

The Effects of Visual and Verbal Information on Consumer Attitude and Purchase Intention Between Collectivist and Individualist in the Case of Thailand

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of the information processing preference on customers' purchase intention. The researcher has investigated the relationship between social media presentation format and consumer personality traits namely the collectivist and individualist on attitudes towards product and purchase intentions. The study was conducted in the experimental design in the social media context in the case of Thailand. The results of the study suggest that the compatibility between social media presentation format and consumers' personality has improved consumers' attitude towards products especially for individualist consumers receiving visual information. Additionally, compatibility between social media presentation format and consumers' personality has improved consumers' intention to buy especially for collectivist consumers receiving verbal information. Interesting enough, attitude towards product can be stimulated by visual products information for both collectivist and individualist consumers. On the other hand, intention to buy can be aroused by verbal information for collectivist consumer while individualist consumers are aroused by visual information.

Key words: Social media presentation format, collectivist, individualist, attitude towards product, intention to buy

INTRODUCTION

Since, the emergence of social media within the past several years, the popularity of social networking media has become a worldwide phenomenon. Now a day, social media is also becoming a part of consumer's daily life. Immediately after potential consumers wake up, they access their preferred social media and spend most of their day attuned to it. Ostrow claims that >500 billion people around the world participate in social media and around 92% of the people who can access the internet in Thailand utilize social media. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or LinkedIn have a number of users and it keeps growing every day (Kane *et al.*, 2012). Because of social media's increasing popularity at this time, this phenomena has attracted marketers who recognize that social media marketing is economically significant for their marketing communication strategies (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Social media hold a lot of potential benefits for organizations such as communicating with their consumers and assisting marketers in determining consumer needs and also understanding what their market might look like in the future. Key beneficial factors of social media allow

consumers to estimate products, make recommendations to contacts or friends and share any of their purchases through their particular social media (Wang *et al.*, 2012).

Shopping via the internet or social media, the consumer cannot evaluate products physically as shopping in a store. Consumers look for information about products and brands to evaluate the details of the product and to reduce their risk in the purchase (Kim and Lennon, 2000; Ward and Lee, 2000). For shopping and purchasing online, information of products is the most salient factor that affects consumers' satisfaction and attitudes (Jarvenpaa and Todd, 1997; Szymanski and Hise, 2000). Product presentation formats are the way product information is displayed on social media and processed by consumers (Jiang and Benbasat, 2007). Consumers need adequate product information for their decision making (Fiore *et al.*, 2005). That is why, as internet access becomes more available at a rapid rate, a number of academicians and practitioners in the marketing field focus their efforts into studying and improving online presentation of product information (Jiang and Benbasat, 2007).

Conflicting results about the effects of information presentation format on consumers decision making when

shopping online has been conducted in prior research (Kelton *et al.*, 2010; Li *et al.*, 2015). Some research suggest that visual information has a more superior effect rather than verbal in capturing consumers' attention and influencing their intention to shop (Blanco *et al.*, 2010; Deubel and Schneider, 1993). On the other hand, some studies have found that verbal information is better than visual in affecting consumer's intention to buy products (Ghasemaghaei and Hassanein, 2013; Kim and Lennon, 2008). These conflicting results leave a key gap in the research which should be explored in more depth in order to understand the information processing and decision making of consumers in the context of social media commerce. Even with the rapidly rising popularity of social media, there are very few notions about the suitable social media presentation format for costumers (Roggeveen *et al.*, 2015). Consequently, this research focused on comparing the two main presentation formats on social media (visual and verbal). Specifically, we studied the direct effect and interaction effect of information presentation format and consumers' collectivist/individualist attitudes and intention to buy a product.

Additionally, this research investigated the relationship between visual and verbal on social media presentation format and purchase intentions in two distinct personality traits, collectivist and individualist. The existing research proposed personality traits are frameworks to help the marketer to understand the differences in communication styles among consumers.

The results from this study can be used to help design effective social media and product advertisements. The theoretical contribution of this research expands the notion about the influence of presentation format and the collectivist/individualist on social media (Roggeveen *et al.*, 2015). In addition, it identifies the relationship stimulated by visual information, e.g., pictures, imagery information processing is activated. On the other hand, if a human is stimulated by verbal information, discursive information processing is activated (Kim and Lennon, 2000). The dual coding theory and picture-superiority effect theory explain that visual information is superior to verbal information. Visual information is easier to get consumers' attention and to remember than verbal information (Ally *et al.*, 2009; Defeyter *et al.*, 2009; Bride and Doshier, 2002; Shepard, 1967; Whitehouse *et al.*, 2006). However, there are some arguments about the effects of presentation formats. Kim and Lennon (2008) found that both visual and verbal information significantly affects consumers' attitudes but

consumer intent to buy is only affected by verbal information. These can explain that when consumers decide to buy a product, they need more details about product information. Verbal information can give consumers more details than visual information. Therefore, product information in verbal form positively affects consumer purchase decisions.

In the e-Commerce context, the consumer cannot physically touch a product, thus consumers require product information in detail (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999; Schlosser, 2003). Before consumers buy products online, they search for more information about products to reduce their risk and also evaluate the product (Schlosser, 2003). Consumers who have sufficient information tend to process picture information but verbal text is processed by consumers who lack information (Chaiken, 1980).

We can conclude that to reduce risk consumers seek more information. Consumers feel less at risk when they perceive that they have sufficient product information and this feeling influences them to shop online (Dowling and Staelin, 1994; Kim and Lennon, 2000; Park *et al.*, 2005). This study researched the impact of presentation format via social media on consumer intention to buy and buying behavior. Two types of information namely visual and verbal were focused on in this study.

Collectivist and individualist: Collectivists often depend on their groups' goals and are concerned for their group's well-being. Collectivist identity originates through social networking. Whereas individualists concentrate on self-goals and make their decision to fit their individual goals and well-being (Triandis *et al.*, 1990). These two types of personalities namely collectivist and individualist have the power to shape consumers' behavior. Because these traits impact consumers, they recognize their need to search for information when making their purchase decision (Andrews *et al.*, 1991). Existing research suggests that the important key to consider when communicating with consumers are collectivist and individualist attitudes and identities (Gregory and Munch, 1997).

The differences between collectivist and individualist and the influences on consumer preference can be witnessed by the way they approach visual and verbal information. Cross cultural research suggests that a different culture creates a different argument in advertising preferences (Albers and Gelb, 1996). Collectivists rely more on implicit communication whereas individualists on more explicit. By extension, one would expect that individualists who are more independent than

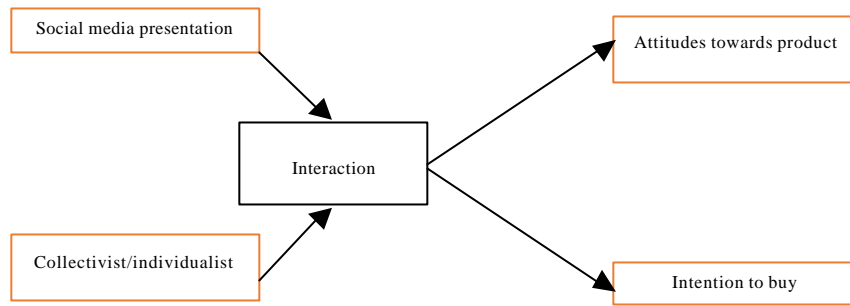


Fig. 1: Conceptual model

collectivists, tend to prefer visual information because they need to translate the meaning of information by themselves. On the other hand, collectivists prefer verbal information to clarify the meaning of information.

From the aforementioned ideas, presentation formats play important roles in the way consumers perceive information. This being said, it is very important to examine the role presentation formats play in influencing the collectivist/individualist on consumer attitude and intention to buy a product in order to fill the present gap in research literature (Fig. 1). Hence, the following hypotheses are stated:

- H_1 : congruence in the presentation format and collectivist/individualist leads to a stronger positive effect on consumer's attitude towards green products
- $H_{1,1}$: visual information interacts with individualists leads to a stronger positive effect on consumer's attitude towards green products
- $H_{1,2}$: verbal information interacts with collectivists leads to a stronger positive effect on consumer's attitude towards green products
- H_2 : congruence in the presentation format and collectivist/individualist leads to a stronger positive effect on consumer's intention to buy green products
- $H_{2,1}$: visual information interacts with individualists leads to a stronger positive effect on consumer's intention to buy green products
- $H_{2,2}$: verbal information interacts with collectivists leads to a stronger positive effect consumer's intention to buy green products

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To investigate the effects of social media presentation format and collectivist/individualist on consumers' attitude and intention to buy green products, this research was conducted by using the experimental method. The study incorporated a 2x2 between-subject

quasi-experiment design to test the interaction effects of social media presentation format on collectivist/individualist towards attitude and intention to buy green products. This factorial design consisted of two levels of social media presentation format (visual and verbal) and two types of personalities (collectivist and individualist).

The instruments were a mock social media that exhibited green products information. Subjects were 830 undergraduate students from a public university in Thailand. In this study, a homogeneous sample of university students was appropriately selected because the homogeneity of students increases the power statistically (Burton and Lichtenstein, 1988; Ozsomer *et al.*, 1991).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research findings

Hypothesis test:

- H_1 : congruence in the presentation format and collectivist/individualist leads to a stronger positive effect on consumer's attitude towards green products
- $H_{1,1}$: visual information interacts with individualists leads to a stronger positive effect on consumer's attitude towards green products
- $H_{1,2}$: verbal information interacts with collectivists leads to a stronger positive effect on consumer's attitude towards green products

The ANOVA results showed a significant interaction effect of presentation format and collectivist/individualist on attitude towards products ($F = 5.786, p < 0.05$). Mean for interaction between visual information and individualist was 3.731 higher than other conditions ($H_{1,1}$). Mean for interaction between verbal information and collectivist was 3.356 lower than other conditions ($H_{1,2}$). In other words, individualist consumers who received visual information tended to have a higher attitude towards a product whereas collectivist consumers who received

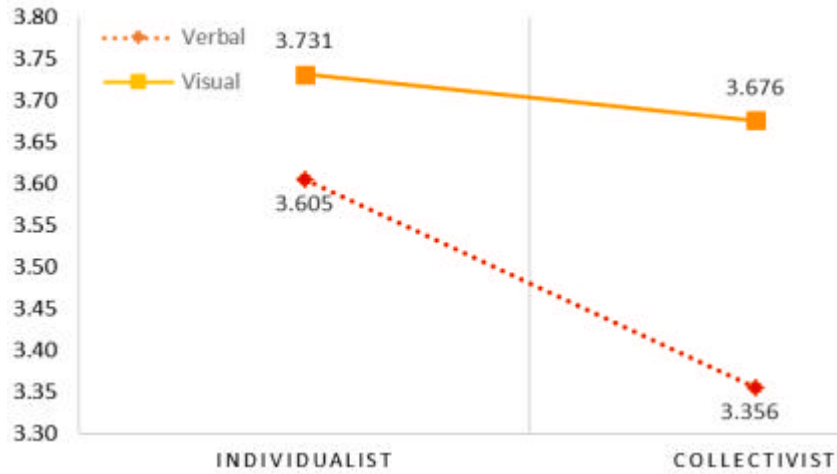


Fig. 2: A graphical depiction of interaction effect between presentation format and consumers' personality on attitude towards product

Table 1: ANOVA for interaction effects of presentation format and information preference (n = 830)

Variables	Mean	df	Mean square	f	p-values	Hypothesis
Attitudes towards product	Visual-individualist (3.731)	1	1.883	5.786	0.016	H1.1 support
	Visual-collectivist ((3.676))					
	Verbal-individualist (3.605)					
	Verbal-illcollectivist (3.356)					
Intention to buy	Visual l-individualist (3.307)	1	2.821	4.704	0.030	H1.2 not support H2.1 not support
	Visu al-collectivist (3.484)					
	Verbal-individualist (3.284)					
	Verbal-llcollectivist (3.698)					
						H2.2 support

verbal information tended to have a lower attitude. An interesting point is that visual information received a higher score than verbal information in both collectivist and individualist consumers. Another point is that individualist consumers have a higher score than collectivist consumers in both verbal and visual information (Fig. 2). Therefore, the results showed partial support for H1. Table 1 exhibits ANOVA for the interaction effect of presentation format and collectivist/individualist for attitudes towards product:

- H₂: congruence in the presentation format and collectivist/individualist leads to a stronger positive effect on consumer's intention to buy green products
- H_{2,1}: visual information interacts with individualists leads to a stronger positive effect on consumer's intention to buy green products
- H_{2,2}: verbal information interacts with collectivists leads to a stronger positive effect consumer's intention to buy green products

The ANOVA results showed a significant interaction effect of presentation format and collectivist/individualist

on attitude towards products ($F = 4.704, p < 0.05$). Mean for interaction between visual information and individualist was 3.307 (H_{2,1}) higher than the verbal-individualist condition. Mean for interaction between verbal information and collectivist was 3.356 higher than other conditions (H_{2,2}). The interesting point is that verbal information received a higher score than visual information in collectivist consumers but received a lower score than visual information in individual consumers (Fig. 3). Thus, the results showed partial support for H₂. Table 1 exhibits ANOVA for the interaction effect of presentation format and collectivist/individualist for intention to buy.

These results show an interesting relationship between social media presentation format and consumers' personality types namely collectivist and individualist, concluding that the different styles of consumers prefer different types of information. Individual consumers favor visual information more than verbal information. On the other hand, collectivist consumers favor verbal information more than visual information. The statistical tests from this research support the notion that consumers who match their style with information

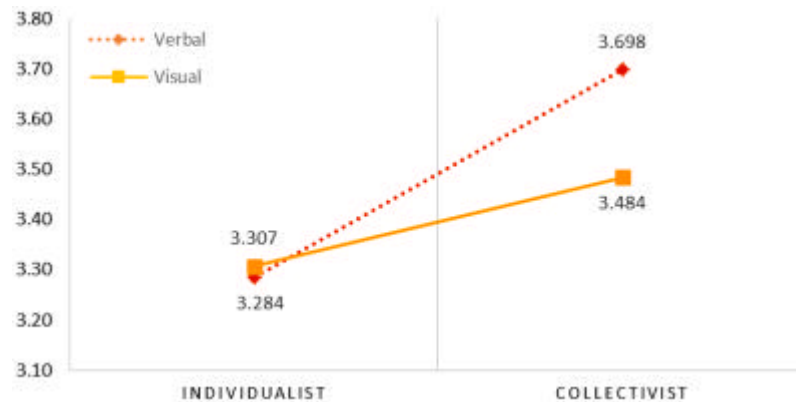


Fig. 3: A graphical depiction of interaction effect between presentation format and consumers' personality on intention to buy

presentation format have a more positive attitude toward products and intention to buy than the other groups.

The study findings revealed that the results are consistent with existing findings in which attitudes towards a product can be led by visual information (Deubel and Schneider, 1993). The results show that visual can arouse consumers' interest in both collectivists and individualists. Especially for individual consumers, visual information can create more interest than for collectivist consumers. Table 1 and Figure 2 demonstrated that the attitude towards products with visual information was higher than verbal information because consumers were more easily interested in pictures than verbal especially for consumers who prefer visual namely individualist consumers. As suspected, consumers who matched between their personality and presentation format expressed more positive attitudes towards a product than consumers who did not match, e.g., individualist consumers and visual information. We can conclude that the compatibility between presentation formats and consumer personality is very important in improving the consumer's attitude. To acquire better efficiency when using social media, practitioners should consider the compatibility of these three variables.

CONCLUSION

The study findings revealed that the results are consistent with existing findings in which intentions to buy can be led by verbal information (Kim and Lennon, 2008). The results show that verbal information increases consumers' intention to buy especially for collectivist consumers. The interesting point is that individual consumers prefer visual information more than the verbal version even when they need more information in making their decision to buy products.

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