Self - presentation of Thai women on Dating websites for seeking foreign men,

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Abstract

The research "Self – presentation of Thai women on Dating websites for seeking foreign men " has two objectives; 1) To study the characters and content of Thai women that are used for the presenting female self to seek foreign men on Dating website and 2) To study Thai women's expression of their thoughts on Online Media. This study is a qualitative study. The research tools are textual analysis and observation from 2 Dating websites of Thailand. The data are collected and analyzed from the registration of personal information in the websites such as photos, content and other signs for representing personal information to attract foreign men on Dating websites. Research theories are Computer – Mediated – Communication, Semiology, Cyberfeminism, Self-Concept and Self-Identity. The study proves to portray the reflection of Thai women in expression themselves on Online Media.

Keyword : Self – presentation, Thai women, Dating websites, Foreign men

Introduction

In the past, there was a strict division of gender in Thai society, especially for women who was controlled or couldn't express their feelings about gender issues openly. In addition, single women usually were controlled in order to only stay at home, or by providing a suitable match for the parents or relatives in the family to auction off; this is called Arranged Marriages. It means that the parents or relatives provide a match or force their children to marry someone they choose, which both parties or either party can't refuse. The main reason why Thai women couldn't choose their own partner was because of the old Thai traditions, which defined women as the follower, who had a lower social status than men. Women were taught to believe that they were the property of their husband after marriage. There were Thai literature or women teaching proverbs stating the characteristics of a good wife as a slave; they had to treat their husband as a boss, or women had to respect their husband. Thus, it is clear that Thai society in the past taught women to be the follower who had to listen to her husband on every topic and every time. The image of Thai women in the past was about wife and mother, rather than being independently successful in their own career.

In regards to dating in Thai society in the past and nowadays it is the belief that the man has to start hitting on the woman. If the woman begins to do this, they will get a negative reaction from society. Therefore, romance for women in the past was a secret issue, and the ways of getting romantic contact between young people was not very many. So it was difficult to keep contact for them, and traditionally Thai women were very reserved and did not show emotions openly, which made it even more difficult for Thai women to find a partner.

When the period of time changes, the context and cultural content of society also changes. There was more openness about social values, especially assimilating western culture during the early Rattanakosin period in Thailand. It was a turning point that raised women's status, because Thai women got access to better education, and the new educational opportunities caused women to be more participating in society and the economy (Arun Wechsuwan, 1998). Better education made women have more employment options, and be more successful in their career, step by step.

The lifestyle of people in Thai society has changed since Thailand started to get influence from Western social values and technology. There were many foreign men working in Thailand, and Thai women got equal educational opportunities to go study abroad. It made it more common for Thai women to get married to foreign men. In addition, foreign men who were working in Thailand got married to Thai women in Thailand more as well. So, it is clear that Thai women are getting married to foreign men more and more, and that Thai women has more freedom to seek their partner by themselves, because the social context was more open (Phornpirom Iamtham and Withayakorn Chiangkool, 2000).

Rights and freedom for dating of Thai women are more free now, so Thai women have changed dating behavior to now being able to choose by themselves, such as Thai women deciding to marry foreign men or by seeking a partner using various medias. The social choices of dating are increasing, the options of seeking a partner are more varied, not only matchmaker, provided by parents, introduced to know each other in social meetings by friends, but also media technology such as internet helping with matchmaking. The nature of the internet has the advantage of no boundaries in terms of location and timing in regards to communication between the beloved who live far away from each other in different countries. They can contact each other easily and maintain the relationship continuously, because the internet can use any computer in the world to communicate at any time to the desire of the users.

The characteristics of online communication on the internet make people communicate easily and quickly, by getting rid of the limitations of time and location. So, the internet is an option that can be used to seek a partner, because it is quick and incognito when you input information, and you can contact in real time through various programs such as Chat Webcam or Skype. It makes people able see each other, and keeps relationships easily and quickly.

Internet communication makes interaction between people all over the world more convenient and faster. So, there are many dating websites, and users live all over the world, because the users can communicate anytime and everywhere. There are dating websites in Thailand as well, where users or members of the website are able to make their own profile with basic information to introduce themselves, such as photos, opinion comments, education, career, interesting topics, and characteristics of the partner that they are looking for, in order to attract the opposite gender to talk or send text to message inbox. The features of the internet is easy access, free service at the beginning of use, so many men and women like to use dating websites. The relationships on the internet are similar in context to real life relationships. This means that general relationships can end, or continue to develop into real friendships, into a romantic relationship or into even a marriage. This is actually happening nowadays in real social life. (Saijai Leelakajornjit referred in Wannee Siriratrungreang, 2004).

Dating websites in Thailand has made the opportunity for women to choose their partner by themselves. Most dating websites provide opportunities for Thai women to seek foreign men by putting introduction profile, photos and character of desired partner, in order to impress foreign men and get interaction from them, and can then develop into a romantic relationship in the future.

Because of new advances in technology and the fact that women have a chance to get better education, women have more rights and roles in society, they dare to think and express themselves by using public space in the online world to respond to their needs, and they also have more freedom to choose their partner. This obviously shows

that women can seek any guy on the internet to be a friend or partner according to their needs and satisfaction.

This study focuses on the presentation detail of Thai women in terms of seeking foreign men on Dating websites. This study will reflect the presentation contents, such as opinion and social values of Thai women in Thai society nowadays.

Research Objectives

To study about the presentation contents of Thai women for seeking foreign men on dating websites, which shows the social values and opinion expressed by them nowadays.

Research Methodology

- **Samples and research tool**

The researcher used the pattern and content of the self-presentation profile of Thai women members on dating websites as the samples by using messages and photos of them. The researcher used purposive sampling of 100 members from 2 websites which are www.thaifriendly.com for 50 members and www.thailovelink.com for 50 members. Then the researcher did sampling by Systematic Random Sampling by choosing every fifth name to be analyzed.

Related literatures

1. Computer – Mediated – Communication (CMC)
2. Semiology
3. Cyberfeminism
4. Self-Concept and Self-Identity

Research Results

• The content for self- presentation of Thai women on dating website for seeking foreign men.
The content of analysis was composed of personal details, introduction information and opinion expressed by the members, characteristics of the partner that the members were looking for, and photo of members that they used for presenting themselves**.**

Personal details of the members
Personal details of the members was composed of basic information of the member, such as age, marital status, education, having children or not, wanting children or not, and type of body. Then the researcher classified this information into 6 groups as follows:

1. Younger than 20 years old, most were single, had bachelor degree, didn't have children, didn't want to have children, and were average shape.

2. 21-25 years old, most were single and a few divorced, most had bachelor degree, few had children, rather a lot wanted to have children, and most were average, thin or plump shape.

3. 26-30 years old, most were single and few divorced, most had bachelor degree, most had children, rather few wanted to have children, and most were average or thin shape.

4. 31-35 years old, most were single, most had bachelor degree, few had children, rather few wanted to have children, and most were average, thin or plump shape.

5. 36-40 years old, most were single, few separated, most had bachelor degree, most had children, most wanted to have children, and most were average shape.

6. over 40 years old, most were single and divorced, few were widowed, most had bachelor degree, few had master degree, most had children, rather a few wanted to have children, and most were average shape.

Summary of the personal details was that most were single, of average shape, had bachelor degree education, and didn't want to have children. This showed that Thai women who were of average shape and had high education didn't want to have offspring.

The introduction information and opinion expressed by the members

The information of characters and opinion expressed to foreign men of members to get attraction from foreign men was classified into 7 types as follows:

1. Simply women who liked to stay at home, cook, and have activities at home.
2. Lonely women who lacked warmth in family, liked to be taken care of.
3. Social women who liked to have an active social life.
4. Women who just looked for a friend to talk with or to improve their English.
5. Women who were serious about love, and looking for real love.
6. Women who liked to protect their dignity and the female values.
7. Women who introduced themselves by using quotes or poems.

The example of the information opinion expressed of the member

- Simply women who liked to stay at home, cook, and have activities at home.

    "I am a working woman, simple and funny woman sometime serious but good heart…like to cook, the temple, read book, nature (don't contact me if you want to play game or chat about sex" **(Triple)**

    " nice person, simple, good heart comfortable to talking ..Like simple life " **(Adamas)**

- Lonely women who lacked warmth in family, liked to be taken care of.

    " i need someone for take care of me and family spend time together like a family" **(peachycute)**

    " I am so lonely. . . want to meet someone good guy and kind heart" **(Rungfa)**

- Social women who liked to have an active social life.

    " I like to go horseback riding at the weekend and go hang out with friends (yeah! you can go with me lol)" **(Tanapron)**

- Women who just looked for a friend to talk with or to improve their English.

    " JUST MAKE FRIEND !! Bcoz i'm not good in english I want to learn in Eng. <<Don't ask me about sex>> !! **(ConTii)**

    " i want to learn english. because i'm not good at english. i will happy if you would teach me give i understand english more. **(Ingmei)**

- Women who were serious about love, and looking for real love.

    " My marriage life with their loved ones. A small family together And take care of each other forever" **(Il joo)**

    " I am looking for a man whom I can start my new life and help me forget my sad past and of course respect of who i really am :) " **(mindy2012)**

- Women who liked to protect their dignity and the female values.

    "I AM NOT PROSTITUTE. AND STOP TO SAY WITH ME. I WANT TO FUCK YOU! I AM NOT SELL MY PUSSY. I hate play boy and play game with me. I don't want support me. I'm do work and I have money. Hope you understand. Good luck everybody. **(kanyawee208)**

    "Smart, independent, self confident, talent and trustworthy" I think those words could describe how I am as clear. Do not worry, I'm not looking for sugar daddy who supports myself or family as long as I still have my own business (9 years by now) plus another jobs that I work as a consultant. I'm a hard working woman, work more than play, do more than words and I do believe in what I have seen, not from what I heard" **(ElinaElleMartin)**

- Women who introduced themselves by using quotes or poems.

    "Sometime when you meet someone you fell in love.But I dont believe in love at first.But I sure believe in the click. When someone is so sweet to

you,don't expect that person will be like that all the time. remember,even the sweetest chocolate expires" **(Patcha555)**

"Love is a beautiful thing, it must be treated with tenderness and compassion or, like a rose, it's thorns can make it dangerous." **(bowlawong)**

The introduction information and opinion expressed by the members found that the information mostly shown were of women who were serious about love, looking for real love, simply women who liked to stay at home, cook, have activities at home, women who liked to protect their dignity and the female values. This shows that Thai women are serious when looking for love and stable relationships, have a simple life, have a housewife character and like to protect their dignity and female values. Most members posted in their information that they are not bar girls, not prostitutes, and don't want to talk about sex, for example;

"I am not a bar girl or anything like someone think..especially not easily girl...and i have a construction company with my family in Phuket." **(ladythailand2012)**

" I have tattoos doesn't mean i m bar girl or bad girl. If u DON'T LIKE tattoos dont say anything and go away from my profile :)" **(BoBoBaby)**

Moreover, there was other information about protecting the dignity and female values that members had posted, for example;

"Thai girl are not stupid ....we are don't need dirty guys..end" **(Thiwaporn1989)**

"I really understand human who like to liar for fun because a lot of ladies easy to get them. Please, don't contempt for some Thai ladies who are sincere and honest.." **(Hanaa)**

"If you come to my profile and ask me for sleep with you plz go to the hell ok? not all Thai ladies are easy or crazy like that" **(mindy2012)**

The characteristics of foreign men that members were looking for

The information about the characteristics of foreign men that members were looking for found that most members were looking for men who were older, could be a gentleman, honest, good mind, could take care of a family, had a sense of humor (but not playboy who likes to play games), friendly, and could discuss all topics. It showed that Thai women are looking for men who are mature, can take care of a family, and can share every issue of life.

The sample of the information that members posted about the characteristics of foreign men that they were looking for;

"A gentle intelligent, charming, heartfelt warmhearted Do you really love me with your heart. I am looking for someone to share my life with, must be friendly and easy going - everything else is unimportant. If you are with me then I' M happy : -)." **(Dehi)**

"*No playboy. A man who looking for serious relationship, love me and my daughter "* **(Tongii)**

"want to know someone very good kind and we can talk about everything." **(19011980)**

The photo of members that they used for presenting themselves

The photo of members that they used for presenting themselves to foreign men was categorized by the researcher into 5 types as follows:

1.   The photos of sexy and voluptuous women where the members wore a sexy dress or rather open, such as a leotard dress, swimming suit, showed sexy action,   showed   curves   of   body   or   the   bust.
Sample of sexy and voluptuous women photos
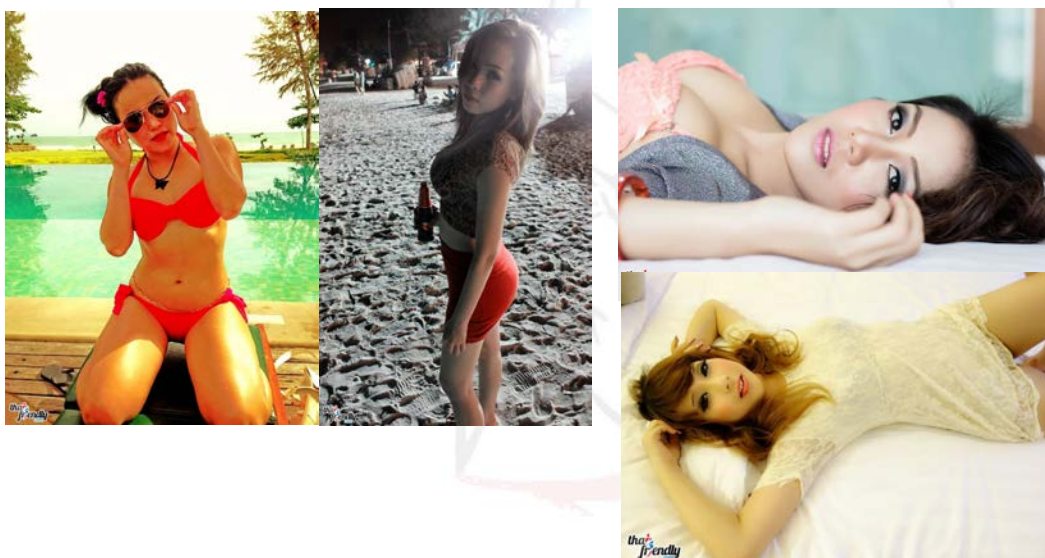
2.   The photos of beautiful sweet, lovely, bright women where the members wore shirt singlet, or sleeveless shirt with sweet tones, such as white, pink. The face part was clear with a smile and a sweet action.
*Sample of sweet, lovely, bright women photos*

3.   The photos of self-confident and active women where the members wore convenient clothes, such as a T-shirt or a sports suit, and taken while standing   or   sitting.
Sample of confident and active women

4.   The photos of women who love animals where the members took a photo with pets such as dogs or other animals, and taken to express that they love animals.
Sample   of   women   who   love   animals
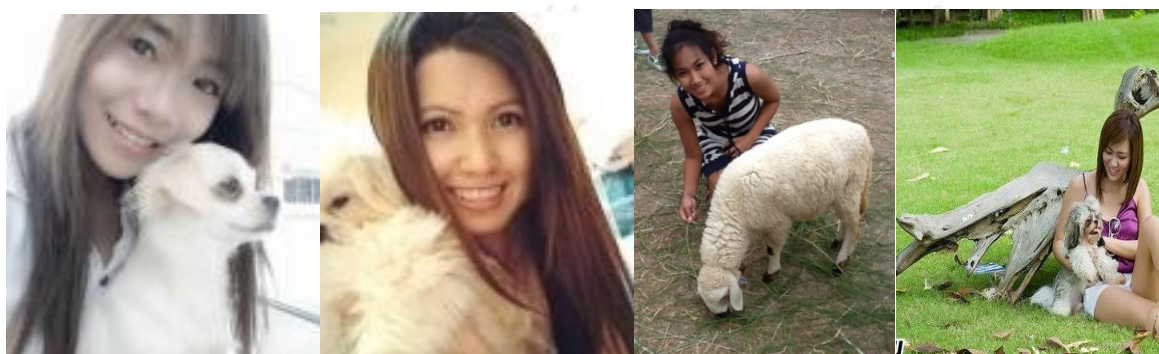
5.   The photos of women who had a housewife character and showed Thai style where the members looked casual and confident, wore covering dresses or Thai fabric dress, taken having a serious expression, warmth, and maturity.
Sample of women who had housewife character

The photos of members that they used for presenting themselves to foreign men found that most were the photos of beautiful sweet, lovely, bright women, who

showed beautiful a sweet bright face with a smile, and a sweet personality, followed by the photos of women who have a housewife character and showed Thai style, looking casual and confident, and with an expression of warmth and maturity. So, the photos of a sweet bright face with a smile of Thai women to present themselves to foreign men show that Thai women like to show the image of beautiful sweet and bright women. And that they also like to show the image of confident and strong women who could take care of themselves and create make family warmth by using the photo that expressed maturity and seriousness.

Discussion

The Internet has become the matchmaker in the modern world by using the computer as a mediator, also called Computer - Mediated – Communication, or CMC, which has affected society and culture. The result of the research found that women on dating websites post messages, photos, or symbols of the members by showing personal detail, presentation information, the characteristics of foreign men that they were looking for, and show various photos of themselves, and the members can edit content as needed. Also, it is very convenient to sign in to dating websites at any computer connected to the internet, at anytime, anywhere. This conforms to the concept of Everett Roger (referred in Kanchana, 2000) which states about CMC as a new media that is different from the former media, because CMC has no limitations to present the contents. So this kind of media is available by needs of the user (Transient), and CMC is widely distributed (Wide Distributed), has many ways to present (Multi-Model), and users can adjust the contents as appropriate (Manipulation of Content).

From these mentioned features of CMC, the effect for Thai women is that they can use dating websites to communicate and keep relations with foreign men conveniently and easily. And the activities in Cyberspace help people who used to have no rights in society become capable, makes women and men equal, and women can show their various opinions openly. So, the image that women had no right to choose partners by themselves or got into arranged marriages, as in the past, is fading away step by step. The characteristics of the internet in terms of providing equality and democracy are used more for negotiating the values of women (Kanchana, 2011). The relationship between women in cyber space started the term called Cyberfeminist which connected technology and women, so women can get benefits by using Cyberspace to respond to their needs. Women can show their opinions, needs, and features of themselves in cyber space, they don't need to worry about getting bad feedback from society when they want to be equal to men. The results of the research found that most women who use dating websites have bachelor degrees. This shows that highly educated Thai women are interesting in seeking a partner by using the internet. It means that modern women who have high performance dare to show their opinions more than before.

Self – presentation of Thai women for seeking foreign men had several ways of communication to show the self-presentation contents in terms of emotion and desire, by using sign systems, such as use of language, photos or other symbols to impress foreign men who can get to know them as much as in real life. According to the Theory of Signs by Pierce, self–presentation of Thai women was Icon Signs which presents real photos of various actions to present themselves as much as they can, because Icon Signs is easy to decode or explain immediately. The most photos of Thai women shown on dating websites were the photos of beautiful sweet, lovely, bright women, who showed sweet bright faces with a smile, and a sweet personality to attract men who have an identity as being strong and wanting to protect those women.

According to the concept of Goffman (referred in Sophida, 2003) the Self is not something permanent in each individual. But the Self is the social process or the art of impression management, it means the way to express the behavior of human beings in any social event in order to get acceptance from others, just as Thai women who posted Self-presentation on their profile in order to impress and attract the opposite gender to visit their profile and view their photos. This is the Signs of self-presentation that conformed to the concept of Saussure (referred in Kanchana, 2010) to interact with Binary Opposition, because the information on the profile is easy to access and understand. This shows that most Thai women presented themselves as nice women with the protection of their dignity and values by putting themselves opposite to bar girls and prostitutes.

Conclusion

The Self – presentation of Thai women on dating websites for seeking foreign men was used for impressing and attracting the foreign men to talk or send messages. It shows that the power of the internet communication empowers women equally as men. Thai women can construction good images of themselves by their needs, and they can choose their partner to their satisfaction more than before by using nice messages and symbols to make nice images of themselves as modern girls who have high education, and who use internet technology for seeking real love and a stable life by presenting themselves as women who like to get taken care of and be protected by men who are strong. The image of those women were opposite bar girls or prostitutes, because they did not want to be considered as such.

However, even though the image of Thai women as presented as modern women who are self-confident and have freedom to express opinions on cyber world, the self–presentation of Thai women was still conservative as simply, sweet, and having a housewife character, and also looking for foreign men who can provide a stable life, give real love, and serious commitment for life, rather than playing love games and simply looking at them as sexual objects.

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