EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

Welcome to Volume 8, Number 2 of the ASEAN Journal of Management and Innovation (AJMI). As the pandemic continues to impact communities all over the world in spite of widespread vaccination and relentless efforts to stem its spread, AJMI Editorial Board would like to offer its heartfelt good wishes to all those who have been directly affected by Covid-19.

Once again, a stricken world is preparing to celebrate New Year as another wave of infection is tearing its way through populations, businesses, and economies with seemingly no end in sight. People are wondering when things will be back to 'normal' and asking themselves what the world will look like after the dust from the pandemic settles.

One sector deeply affected by the sanitary crisis is the airline industry. Government-imposed travelling restrictions have caused airlines to drastically reduce their activities. The pre-Covid-19 shortage of pilots is now a thing of the past. Travelling, however, is expected to resume in the years to come. This makes **Pattarachat Maneechaeye**'s article, *Factors Affecting Professional Pilots' Intention to Leave Aviation Jobs: Supervised Machine Learning Algorithms,* quite relevant as it will be critical for airlines to retain their experienced pilots.

Another activity dramatically impacted by the pandemic is education. Online teaching continues to be the norm. A multitude of teaching modalities and pedagogies have been heavily studied and some of them tested as a result. **In** *Impact of Vlogging on Beginner Learners' English as an International Language (EIL) Competency during the COVID-19 Pandemic,* **Emerald Anne Jorda** and **Russell Rodrigo** explore the effectiveness of vlogging (a term made of the contraction of the words 'video' and 'blogging') as a 21ˢᵗ-century pedagogical tool in the context of an international university in Bangkok.

If pre-pandemic statistics are any indication of future trends, Thailand is likely to witness a surge in the number of international students coming to Thailand to pursue their university education once borders reopen. This makes **Junwerlo Mundo Ng** and **Helen Tajoda-Edwards**' article, *In the Thai Students' Eyes: Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers' Pedagogical and Linguistic Qualities and Students' Learning Outcomes,* especially relevant as the number of non-native English-speaking teachers is likely to rise in the future.

Surprisingly, though, as **Ponglert Lewis Ponglertnapakorn** and **Paulo Roberto Chaves Dalpian** report in *Consumer Wellbeing in Thailand During Covid-19,* Thai consumer wellbeing as measured in terms of psychological activity (including social media usage), physical activity, expenditure and consumption of durable goods, and food has remained stable throughout the pandemic.

Two contributions to this volume focus on cultural issues. In *National Cultural Dimension Challenges from Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos in Developing Hotel's Organizational Performance***, Pichaphob Panphae** and **Ravee Art Phoewhawm** discuss how measures needed to improve organizational performance may run counter to the cultural dimensions of Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar as identified by Hofstede (2001) and stand in the way of

organizational goals. In *The Effects of Communication Attitude on Cross-National Communication Barriers with Encoding, Decoding, and Transmitting as Mediating Variables,* **Wang Gao** and **Chih-Cheng; Fang** tackle issues inherent in communicating across borders and on the need for communicators to adjust their attitude to improve the quality of cross-national communication.

This volume also includes a contribution dealing with corporate social accounting and another with leadership style. In *Corporate Social Accounting Practices and Firm Sustainability: An Empirical Evidence from Listed Firms in Thailand,* **Suwan Wangcharoendate, Krittayawadee Gatewongsa, Nath Srimuangtong,** and **Patsorn Siewsamdangdet** investigate the impact of corporate social accounting on firm sustainability through the mediating effect of accounting information advantage, stakeholder acceptance and corporate reputation. As to leadership style, one important issue is the type of leadership style to adopt in an ever-changing environment. **Jun Liu, Mingming Chen,** and **Yan Ye** address this issue in the context of application-oriented universities in China. As explained in *University Presidents' Leadership Styles in China's Application-Oriented Higher Education,* the preference is for participating leadership style and selling leadership style.

Finally, as expounded by **Scot Roach** in *All Appearances the Customer was Satisfied: A Study of the Effects of Employee Features on Expected Customer Satisfaction,* while non-verbal communication, helpfulness and displayed emotion provide many of the tangible cues during the service encounter, various aspects of employee appearance (gender, physical attractiveness, and level of smile) can have an effect on customer satisfaction as well.

The book reviewed in this volume is entitled *Start-Up Thailand: The Entrepreneurs' Journey*. As **Thittapong Daengrasmisopo** reports, as a compilation of inspiring stories of Thai entrepreneurism behind successful Thai-founded enterprises, it portrays the journeys to success of eleven Thai entrepreneurs and serves as a source of inspiration for those planning to become entrepreneurs.

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By All Appearances the Customer was Satisfied: A Study of the Effects of Employee Features on Expected Customer Satisfaction

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Abstract

The concept of customer satisfaction has been very popular in recent years resulting in many studies examining factors influencing this important construct. While non-verbal communication, helpfulness and displayed emotion may provide many of the tangible cues during the service encounter, they are not available prior to the interaction. Since the service employee is likely to be one of the aspects that will affect satisfaction with the service encounter, a number of researchers are beginning to include employee factors in their studies as social variables, namely, various aspects of employee appearance that can be witnessed and evaluated even before the service employee and the customer speak. This study focuses on three aspects of employee physical appearance that can be assessed by the consumer before the actual service encounter – gender, attractiveness, and level of smile – and examines their effects on customer satisfaction. It considers the effects of physical attractiveness, gender, and smiling on a global satisfaction rating of a hypothetical service encounter. The research was conducted as an experiment in which respondents viewed pictures of persons and rated their level of satisfaction for an imagined service interaction with the pictured "employee." Multiple regression results showed that there was a significant relationship between the three physical appearance factors tested (gender, attractiveness and magnitude of smile) and a global rating of satisfaction. Managerial implications for these findings are provided.

Keywords: Customer Satisfaction, Service Encounter, Smile, Appearance, Gender

1. Introduction

Marketing scholars have long recognized the importance of customer satisfaction for business. Much of this is due to the positive relationship of satisfaction with a number of determinants of business success, including behavioral intention and repurchase intention (Mittal & Kamakura, 2001; Ryu & Han, 2011), customer retention and loyalty (Gustafsson, Johnson, & Roos, 2005; Ryu & Han, 2010), positive word-of-mouth (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml, 1993; Ryu et al., 2010), and ultimately to profit (Bernhardt, Donthu, & Kennett, 2000). In a service setting, employees who provide the service in many ways are the service. They are the firm providing the service and become the brand to those receiving that service (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2013; Sousa & Coelho 2013). As such, the employee becomes a major factor in a consumer's evaluation of the service that he/she has received and in his/her judgements of satisfaction with that service (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). Since services are intangible, customers look to the tangible physical evidence, which accompanies a given service encounter. This includes such things as the environment in which the service takes place, but it also includes the appearance of the personnel (Bitner, 1990). Because of this, some organizations, air travel companies for instance, hire employees that have a certain "look" (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2013).

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect that employee appearance may have on customer satisfaction with an employee in a service encounter. In particular, as depicted in Figure 1 below, this study examines the effects on customer satisfaction of three aspects of employee physical appearance that can be assessed by the consumer before the actual service encounter: gender, attractiveness, and level of smile.

Components of Physical Appearance

Gender

Attractiveness

Level of Smile
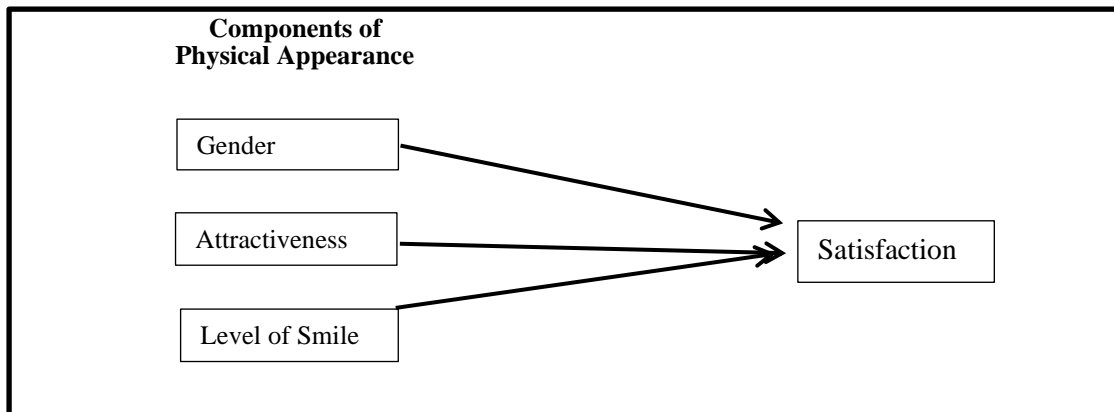
Satisfaction

Figure 1: Conceptual Model Source (Created by Author)

2. Literature Review

- *Customer Satisfaction*

Customer satisfaction has long been conceptualized as a disconfirmation from an expectation. Building on Helson's (1948) adaptation-level theory, the disconfirmation theory states that the expectation that the consumer brings to a consumption situation is an adaptation level that has resulted from prior experience with the product and brand, context (including employee communications and social referents), and the individual characteristics of that person. It is only against this adaptation level that future service encounters can be perceived. Positive and negative deviations from this standard result in judgements of satisfaction and dissatisfaction respectively (Oliver, 1980; LaBarbera & Mazursky, 1983; Mittal, Kumar, & Tsiros, 1999). In the context of a service, this would mean that a consumer's expectation or adaptation level would be based upon that individual's prior experience with that type of service and brand where in the case of services the service provider is often viewed as the brand (Ye, & Liang, 2010; Zeithaml, et. al, 2013; Sousa & Coelho 2013). The service provider is the one who provides the employee communication and serves as the social referent. Therefore, it follows that for various services, consumers bring with them an expectation or adaption level for the service provider that would serve as the standard against which other service providers would be judged in determining the level of satisfaction.

Since the service employee is likely to be one of the aspects that will affect satisfaction with the service encounter, a number of researchers are beginning to include employee factors in their studies as social variables. These factors include employee appearance, professional appearance or good grooming (Ryu, et al., 2011; Bernhardt et al., 2000; Kuo, 2009; Ryu, et al., 2010; Lee & Choi, 2020) smiling expressions (Soderlund & Rosengren, 2008; Kuo, 2009) employee gender (Luoh & Tsaurb, 2009; Ryu, et al., 2010) and service worker attractiveness

(Soderlund & Julander 2009; Luoh & Tsaurb, 2009). Some employee factors have also been explored in combination such as physical attractiveness, helpfulness and displayed emotion (Keh, Ren, Hill, & Li, 2013) or physical appearance and various forms of non-verbal communication (Jung & Yoon, 2011). Because services are intangible, consumers look for what Shostack (1977) terms tangible cues; evidence so as to judge that service before buying it. While non-verbal communication, helpfulness and displayed emotion may provide many of these cues during the service encounter, they are not available prior to the interaction. Physical features, on the other hand, are in evidence well before the service encounter and if linked to customer satisfaction, may provide the consumer with advance knowledge of what they can expect and may begin building satisfaction even before the encounter begins. Physical attractiveness, gender and smiling can be witnessed and evaluated even before the service employee and the customer speak. As suggested by Kim and Baker (2019) studies need to take more than a piecemeal approach to examining employee attributes and explore these attributes simultaneously. While groupings of employee attributes are beginning to be examined for a relationship to customer satisfaction, to this researcher's knowledge no study has examined these three physical features in combination. This study seeks to fill that void.

- Physical Features

Employers are continually faced with the need to transform employee potential into actual performance in the workplace. Since the current economy is predominantly service based, much of the workforce is engaged in face-to-face interactions and discussions with consumers. This gave rise to a need for service employees to engage in what Hochschild (1983) referred to as emotional labor. Service employees were encouraged by their employers to possess the right attitude and be courteous, friendly, and helpful to their customers in order to achieve the desired service encounter. More recently employers have concentrated on physical features of potential employees in their hiring of service workers based upon what Warhurst, Nickson, Witza, and Cullen (2000) have termed aesthetic labor, having attributes intended to appeal to the senses of customers, and are only later providing training for these workers.

Employers are looking for the right look or appearance in employees which may manifest itself as either good looks or the right look for the specific organization. This can be due to certain branding strategies or may be that the companies believe that a particular look is attractive to that company's customers.While many types of physical features can be viewed and evaluated at a distance (height, weight, color and length of hair for example), this study has chosen to examine three. The first is gender, because of research indicating that gender and job congruency resulted in greater levels of customer satisfaction (Mohr & Henson, 1996). Attractiveness was chosen because of its relation to customer satisfaction (Keh et al. 2013). The third physical feature, smile, was also chosen because it is discussed in the literature on emotional labor and may serve as an indicator of someone who would be friendly (Warhurst et al. 2000). The following sections discuss each of these three physical features and propose hypotheses for testing.

- Gender

Human gender is an important physical factor which can influence social face-to-face interaction. A number of studies indicate that men generally have more influence and power in social interactions than women (Carli, 2001; Grant, Button, Hannah, & Ross, 2002). Historically, there are a lot of stereotypes about the differences between female and male roles in society and, therefore, the difference in their nature and impact on others. Studies that examined the influence of gender on social interaction and perceptions of female and male faces received mixed results. Some studies found that female faces tend to be evaluated as more attractive (e,g. Andreoni, & Petrie, 2008). However, other studies (e.g. Grant et al, 2002) found no difference in perceptions of attractiveness between female and male faces. Hochschild

(1983) suggests that women are better at understanding the skills required to manage feelings and are therefore better equipped to provide a better service encounter in terms of sociability and communication, thereby making customers feel good. Therefore it is suggested that service encounters are naturally feminine work even though Warhurst et al. (2000) suggest that more research is needed in this analysis. Could it be that for this reason customers may choose women over men because these consumers approach the situation with the expectation that the woman service provider will better meet their emotional needs?

Still others suggest that congruency between gender and job type may be a significant predictor of consumer satisfaction (Mohr & Henson. 1996; Stuhlmacher & Poitras, 2010). Consumers may arrive at a service encounter with the expectation that a person of a specific gender may better possess the attributes required to deliver a more satisfying service and make the choice based upon this expectation. The population for this current study involves air travelers. The World Travel and Tourism Council (2013) report states that a higher proportion of women are employed in the travel and tourism sector than in the workforce as a whole. Women make up over 60 percent of the persons employed in this sector. Due to this suggested congruency and women being perceived as providing greater levels of emotional labor it is likely that this study's population will have an expectation that includes congruence of women in travel industry roles. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₁: *Gender will have a significant association with expected customer satisfaction with women producing the highest levels of expected satisfaction.*

- Attractiveness

In a service setting, physical attractiveness is the extent to which the service provider possesses an appealing and pleasing physical appearance in the eyes of the consumer (Ahearne, Gruen, & Jarvis, 1999). A number of studies indicate the facial attractiveness as a significant factor which plays a major role in the social interaction. Attractive people earn more money, they are more successful in social and private life and they are more socially desirable (Foos & Clark, 2011). Facial attractiveness has been shown to be related to increased credibility, professionalism, attentiveness and to responsiveness (Lee & Choi, 2020). Fudman (2010) reported that physical attractiveness and facial attractiveness as well, gives attractive people a wide range of social, political, academic and even legal benefits and advantages. The research showed that people who have been evaluated as attractive were perceived to have other positive characteristics including thoughtfulness, intelligence, friendliness, or interestingness.

Employee physical attractiveness has been shown to have significant positive effects on consumer satisfaction (Keh et al., 2013; Lee & Choi, 2020). The use of employee looks is a strategy employed by business firms to obtain competitive advantage as more outlets for similar services become available. Employee appearance is also being used as a tool to increase sales (Warhurst et al., 2011). Physical attractiveness was found to be related to consumers' evaluation of server tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Luoh & Tsaurb, 2009). All of these evaluations were made based upon physical features that could be viewed and evaluated by consumers prior to actual employee-customer interaction. Not only may the physical attractiveness of a service employee impact customer satisfaction judgements toward that employee, employee attractiveness may also affect consumer judgements about such things as the firm for which the employee works. Based upon this discussion, the following hypothesis is offered:

H₂: *Increased levels of employee attractiveness will have significant positive effects on ratings of expected consumer satisfaction*

- Smile

While "service with a smile" seems a bit of a cliché, studies have found that smiling tends to result in larger tips and a desire for further interaction (Tidd & Lockard, 1978; Husvar, 2006), expressed intentions to return to the store (Tsai, 2001) increased trustworthiness and a signal of intention to cooperate (Scharlemann, Eckel, Kacelnik, & Wilson, 2001). Smiles also serve as clues for differences such as assessing the level of friendliness that signals a unique and outstanding service environment and even potential consumer satisfaction. (Brown & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1994; Hennig-Thurau, Groth, Paul, & Gremler, 2006; Truong, Dang-Pham, McClelland, & Nkhoma, 2020). Since smiles have been related to such things as advice-taking, social rapport and overall satisfaction, research during the current COVID time is even beginning to examine the need to smile sincerely under surgical masks to continue to promote these effects (Hofmann, Stokburger-Sauer, Wanisch, & Hebborn, 2021).

The literature suggests reasons for why a smile passed between individuals may have these effects. First, studies suggest that in the absence of additional information, individuals tend to form perceptions based upon available data such as personal appearances and pre-established expectations. These perceptions then tend to be used in making judgements, forming impressions and beliefs, determining the intentions of the other party and formulating subsequent actions though they may only be based on elements of physical attractiveness (Scharlemann et al., 2001; Luoh & Tsaur, 2007). Therefore, in the face of sparse evidence offered by an intangible service encounter, consumers are likely to use cues such as a smile to indicate the nature of the encounter to come. Since actors do draw meaning from facial expression, the smile may provide that basis for an inference about the intentions of a stranger in a bargaining setting such as a service encounter (Scharlemann et al., 2001) and, since smiling is one aspect of an expression of friendliness, consumers may be forming expectations that the encounter will be a good one.

Another explanation that may tie increased smiling to satisfaction that is offered by the literature is called emotional contagion. Studies have shown that persons tend to unconsciously adopt or mimic the emotions of the persons around them (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1992; Barger, & Grandey, 2006; Barsade, 2002; Pugh, 2001; Hatfield, Bensman, Thornton, & Rapson, 2014). Studies have shown that in mimicking the facial expressions that they "catch" from people around them, they also tend to "catch" the emotions associated with these facial expressions (Scanlon & Polage, 2011; Hatfield et al., 2014). Since smiles tend to be associated with emotions such as friendliness (Tsai, 2001), a consumer seeing a smile on a service provider's face is likely to also smile and experience emotions consistent with smiling such as acceptance, approval and bonding (Barsade, 2002). In beginning to evaluate the consumption experience, consumers are likely to ask themselves how they feel about it and rely on their current emotional state as an indicator (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006). This is likely why famous restaurants look for such things as enthusiasm, smile, friendliness and good looks when they hire (Luoh & Tsaur, 2009). Based upon the above discussion, a hypothesis regarding smiling is offered:

H_3: *Increased magnitude of employee smiling will have significant positive effects on ratings of consumer satisfaction*

3. Methodology

In order to test the hypothesized relationships suggested above between physical attributes and expected customer satisfaction in a service encounter, an experiment was designed. In this experiment participants were view photographs that varied by gender, level of attractiveness, and magnitude of smile. The following describes that experiment.

- Participants

The experiment was designed to have participants rate their expected customer satisfaction in a travel scenario set in Thailand. To add a measure of authenticity, respondents were selected from passengers arriving in Bangkok at Suvarnabhumi Airport. A total of 100 persons were selected to participate using a quota sampling technique. Quotas were set by gender with an approximate 50-50% mix of women and men. The minimum age to be selected was set at 18 to better ensure that respondents would have prior travel experience.

- *Materials*

In reviewing articles for this study, it was found that many of the studies examining the effects of physical features on consumer behavior or evaluations used pictures that varied these features (e.g. Kim & Baker, 2019; Scharlemann et al., 2001; Husvar, 2006; Luoh & Tsaur, 2009; Scanlon & Polage, 2011). For this study, since the independent variables of interest included gender, level of attractiveness, and magnitude of smile, photos were taken of eight women and nine men that ranged in age from 20 to 30. Those photographed were all Asian and wore no jewelry or glasses. Of these seventeen persons photographed each had three pictures taken: one with no smile, one with a small smile and one with a big smile. All women had makeup that was similarly applied so that each looked natural. The individuals involved differed in attractiveness.

The pictures were then put through a rating process in which 30 university students rated each picture for attractiveness from 1 (not attractive) 2 (average attractiveness) to 3 (very attractive) and for smiling from 1 (a neutral face), 2 (a small smile) to 3 (a large smile). The photos of the nine men and then the eight women with a neutral smile were then placed in order of attractiveness from the lowest level of attractiveness to the highest level of attractiveness by each of the 30 students while not in view of the other students. From this rating exercise, pictures rated 1-3 were considered not attractive, 4-6 were considered average attractiveness and those rated above 6 were considered attractive. Quality assurance was achieved on the measurement tool used in this study through a photo rating process employed by similar published studies (e.g. Kim & Baker, 2019; Scharlemann et al., 2001; Husvar, 2006; Luoh & Tsaur, 2009; Scanlon & Polage, 2011).

Photos that were rated as not reliably falling into one of the three categories of attractiveness were removed. Reliability of the ratings of the remaining 10 photos (5 men and 5 women) indicated a 73.3% (22 of 30) agreement for the "attractive" male pictures and a 76.6% (23 of 30) agreement for the "attractive" female. For the "average" attractiveness, the agreement was 70% for both genders (21 of 30). As for the "not attractive" rating, the male photo was agreed upon 73.3% of the time (22 of 30) and the female photo was agreed upon 83.3% (25 of 30). George and Mallery (2003) suggest that reliability measures above .7 are acceptable while .8 is considered good. A similar rating task for the magnitude of smile resulted in 100% agreement for each smile level for both males and females. These reliability ratings indicate that the materials created represented the levels of the variables that they were designed to represent and that this was done with an acceptable level of reliability.

- Procedure

Travelers at the airport were approached and requested to participate in the experiment. They were given a scenario that had been created for this study in which they were to imagine being customers of a travel company and they were to interact with one of the travel company's

employees. Participants were then shown pictures of individual males and individual females that had varying levels of smiles (no smile, small smile and big smile) and varying levels of attractiveness from not attractive to average to attractive. Participants were then instructed to imagine themselves interacting with the employees depicted in the photos. After each picture was viewed, the respondents were to rate what they expected their level of satisfaction would be in such an interaction with the employee in the picture they just viewed. Ratings were conducted using a 1-5 Likert scale (with 1 indicating lowest and 5 indicating highest level of) to rate their expected level of satisfaction. Similar procedures have been employed in other studies to measure the influence of such things as physical features on expected satisfaction levels for imagined interactions (e.g. Husvar, 2006; Parlade et al., 2008).

4. Research Findings

The sample of travelers selected for the rating task included 100 participants; 48 men and 52 women. Of these, 46 (46%) were ages 18-29, 45 (45%) were ages 30-49 and only 9 (9%) were over 50. As an indicator of travel experience, it was found that 27 participants flew an average of once a year, 40 participants flew 2-3 times per year, 16 flew 4-5 times a year and 17 persons flew more than 5 times per year. All were experienced travelers. Multiple regression was selected to analyze the data obtained. The ten photographs depicting gender, varying levels of attractiveness and smile were rated by 100 persons producing a total of 1000 ratings. As reported in Table 1, satisfaction across all ratings had a mean of 3.361 (out of 5 as highest) with a standard deviation of 1.057. Gender was dummy coded with 0 = men and 1 = women for the regression. Since the numbers of male and female pictures were the same, the mean for this variable was .50 with a standard deviation of .500. Attractiveness of the persons in the pictures indicated a mean of 2.20 (out of 3 as highest) and a standard deviation of .749. Magnitude of smile had a mean of 1.60 (out of 3 as highest) and a standard deviation of .800.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the Study Variables

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Satisfaction	1000	3.361	1.057
Gender	1000	.50	.500
Attractiveness	1000	2.20	.749
Smile	1000	1.60	.800

Source: Created by the Author for this Study.

The ANOVA for the model is significant at $F(3, 139.3)$, $p < .001$ indicating that the adjusted $R^2 = .293$ is significantly greater than zero. Therefore the predictor variables in this model account for a significant percentage of the variance in ratings of expected satisfaction for the scenario service encounter. In this case, that percentage is 29.3%.

Hypothesis 1 suggested a significant association between gender and expected customer satisfaction with women producing the highest levels of satisfaction. As shown in Table 2 below, gender did have a significant association with expected satisfaction ($t = 3.587$, $p < .001$).

Since men were coded as 0 and women were coded as 1, the positive standardized beta of .099 indicates support that women were more strongly associated with expected satisfaction than men. These two findings suggest support for Hypothesis 1. Additionally, the unstandardized beta for gender indicates that a service encounter with a woman will bring about a .210 higher level of expected satisfaction (out of a possible 5) than would such an encounter with a man.

Table 2: Regression of Gender, Attractiveness and Magnitude of Smile on Expected Satisfaction

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | | 95.0 Cl | |
	β	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Constant	1.965	.094		20.967	<.001	1.781	2.149
Gender	.210	.059	.099	3.587	<.001	.095	.325
Attractiveness	.230	.041	.163	5.610	<.001	.150	.311
Smile	.622	.037	.471	16.817	<.001	1.781	.694

Adjusted R^2 = .293
Source: Created by the Author for this Study.

The second hypothesis suggested that increased levels of employee attractiveness will have significant positive effects on ratings of expected consumer satisfaction. As shown in Table 2, attractiveness has a significant positive relationship with expected satisfaction ratings (t = 5.610, p < .001). This finding supports the relationship suggested in Hypothesis 2. The unstandardized beta indicates that for a 1 point increase in rated attractiveness, ratings of expected satisfaction increase by .230 out of a possible 5.

The final hypothesis suggests that increased magnitudes of employee smiling will have significant positive effects on ratings of expected consumer satisfaction. As indicated in Table 2, the magnitude of smile does have a significant positive influence on ratings of expected satisfaction (t = 16.817, p < .001). The unstandardized beta for this variable indicates that as the magnitude of smile increases by 1, there will be an associated .662 (out of 5) increase in the ratings of expected satisfaction. Hypothesis 3 is therefore supported.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this study indicate support for the idea that in a service encounter, various physical characteristics, in this case gender, level of attractiveness, and magnitude of smile may influence expectations of satisfaction with the encounter before such encounter even starts. These findings are in agreement with various studies that examined these variables and their relationship to satisfaction in service exchanges (e.g. Soderlund & Rosengren, 2008; Kuo, 2009; Soderlund & Julander 2009; Luoh & Tsaurb, 2009; Luoh & Tsaurb, 2009; Ryu et al., 2010; Ryu et al., 2011; Lee & Choi, 2020). From this, there are immediately applicable managerial implications in three areas: hiring, training and evaluation.

First, since women were rated more likely to produce a satisfying service exchange encounter, it would seem reasonable that employers lean toward hiring women in service provider roles. However, the literature suggests that another factor, congruence between the gender and the specific job may be more important (Mohr & Henson, 1996). The scenario in this study was related to travel and, as suggested, it is possible that women are viewed as more congruent to fulfil such a job. Further research is needed to identify gender congruent roles as viewed from the consumers' point of view.

Attractiveness can quite often be improved by the application of make-up, body and skin care products, selection of clothing and even through exercise. This has implications for selection, training and evaluation. In hiring customer contact providers, recruiters and interviewers should work with management and possibly even customers develop standards for physical attractiveness practices and for appropriateness of what is worn. Studies have shown that the wearing of appropriate and expected clothing does affect customer satisfaction (Shao, Baker, & Wagner, 2004). Service encounter employees should not only be taught these standards, but should be trained in how to best achieve these standards on a daily basis. Merit evaluations of employees should contain items examining attractiveness in terms of make-up, dress, smiling, based upon the standards that have been communicated and the training that the employees have received.

Of the three independent variables examined in this study, smiling had the largest effect on expected satisfaction. It therefore seems obvious that the magnitude and possibly the frequency of smiling should be considered for employee selection, training and evaluation. However, there is a caveat that should go with that. Studies have shown that having employees walking around with a smile "pasted" on their face is often not very effective (Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2006; Groth, Hennig-Thurau, & Walsh, 2009). The current study employed pictures to obtain satisfaction ratings. Still photos are not the best for exhibiting what these writers refer to as "emotional labor." Employees should be taught to provide sincere emotional response with their features (eyes, mouth, cheeks) and should be rewarded for their emotional efforts.

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University Presidents' Leadership Styles in China's Application-Oriented Higher Education

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Abstract
Sharing something in common with cooperative education, application-oriented universities has been a growing trend in China's higher education development. For application-oriented university presidents, the primary concern is to determine what leadership styles to adopt to face the opportunities and challenges inherent in changing situations. Based on the situational leadership theory and the synergistic leadership theory, this research applies a mixed methodology to analyze the leadership styles of application-oriented university's presidents and identify the common characteristics and differences in their leadership styles. Two presidents from University S and University X were chosen as respondents as both of them had experience with application-oriented universities from developed areas on the Southeast coast of China. The investigation reveals that they have adopted a participating leadership style and a selling leadership style, respectively. In light of the synergistic leadership theory, it also points to some similarities and differences in their leadership styles. This research study provides important considerations in terms of the internal and external factors of leadership style adoption.

Keywords: Application-Oriented Higher Education, Situational Leadership Style, System Theory, Synergistic Leadership Theory

1. Introduction
Application-oriented higher education in China shares something in common with cooperative education, which is a type of education system that combines vocational education and higher education (Coll & Zegwaard, 2011) or integrates practical elements with higher education (Krone, 2015). In cooperative education, companies and higher education institutes joint efforts to develop a special learning environment conducive to the transfer of academic knowledge in a practical work-related setting (Reinhard & Pogrzeba, 2016). Following the release of the Outline of China's Medium- and Long-Term Plan for Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) in July 2010, developing application-oriented universities has been a dominant trend in China's higher education (Zhang & Wu, 2018). This is all the more the case as the National Vocational Education Reform Implementation Plan (2019), adopted in February 2019, which further promotes application-oriented higher education.

The plan stipulates that application-oriented higher education does not refer to a specific level but to a type of higher education system that is to cultivate skilled talents engaged in specifically applied work. Both of these government plans clearly indicate that the structure of higher education should be continuously optimized, including the disciplines taught, the type of education, and the integration of a multiple-disciplinary approach. All this is part of the higher education strategy developed to cultivate talents needed for the economic transformation of the country. Unlike vocational colleges, application-oriented universities can confer degrees equivalent to those awarded in academic universities. This gives them a high status in the field of application-oriented higher education and greatly contributes to their strong appeal across China (Cui, 2018), especially in developed industrial areas on the Southeast coast. At the same time, a new integration mode has been introduced, which according to a notice released by the State Council of the People's Republic of China in 2017, further encourages enterprises to participate in the operation of vocational schools and universities via the establishment of sole proprietorships or joint ventures and provide students with more internship opportunities. The result has been the strengthening of the cooperation between the industry and educational institutes.

The steady growth of application-oriented higher education and the changes that accompany it require university presidents to be effective leaders. According to Northouse (2016), the key to effective leadership is to match a particular situation with the appropriate leadership style, which is also crucial to boost organizational innovation performance (Rahim et al., 2015). This brings to the fore the following issue: What leadership style the presidents of application-oriented university have adopted to meet the situations they have been faced with?

This study seeks to address this query. Specifically, focusing on two universities in China and their presidents and in light of the situational leadership theory and the synergistic leadership theory, it aims to:
1. analyze the leadership styles of the presidents of application-oriented universities; and
2. identify the similarities and differences in the leadership styles.

2. Review of Relevant Literature
This section discusses the various leadership styles relevant to this study and their underlying theories.

- *Situational Leadership Style*
Weber (2019) determined that since people's behaviors are deeply influenced by situations, the best leaders are reflective situation architects and interpreters. For this very reason, any investigation into leadership styles should take the situation into consideration. As the name implies, situational leadership centers on leadership in specific situations (Northouse, 2016). The concept was first introduced by Hersey and Blanchard (1969), who proposed to perform more directive behaviors to new employees, and gradually change to supportive behaviors as employees are becoming seniors. The situational leadership theory has since been extended and refined. In 1985, Blanchard, Zigarmi, and Zigarmi introduced a Situational Leadership II model, making leadership styles the core part. In 2008, Hersey and Blanchard expanded the situational leadership theory by identifying two key leadership styles; *task* (directive) behaviors and *relationship* (supportive) behaviors. Leadership styles in their model can be further classified into four subcategories; (i) telling (high task and low relationship behaviors); (ii) selling (high task and high relationship behaviors); (iii) participating (low task and high relationship behaviors); and (iv) delegating (low task and low relationship behaviors).

Maisyaroh et al. (2019) argued that applying the situational approach can raise leaders' success level by improving subordinates' performance and help leaders in deciding the styles during the leadership process.

- *Followers and the Situational Leadership Style*

Followers are another major part of situational leadership and as such have been the focus of research on leadership styles as well. A number of studies have determined that leadership effectiveness is related to the overall task performance of followers, whose motivation to perform better is encouraged by situational leadership styles (Leister et al, 2017; Maisyaroh et al, 2019). The situational leadership theory also focuses on the followers' development levels (Northouse, 2016). Leadership styles may be adapted to the development levels of followers so as to make them move forward along the developmental continuum. Situational leadership values the understanding of followers' readiness for taking greater responsibility and the development of the skill-sets of followers. A number of previous studies used leader rating to assess followers' development level (Vecchio, 1987; Fernandez & Vecchio, 1997; Thompson & Vecchio, 2009). Some used the degree of agreement between leader rating and followers' self-rating to determine followers' competence and commitment and consequently determine an optimal leadership style (e.g. Thompson & Glasø, 2018). As to measuring leadership styles, Hersey's (1985) suggested that followers' reports on leader behaviors should be preferred. According to Yeo (2020), observations on leadership styles depend on leaders' behavioral attributes and effectiveness, such as communication skills, drive for performance, relationship building ability, as well as responses to change. Nevertheless, employees' perception is also decisive.

- *The System Theory*

The system theory provides an avenue to analyze various situations. The theory is rooted in Von Bertalanffy's general system theory (1976), which marks a shift from thinking in terms of a whole as unchangeable substances to a system in dynamic interactions with the environment. Senge (1990, 2006) defined this open system as an interrelated set of elements functioning as an operating unit. According to Vanderstraeten (2019), the general system theory foreshadows the evolutionary theory characterized by social systems, in which processes, structures, and elements produce their later counterparts. For contemporary socio-ecological system theories, the open system theory nevertheless still provides a deep and valuable understanding of complex situations (Van Assche et al, 2019).

- *The Synergistic Leadership Theory*

Based on the system theory, Irby et al (2002) developed the synergistic leadership theory, which provides another avenue to analyze various situations. The theory uses four factors with multiple perspectives to form a tetrahedron and consider not only various aspects of leadership but also its effects on organization systems. The four factors can be described as follows:

- *Factor 1* consists of beliefs, attitudes, and values, such as for example, believing in the importance of professional growth for all individuals, being open to change and/or diversity, valuing the importance of character, and ethics and integrity in schooling.

- *Factor 2* relates to leadership behavior, such as for example, cooperation, receptivity, merging, acceptance, self-assertion, separation, independence, control, and competition.

- *Factor 3* refers to external forces, such as for example, perceptions and/or expectations of supervisor or colleagues, perceptions and/or expectations of community, regulations, resources, location, culture of community, socio-economic status, language or ethnic groups, and political or special interest groups.

- *Factor 4* pertains to the organizational structure, such as for example, using expertise of members, having consensus on derived goals, valuing members, rewarding professional

learning, relying on informal communication, dispersing power, promoting nurturing and caring, empowering promoters, having many rules, having separate tasks and roles, and initiating changes. Although situational leadership style has been a widely recognized, it is still an under-researched theory (Northouse, 2016; Thompson & Glasø, 2018). This is not the case, however, with regard to the synergistic leadership theory, which is premised on the belief that leadership behaviors interact directly with beliefs, attitudes, and values, organizational structure, and indirectly with external forces (Irby et al, 2002). Leaders may thus identify each of the synergistic leadership factors in the organization systems to shape a whole picture of the situation. In other words, leaders may adapt leadership styles to the situation by applying the corresponding solution strategies (Liu & Chen, 2021). All that said, few studies have been conducted in the context of education, especially in respect of the reforms of the system.

3. Methodology

To investigate the university presidents' leadership styles in China's application-oriented higher education, this research applied a mixed-methodology consisting of both quantitative and qualitative components.

The quantitative approach was based on a questionnaire distributed to followers. The data obtained from their assessments was used to provide a general description of presidents' leadership styles, including common characteristics and differences.

The qualitative approach was based on interviews with two university presidents and some followers. Since it would have been quite complex to determine the synergistic leadership factors in the development of China's application-oriented higher education simply on the basis of standardized statements, this study relied on open-ended data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It not only provided more detailed and specific information about presidents' leadership styles, it also ensured methodological integrity, accuracy, and validity.

- Participants

Participants in this mixed methodology research include leaders (two presidents) and followers. President S and President X from University S and University X, respectively, were chosen as the respondents since both of them were experienced presidents of typical and different application-oriented universities from developed areas on the Southeast coast of China. Both of them speak English fluently. University S is known for foreign languages disciplines and is located in City S, which is one of the largest cities in China with versatile cultures from national immigrants. The city is also heavily influenced by international cultures and is one of the international centers for economics, finance, trade, logistics, and Sci-tec innovation. University X, which specializes in engineering disciplines, is located in City X, a medium-sized city in China with local traditional culture compatible with the culture of immigrants. It is one of the most important regional ports, financial service centers and trade centers. Followers/participants came from these two universities and consisted of a sample of 100 respondents, 50 from each university. For each university, the sample comprised 10 heads of schools/departments, 20 administration staff members, and 20 faculty members. Followers/interviewees included five staff members from each university (one head of school/ department, two administration staff members, and two faculty members). They all spoke English.

- Instruments

The questionnaire comprised two sections, both in English and Chinese, directly translated by Microsoft Word 2019 and double checked by being translated back into English. The first section was about demographics and included personal information, educational background, years of employment at the university, and the position in that university. The second section focused on the respondents' assessments of their presidents. The first eight items were taken

from Northouse's (2016) style questionnaire. Items 1-4 were scored for relationship-directed behaviors and items 5-8 for task-directed behaviors. For example, one sample item read as follows: "Our president acts friendly with us" (1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Occasionally, 4=Often, 5=Always). The next seven items were adapted from LMX 7 Questionnaire (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The following is one example of the sample items: "I know how I finish my work to satisfy our president" (1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree). The last five items consisted of a five-item assessment of autonomy drawn from Ohio State Leadership items (Stogdill, 1963).

One example of the sample items reads as follows: "My president gives me the freedom to decide how to do my job" (1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree). As can be seen in Table 1 shown in the next section, all 20 items in Section Two were worded positively. Questions for the interviews were designed on the basis of the situational leadership theory, the system theory, and the synergetic leadership theory so as to address the research objectives. They covered the interviewees' philosophy of education, general and specific descriptions of the presidents' leadership behaviors and leadership styles in dealing with external forces and managing teams. The interviews were conducted in English via Chats on WeChat by means of self-report or assessment, and were reported based on qualitative analysis.

- Data analysis

All the questionnaires were coded for the analysis, which was conducted with the help of SPSS Statistics, applying means analysis. Inferential statistics applied p-value to ensure the significance level and t-test to determine whether the means of two presidents' leadership styles were statistically different from each other and to find out the similarities and differences in leadership styles of the two presidents. The interviews were coded as the qualitative analysis was applied with key words abstracted from the discourses based on their recordings. Firstly, the two presidents' leadership styles were explored and compared according to their own reports. Secondly, the responses from the other interviewees were compared and also matched with their presidents. The focus then switched to the descriptions of and the rationale for the leadership styles adopted.

4. Findings

- Leadership Styles of the Presidents of Application-Oriented Universities

Generally, President S used leadership more like a participating style and President X adopted more of a selling style. As shown in Table 1, followers in University S thought President S applied more of a relationship-directed leadership style (M=19.1, SD=2.092) than a task-directed one (M=17.62, SD=2.118). Followers in University X, on the other hand, determined that President X employed a good balance leadership between relationship-directed (M=18.1, SD=1.515) and task-directed styles (M=18.18, SD=1.578). Followers in both universities similarly reported strong leader-member exchanges (M=30.94, SD=3.728; M=31.46, SD=2.998) and high levels of autonomy (M=23.26, SD=2.456; M=22.68, SD=1.974). This perfectly matched what was revealed in the interviews as discussed next.

Table 1: Followers' Assessments of Presidents' Leadership Styles

Items	University S M (SD)	University X M (SD)	t	p
1. Our president acts friendly with us	4.84(0.468)	4.58(0.499)	2.689	0.008*
2. Our president helps us feel comfortable at work.	4.78(0.545)	4.6(0.495)	1.728	0.087
3. Our president communicates actively with us.	4.7(0.614)	4.46(0.579)	2.01	0.047*
4. Our president helps us get along with each other.	4.78(0.616)	4.46(0.579)	2.677	0.009**
Items 1--4 Relationship-directed leadership styles	19.1(2.092)	18.1(1.515)	2.737	0.007**
5. Our president defines role responsibilities for each of us.	4.36(0.722)	4.38(0.567)	-0.154	0.878
6. Our president develops a plan of action.	4.26(0.751)	4.62(0.530)	-2.769	0.007**
7. Our president makes suggestions about how to solve problems.	4.26(0.694)	4.48(0.646)	-1.64	0.104
8. Our president encourages us to do high-quality work.	4.74(0.527)	4.7(0.463)	0.403	0.688
Items 5--8 Task-directed leadership styles	17.62(2.118)	18.18(1.587)	-1.496	0.138
9. I know how I finish my work to satisfy our president.	4.42(0.731)	4.58(0.538)	-1.247	0.216
10. Our president understands our job problems and needs.	4.42(0.642)	4.48(0.646)	-0.466	0.642
11. Our president recognizes our potential.	4.14(0.808)	4.3(0.768)	-1.073	0.286
12. Our president would use his/her power to help us solve problems with work.	4.32(0.683)	4.48(0.646)	-1.203	0.232
13. Our president would help us out of a difficult situation.	4.26(0.633)	4.48(0.646)	-1.72	0.089
14. We have enough confidence in our president.	4.74(0.664)	4.76(0.476)	-0.173	0.863
15. Our working relationship with our president is effective.	4.64(0.663)	4.38(0.635)	2.003	0.048*
Items 9--15 LMX leadership styles	30.94(3.728)	31.46(2.998)	0.769	0.444
16. Our president gives us the freedom to decide how to do our job.	4.68(0.612)	4.5(0.580)	1.498	0.137
17. Our president trusts us to use our own judgments.	4.76(0.517)	4.58(0.538)	1.705	0.091
18. Our president values our advice.	4.58(0.642)	4.52(0.544)	0.504	0.615
19. Our president puts our suggestions into operation.	4.42(0.642)	4.42(0.575)	0	1
20. Our president treats us as equals.	4.82(0.482)	4.66(0.479)	1.666	0.099
Items 16--20 Autonomy afforded by leaders	23.26(2.456)	22.68(1.974)	1.302	0.196

* $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$

Based on Table 2, which highlights the key aspects of the interviews with the two Presidents, it may be inferred that both presidents valued task and relationship behaviors in leadership. President S believed that it was important for a leader to "explain the requirements and direction of tasks" (II, Sa) and "provide socio-emotional support" (II, Sf) in leadership. President X believed that as a leader in an applied-oriented university, her task was "to complete the university's plan and achieve the goals it set" (II, Xa). However, task and relationship behaviors played different roles in their leadership. Regarding task behaviors, President S thought leaders should "focus more on making decisions and evaluating achievement" (II, Sc). Meanwhile, he emphasized the "more important role of relationship behaviors" (II, Sd) and thought leaders should direct two-way communication toward "achieving goals and meeting followers' socio-emotional needs" (II, Se). President X

highlighted the importance of both task behaviors and relationship behaviors as well. She thought leaders should "provide guidance and support" (II, Xc) and "maintain a good relationship with teachers and students" (II, Xd).

Table 2: Responses from Interviews with Presidents

	President S (S)	President X (X)
I. Philosophy of Education	a. all-round and lifelong development b. integrating moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labor education c. study strategy, practical skills, and independent living skills d. international vision, noble traits, and intercultural communication competence e. integration of humanities and economics studies	a. not exam-oriented b. knowledge c. application-oriented abilities d. to meet the needs of social development e. international vision f. international schooling g. green sustainable development strategy
II. Leadership Behaviors	a. to explain the requirements and direction of tasks b. to stress the achievement in task behaviors c. to focus more on making decisions and evaluating the achievement in task behaviors d. more important role of relationship behaviors e. two-way communication of achieving goals and meeting followers' socio-emotional needs f. to provide socio-emotional support g. pioneer, innovator, motivator	a. to complete the university's plan and achieve the goal b. to highly emphasize both teaching and scientific research c. to provide guidance and support d. to accomplish the tasks, maintaining a good relationship with teachers and students e. to analyze the needs of teachers and student communicator, transformer, risk-taker
III. Dealing with External Forces	a. being open b. introducing advanced educational concepts and management modes c. establishing partnerships with international prestigious universities d. being a member of the university cooperative alliance e. providing minor and selective courses from renowned universities f. establishing a relationship with prestigious organizations for practical learning	a. stressing the impact on practical teaching b. paying attention to the environmental influence on school management c. making good use of external resources of government, enterprise and local industries d. gaining enough funds e. building practical teaching base through school-enterprise cooperation f. considering employment demand in local industries
IV. Organizing the Management Team	a. having the consensus on application-oriented education goals b. using the expertise of team members c. hiring several experts with practical working experience	a. setting up a school-enterprise mixed management team b. caring for all members in the team

As seen in Table 3, which highlights the key aspects of the interviews with followers in both universities, followers in University S focused more on relationship-directed behaviors. They used terms, such as "friendly" (II, FS1, FS4), "nice" (II, FS3), "understanding subordinates"(II, FS1), "talking to teachers often" (II, FS2), "a good communicator" (II, FS4), "supportive" (II, FS5), and "concerned about teachers' development" (II, FS1), as opposed to terms related to task-directed behaviors, such as "competent" (II, FS3, FS4), "leading the way" (II, FS3), "taking on any kind of tasks" (II, FS4), and "planning and managing in a wise and farsighted way" (II, FS5). Followers in University X gave a similar assessment of the relationship-directed behaviors to task-directed ones, using terms, such as "amiable" (II, FX1), "nice" (II, FX2), "approachable" (II, FX1), "spell able" (II, FX4), "caring for teachers and students" (II, FX1), "communicating with teachers" (II, FX2), and "good communicating skills" (II, FX5) for relationship behaviors, and "arranging tasks appropriately" (II, FX2), "decisive" (II, FX3, FX5), "strong execution ability" (II, FX3), "pragmatic" (II, FX3), "high efficiency" (II, FX4, FX5) and "offering guidance" (II, FX4) for task behaviors.

Table 3: Responses from Interviews with Followers

	Followers from University S (FS)	Followers from University X (FX)
I. Philosophy of Education (Self)	FS1: student-centered teaching; lifelong learning FS2: knowledge and practical skills, together with social collaboration FS3: pursuing the truth and satisfying the social needs FS4: internationalization and localization FS5: international vision and intercultural communication competence	FX1: cultivating students' application ability; not exam-oriented; centering on students FX2: training students' practical ability FX3: meeting the needs of society FX4: application-oriented abilities; being goal-directed FX5: having international vision; having educational dream and beliefs
II. Leadership Behaviors	FS1: being friendly; understanding subordinates; concerning about teachers' development FS2: being farsighted; getting well along with subordinates; talking to teachers often FS3: leading the way in the educational reforms; being competent and nice FS4: being friendly and competent; a good communicator; taking on any kind of tasks FS5: planning and managing in a wise and farsighted way; being supportive	FX1: being amiable; caring for teachers and students; being approachable FX2: being nice; communicating with teachers; arranging tasks appropriately FX3: being decisive; strong execution ability; being pragmatic FX4: spell able; high efficiency; offering guidance FX5: being highly effective; good communicating skills; being visionary and competent
III. Dealing with External Forces	FS1: cooperating with international universities and organizations FS2: providing many communication opportunities with peer teaching teams in other universities FS3: achieving many resources with personal charisma FS4: being visionary in cooperation with renowned universities and enterprises FS5: applying abundant external resources; being good at communication with external forces	FX1: cooperating with enterprises to train students; establishing enterprise practice base FX2: Attaching importance to school-enterprise cooperation FX3: setting up specialties according to local industry characteristics FX4: paying highly attention to local talent needs FX5: building practical teaching base through school-enterprise cooperation; getting government financial support for school reform
IV. Organizing the Management Team	FS1: diversity of educational and cultural background FS2: introducing some renowned professors to be the head of schools	FX1: cooperating with corporate engineers to deliver classes FX2: enterprise teachers developing curriculum for developing students' practical ability

FS3: involving managing talents in the management team
FS4: being strategic in organizing teams; developing leaders from administrative staff and faculty members
FS5: delegating powers; being helpful in the management system; collective decision making

FX3: setting up a school-enterprise mixed management team
FX4: cooperating with enterprise management for administration
FX5: paying more attention to the construction of application-oriented universities in terms of school management

- Common Characteristics and Differences in Leadership Styles
The analysis of the four factors at the core of the synergistic leadership theory as expounded by Irby et al. (2002) and discussed above reveals some similarities as well as differences in leadership styles between two presidents.
In terms of beliefs, attitudes, and values (Factor 1), it appears that the presidents and followers espoused a variety of educational philosophies (Table 2, I; Table 3, I). Both presidents were open-minded about change and both value diversity (Table 2, I & III). Both also attached importance to cultivating application-oriented talents with an international vision (Table 2, I, Sc, Sd, Xc, Xf).

In respect to leadership behavior (Factor 2), firstly, there was no difference in their creating a comfortable working climate (Table 1, 2), defining role responsibilities (Table 1, 5), making suggestions (Table 1, 7), and encouraging followers (Table 1, 8). Secondly, both of them believed that it was important for an excellent president in application-oriented universities to be a good communicator (Table 2, II, Se, Xf) and a good relationship broker (Table 2, II, Sd, Xd). This is in line with the followers' assessment as seen in responses to leadership behaviors in Table 3. Thirdly, as shown in Table 3, followers insisted on noting that their presidents were farsighted (II, FS2, FS5, FX5), competent (II, FS3, IFS4, FX3, FX5), and offered guidance or supports in task behaviors (II, SF5, FX4). However, there also were highly significant differences. President S is more inclined to adopt supportive or relationship leadership, whereas President X favors mixed leadership (Table 1, Items 1-4). More specifically, President S was perceived to do more to help followers get along with each other (Table 1, 4), whereas President

X was more involved in developing a plan of action (Table 1, 6).
As to external forces (Factor 3), they both recognized the importance of external factors influencing each other, strive for more external resources, and make good use of them (Table 2, III). The external forces they both utilized are prestigious organizations for practical learning (Table 2, III, Sf, Xc). There still exist some differences in that President S has established a close relationship with prestigious or international organizations, most notably universities (Table 2, III, Sc, Se; Table 3, III, FS2, FS4) while President X promotes school-enterprise cooperation to build a practical teaching base (Table 2, III, Xe; Table 3, III, FX1, FX2, FX5) and is concerned more about gaining financial support (Table 2, III, Xd; Table 3, III, FX5). However, regardless of the differences with respect to this third factor, both of them have established good relationships and coordinate well with external forces.

Finally, regarding organizational structure (Factor 4), both presidents valued members and nurturing them and caring for them (Table 2, IV, Sb, Sc, Xb; Table 3, IV, FS3, FS4). Both of them have set up school-enterprise mixed management team (Table 2, IV, Sc, Xa). However, President S prefers to have consensually-derived goals (Table 2, IV, Sa) and to use the expertise of members with international background and renowned professors (Table 3, IV, FS1, FS2), whereas President X makes more use of engineers and enterprise teachers (Table 3, IV, FX1, FX2).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Internal factors causing adaptation to a particular leadership style are discussed first and external factors considered next.

- Internal Factors in Adapting Leadership Styles

It was found that President S's leadership is relatively-low-task and high-relationship style, which is most effective when subordinates have adequate abilities and need motivation to perform their tasks. President X's leadership can also be described as a high-relationship style but, unlike President S, it qualifies as high-task leadership style. This combination is most effective when subordinates have adequate motivation and but need to be encouraged to improve their abilities. So, the following may be considered in developing application-oriented higher education situation:

(1) Transformation of Followers' Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values – Leadership behaviors can directly have an impact on and be affected by beliefs, attitudes, and values factors (Irby et al., 2002). Followers' beliefs, attitudes, and values that interact with their motivations play a critical role in the effectiveness of leadership styles. As shown in the interviews, both presidents and their followers shared a similar philosophy of education, which in the words of President S pertains to "practical skills," "lifelong learning," and "intercultural communication competence" and in the words of President X to "application-oriented abilities," "not being exam-oriented," and "meeting the needs for social development." Over the last decades, as explained in the introduction to this study, the notion of application-oriented high education and the corresponding educational beliefs, attitudes, and values have been gradually accepted by educators involved in cooperative education. This means that the consensus on the philosophy makes it possible for leaders to adopt less directive and more supportive behaviors and apply selling and participating styles in the situation of application-oriented higher education.

(2) Synergetic Management in Organizational Structure – The organizational structure factor also directly interacts with leadership behaviors (Irby et al., 2002). As the data from Items 9-15 in Table 1 show, LMX leadership in both universities got very high scores, especially for the item about followers' confidence in their presidents. This positive exchange relationship had important task consequences, especially in terms of mutual trust that turns followers into in-group members. Meanwhile, as Items 16-20 in Table 1 indicate, both presidents shared authority and responsibility with followers, leading the latter to feel respected and valued. In addition, as reported in the interviews, both presidents employ experts directly from enterprises and teachers with practical working experience, which made members versatile in knowledge and skills. In the situation of application-oriented institutes, both presidents need to adapt their styles to synergetic leadership, i.e., they must involve as many followers in in-groups as possible. They must also motivate all staff and faculty members, including professional experts, discipline-leading teachers, practical trainers, etc., to use their expertise, make full use of their high autonomy, and facilitate the growth of their professional abilities or skills as part of the institute's management and development.

- External Factors in Adapting Leadership Styles

Both presidents have adopted Von Bertalanffy's general system theory (1976) and focused on their role as communicators in the open system. Although the degree of interaction with external factors might be different, the nature of application-oriented universities as open systems provides for the following observations to be taken into considerations:

(1) Globalization of Educational Development – The educational globalization factor makes it necessary for leaders to develop a global mindset. In this research, both universities are from coastal cities heavily involved in international exchanges. For both presidents, these locations

provide more opportunities to get access to international resources and more possibilities to develop an international vision. Taking University S as an example, it was found that not only President S self-reported the importance of an international vision and practice (e.g. "establishing partnerships with international prestigious universities") but followers saw "cooperating with international universities and organizations" as a very important characteristic of the leadership in dealing with external forces. In this situation, both presidents should cultivate the ability to view the education sector from a broad perspective and behave beyond the geographic boundaries when it comes to leadership styles adaption.

(2) Integration of Industrial Resources – Industrial resources, such as enterprises, industrial talents, technological transfers, etc., play a big part in application-oriented education reforms. In this research, University S is from an international city with many large companies and enterprises, and more universities as well, which may result in more fierce competition in the integration between industry and education. University X is more likely to have an easier time cooperating with small and medium enterprises. For one, in her own words, President X had been "attaching great importance to school-enterprise cooperation," "cooperating with corporate engineers to deliver classes," "[involving] enterprise teachers in curriculum development," even "building the practical teaching base through school-enterprise cooperation," and being responsive to "employment demand in local industries." Based on the experience of both universities and the suggestions from the government (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2017), presidents may, as part of developing application-oriented higher education, want to further adapt their behaviors to work even closer with enterprises, including startups, set majors in line with the industrial evolution, cooperate with industrial talents to design curriculum and develop teaching materials, deliver classes.

*(3) Utilization of Talent Reso*urces – Followers' abilities and motivations are two influential factors in deciding on an effective leadership style (Northouse, 2016). On the one hand, City S is a famous international city with rich human resources in the form of immigrant talents. Under such conditions, it is therefore reasonable for university S to make more efforts to attract these talents to collaborate in the development of the university by means of communicating with "peer teaching teams in other universities", cooperating with "renowned universities and enterprises", etc. On the other hand, City X is a medium-sized city, where there are not as many talents as in City S. It is thus critical for President X to utilize talents from local companies and facilitate cooperation with various industrial sectors. Both university situations imply that, in the field of application-oriented higher education, presidents may adopt appropriate leadership styles to build a professional learning community with external talents' participation, communicate with experts from renowned universities, and cooperate with the industrial talents, in short to make full use of talent resources available under their specific sets of circumstances.

- Conclusion

Developing application-oriented higher education has been a critical step in China's reform of the education system. While turning to successful experiences from developing application-oriented and hands-on talents in other countries for references can be helpful, university presidents need to keep focusing on their specific situations in China and adapt their leadership styles accordingly to boost reform performance. This investigation into presidents' leadership styles at two typical application-oriented universities in developed cities in China provided evidence that both participating and selling styles might be adopted and that leadership behaviors should be in line with both the internal and external factors. This includes, among others, the transformation of followers' beliefs, attitudes, and values, synergetic management, educational internalization, the integration of industrial resources, and the utilization of talent resources. By and large, the efforts made by the two presidents are recent experiments likely to be emulated. It will therefore be helpful to have more research in the open system of

application-oriented higher education in China, and perhaps elsewhere in the world, based on situation changes.

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Consumer Wellbeing in Thailand during Covid-19

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Abstract

This research study aims to assess consumer wellbeing level in Thailand in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. A mixed methodology was used. 24 individuals were interviewed as part of a discovery oriented variable research. Four of the variables found in this discovery phase, namely, psychological activity, including social media usage, physical activity, expenditure and consumption of durable goods, and food consumption, were then incorporated into the study as part of the quantitative approach. An online survey of people currently living in Thailand was conducted between April and May 2021. Of the total surveys received, 490 were valid and considered for further analysis. The findings indicate that in spite of some negative effects from the lockdown, the respondents in this study remained resilient. While consumer behavior changed and adapted, consumer wellbeing remained stable throughout the pandemic.

Keywords: Wellbeing, Thailand, Consumers, COVID-19, Social Media Usage

1. Introduction

Lately, the question of whether COVID-19 has impacted markets, consumption, and people's wellbeing has been the focus of the general media and scholarly publications, much of it in relation to the medical field (Ahmed et al., 2020; Unadkat & Farquhar, 2020; Teoh & Kinman, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020) but some of it in other fields as well (Baker et al., 2020; Brodeur et al., 2020; Cohen, 2020). In Thailand, many studies have focused on COVID-19 and the financial market. For example, Khanthavit (2020) showed how the COVID-19 crisis initially significantly negatively affected the national stock market. Measures such as border closures, curfews, and public space restrictions have also been discussed in news outlets and identified as one of the major factors helping Thailand manage this crisis and bring the pandemic under control within its borders (Setboonsarng, 2020) even though it was one the first Asian countries outside of China to detect COVID-19 cases (Okada, 2020). Regarding wellbeing, one area of concerns has been medical workers (Bhattarai & Karki, 2020; Nair et al., 2020); understandably so, given the pressure under which people in the healthcare industry have found themselves since the pandemic broke out.

Defining wellbeing can be a challenging task (Dodge et al., 2012). To begin with, as Ryff and Keyes (1995) have argued, wellbeing research lack a theory-based approach. Historically, wellbeing was studied from two approaches. One is the hedonic tradition, whose focus is on happiness and satisfaction with life; the other is the eudaimonic tradition, which focuses on psychological functions and human development (Dodge et al., 2012). Multi-dimensional approaches have also been developed since (e.g. Diener, 2009). This study adopts Dodge et al.'s (2012) definition of wellbeing, which the authors believe captures its essence. They define wellbeing as a "[...] balance point between an individual's resources and the challenges faced" (p. 230). In the context of this study, the resources and challenges faced by an individual are psychological, social, and physical.

Yiengprugsawan et al. (2010) determined that the national Personal Wellbeing Index levels for Thai nationals were comparable to those of Westerners and Tibetans, reaching a relatively high level. In 2018, the general mean of the Thai Wellbeing score was 70 (in a 0-100 range). Another research conducted by Kusuma Na Ayuthaya (2019) found that adoption of the self-sufficiency economy model has a positive impact on economic livelihood. All sufficiency economy prediction factors had a positive linear relationship and predicted the economic livelihood well (= 0.5791).

Focusing on the wellbeing construct in Thailand, this study aims to expand the scope of recent research on wellbeing during Covid-19 and zeroes in on consumer's wellbeing to verify whether COVID-19 has had any impact on general wellbeing levels in the country. More specifically, it addresses the following research question: What is the consumer wellbeing level in Thailand in the midst of the current COVID-19 crisis? As the wording of this question shows, the main concern is consumption levels. This research study is expected to add to the the relevant body of literature and update knowledge on wellbeing levels in the midst of the pandemic.

2. Literature Review

This section discusses various approaches to the concept of wellbeing in light of a number of studies conducted in Asia – in Thailand in particular – and how it is connected to consumption.

- *Wellbeing*

As noted above, it is difficult to treat wellbeing as a separate concept. It is often explored in conjunction with economics, psychology, and food consumption (Masferrer-Dodas et al., 2012). Economists traditionally focus on wellbeing as an outcome of consumption levels, income, and unemployment. This approach contrasts with Buddhism and the view that happiness is not measured by an increase in one's ambition, acquisition of material goods, or economic status, but the improvement of one's mind to achieve higher level of enlightenment (Chaiwong, 2013). As to psychologists, they traditionally investigate wellbeing in the context of negative affect phenomenon, such as depression and anxiety. Psychologists and physical educators have also explored wellbeing in relation to physical activity (Edwards et al., 2005; Hyde, Maher, & Elavsky, 2013). One important aspect of everyday life that has been explored under the psychological approach is social media (Best, Manktelow, and Taylor, 2014). Moreover, nutritionists focus on food consumption and individuals' nutritional habits as markers of wellbeing (Masferrer-Dodas et al., 2012). As the food consumption approach is gaining currency, one growing consumer concern being actively researched is the quality of food. For example, Apaolaz et al. (2018) have linked organic food consumption to consumer's health beliefs and found a partial mediation between health concerns and organic food effects on wellbeing. These unidimensional approaches are especially helpful to select and analyze the specific impact of human activities and experiences on wellbeing.

- *A Multidimensional Approach to Wellbeing*

Another view of wellbeing and consumption research is the multidimensional approach as opposed to the unidimensional approach considered above (Masferrer-Dodas et al., 2012). This approach encompasses a multitude of domains that humans attempt to satisfy, ranging from "subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity and freedom" (Masferrer-Dodas et al., 2012, p. 214). Bhanot, Han, and Jang (2018), for example, discussed workfare in poor communities in Kenya, and although the study focuses on the economic aspects of wellbeing, the constructs used to measure the outcome and the wellbeing of people include feelings (being upset, excited, proud, etc.). In short, the study expands economic aspects by imbricating them with psychological states. A number of studies linking consumption and wellbeing focus their investigations on sustainability, expenditures, and the

consumption of durable goods (Schneider, Kallis, & Martinez-Alier, 2010; Masferrer-Dodas et al., 2012; Zorondo-Rodríguez et al., 2016), food consumption and consumer wellbeing (Rozin, 2005; Bublitz et al., 2013; Apaolaza et al., 2018), and psychological and physical states (Edwards et al., 2005; Hyde et al., 2013). In light of all the above, the following theoretical framework has been developed using four variables (Psychological, Physical Activity, Expenditures and Consumption of Durable Goods, and Food Consumption) and measuring their impact.
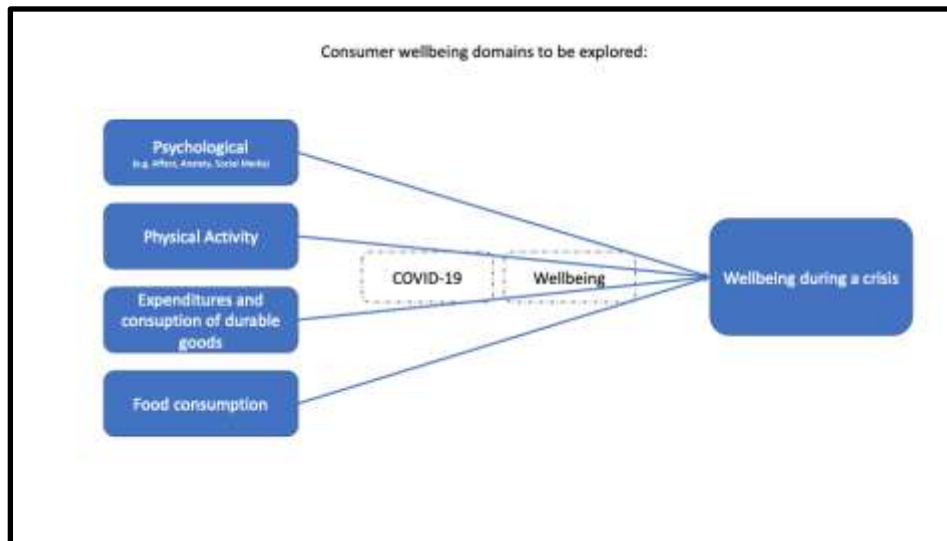
Figure 1: The Four Variables and their Impact on Wellbeing as Mediated
by the COVID-19 Crisis (Created by the Authors for this study)

- *Thailand, Wellbeing, and COVID-19*

Exploring the impact of these four variables on wellbeing needs to be understood in the context of the current global pandemic. The first suspected cases of COVID-19 in Thailand were detected on January 8 and 13, 2020 (Okada et al., 2020). Thailand had already implemented screening procedures for all incoming passengers on January 3 and imposed further travel restrictions on January 23 (Okada et al., 2020). Once people's daily routine started to change as a result of the lockdown imposed by the Government, many started to feel stressed and depressed due to their inability to conduct normal activities. Many also lost their jobs as the sudden loss of income forced a number of companies to lay off their employees (Bangkok Business News, 2020). Moreover, many businesses had to close temporarily. The 4th General Stress Level Evaluation was conducted by the Department of Mental Health during the period April 4-May 3, 2020 among the health and medical personnel as well as among the general public.

According to Dr. Kiatiphoom Wongjit, Director of the Department of Mental Health, the results showed a clear sign of reduction in stress level compared to earlier studies (Department of Mental Health, 2020). The results were confirmed by the Department in August 2020. While COVID-19 has been linked to higher levels of psychological distress, it has also been linked to the development of a sense of belonging to a community (Department of Mental Health, 2020). Acting as a mitigating factor, the latter is at the root of people's general feeling of *resilience* with which COVID-19 and the national lockdowns have been associated (Sibley et al., 2020). Since many Southeast Asian developing economies, including Thailand's, were exposed to higher risks, especially for people living in poor communities, slums, and informal settlements (Corburn et al., 2020), Thailand was suitable for this study. This is all the more the

case given the devastating impact that COVID-19 has had on global tourism and on the tourism-dependent Thai economy in particular (Tateno & Bolesta, 2020; Rittichainuwat et al., 2020). The potential impact of the pandemic on the stock market can also be expected to influence wellbeing levels (Khanthavit, 2020).

3. Methodology

This study used a mixed methodology. A preliminary qualitative data collection took place between March and April 2021, when 24 individuals were interviewed in a discovery oriented variable research. Questions were open-ended and developed to discuss how consumers were feeling, how they perceived their wellbeing levels, and how these levels were affected by the pandemic and lockdown situations. Each interview lasted for about 20 minutes. Some of the variables found in this discovery phase, namely, physical activity, food consumption, and social media usage, were then incorporated into the study as part of the quantitative approach. An online survey using Google forms was subsequently conducted between April and May 2021. The population for this survey was people currently living in Thailand. Only people currently residing in Thailand, regardless of their nationalities, were taken into account. The sample consisted of 512 respondents selected by using a convenience sample method. Of the total surveys received, 490 were valid and considered for further analysis. The survey questionnaire consisted of three sections.

- The first section was used as the screening section to check for the current country of residence, age, and other demographic characteristics.
- The second section, the core component of the survey, focused on the full psychological wellbeing scale used in the MIDUS II study developed by Ryff et al. (2010). It consisted of 42 items that were translated by one of the authors and then triangulated with the help of a researcher not involved in this study. A back translation was then conducted for a consistency check (see Appendix 2 for final the 42 items resulting from this process).
- The third and final section focused on the other wellbeing domains, i.e., on the variables discovered during the qualitative phase: Psychological, Physical Activities, Durable Goods Consumption, and Food Consumption.

A 4-point Likert scale was used for all the questions. While we recognize that this choice makes our results non-comparable to the previous MIDUS II studies, we also chose to convert the MIDUS II to a 4-point scale for cohesiveness. The interpretation for mean scores from the 4 points scale are as follows: 0.01-1.50 = Very Low/Strongly Disagreed; 1.51-2.51 = Low/Disagreed; 2.51-3.50 = High/Agreed; and 3.51-4.00 = Very High/Strongly Agreed

The survey questionnaire was shared via social media and Line messaging app and data directly collected on an Excel spreadsheet, and later converted to SPSS format for analysis. SmartPLS was also used to conduct a multiple regression analysis that focused on wellbeing levels and the 42 items from the wellbeing scale. As noted above, a total of 490 valid (complete, full) responses were considered for further analysis. Only people currently residing in Thailand (regardless of their nationalities) were taken into account. The data collection was organized along Ryff et al.'s (2010) validated scales. Descriptive and frequency analysis were used to measure current wellbeing levels and the interplay of other mediating factors, such as for example physical activity and food consumption. Correlation was also conducted with all variables within each domain to broaden and deepen the possible ways the variables interacted with each other during the COVID-19 crisis.

4. Findings

Before reporting the results for each of the four domains considered in this study and their impact on wellbeing, general wellbeing levels are discussed first. The regression analysis for

wellbeing data showed acceptable ranges for internal consistency (see Appendix 1). It can be safely assumed that the wellbeing levels are reflecting the current situation. Table 1 shows the results.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for General Wellbeing Levels

	N	Male	Female		
Gender	490	264 (53.88%)	226 (46.12%)		
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev
Age	490	16.0	59.0	22.479	4.6923
Overall Wellbeing Score	490	1	4	3.02	.618

Note: Overall wellbeing mean score interpretation; 0.01-1.50 = Very Low, 1.51-2.51 = Low, 2.51-3.50 = High, and 3.51-4.00 = Very High

The gender distribution was 53.9% female and 46.1% male, which points to a relatively balanced gender participation. The average age was 22.5 years old, which indicates a relatively young sample. The general wellbeing score averaged 3.02 out of 4 (or 75.5 out of 100), which is a relatively high wellbeing score in our sample and one that is in-line with previous wellbeing research conducted in Thailand (e.g. Yiengprugsawan et al., 2010). We could not find significant correlations between these three variables.

- How Social Media Consumption Influences Wellbeing
Social Media usage was measured in hours per day and coded as follows: 1 (less than 1 hour); 2 (between 1 and 3 hours); 3 (3 to 6 hours) and 4 (more than 6 hours). Almost 40 percent of the sample reported using social media between 1 and 3 hours daily. Table 2 summarizes the results. The average value of 2.17 points to an average use of above 3 hours per day.

Table 2: Results for Social Media Usage

Frequency of Social Media Usage	Count	Valid percentage
Less than 1 hour	136	27.76%
Between 1 and 3 hours	188	38.37%
Between 3 and 6 hours	111	22.65%
More than 6 hours	55	11.22%
Social Media and Wellbeing		
	Avg. (1-4)	**St. Dev.**
Wellbeing affected by social media	2.53	0.798

Table 3 shows the correlations between the demographic data and social media usage (only significant correlations are shown). As can be seen, there is a significant and positive correlation between Social Media Usage and Gender and an equally significant but negative correlation between Age and Social Media Impact on Wellbeing. Therefore, we can assume that within our sample, women tended to use more social media than men, and that younger respondents reported a higher impact of social media on their wellbeing levels. This is in line

with Vannucci, Flannery, and Ohannessian's (2017) study in which it was found that social media usage is associated with higher anxiety levels.

Table 3: Correlations between Social Media Usage and Demographics

	Social Media Usage	**Overall Wellbeing**	**Age**	**Gender**	**Social Media Impact on Wellbeing**
Social media usage	1			.25 8**	
Overall wellbeing		1			
Age			1		-.255**
Gender				1	
Social media impact on wellbeing					1

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

- *How Physical Activity Influences Wellbeing*
The focus in this second domain is on physical activity and on how consumers felt it interacted with their wellbeing. Respondents were asked to evaluate whether the COVID-19 lockdown had impacted their physical activity levels. Table 4 summarizes the descriptive statistics. For the three measured physical activities, values were coded daily as follows: 0 (none); 1 (less than 1 hour); 2 (less than 2 hours); 3 (less than 3 hours); and 4 (3 hours or more). Our data shows that, on average, the respondents agree that the lockdown has impacted their physical activity, negatively.

Table 4: Results for Physical Activity

Physical exercise *(such as swimming, jogging, aerobics, sports, or the gym)*	Frequency	Percent
None	279	56.94%
Less than 1 hour	77	15.71%
Less than 2 hours	76	15.51%
Less then 3 hours	53	10.82%
3 hours or more	5	1.02%
Walking	Frequency	Percent
None	226	46.12%
Less than 1 hour	95	19.39%
Less than 2 hours	92	18.78%
Less then 3 hours	29	5.92%
3 hours or more	48	9.80%
Housework (cleaning, childcare, etc.)	Frequency	Percent
None	207	42.24%
Less than 1 hour	120	24.49%
Less than 2 hours	62	12.65%
Less then 3 hours	58	11.84%
3 hours or more	43	8.78%

As Table 5 shows, the average weight for the sample was 61.8kg, which is above the 58.79 Kg Thai average as computed by Walpole et al. (2012). For the three measured physical activities, values were coded daily as follows: 0 (none); 1 (less than 1 hour); 2 (less than 2

hours); 3 (less than 3 hours); and 4 (3 hours or more). Physical Exercise had an average of below 1 hour daily. Walking had an average of more than 1 hour daily; and Housework (including cleaning and childcare) had an average of more than 1 hour daily. Respondents were also asked to evaluate whether the COVID-19 lockdown had impacted their physical activity levels. The data collected indicates that, on average, they agreed that the lockdown had impacted their physical activity, negatively.

Table 5: Results for Three Types of Physical Activities

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.
Current weight (Kg)	41	90	61.8559	10.0452
Physical exercise (swimming, jogging, aerobics, sports, or the gym)	0	4	0.802	1.0679
Walking	0	4	1.139	1.3344
Housework (cleaning, childcare, etc)	0	4	1.198	1.3418
During the lockdown, my physical activity has decreased significantly	0	4	2.723	0.8139

Table 6 shows the correlation between activity variables (only significant results are presented). The two highest significant correlations were found between the Walking and Housework activities (.688) and how people felt the lockdown had reduced their activity and motivation (.534). Another observation is that people who felt their activity was decreasing because of the lockdown inversely rated their routine adaptations – which suggests that a decrease in activity also means a decrease in terms of adaptation. Also, as expected, people who had a high level of physical activity were not demotivated by the lockdown (correlation of -.281).

Table 6: Physical Activity Correlations

	Weight	Physical Exercise	Walking	Housework	Lockdown decreased activity	Lockdown reduced motivation	I adapted my routine due to the lockdown
Weight	1						
Physical exercise		1	.490**	.488**	-.259**	-.281**	
Walking			1	.688**	-.222*		
Housework				1			
Lockdown decreased activity					1	.534**	-.312**
Lockdown reduced motivation						1	
I adapted my routine due to the lockdown							1

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

- How Consumption Influences Wellbeing

The final two areas of consumption considered in this study (food and durable products) were combined to facilitate discussion. As far as food consumption was concerned, the respondents were asked to determine whether they thought their eating habits were healthy. They were also asked to assess their past eating experiences in the short term (i.e., before the lockdown) and determine whether the lockdown had affected their food consumption. Food consumption results were organized in descending means. Table 7 shows the results with regard to the variables connected to food consumption.

The highest mean points to the positive influence that the lockdown had in terms of meal schedules. The lockdown also influenced respondent's decisions to start a diet. Surprisingly though, people determined the influence of the lockdown in terms of healthy eating to be negative. This is due to the fact that while encouraging people to have meals at regular hours and start dieting, the lockdown also led them to feel that it has negatively influenced the quality of their meals. It is important to point out too that the regular schedule of meals during a normal situation was below lockdown levels.

Table 7: Food Consumption and Eating (Normal and Lockdown Situation)

Normal Situation	Mean	Std. Dev.
I like cooking at home	2.938	1.2609
I have a regular meal schedule	2.846	0.9393
I care about having bad eating habits	2.2	0.9874
I like ordering food	2.154	0.8702
I think healthy eating habits are important	1.985	0.9762
Lockdown Situation	**Mean**	**Std. Dev.**
I have a regular meal schedule	3.046	1.165
Fast food per week	2.369	1.112
I have started a diet	2.308	1.0742
I care about having bad eating habits	2.2	0.9874
I think healthy eating habits are important	1.985	0.9762
I can keep a regular healthy eating habit	1.723	0.7397

Note: Mean score interpretation; 0.01-1.50 = Strongly Disagreed, 1.51-2.51 = Disagreed, 2.51-3.50 = Agreed, and 3.51-4.00 = Strongly Agreed

Table 8 shows the findings with regard to the consumption of durable goods during the lockdown. All items were measured with a 4-point scale and are organized in descending order for means. Activities that demand social contact or enclosed spaces, such as for example, work out and hanging out with friends, had, perhaps unsurprisingly, the lowest means in our sample. During the lockdown, gyms were closed, and many interviewees had no option but to keep a regime of exercises at home. Hanging out with friends was also discouraged, and depending on the social context, could lead to problems with law enforcement authorities. Most of the consumption therefore centered around home-based entertainment such as listening to music and watching television. Other products frequently cited by interviewees were mental health applications and online services (such as meditation apps, mindfulness services, and meditation videos), which achieved a high mean during the quantitative phase.

Table 8: Product Consumption Results during Lockdown

	Mean	**Std. Dev.**
Listening to music	3.732	0.5438
Watch Television (Youtube and Netflix)	3.707	0.5073
Surfing the internet	3.683	0.5167
Mental health products (online, apps)	3.146	0.8158
Singing songs	2.732	0.9914
Shopping Online	2.659	0.8173
Reading Books	2.634	0.9595
Work out	2.488	0.8895
Hanging out with friends	2.244	0.6565

- *Changes in Everyday Life: No Impact on Wellbeing*

The authors agree with Sibley et al. (2020) in their choice of the term *resilience* to explain how people adapted to the quarantines, lockdowns, and the pandemic itself. Although the respondents in this research study were forced to change their behaviors significantly during the lockdown, their wellbeing levels did not dramatically change and did not markedly differ from previous findings. For example, in their study conducted in 2010, Yiengprugsawan et al. (2010) found that Thai wellbeing level was 70 points (out of 100). This score is very similar to the score in this study which was 75 points (out of 100); this in spite of the fact that changes occurred during the lockdown. Recall from above that the usage of social media literally exploded, which negatively impacted respondents. Moreover, home-based or solitary entertainment increased, physical activity was also adversely affected, and healthy eating habits were impacted negatively and somewhat neglected.

5. Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Although the results in this study point to some negative effects from the lockdown imposed in Thailand, they also indicate that the respondents in this study remained resilient even at the height of the lockdown. Table 9 summarizes the findings. They show that the measures taken by the government to curb the pandemic affected the usual physical routine of the respondents – and also how they felt it negatively affected their physical activity. Maintaining healthy food consumption turned out to be harder during the lockdown. A positive side effect though is that, as most respondents reported, the lockdown enabled them to have meals at regular intervals and prompted some of them to pay more attention to their diet. This study also showed a move towards more introspective consumption – online, home-based entertainment.

Table 9: Main Findings Summarized

Main Findings	
Psychological, e.g. Social Media usage, Anxiety, Affect	The sample in this study had a high social media daily usage (above 3 hours daily). Younger respondents reported a higher impact of social media on their wellbeing.
Physical Activity	The sample in this study had a slightly higher weight than theThai average (our sample: 61.8 Kg; Thai: 58.8 Kg). Respondents reported that lockdowns negatively affected their physical activity.

Food Consumption	While the respondents felt that the lockdown prompted them to start having a goof diet and eat regularly, they also felt that at the same time the lockdown made it more difficult for them to eat healthy meals.
Expenditures and consumption of goods	As expected, given the lockdown, consumption switched away from outdoor/social activities into home-based entertainment – or solitary activities (watching television, listening to music, and surfing the web).

Source: Compiled by the authors for this study

One key term that has emerged from this research study on consumer wellbeing in Thailand is *resilience* (Sibley et al., 2020) as reflected by the high overall wellbeing score average (3.02 out of 4). In spite of the negative effects of the lockdown, wellbeing levels remained high as people remained resilient. Psychologically, it was found that the lockdown and the COVID-19 crisis affected people living in Thailand negatively with MIDUS II Affect and Anxiety levels as variables related to the overall impact. The main finding, however, was that social media usage increased during the lockdown with 38.37 percent of the respondents using social media for 1 to 3 hours daily. Paradoxically enough and of great import here, those same respondents also concurred that social media negatively affected their wellbeing.

Regarding physical activity, the majority of the respondents (56.94% and 46.12% respectively) reported having no physical activity whatsoever, no walking or whatever other physical exercise they would usually have. This may be because gyms and exercise areas were under strict control but when correlated to their feelings, it was found that the lockdown also impacted their motivation to exercise and find alternative to the prohibited use of public facilities, hence the reduced level of physical activity. With regard to food consumption, respondents generally reported eating on a regular schedule, but healthy eating habits were negatively impacted by the lockdown. Some interviewees related this difficulty to the fact that lifestyle adaptations made it harder to adequately eat during the lockdown. While previously they had access to fresh food and could eat out, during the lockdown they were forced to rely more on ready-made or frozen meals from local minimarts. As to goods consumption, most respondents, perhaps expectedly, shifted their consumption towards solitary and in-house entertainment.

Most interviewees cited streaming services, music streaming, and online gaming as temporary substitutes for their usual entertainment and activities. Since outdoor activities and hanging out with friends were discouraged by authorities during the lockdown, they had no option but to turn to individual and enclosed entertainment. COVID-19 forced changes in everyday life, even more so for health workers (Bhattarai & Karki, 2020). Adaptations were necessary for consumers in the four domains of wellbeing. As noted above, the term resilience aptly captures the respondents' prevailing response.

- Recommendations for Future Studies
The conversion of MIDUS II to a 4-point scale would be fruitful and beneficial for future studies on wellbeing in Thailand and other countries with a similar culture. This would help to systematically observe behavior and wellbeing changes as COVID-19 continues to affect everyday life. Translated scales are offered (see Appendix 1) in order to facilitate future research that may want to use the MIDUS II scale in Thailand.

- Limitations of this Study
One limitation in this study is that wellbeing levels were measured by residents of Thailand as well as Thai people, and not solely Thai people. This may have skewed the results to a level higher than the one found by Yiengprugsawan et al. (2010). Focusing on residents of Thailand is a generalization which could impact the results as foreigners usually have a higher income

than the average Thai person. Another limitation relates to the online method of collecting answers. The online method was imposed by the mandatory isolation during the months of February and May 2021 even though it created significant limitations in data collection as those most negatively affected by COVID-19 were lower-income Thai nationals who in many cases could be reached online (Techakitteranun, 2020).

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Appendix 1: Results of Regression Analysis for Wellbeing Scale
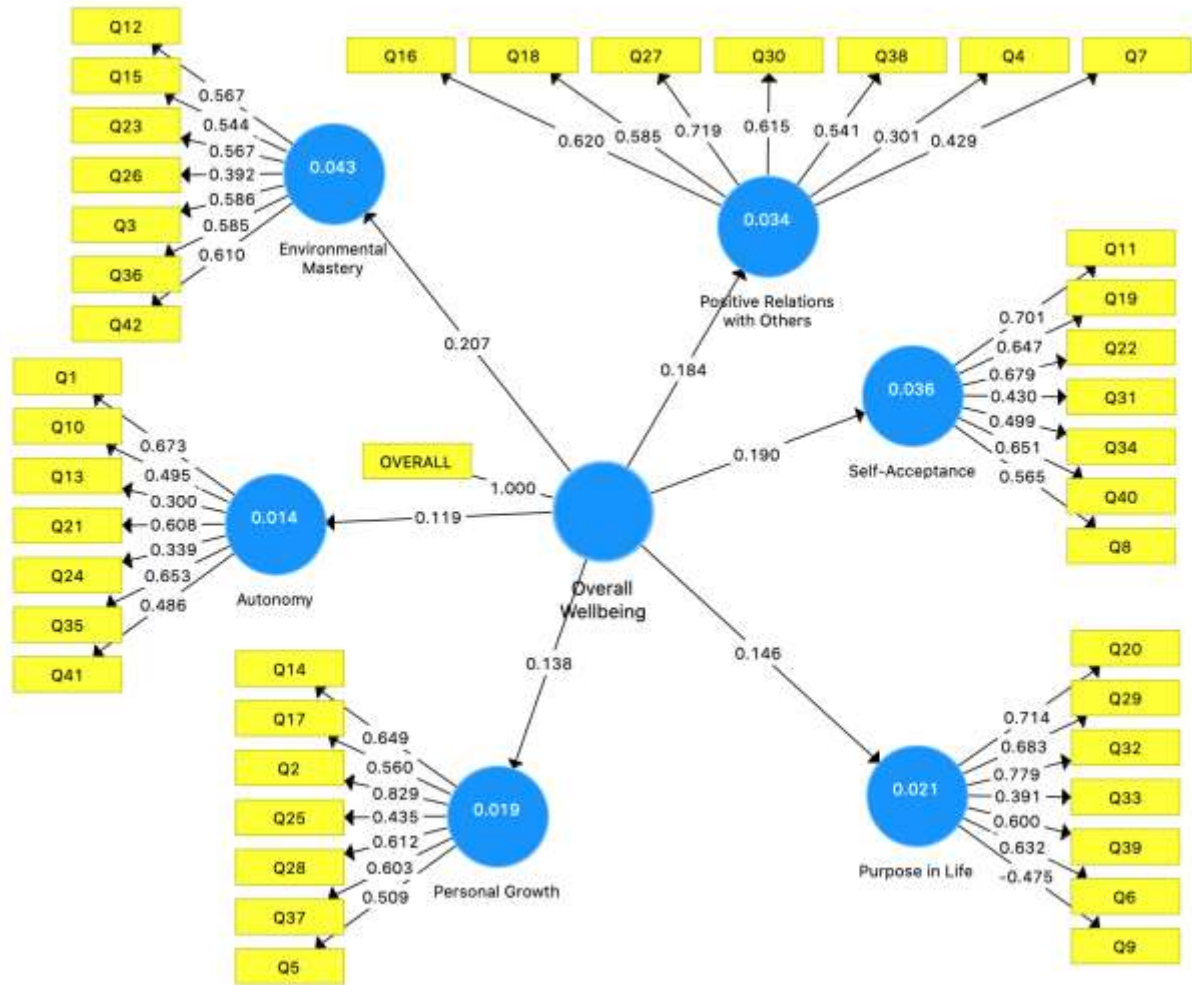
Appendix 2: English to Thai translated MIDUS II scales

1. "I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people." ฉันไม่กลัวที่จะแสดงความคิดเห็นของฉัน แม้ว่ามันจะตรงข้ามกับความคิดเห็นของคนส่วนใหญ่

2. "For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth." สำหรับฉันแล้ว ชีวิตคือการเรียนรู้ เปลี่ยนแปลงและเติบโตอย่างต่อเนื่อง

3. "In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live." โดยทั่วไปแล้ว ฉันรู้สึกว่าสามารถควบคุมสถานการณ์ต่างๆ ในชีวิตได้

4. "People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others." คนส่วนใหญ่มองว่าฉันเป็นคนที่เอื้อเฟื้อและพร้อมที่จะให้เวลากับผู้อื่น

5. "I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizons." ฉันไม่สนใจในกิจกรรมที่ช่วยพัฒนามุมมองของฉัน

6. "I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality." ฉันชอบวางแผนเพื่ออนาคต และทำให้มันเป็นจริง

7. "Most people see me as loving and affectionate." คนส่วนใหญ่มองว่าฉันเป็นคนที่รักและแคร์ผู้อื่น

8. "In many ways I feel disappointed about my achievements in life." ฉันรู้สึกผิดหวังกับชีวิตในหลายๆ ด้าน

9. "I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future." ฉันใช้ชีวิตอยู่กับปัจจุบัน ไม่ค่อยคิดถึงอนาคตมากนัก

10. "I tend to worry about what other people think of me." ฉันค่อนข้างจะคิดมากว่าคนอื่นมองฉันยังไง

11. "When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out." เมื่อฉันย้อนมองเรื่องราวของชีวิตของฉันจากอดีตถึงปัจจุบัน ฉันพอใจกับสิ่งต่างๆ ที่ทำให้ฉันเป็นในวันนี้

12. "I have difficulty arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to me." ฉันมีปัญหากับการจัดการชีวิตให้เป็นไปตามที่ต้องการ

13. "My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing." วิธีปฏิบัติตนหรือความคิดของคนอื่นไม่ค่อยมีผลกับการตัดสินใจในเรื่องต่างๆ ของฉัน

14. "I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago." ฉันล้มเลิกความคิดที่จะปรับปรุงตัวเองหรือเปลี่ยนแปลงอะไรมากๆ ในชีวิตไปนานแล้ว

15. "The demands of everyday life often get me down." บ่อยครั้ง สิ่งต่างๆ ที่ต้องพบเจอทุกวันก็ทำให้ฉันเศร้า

16. "I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others." ฉันไม่ค่อยมีความสัมพันธ์กับผู้อื่นที่ฉันรู้สึกไว้ใจและอบอุ่น

17. "I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world." ฉันคิดว่าประสบการณ์ใหม่ๆ ที่ท้าทายความคิดเกี่ยวกับตัวตนของเราและโลกโดยรวมเป็นสิ่งสำคัญ

18. "Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me." การรักษาความสัมพันธ์ใกล้ชิดกับผู้อื่นเป็นเรื่องที่ยากและทำให้อารมณ์เสียสำหรับฉันมาโดยตลอด

19. "My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves." ฉันมีทัศนคติต่อตนเองไม่ดีเท่าที่คนอื่นมีต่อตัวพวกเขาเอง

20. "I have a sense of direction and purpose in life." ฉันมีทิศทางและจุดมุ่งหมายที่แน่วแน่ในชีวิต

21. "I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important." ฉันตัดสินคุณค่าของตัวเองบนบรรทัดฐานของฉันเอง ไม่ใช่จากค่านิยมของผู้อื่น

22. "In general, I feel confident and positive about myself." โดยทั่วไป ฉันรู้สึกมั่นใจและรู้สึกดีกับตัวเอง

23. "I have been able to build a living environment and a lifestyle for myself that is much to my liking." ฉันประสบความสำเร็จในการสร้างสภาพแวดล้อมทางสังคมและไลฟ์สไตล์ที่ฉันชอบ

24. "I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions." คนรอบตัวที่ยึดมั่นในความคิดของตัวเองค่อนข้างมีผลต่อความคิดของฉัน

25. "I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things." ฉันไม่ค่อยชอบไปอยู่ในสถานการณ์ใหม่ๆ ที่ฉันจะต้องปรับเปลี่ยนการทำตัวไปจากที่คุ้นชิน

26. "I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me." ฉันเข้ากับคนรอบตัวในสังคมของฉันไม่ค่อยได้

27. "I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me." ฉันมั่นใจว่าฉันเชื่อใจเพื่อนของฉันได้และพวกเขาก็เชื่อใจฉันเช่นกัน

28. "When I think about it, I haven't really improved much as a person over the years." พอมาคิดดีๆ แล้ว ตลอดหลายปีที่ผ่านมาฉันไม่ค่อยได้พัฒนาตัวเองขึ้นเท่าไหร่

29. "Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them." คนบางคนใช้ชีวิตอย่างไร้ทิศทาง แต่ฉันไม่ใช่หนึ่งในคนเหล่านั้น

30. "I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns." ฉันรู้สึกโดดเดี่ยวอยู่บ่อยๆ เพราะมีเพื่อนสนิทที่แชร์ความรู้สึกได้อยู่ไม่กี่คน

31. "When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am." ฉันรู้สึกดีกับตัวตนของฉันเมื่อฉันเอาตัวเองไปเทียบกับเพื่อนฝูงและคนรอบตัว

32. "I don't have a good sense of what it is I'm trying to accomplish in life." ฉันไม่ค่อยแน่ใจว่าต้องการจะบรรลุเป้าหมายอะไรในชีวิต

33. "I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life." บางครั้งฉันก็รู้สึกว่าได้ทำทุกอย่างที่พึงกระทำในชีวิตไปหมดแล้ว

34. "I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have." ฉันรู้สึกว่าคนรอบตัวฉันใช้ชีวิตได้มีความหมายมากกว่าฉัน

35. "I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus." ฉันมั่นใจในความคิดของฉันแม้ว่ามันจะสวนทางกับคนส่วนใหญ่

36. "I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life." ฉันบริหารจัดการสิ่งที่ต้องรับผิดชอบในชีวิตประจำวันต่างๆ ได้ค่อนข้างดี

37. "I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time." ฉันรู้สึกว่าตลอดเวลาที่ผ่านมาฉันพัฒนาตนเองได้มาก

38. "I enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family members and friends." ฉันชอบการพูดคุยที่ใกล้ชิดและสร้างความสัมพันธ์กับครอบครัวและเพื่อนฝูง

39. "My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me." ฉันรู้สึกว่าสิ่งต่างๆ ที่ฉันทำในแต่ละวันเป็นเรื่องเล็กน้อยที่น่าเบื่อและไม่สำคัญอะไร

40. "I like most parts of my personality." ฉันค่อนข้างชอบบุคลิกภาพของฉัน

41. "It's difficult for me to voice my own opinions on controversial matters." การแสดงความคิดเห็นในเรื่องที่ล่อแหลมหรือเป็นประเด็นขัดแย้งรุนแรง เป็นเรื่องยากสำหรับฉัน

42. "I often feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities." ฉันรู้สึกว่าสิ่งต่างๆ ที่ต้องรับผิดชอบในแต่ละวันช่างล้นหลามเหลือเกิน

Answer Scales: Strongly disagree, disagree, agree, Strongly agree ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง, ไม่เห็นด้วย, เห็นด้วย, เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง

Impact of Vlogging on Beginner Learners' English as an International Language (EIL) Competency during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract
With the turbulence in the learning environment brought by COVID-19, multitudes of teaching modalities and pedagogies have been heavily studied and some of them tested. This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of vlogging on students' English as an International Language (EIL) competency in the context of Covid-19-induced online courses at an international university in Bangkok, Thailand. This quasi-experimental research method utilized two course assessments, the final presentation and final listening and speaking exam, to determine students' EIL competency. The sampling consists of Beginner English level learners enrolled in a language program and divided into a controlled group and an experimental group, with the latter using vlogging as a learning tool. The data collected were analyzed through a T-test and one-way ANOVA. The results showed a significant difference in the experimental and controlled groups' EIL competency, suggesting that vlogging can have a significant positive effect on students' performance. These findings may contribute to adapting more contemporary teaching tools in the 21st-century pedagogy.

Keywords: Vlogging, English as an International Language (EIL) Competency, Beginner English Level Learners

1. Introduction
According to Mendelson (1994), the listening, and speaking skills of a learner of English as a Second-Language (ESL) almost amount to 50% of the four language skills required to communicate (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). This implies that these two skills lie at the heart of English language teaching, which aims in part to enable students to communicate or interact fluently in English. Yet, as the authors, two ESL teachers at an international University, can vouch, many ESL students remain unsuccessful in their attempts to do so. This begs the question of why. In their research conducted in Taiwan, Shen and Chiu (2019) found that non-native English learners' speaking difficulties stem from nervousness, fear of making mistakes, a lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, and a lack of contextual comprehension on how to use English expressions learned in class. As to listening skills, research conducted in Indonesia by Sari and Fithriyana (2019) revealed that many foreign language students have low confidence, weak concentration, and generally have a difficult time comprehending the spoken words they hear during class. This often results in negative remarks from teachers or fellow learners in the classroom that cause low motivation and affect student willingness to learn a new language.

In addition, non-native English learners exhibit a high level of anxiety that further alters their learning environment. Asysyifa, Handayani, and Rizkiani (2019) identified five reasons that make students feel anxious speaking English, namely, a lack of preparation, the fear of being left behind in understanding the material, the fear of committing mistakes, the embarrassment of being laughed at by their friends, and a lack of confidence in their pronunciation. Another significant factor hindering ESL students' listening and speaking English proficiency is the insufficient time, most notably for Beginner English level learners, to practice English in various contexts outside the classroom. This continues to be a real challenge to most ESL teachers since a large majority of students are likely to revert to speaking in their native tongues once an ESL class has ended. Also compounding these difficulties is the learning environment, i.e., the class size and the various nationalities of students. All these factors undeniably have negative repercussions on the oral communication performance of non-native English learners and decrease their self-confidence and motivation to participate in language learning. Given all these difficulties in the classroom, whether online or face-to-face, contemporary English language teaching and learning methods clearly need to be explored and novel digital language educational tools adopted.

Having said that, it is important to note that the majority of contemporary English language teachers are now actively incorporating technological tools and virtual activities designed to maximize the students' positive learning experience in their teaching (Alqahtani, 2019). In short, today, technology is taking center stage. This is especially the case today in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. As Dhawan (2020) aptly observed, given the digital orientation of students nowadays, many educators support online learning platforms, which are associated with an educational technology medium best known to them. According to a recent study conducted in Spain by Hervas, Medina, and Sandin (2020), the use of video recordings in teaching and learning for college students often result in the development of students' self-reflection and in positive perceptions of distance learning education. One such dynamic teaching tool that has been reported to boost students' speaking time, confidence level, and knowledge of grammar, and help them overcome their shyness, at least in part, is "vlogging," which in a nutshell may be described as an online video journal (Mufidah & Roifah, 2020). As a teaching tool, vlogging can help foreign language educators and educators in general incorporate varied social media applications or online platforms in their online teaching methods and strategies to strengthen students' engagement and motivation to learn. In short, a strong link might be drawn between vlogging and the improvement of the communication skills of English learners, which is precisely what this study seeks to determine.

Specifically, applying a quasi-experimental research method that involves one controlled and one experimental group, this study aims to assess the impact of vlogging on the English International Language (EIL) competency of ESL beginner students in terms of listening and speaking skills. As a practice used by the authors in their respective classes at Stamford International University, located in Bangkok, Thailand, vlogging is a teaching method that supports the university's core values of making students life-long learners. Under the university English program, this study's proposed vlogging model can be utilized and customized for different courses and serve as an innovative teaching tool, as well as a teaching assessment instrument in the future. The experimental group used vlogging whereas the controlled group used the conventional teaching method and the course assessments scores of both groups compared. This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of traditional teaching on the EIL competency of the controlled group in terms of listening and speaking skills as measured by their scores on the final presentation and the final exam?

2. Is there a significant difference in the controlled group's EIL competency based on a comparison of their scores on the final presentation and the final exam?
3. What is the impact of vlogging on the experimental group's EIL competency as measured by their scores on the final presentation and the final exam?
4. Is there a significant difference in the experimental group's EIL competency based on a comparison of their scores on the final presentation and the final exam?
5. Is there a significant difference in the EIL competency of the controlled and experimental groups based on their scores on the final presentation and the final exam?

This study is significant in a number of ways. It is the authors' hope that its results will contribute in several ways to the ongoing search for effective curricular delivery in addressing teaching and learning challenges, not only during but also post COVID-19 as the online modality is likely to continue even after this unprecedented health crisis comes under control. The findings could also be beneficial in the quest to keep learning meaningful, student-centered, and hones 21st century graduates' autonomy, creativity, critical thinking skills, and other job-related skills. Lastly, they may contribute to having a well-informed and better performing workforce.

2. Review of Related Literature
- *Vlogging*
The term "VLOG" is a portmanteau of two words, "video" and "blog" (blog stands for web and log). Baker (2019) defined vlog as video records about a person's thoughts, opinions, and interests published on varied online video platforms. In short, Vlogging is an online video journal where individuals record, edit and upload a video about their lives. According to Sanchez (2019), the first vlog recorded was Adam Kontras' 15 seconds video of himself sneaking a cat into his apartment building. He was documenting his journey in Los Angeles for his friends as he tried his luck in Hollywood show business. But what made vlogging uniquely interesting when it started was the first-person storytelling, which attracted viewers from all walks of life (Joseph, 2019). Thanks to the rise of YouTube in the mid-2000s, vlogging became popular. But it was not until the smartphone opened the door by putting a camera within the reach of most people that vlogging became truly accessible. Vlogging, made it simple for anybody to record a video and upload that video directly to YouTube or other free online video platforms. In the context of education, Mufidah and Roifah (2020) argued that vlog activities can maximize students' fluency as well as their public speaking skills. They can also lessen students' stress or pressure when speaking in English. Moreover, Taqwa and Sandi (2019) found that doing vlogs enable students to gain confidence and improve their vocabulary range when speaking in English. As discussed next, vlogging also creates opportunities for students to practice and enhance their English listening and speaking outside school premises through the regular maintenance of their own vlogs.

- *Vlogs as Educational Tools*
Nowadays, the majority of students get most of their information through online videos (YouTube) and online audios (podcasts), which are their primary sources of knowledge whether these are vlogs, educational videos, or news articles. As advocated by Robertson (2019), an exciting way of engaging a learner in mastering a new language outside the classroom is through vlogging as it involves more senses, making language learning in the classroom alive through images and musical effects. According to Benkada and Moccozet (2017), utilizing interactive media tools, such as vlogs, can increase students' motivations for language learning. It also makes linguistic lessons more interesting and fun especially for non-native English learners as vlogs or video blogging make content dynamic and relatable. Dressman and Sadler's (2019) handbook of informal language learning further highlights the

multimodal quality of vlogging activities. They enable learners to practice their listening and speaking skills while developing an autonomous learning style since YouTube enables peer learning in an accessible and flexible environment. Despite its popularity, it is reported that vlogging is still not widely used in the educational setting. There is thus great potential to harness it to provide a real-world learning experience via visual communication. Using vlogs as a language teaching tool can, among other benefits, help to develop the learner's ESL speaking skills since they are students' first skills when vlogging. Several notable vlogs have emerged on YouTube and students worldwide can be directed to them for extensive listening practice. Creating vlogs as a video-portfolio-based output can help to support the Beginner English level learners' oral communication skills. Of even greater use is students' regular maintenance of their own vlogs as it entails having them speak before a web-camera for an unlimited period, watch and evaluate their recorded statements before deciding to post them, and then watch and listen to the vlog replies of their classmates or teachers (Kahler et al., 2017). This way, vlogs can increase learners' self-confidence in a gradual and definitive manner.

- Vlogging Underlying Learning Theories

It is important to develop some understanding of the basic principles of vlogging underlying learning theories, which highlight the teaching and learning process. Two learning theories serve as a beacon of light to the 21st teaching practice; the mobile learning theory and the zone of proximal development theory. They motivate educators to design a dynamic and meaningful learning environment, during the Covid-19 pandemic in particular.

- The Mobile Learning Theory

Dudeney and Hockly (2007) described mobile learning as a means to integrate course content with real-life situations outside the classroom space. In this study, digital media tools are of great importance as an alternative teaching and learning tool for many language teachers, including the authors of this research study. Using digital media encourages students to actually speak longer using the desired target language even outside the classroom and using their own mobile gadgets as a medium. Despite the fact that technology such as mobile phones has been transforming educational pedagogy, Dudeney and Hockly (2007) argued that based on their observations, it is probable that there is no real significant difference in terms of academic performance of learners utilizing their smartphones. In other words, the application of technology in language teaching does not automatically increase the academic performance of students. As a follow-up on Dudeney and Hockly's (2007) argument, this research study refutes their assumptions and would like to argue that vlogging can be a teaching tool that can help Beginner level ESL learners to improve their listening and speaking skills and therefore improve their academic performance in English.

- The Zone of Proximal Development Theory

Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) pertains to the learning process of children through social and environmental influences. As explained by Esteban-Guitart (2018), children who are in the zone of proximal development can almost perform any task independently, but are not quite there yet. In short, children as learners need some help, in order to perform the tasks assigned successfully. This shows that getting instructions from someone is of immense importance in skill development. When a task is modelled clearly, learners can organize the new information in their existing memories. In turn, they use this information as a guide on how to perform the activity properly and eventually doing it independently. This is most likely the same with the vlogging process. Language learners need assistance drafting, practicing and processing speaking material. This is especially true for Beginner English learners who are unfamiliar with the steps involved in creating a vlog.

Moreover, instructions have to be clearly modelled and repeated for students to follow step-by-step the vlogging procedure. Vygotsky's (1978) theory also highlights student's active role in the language learning process. Learning becomes a reciprocal experience for students and teachers. One example of a dynamic teaching tool that provides meaningful lessons is educational media teaching aids. Educational media tools include television shows, radio shows, internet websites and vlogs (Glencoe, 2006). As an educational media tool used during the online learning modality, vlog is composed of moving pictures, sounds, visual effects, and texts which stimulate students' interest during the learning process as they speak in front of the camera. Hence, it has commonly been assumed that vlogging is an ideal teaching aid for any language learner.

- *English as an International Language (EIL) Competency*

Looking at Thailand's English language teaching, both British English and General American English are taught in Thai schools as is the case in most other ASEAN countries. While these two English varieties are taught to most Thai English learners by native British and Americans, it is worth noting that there is an increasing number of Filipinos, Thais, and other non-native English-speaking teachers (NNEST) teaching English in Thailand as compared to native English-speaking teachers (NEST) (Ayuthaya, 2018). In light of this development, McKay's (2018) defines EIL competency as using English as a default language by non-native speakers to communicate with other non-native English speakers who do not share a common mother tongue. Taking into consideration the fact that English as a lingua franca is being used by many non-native English users surpassing that of native speakers, learners are not expected to follow native English norms as long as their communicative goals are achieved (Vodopija- Krstanovic & Marinac, 2019). In line with the use of vlogs to improve EIL competency of non-native English learners, a previous study from Kartikasari (2018) shows that vlogs by Indonesian Intermediate English level students in groups can facilitate autonomous learning and enhance the learners' EIL competency mainly their speaking skills. Moreover, research conducted at Sunandha Rajabhat University in Thailand by Wongsuthorn et al. (2019) reports that there is a growing use of innovative media tools such as vlogging in English language teaching as an international language for graduate studies.

- *Beginner English Level Learners*

According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2018), as ESL learners, students in Foundation or FND level course present the following characteristics:

a. Can deliver very short, rehearsed announcements of predictable learnt content, which are intelligible to listeners who are prepared to concentrate.
b. Can give a short, rehearsed presentation on a topic pertinent to his/her everyday life, briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions, plans and actions.
c. Can cope with a limited number of straightforward follow-up questions.
d. Can give a short, rehearsed, basic presentation on a familiar subject.
e. Can answer straightforward follow-up questions if he/she can ask for repetition and if some help with the formulation of his/her reply is possible.
f. Can read a short, rehearsed statement, for example, introducing a speaker or proposing a toast.

Out of all the body of related literature reviewed, not a single article focuses on the promising value of vlogs as a teaching tool for enhancing the listening and speaking skills of online Beginner English level students of diverse nationalities. While some instructors are already applying vlogging to high school and college students with Intermediate English proficiency levels in a face-to-face learning modality, no one has used it yet with Beginner English level learners, who are struggling to communicate in basic English. The authors have

been interested in applying vlogs to Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Thai Beginner English level students, who have a minimal understanding of the English language and are enrolled at an international university in Thailand and have had to switch to an online modality as a result of COVID-19. Studying the possible effects of vlogging on the EIL competency of Beginner English level learners is significant and timely because vlogging allows students to share ideas and demonstrate knowledge without a conventional text. This supports Mauilidah's (2018) assertion that vlogging helps students participate in meaningful dialogues within and beyond the classroom. Not many students are good English speakers. Allowing students to use a vlog for a project can develop their ability to showcase what they know about the target language.

3. Methodology

This study used a quasi-experimental research design wherein two groups were being compared and analyzed, as illustrated in Figure 1. One was a *controlled* group, while the other was an *experimental* group. As a teaching tool, vlogging was applied to the experimental group while the conventional teaching method was implemented in the controlled group. Furthermore, the data collected from the online course assessments – the Final Presentation and the Final listening and Speaking Exam – were used to identify any significant differences in English language competency (listening and speaking skills) between the two groups.
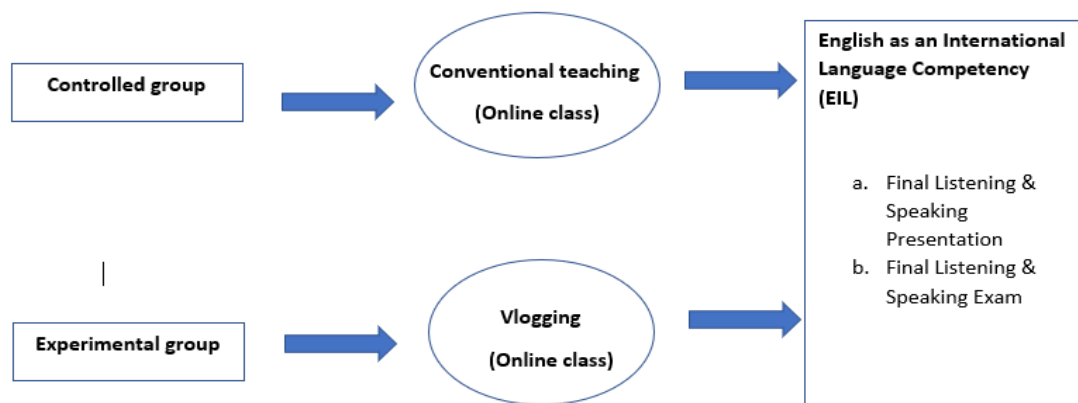
Figure 1: Two-Group Experiment

- Population and Sampling Procedure
The purposive sampling in this study used the enumeration method. The sample population consisted of students enrolled at Stamford International University English Language Program. Specifically, both the controlled and experimental groups were composed of Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Thai nationals, both females and males, aged 17 to 24. The selected classes were two Foundation 200 (FND 200) sections, which the researchers taught for one semester at Stamford International University, Bangkok, Thailand.

Table 1: Respondents in the Study

Groups	Classes	Number of Students	Total Number of Respondents
Control group	FND 200 Sec A	20	40
Experimental group	FND 200 Sec B	20	

- *Research Instruments*

The two research instruments used in this study include a final presentation and a final listening and speaking exam. Table 2 shows the weighing system used.

Table 2: EIL Course Assessment

Assessment	Data Collection	Weighting
Final Presentation	Week 11	20%
Final Listening and Speaking Exam	Week 12	30%

(i) Final Presentation: There were five evaluation criteria used in this assessment. The maximum score for each criterion was five points. Students could lose up to five points if they used a language other than English during the presentation. Each team could receive up to three extra points for asking grammatically correct questions after the presentations. Students were graded individually based on the length of the presentation, use of the past tense, vocabulary utilized, pronunciation, and task completion.

Each team member had to talk individually about his/her chosen topic using the simple past tense and comparative adjectives. Each group had to listen to all groups and were encouraged to ask questions to the presenters for additional points, provided that they used the correct grammatical form.

(ii) Final Listening and Speaking Exam: As indicated in Table 3, the exam consisted of two speaking parts. Table 4 shows the speaking assessment rubrics.

Table 3: Final Listening and Speaking Exam

Exam Parts	Time	Score
Listening	20 minutes	/20
Speaking Part 1	-----	/15
Speaking Part 2	-----	/15
Total		**/50**

For the listening part, the audio tool, listening test paper, and speaking prompts were adapted from Cambridge Learning Management System, A2 Listening Competency Test. For the Speaking part, the rubrics were derived from IELTS Speaking Assessment Criteria (https://www.ielts.org/-/media/pdfs/speaking-band-descriptors.ashx?la=en).

Table 4: IELTS Speaking Assessment Rubrics

	Fluency & Coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range & accuracy	Pronunciation
4	*Cannot respond without noticeable pauses and speaks slowly with frequent repetitions and self-corrections	*Is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meanings on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice •Rarely attempts paraphrase	•Produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare •Errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding	•Uses a limited range of pronunciation features •Mispronunciation is frequent and causes some difficulty for the listener
3	*Speaks with long pauses, has limited ability to link simple sentences and gives only simple responses	*Uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information •Has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics	*Attempts basic sentence forms but makes numerous errors except for memorized expressions	*Shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 4
2	•Pauses lengthily before most words	*Only produces isolated words or memorized utterances	*Cannot produce basic sentence forms	*Speech is often unintelligible
1	•No rateable language	•No rateable language	•No rateable language	•no rateable language

- Data Gathering
Table 5 shows when the data were to be collected from both the controlled and experimental groups.

Table 5: Data Collection Procedures for Beginner English learners

Group	Vlogging	Final Presentation	Final Listening & Speaking Exam
Control	No Vlogs	Week 11	Week 12
Experimental	Weeks 2-5 & weeks 7-10 only	Week 11	Week 12

- *Data Analysis Techniques and Statistical Tools*
The data collected from the academic scores describing the EIL competency of Foundation 200 students or Beginner English level students was compared and analyzed using statistical tools such as one-way ANOVA and T-Test as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Statistical Tools

SOP	Statistical Tool
RQ1	Frequency & Mean scores
RQ2	Frequency & Mean scores
RQ3	T-test
RQ4	T-test
RQ5	One-Way ANOVA

4. Results and Discussion

This section addresses each of the research questions articulated in the introduction to this study and discuss the findings in light of the relevant previous studies.
4

RQ 1: *EIL Competency of the Controlled Group as Measured by their Scores on the Final Assessments*

The overall mean scores of the controlled group based on their two course assessments were 82.55 for their Final Presentation and 85.60 for their Final Exam. These scores negate previous assumptions that the EIL competency of non-native English language learners can be determined based on their gender or their nationality. They disprove the claim made by Shakouri and Saligheh (2012) that in terms of verbal abilities, females are usually better at articulating vocabulary and mastering grammar than males. Neither the men nor the women in the controlled group were better at speaking and listening. In addition, the mean scores support the finding that a person's country of origin is not outcome determinative when it comes to achieving a higher level of English language competency. Similarly, the mean scores from each course assessments are inconsistent with Amirian and Komesh's (2018) study, which concluded that the nationalities of Persian, Turk, and Arab EFL learners affected their level of academic performance in English. According to them, Persians are highly motivated and display excellent communication abilities compared to the less motivated Arabs and Turks. A learner's English language competency will instead be impacted by his/her level of motivation using English as a means of communication (Modiano, 1999). Language proficiency is not only not gender-based, it is also not based on nationality. In this study, neither Chinese nor Thai nor Vietnamese students in the controlled group received a lower or higher grades because of their nationalities.

RQ2. *Differences in the EIL Competency of the Controlled Group Based on a Comparison of their Scores on the Final Presentation and the Final Exam*

An independent samples t-test was conducted to investigate the EIL competency of students in the controlled group by comparing their final listening and speaking presentation scores and final listening and speaking exam scores (see Table 7). The t-statistic of -.60 indicates that the mean of the listening and speaking presentation scores is less than the mean of the listening and speaking exam scores. There is no significant difference in the final listening and speaking presentation scores and final listening and speaking exam scores of students in the controlled group (t (38) = -.60, p = .554).

Table 7: T-Test (Controlled Group)

EIL competency of Controlled Group	t	Sig.	Remarks	Decision
Two Course Assessments	-.60	.554	**Not Significantly Different**	**Accept Null Hypothesis**

That the controlled group's performance on the two assessments on Week 11 and Week 12, respectively, yielded a "not significantly different" result suggests that the teaching style and learning environment implemented may have molded their generic language competency results. It is also noteworthy to remember that according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or CEFR (2018), the respondents in this study are at the Foundation level and as such characterized as Beginner English level learners who can deliver very short, rehearsed announcements or repetitive sentences understandable to the listeners. Moreover, these Foundation level students can only give short rehearsed presentations on topics about their everyday life. These linguistic limitations, together with internet connectivity problems, could have affected their academic performance online. Accepting the null hypothesis in the controlled group may be due to the following: limited collaborative learning among students online, absence of actual field work for students to interact and practice their communication skills in English, and low motivation level to actually use and expound their communication skills outside of their two-to-four-hour online classes. A research study conducted by Tudy and Villas (2017) in the Philippines concluded that there is a moderately positive relationship between students' attitudes toward English language learning and students' low or high academic grades in English courses. All these factors may apply to one degree or another to the controlled group in this study as knowledge and exposure to the language are still fairly limited, thus, making sense of its "not significantly different."

RQ3: *Impact of Vlogging on the Experimental Group's Competency as Measured by their Scores on the Final Assessments*

The experimental group's overall mean scores from both the Final presentation and the Final Exam are higher than the total mean scores from the controlled group who did not utilize vlogging in learning English. This suggests that students who creates vlogs are likely to have a higher academic performance than those using a conventional teaching method. This result also further supports the notion that EIL competency is irrelevant if there is no communicative practice involved. The high mean scores of the experimental group indicate that the role of vlogging as a communication technology instrument can be significant in terms of fostering a positive learning attitude in Beginner English learners. They make it patently clear that learners must use vlogging for communication purposes to interact with their communities, friends, families and school mates.

This is consistent with Hung's (2011) study of the relevance of vlogging as a motivation booster. The study concluded that it can be a major factor in helping to develop Beginner learners' ESL speaking skills since they are the first skills used by the students when vlogging. Another factor that might have contributed to the higher EIL competency scores of the experimental group is the students' positive attitude in learning through the use of vlogs. This positive perception is echoed in previous studies from Somdee and Suppasetseree (2012) and Deerajviset and Harbon (2014) in which multimedia materials in learning English such as vlogs is discussed. They all show that vlogging can have a positive effect on a student's engagement, self-confidence, motivation and creativity. In addition, the vlog activities conducted by students from the experimental group provided them with a valuable additional learning platform to actually practice English beyond their classroom sessions. This is in keeping with Aquino's (2018) study that found a link between vlogging and students' English performance at a Catholic school in Tarlac, Philippines, and with Aldukhayel's (2019) research that shows the vital role of vlogs on improving the listening skills of foreign language learners.

RQ4. *Differences in the EIL competency of the Experimental Group Based on a Comparison of their Scores on the Final Presentation and the Final Exam*

An independent sample t-test was conducted to investigate the EIL competency of students in the experimental group by comparing their final listening and speaking presentation scores and final listening and speaking exam scores. The t-statistic of 1.03 indicates that the mean of the listening and speaking presentation scores is higher than the mean of the listening and speaking exam scores. As Table 11 shows, the results further suggest that there is no significant difference in the final listening and speaking presentation scores and final listening and speaking exam scores of students in the experimental group (t (38) = 1.03, p = .311).

Table 8: T-Test (Experimental Group)

EIL competency of Experimental Group	t (38)	Sig.	Remarks	Decision
Two Course Assessments	1.03	.311	**Not Significantly Different**	**Accept Null Hypothesis**

The vlog activities conducted by students from the experimental group provided them an additional learning platform to practice English beyond the classroom online sessions. This is consistent with Sime and Themelis' (2018) research study that determined that video apps and vlogs are vital in enhancing non-native English learners' speaking skills. This is also supported by La Caze's (2019) conclusion that vlogs improve students' engagement and motivate them to produce outstanding speaking outputs. Of great import here, the finding that the two online assessments in the experimental group are "not significantly different" negates Nurviyani and Rahayu's (2018) conclusion that vlogs can only successfully work with intermediate or upper-level university students. Further contradicting their conclusion, there were positive changes in terms of the experimental learners' fluency, lexicon range, and grammatical comprehension skills as shown by the IELTS rubrics used in grading students' online final presentations and final exams. Moreover, Tanjung's (2020) experiment supports the conclusion that vlogging is not explicitly instrumental in making students' English exam scores higher (in this case, during their face-to-face English classes) but that instead it is students' attitudes that directly affects their academic performance.

This conclusion ties up with Dudeney and Hockly's (2007) mobile learning theory according to which the sheer use of vlogging through technological tools does not necessarily translate into a direct increase of the scores of students. Instead, vlogging appears to be instrumental in integrating real-life situation to contextualize the language learned by beginner English level learners and make it more meaningful and relevant to their experiences. While this also implies that vlogs to a certain extent are capable of aiding foreign language learners from the experimental group reinforce their communication skills in English, it does not guarantee that a student will automatically get higher grades from one course assessment to the other. In line with this, it is probable that due to the regular weekly vlog exercises done before weeks 11 and 12, during which the two assessments were conducted, most of the Beginner English learners in the experimental team showed gradual improvements in how they responded without long pauses and could connect basic sentences to express their ideas thoroughly. During the online final exams and final online presentations in class, some exhibited confidence using appropriate words or expressions when talking about their favorite topic. Others were able to produce correct basic short sentences with minimal grammatical errors. In other words, vlogging gradually improved the experimental group's listening and speaking skills. This was reflected in their performance on the online final presentation and the final exam, which were "not significantly different."

RQ5: *Differences in EIL Competency of the Experimental and the Controlled groups Based on the Two Final Course Assessments*

One-way ANOVA was used as a data analysis tool to determine whether vlogging had a significant effect on the experimental team's course assessments. As shown in Tables 12 and 13, the scores were lower for the controlled team who did not do any vlogs as an alternative means to develop their pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and fluency in English outside the online class sessions. Vlogging somehow helped students in the experimental group to obtain higher scores than those in the controlled team in their online pandemic-induced classes. These findings support previous studies on vlogs as an educational tool, which determined that vlogging provides opportunities for non-native English learners to extend their communicative practice time beyond the classroom. For one thing, they are consistent with previous research asserting that vlogs are instrumental in developing self-awareness and autonomous learning and fosters positive motivation in honing the learners' English listening and speaking skills (Aquino, 2018; Torres, 2018). Moreover, they are in keeping with Poramathikul et al. (2020) who explored vlogging efficiency as a learning platform utilized by both bilingual and multicultural learners at a Thai university and found an improvement in students' English fluency in oral communication. Similarly, Zahro's (2020) findings show that the use of vlogs is instrumental in decreasing the students' hesitancy in speaking using English. They also show that integrating vlogs into speaking classes can lead to a positive learning environment for students with mixed English proficiency levels (good, average, and below-average).

All these findings echo the theory of Zone of Proximal Development (Esteban-Guitart, 2018) according to which, as we saw earlier, proper scaffolding and modelling from the teacher is vital in cultivating students' sense of ownership of their work and self-monitoring skills, something which vlogging can achieve as part of their online language learning. In addition, the significant difference recorded in Tables 12 and 13 between the experimental and controlled groups show congruency with Junio and Bandala's (2019) study on the use of video blogging and with their conclusion that it is a critical tool for improving the ESL oral communication proficiency of high school students in the Philippines in terms of their pronunciation, fluency, syntax, lexical range and general use of English. Finally, as Safitri and Khoiriyah (2017) have argued, creating vlogs improves college senior students' engagement and motivates them to produce very good quality speaking outputs. Needless to say, all the much-improved performances reported in these studies sharply contrast with those of the controlled group students who could not count on vlogs as an alternative means to develop their pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency and grammar in English outside the online class sessions.

Table 12: EIL Competency Based on Final Exam

			Remarks	Decision
EIL competency of Controlled & Experimental Groups	F (1, 38)	Sig.	**Significantly different**	**Reject Null hypothesis**
Final Exam	28.70	.000		

Table 13: EIL Competency Based on Final Presentation

	5		Remarks	Decision
EIL competency of Controlled & Experimental Groups	F (1, 38)	Sig.	**Significantly different**	**Reject Null Hypothesis**
Final Presentation	9.87	.003		

In sum, while previous studies on the impact of vlogging focus on students at higher English levels as their target population, this study focuses on Beginner English level online students, whose linguistic abilities were by definition much more limited at the start of the semester. In spite of these limitations, the experimental group still had a stronger performance on the online Final Exam and Final Presentation as compared to the controlled group.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings in this study strongly suggest that vlogging works effectively in honing ESL beginner learners' listening and speaking skills in Covid-19-induced online classes. There was no significant difference in the EIL competency of the experimental group based on the two course assessments (the final listening and speaking presentation and the final listening and speaking exam). There was, however, a significant difference in the EIL competency of the controlled group and the experimental group as measured by their presentations and final exam assessments. Their scores were higher than those of the controlled group. In sum, vlogging is an innovative way to solve the challenging task of motivating non-native English learners to practice communicating in English. In line with these findings, a proposed vlogging teaching model will be recommended by the authors to be implemented by Stamford's English Language Program in the upcoming semesters to accommodate students with varying English proficiency levels and further adapt contemporary pedagogy to 21st century teaching and learning.

In addition, it is recommended that future studies include a greater range of English learning students. They may, for example, include high school students or graduate students or even professionals using English for practical purposes. They will help to explore how vlogs can impact language learning at different English proficiency levels and different contexts. Moreover, future research should investigate both students and teachers' attitudes towards the use of vlogs in learning, teaching, and in terms of assessment. This would help to determine the effectiveness of creating vlogs in language distance learning. Future studies should also incorporate the four English macro-skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) in determining the effectiveness of vlogging with regard to the English language competency of Beginner English level students.

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The Effects of Communication Attitude on Cross-National Communication Barriers with Encoding, Decoding, and Transmitting as Mediating Variables.

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Abstract
In this study, hypotheses on the effect of communication attitude on cross-national communication barriers based on the Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver (SMCR) model developed by Berlo (1960), are proposed and tested. Three indirect effects are compared in light of three mediating variables. In total, 516 employees of companies located in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) in Thailand, an area where many foreign companies operate, participated in a questionnaire survey that was used as the data source. The results from the structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis show that communication attitude positively affected cross-national communication barriers. However, no direct relationship was observed between communication attitude and cross-national communication barriers. Communication attitude affects cross-national communication barriers through encoding and decoding. Encoding plays a positive and the most important role in mediating the indirect effects between communication attitude and cross-national communication barriers, whereas decoding plays a negative and limited role. Additionally, communication attitude does not affect cross-national communication barriers through transmitting. Communicators must appropriately adjust their attitude to improve the quality of cross-national communication and specifically pay attention to encoding and decoding.

1. Introduction

Cross-national communication is a type of human activity that takes place in a unique situation in that messages are exchanged between a producer and a receiver who belong to different countries and different cultures (Samovar et al., 2015). With the increase of globalisation in the last decades, cross-national communication is occurring in a growing number of activities that have become global, such as for example, international business, science, cross-national education, and international media (Martin & Nakayama, 2013). Effective cross-national communication, however, is often hindered by communication barriers (Barna, 1994), which remain a challenge as they break helpful links in international communication (Zhu, 2011), cause misunderstandings or language issues (Robinson & Giles, 1990), and create all sorts of problems from a procedural, semantic, physical, and psychosocial standpoints (Eisenberg, Goodall Jr, & Trethewey, 2013).

Simply put, cross-national communication barriers (CCBs) are by far the main impediment to communication among people from different cultures as they can drastically reduce effective communication. Most studies on cross-national communication focus on the barriers affecting communication (e.g. Bella & Mody, 2002; Barna, 1994). Researchers have identified a number of factors operating as barriers to cross-national communication. One such factor is the limitations due to the rules or norms of one's own culture (Jandt, 2017). Barna (1994) identified six barriers to cross-national communication: anxiety, assuming similarity instead of difference, ethnocentrism, stereotype and prejudice, nonverbal misinterpretation, and language. Filtering, emotions, information overload, defensiveness, language differences, and specific national cultural traits have also been identified by researchers as barriers (Robbins & Coulter, 2012; Yang (2005). As the ne of the most significant factors affecting cross-national communication is therefore the communicator's attitude (Lee & Choe, 2021). Cargile and Bradac (2001) found that attitude, especially the language attitude of the speaker (for example, using English as the communication language) affects the efficiency of interpersonal and intercultural communication and can lead to CCBs. According to Berlo's (1960) SMCR model, the communicator's attitude affects the processes of encoding, decoding, and transmitting. As determined by Hulbert (1994), all CCBs arise as part of this 3-step communication process.

This study focuses on communicator's attitude in relation to encoding, decoding, transmitting, and the communication barriers that arise from it. Previous studies on communication barriers mostly used a qualitative methodology to determine the factors affecting cross-national communication. For instance, Yang (2005) used a qualitative method to show that attitude and nonverbal communication are the main factors contributing to communication barriers. However, while a qualitative a method allows researchers to explore causative factors, it cannot be used to confirm relationships among factors, especially indirect effects. Thus, using a quantitative method called structural equation modelling (SEM), this study analyses these factors in a cross-national communication context; the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), an industrial area earmarked by the Thai government for the development of digital industries that has been attracting foreign firms (Wangkiat, 2018). Reflecting the growing business cooperation between Thailand and China, a large number of Chinese companies are relocating their factories to the EEC and are employing numerous Chinese citizens. This makes the EEC the perfect place for collecting data for this cross-national communication research since many of the people working there have experience in cross-national communication.

2. Literature Review
- Cross-National Communication Barriers (CCBs)
Cross-national communication barriers (CCBs) may be defined as the various factors that disturb or decrease the quality of cross-national communication (Robbins & Coulter, 2012). For instance, as reported by Buckman (2005), Chinese, unlike Americans, dislike video mails. Failure to use this mode of communication will therefore decrease the communication quality between Americans and Chinese. Due to increasing globalisation, cultural factors are playing a key role in cross-national communication (Jenifer & Raman, 2015). CCBs comes in a number of forms (Shin, 2013). The five most common barriers as identified by Robbins and Coulter (2012) include filtering, information overload, defensiveness, inefficiency, and misunderstanding. Filtering refers to the deliberate manipulation of information to make it appear more favourable to the receiver (Robbins & Coulter, 2012). For example, information is filtered when a person focuses only on the information that the manager wants to hear. The level of filtering is therefore determined by the amount of ignored information and the time of filtering.

If the amount of ignored information is high, the level of filtering is also high. More vertical levels in communication will increase the likelihood and degree of filtering (Robbins & Coulter, 2012). Another problem in cross-national communication is information overload as with the development of digital communication, the number of messages has increased exponentially. Because of the heavy bombardment of messages, one selectively chooses communication information (Robbins & Coulter, 2012). Email editing takes a considerable amount of time. It is estimated that each American devotes on average 107 minutes per day to e-mail editing (Shellenbarger, 2007). In addition to e-mails, phone calls, faxes, and video messages carry numerous messages. When recipients receive too many messages, they tend to ignore, pass over, forget, or selectively choose information (Robbins & Coulter, 2012). Defensiveness occurs to escape punishments or attacks when an individual perceives a threat (Gibb, 1960a). When people feel they are threatened, they usually attack by making sarcastic remarks, being overly judgemental, or questioning the other person's motives (Berlo, 1960). One takes outward action to avoid an attack or punishment in communication (Gibb, 1961). An increase in defensiveness is positively correlated to inefficiency in communication (Gibb, 1960b).

- *Communication Attitude*
Attitude is a psychological construct and a mental and emotional entity that is inherent in or characterizes a person (Perloff, 1993). Attitude not only determines the types of friends one has but also influences relationships between friends when communicating (Arasaratnam, Banerjee, & Dembek, 2010). In cross-national communication, predicting the attitude of cross-national communicators is especially useful (Presbitero & Attar, 2018). Because of diversity, cross-cultural communication may cause many conflicts (Kokarevich & Sizova, 2015). The types of attitudes found in cross-national communication include, among others, adequate explanations about one's own thoughts, communication willingness, and speakers' and listeners' openness, respect, or anger toward foreigners (Morinaga, Ohtsubo, Yamauchi, & Shimada, 2008). Directness, respect, empathy, and openness to communicate with foreigners are also considered essential elements of an attitude that can improve communication achievements (Austin & Anderson, 2010; Collier, 2015; Lane, Hays, Core, & Auerbach, 2013). Other essential elements include positive intention in cross-cultural communication (Ihtiyar & Ahmad, 2014; Ruben, 2015), and willingness to communicate with foreigners (Chiper, 2013; Raju, 2012). A positive attitude such as being tolerant, respectful, and polite is quite helpful in making communication successful (Hopson, Hart, & Bell, 2012). Confidence also plays a vital role in cross-national communication (Henderson et al., 2016).

Table 1 below summarizes the six key elements of communication attitude that affect the strength of cross-communication and the level of barriers to communication. They include: motivation (Collier, 2015), tolerance (Soter, 2016), respect and politeness (Hopson et al., 2012; Morinaga et al., 2008), openness or willingness (Lieberman & Gamst, 2015; Zakaria, 2017), peacefulness and friendliness (Henderson et al., 2016), and confidence (Nikolaeva, Kozlova, & Nurkhamitov, 2017). They represent the parameters with which to measure attitude. Communication attitudes can profoundly affect CCBs. Whenever a negative attitude is exhibited, communication barriers are likely to be high (Mak, Brown, & Wadey, 2014). According to the anxiety/uncertainty management (AUM) theory, negative attitudes such as anxiety and uncertainty can cause communicators, especially if they are strangers to each other, to experience significant problems communicating (Gudykunst, 2005). Differences in cultures may further contribute to decreasing the positive attitude one may have toward a sender/receiver and thus create CCBs (Robbins & Coulter, 2012). Hypothesis H1 can therefore be developed as follows:

H1: *Communication attitude (ATT) negatively affects CCBs.*

Table 1: Operationalized Definition of Communication Attitude

Variable	Abbr.	Conceptual definition	Operational definition	Measurements	Sources
Attitude	ATT	Attitude is a psychological construct, a mental and emotional entity that inheres in or characterizes a person.	Attitude is the manners toward a person (e.g., tolerance, respect, willingness, politeness, openness, peacefulness) or personal characteristics (e.g., motivation, sensation seeking, intention, confidence).	Motivation Tolerance Respect/ politeness Openness: willingness Peacefulness/ friendliness Confidence	(Collier, 2015), (Soter, 2016), (Hopson et al., 2012; Morinaga et al., 2008), (Lieberman & Gamst, 2015; Zakaria, 2017), (Henderson et al., 2016), (Nikolaeva et al., 2017)

- The Process of Communication

Berlo (1960) identified four key components in the process of communication that are part of the so-called SMCR model: the Source, the Message, the Channel, and the Receiver. As shown in Figure 1, the source, channel, and receiver respectively correspond to the process of (i) encoding, (ii) transmitting, and (iii) decoding messages.
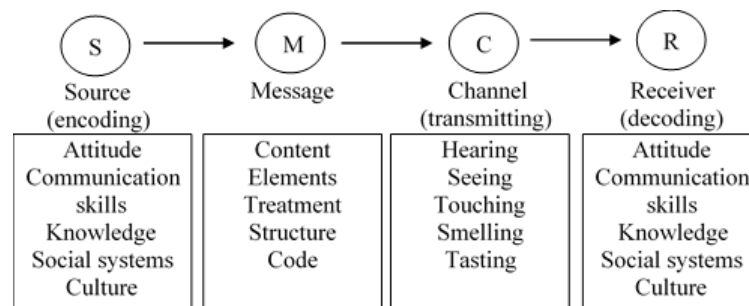
Figure 1: Berlo's (1960) SMCR Model

(i) Encoding – Encoding is the conversion of a message into symbols (Berlo, 1960). It can be verbal or nonverbal (Durham & Kellner, 2009). Verbal communication (VER) is a mediating variable that confers the capability of using symbols, lexis, articulation, and terminology to encode information (Ferguson & Terrion, 2014). Many scholars, such as for example, Kowner (2002) and Henderson, Barker, and Mak (2016) have provided questions or measurement suggestions to assess verbal encoding. In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha of verbal communication (VER) was 0.828, indicating good internal consistency using the 4 dimensions (symbol, lexis, articulation, and terminology) to measure verbal communication.

Nonverbal communication (NON) is a mediator variable that confers the capability of using voice, body language, and facial expressions to encode information (Kowner, 2002). More specifically, nonverbal communication transmits information using haptic communication, chronemic communication, gestures, body language, facial expressions, and eye contact (Giri, 2010; Kowner, 2002). Thus, it is a way of encoding messages in the form of non-linguistic representations. Durham and Kellner (2009) devised questions now widely used to measure the capability of nonverbal communication. In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha of nonverbal communication is 0.901, indicating good internal consistency using 3 dimensions (intonation, body language, and facial expressions) to measure nonverbal communication. Table 2

summarizes the assessment questions for verbal and nonverbal communication as proposed by Ferguson and Terrion (2014), Giri (2010), and Kowner (2002).

Table 1: Assessment Questions for Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

	When you communicate with foreigners, you will	Measurements
verbal	use writing or symbols	Symbol
	use agreement words to corroborate others' opinions	Lexis
	use independent words to express your own opinion	
	use humour or jokes	
	use words to praise others and show respect	
	speak rationally and warmly	Articulation
	have clear logic and grammar	
	do not use unfamiliar terminology	Terminology
Nonverbal	speak very quickly	Intonation
	speak in a loud voice	
	let your legs shake or cross them	Body language
	sit while others are standing	
	let your hands in your pocket, shake, or not move	
	have no gesture to accompany words	
	have no facial expression	Facial expression
	avoid eye contact	

Sources: Ferguson and Terrion (2014), Giri (2010), Kowner, R. (2002).

(ii) Transmitting – Transmitting (TRA) is the process of sending encoded messages to receivers via some medium. The medium along which a message travels is a transmission and storage tool or a channel for complex, wide breadth, accurate data storage and for messages under limited time, space, and cost (Robbins & Coulter, 2012). Transmitting quality is based on the right choice of medium, which is a mediator variable in this study. Clampitt (2012) identified 5 dimensions to determine the strength of the right communication tools. They include: their complexity capacity (i.e., the capacity to transmit complex messages), breadth potential (i.e., the capacity to transmit any messages), accuracy (i.e., choosing the right tool), time-space constraint (i.e., one should not have to worry about time and distance limitations), and cost (in terms of money and energy). In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha of transmitting is 0.821.

(iii) Decoding – Decoding (DEC) consists in retranslating a sender's message (Robbins & Coulter, 2012). It refers to the communication process through which human beings interpret encoded messages into understandable information. In other words, the receiver must retranslate the sender's messages in order for them to be understandable (Dodd, 1995; Mc Quail, 1987, Schram, 1954). Decoding is a mediator variable, which means the receiving and decoding capabilities are based on seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and testing. The five senses thus are the basic dimensions applied to measure the decoding capability of human beings to receive messages and general information (McQuail, 1987; Schram, 1954). One common assessment method is the eye movement test (Taylor, 1965). Another practical assessment method is self-report (Berlo, 1960). A self-report inventory is not only inexpensive and convenient, it also effectively reports the traits and tests of the examinee (Aiken, 1997). In daily life, message reception mostly depends on hearing and seeing (Robbins & Coulter, 2012). When hearing and seeing measure the capability of the receiver's decoding, the Cronbach's Alpha is 0.778. This means that hearing and seeing as measure dimensions also have good internal consistency.

3. Research Framework and Methodology

Based on the above discussion of the concepts relevant to this study, the following research framework was developed.
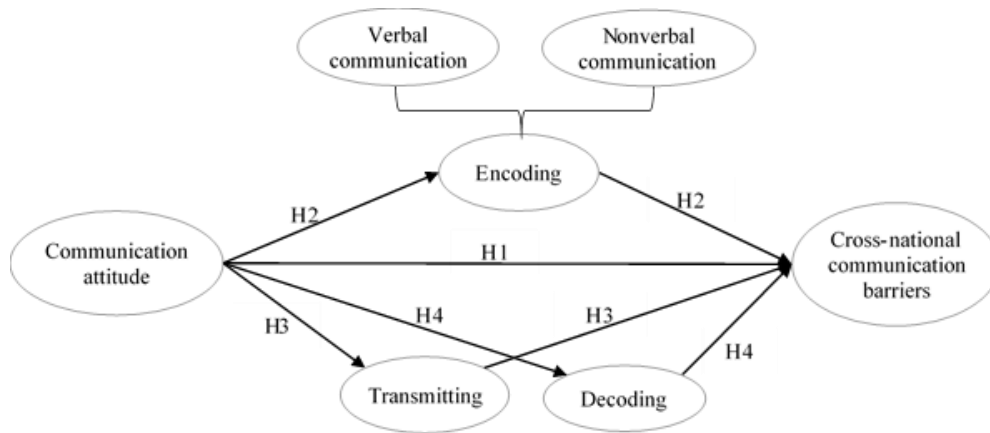
Figure 2: Research Framework (Created by the Authors for this Study)

As shown in Figure 2, communication attitude is the independent variable. It affects cross-national communication barriers (CCBs) – the dependent variable – in two ways: directly and indirectly through 3 mediation variables: encoding, decoding, and transmitting. Encoding includes two dimensions – two latent variables: verbal and nonverbal communication. Communication attitude affects interpersonal communication via the encoding, decoding, and transmitting processes (Berlo, 1960). Its impact on cross-national communication results in communication barriers in the 3 processes (encoding, decoding, and transmitting). The following 3 hypotheses can therefore be developed:

H2: *Communication Attitude (ATT) affects CCBs through the encoding (ENC) capability.*

H3: *Communication Attitude (ATT) affects CCBs through the transmitting (TRA) capability.*

H4: *Communication Attitude (ATT) affects CCBs through the decoding (DEC) capability.*

- Data Source

In this study, the respondents are Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) employees. According to the summary of the Labour Force Survey in Thailand published in January 2017 by the National Statistical Office of Thailand, the EEC has more than 100,000 employees. Based on the Yamane's (1967) determination, the sample size used in this study was 400. With 10% of invalid questionnaire, the objective was to receive at least 440 questionnaires. To this end, 550 questionnaires were distributed and 516 duly returned as shown in Table 3. The software of SPSS version 24 and AMOS version 23 were used for the statistical analysis of the data.

Table 3: Sample Size in 3 EEC Provinces

NO.	Industrial Estate	Province	Approved projects	Sample size
1	Pinthong Industrial Estate	Chonburi	133	265
2	Amata City Industrial Estate			
3	WHA Eastern Seaboard Industrial Estate 2 (WHA ESIE 2)			
4	Pin Thong Industrial Estate 5			
5	WHA Chonburi Industrial Estate 2 (WHA CIE 2)			
6	WHA Eastern Seaboard Industrial Estate 1 (WHA ESIE 1)			
7	WHA Chonburi Industrial Estate 1 (WHA CIE 1)			
8	WHA Eastern Industrial Estate (Map Ta Phut)	Rayong	93	186
9	Eastern Seaboard Industrial Estate (ESIE)			
10	WHA Eastern Seaboard Industrial Estate 4 (WHA ESIE 4)			
11	WHA Rayong Industrial Land (WHA RIL)			
12	Industrial Estate GATEWAY CITY	Chachoengsao	33	65
13	Wellgrow Industrial Estate			

Source: EEC Investment Statistics in 2017, www.eeco.or.th/en/content/investment-statistics

A total of 320 individuals from Thailand (62%) and 196 individuals from China (38%) participated in this survey. 69.96 percent of the respondents were males, 27.33 percent females and 14 respondents chose 'other' as their gender (transgender). 71.7 percent of them (370) were 23 to 39 years old, indicating that a majority of the employees surveyed were young. Middle-aged people (50–59 years) constituted the second largest part of the study cohort (20.5%). Only one respondent was >60 years old. Nine were <22 years. The highest education level of 51.6 percent of the respondents was high school. 33.3 percent of them had a bachelor's degree. Three respondents had a master's degree, and one was a doctor. 74 respondents (14.3%) specified that they did not finish high school. 296 of the respondents (57.4%) were Buddhists, the largest religious group in this study cohort. 173 individuals mentioned 'other' as their religious identity, representing more than one-third (33.5%) of the respondents. One respondent was Jewish, 11, Muslims, and 35 Christians (6.8%). All the respondents were EEC employees with experience in cross-national communication.

4. Data Analysis and Results
- *Exploratory Factor Analysis*
The cumulative extraction sum of squared loadings for the 6 components was 62.49%. As determined by Meglen (1992), a value of cumulative variability < 0.3 is unacceptable and the cumulative extraction sum of squared loadings is better if it is >60%. The eigen values of the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) achieved the threshold, where 62.49% of the total variance was attributable to 6 factors. Therefore, a model with these 6 factors was considered adequate.

Table 4 presents the 6 factors after Varimax rotation. After suppressing the small coefficients that had an absolute value of <0.45, the items loaded on each of the 6 factors were clearly identified. Eight items (NO1–NO8) were loaded on factor 1 (nonverbal communication); 8 items (V1–V8) were loaded on factor 2 (verbal communication); 6 items (T1–T6) were loaded on factor 3 (communication attitude); 5 items (M1–M5) were loaded on factor 4 (medium, transmitting); 6 items (C1–C6) were loaded on factor 5 (CCB); and 2 items (R1, R2) were loaded on factor 6 (receiver, decoding). The clustering of the items in each factor and their wording offered the best clue for the significance of that factor.

Table 4: Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
NO1	0.786					
NO5	0.770					
NO3	0.750					
NO4	0.748					
NO2	0.739					
NO8	0.719					
NO7	0.717					
NO6	0.625					
V7		0.728				
V5		0.706				
V2		0.685				
V6		0.661				
V3		0.642				
V8		0.593				
V1		0.575				
V4		0.534				
T6			0.815			
T5			0.792			
T1			0.746			
T2			0.684			
T3			0.678			
T4			0.673			
M2				0.799		
M3				0.747		
M1				0.742		
M4				0.705		
M5				0.485		
C5					0.772	
C4					0.735	
C6					0.710	
C1					0.672	
C3					0.633	
C2					0.509	
R1						0.846
R2						0.788

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.
 Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

- *Normality Test*

Westfall and Henning (2013) determined that values of Skew and Kurtosis > 3 indicate that a variable is not normally distributed. As shown in Table 5 below, the values of all the variables of Skew and Kurtosis were <3, which indicated that all the variables were normally distributed. In addition, all the variables were acceptable to the method of maximum likelihood in the path analysis.

Table 5: Assessment of Normality

Items	Min	Max	Skew	C.R.	Kurtosis	C.R.	Items	Min	Max	Skew	C.R.	Kurtosis	C.R.
T6	1	5	0.174	1.610	0.170	0.789	V8	1	5	0.347	3.213	-0.259	-1.203
T5	1	5	0.13	1.204	0.098	0.456	V7	1	5	0.225	2.086	0.035	0.163
T4	1	5	0.089	0.823	-0.466	-2.163	V6	1	5	0.132	1.221	-0.464	-2.151
T3	1	5	0.285	2.640	-0.520	-2.41	V5	1	5	0.131	1.218	-0.361	-1.674
T2	1	5	0.073	0.673	0.300	1.391	V4	1	5	0.374	3.464	-0.056	-0.259
T1	1	5	0.157	1.453	0.873	4.046	V3	1	5	0.243	2.256	-0.118	-0.547
M5	1	5	0.317	2.936	0.305	1.416	V2	1	5	0.305	2.831	0.242	1.121
M4	1	5	0.309	2.867	-0.125	-0.578	V1	1	5	0.141	1.304	0.244	1.132
M3	1	5	0.237	2.200	-0.536	-2.486	NO8	1	5	-0.325	-3.015	-0.281	-1.302
M2	1	5	0.367	3.405	-0.466	-2.159	NO7	1	5	-0.382	-3.545	-0.211	-0.978
M1	1	5	0.229	2.124	0.192	0.889	NO6	1	5	-0.376	-3.488	-0.595	-2.760
C6	1	5	0.299	2.769	0.221	1.024	NO5	1	5	-0.736	-6.829	-0.280	-1.299
C5	1	5	0.181	1.674	0.376	1.744	NO4	1	5	-0.510	-4.733	-0.551	-2.554
C4	1	5	0.329	3.050	0.180	0.836	NO3	1	5	-0.440	-4.080	-0.765	-3.548
C3	1	5	0.177	1.639	-0.072	-0.334	NO2	1	5	-0.005	-0.048	0.317	1.470
C2	1	5	0.029	0.268	0.117	0.542	NO1	1	5	-0.004	-0.039	0.338	1.566
C1	1	5	-0.234	-2.173	0.214	0.991	R2	1	5	0.530	4.916	-0.273	-1.264
Multivariate					386.178	86.185	R1	1	5	0.382	3.539	0.070	0.324

- Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Two measurement models achieved the minimum requirements to run out the outputs. However, the original measurement model (see Appendix 1, left figure) had issues with the model fit. A CMIN/DF value of >3 was unacceptable and the values of some important indicators (e.g., TLI, CFI, and RMSEA) were unsatisfactory. In accordance with the modification indices (MI), the original measurement model was changed to the modified model (see Appendix 1, right figure). In the modified model, some items and their errors (e.g., NO6, NO8, V5, V6, C2, C6, M5) were deleted. In addition, some errors such as e1 and e2, e23 and e24, e31 and e32, e33, and e34 were correlated. After all these modifications, the modified measurement model was acceptable. Some important model fit indicators achieved the threshold, such as CMIN/DF < 3, TLI and CFI > 0.9, and RMSEA > 0.06. The AIC of the modified model was smaller than the original measurement model.

The validity and reliability of the six factors could then be tested according to the output data of the measurement models. As shown in Table 6, all the values of composite reliability (CR) were greater than 0.7 and all the values of average variance extracted (AVE) were greater than 0.45. In addition, all the factors' values of maximum shared variance (MSV) were smaller than those of AVE and all the factors' value of square root of AVE were greater than the inter-construct correlations. Thus, the 6 factors were suitable in terms of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Table 6: Validity and Reliability Test

	CR	AVE	MSV	ATT	NON	VER	CCB	TRA	REC
ATT	0.888	0.57	0.461	**0.755**					
NON	0.902	0.538	0.307	-0.14	**0.733**				
VER	0.874	0.468	0.424	0.572	-0.486	**0.684**			
CCB	0.831	0.452	0.307	0.338	-0.554	0.516	**0.673**		
TRA	0.873	0.585	0.461	0.679	-0.237	0.651	0.362	**0.765**	
REC	0.753	0.617	0.147	0.357	0.149	0.279	0.023	0.384	**0.786**
	Modified measurement model								
ATT	0.879	0.549	0.491	**0.741**					
NON	0.875	0.543	0.335	-0.137	**0.737**				
VER	0.827	0.447	0.335	0.532	-0.579	**0.668**			
CCB	0.789	0.484	0.324	0.336	-0.562	0.569	**0.695**		
TRA	0.875	0.638	0.491	0.701	-0.198	0.571	0.291	**0.799**	
REC	0.748	0.609	0.159	0.365	0.172	0.188	-0.032	0.399	**0.781**

- Path Analysis

The attitude model achieved the minimum requirements to run out the outputs in AMOS. The value of chi-square was 841.624 and the degree of freedom 311. As Figure 4 shows, the attitude model had secondary modifications based on the modified measurement model. It also refers to the indicator of the Modification Index (M.I.). The errors e15 and e16 were correlated. Item T5 and its error were deleted.
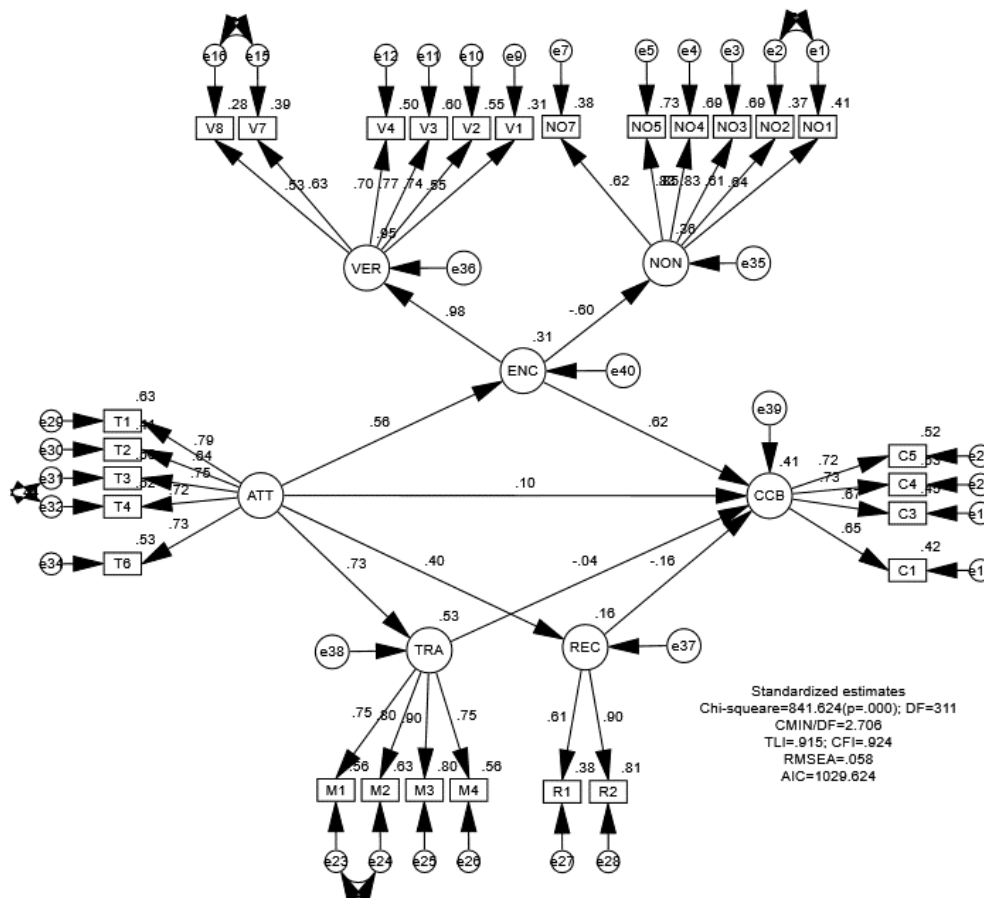
Figure 4: Path Analysis

As summarized in Table 7, the model of attitude for path analysis showed good performance in the model fit. The value of chi-square was 2.706, which is <3 and the values of TLI and CFI were greater than 0.9. The RMSEA was 0.058, which is <0.6. Overall, the model for path analysis as shown in Figure 4 had high credibility.

Table 7: Model Fit

Measure	Value	Threshold
Chi-square/df (CMIN/df)	2.706	<3 good; <5 sometimes permissible
P value for the model	0.000	>.05
TLI	0.915	>.95 great; >.90 traditional; >.80 sometimes permissible
CFI	0.924	>.95 great; >.90 traditional; >.80 sometimes permissible
AIC	1029.624	
RMSEA	0.058	<.05 good;.05-.10 moderate; >.10bad
PCLOSE	0.004	>0.5

As shown in Table 8, the direct effect of ATT on CCBs was not significant (P value = 0.296). Therefore, Hypothesis H1 was rejected. However, the effects of ATT on encoding and those of encoding on CCBs were significant (all P values < 0.05). Since they were positive, Hypothesis H2 was supported. Moreover, encoding had a positive full mediation effect on ATT and CCBs. The effect of ATT on medium was significant (P value < 0.05) but the effect of medium (MED) on CCBs was not significant (P value = 0.607). Thus, Hypothesis H3 was rejected. The effects of ATT) on recipient and that of recipient on CCBs were significant (P values < 0.05), which means that Hypothesis H4 was supported.

Table 8: Hypothesis Testing

	IDV--->MV--->DV	Hypo. sign	Estimate	Standardised Estimate	C.R.	P	Verification	Correction
H1	ATT ---> CCB	Negative (-)	0.086	0.104	1.045	0.296	Rejected	No direct
H2	ATT ---> ENC	Negative (-)	0.445	0.559	8.734	***	Supported	Full mediation
	ENC ---> CCB		0.641	0.616	5.942	***		
H3	ATT ---> TRA	Negative (-)	0. 827	0.731	13.130	***	Rejected	No mediation
	TRA ---> CCB		-0.029	-0.039	-0.514	0.607		
H4	ATT ---> REC	Negative (-)	0.392	0.395	5.345	***	Supported	Full mediation
	REC ---> CCB		-0.133	-0.160	-2.957	0.003		

Notes: *** refers to the value less than 0.001.

The results were confirmed using the Bootstrap method. As Table 9 shows, the P value of the effect of ATT on CCB was more than 0.05. No direct ATT effect on CCBs was noted. The P values of the paths from ATT) to CCBs through encoding or decoding were <0.01, indicating that these paths were significant. The other path, however, that going from ATT to CCBs through transmitting was not significant (P value = 0.595). Overall, the total effect of ATT on CCBs was significant (p value < 0.01), and the full mediation effects of the two mediation variables (encoding and decoding) were noted.

Table 9: Indirect Effect (Bootstrap$_{5000}$) Testing

Path	Estimate	Std. Estimate	P value	BC 95% Confidence Interval		Proportion
				Lower bounds (BC)	Up bounds (BC)	
Indirect						
ATT→ENC→CCB	0.285	0.344	***	0.207	0.482	96.36%
ATT→TRA→CCB	-0.024	-0.029	0.595	-0.148	0.074	-8.12%
ATT→REC→CCB	-0.052	-0.063	0.007	-0.128	-0.019	-17.65%
Direct						
ATT→CCB	0.086	0.104	0.375	-0.091	0.299	29.13%
Total						
ATT→CCB	0.295	0.357	***	0.234	0.468	100.00%

Notes: *** refers to the value less than 0.001.

5. Conclusion

Communication attitude affects CCBs. However, communication attitude has no direct effect on CCBs. It only indirectly affects CCBs through message sending and decoding. Encoding plays a positive role between communication attitude and CCBs (the standard estimate is 0.344), whereas decoding plays a negative role between communication barriers (the standard estimate is −0.063). Overall, the results suggest that communication attitude has a positive effect on CCBs (the standard estimate is 0.357). In cross-national communication, a positive communication attitude may not decrease but instead increase communication barriers. For instance, somebody may deliberately hide some information even if it distorts the original meaning. Thus, appropriately controlling communication attitude when communicating with foreigners is vital. Some communication attitudes, such as being over-motivated, over-intended, over-respected, over-tolerating, over-willing, and over-confident, are not beneficial to cross-national communication. In addition, when communicating with foreigners, people should specially pay attention to encoding and decoding as they can greatly influence the quality of cross-national communication. Obviously, many factors can increase cross-national communication barriers. Some may also alleviate them. While the model adopted in this study to examine CCBs, based on Berlo's (1960) SMCR model, has brought to light a number of them, some additional factors affecting CCBs may need to be further explored in future studies.

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Appendix 1: Measurement Models
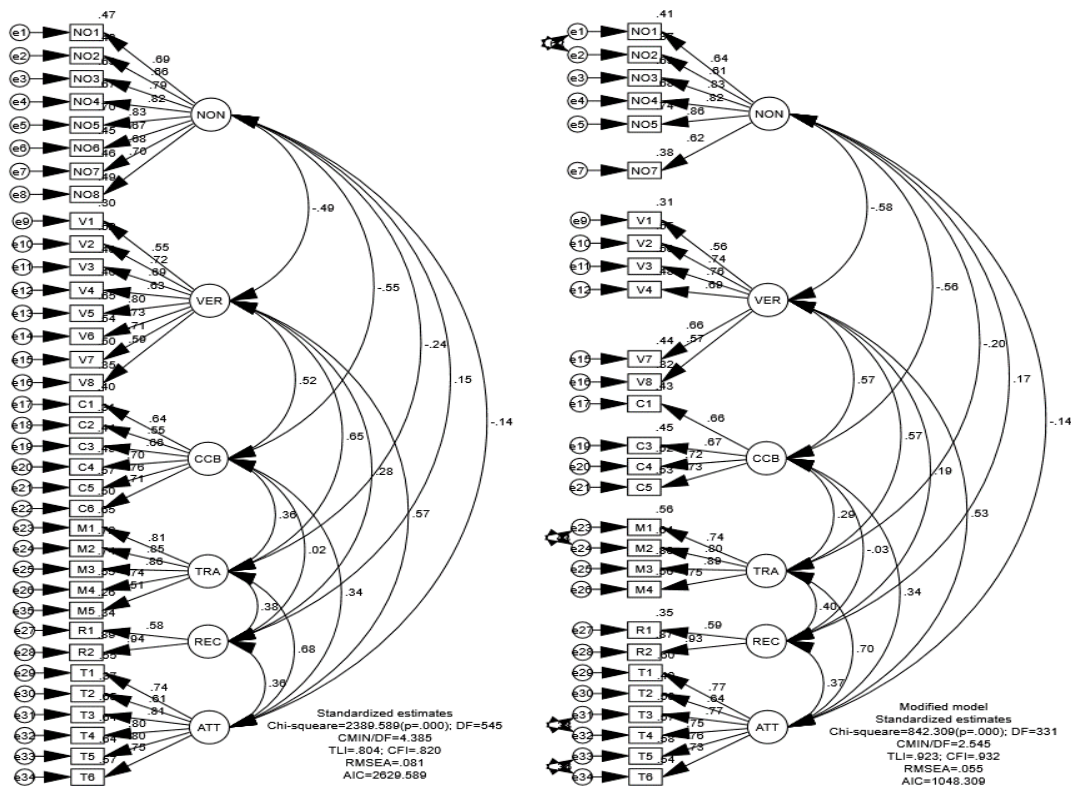
In the Thai Students' Eyes: Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers' Pedagogical and Linguistic Qualities and Students' Learning Outcomes

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Abstract

The emergence of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) in the ELT industry has paved the way for many opportunities, as well as issues and challenges that question the NNESTs' capabilities. The objective of this study was to investigate Thai students' perceptions of NNESTs pedagogical and linguistic qualities and how they relate to their learning outcomes using a correlational method to analyze the data from the sample population of 422 grades 4-12 Thai students under Educational Area 1 in Nonthaburi, Thailand. A survey questionnaire was made to mollify the data collection with 10 questions about pedagogical qualities and 10 questions about linguistic qualities. Two open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire to support the responses. Data were then analyzed using Pearson r and ANOVA as the main statistical measurements. The overall grades of the respondents in English were collected together with the survey questionnaire. The study indicates that Thai students have a very high level of perception of their NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities. However, there is no correlation between students' perception of the NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities and students' learning outcomes.

Keywords: Learning Outcomes, Pedagogical Qualities, Linguistic Qualities, Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers

1. Introduction

There is a lot of research advocating Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers' (NNEST) capacity to teach English and be part of the English Language Teaching (ELT) industry (Ma, 2012; Faez, 2018; Yazan, 2018; Alam, 2019; Kasztalska, 2019: Floris & Renandya, 2020; Rahman & Yuzar, 2020). One of the arguments made is that the potencies of Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) and NNESTs complement each other and are ideal in the teaching arena (Tosuncuoglu, 2017). While some stakeholders prefer native speakers, others favor NNESTs. Whereas there is a perception that NESTs teach their own language better and are therefore more suited instructors for English as a Foreign Language (EFL), NNESTs are believed to have more understanding of the issues involved in second language acquisition. As a matter of fact, both NESTs and NNESTs have shortcomings that range from their foreign accents to pedagogical issues and cultural dimensions (Moussu, 2018). There has also been a trend by educational institutions against discriminating hiring practices and toward moving away from the NEST and NNEST dichotomy. All that said, the debate as to who is better when it comes to teaching EFL to Thai students is still going on Thailand, a country where English is taught by instructors hailing from a variety of countries. Responses are split. As reported by Ulla (2019), while some favor an instructor with a native accent to teach EFL or ESL, there is

a positive perception of Filipinos as EFL or ESL teachers in Bangkok. Many see the issue in terms of teacher training and teaching experience rather than simply in terms NESTs or NNESTs (Phothongsunan, 2017; Waelateh, Boonsuk, Amebele, & Wasoh, 2019). In short, NNESTs have the capacity to teach ESL or EFL even though it is their second language. Since the emphasis is on the pedagogical and linguistic qualities of a teacher, not necessarily his/her nationality, fortifying quality teacher education programs and providing them with the essential pedagogical tools have been a priority (Iskandar, 2020).

This study focuses on NNESTs in Thailand. It aims to determine the perception of Thai students regarding their NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities as correlated with their learning outcomes. More specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is Thai students' perception of NNESTs' pedagogical qualities (teaching strategies and content) and linguistic qualities (fluency and accuracy)?
2. Are there significant differences in the pedagogical and linguistic qualities of NNESTs and students' learning outcomes?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the pedagogical and linguistic qualities of NNESTs and students' learning outcomes?

This study is significant in a number of ways. To begin with, the ELT industry is not just a venue where the teaching-learning exchange process exchange takes place but also one where language learning and the sharing of culture occur, showcasing varied teaching strategies and levels of students' progress. The results of this study can therefore fortify NNESTs' self-confidence and competency as in the midst of the on-going debate about the NEST and NNEST dichotomy in the ELF industry Thai students continue to have a high regard for NNESTs. This study can also be a reference to create varied English refresher courses, school-wide activities, and even long-term professional developments.

2. Review of Related Literature
- *Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs)*
The World 'Englishes,' proposed by Krachu in the mid-1980s, has created a localized variety of English used in many countries, which are part of either one of the following English circles; the inner circle, the outer circle, and the expanding circle. The inner circle consists of countries where English is used as the lingua franca. The outer circle includes countries with historical colonial relations with countries in the inner circle, where English is commonly used in social life and government sectors. The expanding circle comprises countries that use English as a foreign language. This creates opportunities for English teachers from the outer circle, known as NNESTs, to teach English in various parts of the world as they fill the demand for English-speaking teachers. There are countries, however, where speaking English is a status symbol and students prefer to learn from NESTs (Toscuncuoglu, 2017). NNESTs, however, bring cultural pluralism to the classroom and convey other important fundamental characteristics of a language (Alam, 2019). According to Medgyes (2001), while NNESTs have linguistic limitations and an inferiority complex, they have the advantage of speaking two or more languages and being part of several cultures. This culturally-responsive teaching reduces the focus on stereotypes of accent or dress, or ways of communicating. They are also good models and clear evidence that learning English is achievable. Moreover, NNESTs speak in a manner (interlanguage) that is understandable to students.

- *NNEST's Pedagogical and Linguistic Qualities*
English teachers are expected to teach effectively. Frenzel, Taxer, Schwab, and Kuhbandner (2019) and Oder and Eisenschmidt (2018) identified two key aspects of effective teaching. The first one is intrinsic and involves teacher's motivation, enthusiasm, and interpersonal skills. The second one is extrinsic and involves teacher's skills like proficiency in instructional materials

and strategies. Another factor is continuous professional development, which is meant to address teacher's pedagogical and linguistic gaps and deliver more effective lessons. Thus, teachers' pedagogical and linguistic qualities are one of the factors apt to amplify students' learning outcome. In a study entitled *Self-Perceived Non-Nativeness in Prospective English Teachers' Self-Images*, Gonzalez (2016) determined that NNESTs use their native language (L1) more in teaching, pay more attention to psychological and emotional factors, are more book- and test-oriented in their teaching, and have more knowledge about their students. These findings are in keeping with Waelateh et al.'s (2019) study on NNESTs' pragmatism teaching English. Moreover, as Kasztalska (2019) argued, NNESTs have a broader understanding of internationalization and World Englishes, not to mention translingualism.

However, while students often acknowledge that NNESTs are knowledgeable and hardworking, they also point out that intercultural communication anxiety may at times impede their effectiveness in teaching (Abayadeera, Mihret, & Hewa Dulige, 2018). According to Lee, Schutz, van Vlack, and Martinze Agudo (2017), NNESTs have insecurities stemming from a lack of communication abilities. Ellili-Cherif and Hadba (2017) nevertheless concluded that NNESTs are on par with other teachers as long as they use reliable and quality teaching materials, implement modified teaching strategies to fit any given context, and employ differentiated linguistic lessons to strengthen their pedagogy; hence the need for professional development. English refresher courses and opportunities to advance their skills are very important to enhance their pedagogical and linguistic skills but also their personal and interpersonal skills.

- Students' Learning Outcome
Several factors may affect students' learning outcomes. Among those identified by Munawaroh (2017) in her study on teaching methods and the learning environment influencing students' learning achievements, two will be used in this study: teachers' teaching strategies and teachers' linguistic skills. Other factors discussed in Munawaroh's (2017) study that greatly affect students learning outcomes include: students' level of motivation, intelligence, readiness, and learning abilities. According to Sosik, Chun, and Koul (2017), motivation plays a vital role in the learning process and often is a function of the learning situation and social support. As they argue, with the right combination of parental and school supervision, students will achieve positive learning outcomes. Research also indicates that student engagement in discussions and activities inside a language class is critical for learning (e.g. Gerritsen-van Leeuwenkamp, Joosten-ten Brinke, & Kester, 2019). The more interactive the class, the deeper learning is. Making the class interactive and fun boosts the teaching-learning process (Bai, Larimer, & Riner, 2016). When combined with real-world situations, it could develop cross-cultural promotion, whet the appetite of students for more knowledge, and widen their horizon and understanding of the world. Mante-Estacio, Nino Valdez, and Pulido (2018) determined that giving students real-world problems to solve and interact with promotes learner-centeredness and culturally-sensitive instruction. Therefore, the learning process can affect learning outcomes (Burapadecha & Thiankhanithikun, 2016).

Moreover, students' self-confidence in learning English and their self-perception are related to their authentic learning outcomes (Grey & Jackson, 2020). Thus, teachers should undergo trainings to deliver effective learning outcomes and improve students' learning processes. Opartkiattikul, Argthur-Kelly, and Dempsey (2016) argued that the opportunity to learn and practice skills during professional development is essential in supporting teachers in their efforts to improve student outcomes. NNESTs must continue their professional development, especially in respect of teaching strategies and linguistics, to remain qualified English teachers (Kasztalska, 2019) and meet Thai students very high stance on NNEST pedagogical and linguistic qualities.

3. Research Methodology

- Respondents

This study focused on the perceptions of Thai students enrolled in an English program at some of the Nonthaburi Educational Area 1 schools in Thailand that have 5 or more NNESTs. The schools involved include 2 schools for grades 4-6 and 2 schools for grades 7-12. Slovin's formula was used to identify 422 samples with 0.5 as marginal error. It is the researchers belief that students at these grade levels (Grade 4-12) can already scrutinize, compare, and define the qualities of their NNESTs. The reason they chose schools in Nonthaburi Area 1 is because of the ratified, organized, and connected government schools within Educational Service Area 1, which means the curricular programs and activities in each school are synchronized. Nonthaburi is directly northwest of Bangkok alongside the Chao Phraya River, which is part of the Greater Bangkok Metropolitan Area.
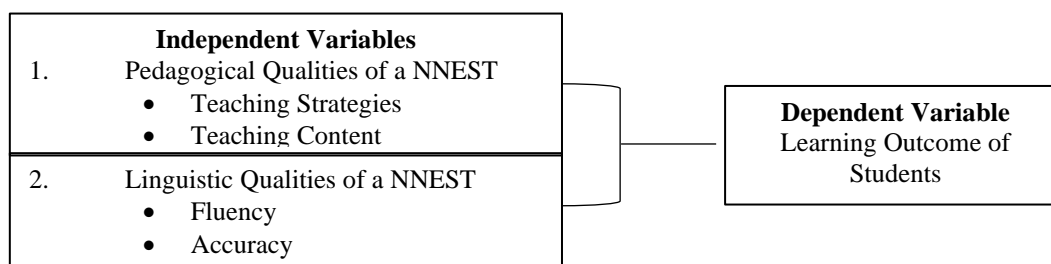
Table 1: Number of Respondents per School

School	Students	%
Anurajaprasit School	151	35.8
Pracha-Uppathum School	42	9.9
Benjamarachanusorn School	113	26.8
Anuban Nonthaburi School	116	27.5
Total	422	100

Figure 1: Study Paradigm (Created by the Authors for this Study)

- *Data Gathering Procedure and Instrument*

This descriptive research used a survey method for collecting data, namely a Likert scale questionnaire with open-ended questions. The researchers created their own questionnaire, based on the independent variables and the dependent variable, to effectively gather data on their perceptions and their individual grade in English subject, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Independent Variables
1. Pedagogical Qualities of a NNEST
   - Teaching Strategies
   - Teaching Content
2. Linguistic Qualities of a NNEST
   - Fluency
   - Accuracy

Dependent Variable
Learning Outcome of Students

Figure 2: Research Framework (Created by the Authors for this Study)

The survey questionnaire consists of 3 parts, (i) respondent's demographics, (ii) Likert-scale questions on pedagogical and linguistic qualities of a NNESTs, and (iii) open-ended questions, and includes 10 questions on pedagogical qualities and another 10 questions on the linguistic qualities of NNESTs. Each question has a scale for the respondents to choose from (5 for strongly agree; 4 for agree; 3 for neutral; 2 for disagree; and 1 for strongly disagree). The last part of the questionnaire includes two open-ended questions that the students needed to answer concisely. These two questions focus on the characteristics of NNESTs, their pedagogical and linguistic qualities in particular. The purpose of these questions was to support their responses to the Likert-scale questions. The questionnaire was translated in Thai language

to generate valid results. The survey questionnaire was then pilot tested in a school that is not included in the study. A reliability analysis was carried out on the perceived task values scale comprising 10 items in the linguistic qualities and 10 items in the pedagogical qualities of the NNESTs. Cronbach's alpha showed the questionnaire reached acceptable reliability at α = 0.78 and α = 0.82, respectively.

The researchers sent a consent letter to the school directors to ask permission to conduct the survey and distribute the survey questionnaires. The researchers also made sure that the respondents were instructed by NNESTs. They also sent letter of consent to the parents of the students. For confidentiality purposes, the questionnaire did not require students to write their names and schools. The respondents were given ample time to answer the questionnaire. The data was collected, coded, and recorded using SPSS for calculation, statistical results, and analysis.

- *Treatment of the Data*
The quantitative data collected was computed using Pearson r correlation to define the relationship between the students' perceptions of NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities, and their learning outcomes. ANOVA was employed to treat the relationship between pedagogical and linguistic qualities according to the respondents' learning outcomes in the English subject. The mean of the grades was computed using the following description: 1.00 – 1.5 for excellent; 1.51 – 2.5 for very satisfactory; 2.51 – 3.5 for satisfactory; 3.51 – 4.5 for good; 4.51 – 5.5 for fair; 5.51 – 6.5 for poor; and 6.51 – 7.0 for needs improvement. In computing the mean of the levels of perception of the students, the descriptions of the mean brackets used were: 1.00 – 1.20 is low; 1.21 – 2.30 is fair; 2.31-3.40 is high; 3.41 - 4.50 is very high; and 4.51 – 5.0 is outstanding.

4. Research Findings and Discussion
This section addresses each of the research questions articulated in the introduction to this study and discusses the findings in light of relevant previous studies.

RQ1*: Thai Students' Perceptions of NNESTs' Pedagogical and Linguistic Qualities*
Table 2 shows the grand mean of pedagogical qualities, which as we saw earlier consists of teaching strategy and content teaching. The result indicates that students have a "very high" perception of their NNESTs' pedagogical qualities.

Table 2: Thai Students' Perceptions of NNESTs' Pedagogical Qualities

Pedagogical Qualities	Mean	SD	Level of Satisfaction
1. Teacher designs lessons that allow students to participate in empowering activities.	4.07	.56	very high
2. Teacher promotes a safe-environment conducive to learning.	4.30	1.00	very high
3. Teacher cultivates cross cultural understandings and the value of diversity.	3.85	1.20	very high
4. Teacher uses advanced technology to improve my learning.	4.09	.97	very high
5. Teacher engages the students in discussion.	3.79	1.08	very high
Overall (Teaching Strategies)	*4.02*	*1.04*	*very high*
6. Teacher clearly states the objectives of his/her lessons.	4.01	.66	very high

7. Teacher presents concepts from related fields.	4.23	.82	very high
8. Teacher incorporates students' real-life situations in instruction.	4.01	1.02	very high
9. Teacher incorporates values in the lessons.	4.11	.90	very high
10. Teacher demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of content.	4.30	.79	very high
Overall (Content Teaching)	*4.01*	*.92*	*very high*
Grand Mean (Teaching Strategy & Content Teaching)	**4.13**	**.57**	**very high**

Table 3 shows a similar result. The grand mean is 4.00 which is also "very high." Again, this indicates that students have a "very high" level of perception of their NNESTs' linguistic qualities.

Table 3: Thai Students' Perception of NNESTs' Linguistic Qualities

Linguistic Qualities	Mean	SD	Level of Satisfaction
1. Teacher links language to the context	4.20	1.023	very high
2. Teacher pronounces words clearly	3.80	1.17	very high
3. Teacher uses grammar correctly	4.12	.92	very high
1. Teacher produces language that may not be predictable	3.76	1.01	very high
2. Teacher responds to the students' questions properly	3.90	1.10	very high
Overall (Fluency)	*3.96*	*.65*	*very high*
3. Teacher uses language suitable for my level	4.18	.90	very high
4. I can understand the teacher's instructions	3.85	1.15	very high
5. Teacher practices the language as used in the real world	4.10	.93	very high
6. Teacher corrects me every time I commit language mistakes	4.27	.83	very high
7. Teacher has control of the choice of language	3.82	.97	very high
Overall (Accuracy)	*4.04*	*.68*	*very high*
Grand Mean (Fluency & Accuracy)	**4.00**	**.60**	**very high**

RQ2: *Significant Differences in the Pedagogical and Linguistic qualities of NNESTs and Learning Outcomes*

Table 4 exhibits the differences between pedagogical and linguistic qualities and the respondents' learning outcomes. The results were analyzed using f-test ANOVA. The p-value of the overall pedagogical qualities was 0.791 while for linguistic qualities it was 0.790. Their p-values thus do not indicate a significant difference at 0.05 level of significance and there is no significant correlation between NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities and students' learning outcomes.

Table 4: ANOVA Results

Learning Outcome	Overall Pedagogical Qualities			Overall Linguistic Qualities		
	Mean	*SD*	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*	*N*
Excellent	4.0697	.57419	323	4.0204	.60798	323
Very Satisfactory	4.1076	.47339	66	3.9636	.61260	66
Satisfactory	3.9737	.60315	19	3.9053	.87491	19
Good	4.0714	.30563	7	3.9714	.68738	7
Fair	3.9200	.25884	5	3.7800	.36232	5
Poor	4.5000	.70711	2	3.6500	.21213	2
Overall	4.0716	.88718	422	4.0000	.60414	422
F-value	.481			.482		
Sig	.791			.790		
Interpretation	Not significant			Not significant		
Decision	Accept Ho			Accept Ho		

RQ3: *Significant Relationship between the Pedagogical and Linguistic qualities of NNESTs and Learning Outcomes*

Table 5 shows the relationship between NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities and students' learning outcomes. The p-value of students' learning outcomes and linguistic qualities is at 0.992. Conversely, students' learning outcomes and pedagogical qualities has a 0.146 p-value. Both variables as compared with students' learning outcomes can thus be interpreted as not significant. There is no significant relationship between NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities and students' learning outcomes. This means that the students' level of perception of NNESTs' linguistic and pedagogical qualities does not influence their learning outcomes. The table also shows the r values of the two variables. Students' learning outcomes have no significant relationship with the linguistic qualities of their NNESTs. Also, students' learning outcomes have a very weak relationship with their NNESTs' pedagogical qualities. So there is no significant relationship between the pedagogical and linguistic qualities of NNESTs and the learning outcomes of their students.

Table 5: Relationship between NNESTs' Pedagogical and Linguistic Qualities and Students' Learning Outcomes

Variables Compared	r	Strength of Correlation	Sig	Interpretation Decision
Students' Learning Outcomes and Linguistic Qualities	.000	No relationship	.992	Not Significant Accept Ho
Students' Learning Outcomes and Pedagogical Qualities	.071	Very weak	.146	Not Significant Accept Ho

Thai students' high level of perception of their NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities aligns with Abayadeera et al.'s (2018) study, which found that students believed their NNESTs were knowledgeable and hardworking instructors. This belief encourages NNESTs to continue to or even further excel in their profession and keep delivering quality education. Another study from Okuda (2019) on student perceptions of NNESTs working at a writing center in Japan corroborates Thai students' perceptions of their NNESTs. The Japanese students surveyed viewed their instructors as credible, suitable, and qualified to teach. Teaching is perceived as a noble job and teachers treated with utmost respect and courtesy, which may be a factor in the perception of NNESTs. However, even if students have a "very high" perception of their NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities, the results show that there is no significant relationship between the NNESTs pedagogical and linguistic qualities and students' learning outcomes.

This result is inconsistent with Gerritsen-van Leeuwenkamp et al.'s (2019) study which established that students' learning outcomes were positively related to the deep learning approach. The teaching strategies greatly affected how students went through the deep learning approach. Grey & Jackson (2020) found that students' self-confidence in learning English and their self-perception were also related to their authentic learning outcomes. Generally, teachers showing positive emotions as part of the teaching-learning process as well as the capacity of students to be independent learners have a positive impact on students (Heckel & Ringeisen, 2019). Non-school factors also influence student achievements, but they are largely outside school's control. According to Munawaroh (2017), teaching methods and the learning environment influence students' learning achievements. Other factors discussed in this study that greatly affect students' learning outcome were the level of motivation, the intelligence of students, and their readiness and learning abilities. It is vital that all these teachers' skills should be sharpened and developed. As Opartkiattikul et al. (2016) argued, the opportunity to learn and practice teaching skills as part of one's professional development is essential in fortifying student's learning outcomes.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Thai students perceived their NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities as "very high." They believe in their capabilities. However, they have different perceptions when it comes to the know-how of teaching English. There is a significant difference between genders and the level of perception of NNESTs' *linguistic* qualities. However, there is no significant difference with regard to NNESTs' *pedagogical* qualities. This goes to show that teaching practices, strategies, and even how teachers handle the class are seen similarly by all students, males and females alike. This study aalso determined that NNESTs pedagogical and linguistic qualities are not the sole factor affecting students' learning outcome.

- Recommendations

New technologies are changing language teaching and creating a growing need for NNESTs to have professional training on the latest trends in language teaching. As this study shows, students expect teachers to keep enhancing learning activities, strategies, and any other learning factors contributing to improving students' learning outcomes. Administrators and school officials should therefore provide avenues for teachers to grow professionally. The focus should not only be on pedagogical and linguistic trainings, but also on classroom management, relationship-building and classroom design so as to create a bigger impact on students' learning outcomes. To this end, an intervention action plan was designed for the professional development of the NNESTs in each school. Its goal is to promote better student learning outcomes.

The action plan is inspired in part by the conceptual framework of the 2018 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). The survey is a large-scale international survey of the teaching workforce, the conditions of teaching, and the learning environments in participating countries. The 2018 framework builds on the 2008 and 2013 surveys which emphasized training on effective teaching strategies for students and schools. It tackles in-depth themes and primacies on professional individualities and pedagogical practices. TALIS was developed in collaboration with the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA, Amsterdam, The Netherlands), IEA Data Processing and Research Center (IEA DPC, Hamburg, Germany), Statistics Canada (Ottawa, Canada), and the OECD. It is not just a support for teachers in their professional development but it is also meant for policy makers and school leaders to ensure that opportunities are available.

The rationale of the program is that NNESTs, either Thai or non-Thai, should be given opportunities to hone their skills and continue their professional development, which should focus on current pedagogical trends and language training. Its purpose is to update teachers in Thailand who use English language as the medium of instruction on 21st century pedagogical trends, techniques, and skills. There are certain objectives to be followed to achieve maximum effectiveness of the program. These are meant to update teachers on current trends, practice and recent advances in the teaching arena; to renew the teachers' skills, attitudes and approaches with regard to the development of new teaching techniques and objectives, new contexts, new scholastic research, and create effective and appropriate assessments and evaluations for students; to empower teachers to give part of curriculum development, and other facets of teaching practices; to foster schools in applying new strategies about curriculum and other aspects of teaching practice; and to provide an avenue for exchange of teaching strategies and knowledge in language teaching among teachers and others.

Table 6 shows the matrix of activities and procedures of the intervention program. There are 4 activities, each of them with corresponding performance indicators, time frames, and strategies.

Table 6: Intervention Program Matrix of Activities and Procedures

Activities	Strategies	Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Persons Responsible
Student-teacher assembly	Solicit ideas of what the students expect from the teachers and the school Provide a picture of the classroom and the pedagogy integration	Taking student attendance and students' feedback (expectations from the teachers) Giving orientation to students on what is in store for them inside the classroom to boost their academic performance	First week of every semester (2 times per academic year)	The academic head The school administrators Homeroom Advisers Students

Teacher training and in-service professional development	Language teaching workshop Pedagogical training, including classroom management Conducting a SWOT analysis Teachers' workshop on being an effective teacher on both outside and inside the classroom	Initiating and managing learning processes Responding effectively to the learning needs of individual learners Integrating formative and summative assessment Creating effective and appropriate assessments and evaluations Providing solutions to the present problem and possible problems in the classroom and in school Identifying the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the threats and opportunities of the teachers, the school, and the school administrators	a. Within the 1st week of May and October b. Within the last week of October and 3rd week of March	School Administration Academic Head All NNESTs
Professional Development	Provide opportunities for the teachers to proceed to educational programs or post-graduate programs	Increasing teachers' qualification Mounting teachers' professional and pedagogical practices		Government Officials School Administration NNESTs
Cooperative Teaching	Team teaching Peer-evaluation Group assessment	Assessing one's weakness and strengths Learning from each other's pedagogical techniques Promoting teacher-teacher relationship	a. monthly (rotational member of the group every month)	NNESTs Academic Head

Source: Created by the Authors for this Study

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Factors Affecting Professional Pilots' Intention to Leave Aviation Jobs: Supervised Machine Learning Algorithms

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Abstract
The objective of this study is to gain knowledge of the factors affecting the likelihood of Thai pilots leaving aviation jobs and classify the intention to leave outcomes using supervised machine learning algorithms derived from data science disciplines. The focus is on career success and job demand as key factors contributing to the intention to leave or not leave the airline. This multidisciplinary study follows a quantitative approach and relies on a sample of 610 Thai pilots listed in Thai Pilot Association. The results indicate that pilots holding the rank of pilot in command and an air transport pilot license with no other extra responsibilities such as check airman and instructor pilot have a lessor chance to leave aviation jobs. Moreover, the overall binary classification model developed by this method fits with empirical data. It is recommended that airlines respond to these risks by providing the job resources needed to maintain their pilots' morale and keep them on board. This research contributes to behavioral science disciplines by providing a classification model with moderate performance. Future research should broaden the sample to an international context and utilize a qualitative or a mixed methodology in order to obtain richer results.

Keywords: Aviation, Intention to Leave, Pilot, Pilot Rank, Supervised Machine Learning Algorithms

1. Introduction
The concept of human capital is widely cited as a valuable intangible asset even though it is not listed on an organization's financial report (Schultz, 1961; Kiker, 1966; Maneechaeye, 2021a). Human capital may be defined as the economic value of employees' skills and competencies, including qualification, training, intelligence to name a few (Kucharčíková, 2013). In the aviation business, pilots play a central role as, in this position, they are responsible for an airline's core service; flying aircrafts. In order to get a pilot ready to fly and be responsible for the safety of all the passengers and crewmembers onboard, a huge amount of money needs to be invested in this particular human capital. Indeed, airlines have no choice but to invest considerable funds to train them extensively, using among other devices costly simulator check rides. Such intensive training is necessary to ensure the proper skills, which this position's responsibility requires. It also provides the suitable professional pilot qualifications mandated by law to man commercial aircrafts. This entire process is estimated to take up to 2 years to complete with training costs ranging from USD50,000 to USD100,000. Clearly, pilot training is a significant investment, both in terms of time and money (Department of Employment, 2021). This brings to the fore an important issue. What will happen to all these investments in developing and training pilot if pilots feel unsatisfied with their current job demands and end up leaving the organization? This is a real issue the industry has to deal with as such investments may be made in vain (Maneechaeye, 2021b).

While a number of studies focus on the factors affecting turnover intention and burnout in various contexts (e.g. Federici, 2013; Tremblay & Genin, 2008), few studies really focus on how to predict the likelihood that some pilots will leave their job. This study focuses on this issue and, based on the above, seeks to address the following research question: Do pilot professional factors, namely pilot rank, pilot license, and pilot position significantly determine the likelihood of their leaving their aviation job? To answer this question, this study aims to develop a classification model using data science technique. More specifically, it aims to use supervised machine learning algorithms to determine the likelihood of leaving the company due to the three pilot professional factors to be considered in this study. It is expected that this classification model could be used by airlines to assess that likelihood and therefore develop a strategy designed to mitigate the risk of pilot turnover.

2. Literature Review

- *Supervised Machine Learning Algorithms*

Supervised machine learning algorithms are presently applied to analyze various contents in many fields of study (Burscher, Vliegenthart, & De Vreese, 2015). Computers quintessentially try to replicate the coding decision algorithms formerly coded by users. The intent is to automatically code a number of inputs into previously defined algorithms. Therefore, a set of pre-fitted predictions or a classification model for the content categories are the main preconditions of virtually all supervised machine learning models. In general, supervised machine learning involved three major steps (Burscher, Odijk, Vliegenthart, De Rijke, & De Vreese, 2014). Firstly, datasets are randomized into two sets, a train set and a test set, according to some predefined ratio that may range from 60/40 to 80/20 depending upon the nature of the dataset. This method, called holdout validation, is considered to be the simplest approach (Mahobia et al., 2010). Secondly, the train set is put into a prediction or classification model fitting, depending upon the objective of the study. As part of this process, an algorithm mathematically analyzes the features from each content category from the train set and generates a predictive or a classification model, depending on whether the research question is to predict or classify the target label outcome. Finally, after fitting a predictive or classification model by train set, the test set is put into a model to evaluate the prediction of classification performance. Supervised machine learning provides several advantages over legacy model development analysis. First and foremost, this it allows researchers to expand the scope of their analysis by determining the effectiveness of the predictions or their classification model by using test sets to evaluate the effectiveness of the fitted model (van Zoonen & Toni, 2016).

- *Human Capital Theory*

Human capital is a relatively new concept that replaces the legacy human resource concept. Human capital refers to the skills and ability that an individual attain to enhance his/her potential productivity and boost his/her career (Becker, 2007). High performance human capital such as pilots sends a signal to organizations that applicants deserve to be hired due to their accumulated skills and knowledge (Singer & Bruhns, 1991). The organization will acknowledge potential employees with the desirable professional attributes related to the organization's needs. A pilot job is considered to be a high investment career due to extensive flight training and the academic requirements that come in addition to practical training. Pursuing a pilot license thus changes an ordinary person into a competent licensed airman that can operate a complex flying machine and be responsible for the many souls on board a vessel. Therefore, given the huge human capital investment, airlines are often willing to pay high salaries and provide more resources to hire and retain proficient pilots (Swenson-Lepper, 2005).

- *Career Success*

Career success may be defined as positive work-related results or achievements accumulated as a result of one's past experiences (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz Jr, 1995). Career success can be measured both subjectively and objectively. It is an individual's positive evaluation of his/her career. It is signalled by one's career satisfaction or job satisfaction. Objective career success is measured by one's salary and promotion (Boudreau, Boswell, & Judge, 2001). In the flying job context, rookie pilots holding a commercial pilot license start out as co-pilot so as to accumulate flight times and in-air experience together with problem solving skills. After passing certain flight times milestones and getting through several checks, their license will be upgraded to an air transport pilot license. Eventually, they will be extensively evaluated by check airmen or instructors and possibly be promoted to full-fledged pilots in command position or captains with more responsibilities and a bigger pay check. Such promotions are regarded as one of the most prestigious moments in a pilot life and considered as career success in the aviation industry, both subjectively and objectively.

- *Job Demands*

According to the job demands-resources theory developed by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli in 2001, when job demands are high and job resources/positives low, stress and burnout increase. Conversely, a high number of job positives can offset the effects of high job demands. What job demands means is that the company expects employees to put efforts into their work (Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbek, 2004). As to job resources, it refers to the supporting work environment provided by an organization (Lesener, Gusy, & Wolter, 2019). Job demands may lead to physical and psychological stress and burnout problems at work (Maneechaeye, 2020). Whereas job demands are negative factors, well-provided job resources can possibly mitigate the negativity. Holding the highest position in the cockpit or being promoted as check airman or instructor pilot do not mean that there are no drawbacks though. Pilots holding extra positions apart from line flying, such as check airman or instructor position tend to face a high level of job demands that may add significant stress to their professional lives (Bauer & Herbig, 2019; Brezonakova, 2017; Carbone & Cigrang, 2001). Eventually, accumulated stress will lead to burnout, which may end up causing leaving the aviation job, thereby rendering past human capital investment useless (Brezonakova, 2017). Based on the above review of the relevant literature, the following hypotheses can therefore be developed:

> **H1:** *Pilots holding the rank of Pilot in Command are less likely to leave their aviation job.*
>
> **H2:** *Pilots holding an Air Transport Pilot License are less likely to leave their aviation job.*
>
> **H3**: *Line pilots with no other extra duties are less likely to leave their aviation job.*
>
> **H4:** *The binary classification model with the holdout validation method is fitted for empirical data.*

3. Methodology and Data Collection

This study utilizes a quantitative approach by adapting the supervised machine learning concept from data science disciplines.

- *Population*

The population in this study is Thai pilots registered with the Thai Pilot Association. The simple random sampling method was utilized to select them. Any Thai pilot registered with the Thai Pilot Association was considered to meet the inclusion criteria. The sample was drawn from seven major air carriers ranging from commercial airline and helicopter service companies. Only private air carriers were selected as military operations completely differ from civilian ones. According to the supervised machine learning concept, apart from fitting the

classification model, model performance testing brought this methodology to new frontier of data analysis as not only the model was fitted but the performance of the model could be effectively evaluated by another set of data. Using the holdout validation methodology, the sample was randomly divided into 2 groups; a training set and a testing set along a 75/25 ratio.

- Instrument

After being granting permission, 650 self-administered survey questionnaires in a soft copy format were distributed via intra-office email by the researcher. Questions regarding feature variables or independent variables were dichotomous and those regarding personal information and demographics were both dichotomous and continuous. After a process of data exploration and preprocessing (cleaning duplicated data, detecting outlier, imputation for missing value, and deleting noisy data), 610 respondents qualified for the statistical analysis. All the questionnaires were administrated according to Thai social norms, and local traditions. All measurements were in Thai language. Sample sizes were calculated by infinite population mean formula as the exact number of population was unknow (Cochran, Mosteller, & Tukey, 1954). The number of sample size was calculated as Equation (1):

$$n = \frac{p(1-p)z_{\alpha/2}^2}{d^2} \qquad (1)$$

Where proportion (*p*) is 0.5, error (*d*) is 0.05, alpha is 0.05, and Z at 0.975 is 1.96. Therefore, the minimum number of samples would be 385 or more in accordance with the calculation.

This research utilized a self-developed questionnaire based on the aforementioned related literature with dichotomous answers for each question. For example, the choice of answers to the question "What is your pilot rank?" was either "Pilot in Command" or "Second in Command." For the question "What is your pilot license type?" the two possible answers were "Commercial Pilot License" or "Air Transport Pilot License." The choice could also be a simple "yes" or "no" as was the case with the following question "Apart from line flying, do you have extra responsibilities such as check airman or instructor pilot?" ("Yes or No).

- *Data Analysis*

The screened data of 610 samples were analyzed by using a supervised machine learning classification algorithms to test the hypothesis of the study. The reason behind the adoption of this technique is that it allows for the classification of feature and label variables (Angsuchote et al., 2011). The statistical method used in this study was entirely computed by R (R Core Team, 2021).

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for nominal data relating to the classification model. The largest sample is pilot in command (51.30%) followed by holding commercial pilot license (46.70%). Most of the pilots worked as line pilot (73.90%). The rest of them held either check airman or instructor pilot positions (26.10%). 94.60 percent of the population sampled was males. 75.60 percent of them held a bachelor degree. Moreover, 75.60 percent of them piloted fixed wing aircraft and 60percent had been flying for more than 10 years.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Nominal Demographic Data

Feature Variables (N = 610)	Frequency	Percentage
1. Pilot Rank (RNK)		
- Pilot in Command (PIC)	313	51.3
- Second in Command (SIC)	297	48.7
2. Pilot License (LIC)		
- Commercial Pilot License (CPL)	285	46.7
- Air Transport Pilot License (ATP)	325	53.3
3. Pilot Position (POS)		
- Line Pilot with Check Airman or Instructor Position (LPC)	159	26.1
- Line Pilot Position Only (LPO)	451	73.9

Before fitting a binary logistic regression classification model, all features variable were put into chi-square test of independence in order to determine whether which variable would be considered to input in the classification model. Independent variables that had a significant relationship with intention to leave aviation job were retained for inclusion in the model. The results of the chi-square test of independence indicate that all the variables were statistically significant with $p < .001$. This implies that pilot rank, pilot license, and pilot position significantly classified intention to leave aviation job and these also implied that all independent variables were suitable for fitting a binary logistic regression classification model as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Chi-square Test of Independence – Cross Tabular

Feature Variables (N = 610)	Intention to Leave Aviation Job	No Intention to Leave Aviation Job	Chi-square Test of Independent
1. Pilot Rank (RNK)			
- PIC	74	278	$\chi2(1) = 12.374$
- SIC	73	185	$p < .000***$
2. Pilot License (LIC)			
- CPL	85	200	$\chi2(1) = 9.859$
- ATP	62	263	$p < .000***$
3. Pilot Position (POS)			
- LPC	53	106	$\chi2(1) = 10.027$
- LPO	94	357	$p < .000***$

Note. PIC = Pilot in Command, SIC = Second in Command, CPL = Commercial Pilot License, ATP = Air Transport Pilot License, LPC = Line Pilot with Check Airman or Instructor Position, LPO = Line Pilot Position Only, *** $p < .001$

As Table 3 below shows, by applying a maximum likelihood estimation, a binary logistic regression model was developed from the training set, which was randomized and derived from 75 percent of total dataset. In this classification model, a binary logistic regression classification model was fitted to assess the impact of pilot rank, pilot license, and pilot position on the likelihood that participants would be determined to leave their aviation job and all feature variables or predictor variables including intercept were statistically significant. Crude and adjusted odds ratios were described and shown significant in all of the feature variables. Adjusted odds ratios were used to determine one dependent and more than one independent variables by eliminating confounding effects by other independent variables within the same classification model. For variable importance from the random forest concept (Nathns, Oswald, & Nimon, 2001), this value signified the importance of the classification ability, the more the number, the better the classification ability. In this classification model, pilot position was the most important variable classifying intention to leave aviation job with a variable importance value of 3.87.

Table 3: Fitting a Binary Logistic Regression Classification Model Based upon 457 Training Samples

Feature Variable	EST	Crude OR (95% CI)	Adj. OR (95% CI)	p-value	VI
Intercept	-1.51	-	-	.000***	-
Pilot Rank (RNK)	-0.62	0.70 (0.45, 0.98)	0.54 (0.31, 0.92)	.024*	2.26
Pilot License (LIC)	0.61	2.18 (1.40, 3.38)	1.85 (1.16, 2.96)	.001**	2.58
Pilot Position (POS)	1.07	2.17 (1.37, 3.43)	2.93 (1.70, 5.05)	.000***	3.87

Note. EST. = model coefficients; *Crude OR* = crude odd ratio; *Adj. OR* = adjusted odd ratio; 95% CI = 95% confident interval from range estimation; *p*-value = Wald's Test *p*-value; *VI* = variable importance; reference class (coded as 1) = pilot in command (RNK), commercial pilot license (LIC) and line pilot with check airman or instructor position (POS) respectively; Significant codes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The pilot rank significant adjusted odds ratio was 0.54, implying that the likelihood of pilots with command rank leaving their aviation job was 1.85 (1/0.54) times. This means that second in command pilot rank had significantly higher chance of leaving their aviation job. The pilot license significant adjusted odds ratio was 1.85, implying that the likelihood of pilots holding a commercial pilot license leaving their aviation job was 1.85 times higher than that of pilots holding an air transport pilot license. The likelihood of pilots holding a commercial pilot license to leave their aviation job is therefore significantly higher. Finally, the pilot position significantly adjusted odds ratio was 2.93, implying that the chance for line pilot with check airman or instructor position to leave their aviation job was 2.93 times higher than that of those holding a line pilot position only. This means that line pilots holding a check airman or an instructor position have a significantly higher chance of leaving their aviation job. Thus, Hypotheses 1 to 3 were accepted.

After developing a classification model, the model evaluation and diagnosis were tested to see if the model was fitted with empirical data and was valid in terms of classification ability (Archer & Lemeshow, 2006). There are several measures to evaluate and diagnose a model goodness of fit. They include both absolute measures of fit, such as the Likelihood Ratio Test, the Pseudo R-squared, and the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test, and relative measures of fit such as the Wald Statistics. As an absolute fit indice, the Pseudo R-squared imitates regular R-squared; the higher its value, the more absolute the fit. As Tables 4 and 5 show, all tested statistics pointed to a good fit and good model fit statistics. As relative measures of it, Wald Statistics, which include both the F-test and Chi-squared test, were significant. As to absolute measures of fit, the Log Likelihood Ratio test was also significant, indicating a good fit with empirical data. Moreover, Hosmer and Lemeshow Test was not significant, also pointing to a good fit with empirical data. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Table 4: Classification Model Diagnosis: Goodness-of-Fit Test

| Test Statistics	df	Statistics	p-value
Hosmer and Lemeshow Test (χ^2)	4	0.73	.98
Likelihood Ratio Test (χ^2)	-3	28.09	.000***
Wald Test (χ^2)	-3	25.62	.000***
Wald Test (F-test)	-3	8.54	.000***

Significant codes: ***$p < .001$

Table 5: Classification Model Diagnosis: Model Fit Statistics

Model Fit Statistics	Value

Log-likelihood: Intercept Only	-252.21
Log-likelihood: Full Model	-238.16
Deviance (-2LL)	476.33
Cox and Snell Pseudo R^2	0.060
Cragg-Uhler (Nagelkerke) Pseudo R^2	0.089
McKelvey and Zavoina Pseudo R^2	0.099
AIC = 484.334; BIC = 500.833; Likelihood Ratio = 28.090; p-value < .001***	

To evaluate the classification performance at all possible thresholds, the Receiver Operating Characteristic Curve (ROCC) was analyzed to determine the model accuracy performance using two parameters; true positive rate (sensitivity) and false positive rate (1-specificity). The Area under ROCC Curve (AUC) measured the total two-dimensional areas under the entire ROCC through an integral calculus paradigm that provided an aggregate measure of classification performance across all possible thresholds. As shown in Figure 1, the classification model AUC was 65.6 percent, indicating a moderate classification performance.
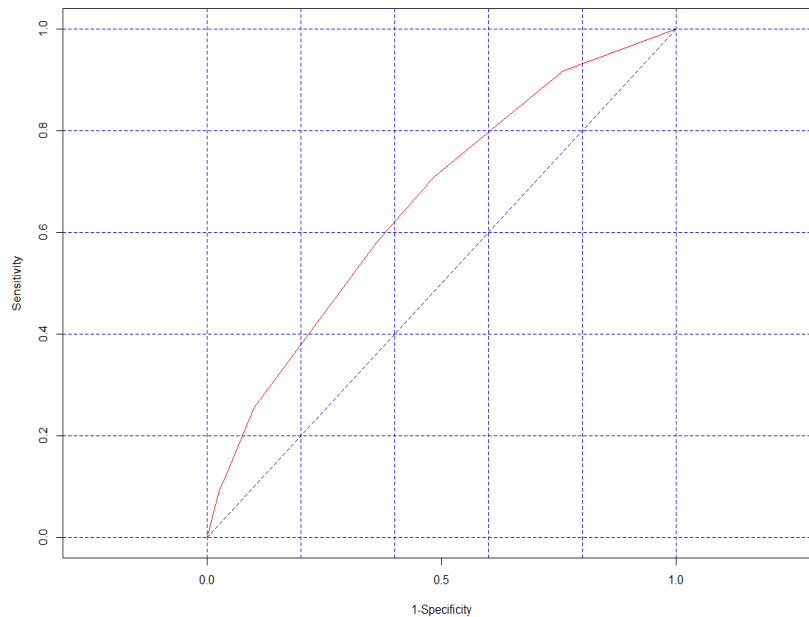
(AUC) = 0.656 with sensitivity and specificity are equal as cut-off value

Figure 1: Receiver Operating Characteristic Curve showing Area Under ROCC Curve
(The visualization was developed by the author using R)

Finally, the model was put through classification experimental testing by inputting one sample from unseen data and having a model classified outcome. In this case, as shown in Table 6, if a subject were in a pilot in command position, held an air transport pilot license, and were a line pilot with a check airman or instructor position, the model would classify this subject as having no intention of leaving his/her aviation job.

Table 6: Binary Logistic Regression Classification Result from One Unseen Data

Feature Variable	One Record of Unseen Data Input

Pilot Rank (RNK)	Pilot in Command (1)
Pilot License (LIC)	Air Transport Pilot License (0)
Pilot Position (POS)	Line Pilot with Check Airman or Instructor Position (1)
Intention to Leave Aviation Job	No (Predicted Value = 0.257, less than 0.5 cut-off value)

Note. Reference class = pilot in command (RNK), commercial pilot license (LIC) and line pilot with check airman or instructor position (POS) respectively. Reference class would be labeled as 1.

As to the research objective, which was to develop the most suitable binary classification model, the model needed to be tested and evaluated for classification performance. In order to effectively evaluate the classification ability, the evaluation was based on a test set that was derived from the 25 percent or 153 samples of the main data sets. Table 7 shows the result of classification performance evaluation based on the confusion matrix.

Table 7: Confusion Matrix: Classification Performance Evaluation
(Based upon 153 Unseen Samples)

Confusion Matrix	Predicted	Intention to Leave	No Intention to Leave
		Actual	
Intention to Leave		1	3
No Intention to Leave		36	113

As shown in Table 8, to determine the classification performance on the basis of the test set classification results from the confusion matrix, the model classification accuracy was 74.5 percent. The True Positive Rate (Sensitivity) was 2.7 percent and the True Negative Rate (Specificity) 97.4 percent. Sensitivity or True Positive Rate refer to the proportion of those who met the conditions that gave rise to a positive result from the model classification. Conversely, specificity or True Negative Rate refer to the proportion of those who do not have the condition that received a negative result from the model classification. Accuracy should be more than 0.5 in order to ensure better classification performance than just flipping a coin. Recall that the goal of the test was to accurately identify pilots having the intention (or meeting the conditions) to leave. The number of false positives should be very low, which requires a high Specificity or True Negative Rate, that is to say, pilots who do not have the intention (or do not meet the conditions) to leave are highly likely to be excluded by the model classification results. The classification performance as measured by the test set revealed a very high Specificity or True Negative Rate of 97.4 percent, which indicated that this classification model had a high classification performance.

Table 8: Classification Performance Resulted from Test Set

Classification Performance Index	Results
Accuracy	0.745
Sensitivity or True Positive Rate	0.027
Specificity or True Negative Rate	0.974

The results of the analysis indicate that pilot rank, pilot license, and pilot position play a critical role in assessing the likelihood of Thai pilots leaving their aviation job. These variables were impacting factors that significantly determined the likelihood of leaving aviation job. Finally, as shown in Table 9, in this study, all hypotheses were supported.

Table 9: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Result	Explanation

H1	Supported	Pilots holding a rank of Pilot in Command are less likely to leave aviation job.
H2	Supported	Pilots holding Air Transport Pilot License are less likely to leave aviation job.
H3	Supported	Line pilots with no other extra duties are less likely to leave aviation job.
H4	Supported	The binary classification model with the holdout validation method is fitted with empirical data.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study contributes to the growing academic literature on Thai pilots' intention to leave aviation job. A practical contribution from this study is the finding that job demands play the most influential role in determining the likelihood that a pilot will leave the organization. This is in keeping with previous studies conducted in various contexts on the same issue (Hoonakker, Carayon, & Korunka, 2013; Jourdain & Chênevert, 2010). Training a pilot is costly by nature. It is therefore advisable that airlines make an effort to support their pilots by providing adequate job resources and keep their flying morale high in order to retain them on board. Moreover, airlines should pay attention to lower rank pilots with commercial pilot license and provide more suitable career plan to those pilots since, according to the results of this study, pilots with second-in-command rank holding commercial pilot license have the higher chance of leaving aviation jobs. In addition, since, as the results indicate, pilots with extra duties have a higher chance of leaving aviation jobs, airlines should allocate adequate job resources to those pilots in order to mitigate stressful work-related situation stemming from job demands. Moreover, in order to maintain an acceptable level of flight crew members in operation, airlines should enhance their recruitment marketing strategies so as to attract potential flight crew members to join the fleet and help mitigate pilot shortage risk (Wangyuenyong, 2017).

Another academic contribution of this study is the harmonious utilization of data science discipline approach in the behavioral sciences context. Compared to legacy techniques, a classification model fitted with train set and evaluated by test sets provides more insightful results in terms of classification and reduces the chance of overfitting the model (Kotsiantis, Zaharakis, & Pintelas, 2007). However, even though adapting a classification model from data sciences discipline helped to clarify answers to problems in behavioral science, there were limitations. First, samples were collected from Thai pilots. Thereby, the result from this study might apply to those flying in Thailand. Future studies should extent the samples to an international context. Second, this study is quantitative. Future research should be qualitative as this method allows for deeper and richer results (QRCA, 2021).

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National Cultural Dimension Challenges from Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos in Developing Hotel's Organizational Performance

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Abstract
Measures needed to improve organizational performance may run counter to cultural dimensions as identified by Hofstede (2001). This mixed methodology study looks at the cultural dimensions of Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar and at how they can stand in the way of reaching organizational goals. The quantitative approach consists of a survey of hotel managers from those three countries. In addition, in-depth structured interviews were conducted with twelve managers from the selected hotels to determine the impact of cultural dimensions on hotels' performance in terms of working relationship, changing and adapting to circumstances, coordinating and collaborating, and holding employees accountable. Hypothesis testing and data analysis were done by reference statistics and a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The results indicate that the natural cultural dimensions are heavily linked to the business operations and may put high performance in a quandary. Time orientation has the highest direct effect on hotels performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos, followed by power distance and collectivism.

Keywords: Change, Collaboration, Cultural dimensions, High performance, Management, Organization

1. Introduction
One of the main factors for business organizations to perform at their highest level is the focus on daily operations. Keeping customers and clients satisfied with the products or services requires top management to keep front-line staff empowered to make the right decisions. Moreover, people with diverse skills and talents should be aligned in order to utilize their knowledge and wisdom toward attaining the organization's goals and objectives and making its operations sustainable (Claus, 2019). This requires employees to take initiatives towards innovation and creativity, which in turn necessitates an open channel for communication among colleagues for new ideas and for mutual respect from those making informal contributions. Initiatives and innovative ideas are especially critical when a company need to navigate through an instable economic environment and uncertain times. Often time, these are situations where an organization needs to re-examine the organizational framework and the way its conducts business (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Much of its success depends on the working relationship within the organization and on the level of trust, confidence, and commitment among employees.

How working relations operate within an organization and contribute to maintaining a high performance depends in part on the culture of the country where the organization is based (Carey et al., 2019). Obviously, it also depends on the culture of the organization and its main orientations. While both cultures play a critical role in the performance of a firm, this study focuses on national cultural dimensions as defined by Hofstede (2001). More specifically, it seeks to examine the challenges the cultural traits of three countries geographically and culturally connected, Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos, pose to hotels in developing their organizational performance. Ideally an organization wants to continuously perform at a high standard and expects all its members to be dedicated to contributing to its success (Jyoti & Rani, 2017). In practice, however, challenges of all sorts make this goal difficult to attain, in particular, challenges arising from national cultural orientations. For instance, as Panphae and Ploysri's (2018) research on the national cultural factors that may affect hotel's performance in Thailand reveals, in terms of working relationship, management in the Thai hotels included in the study is more authoritative with subordinates than would be the case in most Western cultures. As their study shows, employees must, among other obligations, show extreme respect to their superiors, accept that there is inequality in the workplace as well as injustice in the performance appraisal, and come to grasp with the fact that any privileges must first come from those in higher positions.

As can be easily gathered from the above, in this kind of working environment, management is unlikely to be keen on letting individuals have much freedom in terms of taking personal initiatives and even less in terms of making decisions no matter how skilled or talented individuals may be. Needless to say, under such circumstances, there is also little room for employee empowerment. As will be discussed in subsequent sections, another important cultural dimension is the degree of uncertainty tolerated by individuals, which in the case at hand means that any form of uncertainty is considered a threat to be dealt with immediately by management due to the fear that it might disturb the status and privileges of one's position. Clearly, there needs to be a proper understanding of the culturally-induced mindset behind the working attitude and behavior of hotel employees in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos. In examining the challenges hotel's organizational performance is confronted with in terms of the national cultural dimensions of these three countries, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Which national cultural dimensions of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand have a direct effect on hotels' performance?
2. What are the challenges hotels in their efforts to improve their organizational performance face with regard to working relationship, changing and adapting to circumstances, coordinating and collaborating, and holding people accountable?

2. Literature Review
- *Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions*
Geert Hofstede (2001) pioneered the way research is conducted with regard to cross-cultural issues in the workplace by examining how an individual or a group of individuals' cultural beliefs and values have an impact on their working behavior and thought patterns (Farrell & Hutasingh, 2018). Hofstede's vast amount of data collection and analysis of 100,000 individuals representing 40 different countries gave rise to a cultural dimension theory model for analyzing culture in the workplace that has been widely used since by many research scholars (Towers & Peppler, 2017; Carolina, 2019). Hofstede's cultural dimensions are discussed next. They include power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long- versus short-term orientation.

- Power Distance

This dimension was introduced by Hofstede in 2001 to describe the extent to which members of institutions and organizations within a given culture expect and accept power to be unevenly distributed. In hierarchical organizations, individuals who do not possess any power of influence willingly obey orders by those who possess more power than others (Fang, 2012). Those who come from a lower stratum in society accept the degree of power to be unfairly distributed (Merkin, 2006). A strong hierarchical structure emits a sense of awareness for employees to limit their communication disagreeing with the manager's decision, curb their level of influence in the organization's decision-making process, and do their best to avoid taking part in activities related to making decisions (Kumar Moona Haji Mohamed et al., 2013). If a team is formed, members rely on top management as the ultimate authority for determining what ought to be correct (Chieochan, Thanasankit, & Corbitt, 2005). When it is a family-owned business, the affairs are conducted less formally with a slower decision-making process, and management is centralized on the basis of seniority and personal relationships (Adams & Vernon, 2004). However, in organizations that have a lesser chain of command, power is distributed equally amongst individuals and no one has strict authority over each other (Hofstede, 2013). With more power in hand, managers can be more effective in terms of responding swiftly to poor performance while simultaneously modeling appropriate behaviors for their employees (De Waal & Akaraborworn (2013).

- Individualism/Collectivism and Organizational Working Performance

Individuals in society where individualism is highly valued tend to focus more on their own interests such as, for example, taking care of their own family, and expect others to respect their privacy and rights. For them, being able to speak one's mind takes priority over minding the working relations (Koch & Koch, 2007). In contrast, collectivism, where the extended family predominates, encourages people to have sense of belonging together. Maintaining harmony is key and working relations should be the focus rather than completion of the task assignments (Reeve et al., 2014). In exchange, loyalty is granted. Individualism and collectivism influence the way people communicate and interact with each other in social gatherings and in functional situations (Hofstede, 2011). Nations that value individualism promote a working culture in which employees have more freedom in engaging in development or experimentation with products, services, and ideas. Their views and opinions may have a significant impact and influence on shaping the organizational outcome (Jirachiefpattana, 1997). A collectivist culture, on the other hand, expects people to conform and strictly comply (Hofstede, 2001). In a working culture where collectivism is highly valued, studies show that employees feel more at ease when tasks are procured as a group, knowing that there is a sense of security and loyalty with each other when the same language is being spoken and they are doing work in an easy and relaxing manner (Petison & Johri, 2008).

There is no feeling of individual pressure as everyone shares in the responsibilities and expectations to perform efficiently and effectively. There is also no need to feel overburdened or disheartened when the desired results have not been met (Amster & Böhm, 2015). The golden rule for working in a collective cultural system is to ensure that the people around you, especially top executives, do not 'lose face' or respect from your actions and behaviors. No matter how doomed to failure the idea and resources given to execute from the top committee, one has to refrain from stating reasons that point to the illogical thinking and constraints that lead to attaining the aims. In short, the importance of not dragging down the name and reputation of others prevails over reaching the organizational goal (Thanasankit & Corbitt, 2002). The organization can utilize its collective strength to help to cope with volatile disruptions in the economy (Grant, 2016). According to Karlgaard and Malone (2015), in

order for the collective group to deal with changes, high performing organizations rely on cohesive teams that act as the driving force in executing the decisions across the entire organization.

- *Masculinity/Feminism and Organizational Working Performance*

Whereas in a masculine society, people are more focused on being successful and achievers, in a feminine society, they put a lot of efforts in caring about the wellbeing and health of others, as well as promoting a quality of life' (Hsu, Woodside, & Marshall, 2013). While individuals in a masculine society tend to be assertive, ambitious, and admiring of those who are strong, a feminine society is more about being modest, caring for others, and displaying sympathy for individuals experiencing an unfortunate situation (Armstrong, Francis, & Grow, 2017). Femininity seeks balance between one's family and duties and, unlike masculinity which seems to be oblivious to feelings, take emotions into account (Hofstede, 2006). In a society where masculinity dominates, people tend to be less in favor of cooperation among each other. According to Promsri (2013), there is a heavy leaning on the side of femininity within an organization when workers hope to see managers express their good faith in being concerned for the well being and welfare of others and promote strong bonds in the work environment. In other words, management style is expected to assume the role of a paternalistic figure by putting an effort in dealing with the emotions and feelings of employees coping with their task assignments (Promsri, 2013).

As a result, discussions on work performance will first revolve around the state of mind of workers and then around configuring a way for them to do their job more effectively (Saratun & Rungruang, 2013). In a working culture that embraces feminine values, it is therefore comprehensible for staff members to bring their family life and issues into the organization since the workplace is considered an extension of a social living space for individuals to meet and greet new people (Sunny, Patrick, & Rob, 2019). This sets the platform for co-workers to open up more about themselves and reciprocate their sentiments with one another. The friendlier the workplace, the stronger the chances of retaining workers (Kantabutra & Saratun, 2011). Whenever problems arise within the organization management provide immediate attention to the situation, such as for example, easing the conditions, which have been making groups compete against each other for resources or are making other workers feel uncomfortable at their job (Anurit, Selvarajah, & Meyer, 2011).

- *Uncertainty Avoidance and Organizational Working Performance*

Uncertainty avoidance may be defined as the level of tolerance of key decision-making unit in dealing with unstructured situations that make the behavior feeling comfortable or uncomfortable (Minkov & Hofstede, 2014). In cultures with a low degree of tolerance in experiencing uncertain situations, people will take an immediate, but often irrational, action to prevent any conditions that will be tightening behavior codes and enforcing laws and rules sporadically. They will monitor any suspected behaviors deemed to be deviant and are unwilling to accept any situation that challenges their status quo (Matusitz & Musambira, 2013). According to Hofstede (2006), high uncertainty avoidance often causes people in organizations to see threats everywhere and get too emotional. They may not able to function when there is no clarity and a structure is lacking. An organizational work culture with a high level of uncertainty avoidance has the tendency to put up mental default practices that are resistant towards adapting to the changes. Higher management's immediate response towards dealing with changes is to set the system in risk avoidance mode by carrying out policies and guidance procedures for employees to adhere and comply without much questioning (Swierczek & Ha, 2003).

The rationale for adopting a high uncertainty avoidance stance is the belief that people will perform much better in a safe and conforming environment as opposed to one that is constantly shifting, which would make workers feel inconvenient in managing things (Pinkse & Kolk, 2012). Organizations become trapped in their own stubborn ways by believing that they perform much better when the operation of things are more stable; these organizations hide in their shells like a turtle and wait for the external environment to be fully stabilized for the next course of action (Kaplan, 2008). The stronger resistance to the changes, the weaker the organizational performance (Hallikainen and Laukkanen, 2015). Unknown and unfamiliar ties stemming from uncertainties make managers seek for immediate security without entertaining the thoughts of challenging or experimenting with some innovative/creative ideas. The tendency is for them to look for outside advice as a quick solution to remedy the state of affairs, which they strongly view as a problem (Foucreault & Ollier-Malaterre, 2017). Low-uncertainty avoidance organizations on the other hand take all challenges on a daily basis, are in self-control regardless of what the situation is, analyze differences as an opportunity to learn, and work through the chaos and ambiguous surrounding (Nakata, 2009). Individuals or organizations that have a strong habit of avoiding any issues deemed uncertain will tend to feel more apprehensive and, therefore, take quick procedures to stamp out the level of ambiguity (Hofstede, 2001d). In this study, uncertainty avoidance therefore means taking actions immediately to reduce ambiguity in the workplace over performance.

- *Long-Term Orientation and Organizational Working Performance*
When social psychologist Michael Harris Bond, who was doing work on time orientation in Asia, met Hofstede in the early eighties, they put up a study that uncovered a new, fifth dimension of culture (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). Initially called Confucian dynamism, it was later renamed long-term orientation and then defined as long-term versus short-term orientation. It relates to the extent of holding a perspective that is focused on the future with minimal thoughts on being conservative with time (Durach & Weingarten, 2017). It is about investing in the future. In contrast, short-term orientation focuses on personal steadiness and stability, respecting the values of tradition, and pursuing happiness over peace of mind (Fang, 2003). Long-term-oriented organizations have parameters to indicate the extent of employees' loyalty, partaking in reciprocal duties, and meeting obligations with superiors. It is not unusual for workers to feel that that conformity, respect, and personal loyalty to supervisors are important and should be rewarded (Khan & Panarina, 2017).

Partners may invest heavily over time in forming relationships, which, once formed, are viewed as long-term partnerships and long-term contracts (Sarason, Yuthas, & Nguyen 2018). Such partnerships are characterized by a great deal of reciprocity and information exchange that results from the deep, almost family-like ties formed between business partners. According to Kuo et al. (2017), organizations following a long- term orientation tend to abstain from seeking immediate gratification, which they delay, strongly advocating instead for the staff to make all necessary sacrifices for the future (Lawler & Siengthai, 1997). In a society that values time in the long term there is a belief that truth will prevail as the situation runs its course, thus making the context more ascertain for better decision making, and stronger minded to save and invest, while the demonstration of guile and perseverance become more imminent (Hofstede, 2001). This research thus defines long-term orientation as looking into the future within the workplace for performance.

3. Conceptual Framework and Methodology
In order to examine the challenges some of national cultural dimensions of Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos pose to a hotel's performance, the following conceptual framework was developed:
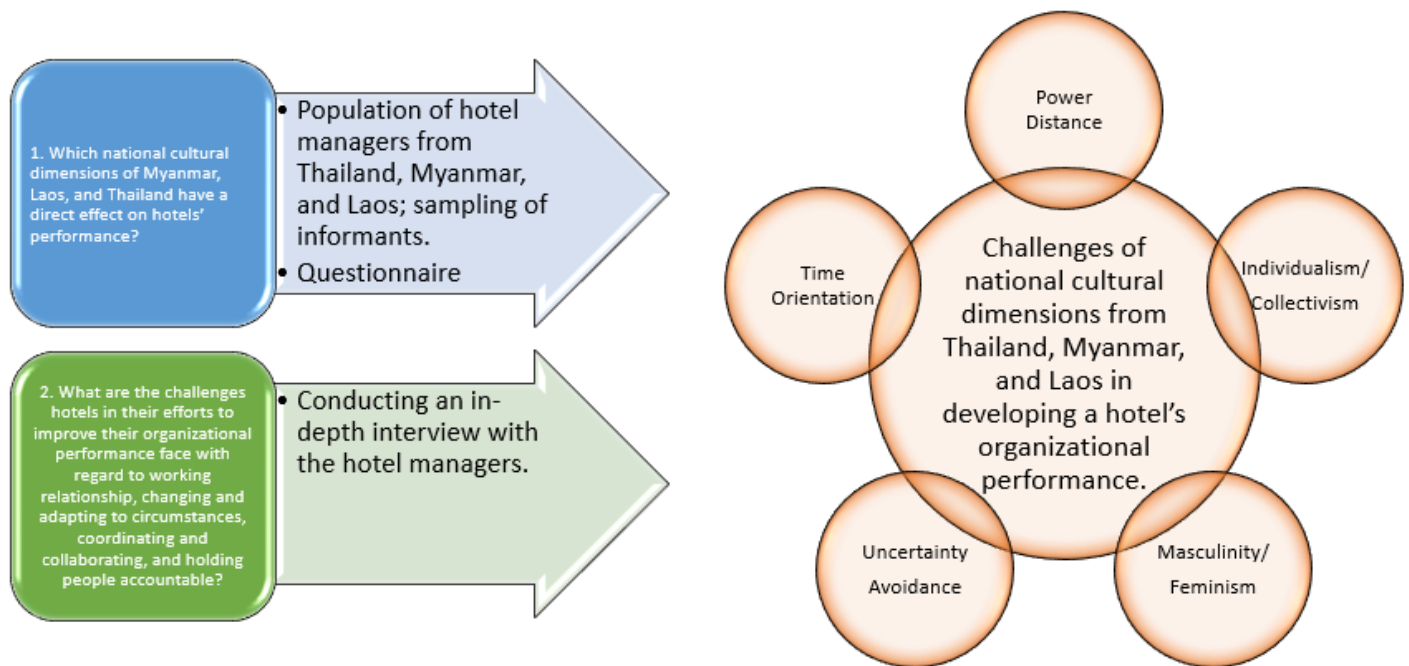
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for National Cultural Dimensions Analysis

This study was inspired by Panphae and Ploysri's (2018) research that sought to provide an understanding of the national and business cultures of hotel entrepreneurs and offer guidelines for remedial action. It used a mixed methodology. The quantitative approach consisted of a survey of hotel managers from Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos. As to the qualitative approach, it involved conducting in-depth interviews with 12 hotel managers and collecting secondary data such as academic papers, books, journal articles, and related research, The data collected were then compared and confirmed. The population in this study comprised hotel managers or owners based in Chiang Mai (Thailand), Yangon (Myanmar), and Vientiane (Laos). This amounted to 206, 187, and 194 managers respectively from the three countries for a total of 587. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), the proper sample size should be 45% of the population. Using purposive sampling (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016), 400 hotels were selected in these three cities: 140 in Chiang Mai, 127 in Rangoon, and 133 in Vientiane.

The questionnaire consisted of four parts: (1) Demographic data of hotel managers and background of the hotels; (2). Opinions of hotel managers on Hofstede's' national cultures; (3) Organizational performance; and (4) Suggestions and business etiquette when running business in those countries. The reliability test of the instrument was analyzed by Cronbach's alpha coefficient with 0.73 - 0.88 and the whole questionnaire was 0.84. After selecting informants for in-depth interviews, the researcher sent consent letters to all of them and made appointments. Each interview lasted for 1-1.30 hours. The interviewers took notes and also recorded the interviews. The data was then thoroughly analyzed.   Triangulation was uses to checking the data liability first. The analytical process was implemented by ordering and decoding the data and interpreting the results. The descriptive statistics included frequency, means, and standard deviations. Hypothesis testing and data analysis were done by reference statistics and a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). In evaluating the consistency of the model with data and hypothesis testing, the Linear Structural Relationship (LISREL) model was employed.

The LISREL model is a linear program showing which independent factors will have a direct or indirect effect on the dependent factors. The results were analyzed by a statistic program in order to identify the frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and the descriptive statistics (Causal structural models with latent variable) for testing the relationship between Hofstede's' Cultural Dimension and the hotels' performance.

4. Results and Discussion

Figure 1 below shows the results of the causal model of national culture analysis with regard to hotel business' performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos.

Chi-Square=885.34, df=465, P-value=0.30000, RMSEA=0.0108
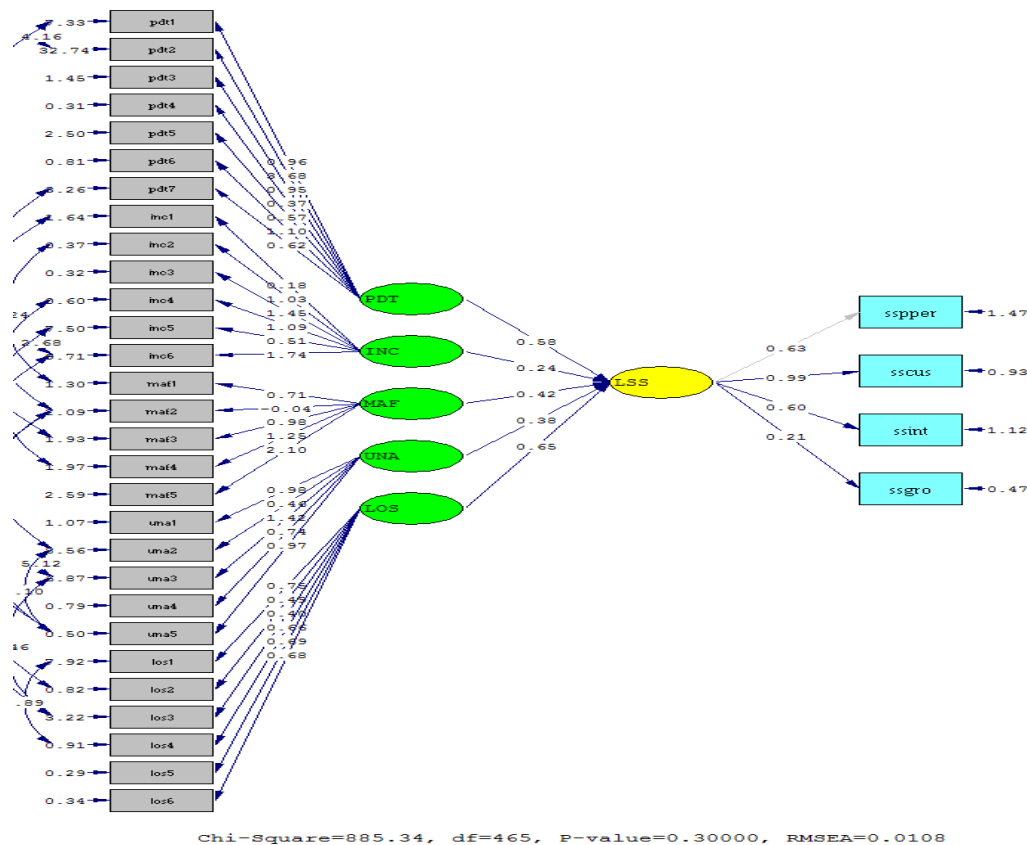
Figure 2: Casual Model of National Culture Analysis in Hotel Business Performance

Figure 2 indicates a relationship between types of relationship congruence to evidently with a qui-square (x^2) of 858.34 at a degree of freedom (df) of 465 and a probability (p) of 0.30. In addition, as shown in Table 1, the GFI equals 0.94, the AGFI, 0.95, the RMSEA 0.01, and the SRMR 0.03.

Table 1: Congruence of Model Fitting

Index	level of Acceptance	result	conclusion
Qui-square	Non-significant Qui-square or P-value ≥0.05	0.30	accept
GFI	≥0.90	0.94	accept
AGFI	≥0.90	0.95	accept
RMSEA	≤0.05	0.01	accept
SRMR	≤0.05	0.03	accept
CN	≥200	360	accept

With a score of 0.65, time orientation, either long or short term (LOS), has the highest direct effect on hotels performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos. With a score of 0.58, power distance (PDT) is the second national cultural dimension to have an effect on hotel performance in these three countries. Masculinity and femininity (MAF) rank third with score of 0.42, uncertainty avoidance fourth with a score of 0.38, and individualism and collectivism fifth with a score of 0.24. The three countries score high on time orientation with a mean of 4.57, 4.16, and 4.09 respectively. The scores are consistent with research conducted by Fisher et al. (2006), who argued that time orientation was very little different, especially within the same region. In this study, the three countries had long, medium, and short-term plan to cope with a rapidly changing business environment. However, Thailand and Myanmar are more long-term oriented when doing business than Laos where the tendency is to take action sooner.

- ***Hypothesis Testing***

- *Hypothesis 1* (Power distance has a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos) – the results show that power distance had a direct impact on hotel performance in those three countries (b = 0.58, (p)>0.05). People accept inequality in power distribution and inequality in human's physical strength and wisdom. The in-depth interviews indicated that respondents in those countries accepted power distance and found inequality in the workplace and have leaders who were more authoritative to be normal. All subordinates must pay respect to their leaders, accept injustice in performance appraisal, and privileges must be enjoyed by those in higher positions.

- *Hypothesis 2* (Individualism and collectivism have a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos) – It was found that individualism and collectivism have a direct effect on hotels' performance in the three countries (b = 0.24, (p)>0.05). The results are in keeping with Wiengarten et al.'s (2011) study which focused on how national cultures may affect business investment and organizational performance and found that individualism has an effect on organization's performance. They are also consistent with that of Hammou et al. (2014) who determined that national cultures had a direct effect on the strategic and financial planning of cement companies in Morocco and the USA. They found that individualistic persons were more innovative than those in collectivist societies as they had more freedom thinking, making decision, and choosing their style of work.

- *Hypothesis 3* (Masculinity and femininity have a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos) – Testing demonstrated that masculinity and femininity had a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos: (b = 0.42, (p)>0.05). The results of the study indicate that Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar are male dominated societies with a high score masculinity of 3.96, 3.83, and 3.43 respectively. Male-dominated societies emphasize power and work accomplishment and place much importance on material belongings or money. This is in keeping with Wiengarten et al. (2011) who found that masculinity was more conducive to personal motivation and higher work determination than femininity, which puts more emphasis on spiritual aspects (Deresky, 2014).

- *Hypothesis 4* (Uncertainty avoidance has a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos) – Uncertainty avoidance has a direct effect on hotel performance in the three countries: (b = 0.38, (p)>0.05). This finding is in keeping with Wiengarten et al.'s (2011) study that showed that employees in the organization were risk takers and were very enthusiastic about their work. Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos scores were 3.28, 3.76, and 4.01 respectively, which were high and indicate that the respondents in these three countries did not embrace a high-risk-orientated working culture. This is corroborated by the in-depth interviews. People in these three countries tend to rely on occupations that are very stable

such as civil servants and can fulfill one's social status. The perception, however, is that civil officers have very low efficiency compared to people employed in the private sectors. This is also consistent with Hammou et al. (2014) discussed earlier.

- *Hypothesis 5* (Time orientation has a direct effect on hotel' performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos) – this cultural dimension has a direct effect on hotels' performance in the three countries (b = 0.65, (p)>0.05). Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos have scores of 4.57, 4.16, and 4.09, respectively. These scores, which are high, show that the respondents in all three countries are long-term oriented. In-depth interviews indicate that interviewees have short, medium, and long-term plans to cope with the changing business environment.

Table 2: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Accept	Reject
Power distance has a direct effect on hotel' performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos.	✓	
Individualism and collectivism have a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos.	✓	
Masculinity and femininity have a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos.	✓	
Uncertainty avoidance has a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos.	✓	
Time orientation has a direct effect on hotel performance in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos.	✓	

- ***Challenges Changing National Cultural Dimensions***
The following is a summary of the replies from the twelve hotel managers interviewed on the challenges posed by the national cultural dimensions discussed above.

- *Power Distance Challenges*
One the challenges posed by power distance, as explained by some interviewees, is that although there is a promotion of equality in the workplace, there is a sense of obligation among the staff to accept inequality and submit to authority from top management, especially if the business has a sole owner. It was also mentioned that people in societies not equal, the prevailing attitude in organizations is to be highly obedient to superiors. There is a grip on the conservative way of managing the business. Strong hierarchical traditions and beliefs within the organization clearly mean that the working relationship revolves mostly around those who have a strong influence in the chain of command (Beugelsdijk, Maseland, & van Hoorn, 2015). Workers adhere to those in power and will make some changes to the way they function in the workplace only if they have been given direct orders from the seniority level. While the staff and employees carry about their roles and duties, the initiative for working in unison will never be consistent until the authorized person with power demand that people do so (Brouthers, Marshall, & Keig, 2016). The idea of holding people accountable is not an ideal practice for this type of working climate. No matter how many mistakes and errors may pile up, the most important thing is to protect the reputation of those who are associated with managerial or supervisory positions (Drogendijk & Slangen, 2006).

- *Individualism/Collectivism Challenges*
The interviewees' comments reveal that people tend to work mainly as a group, regardless of whether the working procedures rely on a particular individual to make corrections or adjustments to the process. No matter what, individual feels that it is best to get others involved. Individuals are expected to treat other employees like family members and heed the importance of their relatives by participating in special occasions such as birthdays, weddings, and funerals. Given the very high collective working culture of Thailand, Laos and

Myanmar, relationships are highly nurtured. Anything that might be deemed to be a threat to or undermine the camaraderie between workers will be immediately be dealt with as poisonous. As pointed out by a number of interviewees, strong working relationships, however, can be the demise of standard performance as group-thinking creeps in and puts pressure on peers to move along with others, even if the rationale is weak. The importance of maintaining ways of working collectively is given much consideration over other matters that have given rise to new ways of responding to competition or adjusting to new business environments (Foss & Lindenberg, 2013). Still, any changes in the workplace will always maintain the ceremonial rituals and traditions that keep people working together and respecting each other as family members. Everyone is expected to take part in scheduled events and the sense of being part of the family encourages workers perform to coordinate their efforts and collaborate with fellow co-workers. People encourage one another to do their best and are often willing to assist if they can. Sometimes extra favors are done out of goodwill with no expectation that the recipients reciprocate. They are expected, nonetheless, to show gratitude by for instance offering a snack and/or gracious words (Kim & Aguilera, 2016).

- Masculinity/Feminism Challenges:
Several managers emphasized that everyone felt they were treated fairly regardless of the character or personality of the individual considered. According to management, everyone is given the opportunity to perform at his/her best in the job position. Employees can demonstrate their skills and abilities as long as this does not make other employees, especially those in higher positions, feel uncomfortable or uneasy about not being able to perform well in front of others. In preserving working relations employees need to be aware of functioning with other group members and balance changes in the working system while upholding the cultural values and traditions that top management would like to see being carried out (Phillips, Pullen, & Rhodes, 2014). In a spirit of collaboration, workers are sometimes asked to coordinate with other people who have different skills. To keep a smooth working relationship the thought of preventing colleagues from feeling the pressure to perform is always kept in mind so that others may get the chance to do their best, regardless of whether time and resources are being heavily over consumed. When the expected results are not coming on time, a meeting will be held to discuss the situation at hand and allow employees involved in the process to explain what they plan to do to remedy the situation. As part of the process, top management strive to show much empathy and make sure to encourage employees to complete the tasks and not hold anyone accountable (Klier et al., 2017).

- Uncertainty Avoidance Challenges
Management makes adjustments every so often for the sake of organizational development. However, plans for adapting to the changes do not really involve employee who are simply shifted around and monitored to see how their work progresses. Typically, the staff will leave risk issues and other relevant concerns to management to deal with and will just go about carrying their duties. The working relationship between employees and those in higher positions revolves around the expectations from executives in charge. Employees are simply required to respond to requests, including those coming abruptly with scant details if any. Management decides what is the best course of action and workers oblige, instantaneously adjusting to the changes in the belief that it will lead to good results although the rationale is hardly justified as emotions often swayed in (Maidland & Sammartino, 2015).

Coping with uncertainties is a reactive form of management as executives let issues that constrain organizational performance to accumulate until they are overloaded with problems. Ad hoc committees are then typically set up to identify the problems. Once they have been identified, rearrangements are made for the staff to work together in getting the method corrected under the watchful eye of supervisors (Marano et al., 2016). Only management can determine what is considered acceptable and normal and what the threats may be toward the organization. Meetings will be held to discuss obstacles to raising the level of organizational performance but one concern is that nobody gets into a spat with those colleagues who may be part of the problem (Seo, Kim, & Jang, 2018). It is best for everyone to preserve the reputation of others rather than openly blaming them and holding them accountable. Moreover, getting into an argument on what is best for the organization would make others feel uncomfortable.

- Time Orientation Challenges

Hotels have plans in place for medium- to long-term responses to competition. Management, however, feels that they should be set forth only if competition level becomes highly aggressive. As some managers interviewed lamented, wnew expectations are raised, the tendency is for workers to stick to their job routines, as there is little interest, if any, in future-oriented self-development. Some people admit that they do not like to get involved with competition as it brings a lot of pressure and disruption to their normal flow of daily activities. When competition becomes too high, it makes working relationship a bit edgy, especially if employees fail to get the outcome sought (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). It is unbearable for managers and employees to be perceived as incompetent adapting to changes as it makes them think that others see them as unqualified for the position. Regardless of whether the plan set forth for engaging in competition produces the right results or not, employees are still expected to demonstrate their loyalty by coordinating and collaborating with others and not questioning authority to gather additional information to make things clear on what is needed to be done. Even if the people in charge of planning are unaware of what the competition actually is, they will be given a briefing on the situation and come up with an approach (Tippmann, Scott, & Mangematin, 2014). How much time the person responsible for making the plans will have depends on the patience of the executive. Failure of the organization to adequately deal with competition is likely to bring shame on executives for being ineffective.

- Challenges Developing Hotels' Organizational Performance

The second question seeks to understand the challenges hotels in their efforts to improve organizational performance face with regard to working relationships, changing and adapting to circumstances, coordinating and collaborating, and holding people accountable. National cultural dimensions are heavily intertwined with one another and set the feelings and mood of employees as well as their working behavior. They can act as a single catalyst that directs the flow of operation. Whatever working philosophy the organization espouses, national cultural dimensions play an intricate role in maintaining the order of things while simultaneously being a total impediment to learning to adjust to changes (Huang & Crotts, 2019; Metiu & Rothbard, 2013). Principles and values are upheld to the point of not questioning authorities even if evidence shows that are not producing effective results. Management should not rely on the old Taylor style of approach whereby people are just cogs of the big machine and can be replaced anytime and anywhere as workers' skills, abilities, talent, and knowledge are not fully utilized to set up a high-performance organization (Gao et al., 2018; Wagner-Tsukamoto, 2008). The challenge for setting up a high-performance organization is therefore to maneuver around natural cultural dimensions planted in the minds of employees and find the leverages that will cause them to adopt the best practices for high performance.

When working with a hierarchical structure, managerial staff alignment is vital to continuously find the best ways of getting the organization to perform at its best (Soldatenko & Backer, 2019; Huang, 2016). The values in comradery and loyalty can quickly erode if the organization is failing to reach its targeted aims. But failures can serve as lessons to be learned or relearned about the working culture. The managerial level of influence should be assessed regarding how well they promote a culture of performance aiming to make the organizational vision and mission become close to reality (Matilla, 2019; Stahl et al., 2010). The continuous search for better methods and applications requires that changes and ideas be accepted, which in turn means that resorting to cultural traditions and customs may not be the proper path. While management assumes the role of guardian of culture as well as that of promoter of high performance, they need to be sensitive to employees' experience in order to determine how improvements can be made and how they can be effective. To do so, they strive to make task procedures clear and encourage them to provide feedback, especially positive feedback that can enhance the outcome (Crotts, 2016; Hartnell, Ou, & Kinicki, 2011).

Coordination and collaboration are essential ingredients for continuous success. For challenges that might be too much to handle, management can hold a meeting with the teams and groups to review the organizational framework and allow members to share insights on what can be changed to improve performance. This should be part of the organizational culture for high performance. Management needs to be patient and be sure to understand the extent of their workers' capabilities and capacity to execute applying higher standards. Moreover, getting people to buy into the idea of high performance is a journey that requires both sides to be tolerant, empathetic, and to make some sacrifices for the greater good (Stamolampros et al., 2020; Cronin et al., 2011). New resources can be added but they will not add real value unless they contribute to achieving the organizations' aims and objectives. While rearrangements can be made, they cannot be an antidote for quick changes and learning. Realignments can be implemented to get people working as one force if the task assignments involve the skills and abilities of all of them and make them feel important in valued in the process.

That said, national cultural dimensions will still stand in the way of shaping mindsets conducive to performance enhancement. It is a matter of time, space, and momentum. Individuals need to be focused on priorities. Providing time is also about letting the workers convert the data into information and then sorting that information for decisive action. Questions also need to be asked and answers compared to find the best solutions to act upon. Moreover, management has to allow the system to run its course for people to discover and explore hidden methods that can help make improvements and develop others' competencies. Resources should be properly allocated for workers or teams to get edge. Most critical is a sense of trust and confidence with fellow colleagues regarding their good intentions for supporting each other (Kitirattarkarn, Araujo, & Neijens, 2019; Gibbs, Grushina, & Gibson, 2013). Any uncertainties, unknowns, or unforeseen events should be anticipated and dealt with instantaneously by managers in order to prevent performance from being forestalled in carrying out the mission objectives. At times, people can become mentally fatigue or get caught up with some troubling personal emotions which can hinder performance. To enlarge the space for performance management should identify people who can be lifelong learning partners that offer mentoring and coaching to restore the spirit of others so that they have a positive outlook and determination for reaching their aims and goals (Francesco & Roberta, 2019; Hinds, Liu, & Lyon, 2011).

Furthermore, conditions allowing people to make efficient and effective progress should be reinforced as a sign of having faith in workers. Management should promote informal conditions for members to provide feedbacks and setting channels for a healthy dialogue that seeks for ways to make the most of the situation (Afsar et al., 2019; Leung et al., 2011). Experienced people can assist one another in asking the right questions for acquiring a much better solution or getting the right corrections for implementation.

5. Conclusion

The findings from this study go beyond the statistical facts and figures of Panphae and Ploysri's (2018) previous study to provide a clear understanding of what hotels operating in countries like Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos need to do to achieve higher performance. This paper clearly shows that the main challenges working with the cultural dimensions identified in this study stand from deeply-entrenched routine behaviors. If an organization wants to promote a culture of high performance, it is up the management team to provide incentives in order for things to gradually morph into the model that is desired. Culture matters, power distance in particular, as it takes those with power to influence others to learn to become a high performing organization without intimidating them. The results highlight what the management side struggle with to get employees working at a high level. The fact of the matter for hotel managers is that getting people to perform at their best demands the very best from people and requires attitudes and beliefs that may go against working values (Chon, Park, & Zoltan, 2020; Acquaah, 2007). Performance is constrained by the need to maintain traditions and values. Employees tend to be more concerned making their fellow workers happy rather than holding them responsible for finding ways for example to cut down on wastes, maximize resources and search for solutions instead of being paralyzed. It becomes a folly when there are two different cultures within the organization that compete with each other instead of complementing each other for helping the organization reach the next level (Koukpaki et al., 2020; Cantwell, Dunning, & Lundan, 2009). Using national cultural dimensions as an excuse for not taking any initiatives to change or adapt working behaviors is common practice (Ullah, 2020; Brouthers & Hennart, 2007). This makes restructuring the organization for high performance challenging.

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Corporate Social Accounting Practices and Firm Sustainability: Empirical Evidence from Listed Firms in Thailand

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Abstract

This qualitative study attempts to investigate the determinants of corporate social accounting practices and firm sustainability through the mediating effect of accounting information advantage, stakeholder acceptance and corporate reputation. Organizational learning capability is a moderating variable of the relationships among corporate social accounting practices and consequences variables. The study seeks to address the following question: What effects does corporate social accounting practices have on consequence variables and firm sustainability. A questionnaire was used for data collection. 126 accounting executives and managers of firms listed on the Stock Exchange of Thailand were selected as respondents. The Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis was employed to examine all hypotheses. The results indicate that some dimensions of corporate social accounting practices, namely social impact recognition, regulation compliance willingness, and environmental management practices have a partial significant positive effect on accounting information advantage, stakeholder acceptance and corporate reputation. Moreover, accounting information advantage has a significant positive effect on stakeholder acceptance, and stakeholder acceptance has a significant positive effect on corporate reputation too. Similarly, the consequences have a significant positive effect on firm sustainability. The moderating variables show some partial support for the hypotheses. This study provides suggestions for managers and directions for future research.

Keywords: Corporate Social Accounting Practices, Firm Sustainability, Organizational Learning Capability

1. Introduction

With globalization increasing, business organizations have been seeking new ways of maintaining their competitive advantage in order to maximize return for shareholders (Svensson & Wagner, 2015). Firms, however, are expected to demonstrate ethical responsibility and not solely focus on profit without considering their impact on others (Tengblad & Ohlsson, 2010). They can no longer ignore corporate responsibility. This is the case today more than ever as the deterioration of the environment affects everyone. The buzzword is corporate social responsibility (CSR). Success is not simply measured in financial terms. Corporate value is maximized through economic, social, and environment

integration (Cho, Chun, & Choi, 2015). Corporate social accounting practices have been gaining currency as a result. The implementation of strategic CSR practice can impact long-term business management and profit maximization. This is a win-win strategy (Igwe & Nwadialor, 2015). Companies signal their social and environmental responsibilities by providing sufficient accounting information about their monetary and non-monetary involvement to the public, not simply shareholders (Nnaemeka, Lucy, & Kevin, 2017; Miragaia et al., 2017) and to stakeholders challenging a firms' accounting (Gray et al., 2014). Corporate social accounting will not only promote their corporate image but also help stakeholders make the proper decisions (Ho et al., 2016). Research indicates that investors tend to invest more in corporations that are aware of their social responsibility (Soobaroyen & Ntim, 2013).

Corporate social accounting enhances a firm's reputation and gives it a competitive advantage (Saeidi et al., 2015). Previous studies indicate that social accounting includes eco-efficiency responsibility, which is positively associated with organizational value (Miragaia, Ferreira, & Ratten, 2017; Davidson, et al., 2019; Tilt, 2020). The United Nations (UN) and the Organization for Economic Corporation and Development (OECD) provide guidelines for social responsibility. Moreover, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) has issued guidelines for any organizational that needs to use GRI standards to prepare a sustainability report and report specific economic and environmental topics and/or their social impacts, including human rights (Global Reporting Initiative, 2016). Registered firms in Thailand have high social responsibility awareness as the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has been encouraging listed firms to enhance their CSR. The SEC provides CSR information in the annual registration statement (56-1) on companies' social and environmental impact, including their covering policy, operational data, and the social and environmental effect. 56-1 statements help investors gain sufficient information that go beyond financial data to making decisions. This study focuses on corporate social accounting and the role this accounting process plays in recognizing, recording, analyzing, and reporting information pertaining to corporate social and environmental activities in the context of Thailand and firms listed on the SEC.

The analysis is based on a sample consisting of accounting executives from listed firms familiar with corporate social accounting practices. Specifically, this study examines the effects of corporate social accounting practices on firm sustainability via accounting information advantage, stakeholder acceptance and corporate reputation. It seeks to achieve the following research purposes:
1. To investigate the mediating effects of each dimension of corporate social accounting practices on accounting information advantage, stakeholder acceptance, and corporate reputation.
2. To examine the effects of accounting information advantage on stakeholder acceptance.
3. To examine the effects of stakeholder acceptance on corporate reputation.
4. To analyze the effects of accounting information advantage, stakeholder acceptance, corporate reputation on firm sustainability.
5. To test the moderating effects of organizational learning capability on the relationship among each dimension of corporate social accounting practices and each consequence.

It is expected that the results will be able to demonstrate that the social accounting implementation is important to increase the firm sustainability.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

- *Corporate Social Accounting Practices*

Social accounting practices may be defined as a management strategy that leads to competitive advantage. It refers to a firm's comprehensive recognition, recording, categorizing, summarizing, and voluntary reporting related to social issues (Sutanto, 2017). The latter includes information about community activities, social and environmental impacts, and regulation compliance. Businesses which ignore their social and environmental responsibility face competitive disadvantage. According to Killian and O'Regan (2016), social accounting practices invoke reliance on community and justice in the distribution of social resources. They can be a guide as to how communities make decision about their social resources. Social accounting is a channel of communication between business organizations and internal and external stakeholders.

- *The Stakeholder and Contingency Theories*

The stakeholder theory provides foundations for developing social and environmental responsibility concepts and voluntary disclosure. It claims that there is a need for powerful stakeholders to ensure that business will be sustainable (Soobaroyen & Ntim, 2013). Therefore, the demand of stakeholders for more information motivates businesses to disclose information voluntarily (Uyar et al., 2013). As to the contingency theory, as an organizational theory, it claims there is no best way to lead a company or make decisions (Morgan, 2007). The theory is applied to describe the phenomena of social and environment responsibility strategy improvement as to the environment change factor. The optimal course of action is contingent, i.e., dependent, on the internal and external situation (Mintzberg, 1979). Corporations attempt to match their strategy to fit with an appropriate situation. Contingent leaders are flexible in choosing and adapting to succinct strategies to suit change in situation at a particular period in time in the running of the organization (Ganescu, 2012).

- *Social Impact Recognition*

Social impact recognition refers to the process of analyzing, monitoring and managing the social impact of the actions of the firm. It is also about supporting and reporting social projects that have a direct and indirect effect on society (Moghadam et al., 2016). Social impact recognition and social accounting implementation have the potential to influence stakeholder acceptance organizational value increase, corporate image, and firm sustainability. Hence, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

> **H1a-1c:** *The higher social impact recognition, the more likely the firm will achieve greater (a) accounting information advantage; (b) stakeholder acceptance; and (c) corporate reputation.*

- *Regulation Compliance Willingness*

Regulation compliance willingness may be defined as the process that focuses on presenting and communicating information related to business ethic and social responsibility (Ertop, 2015). Regulation compliance is one criterion that forces information disclosure and compliance with regulations. Today, many countries encourage listed companies and large firms to prepare reports on social responsibility. This is done through guidelines and voluntarily disclosure. As Gherghina and Vintila (2016) argued, voluntary disclosure provides legitimacy. Based on the above, the following hypotheses can be developed:

> **H2a-2c:** *The higher regulation compliance willingness, the more likely the firm will achieve greater (a) accounting information advantage; (b) stakeholder acceptance; and (c) corporate reputation.*

- *Environmental Management Practices*

Environmental management practices can be defined as the accounting procedure that provides essential financial and non-financial information for corporate environmental management to support decision-making with regard to both internal and external stakeholders (Mokhtar, Jusoh, & Zulkifli, 2016). Prior literature shows that environmental strategy, environmentally-sensitive industries, and organizational size influence environmental management practice (Li F., Li T., & Minor, 2016). The following hypotheses can thus be developed:

> **H3a-3c***: The higher environmental management practices, the more likely a firm will attain greater (a) accounting information advantage; (b) stakeholder acceptance; and (c) corporate reputation.*

- *Accounting Information Advantage*

Accounting information advantage refers to financial and non-financial information in annual report that reflects to real economics of the firms and can be used to correctly predict future cash flows. Accounting statements are not only useful for decision making, they also provide useful information to shareholders, including creditors, employees, and consumers (Sutanto, 2017). Therefore, this study proposed the following hypotheses:

> **H4:** *A firm that enjoys a higher level of accounting information advantage will achieve greater stakeholder acceptance.*
>
> **H6:** *A firm that enjoys greater level of accounting information advantage will achieve better firm sustainability.*

- *Stakeholder Acceptance*

Stakeholder acceptance can be defined as the actions of consenting the operation to achieve **the** objectives of the organization, which leads to firm benefits include getting cooperation, liability and trust without prejudice in the long-term (Lestari, Hamzah, & Maelah, 2019; Arshad, Othman, & Othman, 2012). The stakeholder theory confirms that acceptance is conducive to the creation of a firm reputation as stakeholders are likely to have a positive influence on social responsibility and organizational behavior (Ertop, 2015). Thus, the following hypotheses can be developed:

> **H5:** *A firm with greater level of stakeholder acceptance will achieve better corporate reputation*
>
> **H7**: *A firm with greater level of stakeholder acceptance will achieve better firm sustainability.*

- *Corporate Reputation*

Corporate reputation refers to the identity of a firm that is recognized. According to Svensson and Wagner (2015), corporate reputation influences corporate image, which is a strategic resource that provides an organization with a competitive advantage. Business organizations seek strategic competitive advantages through their responses to societal expectations. Stakeholders come to perceive good attitudes as exceptionally good corporate responsibility (Duff, 2016). Corporate reputation and corporate image are vital strategic resources (Naughton, Wang, & Yeung, 2019). Therefore, the following hypothesis can be developed:

> **H8:** *A firm with a higher level of corporate reputation will achieve greater firm sustainability.*

- *Organizational Learning Capability*

Organizational learning capability refers to a firm's commitment, open-mindedness, employees' development and training, knowledge sharing, idea generation, and knowledge dissemination. They all vital to responding to dynamic changes in both the internal and external environment (Yekini, Adelopo, & Adegbite, 2017). According to Yekini et al.

(2017), it plays an important role in encouraging organizational quality decision and strategic implementation; hence the following hypotheses:

> **H9-11:** *Organizational learning capability will positively moderate the relationship between corporate social accounting practices and (a) accounting information advantage, (b) stakeholder acceptance, and (c) corporate reputation.*

- Control Variables: Sustainable Award, Industry Type, and Corporate Award
Three control variables are included in this study to account for firm characteristics that may influence the hypothesized relationships/ (i) sustainable award, (ii) industry type, and (iii) corporate award.

(i) Sustainable and Corporate Awards – Sustainable and corporate awards reward firms that meet the criteria for environmental, social and corporate governance by the SET. There is a dummy variable; 0 is for firms that qualify for the awards and 1 for firms that do not qualify. To encourage CSR reporting to the public and promote the awards of CSR and sustainability of Thai companies, two awards have been created; the "CSR Award" and the "SET Sustainability Award".

(ii) Industry Type – In this research, industry type refers to the various sectors to which firms listed in Thailand belong. They include the agro and food industry, consumer products, financials, industrial, property construction, resources, services, and technology. In this research study, they are grouped under two categories. The Manufacturing Group includes the agro and food industry, consumer products, industrial, property construction, resources, and technology. The other group, the Other Business Group, includes the financial and service industries. The manufacturing group is more productive to society and the environment than the other business group (Moura-Leite et al., 2012). It is a more important CSR factor than the other business group. The dummy variables are 0 for the manufacturing business groups and 1 for other business groups. Based on all the concepts discussed, above and the three dimensions of corporate social accounting practices (social impact recognition, regulation compliance willingness, and environmental management practices), a conceptual model is developed as shown in Figure 1:
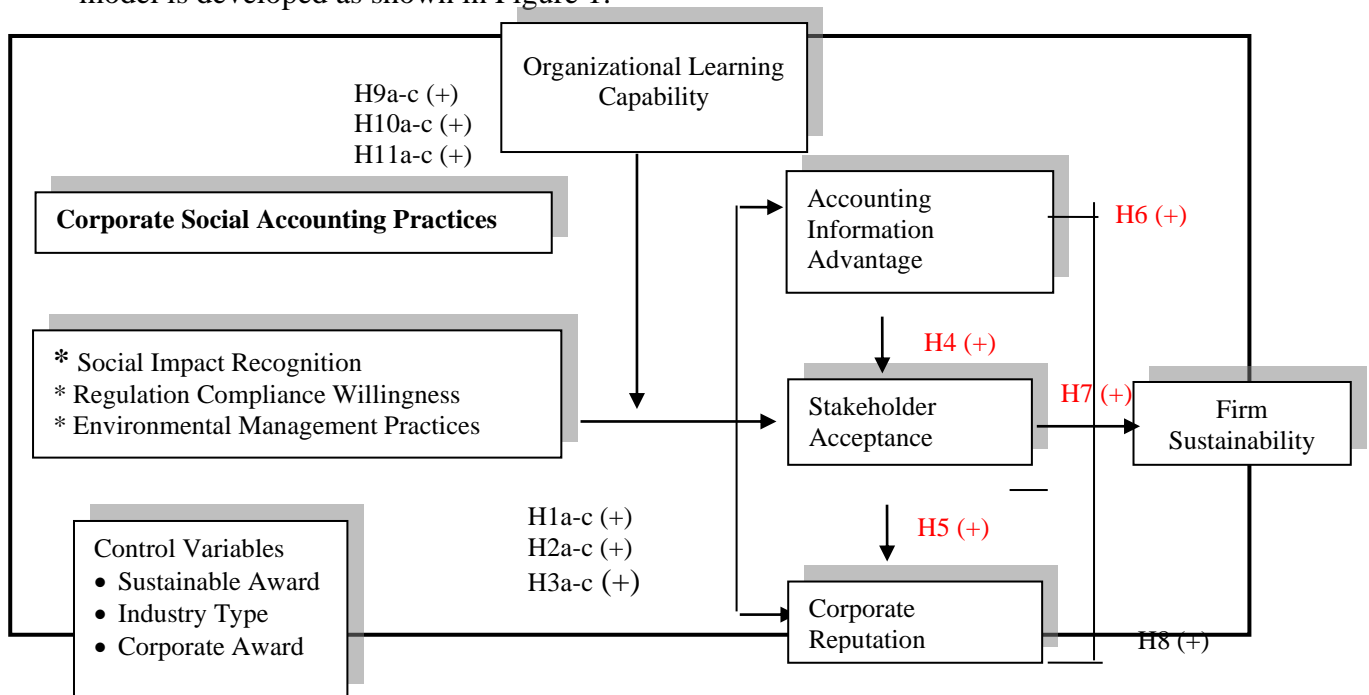
Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Corporate Social Accounting Practices and Firm Sustainability (Created by the Author for this study)

3. Research Methodology

- Sample Selection and Data Collection Procedure

This research focuses on firms listed on the SEC since they have social and environmental awareness and are responsive to the needs, interests, and the potential effects on stakeholders. Another reason for focusing on these firms is that they seek to comply with the guidelines of social responsibility practices issued by the Securities Exchange Commission of Thailand (Corporate Social Responsibility Institute, 2012). According to the database of the Securities Exchange of Thailand (SEC), there are 563 firms listed on the Thai Stock Exchange. The sample was selected using Yamane's (1973) sample size formula that has a 95 percent confidence level and acceptable error (e) = 0.05. The formula as follows:

$$n = N/1+N(e)^2 \text{ (where: } n=563/1+563(0.05)^2) = 234 \text{ firms.}$$

Key participants were accounting executives of listed firms, including accounting directors or accounting managers. The sample size is 234 firms. The acceptable response rate for social science research is 20% or greater for a questionnaire mailed without an appropriate follow-up procedure. Thus, the appropriate sampling was 1,170 firms (234 x 100/20). Since there are only 563 listed firms in Thailand, the population for this study is 563 firms. 5 surveys were undeliverable due to changed locations, therefore 558 surveys were mailed. 126 responses were received and usable for analysis (response rate 22.58%).

- *Questionnaire Development*

In this study, all the constructs in the conceptual model are adapted from the relevant literature as discussed above. To assess the appropriateness of the questionnaire, a validity and reliability test was conducted. The questionnaire was double-checked by an experienced scholar and a pre-test run to ensure clear and accurate understanding before real data collection. The questionnaire consists of six parts. Part 1 collects personal information and Part 2 information about the organizational characteristics. Part 3 evaluates each of constructs in the conceptual model. Questions in the fourth part measure the consequences of corporate social accounting practices and firm sustainability. Part 5 focuses on the moderator variable. Part 6 consists of an open-ended question. All the variables are measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), excluding control variables.

Table 1: Results of Measure Validation

Variable	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Impact Recognition (SIR)	.815 - .839	.841
Regulation Compliance Willingness (RCW)	.726 - .751	.826
Environmental Management Practices (EMP)	.718 - .736	.755
Accounting Information Advantage (AIA)	.807 - .834	.832
Stakeholder Acceptance (StA)	.758 - .772	.854
Corporate Reputation (CR)	.722 - .764	.731
Organizational Learning Capability (OLC)	.712 - .729	.708

- Reliability and Validity

Factor analysis was implemented to assess the underlying relationships of a large number of items and determine whether they could be reduced to a smaller set of factors. The factor analysis was conducted separately on each set of items representing a particular scale due to limited observations. With respect to the confirmatory factor analysis, this analysis has a high potential to inflate the component loadings. Thus, a rule-of-thumb, a cut-off value of 0.40, was adopted (Hair et al., 2010). All factor loadings were greater than the 0.40 cut-off and statistically significant. The reliability of the measurements was evaluated using Cronbach

alpha coefficients. In the scale reliability, Cronbach alpha coefficients were greater than 0.70. This scale of all measures appeared to produce internally consistent results. Thus, these measures were deemed appropriate for further analysis as they showed an accepted validity and reliability.

- Statistical Techniques

The Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis is used to test and examine the hypotheses derived from the conceptual model. All the variables were neither nominal nor categorical data. The OLS analysis is therefore an appropriate method for examining the hypotheses relationships. The equation models of the aforementioned relationships are as follows:

$$\text{Equation 1: } AIA = \alpha_1 + \beta_1 SIR + \beta_2 RCW + \beta_3 EMP + \beta_4(SIR*OLC) + \beta_5(RCW*OLC) + \beta_6(EMP*OLC) + \beta_7 SuA + \beta_8 IT + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Equation 2: } StA = \alpha_2 + \beta_9 SIR + \beta_{10} RCW + \beta_{11} EMP + \beta_{12}(SIR*OLC) + \beta_{13}(RCW*OLC) + \beta_{14}(EMP*OLC) + \beta_{15} SuA + \beta_{16} IT + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Equation 3: } CR = \alpha_3 + \beta_{17} SIR + \beta_{18} RCW + \beta_{19} EMP + \beta_{20}(SIR*OLC) + \beta_{21}(RCW*OLC) + \beta_{22}(EMP*OLC) + \beta_{23} SuA + \beta_{24} IT + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Equation 4: } StA = \alpha_4 + \beta_{25} AIA + \beta_{26} SuA + \beta_{27} IT + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Equation 5: } CR = \alpha_5 + \beta_{28} StA + \beta_{29} SuA + \beta_{30} IT + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Equation 6: } FS = \alpha_6 + \beta_{31} AIA + \beta_{32} StA + \beta_{33} CR + \beta_{34} SuA + \beta_{35} IT + \varepsilon$$

4. Results and Discussion

63.55 percent of the 126 respondents were females and 58.20 percent of them were 40 years old or over. 52.40 percent of them were married. 67.90 percent of them had a level of education higher than undergraduate studies and 35.40 percent of them had at least 20 years of work experience. 36.28 percent of them had an average monthly income of less than 100,000 Thai Baht. 67.56 percent of them held the position of accounting manager and 27.30 percent came from the financials industry. 40.50 percent of the companies had a registered capital of less than 1,000 million Thai Baht. 46.59 percent of them had total assets of less than 10,000 million Thai Baht. In addition, more than two third of the firms (71.66%) had been registered on the Stock Exchange of Thailand for more than 15 years. Nearly half of the firms (48.50%) had been engaged in corporate social responsibility reporting for a period ranging from 5 to 10 years. Meanwhile, 41.23 of the firms had never received any corporate social responsibility award. A bivariate correlation analysis of Pearson's correlation was employed to explore the relationships among variables and detect multicollinearity in multiple regression assumptions. Multicollinearity might occur when inter-correlation in each predict variable is more than 0.80, which indicates a high relationship (Hair et al., 2010) In this study, the bivariat correlation procedure is scaled to a two-tailed test of statistical significance at $p<0.01$ and $p<0.05$. Table 2 shows the results.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

Variables	SIR	RCW	EMP	AIA	StA	CR	OLC
Mean	4.032	4.119	4.127	4.051	4.310	4.216	4.017
SD	.417	.425	.432	.416	.448	.421	.406
SIR	1						
RCW	.641**	1					
EMP	.446**	.643**	1				

AIA	.508**	.581***	.638**	1			
StA	.424**	.624**	.541**	.746***	1		
CR	.570**	.581**	.565**	.518**	.523**	1	
OLC	.474**	.563**	.585**	.528**	.493**	.473**	1

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), ** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Variance inflation factors (VIF) were used to provide information on the extent to which non-orthogonality among independent variables inflated standards errors. As shown in Table 3, the VIFs ranged from 2.651–3.527 and were well below the cut-off value of 10, meaning the independent variables were not correlated with each other (Hair et al., 2010; Stevens, 2002). Therefore, there was no substantial multicollinearity problem encountered in this study. As shown in Table 3 below, the results of the OLS regression analysis affect three dimensions of corporate social accounting practices: accounting information advantage, stakeholder acceptance, and corporate reputation. The hypotheses predicted positive relationships. The results show that social impact recognition had a significant positive impact on accounting information advantage (β_1= 0.236, p <0.05), stakeholder acceptance (β_9= 0.254, p <0.05), and corporate reputation (β_{17}= 0.238, p <0.05). This is because social impact recognition is the process of analyzing, monitoring, managing about the intended and unintended social impact for enhancing of sustainable and environment (Moghadam et al., 2016; Adeyemi & Ayanlola, 2015). Communication on social impact provides a window on corporate behavior and benefits all stakeholders. It also enhances firm reputation and corporate image, which are critical advantages in a competitive market environment (Ali et al., 2015). Hence, Hypotheses 1a-1c were supported.

Secondly, regulation compliance willingness has a significant positive impact on accounting information advantage (β_2= 0.197, p <0.05), stakeholder acceptance (β_{10}= 0.273, p <0.05), and corporate reputation (β_{18}= 0.264, p <0.05). When firms are aware of regulatory compliance and provide information about the underlying regulatory frameworks of the community and the country, it is beneficial to the firms. Gray et al., (2014) found that regulation compliance willingness is one criterion that brings legitimacy. Likewise, voluntary disclosure not only provides a competitive advantage, it is also the foundation of business ethics, which is critical to stakeholder's acceptance, creates a positive image, and ensures the firm's survival in the long term (Gherghina & Vintila, 2016; Ertop, 2015). Thus, Hypotheses 2a-2c were supported. Environmental management practices show no significant influence on accounting information advantage (β_3= 0.031, p >0.05), stakeholder acceptance (β_{11}= 0.026, p >0.05), and corporate reputation (β_{19}= 0.038, p >0.05). This is in keeping with prior research that indicates that environmental performance is negatively related to both voluntary environmental disclosure and firm reputation (Li et al., 2016; Cho et al., 2015). As Ertop (2015) suggested, using environmental management practices techniques helps to make managerial decisions on information disclosure and affects environmental performance improvement. Thus, Hypotheses 3a-3c were not supported.

Moreover, Table 3 shows that accounting information advantage has a significant positive impact on stakeholder acceptance (β_{25} = 0.248, p< 0.05), and firm sustainability (β_{31}= 0.219, p< 0.05). Accounting information advantage leads to favorable operational outcome and continuous performance (Liu & Zhang, 2017). Therefore, Hypotheses 4 and 6 were supported. In addition, the findings indicate that stakeholder acceptance has a positive significant influence on corporate reputation (β_{28}= 0.261, p< 0.05) and firm sustainability (β_{32}= 0.227, p< 0.05). As Arshad et al. (2012) argued, stakeholder acceptance improves a

firm's economic benefits as stakeholders' trust and confidence in the operation of the firm grow in the long run. However, they cautioned that it may mean those stakeholders are involved in the business operation. Thus, Hypotheses 5 and 7 were supported. As reported in Table 3, it was also found that corporate reputation had a positive significant influence on firm sustainability (β_{32}= 0.233, p< 0.05). This is consistent with previous research that found that corporate reputation can lead to competitive advantage, which in turn can lead to firm sustainability (Jones at al., 2017).

Corporate reputation is also critical to a firm's survival when a crisis occurs. Hypothesis 8 was supported. The moderating effect of organizational learning capability on the relationships between corporate social accounting practices and its consequences was tested. As can be seen in Table 3, the findings indicate that the interaction between organizational learning capability and social impact recognition has a positive significant effect on corporate reputation (β_{20}= 0.142, p< 0.10). Therefore, Hypothesis 9c was supported. Organizational learning capability plays a key role in enhancing organizational quality decision and strategic implementation and can act as an impetus for social responsibility strategy. The interaction between organizational learning capability and regulation compliance willingness has a positive significant effect on stakeholder acceptance (β_{13}= 0.165, p< 0.10). This means Hypothesis 10b was supported. As Gray (2014) noted, in many countries, voluntarily disclosure, which comes in addition to rules and guidelines, has led many listed companies to prepare reports on social responsibility. Accordingly, the interaction among organizational learning capability and environmental management practices has a negative and insignificant effect on accounting information advantage (β_6=-.024, p> 0.05), stakeholder acceptance (β_{14}= -.016, p> 0.05), and corporate reputation (β_{22}= -.072, p> 0.05).

Therefore, Hypotheses 11a-11c were not supported. Factors that influence organizational learning capability include individual motivation to learn, team dynamics, and organizational culture practices. These factors have a significant effect on organizational learning capability (Prugsamatz, 2010). Additionally, the results of control variables indicate that sustainable award and industry type do not have a significant effect on accounting information advantage, stakeholder acceptance, corporate reputation, and firm sustainability. This can be interpreted as meaning that industry types, both big and small firms, can be pressured by shareholders and investment analysts to engage in greater environmental management accounting. Companies, large ones in particular, are also sensitive to disclosure and environmental quality and corporate awards.

Table 3: Results of OLS Regression Analysis[a]

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables			
	Equation 6: Firm Sustainability	Equation 1: Accounting Information Advantage	Equation 2: Stakeholder Acceptance	Equation 3: Corporate Reputation
Social Impact Recognition (SIR)		.236** (.079)	.254** (.083)	.238** (.085)
Regulation Compliance Willingness (RCW)		.197** (.089)	.273** (.089)	.264** (.093)
Environmental Management Practices (EMP)		.031 (.085)	.026 (.088)	.038 (.091)
Organizational Learning Capability (OLC)		.172* (.080)	.027 (.090)	.037 (.093)
SIR x OLC		.041 (.071)	.027 (.060)	.142* (.077)

RCW x OLC		.038 (.083)	.165* (.093)	.032 (.077)
EMP x OLC		-.024 (.067)	-.016 (.033)	-.072 (.081)
Accounting Information Advantage (AIA)	.219** (.092)			
Equation:4 Stakeholder Acceptance (StA)	.227** (.090)	.248** (.080)		.261** (.070)
Equation:5 Corporate Reputation (CR)	.233** (.087)			
Sustainable Award (SuA)	0.05 (.093)	0.12 (.106)	0.17 (.123)	.080 (.106)
Industry Type (IT)	.100 (.094)	-0.11 (.016)	-0.172 (.012)	-0.151 (.106)
Adjusted R square	.301	.369	.384	.432
Maximum VIF	2.651	3.527	3.527	3.527

**p< .05, *p < .10   [a] Beta coefficients with standard errors in parenthesis.

5. Conclusion and Study Limitations

This study examined the influence of three dimensions of corporate social accounting practices namely, social impact recognition, regulation compliance willingness, and environmental management practices. The mediating variables consisted of accounting information advantage, stakeholder acceptance, and corporate reputation. Organizational learning capability operated as a moderator. The population in the survey included accounting executives, accounting directors, and accounting managers of Thai listed firms. A total of 126 questionnaires were collected. The results indicate that social impact recognition, regulation compliance willingness, and environmental management practices have a partial significant positive effect on accounting information advantage, stakeholder acceptance and corporate reputation. Moreover, they all have a significant positive effect on firm sustainability. Of great import, accounting information advantage has a significant positive effect on stakeholder acceptance, which in turn has a significant positive effect on corporate reputation. The moderating effect of organizational learning capability is to create a partially moderating relationship between social impact recognition and regulation compliance willingness with environmental management practices and stakeholder acceptance. Furthermore, the findings show that corporate social accounting practices with regards to each dimension are essential as they add legitimacy and reinforce the image of the firm.

As this study shows, the conceptual social accounting process is similar to mapmaking, drawing the local social geography and supporting relationships between the local community and the company (Killian and O'Regan, 2016). There is a growing trend toward more social responsibility and environmental awareness and the recognition of the need for more harmony in society, in which business operations have a role to play (Chadegani & Jari, 2016). The essence of corporate social accounting is not only to broaden the domain of information considered and understand the impact of the organization but also to look at the organization from the perspective of its many stakeholders – not just its shareholders. It represents an expression of social and environmental responsibility by providing sufficient information to the public. It also contributes to a firm's sustainability. Organizations are becoming a driving force in this new development and social responsibility a parameter in management accounting that provides information necessary for environmental and societal management and corporate decision making. (Miragaia, Ferreira, & Ratten, 2017). This study can assist accounting executive or accounting managers of Thai listed firms, who are responsible for the management and application of the firm's strategy. In addition, the findings can help executives analyze and justify key components that may be more critical in

a dynamic competitive environment. Social accounting implementation is an alternative strategy for organization that practitioners should support and adopt.

- Limitations and Future Research Direction

This study has limitations. Firstly, the measurements of all the constructs in this research were newly developed with some modifications based on the literature reviewed and related theories. Secondly, the measurements were developed using content validation with business experts but did not involve in-depth interviews of firm's practitioners. Moreover, the relatively small sample size influenced the testing assumption through the linear regression and may have affected hypothesis testing as well. Future research may therefore use another sampling population with differentiation in types and characteristics in order to compare the results and outcomes. Besides, another research method (for example in-depth interviews) and additional moderating variables should be considered.

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BOOK REVIEW

Start-Up Thailand: The Entrepreneurs' Journey Philip C. Zerrillo, Havovi Joshi, and Pannapachr Itthiopassagul Singapore: World Scientific, 2020. 171 pp. ISBN 978-981-121-618-3 (hardcover)

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This book is a compilation of inspiring stories of Thai entrepreneurism behind successful Thai-founded enterprises which are, in part, representative of the entrepreneurial spirit of businesses in many emerging markets in the Southeast Asia region. Unlike most entrepreneurs in other nations, one of the common characteristics of the business owners included in this book is their "Jai Dee" or good heart approach to nosiness. The authors – Dr. Philip C. Zerrillo, Professor of Marketing (Practice) at Singapore Management University; Dr. Havovi Joshi, Director, Centre for Management Practice at Singapore Management University; and Ms. Pannapachr Itthiopassagul, Assistant Professor of Marketing at Thammasat Business School – draw on their great expertise in marketing and business practices in ASEAN countries. The twelve chapters of this book represent eleven Thai business cases, each of which exhibits its own unique way of becoming a prominent player or game changer in their respective industry. Many of the chapters portray the interesting journeys of the entrepreneurs, from the origins to their initial successes and ahead to their future challenges.

The book begins with a preface, acknowledgements, and an introduction chapter on Thai entrepreneurship. In the introduction (Chapter 1), the authors provide insightful details about Thailand as one of the largest economies in Southeast Asia, its geographical significance to the region, the deeply penetrated internet connectivity, and the origins of the country's economic foundations in agricultural and traditional retail sectors. In terms of entrepreneurism, Thailand has been ranked among the most entrepreneurial nations in the world. Various reasons are given for this. According to the Global Entrepreneurial Monitor survey for 2016-2017, Thai businesspeople in general are not discouraged by the fear of their businesses failing, while another important consideration is that Thais mostly perceive entrepreneurs as having a high societal status. Although Thai entrepreneurs experienced rapid economic growth in the late 20th century, they have also been faced by several periods of crisis and uncertainty. Such highs and lows have shaped them to become resilient and smart. After the introduction, the authors present the selected Thai business cases in four main sections, each of which represents different aspects of the Thai entrepreneurial journey, ranging from the challenging growth paths faced by successors of Thai family businesses to the bold and passionate adventures of Thai start-up entrepreneurs.

The first section (Chapters 2-4) entitled "Entrepreneurship: A Family Business" features three stories of how the young heirs to family businesses were able to bring new perspectives into the original business models of their family ventures, namely Jubilee, Vichaivej International Hospital Group, and Sappe. In Chapter 2, the Jubilee case study contrasts the traditional nature of a Thai Chinese family-owned business and the impressive courage of its successors from the younger generation in taking over and growing this publicly-listed jewelry

enterprise. Having been founded in the old Chinatown area of Bangkok ninety years ago, Jubilee Enterprise PCL has established a respected reputation over many decades. In recent times, the company's new leaders from the younger generations have subsequently managed to grow the business from one jewelry institution in Bangkok to an operation with 125 retail outlets. To achieve this, the key strategies in the late 1990s included founding the Jubilee Diamonds brand, opening counters in department stores, commencing marketing initiatives (such as diamond price displays, the tactical use of colors in counters and uniforms, and cross promotions with financial partners to introduce payments by installment), expanding the business with franchising operations, and providing certification to win the trust and confidence of cautious prospects.

In the 2010s, Unyarat Pornprakit took the wheel of the family business from her father and set about taking the business to the next level with the daring change of the brand's signature color to black – which was a controversial decision for traditional Thai Chinese families at a time when black could be interpreted as being unlucky. The bold initiative involved changing the total look of the brand identity and its frontline staff. After the change, Jubilee gradually came to be regarded as a premium brand and the business was further expanded under two strategic brands: Jubilee Diamonds (the brand owned by the company) and Forevermark (the leading global diamond brand owned by the De Beers Group). From its humble beginnings as a small store in Chinatown, Jubilee Diamonds was listed on the Stock Exchange of Thailand in 2009 following a successful IPO. Jubilee's operating philosophy is rooted in a balance between company performance and the happiness of the employees.

The next story of Vichaivej International Hospital Group (Chapter 3) highlights a landscape of succession challenges faced by the company's second generation during the transition of ownership from the founders. Patcharapan Vanadurongwan, the daughter of the founders, was born after Samyaekfaichai Poly Clinic, the first hospital branch, had been established. Her father, who was a well-known orthopedist, started Srivichai Hospital and recruited a small team informally called the 'generals' who had to do virtually everything for the hospital with a strong entrepreneurial spirit. After expanding to include four general hospitals (with expertise in orthopedics) operating to international standards and targeting middle to high-income patients, the business was rebranded as Vichaivej International Hospital Group upon being listed on Thailand's stock exchange market. Patcharapan, as the youngest daughter, prepared herself for the succession by acquiring key knowledge and cultivating a network from her graduate school before taking the leadership role in marketing and developing an e-commerce platform for the hospital while being mentored by her eighty-year-old father. As part of the business's second generation, she had to overcome the challenge of developing a more professional culture and building trust among the staff in order to take the publicly-listed business group in a different direction than it had followed under the preceding generation.

Focusing on Sappe Public Company Limited (Chapter 4), the third entrepreneurial journey in this section clearly demonstrates the importance of an innovation-driven culture led by the family in transforming and diversifying its original business model to thrive in the ever-growing dynamics of its market. The company was founded by the first generation as a small-scale traditional snack manufacturer. Originally, its main product was 'KrongKrang', a traditional crunchy Thai snack sold to traditional trade retailers. In the late 1990s, the Southeast Asian financial crisis impacted the traditional 'mom and pop' outlets who represented their major distribution outlets. To sustain the business, this small traditional manufacturer took the bold move of listing its products in the large-scale modern trade store network of 7-Eleven, which presented the huge challenge of serving the rapidly growing nationwide network of convenience stores. A few years later, the company discontinued its snack line due to the difficulty of manufacturing traditional snacks at a very large scale and decided instead to begin

a new beverage product line instead. At that time, the elder son of the founder with a background in food science discovered nata de coco, a chewy high fiber material produced from coconut water fermentation, and used it in the new beverages. After achieving several manufacturing certifications, the family placed their focus on innovation under three main pillars: the mind-set of the people, creative and fun process, and the 'Inno Studio' funding to support innovative projects. After the initial success of its beverage business launch, the company changed its name to Sappe Public Company Limited and listed on the Stock Exchange of Thailand in 2014. The business later successfully introduced a range of functional drinks to enhance beauty, e.g. Sappe Beauti Drink, Sappe Beauti Shot, and St. Anna. On the challenges of going public, Sappe still needs to put its best efforts into creating constant innovations for its four product categories: functional beverages, fruit juices, functional powders, and ready-to-drink products. In parallel with this, the company also launched a franchise model for its coconut café business. Having started as a traditional snack business, Sappe in 2018 generated sales revenues not only from Thailand, but also from many other international markets, including the European Union, the United States, and the Middle East.

Covering Chapters 5-6, the second section of the book is entitled "The Female Founders: The Power of Mom" and is dedicate to two businesses founded with strong passion by Thai moms, namely Lamoon and Waraporn Salapao, both of whom resonate the key roles of a mother in an oriental family. Telling the story of Lamoon (Chapter 5), Thailand's leading organic baby care brand, the fourth case affectionately represents the origin of business innovation driven by the passion of a new mother whose son had suffered from a skin allergy. A former product development manager and a new mom, Nednaphit Rungthanakiat working on her own initiative created a new soap especially for her son to ease the pain from his severe skin allergy. She then further developed the soap with a group of three of her old classmates who were experienced in the field and shared her passion for helping other parents with a similar problem, and together they established their business venture in 2011. The success of their product development initiatives were largely attributed to Nednaphit's real insights as a mom herself. Once established, the Lamoon Baby brand offered a range of organic baby products with a clear position, i.e. baby products with no chemicals, no fragrances, and no parabens.

Later, the company extended its product offerings to other organic baby accessories and products. The brand became famous when Lamoon started selling its products online and Thai celebrities began using them. Building on this fame, Lamoon started partnership collaborations with famous Thai and international brands. For the company to make organic baby products more mainstream, the next challenge involved: 1) acquiring an organic product certification from the Thai FDA, 2) reformulating its all-natural products for longer shelf life, 3) finding manufacturers who accepted small order quantities, and 4) positioning its brand to be different from mass and imported organic products. Lamoon is now planning for its international expansion and looking for potential acquisitions if it identifies opportunities that fit its vision and uncompromising level of quality.

Waraporn Salapao (Chapter 6) is another clear example of an entrepreneurial success originating from the vision and drive of a mom from a traditional Chinese Thai family. Waraporn Suthanya created her own recipe to make Chinese-style steamed buns, called 'Salapao', for her children to eat after school. As the savory buns became famous in the neighborhood, the family started to sell them from a small kiosk in front of their house, and hence the name, Waraporn Salapao. After a few years, Waraporn and her children grew the business together as a family and expanded their outlets into many malls in Bangkok. The family company then began selling dim sum and rice dishes through a small restaurant format, which grew into a chain of 78 outlets mostly in Bangkok where snacks and dishes made with

the brand's original recipe are sold at competitive prices. The family has a future expansion plan to cover other key provinces and potentially other Asian markets. One big hurdle to cross is to elevate the consumer perception about a bun to be more than an inexpensive street food choice. As the bun business is scaling up, the other internal challenge is how this family company founded by the mother could be run together with her children, all of whom have grown up and become the company's management.

The third section (Chapters 7-11) entitled "The Start-up Entrepreneur" is a compilation of five Thai start-up success stories in which most of the founders fruitfully seized great business opportunities without their family support. The companies covered in this section are Priceza, Wongnai, At Vantage, Alto Coffee, and Thai Habel Industrial. Chapter 7 presents the story of Priceza, a Thai tech start-up providing price comparison and shopping search engine services for online bargain-hunters. The case of Priceza underlines the crucial development capability of start-ups of being able to keep up with a fast-changing market and to make and learn from mistakes. Founded by three computer science graduates, Priceza is an online business that was launched in the age of relatively low internet penetration in 2010. During the early years of trial and error, one of the big mistakes was the decision to outsource the core technology programming which later crashed and limited the company's ability to modify or fix the software. Having learned from their mistakes, the team focused their efforts into gathering insights from potential customers before relaunching a slimmed-down version. Many years later, Priceza has had millions of active users accessing the site through multiple platforms (mostly smartphones) from countries across Southeast Asia. The original service of Priceza focused on online price comparisons.

In the company's later evolvement, more shopping comparison features, such as payment and delivery options, were introduced. There are two main performance-based business models, i.e. cost per click and cost per sales commission. Its revenue comes from selling online display ads and insights. Priceza attracted external investments in the form of Series A funding (CyberAgent Ventures) in 2013 and Series B funding (Burda Principal Investment) in 2016. The company has become an e-commerce distribution platform and is passionately evolving toward the leadership role in the industry. Chapter 8 is the story of Wongnai, which means 'insider' in Thai. Wongnai is a lifestyle platform featuring details and reviews of restaurants, salons, spas, etc. This is a Thai online start-up business case which dares to explore beyond its original scope. The co-founder and CEO, Yod Chinsupakul, is one of the Thai start-up exemplars who inspires his young tech savvy team to drive the company's relentless innovations. Wongnai was founded as a location-based restaurant review guide service in the years of 3G technology.

The business gradually introduced additions to the platform, such as e-vouchers, but it was not easy to raise funds during that time. Then the founders identified how the platform could be monetized via banner advertising. With the founders' ambition, the company reached Pre-series A funding from Japan's Recruit Group and also learned from its new shareholder to improve the revenue stream to be more effective. Subsequently, the first ever series B investment in a Thai start-up from Intouch Group fueled the business to expand its scope into other lifestyle verticals and it turned profitable in 2017. With its belief in a team-based approach, the business did not stop at being a dining-related app; instead, it later introduced new platforms for beauty parlors, hair salons, spas, and clinics, with potential for expanding to cover pet food providers or schools. Wongnai also started a cooking portal with original video contents which impressed the advertisers of the ingredients and kitchen appliances used in the videos.

Wongnai positions itself to be the 'wisdom of the crowd' platform and considers Instagram as an important social media source of food and lifestyle inspirations. At Vantage Co. Ltd. (Chapter 9) is characterized as an individual Thai market research agency which was able to succeed in the marketing research industry that was dominated by large international players. The key success factor for the business was based on its service differentiation in providing more customized, well-crafted insights delivered by its dedicated team of experts in tandem with the latest technology. Suttipan Sutas Na Ayuthaya, together with his team members and his former marketing professor, founded this research company with his practical marketing research experience and the conjoint analysis skills he acquired while studying for his master's degree. Once a customer of big international research firms, Suttipan found his way to provide alternative solutions to the typical 'cookie cutter' reports from the research giants. Coupled with a deep statistical analysis,

At Vantage also started to offer its customized research reports with data visualization and graphics. It was a new solution that helps to make complex data look clear and easy to understand so that the users are able to make more informed decisions. As the business grew to a certain point, the founder realized the need to mitigate the risk of losing revenues in the long-term by creating a cost-effective platform, rather than working on a one-by-one basis. The founder thus commenced his new pathway to profitability in three stages, starting with establishing a client services department, improving the use of automation and the ability to scale up using research panels, and starting the company's own software development unit. Since undergoing this significant transformation, At Vantage has turned out to be a cost-effective marketing intelligence firm powered by a team of experts and its proprietary technologies.

The story of Alto Coffee (Chapter 10) takes the readers through a Thai entrepreneur's journey of courage and perseverance as he explores his path and learns from his failures to make it in the specialty coffee business. After the closure of an unsuccessful pasteurized soy milk business venture that he embarked on with his brother, Patthrapon Ruangsuteerakit started a new experiment by opening three new café outlets in a row but with different price points, menu names, cup sizes, promotion offers, and packaging designs in the central Bangkok area. In the 2010s, the café market in Thailand's urban cities grew significantly, which also meant an increase in the number of key competitors' outlets like Starbucks, Café Amazon, or Black Canyon. Patthrapon later learned from the vast variations of the marketing elements that most of his customers were price sensitive but also skeptical whether a value-priced coffee was of a very high quality. After his period of experiment, he closed down all initial outlets and replaced them with the new café chain, Alto Coffee, a premium boutique café that also offered premium coffee beans, brewing equipment, and coffee knowledge from his well-trained people in the showroom.

The word 'alto' means "high" in Italian which connotes the higher altitudes where good coffee is typically grown. Beverage prices at Alto Coffee are generally 10-15% lower than other international brands. His loyal customers gradually became more educated and willing to spend more for higher graded specialty coffee choices. The owner regularly spends time observing his staff so that he can then give necessary direct feedback to his frontline employees. The business also worked with upstream suppliers who were coffee farmers in the Northern provinces of Thailand. Alto buys good coffee directly from these local farmers at a 25-30% premium in order to improve their standard of living. The founder also focused on his wholesale operations and used cost-based pricing per kilogram for this different group of customers who were more price-sensitive. This wholesaling business also sources beans for other café owners who, therefore, do not see Alto as their competitor.

As described in Chapter 11, the story of Thai Habel Industrial Co. Ltd. portrays the admirably strong will and grit of the family who were able to bring their appliance manufacturing business back to be even greater after suffering a devastating factory fire. The company was one of the first manufacturers of old technology television displays. After the business had grown as an OEM supplier for major modern trade and online retailers, the company's factory was destroyed by nine-hour fire in 2015, resulting in US$60 million of damage. Narindej Thaveesangpanich left his professional marketing career and returned to help his family salvage their damaged business. As a condition for him to quit his well-paid job, he insisted that the family start an export business to improve its post-crisis cashflow situation quickly and develop its own branded products to improve its margins. The company successfully underwent a big turnaround process after the crisis involving reorganization, market diversification, and cost-cutting efforts.

As part of the organization changes, the business launched its own brand, Altron, of high-quality LED televisions distributed through modern trade channels and targeting middle income households. The brand image was proudly communicated as being "Made in Thailand" with a modern design, user-friendly functions, a warranty, and nationwide service centers. Third-party endorsements from reputable institutions, including the Thailand Trust Mark from the Ministry of Commerce and the Prime Minister's Award for export, were highlighted to ensure the brand credibility which is paramount to success in both domestic and export markets. The company is now planning for a strong expansion into the regional market.

The fourth section (Chapter 12) entitled "Making it big: Success against all odds" simply showcases the huge business success of the Minor Group and its iconic founder, William Heinecke. The multi-billion-dollar success of Minor International is evidence of the passionate entrepreneurial journey of Heinecke, an American-born entrepreneur who came to Thailand as a teenager and started his own office cleaning and advertising companies soon after. His company became Minor Holdings which then entered the hotel business. Heinecke also took the opportunity to expand into the field of restaurant franchising under the Minor Food brand, beginning with Mister Donut followed by other American dessert franchises, Swensen's and Dairy Queen. In 1998, there was a famous pizza business conflict which was made public when Minor's Pizza Hut franchising license was surprisingly terminated by the master franchisor, Tricon. In spite of the significant impact on Minor's stock price, the company built its own competing brand, The Pizza Company, with its experienced team from the terminated franchise and quickly regained its share of the pizza business.

With visionary leadership, Heinecke collectively developed his hospitality and food service empire to withstand the Asian financial crisis, the 2004 tsunami in Thailand, the outbreak of bird flu and political upheavals. After experiencing this series of crises in its domestic market, Minor then expanded its investment into various overseas markets, e.g. AVANI Hai Phong Harbour View in Vietnam and The Pizza Company in Kuwait, the UAE, Cambodia, and the Philippines, to create a more balanced business with geographical diversification. After decades of accomplishments, the company continues to seek new opportunities and acquisitions, with the founder believing that the company's strong leadership team and culture have been crucial in driving fast-paced growth.

Overall, this book is recommended for entrepreneurs and marketers who have business operations or are inspired to start new business ventures in Thailand or its other Southeast Asian neighbors. Most of the case studies can also be used to complement the teaching and study of business- and marketing-related courses as they provide practical and inspiring examples as well as real-world cases that promote further discussion on a variety of management challenges. The sectional themes make the book more emotionally inspirational

and easier to digest for readers who do not have a business background. On a side note, it would be even more helpful for some readers or students if the book could provide relevant illustrations of each case, for instance, photos comparing the businesses in the past and in the present, as well as the photos of their current product offerings. Similarly, some additional key figures or graphics, such as charts of market shares or sales growth, could be helpful for readers to analyze the context of each individual business more deeply. Above all, just as the authors indicate on the back cover, this book serves as a source of inspiration and hands-on insights that could be appreciated by those who are planning to become entrepreneurs or potential Thailand investors.

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- Section Heading: First letter of each word in capitals, bold 14 point font.
- Body Text: Times New Roman font, 12 point, single space between sentences.

6. In-Text Citations

- All in-text citations included throughout the article must have a corresponding full reference at the end of the manuscript body.
- Only direct quotes need a page number (not paraphrases).

- Direct Quotes
  - *One Author*
  Author's Last name (Year) stated that "direct quote" (page number).
  Isenberg (2007) stated that "international dispersion is on the rise" (p. 56). **Or**
  "Direct quote" (Last name, Year, page number)
  "International dispersion is on the rise" (Isenberg, 2007, p. 56).

  - *Two Authors*
  First author's Last name and second author's Last name (Year, page number) mentioned that "direct quote" (page number).
  Isenberg and Kerr (2007) mentioned that "international dispersion is on the rise" (p. 56). **Or**
  'Direct quote" (first author's Last name & second author's Last name, Year, page number).
  "International dispersion is on the rise" (Isenberg & Kerr, 2007, p. 56).

- Block Quotes
  If a quote runs on for more than 40 words:
  - Start the direct quotation on a new line
  - Indent the text roughly half an inch from the left margin
  - Remove any quotation marks
  Example:
  As Krugman (2019) stated:
  > Maybe the larger point here is that there tends to be a certain amount of mysticism about trade policy, because the fact that it's global and touches on one of the most famous insights in economics, the theory of comparative advantage, gives it an amount of mind space somewhat disproportionate to its actual economic importance. (p. 3).

- Parenthetical Citing
  - *One Author*
  Author's Last name (Year) in-test parenthetical citation (paraphrase).
  Isenberg (2007) argues that cross-border migration is increasing. **Or**
  Paraphrase (Last name, Year)
  Cross-border migration is increasing (Isenberg, 2007).

‒ *Two Authors*
First author's Last name and second author's Last name (Year) paraphrase.
Kerr and Isenberg (2007) argued that cross-border migration is increasing. **Or**
Paraphrase (first author's Last name & second author's Last name, Year).
Cross-border migration is on the rise (Isenberg & Kerr, 2007).

‒ *Three to Five Authors*
All authors' Last names (Year) paraphrase.
Kerr, Issenberg, and Steward (2007) argued that cross-border migration is increasing. **Or**
Paraphrase (all authors' Last names, Year).
Cross-border migration is increasing (Isenberg, Kerr, & Steward, 2007).

For all subsequent in-text paraphrases, first author's Last name followed by "et al." and the publication year.
Isenberg et al. (2007) found that the event resulted in thousands of people flocking to the border. **Or**
The event resulted in thousands of people flocking to the border (Isenberg et al., 2007).

<u>Full References</u>

The following formatting rules apply:

‒ References appear at the end of the manuscript body in alphabetical order by the first word in the reference (usually the author's last name, sometimes the title).

‒ All References must have a corresponding in-text citation in the manuscript.

‒ If more than one work by an author is cited, list them by earliest publication date first.

‒ If the list contains more than one item published by the same author(s) in the same year, add lower case letters immediately after the year to distinguish them (e.g. 1983a).

‒ If there is no author, the title moves to the author position (filed under the first significant word of the title).

‒ Reference list entries should be indented half an inch or 12 mm (five to seven spaces) on the second and subsequent lines of the reference list for every entry - a hanging indent is the preferred style (i.e. entries should begin flush left, and the second and subsequent lines should be indented).

‒ Double-space all reference entries.

Follow APA Referencing Style format for each source type listed as shown below. For any source type not shown below, go to the APA website for references.

• Book
  ‒ *One Author*
  Author, F. M. / Organization. (Year). *Topic Title*. City: Publisher.
  Nagel, P. C. (1992). *The Lees of Virginia: Seven generations of an American family*. New York: Oxford University Press.

  ‒ *Two Authors*
  Author, F. M., & Author, F. M. (Year). *Topic Title*. City: Publisher.
  Nagel, P. C., & Sampson, T. (1995). *Seven generations of an American family.* New York: Oxford University Press**.**

– *Three Authors*
Author, F. M., Author, F. M., & Author, F. M. (Year). *Topic Title*. City: Publisher.
Nagel, P. C., Sampson, T., & Hubbard, A. J. (1992). *The Lees of Virginia: Seven generations of an American family.* New York: Oxford University Press.

- Journal
Author, F. M. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Journal*, vol. (issue), pp xxx-xxx.
Turner, R. A. (2007). Coaching and consulting in multicultural contexts. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, *59*(4), 241-243.

- Website
Author, F. M./ Organization. (Year of Publication). Web page title. Retrieved (Date) from URL Address.
Bogati, S. (2013, October 14). Hospitality Industry in Nepal. Retrieved November 3, 2018, from http://hospitalityindustryinnepal.blogspot.com/

- Newspaper
Author, F. M. / Organization (Year, month, day published). Title of article. *Title of newspaper*, page.
Parker, T. D. (2009, August 3). Getting rid of side stitches. *The Washington Post*, p. E1, E4.

7. *Formatting Figures and Table*

There are two different styles for graphics in APA format: **Figures** (charts, images, pictures) and **Tables.**
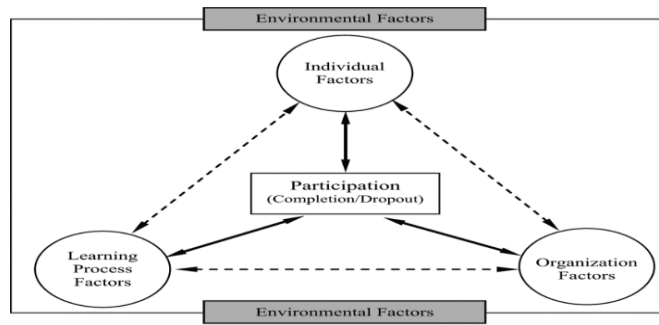
- Figures
  - The first graphic (chart, drawing, or image) will be labeled as Figure 1 and be the first one mentioned in the article.
  - Subsequent ones will follow in the appropriate numeral order in which they appear in the article.
  - Follow APA Referencing Style format for each source type listed as shown below. This means that both the Title and the Source are written below the Figure.

Figure 1: Name of Picture
Source: Author's Last name OR Organization's name (Year, Page number OR Online)
Khoman (2017, p. 137)

Figure 1: Conceptual framework
Source: Author's Last name OR Organization's name (Year: Page number OR Online)
Wang (2019: p. 45)

- Tables

  Tables are labelled separately to Figures and should follow the instructions below.

  – The first Table will be labeled as Table 1 and be the first Table mentioned in the article.

  – Subsequent ones will follow in the appropriate numeral order in which they appear in the article. This means that Tables are labelled separately to Figures.

  – The APA Referencing Style format for a Table differs to that of a Figure. A Table has the Title above the Table, and the Source will be listed below.

Table 2: Domestic Tourism in Ayutthaya and Sukhothai in 2004

Type of Data (2004)	Ayutthaya	Sukhothai
Visitor Thai Foreigners	3,023,933	1,915,975 1,107,958

Source: Author's Last name OR Organization's name (Year: Page number OR Online)
Tourism Authority of Thailand (2005: Online)

For any source type not shown above, go to the APA website for references.

References

APA (2010). Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association (6th ed). Retrieved April 5, 2019 from https://opentextbc.ca/researchmethods/chapter/american-psychological-association-apa-style/

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Kerr, W. R., & Isenberg, D. J. (2007) "Take Advantage of Your Diaspora Network." *Harvard Business School* Background Note 808-029, August. (Revised July 2008.) (Featured in a 2008 *Harvard Business Review* write-up.)

Krugman, P. (2019, May 13) Trump's trade war is killing the 'Pax Americana'. *The Bangkok Post*, p. 9.

Nagel, P. C. (1992). *The Lees of Virginia: Seven generations of an American family.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Nagel, P. C., & Sampson, T. (1995). *Seven generations of an American family.* New York: Oxford University Press**.**

Nagel, P. C., Sampson, T., & Hubbard, A. J. (1992). *The Lees of Virginia: Seven generations of an American family.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Parker, T. D. (2009, August 3). Getting rid of side stitches. *The Washington Post*, p. E1, E4.

Turner, R. A. (2007). Coaching and consulting in multicultural contexts. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, *59*(4), 241-243.