

# SOCIAL MEDIA AS THE LEARNING PLATFORM OF POWER IN THAI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Chon NeVille\* and Patcharin Sirasoothorn

Naresuan University, Thailand

## ABSTRACT

**\*Corresponding author:**

Chon NeVille  
chonn@nu.ac.th

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This study explored the social phenomena of how Thai students have become accustomed to using and misusing social media (i.e. Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter) in order to learn social thoughts and behaviors. It appears as if this generation of students has become very reliant on these social media platforms as a means of expression and learning, which is resulting in power. The social learning platforms of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are becoming platforms of social learning which results in power. This qualitative study was designed to find out how 3 social media platforms are contributing to the social learning power of Thai university students and how these three platforms, media literacy, and social learning are related. The researchers wanted to explore the perceptions of power and social learning amongst Thai university students, and why students are using Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram as modes of communication and learning platforms. This study is important for Thai students to raise awareness of how influential social media has become, and important for instructors to potentially harness social media as a teaching tool. 52 Thai university students were interviewed using FB messenger and clearly that these 3 platforms have become places where students learn social behaviors and where they can express themselves with proper media literacy skills.

**Keywords:** Social learning platforms; social media power; Thai university students

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social media (SM) has become an active part of the daily lives of many people, and that use has become an outlet for social learning and potentially power. This research defines SM as interactive content that can be utilized to inform, entertain, or communicate messages. This spread of knowledge and communication often relates to learned social behavior and possibly power, or the perception of power. The learned behavior and norms may result in both positive and negative repercussions among young users. There is a plethora of examples of negative or disturbing items on social media that are impacting students in ways (bullying, peer-pressure, time spent, etc.). Much of what these students are seeing and reading may be perceived knowledge (without proof or validity) or even more problematic, students are learning more than just behaviors via social media (i.e. Gonzales and Hancock, 2011).

These studies and more point out legitimate concerns regarding the social learning that has been taking place, and as more students post, read, and contribute to potentially negative learning elements, the effects on students' learning behaviors may continue to grow exponentially (Ryan et al., 2014). SM platforms also say a great deal about the personality of a user, and create an online identity. A study by Magpanthong and

McDaniel (2011, p. 89) suggested that "How one identifies oneself on Facebook through username and photos is important because these are ways to directly disclose oneself to the Facebook community." There are various elements to social media that go beyond its definition. SM is used for entertainment, connecting with cultures, and meeting new people. It could be argued that SM is essentially a communication tool (Mazman and Usluel, 2010).

As far as possible effects of SM use, the most abundant research work is in relation to sales, business practice, and branding. Research surrounding the positive and negative effects linking SM to social situations include Siddiqui and Singh (2016), who discussed the value of SM as a platform of information and how it can help businesses market and conduct research to help find more success. Moreover, Pittman and Reich (2016) conducted a study and found that SM can create positive bonds in relationships, citing intimacy based on images and text that SM can provide.

## 2. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

There are many elements to this study, in both concept and practice. Social media covers a capacious space, and therefore for this study is limited to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. These three platforms of social media have become platforms of social learning power. A learning platform can be a source where knowledge is shared, copied, or witnessed. These three platforms all have features that allow for opportunities to learn. Social media use is heavily reliant on student media literacy, and the end result is a learning platform. Two major concepts involved in this thesis include media literacy and social learning. Media literacy refers to the ability of a user to use social media as a platform for power. Social learning is the process of developing power among users. This metaphor may help explain the phenomena that the researcher is exploring: Media Literacy is a stage, and Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the learning platforms. All users are performers who are considered as active self-learners. If the university student in question has a big stage (i.e. high level of media literacy) then the stage is big, the audience is engaged, excited, and the lights are bright, the sound is clear, and the venue is sold out. If the student has less understanding (i.e. lack of media literacy) then the stage is small, the venue is empty, the microphone is weak, and no one cares. Media is power, the ability to harness and manipulate media via literacy translates to power, and power can and does translate into learning.

In Thailand, university students are the future managers, teachers, bankers, lawyers, doctors, and will basically be running this country as active citizens, leaders and contributors to society. Some of these students will graduate soon and be the next *change agents* of Thailand. What's more, is university students make up a large portion of Thai society, and specifically in Phitsanulok, where the location is a hub of travel between the north and south, a growing city where students come from all over Thailand to experience the college experience. The choices they are making today, using social media as a platform to voice opinions and concerns, and convey emotions are having an impact on their lives and on Thailand in general.

According to Northouse (2016), there are four factors that influence transformational leadership including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. However, the level of individuals' idealized influence can be built on trust and integrity to their leader or organization. Inspirational motivation, developed by good leaders, helps promote positive reinforcement which gives individuals opportunities to achieve a greater goal. Intellectual stimulation from influence teams creates innovative beliefs and positive values which leads to innovative ideas and learning behaviors. The individualized consideration offers supportive learning atmosphere that helps individuals to perform at a higher level. With the four factors, individuals can use their power and transform oneself, group, team and the organization to a sustainable level.

Nonetheless, Thailand's lack in these four crucial factors both organizational and societal level obstructs students from the use of their power to develop their transformational leadership. In searching for a cultural balance of trust, integrity and communication, students use SM where their needs of the followers are fulfilled and their social skills can be challenged (Northouse, 2016). This is where media literacy plays such an integral role in how students are using and misusing SM to gain power, or how their social learning may be seen negatively or positively, depending on the situation.

In 2018, the Thai government announced the Thailand 4.0 economic development model claimed that the model will unlock the country from numerous development barriers. The model identifies four development objectives: economic prosperity, social well-being, raising human values, and environmental protection. These four objectives are mirrored by the aforementioned Northouse study in some way. At least two objectives are involved with socio-cultural perspectives. The raising human values, highlights the transformation Thais to "competent human beings in the 21st Century" in order to ensure that HDI will raise from 0.722 to 0.8 or the top 50 countries within 10 years; in ensuring that at least 5 Thai higher education

institutions are ranked among the world's top 100 higher education institution within 20 years. To achieve the goal, development of technology clusters and future industries is one of the five agendas. This inclusion must include some level of SM and Media Literacy so that Thai universities can become leaders in this arena.

This study is significant because in 2018 over 2 billion users on Facebook worldwide (Constine, 2017). There is an estimated number of 21,000,000 FB users in Thailand, a number which is expected to see more growth each year. Constine notes in the same article that there are now over 1 billion IG users. A 2015 study about Thai students and their consumption of SM revealed that in terms of using SM:

*The Bangkok University Research Center's 2013 poll of 1,186 respondents found that social media were most often used to chat with friends (80.2%) and to follow the friends' updates (53.4%). These findings make it clear that Thai youth of this generation have largely adopted social media networks as a part of their daily lives*

(Constine, 2017, p. 84).

As a social research, this study intends to investigate the scope of power that is exercised now that students have a venue to post, providing an opportunity to speak and display opinion. SM has become their "safe" place where they can say or show whatever they want at any given time.

### 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How is social media influencing the social learning of power of Thai University Students?
2. How does social media contribute to media literacy of Thai University Students?

### 4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To find out what kind of social learning of power university students acquire via social media.
2. To analyze the connections between social media, media literacy, and social learning of power in Thai university students.

### 5. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This qualitative research adopted the ideas behind Creswell's (1999) qualitative research. A great deal of the perception and impact of social learning via SM must be interpreted, and as such this is an interpretive paper. This project utilized interviews (both individual and group) for depth, and focus groups to obtain clarity. Interviews with students were conducted both in-person via social media platforms (this way they are transcribed immediately for accuracy) and semi-structured in nature, leaving room for follow-up questions. Initially students expressed a desire to be interviewed in groups, and this research's protocol proved to be a bit complex for groups. Then, the researcher regrouped, cleaned up the questions, and conducted a secondary batch of questions that really provided the insight and depth required to answer objectives. Finally, there were two small focus groups composed of students from each aforementioned university in Phitsanulok. Mixing students from both schools was important because curricula and atmosphere at each institution may be very different and this allows students to discuss. Each interview and focus group did yield something positive regarding the gaps presented in the literature review.

#### 5.1 Criteria and characteristics

All voluntary students were selected by snowball sampling. They were interviewed and the focus group came from students in both target universities. The first participant for the interviews were students at Naresuan University. Both male and female English programme students who are using social media frequently were interviewed. Every current undergraduate Thai student who is willing and enrolled in an English related program at the aforementioned schools was allowed to participate. Then, students from PSRU were selected. The inclusion criteria is Thai students that use social media in their daily routines. Data was collected until saturated and until research questions have been answered.

#### 5.2 Key Informants

The initial batch of interviews (44 students) essentially turned into detailed surveys, though some questions were elucidated upon, therefore the one-on-one questions via FB and IG chat served as the more helpful qualitative measures. To obtain the depth and clarity after the first batch of interviews and focus group,

the researcher conducted 5 additional interviews which did saturate the data. A total of 52 interviews were conducted, and 12 students provided feedback in (2 sessions of 6) focus groups.

## 6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research are organized by research objective. Next, the chapter will be presented by specific concepts in relation to the literature and the data will be presented in relation to research concepts. The major concepts include attention, retention, production, motivation, control, awareness, perceptions, influence, learning, and behavior. Subheadings with specific student feedback will provide answers to research questions in conjunction with concepts. Research objectives will guide this results section.

The first step was to collect descriptive details about the students in order to answer research objectives via major concepts. These were collected via interview and a warm up to the more content related questions.

### 6.1 General information of informants

**Table 1:** Demographics

Naresuan	PSRU	19-25	Male/Female	1 <sup>st</sup> year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	4 <sup>th</sup> year
34	18	52	13/39	10	26	6	10
65%	35%	100%	25%/75%	19%	50%	12%	19%

Table 1 shows the demographics and specifics of each student. Each student was included due to the inclusion criteria and volunteered for the study. Some students indicated their parents' occupations which ranged from teacher to business owner. There were no outliers or professionals that appeared to sway or influence any answer.

This study finds four elements of social learning (attention, retention, produce, motivation) in the form of three levels of power. First, the power of individuals to realise their own power to express themselves in public space. Second, students have opportunities to improve their life skills, including communication, observation skills, and identifying and duplicating perceived positive characteristics by sharing some information. Third, that social expression and representation can and in fact does elicit power in various ways, most notably as influence and control.

Different levels of power are found such as power on individual's self (by displaying lifestyle, taste, socio-economic background, privacy, passionate etc.); power on group identify (by displaying friends, cloths, subculture, sending gift cards to friends etc.); power of social and political identify (by sharing their favorite politicians, idols, norms etc.)

This research found two types of motivation among SM users. First, it is internal motivation. This motivation type is varied based on time and experiences of SM users. They are status-seekers, demand for learning opportunities, alternatives to improve cognitive development. Second, it is external motivation. The users identify numbers of "likes" as positive reinforcement from SM's friends. By counting "likes", they develop a new form of virtual community within the SM.

Students said that IG provides more privacy in messaging and posts, and IG is more intimate which makes it a better platform to convey power, or lack thereof in terms of discussing school, peers, or teachers.

Student H (personal communication, October 19, 2019) said she likes it when a picture she posts receives hundreds of likes, she likes that attention and it motivates her to try to do it again and again. Student B (personal communication, October 19, 2019) said she will post things with the sole purpose of capturing the attention of her boyfriend, such as a bag or shoe she wants him to buy her. Students are using social media to capture the attention of others, sometimes in order to motivate.

Using SM increases 6 production skills: attention to detail, creative thinking, strong communication, interest and aptitude for technology, dependability (rules and regulations), and ability to be cross-trained (presenting various ideas, pictures, information on the platforms).

Student WW (personal communication, November 19, 2019) provided some passionate feedback about why she chooses IG. "IG has many features for photos also you don't need to download more photoshop apps. There are more functions than you can play more than FB with videos and photos. AI of IG is really good because they only pull you to the things that it thinks might interest you and it is so!! I feel so special and I love to use them."

Nearly all students that were interviewed indicated that they were fully aware of the posts they were creating, meaning that there was a desired goal (to inspire, to inform, or show-off, etc.). Student A (personal

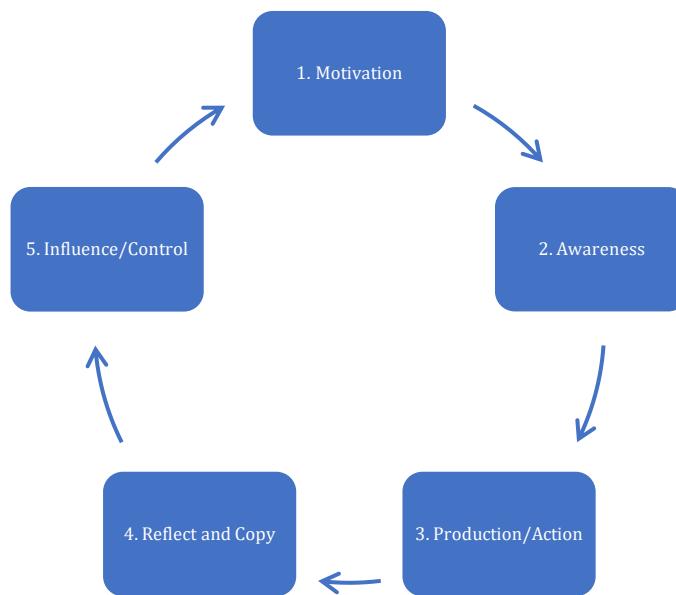
communication, November 19, 2019) said she posts and reads posts in order to improve herself, and when she feels good about a post she will share and repost it on other sites. Student F (personal communication, November 19, 2019) said he is careful not to assume anything, and indicated that he is aware that much of what he sees on social media is a lie or false in some way. Sometimes awareness seems to come later in the process of absorbing messages, and awareness can lead to perception. For example, it was common for students to discuss how they want their friends and classmates see their posts of fun meals or expensive things, which has become an outlet of perceived wealth or status.

Many students have FB pages, and many have multiple pages here, the reader should be careful to give a generalization to the whole population when doing a qualitative study which highlights the deep information not generalization. As such, there is almost a competition to get and keep friends and followers. Also, in accordance with social learning there is often a desire to improve on a post they may have seen and copied. Student VV (personal discussion, November 19, 2019) discussed the role of retention when she talked about the popularity of a FB page. She indicated that:

*"The more repetitive a type of content or opinion is on Facebook, the more likely its audience, especially students will mold their perspectives according to what they see often."*

This aligns with what XX said about getting the attention of others, once they have your (personal discussion, November 20, 2019) attention, they have to work hard and possibly pay to keep their attention.

This social learning of power that comes from these 3 social platforms has become a cultural phenomenon and as this relationship between the platforms and media literacy skills has become a social learning power. Figure 1 displays a diagram displaying the relationships and cycle of how social media and media literacy combine to create and evoke social learning which has become power. The cycle begins with a sort of motivation, where a student has a desire or need for attention and is aware that how and what they post will be perceived by others in some way. The production of a post and action will cause a reaction, whereas students may copy and improve and almost always reflect in some way. The result is that social learning has taken place, and that social learning results in power. With more literacy and power, the cycle continues, and continues.



**Figure 1:** Relationship Diagram

Many students discussed how creating posts are very important to the perceived audience. Paying for photography, paying for fake likes, and spending hours a day finding the right photo or video to impress others. Some students also explained how they often will see a post and ignore it, or even stop following a friend because their post is not original. The level of media literacy is salient both for user, and reviewer of FB. Creativity and evaluation are central components of media literacy. Evaluation skills are reliant on both literacy and experience of the student. For example, if someone is seeing a new post for the first time about a peer standing next to an expensive car, leaning on the car as if to assume that car belongs to the student, the initial evaluation may be that the student is rich. However, as more information is learned about this peer and more photos of more cars are posted, the evaluation skills go up and more realistic expectations may trigger different responses.

## 6.2 Theories and concepts

The goals of this study were to find out what kind of social learning of power university students acquire via social media and to analyze the connections between social media, media literacy, and social learning of power of Thai university students. Both of these objectives were achieved. In order to get to this point the authors needed to consider various related theories (i.e. Social Learning, Power, Media Literacy, Uses and Gratification). Social Learning theory (Bandura, 1969) centers around how students learn from observation, and often copy and imitate. The theory of power was taken from the perspective of the use of meeting a goal and how power is used for influence over others. Media literacy (Potter, 2015) was the third theory and is relevant to the study because of the components of creativity, awareness, and retention of what is being produced via social media. Finally, Uses and Gratification Theory (Katz et al., 1973) was used because this study aimed to find out how and why students have turned to social media for their expression and knowledge sharing.

## 6.3 New theory that bridges the gaps of theories

In reference to Users and Gratification Theory (Katz et al., 1973), the authors of this study argue that after this study was concluded, it is very clear that students want and need to use social media as an outlet for expression and for general input of information. Students are using social media not only to satisfy needs, but also use platforms of social media to express mood, elicit power, and learn various social conventions. Also, a student's "need" or "want" to post something has created urgency for others to follow and improve. This constant competition and game of social learning of power is having deep impacts on other users. Gratification itself in this vein may never be fully met according to the cycle of media use.

The second theory followed by questions was Social Learning Theory by Bandura (1969). While his long-standing theory is still relevant and seen in this study (i.e. copy and repeat), one gap identified from this study is that some students are not equipped to properly copy and improve. The desire may be there based on social learning and influence, but if a student does not have the media literacy to improve on a post, that post may inspire negative feedback. This leads to the third theory focused on in this research, media literacy.

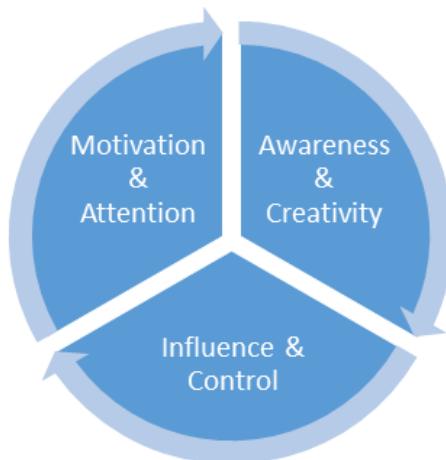
Media literacy is defined as the ability to create, evaluate, understand, and interpret various levels of media at different levels of ability. James Potter (2015) is one of the engineers of this theory and the biggest limitation is that the role of social learning is not heavily included. According to this study, media literacy is directly related to social learning in that when students have a high level of literacy they have more power to directly influence others socially. This sense and theory of power is the 4<sup>th</sup> and final theory discussed.

Power has many elements, and for the purposes of this study the elements of influence and control were the most salient. Social media has become a platform of power. Posts and photos and reactions are clearly influencing and potentially controlling the thoughts and actions of other students. When this power is recognized, many students may want more media literacy, when they get more literacy, they can have more social influence and utilize more social media platforms. Each theory is related and students seem to have recognized these connections.

In order to fill the gaps of knowledge, the authors have created a new theory based on gaps and new involving research. Social Media Power Theory has been introduced by the authors at the conclusion of this study. This theory can be defined as a process in which people utilize media in a way to teach or learn with a goal of power as the desired result. Control is a major component of this new theory, and can be used in relation to many theories that involve characteristics mentioned above, but is different because this theory predisposes the notion that people (in this study, students) are using social media to teach or learn and how that knowledge transfer is dependant on media literacy and opportunity. For example, power in a social and political vein is much bigger and more salient in that a post or comment can affect an entire group, community, or even culture. If a post has enough influence, many social norms may be accepted or challenged. SM may be seen as a communication tool between friends, or it can be on a much bigger level because SM has become such a platform. Social movements, political unrest, teacher lesson plans, and even posting something in English when others can only post in Thai all have influence and may affect individuals and groups in a profound way.

## 6.4 Contributions and innovation

The research provides three major contributions to academic and social society: SMPT is significant because of the impact on Thai students' use of social media, and the effects that social media can have on sociocultural behavior and understanding. This is a cycle of power and social learning that is seen below in Figure 2. Knowledge is power, and sometimes the perception of knowledge is power. Finally, this research brings attention to the influence and potential control of SM that must be recognized by social development programs. As SM continues to evolve and provide more opportunity for communicating, our program must evolve with it, so that we are in a position to help our students and community grow. The following graph illustrates SMPT.



**Figure 2:** Social Media Power of Learning Named “SMPT Model”

Figure 2 illustrates the cycle that is taking place. It begins with a sense of motivation, which may be intrinsic or extrinsic. Regardless, the poster or commenter wants someone else to see what they have to say. Next, there is a moment of awareness and attention, where the student will use creativity, which may or may not involve reflection or retention to post something to send a specific message. The poster may already know how effective the post or comment may be based on reflection and retention. Finally, that post or comment will be seen by others, and the reactions and learning that may take place often creates an action or thought, which begins the cycle all over again when a user sees the original post and wants to copy and improve on it, or simply react with an action or thought. This new theory differentiates itself because it acknowledges the connections between social media, power, media literacy, and why students are promoting their thoughts and actions on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (potentially other SM platforms as well).

There is a bit of a social game taking place between Thai students and their social media accounts. Many students admit to posting things for attention, or to send a specific message in a covert way. However, if many students know this game and are playing the game as well, there is a real fear about what is real and what is being perceived as real. Questions like this are in the minds of students, and they are using this power of knowledge or lack thereof to create a hierarchy online. Some students know it is a game, others do not but are playing anyway. There is a constant cycle of social learning of power taking place, and whoever has the highest media literacy may ultimately win this game.

It is clear that Thai students are heavily influenced socially by their time (an average of 76 minutes a day on FB, 110 minutes a day on Twitter, and 295 minutes a day on IG) spent on SM, and in some cases, their SM lives are providing a sense of power. If a student has hundreds of thousands of followers, he or she may have more influence and power when they get to class or are seen outside of class. This sense of power may be influenced by their level of media literacy such as ability to crop photos, knowing which captions to put with a photo, or having higher English proficiency to post and comment in English. The social learning that students admit to being exposed to on these social platforms may be very influential. Furthermore, early in this paper the work of Northouse (2016) was elucidated upon and because these Thai students represent the future of Thailand, the results of this study are indeed salient. The common responses such as attention, motivation, power, and learning create a sense of urgency and insight into how students today may be shaping the future of Thailand.

Northouse mentioned influence, motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration as main factors in producing young leaders. The role of social media, media literacy, social learning, and power all are juxtaposed with these 4 factors in such a way that students are harnessing some of these elements, but doing so online which may be both a cause of concern, and yet a beacon of hope. If they can translate these SM persona's and traits into social skills in day to day activities, Thailand may have a bright future.

This study followed Media Literacy theory, Uses and Gratification theory (Katz et al., 1973), Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1969), and Guinote's Power theory (2015). There is essentially a cycle that begins with social media platform (i.e. Twitter, FB, IG), and depending on a user's media literacy, he or she can gain awareness and capture attention, which is then retained and possibly copied by others which motivates new users to evaluate and reflect. The next step is some sort of production and influence, which can lead to social learning and power, or vice-versa. The end result is a perception of power or a learned thought or behavior.

In the introduction the author discussed learning platforms. FB, IG, and Twitter have become learning platforms, much like a book, or even a teacher. This is because these three SM platforms have become places where students can teach and learn, share and copy, motivate and emulate. A learning platform is any source

that can provide knowledge, and that knowledge can become power, as it did in this study. Social learning, was a key concept of this study, and media literacy through the use of social media platforms (FB, Twitter, and IG for this study) all lead to, and elicit power. Social learning is power, and this study explored and validated that premise. Facebook and Twitter were the two answers tied for the most influential in terms of power. There was no clear response as to why these two platforms hold more power, though Twitter was the most trusted and FB was the most utilized for political messages. The power that students are producing, retaining, sharing, and posting can come in many different forms. Sometimes the perception of power is a new bag they want to show off, or a flight ticket that may give viewers the indication that the poster is wealthy or well-traveled. Posting in English can be a sign of power via knowledge and opportunity. The number of likes or comments can be powerful, and the time spent on SM itself is an indicator of power.

## 7. CONCLUSION

A descriptive survey was used to understand patterns, and in-depth semi-structured interviews were utilized to gather rich and meaningful feedback to questions centered around three social media platforms (i.e. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter). The population was two universities in Phitsanulok, Thailand (Naresuan University, Rajabhat University), chosen because of their geographical location and attraction of Thai students from all over the country. English program students narrowed the population and sample size because being able to post in English is a sign of power (influence). Nearly all students posted in English and Thai depending on content and purpose, and often times students were code-switching (especially posting in English but finishing the sentence with 555). Survey, interview, and focus groups all contributed to the findings of over 50 participants (chosen by random snowball sampling). Content analysis was used to find answers to research questions and the coding from interviews provided salient themes. This study followed one of Creswell's qualitative formats, in that it was a case study where the authors were exploring a phenomenon. The methodology of surveys, focus groups, and interviews created a triangulation of data that revealed salient results. Pattern of agreement and content analysis were used to explore student feedback. This study followed an interpretivist design whereas the authors could get a deeper sense of attitudes and motivation of the students. All ethical considerations were followed to ensure safety and confidentiality.

This study proved to uncover some very important habits and patterns of student social media use (in relation to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter). Students have discovered a platform for learning and sharing that may be positive or negative in nature.

In order to fill the gaps of knowledge, the authors have created a new theory based on gaps and new involving research. Social Media Power Theory has been introduced by the author at the conclusion of this study. This theory can be defined as a process in which people utilize media in a way to teach or learn with a goal of power as the desired result. Control is a major component of this new theory, and can be used in relation to many theories that involve characteristics mentioned above, but is different because this theory predisposes the notion that people (in this study, students) are using social media to teach or learn and how that knowledge transfer is dependant on media literacy and opportunity. For example, power in a social and political vein is much bigger and more salient in that a post or comment can affect an entire group, community, or even culture. If a post has enough influence, many social norms may be accepted or challenged. SM may be seen as a communication tool between friends, or it can be on a much bigger level because SM has become such a platform. Social movements, political unrest, teacher lesson plans, and even posting something in English when others can only post in Thai all have influence and may affect individuals and groups in a profound way.

### 7.1 Research recommendations

According to this study, the authors present two suggestions, one as a recommendation from the results of this study, and the second as a suggestion for future research in this area. First, in reference to this study, 1) how the students can use SM for enhancing their positive social learning; 2) how to increase media literacy among student users; 3) how to use SM as an online learning platform for empowering students in terms of self-improvement, social consciousness, public mind.

Next, for future research, 1) Researchers interested in exploring this topic more should consider SMPT theory to focus on specific types of power being used or misused on social media, as well as a more modern version of Uses and Gratification theory; 2) in order to explore students at a more personal level an ethnography should take place, where a researcher goes deep inside the world of SM and student use by being directly involved to see and understand the motives and outcomes of this game; 3) more students from non-English programs should be investigated as well. This study explored how English can be used as a source of power, and next there should be an exploration of Thai language and how that is used in the same vein. The authors could have had more focused questions and concepts such as specific emotions or actions (i.e. political

views, romantic relationships, travel, constrain, self-efficacy) and more participants, including younger students in high school or even primary school to see when this power is beginning.

## 7.2 Implications

There is no indication that the Thai students in this study will stop or slow down their involvement with SM. More apps will ultimately be developed and they will most likely continue to utilize SM as a communication tool to share socially and that will continue to translate into power. These Thai students are motivated and use social media, specifically Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to potentially influence and control others through their ability to navigate media and share information and opinions that results in social learning.

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