force, manipulation, and inheritance as sources of power; those with low scores tend to value equality, with members citing knowledge and respect as sources of power. Given the focus on power accorded to individual members of society, this characteristic reflects a culture's attitude toward the authority of individual persons. One consequence of high power distance is a general distrust of others, since power is generally seen to rest with individuals who act forcefully rather than legitimately (Hofstede, 1980).

Prior studies indicate that individuals with higher power distance perception would tend to perceive the views of higher status individuals to be superior to their own (Tung and Quaddus, 2002). Thus acceptance of unequal power distribution implies the acceptance of substituting the decision of an individual for the decisions of an authority (Wong and Birnbaum-More, 1994). In other words, the higher the power distance value one holds, the stronger will be the referents' influence on the individual, which indicates a greater role of subjective norm in one's perception of purchase decision.

Although Tung and Quaddus (2002)'s research involves group support system, which is not directly related to this study. However, one important finding was that Singaporean samples (high power distance culture) perceive the views of higher status individuals to be superior to their own. On contrary, Australian samples (low power distance) feel that they are all on equal footing. Each person's idea is just as good as anyone else's. Dawar et al. (1996) studied information exchange across eleven nationalities. It was found that power distance increases the use of personal sources. Pornpitakpan (2004) studied opinion seeking and found positive correlation for power distance and opinion seeking across 15 cultures. However, none of these studies aim to measure the influence of opinion leaders towards the purchase decisions of the opinion seekers. Nor did they look into interpersonal forces such as tie strength and homophily between the opinion leaders and opinion seekers or personal forces such as expertise of either side of information exchange.

**Figure 2.1: Hofstede's Findings on Collectivism-Individualism and Power Distance**




*Source: Journal of International Business Studies, Fall 1983*

### ***2.2.3 Cultural Difference between Thailand and USA***

Figure 2.1 shows that Thailand and USA are at two ends of collectivism – individualism and power distance spectrum. Thailand is located up in the top right-hand corner amongst other large power distance low individualism countries, whereas USA is located down in the bottom left-hand corner amongst other small power distance high individualism countries. Hofstede's findings in USA have been validated and reconfirmed many times. His work on Thailand has also been extended further. Komin (1990) reconfirmed Hofstede's findings with nine value orientations for Thais. Those related directly to Hofstede's findings on collectivism are smooth interpersonal relationship and flexibility, indicating social harmony with others; and adjustment and interdependence, indicating preference to belong in a group. Komin (1990) found several cultural values that proved to be salient values of the Thai. These are gratitude, caring and considerate, calm and cautious, contented, interdependence and mutually helpful, fun-loving-humorous, and being responsive to situations and opportunities. These are new values that were unfound in American national samples. In addition, another value that does not appear on American value list is status and wealth. This indicates that Thais are more tolerant to the unequal distribution of power and wealth, although this proved to be amongst the main reason behind the mass red-shirt rally in the past few years. However, at work and in most social interactions, this finding is still valid. In contrast to American's value pattern, Thais are also significantly different in ambitious and broad mind, with Americans scoring high on these dimensions. Like other collectivist societies, the concept of 'face' is very important. Thai people have big egos. Violation of ego can result in strong emotional reactions, Komin (1990). Preserving 'face' is the basic rule for all Thai social interactions.

For Americans, the achievement motive is very important. It serves target end-value of self-interest. This operates in direct contrast to Komin (1990)'s findings on Thais especially for government officials where smooth interpersonal relationships are valued more. USA has higher degree of equality hence small power distance as can be seen by McGregor's Theory *x* and Theory *y*, which emphasise employees'

participation with the managers' decisions to become a Theory *y* person. In addition, Maslow's concept of self-actualisation also stresses self as a target end value. These famous American theorists reflect American culture.

In relation to this social influence, Kongsompong et al. (2009) found in their study across four nations of Australia, Singapore, Thailand, and USA, that Thai consumers exhibit more social influence than do Americans, Australians, and Singaporean counterparts. Furthermore, Americans exhibit less susceptibility to social influence than either Singaporean or Thais. They concluded that respondents with a collectivist orientation are more heavily influenced in the purchase decision than their individualist oriented counterparts.

### ***2.2.4 Criticism against Culture***

Culture constitutes the broadest influence on many dimensions of human behaviour. This makes defining culture difficult (McCort and Malhotra, 1993). This difficulty obstructs progress of research into the influence of culture on international consumer behaviour (McCort and Malhotra, 1993; Clark, 1990; and Dawar et al., 1996). Buzzell (1968) notes that culture is a convenient catchall, for the many differences in market structure and behaviours, that cannot be explained in terms of more tangible factors.

A major problem of earlier work, such as those of Hofstede, was that the measurement was at the country rather than at the individual level. It thus assumes that members of these countries are homogenous on individualism and collectivism, and this is not only unlikely, but also subject to empirical evaluation. Triandis (1995) argues that people selectively form their personal characteristics, communication styles, and preferences from both individualistic and collectivistic cognitive structures under different situations. Thus, it seems premature to assume that everyone in individualistic cultures is an individualist, whereas everyone in collectivistic cultures is a collectivist. Dutta-Bergman and Wells (2002) provided full evidence on within-culture variations in terms of individualism and collectivism and consequent

differences exhibited in behavioural indicators. Developments in cross-cultural psychology have also suggested that the traditional conceptualisation of individualism-collectivism as a simple dichotomy could be limited and in need of better formulation. Given today's global environment, the notion of a homogeneous population within a culture may no longer be valid (Singlis & Brown, 1995). In other words, not every person in an individualistic culture is an individualist. Nor does it mean that people in a collectivistic culture are all collectivists. Just as nations are compared based on their classification of individualism or collectivism, so should people within a culture be compared in this way.

While this criticism is valid, the benefits of this approach for international marketing and cross-cultural research outweigh its limitations (Soares et al., 2006). Thus, although caution is recommended in using this approach, there is empirical support for between-country differences (Hofstede, 1984; and Steenkamp, 2001). Nation can be used as a proxy for culture since members of a nation tend to share a similar language, history, religion, understanding of institutional systems, and a sense of identity (Dawar and Parker, 1994; and Hofstede, 1984), making its use a common approach to operationalise culture.

## 2.3 Product Involvement

Product involvement or consumer involvement originated from ego involvement, which is based on one’s association with an issue or subject. High ego involvement occurs when an issue or object holds personal meaning and importance, relates to the self or arouses strong feelings. Krugman (1966/1967) is one of the first scholars to apply Sherif et al.’s ego involvement theory to a marketing framework.

Since Krugman’s work, numerous involvement conceptualisations have emerged, with involvement described as a combination of needs, values, interests and situational variables. Rothschild (1979) defines involvement as ‘a state of interest, motivation, or arousal’, and Bloch (1981) as an ‘unobservable state reflecting the

amount of interest, arousal, or emotional attachment a consumer has with a product'. Product involvement has been identified as the product's perceived importance or personal relevance based on individual needs and values. Kapferer and Laurent (1986) describe involvement as the state of motivation or arousal induced by factors such as interest, pleasure, sign value and risk. Robertson (1971) expresses involvement as the 'strength of the individual's belief system' related to product or brand attributes. Emotional components of involvement including self-expression, interest and pleasure have also been found. As such, consumer involvement can be described as the personal relationship one holds with a product or situation and is determined by both internal factors, including values, morals, and attitudes; and external factors, including environment, products, and advertising.

Houston and Rothschild (1977) classify involvement into three types: situational, enduring, and response. Clarke and Belk (1978) argue that situational involvement (SI) describes temporary arousal and interest brought about by current environmental factors (for example, perceived risk, price, and durability) and accompanied by a decrease in involvement-related behaviours once the situation comes to an end. SI therefore applies when products require thorough understanding of functional facts and logical decision. Enduring involvement (EI) represents the stable and long-term arousal and interest with a product. EI occurs with few products and is based on past experience with the product and important relevant values (for example, self-image and pleasure). EI therefore applies to products that can express one's personality and are based on looks, taste, touch, smell, or sounds. Studies have confirmed Houston and Rothschild's SI and EI. Response involvement describes the combined effects of SI and EI. Response involvement indicates the individual's overall personally relevant feelings that result from the product and situation.

Kapferer and Laurent (1985) identified five antecedents of involvement – interest, pleasure, sign, risk importance and probability of error – to create the consumer involvement profile (CIP). Interest refers to the interest and importance in a product category. Pleasure is the enjoyment derived from the product purchase. Sign

value is the character, personality and identity communicated through the product class or brand. Risk importance is the importance placed on the outcome of a wrong purchase. It represents how the consumer will feel if he/she purchases the wrong product, for example, upset, irritated or annoyed. Probability of error measures feelings of uncertainty, based on the likelihood of a wrong purchase. These five dimensions combine aspects of both EI and SI.

Researchers have shown that important differences may exist in product evaluation due to different levels of involvement (Petty et al., 1983; Chaudhuri, 2000; Maoz and Tybout, 2002). A highly involved product is a product that is recognised as central to one's life, one's sense of identity, and one's relationship with the rest of the world (Traylor, 1981). In purchase decision research, the concern is whether the decision is relevant such that the consumer will be motivated to make a careful purchase decision (Clark and Belk, 1978). According to the elaboration likelihood model (ELM), a person's processing of information differs on his or her level of involvement. High product involvement tends to provoke a central route to persuasion, in which consumers exert the 'cognitive' effort required to evaluate the relevant arguments presented to them (high-elaboration likelihood). Consumers tend to search for more product information (e.g. detailed product attribute information) and make more product comparisons to ensure product quality and value (Nijssen et al., 1995). Under such situations, consumers tend to focus more on highly analytical cues such as attributes and performance information to evaluate products. In contrast, low product involvement induces a peripheral route to persuasion, in which consumers evaluate products based on some 'affective' superficial analysis of available and salient cues in the stimuli presented to them (Nkwocha et al., 2005). Examples of such cues are price and brand name. When motivation is low, consumers are neither willing nor able to exert much effort (low-elaboration likelihood).

In relation to this study, it was found that certain factors influence the levels of product involvement.

- **Subjective product knowledge** – Subjective product knowledge indicates what consumers think they know about the product and the consumers' feelings of 'familiarity' with the product (Brucks, 1985; Cordell, 1997; Seines and Gronhaug, 1986). It was found that subjective product knowledge influence the levels of product involvement. Greenwald and Leavitt (1984) argue that consumers' product knowledge will increase as consumers become more involved with the product. Barta and Ray (1986) show that the correlation coefficient between product involvement and subjective product knowledge of the products (photographic film, deodorants, facial moisturiser, instant coffee, instant cocoa, drink mixes, and frozen pizza) is 0.49. Lutz et al. (1983) show that consumers who have extensive knowledge about a specific product are more likely to perceive the product as being important than consumers who have less knowledge (Lutz et al. 1983).

- **Social influence** – Social influence is another important determinant of consumer behaviour towards the levels of product involvement. Coulter et al. (2003) argue that social networks play an important role in facilitating product involvement among adults. Their findings suggest that there is a strong relationship between product involvement and the use of friends as information sources.

- **Product category** - Zaichkowsky (1985) examined the level of product involvement and found a significant difference in product involvement level for various products. For instance, a low level of product involvement was found for: batteries, pasta and hose. A medium level of product involvement was found for: yogurt, chocolate candies and facial soap. A high level of product involvement was found for: washing machine, dress and perfume. The study of Kapferer and Laurent (1985) also shows a variance in product involvement for different products: In their studies, 20 product types were examined amongst a sample of 800 adult female respondents. A higher level

of product involvement was found for the goods and perfume categories than for other product types.

Many studies provide evidence that purchase-relevant decision-making traits that consumers engage in depend on the product category they intend to purchase, and they can therefore vary substantially. Consumer behavior in this context is not only strongly connected to the product category, but also to the intensity of product involvement felt by the individual consumer (Bauer et al., 2006). For example, Suh and Yi (2006) found that product involvement decreases the direct effects of satisfaction on brand attitudes and loyalty, but increases the indirect effects of advertising attitudes and the corporate image. Kotler (1994) classified purchase behaviour based on the level of involvement and on the brand difference. Previous studies of the effects of product involvement on dependent measures of advertising effectiveness (e.g. attitudes, etc.) have generally found that high-involvement products tend to score higher than do low-involvement products. In addition, studies have found that the product-involvement variable is a constant and stable variable, relative to many other variables; therefore, it may serve marketers and advertisers in the long-term (Havitz and Howard, 1995; Iwasaki and Havitz, 1998; Quester and Smart, 1996).

Mittal (1989) pointed out to a gap in previous involvement literature in that, given two different products which are both high involvement products, they may require different level of cognitive inputs. For example, a consumer may ‘care’ a lot about products such as perfume and music album, however he/she manifests little cognitive activity. Instead his/her choice may be dictated by emotional enchantment. On the contrary, a consumer may use a great deal of purchase decision involvement to purchase a washing machine, but it has no symbolic value to express his/her social and psychological status.

As such, the involvement in the purchase of expressive products is termed expressive involvement. Expressive quality refers to a product’s ability to express its

user's personality, or self-concept, or mood, as well as enable a consumer to experience these entities. On the other hand, a product is functional when its physical performance is of overriding concern. Although most products will have a central tendency of being deemed functional or expressive by a majority of consumers, this involvement typology is not attached to products per-se. Rather an individual consumer's orientation toward a product will determine the typology. Thus, it is a person-product dyad variable.

Viewed in this light, Kapferer and Laurent (1985) and Zaichkowsky (1985) are inappropriate measures of purchase-decision involvement. Kapferer and Laurent (1985) proposed five antecedents. One of these factors is 'risk importance' – a combination of product importance and perceived risk. Combining these two is conceptually incorrect since these are different concepts. Another two antecedents are interest and pleasure. By definition, the higher a consumer places emphasis on interest and pleasure, the higher the involvement. However, consider the case of an automobile: automobiles may be considered by many a high involvement product, however a consumer may not have a strong interest in a car. She may not consider buying a car for pleasure, rather she considers it only for functional use. Instead, she may consider shoes, a product that many may consider a medium to low involvement product, more interesting and pleasurable than cars. As such, Kapferer and Laurent's scale fails to capture purchase-decision involvement.

In much the same way, Zaichowsky included in her twenty-item scale differentials such as needed/not needed, essential/inessential, relevant/irrelevant. A high score on these items has no bearing on purchase-decision involvement. For example, essential items (e.g. contact lenses) may require less purchase-decision involvement than many inessential/luxury items (e.g. handbags).

Nevertheless, despite a more focused and more practical nature of purchase decision involvement, Mittal (1989)'s discussion about categorising products into expressive and functional involvement has received little attention in subsequent

academic literature. This may be due to lack of credible categorisation. Mittal (1989) hypothesised that, for expressive involvement compared with functional involvement, customers will: (a) use fewer source of information, (b) do less extensive brand comparisons, and (c) examine fewer brands. Even though these hypotheses are supported, it can be argued that categorisation into expressive or functional involvement cannot be based on merely 3 propositions. Evidence from previous literature is also vague and unclear with more citation from discussion but little given empirical evidence. In addition, all these hypotheses relate to customer behaviour prior to making a purchase, hence they do not echo the definition of involvement, which is identified as the product's perceived importance or personal relevance based on individual needs and values. In addition, since there are no subsequent literatures to further support these propositions, all that is left is the original, which dates back to 1989. This creates doubt in the validity as the world has evolved from the settings of the 80as to 90s era.

However, we still believe that Mittal's purchase-decision involvement has a unique and important advantage over product involvement because it can provide marketing practitioners with more purchase-relevant information with which they ought to be concerned. To give an example, a consumer may not be constantly involved in a sofa, but he/she would become highly involved when deciding to purchase one. Thus, a consumer may have a low enduring product involvement until the time of the purchase when the consumer has high product-choice involvement in the process of deciding to purchase a sofa.

**Cognitive/Affective Dimensions of Involvement**

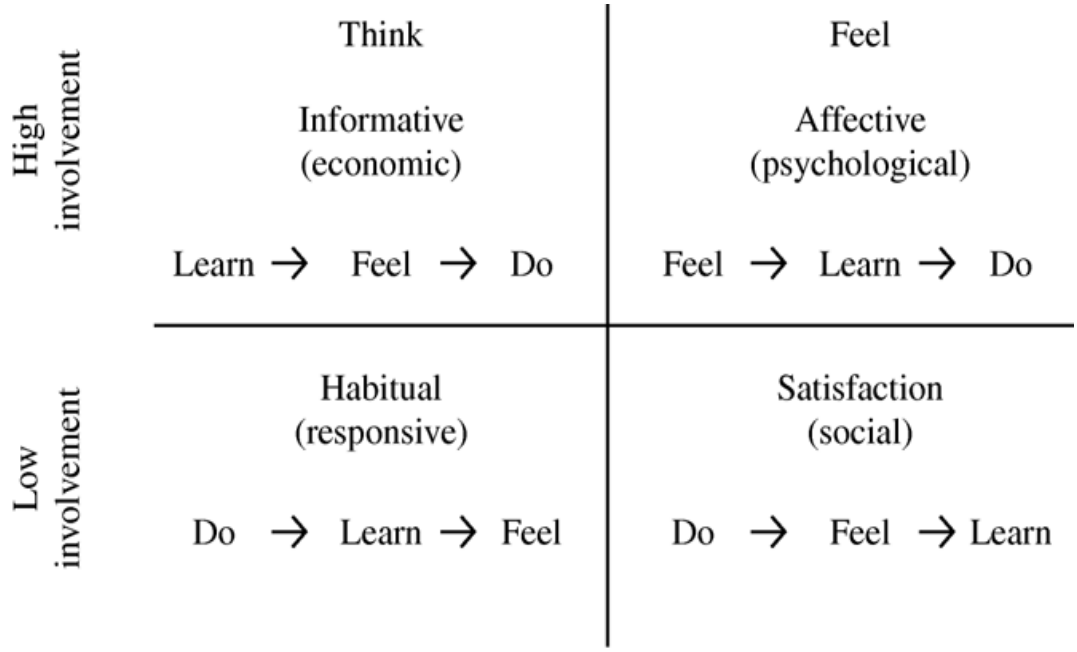
According to Park and Mittal (1985), motivational component of involvement indicates the cognitive/affective involvement. They indicated that information processing under cognitive differs from that under affective involvement. Cognitive involvement refers to the level of consumers' informational processing activities,

while affective involvement refers to the degree of a consumer's emotional states evoked by an object, such as a product (Kim and Sung, 2009).

Studies indicate that purchase decisions are based on considerations of both cognitive and affective product features. For instance, a consumer may be initiated first by cognitive involvement with an iPad's features and functions, and/or affectively involved with the sleek design of an iPad, or both. In sum, Dhar and Wertenbroch (2000) differentiated hedonic and utilitarian considerations, where hedonic provides fun, pleasure, and excitement features, and utilitarian provides mostly instrumental and functional features.

Previous literature has mostly averaged the cognitive and affective items together. For example, Kapferer and Laurent (1985) measured affective involvement within the construct of cognitive involvement by including emotional-related measurement items such as pleasure and excitement. Park and Mittal (1985)'s framework and the Foote, Cone, and Belding's FCB Grid are some attempts to explain the involvement construct in terms of both cognitive and affective reactions to stimuli. In fact, FCB Grid is one of the most widely used product classification scheme, which utilises both the cognitive "feel" and affective "think" aspects.

**Figure 2.2: FCB Grid**




**Source:** Vaughn (1986, p. 58)

Each quadrant in Figure 2.2 above represents a series of consumer thought for different types of products and involvement. Products can be placed in one of the four quadrants based on the reasons behind its selection – emotional or for its functional benefits. Some products are more personally relevant to the consumer than others – product involvement will consequently vary.

Each quadrant has a different sequence including the components 'think', 'feel' and 'do', that is assumed to account for the consumer decision-making process.

The quadrant of low-involvement/think typically includes household products such as detergent, toilet paper, and simple food items. Decision making proceeds along a do – learn – feel sequence: consumers buy the brand without any mentionable cognitive or affective process preceding it, for example, consumers buy detergent by the simple observation that their household has ran out of it.

The quadrant of low-involvement/feel includes products that may be regarded as 'life's little pleasures' (De Pelsmacker et al., 2001), such as candy, soft drink, ice

cream, etc… They are bought primarily for hedonic reasons, and hence, affective considerations weigh more heavily than cognitive considerations. Information about these products requires little cognitive effort and decision-making proceeds along a do – feel–learn hierarchy. After purchase, the product is consumed eliciting an affective experience, which may be followed by learning about the product's attributes.

The quadrant of high involvement/think includes products that are associated with considerable risk such as headache remedies, houses, and life insurance. Decision-making about the product attributes and performance are made through careful processing of available information, then develops an attitude and subsequently acts in accordance with that attitude.

The quadrant of high involvement/feel involves a feel – learn – do sequence and includes such products as expensive jewelry, perfume, and fashion. Feel refers to a true affective, sensory experience.

Many of low involvement products involve impulse buying. For example, low involvement/think includes such products as disposable razor and paper towels. Low involvement/feel includes such products as soft drinks and peanut butter. These products require little influence from opinion leaders in purchase decisions, not only because they are impulse buying, but also most of the time they are repeat purchases. Unlike in the purchase of high involvement products, consumers start sequence with 'do', followed by learn and feel, in the case of low involvement/think products. As for low involvement/feel products, consumers also start with 'do', followed by feel and learn. Consumers are willing to buy first and learn or feel about it later. This is because the risk involved in purchase decisions, whether socially, financially, or safely is low. Consumers do not have to rely on opinion leaders for advice. This is why this study will focus on high involvement products only.

Although the idea of classifying cognitive (think) and affective (feel) purchase-decision involvement appears to be reasonable, it was not until Kim and

Sung (2009) who confirmed that cognitive purchase-decision involvement is a different construct from affective purchase-decision involvement.

## 2.4 Homophily

Homophily is defined as 'the degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are similar in terms of certain attributes, such as age, sex, beliefs, education, social status, and the like' (Rogers, 1983). In other words, homophilous individuals tend to associate and bond with similar others. The presence of homophily has been discovered in a selection of network studies. In their original explanation of homophily, Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) distinguished between status homophily and value homophily. Status homophily means that individuals with similar social status demographics are more likely to associate with each other than by chance. By contrast, value homophily refers to a tendency to associate with others who think in similar ways, regardless of differences in status.

Homophily is conceptually related to tie strength. While some may suggest that tie strength and homophily are identical (e.g. Gatignon and Robertson, 1985; Rogers, 1983), others (e.g. Brown and Reingen, 1987) view tie strength and homophily as related but separate constructs. The difference is that homophily refers to the similarity in certain characteristic attributes (e.g. same age, sex, or social status) or perception that individuals possess or view, whereas tie strength is a relational property that display itself in the form of different types of relations (e.g. family member, close friend, or acquaintance). For example, an individual could have a very high level of demographics homophily with a stranger in terms of age, sex, and social status, but the tie strength between the two would be virtually non-existent.

A number of theories have attempted to explain how the concept of homophily increases the influence of the information transmitted from opinion leaders. First, the source-attractiveness model suggests that receivers feel that they can better identify with sources that are similar to themselves (Kelman, 1961). Festinger's (1954) theory of social comparison suggests that people like to compare themselves with others.

This tendency to compare oneself with others increases as the person is seen as similar. This is because individuals directly assume that similar people have similar needs and preferences. Lastly, the match-up hypothesis (Kamins, 1990) suggests that the influence of the information transmitted depends on how good is the match between the communicator's image with the image of the product and the self-concept of the receiver.

It is interesting that although opinion leaders enjoy relatively high status, they tend to be more homophilous than heterophilous with other members of their social system. According to Rogers (1982) this paradox arises because people are more influenced by other people who are similar to themselves since the similarity makes the personal relevance and desirability of the product/service purchase more obvious. For example, Feldman and Spencer (1965) looked at the similarity between new residents seeking medical doctors and the personal sources they used in their search. They found that only 15 percent of the sample turned to a personal source who exhibited expertise in the medical field. Most respondents turned to friends, neighbours, and co-workers for a referral. Most interestingly, couples with children usually relied on other couples with children for physician referral, whereas childless couple tended to rely on other childless couples, indicating that couples turn to homophilous sources instead of to product experts.

Brown and Reingen (1987) studied the homophily between piano teacher-selecting opinion seekers and the personal sources they used as well as their non-activated potential sources. They found that more demographic homophilous ties were more likely to be chosen. But they did not find that these homophilous ties were likely to have greater influence on the decision than heterophilous ties. However, Brown and Reingen attributed this latter result to imprecise measurement of using homophily construct by demographics rather than by perceptual similarity of values and lifestyle. As such, they suggested that future research include perceptual homophily and lifestyle into measurement.

Overall, the current empirical evidence suggests that consumers are likely to talk to similar sources and that under some circumstances the influence of homophilous sources may be greater than that of expert sources. Price and Feick (1984) argue that homophily will facilitate the flow of product information because of perceived ease of communication (i.e. 'Birds of a feather flock together'). In addition to having greater access to individuals like themselves due to closeness, the seeker may select a source who shares the same value. Homophilous individuals are more likely to have similar product requirements than heterophilous individuals, resulting in the most personally relevant product information (Feldman and Spencer, 1965) Furthermore, in the sales management literature seller/buyer similarity has been described as increasing sales interaction (e.g. Evans, 1963; Campbell et al.,1988). Sweeney et al. (2007) suggested that there is evidence that diffusion takes place rapidly when there is high homophily. Finally, Brown and Reingen (1987) suggest that homophilous sources of information will be perceived as more credible than heterophilous ones, which should result in greater influence.

The impact of homophily may be less powerful for high-involvement products. This is because high-involvement products require thorough consideration that cannot be based merely on the similarities between the opinion leaders and opinion seekers. While homophily may still play some role in interpersonal discussion with similar others because of perceived ease of communication, factors such as opinion leader's expertise may have a stronger influence. On contrary, low-involvement product may reflect the fact that a consumer sees less importance and relevance to their daily lives and thus make a decision based on affective, rather than cognitive buying behaviour.

Researchers who seem to agree that product category involvement may play a part in this are Gilly et al. (1998). They pointed out that the relationship between homophily and influence appears to be more complex than initially thought. They suggested that demographic and perceptual homophily can affect word-of-mouth

influence processes in different ways, and their effect varies depending on the product category. Perceptual homophily appears to have enhanced word-of-mouth influence on all product types. However, demographic differences appear to have impact only when the product category is consumer durables.

## 2.5 Tie Strength

Bristor (1990) states that a word-of-mouth network is a social network consisting of a set of people who engage in word-of-mouth, plus the relationships between them. The relationship between people is essentially a force that works to bond them, represented by the construct of tie strength.

Zhang (2010) found that there are largely two bodies of literature that explore the concept of tie strength. First is the social network theory in sociology and management. Second is the relationship theory in social psychology. The social network theory mainly emphasises networks that are composed of people who interact mostly on a cognitive or quantitative basis. The sharing of information amongst these actors is based on the opportunities created by their connections (e.g. contact frequency) and their access to the information is determined by these opportunities. On the other hand, relationship theory in social psychology primarily focuses on close relationships, such as romantic partnerships, which, to a great extent, operates on an emotional or a qualitative basis.

There is no real consensus as to what the definition of tie strength is (Zhang, 2010). The earliest tie strength theorist, Granovetter, noted in 1973 in his seminal paper entitiled ‘The Strength of Weak Ties’ that the most intuitive notions of the strength of an interpersonal tie should be defined as ‘the strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie.’ Zhang (2010) argues from his findings that tie strength is the quantitative and qualitative nature of the interpersonal relationship between two individuals and is

identified by the temporal overlap and emotional closeness perceived by one individual regarding another individual. Temporal overlap is indicated by interaction frequency, relationship duration, and activity diversity. On the other hand, emotional closeness is indicated by disclosure of feelings, goals, network, and physical intimacy. The two dimensions together contribute to the overall tie strength.

Prior social network research has identified three views regarding tie strength at different levels of social networks. They are global view, dyadic view, and structural view. In the global view, tie strength is driven by the whole network system or the total number of short paths an individual has throughout an entire network. The global view focuses on the macro level, in which researchers either assign the same strength to all ties or assume that tie strengths are determined by the network's global characteristics. In the dyadic view, tie strength is determined by the nature of the relationship between the two individuals. In the structural view, tie strength is driven by the local structure or immediate vicinity of the ties. The three views are inter-related. The global network concepts, for example, are ultimately founded upon the connections between individuals in the network. In other words, it is the strength of ties in the dyadic relationships and the local structure that drives the global properties of a complete network. Examining tie strength at the dyadic and the structural level facilitates a more refined point of view in understanding the dynamics in social networks. In addition, since this study focuses on interaction at a micro-level between two actors, opinion leaders and opinion seekers. Therefore, this study will focus on the dyadic and structural views of tie strength, which also reflects Granovetter (1973)'s original definition.

In addition, it can be inferred that the strength of the tie will also affect how enthusiastically the word-of-mouth is sought by the receiver. Intuitively, when tie strength is high, the receiver would attribute a greater level of credibility to the sender. Also, in a scenario of high tie strength, the opinion leader and the opinion seeker could likely be in close physical proximity to each other and thereby facilitate

an active search of word-of-mouth information by the seeker. Information from strong ties is also likely to be attained with little effort.

Brown and Reingen (1987) hypothesise that active information seeking is more likely to occur from strong-tie than weak-tie sources or referrals. They argue that when a strong tie exists between the sender and the receiver, the two are probably more familiar with each other than those who are in a weak tie condition, it is believed that this strong-tie scenario results in a more easily facilitated search and hence an active search for word-of-mouth information. Bristor (1990) agrees with this reasoning.

It is also interesting to note that Granovetter (1973) found that despite the relationship weaknesses, weaker ties seem to play a key role in the transmission of information throughout the social network. Ellison and Fudenberg (1995) also found that weak ties provide a more efficient outcome in the diffusion of an idea than if contacts are more frequent. Baer (2010) also found that weak tie strength, high diversity, and high openness together were more likely to boost creativity. Sweeney et al. (2007) also found some evidence that effective outcome did not always come from strong ties. Instead more distant relationships, i.e. weak ties, could be well received also.

As such, it can be argued that strong tie strength facilitates more ease and enthusiasm for opinion seekers to access the required information. In contrast, weak tie strength could lead to more efficient diffusion outcomes. However, one may doubt whether strong tie strength or weak tie strength will result in greater opinion leader's influence to purchase. To this end the work of Brown and Reingen (1987) provides instrumental insights into the notion and effects of tie strength. They suggest that strong ties bear greater influence on the receiver's behaviour than weaker ties. This notion is further supported in the work of Frenzen and Nakamoto (1993). Bansal and Voyer (2000) also found support at 0.10 level of significance. Sweeney et al. (2007) also concluded that word-of-mouth was more effective when there was a close relationship and a good rapport between the sender and the receiver. They point out

that what is important is that the sender's opinion must be viewed with respect by the receiver.

## 2.6 Opinion Leader's Expertise

Consumers tend to to seek the advice from, and be influenced by, expert sources than by non-expert ones (Bansal & Voyer, 2000). This is because expertise reduces perceived risk during the evaluation stage of a purchase. Research on opinion leadership supports the proposition that the primary characteristic of opinion leaders is superior product knowledge and experience. Jacoby and Hoyer (1981) specifically tested this theory and found that product expertise, measured via objective knowledge, was highly correlated with opinion leadership. Gilly et al. (1998) reported a strong support for the contention that the sender's expertise positively affects the influence it has on the seeker's purchase decision. These information-providing opinion leaders have also been found to be more innovative (earlier to adopt new idea/product) than their followers (Baumkarten, 1975; King, 1964). Experts have greater awareness of, and knowledge about, product alternatives than non-experts (Mitchell and Darcin, 1996), providing them with the extensive knowledge that other customers seek.

Opinion leaders appear to receive more information via non-personal sources of information (e.g. specialty mass media) (Bayus et al., 1985; Coleman et al., 1966) and are more product involved on an enduring basis - that is they maintain a higher continuous level of interest in the product area in which they are opinion leaders (Bloch and Richins, 1983; Bloch et al., 1986; Jacoby and Hoyer, 1981).

As mentioned above, the body of knowledge on opinion leadership seems to suggest that an important factor in the influence of a personal source is expertise. Nevertheless, expertise and opinion leadership are separate, but related constructs. Expertise is the knowledge a source possesses, whereas opinion leadership is the ability and motivation to share information.

Thus, it makes sense that sources who have greater expertise and who are opinion leaders will be depended on more heavily by information seekers than will less expert, non-leader sources. In other words, an expert's message would have a significant impact on the seeker's purchase decision. Fitzgerald Bone (1995), Gilly et al. (1998), Wangenheim and Bayon (2004), and Sweeney et al. (2007) investigated the importance of opinion leader's expertise and opinion leadership on the influence of a sender's word-of-mouth on an opinion seeker. Their studies supported the impact of source expertise and opinion leadership on the effectiveness of word-of-mouth. Hence, claim for this argument is well founded in consumer behaviour literature. In conclusion, behavioural influences are more pronounced when the credibility of the source is high than when it is low.

Opinion leaders' expertise will only exert influence to the extent that it affects either the perceived costs or benefits of the recommended product or service. If the recipient can easily assess these costs and benefits without ambiguity, source expertise should bear no influence. On the other hand, when a product or service is complex, when its benefits are not immediately observable, or when the benefits are ambiguous or intangible, recipients may rely on the expertise of opinion leaders as a cue for evaluating and potentially purchasing the product or service (Rogers, 1995). This argument aligns with Robertson (1971), who maintains that products high in complexity and perceived risk and low in testability are more prone to personal influences than those low in complexity and perceived risk but high in testability. On the other hand, in the absence of such complexity, seekers will not need to use the source's expert opinion as a helping hand for their own judgment.

## 2.7 Opinion Seeker's Expertise

A number of empirical evidence supports a negative relationship between expertise and total external search for information (Gilly et al., 1998). More specifically, experts engage in less search for personal source information (Furse et al., 1984; Punj and Staelin, 1983), and consumers with a prior impression of a target

brand are less affected by word-of-mouth (Herr et al., 1991). Similarly, Friestad and Wright (1994) speculate that the target's 'topic knowledge' (or expertise) is one knowledge structure that shapes and determines the outcomes of persuasion attempts. Bloch et al. (1986) found that product enthusiasts, assumed to be high in product expertise, conducted relatively little external search immediately prior to purchase. This is due to large store of knowledge that these highly product-involved consumers gathered during ongoing, 'hobby-type' information gathering. These product experts would feel confident, therefore, in their ability to make any individual product choice and would feel little need to consult others prior to product selection.

Consumers with less product knowledge and experience are more likely to doubt their own ability to make good product choices and therefore are likely to feel compelled to ask others for product advice (Furse et al., 1984).

Kiel and Layton (1981), via cluster analysis, found a group of car purchasers, termed selective information seekers, who focused information search efforts on interpersonal sources, conducting very little retail or mass media search. They found a significant negative correlation between level of interpersonal search and product experience (measured as number of previous car purchases and number of years of driving experience). Those with less product experience probably perceive more risk and, from an information economics perspective, have the most to gain from engaging in information gathering.

In a following information search study of automobile purchasers, Furse et al. (1984) provided indirect support for a negative relationship between information seeker product expertise and preference for information gathering. Through use of cluster analysis, they found a cluster of car buyers assisted by 'purchase pals.' Members of this cluster were the least experienced new car shoppers and expressed little confidence in their ability to evaluate cars without the help of an advisor. Furse et al. (1984) also found a cluster that was unlikely to seek others as sources of

information. This group was typified by considerably purchase/usage experienced car buyers.

The authors concluded that ‘younger, less experienced consumers appear to rely more heavily on the expertise of others, while more experienced buyers do not.’ Likewise, Murray (1991) found that experienced services purchasers preferred their own experience over all others, whereas Beatty and Smith (1987) found a negative correlation between interpersonal search and product class knowledge.

Consumers with prior impressions of target brands are less affected by word-of-mouth than those with little or no previously conceived ideas (Herr et al., 1991). Therefore, it can be logically assumed that opinion leader’s influence on seekers will likely be low when their expertise is high.

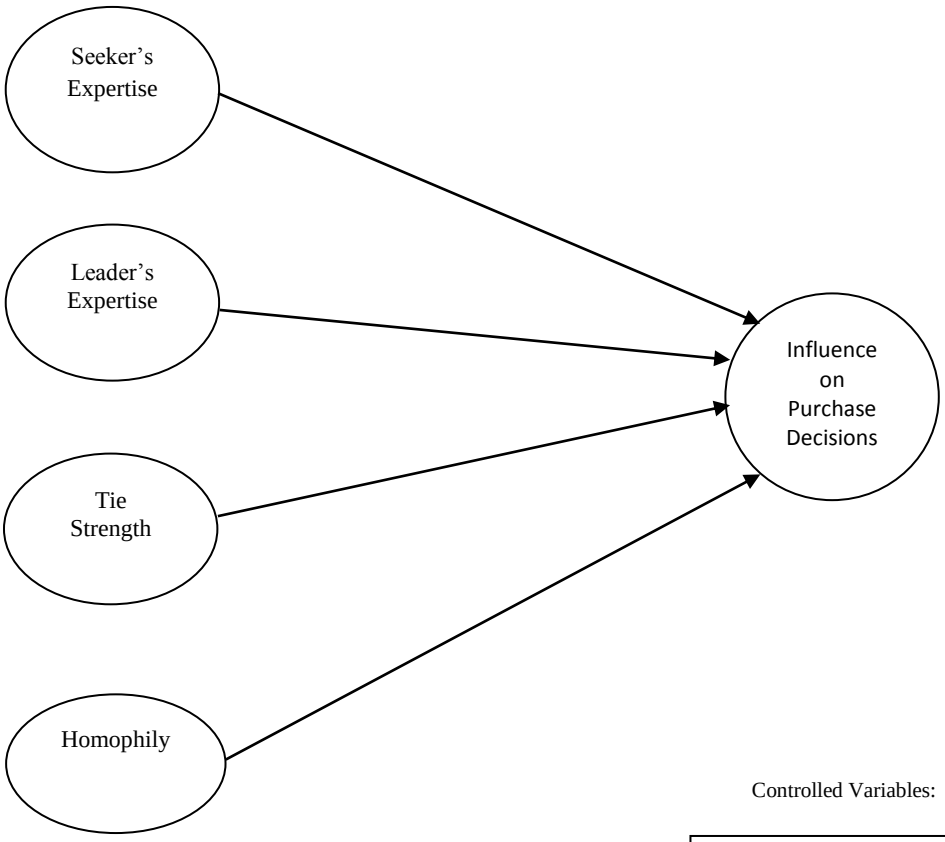
Contrary to the expected contention, however, previous research on theinfluence of opinion seeker’s expertise has not all been conclusive (Fitzgerald Bone, 1995; Gilly et al., 1998; Bansal and Voyer, 2000; Sweeney et al., 2007). Gilly et al. (1998) found that opinion seeker’s expertise appeared to have a direct negative impact on opinion seeker’s influence on purchase decision of durable. They cited that because ‘consumer durables tend to involve the greatest financial and functional risks and increased length of purchase cycle, seeker expertise lessened the ability to be influenced’. However, Gilly et al. (1998) found no support for non-durables and services. Similarly, Sweeney et al. (2007) conducted their research in services. They also found no support for their findings. Similarly, Bansal and Voyer (2000) found the direction to be in accordance with their hypothesis. However, the relationship was found to be weak. Fitzgerald Bone (1995) used chocolate chips as the product under study, they also could not establish support. This suggests that further investigation should be carried out. In particular, further investigation should be performed on product category involvement as it appears that product category involvement may play a part in this.

# Chapter 3

# Research Framework

## 3.1 Conceptual Framework

**Figure 3.1: Conceptual Model**



## 3.2 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are set out to examine each interpersonal and personal force between opinion leaders and opinion seekers and the influence each has on the purchase decision of opinion seekers.

Influence of tie strength on opinion seeker's purchase decision

H1: The stronger the tie strength, the greater the influence on purchase decision.

In addition, tie strength will also be explored further in order to assess:

(a) Its influence on collectivist-individualist opinion seekers;
(b) Its influence on high power distance seekers and low power distance seekers;
(c) Its influence on affective and cognitive product.

Influence of homophily on opinion seeker's purchase decision

H2: The stronger the homophily, the greater the influence on purchase decision.

In addition, homophily will also be explored further in order to assess:

(a) Its influence on collectivist-individualist opinion seekers;
(b) Its influence on high power distance seekers and low power distance seekers;
(c) Its influence on affective and cognitive product.

Influence of opinion leader's expertise on opinion seeker's purchase decision

H3: The more superior the opinion leader's expertise, the greater the influence on purchase decision.

In addition, opinion leader's expertise will also be explored further in order to assess:

(a) Its influence on collectivist-individualist opinion seekers;
(b) Its influence on high power distance seekers and low power distance seekers;

(c) Its influence on affective and cognitive product.

Influence of opinion seeker's expertise on opinion seeker's purchase decision

H4: The more superior the opinion seeker's expertise, the less the influence on purchase decision.

In addition, opinion seeker's expertise will also be explored further in order to assess:

(a) Its influence on collectivist-individualist opinion seekers;
(b) Its influence on high power distance seekers and low power distance seekers;
(c) Its influence on affective and cognitive product.

# Chapter IV

# Research Methodology

Research methodology begins with discussion about nationality selection that represents the cultures in question. This is followed by how the two products are identified for each involvement types in Phase I Study. Then the pilot study will be conducted to check the reliability and validity of the scales. Finally, sample population, sampling method, measurement model will be discussed in the Main Study.

## 4.1 Nationality Selection

Most theories associated with consumer behaviour have been developed and tested in North America. In relation to this study, both Gilly et al. (1998) and Bansal and Voyer (2000) also used samples that are North Americans. Gilly et al. (1998) used faculty members and marketing students in two Californian Universities, while Bansal and Voyer (2000) used Canadian military servicemen samples. As such, it is worth looking at the applicability of these theories outside of North America. In so doing, we need to compare samples that are from a North American country and another country.

As seen from Figure 2.1 in Chapter 2, Hofstede (1983) found Thais and Americans are both at different ends of the spectrums for both collectivism-individualism and power distance scales. Hofstede categorised Thailand into large power distance low individualism groups, whereas USA is categorised into small power distance high individualism groups. Fischer (2000) also considered North America the model for individualism. The variation is thus evidently distinctive. Kongsompong et al. (2009) also confirmed such notion in their studies that Thailand and USA are two ‘extremes’ nations in their study.

Another reason as to why Americans are chosen to be studied is because there is a large enough number of prospective American tourists entering into Thailand. Figures from Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) indicates that American tourists into Thailand amounted to 620,496 persons and are ranked 9th, representing 3.92% of all international tourists into the Kingdom of Thailand in 2010. Hence there are well-over 50,000 American tourists arriving into Thailand each month. Their preferred mode of travel is by air with 92.8% of all Americans entering Thailand through this mode in 2007. Working-age Americans travel into Thailand more than other age groups. It was found that Americans aged 25 - 34 travelled into Thailand the most, followed by age group 45 – 54 in the second place, age group 35 – 44 in the third place, age group 55 – 64 in the forth place, age group 15 – 24 in the fifth place, age group over 65 in the sixth place and age group under 15 in the last place. However, there are more American males travelling into Thailand than females. In 2007, there were 430,030 American males entering Thailand, compared with only 193,608 females.

## 4.2 Pretest

Pretest is an important step in the design of a questionnaire. Pretest allows the questionnaire to be checked for the appropriateness of the structure, language, and measurement items before the questionnaires are used with the sampling population.

This study uses personal interview to pretest the preliminary questionnaire. Personal interviews help a researcher detect errors of ambiguity in language and meaning of measurement items. In this study, pretest was conducted in two stages. First stage of pretest involved 30 respondents. Of these 30 respondents, 15 responded to Thai questionnaires and 15 responded to English questionnaires. The occupations of the respondents include university professors, PhD students, lawyers, secretary, clerical work, cleaning ladies, and retirees. The questionnaires are distributed into badges of 3 respondents. They provided feedback for corrections. Subsequent badges

then followed. The second stage of pretest is conducted in Marketing classes at Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy, Chulalongkorn University. The respondents to Thai questionnaires are 47 third year students, and the respondents to English questionnaires are 33 students in English-conducted MBA course. Respondents are encouraged to participate and/or comment. After the second stage of pretest was conducted, reliability of the questions was calculated. It was found that reliability was 0.877 for Thai questionnaires and 0.819 for English questionnaires indicating highly reliable measurement scales.

## 4.3 Phase I Study

A study of 120 samples is conducted to begin with in order to check the practicability of aged previous findings - types of involvement - which is conducted outside of Thailand for over 20 years ago. Phase I study serves the purpose of identifying two products in each type of involvement that are important to the working population. Furthermore, it was found that previous literature has not established the relationship between types of product involvement and opinion leadership influence. Phase I study serves the purpose of filling in this gap before further research is conducted.

Phase I study includes 60 American samples and 60 Thai samples, equally distributed between age 25 – 64, and equally distributed in sex. The venue of the survey is not specified for Thai respondents, whereas the venue of the survey is at both inbound and outbound areas of Suvarnbhumi Airport for American respondents.

**Table 4.1**: **Respondents as Categorised by Three Demographics**

| Age | Nationality | Sex | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | M | F | |
| 25 – 44 | US | 15 | 15 | 60 |
| | Thai | 15 | 15 | |
| 45 – 64 | US | 15 | 15 | 60 |
| | Thai | 15 | 15 | |
| **Total** | | **60** | **60** | **120** |

## 4.4 Product Selection

### ***4.4.1 Fashion Goods***

Goods can fulfill many functions beyond mere functional performance such as warmth and protection. 'It (fashion goods) says how important an individual is, tells others how much status an individual has, what the individual is like (e.g. professional, sexy, casual)', O'Cass, 2000, pp. 547. Previous involvement literature has discussed certain fashion as high involvement, e.g. Kapferer and Laurent (1985) found from surveying housewives that dress is a high involvement product, Zaichkowsky (1985) found from surveying university staff that jeans is a high involvement product.

In order to categorise fashion goods and dietary supplements into affective or cognitive involvement product, pairwise samples test is performed on the data from the respondents. The samples consist of 60 Thai and 60 American samples as indicated in the Phase I Study.

### *4.4.2 Dietary Supplement*

According to Neilson's online survey in 2009, Thai consumers top the world as the biggest consumers of dietary supplements, with 66 percent of respondents claiming to use them. In the same survey, it was found that high levels of usage were also recorded in the USA with 56 percent of respondents claiming to use them.

Neilson also found that the role of healthcare professionals and doctors in driving usage of dietary supplements is relatively low in Thailand, with only 4 percent of product users convinced by their pharmacist or health food retailer and 9 percent claiming to use because of doctor's advice.

In the USA, the top response of 62 percent of the respondents was to ensure a balanced diet. Similar to Thai consumers, ensuring a balanced diet is amongst the top response, with 43 percent of the respondents indicating this as a primary reason.

Past research has not discussed dietary supplement in terms of affective or cognitive involvement. However, previous involvement literature has discussed medicine such as cold remedy as a cognitive product (Putrevu and Lord, 1994). Cold remedy and dietary supplement can be argued to be different in that cold remedy alleviates cold symptoms, whereas dietary supplement works to prevent diseases. However, they have similarities in that consumers take them in order to promote better health, and have to be administered in similar ways, e.g. orally.

**Table 4.2: Paired Samples Statistics**

| | | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pair 1** | Fashion | 1.0417 | 120 | .91041 | .08311 |
| **(Cognitive)** | Supplement | 1.3367 | 120 | .90488 | .08260 |
| **Pair 2** | Fashion | 1.3139 | 120 | 1.03288 | .09429 |
| **(Affective)** | Supplement | 1.0694 | 120 | 1.00689 | .09192 |

**Table 4.3: Paired Samples Test**

| | | Paired Differences | | | | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower | Upper | | | |
| Pair 1 (Cognitive) | Fashion Supplement | -.29500 | 1.18392 | .10808 | -.50900 | -.08100 | -2.730 | 119 | .007 |
| Pair 2 (Affective) | Fashion Supplement | .24444 | .93157 | .08504 | .07606 | .41283 | 2.874 | 119 | .005 |

By looking at the Pairwise Samples Test, it can be inferred that there is a significant difference between 2 products in terms of cognitive and affective involvement in the eyes of the consumers. The negative mean of pair 1 between fashion goods and dietary supplements indicates that dietary supplements are considered more of a cognitive product than an affective product. The positive mean of pair 2 between fashion goods and dietary supplements indicates that fashion goods are considered more of an affective product than a cognitive product.

## 4.5 Pilot Study

A pilot study serves the statistical purpose of checking for reliability and validity of the scales. It also confirms whether respondents can recall purchase of products that took place within the last three years. Pilot study consists of four respondents from each cell in Table 4.1 to make up 128 respondents. The venue of the survey is in Bangkok metropolis for Thai respondents. No specific venue is fixed as there is an adequate pool of Thai respondents to fill each cell in Table 4.1, whereas the venue of the survey is at both inbound and outbound areas of Suvarnbhumi Airport for American respondents, where there is an adequate pool of American respondents.

## 4.6 Main Study

### ***4.6.1 Population and Samples***

The respondents will be those of the working population, aged 25 - 64. Working population is used here in this study because of their exposure to many people both from work, their own social relationships, their spouses/partners' relationships and their kids' relationships. They are more active in seeking and buying both affective and cognitive products than younger and older generations. The fact that working population are in employment means they are more likely to earn more than kids and retirees and hence more likely to pay for these products themselves.

The survey involves sampling of 480 Thai citizens and 480 American citizens. In order to make sure that the respondents are indeed the population that fit the criteria, the interviewer are instructed to first ask three screening questions in order to ensure that they are the end-users of the products and that they can recall the purchase. Screening questions are: (1) respondent own both products; (2) respondent has purchased both products within the last three years; and (3) respondent paid for both products by themselves. The venue of the survey is not specified for Thai respondents, whereas the venue of the survey is at both inbound and outbound areas of Suvarnbhumi Airport for American respondents. The respondents are asked to fill out a questionnaire that includes their own demographics data, tie strength, perceptual homophily, opinion leader's expertise, opinion seeker's expertise, and opinion leader's influence on purchase decision. The respondents are asked to exclude their spouses and partners as their opinion leaders.

### ***4.6.2 Sampling Method***

Since this study is a cross-cultural study, the compatibility of the sample is a foremost significant issue. Non-comparable samples could lead to alternative explanations for any observed differences. As such, this study aims to control and minimise the confounding factors that may lead to alternative explanations.

In order to achieve control for the confounding factors, this study distinctively categorise the population into equal groups according to age, sex, and education. Each group is sampled as an independent sub-population. Not only can we limit the confounding factors, but also achieve another potential benefit, which is that we can draw inferences about specific subgroups that may be lost in a more generalised sample. This results in a more generalisable outcome.

**Table 4.4: Samples Categorised into Nationality and Sex**

| Sex | Americans | Thais |
|---|---|---|
| **Male** | 240 | 240 |
| **Female** | 240 | 240 |

**Table 4.5: Sample Population Categorised into Age and Nationality**

| Age (Years) | Americans | Thais |
|---|---|---|
| **25 – 34** | 120 | 120 |
| **35 – 44** | 120 | 120 |
| **45 – 54** | 120 | 120 |
| **55 – 64** | 120 | 120 |

**Table 4.6: Sample Population Categorised into Nationality and Educational Attainment**

| Educational attainment | Americans | Thais |
|---|---|---|
| **Below Bachelor's Degree** | 240 | 240 |
| **Bachelor's Degree and above** | 240 | 240 |

According to figures from Tourism Authority of Thailand in 2007, occupation data show that American tourist arrivals into Thailand consist of mostly professionals (30.82%) and commercials (18.59%). These two occupations alone make up almost half (49.41%) of the American tourists arriving into Thailand. This posts a significant

limitation to our study in that it may be difficult to find American samples who are high school graduates and some college graduates. As such, it is decided that the best course of action is to collapse the educational attainment into Bachelor's Degree and below and Bachelor's Degree and above. Education serves an additional purpose of a substitute for income. It can be argued that the respondents of the two countries cannot be compared in terms of income due to difference in the cost of living. Education is therefore the closest demographics data to income.

**Table 4.7: Sample Population Categorised into Age, Educational Attainment, Nationality, and Sex**

| Age(Years)/ Education | Nationality | Below Bachelor's Degree | | Bachelor's Degree or Above | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Sex | | Sex | | |
| | | M | F | M | F | |
| **25 – 34** | US | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 240 |
| | Thai | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | |
| **35 – 44** | US | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 240 |
| | Thai | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | |
| **45 – 54** | US | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 240 |
| | Thai | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | |
| **55 – 64** | US | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 240 |
| | Thai | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | |
| **Total** | | **240** | **240** | **240** | **240** | **960** |

## 4.7 Measures

The focus of this study is on one-to-one communication between opinion leader and opinion seeker. The communication includes not only verbal one-on-one communication between opinion leader and opinion seeker, but it also includes non-verbal communication, such as looking at opinion leader as a role model. The concern

rests on the interpersonal forces and personal forces and their impact on opinion seeker's decision.

The translation of the questionnaire involves a forward-translation from English into Thai by a bilingual translator who is fluent in both English and Thai. This was followed by a back-translation from Thai into English by another bilingual translator who is fluent in both English and Thai. The original and back-translated English questionnaires were then compared by the third person (who earned a doctoral degree in business administration). The author then checked the content validity. The Thai language questionnaire is pretested with 15 respondents to ensure the English meaning of various concepts. Similar pretests were conducted on a class of Thai undergraduate students at Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy, Chulalongkorn University. It was found that minor modifications are necessary as some words or phrases have no exact comparable Thai translation.

### ***4.7.1 Collectivism – Individualism***

Oyserman et al. (2002) did a major review of 83 studies on collectivism and individualism. He highlighted the three most common measurement tools for collectivism - individualism (a) the Independent- Interdependent (SCS) scale (Singelis,1994),used in 19 US and international studies, (b) the Horizontal-Vertical Collectivism–Individualism scale (Traindis et al., 1995), used by 16 US and international studies and (c) the INDCOL measure (Hui, 1988), which was employed in ten international studies. In analysing these scales Oyserman et al. (2002) identified seven major domains relating to individualism and eight major domains relating to collectivism. Hence, this study will use scales that are derived by Oyserman et al. (2002)

### ***4.7.2 Power Distance***

Original Hofstede (1980) survey questions are used in this study, with an exception of one question, 'It is all right for people in lower positions to call people in higher positions by their first names'. This is because this question cannot be applied

in Thailand, where acquaintances call each other by first names. In addition, the original questions was surveyed on employees at IBM, hence the questions used ‘employees’ and ‘employers’ as subjects. In this study, ‘employees’ are replaced by ‘people in lower positions’ and ‘employers’ are replaced by ‘people of higher positions’.

### ***4.7.3 Product Involvement***

Several scales have been developed to measure product involvement. The more accepted measurement scales amongst product involvement studies are Zaichkowsky’s Personal Involvement Inventory (1985), Laurent and Kapferer’s Consumer Involvement Profile Inventory (1985), and Mittal’s Involvement Scale (1989). Goldsmith and Emmert (2001) tested discriminant, and criterion-related validity of three of these measures using a multitrait – multimethodmatrix analysis. It was found that there is evidence for the convergent and discriminant validity of the 3 product involvement scales. Correlations with several criterion measures demonstrated criterion-related validity.

However, it can be argued that these studies were conducted for well over 20 years ago. Hence not only is the validity of the results questionable, but also the results may not be applicable in Thailand. In addition, as pointed out earlier in the Literature Review under Product Involvement Section, Kapferer and Laurent’s scale and Zaichowsky fail to capture purchase-decision involvement. Nevertheless, despite a more focused and more practical nature of purchase decision involvement, Mittal (1989)’s discussion about categorising products into expressive and functional involvement has received little attention in subsequent academic literature.

In this study, it is eventually decided that product involvement should be considered in terms of affective and cognitive reactions to stimuli to capture involvement at the time of purchase.

Previous literature, e.g. Kapferer and Laurent, 1985; Park and Mittal, 1985; Ratchford, 1987; Kim and Sung, 2009are some attempts to explain the involvement construct in terms of both affective and cognitive reactions to stimuli. Their findings support the premise that affective and cognitive product involvements are distinct constructs warranting separate consideration.

The semantic differential items used to measure purchase-decision involvement were originally developed and validated for Foote, Cone, and Belding (Ratchford, 1987). The scale was further developed and validated by Kim and Lord (1991) and revalidated again by Putrevu and Lord (1994), and Mittal (1995).

### ***4.7.4 Homophily***

Gilly et al. (1998) provided 7-point Likert scale for measurement of this construct through perceptual homophily.

### ***4.7.5 Tie Strength***

Bansal and Voyer (2000) provided 7-point Likert scale for measurement of this construct. The scale reflects the original definition of tie strength by Granovetter (1973), who defined tie strength as a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterise the tie. Granovetter (1973)'s definition was further developed into scales by Marsden and Campbell (1984). This was further refined by Mathews et al. (1998) by factoring out 4 factors from 13-item scale.

### ***4.7.6 Opinion Leader's Expertise***

Opinion leader's expertise is measured by using 7-point Likert scale adopted from Misha et al. (1993). A four-item, 7-point semantic differential is used to measure a consumer's assessment of their own knowledge and competency. These four indicators are: product knowledge, expertise in this subject area, usage experience,

and informed about latest updates. These factors reflect the perception of the seekers towards the opinion leaders' knowledge and competency.

### ***4.7.7 Opinion Seeker's Expertise***

Similar to opinion leader's expertise, seeker's expertise is measured by using scales adopted from Misha et al. (1993). A four-item, 7-point semantic differential is used to measure a consumer's assessment of their own knowledge and competency. These four indicators are: product knowledge, expertise in this subject area, usage experience, and informed about latest updates. These factors reflect the perception of the seekers towards themselves in knowledge and competency.

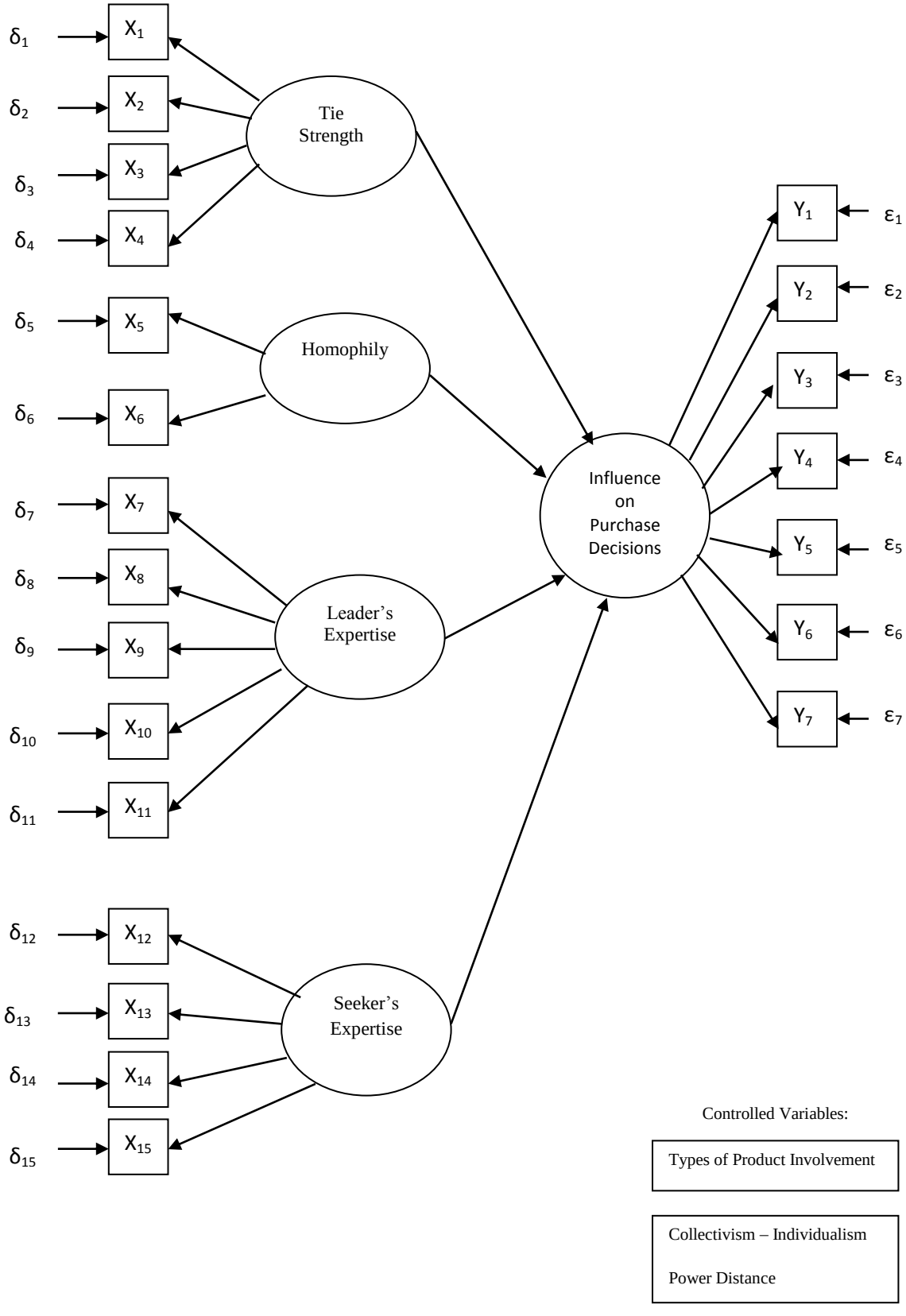
## 4.8 Measurement Model

### ***4.8.1 Confirmatory Analysis***

Scales that are obtained and items that are retained from stage 1 are subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS with maximum likelihood estimation. Multiple fit indices will be assessed: chi-square/degrees of freedom, goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and comparative fit index (CFI).

Reliability together with internal consistency will be calculated for each scale/construct using loadings obtained from stage I.

**Figure 4.1: Operational Model**



## 4.9 Multi-Group Comparison

For purpose of data analysis, the respondents will be categorised into study models as followed:

**Figure 4.2: Model 1 – Model 4**

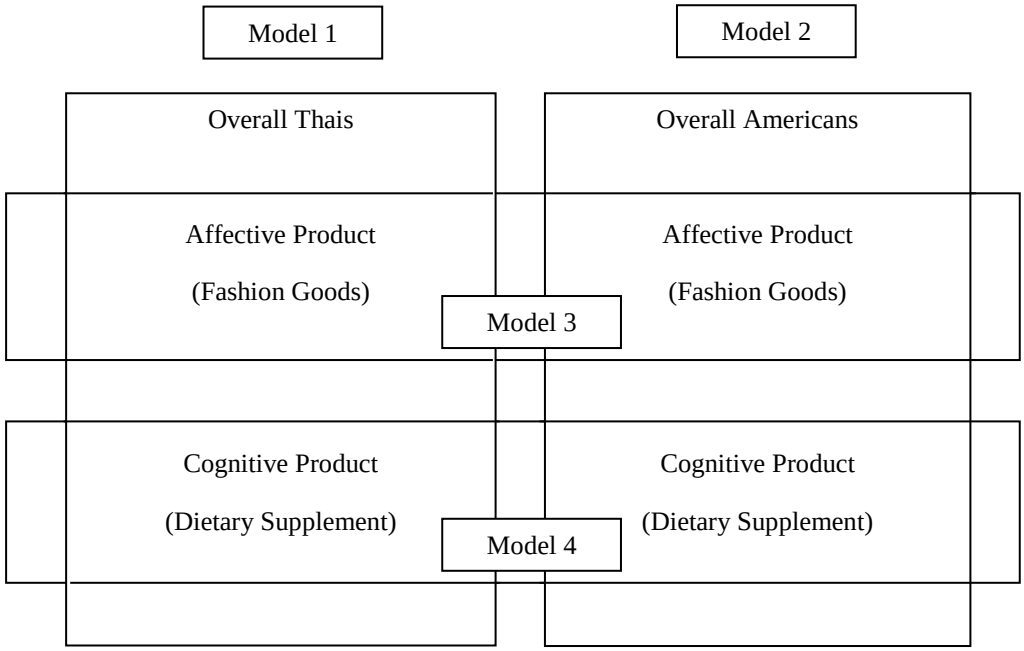



**Figure 4.3: Model 5 – Model 8**

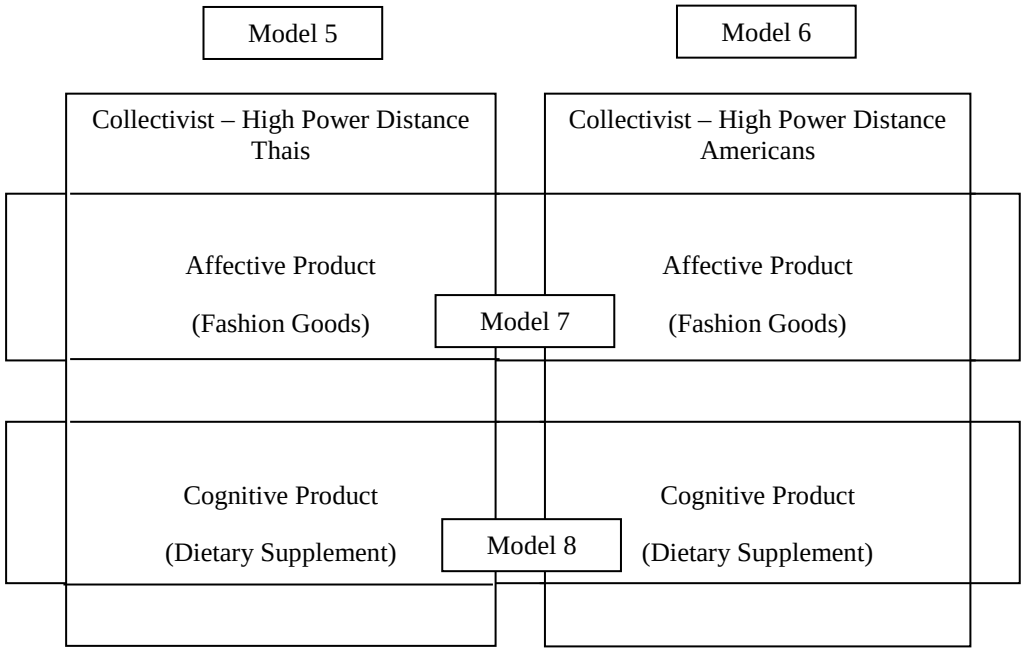
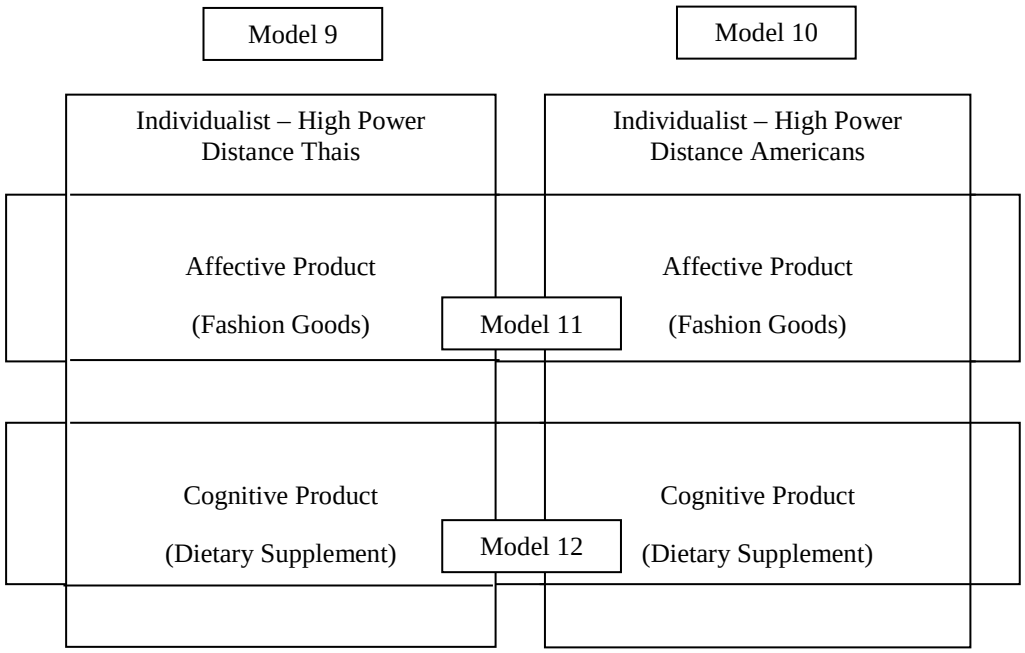


**Figure 4.4: Model 9 – Model 12**




**Study 1: Comparative study of model 1**

Under this study, overall Thai respondents are examined across different product types. Here it is argued that interpersonal forces and personal forces may have different impacts on purchase decisions of opinion seekers under different product types.

**Study 2: Comparative study of model 2**

Under this study, overall American respondents are examined across different product types. Here it is argued that interpersonal forces and personal forces may have different impacts on purchase decisions of opinion seekers under different product types.

**Study 3: Comparative study of model 3**

Under this study, overall Thais and overall Americans are examined with affective product (fashion goods). Here it is argued that interpersonal forces and

personal forces may have different impacts on purchase decisions of opinion seekers in different countries.

**Study 4: Comparative study of model 4**

Under this study, overall Thais and overall Americans are examined with cognitive product (dietary supplement). Here it is argued that interpersonal forces and personal forces may have different impacts on purchase decisions of opinion seekers in different countries.

**Study 5: Comparative study of model 5**

Under this study, collectivist – high power distance Thais are examined across different product types. Here it is argued that interpersonal forces and personal forces may have different impacts on purchase decisions of opinion seekers under different product types.

**Study 6: Comparative study of model 6**

Under this study, collectivist – high power distance Americans are examined across different product types. Here it is argued that interpersonal forces and personal forces may have different impacts on purchase decisions of opinion seekers under different product types.

**Study 7: Comparative study of model 7**

Under this study, affective product (fashion goods) is examined for collectivist – high power distance respondents across different countries. Here it is argued that interpersonal forces and personal forces may have different impacts on purchase decisions of opinion seekers under the same cultural backgrounds across different countries.

**Study 8: Comparative study of model 8**

Under this study, cognitive product (dietary supplement) is examined for collectivist – high power distance respondents across different countries. Here it is

argued that interpersonal forces and personal forces may have different impacts on purchase decisions of opinion seekers under the same cultural backgrounds across different countries.

**Study 9: Comparative study of model 9**

Under this study, individualist – high power distance Thais are examined across different product types. Here it is argued that interpersonal forces and personal forces may have different impacts on purchase decisions of opinion seekers under different product types.

**Study 10: Comparative study of model 10**

Under this study, individualist – high power distance Americans are examined across different product types. Here it is argued that interpersonal forces and personal forces may have different impacts on purchase decisions of opinion seekers under different product types.

**Study 11: Comparative study of model 11**

Under this study, affective product (fashion goods) is examined for individualist – high power distance respondents across different countries. Here it is argued that interpersonal forces and personal forces may have different impacts on purchase decisions of opinion seekers under the same cultural backgrounds across different countries.

**Study 12: Comparative study of model 12**

Under this study, cognitive product (dietary supplement) is examined for individualist – high power distance respondents across different countries. Here it is argued that interpersonal forces and personal forces may have different impacts on purchase decisions of opinion seekers under the same cultural backgrounds across different countries.

# Chapter V

# Research Results

In this chapter, reliability, validity, measurement and structural model assessment, and hypotheses testing are examined. Results of hypotheses testing and estimated model are summarised. The followings are the summary of each section and their details are shown in depth later in this chapter.

Phase I study consists of 31 Likert-scale questions from 2 constructs. They are cultural dimensions and facets of involvement. Cultural dimensions involve 15 questions on collectivism-individualism, and 8 questions on power distance. Facets of involvement involve 8 questions on semantic differential scale.The results of facets of involvement are included in Chapter 4.

Main study consists of 5 constructs. These constructs can be classified into two groups: exogenous constructs consist of 14 variables, and endogenous construct consists of 7 variables. There are 4 exogenous constructs: opinion seeker's expertise (4 variables), opinion leader's expertise (4 variables), homophily (2 variables), tie strength (4 variables). For endogenous construct, there are 7 variables for influence of opinion leaders on purchase decision.

## 5.1 Normality of Data

As this study uses 960 respondents (480 Thais and 480 Americans), it can be argued that this study uses a large sample size. The effect of large sample size (over 200) can reduce the detrimental effects of non-normality (Hair et al., 2006).

## 5.2 Demographics of the Respondents

In this study, respondents are citizens of two nations, Thailand and America. The first group of respondents consists of 480 Thai respondents. The second group of respondents consists of 480 American respondents. The respondents are asked to fill out demographics data, which is shown below.

**Table 5.1: Sex, Age, Education, Marital Status, and Number of Children for Thai Respondents**

| | | Frequency | Valid Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | Male | 240 | 50 |
| | Female | 240 | 50 |
| Age | 25 – 34 | 120 | 25 |
| | 35 – 44 | 120 | 25 |
| | 45 – 54 | 120 | 25 |
| | 55 - 64 | 120 | 25 |
| Education | Below Bachelor's Degree | 240 | 50 |
| | Bachelor's Degree or Above | 240 | 50 |
| Status | Single | 170 | 35.41 |
| | Married | 244 | 50.83 |
| | Widowed | 35 | 7.29 |
| | Separated | 31 | 6.46 |
| Number of Children | 0 | 182 | 37.91 |
| | 1 | 128 | 26.67 |
| | 2 | 112 | 23.33 |
| | 3 | 45 | 9.38 |
| | 4 | 11 | 2.29 |
| | 5 | 2 | 0.41 |

**Table 5.2: Sex, Age, Education, Marital Status, and Number of Children for American Respondents**

| | | Frequency | Valid Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | Male | 240 | 50 |
| | Female | 240 | 50 |
| Age | 25 – 34 | 120 | 25 |
| | 35 – 44 | 120 | 25 |
| | 45 – 54 | 120 | 25 |
| | 55 - 64 | 120 | 25 |
| Education | Below Bachelor's Degree | 240 | 50 |
| | Bachelor's Degree or Above | 240 | 50 |
| Status | Single | 243 | 50.62 |
| | Married | 171 | 35.63 |
| | Widowed | 48 | 10 |
| | Separated | 18 | 3.75 |
| Number of Children | 0 | 242 | 50.42 |
| | 1 | 114 | 23.75 |
| | 2 | 81 | 16.88 |
| | 3 | 28 | 5.83 |
| | 4 | 12 | 2.50 |
| | 5 | 3 | 0.63 |

Demographics data reflects the planned respondent categorisation according to sex, age, and education, as is shown in Table 4.7. Therefore the number of respondents in the categories of sex, age, and education from two nationals are the same. Sex is divided equally into male and female. Age is divided into 4 sub-groups,

25 – 34, 35 – 44, 45 – 54, and 55 – 64. Education is divided into below Bachelor's degree and Bachelor's degree and above.

However, the other areas that have not been controlled for are status and number of children. It is found that for most Thai respondents (50.83%) are married. Singles account for 35.41%, widowed account for 7.29%, while separated account for 6.46%. On the other hand, American respondents are mostly single. Together they account for 50.62%. Married respondents account for 35.63%. Widowed account for 10%. Separated account for 3.75%.

As for number of children, most Thai respondents do not have any children (37.91%), only one child account for 26.67%, two children account for 23.33%, three children account for 9.38%, four children account for 2.29%, and five or more children account for 0.41%. For the American counterparts, most also do not have children (50.42%), only one child account for 23.75%, two children account for 16.88%, three children account for 5.83%, four children account for 2.5%, and five or more children account for 0.63%.

## 5.3 Reliability of Measurement

Reliability of the measurement model is the extent to which a set of items is consistent in what it intends to measure. High reliability of a construct means high likelihood of all items measuring the same thing. It differs from validity in that it does not relate to what should be measured, but instead how it is measured (Hair et al., 1998). Reliability is a necessary but not sufficient condition to ensure the validity of the construct. Cronbach's alpha is the most widely used measurement to represent the reliability of a set of items. The acceptable level of Cronbach's alpha is 0.8 to represent a sufficient internal consistency (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994: 264-265). Below is the result of reliability tests for all constructs for Thai samples and American samples. It is shown that for Thai samples, all constructs have an acceptable level of

reliability. However, for American samples, reliability must be subject to elimination of outliers because reliability is low across all constructs.

Reliability was found through calculation of Cronbach's Alpha.

### ***5.3.1 Thai Samples***

**Table 5.3: Reliability of Thai Samples**

| **Construct** | **Number of Variables** | **Cronbach's Alpha** |
|---|---|---|
| **Fashion Goods** | | |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 4 | 0.747 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 4 | 0.750 |
| Tie Strength | 4 | 0.933 |
| Homophily | 2 | 0.864 |
| Influence on Purchase Decision | 7 | 0.808 |
| **Overall** | **21** | **0.922** |
| **Dietary Supplement** | | |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 4 | 0.778 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 4 | 0.750 |
| Tie Strength | 4 | 0.937 |
| Homophily | 2 | 0.884 |
| Influence on Purchase Decision | 7 | 0.809 |
| **Overall** | **21** | **0.909** |

### *5.3.2 American Samples*

**Table 5.4: Reliability of American Samples before Elimination of Outliers**

| Construct | Number of Variables | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|---|---|
| **Fashion Goods** | | |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 4 | 0.561 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 4 | 0.537 |
| Tie Strength | 4 | 0.562 |
| Homophily | 2 | 0.351 |
| Influence on Purchase Decision | 7 | 0.596 |
| **Overall** | **21** | **0.779** |
| **Dietary Supplement** | | |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 4 | 0.505 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 4 | 0.578 |
| Tie Strength | 4 | 0.619 |
| Homophily | 2 | 0.428 |
| Influence on Purchase Decision | 7 | 0.660 |
| **Overall** | **21** | **0.773** |

As can be seen in Table 5.2, reliability is low throughout all constructs. This is especially the case for perceptual homophily (0.351 for fashion and 0.428 for dietary supplement). In addition, overall reliability for both fashion goods and dietary supplement are below Hair et al. (1998)'s recommendation of a cut-off point at 0.8 (currently 0.779 for fashion goods and 0.773 dietary supplement). Due to such poor reliability of the data, it is decided that some data must be eliminated. This is done by identifying the outliers from each construct and eliminating them. Here SPSS programme is used to identify these outliers in the outliers plot (See Appendix D). The dependent variables are influence on purchase decisions, while the independent variables are opinion seeker's expertise, opinion leader's expertise, tie strength, and homophily. In order to plot these data into a graph, the average of the data of each construct is used. Please see appendix for the outliers plots.

As a result of this, some samples are eliminated. Below is the statistics of the number of samples that have been eliminated from each construct.

**Table 5.5: Number of Eliminated American Samples from Each Construct**

| Construct | Number of Eliminated Samples |
|---|---|
| **Fashion** | |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 20 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 14 |
| Tie Strength | 9 |
| Homophily | 17 |
| **Total** | **60** |
| **Dietary Supplements** | |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 26 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 17 |
| Tie Strength | 0* |
| Homophily | 12 |
| **Total** | **55** |

*Not eliminated because there was no improvement on reliability figure

Because some data are eliminated, the planned distribution of respondents as discussed in previous chapter cannot be achieved for American samples. Below is the summary of the eventual demographics that is left and will be used for calculation.

**Table 5.6: Final American Sample Population Categorised into Age, Educational Attainment, Nationality, and Sex**

| **Age (Years)/ Education** | **Product Type** | **Below Bachelor's Degree** | | **Bachelor's Degree or Above** | | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Sex | | Sex | | |
| | | M | F | M | F | |
| **25 – 34** | Fashion Goods | 26 | 27 | 27 | 28 | 108 |
| | Dietary Supplement | 25 | 25 | 26 | 26 | 102 |
| **35 – 44** | Fashion Goods | 25 | 27 | 27 | 28 | 107 |
| | Dietary Supplement | 25 | 26 | 26 | 26 | 103 |
| **45 – 54** | Fashion Goods | 24 | 28 | 25 | 27 | 104 |
| | Dietary Supplement | 27 | 28 | 27 | 28 | 110 |
| **55 – 64** | Fashion Goods | 24 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 101 |
| | Dietary Supplement | 27 | 27 | 27 | 29 | 110 |
| **Total** | **Fashion Goods** | **99** | **107** | **105** | **109** | **420** |
| | **Dietary Supplement** | **104** | **106** | **106** | **109** | **425** |

**Table 5.7: Reliability of American Samples after Elimination of Outliers**

| Construct | Number of Variables | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|---|---|
| **Fashion Goods** | | |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 4 | 0.616 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 4 | 0.605 |
| Tie Strength | 4 | 0.620 |
| Homophily | 2 | 0.405 |
| Influence on Purchase Decision | 7 | 0.712 |
| **Overall** | **21** | **0.806** |
| **Dietary Supplement** | | |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 4 | 0.633 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 4 | 0.630 |
| Tie Strength | 4 | 0.619* |
| Homophily | 2 | 0.434 |
| Influence on Purchase Decision | 7 | 0.700 |
| **Overall** | **21** | **0.830** |

*No improvement in reliability so the outliers are retained

As seen in Table 5.5, all reliability data shows improvement. Most importantly, overall models for both fashion goods and dietary supplement show improvement in reliability figures that are now above the cut-off figure at 0.8 (Hair et al., 1998)

## 5.4 Validity Test

Validity refers to the extent that an item or a set of items correctly represents the construct of interest. Validity is concerned with how well the construct is defined by items. To test the validity of a measurement model, confirmatory factor analysis

(CFA) will be examined. CFA is used to test how well a set of items represent a smaller number of construct. The composite reliability $R^2$ is used to test the reliability of each item in the measurement model. This represents how well items serve as measurement items for construct. The composite reliability has a value between 0 – 1 where 1 represents a perfect representation of the construct. The data for squared multiple correlations are included within each model in the following section.

In this section, all hypotheses of the proposed framework are examined together with the coefficient of determination and total effect of endogenous variables.

**Table 5.8: Hypotheses of antecedents to influence on opinion seeker's purchase decisions**

| Hypotheses |
|---|
| **Opinion Seeker's Expertise (Antecedent)**<br>The more superior the opinion seeker's expertise, the less the influence on purchase decision.<br>H1a: Its influence on collectivist-individualist opinion seekers;<br>H1b: Its influence on high power distance seekers and low power distance seekers;<br>H1c: Its influence on affective and cognitive product |
| **Opinion Leader's Expertise (Antecedent)**<br>The more superior the opinion leader's expertise, the greater the influence on purchase decision.<br>H2a: Its influence on collectivist-individualist opinion seekers;<br>H2b: Its influence on high power distance seekers and low power distance seekers;<br>H2c: Its influence on affective and cognitive product. |
| **Tie Strength (Antecedent)**<br>The stronger the tie strength, the greater the influence on purchase decision.<br>H3a: Its influence on collectivist-individualist opinion seekers;<br>H3b: Its influence on high power distance seekers and low power distance seekers;<br>H3c: Its influence on affective and cognitive product. |
| **Homophily (Antecedent)**<br>The stronger the homophily, the greater the influence on purchase decision.<br>H4a: Its influence on collectivist-individualist opinion seekers;<br>H4b: Its influence on high power distance seekers and low power distance seekers;<br>H4c: Its influence on affective and cognitive product |

## 5.5 A Tale of Two Countries

Tables below represent the structural equation modeling estimates and p-value of antecedents to influence on purchase decisions when controlled variables (cultures and types of products) differ. The results are based on the assumption that Thais are

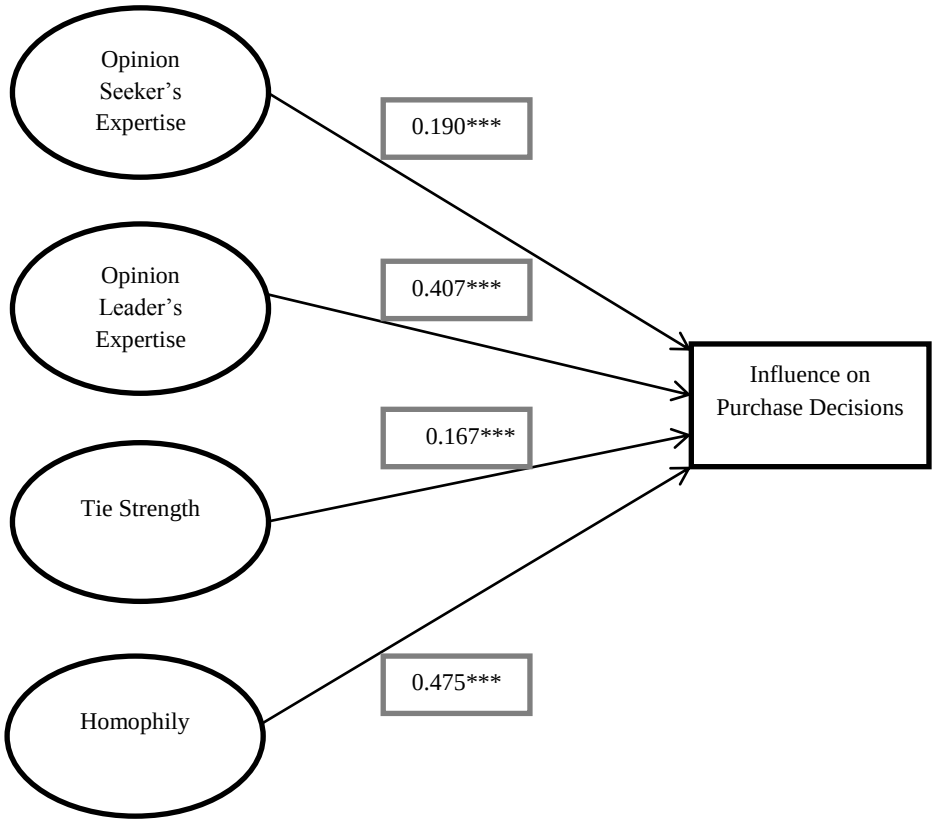
collectivist – high power distance individuals, while Americans are individualist – low power distance individuals.

### ***5.5.1 Analysis Results for Fashion Goods***

**Table 5.9: Statistics Data on Fashion Goods for Thai Samples**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.030 | 0.190 | 0.000 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.040 | 0.407 | 0.000 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.021 | 0.167 | 0.000 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.037 | 0.475 | 0.000 |

**Figure 5.1: Standardised Regression Weights on Fashion Goods for Overall Thais**

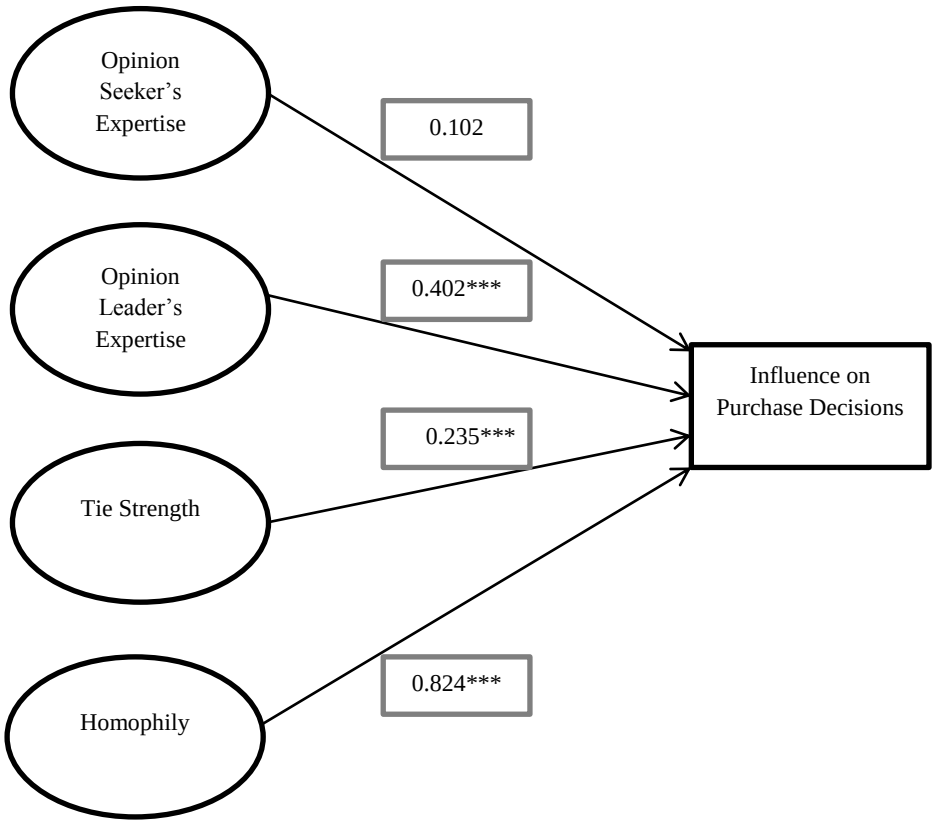



***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

**Table 5.10: Statistics Data on Fashion Goods for American Samples**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.059 | 0.102 | 0.102 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.135 | 0.402 | 0.000 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.131 | 0.235 | 0.001 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.263 | 0.824 | 0.000 |

**Figure 5.2: Standardised Regression Weights on Fashion Goods for Overall Americans**




***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

Both Thais and Americans display a tendency to be influenced by others, as shown by significant p-values throughout most personal influences and interpersonal influences. Both Thais and Americans are influenced by the expertise of the opinion leaders, tie strength, and perceptual homophily. Opinion seeker's expertise is significant for Thais but is only significant at 0.1 level for Americans.

As for the order of influence for both Thais and Americans, perceptual homophily appears the most influential. This is followed by opinion leader's expertise, opinion seeker's expertise, and tie strength. The magnitude of influence of each antecedent however differs. Perceptual homophily appears most influential by a large margin for Americans in comparison to Thais. This means that the Americans value the opinions of opinion leaders that share similar perception and outlook in life with them even more than Thais do in their purchase of fashion goods. The magnitude for opinion leader's expertise is quite similar across both cultures. Opinion seeker's expertise is another construct that differ strongly between Thais and Americans. The standardised regression weight of opinion seeker's expertise is almost double for Thais when compared to that of Americans. Tie strength is stronger for Americans, although by not a wide margin.

**Table 5.11: Assessment of Model Fit for Overall Thais on Fashion Goods**

| Parameter | Value |
|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 608.256 |
| Degree of Freedom | 132 |
| Relative Chi-Square | 4.608 |
| P-Value | 0.000 |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | 0.098 |
| Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) | 0.880 |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | 0.915 |
| Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) | 0.791 |

The measurement model of overall Thais on fashion goods shows not the best fit due to high relative chi-square at a ratio of 4.608:1, which is higher than 3:1 (Kline, 1998; Ullman, 2001). However, Schumacker & Lomax (2004)'s criterion is acceptance of any relative chi-square that is less than 5:1. Thus this is still acceptable and indicates a good fit between estimated model and observed data. P-value is lower than 0.05 which demonstrates a bad fit model. However, chi-square model is sensitive to sample size. A large sample size increases the chi-square value leading to statistically significance, thus erroneously implying a poor data to model fit (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 211). Consequently, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that a researcher should consider other fit indices rather than Chi-square's p-value to evaluate goodness of fit between the estimated model and the observed data when sample size is large. RMSEA of the measurement model is 0.098 which is lower than 0.1 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). This shows a good fit between the measurement model and the observed data. Furthermore, GFI of 0.880 is close to 0.9 (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 76), CFI of 0.915 is above cut off point at 0.90 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993), indicating a good fit. Lastly, AGFI of 0.791 is close to cut-off point at 0.80 (Taylor and Todd, 1995), indicating a good fit. Thus, overall these fit indices indicate a reasonable fit between measurement model and the data.

**Table 5.12: Assessment of Model Fit for Overall Americans on Fashion Goods**

| Parameter | Value |
|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 314.762 |
| Degree of Freedom | 127 |
| Relative Chi-Square | 2.478 |
| P-Value | 0.000 |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | 0.059 |
| Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) | 0.939 |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | 0.913 |
| Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) | 0.899 |

The measurement model of overall Americans on fashion goods shows a good fit due to low relative chi-square at a ratio of 2.478:1, which is lower than 3:1 (Kline, 1998; Ullman, 2001).This ratio indicates a good fit between estimated model and the observed data. P-value is lower than 0.05 which indicates a bad fit model. However, chi-square model is sensitive to sample size. A large sample size increases the chi-square value leading to statistically significance, thus erroneously implying a poor data to model fit (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 211). Consequently, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that a researcher should consider other fit indices rather than Chi-square's p-value to evaluate goodness of fit between the estimated model and the observed data when sample size is large. RMSEA of the measurement model is 0.059 which is lower than 0.1 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). This shows a good fit between the measurement model and the observed data. Furthermore, GFI of 0.939 is above cut off point of 0.9 (Byrne, 1994), CFI of 0.913 is above cut off point at 0.9 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993), indicating a good fit. Lastly, AGFI of 0.899 is above cut-off point at 0.8 (Taylor and Todd, 1995), indicating a good fit. Thus, overall these fit indices indicate a reasonable fit between measurement model and the observed data.

**Table 5.13: Squared Multiple Correlations ($R^2$) for Fashion Goods for Thais**

| Construct | Item | Estimate |
|---|---|---|
| **Influence on Purchase Decision** | **Influence** | **0.456** |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | Knowledge in Subject Area | 0.842 |
| | Expertise in Product Use | 0.908 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.030 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.441 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | Knowledge in Subject Area | 0.844 |
| | Expertise in Product Use | 0.771 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.025 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.493 |
| Tie Strength | Relationship with Opinion Leader | 0.798 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Personal Confidence | 0.762 |
| | Likelihood of Assistance | 0.824 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Free Time together | 0.731 |
| Homophily | Similar Outlook on Life | 0.742 |
| | Similar Likes and Dislikes | 0.788 |
| Influence | Little New Information | 0.207 |
| | Influence on Choice | 0.514 |
| | Mention Things Not Considered | 0.521 |
| | Different Ideas | 0.494 |
| | Did not Change My Mind | 0.058 |
| | Help Reach A Decision | 0.505 |
| | Purchase Influence | 0.308 |

**Table 5.14: Squared Multiple Correlations ($R^2$) for Fashion Goods for Americans**

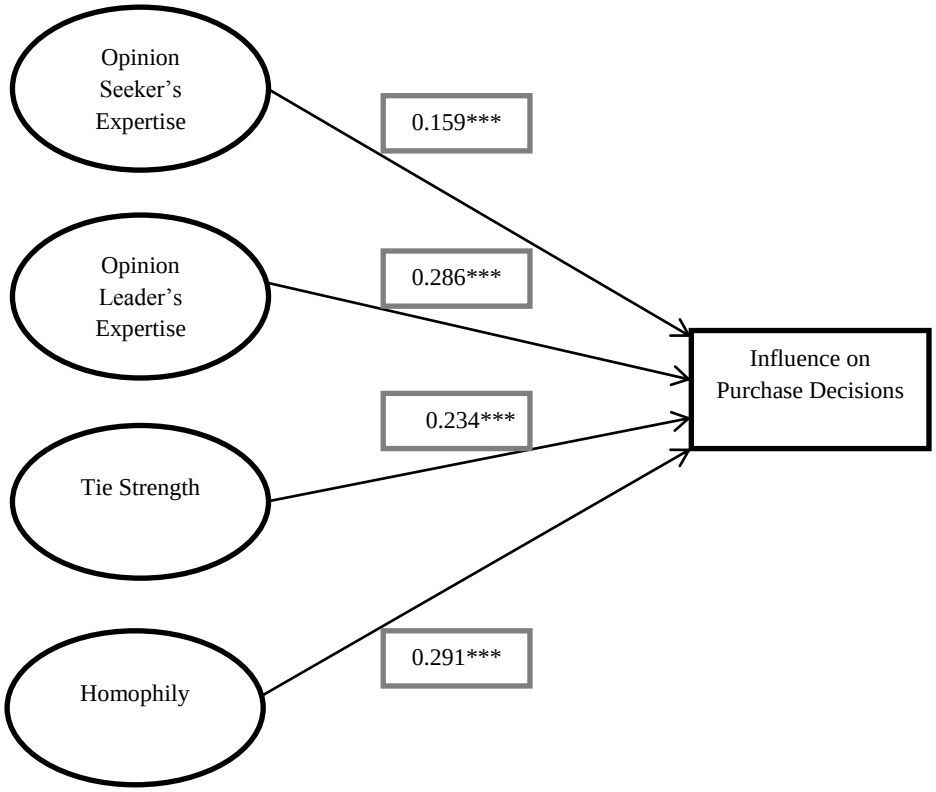
| Construct | Item | Estimate |
|---|---|---|
| Influence on Purchase Decision | Influence | 0.441 |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | Knowledge in Subject Area | 0.895 |
| | Expertise in Product Use | 0.808 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.073 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.403 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | Knowledge in Subject Area | 0.896 |
| | Expertise in Product Use | 0.862 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.021 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.754 |
| Tie Strength | Relationship with Opinion Leader | 0.751 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Personal Confidence | 0.794 |
| | Likelihood of Assistance | 0.776 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Free Time together | 0.798 |
| Homophily | Similar Outlook on Life | 0.757 |
| | Similar Likes and Dislikes | 0.708 |
| Influence | Little New Information | 0.142 |
| | Influence on Choice | 0.593 |
| | Mention Things Not Considered | 0.539 |
| | Different Ideas | 0.468 |
| | Did not Change My Mind | 0.076 |
| | Help Reach A Decision | 0.580 |
| | Purchase Influence | 0.256 |

### *5.5.2 Analysis Results for Dietary Supplement*

**Table 5.15: Results on Dietary Supplement for Thais**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.034 | 0.159 | 0.000 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.037 | 0.286 | 0.000 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.022 | 0.234 | 0.000 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.030 | 0.291 | 0.000 |

**Figure 5.3: Standardised Regression Weights on Dietary Supplement for Overall Thais**

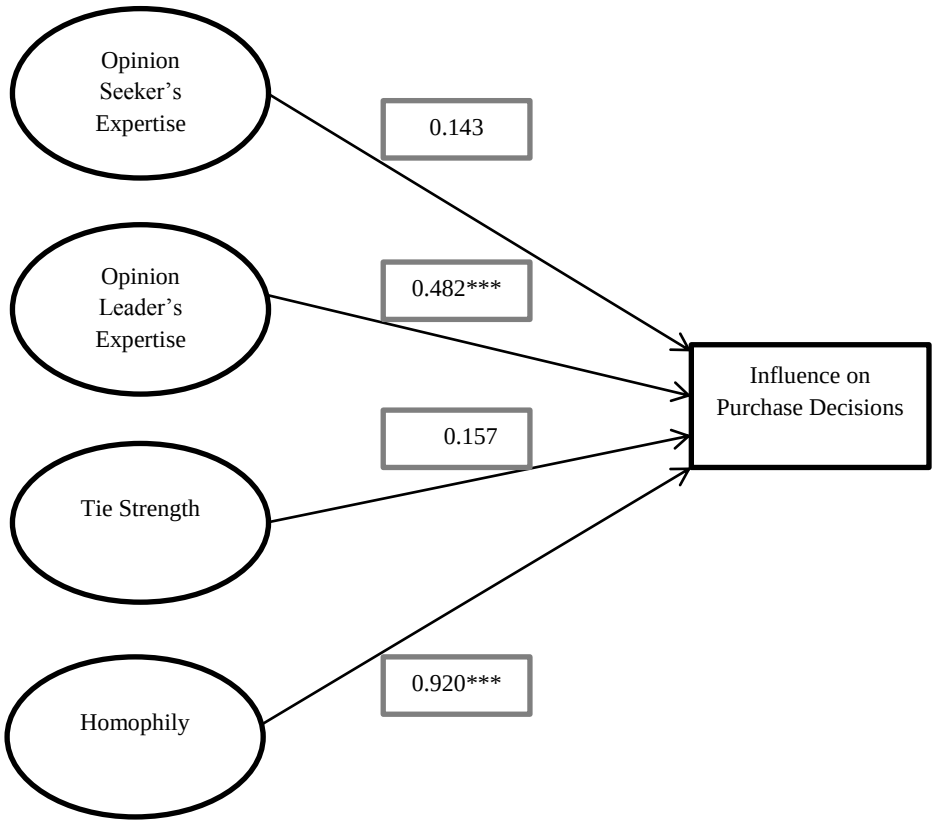



***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

**Table 5.16: Results on Dietary Supplement for Americans**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 4.695 | 0.143 | 0.602 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.053 | 0.482 | 0.000 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 4.304 | 0.157 | 0.641 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.128 | 0.920 | 0.000 |

**Figure 5.4: Standardised Regression Weights on Dietary Supplement for Overall Americans**




***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and - Non Significant

As for dietary supplement, it can be inferred that as collectivists and high power distance individuals, Thais display a tendency to be influenced by others more than American counterparts. This is shown by significant p-values throughout both personal and interpersonal influences. Americans only are influenced by the expertise of the opinion leaders and perceptual homophily between the opinion seeker and opinion leader. The significance of tie strength for Thais shows that for dietary supplement, Thais value the opinions of those close to them, while Americans do not. Also in contrary is the opinion seeker's expertise, where Thais value opinions from their opinion leaders even if their own expertise is high while Americans do not.

As for the order of influence for both Thais and Americans, perceptual homophily appears the most influential for Thais. This is followed by opinion leader's expertise, tie strength, and opinion seeker's expertise. The magnitude of influence of each antecedent however differs. Perceptual homophily appears most influential by a large margin for Americans in comparison to Thais. This means that the Americans value the opinions of opinion leaders that share similar perception and outlook in life with them even more than Thais do in their purchase of dietary supplement. The magnitude for opinion leader's expertise also differs, with Americans valuing the expertise of the opinion leaders more than Thais do. As for tie strength, which is the closeness construct, Thais rely on it while the Americans do not in their purchase of dietary supplement. This shows that whilst both cultures rank opinion leader's expertise as more influential in their purchase decision than tie strength. The degree is different. Americans think of expertise of opinion leaders more than Thais, and Thais think of tie strength more than their American counterparts. As for opinion seeker's expertise, the magnitude is similar although it is significant for Thais but not significant for Americans.

**Table 5.17: Assessment of Model Fit for Overall Thais on Dietary Supplement**

| Parameter | Value |
|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 691.050 |
| Degree of Freedom | 150 |
| Relative Chi-Square | 4.607 |
| P-Value | 0.000 |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | 0.098 |
| Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) | 0.863 |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | 0.900 |
| Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) | 0.789 |

The measurement model of overall Thais on dietary supplement shows not the best fit due to high relative chi-square at a ratio of 4.607:1, which is higher than 3:1(Kline, 1998; Ullman, 2001). However, Schumacker & Lomax (2004)'s criterion is acceptance of any relative chi-square that is less than 5:1. Thus this is still acceptable and indicates a good fit between estimated model and observed data. P-value is lower than 0.05 which demonstrates a poor fit. However, chi-square model is sensitive to sample size. A large sample size increases the chi-square value leading to statistically significance, thus erroneously implying a poor data to model fit (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 211). Consequently, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that a researcher should consider other fit indices rather than Chi-square's p-value to evaluate goodness of fit between the estimated model and the observed data when sample size is large. RMSEA of the measurement model is 0.098 which is lower than 0.1 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). This shows a good fit between the measurement model and the observed data. Furthermore, GFI of 0.863 is close to 0.9 (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 76), CFI of 0.900 is right at the cut-off value of 0.9 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993), indicating an acceptable fit. Thus, overall these fit indices indicate a reasonable fit between measurement model and the observed data.

**Table 5.18: Assessment of Model Fit for Overall Americans on Dietary Supplement**

| Parameter | Value |
|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 328.047 |
| Degree of Freedom | 128 |
| Relative Chi-Square | 2.563 |
| P-Value | 0.000 |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | 0.057 |
| Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) | 0.938 |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | 0.907 |
| Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) | 0.789 |

The measurement model of overall Americans on dietary supplement shows a good fit due to low relative chi-square at a ratio of 2.563:1, which is lower than 3:1(Kline, 1998; Ullman, 2001). This ratio indicates a good fit between estimated model and observed data. P-value is lower than 0.05 which indicates a poor fit. However, chi-square model is sensitive to sample size. A large sample size increases the chi-square value leading to statistically significance, thus erroneously implying a poor data to model fit (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 211). Consequently, Fornell and Larckenr (1981) suggest that a researcher should consider other fit indices rather than Chi-square's p-value to evaluate goodness of fit between the estimated model and the observed data when sample size is large. RMSEA of the measurement model is 0.057 which is lower than 0.1 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). This shows a good fit between the measurement model and the observed data. Furthermore, GFI of 0.938 is above cut-off point at 0.9 (Byrne, 1994), CFI of 0.907 is above the cut-off point at 0.9 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993), indicating a good fit. Thus, overall these fit indices indicate a reasonable fit between measurement model and the observed data.

**Table 5.19: Squared Multiple Correlations ($R^2$) for Dietary Supplement for Thais**

| Construct | Item | Estimate |
|---|---|---|
| **Influence on Purchase Decision** | **Influence** | **0.350** |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.880 |
| | Expertise in Subject Area | 0.856 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.032 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.496 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.825 |
| | Expertise in Subject Area | 0.787 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.034 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.497 |
| Tie Strength | Relationship with Opinion Leader | 0.766 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Personal Confidence | 0.788 |
| | Likelihood of Assistance | 0.841 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Free Time together | 0.766 |
| Homophily | Similar Outlook on Life | 0.680 |
| | Similar Likes and Dislikes | 0.923 |
| Influence | Little New Information | 0.191 |
| | Influence on Choice | 0.625 |
| | Mention Things Not Considered | 0.568 |
| | Different Ideas | 0.476 |
| | Did not Change My Mind | 0.043 |
| | Help Reach A Decision | 0.519 |
| | Purchase Influence | 0.381 |

**Table 5.20: Squared Multiple Correlations ($R^2$) for Dietary Supplement for Americans**

| Construct | Item | Estimate |
|---|---|---|
| **Influence on Purchase Decision** | **Influence** | **0.394** |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.850 |
| | Expertise in Subject Area | 0.800 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.049 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.416 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.879 |
| | Expertise in Subject Area | 0.729 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.053 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.407 |
| Tie Strength | Relationship with Opinion Leader | 0.717 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Personal Confidence | 0.801 |
| | Likelihood of Assistance | 0.798 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Free Time together | 0.719 |
| Homophily | Similar Outlook on Life | 0.611 |
| | Similar Likes and Dislikes | 0.834 |
| Influence | Little New Information | 0.253 |
| | Influence on Choice | 0.326 |
| | Mention Things Not Considered | 0.160 |
| | Different Ideas | 0.210 |
| | Did not Change My Mind | 0.081 |
| | Help Reach A Decision | 0.239 |
| | Purchase Influence | 0.281 |

The results exhibit some academic contribution that consumers in different countries will not be influenced by personal and interpersonal forces in the same way with the same magnitude. However, in order to compare individuals with dissimilar background, a more in depth research is needed. This is because within a country, variation can be found. Therefore, we cannot stereotype or label that Thais will all be collectivists and high power distance individuals, while Americans will all be individualists and low power distance individuals.

## 5.6 Sub-Cultural Comparison

**Table 5.21: Respondents' Profile**

| Culture | Americans | Thais |
|---|---|---|
| **Collectivists – High Power Distance** | 86 | 219 |
| **Collectivists – Low Power Distance** | 92 | 31 |
| **Individualists – High Power Distance** | 151 | 187 |
| **Individualists – Low Power Distance** | 151 | 43 |
| **Culture** | **Americans** | **Thais** |
| **Collectivists – High Power Distance** | 86 | 219 |
| **Collectivists – Low Power Distance** | 92 | 31 |
| **Individualists – High Power Distance** | 151 | 187 |
| **Individualists – Low Power Distance** | 151 | 43 |

The respondents' profile clearly demonstrates clear distinction between Americans and Thais that fit well with previous literature. American samples consist of mostly individualists. Thai samples consist of mostly collectivists who are also high power distance individuals. However, the data points out that it is rare to find Thais who are both collectivist and low power distance. There are only 31 such persons out of 400 respondents. Similarly, it is rare to find individualist and low power distance individuals. There are only 43 such persons out of 400 respondents. In other words, it is rare to find Thais who are low power distance in cultural orientation.

From the table above, it can be concluded that there are significant variations within each country that it is not accurate to stereotype cultural dimension by country. Results above show that while Thais are mostly high power distance individuals, there are also a number of Thais that are individualists. In fact, there are only 14.61% less individualist – high power distance Thais compared to collectivist – high power distance Thais. In similar fashion, while most Americans are individualists, there is an equal number of individualist Americans in both high power distance and low power distance categories.

From the results above, the authors would like to point out to the inability to use data from Thai collectivist – low power distance samples (31 respondents) and data from Thai individualist – low power distance samples (43 respondents) as there are insufficient data for both groups to be able to successfully statistically validate the results with Structural Equation Modeling. As such, data from collectivist – low power distance American samples and data from individualist – low power distance American samples will also not be used due to the inability to make comparison.

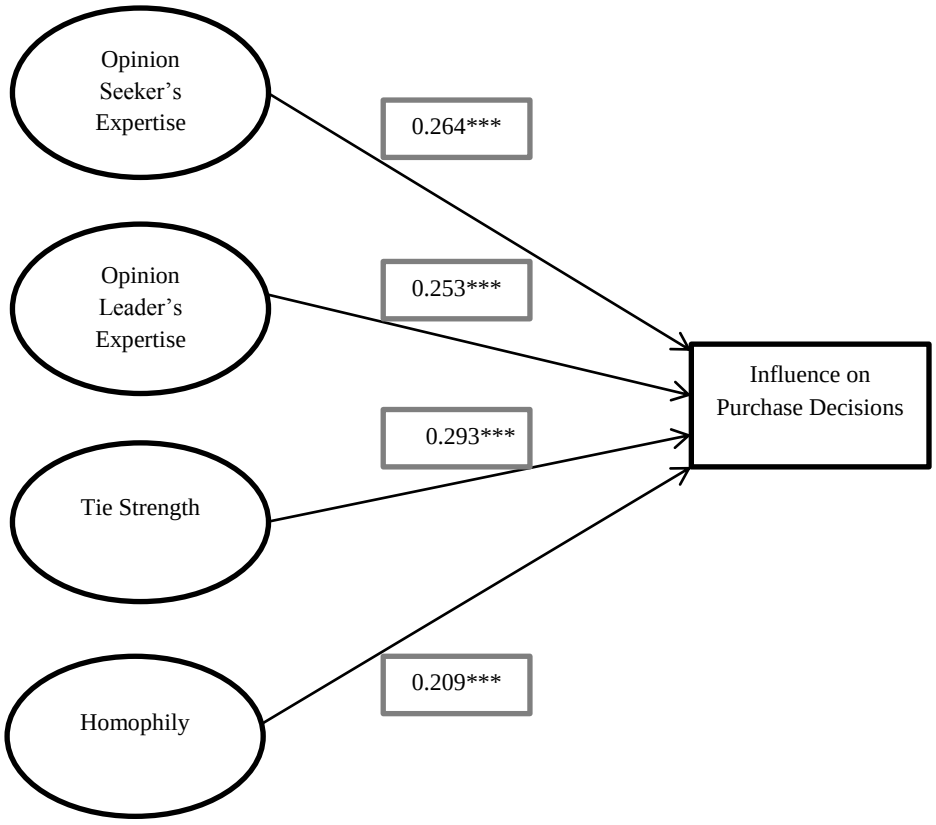
### *5.6.1 Comparative Study for Countries (Control for Product Type and Cultural Background)*

#### *5.6.1.1 Fashion Goods: collectivist – high power distance*

**Table 5.22: Results on Fashion Goods for Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.059 | 0.264 | 0.002 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.067 | 0.253 | 0.002 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.044 | 0.293 | 0.000 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.065 | 0.209 | 0.002 |

**Figure 5.5: Standardised Regression Weights on Fashion Goods for Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais**

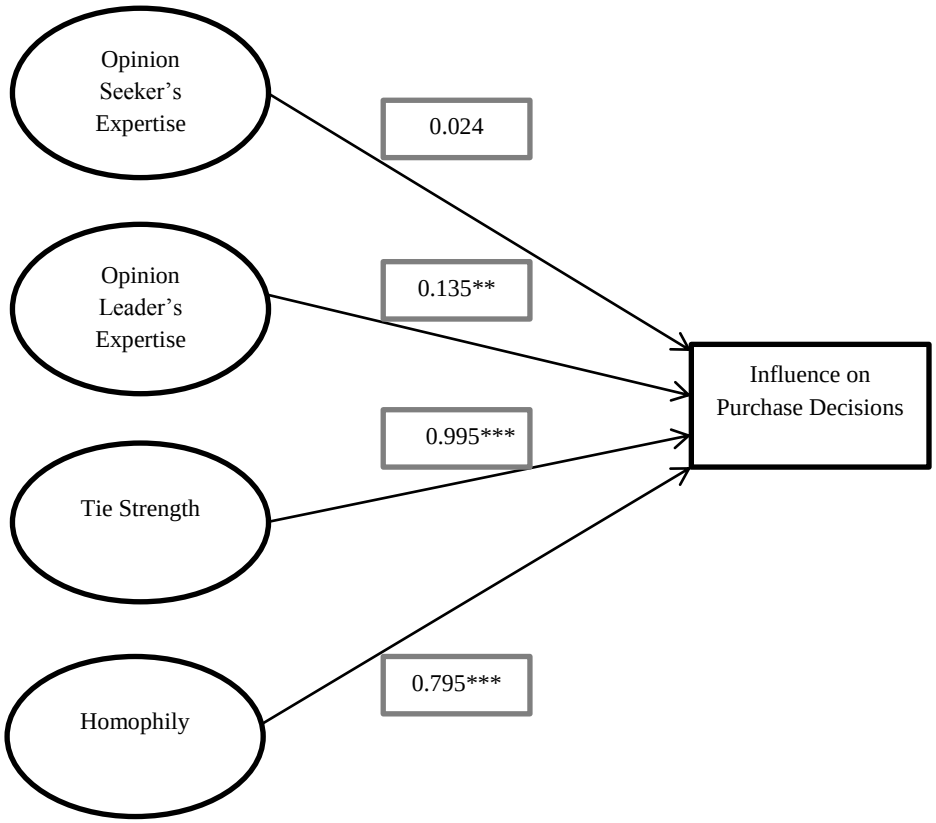



***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

**Table 5.23: Results on Fashion Goods for Collectivist – High Power Distance Americans**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.056 | 0.024 | 0.677 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.061 | 0.135 | 0.030 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.232 | 0.995 | 0.000 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.325 | 0.795 | 0.006 |

**Figure 5.6: Standardised Regression Weights on Fashion Goods for Collectivist – High Power Distance Americans**




***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

The Tables above demonstrate similarity across Thai and American collectivists – high power distance individuals in their purchase decisions of fashion goods. Both Thai and American samples are influenced by the expertise of the opinion leaders, tie strength and perceptual homophily between themselves and their opinion leaders. The exception is the significant influence for Thais but insignificant influence for Americans for opinion seeker's expertise on their purchase decisions.

The magnitude of influence for collectivist – high power distance Thai samples is quite close together. It is highest in tie strength (0.293). This is followed by opinion seeker's expertise (0.264), opinion leader's expertise (0.253), and perceptual

homophily (0.209). The magnitude of influence for collectivist – high power distance American samples is highest in tie strength (0.995). This is followed by perceptual homophily (0.795), opinion leader's expertise (0.135), and opinion seeker's expertise (0.024). The weights are quite similar for Thais across all constructs. However, for Americans, the weights are placed much more towards perceptual homophily and tie strength.

From the results, it can be concluded that collectivists – high power distance individuals across two countries are quite similar in the influence they receive by their opinion leaders in fashion goods. In other words, a collectivist – high power distance person will rely on opinion leader's expertise, tie strength, and perceptual homophily in his/her purchase decision of fashion goods. In addition, Thai opinion seekers will also consider how their own expertise affects influence of opinion leaders in their purchase decisions.

In consideration with the overall models of two countries, it can be argued that the results of these groups fit well with their own overall country model. In other words, results from Thai samples fit well with overall Thai model, while results from American samples fit well with overall American model. Similarly, the magnitude of each construct in order of importance also follows that of overall model of each country.

**Table 5.24: Assessment of Model Fit for Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais on Fashion Goods**

| Parameter | Value |
|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 504.439 |
| Degree of Freedom | 161 |
| Relative Chi-Square | 3.133 |
| P-Value | 0.000 |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | 0.099 |
| Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) | 0.833 |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | 0.877 |
| Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) | 0.761 |

The measurement model of collectivist – high power distance Thais on fashion goods shows not the best fit due to high relative chi-square at a ratio of 3.133:1, which is higher than 3:1 (Kline, 1998; Ullman, 2001). However, Schumacker & Lomax (2004)'s criterion is acceptance of any relative chi-square that is less than 5:1. Thus this is still acceptable and indicates a good fit between estimated model and observed data. P-value is lower than 0.05 which indicates a poor fit. Nevertheless, a large sample size increases the chi-square value leading to statistically significance, thus erroneously implying a poor data to model fit (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 211). Consequently, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that a researcher should consider other fit indices rather than Chi-square's p-value to evaluate goodness of fit between the estimated model and the observed data. RMSEA of the measurement model is 0.099 which is lower than 0.1(Browne and Cudeck, 1993). This shows a good fit between the measurement model and the observed data. Furthermore, GFI of 0.833 is close to 0.9 (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 76), CFI of 0.877 is close to cut-off point at 0.90 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993), indicating a reasonable fit. Lastly, AGFI of 0.761 is close to cut-off point at 0.8 (Taylor and Todd, 1995), indicating a reasonable fit. As such, most fit indices indicate a reasonable fit between measurement model and the observed data.

**Table 5.25: Assessment of Model Fit for Collectivist – High Power Distance Americans on Fashion Goods**

| Parameter | Value |
|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 298.260 |
| Degree of Freedom | 171 |
| Relative Chi-Square | 1.744 |
| P-Value | 0.000 |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | 0.103 |
| Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) | 0.803 |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | 0.816 |
| Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) | 0.709 |

The measurement model for collectivist – high power distance Americans on fashion goods shows a good fit due to low relative chi-square at a ratio of 1.744:1, which is lower than 3:1(Kline, 1998; Ullman, 2001). This ratio indicates a good fit between estimated model and observed data. P-value is lower than 0.05 which indicates a poor fit. Nevertheless, a large sample size increases the chi-square value leading to statistically significance, thus erroneously implying a poor data to model fit (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 211). Consequently, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that a researcher should consider other fit indices rather than Chi-square's p-value to evaluate goodness of fit between the estimated model and the observed data. RMSEA of the measurement model is 0.103 which is not lower than 0.1 but close to 0.1 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). This shows a poor fit between the measurement model and the observed data. GFI of 0.803 is close to 0.9 (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 76), CFI of 0.816 is close to cut-off point at 0.90 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993), indicating an reasonable fit. Lastly, AGFI of 0.709 is close to cut-off point at 0.8 (Taylor and Todd, 1995), indicating a reasonable fit. Thus, overall these fit indices indicate a reasonable fit between measurement model and the observed data.

**Table 5.26: Squared Multiple Correlations ($R^2$) for Fashion Goods for Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais**

| Construct | Item | Estimate |
|---|---|---|
| **Influence on Purchase Decision** | **Influence** | **0.364** |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.822 |
| | Expertise in Subject Area | 0.918 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.030 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.391 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.849 |
| | Expertise in Subject Area | 0.565 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.030 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.459 |
| Tie Strength | Relationship with Opinion Leader | 0.757 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Personal Confidence | 0.738 |
| | Likelihood of Assistance | 0.804 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Free Time together | 0.730 |
| Homophily | Similar Outlook on Life | 0.442 |
| | Similar Likes and Dislikes | 0.369 |
| Influence | Little New Information | 0.274 |
| | Influence on Choice | 0.448 |
| | Mention Things Not Considered | 0.507 |
| | Different Ideas | 0.440 |
| | Did not Change My Mind | 0.028 |
| | Help Reach A Decision | 0.548 |
| | Purchase Influence | 0.235 |

**Table 5.27: Squared Multiple Correlations ($R^2$) for Fashion Goods for Collectivist – High Power Distance Americans**

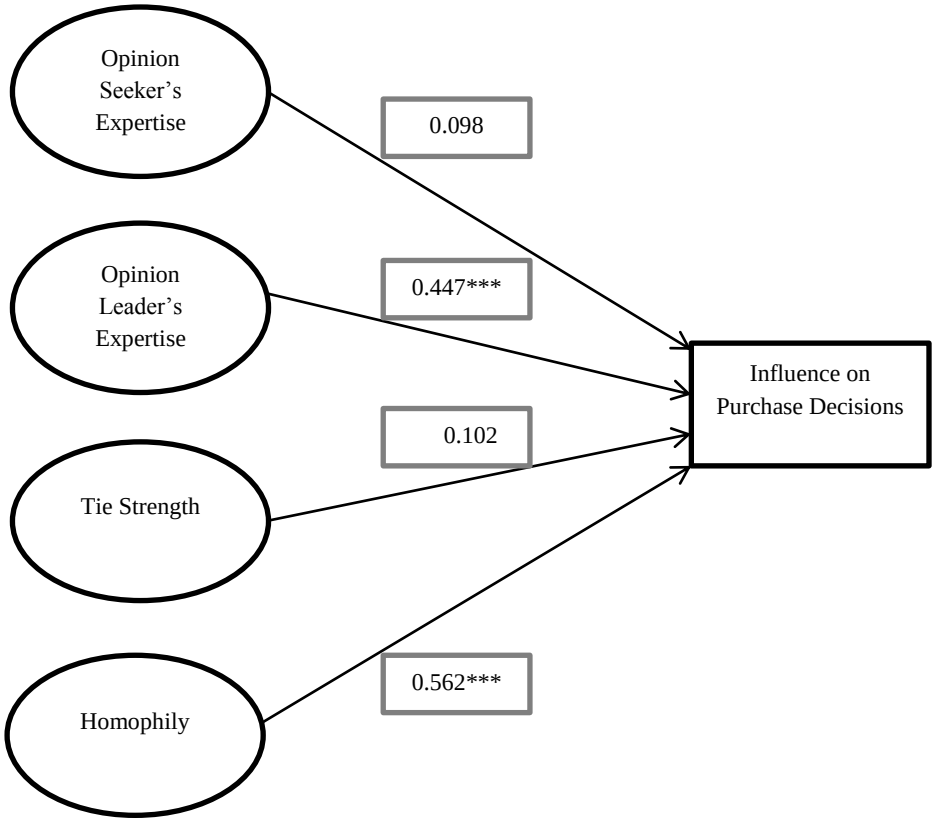
| Construct | Item | Estimate |
|---|---|---|
| **Influence on Purchase Decision** | **Influence** | **0.488** |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.802 |
| | Expertise in Subject Area | 0.801 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.030 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.322 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.842 |
| | Expertise in Subject Area | 0.843 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.105 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.486 |
| Tie Strength | Relationship with Opinion Leader | 0.780 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Personal Confidence | 0.738 |
| | Likelihood of Assistance | 0.786 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Free Time together | 0.574 |
| Homophily | Similar Outlook on Life | 0.694 |
| | Similar Likes and Dislikes | 0.739 |
| Influence | Little New Information | 0.169 |
| | Influence on Choice | 0.564 |
| | Mention Things Not Considered | 0.483 |
| | Different Ideas | 0.418 |
| | Did not Change My Mind | 0.117 |
| | Help Reach A Decision | 0.450 |
| | Purchase Influence | 0.266 |

***5.6.1.2 Fashion Goods: individualist – high power distance***

**Table 5.28: Results on Fashion Goods for Individualist – High Power Distance Thais**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.038 | 0.098 | 0.160 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.070 | 0.447 | 0.000 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.025 | 0.102 | 0.143 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.065 | 0.562 | 0.000 |

**Figure 5.7: Standardised Regression Weights on Fashion Goods for Individualist – High Power Distance Thais**

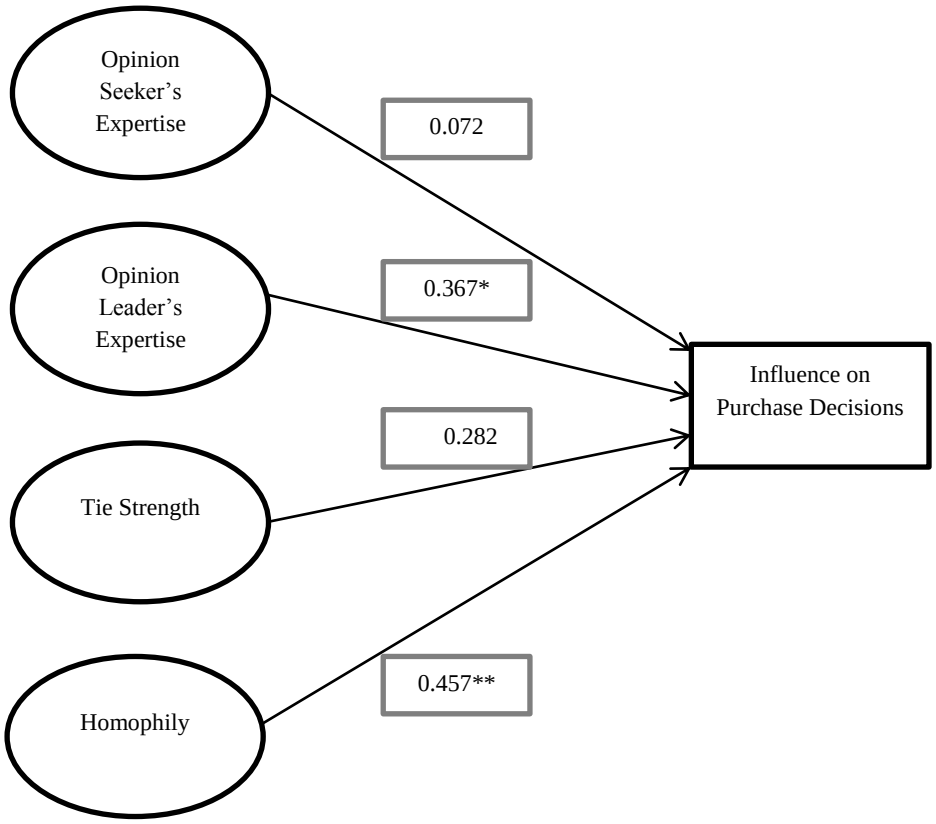



***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

**Table 5.29: Results on Fashion Goods for Individualist – High Power Distance Americans**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.026 | 0.072 | 0.417 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.194 | 0.367 | 0.077 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.260 | 0.282 | 0.112 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.134 | 0.457 | 0.017 |

**Figure 5.8: Standardised Regression Weights on Fashion Goods for Individualist – High Power Distance Americans**




***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

The Tables above demonstrate that both Thai and American individualists – high power distance individuals are influenced by opinion leader's expertise and perceptual homophily between themselves and their opinion leaders for fashion goods.

The magnitude of influence for Thai samples is highest in perceptual homophily (0.562). This is followed by opinion leader's expertise (0.447), opinion seeker's expertise (0.102) (insignificant), and finally tie strength (0.098) (insignificant). The magnitude of influence for American samples is highest in perceptual homophily (0.457), followed by opinion leader's expertise (0.367), tie strength (0.282) (insignificant), and opinion seeker's expertise (0.072) (insignificant). From the results, it can be concluded that individualists – high power distance individuals across two countries are quite similar in the influence they receive by their opinion leaders in fashion goods. In other words, an individualist – high power distance person will rely on opinion leader's expertise and perceptual homophily in his/her purchase decision of fashion goods. Thais however will place more weights on both opinion leader's expertise and perceptual homophily.

In consideration with overall models of two countries, it can be argued that the results of individualist – high power distance Thais and Americans are similar to overall Americans, where opinion leader's expertise and perceptual homophily are both significant.

**Table 5.30: Assessment of Model Fit for Individualist – High Power Distance Thais on Fashion Goods**

| Parameter | Value |
|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 472.372 |
| Degree of Freedom | 166 |
| Relative Chi-Square | 2.846 |
| P-Value | 0.000 |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | 0.100 |
| Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) | 0.806 |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | 0.879 |
| Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) | 0.730 |

The measurement model of overall Thais on fashion goods shows a good fit due to low relative chi-square at a ratio of 2.846:1, which is lower than 3:1(Kline, 1998; Ullman, 2001). This ratio indicates a good fit between estimated model and observed data. P-value is lower than 0.05 which indicates a poor fit. Nevertheless, a large sample size increases the chi-square value leading to statistically significance, thus erroneously implying a poor data to model fit (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 211). Consequently, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that a researcher should consider other fit indices rather than Chi-square's p-value to evaluate goodness of fit between the estimated model and the observed data. RMSEA of the measurement model is 0.1 which is at the cut-off point at 0.1 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). This shows a reasonable fit between the measurement model and the observed data. Furthermore, GFI of 0.806 is close to 0.9 (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 76), CFI of 0.879 is also close to cut-off point at 0.9 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993), indicating a reasonable fit. Lastly, AGFI of 0.730 is close to cut-off point at 0.8 (Taylor and Todd, 1995), indicating a reasonable fit. Thus these fit indices indicate a reasonable fit between measurement model and the observed data.

**Table 5.31: Assessment of Model Fit for Individualist – High Power Distance Americans on Fashion Goods**

| Parameter | Value |
|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 308.678 |
| Degree of Freedom | 147 |
| Relative Chi-Square | 2.100 |
| P-Value | 0.000 |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | 0.086 |
| Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) | 0.831 |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | 0.827 |
| Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) | 0.734 |

The measurement model of overall Americans on dietary supplement shows a good fit due to low relative chi-square at a ratio of 2.100:1, which is lower than 3:1(Kline, 1998; Ullman, 2001). This ratio indicates a good fit between estimated model and observed data. P-value is lower than 0.05 which indicates a poor fit. Nevertheless, a large sample size increases the chi-square value leading to statistically significance, thus erroneously implying a poor data to model fit (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 211). Consequently, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that a researcher should consider other fit indices rather than Chi-square's p-value to evaluate goodness of fit between the estimated model and the observed data. RMSEA of the measurement model is 0.086 which is lower than 0.1 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). This shows a good fit between the measurement model and the observed data. Furthermore, GFI of 0.831 is close 0.9 (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 76), CFI of 0.827 is close to cut off point at 0.90(Browne and Cudeck, 1993), indicating an acceptable fit. Lastly, AGFI of 0.734 is close to cut-off point at 0.8 (Taylor and Todd, 1995), indicating a reasonable fit. Thus, overall most of these fit indices indicate a reasonable fit between measurement model and the observed data.

**Table 5.32: Squared Multiple Correlations ($R^2$) for Fashion Goods for Individualist- High Power Distance Thais**

| Construct | Item | Estimate |
|---|---|---|
| **Influence on Purchase Decision** | **Influence** | **0.536** |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.876 |
| | Expertise in Subject Area | 0.862 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.060 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.393 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.829 |
| | Expertise in Subject Area | 0.859 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.050 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.409 |
| Tie Strength | Relationship with Opinion Leader | 0.840 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Personal Confidence | 0.774 |
| | Likelihood of Assistance | 0.813 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Free Time together | 0.665 |
| Homophily | Similar Outlook on Life | 0.649 |
| | Similar Likes and Dislikes | 0.774 |
| Influence | Little New Information | 0.156 |
| | Influence on Choice | 0.573 |
| | Mention Things Not Considered | 0.427 |
| | Different Ideas | 0.400 |
| | Did not Change My Mind | 0.012 |
| | Help Reach A Decision | 0.447 |
| | Purchase Influence | 0.207 |

**Table 5.33: Squared Multiple Correlations ($R^2$) for Fashion Goods for Individualist – High Power Distance Americans**

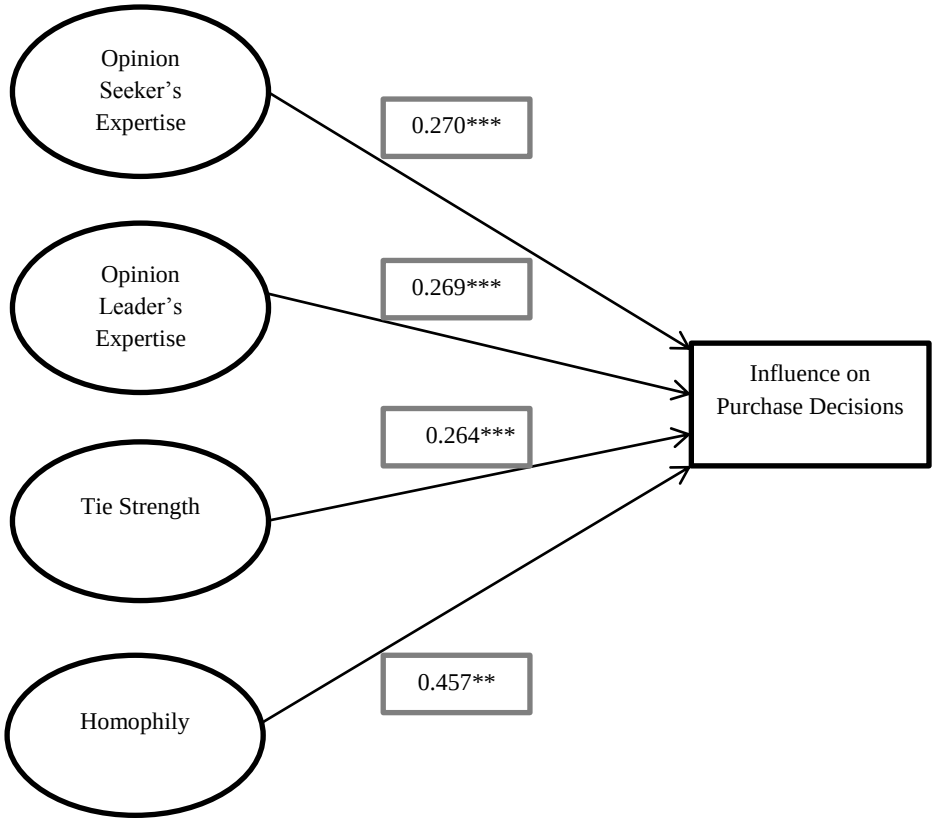
| Construct | Item | Estimate |
|---|---|---|
| **Influence on Purchase Decision** | **Influence** | **0.441** |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.804 |
| | Expertise in Subject Area | 0.804 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.031 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.435 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.816 |
| | Expertise in Subject Area | 0.835 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.021 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.437 |
| Tie Strength | Relationship with Opinion Leader | 0.734 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Personal Confidence | 0.749 |
| | Likelihood of Assistance | 0.759 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Free Time together | 0.730 |
| Homophily | Similar Outlook on Life | 0.744 |
| | Similar Likes and Dislikes | 0.732 |
| Influence | Little New Information | 0.151 |
| | Influence on Choice | 0.503 |
| | Mention Things Not Considered | 0.530 |
| | Different Ideas | 0.355 |
| | Did not Change My Mind | 0.077 |
| | Help Reach A Decision | 0.404 |
| | Purchase Influence | 0.367 |

***5.6.1.3 Dietary Supplement: collectivist – high power distance***

**Table 5.34: Results on Dietary Supplement for Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.043 | 0.270 | 0.002 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.065 | 0.269 | 0.003 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.030 | 0.264 | 0.003 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.048 | 0.280 | 0.009 |

**Figure 5.9: Standardised Regression Weights on Dietary Supplement for Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais**

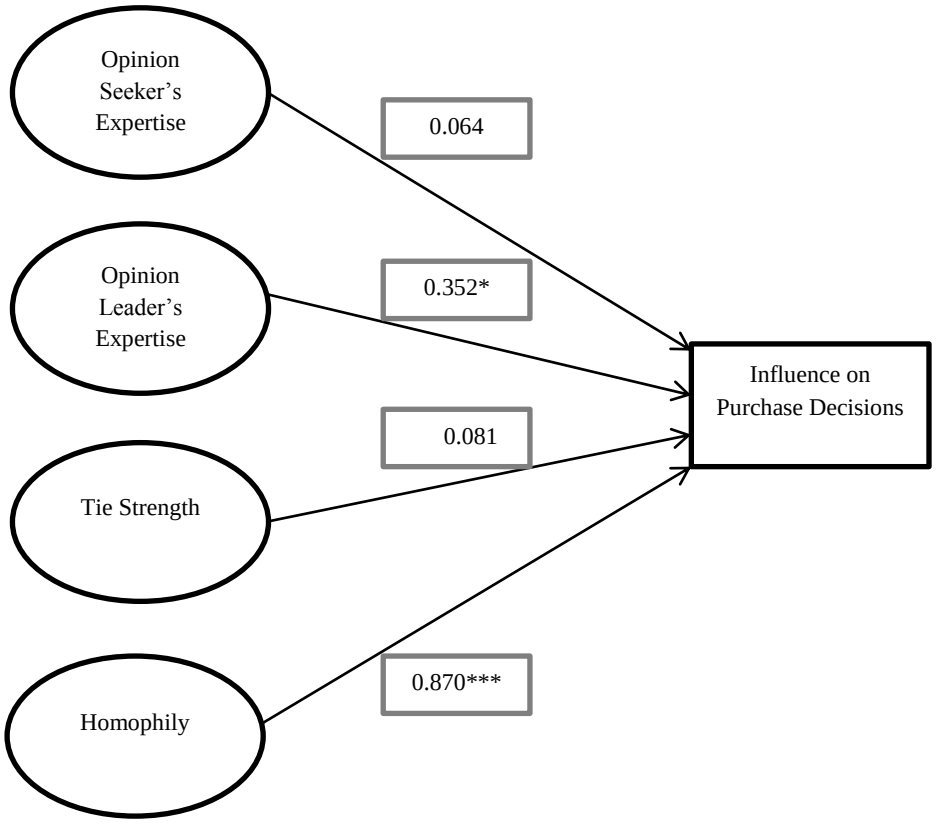



***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and - Non Significant

**Table 5.35: Results on Dietary Supplement for Collectivist – High Power Distance Americans**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.074 | 0.064 | 0.648 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.076 | 0.352 | 0.053 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.856 | 0.081 | 0.616 |
| Homophily → Influence | 1.413 | 0.870 | 0.002 |

**Figure 5.10: Standardised Regression Weights on Dietary Supplement for Collectivist – High Power Distance Americans**




***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, - Non Significant

The Tables above demonstrate that both Thai and American collectivists – high power distance individuals are influenced by opinion leader's expertise, and perceptual homophily (at 0.1 significance level for Americans) for dietary supplements. Thais are also influenced by opinion leader's expertise.

The magnitude of influence for Thai samples is highest for perceptual homophily (0.280). This is followed by opinion seeker's expertise (0.270), opinion leader's expertise (0.269), and finally tie strength (0.264). The magnitude of influence for American samples are highest also in perceptual homophily (0.870), followed by opinion leader's expertise (0.352), tie strength (0.081) (insignificant), and opinion seeker's expertise (0.064) (insignificant). Americans however will place much more weight on perceptual homophily and more weight on opinion leader's expertise than Thais in their purchase decisions of dietary supplement.

From the results, it can be concluded that collectivists – high power distance individuals across two countries are quite similar in the influence they receive by their opinion leaders in dietary supplement. In other words, a collectivist – high power distance Thais and Americans will rely on opinion leader's expertise and perceptual homophily in his/her purchase decision of dietary supplement. In addition, Thai opinion seekers will also consider how their own expertise affects influence of opinion leaders in their purchase decisions.

In comparison to the overall country results, the results for Thai collectivist – high power distance individuals is similar to overall Thai results with the exception of tie strength, while American collectivist – high power distance individuals is similar to overall American results. In terms of magnitude, the results from each group are also similar to their own country.

**Table 5.36: Assessment of Model Fit for Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais on Dietary Supplement**

| Parameter | Value |
|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 405.891 |
| Degree of Freedom | 156 |
| Relative Chi-Square | 2.602 |
| P-Value | 0.000 |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | 0.086 |
| Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) | 0.862 |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | 0.911 |
| Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) | 0.795 |

The measurement model of overall Americans on dietary supplement shows a good fit due to low relative chi-square at a ratio of 2.602:1, which is lower than 3:1(Kline, 1998; Ullman, 2001). This ratio indicates a good fit between estimated model and observed data. P-value is lower than 0.05 which indicates a poor fit. Nevertheless, a large sample size increases the chi-square value leading to statistically significance, thus erroneously implying a poor data to model fit (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 211). Consequently, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that a researcher should consider other fit indices rather than Chi-square's p-value to evaluate goodness of fit between the estimated model and the observed data. A large sample size increases the chi-square value and hence lowers the p-value. RMSEA of the measurement model is 0.086 which is lower than 0.1 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). This shows a good fit between the measurement model and the observed data. Furthermore, GFI of 0.862 is close 0.9 (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 76), CFI of 0.911 is close to cut-off point at 0.90 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993), indicating an acceptable fit. Lastly, AGFI of 0.795 is close to cut-off point at 0.8 (Taylor and Todd, 1995), indicating a reasonable fit. Thus, overall, these fit indices indicate a reasonable fit between measurement model and the observed data.

**Table 5.37: Assessment of Model Fit for Collectivist – High Power Distance Americans on Dietary Supplement**

| Parameter | Value |
|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 233.072 |
| Degree of Freedom | 173 |
| Relative Chi-Square | 1.347 |
| P-Value | 0.002 |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | 0.069 |
| Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) | 0.788 |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | 0.899 |
| Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) | 0.704 |

The measurement model of overall Americans on dietary supplement shows a good fit due to low relative chi-square at a ratio of 1.347:1, which is even lower than 2:1(Kline, 1998; Ullman, 2001). This ratio indicates a very good fit between estimated model and observed data. P-value is lower than 0.05 which indicates a poor fit. Nevertheless, a large sample size increases the chi-square value leading to statistically significance, thus erroneously implying a poor data to model fit (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 211). Consequently, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that a researcher should consider other fit indices rather than Chi-square's p-value to evaluate goodness of fit between the estimated model and the observed data. RMSEA of the measurement model is 0.069 which is lower than 0.1 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). This shows a good fit between the measurement model and the observed data. Furthermore, GFI of 0.788 is close to 0.9 (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 76), CFI of 0.899 is close to cut-off point at 0.90 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993), indicating a good fit. Lastly, AGFI of 0.704 is close to cut-off point at 0.8 (Taylor and Todd, 1995), indicating a reasonable fit. Thus, overall these fit indices indicate a reasonable fit between measurement model and the observed data.

**Table 5.38: Squared Multiple Correlations ($R^2$) for Dietary Supplement for Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais**

| Construct | Item | Estimate |
|---|---|---|
| **Influence on Purchase Decision** | **Influence** | **0.431** |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.932 |
| | Expertise in Subject Area | 0.872 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.020 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.474 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.820 |
| | Expertise in Subject Area | 0.581 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.014 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.471 |
| Tie Strength | Relationship with Opinion Leader | 0.748 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Personal Confidence | 0.739 |
| | Likelihood of Assistance | 0.842 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Free Time together | 0.736 |
| Homophily | Similar Outlook on Life | 0.729 |
| | Similar Likes and Dislikes | 0.813 |
| Influence | Little New Information | 0.217 |
| | Influence on Choice | 0.581 |
| | Mention Things Not Considered | 0.576 |
| | Different Ideas | 0.427 |
| | Did not Change My Mind | 0.010 |
| | Help Reach A Decision | 0.444 |
| | Purchase Influence | 0.491 |

**Table 5.39: Squared Multiple Correlations ($R^2$) for Dietary Supplement for Collectivist – High Power Distance Americans**

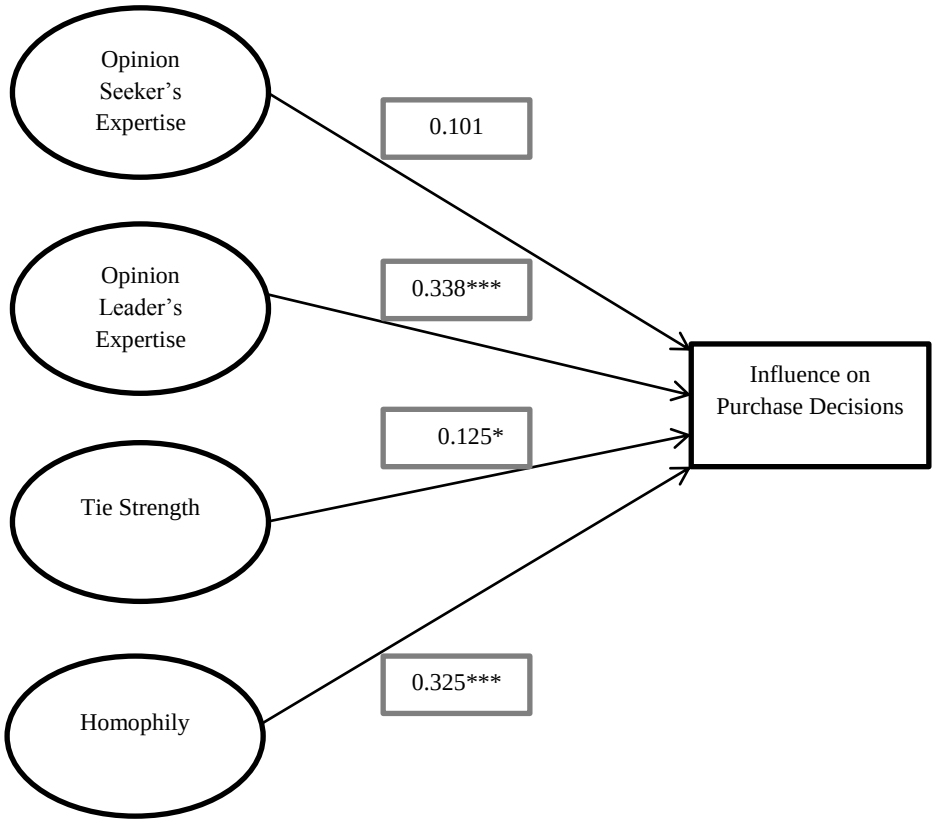
| Construct | Item | Estimate |
|---|---|---|
| **Influence on Purchase Decision** | **Influence** | **0.399** |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.800 |
| | Expertise in the Subject Area | 0.795 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.025 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.352 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.830 |
| | Expertise in the Subject Area | 0.853 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.028 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.430 |
| Tie Strength | Relationship with Opinion Leader | 0.770 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Personal Confidence | 0.742 |
| | Likelihood of Assistance | 0.709 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Free Time together | 0.511 |
| Homophily | Similar Outlook on Life | 0.691 |
| | Similar Likes and Dislikes | 0.667 |
| Influence | Little New Information | 0.139 |
| | Influence on Choice | 0.429 |
| | Mention Things Not Considered | 0.422 |
| | Different Ideas | 0.438 |
| | Did not Change My Mind | 0.276 |
| | Help Reach A Decision | 0.290 |
| | Purchase Influence | 0.354 |

***5.6.1.4 Dietary Supplement: individualist – high power distance***

**Table 5.40: Results on Dietary Supplement for Individualist – High Power Distance Thais**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.063 | 0.129 | 0.101 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.078 | 0.338 | 0.000 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.037 | 0.125 | 0.094 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.054 | 0.325 | 0.000 |

**Figure 5.11: Standardised Regression Weights on Dietary Supplement for Individualist – High Power Distance Thais**

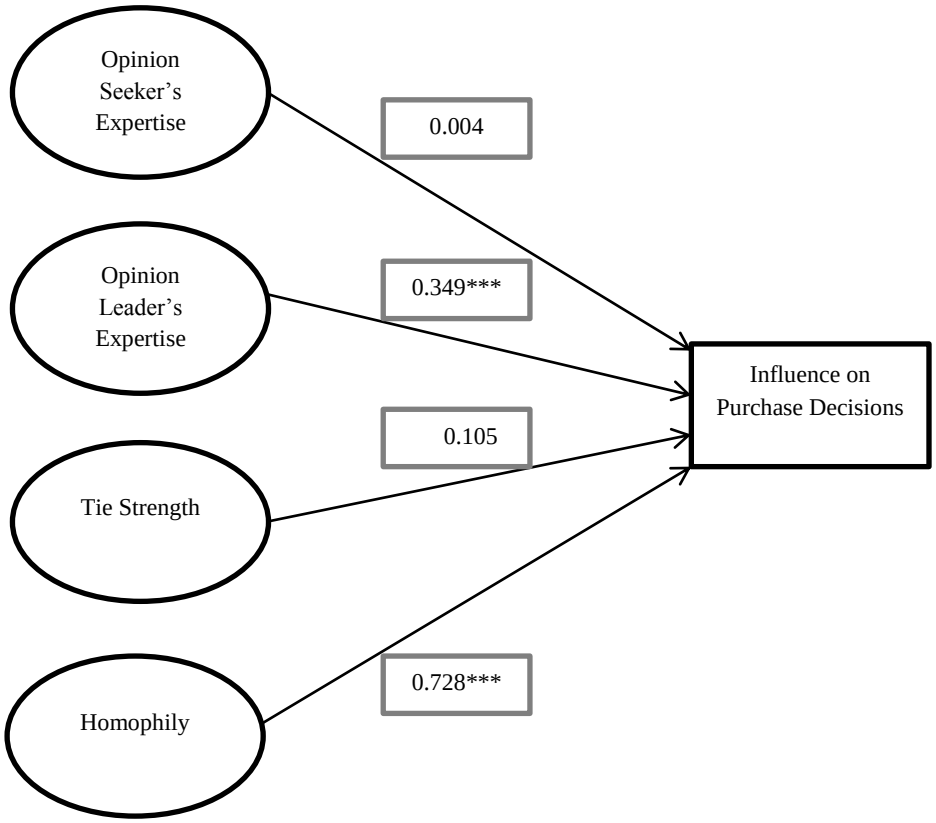



***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significan

**Table 5.41: Results on Dietary Supplement for Individualist – High Power Distance Americans**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.039 | 0.004 | 0.895 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.049 | 0.349 | 0.000 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.115 | 0.105 | 0.295 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.144 | 0.728 | 0.000 |

**Figure 5.12: Standardised Regression Weights on Dietary Supplement for Individualist – High Power Distance Americans**




***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

The Tables above demonstrate that the results are the same across both Thai and American individualists – high power distance individuals. They are influenced by opinion leader's expertise, and perceptual homophily for dietary supplement.

The magnitude of influence for Thai samples is highest for opinion leader's expertise (0.338). This is followed by perceptual homophily (0.325), opinion seeker's expertise (0.129) (insignificant), and tie strength (0.125) (insignificant). The magnitude of influence for American samples is highest in perceptual homophily (0.728), opinion leader's expertise (0.349), tie strength (0.105) (insignificant), and opinion seeker's expertise (0.004) (insignificant).

From the results, it can be concluded that collectivists – high power distance individuals across two countries are quite similar in the influence they receive by their opinion leaders in dietary supplement. In other words, an individualist – high power distance Thais and Americans will rely both perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise in his/her purchase decision of dietary supplement.

In comparison to overall country results, the results of both Thai and American individualist – high power distance groups are similar to overall American results. The magnitude however is different, with American individualist – high power distance results similar to overall Americans that put much more weight on perceptual homophily than Thai counterparts.

**Table 5.42: Assessment of Model Fit for Individualist – High Power Distance Thais on Dietary Supplement**

| Parameter | Value |
|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 375.740 |
| Degree of Freedom | 166 |
| Relative Chi-Square | 2.263 |
| P-Value | 0.000 |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | 0.082 |
| Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) | 0.854 |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | 0.910 |
| Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) | 0.796 |

The measurement model of overall Americans on dietary supplement shows a good fit due to low relative chi-square at a ratio of 2.263:1, which is lower than 3:1(Kline, 1998; Ullman, 2001). This ratio indicates a good fit between estimated model and observed data. P-value is lower than 0.05 which indicates a poor fit. However, chi-square model is sensitive to sample size. A large sample size increases the chi-square value leading to statistically significance, thus erroneously implying a poor data to model fit (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 211). Consequently, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that a researcher should consider other fit indices rather than Chi-square's p-value to evaluate goodness of fit between the estimated model and the observed data. RMSEA of the measurement model is 0.082 which is lower than 0.1 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). This shows a good fit between the measurement model and the observed data. Furthermore, GFI of 0.854 is close 0.9 (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 76), CFI of 0.910 is above the cut-off point at 0.90(Browne and Cudeck, 1993), indicating a good fit. Lastly, AGFI of 0.796 is close to cut-off point at 0.8 (Taylor and Todd, 1995), indicating a reasonable fit. Thus, overall these fit indices indicate a reasonable fit between measurement model and the observed data.

**Table 5.43: Assessment of Model Fit for Individualist – High Power Distance Americans on Dietary Supplement**

| Parameter | Value |
|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 343.074 |
| Degree of Freedom | 133 |
| Relative Chi-Square | 2.580 |
| P-Value | 0.000 |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | 0.057 |
| Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) | 0.935 |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | 0.903 |
| Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) | 0.887 |

The measurement model of overall Americans on dietary supplement shows a good fit due to low relative chi-square at a ratio of 2.580:1, which is lower than 3:1(Kline, 1998; Ullman, 2001). This ratio indicates a good fit between estimated model and observed data. P-value is lower than 0.05 which indicates a poor fit. However, chi-square model is sensitive to sample size. A large sample size increases the chi-square value leading to statistically significance, thus erroneously implying a poor data to model fit (Schumacker and Lomax, 2011, p. 211). Consequently, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that a researcher should consider other fit indices rather than Chi-square's p-value to evaluate goodness of fit between the estimated model and the observed data. RMSEA of the measurement model is 0.057 which is lower than 0.1 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). This shows a good fit between the measurement model and the observed data. Furthermore, GFI of 0.935 is above cut-off point at 0.9 (Byrne, 1994), CFI of 0.903 is above the cut-off point at 0.90 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993), indicating a good fit. Lastly, AGFI of 0.887 is above cut-off point at 0.8 (Taylor and Todd, 1995), indicating a good fit. Thus, overall these fit indices indicate a reasonable fit between measurement model and the observed data.

**Table 5.44: Squared Multiple Correlations ($R^2$) for Dietary Supplement for Individualist – High Power Distance Thais**

| Construct | Item | Estimate |
|---|---|---|
| **Influence on Purchase Decision** | **Influence** | **0.413** |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.821 |
| | Expertise in the Subject Area | 0.793 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.018 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.396 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.812 |
| | Expertise in the Subject Area | 0.874 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.016 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.411 |
| Tie Strength | Relationship with Opinion Leader | 0.783 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Personal Confidence | 0.784 |
| | Likelihood of Assistance | 0.848 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Free Time together | 0.766 |
| Homophily | Similar Outlook on Life | 0.652 |
| | Similar Likes and Dislikes | 0.857 |
| Influence | Little New Information | 0.283 |
| | Influence on Choice | 0.596 |
| | Mention Things Not Considered | 0.538 |
| | Different Ideas | 0.383 |
| | Did not Change My Mind | 0.016 |
| | Help Reach A Decision | 0.447 |
| | Purchase Influence | 0.300 |

**Table 5.45: Squared Multiple Correlations ($R^2$) for Dietary Supplement for Individualist – High Power Distance Americans**

| Construct | Item | Estimate |
|---|---|---|
| **Influence on Purchase Decision** | **Influence** | **0.402** |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.818 |
| | Expertise in Subject Area | 0.819 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.031 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.439 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | Product Knowledge | 0.879 |
| | Expertise in Subject Area | 0.827 |
| | Usage Experience | 0.136 |
| | Informed about Latest Updates | 0.516 |
| Tie Strength | Relationship with Opinion Leader | 0.617 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Personal Confidence | 0.742 |
| | Likelihood of Assistance | 0.779 |
| | Likelihood of Sharing Free Time together | 0.460 |
| Homophily | Similar Outlook on Life | 0.691 |
| | Similar Likes and Dislikes | 0.680 |
| Influence | Little New Information | 0.208 |
| | Influence on Choice | 0.576 |
| | Mention Things Not Considered | 0.405 |
| | Different Ideas | 0.461 |
| | Did not Change My Mind | 0.117 |
| | Help Reach A Decision | 0.464 |
| | Purchase Influence | 0.280 |

### *5.6.2 Comparative Results for Sub-Cultures in Each Country (Control for Country and Product Type)*

#### *5.6.2.1 Fashion Goods: Thais*

**Table 5.46: Results on Fashion Goods for Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.059 | 0.264 | 0.002 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.067 | 0.253 | 0.002 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.044 | 0.293 | 0.000 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.065 | 0.209 | 0.002 |

**Table 5.47: Results on Fashion Goods for Individualist – High Power Distance Thais**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.038 | 0.098 | 0.160 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.070 | 0.447 | 0.000 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.025 | 0.102 | 0.143 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.065 | 0.562 | 0.000 |

The Tables above demonstrate variation across high power distance Thais in their purchase decisions of fashion goods. Both groups are influenced by expertise of the opinion leaders and perceptual homophily between themselves and their opinion leaders. However, the Table above also shows that collectivist – high power distance Thais also are influenced by their own expertise and by tie strength in their purchase decision of fashion goods.

The magnitude of influence for collectivist – high power distance Thais are quite close together. It is highest in tie strength (0.293). This is followed by opinion seeker's expertise (0.264), opinion leader's expertise (0.253), and perceptual homophily (0.209). The magnitude of influence for individualist – high power distance Thais is highest in perceptual homophily (0.562). This is followed by opinion leader's expertise (0.447), tie strength (0.102) (insignificant), and opinion seeker's expertise (0.098) (insignificant). The weights vary significantly across constructs for individualist – high power distance Thais, which are placed much more towards perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise.

From the results, it can be concluded that collectivists – high power distance Thais and individualist – high power distance Thais vary in the influence they receive by their opinion leaders in fashion goods. A collectivist – high power distance Thai will rely on tie strength, opinion seeker's expertise, opinion leader's expertise, and perceptual homophily in his/her purchase decision of fashion goods. On the contrary, an individualist – high power distance Thai will rely on only perceptual homophily and partially on opinion leader's expertise.

In consideration with the overall models of two countries, it can be argued that the results of these groups fit well with each of the two countries. Results from collectivist – high power distance Thais fit well with the overall Thai results. On the contrary, results from individualist – high power distance Thais fit well with the overall American results. The magnitude however is different. Both countries are similar in the ranking the samples give to the constructs. This is only similar to

individualist – high power distance Thais, who rank perceptual homophily, opinion leader's expertise, tie strength, and opinion seeker's expertise in order of importance. Collectivist – high power distance Thais however rank tie strength, opinion seeker's expertise, opinion leader's expertise, and perceptual homophily as their ranking in order of importance.

#### ***5.6.2.2 Fashion Goods: Americans***

**Table 5.48: Results on Fashion Goods for Collectivist – High Power Distance Americans**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.056 | 0.024 | 0.677 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.061 | 0.135 | 0.030 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.232 | 0.995 | 0.000 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.325 | 0.795 | 0.006 |

**Table 5.49: Results on Fashion Goods for Individualist – High Power Distance Americans**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.026 | 0.072 | 0.417 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.194 | 0.367 | 0.077 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.260 | 0.282 | 0.112 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.134 | 0.457 | 0.017 |

The Tables above demonstrate variation across high power distance Americans in their purchase decisions of fashion goods. Both groups are influenced by perceptual homophily between themselves and their opinion leaders. Opinion leader's expertise is significant for collectivist – high power distance Americans, while it is only significant at 0.1 level for individualist – high power distance Americans.

The magnitude of influence for of each construct varies a great deal across both American groups. For collectivist – high power distance Americans, it is highest in tie strength (0.995). This is followed by perceptual homophily (0.795), opinion leader's expertise (0.135), and opinion seeker's expertise (0.024). The weights vary significantly across constructs for collectivist – high power distance Americans, which are placed much more towards perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise. The magnitude of influence for individualist – high power distance Americans is highest in perceptual homophily (0.457). This is followed by opinion leader's expertise (0.367) (significant at 0.1 level), tie strength (0.282) (insignificant), and opinion seeker's expertise (0.072) (insignificant). The weights vary less significantly for individualist – high power distance Americans. However, the weights are still placed more towards perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise.

From the results, it can be concluded that collectivists – high power distance Americans and individualist – high power distance Americans vary in the influence they receive by their opinion leaders in fashion goods. A collectivist – high power distance Americans will rely on tie strength, perceptual homophily, and opinion leader's expertise in his/her purchase decision of fashion goods. On the contrary, an individualist – high power distance American will rely on only perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise.

In consideration with the overall models of two countries, it can be argued that only the results from collectivist – high power distance Americans fit well with overall American results. The magnitude however is different. In terms of ranking of

the constructs, this is only similar to individualist – high power distance Americans, who rank perceptual homophily, opinion leader's expertise, tie strength, and opinion seeker's expertise in order of importance. Collectivist – high power distance Americans however rank tie strength, perceptual homophily, opinion leader's expertise, and opinion seeker's expertise as their ranking in order of importance. It can be argued that collectivist – high power distance Americans are similar to overall Thais, who rank tie strength as the most influential construct.

#### ***5.6.2.3 Dietary Supplement: Thais***

**Table 5.50: Results on Dietary Supplement for Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.043 | 0.270 | 0.002 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.065 | 0.269 | 0.003 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.030 | 0.264 | 0.003 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.048 | 0.280 | 0.009 |

**Table 5.51: Results on Dietary Supplement for Individualist – High Power Distance Thais**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.063 | 0.129 | 0.101 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.078 | 0.338 | 0.000 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.037 | 0.125 | 0.094 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.054 | 0.325 | 0.000 |

The Tables above demonstrate similarities and variations across high power distance Thais in their purchase decisions of dietary supplement. Both groups are influenced by expertise of the opinion leaders and perceptual homophily between themselves and their opinion leaders. However, the Table above also shows that collectivist – high power distance Thais also are influenced by their own expertise.

The magnitude of influence for collectivist – high power distance Thais are quite close together for those constructs that are significant. It is highest in perceptual homophily (0.280). This is followed by opinion seeker's expertise (0.270), opinion leader's expertise (0.269), and tie strength (0.264). The magnitude of influence for individualist – high power distance Thais is highest in opinion leader's expertise (0.338). This is followed by perceptual homophily (0.325), opinion seeker's expertise (0.129) (insignificant), and tie strength (0.125) (insignificant). Again, the weights are quite similar for those significant constructs (perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise).

From the results, it can be concluded that collectivists – high power distance Thais and individualist – high power distance Thais vary in the influence they receive

by their opinion leaders in dietary supplement. A collectivist – high power distance Thai will rely on perceptual homophily, opinion seeker's expertise, and opinion leader's expertise in his/her purchase decision of dietary supplement. On the contrary, an individualist – high power distance Thai will rely on only perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise.

In consideration with the overall models of two countries, it can be argued that the results of these groups are similar to each of the two countries. Results from collectivist – high power distance Thais fit well with the overall Thai results. The exception however is opinion seeker's expertise which is insignificant here. On the contrary, results from individualist – high power distance Thais fit well with the overall American results. The magnitude however is different. Overall Thai results rank opinion leader's expertise as second most influential factor. However, collectivist – high power distance Thais here rank opinion seeker's expertise as second most influential, although the difference in weights is only 0.001. Individualist – high power distance Thais also differ from overall American results in that individualist – high power distance Thais rank opinion leader's expertise as most importance compared to overall American results which rank perceptual homophily as most important. Overall Americans also place double more weights to both opinion leader's expertise and perceptual homophily.

***5.6.2.4 Dietary Supplement: Americans***

**Table 5.52: Results on Dietary Supplement for Collectivist – High Power Distance Americans**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.074 | 0.064 | 0.648 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.076 | 0.352 | 0.053 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.856 | 0.081 | 0.616 |
| Homophily → Influence | 1.413 | 0.870 | 0.002 |

**Table 5.53: Results on Dietary Supplement for Individualist – High Power Distance Americans**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.039 | 0.004 | 0.895 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.049 | 0.349 | 0.000 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.115 | 0.105 | 0.295 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.144 | 0.728 | 0.000 |

The Tables above demonstrate similarity across high power distance Americans in their purchase decisions of dietary supplement. Both groups are influenced by perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise (significant at 0.01

level for individualist – high power distance Americans and significant at 0.1 level for collectivist – high power distance Americans).

The magnitude of influence for each factor varies a great deal across both American groups. For both groups, the most influential factor is perceptual homophily. This is followed by opinion leader's expertise, tie strength, and opinion seeker's expertise. The weights vary significantly across collectivist – high power distance Americans, which are placed much more towards perceptual homophily (0.870) and less on opinion leader's expertise (0.352). The magnitude of influence for individualist – high power distance Americans is highest in perceptual homophily (0.728) and a lot less in opinion leader's expertise (0.349). This is followed by tie strength (0.105) (insignificant), and opinion seeker's expertise (0.004) (insignificant).

From the results, it can be concluded that collectivists – high power distance Americans and individualist – high power distance Americans are rather similar in the influence they receive by their opinion leaders in dietary supplement. Both groups will rely on perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise in his/her purchase decision of dietary supplement.

In consideration with the overall models of two countries, it can be argued that only the results from both collectivist – high power distance Americans and individualist – high power distance Americans fit well with overall American results. The magnitude however is different. Overall American results place similar weighting to perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise. Here, although the ranking is similar, the weight is placed much more towards perceptual homophily.

### *5.6.3 Comparative Study for Product Types (Control for Country and Cultural Background)*

#### *5.6.3.1 Thais: Collectivist – High Power Distance*

**Table 5.54: Results on Fashion Goods for Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.059 | 0.264 | 0.002 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.067 | 0.253 | 0.002 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.044 | 0.293 | 0.000 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.065 | 0.209 | 0.002 |

**Table 5.55: Results on Dietary Supplement for Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.043 | 0.270 | 0.002 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.065 | 0.269 | 0.003 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.030 | 0.264 | 0.003 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.048 | 0.280 | 0.009 |

The Tables above demonstrate similarities and variations across collectivist - high power distance Thais in their purchase decisions of two product types. Both groups are influenced by opinion seeker's expertise, opinion leader's expertise, and perceptual homophily. However, the Table above also shows that, for fashion goods, collectivist – high power distance Thais are also influenced by tie strength.

The magnitude of influence for collectivist – high power distance Thais across these two product types are quite close together for those constructs that are significant. For fashion goods, it is highest in tie strength (0.293). This is followed by opinion seeker's expertise (0.264), opinion leader's expertise (0.253), and perceptual homophily (0.209). The magnitude of influence for dietary supplement is highest in perceptual homophily (0.280). This is followed by opinion seeker's expertise (0.270), opinion leader's expertise (0.269), and tie strength (0.264).

From the results, it can be concluded that collectivist – high power distance Thais are influenced by opinion leaders in their purchase decision of fashion goods and dietary supplement in different ways. For fashion goods, a collectivist – high power distance Thai will rely on tie strength, opinion seeker's expertise, and opinion leader's expertise in his/her purchase decision. On the contrary for dietary supplement, a collectivist – high power distance Thai will rely on only perceptual homophily, their own expertise, and opinion leader's expertise.

In consideration with the overall Thailand country model, it can be argued that the results of these groups are similar to overall Thai results. The exception however is tie strength which is insignificant for dietary supplement. The magnitude however is different. For fashion goods, overall Thais rank perceptual homophily, opinion leader's expertise, opinion seeker's expertise, and tie strength in order of their most influential factors in the purchase decision. However, collectivist – high power distance Thais rank tie strength, opinion seeker's expertise, opinion leader's expertise, and tie strength as their most influential factors in the purchase decision. In addition, the weights are placed more towards opinion leader's expertise and perceptual

homophily for overall Thai results, as opposed to similar weighting across all factors for collectivist – high power distance Thais. For dietary supplement, overall Thais rank perceptual homophily, opinion leader's expertise, tie strength, and opinion seeker's expertise in order of their most influential factors in the purchase decision. However, collectivist – high power distance Thais rank perceptual homophily, opinion seeker's expertise, opinion leader's expertise, and tie strength as their most influential factors in the purchase decision. In addition, the weights are placed rather equally across all factors except opinion seeker's expertise, as opposed to similar weighting across all factors except tie strength (insignificant) for collectivist – high power distance Thais.

#### ***5.6.3.2 Thais: Individualist – High Power Distance***

**Table 5.56: Results on Fashion Goods for Individualist – High Power Distance Thais**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.038 | 0.098 | 0.160 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.070 | 0.447 | 0.000 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.025 | 0.102 | 0.143 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.065 | 0.562 | 0.000 |

**Table 5.57: Results on Dietary Supplement for Individualist – High Power Distance Thais**

| **Antecedents** | **Standard Error** | **Standardised Regression Weights** | **P-Value** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.063 | 0.129 | 0.101 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.078 | 0.338 | 0.000 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.037 | 0.125 | 0.094 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.054 | 0.325 | 0.000 |

The Tables above demonstrate similarities and variations across individualist - high power distance Thais in their purchase decisions of two product types. Both groups are influenced by opinion leader's expertise, and perceptual homophily. However, the Table above also shows that individualist – high power distance Thais are also influenced by tie strength, although at low level of significance of 0.01 level.

The weights of influence for individualist – high power distance Thais across these two product types are within the range of 0.325 to 0.562 for those constructs that are significant. For fashion goods, it is highest in perceptual homophily (0.562). This is followed by opinion leader's expertise (0.447), tie strength (0.102) (insignificant), and opinion seeker's expertise (0.098) (insignificant). The magnitude of influence for dietary supplement is highest in opinion leader's expertise (0.338). This is followed by perceptual homophily (0.325), opinion seeker's expertise (0.129) (insignificant), and tie strength (0.125) (insignificant).

From the results, it can be concluded that individualist – high power distance Thais are influenced by opinion leaders in their purchase decision of fashion goods and dietary supplement in similar ways. An individualist – high power distance Thai

will rely on perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise in his/her purchase decision across both product types.

In consideration with the overall country model, it can be argued that the results of fashion goods is similar to overall Thai results for fashion goods, but only in terms of magnitude. The weights are placed more towards perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise, just like individualist – high power distance Thais. However, all factors are significant in the case of overall Thai results for fashion goods. On the contrary, only opinion leader's expertise and perceptual homophily are significant for individualist – high power distance Thais. As for dietary supplement, individualist – high power distance Thais are more similar to overall American results for dietary supplement. The exception however is the magnitude. While the weight is only 0.325 for perceptual homophily in the case of individualist – high power distance Thais, the weight for overall American results is 0.920. Similarly, although to a lesser degree, opinion leader's expertise is 0.338 for individualist – high power distance Thais, the weight for overall American results is 0.482.

#### ***5.6.3.3 Americans: Collectivist – High Power Distance***

**Table 5.58: Results on Fashion Goods for Collectivist – High Power Distance Americans**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.056 | 0.024 | 0.677 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.061 | 0.135 | 0.030 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.232 | 0.995 | 0.000 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.325 | 0.795 | 0.006 |

**Table 5.59: Results on Dietary Supplement for Collectivist – High Power Distance Americans**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.074 | 0.064 | 0.648 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.076 | 0.352 | 0.053 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.856 | 0.081 | 0.616 |
| Homophily → Influence | 1.413 | 0.870 | 0.002 |

The Tables above demonstrate similarities and variations across collectivist - high power distance Americans in their purchase decisions of two product types. Both groups are influenced by opinion leader's expertise and perceptual homophily. However, the Table above also suggests that, for fashion goods, collectivist – high power distance Americans are also influenced by tie strength.

The magnitude of influence for collectivist – high power distance Americans across these two product types vary wildly for all constructs whether they are significant or not. For fashion goods, it is highest in tie strength (0.995). This is followed by perceptual homophily (0.795), opinion leader's expertise (0.135), and opinion seeker's expertise (0.224) (insignificant). The magnitude of influence for dietary supplement is highest in perceptual homophily (0.870). This is followed by opinion leader's expertise (0.352), tie strength (0.081) (insignificant), and opinion seeker's expertise (0.064) (insignificant).

From the results, it can be concluded that Americans are influenced by opinion leaders in their purchase decision of fashion goods and dietary supplement in different

ways. For fashion goods, a collectivist – high power distance American will rely on tie strength, perceptual homophily, and opinion leader's expertise. On the contrary for dietary supplement, a collectivist – high power distance American will rely on only perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise.

In consideration with the overall American country model, it can be argued that the results of these groups are similar to overall American results. Slight difference however is opinion leader's expertise, which is significant at 0.1 level for dietary supplement. The order of influence is also the same for dietary supplement, however, for fashion goods, this is different. For fashion goods, overall Americans rank perceptual homophily, opinion leader's expertise, tie strength, and opinion seeker's expertise (insignificant) in order of their most influential factors in the purchase decision. However, collectivist – high power distance Americans rank tie strength, perceptual homophily, opinion leader's expertise, and opinion seeker's expertise (insignificant) as their most influential factors in the purchase decision. In addition, the weights are placed more towards perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise for collectivist – high power distance Americans, as opposed to much more weight on perceptual homophily and half as much on opinion leader's expertise. For dietary supplement, overall Americans rank perceptual homophily, opinion leader's expertise, tie strength (insignificant), and opinion seeker's expertise (insignificant) in order of their most influential factors in the purchase decision. This is the same with overall American results for dietary supplement. In addition, the weights are placed in similar manner across both factors, with perceptual homophily having about double the weight of opinion leader's expertise.

***5.6.3.4 Americans: Individualist – High Power Distance***

**Table 5.60: Results on Fashion Goods for Individualist – High Power Distance Americans**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.026 | 0.072 | 0.417 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.194 | 0.367 | 0.077 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.260 | 0.282 | 0.112 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.134 | 0.457 | 0.017 |

**Table 5.61: Results on Dietary Supplement for Individualist – High Power Distance Americans**

| Antecedents | Standard Error | Standardised Regression Weights | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise → Influence | 0.039 | 0.004 | 0.895 |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise → Influence | 0.049 | 0.349 | 0.000 |
| Tie Strength → Influence | 0.115 | 0.105 | 0.295 |
| Homophily → Influence | 0.144 | 0.728 | 0.000 |

The Tables above demonstrate similarities and variations across individualist - high power distance Americans in their purchase decisions of two product types. Both groups are influenced by perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise. However, the Table above also suggests that collectivist – high power distance

Americans are influenced by opinion leader's expertise at only 0.1 level for fashion goods.

The magnitude of influence for collectivist – high power distance Americans across fashion goods is closer together, in comparison to dietary supplement, which vary wildly. For fashion goods, it is highest in perceptual homophily (0.457). This is followed by opinion leader's expertise (0.367), tie strength (0.282) (insignificant), and opinion seeker's expertise (0.072) (insignificant). The magnitude of influence for dietary supplement is highest in perceptual homophily (0.728). This is followed by opinion leader's expertise (0.349), tie strength (0.105) (insignificant), and opinion seeker's expertise (0.004) (insignificant).

From the results, it can be concluded that Americans are influenced by opinion leaders in their purchase decision of fashion goods and dietary supplement in similar ways. For both product types, a collectivist – high power distance American will rely on perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise in his/her purchase decision.

In consideration with the overall American country model, it can be argued that the results of dietary supplement are similar to overall American results for dietary supplement. On the contrary, the results of fashion goods are not similar to overall American result for fashion goods. The weights are also different. For fashion goods, overall Americans and individualist – high power distance Americans rank perceptual homophily, opinion leader's expertise, tie strength, and opinion seeker's expertise in order of their most influential factors in the purchase decision. However, the weights are placed much more towards perceptual homophily for overall American results, as opposed to similar weighting across all factors for collectivist – high power distance Americans. For dietary supplement, both overall Americans and individualist – high power distance Americans rank perceptual homophily, opinion leader's expertise, tie strength, and opinion seeker's expertise in order of their most influential factors in the purchase decision. In addition, the weights are placed in a similar fashion for both overall American model and individualist – high power

distance Americans, where the weights for perceptual homophily are about double those of opinion leader's expertise.

## 5.7 Summary of Results

**Table 5.62: Standardised Regression Weights and Significance Levels across All Groups**

| | Overall Thais | | Overall Americans | | Collectivist – High Power Distance | | | | Individualist – High Power Distance | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Thais | | US | | Thais | | US | |
| | FG | DS | FG | DS | FG | DS | FG | DS | FG | DS | FG | DS |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.190 *** | 0.159 *** | 0.102 - | 0.143 - | 0.264 *** | 0.270 *** | 0.024 - | 0.064 - | 0.098 - | 0.129 - | 0.072 - | 0.004 - |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.407 *** | 0.284 *** | 0.402 *** | 0.482 *** | 0.253 *** | 0.269 *** | 0.135 *** | 0.352 * | 0.447 *** | 0.338 *** | 0.367 * | 0.349 *** |
| Tie Strength | 0.167 *** | 0.234 *** | 0.235 *** | 0.157 - | 0.293 *** | 0.264 *** | 0.995 *** | 0.081 - | 0.102 - | 0.125 * | 0.282 - | 0.105 - |
| Homophily | 0.475 *** | 0.291 *** | 0.824 *** | 0.920 *** | 0.209 *** | 0.280 *** | 0.795 *** | 0.870 *** | 0.562 *** | 0.325 *** | 0.457 ** | 0.728 *** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and - Non Significant

FG: Fashion Goods and DS: Dietary Supplement

### *5.7.1 Opinion Seeker's Expertise*

It is shown from the Table above that only overall Thais from the whole Thai sampling population in this study and collectivists – high power distance Thais that regard opinion seeker's expertise as significantly influential. For those groups that are significant, the weights are higher amongst Thai collectivists – high power distance for both fashion goods (0.264) and dietary supplement (0.270). The weights are less for overall Thais, which are 0.190 for fashion goods and 0.159 for overall Thais.

The direction, however, is contradictory with the literature findings. Therefore, the argument that "the more superior the opinion seeker's expertise, the less the influence on purchase decision" does not hold.

However, the results show an identifiable trend that deserves attention. It seems that overall Thais and in particular collectivist – high power distance Thais find that despite their superior expertise on both fashion goods and dietary supplement, the influence of opinion leaders still have an overwhelming effect on their purchase decision. It is as if they do not are not confident and do not trust themselves so much. This is likely a collectivist – high power distance outcome, as a goal of such person includes the fit in with their group(s). However, it must be argued that American counterparts do not share the same results. The results suggest that own expertise of collectivist – high power distance Americans does not affect opinion leaders in their purchase decision. This must be country specific influence. In the next chapter, this will be discussed in further details.

As for product types, opinion seeker's expertise seems to have a stronger effect on overall Thais for fashion goods (0.190) than for dietary supplement (0.159). As for collectivist – high power distance Thais, opinion seeker's expertise seems to have a very slightly stronger effect for dietary supplement (0.264) than for fashion goods (0.270). There is no effect on Americans with the exception of slight significance on collectivist – high power distance Americans at 0.1 level.

### ***5.7.2 Opinion Leader's Expertise***

Opinion leader's expertise is shown to be a significant factor across both nationalities and across both product types. The exception is collectivist – high power distance Americans in their purchase decision of dietary supplement and individualist – high power distance Americans in their purchase decision of fashion goods. These two are also significant but at 0.1 significance level. Thus it is accepted that the more superior the opinion leader's expertise, the greater the influence on purchase decision.

In terms of the magnitude on country level, opinion leader's expertise has more influence on purchase decision of fashion goods on Thais (0.407) than on American counterparts (0.402). On the other hand, opinion leader's expertise has

more influence on purchase decision of dietary supplement on Americans (0.428) than Thai counterparts (0.284).

In terms of the magnitude on sub-cultural level, opinion leader's expertise has most influence on individualist – high power distance Thais in their purchase decision of fashion goods (0.447). The least but still significant is on collectivist – high power distance Americans in their purchase decision of dietary supplement (0.135).

As for product types, opinion leader's expertise seems to have a stronger influence on overall Thais for fashion goods (0.407) than for dietary supplement (0.284). On the contrary, overall Americans seem to have a reverse effect. Overall Americans weigh influence of opinion leader's expertise at 0.402 for fashion goods, and 0.482 for dietary supplement. As for collectivist – high power distance Thais, opinion leader's expertise has rather similar weights across both product types with a little more weight on dietary supplement. It is 0.253 for fashion goods and 0.269 for dietary supplement. As for collectivist – high power distance Americans, opinion leader's expertise also has a stronger influence on dietary supplement, with weights of 0.135 for fashion goods and 0.352 dietary supplement (significant at only 0.1 significance level). As for individualist – high power distance Thais, opinion leader's expertise has an influence weight of 0.447 for fashion goods, versus 0.338 for dietary supplement. As for individualist – high power distance Americans, opinion leader's expertise has an influence weight of 0.367 for fashion goods (significant at 0.1 level), versus 0.349 for dietary supplement. As such, collectivist – high power distance individuals weigh more influence of opinion leaders expertise on dietary supplement compared to fashion goods. On the other hand, individualist – high power distance individuals weigh more influence of opinion leader's on fashion goods compared to dietary supplement.

### ***5.7.3 Tie Strength***

Tie strength is shown to be a significant factor across both overall Thais and overall Americans and across both product types. However, at sub-cultural level, only collectivist – high power distance Thais and Americans show significant influence, and only for fashion goods. As for individualist – high power distance, only Thais show slight significant influence at 0.1 level for dietary supplement.

In terms of the magnitude on country level, tie strength has more influence on purchase decision of fashion goods on Americans (0.235) than on Thai counterparts (0.167). On the other hand, tie strength has more influence on purchase decision of dietary supplement on Thais (0.234) than American counterparts (0.157).

In terms of the magnitude on sub-cultural level, opinion leader's expertise has most influence on individualist – high power distance Thais in their purchase decision of fashion goods (0.447). The least but still significant is on collectivist – high power distance Americans in their purchase decision of dietary supplement (0.135).

As for product types, tie strength has more influence on purchase decision of fashion goods (0.167) than on dietary supplement (0.234) for overall Thais. On the other hand, tie strength has more influence on purchase decision of dietary supplement (0.235) than on dietary supplement (0.157) for overall Americans. Nevertheless, since dietary supplement is not significant across all groups, with exception of individualist – high power distance Thais which is significant at 0.1 level (however fashion goods is not significant), comparison between product types cannot be made. As such, it can be concluded that tie strength between opinion leader and opinion seeker does not have a significant influence on purchase decision of dietary supplement. On the contrary, tie strength has an influence on purchase decision of fashion goods when the opinion seeker is a collectivist – high power distance as is shown by data for both Thai and American collectivist – high power distance.

### ***5.7.4 Perceptual Homophily***

Perceptual homophily is shown to be a significant factor across both nationalities and across both product types. Thus it can be accepted that the stronger the perceptual homophily, the greater the influence on purchase decision.

In terms of the magnitude on country level, perceptual homophily has more influence on purchase decision of fashion goods on Americans (0.824) than on Thai counterparts (0.475). In a similar fashion, perceptual homophily has more influence on purchase decision of dietary supplement on Americans (0.920) than Thai counterparts (0.291).

In terms of the magnitude on sub-cultural level, perceptual homophily has most influence on collectivist – high power distance Americans in their purchase decision of dietary supplement (0.870). The least but significant is on collectivist – high power distance Thais in their purchase decision of fashion goods (0.209).

As for product types, perceptual homophily seems to have a stronger influence on overall Thais for fashion goods (0.475) than for dietary supplement (0.291). On the contrary, overall Americans seem to have a reverse effect. Overall Americans weigh influence of perceptual homophily at 0.824 for fashion goods, and 0.920 for dietary supplement. As for collectivist – high power distance Thais, perceptual homophily has more weight on dietary supplement (0.280) than fashion goods (0.209). This is similar to collectivist – high power distance Americans who put more weight on dietary supplement (0.870) compared to fashion goods (0.795). The magnitude however is very different across two countries. Americans place at least double more weight on perceptual homophily compared to Thai counterparts. Therefore, it can be argued that American opinion seekers view perceptual homophily as more influential in their purchase decision than Thai counterparts. As for individualist – high power distance groups, individualist – high power distance Thais place influence weight of 0.562 for fashion goods compared to 0.325 for dietary supplement. In contrast, individualist – high power distance Americans place influence weight of 0.457 for fashion goods and 0.728 for dietary supplement.

# Chapter VI

# Discussion

## 6.1 Country Level

### *6.1.1 Fashion Goods*

**Table 6.1: Regression Weights and Significance Level between Two Countries on Fashion Goods**

| | Overall Thais | Overall Americans |
|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.190 *** | 0.102 - |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.407 *** | 0.402 *** |
| Tie Strength | 0.167 *** | 0.235 *** |
| Homophily | 0.475 *** | 0.824 *** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

Thais display a tendency to be influenced by others in their purchase decision of fashion goods, as shown by significant p-values throughout all personal influences and interpersonal influences. Americans, on the other hand, are influenced by the expertise of the opinion leaders, tie strength, and perceptual homophily, but not so much by opinion seeker's expertise, as seen from low significance acceptance.

As for the order of influence for both Thais and Americans, perceptual homophily appears the most influential. This is followed by opinion leader's

expertise, opinion seeker's expertise, and tie strength. Perceptual homophily appears most influential by a large margin for Americans in comparison to Thais. This means that the Americans value the opinions of opinion leaders that share similar perception and goals in life with them even more than Thais do in their purchase of fashion goods. Tie strength is stronger for Americans, although by not a wide margin.

Thus, if we consider Thais as representatives from a collectivist – high power distance culture, and Americans as representatives from an individualist – low power distance culture, fashion goods managers and marketing practitioners alike may consider assessing the opinion leaders who have a similar perceptual homophily with the customers as the first priority to spread word-of-mouth. Perceptual homophily is even more important for individualist – low power distance cultures compared to collectivist – high power distance cultures. This is followed by opinion leaders who the customers consider fashion experts, and lastly opinion leaders the customers consider 'friends and family' or likely to have high tie strength with.

As for opinion seeker's expertise, results from American respondents indicate no significance. Hence there is no support for this personal force. Although this contradicts with some literature review, Bansal and Voyer (2000) also found similar outcome. In their research of word-of-mouth on services purchase decision, they found that the relationship was extremely weak and therefore not statistically significant. In contrast, Thai respondents indicate significant relationship, but results indicate a positive relationship between opinion seeker's expertise and its influence on purchase decisions from opinion leader, which is contradictory to the literature review. It shows that Thais value opinions of their opinion leaders even if their own expertise is high while Americans do not. The argument that "the more superior the opinion seeker's expertise, the less the influence on purchase decision" does not hold for Thais. Even if Thai seekers think of themselves as experts in dressing up, they still resort to those who they consider fashion gurus for advice. This could be due to the fact fashion goods is a subjective product. Trend in fashion goods is also a fast

changing. Those who think of themselves as experts are those who pay attention to fashion and hence will resort to advice from others for latest trend in fashion.

### ***6.1.2 Dietary Supplement***

**Table 6.2: Regression Weight and Significance Level between Two Countries on Fashion Goods**

| | Overall Thais | Overall Americans |
|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.159 *** | 0.143 - |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.284 *** | 0.482 *** |
| Tie Strength | 0.234 *** | 0.157 - |
| Homophily | 0.291 *** | 0.920 *** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and - Non Significant

As for dietary supplement, it can be inferred that as collectivists and high power distance individuals, Thais display a tendency to be influenced by all interpersonal and personal forces. Americans only are influenced by the expertise of the opinion leaders and perceptual homophily between the opinion seeker and opinion leader.

As for the order of influence for both Thais and Americans, perceptual homophily appears the most influential for both. This is followed by opinion leader's expertise, tie strength, and opinion seeker's expertise. Perceptual homophily appears most influential by a large margin for Americans in comparison to Thais. This means that the Americans value the opinions of opinion leaders that share similar perception and goals in life with them even more than Thais do in their purchase of dietary supplement. The magnitude for opinion leader's expertise also differs, with

Americans valuing the expertise of the opinion leaders more than Thais do. As for tie strength, which is the closeness construct, Thais rely on it while the Americans do not in their purchase of dietary supplement. This shows that whilst both cultures rank opinion leader's expertise as more influential in their purchase decision than tie strength. The degree is different. Americans think of expertise of opinion leaders more than Thais, and Thais think of tie strength more than their American counterparts.

Thus, if we consider Thais as representatives from a collectivist – high power distance culture, and Americans as representatives from an individualist – low power distance culture, dietary supplement marketing managers and business practitioners alike may consider assessing the opinion leaders who have a similar perceptual homophily with the customers as the first priority to spread word-of-mouth. Perceptual homophily is even more important for individualist – low power distance cultures compared to collectivist – high power distance cultures. In this comparison case, American respondents indicate three times higher weight than Thai counterparts. This is followed by opinion leaders who the customers consider experts. Again, people individualist – low power distance cultures may place more emphasis on opinion leader's expertise than people in collectivist - high power distance cultures. In this comparison case, American respondents indicate twice higher weight for opinion leader's expertise than Thai counterparts. Lastly people in collectivist – high power distance cultures will also consider opinion leaders whom the customers consider 'friends and family' or likely to have high tie strength with in their purchase decision of dietary supplement, as is the case for Thailand. People in individualist – low power distance cultures may state otherwise, as is the case for Americans. Tie strength indicates the relationship between the opinion seeker and the influence he/she receive from his/her 'friends and family' in the purchase decision. It is therefore a belonging to a group influence. It is clear that there is support for this collectivist influence only for Thais, while it is not supported for Americans.

As for opinion seeker's expertise, results from American respondents indicate no significance. Hence there is no support for this personal force. Although this contradicts with some literature review, Bansal and Voyer (2000) also found similar outcome. In their research of word-of-mouth on services purchase decision, they found that the relationship was extremely weak and therefore not statistically significant. In contrast, Thai respondents indicate significant relationship, but results indicate a positive relationship between opinion seeker's expertise and its influence on purchase decisions from opinion leader, which is contradictory to the literature review. It shows that Thais value opinions of their opinion leaders even if their own expertise is high while Americans do not.

### *6.1.3 Fashion Goods and Dietary Supplement*

**Table 6.3: Regression Weight and Significance Level between Two Countries on Fashion Goods and Dietary Supplement**

| | Overall Thais | | Overall Americans | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Fashion Goods | Dietary Supplement | Fashion Goods | Dietary Supplement |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.190 *** | 0.159 *** | 0.102 - | 0.143 - |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.407 *** | 0.284 *** | 0.402 *** | 0.482 *** |
| Tie Strength | 0.167 *** | 0.234 *** | 0.235 *** | 0.157 *** |
| Homophily | 0.475 *** | 0.291 *** | 0.824 *** | 0.920 *** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and - Non significant

It is shown from Table 6.3 above that perceptual homophily is foremost the most important for both Thais and Americans across both product types. This is

followed by opinion leader's expertise, tie strength (with exception of fashion goods for Thais), and opinion seeker's expertise (with exception of fashion goods for Thais).

The magnitudes however differ prominently. While Thai seekers resort to perceptual homophily more when they make purchase decisions on fashion goods, they do so less when they make purchase decisions on dietary supplement. This is in contrast to Americans, who resort to those with similar outlook in life more when they make purchase decisions on dietary supplement compared to fashion goods. Similar picture can be found for opinion leader's expertise, where Thai seekers think of the knowledge of the person who advises them more for fashion goods than dietary supplement, while Americans counterparts think of the knowledge of the person who advices them more for dietary supplement than fashion goods. Similarly for tie strength, where Thai seekers think of 'friends and family' advice more when they make purchase decisions on dietary supplement compared to American counterparts who think of 'friends and family' advice more when they make purchase on fashion goods.

As for opinion seeker's expertise, only Thais think of this as important in their purchase decision of both products. The direction, however, is contradictory to the literature findings. Thai seekers resort to their own expertise more for fashion goods than for dietary supplement, although the difference is not by a wide margin.

## 6.2 Sub-Cultural Level

### *6.2.1 Collectivist- High power Distance*

#### *6.2.1.1 Fashion Goods*

**Table 6.4: Regression Weight and Significance Level between Collectivist – High Power Distance Persons from Two Countries on Fashion Goods**

| | Thais | US |
|---|---|---|
| | Fashion Goods | Fashion Goods |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.264 *** | 0.024 - |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.253 *** | 0.135 *** |
| Tie Strength | 0.293 *** | 0.995 *** |
| Homophily | 0.209 *** | 0.795 *** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and - Non significant

Collectivist – high power distance Thais display a tendency to be influenced by others in their purchase decision of fashion goods, as shown by significant p-values throughout all personal influences and interpersonal influences. Americans, on the other hand, are influenced by the expertise of the opinion leaders, tie strength, and perceptual homophily, but not by opinion seeker's expertise. As such, the picture is similar across both countries in terms of what opinion seekers consider influential.

As for the order of influence, collectivist – high power distance Thais and Americans consider tie strength as the most influential. However, after that the order is different across two countries. Collectivist – high power distance Thais consider opinion seeker's expertise as the next most influential, followed by opinion leader's expertise, and perceptual homophily. Collectivist – high power distance Americans consider perceptual homophily as the next most important, followed by opinion leader's expertise.

Thus, one thing is common for fashion goods managers and marketing practitioners alike is that collectivist – high power distance individuals will consider their 'friends and family', fashion gurus, and those who share similar perception and outlook in life as their influential opinion leaders. For collectivist – high power distance Thais and Americans, 'friends and family' are considered most important. Therefore, the most important word-of-mouth source for both collectivist – high power distance Thais and Americans are their 'friends and family'. However, the degree of influence will vary for other factors. For collectivist – high power distance Thais, the next most important will be their own expertise in fashion. This is followed by fashion gurus, and least important amongst the four are those with similar perception and outlook in life. For collectivist – high power distance Americans, the next most important will be those who share similar perception and outlook in life. This is followed by fashion gurus.

#### ***6.2.1.2 Dietary Supplement***

**Table 6.5: Regression Weight and Significance Level between Collectivist – High Power Distance Persons from Two Countries on Dietary Supplement**

| | Thais | US |
|---|---|---|
| | Dietary Supplement | Dietary Supplement |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.270<br>*** | 0.064<br>- |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.269<br>*** | 0.352<br>* |
| Tie Strength | 0.264<br>*** | 0.081<br>- |
| Homophily | 0.280<br>*** | 0.870<br>*** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and - Non significant

Collectivist – high power distance Thais display a tendency to be influenced by others in their purchase decision of fashion goods, as shown by significant p-values throughout most personal influences and interpersonal influences. Collectivist

– high power distance Americans, on the other hand, are influenced by onlyperceptual homophily, and slightly by the expertise of the opinion leaders.As such, the only similarity across both countries in terms of what opinion seekers consider influential is perceptual homophily.

As for the order of influence, collectivist – high power distance Thais and Americans consider perceptual homophily as the most influential. However, after that the order is different across two countries. Collectivist – high power distance Thais consider opinion seeker's expertise as the next most influential, followed by opinion leader's expertise. Collectivist – high power distance Americans consider opinion leader's expertise as the next most important, although almost no influence.

Thus, one thing is common for health product managers and marketing practitioners alike is that collectivist – high power distance individuals will consider those with similar perception and outlook in life and to a certain extent those with knowledge about dietary supplement as their influential opinion leaders. Therefore, the most important word-of-mouth source for both collectivist – high power distance Thais and Americans are those the customers consider to have similar perception and outlook in life. It must also be noted that collectivist – high power distance Americans place approximately three times more importance on perceptual homophily compared to Thai counterparts. As for the next most influential, collectivist – high power distance Thais and Americans consider those with knowledge about dietary supplement. Collectivist – high power distance Americans consider this more influential as seen by higher weight.

***6.2.1.3 Fashion Goods and Dietary Supplement***

**Table 6.6: Regression Weight and Significance Level between Collectivist – High Power Distance Persons from Two Countries on Fashion Goods and Dietary Supplement**

| | Thais | | US | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Fashion Goods | Dietary Supplement | Fashion Goods | Dietary Supplement |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.264 *** | 0.270 *** | 0.024 - | 0.064 - |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.253 *** | 0.269 *** | 0.135 *** | 0.352 * |
| Tie Strength | 0.293 *** | 0.264 *** | 0.995 *** | 0.081 - |
| Homophily | 0.209 *** | 0.280 *** | 0.795 *** | 0.870 *** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

Here two products are brought together for comparison. It can be found that for fashion goods, collectivist – high power distance Thais responded that all interpersonal and personal forces are influential to their purchase decisions. As for collectivist – high power distance Americans, except for opinion seeker's expertise, all forces are influential for fashion goods. However, for dietary supplement, the influence of tie strength also disappears. Opinion leader's expertise also becomes less significant.

The order and magnitude of influence is quite similar for collectivist – high power distance Thais on both products. However, a notable difference can be found for perceptual homophily. Perceptual homophily appears to be more influential for dietary supplement in comparison to fashion goods. Collectivist – high power distance Americans also place more weight on perceptual homophily in their purchase decision of dietary supplement compared to fashion goods. In addition, collectivist – high power distance Americans also place a lot more weight on opinion leader's expertise on dietary supplement compared to fashion goods.

As for opinion seeker's expertise, results from collectivist – high power distance American respondents indicate no significance. Hence there is no support for this personal force. Although this contradicts with some literature review, Bansal and Voyer (2000) also found similar outcome. In their research of word-of-mouth on services purchase decision, they found that the relationship was extremely weak and therefore not statistically significant. In contrast, collectivist – high power distance Thai respondents indicate significant relationship, but results indicate a positive relationship between opinion seeker's expertise and its influence on purchase decisions from opinion leader, which is contradictory to the literature review. It shows that collectivist – high power distance Thais value opinions of their opinion leaders even if their own expertise is high while Americans do not. The argument that "the more superior the opinion seeker's expertise, the less the influence on purchase decision" does not hold. Even if collectivist – high power distance Thai seekers think of themselves knowledgeable, they still resort to those who they consider more knowledgeable for advice.

### ***6.2.2 Individualist – High Power Distance***

#### ***6.2.2.1 Fashion Goods***

**Table 6.7: Regression Weight and Significance Level between Individualist – High Power Distance Persons from Two Countries on Fashion Goods**

| | Thais | US |
|---|---|---|
| | Fashion Goods | Fashion Goods |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.098<br>- | 0.072<br>- |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.447<br>*** | 0.367<br>* |
| Tie Strength | 0.102<br>- | 0.282<br>- |
| Homophily | 0.562<br>*** | 0.457<br>** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

Individualist – high power distance Thais display a tendency to be influenced by others in their purchase decision of fashion goods more than American counterparts, as shown by stronger significant p-values in both perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise. However, it can be argued that the significant personal and interpersonal influences are the same across both individualist – high power distance Thais and Americans. As such, the picture is similar across both countries in terms of what opinion seekers consider influential.

As for the order of influence, individualist – high power distance Thais and Americans consider perceptual homophily as the most influential. This is followed by opinion leader's expertise. In terms of magnitude, individualist – high power distance Thais place more weight on both perceptual homophily and opinion leader's expertise.

Thus, implication is clear to fashion goods managers and marketing practitioners alike that individualist – high power distance individuals will consider those who share similar perception and outlook in life and fashion gurus as their influential opinion leaders. For individualist – high power distance Thais and Americans, those who share similar perception and outlook in life are considered most important. Therefore, the most important word-of-mouth source for both individualist – high power distance Thais and Americans are those who share similar perception and outlook in life. The next most important will be fashion gurus in the eyes of the opinion seekers.

***6.2.2.2 Dietary Supplement***

**Table 6.8: Regression Weight and Significance Level between Individualist – High Power Distance Persons from Two Countries on Dietary Supplement**

| | Thais | US |
|---|---|---|
| | Dietary Supplement | Dietary Supplement |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.129<br>- | 0.004<br>- |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.338<br>*** | 0.349<br>*** |
| Tie Strength | 0.125<br>* | 0.105<br>- |
| Homophily | 0.325<br>*** | 0.728<br>*** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

Individualist – high power distance Thais and Americans display a tendency to be influenced by opinion leader's expertise and perceptual homophily in their purchase decision of dietary supplement. Additionally, individualist – high power distance Thais are also slightly influenced by tie strength. As such, the similarity across both countries in terms of what opinion seekers consider influential is opinion leader's expertise and perceptual homophily.

As for the order of influence, individualist – high power distance Thais consider opinion leader's expertise the most influential, followed by perceptual homophily, although not by a wide margin. However, individualist – high power distance Americans consider perceptual homophily the most influential, followed by opinion leader's expertise. Tie strength becomes another source of influence for individualist – high power distance Thais but the significance is very low.

Thus, an obvious similarity that health product managers and marketing practitioners alike can learn from is that individualist – high power distance

individuals will consider those with similar perception and outlook in life and those with knowledge about dietary supplement as their influential opinion leaders. Therefore, the most important word-of-mouth source for both individualist – high power distance Thais and Americans are those the customers consider to have similar perception and outlook in life and those with knowledge about dietary supplement. It must also be noted that individualist – high power distance Americans place approximately twice the importance on perceptual homophily compared to Thai counterparts. As for those with knowledge, individualist – high power distance Thais and Americans put similar weight across both forces. Tie strength becomes another source of influence for Thais but the significance is very low.

#### ***6.2.2.3 Fashion Goods and Dietary Supplement***

**Table 6.9: Standardised Regression Weights and Significance Levels between Individualist – High Power Distance Persons from Two Countries on Fashion Goods and Dietary Supplement**

| | Thais | | US | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Fashion Goods | Dietary Supplement | Fashion Goods | Dietary Supplement |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.098<br>- | 0.129<br>- | 0.072<br>- | 0.004<br>- |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.447<br>*** | 0.338<br>*** | 0.367<br>* | 0.349<br>*** |
| Tie Strength | 0.102<br>- | 0.125<br>* | 0.282<br>- | 0.105<br>- |
| Homophily | 0.562<br>*** | 0.325<br>*** | 0.457<br>** | 0.728<br>*** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

Here two products are brought together for comparison. It can be found that for both fashion goods and dietary supplement, individualist – high power distance Thais and Americans responded that only perceptual homophily and opinion leader's

expertise are influential to their purchase decisions. However, for individualist – high power distance Thais on dietary supplement, the influence tie strength becomes marginally significant.

The order and magnitude of influence is quite similar for individualist – high power distance Thais on both products. In addition, an obvious trend is that individualist – high power distance Thais place more weight on opinion leader's expertise and perceptual homophily for fashion goods compared to dietary supplement. The order and magnitude of influence is similar for individualist – high power distance Americans on opinion leader's expertise. However, the order and magnitude is different for individualist – high power distance Americans on perceptual homophily. Individualist – high power distance Americans place a lot more weight on perceptual homophily on dietary supplement compared to fashion goods.

As for opinion seeker's expertise, results from both individualist – high power distance Thai and American respondents indicate no significance. Hence there is no support for this personal force. Although this contradicts with some literature review, Bansal and Voyer (2000) also found similar outcome. In their research of word-of-mouth on services purchase decision, they found that the relationship was extremely weak and therefore not statistically significant.

However, the results show an identifiable trend that deserves attention. It seems that overall Thais and in particular collectivist – high power distance Thais find that despite their superior expertise on both fashion goods and dietary supplement, the influence of opinion leaders still have an overwhelming effect on their purchase decision. It is as if they do not are not confident and do not trust themselves so much. This is likely a collectivist – high power distance outcome, as a goal of such person includes the fit in with their group(s). However, it must be argued that American counterparts do not share the same results. The results suggest that own expertise of collectivist – high power distance Americans does not affect opinion leaders in their purchase decision.

**Table 6.10: Standardised Regression Weights and Significance Levels across All Groups**

| | Overall Thais | | Overall Americans | | Collectivist – High Power Distance | | | | Individualist – High Power Distance | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Thais | | US | | Thais | | US | |
| | FG | DS | FG | DS | FG | DS | FG | DS | FG | DS | FG | DS |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.190 *** | 0.159 *** | 0.102 - | 0.143 - | 0.264 *** | 0.270 *** | 0.024 - | 0.064 - | 0.098 - | 0.129 - | 0.072 - | 0.004 - |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.407 *** | 0.284 *** | 0.402 *** | 0.482 *** | 0.253 *** | 0.269 *** | 0.135 *** | 0.352 * | 0.447 *** | 0.338 *** | 0.367 * | 0.349 *** |
| Tie Strength | 0.167 *** | 0.234 *** | 0.235 *** | 0.157 - | 0.293 *** | 0.264 *** | 0.995 *** | 0.081 - | 0.102 - | 0.125 * | 0.282 - | 0.105 - |
| Homophily | 0.475 *** | 0.291 *** | 0.824 *** | 0.920 *** | 0.209 *** | 0.280 *** | 0.795 *** | 0.870 *** | 0.562 *** | 0.325 *** | 0.457 ** | 0.728 *** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

FG: Fashion Goods and DS: Dietary Supplement

The study has achieved its objective of providing insights into the relationship between cultural dimensions of collectivism – individualism and power distance, and social influence on purchase decision of opinion seekers. As witnessed from the finding, respondents of the same cultural background are influenced by the same interpersonal and personal forces, regardless of their own nationality. In addition, it is also found that collectivist – high power distance persons are influenced by social influences in their purchase decision more in comparison to individualist - high power distance persons. This confirms previous findings that collectivists based their decisions on group goals more than the individualist counterparts who prioritise their own hedonic needs and desires.

The findings provide evidence of the fact that business practitioners need to give overt consideration to cultural dimension when devising a marketing strategy, but not without consideration of other aspects of the country and its culture, as can be seen in the case of opinion seeker's expertise for overall Thais and collectivist – high power distance Thais. In order for marketers to gain more ground into any market

segment, cultural background of each person may play an important role. Thus, it is vital to also estimate the power of the collective to determine consumer buying behaviour as it may possess a strong influence on purchase decision of a collective customer. This problem can be compounded by further being aware of the subtleties involved. When devising product, service, and communications strategies to collectivists, the findings suggest that, not only should marketing strategies be directed at the potential buyers themselves, but also the marketer should give consideration to 'friends and family' and sales related forces that could influence people's buying decisions. 'Friends and family' influence in buying decisions is shown to be relatively lower in an individualist nation, like the USA. In Thailand, however, 'friends and family' exercise considerable influence over what opinion seekers purchase. Furthermore, collectivist persons regardless of nationals are also considerable influenced by 'friends and family'. As such, 'friends and family' under such circumstance may need to be considered when designing products and services and when designing communication messages related to these offerings.

In addition, from the results, it can be argued that fashion goods is a socially visible good, while dietary supplement is not. This is because tie strength is influential only to collectivists. Thus, for socially visible goods, the findings show that degree of collectivism may be a relevant segmentation variable even within countries, with relative collectivists and individualists responding to different strategies.

Furthermore, the degree of collectivism in Thailand may have an adverse effect on opinion seeker's expertise towards opinion leader's expertise. The results from this study shows that overall Thais and collectivist – high power distance Thais show significant positive relationships between opinion seeker's expertise and influence of opinion leader on opinion seeker's purchase decisions. This is in contrast to previous literature which suggests that those who consider themselves experts would feel confident in their ability to make any individual product choice and would feel little need to consult others prior to product selection. In other words, evidence suggests that overall Thais and collectivist – high power distance Thais find that, although they consider themselves possessing superior knowledge and expertise in

fashion and dietary supplement, they still rely on and are influenced by opinion leader's advice on their purchase decision. This interpersonal influence is not found to be significant amongst individualist- high power distance Thai samples. Nor is it found to be significant amongst American samples, even in collectivist – high power distance Americans. Therefore, it can be argued that such phenomenon is country specific and only apply to certain type of individuals within Thai population.

Since the results contradict with previous literature findings, it is decided that this research must be repeated on Thai samples using qualitative method to gain an in-depth understanding into why the results contradict with previous literature findings. Again, in order to gain an equal and diverse working Thais, the authors decide to use the Table below.

**Table 6.11: Thai Respondents' Profile for Qualitative study**

| **Age (years)/ Education** | **Below Bachelor's Degree** | | **Bachelor's Degree or Above** | | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sex | | Sex | | |
| | M | F | M | F | |
| **25 – 34** | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| **35 – 44** | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| **45 – 54** | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| **55 – 64** | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| **Total** | **4** | **4** | **4** | **4** | **16** |

Collectivist – high power distance Thais are selected in accordance with the Table above. Respondents are asked to complete questionnaire on cultural dimensions to verify that they are collectivist – high power distance Thais (See Appendix E).

They are then asked individually as to why it was found that collectivist – high power distance Thais respond in contradiction with previous literature findings and common logical explanation. Their explanation varies from person to person. Their explanation also varies with product types.

For fashion goods, the most common answer found across most respondents is related to their desire to fit in and hence a lack of self-confidence. The next most common answer is that the more they are interested, the more they like to trust others who they feel are more skilful than themselves.

When we ask the interviewees whether they follow the latest trends in fashion on a Likert-type scale from little, moderate, and a great deal, it was found that those younger respondents (age 25 – 34) pay more attention to latest trends and updates. Two female interviewees from this age group argue that even though they view themselves as experts and enjoy mixing and matching, their opinion leaders (famous superstars) still act as their role models who trigger their decision to purchase.This view is confirmed by a Thai fashion designer who indicated in an interview with us that her products can suddenly be sold in large quantities following appearance of some superstars using/wearing her products. One of them also follows strictly on what famous designers say. The older they get, the less they follow these latest trends and updates.Younger respondents (age 25 – 34) experiment with latest trends and updates in fashion. Nevertheless, a male respondent in this age group enjoys mixing and matching but fears his group will laugh at the way he dresses so he always consult with his opinion leader on fashion. He also states that he does not trust his family member to make fashion decision for him. As respondents get older (age 35 – 44), they argue that they have found the styles that they like and hence experiment less. Nevertheless, a respondent in this age group states that she still enjoys searching

online as a hobby for tips on new trends in fashion. Her purchase decision is based on confirmation from her opinion leaders, who are celebrities. Another respondent gives this duty to his wife to take care of. He learns from his wife on various brands and still trust his wife in what she thinks is best for him in different occasions. Older respondents (age 45 and above) whether male or female say they rarely change their styles. They argue that they have discovered the styles that fit them well.However, when they want to change from usual styles, their opinion leaders will be more from members of their families. A respondent in 45 – 55 age group argues that he will be proud and happy when others complement him for the way he dresses. A respondent in 55 – 65 age group is a language teacher, she states that her dress must reflect her career and she trusts her long-time designer who now becomes her good friend to design her dresses that fit her body and her career. As such, she does not trust anyone else for fear that the recommendation may not match herself.

The interviewees are also asked to indicate how much influence they receive from their opinion leaders on a Likert-type scale from three choices (little, moderate, and a great deal). It was found that the influence of opinion leaders on fashion goods has more impact on younger collectivist – high power distance Thais more than older counterparts. The influence becomes less so as they get older. Also the influence of opinion leaders has impact on female more than male. In addition, the influence of opinion leaders has impact on those who hold bachelor's degrees or above more than those who hold degrees below bachelor's degree.

Dietary supplement is viewed by all interviewees in this group as less of a social product compared to fashion goods. Here, the interviewees indicate that the reason they resort to opinion leaders is because opinion leaders are viewed as more trustable than most other means, e.g. commercial advertisement. The most common answer found across those holding bachelor's degree and above as to why they consult opinion leaders is related to the risks involved since dietary supplement must be taken over a long period of time, which may affect their health. The most common answer found across those holding below bachelor's degree is related to the results.

They prefer to see the results that they can make reference to easily. Opinion leaders are there to give confirmation to these opinion seekers that their gathered knowledge through other means is true.

When we ask the interviewees whether they follow the latest updates on health products on a Likert-type scale from little, moderate, and a great deal, it was found that those holding bachelor's degree and above pay more attention to these updates. Two interviewees from this group argue that even though they view themselves as experts on dietary supplement, they still consult opinion leaders for a second opinion or a third opinion. Concern of an interviewee in this group stem from the safety of local products as opposed to imported FDA approved products. An interviewee aged 25 – 34 from this group argues that he is aware of the benefits of the dietary supplement he takes from various media sources, however opinion leaders (a doctor) may be able to tell whether it is necessary in his case. An interviewee from below bachelor's degree group aged 35 – 44 argue that before she consumes rice bran oil, she consults with an opinion leader about the potential benefits. As such, it can be seen that in some cases opinion leaders are needed because some local products may include herbal ingredients that are available in Thailand only and are still not recognised worldwide with proven results. Another interviewee from this group aged 25 - 34 consumes a dietary supplement that promotes whitening and healthy-looking skin. She prefers to see the end results on another consumer as a reference. An interviewee holding bachelor's degree or above aged 55 – 64 argues that she has heard of benefits of local herbal remedies as important alternatives to Western drugs to fight against her illness. However, their benefits may be overstated. Thus she consults her opinion leader.

Overall, the reasons as to why Thai opinion seekers consult opinion leaders about these two product types are different. For fashion goods, it is more about lack of self-confidence. In order to fit into their groups, they resort to opinion leaders to gain confirmation. Thus even though they consider themselves gurus in fashion, they still need confirmation from opinion leaders. For dietary supplement, it is more about risks

involved. Thais view local herbal remedies as important alternatives to Western drugs. However, Thais are aware that the benefits may be overstated. In other words, Thais do not have total faith in the products and various product brands that are available in the market. Thus, they consult opinion leaders for confirmation.

# Chapter VII

# Contributions

## 7.1 Theoretical Contribution

Previous literature has found and established that interpersonal and results have not all been totally conclusive depending on which force, those findings have profound contribution to the body of knowledge. Viewed in this light, it is therefore worth looking into each particular domain of personal and interpersonal forces, and examine how findings from this research can contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

### ***7.1.1 Homophily***

To begin with, literature have separated homophily into demographics homophily and perceptual homophily. The influence of the two varies with perceptual homophily appearing to enhance word-of-mouth influence more than demographics homophily. Gilly et al. (1998) attributed the reason of this to different product categories, i.e. demographic homophily appears to enhance influence only when the product is a consumer durable. However, since this study involves not just consumer durables, it is decided that demographic homophily is not examined. Instead this study examines perceptual homophily, together with product category which are systematically categorised into Foot, Cone, and Belding (1987)'s affective and cognitive high involvement products.

This study found that homophily is the most significant factor. Homophily is viewed by opinion seekers across all groups an important factor that contribute strongly to purchase decision of both fashion goods and dietary supplement. This study confirms what have been found in previous literature. It can be confirmed that not only is homophily significant across services and consumer durables as found in

previous literature, but this study also finds it a significant factor across both affective and cognitive product categorisation. In addition, this study confirms previous literature findings in Western countries. It is also found further that this factor is significant in Thailand as well. This confirms that as a culture that consists of mostly collectivist – high power distance individuals, Thailand also consider homophily an important factor towards purchase decision just like in individualist – low power distance cultures. However, American respondents place more weight on this factor compared to Thai counterparts. At subculture levels, this study is able to confirm that homophily is significant across collectivist – high power distance and individualist – high power distance dimensions regardless of country. Again, American respondents place more weight on this factor compared to Thai counterparts. However, this study lacks results for collectivist – low power distance and individualist – low power distance due to insufficient data of these dimensions in Thailand.

### ***7.1.2 Opinion Leader's Expertise***

Abundant research on opinion leader's expertise have supported the view that opinion leader with expertise will be depended on more heavily. Hence, claim for this argument is well-founded. It was also pointed out that risk factor also contribute to the varied influence on purchase decisions. Robertson (1971) and Rogers (1995) argue that this again can be attributed to product category. Since risk factor contributes to the level of product involvement, the findings from this study contributes to the understanding of opinion leader's expertise as we look into different involvement towards affective and cognitive involvement products.

This study finds that opinion leader's expertise is the next most significant factor. Opinion leader's expertise is viewed by opinion seekers across all groups an important factor that contribute strongly to purchase decision of both fashion goods and dietary supplement. This study confirms what have been found in previous literature. It can be confirmed that not only is opinion leader's expertise significant across services and consumer durables as found in previous literature, but this study also finds it a significant factor across both affective and cognitive product

categorisation. In addition, this study confirms previous literature findings in Western countries. It is also found further that this factor is significant in Thailand as well. This confirms that as a culture that consists of mostly collectivist – high power distance individuals, Thailand also consider opinion leader's expertise an important factor towards purchase decision just like in individualist – low power distance cultures. At sub-cultural levels, this study is able to confirm that opinion leader's expertise is significant across collectivist – high power distance and individualist – high power distance dimensions regardless of country. Slightly lower significance can be found in collectivist – high power distance American respondents for dietary supplement and in individualist – high power distance respondents for fashion goods. However, the significance levels are close to acceptance level at 0.05. Thus we could consider it significant still. However, what this study lacks is the results for collectivist – low power distance and individualist – low power distance due to insufficient data of these dimensions in Thailand.

### ***7.1.3 Tie Strength***

Previous literature on tie strength has not all been conclusive. Diffusion researchers point to a more efficient outcome when weak ties are present. However, researchers specialising in interpersonal forces point to a greater influence on purchase decision when strong ties are present. This study provides a confirmation and deeper understanding into tie strength and its influences towards purchase decisions of opinion seekers.

It is found that tie strength is the third most significant factor amongst four factors. Tie strength is viewed by overall Thai opinion seekers an important factor that contribute strongly to purchase decision of both fashion goods and dietary supplement. However, tie strength is only significant for fashion goods for overall Americans. At sub-cultural level, it is found that tie strength is significant for collectivist – high power distance Thais in the purchase decision of fashion goods and dietary supplement. It is also found significant for collectivist – high power distance Americans for fashion goods. However, it is not significant for individualist – high

power distance Thais, collectivist – high power distance Americans, and individualist – high power distance Americans across both products. Slight significance can be found for individualist – high power distance Thais in the purchase decision of dietary supplement, however, this is very weak since the p-value is very close to 0.1. Thus, this study partly confirms what have been found in some previous interpersonal forces literature. Cultural dimension theorists may argue that collectivists are more inclined to trust the members of their in-group, while feel unreceptive towards opinions from the outsiders. This is why tie strength is found important even if dietary supplement is not a social product. For other groups, it could be argued that diffusion spreads better when tie strength is weak, as some researchers have found. Again, what this study lacks is the results for collectivist – low power distance and individualist – low power distance due to insufficient data of these dimensions in Thailand.

### ***7.1.4 Opinion Seeker's Expertise***

Previous research on the influence of opinion seeker's expertise has not all been conclusive. Again, Gilly et al. (1998) attributed this to product category involvement. They cited that since durable tend to involve greatest financial and functional risks, seekers' expertise lessened the influence of the opinion leaders. They, however, found no support for non-durable products. Others have also found no support. This research extends the results from previous studies by hypothesising that product category involvement may play a part in this.

Opinion seeker's expertise is found significant only in the case of Thailand. Slight significance is found in overall Americans for fashion goods. However, the significance level is close to 0.1 which can be considered weak. This study attempts to explain why opinion seeker's expertise is found significant only in Thailand through qualitative research. It is yet to be further researched whether opinion seeker's expertise is significant in other countries.

This study also argues that the existing body of knowledge bases the findings in North America. The results may have significant value in North America but may

create no value elsewhere due to multi-cultural diversity. This research fills this gap through comparative means of USA and Thailand with established theory of collectivism – individualism and power distance. Although complete picture on a global scale cannot be achieved with comparative study between these two countries, this study has provided some grounds for further studies in various parts of the world. It will also be of further interest to study non-cosmopolitan samples. In this research, it is found that the influence respondents receive from opinion leaders are relatively similar across both Thai and American sub-cultures. This may be due to the fact that our respondents whether Thais or Americans are mostly cosmopolitan samples. Thai respondents are Bangkok dwellers. Americans respondents are travellers visiting Thailand. These people already have many things in life in common and share similar daily routines. For example, Thais enjoy going to cinemas to watch American movies. Both Thais and Americans are faced with global brands, e.g. Apple, McDonald's, Coca-Cola, or use the same medicines from Pfizer. Thais read such magazines as Harper's Bazaar and Esquire, just like Americans. Thai products are also available and advertised in USA, e.g. Red Bull and Jim Thompson Thai Silk. There's also the internet that both Thais and Americans have access to and share the same information. In other words, the gap of dissimilarity is getting closer and closer. In order to completely distinguish the samples, it is worth looking again into same sub-cultures that have no globalised connection, and see the difference in results.

## 7.2 Managerial Implications

In today's world, consumers are faced with abundance in choices of products but less time to spend on the evaluation of increasing alternatives. Consequently, consumers rely on many sources for advice, most notably, from the oldest form of marketing – word-of-mouth. Consumers seek advice from opinion leaders. Opinion leadership, as many studies have confirmed, is the single strongest factor causing a purchasing decision(e.g. Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Kohli, 1989; Webster, 1988).

Previous literature has found and established that interpersonal and personal influences have a disproportionate influence on others' adoption in Western countries. It is no less significant to discover similar trend in an international arena in order to improve general understanding of international consumer behaviour. Globalisation has paved way for any company that is eager with an open-mind to capitalise on the trend. However, one may need to learn that despite such global-scale interconnectedness, multi-cultural diversity is present. This study has confirmed that this is true. In order to create more effective marketing communication, marketing managers should take into account that a local strategy will not always work for all markets because people are different in terms of cultural background.

Expanding on this central idea, it is hypothesised that each consumer's reception and perception towards information received are different due to varied cultural background. As such, the influence of opinion leaders towards purchase decision does have equal weighting on the purchase decision of opinion seekers. For instance, the purchase decision of a collectivist is influenced by factors such as group norms, while an individualist may be concerned only with hedonistic urges. Managers that are able to identify different needs of opinion seekers will be able to target and market the products using most effective channels.

In addition, it has been documented that there is a strong relationship between product involvements and the use of social influences, including immediate family, friends, acquaintances, employers and coworkers. It was also found that cultural intermediaries and cultural ideologies play their roles in activating product involvement. However, no research has looked into the influence the opinion leaders may have on the purchase decision of opinion seekers at different types of product involvement. The findings from this research further contribute to the aged body of knowledge on involvement that different types of involvement require different marketing. On top of the previous findings that explain how cognitive products are subject to more information search from opinion seekers compared to affective products, marketing academics and business practitioners alike can use this

interpersonal and personal influences information to effectively market their products to best suit their communication channels. In addition, cultural dimensions can further deepen the understanding into each individual consumer.

Managerial implications can be separated into two areas in accordance with the controlled variables of this study, product types and cultural dimensions.

### ***7.2.1 Product Types***

**Table 7.1: Standardised Regression Weights and Significance Levels between Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais and Americans**

| | Collectivist – High Power Distance | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Thais | | US | |
| | FG | DS | FG | DS |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.264 *** | 0.270 *** | 0.024 - | 0.064 - |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.253 *** | 0.269 *** | 0.135 *** | 0.352 * |
| Tie Strength | 0.293 *** | 0.264 *** | 0.995 *** | 0.081 - |
| Homophily | 0.209 *** | 0.280 *** | 0.795 *** | 0.870 *** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

For fashion goods, collectivist – high power distance individuals across two countries display the need for localisation in communication strategy. Although the significant factors are quite similar, the orders of importance are not the same. Collectivist – high power distance Thais rank tie strength as the most important. This is followed by opinion seeker's expertise, opinion leader's expertise, and homophily. Collectivist – high power distance Americans rank tie strength as the most important also. But this is followed by homophily, and opinion leader's expertise. In contrast to collectivist – high power distance Thais, opinion seeker's expertise is not significant at all for collectivist – high power distance Americans.

This finding has significant indication for global fashion goods firms that communication strategy should not be a ‘one size fits all’ strategy. This can be partly explained by tie strength or ‘friends and family’ factor, which is the most important factor for collectivist – high power distance individuals across two countries. The inputs of ‘friends and family’ in the purchase decisions of fashion clothing mean that communication messages cannot be directed just at the purchasers themselves. Thus although individuals are both collectivist – high power distance in their cultural background, it is their ‘friends and family’ who also have a lot of say in their purchase decision. In order to maximise reach of communication and effectively maximise purchase decisions, global marketing managers should employ different strategies for different markets, and allocate resources accordingly.

For dietary supplement, collectivist – high power distance individuals across two countries also display the need for localisation in communication strategy. Although both collectivist – high power distance Thais and Americans rank homophily as the most significant factor. Collectivist – high power distance Thais rank opinion seeker’s expertise, opinion leader’s expertise, and tie strength as the next significant factors. Collectivist – high power distance Americans rank opinion leader’s expertise as the next and the only other significant factor. In contrast to collectivist – high power distance Thais, opinion seeker’s expertise and tie strength are not significant at all for collectivist – high power distance Americans.

This finding has significant indication for global dietary supplement firms that communication strategy should not be a ‘one size fits all’ strategy. This can be partly explained in qualitative research in Chapter 6 that collectivist – high power distance Thais consume dietary supplement like a fashion. Thus tie strength or ‘friends and family’ factor has a significant influence. Also risk factor is another important issue for unapproved products. In order to maximise reach of communication and effectively maximise purchase decisions, global marketing managers should employ

different strategies for different markets to include country specific needs, and allocate resources accordingly.

**Table 7.2: Standardised Regression Weights and Significance Levels between Individualist – High Power Distance Thais and Americans**

| | Individualist – High Power Distance | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Thais | | US | |
| | FG | DS | FG | DS |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.098<br>- | 0.129<br>- | 0.072<br>- | 0.004<br>- |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.447<br>*** | 0.338<br>*** | 0.367<br>* | 0.349<br>*** |
| Tie Strength | 0.102<br>- | 0.125<br>* | 0.282<br>- | 0.105<br>- |
| Homophily | 0.562<br>*** | 0.325<br>*** | 0.457<br>** | 0.728<br>*** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

For fashion goods, individualist – high power distance individuals across two countries display the possibility of using standardised communication strategy. This is not only because the significant factors are the same, but the orders of importance also are the same. Individualist – high power distance Thais and Americans both rank homophily as the most important. This is followed by opinion leader's expertise.

This finding has significant indication for global fashion goods firms that communication strategy could be a 'one size fits all' strategy. Individualists do not need the advice from 'friends and family' as in the case of collectivists. Their purchase decisions are to satisfy their own desires. Communication can be directed at individualists themselves, and not at their 'friends and family' as well.

For dietary supplement, individualist – high power distance individuals across two countries also display a tendency for the possibility of using standardised communication strategy. This is because the significant factors are the same, although the orders of importance are somewhat different. Individualist – high power distance

Thais rank opinion leader's expertise as the most important. This is followed by homophily, and to a certain extent, tie strength is slightly significant also. Individualist – high power distance Americans rank homophily as the most important. This is followed by opinion leader's expertise.

This finding has significant indication for global dietary supplement firms that communication strategy could be a 'one size fits all' strategy. American individualists do not seek the advice from 'friends and family' at all. Thai individualists do not seek the advice from 'friends and family' as much as in the case of Thai collectivists. Their purchase decisions are based on what they think is best for themselves. Communication can be directed at individualists themselves, and not at their 'friends and family'.

**Table 7.3: Standardised Regression Weights and Significance Levels across Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais and Individualist – High Power Distance Thais**

| | Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais | | Individualist – High Power Distance Thais | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FG | DS | FG | DS |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.264 *** | 0.270 *** | 0.098 - | 0.129 - |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.253 *** | 0.269 *** | 0.447 *** | 0.338 *** |
| Tie Strength | 0.293 *** | 0.264 *** | 0.102 - | 0.125 * |
| Homophily | 0.209 *** | 0.280 *** | 0.562 *** | 0.325 *** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

For fashion goods, finding suggests the need for segmented communication strategy in Thailand. Collectivist – high power distance Thais are significantly influenced by tie strength, opinion seeker's expertise, opinion leader's expertise, and homophily in the order of importance. Individualist – high power distance Thais are

significantly influenced by only homophily and opinion leader's expertise, also in order of importance.

This finding has significant indication for local fashion goods firms in Thailand that communication strategy should be a segmented communication strategy. This can be partly explained by tie strength or 'friends and family' factor, which is the most important factor for collectivist – high power distance individuals. The inputs of 'friends and family' in the purchase decisions of fashion clothing mean that communication messages cannot be directed just at the purchasers themselves. Individualists do not need the advice from 'friends and family' as in the case of collectivists. Their purchase decisions are to satisfy their own desires. In order to maximise reach of communication and effectively maximise purchase decisions, marketing managers must understand that the nature of the customers, even within a country, are different. Thus managers should employ different strategies, and allocate resources accordingly.

For dietary supplement, finding suggests the need for segmented communication strategy in Thailand. Collectivist – high power distance Thais are significantly influenced by homophily, opinion seeker's expertise, opinion leader's expertise, and tie strength in the order of importance. Individualist – high power distance Thais are significantly influenced by only opinion leader's expertise, homophily and slightly by tie strength in order of importance.

This finding has significant indication for local dietary supplement firms in Thailand that communication strategy should be a segmented communication strategy. This can be partly explained by tie strength or 'friends and family' factor, which is the most important factor for collectivist – high power distance individuals. The inputs of 'friends and family' in the purchase decisions of dietary supplement mean that communication messages cannot be directed just at the purchasers themselves. It was found in qualitative research that collectivist – high power distance Thais purchase dietary supplement by suggestion of friends like a fashion.

Individualists do not need the advice from 'friends and family' as much as in the case of collectivists. In order to maximise reach of communication and effectively maximise purchase decisions, marketing managers must understand that the nature of the customers, even within a country, are different. Thus managers should employ different strategies, and allocate resources accordingly.

**Table 7.4: Standardised Regression Weights and Significance Levels between Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais and Individualist – High Power Distance Americans**

| | Collectivist – High Power Distance Americans | | Individualist – High Power Distance Americans | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FG | DS | FG | DS |
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.024<br>- | 0.064<br>- | 0.072<br>- | 0.004<br>- |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.135<br>*** | 0.352<br>* | 0.367<br>* | 0.349<br>*** |
| Tie Strength | 0.995<br>*** | 0.081<br>- | 0.282<br>- | 0.105<br>- |
| Homophily | 0.795<br>*** | 0.870<br>*** | 0.457<br>** | 0.728<br>*** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

For fashion goods, finding suggests the need for segmented communication strategy in America. Collectivist – high power distance Americans are significantly influenced by tie strength, homophily, and opinion leader's expertise in the order of importance. Individualist – high power distance Americans are significantly influenced by only homophily and slightly by opinion leader's expertise, also in order of importance.

This finding has significant indication for local fashion goods firms in America that communication strategy should be a segmented communication strategy. This can be partly explained by tie strength or 'friends and family' factor, which is the most important factor for collectivist – high power distance individuals. The inputs of 'friends and family' in the purchase decisions of fashion clothing mean that

communication messages cannot be directed just at the purchasers themselves. Individualists do not need the advice from 'friends and family' as in the case of collectivists. Their purchase decisions are to satisfy their own desires. In order to maximise reach of communication and effectively maximise purchase decisions, marketing managers must understand that the nature of the customers, even within a country, are different. Thus managers should employ different strategies, and allocate resources accordingly.

For dietary supplement, finding suggests the need for mass communication strategy in America. Collectivist – high power distance Americans are significantly influenced by homophily and opinion leader's expertise in order of importance. Individualist – high power distance Americans are significantly influenced by homophily and opinion leader's expertise, also in order of importance.

This finding has significant indication for local dietary supplement firms in America that communication strategy should be a mass communication strategy. American consumers are not so different when it comes to dietary supplement. This could be due approval by FDA for dietary supplement products available in the open market which reduces the risks posed to American consumers.

### ***7.2.2 Cultural Dimensions***

This study involves two product types, namely affective involvement product and cognitive involvement product. The representatives of these two product types that have been derived in product type research are fashion goods and dietary supplement. This study has categorised respondents into collectivist – high power distance Thais, individualist – high power distance Americans, collectivist – high power distance Americans, and individualist – high power distance Americans. The results indicate that out of four groups for fashion goods and four groups for dietary supplement, the respondents can be categorised into four smaller groups according to factors that are significant. Each group will require similar marketing strategies. Table

below shows how respondents with various cultural backgrounds indicate similar significant factors that can be grouped together.

**Table 7.5: Group Categorisation**

| **Fashion Goods** | |
|---|---|
| Group I | Collectivist – high power distance Thais |
| Group II | Collectivist – high power distance Americans |
| Group III | Individualist – high power distance Thais<br>Individualist – high power distance Americans |
| | |
| **Dietary Supplement** | |
| Group IV | Collectivist – high power distance Thais |
| Group V | Collectivist – high power distance Americans<br>Individualist – high power distance Thais<br>Individualist – high power distance Americans |

Below the results are discussed in depth with full interpretations that business practitioners can make use of.

***7.2.2.1 Group I***

**Table 7.6: Standardised Regression Weights and Significance Levels of Opinion Leaders on Fashion Goods for Collectivist –High power distance Thais**

| Influence Factor | Collectivist – High power distance Thais |
|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.264 *** |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.253 *** |
| Tie Strength | 0.293 *** |
| Homophily | 0.209 *** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

It is found that collectivist – high power distance Thais are influenced by tie strength, opinion seeker's expertise, opinion leader's expertise, and homophily in order of influence in their purchase decisions of fashion goods. The following are some managerial implications that can be derived from the findings:

First, collectivist – high power distance Thais value opinions from 'friends and family' the most. This shouldn't come as a surprise considering that collectivist – high power distance persons regard close others an integral part of themselves. Managers should be aware that tie strength varies across age groups. Tie strength includes the relationship between opinion leader and opinion seeker, likelihood of spending free time together, likelihood of sharing personal secrets, likelihood of extending everyday assistance. Here we can see that friends are considered important for younger crowds. As a person grows older and has a family, the tie strength is likely to be stronger amongst family members. This may change again back to friends when a person gets to retirement age. Thus, marketing managers will need to pay attention to age groups of their target segments closely.

In addition, managers may also optimise the use of social network. Nowadays many businesses thrive through the use of social media such as Facebook which penetrates the network of 'friends and family' of the users. Furthermore, such media can now push the information that is relevant to the search of the users so that the marketing becomes relevant to the need of the users. One way is that 'friends and family' can give suggestions to others in their network, thus effectively screening the vast amount of information that is available online. This method becomes important, especially for cultures and products that tie strength is important in the purchase decisions. This can partly explain why we can see that social media and businesses through social media become so successful in a collectivist culture like Thailand. Another example, by clicking 'like' on a Facebook page, users automatically become subscribers of the product or service with updates that the managers can constantly push the information to the users.

Second, opinion seeker's expertise is found as the second most important influence. Nevertheless, the direction is opposite to previous literature. In qualitative review into Thai consumers, it is found that this could be attributed to low self-confidence. In order to fit into their groups, they resort to opinion leaders to gain confirmation. Thus even though they consider themselves gurus in fashion, they still need confirmation from opinion leaders. This lack of self-confidence can work to the advantage of the marketers in their promotion of fashion goods. This is not to say that Thais are easily persuaded. Rather, it can be argued from qualitative research that those who pay attention to fashion goods will be sensitive to opinion leaders' influence. Marketers should therefore aim their marketing campaign at those who pay attention to fashion goods and those who consider themselves fashion gurus. It is logical to think that those who pay attention to fashion goods will most likely be the people who spend more on purchase of fashion goods, as opposed to those who do not care about fashion at all. In addition, it was found from qualitative research that opinion seekers who are more sensitive to opinion leader's influence are those female interviewees and those from younger age groups. Therefore, looking at the big picture, the managerial implication from this study on opinion seeker's expertise is

that managers should allocate their resources more towards those who are fashion conscious. This is because such groups are likely to spend a larger proportion of their income on fashion goods compared to other groups. They are likely to be sensitive to their opinion leader's comments that will trigger purchase decisions. In addition, qualitative research also point to the direction that females are more sensitive to opinion leader's influence compared to their male counterparts. Therefore, the strategy aimed at prospective female customers should be different from the strategies aimed at prospective male customers. That is the strategies aimed at female customers should focus on reassuring or boosting their self-confidence. For example, salespersons should be trained to be able to psychologically motivate the purchase of fashion goods. Male customers are considered more confident. Therefore the use of salespersons may not be as effective. For male customers, their wives/girl friends may also be another source that triggers the purchase, as was found from an interview. Lastly, younger crowds will be influenced by opinion leaders more than older crowds. This is again related to lack of self-confidence. As the customers grow older, the influence of opinion leaders becomes less. The strategy for younger crowds should therefore be based on friends that trigger friends' purchase. Strategies should be on finding identifying opinion leaders that others will look up to as their role models. Strategy for older customers will be related more to repeat purchase as they have found the styles/brands that they feel fit them well.

Third, opinion leader's expertise is found as the next most important influence. Since we already discussed the roles that salesperson and celebrities or fashion icons can play in reinforcing the message, here it is worth noting other available marketing channels. In qualitative research, an interviewee indicated that she takes advice from fashion designers for updates on the latest trends in fashion. If her indication represents many of the Thai female population, an important communication mean will include such column in magazines or TV programmes to promote latest trends in fashion. Magazine columns or TV programmes such as fashion police is a fun and educational way for readers/watchers to follow on what fashion gurus regard as 'in' or 'out', or 'do' and don't' in fashion. Another mean

which is unavoidable in modern age, and has been indicated also by another Thai interviewee, is the use of the internet. If her indication represents many of the Thai female population, an important communication mean will include promotions using new media. Internet based-social network channel such as internet chat room is an example. Social network channels also have additional benefits in that the intended messages can be specified to fit demographics and geographical locations, which can be done at less cost.

The use of opinion leader's expertise is important at introductory stages to introduce latest trends, as well as at later stages to educate about what existing products may fit well with each person who are different in terms of appearance.

Last but not least, collectivist – high power distance indicate homophily as the last most important influence. However, marketing managers still cannot fail to disregard this factor. By definition, a homophilous person can be anyone that opinion seekers know, however opinion leaders may or may not know the opinion seekers. The important thing is they have to be like-minded individuals. Since the respondents have to respond to questions on their opinion leaders in fashion goods, we may assume that these like-minded individuals refer to opinion leaders with like-minded taste in fashion to opinion seekers, but have a greater sense of fashion that opinion seekers think of for advice. Therefore, the likely targets that marketing managers need to approach are the fashion enthusiasts whom opinion seekers think of for advice. As accounted for earlier in the qualitative part of the research (end of Chapter 6), a Thai fashion designer indicated in an interview that her products can suddenly be sold in large quantities following appearance of some superstars wearing/using her products. Therefore, an avenue of communication for fashion goods should be an integration of using celebrities and fashion icons that customers can easily associate with. Personal selling by salesperson can then reinforce the images from the celebrities and fashion icons into the minds of the prospective customers.

Another avenue that marketing managers may explore is to use diffusion strategy. In a collectivist – high power distance society such as in Thailand, individuals want to belong and enjoy being part of their groups. In addition, collectivists are hierarchical in that they each have their own places in the social hierarchy. Therefore, marketing managers may need to identify these opinion leaders of the groups that other members look up to and come for advice on fashion.

The best stage to reinforce these messages will be at the awareness stage of a product. Consider the "must-have" lists in magazines with images of celebrities using these new products. For a new brand to be recognised and accepted rapidly, this is the way forward to bring about the demand.

Amongst these four factors, findings indicate all four are significant. However, the magnitudes are different depending on the influence opinion seekers indicated. As such marketing managers may allocate resources available to these factors accordingly. Looking at the big picture, resources should be allocated into communication through like-minded people to target customers, fashion gurus, seeker's own expertise, and 'friends and family' in order of importance.

Managerial implications from Group I may be useful for managers in other countries known to have many collectivist – high power distance individuals. For example, cosmopolitan samples in Korea are comparable to collectivist – high power distance cosmopolitan Thais because nowadays they are subject to many common things in life such as similar daily routines, similar global brands, and in particular similar entertainment industry. These similarities will, to a certain extent, affect their purchase decisions on fashion goods. Other countries known to be collectivist – high power distance that Hofstede grouped together (Figure 2.1) are for example Singapore and China.

### *7.2.2.2 Group II*

**Table 7.7: Influence of Opinion Leaders on Fashion Goods for Collectivist - High Power Distance Americans**

| Influence Factor | Collectivist – High Power Distance Americans |
|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.024<br>- |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.135<br>*** |
| Tie Strength | 0.995<br>*** |
| Homophily | 0.795<br>*** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non significant

It is found that, collectivist – high power distance Americans are similar in the influence they receive from opinion leaders to collectivist – high power distance Thais. Therefore, the recommendation to marketing managers for this group is similar to Group I. This shows that there are similarities across both countries across collectivist – high power distance Thais and Americans. The results indicate that fashion goods marketing managers are able to apply global strategies across these groups.

The exception exists however in the case of opinion seeker's expertise. In the case of Thailand, it is found that this may be due to low self-confidence. However, some recommendations can still be logically applied in the case of overall Americans and collectivist – high power distance Americans too. One is that those who pay attention to fashion goods will most likely be the people who spend more on purchase of fashion goods, as opposed to those who do not care about fashion at all.

It must be noted that tie strength is by far the most important factor for collectivist – high power distance Americans. The weight is even higher than those in collectivist – high power distance Thais. This means collectivist – high power distance Americans regard 'friends and family' as much more influential. Again, fashion goods marketing managers must be aware of this and allocate adequate resources to facilitate this factor.

### ***7.2.2.3 Group III***

**Table 7.8: Standardised Regression Weights and Significance Levels of Opinion Leaders on Fashion Goods for Individualist – High Power Distance Thais and Americans**

| Influence Factor | Individualist – High Power Distance Thais | Individualist – High Power Distance Americans |
|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.098<br>- | 0.072<br>- |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.447<br>*** | 0.367<br>* |
| Tie Strength | 0.102<br>- | 0.282<br>- |
| Homophily | 0.562<br>*** | 0.457<br>** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

It is found that individualist – high power distance Thais are influenced by homophily and opinion leader's expertise in order of influence in their purchase decisions of fashion goods. Individualist – high power distance Americans are also influenced by the homophily and opinion leader's expertise, although opinion leader's expertise is less significant for individualist – high power distance Americans. The following are some managerial implications that can be derived from the findings:

First, individualist – high power distance Thais and Americans feel that the person who has the most influence on their purchase decision is the person who shares the same perception and outlook in life with them. This shows that opinion leaders can be anyone ranging from celebrities, fashion icons, sportsperson, salesperson to friends, colleagues, and someone in their family. However, it can be assumed that it is unlikely that they will seek advice from opinion leaders that they know personally. This is because tie strength or 'friends and family' factor is not significant across both groups. The opinion leaders they look up to will therefore be someone they do not know personally, such as celebrities, fashion icons, sportsperson. As such, communication for fashion goods should be an integration of using celebrities, sportsperson, and fashion icons that customers can easily associate with. Personal selling by salesperson can then reinforce the images from the celebrities and fashion icons into the minds of the prospective customers.

In addition, managers may also optimise the use of social network. Similar to collectivists' emphasis on tie strength, managers can also use social media to update and advertise their products. Again, by clicking 'like' on a celebrity's fan page, users automatically become subscribers of the latest updates on everything about the celebrity, whether it is what he/she wears, what car he/she drives, what product he/she likes, etc… Opportunities are endless and personalised to the demand of the users.

Second, opinion leader's expertise is found to be the next most important influence. Since we already discussed the roles that salesperson and celebrities or fashion icons can play in reinforcing the message, here it is worth noting other available marketing channels. An important communication mean will include such column in magazines or TV programmes to promote latest trends in fashion. Magazine columns or TV programmes such as fashion police is a fun and educational way for readers/watchers to follow on what fashion gurus regard as 'in' or 'out', or 'do' and don't' in fashion. Another important communication mean will include promotions through new media. Social network channel such as internet chat room is an example.

All in all, marketing managers must acknowledge that individualists whether Thais or Americans will unlikely take advice from 'friends and family'. Thus the marketing channels should not go through those channels. They will take advice from other opinion leaders whom they view as fashion gurus though. They will also focus on their own unique, idiosyncratic qualities thus marketing managers must acknowledge that these groups of customers may demand fashion goods that make them stand out from the crowd. Marketing managers may need to increase product choices so they do not feel that their purchase decisions will lead them to become followers.

Amongst these four factors, findings indicate that only two are significant. However, the magnitudes are different depending on the influence opinion seekers indicated. As such marketing managers may allocate resources available to these factors accordingly.

All in all, fashion goods are considered high involvement product. Consumers' purchase decisions will involve emotional approach using the right part of the brain (feel factor). The sequence of overall consumers' experience is to feel – to learn – to do. Marketing managers should try to create empathy and a vicarious emotional experience. Thus, in terms of advertising, marketing managers may consider the use of dramas to trigger emotional arousal and attitude change. It is recommended that marketing managers should use sources that are similar to customers so that customers feel they can relate to. The advertisement should feature strong visuals and large spreads.

Foot, Cone, and Belding (1987) originally included certain products that can use similar marketing strategy, such as perfume. Later John J. Ressiter et al. (1991) added other products that should fit into this group such as sports car, expensive watch, eye glasses, wallpaper, and wine for dinner party. Thus, in terms of generalisability, this finding can be applied to these products as well since they have been found to be affective high involvement products.

***7.2.2.4 Group IV***

**Table 7.9: Standardised Regression Weights and Significance Levels of Opinion Leaders on Dietary Supplement for Collectivist –High Power Distance Thais**

| Influence Factor | Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais |
|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.270 *** |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.269 *** |
| Tie Strength | 0.264 *** |
| Homophily | 0.280 *** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non Significant

It is found that collectivist – high power distance Thais are influenced by homophily, opinion seeker's expertise, opinion leader's expertise, and tie strength in order of influence in their purchase decisions of dietary supplement. The following are some managerial implications that can be derived from the findings:

First, collectivist – high power distance Thais feel that the person who has the most influence on their purchase decision is the person who shares the same perception and outlook in life with them. This shows that opinion leaders can be anyone ranging from salesperson to friends, colleagues, and someone in their family. The important thing is they have to be like-minded individuals. Under the assumption that opinion seekers refer to like-minded individuals as like-minded health conscious individuals, the likely targets for marketing managers are the health conscious individuals whom opinion seekers interact with. As accounted for earlier in the qualitative part of the research (end of Chapter 6), Thais, especially those holding below bachelor's degree, seek results and persons they can refer to as consumers with good results. As such, communication for dietary supplement should be focused on

word-of-mouth, particularly on those with below bachelor's degree. As for those with bachelor's degree or above, a pressing concern is on consumption that produces desired effects and is safe. Thus, marketing managers may need to stress the safety of consumption through approval from various government bodies and institutions.

Marketing strategy that communicates the outcomes of consumption and safety issues is likely to be most important during introductory stage of a brand or product. Marketing managers have to be able to cross this barrier first. Once a product or a brand becomes known and accepted, marketing will change to encourage repeat purchase and introduce other products.

Another avenue that marketing managers may explore is to use diffusion strategy. Dietary supplement is not known to be a social product. However, it is found in qualitative research that Thai consumers purchase dietary supplement as a fashion. Marketing managers may need to identify the opinion leaders within groups and ask them to participate in taking the product. Once the results become evident, the opinion leaders can talk about it to others. Others could soon follow. Therefore, a task for marketing managers is to identify these opinion leaders of the groups.

Second, opinion seeker's expertise is found as the second most important influence factor amongst the four for collectivist – high power distance Thais. The direction is positive which is opposite to previous literature. In qualitative review into Thai consumers, it is found that this could be attributed to fear of consuming substandard products and also to low self-confidence. The latter is likely to have a stronger effect on collectivist – high power distance Thais because collectivists are likely to turn to others for decision help, and high power distance individuals may perceive others as having superior knowledge to themselves. Thus even though they consider themselves experts, they still need confirmation from opinion leaders. Similar to fashion goods, it can be argued from qualitative research that those who pay attention to dietary supplement will be sensitive to opinion leaders' influence. Marketers should therefore aim their marketing campaign at those who are health

conscious. It is logical to think that those who pay attention to dietary supplement will most likely be the people who spend more on purchase of dietary supplement, as opposed to those who do not care so much about health issues at all. Therefore, looking at the big picture, the managerial implication from this study on opinion seeker's expertise is that managers should allocate their resources more towards those who are health conscious. This is because such groups are likely to spend a larger proportion of their income on dietary supplement compared to other groups.

Third, opinion leader's expertise is found as the next most important influence. Since dietary supplement are like drugs that have to be taken, possibly for a long period of time, to see the results, opinion leaders have to act to ensure the safety of taking dietary supplement. In the big picture, opinion leaders that will produce most trustworthy recommendation are doctors. Thus, doctors are one avenue. However, doctors may opt to specify only the content of dietary supplement that the patients should take. Marketing managers will have to work further to promote the brand. Another avenue is that the opinion leaders are consumers themselves and dietary supplement must have produced sufficiently good results on them. Such persons should be the persons to spread word-of-mouth.

Word-of-mouth should be done in conjunction with educational articles on these health issues in various marketing channels, e.g. leaflets, magazines, company's website to reinforce the messages. Dietary supplement can be divided into two types. They are supplement to cure and supplement to prevent. The indication for marketing managers will be similar to the above. The use of opinion leaders who are consumers themselves will be most effective but may take longer and will be more costly because it is specific to each symptom and is specific to each group. For those seeking prevention, other mass marketing channels such as leaflets, articles in magazines, new media through the internet can be used.

The use of opinion leader's expertise is important at introductory stages to educate about the products, as well as at later stages to encourage repeat purchase and introduce new products.

Last, although tie strength or the 'friends and family' factor is the last amongst four factors for collectivist – high power distance Thais, it is still a significant factor. This shouldn't come as a surprise as dietary supplement is not a social good. Consumers consume not because they want to belong to a group, but they want to maintain good health. 'Friends and family' is important still, but not as important as in the case of fashion goods. However, cultural dimension theorists may argue that collectivists are more inclined to trust the members of their in-group, while feel unreceptive towards opinions from the outsiders. This is why tie strength is found important even if dietary supplement is not a social product.

In addition, managers may also optimise the use of social network. Nowadays many businesses thrive through the use of social media such as Facebook which penetrates the network of 'friends and family' of the users. Furthermore, such media can now push the information that is relevant to the search of the users so that the marketing becomes relevant to the need of the users. One way is 'friends and family' can give suggestions to others in their network, thus effectively screening the vast amount of information that is available online. This method becomes important, especially for cultures and products that tie strength is important in the purchase decisions. This can partly explain why we can see that social media and businesses through social media become so successful in a collectivist culture like Thailand. Another example, by clicking 'like' on a Facebook page, users automatically become subscribers of the product or service with updates that the managers can constantly push the information to the users.

It must be noted that some Thais are willing to take risks but they expect satisfactory results. Marketing managers can surely capitalise on this. However, one must not capitalise on such opportunities at the expense of safety of their own

customers who put their faith in these companies. This has been and still is a serious issue in Thailand. Companies that are ethical are likely to go further and can win over the market in the long term.

Amongst these four factors, findings indicate that three factors are significant. However, the magnitudes are different depending on the influence opinion seekers indicated. As such marketing managers may allocate resources available to these factors accordingly.

Managerial implications from Group IV may be useful for managers in other collectivist – high power distance cultures. For example, cosmopolitan samples in China are comparable to collectivist – high power distance Thais because they are subject to many common risks regarding dietary supplement. They also desire many common health or appearance benefits. Whitening effect is one example.

### ***7.2.2.5 Group V***

**Table 7.10: Standardised Regression Weights and Significance Levels of Opinion Leaders on Dietary Supplement for Individualist – High Power Distance Thais, Collectivist – High Power Distance Thais and Americans**

| Influence Factor | Individualist - High Power Distance Thais | Collectivist – High Power Distance Americans | Individualist – High Power Distance Americans |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion Seeker's Expertise | 0.064<br>- | 0.129<br>- | 0.004<br>- |
| Opinion Leader's Expertise | 0.352<br>* | 0.338<br>*** | 0.349<br>*** |
| Tie Strength | 0.081<br>- | 0.125<br>* | 0.105<br>- |
| Homophily | 0.870<br>*** | 0.325<br>*** | 0.728<br>*** |

***Significant at 0.01 Level, ** Significant at 0.05 Level, *Significant at 0.1 Level, and – Non-Significant

It is found in this group that that individualist – high power distance Thais, collectivist – high power distance Americans, and individualist – high power distance Americans are only influenced by homophily and opinion leader's expertise in their purchase decisions of dietary supplement. It may appear that individualist – high power distance Thais indicate a poor significance, however the p-value which is close to 0.05 is still arguably acceptable. Respondents in group V indicate that tie strength is not significant. Again, although it may appear that collectivist – high power distance Americans indicate a low significance, the high p-value close to 0.1 can arguably be rejected. The following are some managerial implications that can be derived from the findings:

First, individualist – high power distance Thais, collectivist – high power distance Americans, and individualist – high power distance Americans feel that the person who has the most influence on their purchase decision is the person who shares the same perception and outlook in life with them. This shows that opinion leaders can be anyone ranging from salesperson to friends, colleagues, and someone in their family. The important thing is they have to be like-minded individuals. However, opinion leaders are unlikely to be opinion seekers' 'friends and family' since opinion seekers indicate that tie strength is not significant. The likely targets for marketing managers to spread word-of-mouth are the health conscious individuals whom opinion seekers seek for credible advice.

Second, opinion leader's expertise is found as the next most important influence. Since dietary supplement are drugs that have to be consumed for a long period of time to see the results, opinion leaders have to act to ensure the safety of taking dietary supplement. In order to do this, the opinion leaders must be the consumers themselves and dietary supplement must have produced sufficiently good results on them. Such persons should therefore be asked to spread the message. This can be done in conjunction with educational articles on these health issues in various marketing channels, e.g. leaflets, magazines, company's website.

Amongst these four factors, findings indicate that only two are significant. However, the magnitudes are different depending on the influence opinion seekers indicated. As such marketing managers may allocate resources available to these factors accordingly.

All in all, dietary supplement are considered high involvement product. Consumers' purchase decisions will involve rational approach using the left part of the brain (think factor). The sequence of overall consumers' experience is to learn – to feel – to do. Marketing managers should try to convey scientific evidence. Thus, in terms of advertising, marketing managers may consider the use expert/credible sources and comparative advertising. It is recommended that marketing managers should use sources that are similar to customers so that customers feel they can relate to. The advertisement should convey multiple facts that illustrate the basic message.

Foot, Cone, and Belding (1987) originally included certain products that can use similar marketing strategy, such as life insurance. Later John J. Ressiter et al. (1991) added other products that should fit into this group such as family car, contact lenses, washer/dryer, exterior house paint, headache remedy, and auto insurance. Thus, in terms of generalizability, this finding can be applied to these products as well since they have been found to be cognitive high involvement products.

Managerial implications from Group V may be useful for managers in other individualist cultures. For example, cosmopolitan samples in Canada, United Kingdom, Australia are comparable to individualist cosmopolitans because nowadays they are subject to many common things in life such as similar language, similar global brands, and in particular similar entertainment industry. These similarities will, to a certain extent, affect their purchase decisions on fashion goods.

# Chapter VIII

# Limitation of the Study and Future Research

There are certain limitations in this study which must be noted. First, although our samples are real persons and not students like other study of this kind, this study focuses on the cosmopolitan consumers rather than the average citizen of each country. Thus, these samples do not represent the average citizens of their respective country. The results show that the influence of opinion leaders on opinion seekers is rather similar when respondents have similar cultural background. This could be attributed partly to the fact that the world has become more globalised and consumers around the world are increasingly faced with similar products and purchase situations. However, it can be argued that cultural background still has its impact on describing the characteristics of each person and their purchasing behaviour.

Second, the number of nationalities included should certainly be larger than this and span all continents for a better understanding of cross-national differences. It is not possible to generalise the findings unless more countries are included in the study so that collectivist – high power distance individuals, individualist – high power distance individuals across the world can be compared. However, since there are insufficient Thai respondents in collectivist – low power distance and individualist – low power distance categories, comparison cannot be made. In future research, it will be interesting to include other missing cultural backgrounds and compare the results. One contributory fact is that there are many variations within a country and researchers should not generalise or stereotype all citizens of a country into any one cultural dimension.

Third, as mentioned before, Hofstede's (1983) findings are not up-to-date. Rapid communication and traveling have shrunken the world by a great deal, and these dimensions may not be as distinct as they used to be over twenty years ago. This is especially the case for cultures (Pornpitakpan, 2004). This, however, was opposed by Kongsompong et al. (2009) who supported Hofstede's contention that cultures are relatively enduring and not subject to rapid change. Kongsompong et al. (2009) found that, despite their country having grown economically to the point where it is now considered a first-world nation, Singaporeans have remained highly collectivists in their orientation. This finding lends credence to the continued use of Hofstede's findings. It can be argued that Hofstede's finding is still valid. Most Thais are still collectivist – high power distance in their cultural background, although many Thais are found to be individualist – high power distance too. Most Americans are still individualist – low power distance in their cultural background, although this finding indicates that USA is a melting pot consisting of people with different cultural backgrounds. It must be noted however that the samples of this study are more cosmopolitan than the general population, thus they may not reflect the true population of both Thailand and USA.

Forth, as discussed above, since this study includes results for overall Thais and overall Americans, it can be argued that using only nationality as a basis for understanding the general population of a country is not advisable. This is because in any society, there are bound to be variations. The findings may be valid only for this study and hence readers are advised to exercise care in using the data.

Fifth, since this study is based on purchase decisions that have actually occurred in the past, memory recollection of the opinion leaders who influenced purchase decisions may not be as accurate as we want it to be, even if limit of three years is conditioned. In addition, this study does not limit the respondents to first time purchase decision. The influence of opinion leaders can be different both in the scale and in significance. However, it is difficult to find first time buyers of fashion goods and dietary supplement, especially when the samples are working age from 25 years

old to 64 years old. Most respondents probably have encountered purchase situation of these two products many times. In future research, researchers may consider houses as a product choice as there will be more first time buyers.

Sixth, this study is a study of perception, hence prediction of the outcomes should be used with care, since evidence is not based on scientific facts, rather it is based on viewpoints, and viewpoints of the respondents can change with age, mood, and settings of the interview.

Seventh, an issue that is worth looking into is way(s) to identify persons with different cultural background. This research has offered a justifiable reason to implement marketing strategies based on various cultural backgrounds of consumers. It is for future researchers to try to identify consumers based on various cultural backgrounds since the influence of opinion leaders will have different effects on purchase decision of opinion seekers from different cultural backgrounds.

Eighth, it was found in the research that Thai opinion seekers, especially collectivist – high power distance individuals, that even though they consider themselves experts in fashion goods and dietary supplement, they are even more strongly influenced by opinion leader's advice. This is contradictory to previous literature and is unfounded in the study of Americans. Qualitative research reveals that this could be due to low self-confidence level. Thus, it should be studied into greater depth into this country specific phenomenon, for example, confidence level and ease of persuasion of Thai consumers.

Lastly, future research may be able to identify additional variables that are related toopinion seeking. For example, personality dimension of introversion/extroversion is another trait that may be related to opinion seeking. Introvert persons may be less likely than extroverts to seek opinions from others because they tend to focus on their inner feelings and values for guidance in their behaviour and are not much inclined to socialise with others. As such the influence of

the opinion leaders may have different effects. Impulsive people may not want to seek opinions from others before buying because they like to act on the spur of the moment and buy things without planning.

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# Appendices

# Appendix A

**Phase I Study**

Please indicate your view on the purchase of fashion goods

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Very Important Decision | *[ -3 - 2 -1 0 1 2 3 ]* | Very Important Decision |
| 2 Decision requires a lot of thought | *[ -3 - 2 -1 0 1 2 3 ]* | Decision requires a lot of thought |
| 3 A lot to lose if you choose the wrong brand | *[ -3 - 2 -1 0 1 2 3 ]* | A lot to lose if you choose the wrong brand |
| 4 Decision is mainly logical or objective | *[ -3 - 2 -1 0 1 2 3 ]* | Decision is mainly logical or objective |
| 5 Decision is based mainly on functional facts | *[ -3 - 2 -1 0 1 2 3 ]* | Decision is based mainly on functional facts |
| 6 Decision expresses one's personality | *[ -3 - 2 -1 0 1 2 3 ]* | Decision expresses one's personality |
| 7 Decision is based on a lot of feeling | *[ -3 - 2 -1 0 1 2 3 ]* | Decision is based on a lot of feeling |
| 8 Decisionis based on looks, taste, touch, smell, or sounds | *[ -3 - 2 -1 0 1 2 3 ]* | Decisionis based on looks, taste, touch, smell, or sounds |

Please indicate your view on the purchase of dietary supplement

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Very Important Decision | *[ -3 - 2 -1 0 1 2 3 ]* | Very Important Decision |
| 2 Decision requires a lot of thought | *[ -3 - 2 -1 0 1 2 3 ]* | Decision requires a lot of thought |
| 3 A lot to lose if you choose the wrong brand | *[ -3 - 2 -1 0 1 2 3 ]* | A lot to lose if you choose the wrong brand |
| 4 Decision is mainly logical or objective | *[ -3 - 2 -1 0 1 2 3 ]* | Decision is mainly logical or objective |
| 5 Decision is based mainly on functional facts | *[ -3 - 2 -1 0 1 2 3 ]* | Decision is based mainly on functional facts |
| 6 Decision expresses one's personality | *[ -3 - 2 -1 0 1 2 3 ]* | Decision expresses one's personality |
| 7 Decision is based on a lot of feeling | *[ -3 - 2 -1 0 1 2 3 ]* | Decision is based on a lot of feeling |
| 8 Decisionis based on looks, taste, touch, smell, or sounds | *[ -3 - 2 -1 0 1 2 3 ]* | Decisionis based on looks, taste, touch, smell, or sounds |

กรุณาระบุระดับความเห็นของท่านที่มีต่อการซื้อสินค้าแฟชั่น

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1.เป็นการตัดสินใจซื้อที่ไม่มีความสำคัญ | [ -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 ] | เป็นการตัดสินใจซื้อที่สำคัญมาก |
| 2.การตัดสินใจซื้อต้องใช้ความคิดน้อยมาก | [ -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 ] | การตัดสินใจซื้อต้องใช้ความคิดอย่างมาก |
| 3.ถ้าเลือกผิดยี่ห้อจะมีผลเสียเล็กน้อย | [ -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 ] | ถ้าเลือกผิดยี่ห้อจะมีผลเสียเป็นอย่างมาก |
| 4.การตัดสินใจส่วนใหญ่ เป็นการตัดสินใจอย่างไม่มีเหตุมีผล | [ -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 ] | การตัดสินใจส่วนใหญ่ เป็นการตัดสินใจอย่างมีเหตุมีผล |
| 5. การตัดสินใจส่วนใหญ่ไม่ได้ยึดข้อมูลในการใช้งานเป็นหลัก | [ -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 ] | การตัดสินใจส่วนใหญ่ยึดข้อมูลในการใช้งานเป็นหลัก |
| 6.เป็นการตัดสินใจที่ไม่แสดงถึงบุคลิกภาพของคนๆนั้น | [ -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 ] | เป็นการตัดสินใจที่แสดงถึงบุคลิกภาพของคนๆ นั้น |
| 7.การตัดสินใจซื้อไม่ใช้ความรู้สึกเป็นหลัก | [ -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 ] | การตัดสินใจซื้อใช้ความรู้สึกเป็นหลัก |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 8.การตัดสินใจไม่ใช้โสตประสาทสัมผัส(รูปลักษณ์รสชาติสัมผัสกลิ่น)หรือ | [ -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 ] | การตัดสินใจใช้โสตประสาทสัมผัส(รูปลักษณ์ รสชาติ สัมผัส กลิ่น)หรือ |

กรุณาระบุระดับความเห็นของท่านที่มีต่อการซื้อผลิตภัณฑ์เสริมอาหาร

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1.เป็นการตัดสินใจซื้อที่ไม่มีความสำคัญ | [ -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 ] | เป็นการตัดสินใจซื้อที่สำคัญมาก |
| 2. การตัดสินใจซื้อต้องใช้ความคิดน้อยมาก | [ -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 ] | การตัดสินใจซื้อต้องใช้ความคิดอย่างมาก |
| 3.ถ้าเลือกผิดยี่ห้อจะมีผลเสียเล็กน้อย | [ -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 ] | ถ้าเลือกผิดยี่ห้อจะมีผลเสียเป็นอย่างมาก |
| 4.การตัดสินใจส่วนใหญ่ เป็นการตัดสินใจอย่างไม่มีเหตุมีผล | [ -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 ] | การตัดสินใจส่วนใหญ่ เป็นการตัดสินใจอย่างมีเหตุมีผล |
| 5. การตัดสินใจส่วนใหญ่ไม่ได้ยึดข้อมูลในการใช้งานเป็นหลัก | [ -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 ] | การตัดสินใจส่วนใหญ่ยึดข้อมูลในการใช้งานเป็นหลัก |
| 6.เป็นการตัดสินใจที่ไม่แสดงถึงบุคลิกภาพของคนๆนั้น | [ -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 ] | เป็นการตัดสินใจที่แสดงถึงบุคลิกภาพของคนๆ นั้น |
| 7.การตัดสินใจซื้อไม่ใช้ความรู้สึกเป็นหลัก | [ -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 ] | การตัดสินใจซื้อใช้ความรู้สึกเป็นหลัก |
| 8.การตัดสินใจไม่ใช้โสตประสาทสัมผัส(รูปลักษณ์รสชาติสัมผัสกลิ่น)หรือ | [ -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 ] | การตัดสินใจใช้โสตประสาทสัมผัส(รูปลักษณ์ รสชาติ สัมผัส กลิ่น) |

# Appendix B

**Questionnaire Part I**

These questions form part of research methodology for PhD dissertation on "The Impacts of Opinion Leaders towards Purchase Decision under Different Types of Product Involvement: A Cross-Cultural Study" at Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy, Chulalongkorn University. Please answer all questions.

Please tick in front of the appropriate choices

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 Gender | ___ Male ___ Female |
| 2 Age | ___ 25-34 ___ 35-44 ___ 45-54 ___ 55-64 |
| 3 Education Attainment | ___ Bachelor's Degree & Below ___ Above Bachelor's Degree |
| 4 Marital Status | ___ Single ___ Married ___ Widowed ___ Separated/Divorced |
| 5 Number of Children | ___ 0 ___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5 or more |

Please specify your level of agreement with the following sentences

| | *Strongly Disagree* | | | | | | | *Strongly Agree* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 To understand who I am, you must see me with members of my group. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 2 To me, pleasure is spending time with others. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 3 I would help, with my means, if a relative were in financial difficulty. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 4 I make an effort to avoid disagreements with my group members. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 5 Before making a decision, I always consult with others. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 6 How I behave depends on who I am with, where I am, or both. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 7 I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 8 I would rather do a group paper than do one alone. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 9 I tend to do my own things. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 10 I take great pride in accomplishing what no one else can accomplish. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 11 It is important to me that I perform better than others in many respects. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 12 I am unique – different from others in many respects. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 13 I like my privacy. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 14 I know my weaknesses and strengths. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 15 I always state my opinions very clearly. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 16 People in lower positions should not talk to people in higher positions about personal matters. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 17 Power and wealth are evil. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |
| 18 It is important for people in higher positions to make all decisions. | *[ 1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *]* |

| | |
|---|---|
| 19 It is important that people in higher positions closely supervise people in lower positions. | *[ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ]* |
| 20 People in lower positions should participate in group decision-making. | *[ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ]* |
| 21 It is all right for people in lower positions to disagree openly with people in higher positions. | *[ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ]* |
| 22 It is important for me to be able to work independently. | *[ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ]* |
| 23 I like to trust and to cooperate with other people. | *[ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ]* |

**Questionnaire Part II**

These questions form part of research methodology for PhD dissertation on "The Impacts of Opinion Leaders towards Purchase Decision under Different Types of Product Involvement: A Cross-Cultural Study" at Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy, Chulalongkorn University. Please answer all questions.

Screening Questions: You have purchased a fashion goods item and a dietary supplement in the last 3 years.

**Please recall the purchase of any fashion goods**

Please indicate your own expertise on fashion goods

| | |
|---|---|
| 1.Knowledge about Fashion | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 2.Expertise in how to use Fashion Goods | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 3. Much Usage Experience | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 4. Informed about Latest Updates | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |

Please indicate the level of expertise of the person who had the greatest influence on your purchase decision of fashion goods

| | |
|---|---|
| 1.Knowledge about Fashion | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 2.Expertise in how to use Fashion Goods | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 3. Much Usage Experience | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 4. Informed about Latest Updates | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |

Please indicate your tie strength with the person who had the greatest influence on your purchase decision of fashion goods

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Relationship this person | *Weak [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strong* |
| 2. Likelihood of sharing a personal confidence | *Least Likely [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Most Likely* |
| 3. Likelihood of extending an everyday assistance | *Least Likely [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Most Likely* |
| 4. Likelihood of spending free time together | *Least Likely [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Most Likely* |

Please indicate your similarity with the person who had the greatest influence on your purchase decision of fashion goods

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Considering your outlook on life, how similar are you and this person? | *Least Similar [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Most Similar* |
| 2. Considering your likes and dislikes, how similar are you and this | *Least Similar [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Most Similar* |

| | |
|---|---|
| person? | |

Please indicate the level of influence this person had on your purchase decision

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. This person provided little new information. | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 2. The influence of this person will influence my choice about buying the product. | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 3. This person mentioned some things I have not considered. | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 4. This person provided some different ideas than other sources. | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 5. This person really did not change my mind about buying the product. | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 6. This person helped me make a decision about buying the product. | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 7. How much influence do you think this person will have on whether or not you purchase the product? | *Very Little Influence [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Complete Influence* |

**Please recall the purchase of your dietary supplement**

Please indicate your own expertise on dietary supplement

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Knowledge about Nutrition | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 2.Expertise in how to use Dietary Supplement | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 3. Much Usage Experience | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 4. Informed about Latest Updates | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |

Please indicate the level of expertise of person who had the greatest influence on your purchase decision of dietary supplement

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Knowledge about Nutrition | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 2.Expertise in how to use Dietary Supplement | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 3. Much Usage Experience | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 4. Informed about Latest Updates | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |

Please indicate your tie strength with the person who had the greatest influence on your purchase decision of dietary supplement

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Relationship with this person | *Weak [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strong* |
| 2. Likelihood of sharing a personal confidence | *Least Likely [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Most Likely* |
| 3. Likelihood of extending an everyday assistance | *Least Likely [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Most Likely* |
| 4. Likelihood of spending free time together | *Least Likely [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Most Likely* |

Please indicate your similarity with the person who had the greatest influence on your purchase decision of dietary supplement

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Considering your outlook on life, how similar are you and this person? | *Least Similar [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Most Similar* |
| 2. Considering your likes and dislikes, how similar are you and this person? | *Least Similar [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Most Similar* |

Please indicate the level of influence this person had on your purchase decision

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. This person provided little new information. | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 2. The influence of this person will influence my choice about buying the product. | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 3. This person mentioned some things I have not considered. | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 4. This person provided some different ideas than other sources. | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 5. This person really did not change my mind about buying the product. | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 6. This person helped me make a decision about buying the product. | *Strongly Disagree [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] Strongly Agree* |
| 7. How much influence do you think this person will have on whether or not you purchase the product? | *Very Little Influence [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] CompleteInfluence* |

# Appendix C

**คำถามชุดที่ 1**

คำถามเหล่านี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของงานวิจัยระดับปริญญาเอกของคณะพาณิชยศาสตร์และการบัญชี จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัยในหัวข้อเรื่องผลกระทบของผู้นำทางความคิดต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อภายใต้ความเกี่ยวพันกับสินค้าที่มีลักษณะต่างกัน: การศึกษาข้ามวัฒนธรรม โปรดตอบคำถามทุกคำถาม

กรุณา ☑ หน้าตัวเลือกที่เหมาะสมกับตัวท่าน

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. เพศ | ___ ชาย___ หญิง |
| 2. อายุ | ___ 25-34 ___ 35-44 ___ 45-54 ___ 55-64 |
| 3. ระดับการศึกษา | ___ ต่ำกว่าหรือเทียบเท่าปริญญาตรี ___ สูงกว่าปริญญาตรี |
| 4. สถานภาพการสมรส | ___ โสด ___ สมรส ___ หม้าย ___ แยกกันอยู่/หย่าร้าง |
| 5. จำนวนบุตร – ธิดา | ___ 0 ___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5 หรือมากกว่า |

กรุณาระบุระดับความเห็นของท่านที่มีต่อข้อความต่อไปนี้

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. หากคุณต้องการรู้จักตัวตนที่แท้จริงของฉันคุณต้องเห็นเวลาฉันอยู่ในกลุ่มเพื่อน | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 2.ความสุขของฉันคือการได้ใช้เวลาร่วมกับผู้อื่น | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 3. ถ้าญาติประสบความลำบากทางการเงินฉันจะช่วยญาติ ด้วยวิธีของฉันเอง | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 4.ฉันพยายามหลีกเลี่ยงข้อขัดแย้งกับเพื่อนๆในกลุ่มของฉัน | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 5.ก่อนการตัดสินใจฉันปรึกษาผู้อื่นเสมอ | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 6. พฤติกรรมของฉันขึ้นอยู่กับว่าฉันอยู่กับใครอยู่ที่ไหนหรือทั้งสองอย่าง | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 7.ฉันเกรงใจผู้มีอำนาจที่ฉันติดต่ออยู่ด้วย | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 8.ฉันชอบทำงานกลุ่มมากกว่าทำคนเดียว | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 9.ฉันมักจะทำอะไรๆด้วยตัวฉันเอง | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 10.ฉันภูมิใจในความสำเร็จของฉันที่ผู้อื่นทำไม่ได้ | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 11.ฉันต้องทำงานให้ดีกว่าคนอื่นในหลายๆ ด้าน | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 12.ฉันมีเอกลักษณ์แตกต่างจากผู้อื่นในหลายๆ ด้าน | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 13.ฉันชอบความเป็นส่วนตัว | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 14.ฉันตระหนักถึงจุดอ่อนและจุดแข็งของตัวเอง | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |

| | |
|---|---|
| 15.ฉันมักจะแสดงความเห็นอย่างตรงไปตรงมาเสมอ | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 16.ผู้ที่อยู่ในตำแหน่งต่ำกว่าไม่ควรจะพูดเรื่องส่วนตัวกับผู้ที่อยู่ในตำแหน่งสูงกว่า | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 17.อำนาจกับความร่ำรวยเป็นสิ่งชั่วร้าย | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 18.ผู้ที่อยู่ในตำแหน่งสูงกว่าต้องตัดสินใจในทุกๆเรื่อง | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 19.ผู้ที่อยู่ในตำแหน่งสูงกว่าต้องกำกับดูแลผู้ที่อยู่ในตำแหน่งต่ำกว่าอย่างใกล้ชิด | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 20.ผู้ที่อยู่ในตำแหน่งต่ำกว่าควรมีส่วนร่วมในการตัดสินใจ | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 21.ผู้ที่อยู่ในตำแหน่งต่ำกว่าสามารถแสดงความไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างเปิดเผยกับผู้ที่อยู่ในตำแหน่งสูงกว่า | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 22.การทำงานอย่างมีอิสระเป็นเรื่องสำคัญสำหรับฉัน | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 23.ฉันมักจะให้ความเชื่อถือและร่วมมือกับผู้อื่น | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |

**คำถามชุดที่ 2**

คำถามเหล่านี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของงานวิจัยระดับปริญญาเอกของคณะพาณิชยศาสตร์และการบัญชี จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัยในหัวข้อเรื่องผลกระทบของผู้นำทางความคิดต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อภายใต้ความเกี่ยวพันกับสินค้าที่มีลักษณะต่างกัน: การศึกษาข้ามวัฒนธรรม โปรดตอบคำถามทุกคำถาม

คำถามกลั่นกรอง

1. ท่านมีสินค้าทั้ง 2 อย่างในครอบครอง
2. ท่านซื้อสินค้าทั้ง 2 อย่าง ในระยะเวลา 3 ปีที่ผ่านมา
3. ท่านจ่ายเงินซื้อสินค้า 2 อย่างนี้ด้วยตนเอง

***กรุณานึกย้อนไปถึงการซื้อสินค้าแฟชั่น***

กรุณาระบุระดับความเชี่ยวชาญของท่านที่เกี่ยวข้องกับสินค้าชนิดนี้

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. มีความรู้เกี่ยวกับแฟชั่น | น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มากที่สุด |
| 2. มีความชำนาญในการใช้สินค้าแฟชั่น | น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มากที่สุด |
| 3. มีประสบการณ์การใช้ | น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มากที่สุด |
| 4. รับรู้ข่าวสารล่าสุด | น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มากที่สุด |

กรุณาระบุระดับประสบการณ์ของบุคคลที่มีอิทธิพลมากที่สุดต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อสินค้าชนิดนี้

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. มีความรู้เกี่ยวกับแฟชั่น | น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มากที่สุด |
| 2. มีความชำนาญในการใช้สินค้าแฟชั่น | น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มากที่สุด |
| 3. มีประสบการณ์การใช้ | น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มากที่สุด |
| 4. รับรู้ข่าวสารล่าสุด | น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มากที่สุด |

กรุณาระบุระดับความสัมพันธ์ของคุณกับบุคคลที่มีอิทธิพลมากที่สุดต่อการซื้อสินค้าชนิดนี้

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. ความสัมพันธ์กับบุคคลที่มีอิทธิพลผู้นี้ | ห่างเหิน [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] สนิทสนม |
| 2. ความเป็นได้ในการบอกความลับส่วนตัว | เป็นไปได้น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เป็นไปได้มากที่สุด |
| 3. ความเป็นไปได้ในการให้ความช่วยเหลือในชีวิตประจำวัน | เป็นไปได้น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เป็นไปได้มากที่สุด |
| 4. ความเป็นไปได้ในการใช้ว่างเวลาร่วมกัน | เป็นไปได้น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เป็นไปได้มากที่สุด |

กรุณาระบุระดับความเหมือนกันระหว่างคุณกับบุคคลที่มีอิทธิพลมากที่สุดต่อการซื้อสินค้าชนิดนี้

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. เมื่อพิจารณาการมองชีวิตในอนาคตคุณคิดว่าคุณเหมือนกับบุคคลที่มีอิทธิพลผู้นี้มากขนาดไหน | คล้ายคลึงกันน้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] คล้ายคลึงกันมากที่สุด |
| 2. เมื่อพิจารณาสิ่งที่คุณชอบและไม่ชอบคุณคิดว่าคุณเหมือนกับผู้บุคคลที่มีอิทธิพลผู้นี้มากขนาดไหน | คล้ายคลึงกันน้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] คล้ายคลึงกันมากที่สุด |

กรุณาระบุระดับอิทธิพลของบุคคลที่มีอิทธิพลมากที่สุดต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อสินค้าชนิดนี้

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. บุคคลนี้ให้ข้อมูลใหม่ๆน้อย | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 2. บุคคลนี้มีอิทธิพลต่อตัวเลือกในการเลือกสินค้า | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 3. บุคคลนี้บ่งชี้ถึงบางสิ่งบางอย่างที่ฉันไม่เคยนึกถึงมาก่อน | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 4. บุคคลนี้ให้ความคิดเห็นที่แตกต่างจากแหล่งข้อมูลอื่นๆ | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 5. บุคคลนี้ไม่ได้เปลี่ยนแปลงการตัดสินใจของฉันในการเลือกซื้อสินค้า | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 6. บุคคลนี้ช่วยฉันในการตัดสินใจเลือกซื้อสินค้า | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 7. คุณคิดว่าบุคคลนี้มีอิทธิพลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อ | มีอิทธิพลน้อยมาก [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มีอิทธิพลอย่างสมบูรณ์แบบ |

***กรุณานึกย้อนไปถึงการซื้อผลิตภัณฑ์เสริมอาหาร***

กรุณาระบุระดับความเชี่ยวชาญของท่านที่เกี่ยวข้องกับสินค้าชนิดนี้

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. มีความรู้ในด้านโภชนาการ | น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มากที่สุด |
| 2. มีความชำนาญในการใช้ผลิตภัณฑ์เสริมอาหาร | น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มากที่สุด |
| 3. มีประสบการณ์การใช้ | น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มากที่สุด |
| 4. รับรู้ข่าวสารล่าสุด | น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มากที่สุด |

กรุณาระบุระดับประสบการณ์ของบุคคลที่มีอิทธิพลมากที่สุดต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อสินค้าชนิดนี้

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. มีความรู้ในด้านโภชนาการ | น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มากที่สุด |

| | |
|---|---|
| 2. มีความชำนาญในการใช้ผลิตภัณฑ์เสริมอาหาร | น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มากที่สุด |
| 3. มีประสบการณ์การใช้ | น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มากที่สุด |
| 4. รับรู้ข่าวสารล่าสุด | น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มากที่สุด |

กรุณาระบุระดับความสัมพันธ์ของคุณกับบุคคลที่มีอิทธิพลมากที่สุดต่อการซื้อสินค้าชนิดนี้

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. ความสัมพันธ์กับบุคคลที่มีอิทธิพลผู้นี้ | ห่างเหิน [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] สนิทสนม |
| 2. ความเป็นได้ในการบอกความลับส่วนตัว | เป็นไปได้น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เป็นไปได้มากที่สุด |
| 3. ความเป็นไปได้ในการให้ความช่วยเหลือในชีวิตประจำวัน | เป็นไปได้น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เป็นไปได้มากที่สุด |
| 4. ความเป็นไปได้ในการใช้ว่างเวลาร่วมกัน | เป็นไปได้น้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เป็นไปได้มากที่สุด |

กรุณาระบุระดับความเหมือนกันระหว่างคุณกับบุคคลที่มีอิทธิพลมากที่สุดต่อการซื้อสินค้าชนิดนี้

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. เมื่อพิจารณาการมองชีวิตในอนาคตคุณคิดว่าคุณเหมือนกับบุคคลที่มีอิทธิพลผู้นี้มากขนาดไหน | คล้ายคลึงกันน้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] คล้ายคลึงกันมากที่สุด |
| 2. เมื่อพิจารณาสิ่งที่คุณชอบและไม่ชอบคุณคิดว่าคุณเหมือนกับผู้บุคคลที่มีอิทธิพลผู้นี้มากขนาดไหน | คล้ายคลึงกันน้อยที่สุด [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] คล้ายคลึงกันมากที่สุด |

กรุณาระบุระดับอิทธิพลของบุคคลที่มีอิทธิพลมากที่สุดต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อสินค้าชนิดนี้

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. บุคคลนี้ให้ข้อมูลใหม่ๆน้อย | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 2. บุคคลนี้มีอิทธิพลต่อตัวเลือกในการเลือกสินค้า | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 3. บุคคลนี้บ่งชี้ถึงบางสิ่งบางอย่างที่ฉันไม่เคยนึกถึงมาก่อน | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 4. บุคคลนี้ให้ความคิดเห็นที่แตกต่างจากแหล่งข้อมูลอื่นๆ | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 5. บุคคลนี้ไม่ได้เปลี่ยนแปลงการตัดสินใจของฉันในการเลือกซื้อสินค้า | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 6. บุคคลนี้ช่วยฉันในการตัดสินใจเลือกซื้อสินค้า | ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง |
| 7. คุณคิดว่าบุคคลนี้มีอิทธิพลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อ | มีอิทธิพลน้อยมาก [ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ] มีอิทธิพลอย่างสมบูรณ์แบบ |

# Appendix D

**Figure 1: Outliers Plot for Opinion Seeker's Expertise (Fashion Goods)**

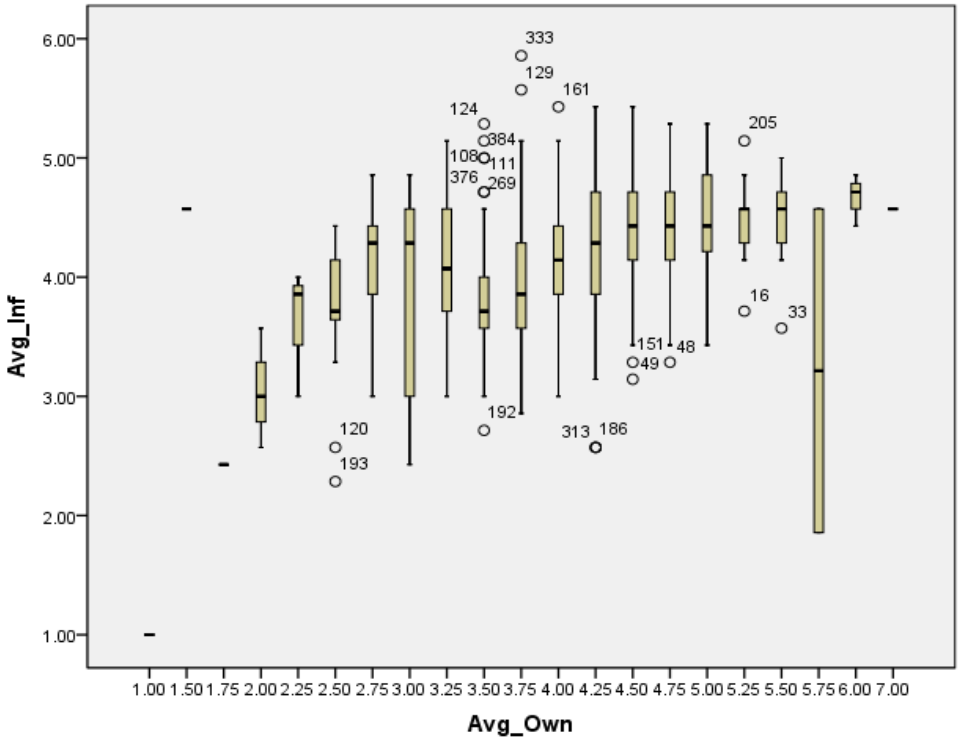



**Figure 2: Outliers Plot for Opinion Leader's Expertise (Fashion Goods)**

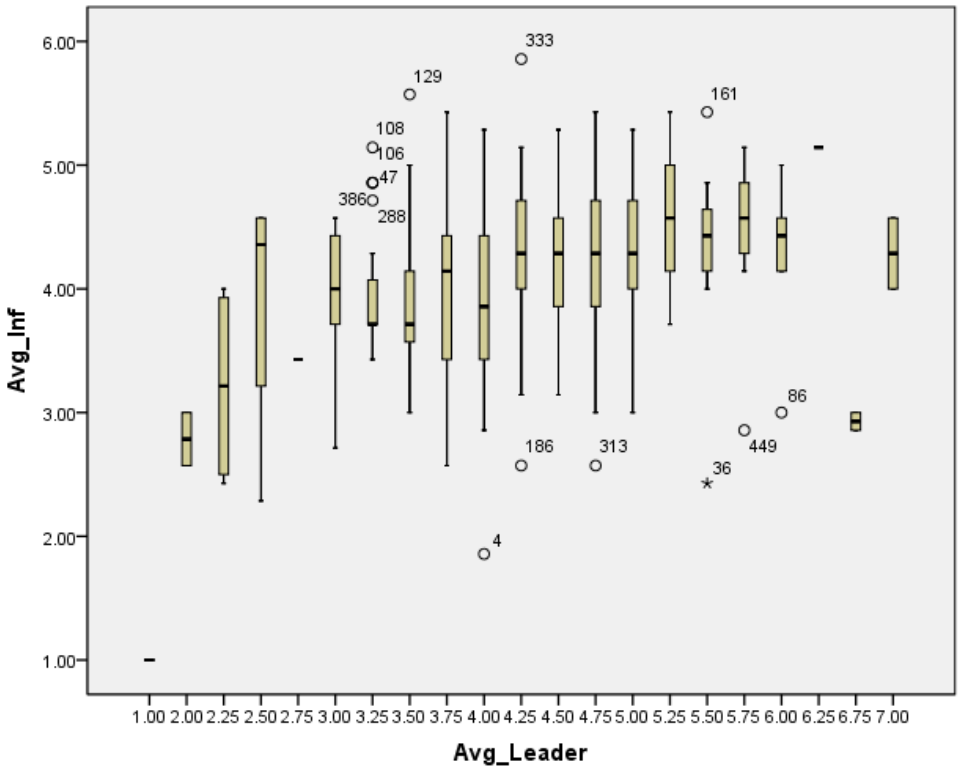


**Figure 3: Outliers Plot for Tie Strength (Fashion Goods)**

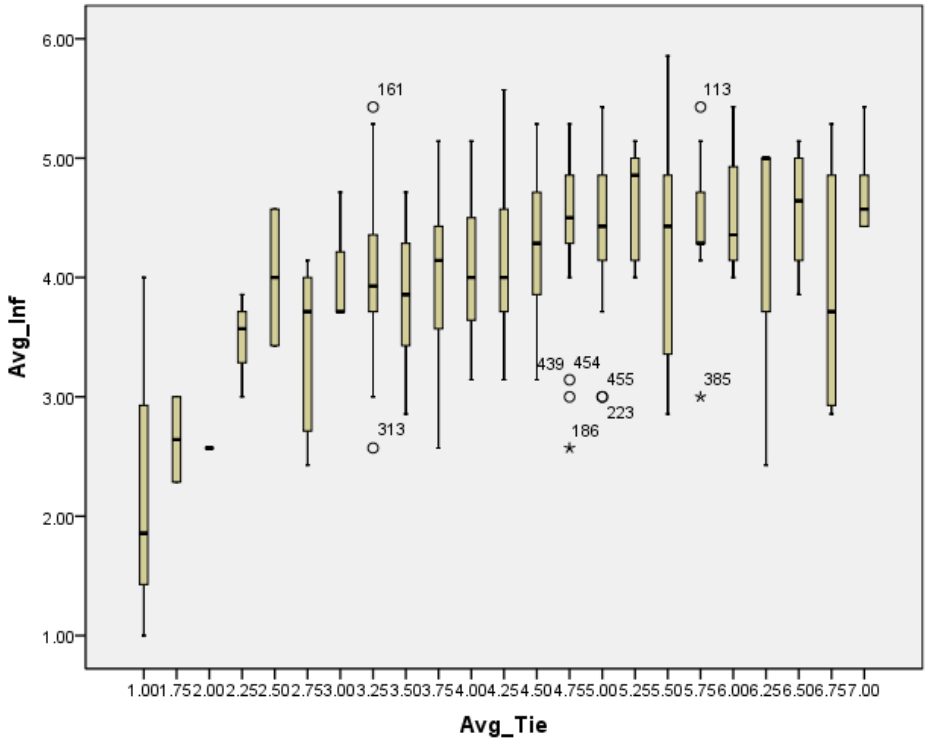



**Figure 4: Outliers Plot for Homophily (Fashion Goods)**

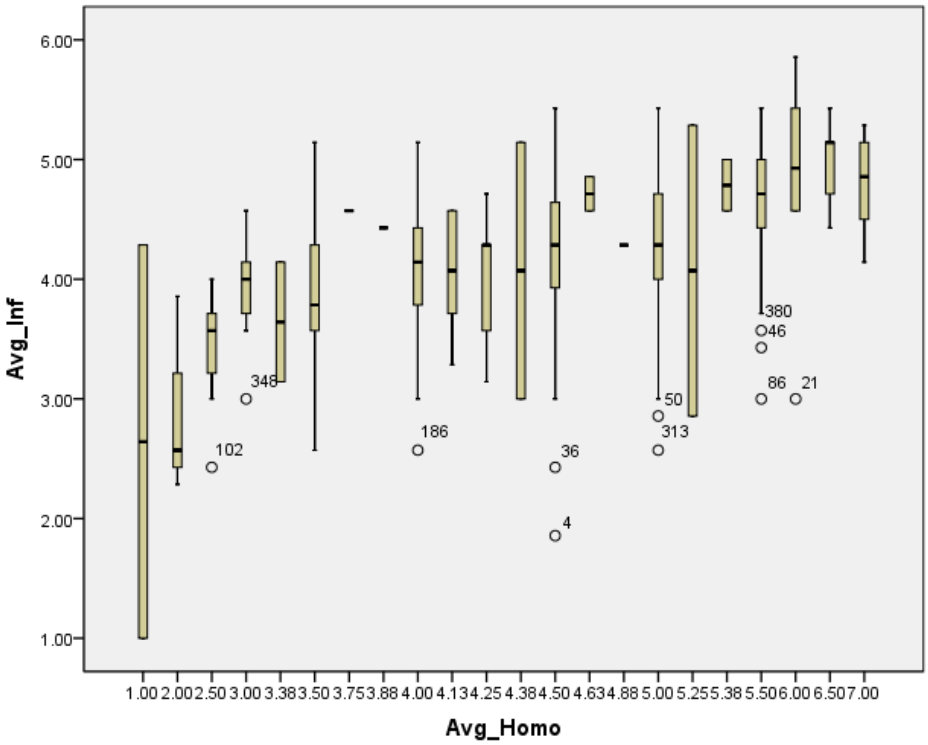


**Figure 5: Outliers Plot for Opinion Seekers' Expertise (Dietary Supplements)**

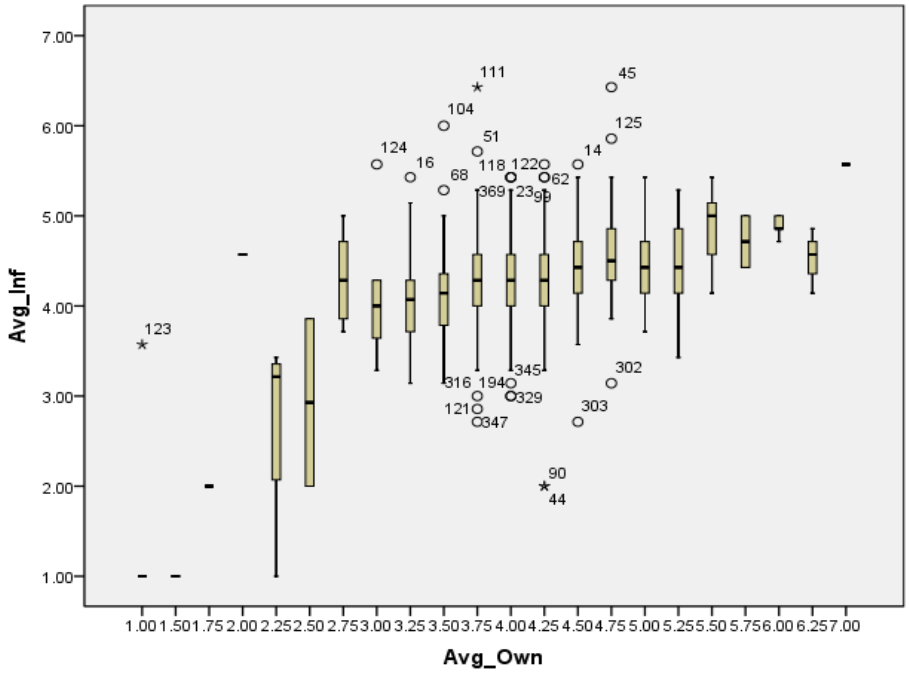



**Figure 6: Outliers Plot for Opinion Leaders' Expertise (Dietary Supplements)**

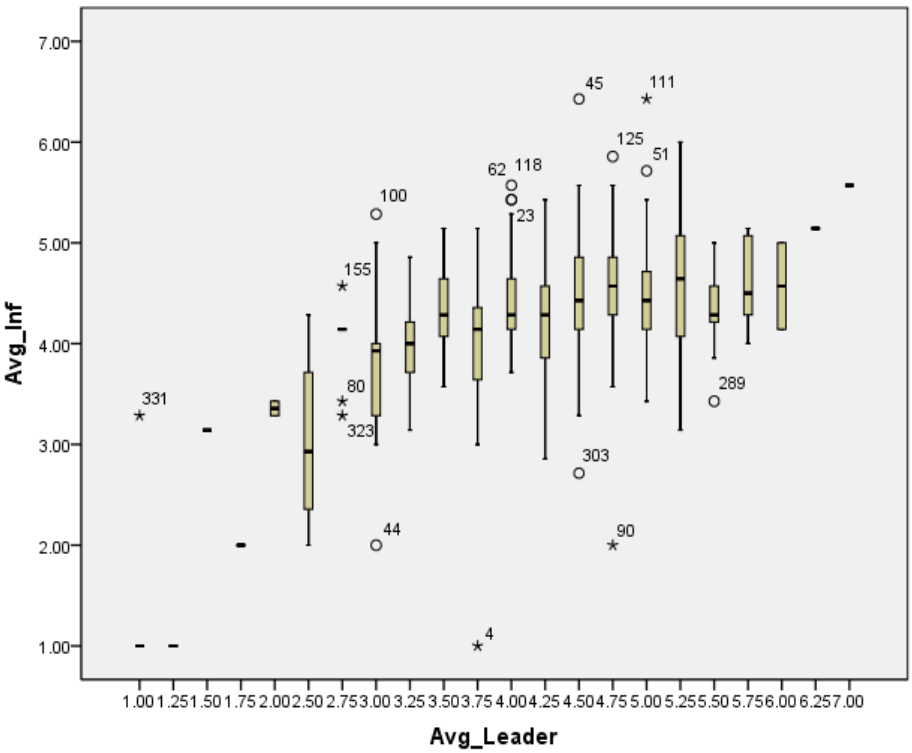


**Figure 7: Outliers Plot for Tie Strength (Dietary Supplements)**

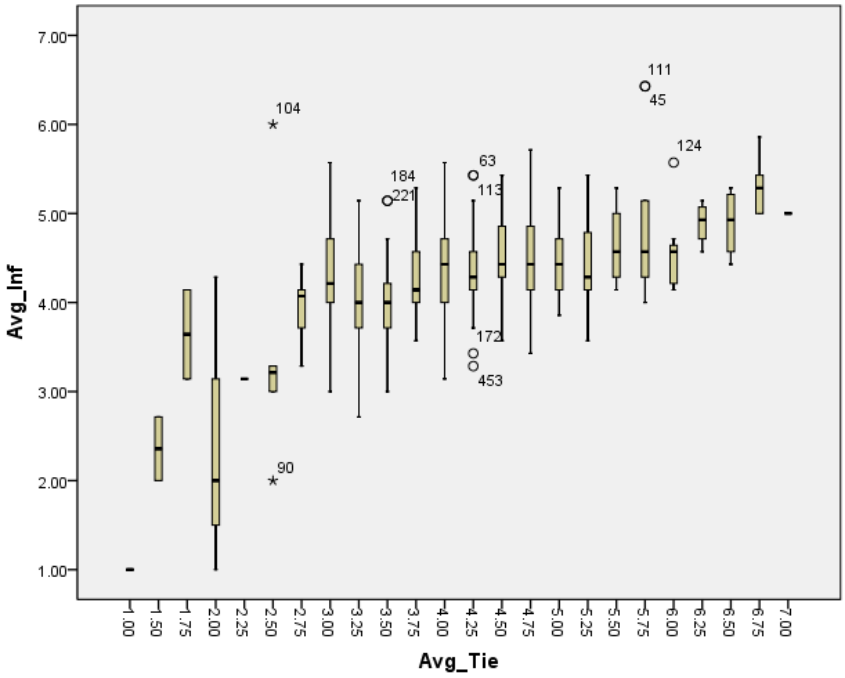
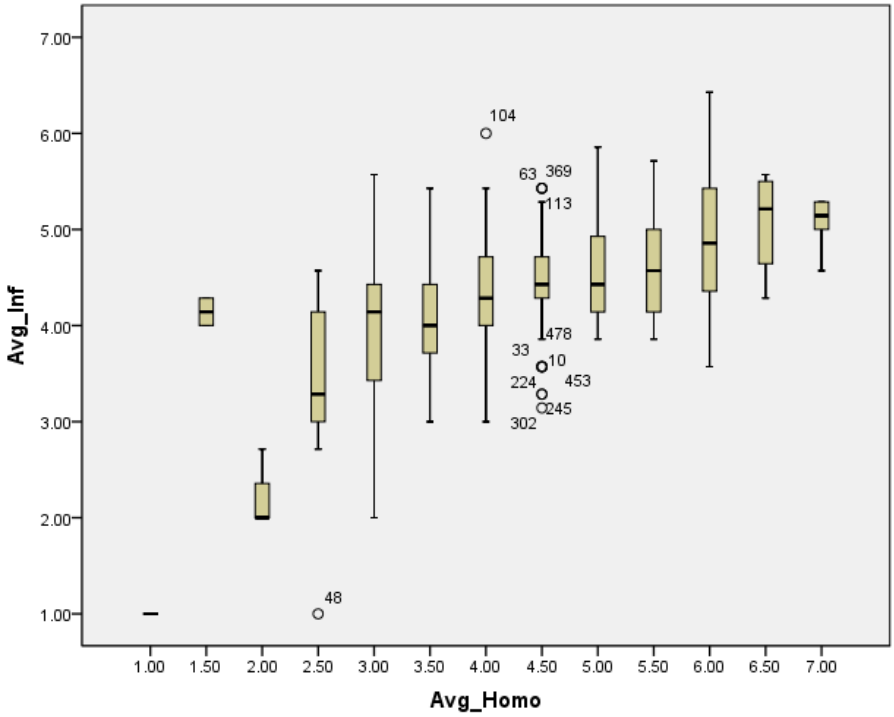



**Figure 8: Outliers Plot for Homophily (Dietary Supplements)**



# Appendix E

## Demographics of Collectivist – High Power Distance Thai respondents in Qualitative Study

| Age (years)/ Education | Below Bachelor's Degree | | Bachelor's Degree or Above | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sex | | Sex | |
| | M | F | M | F |
| **25 – 34** | Person 1 | Person 2 | Person 3 | Person 4 |
| **35 – 44** | Person 5 | Person 6 | Person 7 | Person 8 |
| **45 – 54** | Person 9 | Person 10 | Person 11 | Person 12 |
| **55 – 64** | Person 13 | Person 14 | Person 15 | Person 16 |

| Person | Occupation | Status | Number of Children |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Receptionist | Single | 0 |
| 2 | Business Owner | Single | 0 |
| 3 | PhD Student | Single | 0 |
| 4 | PhD Student | Single | 0 |
| 5 | Business Owner | Single | 0 |
| 6 | Secretary | Married | 0 |
| 7 | Business Owner | Married | 2 |
| 8 | Manager | Single | 0 |
| 9 | Manager | Married | 2 |
| 10 | Manager | Married | 1 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | Accountant | Married | 2 |
| 12 | Business Owner | Married | 3 |
| 13 | Business Owner | Married | 4 |
| 14 | Business Owner | Married | 4 |
| 15 | Business Owner | Married | 3 |
| 16 | Teacher | Widowed | 2 |

The respondents are asked the following questions:

(1) Why did you ask for advice from your opinion leader?

(2) Do you follow the latest trends in fashion/dietary supplement? (Little = 1, moderate = 2, a great deal = 3)

(3) How much influence did you receive from your opinion leader? (Little = 1, moderate = 2, a great deal = 3)

| Person | Fashion Goods | | | Dietary Supplement | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Question 1 | Question 2 | Question 3 | Question 1 | Question 2 | Question 3 |
| 1 | Fit-In | 2 | 3 | Result | 1 | 2 |
| 2 | Latest trend | 3 | 3 | Result | 2 | 2 |
| 3 | Fit-In | 2 | 2 | Knowledge | 1 | 2 |
| 4 | Expertise | 3 | 3 | Knowledge | 2 | 3 |
| 5 | Latest trend | 3 | 2 | Result | 1 | 3 |
| 6 | Fit-In | 2 | 2 | Result | 2 | 3 |
| 7 | Expertise | 2 | 3 | Knowledge | 1 | 2 |
| 8 | Latest Trend | 3 | 3 | Safety | 2 | 3 |
| 9 | Fit-In | 2 | 2 | Safety | 2 | 3 |
| 10 | Expertise | 2 | 2 | Result | 3 | 3 |
| 11 | Fit-In | 1 | 2 | Safety | 2 | 2 |
| 12 | Latest Trend | 2 | 2 | Safety | 3 | 3 |
| 13 | Latest Trend | 2 | 1 | Knowledge | 3 | 3 |
| 14 | Fit-In | 2 | 2 | Result | 3 | 3 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 | Appropriateness | 1 | 1 | Knowledge | 2 | 3 |
| 16 | Appropriateness | 1 | 2 | Safety | 2 | 3 |

# Vitae

Pongsiri Tejavibulya is a real estate entrepreneur with a family background in paper manufacturing business. He is the eldest brother amongst four siblings. Currently, he resides in Bangkok. Pongsiri earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Business and Economics at the University of Exeter, United Kingdom in 2001 and Postgraduate Diploma in Management at Regent's Business School, also in United Kingdom in 2002. Later he graduated with a Master of Business Administration, majoring in Marketing and Strategy, at Sasin Graduate Institution of Business Administration of Chulalongkorn University in 2007.