# Symbolic Consumption on Brand Attitude: Variance Between Thai Students and International Students

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**Abstract**

In today's marketplace, consumers can easily compare the tangible or visible benefits of products and services with competitors, which is why marketers cannot rely solely on these benefits to attract consumers. Marketers must understand their customers on a deeper level. This study aims to understand the consumers' brand attitude and how they use symbols to formulate their attitude for different brands. Symbolism, in this case, refers to the consumers' actual self-concept and their lifestyle, and which the study would like to test its effect on consumer's brand attitude. The study also separates the education curriculum to further understand the customers from different educational backgrounds, the international school students and the Thai school students. The researcher believes that different education backgrounds will result in different symbolism from the two groups. The study is conducted by handing out questionnaires that resulted in 203 samples, about half by Thai school students and the other half by international school students. First, the questions are tested for their reliability, and then the answers go through SPSS Multiple Linear Regression in order to test the hypotheses. Some results have shown support for the hypotheses. The results indicate that the symbolism of actual self-concept and lifestyle of Thai school students affects their brand attitude; however, only the lifestyle affects the international school students' brand attitude. The findings suggest that if marketers want to target Thai people educated by an international school curriculum, which are increasing in number, they will do well to focus more on the different lifestyles of these customers. However, if they are targeting students educated in Thai schools, they can focus on both actual self-concept and lifestyle to influence the customer's brand attitude.

***Keywords:*** *Symbolic Consumption, Actual Self-Concept, Lifestyle, Brand Attitude*

## 1. Introduction

Brands seek to market themselves competitively, in hopes that consumers would prefer them over the competitors when selecting a brand. The success or failure of marketing strategies used by corporates today may not be as simple as it is in the past. Consumers are exposed to so many different facets that bombards them with messages, trying to convince them to purchase certain products or services; however, marketers fair better to understand why consumers would prefer a particular brand rather than its competitor. Levy (1959) argues that people purchase products not only for their core benefits but also according to the social symbols the products represent. According to Euromonitor, Thailand's consumer expenditure is expected to increase by 30.7% by 2022 (Sachamuneewongse, 2018). This increase makes the Thai market extremely attractive for both the domestic and international business who would like to take advantage of the booming consumer spendings here in Thailand. Although there are many obstacles in penetrating the market and pursuing consumers, the main problem that most companies face is how to attract consumers to the brand and keep them there. In order to do so, the marketer must first truly understand the mind of the Thai consumers and determine how it ticks. Understanding how the Thai consumers associate symbols that would make products personally relatable to themselves would genuinely be an insight that leads to better communication between a company offering products and services to the right consumer target.

Although many international companies have penetrated the Thai market successfully, there are still many that have failed in the long-run. The failure could be pinpointed to a lack of understanding in the lifestyle and symbolism that the Thai consumers associate with, which could keep the brands in the hearts of Thai consumers for the long-term, rather than a short-lived trend.

For the first quarter of a person's life, mainly for those who can afford good education with high spending power, the time is mostly spent in school. Therefore, education is one of the most critical factors that would influence a person's perception of the world. Education could determine how a person develops different self-concept and lifestyle that would affect their attitude. To consider different educational



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backgrounds would give further perspective on the demographics of the consumers. Marketers can use the information to target niche markets that will be beneficial to their strategies.

Furthermore, due to globalization, parents in many countries, including Thailand, view the best education for their children needs to be at an international standard. Therefore, many students are now attending international schools, instead of Thai schools. "Thailand's international school students have increased from 4,343 in 2002 to 20,309 in 2011" (Jareonsubphayanont, 2015). To be considered an actual international school, it is widely agreed that the school generally follows a national or international curriculum different from that of the host country. Additionally, an emphasis is placed on international education (with such programs as the IB) and global citizenship (Nagrath, 2011). Since most international schools in Bangkok adopt the western curriculum such as the International Baccalaureate, there is bound to be western influences in their behavior and lifestyle. It could be significant to understand if the two groups of educational background would differ significantly in terms of brand attitude.

The more information the marketer can learn about the consumer, the more detailed their development of strategies and communication can be. Thailand is an extremely attractive market that many companies not only want to grab the opportunity to create positive brand attitude but also keep the Thai consumers coming back for more. Therefore, it is vital that the companies understand the Thai consumers at a more in-depth level, in which this study would like to start with influences of education on their symbolic consumption and brand attitude.

## 2. Objectives

Many studies have linked symbolic consumption to consumer behavior, as Ekinci (2011) has concluded in his studies that self-congruence positively influence brand loyalty in tourists. However, many studies often focus on western countries. As a Thai person and a marketer, it is crucial to the researcher to look more in-depth within the Thai society what symbolic consumption entails towards brand attitude. The research would like to determine if actual self-concept and lifestyle affect the Thai consumers, similarly as it does in western studies, that would give an insight into how symbolic consumption of the Thai market's affects brand attitude. The study would like to identify further if there is a difference in how actual self-concept and lifestyle affect brand attitude, based on a Thai person's education, in order to differentiate between those educated in the Thai curriculum and the western International curriculum. Lastly, the study would also like to compare and analyze what the result, if there is a difference between the education curriculum, would mean for the future of marketers who wants to communicate to the Thai consumers. This study aims to explore more specifically the variance between international school students versus the Thai school students in Thailand, and how their actual self-concept and lifestyle would affect brand attitude.

## 3. Material and Methods

3.1 Symbolic Consumption - Many studies have defined symbolic consumption in marketing literature, which most share a common focus on consumers making the purchasing choice in relations to how they perceive the product to communicate their identity (Ekinci et al., 2011; Belk, 1982; Ahuvia, 2005; Wattanasuwan, 2005; McCracken, 1987). It is evident in many of these studies that consumption maintains people's sense of identity and defines the relationship they have with other people (Ahuvia, 2005; Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1981; Olson, 1982; Fournier, 1998). In the present setting of today's world, there are much more choices to who we can be, whom we want to be, and what kind of life we would like to lead. Studies believe that knowing what people prefer and how they choose products is related to self-image to oneself and for others (Ahuvia, 2005; Gergen, 1991; Giddens, 1991). Solomon (1983) identifies that consumers pick up social cues the product communicates to represent themselves. People engage in consumption for both the product's benefits and its symbolic representation (Levy, 1959). Researchers found that the symbolic environment is what aids to relate to their surroundings and society (Solomon, 1983).

3.2 Self-Concept - Levy (1959) explains that when consumers make choices, it is easier for them to choose if the object is symbolically more aligned with their self-image. Besides, (Graeff, 1996) states that

"An individual's perception of one's abilities, limitations, appearance, and characteristics, including one's personality." A person's self-concept is developed over time and based on how one sees themselves and how others see them known by the feedback individuals are given (Graeff, 1996). Self-concept has been the focus of many studies and categorized into four components: actual self, the way a person actually is; subjective self, the way a person see themselves; ideal self, the way individual wants to be; and social self, the way they think people see them (Hughes, 1976; Sirgy 1982). The different categories of self-concept help separate the different perspective of self. Studies have shown that subjective self, ideal self, and social self were not as dominant as actual self in predicting brand preference (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987; Sirgy, 1982).

This study then focuses on actual self-concept as one of the independent variables of symbolic consumption. Gilmore and Pine (2007) believe that actual self-concept is one of the most significant factors in understanding the consumer's perception that can lead to a more meaningful marketing message (Gilmore and Pine 2007). Actual self-concept mirrors the consumer's attitude of the compatibility of themselves and the brand (Malar et al., 2011). Consumers are more likely to form a strong emotional bond with a brand that they feel represents who they are (Malar et al., 2011).

3.3 Lifestyle - In marketing, social consumption patterns have received attention because they often serve as a basis for market segmentation. Instead of analyzing the relationship between social influences and consumption directly, then, lifestyle provides psychological profiles that combine a variety of factors (Holt, 1997). Several studies that have conceptualized lifestyle have concluded that lifestyles are the behavior expressed from personality traits (Lastovicka 1982; Mitchell 1983). Ahuvia (2005) suggests that people continually pursue consumption to master the lifestyle that would fulfill their self-image.

Lifestyle research explains the significance of personality relationship that directs consumer behavior (Wells, 1975). The data from various research conclude that lifestyle reflects market behavior and could be used by advertisers to identify and target market segments (Englis and Solomon, 1995). Consumers want to belong yet be different all at once, which means that preferences should not go against self-image but are combined with some organizing principle, which becomes a lifestyle. Many studies of consumer attitude note that lifestyle is a significant part of the consumption culture. Redmond (2001) suggests that lifestyle is a kind of social conditioning in which individuals learn the construct of what they may need. Lifestyle studies propose that products have symbolic meaning that would also express the social status, which makes the benefit of the products less significant (Redmond, 2001).

3.4 Attitude Behavioral Model - Past studies have shown that the things we are emotionally attached to have a strong influence on our sense of who we are (Ahuvia, 2005). Howard (1969) believes that attitude establishes when consumers are aware of the product category. There is a strong relationship between attitudes that creates more favorable evaluations of a brand and that advertising must first change attitudes to influence behavior (Berger and Mitchell, 1989).

Attitudes formed on the basis of direct experiences with the products would be more predictive of behavior (Berger and Mitchell, 1989). It has concluded that to influence the formulation of an attitude would aid marketers as well as making marketing strategies' impact on consumers measurable and effective (Mitchell and Olson, 1981). The measures of brand attitude are most useful to provide marketers with accurate information required for an effective marketing message (Mitchell and Olson, 1981).

3.5 Thai Students and International Students - Onkvisit and Shaw (1987) believe that formation of self-concept begins unconsciously as individuals begin their education life, as it is in this environment that allows their first social interactions. Individuals see a reflection from other's attitudes towards them, which forms a part of the attitude they have about themselves, others, and everything around them. This study uses this concept to better understand customers in different educational backgrounds.

Determining an individual's lifestyle trait is a process which is molded as much by education and upbringing as by sales promotion and status competition (Redmond, 2001). Many studies discuss the cultural differences that exist when Western educational systems promote more individualist style (Carter,

2016; Baumann and Hamin, 2011; Oldroyd and Sahlberg, 2010). It could be significant to compare with an International curriculum based students studying a western educational system rather than the Thai school students, studying local curriculum. As an ethnographer would gather data and research on the experience in a corporate culture in the timeframe of eight years (Fayard et al., 2015), this study will base its identification of individual's educational background on such timeframe to truly consider whether one is an international school educated student or a Thai school educated student. The questionnaire separates the individual's educational background by asking them to consider which educational background they have educated the longest, and at least for about eight years.

This study will determine the effect of symbolic consumption on brand attitude in Thailand. The Thai population's rising income and economic growth make Thailand an attractive market to enter as the demands of a variety of consumer goods are also increasing (Bhadrawaj, 2018 BCG Online Publishing). It is an optimistic vision for those wanting to penetrate the ASEAN region, as Thailand is also ranked third in ASEAN countries for ease of doing business, and 26$^{th}$ worldwide (World Bank 2018 Ease of Doing Business Report).

The researcher reads and chooses a published research paper of interest to understand the research that has been done before and identify how the study could be continued to better fit what the researcher wants to know more on the subject. The researcher then identifies which variables are relevant to the application of their study. The researcher then finds literature reviews that would support their research questions, objectives, hypotheses and conceptual framework. Then to test out the hypotheses, the researcher distributes the questionnaires in both Thai and English, both online and offline to capture a wide variety of Thai people. The questionnaire is based on the published study the researcher has chosen to study further; however, the questions are based on the variables that are relevant to the study only. The questionnaire aims to have a comparable number of respondents from two spectra of the education available in Thailand; the Thai school curriculum and international school curriculum. Further, the questionnaires will have three screening questions due to the specificity of the topic; (1) the respondents need to be Thai, (2) have graduated from high school, and (3) can select a brand they can substitute as the Brand X to represent the brands that people deem global. There was no selection of a particular brand, but the questionnaire lets the respondents choose their own brand because the relevance only remained with the fact that the choice had to be a global brand. The researcher would like to understand how respondents felt about brands in general, which did not require specification of one particular brand. The brand is an important key to understand the symbols the respondents associate to their actual self-concept and lifestyle. The questionnaire will also divide the participants into two categories, as we want to see the differences between those who attended a Thai curriculum school and those who attended international schools, usually with American or British curriculum.

Data was collected by handing out hard copies of the questionnaires or through an online survey to the Thais in Bangkok, Thailand. The hard copies were handed out in three schools where the researcher was able to access due to being an alumnus or current student: Ruamrudee International School, Chulalongkorn University, and Assumption University. The online version was posted on several social media platforms to gain respondents. The questionnaire is separated into two parts where the first part included the screening questions and demographic information and the second part consists of questions that are linked to actual self-concept, lifestyle, and brand attitude towards Brand X selected by respondents. The actual self-concept, lifestyle, and brand attitude characteristics questions used a seven-point Likert type scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (7) Strongly Agree, while the brand attitude questions used a seven-point bipolar scale. The actual self-concept has two questions, lifestyle has three questions, and brand attitude has ten questions, which followed the questions by Tangsupwattana and Liu (2017) that were developed from several of the studies on each topic from Aaker (1997), Sirgy and Su (2000), Ekinci et al. (2011), and Riefler (2012).

After collecting all the questionnaires, the hard copies were compiled into usable information with the online questionnaires. The respondents who did not match the criteria set by the screening questions were taken out. The information gathered is then run through the SPSS program.

## 4. Research Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Studies have found results that international school students exposed to globalization and multi-cultural setting may have a conflict that leads to an identity crisis, in which they can relate to many different cultures (Jibreel, 2015). The Thais who study in international schools identify themselves as Thais but have some westernized culture within their identity as well. It leads the study to hypothesize that actual self-concept may affect the international school student's brand attitude. Thai students studying in Thai schools have no such conflict of identity due to the sense of belonging to the group by birth, which the study also hypothesized that the Thai student's actual self-concept would influence their brand attitude.

On the other hand, lifestyle represented social meaning and shared consumption patterns that serve as a symbol of affiliation with certain types of people, distinguishing oneself from others, and reinforcing social status (Holt, 1997). This study then hypothesizes that lifestyle will influence both groups of international school students and Thai school students alike.

H1. International school student's actual self-concept has an effect on brand attitude.
H2. International school student's lifestyle has an effect on brand attitude.
H3. Thai school student's actual self-concept has an effect on brand attitude.
H4. Thai school student's lifestyle has an effect on brand attitude.

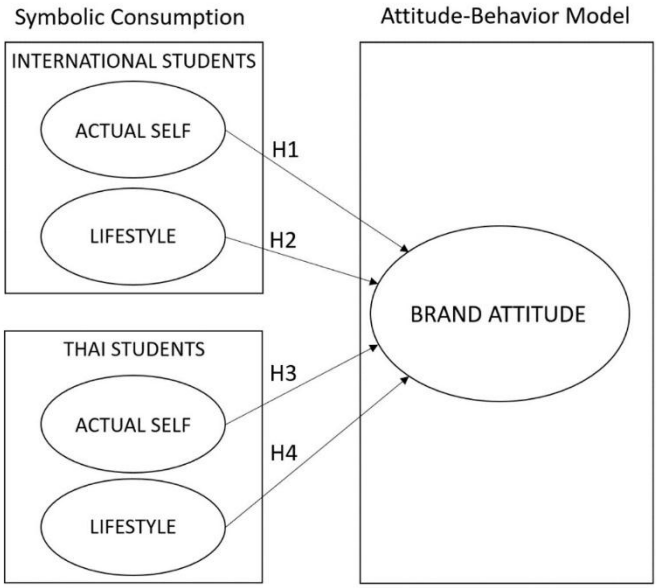


**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework

## 5. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows results from the 203 respondents, in which 98 respondents received their education from the international curriculum and 105 respondents from the Thai curriculum. 62.1 percent of the samples were female while 37.9 percent were male. Most of the participants, at 40.9 percent, were around the age of 31-35 years old, and the second highest number of respondents, at 27.1 percent, were from the ages of 24-30 years old. Almost half of the respondents, 43.8 percent, received a Master's Degree. The highest number of respondents at 42.9 percent had an income of more than 50,000 Baht per month. Apple was the most mentioned brand when asked to name a global brand at 20.7 percent. Out of 52 brands chosen by the respondents to represent Brand X in the questionnaire, Table 1 shows the top ten mentioned brands from the highest to the lowest.

Table 1 helps us to understand the types of respondents we have gathered for those who read this study to understand whether the information is relevant to what they are looking for from this study. It will also determine the limitations of the study to the type of respondents available.

**Table 1:** Demographic Information and Chosen Brand X of Respondents

| **GENDER** | **FREQUENCY** | **%** | **INCOME** | **FREQUENCY** | **%** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 126 | 62.1 | ≤ 15,000 THB | 37 | 18.2 |
| Female | 77 | 37.9 | 15,001 - 30,000 THB | 60 | 29.6 |
| **AGE** | | | 30,001 - 50,000 THB | 87 | 42.9 |
| 14 - 18 years old | 9 | 4.4 | > 50,000 THB | 19 | 9.4 |
| 19 - 23 years old | 83 | 40.9 | **BRANDS** | | |
| 24 - 30 years old | 18 | 8.9 | Apple | 42 | 20.7 |
| 31 - 35 years old | 19 | 9.4 | Nike | 20 | 9.9 |
| 36 - 40 years old | 55 | 27.1 | Chanel | 18 | 8.9 |
| > 40 years old | 19 | 9.4 | Louis Vuitton | 11 | 5.4 |
| **EDUCATION LEVEL** | | | Starbucks | 10 | 4.9 |
| Highschool Diploma | 95 | 47.3 | Coca Cola | 10 | 4.9 |
| Bachelor's Degree | 89 | 43.8 | Gucci | 10 | 4.9 |
| Master's Degree | 11 | 5.4 | Adidas | 9 | 4.4 |
| Ph.D. Degree | 7 | 3.4 | McDonalds | 7 | 3.4 |
| **EDUCATION CURRICULUM** | | | Samsung | 5 | 2.5 |
| Thai School Student | 98 | 48.3 | Others | 61 | 30.1 |
| International School Student | 105 | 51.7 | | | |

**Table 2:** Reliability Test with Cronbach Alpha's

| VARIABLES | CRONBACH'S ALPHA | NUMBER OF ITEMS |
|---|---|---|
| ACTUAL SELF-CONCEPT | 0.715 | 2 |
| LIFESTYLE | 0.943 | 3 |
| BRAND ATTITUDE | 0.789 | 10 |

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability test measures the internal consistency of the questions in the questionnaire to determine if the questions are closely related as a group. If a question is not related to the topic's consistency, the coefficient will be low. The reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered "acceptable" for a social science research study. If the coefficient is low, the researcher would have to delete certain questions from the group to make the internal information consistent.

For the questions that the researcher distributed out, divided into three groups, The Cronbach's Alpha reliability test of all variables in Table 2 are higher than 0.70, which is considered acceptable and which means all the questions in the questionnaire are valid as reliable and consistent. It also means that none of the questions need to be removed due to all of them being relevant to their topic groups. The researcher, therefore, can take all of the information to process the next step of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis.

Table 3 shows the results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis, with the split file between international school students and Thai school students, to see the effect of the independent variables on brand attitude between the two groups that have had different educational backgrounds. The independent variables are actual self-concept and lifestyle. The R squared at the bottom is essential to note that the independent variable explains about 49.9% of the variance of the dependent variable. In other words, the actual self-concept and lifestyle explain 49.9% of the variance of the brand attitude. As the significant level being < 0.05, actual self-concept is not significant in affecting brand attitude for international school students; however, it is a significant factor in influencing brand attitude for the Thai school students. Lifestyle is significant for both groups, international school students and Thai school students. However, comparing the $R^2$, 49.9% of the dependent variable for international school students is affected by the independent variable lifestyle; and $R^2$, 42.7% of Thai school students are affected by both independent variables. It means that lifestyle affects brand attitude for international school students **(sig. = 0.000)** more than it affects Thai school student **(sig. = 0.007).** Then as we look at the unstandardized coefficients beta, for international school students, actual self-concept is 0.005, which tells us that every 1 unit of change for actual self-concept will give a 0.005 change in brand attitude. As for the international school students lifestyle, for every 1 unit of change for the lifestyle will give a 0.351 change in brand attitude. It is consistent with the findings in the significant column as for international school students where actual self-concept is not significant. For the Thai school students, every 1 unit of change for the actual self-concept will result in the 0.248 change in brand attitude and every 1 unit of change for lifestyle will result in a 0.147 change in brand attitude. It is also consistent with the significance shown for Thai school students, which concludes that actual self-concept influences brand attitude more. The standardized coefficient also shows consistent patterns to the result that lifestyle is significant for international school students and actual self-concept is more prominent than lifestyle in affecting brand attitude for Thai school students.

Due to the independent variable actual self-concept being insignificant, the researcher then took out the independent variable to rerun the multiple linear regression, which gave the following results below in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Factors Affecting Brand Attitude between International School and Thai School Students

| | Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| International Students | **(Constant)** | 3.668 | 0.208 | | 17.648 | 0.000 |
| | **Actual Self-Concept** | 0.005 | 0.065 | 0.010 | 0.084 | 0.933 |
| | **Lifestyle** | 0.351 | 0.058 | 0.699 | 6.069 | 0.000 |
| | *R = 0.707a* | *R square = 0.499* | | Std. Error of the Estimate = 0.51531 | | |
| Thai Students | **(Constant)** | 3.503 | 0.227 | | 15.400 | 0.000 |
| | **Actual Self-Concept** | 0.248 | 0.069 | 0.397 | 3.581 | 0.001 |
| | **Lifestyle** | 0.147 | 0.054 | 0.303 | 2.739 | 0.007 |
| | *R = 0.653a* | *R square = 0.427* | | Std. Error of the Estimate = 0.64348 | | |

Note: *p < 0.05

Table 4 takes the beta and significant from Table 3 to show the result according to the hypotheses set at the beginning of the study. Due to the rule that a significant variable must be < 0.05, Table 4 shows that actual self-concept is not significant (**sig. = 0.933**), therefore is not a factor that influences international school student's brand attitude, not supporting H1. The Table further indicates that lifestyle is a strong factor in influencing brand attitude for international school students (**β = 0.699, p<0.05**)**,** which supports H2. As for the Thai school students, actual self-concept (**β = 0.397, p<0.05**) and lifestyle (**β = 0.303, p<0.05**) both affects their brand attitude, which supports both H3 and H4. The table show not support and support, meaning the data resulted from Multiple Linear Regression Analysis, helps us to see the significance of the independent variables, actual self-concept, and lifestyle and how it influences the dependent variable, brand attitude. According to the previous study that this study is based on, the actual self-concept and lifestyle were both significant for Thai people in influencing brand attitude. The researcher hypothesized that it would work for both groups of Thais with a different educational background as well. However, the results gave an insight that there are differences in the significance of those educated in the western curriculum that differs from the Thai curriculum.

**Table 4:** Hypotheses Testing Results

| | Hypotheses | β | Sigs. | Results |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **H1** | International student's actual self-concept has an effect on brand attitude. | 0.010 | 0.933 | Not Support |
| **H2** | International student's lifestyle has an effect on brand attitude. | 0.699 | 0.000 | Support |
| **H3** | Thai student's actual self-concept has an effect on brand attitude. | 0.397 | 0.001 | Support |
| **H4** | Thai student's lifestyle has an effect on brand attitude. | 0.303 | 0.007 | Support |

**Note:** Multiple Linear Regression is significant level at 0.05

The results from using Multiple Linear Regression analysis on the sample of 203 respondents indicate that the effect of symbolic consumption, actual self-concept, and lifestyle on the Thai customer's brand attitude differs between international school students and Thai school students. The independent variable that may be considered the strongest could be a lifestyle as it is significant in both groups from different educational backgrounds, international school students **(sig. = 0.000)** and Thai school students **(sig. = 0.007),** which supports H2 and H4. The results indicate that lifestyle is a stronger factor in influencing brand attitude for the international school students (**β = 0.699, p < 0.05**)**,** more than it does to the Thai school students (**β = 0.303, p<0.05**). As for the actual self-concept, for the international school students, it does not affect their brand attitude **(sig. = 0.933)** but affects the Thai school student's brand

attitude **(sig. = 0.001)**, which mean it does not support H1, however, supports H3. Comparing between actual self-concept and lifestyle for the Thai school students, the actual self-concept has a stronger effect on brand attitude (**β = 0.397, p < 0.05**) than lifestyle (**β = 0.303, p<0.05**).

As seen in the results that lifestyle is the dominant independent variable in determining brand attitude. Holt (1997) claims that lifestyles are symbolic expressions of collectivism through relational differences and map the cultural content of important social context. To clearly see the effect of the independent variable on brand attitude, the study runs another Multiple Linear Regression without the actual self-concept for International School Students, which is shown in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Rerun of Multiple Linear Regression

| | Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| International Students | **(Constant)** | 3.667 | 0.179 | | 20.523 | 0.000 |
| | **Lifestyle** | 0.355 | 0.036 | 0.706 | 9.730 | 0.000 |
| | *R = 0.706a* | *R square = 0.499* | | Std. Error of the Estimate = 0.51261 | | |
| Thai Students | **(Constant)** | 4.001 | 0.190 | | 21.503 | 0.000 |
| | **Actual Self-Concept** | 0.388 | 0.048 | 0.620 | 8.023 | 0.000 |
| | **Lifestyle** | 0.289 | 0.038 | 0.596 | 7.523 | 0.000 |
| | *R = 0.596a* | *R square = 0.355* | | Std. Error of the Estimate = 0.67942 | | |

Note: *p < 0.05

In Table 5, the analysis remains the same, as a lifestyle has a significant effect on both groups, international school students **(sig. = 0.000)** and Thai school students **(sig. = 0.000),** which supports H2 and H4. The results indicate that lifestyle is a stronger factor in influencing brand attitude for the international school students (**β = 0.706**)**,** more than it does the Thai school students (**β = 0.596**). As for the actual self-concept affects the Thai school student's brand attitude **(sig. = 0.000),** supporting H3. Comparing the actual self-concept and lifestyle for the Thai school students, the actual self-concept has a stronger effect on brand attitude (**β = 0.620**) than lifestyle (**β = 0.596**). The unstandardized and standardized coefficients still support the pattern in telling the effects that the independent variables have on the dependent variables. The lifestyle is high in influencing the brand attitude for international school student, and for the Thai school students, the actual self-concept numbers are still higher than lifestyle, which means that actual self-concept changes would indicate a substantial change in brand attitude.

As mentioned above, consumers are able to identify themselves with products and services in certain symbols through their actual self-concepts that also leads to a certain lifestyle they have. However, with the growing number of adolescents having an international education means that they have the identity of both their local country of birth, but also opens them to another world, a western one. It may skew their actual self-concept enough that it does not exactly influence their symbolic consumption, but they use their lifestyle to perceive certain symbols instead. Compared to the Thai school students that their education aligns with their household, the culture of the country of birth, and their peers, which may help them to develop a firmer sense of identity that makes the actual self-concept a more significant influence as symbolic consumption on brand attitude. It will be interesting for future researchers to study further.

## 6. Conclusions

Thailand's growing purchasing power and potential growth in market size become an attractive market for foreign brands and investors to enter. However, the Thai population has also had a rise in the students being educated internationally, which opens new doors for interpretation. Thai consumers, especially the younger generation, have a different way of thinking and how they perceive brands. Equipped with an understanding of not only how symbolic consumption effects brand attitude will not only

allow the marketers to create the right message for their brands to attract the Thai consumers but also build a long-lasting positive attitude towards the brand. It is also significant to know as much information on the consumers as possible, which this study tries to give a more in-depth insight into the target consumer through their educational background as well. Parents who can afford to send their children to international schools, with higher purchasing power, could be an important target market for many brands. It means that they have to keep in mind that messages that link to actual self-concept, which may work with other target groups, may not work with the Thais who are internationally educated. Thus, to maintain a positive brand attitude and build a strong relationship with this particular target group, the marketers will have strong lifestyle messages. The brands chosen most frequent could also indicate the same thing because lifestyle can influence both international curriculum students and Thai curriculum students. Leading brands who sell a lifestyle like Apple, Nike, Chanel, Starbucks, and Coca Cola are high in the choice for Brand X.

Although this study has given us an insight into the Thai consumer's symbolic consumption affecting brand attitude, it needs to state that many limitations, if improved, could make significant discoveries that could be useful to other researchers. Firstly, under time constraints, the sample size was limited to only 203 respondents, although adequate to giving the researchers some insight, with bigger sample size, marketers could pinpoint a better scope of the Thai consumers. The sample was taken from respondents from Bangkok, Thailand only, which may not be an indicator for the whole of Thailand if the information for a broader sample size of the whole of Thailand is needed. Future researchers can expand this scope to many other parts of Thailand. For future studies, the researcher would also like to recommend exploring other demographics as well. Although the study reveals the symbolic consumption effects on the brand attitude with Thai students educated in Thai schools and International schools, future research could expand to purchase intention to find the relationship between brand attitude and what consumers choose to buy. The study could also be applied further to domestic brands that would like to compete with the incoming global brands as well, with these insights.

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