Cross Cultural Relationship Marketing in the Thai Context: The Japanese Buyer's Perspective

Phallapa Petison

Abstract— This paper examines cross cultural problems in buyer-supplier marketing relationships between Thai suppliers and Japanese buyers. The impact of Thai culture on buyer-supplier marketing relationships is exposed from the point of view of Japanese buyers. In-depth interviews were conducted with 25 Japanese expatriates from four leading Japanese automobile manufacturers - Toyota, Honda, Isuzu and Hino. To ensure validity, data triangulation through interviews with Thais involved in developing RM, not only from suppliers but also from automobile purchasing departments were conducted. This study found that Japanese and Thais are aware of the differences; however, cross cultural problems during working relations still exist. Based on Hofstede's five cultural dimensions; Thais are defined as "Feminine" and Japanese as "Masculine", these different dimensions and characteristics consequentially lead to different perceptions on quality terminology and problem solving styles. The inability to cope with conflict may result in a lack of trust in RM. Minimizing working conflict is possible with awareness, acceptance, and commitment from suppliers and buyers, both Thai and Japanese.

Index Terms—Buyer-Supplier Relationship, Japanese, Relationship Marketing, Thai.

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the aspects of Relationship Marketing (RM) which has been the focus of attention for both marketers and marketing scholars is the relationship between buyer and supplier [1]-[3]. This is because the willingness and ability of buyers and suppliers engaging in relationship marketing determines the success of; productivity [4] long term financial growth [5], and the development of sustainable competitiveness for companies [6].

Crucial to successful RM is the understanding of cross cultural issues between buyers and suppliers [7]-[9]. This issue is particularly important for buyer-supplier marketing relationships when doing business in Asia [10].

With the current trend in Asia, the greater the industrial growth through global investment expansion, the greater the need of both buyers and suppliers to understand cross cultural influences on RM in order to establish, maintain and enhance relationships. However, most buyer-supplier RM research studies focus on Western contexts such as USA, UK, Australia, etc while only a few analyze Asian contexts [11]. Furthermore, those that do address Asian contexts focus on

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consumer not industrial products. From the industrial perspective, buyer-seller RMs are regarded as buyer-supplier (B2B), which is somewhat different from seller-consumer (B2C) in consumer markets.

Aware of the lack of academic studies on RM in Asian contexts and the importance of cultural influences on RM, this study attempts to fill this gap by utilizing a case study of Japanese buyers and Thai suppliers in the Thai automobile industry.

Japanese automobile manufacturers are the key players in the Thai automobile industry, and they have confirmed their commitment to use Thailand as their export hub into this region. It is inevitable that the development of RM with Thai suppliers is necessary, especially with the changing industrial structure where parts are now produced not only for use in Thailand but also for global parts sourcing. Moreover, unlike suppliers in developed countries, many Thai suppliers need technological and knowledge support from Japanese automobile manufacturers [12]. Thus, it is necessary for Japanese automobile manufacturers to share knowledge and build meaningful RM with Thai suppliers in order to achieve superior productivity and competitive advantage.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Characteristics of Relationship Marketing (RM)

Since an initial study of relationship marketing (RM) by Berry in 1983, this research area has been widely discussed in various ways [13], for example; the overlap between RM and CRM (Customer relationship management); RM as a series of transactional marketing [14]; or RM in contrast to transaction marketing [15]-[16]; RM in micro level and macro level [17] etc. Although research scholars have addressed RM from different perspectives, they all defined RM as a process aiming to establish, maintain, and develop relationships in order to satisfy objectives set amongst involved parties [18]-[20].

Initially RM studies focused on buyer-supplier relationships [21]. Later on, research scholars further stated that RM is more concerned with behavior and emotions by emphasizing more on: bonding [22]-[23], empathy [24], reciprocity [11], co-operation [25], commitment [26], communication [27], conflict [28] shared values [26], power [15], independence [29] and trust [11],[24],[26] in relationship.

B. Influences of Culture on Supplier-Buyer RM

Various changes such as; marketing, environmental,

technological, social, ethnic heterogeneity, and cross cultural, have driven companies to adopt RM [15]. Cross cultural factors are regarded as important for the creation and development of RM between buyers and suppliers in an era of cross national boundary business [30]-[31]. Cultural similarities between buyers and suppliers produce positive relationships [10]. Therefore, minimizing cultural barriers and building close relationships are considered vital for success, as positive relationships lead to positive performances [32]. Different cultures value relationships differently; as a consequence, the establishment, development, and maintenance of relationships vary across different cultures [33]. In Europe, relationships are mostly focused on cooperation and exchange. In North America, relationships are focused on power and conflict. In Asia, they are focused on connections and relationships which are not based on contractual obligations, but on trust and continuity of relationships as a whole.

Of the few research studies conducted on the relevance of culture in RM, Hofstede's cultural dimension is most referred to and widely cited. Hofstede [34],[35] described national work-related value patterns in five dimensions: Power Distance – the degree to which people in society accept inequality; Individualism vs. Collectivism – whether people are self-oriented or group-oriented; Masculine vs. Feminine – whether people are more achievement-orientated or relationship-oriented; Uncertainty Avoidance – how flexible people are in the face of uncertainty; and Long-term vs. Short-term orientation- whether people value frugality and hard work or value tradition and social obligations.

These work-related vale patterns could influence buyer-supplier attitude and behavioral in developing relationships.

Considering the studies of buyer- supplier RM based on Hofstede' dimensions, not all of the dimensions were examined equally. Amongst the five dimensions, Individualism-Collectivism is discussed the most. It is interesting to note that almost all of the studies further emphasized communication, commitment, conflict solving styles, and trust as elements of culture.

Based on Hofestede most discussed dimension, Individualism-Collectivism, consistent messages from research scholars confirmed that if buyers come from a culture with a high degree of individualism, they will be more independent and self-centered [36]-[38]. Subsequently, a loose RM with suppliers tends to be found. Likewise, trust has more impact on RM in collectivism than in individualism [39]. Buyers from individualist cultures based their trust in RM more on economic and strategic cooperation. In contrast, buyers with a high degree of collectivism based their trust on social and are effective in forming RM [40].

In addition, there is a correlation between collectivism culture and commitment in RM [26]. The study showed that a higher propensity for effective commitment found in buyers/suppliers who are from collectivist and feminine cultures, similar to a study by Furrer [41] comparing Japanese and American RM styles. The research results showed that the Japanese who have a higher degree of collectivism than Americans expect more of a trust based relationship than American expect from their suppliers in RM.

Hofstede's cultural dimension of Masculine vs Feminine places value on power and assertive behavior which is the opposite of feminine which places value on people and nurturing [35]. Suppliers from feminine culture place greater emphasis on non-monetary factors such as bonds of interpersonal friendship and psychic aspects when developing relationship [42].

Regarding the Power Distance dimension, the level of the supplier's power influences the RM relationship [43]. Buyers from high power distance cultures expect suppliers to be weaker than them. As a consequence, in RM, buyers expect friendly relationships, good treatment and attaches greater importance to responsiveness, reliability, and empathy. The opposite is found in the case of weak buyers working with strong suppliers [44]. Furthermore more powerful buyers have greater influence over suppliers on quality of service and products they will receive [43]. Buyer's sources of power are from expertise, knowledge and skill [45]. Furthermore, power distance determines the expectation and satisfaction which powerful buyers are looking for from weak suppliers [44].

According to Hofstede's Uncertainty Avoidance dimension, high uncertainty avoidance buyers avoid uncertainty and ambiguity from unpredictable circumstances by establishing close relationships with suppliers [45]. This is because close relationships help to reduce the possibility of failure whilst increasing the speed of response to problems [44].

Hofstede's Long term- Short term orientation in RM, maintains that buyers and suppliers from long term oriented cultures nurture long term relationships [44], [46]. Buyers from long term oriented cultures consider reliability, responsiveness, and empathy as a very important element. Consequentially, buyers tend to have close relationships with supplier [44].

Focusing more on Japanese cultural impacts on RM, the expansion of Japanese investments has called for numerous studies into Japanese buyer-supplier relationships. It is noted that the Japanese buyer-supplier marketing relationship style is unique from others [47]. In the case of the Japanese, relationships link past, present, and future [48]. The Japanese concept of buyer and supplier is a stable partnership [49], preference in selecting suppliers, exclusive/semi-exclusive buyer-supplier relationships, trust-based focus [50], emphasis harmony [51] and long term orientation [52].

In the Thai context, a very limited number of studies have been conducted [11], [53]. Thai culture values harmony, Thais attempts to avoid conflict [53]. Moreover, their research showed that avoiding making partners lose face is more important in maintaining positive relationship for Thais than other countries in Asia. This is unique for doing business with Thais as Thais value buyer-supplier RM as long term relationships. For Thais, building relationship takes time. Moreover, characteristics of Thai buyer-supplier relationships are influenced by degree of power distance. Social position, hierarchy, moral and honesty between buyer-supplier in RM rely on position [54]. Additionally, the

most recent research on RM in Thai context insists that key success factors in developing successful RM with Thais are bonding, empathy, reciprocity and trust.

III. OBJECTIVES

Literature review indicated that cultural dimensions influence RM, hence it is interesting to examine different RM cultural influences between Thais and the Japanese who are the largest foreign investors particularly in the automobile industry; how Thai culture impacts RM; and to explore how cultural gaps can be bridged when developing RM between both parties-Thai and Japanese.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study applied a qualitative research method. Culture is sometimes regarded as implicit; therefore a qualitative approach seems to be an appropriate tool for helping researchers examines meanings of interviewees in terms of both implicit and explicit cultural elements [55]. In order to address research questions on how and why cross cultural differences between Japanese buyers and Thai suppliers impact on RM, qualitative research is appropriate; as qualitative methodology is advantageous for answering "How and Why" questions [56].

To ensure the reliability and validity of the qualitative research study, methodological triangulation and data triangulation were applied [57]. Through methodological triangulation, multiple methods: in-depth interviews, observations, and focus groups for certain cases were used.

Data triangulation was implemented by cross-checking data from (1) multiple sources - interviews with both Japanese expatriates who worked directly with supplier development as well as cross checking data with Thai suppliers; (2) differing perspective- interviews with Japanese expatriates who have long been working in Thailand and have an expertise in dealing with Thai. The selection of these groups of Japanese expatriates was based on experience, position and job responsibility. Not only Japanese from the academic side but also from business were interviewed (e.g. a Japanese professor with expertise in Thai-Japanese cross cultural, a Japanese businessman who is an advisor to the Japanese Chamber of Commerce Thailand; etc); and Japanese expatriates working with suppliers in the long term (4 years assignment) and Japanese expatriates who worked on short projects (from 2 weeks to 1 year); also Japanese expatriates in various roles and different department: R&D, purchasing, supplier development, and quality assurance.

Based on the preliminary study of cultural differences between Japanese and Thais through a review of the relevant literature, this study is divided into four stages. First: interviews with 5 Japanese expatriates were conducted. Japanese expatriates were selected from those who had at least 15 years of experience working with Thais. The main objective of these interviews is to check their perception of each dimension of Hofstede' five dimensions of cultural and whether they have seen the same Thais and Japanese

compare. This is because although Hofstede's theory is widely discussed and adopted as a frame of reference, there are some arguments regarding the validity of the model and whether the data from his study conducted in 1984 is now outdated.

In-depth interviews utilizing open ended questions were conducted with each expatriate. Each interview took approximately 2 hours. Of the five interviews, two were conducted in Thai as the Japanese expatriates were able to speak, read, and write in Thai. The rest were conducted in English. From these expatriates' point of view, five dimension of Hofstede's theory were found still to be valid and applicable when examining culture influences on RM between Japanese automobile manufacturer and Thai suppliers.

In the second stage, qualitative research methods were utilized, including in-depth interviews, and company observations which were conduct with Thai suppliers. This data collected was a major contribution to this study. In total, 25 Japanese expatriates from the top four automobile manufacturers: Toyota Motor Thailand Co. Ltd. (TMT), Hino Motors (Thailand) Ltd. (HMT), Honda Automobile (Thailand) Co., Ltd. (HATC) and Isuzu Motors Co., (Thailand) Ltd. (IMCT) were interviewed. All interviews were conducted in English. However interview guides were sent to interviewees in advance. Interviews ranged from one to three hours. In some cases, Thais who work closely with Japanese when dealing with suppliers participated and shared ideas. The results in this article are addressed mainly from the perspective of Japanese expatriates from this stage.

By adopting data triangulation methods to ensure the validity of information, the third and the fourth stages were conducted. In the third stage, interviews with 15 Thai suppliers who supply parts to all four manufacturers were conducted. The objective of these interviews was to cross check information as well as to examine their perspectives on cultural differences with the Japanese. In the fourth stage, 10 Thais from all automobile cases working in purchasing departments were conducted to confirm and double-check information.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to Hofstede's study results comparing Thais and Japanese on

1) Power Distance: Thais higher; Thais can accept inequality more than Japanese,
2) Individualism: Thais lower; Thais by nature are more collectivist or group -oriented than Japanese,
3) Masculine: Thais lower; Thais have a feminine type culture and are highly concerned with having good relationships.
4) Uncertainty Avoidance: Thais lower: Thais can tolerate more ambiguous circumstances,
5) Long-term orientation: Thais lower: Thais respect tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one's 'face'

However the most recent study on cross cultural differences between Thai subordinates and Japanese bosses

argued the opposite in all dimensions except Long term orientation [58]. The results may be different from Hofstede because of the time frame when it was conducted, age of the respondents, and the impacts of economic crisis on Thai businesses. Nevertheless, many other scholars still employ Hofstede's results.

This study found that all of the Japanese expatriates being interviewed in the first stage confirmed that even there is some argument over Hofstede' results, the concepts of his five cultural dimensions are still valid and can be utilized for the study. This study therefore does not compare the degree of each dimension between the two nationalities but only addresses the differences in the context where it may impact RM.

A. Power Distance

Awareness of hierarchies within Thai management systems enhances bonding in RM

Most Thai owned suppliers started as family businesses and are still managed by family members even ones listed in the stock market. It is crucial for Japanese expatriates working with Thais to understand their concern with hierarchies within companies. Compared with Japanese organizational structures, there are more positions with more layers of management in Thai companies. Hierarchical system in Thai suppliers reflects Thai concerns with the different powers of people in organizations.

From interviews with Thais in operational level positions, such as supervisors, they expressed that sometimes they may want to talk to or consult Japanese expatriates but aware of the hierarchy, they have to consult their superior and pass the information to a Japanese manager in their own company who will then contact their Japanese counterpart. This is sometimes leads to communication problems.

One cross cultural problem is how to complain or raise a problem; a Japanese manager who is culturally unaware, may make a comment or criticize a supervisor in front of their subordinates. For example, a Japanese expatriate and a Thai supervisor walking together in a supplier plant, passing a sub assembly and the Japanese notices that there are bulks of materials which should not be near that station but Thai pass by without comment. If the expatriate asked the Thai supervisor; "Did you notice what was wrong there? Why as a supervisor, did you just walk past without saying anything or correcting matters?" If he directly made such comments to the Thai supervisor in front of his subordinates, although true this makes the supervisor lose face. Losing face could discredit the supervisor when he works with his subordinates.

Acceptance of higher power buyers helps minimize argument during the development of RM

Most Thais express that automobile manufacturers have more power than suppliers, particularly smaller sized and Thai-owned suppliers. As a high power-distance culture country, Thais accept this difference. Thais have to follow their automobile customer' requests to win orders, the smaller the supplier, the greater the acceptance of the power distance. This is because if they work with a leading automobile manufacturer, it raises their company image.

When working together, Thais feel comfortable following Japanese expatriates' comments. Not only because they accept the power distance but also the technical knowledge gap. Thai engineers recognize that in certain fields, Japanese expatriates have greater technical knowledge and relevant experience so they follow suggestions. This confirms what indicated in literature review [45]. Although in certain cases where suppliers have greater tacit knowledge and expertise than the manufacturer, Thai engineers expressed that they still feel the Japanese expatriates hold more power.

"Kreng Jai (Afraid to disturb)" leads to hidden problem that ruin RM

One of the characteristics of Thai –Kreng Jai- which reflects a respect for one whom they perceive as higher in the hierarchy, leads to Thais not asking any questions. Thai's kreng jai culture means that some Thais are afraid that the expatriates will question further and investigate the processes which will bring trouble or increased work. Further, it is related to other dimensions of culture such as collectivism-lacking knowledge in their own work leads them to lose face or it may discredit or loose trust in their company

B. Individualism VS Collectivism

Thai and Japanese societies are collectivist in nature although to a different degree [34]-[35]. Collectivism culture in Thai context is demonstrated through business network reference and team work orientation in developing RM.

"Pak Puak (Frined)": element of culture to be concerned when embarking on a new RM

Japanese expatriates are aware of the collectivist characteristics of Thais and vice versa. In the case of new Japanese expatriates in the purchasing department, first joining an automobile manufacturer in Thailand, they often request meetings aimed at building relationships with Thai suppliers. Some do not rely only on their Thai staff and previous supplier lists but start to explore new potential local suppliers.

In some cases, if their Thai staff proposes a new supplier, Japanese expatriates will call Thai suppliers to present their potential and product. They are aware the Thais culture of "Pak Puag" (Friend). A Japanese expatriate interviewed indicated that

"…...It is necessary to develop business relationship but it is also necessary that the company select the right suppliers who are potential and qualify. We not pick up one because they are friend with our staff. We need to ensure quality of our car. …."

Equality of treatment is important for harmony in relationship marketing

Although the scenario of purchasing parts leads to increased power for automobile manufacturers over suppliers, it should not be a buyer-customer relationship but rather a business partnership. What links both parties together is "similar goal in working". As part of the business process, it is inevitable that Japanese expatriates will work with many suppliers often selling similar products. Japanese expatriates pointed out that they have to keep balancing relationships with Thai suppliers. One Japanese expatriate reflected that sincerity and reasonable threats are important. He said

"Although they know that we need to have to buy the same part from different suppliers. We should threat all suppliers fairly. Somehow as Japanese we should keep a proper distance as well monitor our Thai subordinates to keep balancing not to close or not too loose relationship. ...."

C. Masculine VS Feminine (Achievement Orientation VS Relationship Orientation)

According to Hofstede's findings, the biggest gap between Thais and Japanese are Thais being Feminine while Japanese being Masculine. Thais place high value on relationships and believe in "Sanuk" (joyful) helps maintain good relationships [58]. In contrast, Japanese are masculine, valuing hard working, goal achievement, and living to work. Japanese in all interviews confirmed these differences.

Different values on achievement impact ways of solving problems in RM

Both may be aware of this culture but in real business relations, because Japanese have a high commitment to prevent problems to achieve goals on time. Japanese expatriates point out that different working styles and ways of solving problems are also perceived to be the causes of conflict. From the Japanese point of view, while working, Thais' lack of preventive attitude can lead to problems occurring later on. On the contrary, Thais believe that all problems can be sorted out and that Japanese worry too much.

It takes time for two persons from different national and corporate cultures to learn to work together. However, creating mutual trust, open-minded listening, willingness to share between both parties' ideas and working styles are required.

Different terminology and perceptions of quality leads to working conflict

These different perceptions are highly influential when Japanese and Thais work together. Japanese indicated that they have higher expectations of quality standards than Thais. Thais also agreed on this point. This causes frequent working conflicts. Japanese expatriates indicated that Thai quality standards are lower than they expected. Thais expect that a "pass standard" means just pass, whereas "pass standard" from the Japanese point of view means consistency, and with persistence it will improve with time. This may stem from the Kaizen concept. However, it is interesting to note that Thais do not believe that quality differences are the major causes of conflicts. The rationales for different perceptions of quality are believed to be because of technological knowledge and skills as well as production process knowledge and technical gaps between Thai engineers and Japanese expatriates. This is crucial for Japanese and Thais. With the emergence of "global sourcing policies", Japanese expatriates commented that Thai suppliers who are capable could be encouraged to enhance and strengthen their capabilities. On the other hand, it could also be a barrier to underperforming ones. Clear communication of definitions and expectations should be addressed. It is a part of Japanese culture to not hide meaning and to state explicit concerns from the beginning of relationships. Thais are also afraid of not winning a selection thus they may not share their concerns on quality. Mutual trust and transparency can help prevent later conflict and strengthen RM.

D. Uncertainty Avoidance

"Mai Pen Rai" (Take it easy, don't worry) reflects that Thais are highly flexible and thus more comfortable accepting changes or uncertainty that Japanese. This study found that different degrees of uncertainty avoidance, leads to the different perceptions of time and sense of urgency.

Different perceptions of time and sense of urgency lead to work conflict.

Japanese expatriates commented that Thai and Japanese have different time frames. Thais' perception of duration is a lot longer than Japanese. The Thai perception of one day is that there is 24 hours to achieve objectives while the Japanese perceive that it is only 24 hours. This annoys Japanese when follow up work with Thais. Japanese comment that they get upset as they feel that Thais irresponsible and have no commitment.

Transfer of Japanese practices

When Thais, with their low uncertainty avoidance attitude, work with the high uncertainty avoidance Japanese who have higher purchasing power, the Thai suppliers have to adopt Japanese production practices. However, Thais do not feel uncomfortable with these requirements as they tend to benefit through increased production effectiveness and efficiency. Japanese transfers their practices are to ensure smooth operation. Japanese believe that the record of successful practices ensure high possibility to implant the same practices in Thailand.

Progress reports as a tactic for working with Thais

Japanese expatriates commented that Thais rarely make progress reports. In Japanese culture, if progress is on track and things running smoothly, you also inform the team. Thais never make a progress report regardless of whether things are going well or there are problems. This lack of information makes the Japanese expatriates nervous; so their strategy to deal with this difference is to continually monitor progress from Thais and to set up meetings to share work progress. The meetings and reports can be divided into short, medium, and long term.

E. Short Term Orientation VS Long Term Orientation

There is a general perception that the Japanese take a long term view. Thais is also regarded as long term by less than Japanese. But during day to day work, Japanese view that Thais tend to concentrate only on what is currently happening. This would reflect a shorter term view of work.

The misconception of Thais being "good on hand problem solver"

This study noted that although short term planning by Thais and long term Japanese planning may not create severe conflict, it can lead to different perceptions, which can be a potential source of conflict later on. As Thais lack long term planning, when a problem occurs, they will need to sort out it out straight away. This creates an attitude that Thais are very good at solving problems at hand and are better skilled in this than the Japanese. This is totally opposite to the Japanese culture of long term orientation. Japanese expatriates believe that with good planning and close monitoring of all potential

problem sources, the problems can be avoided. Thus, a short term focus, concentrating only on daily tasks creates problems that Thais have to solve, but could be prevented.

Thais have a block time frame

Japanese expatriates commented that one of the big differences between both is a perception of time. Japanese expatriates with long experience of working in Thailand did state that the new generations of Thais are aware of these differences and attempt to reduce them; but, they seem to only be able to think in the short-term, meaning only this project; sometimes overlooking contingency and long term planning. One Japanese expatriate stated that

"....Thais tends to focus more on today. They do not see the future. If any problem occur they will said "mai pen sei"(no problem). This is a very dangerous attitude. For us, Japanese, we do not have this. I think Thais should change their way of mai pen rai. My strategies when working with Thais are setting short, medium, and long term plan".

VI. CONCLUSION

This study found that cross cultural gaps between Thais and Japanese can lead to conflict in developing and maintaining RM. Some Japanese expatriates, although aware of these differences prior to their assignments, either through cross cultural training and/or from former expatriates, once they are in the real working environment, find arguments as a result of cultural differences still occur. Among the five dimensions of Hofstede's cultural theory; Masculine vs Feminine, is the dimension in which Thais and Japanese have the widest gap and can have most impacts on RM.

Masculine contrasted with Feminine cultural dimension, leads to differing terminology and perceptions on quality and ways of solving problems which can ruin positive RM. This is because the most important criteria for selecting and evaluating Thai suppliers are the quality of parts. Additionally, achieving global quality standards determines opportunities for Thais to become global suppliers, as a way of creating competitiveness for Thai suppliers.

The inability to minimize gaps on different quality terminology can lead to unpleasant RM, lowered trust levels and in the worst case scenario can result in ending relationships.

In addition, this study found that different cultural values on achievement, can lead to different perceptions between Thais and Japanese, creating conflict in the working environment. Thais think they are good at solving short-term problems while the Japanese think that this is not the way to work as short-term problems means a lack of preparation and inappropriate working. This approach is not necessarily wrong but can create differences and conflict. However, being tolerant of other approaches to problem solving is the best approach to try to achieve "our team-Thai and Japanese" to maintain RM.

An important lesson for managers is that when working across cultures, although awareness of the differences are important, it is not necessarily enough; Acceptance of the differences significantly helps in enhancing RM. When working with high power distance countries like Thailand, although it may be easier for buyers particularly ones from less power-distance countries to deal with, respect and fairness in business leads to trust-based RM, which is considered a key success factor in the market.

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