The Influence Of Social Networking Information On Purchasing Online

By

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Abstract

This research aims to assess the influence of social networking information on consumers' purchasing. Data were collected by using questionnaire. The useable 364 respondents were analyzed with the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to explain the relationship of all hypothesized variables. Even though the consumer received information from different type of social media, the results reveal that all media have been classified at moderate level of important, with the mean of 3.10 for interpersonal media, 3.14 for public media and 3.10 for marketing media. The results from simulating SEM indicate that consumer attitude is the most influence factor on purchasing goods or services via internet. This could be explained that Attitude was affected from several variables, specifically direct tested variable such as interpersonal media, public media, and marketing media. Furthermore, the control variables also affect the Attitude in a various level. The control variables include Perceived easiness, Perceived advantage, and Perceived control. When focusing merely the three media, they all have indirect effect on the intention to purchase online. However, the analysis expose that the most influence media is marketing media and followed by interpersonal media and public media respectively.

Keywords: Online social networking, Online purchasing, Marketing media, Consumer behavior, Information sources

Introduction

Customer decision nowadays has been changed drastically since social media has grown up rapidly in the last few years. Communications among customers have been done increasingly through the Internet and seem to have more impact on customer decision than traditional communication. Many have checked information on goods or services they are interested before making final decision. It can be said that the influence could be depend on cross-sectional heterogeneity related to individual personal uniqueness. This is because people obtain and practice information from various information sources in which they might interpret the messages differently (Casalo et at., 2011; Steinerova & Susol, 2007). Even though the impact of information sources has been studied widely, it still remains contentious in technology adoption literature (Davis et al., 1989; Taylor & Todd, 1995; Venkatesh et al., 2003, Tung & Rieck, 2005).

Marketers have been relying on the marketing mix model for a long time. The model is seen as an inside-out operation meaning that the company normally launch strategic business based on their available inside resources. However, this could be out dated model. There are newer marketing models focusing on outside-in operation for dealing with contemporary customers such as the 5A model from Kotler et al. (2017) and the 4E model from Fetherstonhaugh (2009). The

traditional marketing promotion was reformed into digitized customer centric. Customers have more power on selecting what and where information they want to receive. Some prefer to obtain product details directly from the seller whereas others might believe more if the perceived information coming from their friends. It could be said that customers behave and make decision differently from which information sources they received (Kline & Wagner, 1994)

The communication technology has been remarkable developed in the past decade. It could be said that the traditional way of doing business has been disrupted by modern communication technology. Furthermore, the social media, as a new modern communication technology for marketers, available these days make it unclear which information channel has more influence on the customer decision. The way customers make decision has been changed rapidly and seem to be more unpredictable. Thus, this research aims to assess the influence of social media toward the purchasing online.

Objectives
1   To study the opinion levels toward social media including interpersonal, public media, and marketing media.
2   To study the attitude toward purchasing online including perceived easiness, perceived advantage, perceived control, attitude, subjective norm, and intention to use.
3   To assess the influence levels of social networking information on consumers' purchasing

Literature Review

Social Information Source
In general, people would have some degree of cognitive dissonance when finding themselves in the circumstances they have no experience or information. The way to reduce that mental disagreement is searching more external information. This could assure that they are making the right decision. Buying products or services are also equivalent. With massive alternatives of products or services nowadays, customers tend to search more information before they make decision. It has been reported that social media are getting more popular among all generations and at least one social networking media was a channel they always use (Lenhart. A, et al., 2010; Hampton K, et al, 2011; Smith, 2011).

The present Internet technology allows customer to find information on the products or services easier than before. Moreover, the real customer voice is louder and louder from communication tools such as comment posting, customer review, and content sharing. In this research, the aim is to assess the impact of information sources surrounding customers with specifically spotlight on online shopping. Both traditional and modern information sources are examined including interpersonal, marketing media, and public media.

Interpersonal Sources
Information from interpersonal relationship somehow tends to influence individuals' behavior. They vary in the way they interact with other people. Obviously, some people are intrinsically more comfortable than others in interpersonal relations. So, according to interpersonal information search, reliable people are likely to have a greater preference for interpersonal information search than less reliable people. Interpersonal sources refer to the consumers' personal sources to obtain product information. The sources are generally not for commercial and come from consumers' family, friends, and colleagues (Mourali. M, et al, 2005).

Marketing Media

This type of information is commercial messages which marketers communicate to consumers. It could be said that marketing communication could help forming brand equity and improving promotional performance (Bogan, 2014). If done correctly, consumers would trust and being familiar with the products or services they received information. In details, marketing communication consists of eight main communication models, including advertising, sales promotion, events and experience, public relations, direct marketing, interactive marketing, word of mouth marketing, and sales person (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Marketers frequently communicate to their consumers through a variety of media. In the traditional format, marketing messages were distributed by using radio, TV, newspapers, magazines etc. But in the modern era where communication technology has become increasingly active, marketing communications are progressively using social marketing media. Marketing messages, brand name and logo are advertised across new social media such as Facebook, Youtube, Tiktok, and Instagram. The more consumers view that information, the better they aware and perceive more about the products or services.

Public Media

Information from those who are not involved in business is more reliable than marketing media in the sense that they have no direct benefit from the products or services. The information in this section also includes official information from the relevant authorities. If necessary, official agents would announce official information to the citizens. Generally speaking, Consumers sometimes look for this information before making decisions. Currently, celebrities or individuals have now started reviewing products or services claiming that they have no benefit in the business. So, they would review that products or services according to the facts. The social media is employed more nowadays. It could be said that social media are more powerful networks than traditional media in creating decent relationship with consumers because of its capability to facilitate the interactive communication, sharing contents, keeping network, and promoting popularity among audiences (Bannor et al., 2017, Westberg et al., 2018) Some people have a lot of followers meaning that they have become idea influencers who can dictate consumers to buy or not to buy specific products or services.

Factors Influencing Behavior

Attitude

Attitude is defined as "an individual's positive or negative feelings (evaluative affect) about performing the target behavior" (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975, p. 216). Earlier studies indicate that Attitude is one of determinants affecting technology using. Ajzen (1991) reviews past researches that include Attitude as a factor to predict behavior and states that intention to perform behaviors of different kinds can be predicted with high accuracy from Attitude. Harrison D. et al. (1997) state that Attitude significantly affects executive decision on the using of IT in small firms. The result is consistent with Riemenschneider & McKinney (2001-2002) who compare Attitude between web-based e-commerce adopters and non-adopters and find the differences between two groups. Furthermore, similar results in the context of Internet use were examined in the prior studies (Kula & Tatoglu, 2003; Olson & Boyer, 2003). It is clearly seen that Attitude has an effect to the decision to adopt various technological innovations. This implies that Attitude might also influence the consumer's intention to purchase online.

Subjective Norm

Subjective Norm refers to "a person's perception that most people who are important to him/her think he/she should or should not perform the behavior in question" (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975, p.302). Researches in the area of psychology suggest that an individual learns and uses behaviors based upon what he/she sees in his/her social groups. Generally speaking, a person will emulate others' behavior either intentionally or unintentionally. Subjective Norm as similar to the case of Attitude is found to be related to predict behavior. The discussion is supported by several studies. Harrison D. et al. (1997) report significant effect of Subjective Norm on IT adoption among SMEs. Venkatesh & Davis (2000) also indicate that Subjective Norm meaningfully influences the user acceptance of technology. Furthermore, Riemenschneider et al. (2003) mix the Technology Acceptance Model and the Theory of Planned Behavior and find evident support for Subjective Norm that it affects the adoption decision. Dawkins & Frass (2005) state that the intention to support employee involvement is truthfully determined by Subjective Norm. Furthermore, Celuch et al. (2007) find the positive effect from Subjective Norm on the intention to use the Internet for purchase and information management. As mentioned above, it appears that Subjective Norm is a determinant in the use of several technologies. Consequently, the present study believe it could have influence over the consumer's purchasing decision.

Attitude and subjective norm are the main determinant factors influencing the intention of human called the theory of reasoned action which developed by Fishbein & Ajzen (1975). The determinants are beliefs individuals hold about themselves and their environment. Those beliefs are viewed as underlying an individual's Attitudes and Subjective Norms which they ultimately determine individual's behavioral intentions. The model explains that the behavior is influenced by the intention. The intention is influenced by Attitude and Subjective Norm.

Alternative Factors

Factors influencing the consumers' decision to behave regarding products or services have been extensively observed in different aspects and also using a variety of theoretical perspectives. The commonly used theoretical constructs include the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1989; Venkatesh & Davis, 1996), the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991; Mathieson, 1991; Taylor & Todd, 1995), the Social Cognitive Theory (Compeau & Higgins, 1995a, 1995b; Compeau et al., 1999; Hill *et al.*, 1987), the Diffusion of Innovation (Moore & Benbasat, 1991; Rogers, 2003), These researches offer valuable insight into the cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions of individuals to technology, and also into the factors that influence the reactions.

Based on previous studies, it would be argued that the theoretical construct of those models is comprehensively appeared in business literature. Some models are merged or extended to better explain the adoption of technology related products or services at both individual and organizational levels (Sophonthummapharn, 2009). A vast number of studies using above presented models have been conducted to determine factors influencing the adoption of specific technology related products or services. This study, however, rearrange the model because we want to focus more on the impact of social media consumers used for their decision. The main variables, Attitude, Subjective norm, and intention, were remained the same as previous model. The rest variables, Perceived easiness, Perceived advantage, and Perceived control, were placed as control variable. The conceptual framework for this research is presented on figure 1.
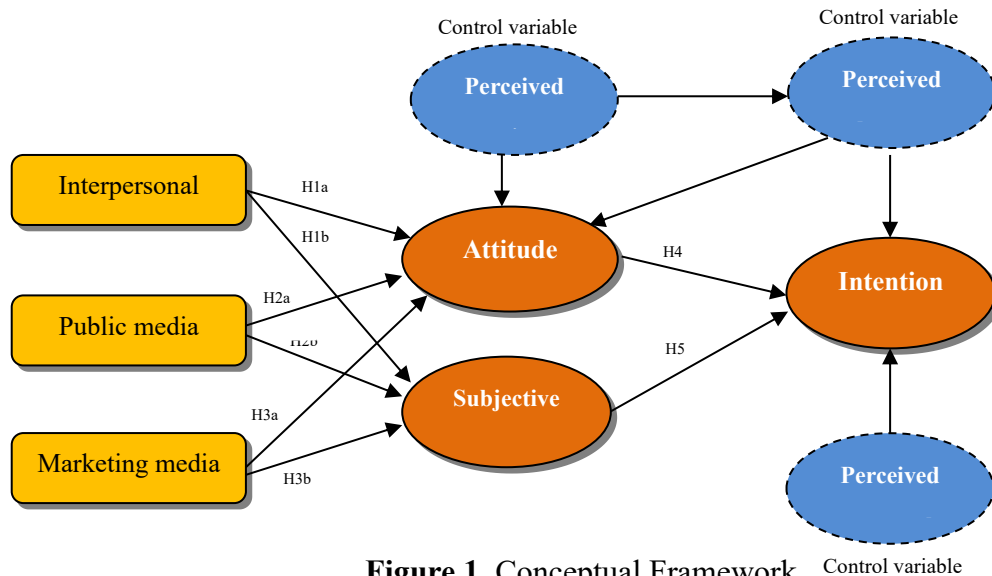
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Hypotheses

H1a	Interpersonal sources have positively influence on attitude toward the use of online shopping
H1b	Interpersonal sources have positively influence on subjective norm toward the use of online shopping
H2a	Public media have positively influence on attitude toward the use of online shopping
H2b	Public media have positively influence on subjective norm toward the use of online shopping
H3a	Marketing media have positively influence on attitude toward the use of online shopping
H3b	Marketing media have positively influence on subjective norm toward the use of online shopping
H4	Attitude have positively influence the use of online shopping
H5	Subjective norm have positively influence the use of online shopping

Research Methodology

Research populations and samples

Survey research was employed. The self-administered questionnaire was developed and the data were collected from both traditional and online techniques. The data were gathered by using three sampling techniques including convenience sampling, purposive sampling, and snow ball sampling. The data were collected from Bangkok and metropolitan as well as another four provinces, using simple random, located in the middle part of Thailand.

Instrument development

The self-administered questionnaire was developed and done validity checked by using the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) from three experts. The IOC score was between

0.67-1.00 which over the minimum acceptable threshold. Furthermore, a pilot test with 35 respondents were applied to check the instrument reliability. The trial yielded the Cronbach alpha coefficient between 0.703-0.921 meanings that the questionnaire was agreed to implement. The final questionnaire comprised of 3 sections as following.

1   Basic information including gender, age, education, occupation, income, internet experience, and online shopping experience.
2   Opinion toward social media including interpersonal, public media, and marketing media. They were measured by 5-point rating scale
3   Attitude toward online shopping including perceived easiness, perceived advantage, perceived control, attitude, subjective norm, and intention to use. They were measured by 5-point rating scale.

Data collection and analysis

The research sample size was calculated using Cochran formula with unknown population. Both paper-based and online-based questionnaires were adopted. The final completed data for analysis was based on usable 364 responses. The data were analyzed by descriptive statistics and the technique of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to clarify the relationship among variables. The minimum standard of statistics was based on the criteria recommended by Hair et al., (2006) and Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2000).

Results And Discussion

Basic information

The majority of respondents were female (66.20%), having age between 21-30 years (74.50%) and having a bachelor degree (69.00%). Moreover, most of them were students (35.40%) and having monthly income between 5,001-15,000 Baht (41.50%). Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for demographic information.

Table 1: Demographic information

	n = 364	%
Gender		
Male	123	33.80%
Female	241	66.20%
Age		
20 years or less	16	4.40%
20 – 30 years	271	74.50%
31 – 40 years	58	15.90%
41 – 50 years	13	3.60%
More than 50 years	6	1.60%
Education level		
High school or lower	22	6.00%
Certificate or equivalent	74	20.30%
Bachelor degree	251	69.00%
Master degree or higher	17	4.70%
Occupation		

Government officer	43	11.80%
Government enterprise	17	4.70%
Company	90	24.70%
Business owner	48	13.20%
Freelance	37	10.20%
Student	129	35.40%
Monthly income		
5,000 Baht or less	73	20.10%
5,001 – 15,000 Baht	151	41.50%
15,001 – 25,000 Baht	89	24.50%
25,001 – 35,000 Baht	26	7.10%
More than 35,000 Baht	25	6.90%

Regarding online behaviors, most respondents stated that they used internet everyday (74.70%). Their last online purchasing was over one month ago (43.10%) and device most used for online purchasing was smart phone (60.70%). In addition, the money paid each transaction was less than 1,000 Baht (58.20%) and the highest paid per transaction was normally not over 5,000 Baht (90.40%). Also, the payment channel most preferred was direct transfer at the bank (48.60%). Table 2 presents details of respondents' online behaviors.

Table 2: Online behaviors

	n = 364	%
Frequency of using internet		
Everyday	272	74.70%
Once per 2-3 days	32	8.80%
Once a week	12	3.30%
Once per 2 weeks	5	1.40%
Once a month	43	11.80%
Last online purchasing		
1 week ago	87	23.90%
2 weeks ago	49	13.50%
1 month ago	71	19.50%
Over 1 month ago	157	43.10%
Average expense per transaction		
Less than 1,000 Baht	212	58.20%
1,001 – 5,000 Baht	134	36.80%
5,001 – 10,000 Baht	14	3.80%
More than 10,000 Baht	4	1.10%
Highest expense per transaction		
Less than 1,000 Baht	169	46.40%
1,001 – 5,000 Baht	160	44.00%
5,001 – 10,000 Baht	19	5.20%
10,001 – 15,000 Baht	6	1.60%
15,001 – 20,000 Baht	3	0.80%
More than 20,000 Baht	7	1.90%
Device most used for online purchasing		
Desktop computer	56	15.40%
Notebook computer	65	17.90%

Smart phone	221	60.70%	
Tablet/ Ipad	22	6.00%	
Preferred payment channel			
Credit card	43	11.80%	
Debit card	22	6.00%	
Convenience store	33	9.10%	
Direct transfer at the bank	177	48.60%	
Internet banking	55	15.10%	
Cash on delivery postal package	20	5.50%	
Seller shop or branch	14	3.80%	

Scale measurement

The results indicated that respondents gave importance to the information coming from social networking at moderate level on all sources including interpersonal ($\bar{x}$ = 3.10), public media ($\bar{x}$ = 3.14), and marketing media ($\bar{x}$ = 3.10). The confirmation factor loading for each variable item was shown on table 3.

Table 3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis for information sources

Information sources	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Loading
Interpersonal (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.727)	**3.10**	**0.78**	
IP1	2.97	0.93	0.60
IP2	3.19	0.91	0.88
IP3	3.15	0.94	0.66
Public media (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.703)	**3.14**	**0.67**	
PM1	3.21	0.89	0.61
PM2	2.95	0.92	0.77
PM3	2.79	0.98	0.73
PM4	3.75	0.99	0.24
PM5	3.01	0.93	0.55
Marketing media (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.746)	**3.10**	**0.68**	
MM1	3.20	0.92	0.67
MM2	2.94	0.92	0.78
MM3	2.76	0.98	0.69
MM4	3.80	0.96	0.33
MM5	2.99	0.94	0.57
MM6	2.93	0.95	0.67

According to the consumers' opinion toward online purchasing, the mean value varied from factor to factor ranging from 3.07 to 3.61. The confirmation factor loading for each variable item was shown on table 4.

Table 4: Confirmatory Factor Analysis for consumers' opinion

Opinion on online purchasing	x̄	S.D.	Loading
Perceived easiness (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.922)	**3.46**	**0.80**	
PE1	3.52	0.93	0.79
PE2	3.49	0.90	0.80
PE3	3.37	0.85	0.68
Perceived advantage (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.868)	**3.61**	**0.77**	
PA1	3.42	0.89	0.67
PA2	3.62	0.87	0.75
PA3	3.64	0.90	0.80
PA4	3.74	0.88	0.72
Perceived control (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.684)	**3.14**	**0.67**	
PC1	3.19	0.87	0.58
PC2	3.11	0.84	0.49
PC3	3.16	0.86	0.68
PC4	3.10	0.89	0.66
Attitude (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.920)	**3.41**	**0.74**	
AT1	3.32	0.84	0.64
AT2	3.36	0.86	0.70
AT3	3.62	0.97	0.67
AT4	3.35	0.84	0.63
Subjective norm (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.855)	**3.07**	**0.74**	
SN1	3.10	0.84	0.67
SN2	3.07	0.82	0.67
SN3	3.02	0.84	0.62
Intention to use (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.892)	**3.28**	**0.83**	
IT1	3.26	0.93	0.67
IT2	3.38	0.93	0.67
IT3	3.19	0.93	0.62

Structural equation model

To test the hypotheses, the structural equation model was developed by using LISREL software. The first model was developed by examining empirical data. All details of the first model were presented on figure 2.
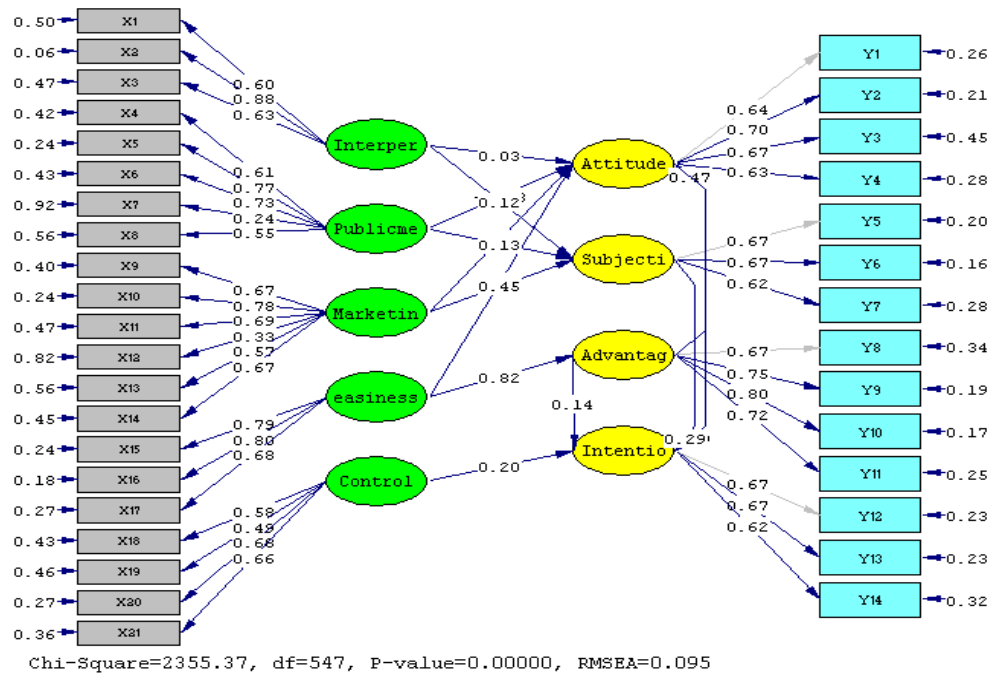
Figure 2 The first model

However, the first model indicated that the hypotheses were not fit to the model and need modification. the model showed some inconsistent between hypothesis model and empirical data. Then, the model was adjusted by considering the model modification indices. The model added more influencing power to Perceived control and Attitude variables indicating they do also affect the Subjective norm variable. Consequently, the modified model was met the minimum standard criteria. The result of second model was presented on Figure 2 and the statistic for model fit was shown on Table 5.
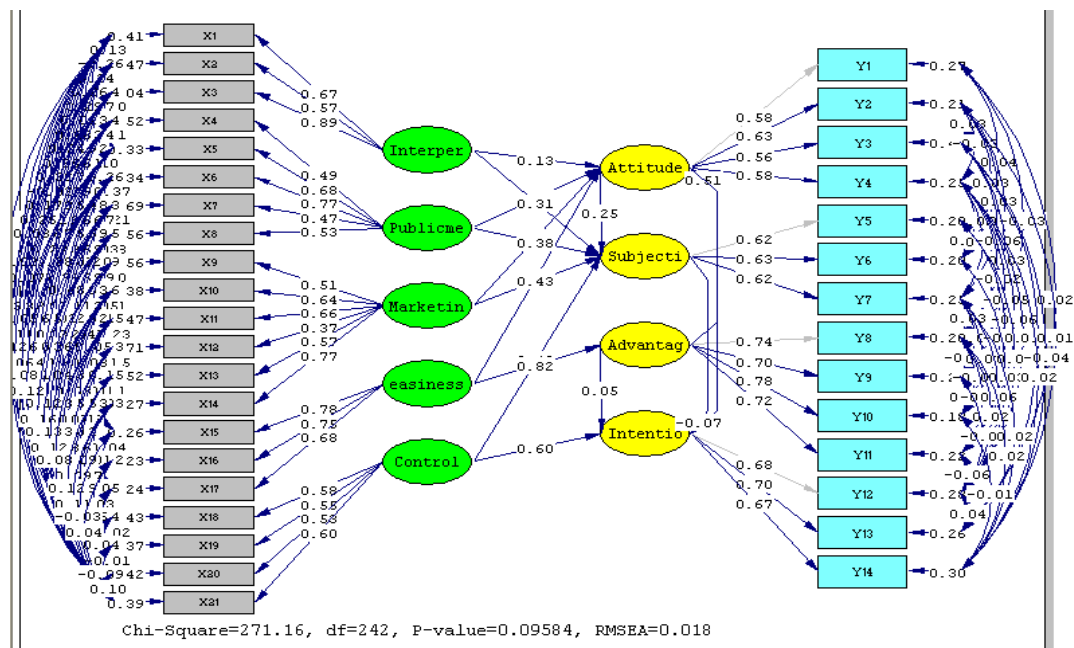
Figure 3. The modified model

Table 5 Comparative and statistics test for model modification

Test Statistics	Before modification	After modification	Standard criteria
Chi-square	2,355.37	271.16	-
Df	547	242	-
P-value	0.000	0.095	Not significant
GFI	0.730	0.960	> .9
AGFI	0.690	0.910	> .9
NFI	0.930	0.990	> .9
IFI	0.940	1.000	> .9
CFI	0.940	1.000	> .9
RMSEA	0.095	0.018	< .07

The results from SEM reveal interesting insight. All information sources have positively influence on attitude and subjective norm. In details, it was found that marketing media has more effect on attitude (b = 0.13) than interpersonal (b = 0.13) and public media (b = 0.10). Thus, the H1a, H2a, and H3a were supported at the significant level of 0.05. This could be explained that marketing media was specifically created to convince customers. Thus, it was more professional than other media and it should eventually dictate the attitude to be on its favor.

Similarity, marketing media (b = 0.43) remained the most influence factor on subjective norm. The second and third were public media (b = 0.38) and interpersonal (b = 0.31). The H1b, H2b, and H3b were also supported at the significant level of 0.05. This indicated clearly that customer tended to rely on information coming from different sources. It would be argued that marketing media can be applied directly to customers and nearby people.

Nonetheless, the SEM analysis suggested that attitude (b = 0.75) has more power than subjective norm (b = -0.07). The model also showed that attitude was influenced from control variables, perceived easiness (b = 0.14) and perceived advantage (b = 0.51). In comparison, the test confirmed that customers believed themselves more than comments from others. They would see other opinions as supplement information to complete their decision.

From the proposed conceptual framework, the factors influencing online purchased could be categorized as technological, consumer, and product factors. The technological factors include Perceived easiness, Perceived advantage, and Perceived control. This is because these factors relate to how consumers use the available devices and applications. The consumer factors are Interpersonal, Public media, Attitude, and Subjective norm. These factors could be seen as how close the relationship consumers have with their surrounding people. However, the public media could be both consumer and product factors depending on what information consumers are looking for. If public media come in a form of social relationship, this would be seen as consumer factor. In contrast, if consumers look for product information from public media, it would be seen as a product factor. The marketing media is unquestionably product factor because it is prearranged to provide product information for consumers.

In more details, the analysis indicates clearly the marketing media remain power and influence over consumer's decision. Especially, if modern communication technology is utilized such as making website interactive, establishing Facebook fanpage or official Youtube channel. Other social media are also available, e.g. Tiktok, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Pinterest, LinkedIn, WeChat. These media could benefit directly to the company. The company can connect with targeted customers for a very low cost or even free. Even some people might

not fully believe in marketing messages, but it is official information coming out from the company. It is more reliable and credible than other information sources. The technology is now prepared. So, the content marketing need to be focused closely. Sending-out information need to be timely manipulated. Thus, the company should effectively apply the social media technology into its product.

Regarding the interpersonal media, people traditionally receive information only from physical meet. Todays, the relationship among people has been also transferred into digital interpersonal. We can connect to our family and friends even we live in a different part of the world. The relationship is remained and sometime better than traditional way. Although this interpersonal media is the second influence media in this study but the marketers should not underestimate the power of this media. Some have reported the effect on products from this social interpersonal media. Individual communication through social media have directly and indirectly affect the consumer's purchase decision (Wang et al.2012). For instance, social webboard is where people come to chat and share information. They do not know each other but they tend to believe someone who is credibility endorsed with some characteristics on that webboard. Consumers tend to believe that there is no reason why others have to share fake information on webboard. Thus, this could be another way to communicate efficiently to customers.

Last but not least, public media has no directed influence on consumer intention. It could be argued that this media generally distributes a variety of messages including news, weather, crime, political, and economic. The messages may not cover what customers are looking for or the information is not enough. This media might capture customer's attention but customers still feel that they need more information to confirm their decision. This could lead them to dig more information from marketing and interpersonal media. However, as the number of social influencers is rapidly growing. These influencers are mixed of independent and sponsored influencers. In the view of consumers, they might not be able to differentiate whether they are viewing independent or sponsored product review. This media could be more investigated for further research.

When considering all information sources, the major findings were that marketing media was the most influence factor on consumer intention to shopping online. So, marketers should be aware that they are in the right position. However, continuing develop better marketing campaign is recommended due to the intensive business competition nowadays. The content and product information on marketing messages must be clear, understandable and touching the heart of consumer. The second factor was interpersonal source while the last one was public media. It is understandable that people have a propensity to trust someone they know more than others. Social relationship remains effective when individual makes his/her decision.   This could be explained that information available on public media was mixed of real and unreal. The validity and credibility of information from public media was always in doubted. So, it would be better to trust information coming from customer interpersonal.

Conclusion And Recommendations

To sum up, this research confirms that consumer attitude remains the main influence factor when they want to shop online. However, as we know that attitude could be revolutionized from time to time. In many cases, consumer attitude is changed by marketing messages. When compare which media has more influence on consumer decision, the most

influence media is marketing media and followed by interpersonal media and public media respectively.

Although this study revealed interesting insight regarding the consumer's mind, but it did not examine further to the consumers' post-purchase behavior. There are some limitations need to be addressed. First, even the sample size was more enough to analyze and covered Bangkok metropolitan area but it was collected through non probability sampling. The sample is sufficient to contribute academically. However, more samples with probability sampling could be done in order to generalize the finding. Second, the marketing strategy is dynamic since consumers are demanding more todays. The variables affecting consumer decision are changed time to time. More variable based on conditions in specific time must be added to consolidate the knowledge to the research community. Therefore, the presented results should be interpreted in light of these recommendations.

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