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Lifestyle of Generations in the Sub-urban

Case study: Major Cities in Northeastern Thailand*

Prapaporn Supunya¹, Dusadee Ayuwat²

¹Department of Social Sciences, Division of Sociology and Anthropology, Labour and International Migration Service Center, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University, Thailand

Corresponding Author: Dusadee Ayuwat. Email: dusayu@kku.ac.th

Abstract

This research aims to study the lifestyle of generations in the suburban area of the Northeast, Thailand. The qualitative methodology was employed, and the units of analysis were individual and community level. Key informants consisted of two groups included 1) ten community leaders and 2) twelve of suburban people who commuted between a suburban and urban area in different generations. These people were selected based on inclusion criteria's which were 1) they had full-time employment and 2) they worked in different occupations. Indepth interviews were the tool and conducted with the key informants, as well as the participatory and non-participatory observations. Data were collected from April to October 2018. Data analysis was conducted by content analysis, and data were presented by a descriptive method. The results found that the generations were related to economic capitals accumulation, Gen B and Gen X accumulated more economic capitals than other generations (Gen y and Gen z). Generations also had the relationship to taste, Gen Y and Gen Z showed a clear pattern of consumption, especially in technological utilization. Generations were related to community participation; the people in the Gen B and Gen X were more interested in community activities than Gen Y and Gen Z.

Keywords: Lifestyle, Generations, Taste, Sub-urban Community

1. Introduction

Thailand once was the agrarian society in which the majority of the population lived in rural areas of the country. When urbanization has introduced to the country, contexts of the rural area had been decreasing and replaced by urbanism. Currently, 55 percent of the area with urbanization has covered the country (World Urbanization Prospect, 2015). Infrastructure development has launched to suburban areas in which people so that people living there have been able to access developing facilities such as transportation. Quality of life of the suburban people has been improving with modernity. They have more options to spend their livings in accordance with the capitalism trend (Bourdieu, 1984), and adopt some urban cultures to use at suburban communities. Moreover, the development of urban society has caused suburban people in various generations to access to a variety of job position, so it results in patterns of livings of the intergeneration suburban people apply different methods to

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accumulate living capitals, and it results in different patterns of consumption among them. Therefore, it is interesting to find out what lifestyle patterns that the intergeneration suburban people apply to sustain their life. The implication of research contributes knowledge on the transitions of livelihoods among the suburban people based on urbanization.

2. Research Objectives

To investigate lifestyle patterns among the intergeneration people in the suburban community of Northeastern Thailand.

3. Literature Reviews

This paper implements three concepts in the study including

- 1) Life Style; Weber (1947) described that lifestyle is a pattern associated with the social status of an individual based on the Consumption of Goods, which reflected an individual's daily life. Bourdieu (1984) suggested that lifestyle is a reflection of individuals, regarding consumption, relaxation, and exercise, in accordance with social relationships. Therefore, lifestyle is implying to an individual's social class. In addition, Plummer (1974) described lifestyle based on 3 aspects of living behavior; activities, interests, and opinions. The lifestyle of individuals, then, represents individuals and environment surrounded (Bowen and Markens, 2000). This paper implements a concept of lifestyle in the study to identify the lifestyle patterns of the intergeneration people in a suburban community. Lifestyles of the intergeneration suburban people have been changing gradually due to the introduction of urbanization. Therefore, lifestyles shall respond to activities, tastes, and consumption of the intergeneration suburban people.
- 2) Capital (Bourdieu, 1984) is a concept implemented in the study to explain the dynamics of the capital that shape the lifestyles of the individual. Bourdieu suggested that capital is a consumption pattern representing practices of suburban people. Capital exists in the suburban community consists of 1) economic capital, 2) social capital, 3) cultural capital, and 4) symbolic capital. This paper implemented a concept of capital to explore what capital owned by suburban people, and how do they apply capitals to improve quality of life. In addition, capital is adopted as an analytical framework to explore lifestyles of the intergeneration suburban people in the suburban community.
- 3) **Generation** is a concept used to investigate individuals from various generations. The concept is adopted to study social phenomena with regard to behavior, lifestyle, or thoughts which clearly contribute consumption patterns of the individual. Therefore, it is important to understand the behaviors of individuals aged in different generations because the thoughts and behaviors of individuals are shaped by social contexts in each period of time. As same as the lifestyle of individuals in a suburban community, lifestyles of individuals from different generations are presented based on periods of time. When urbanization invaded the suburban community, everything has changed. People in the community adjust themselves to spend their livings along with urbanization. This study categorizes generations of suburban people into 4 generations, including Generation B, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z (Lancasen, & Stillman, 2005).

4. Research Methodology

This paper investigated the lifestyle patterns of the intergeneration people in the suburban community of Northeastern Thailand. Qualitative research, particularly the phenomenological approach, was implemented in research methodology. Unit of analysis was at the individual level and community level. Key informants at individual level included suburban people from different generations who aged between 18-59 years old, 12 persons in total. Inclusion criteria to select key informants included 1) they engaged in a full-time work, 2) they engaged in different jobs in Khon Kaen city, 3) they lived in suburban area of Khon Kaen city and distance between workplaces and residences shall not exceed 20 Kilometers, and 4) they had been living in suburban areas at least

1 year. Key informants at the community level included community leaders and related community development persons, 10 persons in total, included educational affair officer, community development officer, agricultural promotion officer, a teacher at the sub-district school, health officer, retired government officer, village headman, local intelligent person, senior villager, and health volunteer officer. Those key informants provided information about community context and dynamics of the community. The research area was a suburban community named "Dong Dok Mai Community" (fictitious name), where located in Khon Kaen city. An in-depth interview with interview guideline was used as a research tool and together with participatory observation and non-participatory observation. Data collection was carried out from April to October 2018. Data were analyzed by the content analysis method and presented data by the descriptive method.

5. Research Results

Research results cover topics including dynamics of the suburban community on socio-economic and culture and lifestyle pattern of the intergeneration people as following details.

1) Dynamics of the Suburban Community on Socio-Economic and Culture

"Dong Dok Mai" is a suburban community with 1,559 population and 395 households, most of the population in the community are the Generation X people. The community located approximately 18 Kilometers away from Khon Kaen city. The community has a large natural pond which people in communication use as a major water source for consumption. Quality of soil is a sandy loam which is suitable for agricultural activities such as rice farming, corn farming, etc. Most agricultural products are used for household consumption. In addition, some households engage in self-employed occupations within the community. Someone works for farmers in the community to harvest agricultural products, while someone work service jobs such as housekeeping, laundry, or waiter/waitress in Khon Kaen city. People in the community also work as productive workers in the industrial sector, and some engage in government jobs such as a teacher, public health officer, or nurse. Due to a variety of occupations that people engage in, this shows that people in the community have focused on education for a while so that they are able to conduct a prestige job such as government job. Moreover, some households have owned businesses in the community such as grocery shop, construction equipment shop, mobile top-up shop, agricultural equipment shop, etc. This causes different economic and social opportunities among suburban households. However, although suburban people increasingly work in Khon Kaen city and they take some urban lifestyles to use in the community, relationships among households or neighbors are still based on the kinship system. Local traditions and cultures are based on Buddhist practices and northeastern culture called "Heed Sib Song Kong Sin See." It can be seen that households in the suburban community have lived with a mixed way of life between urban culture and local culture, which represent through occupations engaged. For instance, some households engaged in agricultural activity along with other occupations in the urban area.

There were 4 generations of suburban people exist in the community, included the generation B people, the generation X people, the generation Y people, and the generation Z people. Patterns of lifestyle and activity among people from different generations were described as the following details.

The Generation B People; was born during 1946-1964, when society still relied on agriculture-based activities, and there were few convenient facilities and technologies used for livings. Therefore, the ways of life of people were simple. Characteristics of generation B people were interesting. They were patience, diligence, hardworking, and achieved from hard working. Someone regularly worked for government agencies, while some maintained a top-level position in private organizations. Someone conducted their own businesses in the community. Their occupations were quite secured, and they were respected by colleagues. These people always participated in religious activities and local traditional activities. They also participated in social activities with neighbors, and they had a good relationship with the community.

The Generation X People; was born during 1965-1980 when technologies were introduced in their life. However, they were not familiar with the technology. These people worked in Khon Kaen city or other urban areas. They

worked for private agencies and government agencies as a regular employee, while someone was witnessed as workers in a manufacturing factory. They participated in religious activities and local traditional activities as same as the generation B people, but they did not get much acceptances from agencies and communities due to their limited experiences.

The Generation Y People; was born during 1981-2000. They were a new generation of people in the suburban community. They were born in a period that technologies were widely spread in daily life, so they were eligible for any technological usage. They had additional income from the usage of modern technology, but they lacked relationships with surrounded persons, including household members. This people group had just started working life. Most of them worked for private agencies and government agencies. Due to the ability of technology usage, they always had a chance to help colleagues about technological issues. They often changed workplaces when they had worked for a while. They chose to participate in only major religious activities and community events.

The Generation Z People; was born since 2001. Most of them were at the studying age. They did not have a regular job, but they earned money as a freelancer. They were able to earn incomes along with studying through the online platform because they were eligible to technology. In addition, this group of people earned income through trading activity. Someone opened the second-handed shop at the flea market in Khon Kaen downtown. Regarding community activity, they were not interested in religious activities or social activities. They only participated in activities that they preferred.

Therefore, it can be seen that people in each generation have different working conditions and community activities. Technologies are applied to their life with different purposes.

2) Lifestyle Patterns of the Intergeneration People in the Suburban Community

This paper focuses on the investigation of lifestyle patterns of the intergeneration people in the northeastern suburban community. The analysis implements Bourdieu's capital accumulation (1984) and Plummer's lifestyle plan (1974) in the investigation of capital accumulation of people in each generation.

2.1 Capital Accumulation of the Suburban People by Generations

People in each generation have a different method of capital accumulation. In this part, capital accumulation is analyzed by occupations, the period of work, and the period of living in a suburban community. Details of capital accumulation are presenting as below (table 1)

The Generation B People; accumulated various types of capital. They accumulated economic capital, including lands, houses, large businesses, agricultural equipment such as harvesting machine and truck, savings, and any convenient facilities. The generation B people accumulated cultural capital, including education, warmth households, and occupational skills (both agricultural activity and non- agricultural activity). Their social capitals were accumulated through social networks at the community level and sub-district level, while symbolic capitals were accumulated through the reputation of the family line who was the first group settled in the community. Their family lines were widely recognized in the community so that they had maintained social positions and cultural positions.

The Generation X People were considered as a majority group in the community. They had stability in work life, so they earned a lot of income. They had good economic status as well as the social status which represented their good livings. Economic capitals of them were accumulated through houses, small businesses in community, vehicles, savings, and convenient facilities. In term of cultural capital, they had a good education and had good support from households. They believed that education contributed to households to improve the socio-economic position and occupational skills. They also had social networks at kinship level and community level, so they always received helps from neighbors in the community; In addition, they sometimes were assigned to set up

community activities with their social positions, which was considered as a symbolic capital of the generation X people.

The Generation Y People; this people group had just started working, so they could not accumulate much capital. They accumulated capitals including economic capital; vehicles and some convenient facilities. They had not yet accumulated much money. They had good occupational skills, especially technology, which was a good cultural capital of them. They had a social network at kinship level that provided any assistance to them. In addition, symbolic capital they had was in the form of recognition as the descendants of someone in the previous generation who lived in the community.

The Generation Z People; this group was not selected as key informants of the study because they were aged below 18 years old, and all of them were still studying. They did not have their own capitals. Therefore, it was noted that parents provided economic support to them. They did not have any occupational skills, but they were eligible for technology, which was a good cultural capital of them. There was no social capital presented. They, however, sometimes used their technical skills to help others in the community. This considered as symbolic capital, but it was unclear.

Table 1 Patterns of Capital Accumulation of the Suburban People

| Capital | Gen B | Gen X | Gen Y | Gen Z |
|----------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Economic | Lands, houses, | Houses, a small | Vehicles, having | No own economic |
| | large business, | business in | some convenient | capital, and relied |
| | occupational | community, | kinds of stuff, and | on parents to |
| | equipment, | vehicles, small | small savings. | support |
| | savings, and | savings, and | | economically. |
| | convenient stuff. | convenient stuff. | | |
| Cultural | Higher education | Higher education | Having | Having ability in |
| | degree, good | degree, good | occupational | technology |
| | occupational skills | occupational skills | knowledge and | |
| | (both agricultural | | skills, and having | |
| | activity and non- | | the ability to | |
| | agricultural | | technology | |
| | activity) | | | |
| Social | Having a social | Having a social | Having a social | No social network. |
| | network at the | network at kinship | network at kinship | |
| | community level | level and | level. | |
| | and sub-district | community level. | | |
| | level. | | | |
| Symbolic | The reputation of | Be assigned to help | Recognized as | Ability on |
| | the family was | community | children of | technology |
| | well-known in the | activities and | someone in the | contributed to the |
| | community and | maintained a social | community. | reputation of them, |
| | maintained a socio- | position in the | | and they were able |
| | cultural position in | community | | to help others in the |
| | the community. | | | community. |

In conclusion, people of different generations have different methods of capital accumulation. The generation B people and the generation X people are the elderly groups with long working experience. Therefore, they are able to accumulate much economic capital. Besides a form of money, their economic capitals are presented in forms of lands, houses, and occupational tools. They have accessed social networks, and have been recognized by neighbors in the community so that they have had relationships with others. This finding confirmed Pholphirul and Rukumnuaykit (2008). Regarding the generation Y people and the generation Z people, these groups of people have just started working, so they are not able to accumulate economic capital and other capital forms. They only maintain some capitals.

2.2 Lifestyle Patterns of the Suburban People by Generations

According to the previous sections, different capital accumulations among suburban people in different generations have caused multiple lifestyles. The capitals they access or owned contributed lifestyle patterns of suburban people through activities, interests, opinions, and tastes (Plummer, 1974) as following details (table 2)

The Generation B People; we're interested in engaging in activities with household members. For instance, on the weekend, they spent time together to do activities such as having lunch, go shopping, or do housekeeping tasks. It was a way to build a good relationship within the household. Someone spent free time to manage work loaded. This people group had life goals which aimed to get successful in life and work. They always gave opinions on issues about society, such as economics or politics. They always participated in community events such as local traditional events, religious events, and being membership in community groups. This finding confirmed Gray et al. (2016) who revealed that people in Generation B would closely adhere to local traditions, as an interview with the person who attended in the traditional event below.

"..I take my children to do merit every on the Buddhist days. I want my children realizing on our culture. Sometimes they participate in community activities.." [Ms. Nonglak (fictitious name), aged 55 years old, interviewed in May 2018]

In addition, this people group had different tastes and lifestyles from the latter generation. They loved to dress silk clothes when they participated in social activities. They always found simple ingredients which easily presented in the community to cook foods. However, they bought foods, especially the ready-to-eat meals sometimes if they did not have much time, but they would buy only simple foods. They loved to spend their life peacefully, in accordance with rural tradition.

Although suburban people in this generation had to work and live in the city or urban area, they still attached closely to rural life. They always participated in the community's traditional activities as a rural lifestyle.

The Generation X People mostly focused on work, and they wanted to succeed in careers. Gray et al. (2016) suggested that the strength of people in this generation is participation in community issues. They always gave opinions on social issues and political issues. Any opinions they gave mostly were for advantages of people in the community. They always spent free time with household members to do activities such as shopping, traveling, or doing community activity; being the volunteer at some community events. They also member in community groups such as the weaving group which presented 15 members. They made extra income from cotton weaving and selling outfits to those outside community.

This group of people had a taste for living in a mixed-lifestyle between urban lifestyle and rural lifestyle. They loved to get the brand-named dress as urban people. They had sufficient income and savings, so they were able to spend their lives in many ways as they wished. Moreover, they were born during a transitional society from the old-style society to modern society, so they had opportunities to take new cultures to sue in their daily livings. However, they still participated in local community activities, but their decisions of participation were based on rationality. They got the dress in urban style when they go to work or do business in the city, and they had a traditional silk dress when they participated in community activities. In addition, they did not cook the foods themselves. They preferred to eat instant foods due to time constraints. They also loved having meals at restaurants in the city. It was noted that they had a simple life, and they were friendly to everyone in the community.

The Generation Y People were interested in jobs that generated high income, entertainment, favorite foods, and technology, but they did not pay attention to community activities. They had specific opinions only what they were interested in, such as technology, education, and their own future. Main activities they focused on consist of tourism, relaxation, sports, technology, entertainment, shopping. These activities represented urban lifestyles they received from urban areas, and they would participate in various kinds of activity as they wished (Chamratrithirong and Rucharoenphonphanit, 2007) The results suggested that the technological capabilities of them contributed the

online activities including transactions via mobile phones, receiving news from social media, searching for work information on internet, online shopping, entertainment, leisure, and sports. These activities caused people to the used mobile phone at all times, so they preferred buying an expensive phone with a modern function that responded to their lifestyles.

Regarding the lifestyle of the generation Y people, they presented their living styles in accordance with modern taste and modern consumption clearly. Due to modern innovation, they were able to do a lot of activities in society. They invested in fashion clothes. They preferred eating instant foods rather than cooking by themselves do not cook food themselves due to limitations about time and convenience.

The Generation Y People had just started working. Their thoughts and activities, therefore, were based on modernity. They earned income from regular jobs and enjoyed working multiple tasks at the same time in order to earn a higher income. On the weekend, they went to the city for shopping some luxurious stuff such as clothes, shoes, cosmetics, wallet, etc. these consumption patterns caused them to lacked financial management. They had debt from the credit card expenses. This finding confirmed Pholphirul and Rukumnuaykit (2008) who found that people in modern society have more symbolic consumption patterns, such as eating and shopping, which represent their lifestyles with luxurious items while they are having the limit on income. This finding is supported by an interview below.

"... I like shopping. My salary is not enough to cover all expenses, but I bought only the necessary things. I go to work in downtown, so I need to buy a car. In each month, half of my salary is spent on car's expense, and I have to buy clothes, shoes, and 50-60 Baht spent on coffee every day. If my salary cannot cover all expenses, I will use the credit card to pay. When the salary is paid, I then pay for the credit card expenses. Some months I have got a serious financial problem, I have to ask my parents for a help "[Ms. Orn-uma (fictitious name), aged 28 years old, interviewed in July 2018]

The Generation Z People were interested in technology, entertainment, media, and fashion, but they did not attend community activities. They had their own opinions and wanted to achieve in the future. Most activities they engaged in were about technology because they were eligible to use benefits from technology to get incomes. Although someone was still studying, they were able to make their own ways to get income along with studying, for example, online shopping, or opening a small shop at the flea market. These incomes caused a better economic status of them and households. However, it was to say that they still made income in order to meet their personal needs

People in generation Z had a taste of fashion similar to people in generation Y, but they did not have sufficient income to meet their needs such as mobile phone, brand-named clothes, etc. as an interview below.

"... I am a fashionista. I love to dress in accordance with the fashion trend. However, I do want to use the parent's money. I then make online business. The profits from my online shop are used for my clothes and cosmetics..." [Ms. Inthira (fictitious name), aged 18 years old, interviewed in October 2018]

In addition, their tastes of food were still limited because they could not earn much income to respond to their needs, but they had several ways to represent symbolic consumption clearly. Regarding their livings, they still could not have their own lifestyles as they wished because they were at the studying age.

Although people in generation Z are not the targeted informants in this paper, it is clear that the suburban people in generation Z have their own ways to create incomes by themselves along with studying. They do not have to ask parents for help financially, and they still make their own lives as they wish.

Table 2 Lifestyle Patterns of the Suburban People by Generations

| | Gen B | Gen X | Gen Y | Gen Z | | |
|--------------------|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| Lifestyle Patterns | | | | | | |
| Activities | Leisure activity, community activity, religious activity, and traditional local activity. | Taking rest, community activity. | Travelling, leisure, sport, technology, entertainment, and shopping. | Technology and specific skills. | | |
| Interests | Family (spending time with family), house (house works), workplace (job tasks), and achieving life goals | Work, achieving life goals, and community issues. | The generated income jobs, entertainment, foods, media. Do not interest in the community. | Technology, entertainment, media, fashion. Do not interest in the community. | | |
| Opinions | Giving an opinion on the social issue, business, economic issue, and political issue. | Giving an opinion on the social issue, business, economic issue, and political issue. | Giving opinions only on what they are interested in, such as education, future, and technology. | Giving opinions only on what they are interested in such a future. | | |
| Tastes | | | | | | |
| Dressing | Getting dress appropriately. Wearing silk-clothes when they participated in community activity, and do not follow the fashion trend. | Preferring brand named clothes, especially clothes for working. | Following the fashion trend. Having many expenses on clothes. | Similar to the Gen Y people, but do not have much income. | | |
| Foods | Simple foods easy to find in the community. Having meals at restaurants some times, and do not take symbolic consumption. | Ready-To-Eat foods. Do not cook at home, and having meals at restaurants always. | Ready-To-Eat foods. Do not cook at home, and having meals at restaurants. Performing symbolic consumption. | Performing symbolic consumption, even though they have less income. | | |
| Lifestyles | A simple life without luxurious consumption. Keeping a low profile. | Opening themselves in the community. Having a convenient lifestyle. | Opening themselves in the community about their interests. Having a convenient lifestyle. | Lifestyle is unclear because they are at the studying age. | | |

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper titled Patterns of Livings among the Intergeneration People: A Case Study of the Suburban Community in Northeastern Thailand aims to explore lifestyles of the suburban people in different generations who have worked in Khon Kaen city (urban area) and stayed with households at the suburban community. The results reveal that people in different generations access or own different capitals. The generation B people and the generation X people accumulate economic capitals higher than other generations because they have worked for a long time. Therefore, they are able to accumulate more economic capital than other generations. Moreover, the capitals they owned contribute different lifestyle patterns among them. Lifestyle patterns of people in different generations are considered through activities, interests, opinions, and taste. People in generation Y and people in generation Z have a clear lifestyle pattern especially in the use of technology which is a result of the capitalism and modernity, while people in generation B and people in generation X are more interested in community activities than people in generation Y and people in generation Z.

People in various generations in the suburban community have lifestyle patterns which represent a mix of traditional rural lifestyle and urban lifestyle. Although they work and spend their living in the city, they still return home to live with households in the suburban area. They are still maintaining traditional life along with urban culture. However, they apply some urban cultures to use in the suburban community. It can be seen from the consumption behaviors of suburban people who prefer to buy ready-to-eat food rather than cooking at home. However, they still continue to participate in community activities, as well. In conclusion, these lifestyle patterns have become a perfect combination which represents the identity of a suburban community nowadays.

Therefore, this paper demonstrates lifestyle patterns of people in different generations, which reflect the context of the suburban community very well. The output of this paper contributes new knowledge about lifestyle patterns under contexts of a modern suburban community in northeastern Thailand. Therefore, relevant agencies should consider policy and implementation plan about people in various generations about the appropriate living plan of livings. It is important to create awareness of modern lifestyle to people in the suburban community, especially those who face with insufficient income in order to live appropriately in the capitalist society.

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