

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

At present, mobile phone technology has become a part of people's lives because it provides them convenience and a number of other benefits. They help people to perform a wide variety of tasks, ranging from such simple tasks as chatting with friends, using short message services (SMS) or multimedia messaging services (MMS), playing games, listening to the radio to other complicated tasks like browsing and searching for information via the Internet, paying public utility bills, conducting financial transactions and stock trading, etc.

In Thailand, mobile phone usage is popular among Thai people. This is evidenced by the number of Thai mobile phone users which is approximately 55 million from the 66 million in total population (DTAC, 2008).

Mr. Kittipong Kanokvilairat, Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) of JAY MART Public Company Limited stated that mobile phones are special merchandise. They have been continuously developed to provide convenience and various entertainment functions such as embedded music players, digital cameras, web browsers, etc. to customers. He added that in a family, there may be one or two television sets, but every family member has his/her own mobile phone (Krungthep Turakij, 2008).

Together with complex-functioned mobile phones, user manuals are printed and put in every mobile phone package to help users operate the device safely, access multiple functions easily, and solve problems with the operation correctly. However, user manuals—not only for mobile phones—are often neglected due to many reasons. To illustrate, Bay (2003) stated that “[m]anuals are typically thick and uncomfortable to read” (p.662). Novick (2006), who conducted a study about computer manual reading, looked at the reasons users did not read product manuals in his article “Why Don't People Read the Manual?” that “[u]sers cite difficulties in navigating the help systems, particularly difficulties in finding useful search terms, and disappointment in the level of explanation found” (p.11).

Although people avoid reading manuals, manuals are still important because neglecting to read the manual and to follow the instructions not only leads to

malfunctions of the products, it also causes accidents, injuries, or death. Take the case of a Thai welder who seriously burned his hands and legs in a Nokia mobile phone battery explosion. As reported on March 14, 2005 from the website “textually.org”, the man was working near a high-voltage electric pole when the phone in his shirt pocket, rang and then exploded. When reviewing *User’s Guide for Nokia 1600*, it is stated in “Additional safety information” with the warning below.

Switch off your device when in any area with a potentially explosive atmosphere and obey all signs and instructions. Potentially explosive atmospheres include areas where you would normally be advised to turn off your vehicle engine. Sparks in such areas could cause an explosion or fire resulting in bodily injury or even death... Areas with a potentially explosive atmosphere are often but not always clearly marked. They include below deck on boats, chemical transfer or storage facilities, vehicles using liquefied petroleum gas (such as propane or butane), and areas where the air contains chemicals or particles such as grain, dust, or metal powders (p. 50).

In terms of mobile phone manufacturers, giving information about their products to customers through user manuals is one of the important services they provide to guarantee users’ safety when operating the products. This can be seen by the attempts of many big mobile phone companies in improving their quality of user guides. For instance, the technical document section of Nokia has been encouraging the customers to give feedback, while Ericsson Mobile Communications AB, Lund, Sweden carried out a series of qualitative market tests on user manuals for mobile phones in 1997, etc.

In Thailand, millions of people use mobile phones and some accidents featuring mobile phone battery explosions occurred. The study of user manual reading among Thai people thus is an interesting topic to find out whether Thai users pay attention to proper operation of mobile phone and the reasons why they read or do not read the user guides. Moreover, so far there have been very few studies looking at this aspect of mobile phone use. This study investigates to what extent mobile phone users pay attention to reading their mobile phone manuals before they start using them or

during the course of their use. The study focuses on working people in Silom sub-district which is the hub of Bangkok where many governmental organizations and private companies are located.

The results of the study will be useful for both mobile phone manufacturers and people in general who use mobile phones in their daily life. Mobile phone manufacturers can use the study results as guidelines in requesting manual printing companies to improve user manual quality in terms of design and language usage to meet the customers' needs and gain their satisfaction. For readers, the new look of user-friendly manuals will motivate them to read for gaining useful information to operate the device correctly and safely. This way, mobile phones will be worth the money spent.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1.2.1 What are the main reasons which make working men and women read or not to read the user manuals for mobile phones?

1.2.2 Among the motivating factors, which ones influence mobile phone users to read the manuals?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are the following:

1.3.1 Main Objective

To identify the reasons why working people in Silom sub-district decide to read or not read user manuals for mobile phones

1.3.2 Sub-Objectives

1) To investigate the percentage of working people in Silom sub-district who read or did not read their mobile phone manuals; and

2) To find out the motivating factors which influenced working people in Silom sub-district to read user manuals

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The definition of the terms of this study is as follows:

1.4.1 **Gender** is the sexual characteristic of an individual, male or female, divided by reproductive anatomy.

1.4.2 **Age** is the number of years a subject of this study has lived after he/she was born.

1.4.3 **Educational level** is the level of academic knowledge gained from academic institutions both government and private.

1.4.4 **Occupation** is a current job of the respondent in this study.

1.4.5 **Income** is money gained in working for a living on a monthly basis.

1.4.6 **User manuals** are references or documents that give information, instruction, and help to users.

1.4.7 **Manual reading** is studying the user manual of mobile phones in order to operate the device correctly, solve problems encountered when using the device, and to be safe from any form of accident which might occur during the operation.

1.4.8 **Motivating factors** are the components or parts in mobile phone user manuals which motivate users to read the manual. In this study, motivating factors are content, language, manual size, font size, font style, binding of manual, illustrations, symbols, and color.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research was conducted to study the manual reading behavior among mobile phone users who worked in Silom sub-district. It focused on the reasons why they read or did not read their user manuals. Moreover, the motivating factors which influenced the subjects to read the user manuals are also included in this study.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1.6.1 The results of the study will be distributed to mobile phone manufacturers and printing companies dealing with and/or designing and printing user manuals. The study will let them know the reasons why people read or do not read the user manuals for mobile phones.

1.6.2 The results of the study can be used as guidelines for mobile phone manufacturers and user manual printing companies to improve their product quality to

meet customers' needs.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study of manual reading behavior among mobile phone users who worked in Silom sub-district in this paper is divided into five chapters.

Chapter One provides a brief background of the study, and statement of the problem. The terms are defined. The objectives and scope of the study are also presented. Moreover, the significance of the study is outlined and the organization of the study is discussed.

Chapter Two contains a review of related literature. This includes background knowledge about user manuals, purposes for reading technical documents, types of readers who read technical documents, analysis of readers' behavior and their reading process, as well as relevant studies.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology used in conducting the research, starting from subject selection, the instrument used in the survey, the procedure for distributing the instrument, and the data analysis.

Chapter Four presents the results of the study which include the demographic information of the respondents, the reasons why the subjects of the study read or did not read their mobile phone user manuals, the percentage of mobile phone users who read or did not read the manuals, and the motivating factors which influenced the subjects to read the user manuals. The findings are presented in terms of frequency, percentage, mean, and average score.

Chapter Five includes a summary of the study, discussion, conclusion, and recommendations for further research.