

**VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY LIFESTYLE
BEHAVIOUR AMONG GENERATION Z
CONSUMERS IN THAILAND: UNDERSTANDING
THE MODERATING ROLE OF GRATITUDE**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

2025

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THE MODERATING ROLE OF GRATITUDE**

by

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**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

March 2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The successful completion of this research would not have been possible without the support, guidance, and participation of several key individuals. I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation to all those who have contributed to this journey.

First and foremost, I extend my deepest gratitude to my esteemed supervisor, Dr. Jasmine Yeap Ai Leen, for her unwavering support, patience, and invaluable guidance throughout this challenging yet rewarding process. Her encouragement and expertise have greatly contributed to shaping my research, helping me refine complex ideas and develop a more structured approach. It has been an absolute honor to work under her mentorship. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Prof. Ramayah Thurasamy, whose dedication as an educator has been truly inspiring. His invaluable advice and willingness to share his extensive knowledge have been instrumental in refining my understanding and approach to this research.

My heartfelt gratitude also goes to all my examiners for their valuable time, insightful feedback, and constructive critiques in evaluating my research. Their expertise and thoughtful recommendations have significantly enhanced the quality and depth of this study. Additionally, I would like to extend my appreciation to the administrative personnel at the School of Management namely Puan Robitah Md. Spian and Puan Rosnah Mohamad Salleh for their continuous support and assistance.

Finally, my utmost gratitude goes to my beloved parents for their unconditional love, support, and encouragement. Their belief in me has been my greatest source of strength throughout this journey, and I am forever grateful for their presence in my life.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SEP	Sufficiency Economy Philosophy
VSLB	Voluntary Simplicity Lifestyle Behaviour
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
GRA	Gratitude
INO	Injunctive Norm
DNO	Descriptive Norm
PNO	Personal Norm
COW	Consumer Wisdom
RSP	Responsibility
PUR	Purpose
FLE	Flexibility
PES	Perspective
REA	Reasoning
SUS	Sustainability
SOR	Social Responsibility
MAT	Material Simplicity
SEL	Self-Sufficiency
SPI	Spiritual Life
CMV	Common Method Variance
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
PLS	Partial Least Squares

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Appendix A	QUESTIONNAIRE AND COVER PAGE
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Appendix C	ANALYSIS OUTPUT

**GAYA HIDUP KESEDERHANAAN SECARA SUKARELA DALAM
KALANGAN PENGGUNA GENERASI Z DI THAILAND:
PEMAHAMAN KESAN PENYEDERHANAAN FAKTOR KESYUKURAN**

ABSTRAK

Pengamalan gaya hidup kesederhanaan secara sukarela berpandukan konsep Falsafah Ekonomi Kecukupan (SEP) disokong sebagai penyelesaian untuk mengatasi kebendaan dan keterlebihan. Namun begitu, tidak banyak diketahui tentang cara pengguna Thai mengamalkan SEP melalui gaya hidup kesederhanaan sukarela dan faktor yang mendorong mereka berbuat demikian. Berlandaskan Teori Pengaktifan Norma, Teori Norma Sosial dan Teori Tumpuan Tingkah Laku Normatif, kajian ini mengkaji kesan faktor kebijaksanaan pengguna iaitu tanggungjawab, tujuan, fleksibiliti, perspektif, penaakulan, kemampanan dan norma sosial iaitu norma injunktif dan deskriptif terhadap norma peribadi seseorang untuk menjalani gaya hidup kesederhanaan sukarela. Seterusnya, kajian ini menyiasat sama ada norma peribadi membawa kepada tingkah laku kesederhanaan sukarela yang berdasarkan tanggungjawab sosial, kesederhanaan material, sara diri dan kehidupan rohani. Tambahan pula, kajian ini menentukan sama ada rasa kesyukuran menyederhanakan hubungan antara norma peribadi dan tingkah laku kesederhanaan sukarela. Data dikumpul daripada 436 pengguna Generasi Z di Thailand memandangkan pengguna muda ini mewakili segmen pasaran yang penting kepada pemasar serta segmen populasi yang penting kepada penggubal dasar negara. Analisis Pemodelan Persamaan Struktur-Kuasa Dua Terkecil Separa (PLS-SEM) mendedahkan bahawa norma peribadi dipengaruhi secara positif oleh kebijaksanaan dalam tanggungjawab, perspektif, penaakulan, kemampanan dan kedua-dua norma injunksi dan deskriptif. Sebaliknya, norma peribadi mempunyai kesan positif terhadap tanggungjawab sosial,

kesederhanaan material, sara diri dan kehidupan rohani. Selain itu, hubungan positif antara norma peribadi dan sara diri adalah lebih kukuh bagi pengguna yang mempunyai rasa kesyukuran yang tinggi. Implikasi teori dan praktikal dibincangkan bersama beberapa cadangan untuk penyelidikan masa hadapan.

**VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY LIFESTYLE BEHAVIOUR AMONG
GENERATION Z CONSUMERS IN THAILAND:
UNDERSTANDING THE MODERATING ROLE OF GRATITUDE**

ABSTRACT

Living a voluntary simplicity lifestyle based on the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) has been advocated as a solution to overcome materialism and excessiveness in Thailand. Nevertheless, insights on how Thai consumers are living out SEP through a voluntary simplicity lifestyle and what propels them to do so are still found wanting. Using the Norm Activation Theory, Social Norms Theory and the Focus Theory of Normative Conduct as a basis, this study examined the effect of consumer wisdom factors namely responsibility, purpose, flexibility, perspective, reasoning, sustainability and social norm factors namely injunctive and descriptive norm on one's personal norm to live a voluntary simplicity lifestyle. Subsequently, this study investigated whether personal norm leads to voluntary simplicity behaviour grounded in social responsibility, material simplicity, self-sufficiency and spiritual life. Furthermore, this study determined whether gratitude moderates the relationship between personal norm and voluntary simplicity behaviour. Data was gathered from 436 Generation Z consumers in Thailand given that these young consumers represent a significant market segment to marketers as well as important population segment to the country's policy makers. Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) analysis revealed that personal norm is positively influenced by wisdom in responsibility, perspective, reasoning, sustainability and both injunctive and descriptive norm. In turn, personal norm has a positive effect on social responsibility, material simplicity, self-sufficiency and spiritual life. Also, the positive relationship between personal norm and self-sufficiency is stronger for

consumers with strong sense of gratitude. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed along with some suggestions for future research studies.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the Chapter

This chapter provides a background on voluntary simplicity lifestyle and the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) in Thailand. The motivation of the research problem to conduct this study together with research questions and objectives as well as the significance of the study are also described. This chapter then closes with an explanation of the key terms used in this study.

1.2 Background of the Study

In today's modern world, individuals have unique goals and different ways of defining the lifestyle they want to lead. A common observable trend is that people tend to focus excessively on their economic and social status, as well as self-actualization, often driven by the growing influence of the global economy. This trend has led to materialism, where consumers engage in overconsumption, spending more than they earn, purchasing unnecessary goods, and generating waste. Materialistic consumers often showcase their status by owning expensive items such as luxury cars, large houses, designer bags, and branded watches. This lifestyle not only impacts individuals and their families but also has significant environmental consequences, including resource depletion, pollution, excessive waste generation, carbon emissions, and habitat destruction caused by the overproduction and distribution of goods.

Materialism significantly impacts both individuals and families. On a personal level, those who strongly equate self-worth with possessions often experience anxiety and inadequacy through constant social comparison. This

connection between identity and material belongings creates a fragile foundation for self-esteem and life satisfaction. Additionally, pursuing a materialistic lifestyle frequently leads to consumer debt, generating financial instability and chronic stress. The effects extend beyond individuals to family dynamics. When materialism becomes central to family values, attention shifts away from relationships and shared experiences, weakening family bonds and increasing conflict. Families may feel pressured to maintain appearances or meet materialistic standards, fostering resentment and unhealthy competition among members. Perhaps most concerning is how children may internalize these materialistic values, fundamentally shaping their understanding of happiness and self-worth for years to come.

Overconsumption is frequently encouraged by a materialistic lifestyle, which accelerates the depletion of natural resources. Higher amounts of trash, such as plastic and electronic waste, are a result of increased consumption and contribute to pollution and environmental deterioration. A carbon footprint, the manufacture and delivery of commodities account for a large portion of greenhouse gas emissions, which exacerbate climate change. A materialistic lifestyle drives overconsumption, leading to resource depletion, pollution, and excessive waste, which significantly harm the environment. In Thailand, and many parts of the world, the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) framework is increasingly being adopted by businesses and policymakers to counteract these negative impacts through sustainable production, ethical consumerism, and corporate responsibility initiatives aligned with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) (Lokuwaduge & Heenetigala, 2017).

As a response to materialism, at the consumer level, a solution called voluntary simplicity has emerged. It emphasizes living with purpose and honesty

while avoiding unnecessary possessions. Voluntary simplicity encourages people to reduce their consumption by controlling their desires and leading a simpler, more eco-friendly life. While it shares some ideas with sustainable consumption, voluntary simplicity involves deeper and more complex principles (Merdin-Uygur, 2019). Voluntary Simplicity Lifestyle Behaviour (VSLB) has become a global concern as overconsumption and materialism continue to drive environmental degradation, economic instability, and social inequalities, prompting individuals, businesses, and policymakers worldwide to advocate for more sustainable, ethical, and mindful consumption practices. Hence, in many parts of the world as well as Thailand, more people are choosing to live simply as the countries faces problems like deforestation, pollution, and urban growth. Thailand's economy for instance has grown quickly, but this has also led to more consumerism, environmental damage, and social inequality. Because of this, many Thai citizens are now focusing on a lifestyle that values sustainability, local products, and minimalism.

In Thailand, a concept closely aligned with voluntary simplicity is the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP). The SEP is a development approach introduced by the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand (Mettathamrong, Upping, & Deedom, 2023) in 1974 which promotes the Middle Path, emphasizing moderation, reasonableness, self-immunity, knowledge, and moral integrity (Khamman, 2012). SEP applies to every level of society—from individuals and households to communities, organizations, and the government (Tabucanon, 2010). Its implementation aims to create balanced and sustainable development, benefiting individuals, society, and the nation as a whole, as illustrated in Figure 1.1.

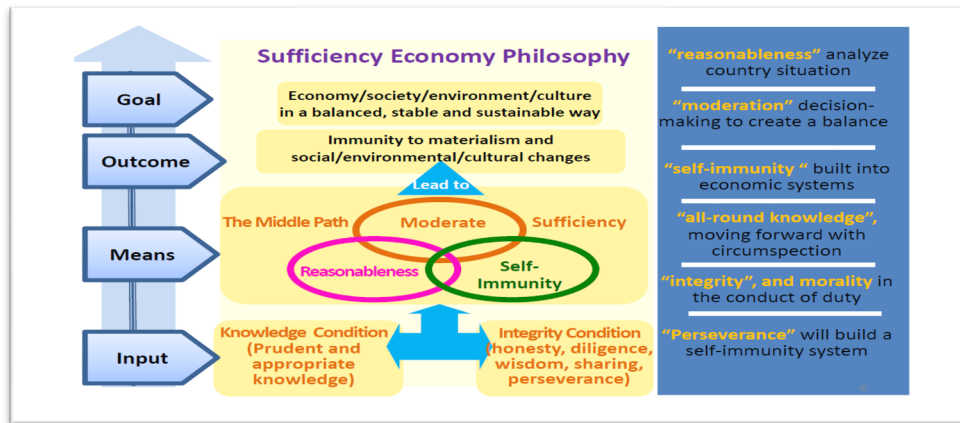


Figure 1.1 Sufficiency Economy Philosophy: SEP (UNESCO, 2012)

The theory of development, which prevailed from the 1940s to the 1970s, attributed the challenges faced by less developed nations to inadequate capital and resource misallocation. Economists of the time viewed development as a process of growth that required a significant reallocation of resources from low-productivity sectors to high-productivity industrial sectors. Nations were believed to progress through multiple stages of development, from initial phases to sustained expansion, with capital accumulation through savings considered essential. However, the inability of populations to save posed challenges for capital formation in less developed countries. Foreign aid and the strategic allocation of savings and investments were seen as solutions to this issue.

In the early stages of development theory, the dominant view emphasized growth-driven development and structural change. The idea of a non-linear long-term development process suggested that countries could experience multiple stable equilibria. At a high investment level, one equilibrium would lead to high output and income, while another, at a low investment level, would result in low income. This scenario, known as a poverty trap, could delay a nation's growth and development due to inadequate infrastructure, social overhead costs, and coordination issues. Government-led policies, such as the Big Push, were seen as solutions to lift

economies out of poverty. Influenced by the successes of the Marshall Plan and active Keynesian government interventions in the 1940s, the government was viewed as a key player in addressing barriers to economic development. Governments controlled investment flows, subsidized investments, and opened new sectors, particularly in industries focused on import substitution.

However, by the 1970s, state-led growth models, which focused heavily on capital accumulation and structural reform, began to encounter significant issues. Despite high rates of income growth and industrialization, many nations continued to face high unemployment, income inequality, excessive debt, inflation, imbalanced growth, and economic instability. As a result, the second phase of development theory emerged in the late 1970s, influenced by neoclassical theories revitalized in Milton Friedman's works in the 1960s. This stage of development theory blamed underdevelopment on excessive government intervention and advocated for the removal of such interventions to allow for more efficient resource allocation, technology adoption, and capital accumulation.

By the late 1970s through the 1990s, government failures were cited as the primary barriers to development, leading to a preference for laissez-faire governance. Neoliberalism gained prominence, emphasizing the liberalization of domestic and foreign markets for goods and production inputs. The Washington Consensus, a set of reforms aimed at stabilizing economies through liberalization, emerged during this time. However, the limitations of neoliberalism became evident as unrealistic expectations regarding resource allocation and efficient markets failed to materialize, particularly in developing nations. Major economic crises, such as the 1994 Mexican Peso Crisis, the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, and the 1998 Russian Ruble Crisis, further eroded confidence in neoliberal approaches. These crises highlighted issues

such as imperfect markets, asymmetric information, and the absence of key institutions necessary for economic stability and growth.

The SEP's three guiding principles—moderation, rationality, and self-immunity—are interrelated and mutually dependent. Moderation encourages individuals to live balanced lives, avoiding extremes, while rationality emphasizes knowledge, experience, foresight, and empathy to understand the broader impact of one's actions. Self-immunity refers to the ability to withstand external shocks and handle unforeseen challenges through self-reliance and discipline. In addition to these principles, knowledge and morality are crucial for the successful application of SEP. Knowledge involves understanding the significance of information and how to apply it wisely, while morality encompasses integrity, reliability, honesty, and hard work. By practicing these principles in combination with knowledge and morality, individuals and societies can live sustainably, fostering resilience in the face of globalization's challenges.

1.2.1 The Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy and National Development

The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) is implemented in Thailand to promote balanced and stable growth at all levels—from the individual to the family, community, and society. Individuals and families begin to develop when they acquire the fundamental knowledge and skills needed to address the significant challenges posed by rapid socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural changes. Communities are formed by individuals and families who cooperate by pooling resources and exchanging ideas, knowledge, skills, and experiences. They utilize community resources and develop activities that align with their geosocial circumstances, providing the greatest benefits and enjoyment for members.

SEP can be applied both domestically and internationally but should start at the national level by creating the groundwork necessary for the majority to access the essentials of life. This ensures they can live adequately and sustain themselves through the application of knowledge and morals. Additionally, individuals should be encouraged to broaden their perspectives by developing learning networks that connect people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and professions. This approach will ultimately foster harmony and solidarity in society. Consequently, SEP-based living is essential not only for Thai families in urban areas or agricultural settings but also for all professions and ethnicities, particularly at the individual level as Sustainable Consumption Behaviour (SCB).

SCB emphasizes a consumer's awareness and responsibility regarding the consequences of their consumption habits, addressing growing environmental concerns. Terms like "green," "ecological," "ethical," and "responsible" describe this type of consumption. These concepts share characteristics that aim to integrate environmental considerations into reasonable and responsible consumer decisions, promoting positive practices that prioritize societal and future well-being. Thus, the appropriateness of consumption behaviour, which aligns well with environmental sustainability, serves as a key indicator of sustainability across various dimensions of society and the economy (Balderjahn et al., 2013).

The theory of sufficiency economy is rooted in core Thai cultural values. It promotes growth through restraint, wisdom, and social immunity, employing knowledge and virtue as guiding principles. Intelligence and perseverance are vital for achieving true satisfaction in life.

The Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy provides a framework for self-improvement; individuals can live wisely in modern society with knowledge and

responsibility. This set of guidelines aims to maintain happiness and prosperity at both individual and social levels, relying on the potential and realistic circumstances of each community. By focusing on the nation's existing resources, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej formulated the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy, which encourages careful control and reduction in production and consumption to ensure sustainability without negative societal impacts.

The key concept of this philosophy involves careful resource utilization. Individuals can lead comfortable lives within their means, avoiding overspending while still enjoying life. In a country with a long agricultural history, the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy aims to ensure sustainable agricultural practices to achieve food security within the national economic framework. This philosophy extends beyond agriculture to industrial sectors and international investments, emphasizing moderation and adaptability to modern society.

As His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej stated in his birthday speech on December 4, 1998:

“I may add that full sufficiency is impossible. If a family or even a village wants to employ a full sufficiency economy, it would be like returning to the Stone Age... This sufficiency means to have enough to live on. Sufficiency means to lead a reasonably comfortable life, without excess, or overindulgence in luxury, but enough. Some things may seem to be extravagant, but if it brings happiness, it is permissible as long as it is within the means of the individual...”

The World Population Prospects 2022 report shows that Asia, which is home to nearly 60% of the global population, is experiencing slower growth due to declining fertility rates (see Figure 1.2). In Thailand, with a population of around 71 million, the fertility rate has dropped to 1.5 children per woman, leading to an aging

population (see Figure 1.3). By 2050, a significant portion of Thailand's population will be over 60, creating challenges such as labour shortages and increased pressure on healthcare systems. This demographic change will have an impact on Generation Z (those born approximately between 1997 and 2012), since they will have to manage a declining workforce, aging-related economic challenges, and an aging population. Their qualities, such flexibility and technological know-how, will be essential in determining the future economy and workforce.

The most pressing demographic trend is rapid population aging. A growing proportion of Thailand's population is moving into older age groups, and by 2050, a substantial percentage will be over 60 years old. This shift will likely result in labour shortages, increased demand for healthcare, and greater pressure on social security systems. The aging population presents economic and social challenges, requiring strategic policy interventions to adapt to the changing population structure. These trends align with the voluntary simplicity lifestyle, which emphasizes minimalism, mindful consumption, and sustainability. As Thailand faces challenges related to resource allocation, rising healthcare needs, and an aging society, voluntary simplicity could offer a solution by encouraging reduced consumption, less materialism, and a focus on community support. This lifestyle could alleviate pressures by fostering self-sufficiency and reducing the economic burden on a shrinking workforce, making it a more sustainable approach in the face of these demographic shifts.



Figure 1.2 Thailand population size and annual growth rate 1950-2025
 Source: <https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/tha/thailand/population>

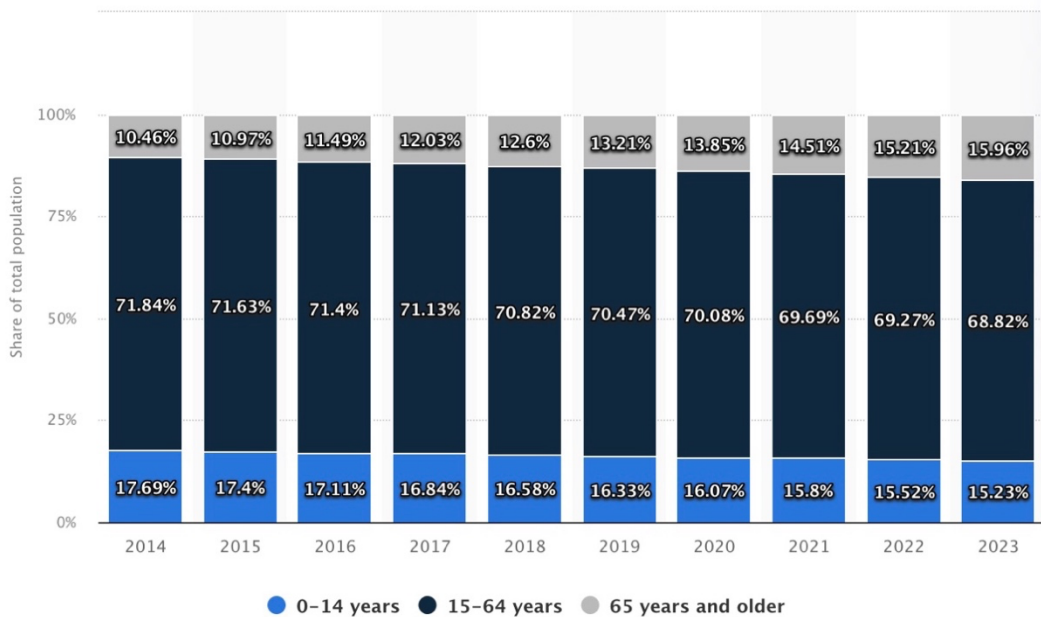


Figure 1.3 Age structure in Thailand from 2014 to 2023
 Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/331892/age-structure-in-thailand/>

These behavioural patterns will have long-term implications. As individuals enter retirement, they must prepare for healthcare costs and living expenses, reducing the challenges of aging alone and minimizing their burden on society. In this context,

the adoption of simpler and more self-sufficient lifestyles becomes increasingly relevant. Individuals embracing voluntary simplicity often prioritize sustainability and community engagement, which can alleviate the pressures associated with retirement. By focusing on needs rather than excessive consumption, these individuals may find themselves better equipped to manage their finances and live more fulfilling lives.

1.2.2 Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, Voluntary Simplicity Lifestyle and Generation Z

Researching people's behaviours is crucial to exploring the relationship between simpler, self-sufficient, and sustainable lifestyles aligns with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. The voluntary simplicity lifestyle (VSL) fosters mindful consumption across all age groups. Older individuals are typically more cautious in their consumption choices, while Özgül (2011) notes that younger generations, driven by energy and ambition, often adopt more extravagant consumption habits. Voluntary simplifiers, by contrast, deliberately consume less and focus on sustainable consumption. Yet, previous studies on VSL have often overlooked its complexity, focusing on reduced purchasing rather than the deeper decision-making processes influenced by environmental concerns.

Consumption behaviour is shifting dramatically with newer generations (Williams & Page, 2011). These shifts go beyond demographics, as diverse consumption lifestyles increasingly influence various social groups. To understand voluntary simplicity fully, it's essential to examine both internal and external factors that drive this behaviour. Internal factors may include personal values and beliefs, while external influences come from peers, family, and social environments.

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is a cohort poised to dominate the consumer market. By 2020, many members of this generation had entered the workforce, having grown up in a digital era defined by social media and the internet. Insider Intelligence monitors Gen Z's characteristics and trends to provide insights for businesses targeting this diverse and technologically savvy generation.

As the youngest and most ethnically diverse generation in U.S. history, Gen Z makes up 27% of the population (Pew Research). They are often associated with high technology use, but they are also recognized for their advocacy for social justice and inclusivity.

Gen Z typically acquires their first smartphones by age twelve, preferring text messaging and social media for communication. They consume bite-sized content on their devices rather than traditional TV. As the largest cohort of future consumers, Gen Z's purchasing power will grow significantly by 2026. To engage this group, retailers must build relationships that meet their expectations in a digital landscape.

Since the introduction of SEP in Thailand, empirical studies documenting the lifestyles of Thai citizens—particularly younger consumers—have been limited. According to the Thailand Board of Investment, Generation Z made up 12.82% of Thailand's 66.19 million population in 2020, with approximately 4.33 million males and 4.15 million females aged 15-24. This group holds significant potential for Thailand's economy, society, and politics, as they represent future leaders. Therefore, it is essential to research voluntary simplicity lifestyles practiced by Generation Z in Thailand. In an effort to investigate the discrepancy between advocacy and actual implementation of a lifestyle that the king had endorsed. It is difficult to determine the true number of persons living this way in the absence of adequate documentation. Since Generation Z will be the future's leaders and influencers, it makes sense to

concentrate on them. It's interesting to learn about how these concepts are accepted or rejected by keeping track of their behaviours and attitudes. Understanding the elements that support or obstruct their participation in various lifestyles may also be helpful.

Embracing a voluntary simple lifestyle, one can match their decisions with their basic values, which leads to a profound sense of contentment. Social responsibility is essential to this way of life because it motivates people to participate in their communities and make moral purchasing decisions. People can improve their sense of purpose and belonging by engaging in social initiatives and supporting local companies (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010). When combined with material minimalism, this strategy promotes a quality-over-quantity mindset that lowers stress and increases gratitude for what one already has (Tischler, 2018). People can escape the cycle of materialism, which frequently results in discontent, with the aid of deliberate living (Kasser, 2002). Additionally, developing self-sufficiency is essential to improving personal empowerment; learning how to cook or grow promotes independence and lessens dependency on consumer products, which increases a person's sense of success (Hoffman, 2018). Incorporating spiritual activities like mindfulness and reflection can enhance one's self-awareness and offer a feeling of purpose and unity (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). According to Hill and Turiano (2014), people can develop enduring contentment and improve their communities and personal lives by promoting a holistic approach that takes these factors into account.

Minimalism, voluntary simplicity, and the sufficiency economy represent distinct yet interconnected approaches to intentional living and consumption. Minimalism primarily focuses on reducing physical possessions to create a clutter-free environment, emphasizing aesthetics and personal fulfillment through the

concept of "less is more." It encourages individuals to keep only what is essential or brings joy, thereby fostering a clearer mindset (Buchanan, 2018). In contrast, voluntary simplicity encompasses a broader lifestyle choice that prioritizes ethical living and social responsibility. This approach urges individuals to consider the environmental and societal impacts of their consumption habits, advocating for sustainable practices and a focus on quality of life over material wealth (Alexander & Ussher, 2012). The sufficiency economy, originating from Thailand, promotes self-reliance and local resources above external resources by emphasizing resilience, moderation, and sustainability. It promotes social well-being and environmental sustainability by encouraging communities to meet their needs without undue reliance on outside sources (Phra Dhammapitaka, 2016). Voluntary simplicity and sufficiency economies promote community well-being and sustainable activities, whereas minimalism is frequently more individualistic and aesthetics-focused. These two approaches show alternative ways to live meaningfully in a world with limited resources. Lastly, sustainability is a general concept that unifies social, economic, and environmental factors with the goal of addressing current demands without endangering future generations. Sufficiency economy and sustainability emphasize the value of community and ecological health, whereas minimalism and voluntary simplicity frequently concentrate on individual activities. These perspectives show alternative paths to a more fulfilling and accountable way of life (Thompson, 2015).

Although King Bhumibol Adulyadej championed the SEP, which shares principles with the VSL—such as moderation, responsible consumption, and mindfulness—the actual extent of SEP practice among the Thai population remains undocumented. Some individuals may embrace these values, while others may not,

highlighting a gap in understanding how deeply SEP has permeated daily life, especially among younger generations.

Documenting SEP and VSL practices among Generation Z is crucial, as this generation will shape Thailand's future. Their values and behaviours toward consumption, sustainability, and simplicity will significantly influence Thailand's economic and social landscape. This study, therefore, focuses on Generation Z to assess their commitment to these principles and how they may integrate SEP and VSL into modern life. By understanding Gen Z's relationship with these lifestyles, this research aims to provide insights that could inform future efforts to embed sustainable, balanced living in Thai society.

1.3 Problem Statement

In today's consumer-driven society, Voluntary Simplicity Lifestyle Behaviour (VSLB) has gained attention as a counter-movement to materialism, offering an alternative lifestyle that prioritizes self-reliance, financial prudence, sustainability, and personal fulfilment over excessive consumption. While VSLB has been widely discussed in the context of sustainable and ethical consumption (Albert, 2019; Garcia-Ruiz & Rodriguez-Lluesma, 2014; Iwata, 2006; Peyer et al., 2017; Read et al., 2018), it extends beyond these dimensions, encompassing a way of life that gives meaning, reduces dependence on material goods, fosters gratitude, and encourages alternative forms of consumption and self-sufficiency. However, despite its increasing relevance, there remains a gap in understanding the motivations, influences, and barriers affecting the adoption of VSLB, particularly among Thai Generation Z consumers.

In Thailand, materialism continues to be deeply embedded in societal values, where wealth and material possessions are often seen as indicators of success. Consumer culture has been heavily influenced by globalization, digital marketing, and social media trends, leading to increased spending on luxury goods, fast fashion, and convenience-driven consumption. The environmental consequences of this consumption-driven society are severe, with high levels of waste generation, resource depletion, and pollution. Although sustainability efforts are increasing, many Thai consumers struggle to transition toward simpler, more mindful consumption behaviours due to social and cultural pressures.

While previous research has examined VSLB in Western contexts (Alexander & Ussher, 2012; Devenin & Bianchi, 2022; Huneke, 2005; Osikominu & Bocken, 2020; Rich et al., 2020), there is limited empirical evidence on how VSLB manifests in Asian cultures, particularly within the framework of Thailand's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP). The late King Bhumibol Adulyadej's SEP promotes a way of life based on moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity, aligning closely with the principles of voluntary simplicity. Despite SEP's influence on Thailand's national policies and economic strategies, its impact on individual consumer behaviour, especially among the younger generation, remains unclear. Given the increasing global discourse on sustainability, it is essential to investigate whether Thai Generation Z consumers are embracing VSLB as an extension of SEP or resisting it due to the pervasive culture of materialism.

Another critical factor influencing the adoption of VSLB is social norms, which shape how individuals perceive acceptable behaviours within their communities. Injunctive norms (what people believe is socially approved) and descriptive norms (what people observe others doing) play a crucial role in

determining whether individuals feel compelled to engage in voluntary simplicity or maintain materialistic lifestyles. The Thai market is increasingly promoting sustainable consumer practices, with businesses and policymakers integrating Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into their strategies. However, whether these evolving social norms are strong enough to override the existing materialistic norms and encourage widespread adoption of VSLB remains an open question.

Beyond social norms, consumer wisdom has been identified as a key factor influencing deliberate and meaningful consumption decisions. Consumer wisdom encompasses responsibility, purpose, flexibility, perspective, reasoning, and sustainability, all of which contribute to more mindful and values-driven consumption patterns. However, research remains scarce on how consumer wisdom interacts with social norms and personal norms to influence VSLB behaviours in an emerging economy like Thailand. Furthermore, the role of gratitude in moderating this relationship is underexplored. Gratitude fosters contentment, reduces materialistic desires, and promotes a deeper appreciation for non-material aspects of life. Individuals who practice gratitude are more likely to experience higher life satisfaction, resist excessive consumption, and embrace voluntary simplicity. Examining whether gratitude strengthens personal norms toward VSLB and mitigates the effects of materialistic social influences is crucial for understanding how to encourage this lifestyle shift.

The aging population in Thailand further complicates the sustainability discourse. With a shrinking workforce and increasing economic pressures, governments may prioritize economic stimulation through consumer spending, potentially reinforcing materialistic consumption. However, VSLB presents an

opportunity to prime the aging population to adopt a simpler and more sustainable lifestyle, reducing financial burdens and promoting well-being. Encouraging self-sufficiency and financial prudence in younger generations may ensure that aging individuals transition smoothly into lifestyles that are less dependent on excessive consumption and more focused on self-reliance. Understanding how VSLB can be positioned as a sustainable long-term lifestyle choice, rather than a short-term trend, is essential for addressing the socioeconomic challenges of an aging population.

Despite the increasing interest in voluntary simplicity, empirical research on its adoption in Thailand remains limited. Studies on how social norms, consumer wisdom, and gratitude interact to influence VSLB behaviours among Generation Z consumers are particularly lacking. Insights on what drives one's personal norm to adopt a VSLB and whether personal norm leads to various practices of VSLB remains elusive. In addition, the effect of social norms on personal norm should be examined in the context of VSLB. Finally, the role of gratitude in consumer behaviour research should not be ignored as such personal value can affect decision making.

In conclusion, the rising concern over environmental degradation, economic instability, and unsustainable consumer behaviours necessitates urgent research into VSLB as a viable alternative. Given Thailand's unique cultural and economic landscape, understanding the interaction between consumer wisdom, social norms, personal norms, and gratitude in shaping VSLB behaviours is crucial for creating a future where sustainability, self-reliance, and financial prudence become mainstream values. This research will contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable consumption and behavioural change, offering valuable insights for both academic

scholars and practical stakeholders seeking to shape a more responsible and mindful consumer society.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions formulated for this study are as listed below:

1. Do various facets of consumer wisdom (responsibility, purpose, flexibility, perspective, reasoning and sustainability) activate one's personal norm to live a voluntary simplicity lifestyle?
2. Do social norms like injunctive and descriptive norms influence one's personal norm to live a voluntary simplicity lifestyle?
3. Does one's personal norm to live a voluntary simplicity lifestyle lead to voluntary simplicity behaviours that focus on social responsibility, material simplicity, self-sufficiency and spiritual life?
4. Does having a sense of gratitude moderate the relationship between personal norm and voluntary simplicity behaviours?

1.5 Research Objectives

Based on the research questions, the following research objectives were developed for this study:

1. To examine the effect of consumer wisdom facets (responsibility, purpose, flexibility, perspective, reasoning and sustainability) on one's personal norm to live a voluntary simplicity lifestyle.
2. To examine the influence of injunctive and descriptive norms on one's personal norm to live a voluntary simplicity lifestyle.

3. To investigate whether one's personal norm to live a voluntary simplicity lifestyle lead to voluntary simplicity behaviours that focus on social responsibility, material simplicity, self-sufficiency and spiritual life?
4. To determine whether gratitude moderates the relationship between personal norm and voluntary simplicity behaviours.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study examined voluntary simplicity lifestyle behaviours among Thai Generation Z end consumers, focusing on the influence of personal norms, social norms (injunctive and descriptive), and consumer wisdom in shaping their consumption choices. The research aimed to understand how these factors contributed to voluntary simplicity behaviours, which emphasized minimalism, ethical consumption, and sustainability-conscious decision-making.

The study population consisted of local Thai end consumers who belonged to Generation Z, defined as individuals born between 1995 and 2009 (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2015). To ensure relevance to the study objectives, the inclusion criteria included Thai citizens residing in Thailand, end consumers who purchased products for personal use rather than business purposes, individuals from Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2009), and were university or college students. The exclusion criteria for the study were non-Thai citizens residing in Thailand, business consumers who engaged in consumption for commercial or resale purposes, individuals who were not part of Generation Z (i.e., born before 1995 or after 2009), and non-university students, including those who were not currently enrolled in a formal higher education institution.

This study was geographically limited to Thailand, with data collected from Thai citizens who met the defined inclusion criteria. Given the impact of external factors on consumer behaviour, data collection was conducted online during the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing for a broader and more accessible reach to respondents while adhering to safety protocols. The study specifically investigated voluntary simplicity lifestyle behaviours, exploring the roles of personal norms, social norms (both injunctive and descriptive), and consumer wisdom in influencing consumer decisions. By focusing on Thai Generation Z university students, the research sought to identify patterns in minimalist consumption, ethical decision-making, and resistance to materialism within this demographic group.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The importance of this study extends to scholars, policymakers, businesses, marketers and educators and is discussed from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

Theoretical Significance

This study contributes to the academic discourse on voluntary simplicity behaviour by offering a comprehensive framework to evaluate the lifestyle choices of Thai Generation Z end consumers within the cultural context of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP). By integrating the Norm Activation Theory (NAT) with consumer wisdom and social norms (injunctive and descriptive), this research enhances the understanding of how personal and social factors influence voluntary simplicity behaviours. The study also provides empirical evidence on the extent to which Generation Z in Thailand adopts voluntary simplicity as a response to growing global concerns about overconsumption, sustainability, and ethical consumerism.

Generation Z is known for being more environmentally conscious and ethically driven compared to previous Generations. As this Generation embraces voluntary simplicity as part of a broader rejection of materialism and overconsumption, understanding their motivations and decision-making processes is critical (Grénman, et al., 2024). This research will contribute to the growing body of literature on sustainable consumption practices, social norms, and ethical consumer behaviour, offering valuable insights for scholars studying consumer psychology, sustainability, and behavioural economics.

Furthermore, this study fills an important gap in voluntary simplicity research by examining its relationship with SEP in the Thai context. While King Bhumibol Adulyadej's SEP shares principles with voluntary simplicity—such as moderation, responsible consumption, and mindfulness—there remains limited empirical research on how deeply these values are integrated into daily life among younger Generations. The findings of this study will provide a culturally relevant understanding of voluntary simplicity within a framework that aligns with Thai economic and social philosophies, ensuring its academic relevance for both local and international sustainability research.

By offering a structured methodology to assess the relationship between wisdom, norms, and gratitude in influencing voluntary simplicity behaviour, this research establishes a foundation for future studies seeking to explore sustainable consumer practices and behavioural economics in different cultural contexts.

Practical Significance

The findings of this study are important to policymakers, businesses, marketers, educators, and sustainability advocates who seek to promote responsible consumption and sustainable lifestyles in Thailand. For policymakers, this research

provides evidence-based insights into how Generation Z consumers are shifting towards voluntary simplicity. Understanding these behaviours will aid in designing effective policies and initiatives that encourage sustainable consumption and responsible consumer behaviour. Policymakers can leverage this trend to promote sustainable development goals, strengthen environmental policies, and integrate voluntary simplicity principles into national economic and environmental strategies.

Potential policy applications include developing educational programs in universities to promote conscious consumption and ethical purchasing decisions among young consumers, incentivizing businesses that prioritize sustainability through tax breaks for companies that offer eco-friendly products or implement ethical labour practices and creating national campaigns to raise awareness about voluntary simplicity and its benefits for individuals, society, and the environment. Additional measures could include implementing green consumer policies, such as promoting the circular economy by encouraging second-hand markets, rental services, and sustainable product designs, as well as expanding sustainable urban planning policies by incorporating voluntary simplicity values, such as supporting shared transportation, zero-waste initiatives, and local sustainable markets.

For businesses and marketers, understanding the voluntary simplicity lifestyle among Thai Generation Z consumers is crucial for adapting to emerging market trends. As Generation Z increasingly values sustainability, ethical production, and transparency, businesses can align their branding, product development, and marketing strategies to meet consumer demand. Companies can benefit from developing product lines that align with voluntary simplicity values, such as eco-friendly fashion, sustainable food sourcing, and zero-waste packaging. They can also enhance corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to build trust and loyalty

with Generation Z consumers who prioritize ethical business practices. Moreover, leveraging digital marketing strategies to communicate sustainability efforts effectively is essential, as Generation Z is highly active online and values brands that demonstrate genuine commitment to responsible consumption. Encouraging sustainable business models, such as rental, resale, and subscription services, that align with voluntary simplicity principles, can also be a valuable strategy for businesses looking to cater to this demographic.

For educators and sustainability advocates, this study provides a framework for promoting sustainable living principles among younger generations. By integrating voluntary simplicity education into university curricula and public awareness programs, institutions can help young consumers develop long-term ethical consumption habits. This research also offers valuable insights for NGOs and advocacy groups working toward environmental conservation and community sustainability. Organizations seeking to engage Generation Z in sustainability initiatives can use the study's findings to design targeted awareness campaigns and behavioural interventions that resonate with their values and consumption patterns.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

Sufficiency economy philosophy (SEP) - Subjective probabilities that performing a way of life based on three principles: moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity guided by two conditions namely knowledge and virtues (Thailand Sustainable Development Foundation (TSDF), 2016)