# Elderly Segmentation, Acculturation to Global Consumer Culture, and Consumption Pattern in Thailand

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# Abstract

This study aims to explore the characteristics, segmentation, and consumption patterns of the elderly population in Thailand. One thousand and two hundred respondents were sampled. By employing the latent class cluster analysis, a more in-depth classification of the elderly population was suggested as an expansion to the previous research findings regarding only the new age and traditional elderly groups. The result suggests five segments, including the new-age, unadaptable affluent, trend-following middle class, complacent middle class, and impoverished elderly groups. The consumption patterns of fifteen products from all the elderly groups were also investigated. Each elderly group has a different consumption pattern from among the material-utilitarian, material-hedonic, experiential-utilitarian, and experiential-hedonic consumption values. Promotion of the traditional elderly group to the new-age elderly group is beneficial to maintaining economic growth in an ageing society. Managerial implications for the government and the private sector with respect to each type of elderly group are proposed.

**Keywords:** New Age Elderly; Acculturation to Global Consumer Culture; Consumption Pattern; Experiential Consumption; Consumption Value

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# Introduction

An ageing society is one of the important issues significantly affecting social and economic environments in various countries. The proportion of Thai people aged over 60 years is likely to increase continuously; this age group began to have a higher percentage than that of children aged 0-14 years in 2019 and accounted for 18.24 percent of the population in 2021.

As a response to such demographic changes, governments, private sectors and educational institutions are all trying to study factors related to the ageing society context. The aim of those studies is to understand and define how to cope with such problems in various aspects. Three main subjects are focused on the well-being and behaviour of elderly individuals themselves, the preparation for old age by those who will become elderly in the near future (Eiamkanchanalai et al., 2013; Ketkaew et al., 2019; Suvanno et. al., 2022; Tosuwan & Yangprayong, 2022), and the attitudes and behaviours of people who interact with the elderly population (Chu & Chu, 2013; Eiamkanchanalai et al., 2019; Faudzi et al., 2022; Runkawatt et al., 2013; Tice et al., 2010)

This study adds to the literature by investigating the consumer behaviour of the current elderly population. Elderly people in the Bangkok metropolitan area of Thailand are the main target. Thailand is in the transitional stage of its economy and can thus be regarded as one of the emerging markets. Given the high exposure of information and communication technology, social and economic changes over the past two decades have led to significant changes in the lifestyle and consumption behaviour of the Thai people. Consumers are engaged in more diverse media from all over the world, resulting in their learning and adopting the global consumer culture (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; Cleveland et al., 2022; Dutot & Lichy, 2019). These changes, in turn, have affected the elderly population as well.

The characteristics of the elderly population in Thailand are more diverse due to their differences in their ability to receive media and adjust to changes in their environment. Thus, treating the elderly as a particular cohort is not suitable in this advancing environment. It is significant to understand their diverse characteristics and identify what their attitudes, lifestyles, as well as consumption behaviours are, so that the policy makers can effectively plan the promoting programs to fit with the diverse elderly groups.

In this study, by applying the concepts of the new elderly age and the acculturation to global consumer culture, elderly respondents in Thai society were explored as proxies for emerging markets. The attitudes and consumption patterns of various types of elderly individuals were discussed, and recommendations for policy makers and business firms were proposed.

# Literature Review

### New-age Elderly

The study of the elderly in sociological research has identified this population as an enthusiastic group interested in activities, known as active ageing. Previous studies aimed to provide guidance on how to encourage elderly individuals to become more active and independent, such as through the formation of a leisure group (a club for the elderly) and life-long learning to help elderly individuals adapt to new environments (Boulton-Lewis et al., 2006; Foster & Walker, 2014; Guido et al., 2022; World Health Organization, 2002).

On the other hand, marketing and consumer behaviour research has presented the new-age elderly concept (Berg & Liljedal, 2022; Kao & Chen, 2021; Saribut & Assarut, 2019; Schiffman & Sherman, 1991). The new-age elderly group is identified as those who have the ability to understand and accept new ways of life. The active-ageing elderly may be active in various activities, but those activities may not be modern. The new-age elderly will accept changes and adapt to the changing era. They can live similar to and do activities that are not different from consumers who are of other ages.

Past research has attempted to investigate new-age elderly individuals through various aspects, such as their acceptance of new innovations (Eastman & Iyer, 2005; Kao & Chen, 2021), tourism behaviour (Mathur et al., 1998; Saribut & Assarut, 2019), perceived value for products and services (Sherman et al., 2001), etc. However, most of the studies were conducted in Western countries with better social and economic infrastructures. Thus, the study subjects possessed basic learning potential from their education system and familiarity with information technology.

Thailand is an emerging economy in which the infrastructure has not been thoroughly developed. The education level and learning ability of the elderly population are not equally distributed throughout the whole country. This results in a heterogeneity pattern among the elderly population in Thailand. Therefore, a study to investigate the characteristics of new-age elderly individuals is an important issue in the context of Thai society to enable the better establishment of public policies that match different types of elderly individuals.

**Acculturation to global consumer culture**

The degree of foreign culture adoption is one of the important characteristics of consumers in emerging markets. Therefore, this factor will be incorporated into the investigation of how the elderly population has acculturated to global consumer culture.

The concept of acculturation has been discussed and studied along with the growth in the mobilization of the global population, as well as the expansion of international business activities. In the early stages of research, the concept was widely applied to explain the acculturation behaviour of individuals when they moved into different cultures, for example, expatriate managers (Nahavandi & Malekzadeh, 1988), foreign workers (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999), and immigrants (Chen et al., 2013). The implication of this research stream is to understand the mechanism of how foreign people adapt to a particular environment.

Later, the acculturation concept was adapted into the field of marketing research (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; Czarnecka & Schivinski, 2019; Steenkamp, 2001). Cleveland and Laroche (2007) tried to explain consumers' responses to foreign cultures and individuals' abilities to move towards global consumers. The authors indicated that consumers within a country are heterogeneous in their needs and behaviours. However, homogeneity among some consumers across the country also exists. These findings led to the recognition of international segmentation for global firms (Cleveland et al., 2022; Hassan & Katsanis, 1994; Hofstede et al., 1999; Steenkamp & Hofstede 2002). This research stream attempted to find the similarity among people in different environments and identify them as a global consumer segment.

This study applied the acculturation concept to explain how the elderly could adapt themselves to globalization via the advancement in information and communication technology. It was assumed that elderly individuals in emerging markets were different in their acculturation to the global culture due to their education and economic backgrounds. Thus, the acculturation to global consumer culture is another key factor concerned in this study.

Cleveland and Laroche (2007) developed the acculturation to global consumer culture (AGCC) scale to measure how individuals acquire skills related to and become a part of the global consumer culture. The scale has been tested and replicated in various contexts (Carpenter et al., 2013; Cleveland et al., 2013; Durvasula & Lysonski, 2015). Durvasula and Lysonski (2015) modified the scale to measure AGCC in the cross-national context. This modified scale consists of seven dimensions, including cosmopolitanism, exposure to the marketing activities of MNCs, English language usage/exposure, social interactions (primarily travel), global mass media exposure, openness to and desire to emulate GCCs, and self-identification with the global consumer culture.

**Consumption Pattern**

The consumption pattern is the main concept in this study. It is a combination of two consumption elements, i.e., consumption value and consumption orientation. These elements were taken from an experiential perspective in the consumer information processing model initiated by Holbrook and Hirshman (1982). The authors indicated that behaviour was motivated by objective elements as well as experiences such as fantasies, feelings, and fun in consumption.

Based on Holbrook and Hirshman (1982), some researchers have focused on consumption value by studying the perceived value of consumption, which is the consequence of the information processing model. The consumption value has been one of the key factors that explains consumers' purchase intention and creates a competitive advantage for products or brands (Parasuraman, 1997; Woodruff, 1997). It has been defined as either utilitarian or hedonic (Babin et al., 1994; Lim & Ang, 2008). The definition of utilitarian value has been explained as "an overall measurement of functional benefits and sacrifices that involves more cognitive aspects of attitude, such as value for the money, judgements of convenience, and time savings", and hedonic value has been defined as "an overall judgement of experiential benefits and sacrifices, such as entertainment and escapism" (Overby & Lee, 2006).

Other researchers have emphasized the consumption orientation element by studying the material or experiential attributes of the products and services (Gilovich & Gallo, 2020). Holbrook and Hirshman (1982) indicated that material-oriented consumers regard product elements as significant in their consumption process. However, experientially oriented consumers rely on past experiences from consumption (Belk 1988; Thompson et al., 1989). It has been suggested that experiential consumption creates more happiness and satisfaction for consumers than does material consumption (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Kumar & Gilovich, 2015; Nicolao et al., 2009; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003).

The aforementioned literature review distinguishes between the concepts of material-experiential consumption and utilitarian-hedonic value. These two concepts are similar but differ in perception. This study proposes combining the two concepts, thereby introducing four types of consumption patterns.

- The material-utilitarian pattern represents the situation where consumers focus more on product features or service elements and use products based on utilitarian value.

- The material-hedonic pattern means that consumers pay attention to the products and services features that provide hedonic value, such as a high-status image.

- Consumers with experiential utilitarian patterns regard the experience of using products and services as more important. Thus, the utilitarian value is fundamentally derived from the experience.
- Last, experiential-hedonic oriented consumers prefer usage experience, which leads to hedonic value.

**Lifestyle**

In addition to the concept of AGCC that will be used to describe the new age of the elderly. Another variable that this research focuses on is lifestyle. It is an important factor that marketers try to understand and apply as a guideline for market segmentation (Akkaya, 2021; Weber et al., 2020). Especially in an era where consumer behaviour is complex, and demographic variables had lower power to distinguish consumer behaviour (Vyncke, 2002). As a result, a number of research studies focus on describing behaviours and classifying populations on the basis of values and lifestyles (Akkaya, 2021; Gonzalez & Bello, 2002; Silverberg et al. 1996; Weber et al., 2020).

In this study, lifestyle variable was added to help explain the behaviours of the elderly that resulted from the new-age elderly and acculturation to global consumer culture. The measurement for lifestyle factor was adapted from the study of Eiamkanchalai et al. (2013, 2019), who developed lifestyle measurement in the Thai context.

**Research Framework**

This study aims to investigate the relationship among the degree of new age elderly, AGCC, consumption patterns and lifestyle. The hypothesis is that the degree of new-age elderly is related to how much the elderlies acculturated to the global consumer culture, which subsequently affects their consumption patterns and lifestyle. Therefore, the respondents are segmented based on their levels of new age elderly and AGCC. Then, the lifestyle and consumption pattern of each segment is identified.
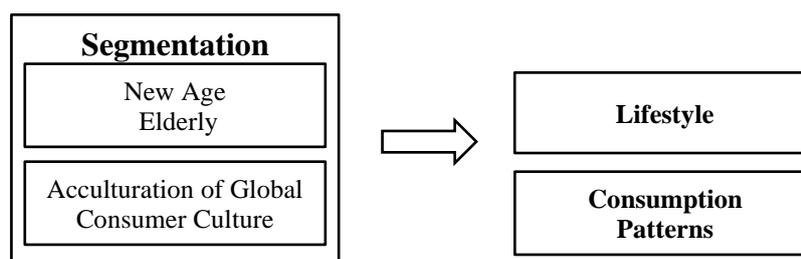


**Figure 1: Theoretical Framework**

# Research Methodology

One thousand and two hundred Thai elderly individuals, aged 55-69, living in the Bangkok metropolitan area were the study respondents. Bangkok metropolitan was selected as the survey area because it was the center of new technologies and lifestyles that gave the elderly living in this area the opportunity to access new consumption patterns and higher quality of life (Chantakeeree et al., 2022; Knodel & Chayovan, 2008). These new consumption patterns have the potential to spread to other regions of the country. Therefore, understanding the elderly in

Bangkok metropolitan can help predict behaviour among the elderly in other regions. The reason behind setting the respondents' age from 55-69 is that the age of 55 years old is the retirement age for most private companies in Thailand, while 69 years old is the age that the elderly can do activities with fewer physical problems.

In-depth interviews using structured questionnaire surveys were conducted. The questionnaires were distributed by quota sampling according to the proportion of the elderly population in Bangkok metropolitan using gender (male-female) and age (56-59, 60-64, 65-69) as the criteria.

First, the respondents answered demographic profile surveys, including questions regarding gender, age, education, past career, current career, and available assets. Then, the respondents answered a 35-question self-evaluating survey related to new-age elderly individuals derived from Mathur et al. (1998) and Sherman et al. (2001). Next, they rated their degrees of AGCC using seven questions proposed by Cleveland and Laroche (2007), followed by eight questions about their lifestyle in the Thailand context adapted from Eiamkanchanalai et al. (2013, 2019). The three sections were evaluated using a seven-point Likert scale (totally agree—totally disagree). Finally, the respondents rated their consumption pattern of 15 products and services, using two types of semantic scales, i.e., consumption aspect (experiential – material; 1-9 score) and consumption value (utilitarian – hedonic; 1-9 score). The products and services were restaurants for dinner, cars or motorcycles, cinemas, clothes, accommodation, smartphones, televisions, refrigerators, barbers or hair salons, fitness, handbags, coffee shops, furniture, hospitals, and sports shoes.

Regarding data analysis, principal component analysis was applied to analyze the construct of new age elderly measurement. Then, the factor scores of new age elderly and AGCC scores were calculated into standardized scores, which were analysed by latent class analysis to identify the elderly segments. Finally, the standardized mean scores of lifestyle and consumption patterns of all elderly segments were analysed.

## Research Findings

In this study, we propose that the new-age and AGCC factors are the criteria by which to classify the elderly population in Thailand. In the first step, the 35 questions on the new-age elderly scale were summarized into a smaller number of factors using principal component analysis (Table 1). First, considering that factor loadings should be higher than 0.4, eleven questions were dropped from the analysis. Considering the Scree plot that showed the dropped in the eigenvalues, the remaining 24 questions were extracted into nine factors, i.e., learning and trying new things, life control, shopping enjoyment, youthful mental age, self-awareness, life satisfaction, shopping decisions, individual decisions, and routine enjoyment.

The KMO index of the analysis was 0.825, indicating the suitability of the data for analysis with this technique. The factor loadings of all questions were higher than 0.500, and all the communality extraction values exceeded 0.4, expressing the internal reliability of the measurement. Although the results showed low Cronbach's alpha coefficients for some factors, the overall analysis result was acceptable. The three factors with low Cronbach's alpha, i.e. shopping decisions, individual decisions, and routine enjoyment, were considered meaningful for explaining the elderly's behaviour, thus we designed to keep the three factors for further analysis.

**Table 1: Principle Component Analysis of New-age Elderly Factors**

| | Items | Factor loading | Communality | Eigen values | Rotation sum of squared loadings | Cronbach's alpha |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Learning and trying new things | 6 | 0.621 - 0.795 | 0.502 - 0.732 | 4.242 | 14.625 | 0.820 |
| Life control | 3 | 0.576 - 0.837 | 0.538 - 0.734 | 3.334 | 8.339 | 0.650 |
| Shopping enjoyment | 3 | 0.508 - 0.807 | 0.534 - 0.717 | 1.359 | 7.937 | 0.635 |
| Youthful mental age | 2 | 0.822 - 0.840 | 0.712 - 0.726 | 1.303 | 6.209 | 0.617 |
| Self-awareness | 2 | 0.646 - 0.808 | 0.533 - 0.696 | 1.241 | 6.082 | 0.460 |
| Life satisfaction | 2 | 0.615 - 0.798 | 0.670 - 0.736 | 1.081 | 5.652 | 0.635 |
| Shopping decisions | 2 | 0.750 - 0.798 | 0.647 - 0.699 | 1.05 | 5.518 | 0.409 |
| Individual decisions | 2 | 0.682 - 0.825 | 0.554 - 0.702 | 0.98 | 5.271 | 0.389 |
| Routine enjoyment | 2 | 0.638 - 0.826 | 0.605 - 0.765 | 0.95 | 5.113 | 0.272 |

The factor scores for the nine new-age elderly factors were calculated using the regression method. For ease of comparison and interpretation, the nine new-age elderly factors, seven questions about AGCC and eight questions about lifestyle were calculated into standardized scores for further analysis.
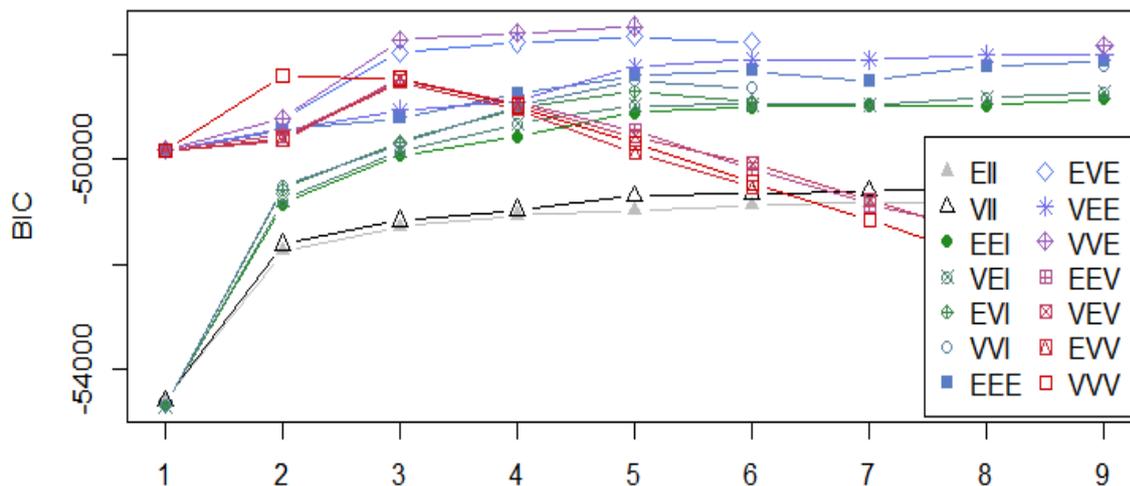


**Figure 2: Number of Elderly Groups Suggested by Production Models.**

The new-age elderly factors and the AGCC factors were applied in latent class cluster analysis using the mclust analysis package in the R program (Scrucca et al., 2016). The analysis results shown in Figure 2 suggest that the best solution for clustering was the use of five groups, which were calculated by the VVE model. The BIC index of the model was -47466.33.

The standardized scores for all aspects of the new-age elderly, AGCC, and lifestyle factors separated by five groups are shown in Table 2. Then, the socio-demographic profiles of all five clusters are presented in Table 3. The characteristics of the five elderly groups were as follows.

*Group 1: Impoverished Elderly Group*

There are 119 respondents (9.92%) in the first group. This group prefers learning and trying new things (mean = 0.350), has confidence in their purchasing decisions (mean = 0.463), and does not enjoy routine (mean = -0.372). However, the respondents perceive that they cannot control things (mean = -1.238), they do not like shopping (mean = -0.997), they do not have self-awareness about what should be done (mean = -0.538), and they are unable to make decisions (mean = -0.834).

The results also show that this group has a negative attitude about AGCC in all aspects, meaning that this group has a low level of internationalization. In addition, when considering lifestyle, this group is concerned about saving money (mean = 0.419) and enjoying meeting friends or being influenced by some friends (mean = 0.195).

In terms of sociodemographic profiles, the majority of the members of this group have an education level lower than a vocational education or were not educated in school (n = 107; 89.92%). Most of them worked freelance (n = 30; 25.21%) or as merchants (n = 24; 20.17%) before they retired. At present, their total assets held does not exceed more than one million Baht (n = 30; 25.21%), followed by five million to ten million Baht (n = 20; 20.17%).

**Table 2: Standardized Scores of New-age Elderly, AGCC, and Lifestyle Factors**

| | Impoverished Elderly Group | Inadaptable Affluent Elderly Group | Complacent Middle-class Elderly Group | New-Age Elderly Group | Trend-Following Middle-class Elderly Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sample size | 119 | 178 | 416 | 168 | 319 |
| (Percentage) | 9.92% | 14.83% | 34.67% | 14.00% | 26.58% |
| **New-age elderly factors** | | | | | |
| Learning and trying new things | 0.350 | -0.932 | 0.688 | 1.037 | -1.053 |
| Life control | -1.238 | 0.180 | -0.054 | 0.572 | 0.131 |
| Shopping enjoyment | -0.997 | 0.172 | -0.264 | 0.819 | 0.189 |
| Youthful mental age | -0.428 | -0.006 | 0.010 | 0.209 | 0.039 |
| Self-awareness | -0.538 | -0.102 | 0.008 | 0.463 | 0.004 |
| Life satisfaction | -0.229 | -0.274 | 0.382 | 0.099 | -0.313 |
| Shopping decisions | 0.463 | -0.323 | -0.013 | 0.013 | 0.018 |
| Individual decisions | -0.834 | 0.129 | 0.029 | 0.193 | 0.099 |
| Routine enjoyment | -0.372 | -0.152 | 0.268 | -0.244 | 0.002 |
| **Acculturation to Global Consumer Culture factors** | | | | | |
| Global experience | -0.868 | 0.607 | -0.404 | 1.348 | -0.199 |
| Global media exposure | -0.811 | 0.548 | -0.201 | 0.966 | -0.249 |
| English proficiency | -0.556 | 0.822 | -0.141 | 1.390 | -0.799 |
| Travel abroad | -0.545 | 0.988 | -0.300 | 1.515 | -0.755 |
| Global entertainment exposure | -0.314 | 0.159 | 0.158 | 0.673 | -0.532 |
| Open to global lifestyle | -0.630 | 0.279 | -0.092 | 0.978 | -0.316 |
| Global consumer lifestyle | -0.832 | 0.517 | -0.302 | 1.122 | -0.176 |
| **Lifestyle factors** | | | | | |
| Interested in modern apparel | -0.969 | 0.332 | -0.324 | 0.502 | 0.334 |
| Enthusiastic and active in work | -0.816 | 0.357 | -0.253 | 0.304 | 0.276 |
| Capable in all aspects | -0.978 | 0.517 | -0.476 | 0.379 | 0.497 |
| Save and spend as needed | 0.419 | 0.240 | 0.072 | -0.881 | 0.079 |
| Pay attention to society and the community | -0.395 | 0.183 | -0.068 | 0.009 | 0.130 |
| Pay attention to health | -0.447 | 0.065 | -0.086 | 0.392 | 0.036 |
| Pay attention to family members | -0.445 | -0.104 | 0.006 | 0.342 | 0.036 |
| Like to meet people and be influenced by friends | 0.195 | -0.156 | 0.139 | -0.155 | -0.086 |

In summary, the elderly individuals in this group have a limited ability to control their own lives and make decisions. They are not attached to the global consumer culture; however, they still desire to learn and experience new things and are influenced by their friends. Most of them have limited educational levels and assets. Thus, this group is called the impoverished elderly group.

## Group 2: Unadaptable Affluent Elderly Group

Group 2 consists of 178 respondents (14.83%). These respondents are strong in the ability to control their lives (mean = 0.180), their shopping enjoyment (mean = 0.172), and their decision making on various issues (mean = 0.129). However, they do not like to learn and try new things (mean = -0.932), they do not have confidence in buying products (mean = -0.323), and they are not satisfied with their own lives (mean = -0.274).

This group of elderly individuals is acculturated to the global culture. They have experienced overseas travel (mean = 0.988) and have English proficiency (mean = 0.822). In terms of lifestyle, they perceive that they are capable in all aspects (mean = 0.517), they are active in work (mean = 0.357), and they desire modern fashion apparel (mean = 0.332).

Furthermore, they have a relatively high level of education. The majority of the respondents have a bachelor's degree or higher (n = 147; 82.58%). They were business owners (n = 35; 19.66%) or worked as private company employees (n = 31, 17.41%) before retirement and held high-level (n = 53; 29.78%) or middle-level executive positions (n = 36; 20.22%). Most of them still work after retirement (n = 109; 61.23%) and have assets valued at more than five million Baht (n = 135; 75.84%).

In short, this group of elderly people has a high level of acculturation to the global culture and a good financial position, education, and work background. Although they enjoy consumption, they have a low tendency to become new-age elderly individuals. This is because they are not interested in trying and learning new things. Therefore, they are named the unadaptable affluent elderly group.

## Group 3: Complacent Middle-class Elderly Group

This group has 436 respondents (36.33%). They love to learn and try new things (mean = 0.688), they are satisfied with life (mean = 0.382), and they enjoy routine life (mean = 0 .268), but they do not enjoy shopping (mean = -0.264). They consume global entertainment (mean = 0.158) and are likely to be influenced by their friends (mean = 0.139)

No education level dominates among this group. The respondents were company employees (n = 72; 16.51%), merchants (n = 69; 15.83%), or freelancers (n = 72; 16.51%) before retirement. Most of them hold assets ranging from 1,000,001 - 5,000,000 Baht (n = 237; 56.97%), followed by 5,000,001 - 10,000,000 Baht (n = 117; 28.13%)

In summary, the elderly individuals in this group are middle class, careful with their spending and enjoy a routine life. They are open minded to try and learn new things. They are the happiest among all the groups. This group is named the complacent middle-class elderly group.

**Table 3: Number of Respondents Classified by Demographic Data and Elderly Groups**

| | Impoverished Elderly Group | Inadaptable Affluent Elderly Group | Complacent Middle-class Elderly Group | New-Age Elderly Group | Trend-Following Middle-class Elderly Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | | | | |
| Male | 50 | 79 | 192 | 75 | 132 |
| Female | 69 | 99 | 224 | 93 | 187 |
| **Education** | | | | | |
| Not educated in school | 16 | 0 | 25 | 0 | 0 |
| Elementary education | 34 | 2 | 96 | 6 | 61 |
| High school education | 35 | 11 | 115 | 6 | 98 |
| Vocational education | 22 | 18 | 85 | 13 | 85 |
| Bachelor's degree or equivalent | 9 | 90 | 75 | 66 | 72 |
| Higher than bachelor's degree | 3 | 57 | 20 | 77 | 3 |
| **Current career** | | | | | |
| Fulltime work | 22 | 109 | 144 | 105 | 96 |
| Part-time work | 53 | 10 | 137 | 21 | 101 |
| Not working | 44 | 59 | 135 | 42 | 122 |
| **Career before retirement** | | | | | |
| Company employee | 14 | 31 | 72 | 36 | 49 |
| Government employee | 3 | 20 | 37 | 32 | 15 |
| State enterprise employee | 4 | 22 | 24 | 12 | 13 |
| Business owner | 0 | 35 | 7 | 22 | 15 |
| Merchant | 24 | 6 | 69 | 11 | 67 |
| Freelancer | 30 | 5 | 72 | 14 | 37 |
| **Work position before retirement** | | | | | |
| High level executive | 1 | 53 | 4 | 24 | 21 |
| Middle level executive | 0 | 36 | 1 | 7 | 19 |
| First level executive | 1 | 24 | 13 | 21 | 24 |
| Supervisor level | 12 | 37 | 94 | 76 | 36 |
| Staff level | 103 | 28 | 299 | 40 | 219 |
| **Asset values** | | | | | |
| <= 1 million Baht | 30 | 13 | 12 | 0 | 132 |
| 1,000,001 - 5,000,000 Baht | 0 | 30 | 237 | 16 | 119 |
| 5,000,001 - 10,000,000 Baht | 20 | 60 | 117 | 60 | 45 |
| 10,000,001 - 20,000,000 Baht | 8 | 35 | 44 | 70 | 12 |
| > 20 million Baht | 0 | 40 | 6 | 22 | 11 |

*Group 4: New-age Elderly Group*

This group consists of 168 respondents (14%). They are considered new-age elderly people because they are open to learning and trying new things (mean = 1.037), they are aware of what to do (mean = 0.463), they enjoy shopping (mean = 0.819), they are able to control their lives (mean = 0.572), and they can make personal decisions (mean = 0.193).

They have a high magnitude of acculturation to the global culture. They have a positive outlook about life. They are interested in modern apparel (mean = 0.502), they are active in work (mean = 0.304), they perceive themselves as capable of all things (mean = 0.379), and they pay attention to their health (mean = 0.392) and family (mean = 0.342).

Similar to Group 2, most of the respondents in this group have a bachelor's degree (n = 66; 39.29%) or a master's degrees or higher (n = 77; 45.83%). Before retirement, they worked in as company employees (n = 36; 21.43%), government officers (n = 32; 19.04%), or they had their own businesses (n = 22; 13.10%). They were mostly supervisors (n = 76; 45.24%) or high-level executives (n = 24; 14.28%). Their total assets held ranges from five million - 20 million Baht (n = 130; 77.38%)

In conclusion, the elderly individuals in this group are global consumers who accept new things. They are informed consumers with knowledge, past experience, and wealth. They are named the new-age elderly group.

*Group 5: Trend-following Middle-class Elderly Group*

The last group has 199 respondents (16.58%). They perceive that they can control their lives (mean = 0.131), and they enjoy shopping (mean = 0.189). However, they do not like to learn and try new things (mean = -1.053), and thy are not satisfied with life (mean = -0.313).

This group is not acculturated to the global consumer culture. Their lifestyle focuses on new fashion (mean = 0.334). They perceive that they are active in their work (mean = 0.276) and that they are capable in all aspects (mean = 0.497).

Similar to Group 3, no education level is dominant in this group. Most of the respondents worked at the staff level (219 persons or 68.65 percent). They hold assets valued at less than one million Baht (n = 132; 41.38%) or between 1,000,001 - 5,000,000 Baht (n = 119; 37.30%)

In conclusion, this elderly group is middle class, not open to new things and not acculturated to the global culture. However, they still enjoy shopping and new fashion, regardless of their wealth limitations. Ultimately, this leads to dissatisfaction with their lives. Thus, they are named the trend-following middle-class elderly group.

*Consumption Patterns of Elderly Groups*

This study also analysed the consumption patterns of all five elderly groups (Table 4). The scores of consumption orientation and consumption value for the 15 product categories were converted into standardized scores. A score greater than zero means that respondents are inclined to adhere to the material consumption orientation or utilitarian consumption value. On the other hand, a score lower than zero means that respondents have a tendency to experience consumption orientation or hedonic consumption value.

**Table 4: Standardized Scores of Consumption Orientation and Consumption Value for all Elderly Groups**

| | Consumption orientation (Experience – Material) | | | | | Consumption value (Hedonic – Utilitarian) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 | Group 4 | Group 5 | Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 | Group 4 | Group 5 |
| Fine dining | -0.515 | 0.379 | -0.300 | 0.148 | 0.294 | 0.566 | -0.320 | 0.277 | -0.007 | -0.391 |
| Car/motorcycle | -0.591 | 0.372 | -0.266 | 0.187 | 0.261 | 0.437 | 0.069 | 0.037 | -0.523 | 0.025 |
| Cinema | -0.474 | 0.471 | -0.310 | -0.011 | 0.324 | 0.172 | -0.049 | 0.087 | -0.082 | -0.107 |
| Clothes | -0.426 | 0.316 | -0.205 | 0.151 | 0.170 | 0.131 | -0.184 | 0.078 | -0.101 | 0.005 |
| House | -0.504 | 0.422 | -0.381 | -0.046 | 0.474 | 0.356 | -0.267 | 0.182 | -0.044 | -0.198 |
| Smartphone | -0.710 | 0.554 | -0.450 | 0.088 | 0.496 | 0.553 | -0.229 | 0.153 | -0.296 | -0.122 |
| Television | -0.669 | 0.473 | -0.401 | -0.058 | 0.539 | 0.332 | -0.123 | 0.088 | -0.188 | -0.071 |
| Refrigerator | -0.663 | 0.549 | -0.419 | -0.188 | 0.586 | 0.554 | -0.351 | 0.286 | 0.149 | -0.462 |
| Hair salon | -0.635 | 0.604 | -0.445 | -0.290 | 0.633 | 0.465 | -0.320 | 0.375 | 0.234 | -0.606 |
| Fitness | -0.265 | 0.305 | -0.241 | -0.175 | 0.335 | 0.356 | -0.228 | 0.328 | 0.118 | -0.495 |
| Handbag | -0.253 | 0.265 | -0.173 | -0.019 | 0.183 | 0.334 | -0.194 | 0.223 | -0.019 | -0.298 |
| Coffee shop | -0.574 | 0.589 | -0.463 | -0.157 | 0.573 | 0.467 | -0.380 | 0.225 | 0.001 | -0.256 |
| Furniture | -0.459 | 0.367 | -0.334 | -0.055 | 0.431 | 0.296 | -0.263 | 0.225 | -0.012 | -0.251 |
| Hospital | -0.703 | 0.791 | -0.605 | -0.256 | 0.745 | 0.495 | -0.509 | 0.382 | 0.028 | -0.413 |
| Sport shoes | -0.526 | 0.207 | -0.223 | 0.124 | 0.306 | 0.511 | -0.242 | 0.143 | -0.252 | -0.109 |

Figure 3 presents the consumption patterns of the five elderly groups. Individuals in the impoverished elderly group (Group 1) and the complacent middle-class elderly group (Group 3) tend to consume products based on experience-utilitarian consumption. On the other hand, individuals in the unadaptable affluent elderly group (Group 2) and the trend-following middle-class elderly group (Group 5) tend to have a material-hedonic consumption pattern. It is clear that the new-age elderly individuals (Group 4) have the most complex consumption pattern. They consume products with every consumption element, i.e., utilitarian, hedonic, experience, and material.
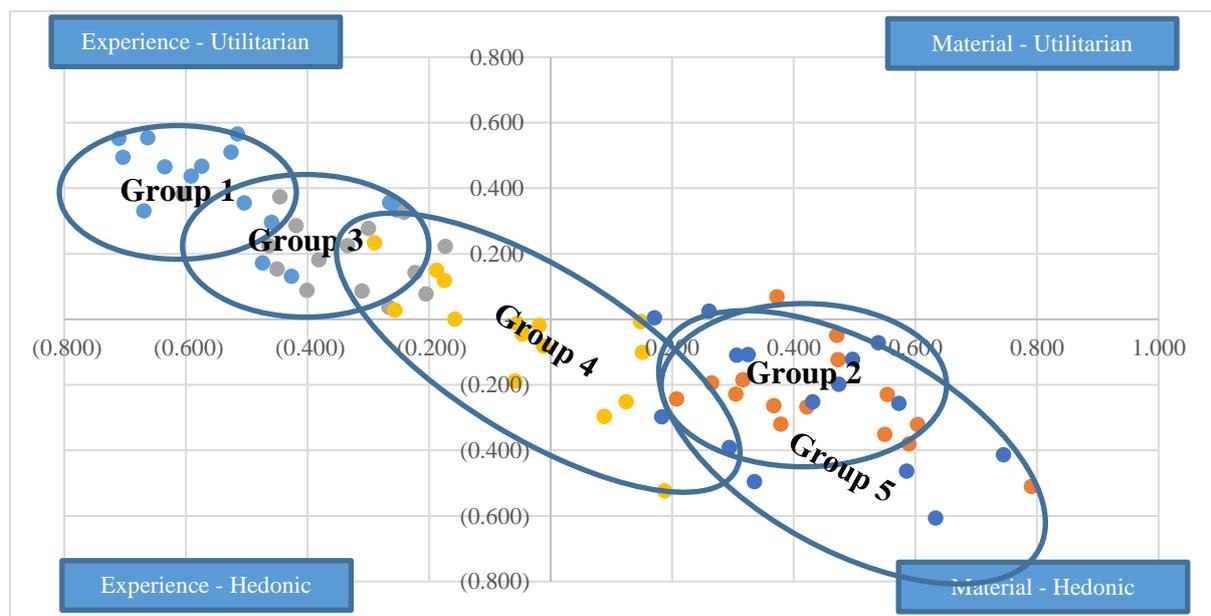


**Figure 3: Consumption Pattern Scores of the Five Elderly Groups**

## Discussion and Implications

Past research has classified elderly individuals into two groups: new-age elderly and traditional elderly. However, by incorporating the degree of acculturation to global consumer culture into the segmentation criteria, this study finds that the traditional elderly group can further be classified into four groups. The four groups are diverse in the degree of acculturation. The impoverished elderly (Group 1) has the lowest degree of acculturation in all aspects, followed by the trend-following middle-class elderly (Group 5). The complacent middle-class elderly (Group 3) is exposed to the global culture just only from the global entertainment. Although, the inadaptable affluent elderly (Group 2), has a high degree of global culture exposure, but they do not want to learn and try new things. The findings confirm the significance of acculturation to global consumer culture as a factor to explain the elderly's behaviour in the globalization era.

Considering the key characteristics of the five elderly groups. They are varied in terms of education, finance, and the exposure to global consumer culture. These are considered as the elderly individuals' resource levels.

The trend-following middle-class elderly (Group 5) and the inadaptable affluent elderly (Group 2) focus on material-hedonic consumption, which implies that they tend to consume products and services based on image and popularity. In other words, they are caught in

consumerism mind set. However, the impoverished elderly (Group 1) and complacent middle-class elderly (Group 3) emphasize on experience-utilitarian consumption. These two elderly groups pay more attention to functionality of the products and have a tendency to be more rational in consumption. This is a result of the high ability to adapt to new things in these two elderly groups.

According to the above discussion, figure 4 summarizes the two important criteria for classification, i.e., resource level and attitude & life concept. The resource level refers to education, work experience, and wealth. The attitude and life concept refers to either a willingness to learn and adapt to changes or consumerism focusing on controlling things and fulfilling one's life.

High resource level

Group 4: New-age elderly individuals

Group 2: Unadaptable affluent elderly individuals

Consumerism

Group 3: Complacent middle-class elderly individuals

Adaptive learning

Group 5: Trend-following elderly individuals

Group 1: Impoverished elderly individuals

Low resource level
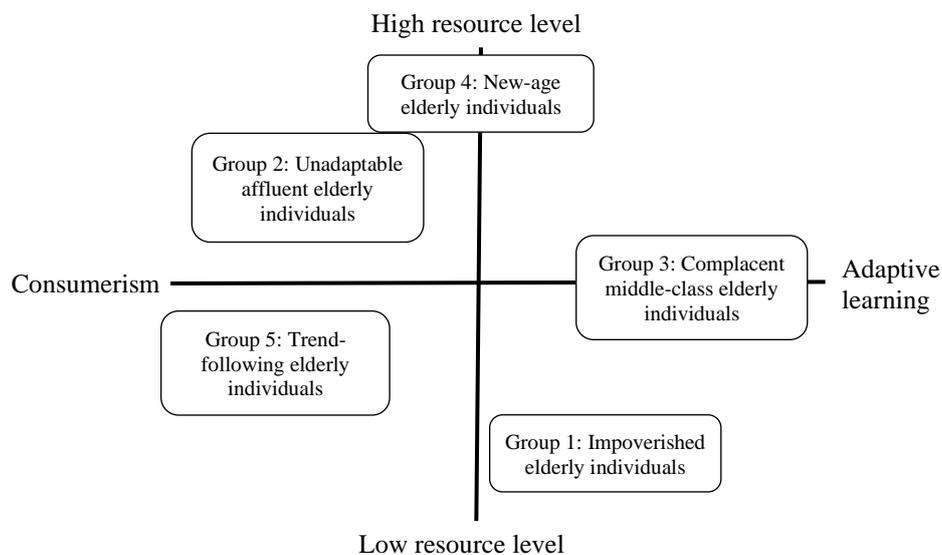
**Figure 4: Classification of Elderly Groups**

The new-age elderly group has the highest level of resources. Additionally, they have a balanced attitude and life concept between consumerism and adaptive learning. This balance provides them with the capability and freedom of consumption, resulting in a sophisticated consumption pattern compared to those of the other elderly groups. This group represents approximately 14 percent of the study population. However, it is a desirable group because they are active happy elderly individuals who have high purchasing power in ageing society economics.

The complacent middle-class elderly group is the largest group, representing approximately 36 percent of the study population. Although they have a moderate level of resources and a high level of adaptive learning attitudes, they have the highest level of happiness in life. This is because they learn to accept their reality and adapt to be contented with what they have. In addition, they do not consume sophisticated products and services. Thus, they are not key drivers within the economy.

The unadaptable affluent elderly group comprises approximately 15 percent of the study population. They have the second-highest level of resources, but they are prone to consumerism and not adapt to changes. They have a high level of expensive material-hedonic consumption, which can contribute greatly to the economy. However, as they are inclined not to adapt, they remain unhappy.

The trend-following middle-class elderly individuals represent 27 percent of the study population. They do not have a high level of resources, but they prefer to overspend with little level of adaption. The products and services they consume are expensive material-hedonic types. Although they contribute significantly to the economy, they do not have sufficient funding to maintain their lifestyle. Thus, this makes them the unhappiest elderly group.

The impoverished elderly group represents approximately ten percent of the study population. They have the lowest level of resources and a moderate level of adaptation to changes. With their limited resources, they have limited access to products and services. Thus, they tend to consume only affordable experience-utilitarian products and services and are incapable of fulfilling products related to fashion. Therefore, they are also one of the three unhappy elderly groups.

The results reveal that the elderly group with the highest level of life satisfaction is the complacent middle-class group, followed by the new-age group. To encourage the elderly population to be happy and satisfied with their lives, society must encourage these individuals to adopt the characteristics of either the complacent middle-class or new-age elderly group. As society increasingly ages, all populations should be active and contributing to the economy. For this reason, the complacent middle-class elderly group, with their low level of consumption propensity, should not be the role model of future elderly individuals. Promoting the elderly population to adopt new-age characteristics is the main solution.

To become similar to the new-age elderly group means to be educated about one's attitude and the life concept of adaptive learning and to prepare resources for one's retirement. The promotion guidelines for the elderly groups are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Guideline of Promotion to Become the New-age Elderly**

| | Learning and adaptability | Resources |
|---|---|---|
| Impoverished Elderly Group | | ✓ |
| Unadaptable Affluent Elderly Group | ✓ | |
| Complacent Middle-class Elderly Group | | ✓ |
| Trend-following Middle-class Elderly Group | ✓ | ✓ |

*Promotion for Learning and Adaptability*

The objective of learning and adaptability promotion is to help elderly individuals understand social and environmental changes, create understanding across generations, and decrease the ego- and self-centred behaviour of elderly individuals.

- The government sector should set up community learning centres or activity centres. These centres can act as places for the exchange of information and experiences among elderly individuals. Additionally, the centres can train the elderly individuals with new information to be more aware of changes in society and environment. This, in turn, should lead these individuals to gain more understanding and acceptance of new challenges.
- The education sector can provide interesting courses that promote continuing education and ultimately lead to lifelong learning. This can be achieved in the form of regular classrooms, learning programs, or online courses. The subject matters should persuade the elderly population to participate in the programmes and form a community. The

subjects could include new personal communication technologies, intergenerational society, hobbies, etc.

- The private sector can participate by cooperating with the government and education sectors. Companies can offer sponsorships to promote community activities in the form of corporate social responsibility (CSR). This can promote social interaction between the elderly population and younger generations to enhance hands-on experiences and understanding.

*Promotion of Resources*

Generally, resources refer to education, work experience, and wealth. As mentioned above, the promotion of education and experience is related to the promotion of learning and adaptability. Thus, the promotion of resources in this section will focus only on wealth.

- The government sector can help promote resources in three ways. First, it can aim to increase the purchasing power of current and future elderly individuals. This can be done by extending the retirement age, encouraging part-time positions for elderly individuals as a tax incentive, or providing financial investment consultations. Second, the government can help younger generations to financially prepare for their future by offering effective saving schemes and investment education. Last, it can upgrade public welfare and social security to guarantee basic healthcare and improve the standard of living.
- The private sector can help promote new-age elderly characteristics by providing alternative affordable products and services for non-new-age groups. This scheme can alleviate both wealth and adaptation issues.

# Conclusion

This research combines the concept of consumption value with the concept of consumption orientation. Four consumption patterns are found. These patterns can lead to more insightful consumer behaviour research regarding the elderly population.

While past research classifies the elderly into either new age elderly or traditional elderly, this study incorporates the concept of new-age elderly with the concept of acculturation to the global consumer culture. In addition to new-age elderly group, the findings further separate traditional elderly into four additional groups. Although the respondents in this study are the elderly in Bangkok Metropolitan, Thailand, the findings enhance the deeper understanding of the elderly population not only in Thailand but can be applied to other emerging markets with similar acculturation to the global consumer culture issues. These can provide direction for governments to effectively design policy that is suitable with the diverse characteristics of the elderly.

# Limitations and Directions of Future Research

This study finds that acculturation to global consumer culture is the key antecedent to categorizing the elderly into diverse groups and predicting their consumption patterns. However, the factors that help developing the elderly's ability to acculturate to global consumer culture remain unmentioned in this study. Thus, further study of these antecedents of the acculturation ability of the elderly is needed, so that a more concrete elderly promotion policy can be formulated.

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