

## **Social Media Usage Behavior of the Elderly: Case Study in Surat Thani Province, Thailand**

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**Abstract:** *The objective of this research is 1) to study social media usage behavior of the elderly and 2) to examine the relationship between factors of the social media usage behavior of the elderly in Surat Thani Province, Thailand. The data were collected from selected elderly aged 60 years and older in Surat Thani Province. The number of the sample in this study was 400. The questionnaire was used as a tool to collect the data. Statistics used were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Chi-Square.*

*The research reveals that 1) personal factors including gender, age, education, income, and occupation/hobbies correlated with their usage of social media are motivated by an individual or organization, the types of social media, the purpose of using social media, participants in the use of social media, the amount of time and internet media usage statistically significant at the 0.05 level, and 2) motivation factors including the demand for social media, benefits of social media, perceived ease of use of social media platforms, social influence of the use of social media and the technology acceptance correlated with social media usage behavior, including their usage of social media is motivated by an individual or organization, the types of social media, the amount of time and in places of using online social media statistically significant at the 0.05 level.*

*The benefits of research are behavioral analysis of the elderly can be used as a guideline for making business decisions by strategizing to make the elderly more interested in products or services. There is marketing communication through social media by bringing content marketing strategies to the present to communicate with the elderly people who will have many in the future.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Thailand tends to enter into an aging society completely. Economic or country development that provides uncovered welfare to people has caused family plans or birth control to reduce fertility and made people have fewer children from such a changed economy because having many children might generate more burdens. Such changes in social structure, values, and attitudes of populations today originate in reduced labor production resulting in Thailand entering into an aging society. It increases expensing budgets while the revenue decreases because the government has to support the welfare budgets to the senior persons more which might cause a social problem (Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development Institute (TGRI), 2013). Every sector has to analyze various situations to perceive the elder society. Hence, it has to adapt the concepts, readiness, and elderly social design for future change (Department of Older Persons (DOP), 2021).

Completely entering an aging society expresses that the proportion of elders in Thailand has been increasing rapidly and consistently. In 2021, the senior population increased by more than 13 million people, or 20% of the population. It regards that this group has a higher population proportion than other groups. Therefore, Thailand can consider entering into an aging society. It causes the structure of the population aged 60 years old and up has changed quickly. It expects that in the next 20 years, Thailand will have many elders increasing as one-third numbers of the Thai people (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2019). For Surat Thani province in 2019, 1.5 hundred thousand from a total of a million people were the elders, or 16% of the population, divided into three groups: youngest-old group (60-69 years old), middle-old group (70-79 years old), and oldest-old group (80 years old up). The top five districts having the most senior citizens included Surat Thani district, Kanchanadit district, Phunphin district, Nasan district, and Wiang Sa district (Surat Thani Provincial Statistical Office, 2020).

In the present changing condition of social structures and behaviors, using social media for communication, especially social networks through the internet in the website to let users describe their interests

or favorite activities to connect same things with others, such as online conversation, messages, video uploading, or photo shooting to share with members like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter popularly today, it reveals that the Gen B group uses social media at 84.7 %. The most popular channel is Facebook. The use rate is four hours per day. The main activities include sending messages, sharing and uploading photos and videos, including posting and commenting on Facebook (Anti-aging Medicine Center, 2021).

Social media and the elderly society group have become necessary and beneficial in their daily lives because they are using it to communicate with each other and follow news and knowledge today to catch up with various global situations, such as news and information, and invitation activities that can forward quickly. Furthermore, it can make family and friends easily connect via video call or message. They can mutually talk all the time without the limit of places. In addition, it enables the elderly to discuss and inspire others by establishing a specific group of people who like the same things. The activities enhance them to meet new friends interested in the same stories or activities, for example, the association regarding the exercise as Tai Chi move, merit-making, and so on (Jutiporn, 2021: online).

Because of the varied change factors affecting the elderly group, therefore, business persons are interested in and emphasizing the elderly's marketing increasingly by using technology like social networks as a medium to access this group, considered the challenging market at present. Today, senior citizens have the readiness and high purchasing power, different from the previous time (eukeik.ee, 2562: online). However, a single obstacle is that most of them or the population group entering the elderly age is knowledgeable about technology quite a little. They likely do not understand how to use online technology compared with other groups. Hence, the business persons have to perceive the characteristics, habits, and various needs of this group which is always changeable, to help drive the domestic business and economy to run forward. Thus, this research aims to study the social media usage behavior of the elderly and factors relating to social media usage behavior by focusing only on the elders in the Surat Thani province areas.

## **II. Literature Review and Research Conceptual Framework**

This research studied and reviewed the essential concepts and related theories as follows:

### **1) Behavioural Theory**

Learning Theory means the behaviors that change according to the experiences and environments which cause learning and adapting such behaviors relating to the animals and human beings' purposes. Psychologists divide three theories: 1 ) Behaviorism: behavior which is the sum of each action. The motivation results in learning and can observe from the behavioral expression. Psychologists divide human behavior into two types: Respondent Behavior, such as Ivan Pavlov's theory (1902), and Operant Behavior, such as B.F.Skinner's concept (1938), 2) Cognitive Constructivism: a learning theory that has to do to generate knowledge to become behaviors. It categorizes into two theories; Cognitive Constructivism, such as Jean Piaget's Basic Theory of Development (1983), and Social Constructivism, such as the Basic Theory of Lev Vygotsky (1978), and 3) Social Cognitive Learning Theory: a theory of Professor Albert Bandura (1986).

Motivation Theory: motivation is a response of individuals that have some stimulus to motivate them to generate actions and express them as behaviors. Moreover, motivation is a factor that enhances a human being to achieve the purpose as needed by responding to some stimulus that stimulates to create motivation. Motivation consists of two characteristics; Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation. Motivation can occur in many cases, such as need, drive, or environment affecting the stimulation behaviors without specific regulations. It is because human behaviors are complicated and different difficult to understand. The crucial motivations of human beings are need, drive, incentive, expectation, goal, etc.

6W1H Theory is a tool to help analyze consumers' behaviors. It is a theory that enhances perceptions toward the target groups and customers group how they live, decide, or use various products. 6 W1H are Who, What, Why, Who, Where, When, and How.

### **2) Theory of Social Media Usage Behavior**

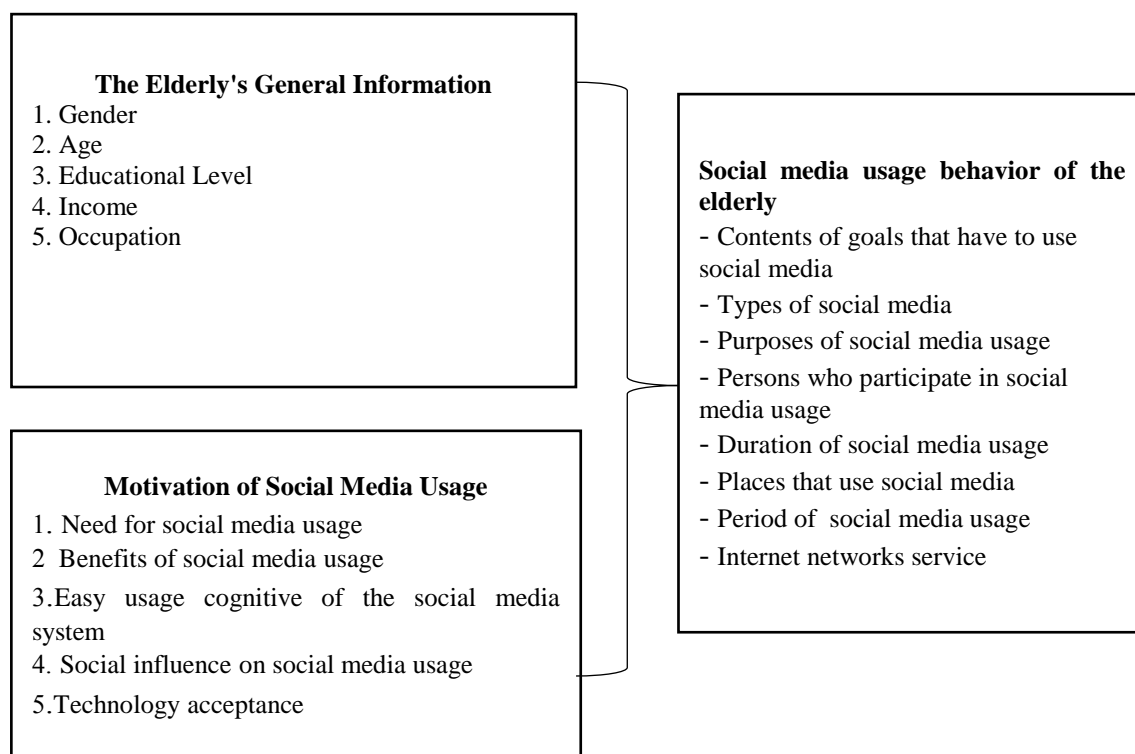
The concept of technological acceptance of Davis Bagozzi & Warshaw (1989); discovered the model of crucial technology acceptance by focusing on creating a model to let the technology users realize how they can apply such novel technology by using the authentic system. However, such use might not affect directly or might work. It involves the Behavioral Intention (BI) affected by Attitude (A). For this model, when offering new technology, three factors affecting the users' decision about such technological use include Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Usefulness, and Attitude.

### **3) The Elderly Concepts**

Hall (1976) described that if a person can understand and open up to the changed behaviors of the elderly who are 60 years old up according to their aging deterioration in physical, mental, and social aspects by

adapting the attitudes or sending signals of caring and concerning about them, they will live the lives concordant with the present environments. Types of the elderly include Chronological Aging, Biological Aging, Psychological Aging, and Sociological Aging

According to the review literature, whether the variables relating to individuals, environments, or technologies that cause learning will express behaviors or not depend on the motivated process, which is Learning Theory, relying on the responses to lead to the shown learning behaviors. Such Learning Theory consists of Classical Conditioning Theory by Ivan Pavlov (1902), and learning happened under the appropriate conditions and environments by B.F. Skinner (1938). The instruments used for analysis are 6W1H Theory for studying the target group's behaviors and the technology acceptance concept by Davis Bagozzi & Warshaw (1989). The crucial model of technology acceptance in the information technology system and novel technology generate several factors affecting the users' decision about the technological use methods. The researcher determines the conceptual framework of the study on the social media usage behaviors of the elderly: a case study in Surat Thani province, Thailand, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1 Research Conceptual Framework**

#### **4) Research Methodology**

This research studied the elderly group in Surat Thani province. The group which expressed social media usage was determined the age rank from 60 years old up, a total of 400 persons. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire which consists of the contents according to the conceptual framework divided into four parts of the question: 1) personal data of the elderly, 2) motivation of social media usage of the elderly, 3) behavior of social media usage of the elderly, and 4) other recommendations. The statistics used in the research include Frequency, Mean, Standard Deviation, and Chi-Square.

#### **5) Research Result**

##### **1) Personal factors of the elderly**

Personal factor: most of the sample group was female, 222 persons (55.5%), aged between 60 and 64 years old, 214 persons (53.5%), primary educational level, 171 persons (42.8%), with a monthly average income between 10,000 and 20,000 baht (50.5%), and holding a farmer occupation, 110 persons (27.5%).

##### **2) Factors of motivation of social media usage**

The study results of all five aspects on the motivational level through social media usage among the elderly in Surat Thani province can conclude: the sample group had overall motivation at a high level. When considering each factor, it reveals that the need for social media usage had the highest Mean (Mean=4.13), secondly was benefits of social media usage aspect (Mean=3.96), Easy usage cognitive of the social media system (Mean=3.83), technology acceptance (Mean=3.55), and social influence on social media usage (Mean=3.46), respectively.

**3) Information on social media usage behavior**

The study results of the responders' behaviors indicated that the sample group had the social media usage behavior as follows: any person or organization that urged the sample group to use social media included friends. Facebook was the social media type used the most. The purpose was to talk and respond the social activities with friends or family members. The person who was involved in the understanding of social media usage was children. The duration used the most was the daytime (12.01 p.m. – 05.00 p.m.). The samples usually used social media in their residences the most. The period was 1-2 hours, and they used the internet network service through home Wi-Fi.

**4) Relationship between personal factors and social media usage behaviors of the elderly in Surat Thani province**

Social media usage behaviors of the elderly								
Personal Factors	Person or organization	Types of social media	Purposes of social media usage	Persons involved	Duration of social media usage	Place of social media usage	Period of social media usage	Media use on internet network
Gender	*	*	*	*			*	
Age							*	*
Education	*			*			*	*
Income				*			*	*
Occupation	*			*			*	*

\* Sig < 0.05 has the statistical significance level at 0.05.

Gender: it had a relationship with the social media usage behaviors of the elderly on any person or organization that urged the sample group to use social media, types of social media usage, purposes of social media usage, persons participated in the understanding of social media usage, and duration of social media usage at the statistical significance of 0.05.

Age: it had a relationship with the social media usage behavior of the elderly on the duration of social media usage and internet network service at the statistical significance of 0.05

Education: it had a relationship with the social media usage behavior of the elderly on the person or organization that urged the samples to use social media, persons involved with the understanding of social media usage, duration of social media usage, and internet network service usage at the statistical significance of 0.05.

Income: it had a relationship with the social media usage behavior of the elderly on persons involved with the understanding of social media usage, duration of social media usage, and internet network service usage at the statistical significance of 0.05.

Occupation: it had a relationship with the social media usage behavior of the elderly on the person or organization that urged the samples to use social media, persons involved with the understanding of social media usage, duration of social media usage, and internet network service usage at the statistical significance of 0.05.

**5) Relationship between the factors of motivation on social media usage and social media usage behaviors of the elderly group**

Social media usage behaviors of the elderly								
Motivation Factor	Person or organization	Types of social media	Purposes of social media usage	Persons involved	Duration of social media usage	Place of social media usage	Period of social media usage	Media use on internet network
Need aspect	*	*			*			
Benefits						*		

aspect			
Cognitive of systematic easiness aspect	*	*	*
Social influence aspect	*		*
Technology acceptance aspect	*		*

\* Sig < 0.05 has the statistical significance level at 0.05

Need for social media usage: it had a relationship with the social media usage behavior of the elderly on person or organization that urged the samples to use social media, types of social media, and duration of social media usage at the statistical significance of 0.05.

Benefits of social media usage: it had a relationship with the social media usage behavior of the elderly group on the places of social media usage at the statistical significance level of 0.05.

Cognitive of systematic easiness on social media usage had a relationship with the social media usage behavior of the elderly group on a person or organization that urged the elderly to use social media, types of social media, and places of social media usage at the statistical significance of 0.05 levels.

Social influence toward social media usage had a relationship with the social media usage behavior of the elderly group on a person or organization that urged the elderly to use social media, places of social media use at the statistical significance at 0.05 levels.

Technology acceptance: it had a relationship with the social media usage behavior of the elderly group on a person or organization that urged the elderly to use social media and places of social media use at the statistical significance at 0.05 levels.

## 6) Research Discussion

The study of the social media usage behavior of the elderly in Surat Thani province revealed that the elderly in Surat Thani province preferred to use social media variedly. They are involved with such media to communicate about social activities with friends or family. The social media they usually used the most was Facebook, with 1-2 hours, which expressed that their usage rate was less than the information on social media usage in the elderly group in Thailand because these senior persons in Surat Thani province who are the samples were in the countryside society. Furthermore, they upheld the occupation of farmers, private businesses, selling, etc. It made the result of social media usage less than the overall image of the elderly in Thailand. In addition, social influence was a part that caused the elderly to use social media. Namely, many people around the elderly mostly applied social media until it made them use accordingly to get acceptance from their friends and other people to participate in various social activities through social media. However, the educational level of the senior persons in Surat Thani province was at the primary school level, which caused them to have little knowledge about social media usage. The person involved in teaching them how to use such media the most was their children. They could learn and try out using it more. It is concordant with the concept Vygotsky mentioned in the Constructivism Theory that human beings are influenced by their environments since they were born, not only natural environments but also social environments they get affected, which include cultures created by each society. Hence, various social institutes starting from the family affect the intelligence development of each individual. Moreover, language is still a crucial instrument of thought and improvement.

## 7) Research Recommendations

1) The analysis data of the elderly's behavior can be applied as guidance of decisions on business relating to online marketing communication through the elderly group that tends to become numerous in the future, for example (1) getting through this target group, it has to offer products or services suitable for their age through Facebook because it is the most popular among this target. The popularity of social media can change over time depending on the social context driven by factors of politics, economics, cultures, and technology of each era, (2) it should determine the strategies to interest the elderly group in products and services more because this group has the duration of usage, especially in the daytime (12.01 p.m. – 05.00 p.m.) by using 1-2 hours, and the place they use is at home. Thus, the products or services offered also affect the purchase decision.

2) To get the senior persons to have motivation on social media usage, in the long run, marketers or developers should improve the systems and focus on developing programs suitable for this group, which include marketing media, advertising, news, or product selling, to let them require or accept, including realizing the usefulness and approaching technology easier by bringing the Content Marketing strategies to represent for communicate with such target group, such as contents related to entertainment such as a game, questioning and answering, viral, or any contents urging the stimulus by using actors or actress, influencers, etc., to review the products for better- known and quick decision to buy. Therefore, Content Marketing becomes a crucial factor that can enhance brands or businesses to communicate with such target groups well.

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