



**THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SUSCEPTIBILITY
TO GLOBAL CONSUMER CULTURE, PERCEPTIONS
TOWARD ONESELF, AND CONSPICUOUS
CONSUMPTION**

BY

MR.CHANON TOLIANG

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SCIENCE
MARKETING MANAGEMENT
FACULTY OF COMMERCE AND ACCOUNTANCY
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC YEAR 2015
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THESIS

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ENTITLED

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was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for
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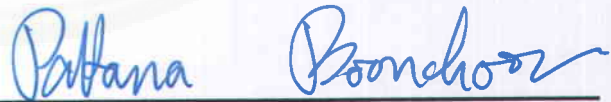
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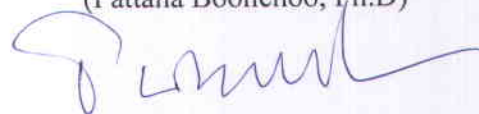
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ABSTRACT

People are grouped into social strata which are created in their own minds as experience and observations accumulate. Their perceptions of social stratification and how they evaluate themselves within those strata vary and have effects on emotionally driven types of buying. It is known that people buy products not only for their functional uses but also have emotional value and purchasing decisions are based on their emotional state. Emotional buying is influenced by different types of motive, such as resource scarcity, time constraints, etc. One important type of emotional buying, namely 'conspicuous consumption' is fairly common, but it has not been sufficiently investigated in the academic literature. Moreover, this type of buying may negatively affect the buyer's financial condition. Conspicuous consumption is a type of consumption that is widely applied by consumers for whom value for money is not the pre-eminent factor and who regularly consumes luxury products in everyday life as a way to demonstrate their wellbeing. Unfortunately, some people who have limited financial resources and were not born to the social class to which they aspire often consume products or services in this fashion with the aim of improving the image of their social status they believe they are projecting. This type of emotional buying is influenced by many factors. Some of these factors are self-perceptions and

pre-conceived attitudes towards the products the consumers seek to purchase. One of the attitudes towards the products that is commonly found to affect buying behavior in an international context is the consumers' attitudes towards global brands. This study explores how susceptibility to global consumer culture, social status, and self-esteem of Thai people impacts on their conspicuous consumption and seeks to explore the interrelationships between all of these variables.

Keywords: Global consumer culture, Social status, Self-esteem, Conspicuous consumption



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Buying is an activity that most people do to fulfill their needs in everyday life. People engage in buying activities because they have their needs, and desires which are later turned into buying motives (Moot, 1967). Consumers purchase products or services not only because of their functional benefits but also their emotional benefits. Unfortunately, the financial cost of buying has its own negative impact as it can affect consumers' well-being. Consumer behavior literature widely mentions a buying behavior, namely conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 2007, Amaldoss and Jain, 2003, Nguyen, 2003, Souiden, M'Saad and Pons, 2011, Pettit and Sivanathan, 2011, Chaudhuri, Mazumdar and Ghoshal (2011). Conspicuous consumption has received more attention in the literature as it is a core driver of the buying behavior of consumers in the luxury market. Marketers around the world are striving to add emotional benefits to their products as the value of the ordinary functions of the products are not enough to satisfy consumers and extra profit can be attained by tapping into this. By studying this type of purchasing behavior,

we will gain greater understanding of consumers in the luxury market. To date, there have not yet been studies concerning this behavior in Thailand; consequently, we expect that this research will be the very first study to explore these concepts in the Thai context. It is generally accepted that the decision to purchase a “conspicuous” product depends not only on the functions of the product but also on social needs such as prestige that can be derived from purchasing the product (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967, Belk, 2010). Veblen (2007) first coined the word “Conspicuous Consumption”, describing this behavior as the consumption which is driven by the desire to excel in pecuniary standing and so gain the esteem and envy of one’s fellow-men, not usability nor comfort. Schiffman and Kanuk (2004, p.330, cited in Souiden, M’Saad and Pons, 2011) defined conspicuous consumption as “the consumption of luxury items (e.g., jewelry, cars, etc.) targeted toward upmarket and specific segments of consumers”. Amaldoss and Jain (2005) stated that conspicuous consumption is “consumption that consumers purchase conspicuous goods to satisfy not only material needs but also social needs such as prestige”. Grace and Griffin (2009, p.3) defined conspicuous consumption as a “visible consumption of goods as a mechanism to enhance one’s social standing”. In the present study, the definitions of conspicuous consumption from Veblen (2007), Schiffman and Kanuk (2004), Amaldoss and Jain (2005) and Grace and Griffin (2009) are combined to formulate the most inclusive definition. Redefined this way, the definition of conspicuous consumption in this study is ‘the consumption of luxury products or services that is mainly focused on enhancing and/or maintaining one’s social standing and esteem rather than being benefited by its function’.

The drive to maintain self-esteem by acquiring goods and services may come from one’s social goals (Fullbrook, 2001). In some instances, consumers in low power situations or those who feel a lack of self-worth can speciously signal their wealth by displaying products that are associated with higher income (Rucker, Derek and Galinsky, 2007, Sivanathan and Pettit, 2010). Conspicuous goods are not acquired mainly for their function but instead to signal social status (Veblen, 2007). These products can catch consumers’ interest as they can display wealth and social status, moreover, it can also enhance consumers’ self-concept (Souiden, M’Saad and Pons, 2011). Conspicuous consumption nowadays can also be found in lower classes

or by consumers with lesser financial resources as most people seek social approval and esteem (Johansson-Stenman and Martinsson, 2006). This incoherence of expense and income can lead an individual to deep financial trouble as they strive to maintain an image at odds with their means by spending money on luxury items they can't afford.

As consuming for status is a global behavior worth a vast amount of money nowadays, luxury brands attempt to strengthen their brand values in order to improve consumers' satisfaction with displaying the product they bought. However, conspicuous consumption behavior is more complex than simply showing-off. Some consumers prefer to be deliberately different to; rather than to mimic people higher in the social hierarchy. As Han, Nunes and Drèze (2010) pointed out, there are consumers who quietly signal to others because they want to separate themselves from the high and medium consumers by extravagantly consuming only what is recognized by people of the same group, while lower groups are striving for well-known luxury goods to signal that they are the "haves", not the "have-nots".

Besides examining conspicuous consumption, this study also attempts to explore the attitudinal factors causing this buying behavior. As buying decisions depend largely on product evaluation, this study will include influences based on both internal and external attitudinal factors. Specifically: social status and self-esteem are chosen to be internal attitudinal factors. How consumers think of themselves may determine how people evaluate or view the same product. Valuing it differently based on how they see and feel about themselves, rather than how they objectively value the product. Susceptibility to global consumer culture is chosen to be an external attitudinal factor as it determines how people evaluate a product differently based on how they evaluate the benefits from purchasing products.

Social status is a powerful driving factor that affects conspicuous consumption. As higher income (demonstrated by displaying the purchase of luxury goods), implies higher status (Cole, Mailath and Postlewaite, 1992), some consumers consume lavishly as means of attaining or maintaining social status (Souiden, M'Saad and Pons, 2011).

Self-esteem is directly related to conspicuous consumption. As people seek social approval and esteem (Johansson-Stenman and Martinsson 2006),

acquisition of luxury goods is used as a tactic to attain and maintain their esteem (Fullbrook, 2001).

One of the important factors that may impact on conspicuous consumption is susceptibility to global consumer culture. Global consumer culture is defined as “a cultural entity not associated with a single country, but rather a far larger group generally recognized as international and transcending individual national cultures” (Alden, Steenkamp and Batra 1999, p. 80). This creates a sense of global belonging (Zhou, Teng and Poon, 2008) to the consumers, giving the feeling of being accepted globally. Global brands always try to communicate the sense of value through reliability and quality (Zhou, Teng and Poon, 2008, Steenkamp, Batra and Alden, 2003), trendy images (Zhou, Teng and Poon, 2008), prestige, status (Steenkamp, Batra and Alden, 2003) and more to consumers. The term: “susceptibility to global consumer culture” is used in this study to indicate how sensitive individuals are to global consumer culture, which will affect their patterns of conspicuous consumption.

1.2 Problem Statement

Do the attitudes about oneself and susceptibility to global consumer culture affect conspicuous consumption?

1.3 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between global consumer culture, social status, self-esteem of Thai consumers on their conspicuous consumption behavior.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To assess the structure of conspicuous consumption and susceptibility to global consumer culture.

2. To substantiate the relationships among susceptibility to global consumer culture, social status, self-esteem, and conspicuous consumption.

1.5 Significance of the study

Conspicuous consumption is a global behavior which occurs to satisfy emotional needs rather than functional needs. In managerial terms, understanding of this behavior is necessary in order to encourage this type of consumption. It will help by identifying the significant effect influencing conspicuous consumption. This study will benefit the luxury goods industry which would like to increase conspicuous consumption by associating desirable images with the brand to elevate consumers' perceived needs.

This thesis is organized as follows. In chapter 2, relevant pieces of literature are critically reviewed to provide the background for this study. A conceptual framework and related hypotheses are also presented. Chapter 3 discusses research methodology adopted in this thesis. Chapter 4 discusses the results of this paper and chapter 5 concludes the findings of this paper as well as suggesting avenues for future study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This thesis seeks to investigate the influences of global consumer culture, social status, and self-esteem on conspicuous consumption. This literature review will define the term of each construct listed and emphasize the relationships between global consumer culture, social status, self-esteem, and conspicuous consumption.

2.2 Susceptibility to global consumer culture

Alden, Steenkamp and Batra (1999, p. 80) defined global consumer culture as a “cultural entity not associated with a single country, but rather a larger group generally recognized as international and transcending individual national cultures”. Ulf Hannerz (1990) stated that the emergence of global culture is derived from the connectedness of various local unique cultures and subcultures. Oswald (1999) added that in global consumer culture, the signs and symbols from different ethnics have been adjusted and blended until they differ from their origin. “Global” has become an association that enhances image and many consumers use global brands to project these global identities and share them with other people. Steenkamp, Batra and Alden’s (2003) study shows how “perceived brand globalness” (PBG) influences the likelihood of brand purchase. They suggested that consumers usually perceive global brands as something of higher quality which, provide higher status and prestige. Global brands usually provide a sense of belongingness to a global consumer culture. This motivates global companies to compete to give consumers the feeling of global belonging.

Cateroa and Graham (2007, p.268, cited in Rosenbloom, Alfred and Haefner, 2009) defined a global brand as “a product or service with uniform characteristics (name, sign, and symbol) sold in multiple countries”. To examine consumers’ tendency to buy the products of global brands and understand why they

prefer global items. The term “susceptibility to global consumer culture” from Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) will be used in this study. They defined susceptibility to global consumer culture as the consumer’s desire for or tendency for the acquisition and use of global brands (2008, p.337) as opposed to non-global brands.

Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) developed a 3-dimensional scale that can be used to index the conceptual domain of susceptibility to global consumer culture between national cultures. They use 6 point scales in their questionnaire to measure their 3 dimensions. The first dimension is the conformity to the consumption trend. For example, “global brands” confer a sense of global belonging. The second dimension is the perception of quality. For example, that global brands have a very high level of reliability. The third and the last dimension is the social prestige. For example, Global brands may project the owner’s trendy image.

Alden, Steenkamp and Batra (1999) studied brand positioning through advertising in different countries on different continents. They defined different strategies used in positioning advertisements, including global, foreign, and local consumer culture positioning. India, Thailand, Korea, Germany, the Netherlands, France, and the United States were chosen for their data collection. Their results show that in almost all of the selected countries, local consumer culture positioning is used heavily in advertising. Unlike in Thailand, in which global consumer culture positioning is the more important factor, representing the country with the highest proportion of global consumer culture positioning in advertisements. As most advertising in Thailand from the study of Alden, Steenkamp and Batra (1999) used global consumer culture positioning, it can be implied that Thai consumers are more susceptible to global consumer culture than consumers in the other countries mentioned.

2.3 Social Status

Linton (1936, cited in Pearce, 2010, p.91) defined social status as “a position in a social system that encompasses a collection of rights and duties”. Normally, the social status of consumer is determined by their education, lifestyles, and wealth, compared to reference standard (Tournemaine and Tsoukis, 2008). High

status in society can provide a source of power, respect, and admiration (Solnick and Hemenway, 1998) and those with high status are listened to more (Pearce, 2010). Driskell (1982) stated that people with higher status usually have more power to influence other people in case of disagreement and induce more interactions between people and receive favorable feedbacks. This leads to more concern with position in society of individuals even to the point of craziness. This is supported by the study of Solnick and Hemenway (1998). Their respondents would willingly sacrifice 50% of their actual income for an increase in their relative income.

Since this research studies the relationship between consumers' attitudes which in turn, impact consumers' behavior. Objective social status will not be used as a measurement but subjective instead. Davis (1956, p.154) defined subjective social status as "a person's belief about his location in a status order". The word "social status" in this research will hence be used to mean subjective social status.

Adler, Epel, Castellazzo and Ickovics (2000) and Singh-Manoux, Adler and Marmot (2003) measured "subjective" social status by giving participants a self-anchoring scale developed by Cantril (1965). This scale is a drawing of a 10-step ladder, telling them to place the X on the step that they think they're standing on in the society. Evaluating the same position in the society can be different as people take different standards into account (Tournemaine and Tsoukis, 2008). At the top of the ladder are people who think they are at the top of the social order and at the bottom of the ladder are people who think that they are at the bottom level of social order.

2.4 Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers to how one evaluates the self (Porter and Washington 1993, p.140). Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, and Vohs, (2003) stated that increases and decreases in self-esteem generally bring strong emotional reactions. They added that the fluctuations in self-esteem are usually an indicator of how ones succeed in life. However, Rosenberg (1995) suggests that self-esteem should not only be looked at as a whole, and this misunderstanding led to different outcomes in studies. He added that global self-esteem and specific self-esteem are not equivalent or interchangeable. Global self-esteem is an attitude toward oneself as a whole while

specific self-esteem is an attitude toward specific facets of oneself. To illustrate; one can have a positive attitude toward his University (global), but have negative attitudes toward some departments in that University (specific). Self-esteem can also be divided into group self-esteem and personal self-esteem. Porter and Washington (1993) stated that group self-esteem refers to how people associate themselves as part of an ethnic group and personal self-esteem refers to how a person evaluates him/herself within the group he/she belongs.

In this study, the word “self-esteem” will hence be used instead of “personal self-esteem” to capture the definition of consumers’ attitudes toward selves and this study will also assess self-esteem as a whole (global) and in each dimension (specific).

Rosenberg (1965) developed a widely used instrument for evaluating individual self-esteem. He developed a global self-esteem measurement with a 10-item Likert scale by measuring positive and negative feelings (reverse question) about the self on a questionnaire. Heatherton and Polivy (1991) also developed a self-esteem scale. This scale has 20 items measuring self-esteem in 3 dimensions, namely: performance, social and appearance.

Rosenberg (1995) found that there is a strong relationship between psychological well-being and global self-esteem while specific self-esteem has a strong association with performance. However, he only measured specific self-esteem in an academic setting. The study of Rosenberg (1995) will then not be applied to this paper as it can only measure performance self-esteem. Instead, to capture the definition of self-esteem thoroughly in wider dimensions, the scale developed by Heatherton and Polivy (1991) will be used to measure self-esteem in different dimensions including performance, social and appearance.

2.5 Conspicuous Consumption

Consumer goods can and do function as material symbols of who a person is and who they would like to be. (Dittmar and Drury, 2000). Conspicuous goods are goods acquired not for their inherent objective or subjective value but instead to signal the wealth (Bagwell and Bernheim, 1996) and social status of the owner

(Veblen, 2007). The purpose of buying conspicuous goods is to satisfy not only material needs but also social needs such as prestige (Amaldoss and Jain, 2005). This causes the behavior of consuming goods for their own sake or even foregoing things they don't really need to get something beyond ordinary consumption. Veblen (2007) coined the word "Conspicuous Consumption" in his book, the theory of the leisure class. He said, the drive of this kind of consumers is neither the usability nor comfort "than this desire to excel in pecuniary standing and so gain the esteem and envy of one's fellow-men". He thinks that when someone buys a luxurious car, he buys it not only for its functional use but to show how better off he is compared to his social groups. By showing off his car, he perceives himself as having higher status and self-worth. Grace and Griffin (2009, p.3) described Conspicuous consumption as "visible consumption of goods as a mechanism to enhance one's social standing". Colarelli and Dettmann (2003) noted that people normally gain higher social status through years of hard work. However, marketers create conspicuous products to illusion that people can bypass time and effort if the product is possessed. Corneo and Jeanne (2001) proposed that the utility of individual status is based largely on how individuals perceived about his wealth rank that is not explicitly observable. Nonetheless, these beliefs are based on noisy "signals" individuals perceive on his wealth. Conspicuous consumption is known to be engaged in by those who have enough financial resources, however, it is not only found in the upper socio-economic classes. It is human nature to have good impression that is in compliance with various social norms to gain social approval and foster their self-esteem (Johansson-Stenman and Martinsson 2006) this drives the conspicuous consumption to be found in lower socio-economic classes or consumers with lesser financial resources. In some instances, consumers in low power situations (Rucker, Derek and Galinsky 2007) or those who feel a lack of self-worth can inappropriately signal their wealth by displaying products representing a higher income (Sivanathan and Pettit 2010).

Alternatively, those who feel a high need for status but cannot afford true luxury, in some instances, use loud counterfeits to mimic those they recognize to be wealthy (Han, Nunes and Drèze, 2010). Veblen (2007) has divided conspicuous consumption into two dimensions. "Invidious comparison", the consumption to demonstrate one's status in order to outclass those below and "Pecuniary emulation",

the imitative consumption of products by those with lower statuses with the intent to achieve higher status by possessing and displaying the goods.

East Asians are particularly avaricious luxury consumers (Wong and Ahuvia 1998). Most consumption of luxury items in Asia is driven by China with its population of 1,354,040,000 (source: Country Economy), which represents almost 20 percent of the world population. And according to Bain's study by Arpizio (2015), Southeast Asia has become the rising star of the Asia Pacific region, with growth of 11%, in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Thailand. Growing consumer interest in luxury products may be partially explained by their intent to display wealth and social status and enhance their self-concept through the consumption of branded items (Souiden, M'Saad and Pons, 2011) The percentage of the poor in the whole Kingdom of Thailand has declined from 42.63 percent in 2000 to 13.15 percent in 2011 (Source: National Statistical Office of Thailand) which can be an indicator of the rise in wellbeing of Thai consumers and possibly the incentivizing of higher spending on luxury goods.

Han, Nunes and Drèze, 2010 studied brand signaling. From their study, consumers were divided into status groups, from high to low, namely: patricians, parvenus, poseurs and proletarians. Patricians possess significant wealth and pay a premium for branded products that can only be noticed by other patricians. They push their standard of conspicuous consumption to a higher point with the result of a relatively greater expenditure (Veblen 2005) to avoid being mistaken for one of the middle-class people who use loud signals (Feltovich, Harbaugh, and To, 2002). Parvenus (or new elite) use loud products to signal to the groups below them that they are distinct. They want to signal to the middle and lower class that they are elite and to the higher class that they are part of their group. Poseurs (or persons who pretend to be people they are not) are also status conscious like Parvenus but they are not true luxury consumers. They may not be able to afford an authentic luxury, so they have the potential to buy luxury goods at discount prices or even buying counterfeit luxury goods. Counterfeit products are illegal but very common in Thailand. From this, it can be implied that Thai people have much more concern over their status and wealth-relative consumption despite their low income relative to other nations. Thai government officials are not taking enough action to eliminate them so these illegal

manufacturers continue to grow. By ignoring "adequate and effective" protection of intellectual property rights results, Thailand is to be classified by The United States as a "Priority Watch List" nation. The last group is Proletarians, a lower social or economic class that are not seeking status. Their consumption is not driven by status as they do not wish to associate with higher socio-economic groups. As a result, a lower-priced line of luxury brands or category-extended products is likely to sell well if they are advertised with the prominent and prestigious labels (loud products) of their high-priced forebears.

According to Amaldoss and Jain's (2005) study about snobs and followers in luxury market, the demand curve is always downward sloping if the price goes up, while the demand curve of snobs could be upward sloping. They also found that the profits decrease as snobbishness among consumers increases. From this, it can be inferred that conspicuous consumption is primarily driven by those who have lower financial resources. Moav and Neeman (2012) encouragingly suggest that those with high human capital who have certified accomplishments (such as degrees or titles) need less motivation to express self through conspicuous consumption, whereas the poor and the newly rich have a relatively stronger motivation to impress via conspicuous consumption.

From the study in gender differences and spending behaviors of Thai undergraduate students by Sereetrakul, Wongveeravuti and Likitapiwat (2013), male students tended to buy more games, alcoholic drinks, sports equipment and computer equipment while female students buy more entertainment, clothes, cosmetics, school equipment and presents for other people.

Souiden, M'Saad and Pons (2011) developed a 5-item scale measuring conspicuous consumption. However, as the authors also measure many other constructs other than conspicuous consumption, this scale would be inappropriate for use in this study.

Chaudhuri, Mazumdar and Ghoshal (2011) developed an 11-item scale measuring conspicuous consumption. They first initiated the 36-item scale and reduced to 11-item scale. However, the scale needs to be refined as some questions are not compatible with overall Thai consumers.

Conspicuous consumption and status consumption are parallel studies. They are both based on the idea of “status consciousness that leads to consumption”. They are close and can overlap but cannot be exchanged. Understanding both of the definitions will help to avoid research flaws so I define them here: Status consumption emphasizes the personal nature of owning status goods, which may or may not be displayed. While conspicuous consumption focuses more on displaying wealth through loud possessions. For example, people may use luxury products as it is the lifestyle of their current status and people can use luxury products to tell other people about their status.

This study emphasizes the understanding of conspicuous consumption in the luxury fashion goods context. It is necessary to define the meaning of fashion goods and also the meaning of luxury used in this study.

2.5.1 Fashion Goods

Bianchi (2002) pointed out two alternative models of fashion. The first model describes fashion as a cascade which involves people that adopt fashion early and people who follow those adoptions. Fashion has two essential features, novelty, and short life. It usually arises, vanishes and repeats. The second model describes fashion as the result of a desire both to conform and to differentiate oneself from others. People are affected by social influences and may repetitively adopt something new to be socially accepted.

Fashion goods as Bianchi (2002, p.15) described, are “goods that become desirable due to the fact that they mix novelty with familiarity, creating the contrast between expectation and experience which, in fashion goods may give pleasure to the adopters”. However, this study will only focus on wearable and easily recognizable fashion goods including shoes, bags, clothing and other fashion accessories (Park, Burns and Rabolt, 2007).

2.5.2 Luxury

Luxury is hard to define as it is a subjective concept and can be dependent on different value systems of observers (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). However, the specific definition of luxury must be determined appropriately in the study to explore further.

Kapferer (1997, cited in Steenkamp, Batra and Alden, 2003) describes luxury as art applied to functional items that provide the reference of good taste. Nueno and Quelch (1998) determine the luxury value of products by comparing the functionality and its intangible utility to the price. This term can be used to compare the degree of luxury of products but may not be able to cover the meaning of luxury. Jackson (2004, cited in Fionda and Moore, 2008) proposed the core characteristics of luxury products as “exclusivity, premium prices, image and status which combine to make them more desirable for reasons other than function.” Vickers and Renand (2003) describe luxury goods product as “something that is definitely out of the ordinary in terms of daily living needs. (p.461)”

2.6 Hypotheses Development

To develop hypotheses, each of the constructs reviewed previously are linked to each other to create a conceptual framework based on the attitude-behavior concept. The relationships between each construct are reviewed to confirm the relations and to develop appropriate hypotheses afterward.

2.6.1 Conceptual Framework

Attitudinal constructs including susceptibility to global consumer culture, social status, and self-esteem are grouped and considered as independent variables. A behavioral construct, (namely conspicuous consumption), is considered the dependent variable and linked to attitudinal constructs. The conceptual framework for this study is shown in Figure 2.1.

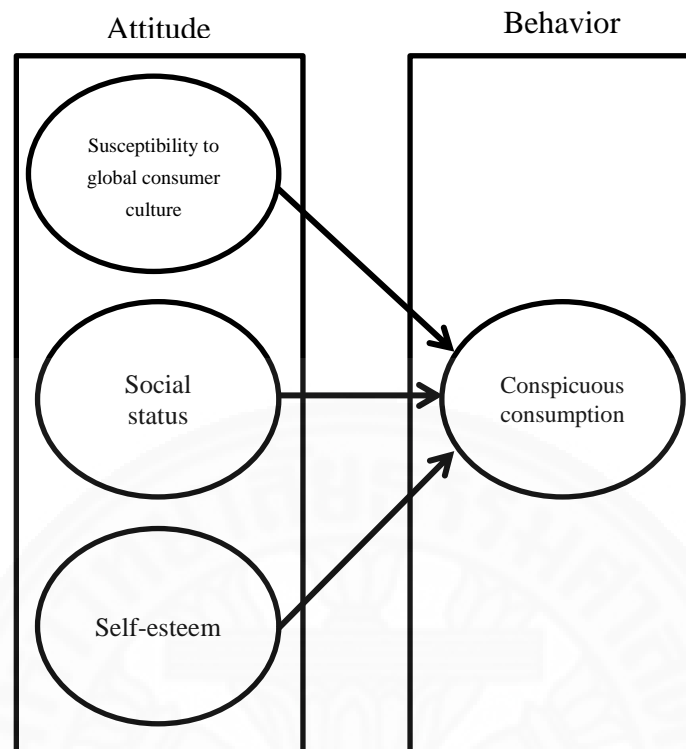


Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework

2.6.2 Attitudinal and behavioral linkage of consumers

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975, cited in Bentler and Speckart, 1979) has developed an attitude-behavior relations model. In their model, there is an indirect relationship between attitude and behavior as there is an inter-relationship between attitude and behavior. However, as a new suggestion, Bentler and Speckart (1979) proposed a model of attitude-behavior relations, arguing that behavior and attitude are not mediated by intention but behavior can be directly influenced by attitude and attitude-influenced behavior itself can affect another behaviors as well.

Bandura (1977, cited in Sexton and Tuckman, 1991) proposed a model of self-efficacy, a model describing the relationship between attitude (outcome expectancy and self-efficacy) and behavior. In his model, individuals hold two expectations in regard to their potential behavior in an upcoming situation (Sexton and Tuckman, 1991, p.725), outcome expectancy, and self-efficacy. An outcome expectancy is defined as “a person’s estimate that a given behavior will lead to certain outcomes” (Bandura, 1977, p. 193, cited in Sexton and Tuckman, 1991) and self-

efficacy is defined as “a perceived capability to perform a behavior” (Williams, 2010, p.417) Self-efficacy causally influences expected outcomes of behavior (Williams, 2010).

Snyder, Berscheid and Tanke (1977) tested the relationship between perception and behavior. The result was that men who perceived themselves as dealing with attractive women will portray a more outgoing and sociable behavior as compared to those who perceived themselves as dealing with unattractive group of women.

Research conducted by Driskell (1990) also found that there is a relationship between expectation and behavior. The study showed that expectations are the strongest positive predictor of behavior with a correlation co-efficient of 0.42. From this study, it can also be implied that the expectation-behavior correlation may get stronger when combined with the effects of status on expectations.

2.6.3 Susceptibility to Global Consumer Culture and Conspicuous consumption

Kapferer, (1997, cited in Steenkamp, Batra and Alden, 2003) suggested that consumers prefer global brands as it associates them with higher prestige and quality which are related to global acceptance (Keller, 1998 cited in Steenkamp, Batra and Alden, 2003), Steenkamp, Batra and Alden (2003, p. 61) added that consumers usually view global brands as product with higher quality and more prestigious. By consuming global brand, they become part of the global consumer culture. Seeing global consumer culture as a reference group, O’Cass and McEwen (2004) stated that susceptibility to the influence of reference group directly relates to an individual’s conspicuous consumption.

It is hypothesized that:

H1: There’s a positive relationship between susceptibility to global consumer culture and conspicuous consumption.

H1a: Conformity to consumption trends of global brands positively impacts on conspicuous consumption.

H1b: Quality perception of global brands positively impacts on conspicuous consumption.

H1c: Social prestige of global brand positively impacts on conspicuous consumption.

2.6.4 Social Status and Conspicuous Consumption

Griskevicius (2007, p.87) described Conspicuous consumption as “the act of spending money to gain status and impress others by indicating that one has enough money to purchase frivolous and wasteful goods”. Everyone has their position in the social hierarchy. High position, which in the past could only be attained through birth and achievements (Han, Nunes and Drèze, 2010), although, the judgment of other people, which determines “where they are” in the social stratification later changes as some other traits are also used to determine “who is higher in society than who”.

Wealth has become the most general trait used as an indicator of people’s status as people with higher income are implied higher in status (Cole, Mailath and Postlewaite, 1992). The rich were considered “better” (Han, Nunes and Drèze, 2010). Bakshi and Chen (1996) have identified the relationship between wealth and status that status can be increased by wealth. Status products and brands are tools consumers used to gain access to a specific social group (O’Cass and McEwen 2004). In the mind of a conspicuous consumer, the display of lavish consumption serves as a means of attaining or maintaining social status (Souiden, M’Saad and Pons, 2011). From the study of Souiden, M’Saad and Pons (2011), consumers’ conspicuous consumption of branded fashion accessories in Canada and Tunisia found that social status has a strong impact on conspicuous consumption. They have tested the relationship between social-status seeking with conspicuous consumption and conspicuous consumption was found to be directly and positively influenced by social status display. Nelissen and Meijers (2011) suggest that person who displays a luxury brand label is indeed perceived as wealthier and receives higher status ratings than a person who does not display a label.

It is hypothesized that:

H2: There’s a positive relationship between perceived social status and conspicuous consumption.

2.6.5 Self-esteem and Conspicuous consumption

People may maintain their self-esteem by acquiring goods and services (Fullbrook, 2001). Pettit and Sivanathan (2011) found that low-esteemed individuals are more likely to buy luxury products on credit to recover their self-worth. Nguyen (2003) stated that teenagers with low self-esteem are more likely to be materialistic. Matching with Leary and Kowalski's study, people can develop desired self-identities by publicly displaying attributes that are consistent with those identities. People differ in how congruent their self-presentations are with their self-perceptions (Leary and Kowalski, 1990). In addition, self-esteem could be enhanced by behaving consistently with one's desired identities.

From Souiden, M'Saad and Pons'a(2011) study about consumers' conspicuous consumption of branded fashion accessories, found the impact of self-esteem on conspicuous consumption is insignificant. However, they added that in different cultural context, self-esteem could explain conspicuous consumption in different ways.

It is hypothesized that:

H3: There's a negative relationship between self-esteem and conspicuous consumption.

H3a: Performance self-esteem negatively impacts conspicuous consumption.

H3b: Social self-esteem negatively impacts conspicuous consumption.

H3c: Appearance self-esteem negatively impacts conspicuous consumption.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter has two main sections. The first section of this chapter addresses the research instrument conducted, target population and sample and measurements of each construct in the research framework. The second section addresses the data analysis used in this study, including data preparation, reliability and validity, and analysis methods

3.2 Research Design

This quantitative research focuses on the collection of data. The questionnaire is a design based on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. All questions are translated from English to Thai, tested and validated. After the sample is set, all surveys are spread throughout the internet. The collected data are to be reported through regression analysis in Chapter 4 and interpreted in Chapter 5.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Survey Instrument

An online questionnaire survey was distributed through the internet in order to collect data concerning susceptibility to global consumer culture, subjective social status, self-esteem, and conspicuous consumption. This convenient sampling technique was used to gather data. The target population was comprised of shoppers who have general knowledge of luxury, own a luxury product and have access to shopping activities. The questionnaire consisted of 46 items. All questions are measured on a 7-point Likert scale except the measure of social status. In that, the scale ranges from 1 to 10. The Likert scale used consists of 7 degrees and translated to Thai as follows,

1 – Strongly disagree (ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง)

2 – Moderately disagree (ไม่เห็นด้วย)

3 – Slightly disagree (ค่อนข้างไม่เห็นด้วย)

4 – Neutral (เฉยๆ)

5 – Slightly agree (ค่อนข้างเห็นด้วย)

6 – Moderately agree (เห็นด้วย)

7 – Strongly agree (เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง)

In the last section of the questionnaire, demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status, education, and monthly income are included.

3.3.2 Population and Sample

The target population is comprised of shoppers aged from 23 to 60 of any gender that has acquired any type of luxury product. It is assumed that all participants have access to shopping activity. A place of participants' shopping activity can be of any kind, department stores to pop-up markets, or any place participants consider they spent their "shopping activity" in. This study only collects data from participants who were born and raised in Thailand. Participants are asked to do the questionnaire through an online survey link. As the convenient sampling technique was used to gather data, the links are mostly shared through well-known social media; Facebook, LINE and Twitter. Instagram is not included as the hyperlink function is not supported within its application

3.3.3 Measures

Research framework of this study has 3 independent variables: susceptibility to global consumer culture, subjective social status, and self-esteem, which influence the dependent variables: conspicuous consumption. The framework is as follows.

(1) Measure of susceptibility to global consumer culture

To assess participants' level of susceptibility to global consumer culture, Zhou, Teng and Poon's scale (2008) is used. The scale consisted of 16 items plotted in 3 dimensions: conformity to consumption trend, quality perception, and social prestige. This scale can measure the consumer's desire or tendency for the

acquisition and use of global brands in 3 aspects so that this study can explore this construct in detail.

(2) Measure of subjective social status

To assess participants' level of subjective social status, Cantril's (1965) 10-point scale is used. This is distinct as it is the exception from the other items' 5-point Likert scales in this research. The participants' were being questioned on where they think they stand in the social stratification. This item will provide the data on subjective social status more precisely through its wider scale.

(3) Measure of self-esteem

To assess participants' level of self-esteem, the Heatherton and Polivy (1991) 20-item scale is used. Their scale consists of 3 dimensions: performance self-esteem, social self-esteem and appearance self-esteem. By breaking the scale into 3 dimensions, it can indicate that which dimension is the aspect of self-esteem that impact most on conspicuous consumption, and can thus understand individuals' self-esteem in more detail.

(4) Measure of conspicuous consumption

To assess participants' level of conspicuous consumption, Souiden, M'Saad and Pons'a(2011) 5-point scale and Chaudhuri, Mazumdar and Ghoshal's (2011) 11-point scale are mixed and some questions are screened out. The 9 questions that are most compatible with this study are chosen to measure conspicuous consumption

3.4 Data Analysis

3.4.1 Data Preparation

After sorting questionnaires, the data was coded and analyzed using Statistic Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Descriptive analysis is conducted to calculate percentage, mean and standard deviation in this study. T-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests are used to compare different outcomes in terms of demographic differences, such as age, gender, and personal income.

If there are missing values, respondents with a few values missing (3 or less) are retained and those missing values are to be replaced with means. Other

respondents with missing values are to be classified as unsatisfactory responses and were discarded.

3.4.2 Reliability and Validity

To establish the reliability of the measurement used in the survey instrument, Cronbach's alpha is verified to examine internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha reliability tests are conducted to test the reliability of questions in both constructive and dimensional terms. Susceptibility to global consumer culture and self-esteem have a high level of reliability at .948 and .810 respectively. All dimensions of susceptibility to global consumer culture and self-esteem are tested and all scored more than .750 which indicates high reliability of each dimension.

The test of correlations is also conducted to prove that there is no inter-correlation between each independent variable. The correlations test between susceptibility to global consumer culture, social status, self-esteem, and conspicuous consumption are as follows:

Table 3.1 Correlations

| | SGCC_ALL | SGCC_CON | SGCC_QP | SGCC_SP | SE_ALL | SE_P | SE_S | SE_A | SS_ALL | CC |
|----------|----------|----------|---------|---------|--------|--------|---------|-------|--------|-------|
| SGCC_ALL | 1.000 | | | | | | | | | |
| SGCC_CON | .894** | 1.000 | | | | | | | | |
| SGCC_QP | .813** | .597** | 1.000 | | | | | | | |
| SGCC_SP | .908** | .712** | .613** | 1.000 | | | | | | |
| SE_ALL | -.033 | -.056 | .040 | -.038 | 1.000 | | | | | |
| SE_P | .120* | .088 | .146* | .100 | .822** | 1.000 | | | | |
| SE_S | -.181** | -.196** | -.087 | -.164** | .855** | .581** | 1.000 | | | |
| SE_A | .058 | .045 | .060 | .041 | .711** | .400** | .393** | 1.000 | | |
| SS_ALL | .193** | .183** | .129* | .180** | -.133* | -.089 | -.167** | -.020 | 1.000 | |
| CC | .537** | .636** | .308** | .448** | -.145* | -.018 | -.260** | -.004 | .103 | 1.000 |

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Where: SGCC_ALL is Susceptibility to global consumer culture, SGCC_CON is Conformity to consumption trend in Susceptibility to global consumer culture construct, SGCC_QP is Quality perception in Susceptibility to global consumer culture construct, SGCC_SP is Social prestige in Susceptibility to global consumer culture construct, SS is social status, SE_ALL is self-esteem, SE_P is Performance in Self-esteem construct, SE_S is Social in Self-esteem construct, SE_A is Appearance in Self-esteem construct, and CC is Conspicuous consumption

In order to establish the validity of this study, pretest questionnaires were conducted to test its formats, language and understandability to ensure that the exact meanings of English questionnaires were translated accurately to Thai. Refined versions of questions were tested to ensure that participants are able to capture the same picture as the former ones.

3.4.3 Factor Analysis

Factor analysis method is performed to simplify constructs and its dimensions, reducing inter-correlated items and maintaining only a few questions that best represent its constructs and dimensions.

The rotated component matrix shows 10 cross-loaded items (SGCC_QP1, SGCC_QP2, SGCC_SP1, SGCC_SP3, SGCC_SP4, SGCC_SP2, SE_P1, SE_P4, SE_P5, SE_P6 and SE_A6) which were deleted prior to interpretation.

3.4.4 Data Analysis

The linear regression method is used to test all hypotheses. Linear regression is the method used to test the relationship between a dependent variable and independent variables, which is used extensively by researchers.

Table 3.2 Rotated Component Matrix

| | Component | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------|------|------|------|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| SE_S7_R | .828 | | | | | | |
| SE_S6_R | .802 | | | | | | |
| SE_S1_R | .767 | | | | | | |
| SE_S4_R | .749 | | | | | | |
| SE_S5_R | .713 | | | | | | |
| SE_S3_R | .658 | | | | | | |
| SE_P7_R | .652 | | | | | | |
| SE_P4_R | .590 | | | | .401 | | |
| SGCC_CON2 | | .853 | | | | | |
| SGCC_CON4 | | .799 | | | | | |
| SGCC_CON5 | | .797 | | | | | |
| SGCC_CON1 | | .780 | | | | | |
| SGCC_CON3 | | .742 | | | | | |
| SGCC_SP2 | | .576 | | .412 | | | |
| SGCC_SP1 | | .567 | .416 | .432 | | | |
| SGCC_QP3 | | | .829 | | | | |
| SGCC_QP2 | | .344 | .808 | | | | |
| SGCC_QP4 | | | .766 | | | | |
| SGCC_QP5 | | | .764 | | | | |

Table 3.2 Rotated Component Matrix (Cont.)

| | Component | | | | | | |
|----------|-----------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| SGCC_QP1 | | .422 | .670 | | | | |
| SGCC_SP5 | | | | .819 | | | |
| SGCC_SP6 | | | | .796 | | | |
| SGCC_SP4 | | .438 | | .780 | | | |
| SGCC_SP3 | | .442 | | .722 | | | |
| SE_P2 | | | | | .795 | | |
| SE_P3 | | | | | .734 | | |
| SE_P1 | | | | | .594 | .332 | |
| SE_P6_R | .363 | | | | .561 | | |
| SE_P5_R | .464 | | | | .507 | | |
| SS_1 | | | | | .453 | | |
| SE_S2_R | | | | | -.417 | | |
| SE_A4 | | | | | | .835 | |
| SE_A3 | | | | | | .761 | |
| SE_A1 | | | | | | .738 | |
| SE_A2 | | | | | | .668 | |
| SE_A5_R | | | | | | | .813 |
| SE_A6_R | .430 | | | | | | .585 |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.^a

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

3.5 Sample Characteristics

After all data were collected and unsatisfied data were discarded, data were processed through SPSS to describe the characteristics of the samples in this study. Most survey participants are women. This study best reflects the behavior of people in “Generation X” as 54.4 percent of participants were aged from 50 to 59. Most participants are married (53.5 percent) and well-educated with their education higher than Bachelor’s Degree (56 percent). Their monthly income clusters, but most of the participants have middle to very high income. More than 60 percent of the participants save money from 10 percent to 30 percent of their income each month while 6 percent of the participants save none or incur debts.

Table 3.3 Sample Characteristics

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|------------|--------------|-----------|---------|
| SEX | Men | 121 | 38.3% |
| | Women | 178 | 56.3% |
| | Total | 299 | 94.6% |
| | Missing Data | 17 | 5.4% |
| Total | | 316 | 100% |
| AGE | 23-29 | 43 | 13.6% |
| | 30-39 | 27 | 8.5% |
| | 40-49 | 45 | 14.2% |
| | 50-59 | 172 | 54.4% |
| | 60-69 | 7 | 2.2% |
| | Missing Data | 22 | 7.0% |
| Total | | 316 | 100% |

Table 3.3 Sample Characteristics (Cont.)

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|---------|
| MARITAL STATUS | Single | 100 | 31.6% |
| | Married | 169 | 53.5% |
| | Divorce | 30 | 9.5% |
| | Missing Data | 17 | 5.4 |
| Total | | 316 | 100% |
| EDUCATION | Less than Bachelor's Degree | 7 | 2% |
| | Bachelor's Degree | 118 | 37% |
| | More than Bachelor's Degree | 177 | 56% |
| | Missing Data | 17 | 5% |
| Total | | 319 | 100% |
| MONTHLY INCOME | Less than 30,000 THB | 39 | 12.3% |
| | 30,001 – 50,000 THB | 50 | 15.8% |
| | 50,001 – 100,000 THB | 94 | 29.7% |
| | 100,001 – 150,000 THB | 54 | 17.1% |
| | 150,001 – 200,000 THB | 18 | 5.7% |
| | 200,001 – 250,000 THB | 11 | 3.5% |
| | More than 250,001 THB | 33 | 10.4% |
| | Missing Data | 17 | 5.4% |
| Total | | 316 | 100% |

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the data collected from the sample of consumers described in Chapter 3. Multiple regression analysis is conducted to investigate the hypothesized relationships set forth in Chapter 2. The chapter concludes with an overall summary of this chapter.

4.2 Findings

Multiple regression is conducted to test all hypotheses shown in Chapter 3. There are two models in this study. The first model examines the relationships between the overall constructs of susceptibility to global consumer culture, social status, self-esteem and conspicuous consumption. The second model investigates the sub-elements of susceptibility to global consumer culture and self-esteem in detail to elucidate their relationships with conspicuous consumption.

In the first model (see table 4.1), the relationships between the overall constructs of susceptibility to global consumer culture, social status, self-esteem and conspicuous consumption are demonstrated.

The regression equation for this model can be written as:

$$Y = B_0 + B_1 \text{SGCC_ALL} + B_2 \text{SE_ALL} + B_3 \text{SE_ALL} + e$$

$$\text{Where } Y = -4.035 + 0.994 + 2.724 - 0.338$$

$$\text{SGCC_ALL} = 0.994$$

$$\text{SS} = 2.724$$

$$\text{SE_ALL} = - 0.338$$

The results of the regression analysis for the first model are shown in Table 4.1. It is found that all of the predictors significantly contribute to conspicuous consumption ($F(3, 254) = 49.045, p < 0.05$). The three predictors accounted for 36.7% of the variance in the outcome variable (i.e. conspicuous consumption) ($R^2 = 0.367, 0.359$ adjusted). In this model, Susceptibility to Global Consumer Culture (SGCC) is

found to have a positive relationship with conspicuous consumption (Beta = 0.509, t = 9.878, p<0.05). As a result, Hypothesis 1 is supported. In the same manner, social status positively affects conspicuous consumption (Beta = 0.184, t = 3.376, p<0.05), and thus Hypothesis 2 is supported. Conversely, and most interestingly, Hypothesis 3 is not supported as self-esteem is found to have a negative relationship with conspicuous consumption in this study (Beta = -0.225, t = -4.224, p<0.05).

Table 4.1 The relationships between the overall constructs of susceptibility to global consumer culture, social status, self-esteem and conspicuous consumption

| | B | Std. Error | β |
|------------|--------|------------|---------|
| (Constant) | -4.035 | 7.961 | |
| SGCC_ALL | .994 | .101 | .509 * |
| SS | 2.724 | .807 | .184 * |
| SE_ALL | -.338 | .080 | -.225 * |

$R^2 = .367$, adjusted $R^2 = .359$, *significant at p<0.05

Note: SGCC_ALL (Susceptibility to Global Consumer Culture), SS (Social Status), SE_ALL (Self-esteem)

In the second regression model (see table 4.2), the relationships among the three components of Susceptibility to Global Consumer Culture (SGCC), social status, the three sub-constructs of self-esteem and conspicuous consumption are substantiated. The regression equation can be written as:

$$Y = B_0 + B_1 \text{ SGCC_CON} + B_2 \text{ SGCC_QP} + B_3 \text{ SGCC_SP} + B_4 \text{ SS} + B_5 \text{ SE_P} + B_6 \text{ SE_S} + B_7 \text{ SE_A} + e$$

$$\text{where } Y = 7.942 + 1.797 - 0.347 + 0.037 + 2.418 + 0.236 - 0.552 - 0.076$$

$$\text{SGCC_CON} = 1.797$$

$$\text{SGCC_QP} = - 0.347$$

$$\text{SGCC_SP} = 0.037$$

$$\text{SS} = 2.418$$

$$\text{SE_P} = 0.236$$

$$SE_S = - 0.552$$

$$SE_A = - 0.076$$

The findings are shown in Table 4.2. All seven predictors in this model accounted for 43.6% of the variance in conspicuous consumption ($R^2 = 0.436$, 0.420 adjusted). Hypotheses 1a is supported as Conformity to consumption trend positively affects conspicuous consumption (Beta = 0.551, $t = 8.498$, $p < 0.05$). Quality perception and social prestige affect conspicuous consumption but not statistically significantly (Beta = -0.049, $t = -0.901$, $p < 0.05$, Beta = 0.006, $t = 0.103$, $p < 0.05$, respectively). As a result, Hypotheses 1b and 1c are not supported. Social status also positively affects conspicuous consumption in the same way as in the previous model (Beta = 0.163, $t = 3.069$, $p < 0.05$). The relationship between the performance dimension of self-esteem and conspicuous consumption is not found to be statistically significant and thus Hypothesis H3a is not supported (Beta = 0.037, $t = 0.604$, $p < 0.05$). Hypothesis 3b is supported because the social dimension of self-esteem is found to negatively affect conspicuous consumption (Beta = -0.228, $t = -3.760$, $p < 0.05$). The last component of self-esteem (i.e. appearance) has no significant effect on conspicuous consumption and thus Hypothesis 3c is not supported (Beta = 0.020, $t = -0.390$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4.2 The relationships among the sub-constructs of susceptibility to global consumer culture, social status, self-esteem and conspicuous consumption

| | B | Std. Error | β |
|------------|-------|------------|---------|
| (Constant) | 7.942 | 8.045 | |
| SGCC_CON | 1.797 | .211 | .551 * |
| SGCC_QP | -.347 | .385 | -.049 |
| SGCC_SP | .037 | .361 | .006 |
| SS | 2.418 | .788 | .163 * |
| SE_P | .236 | .391 | .037 |
| SE_S | -.552 | .147 | -.228 * |
| SE_A | -.076 | .194 | -.020 |

$R^2 = .436$, adjusted $R^2 = .420$, *significant at $p < 0.05$

All hypothesized relationships and their corresponding findings are summarized in Table 4.3. As a result, Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 1a, Hypothesis 2, Hypothesis 3, and Hypothesis 3b are supported. Therefore, Hypothesis 1b, Hypothesis 1c, Hypothesis 3a, Hypothesis 3c are not supported.

Table 4.3 The summary of all hypotheses results

| Hypothesis | Construct | Relationship | Beta | Sig | Tested Result |
|------------|---------------|--------------|-------|------|---------------|
| H1 | SGCC → CC | Positive | .509 | .000 | Supported* |
| H1a | SGCC_CON → CC | Positive | .551 | .000 | Supported* |
| H1b | SGCC_QP → CC | Positive | -.049 | .369 | Not Supported |
| H1c | SGCC_SP → CC | Positive | -.006 | .918 | Not Supported |
| H2 | SS → CC | Positive | .184 | .001 | Supported* |
| H3 | SE → CC | Negative | -.225 | .000 | Supported* |
| H3a | SE_P → CC | Negative | -.037 | .546 | Not Supported |
| H3b | SE_S → CC | Negative | -.228 | .000 | Supported* |
| H3c | SE_A → CC | Negative | .029 | .564 | Not Supported |

*significant at $p < 0.05$

4.3 Summary

This Chapter aims to present the results derived from the regression analysis of the data collected in the study and indicates which of hypotheses set out are supported and which are not supported. This thesis divides the study into two regression models, the first model examines the relationships between the overall constructs. The second model investigates the sub-elements of the constructs in detail and their relationships to conspicuous consumption. Susceptibility to Global Consumer Culture is found to have a positive effect on conspicuous consumption, but the main sub-construct of Susceptibility to Global Consumer Culture that drives the relationship is Conformity to consumption trends. Self-esteem is also found to have a negative effect on conspicuous consumption, but the most important sub-construct of Self-esteem that drives the whole relationship is Social self-esteem

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter aims to discuss the findings presented in the previous chapter. In Section 5.2 to Section 5.4, the discussions are organized based on the relationships of conspicuous consumption with the three predictor variables, including: (1) susceptibility to global consumer culture, (2) social status, and (3) self-esteem. The research implications in terms of their policy, theoretical, and managerial contributions are then discussed in Section 5.5. Section 5.6 discusses the limitations of this study. The chapter concludes with suggested avenues for future research in Section 5.7.

5.2 Relationship between Susceptibility to Global Consumer Culture and Conspicuous Consumption

To date, there have been very few studies investigating the relationship between Susceptibility to Global Consumer Culture and Conspicuous Consumption. This study would be the very first study to explore this pair of relationships. This study found that there is a positive relationship between susceptibility to global consumer culture and conspicuous consumption (Hypothesis 1). This is in line with the extant literature (O’Cass and McEwen, 2004), which has suggested that there might be a relationship between global brand preferences and prestige-seeking behavior. This means that being a global brand can allow access to profits from more conspicuous consumption based purchases. Based on this relationship, firms that seek to sell luxury products may consider building the image of a global product.

To better understand this pair of relationships, this study investigates in detail the three sub-constructs of susceptibility to global consumer culture and their relationships with conspicuous consumption. These 3 sub-constructs include: (1) conformity to consumption trends, (2) quality perception, and (3) social prestige. The findings in the previous chapter indicate that only conformity to consumption trends

significantly affects conspicuous consumption. It is counter-intuitive that quality perception and social prestige are not found to have a significant impact on conspicuous consumption. This implies that being a part of a global trend is important for luxury consumption. People may conspicuously consume products just to keep up with the trend. Social prestige and quality of global brands, however, is not a major consideration for conspicuous consumption. This might mean that conspicuous consumers do

not care much about the quality they can have from global brands. It is also implied that a global brand portrays an image of being in-trend, but it is not associated with projecting the image of being wealthy and prestigious. These findings contradict the statement "Consumers prefer global brands as it associate with higher prestige and quality" that Kapferer, (1997, cited in Steenkamp, Batra and Alden, 2003) suggested and also does not support the statement "Consumers may believe that global brands connote better quality, provide status and prestige, or provide a way to become part of a global consumer culture." that Batra and Alden (2003, p. 61) made. This is contradicts the hypotheses H1b and H1c that are set out in chapter 2 and thus this should be explored further in future research to see whether this kind of relationships holds true in other research contexts and to check that this result is repeatable in this context.

5.3 Relationship between Social Status and Conspicuous Consumption

There were many previous studies that investigated the relationship between social status and conspicuous consumption (Cole, Mailath and Postlewaite, 1992, O'Cass and McEwen, 2004, Griskevicius, 2007, Souiden, M'Saad and Pons, 2011). In the context of this study, it is also expected that there is a positive relationship between social status and conspicuous consumption and results of this study confirm this relationship. This means that people who consider themselves in a higher social stratum have a higher tendency to use luxury products as a symbol that represents their status

5.4 Relationship between self-esteem and conspicuous consumption

The relationship between self-esteem and conspicuous consumption is negative and consistent with existing literature (Nguyen, 2003, Pettit and Sivanathan, 2011). The findings in this study imply that people who have lower self-esteem will be more likely to consume more conspicuously. Not only does this study investigate the relationships between self-esteem and conspicuous consumption, but it also attempts to gain a deeper understanding by exploring the relationships between the three sub-constructs of self-esteem and conspicuous consumption. The model of three sub-constructs of self-esteem is based on Heatherton and Polivy (1991) who defined this construct into 3 dimensions, namely performance, social and appearance. Significant negative relationships of each sub-construct with conspicuous consumption were hypothesized in this study, but only one hypothesis is supported. The performance dimension of self-esteem has no effect on conspicuous consumption. It is deduced that conspicuous consumers overcome their low-performance esteem with some other ways than consuming conspicuously. The social component of self-esteem is found to significantly and negatively affect conspicuous consumption. It means that Thai people who feel they are socially-inferior have the tendency to boost their social esteem by purchasing conspicuous items. Finally, the appearance dimension of self-esteem is found to have no effect on conspicuous consumption. That means people do not buy conspicuous products just because they think they do not look physically good. In other words, conspicuous buyers consume conspicuous goods regardless of how good they think their physical appearance is.

In summary, although conspicuous fashion goods are expected to be used as a means to make consumers look good (appearance dimension), enhance the capability image (performance dimension), and make consumer achieve their sense of social belonging (social dimension). In the Thai context, consumers only conspicuously consume a product in order to feel that they belong to a particular social group. Appearance and performance dimensions of self-esteem appear to be of less concern among the group of Thai consumers.

5.5 Implications

In this section, the implications of this research are discussed in terms of its theoretical, managerial, and policy-making contributions.

5.5.1 Theoretical implications

In terms of its theoretical contribution, this thesis is the very first research to specifically investigate the sub-components of SGCC and SE and their relationships with conspicuous consumption. Only some sub-components of SGCC and SE are found to affect CC. The measurement of SE as an overall construct, for instance, does not appear to have a significant impact on CC. Based on these findings, future research that seeks to investigate SGCC and SE might find it useful to adopt the methodology developed by Heatherton and Polivy (1991) and treat them both as an overall construct and as a three-component construct. A construct as a whole may sometimes not be able to detect and explain the relationships in detail.

5.5.2 Managerial implications

This study shows that Thai people buy conspicuous goods based on the social group to which they think they belong. They buy conspicuous goods because they want to communicate higher status to others. Luxury companies may provide products that loudly signify the status of the holders. The more strongly the product signifies membership of a social group, the more appealing the luxury brands become. As Thai conspicuous consumers buy luxury conspicuously to enhance their social esteem as opposed to gain the benefits from the performance and appearance of the products, marketers should focus particularly on the social benefit of their products in a “straight-to-the-point” fashion. In addition, driving luxury brands to become global brands helps the brands look trendy and this attribute attracts conspicuous consumers considerably. However, though global brands may connote better quality and signify a sense of social prestige as mentioned in Steendamp, Batra and Alden (2003), those attributes are not what Thai conspicuous consumers seek in global brands. Thai consumers are unique in that what they really want from global brands is only to make a purchase of conspicuous goods and become part of the trends and to be seen to do so. The belongingness with others in the global trends is not

important to them. In respect of the quality dimension, communicating global quality will be a waste of budget for luxury fashion as Thai conspicuous consumers do not value product quality as indicated by the proliferation of poor quality, illegal, imitation luxury items.

5.5.3 Policy implications

As most favorable luxury brands are from outside of Thailand, having a craze for luxury all over Thailand will negatively affect the monetary resources of the country. According to the finding, the government should guide the schools to encourage in students their socializing skills and individualism, so they do not need luxury items to repair their self-esteem and can express self-esteem in other ways than following expensive trends when they grow up.

Aside from the findings, as observed (on website and shops), many luxury products users take care of their items carefully in order to sell them later on the second-hand market. The second-hand market can be an alternative choice for people who are frugal or have limited resources. The government's support of second-hand retailers will hold back a good amount of money which is currently flowing out of the country.

5.5.4 Exporting local luxury fashion brands

Based on the findings in this thesis, it is a good opportunity for the Thai government to support and encourage the local Thai luxury fashion brands to go global. Globalizing Thai local luxury brands is a good way to generate more money for the country since the global brand is highly associated with conspicuous consumption. Apart from exporting the product, Thai luxury brands that have successfully turned global could also attract local conspicuous consumers who might be interested in buying global Thai brands, thus stimulating local economy for the country.

5.6 Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, most of the samples in this study consist mainly of people from the same age bracket. Most of the respondents are from Generation X, so this study may not represent the attitudes and behaviors of the

younger generations. Furthermore, the research data are mostly collected from people who live in Bangkok with an urban lifestyle, so this study may not be able to represent the activities of conspicuous consumers who live in other parts of the country very well. Secondly, this study only focuses on global luxury fashion brands. The scope of this study is thus limited as it does not allow us to understand local luxury fashion brands.

5.7 Directions for future research

Although the study has provided an overall picture of conspicuous consumption in Thailand, the focus is mainly on people who live in Bangkok. Future research should explore samples in greater depth from other areas of the country. Future study should also focus on the comparison of people with different demographic characteristics (e.g. gender) as these characteristics may affect the way they conspicuously consume the products.

There is also another type of consumption which is usually referred to as compulsive buying. This type of buying behavior occurs when consumers attempt to deal with bad feelings by purchasing products. From the current model, this type of consumption behavior can replace conspicuous consumption as it is also known to be linked to all independent variables of this study.

There are studies that mentioned the relationship between conspicuous consumption and financial difficulty (Colarelli and Dettmann, 2003). There is a chance for people to consume conspicuously and get into serious debt. Thus, developing good saving behaviors or spending behaviors scale may be able to clarify the negative effects of conspicuous consumption.

Other approaches to data collecting can be applied to this study for more accurate results. Qualitative research may provide some extra findings for conspicuous consumption and also other types of emotional buying behavior.

5.8 Conclusion

The model of conspicuous consumption presented in this study, links susceptibility to Global Consumer Culture, Social Status and Self-Esteem to Conspicuous Consumption. In summary, this study of conspicuous consumption in Thailand generally confirmed the hypotheses based on other authors' results but also revealed some findings that will be beneficial to luxury fashion brands operating in Thailand as the whole study disproportionately represents high-income participants. Both Susceptibility to Global Consumer Culture and Social Status have a positive effect on conspicuous consumption while Self-Esteem has a negative effect on conspicuous consumption. Deeper investigation into constructs helps this research identify the real source of each relationship. Conformity to consumption trend is the main cause that makes Susceptibility to Global Consumer Culture affect Conspicuous Consumption. Social is the main sub-group that causes Self-Esteem to affect Conspicuous consumption.

This study can help assist setting company objectives in Thailand. It can help to avoid wasteful communications for luxury brands operating in Thailand. However, further study should be applied in order to reconfirm the relationship of sub-constructs in this study. A demographic difference study will investigate if there is any demographic issue that has not yet been explored.

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APPENDIX



Questionnaire

| Constructs | Dimensions | Questions | Authors | Translation |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--|----------------------------|---|
| Global consumer culture | Conformity to consumption trend | It makes one feel good in his/her social group | Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) | แบบรณรงค์ระดับโลกทำให้ฉันรู้สึกดีในสังคมของฉัน |
| | | It makes one have the sense of global belonging | Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) | แบบรณรงค์ระดับโลกทำให้ฉันรู้สึกเป็นส่วนหนึ่งกับผู้คนอื่นๆบนโลกนี้ |
| | | It makes one have a good impression of others | Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) | แบบรณรงค์ระดับโลกทำให้ฉันดูน่าสนใจในสายตาคนอื่น |
| | | It makes one feel closer to contemporary lifestyle | Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) | แบบรณรงค์ระดับโลกทำให้ฉันดูมีไลฟ์สไตล์ที่ทันสมัยมากขึ้น |
| | | It makes one feel to be part of the global trend* | Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) | แบบรณรงค์ระดับโลกทำให้ฉันรู้สึกเหมือนเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของเทรนด์โลก |

| Constructs | Dimensions | Questions | Authors | Translation |
|-------------------|--------------------|---|----------------------------|--|
| | Quality perception | It has a very high quality image | Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) | แบรนด์ระดับโลกมีภาพลักษณ์ที่ดูมีคุณภาพสูง |
| | | It has a very high level of reliability. | Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) | แบรนด์ระดับโลกมีความน่าเชื่อถือสูง |
| | | It has a very high level of standard in safety* | Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) | แบรนด์ระดับโลกเป็นแบรนด์ที่มีมาตรฐานและคุณภาพสูง |
| | | It is associated with the latest technology | Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) | แบรนด์ระดับโลกมีเทคโนโลยีที่ทันสมัย |
| | | It is associated with long-lasting quality | Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) | แบรนด์ระดับโลกสามารถใช้ได้ยาวนาน |
| | Social prestige | It signifies one's trendy image | Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) | แบรนด์ระดับโลกทำให้คนที่ใช้ดูมีภาพลักษณ์ที่ทันสมัย |
| | | It represents the latest lifestyles | Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) | แบรนด์ระดับโลกแสดงถึงไลฟ์สไตล์ยุคใหม่ |

| Constructs | Dimensions | Questions | Authors | Translation |
|-------------------|-------------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| | | It symbolizes one's social image | Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) | แบรนด์ระดับโลกเป็นตัวชี้วัดภาพลักษณ์ทางสังคม |
| | | It is associated with the symbol of prestige | Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) | แบรนด์ระดับโลกเป็นเหมือนสัญลักษณ์ของคนมีระดับ |
| | | It tells something about one's social status** | Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) | แบรนด์ระดับโลกสื่อถึงฐานะทางสังคมของผู้ใช้ |
| | | It is associated with wealth** | Zhou, Teng and Poon (2008) | แบรนด์ระดับโลกบ่งบอกถึงฐานะทางการเงินของผู้ใช้ |

| Constructs | Dimensions | Questions | Authors | Translation |
|-------------------|-------------------|--|------------------------------|---|
| Social Status | | Given a 10-step ladder representing social stratification, at the top are those people who have highest social status and at the bottom are those people who have lowest social status, where do you think you're standing in this ladder? | Cantril (1965) | หากจัดลำดับสถานะทางสังคมที่มีอยู่บนโลกนี้เป็น 10ระดับ ระดับ10คือคนที่มีสถานะทางสังคมสูงที่สุด ระดับ1คือคนที่มีสถานะทางสังคมต่ำที่สุด ตามความเห็นของท่าน ท่านคิดว่าท่านอยู่ในระดับใด |
| Self-esteem | Performance | I feel confident about my abilities | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันรู้สึกมั่นใจในความสามารถของตัวเอง |
| | | I feel as smart as others | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันรู้สึกฉลาดเท่ากับคนอื่น |
| | | I feel confident that I understand things | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันรู้สึกมั่นใจในตัวเอง เพราะฉันเข้าใจสิ่งต่างๆได้ อย่างง่ายดาย |

| Constructs | Dimensions | Questions | Authors | Translation |
|------------|------------|--|------------------------------|--|
| | | I feel frustrated or rattled about my performance (R) | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันรู้สึกหงุดหงิดกับความสามารถของตัวเอง |
| | | I feel that I am having trouble understanding things that I read (R) | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันรู้สึกว่าฉันมีปัญหาในการทำความเข้าใจสิ่งที่ฉันอ่าน |
| | | I feel that I have less scholastic ability than others (R) | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันว่าฉันมีความสามารถด้านการศึกษาน้อยกว่าคนอื่น |
| | | I feel like I am not doing well (R) | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันว่าชีวิตของฉันไม่เป็นไปตามที่คาดหวัง |
| | Social | I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or failure (R) | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันกังวลว่าคนอื่นจะมองฉันเป็นคนที่ประสบความสำเร็จหรือล้มเหลว |
| | | I feel self-conscious (R) | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันรู้ว่าตัวตนของตัวเองเป็นอย่างไร |

| Constructs | Dimensions | Questions | Authors | Translation |
|------------|------------|---|------------------------------|---|
| | | I Feel displeased with myself (R) | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันรู้สึกไม่พอใจตัวฉันเอง |
| | | I am worried about what other people think of me (R) | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันห่วงว่าคนอื่นจะมองฉันอย่างไร |
| | | I feel inferior to others at this moment (R) | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ตอนนี้ฉันรู้สึกด้อยกว่าคนอื่น |
| | | I feel concerned about the impression I am making (R) | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันกังวลว่าฉันสามารถสร้างความประทับใจให้กับคนอื่นได้อย่างไร |
| | | I am worried about looking foolish (R) | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันกลัวว่าตัวเองจะดูโง่งในสายตาคนอื่น |
| | Appearance | I feel satisfied with the way my body looks right now | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันพอใจรูปร่างของฉัน |
| | | I feel that others respect and admire me | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันรู้สึกว่าคนอื่นยกย่องและชื่นชมฉัน |

| Constructs | Dimensions | Questions | Authors | Translation |
|------------|------------|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | | I feel good about myself | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันรู้สึกดีกับตัวเอง |
| | | I am pleased with my appearance right now | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันพอใจกับรูปลักษณ์ของฉัน |
| | | I am dissatisfied with my weight (R) | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันไม่พอใจน้ำหนักของตัวเอง |
| | | I feel unattractive (R) | Heatherton and Polivy (1991) | ฉันรู้สึกว่าตัวเองไม่น่าดึงดูด |

BIOGRAPHY

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|------------------------|--|
| Name | Mr.Chanon Toliang |
| Date of Birth | May 31,1991 |
| Educational Attainment | 2012: Bachelor of Accounting (Integrative Approach) |
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