

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter compiles five major issues which are applicable to the topic of the study. It is categorized in the following topics:

- 2.1 Love characteristics and love styles
- 2.2 Mate selection and relationship development
- 2.3 Verbal and non-verbal communication
- 2.4 Computer-mediated communication (CMC) and the Internet characteristics
- 2.5 Relevant Studies

2.1 LOVE CHARACTERISTICS AND LOVE STYLES

Love has a different meaning for each person. Some may believe it is forgiving, others may think it is faith and honesty. However, love or intimacy generally composes of seven basic qualities which are affection, self-disclosure, trust, caring, mutuality, interdependence, and commitment (Hinde, 1976; Derlega, 1984; R.F. Verderber & K.S. Verderber, 1992). Love also has many styles which influence the intensity of each characteristic. In the early years, researchers divided love into two types: passionate and companionate, but John Alan Lee's study (as cited in Hendrick, 1994) developed it to six styles: eros, ludus, storge, pragma, mania, and agape. The six love styles have been adapted and described by Hendrick as follows:

Eros – an erotic love is a passionate feeling towards physical appearance or “took speck” (ถูกสเปค) in Thai. It brings about an immediate need to communicate and an involvement. Although this kind of love focuses on the intensity of physical preference, it is not a jealous or possessive love and an erotic lover desires honesty and sincerity from his or her partner.

Ludus – a ludus lover views love as a playful game and tries to keep space from a partner. This type of lover does not have a specific physical preference and does not spend too much time with one partner. In addition, deeply emotional commitment is avoided. A ludic person enjoys having several partners. Nondisclosure

and insincerity are acceptable; however, a ludus partner does not wish to hurt the other.

Storge – storgic love derives from friendship. It is a natural, relaxed, patient, and last longing love. Storge requires neither immediate closeness as eros nor distance as ludus; in contrast, it calls for sharing, gradual developed trust, and friendship. A storgic lover does not prefer any specific physical type. Besides, this kind of lover is loyal.

Pragma – pragma refer to a practical or sensible love. Pragmatic lovers realize what qualities of a partner they desire. They look for a person with those qualities and develop a relationship realistically and patiently. Similarity is what pragma focuses on and it avoids excessive feelings. Thus, a matchmaker or computer dating service could serve pragmatic lovers because it offers a predictable and compatible mate to them.

Mania – mania is obviously a possessive love and a painful love. It requires great commitment. Typically maniac lovers do not have specific physical preference; furthermore, they may negatively react to someone at first and turn to obsess with that one severely later. Daydreaming, unreasonable anxiety, and distrust frequently occur in maniac lovers' mind and a maniac person usually has maniac behaviors like frantic phone or threats of suicide.

Agape – agape is a self-sacrifice love focusing on partners' benefit more than one's pleasure. This type of love is more spiritual than physical. When comparing with other styles, agape focuses on the partner while ludus and pragma focus on the self, and eros and storge concern mostly on the relationship. Actually, this kind of love is rarely found and pure agape was not found in Lee's research (Hendrick, 1994).

Not only characteristics, styles and intimacy are the main concerns of online love, cyber love also has other interesting aspects to consider. They are mate selection and relationship development.

2.2 MATE SELECTION AND RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

There are many variables to consider when choosing a mate or partner. An erotic person may think of physical appearance as the first priority to concern whereas storge cares more about how well they get along. Hendrick (1994) has categorized the

variables influencing mate selection into three main areas: similarity, self-disclosure, and physical attractiveness.

Similarity is considered as a basic factor to choose someone as a partner. Similar attitudes, lifestyle, personality, background, economic status, and so on make people get along well without too much adjustment. Even though some theorists argue that both complementarity and dissimilarity have a vital role in mate selection, similarity seems to have more impact. *Self-disclosure* refers to personal inner-most revelation. It makes people have knowledge about their prospect partner's beliefs, attitudes, experiences, point of views, and reactions to the world; and then imply how good their relationship will be. Although *Physical Attractiveness* is quite important at the beginning of relationship, it becomes less important after an intimate relationship is established. People usually choose a partner who has the same level of physical attractiveness; however, levels of attractiveness vary from person to person. It depends on a person's preference.

While physical attractiveness is slightly controllable and has few effects on cyber relations, similarity and self-disclosure require communication, which is central to online intimacy, especially during the relationship development process. Particular elements of other theories regarding mate selection or intimacy development are related to communication as well.

The Filter Theory of Kerkhoff and Davis (Dyer, 1983) talks about the influence of similarity and complementarity in different stages of mate selection. This theory points out that superficial factors like physical appearance or social background have more influence than value agreement (similarity) at the beginning of courtship. After passing this stage, discovery of common ground positively encourages relationship and complementarity need will increase in later stages. How can people learn about each other's "likes" and "unlikes"? (Dyer, 1983, p. 113) The answer is communication undoubtedly, even in cyber love.

Stimulus-value-role Theory (SVR Theory) of Murstein (Dyer, 1983) categorized mate selection in three stages. Firstly, stimulus stage refers to a mutual stimulus attraction between two persons. The attraction is generally one's personality or physical or social attributes. If the attraction is mutual enough, the prospect partner will enter the value comparison stage. Murstein stated that

...the value comparison stage involves the appraisal of value compatibility through verbal interaction. The kinds of values explored through discussion are apt to be much more varied than those possible in the “stimulus” stage. The couple may compare their attitudes toward life, politics, religion, sex and role of men and women in society, and marriage (Dyer, 1983, p. 115)

The last stage is the role compatibility stage, focusing on the “role fit” (Dyer, 1983, p. 115). The partners who enter this stage will learn more about each other’s behavior and expectation. If negotiation of the role issue is successful, it becomes rewarding and potentially leads to marriage.

Communication is so important to both offline love and cyber love. However, when considering the above theories, communication seems to be more powerful for cyber love. It can distort the path of mate selection which theorists have been familiar with for years. Self-disclosure or value agreement becomes so significant from the very beginning of cyber relationship. In contrast, physical attractiveness or social background becomes less and less important.

Maybe *Intimacy Development Theory* of Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor (Littlejohn, 1995) is more appropriate for cyber love development. This theory demonstrates a step-by-step progress of relationships focusing only on degree of communication, closeness and sentiment of a partner. The four stages of intimate relationship development are orientation, exploratory affective exchange, affective exchange, and stable exchange. *Orientation* refers to the stage where partners communicate impersonally. *Exploratory Affective Exchange* means the stage that partners broaden and deepen personal information disclosure. *Affective Exchange* implies the stage partners examine and evaluate their feeling of each other. The last stage is *Stable Exchange*; the stage partners are so intimate and able to predict and understand the other’s action or response.

2.3 VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Communication is one of many factors that influence a success of interpersonal relationship and communication channels providing non-verbal cues like face-to face or telephone used to be considered as the best channel to form intimate relationships. These enabled people to communicate effectively. Many studies suggest

that non-verbal messages such as gesture, posture, movement, space, touch, voice, tone, and so forth are so important since it can present the real or exact meaning of the verbal message of the sender (Hamilton, 1997). Non-verbal language is a good supporter for verbal cues and; indeed, presents more meaning than verbal code sometimes. For example, space between two persons indicates their closeness without a single word. The way a woman looks into a man's eyes may communicate greater than a love letter. However, cyber love, as a new type of intimate relationship using advanced communication technology to develop, has opened a new world of relationship development. Cyber love itself has unique characteristics due to the unique attributes of its communication channel, the Internet. Connectivity, availability, real time interactivity, anonymity, privacy, and imagination of the Internet enable relationship to be developed rapidly and intensively regardless of physical remoteness and non-verbal communication between the partners (Ben-Ze'ev, 2004).

2.4 COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION AND THE INTERNET CHARACTERISTICS

Many studies about computer-mediated communication (CMC) argue that the nature of CMC is not appropriate for interpersonal related goals because “important and relevant non-verbal and contextual cues are missing from, or ‘filtered out’ of computer-mediated interaction” (Anderson, 2005, p. 522) and, consequently, lead to negative effects. There is also high level of verbal aggressiveness in the communicated environment; however, J.B. Walther found that computer users who had an online intimate relationship could adapt to the lack of non-verbal messages of online communication and to the social environment in cyber world (Anderson, 2005). Walther suggested in his theory of hyperpersonal communication that “CMC allows for people to overcome certain limitations of face-to-face interaction by providing an environment where they can interact with relative anonymity and develop intimate relationships relatively quickly” (Anderson, 2005, p. 552).

Apart from the adaptability to CMC by Internet users, convenience and unique opportunities provided in cyberspace induce people in our modern age to accept or get into the way of online intimate affairs (Biggs, 2000; Ben-Ze'ev, 2004; Whitty & Carr,

2006; Mahdavi, 2007; อธิชา เมืองยม, 2547). Nonetheless, the lure of the Internet, anonymity and imagination bringing about deception, computer addiction, or social isolation (Ben-Ze'ev, 2004; Whitty & Carr, 2006; อธิชา เมืองยม, 2547), can negatively affect people's attitude to cyber love. Besides, the perception about cyber love might be influenced by other factors such as the perception of romantic beliefs, Internet orientation, amount of Internet use, and perceived realism of the Internet (Anderson, 2005). The finding of Anderson (2005) shows that the more romantic beliefs people have, the more negative attitudes about online intimacy people hold. On the contrary, the more intensity of the Internet orientation, amount of use, and realism people go for, the more positive attitudes people have.

2.5 RELEVANT STUDIES

Positive Attitude

Self-disclosure is the first and most important process making two people gain knowledge about each other. Revelation enables young people to exchange thoughts, feelings, and experiences, then to obtain reciprocal understanding, support, and acceptance of each other, leading to an intimate relationship; however, self-disclosure can make participants vulnerable to hurt from denial and exploitation as well (Derlega, 1984). Because of the fear of being rejected or exploited, accompanied by pressure of face-to-face encounters, adolescents may turn to the Internet to seek a comfortable and safe place to disclose themselves. In addition to increasing fear and pressure, face-to-face dating in some cultures is restricted by norms, especially for the young population, since dating is considered as an improper activity leading to educational defection, premarital sex or other dangers like rape and deceit. Cyber love seems to be a comfortable and protected relationship for them.

The ethnographic study of Mahdavi (2007), with respect to Internet usage of upper middle class educated young people in Teheran, reported that in Iran where sociality is greatly regulated by religion, the young population escaped from the risk by using Internet as a place to meet and do online dating, before making a face-to-face encounter. Cyber love was a kind of "safer" form of romantic encounter and it allowed them to get to know each other before taking the risk of being seen on a face-to-face date with his or her partner. Chat rooms gave participants, especially

youngster ones who had hardly had heterosexual relationships offline, the chances to learn and practice to do courtship or dating without embarrassment both from social restriction and from individual personality. A 22 year old medical student said that

I love chatting online and having sexual relations with a cyber girlfriend because I'm not as shy or awkward... No one knows about my cyber-girlfriend, not my parents or my friends, so no one can give me a hard time about it (Mahdavi, 2007, p. 19)

From a case study regarding romantic online relationships of a divorced woman in Canada, Biggs (2000) reported that the feeling of “actual place” provided in the Internet made the participant accepted and she used the Internet as a place to create new relationships. The Internet not only provided an opportunity to connect with people of the opposite sex but also helped reduce the “gaps” between gender and upbringing culture in offline context. Consequently, the participant could attract other people genuinely with her expressed personality. The level of personal disclosure and perception of safety of cyber love related highly to the lack of visual cues, but the participant felt her online relationships were “empathic and supportive often from the very beginning” (p. 661). The improvement of self-discovering, self-understanding, explicit self-disclosure, and truly self-reflecting during progression of relationship development also encouraged participant's positive attitudes towards intimate relationships on cyberspace.

Anderson (2005) suggested in the study of Relationships among Internet Attitudes, Internet Use, Romantic Beliefs, and Perceptions of Online Romantic Relationships that people would have positive perceptions of online romantic relationships if they felt attached to the Internet and spent a lot of time on Internet. The researcher considered that as Internet usage is increasing, it is possible for online romantic relationships to become more common or acceptable to people in society.

Although many research studies support that love online is now accepted by many societies, some characteristics of the Internet and several external factors can create negative attitudes on cyber love among some groups of people as well.

Negative Attitude

On one hand, the Internet is considered as a medium encouraging people to increase interpersonal relations owing to its connectivity and availability; on the other hand, it is considered as a medium creating deceit, sexual harassment online, unreal expectation, and computer addiction, leading to social isolation due to its non-limitation, anonymity and imagination (McCown et al, 2001; McKenna, 2002; Ben-Ze'ev, 2004; Teich, 2006; อธิชา เมืองยม, 2547).

A finding of Aticha Muangyom (อธิชา เมืองยม, 2547) signified that even chatroom users also had some negative opinions about chat rooms. The participants thought that if a chat room is used without a deliberation or limitation, its freedom and anonymity might cause a deception or Internet addiction which affects the users' life. Complying with Muangyom's research, McCown's finding in a pilot study reported that 46% of women and 77% of men lie online. Besides, since it is difficult to detect deceit violation on the Internet, a chat room is possibly turned to an open room for wicked users.

With regards to social isolation, Kraut et al. (McKenna, 2002) reported that although the Internet gave increasing social circles to both extroverted and introverted Internet users, the latter more often reported increased loneliness. A result from Nie and Erbring's study also reported that Internet users spent less time with family and friends because of the Internet (McKenna, 2002). These reasons may lead to the relatively negative attitude towards relationships in cyberspace, especially romantic relationships.

Although the previous studies may have figured out the possible result of this research, most of them were conducted in foreign countries where there were different cultures and settings from the Thai context. In Thailand itself, most studies related to cyber relationships focus mainly on the communication aspect. There are few studies of cyber love with respect to its characteristics as a kind of human relationship. In terms of previous research methodology used in this issue, the qualitative research design used in a case study of Biggs, though giving deep information about the participant's attitude, cannot be used to represent opinions of other people who have different backgrounds and experience from the participant, an early thirties divorced woman. As well, Pardis Mahdavi's study, which was conducted with several

ethnographic methods to describe Iranian youngsters' usage of the Internet, might have the researcher's bias or misinterpretation. Quantitative research like Anderson's, using a questionnaire combining demographic questions and interval scales to measure the perception and beliefs of the participants, can provide greater variability and validity of the data. Therefore, this research will use a questionnaire with closed-ended questions, open-ended questions, and a Likert scale as an instrument to collect data from adolescents in Thailand. The question framework will be based on intimate relationship characteristics which are existence, trustfulness, safety, support to interpersonal relationship, and potentiality to transform to offline relationship.

In summary, this chapter has discussed five main issues applied for this study which are 1) love characteristics and love styles, 2) mate selection and relationship development, 3) verbal and non-verbal communication, 4) computer-mediated communication (CMC) and the Internet characteristics, and 5) previous related studies. The details of the research methodology will be described in the next chapter.