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Chinese Leadership and Its Impacts on Innovative Work Behavior of the Thai Employees

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Abstract *This study aims to investigate Thai employees' perceptions on their Chinese superiors and to comprehend how Chinese leadership has the impacts on innovative work behavior of the Thai employees. This is a pioneer study about the Chinese leadership in Thailand. In this study, the Chinese means only the expatriates from the mainland. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 Thai senior executives who are working in a Chinese-Thai automotive company in Bangkok. This firm is a joint venture of the two largest firms from Thailand and China. The study revealed that the Chinese leaders were perceived as the dictators who usually apply the top-down managerial approach. While, trustworthiness and respect are also not able to gain because the leaders are not perceived as the moral role model. Sometimes, they are considered as the innovation thieves. For these main reasons, innovative work behavior is not exercised by the Thais.*

Keywords Chinese management · Cross culture · Innovation work behavior · Leadership · Thailand

Introduction

This study has two main objectives. First, it aims to gain an understanding of Thai employees' perceptions of their Chinese superiors. Second, it intends to further understand how Chinese leadership has the impacts on innovative work behavior of the Thai employees. Chinese leadership is the main focus of the study because in the current global economic situation that the power of the American and the European is declining, China has been increasing its power in the global economy rapidly (Huijiong et al. 2013). The Chinese corporations have conquered the world by doing mergers and acquisitions and taking over several American, German, and British companies since the past decade. The current and future directions of the Chinese government are to expand the business empire outside the mainland. Thailand is one important target for this Chinese mission because it is becoming one of most interesting countries in Southeast Asia especially when the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) blueprint goes into action in the end of 2015. It is not only location that drives Thailand to become an interesting country. Highly skilled employees and their flexible culture that is largely influenced by the Chinese one are also the key motivators that place Thailand on the heart of the Chinese investors. Although, there are many Chinese companies investing in Thailand but the literature on Chinese leadership and management practices in the Thai business context is rarely found (Bunchapattanasakda and Wong 2010). For this reason, the first set of questions that arises is how do Chinese managers lead their Thai employees? Are they different from the Western and other Asian leaders, e.g. American, German, Swedish, Japanese, Korean, etc.? However, the management practices of the Chinese managers are not enough for fulfilling an academic gap about the Chinese leaders in Thailand. Thus, I would also like to study deeper to understand the impacts of Chinese leadership and practices on employee innovative work behavior. In my perspective, the Chinese corporations will need to encourage innovative work behavior in their companies for sustaining global

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competitive advantages. As the human resources is the asset, employee innovative work behavior is considered as one of the most important success factors in a rapid fluctuating business circumstance (Janssen 2000). Apart from the organizational influences, leadership is regarded as one of the most significant factors in encouraging innovative work behavior (Gupta and Singh 2012). But a number of empirical studies about the link of managerial manners and innovative work behaviors of the Chinese superiors and their Thai employees are very limited (Bunchapattanasakda and Wong 2010). Furthermore, the leadership literature does not sufficiently play attention on the perspectives and opinions of Thai managers toward their Chinese superiors in the Thai context.

Therefore, this empirical study is beneficial to both the scholars and the Chinese businessmen because it bridges and fulfills an academic gap about Chinese leadership and management practices in the Thai business context. At the same time, it also reveals some significant management factors and practices leading to effective management of the Chinese managers in Thailand. Last but not least, this study is considered as one of the pioneer empirical studies of its kind in Thailand about the Chinese leadership.

Literature Review

Leadership and Innovative Work Behavior (IVB)

Innovation is an important factor that pushes the business from the follower to the leader position in the business battlefield. Innovation cannot be created without the employees who actively contribute the creative ideas and resources to improve or develop their work (De Jong and Den Hartog 2010). Therefore, employees' innovative work behavior is highly desired by every organization. It is the intentional creation, introduction and implementation of novel concepts, processes, or services within an individual, work team or organization, to benefit performance of employees, work team or business as a whole (Scott and Bruce 1994; Janssen 2000; Janssen and Van Yperen 2004). It is a additional job behavior, which is unofficially acknowledged by performance and reward systems (Janssen 2000). It comprises of three interconnected tasks that are (1) idea generation, (2) idea promotion, and (3) idea realization. Employees' innovative work behavior is not independent because it is an interaction of individual and encountered situation. The innovative work behavior can be nurtured in such a situation with adequate job and organizational resources especially leadership (Matthew 2009). According to Bass (1985, 1996), there are two major types of leadership, transactional and transformational (Banerji and Krishnan 2000; Yukl 2002). Transactional

leadership style is distinct from transformational one because it is an exchange process which concentrates on the reciprocal relationships between the leaders and followers (Bass 1985; Yukl 2002).

The transactional leaders usually utilize contingent rewards and a management-by-exception format to mange their relationships with followers (Bass 1985, 1996). Contingent rewards are used to underlie the arrangements for explicit or implicit contract on goals to be reached to obtain the desired rewards or behavior. At the same time, a management-by-exception is utilized to gather behavioral information for predicting or preventing the followers from deviating from the agreed upon goals or objectives. Generally, transactional leaders are passive and only take action when a problem is likely to arise (Judge and Piccolo 2004). In this situation, leaders and followers have substantial power and influence. An exchange relationship is generated to leverage their mutual benefits. In some circumstances, a follower who owns high specific power may be given some privileges to obtain goals. This reciprocal behavior generally leads to politic instead of productivity (Bass and Riggio 2006).

Regarding transformational leadership, it is focused on the leader's effect on followers because this kind of leader is usually be able to inspire, motivate, lead and influence followers by integrating and modifying their self-concept, values as well as self esteem to group or organizational mission (Felfe and Goihl 2002; Kark et al. 2003). In this regard, the followers are likely to demonstrate greater willingness and commitment to drive work teams or organizations to attain the ultimate goal (Yukl 2002). Transformational leadership consists of four dimensions. The first one is "Idealized influence" which is leader's capability to become admired, respected and trusted role model. In this dimension, the followers usually voluntarily take their own risks in deciding any decisions in order to achieve work team or organizational goal. The second dimension is "Intellectual sitmulation", which is leader's competence to creatively stimulate and support the followers to query and attack any challenging tasks. The third dimension is "Individual consideration", which is a way which the leaders pay personal attention to the followers by making them to feel the leaders care their personal growth. This attention creates follower's beliefs in the leaders which drive high contribution to accomplish their tasks. Obviously, it is leader's effort of linking follower's personal needs to group or organizational mission effectively. The last dimension is "Inspirational motivation" which is an ability to create and increase followers' belief in their knowledge, skills, and capability to perform any challenging tasks. However, many leadership scholars suggest that successful leaders usually demonstrate both transformational and transactional leadership but there are many

empirical studies indicate that leaders with transformational leadership style produce more effective performance than transactional one, because transformational leaders go farther the reciprocal agreements for anticipated performance which has a significant impact on innovative work behaviors of followers. In this regard, the leaders can influence followers' innovative work behaviors by driving the followers' challenged and energized feelings that will lead them to search for new or alternative approches in their job (Bass and Avolio 1990; Amabile et al. 2004; Judge and Piccolo 2004; Limsila and Ogunlana 2008).

Janssen (2002) examined the effects of transformational and transactional leaderships on innovative work behavior by distributing 170 structured questionnaires to the employees of an energy supplier in the Netherland, and then hierarchical regression analysis was used in data analysis. The study revealed a positive effect of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior but it also confirmed no relationship between transactional one and the behavior. Jung et al. (2003) also revealed similar results in their empirical research. The study found a direct positive relationship between transformational leadership and corporate innovation in 32 electronics companies in Taiwan. It revealed that leaders who properly manage the organizational climate and culture are able to effectively affect followers' career attitudes, motivation, and then collective organizational achievement. Renvers et al. (2008) found that innovative work behavior will be emerged when transformational leadership is exercised. The results are in line with Pastor and Mayo (2006) who reported that employee's learning and developing skills will be increased under an implementation of transformational leadership instead of transactional one (Table 1).

Chinese Leadership

Apart from the transformational leadership theory developed by Bass (1985), Li and Shi (2008) surveyed 431 employees in China and found that Chinese transformation leadership is distinct from the one in the West. They identified four dimensions of Chinese transformation leadership.

1. Moral modeling means the leaders are expected to act as role models and also to lead by example by demonstrating their integrity and virtue. Moral modeling is based on altruism, freedom from corruption, fairness, and hard work. A moral leader creates a desire in employees to follow this role by contributing their resources to the good of the firm.
2. Charisma means the leaders must have passion and courage to lead and make things done.
3. Vision articulation means the leaders must provide employees with clear vision and direction.
4. Individualized consideration means the leaders are expected to care about the individual employees and their families as well as their work and career. This reflects the fact that life and work in China are less separated. Therefore, Chinese interpersonal relationships are less formal and not managed by explicit contracts or rules.

However, Confucianism is an important factor that influences Chinese leader's moral modeling because it focuses on individual self-regulation and moral growth as a means to achieve harmonious interpersonal relationships (Wood and Lamond 2011). Leaders at all levels are expected to demonstrate moral values and behaviors, which foster perceptions of fairness in organizations. In this regard, fairness has related to trust in the leaders. Once the employees perceive that their leaders have demonstrated high level of fairness, they are likely to emphasize more on tasks instead of politics.

As interpersonal relationships of the Chinese leaders and employees are less formal, employees usually regard leaders as if they were the parents or elder brothers or sisters. Employees expect leaders go beyond the work sphere such as marriage reconciliation. In this regard, if the leaders demonstrate high individual consideration based on Li and Shi, employee engagement will be increased. Thy will want to take whatever action to solve problems for the organization including to develop creative solutions.

According to Li and Shi, the relationships of vision articulation and charisma dimensions with employee's innovative work behavior are less clear. Although, leaders articulate clear visions, employees are independent to pursue them or may do so passively without psychological contract or creativity. For charisma, it may not affect on employee's innovative work behavior because it is a personal character of leaders, which is judged by employees.

Table 1 Impacts of transformational leadership on IVB

Author	Results
Janssen (2002)	There is a positive effect of transformational leadership on IVB compared to transactional leadership
Jung et al. (2003)	Transformational leadership has a direct positive relationship with corporate innovation
Renvers et al. (2008)	IVB will be emerged when transformational leadership is exercised
Pastor and Mayo (2006)	Transformational leadership is a key driver of employee's learning and developing skills

Therefore, Li and Shi's Chinese transformational leadership model was utilized as the center of data collection and analysis of this study. Moral modeling and individual consideration were mainly emphasized. However, Bond and Hwang (1995) argued that Chinese employees favor authoritarian leadership than transformational one because they need the leaders who can take decision completely for each employee.

Thai Leadership

Prior to investigate Thai employees' perspectives on the Chinese managers, it is important to realize about the Thai work values. This will encourage the understanding of the reasons of employees when they work with people from other work values. In Thailand, the work values of the employees are usually defined as adjectives as helpful, warm, supportive, and cooperative, friendly, co-worker, cheerful, and open. According to Komin (1990), the key work-related values in the Thai society are as follows:

1. Egocentric or "Kreng Chai" in Thai. It means Thai employees prefer to save their face and avoid any criticism;
2. Grateful relationship orientation or "Bunkhun" in Thai. It is similar to reciprocal relationship but it is go beyond an exchange;
3. Smooth interpersonal relationship orientation or "Mai Pen Rai" in Thai. Thai employees usually polite and humble in order to avoid conflict;
4. Personal relationship orientation. Thai employees usually emphasize on personal relationship over principles;
5. Buddhism belief orientation or "Chai Yen Yen" in Thai. Thai employees usually base their work behaviors and relationship with leaders on Buddhism belief. This means they usually control their emotion before making any decisions that are expected to negatively impact on relationship with leaders;
6. Education orientation. Thai employees usually utilize education as ways of improving social position rather than an end performance value;
7. Interdependence with respect orientation or "Kiet" in Thai. Thai employees usually depend their tasks on colleagues and leaders but they still remain self-honor. This means that if they are insulted by colleagues or leaders they are likely not to contribute and collaborate for achieving group or organizational goal;
8. Fun and pleasure orientation or Sanuk in Thai. Thai employees are always easy to smile and laugh no matter which situation they are facing, good or bad. Sanuk is not just to make fun because Thais usually recognize that in which situation they should or should not smile or laugh;
9. Social relationship orientation. Thai employees prefer to create and exercise social relations over work.

In Thai business context, interpersonal relationships are most important. Direct and indirect criticism, negative performance feedback, and personal confrontation should be evaded because the Thais are face saving and criticism avoidance that link to 'Kreng Chai'. The Thais are harmonious relationship seekers. They often compromise in order to maintain surface harmony that links to 3 work values which are: (1) Smooth interpersonal relationship orientation or "Mai Pen Rai" in Thai which means take it easy; (2) Buddhism belief orientation or "Chai Yen Yen" in Thai which means keep your temper; and (3) Interdependence with respect orientation or "Kiet" in Thai which means honor and dignity among other colleagues. "Mai Pen Rai" and "Chai Yen Yen" tend to foster smooth relationships, while "Kiet" urges face saving and avoidance of open criticism.

According to 'Kreng chai' concept, employees are likely to avoid direct communication and confrontation in the idea-sharing environment. Top-down management approach is often used in this situation because a scarcity of creative idea and enthusiasm at team meeting. In this regard, leadership is very crucial. The top-down approach is not productive anymore for building an innovative organization in Thailand at this moment. According to changes in the business context, Thai leaders are likely to adopt more democratic and transformational leadership styles instead of an authoritarian one. Limsila and Ogunlana (2008) studied 92 engineers and 12 architects who are the construction project managers in Thailand and found that they frequently adopt transformational leadership because it produces higher outcomes and work performance as well as organizational commitment of employees more than the transactional leadership. Yukongdi (2010) surveyed 546 Thai employees and found that Thais' preferred leadership styles were consultative leader, participative, paternalistic, and autocratic, respectively. The results supported the concept of Thai work values as mentioned earlier and confirmed that the Thai employees did not prefer top-down managerial approach which leaders dictate, decide, direct, and control policies, processes, and all activities without any participation by the employees. Piansoongnern (2013) also reported that leaders with flexible leadership style were an effective key in managing talent employees in the financial and securities industry. He interviewed 25 executives and 75 high performance employees and found that the leaders who wish to success in managing the Thais must be trusted and open-minded persons who always welcome voice of employees and take them into account at all time. In this situation, the sibling relationship is easily created which means the leaders are

regarded as elder brothers or sisters who are always care and able to protect them from any work-related barriers in the workplace. Therefore, employees will never hesitate to contribute their resources and time to get things done for their elder brothers and sisters.

To date, even though leadership research in Thailand has been investigated, there is still little study about the Chinese leadership practices in the Thai business context. This supports Bunchapattanasakda and Wong (2010)'s suggestion that more in-depth research is needed to examine how Thai employees' work performance is influenced by the Chinese leadership (Table 2).

Methodology

Quantitative research was not an appropriate approach for this study because of two reasons. First, a company used as a case study is a newly established Chinese-Thai firm in Thailand. Therefore, it is difficult to approach a number of Thai and Chinese employees in all business units. Second, as in the beginning stage of market penetration, Chinese and Thai executives including employees are not allowed to involve in any research projects officially. Therefore, according to the research questions and objectives of the study, a qualitative research approach was more suitable than a quantitative one because explanation is emphasized rather than prediction and measurement (Leavy 1994). According to the case study method, one Chinese-Thai joint venture was selected since it is only a novel large Chinese automotive brand operating in Thailand. The Chinese executives mainly manage the key management functions and activities, while the Thai partner takes control of financial part. The researcher wished to understand the leadership and management practices of the Chinese mangers and their impacts on Thai employee's innovative work behavior that were going on in the natural or real business situations (Yin 2008). The researcher would not like to control some behaviors and events, but strongly wish to discover and comprehend how employees interact and interpret their experiences, how they create their thoughts, and what meaning they ascribe to their understandings about Chinese leader and management

naturally (Merriam 2009). In order to gain understanding of Thai employees' perceptions of their Chinese superiors and how this leadership has the impacts of their innovative work behavior, semi-structured in-depth interview was considered to be a particularly appropriate way of investigation (Lee Cooke and Saini 2012).

The interviews of this study were conducted during June to August 2014 with Thai employees who are working in an automotive Chinese-Thai joint venture. Snowball technique was utilized for approaching the participants. It was deemed as a suitable method for increasing the number of participants because to formally reveal one's own thoughts about the superior is unusual in Thailand (Gözde et al. 2013). The recommendation of the one who is highly respected by the potential participants was very important in encouraging effectiveness of the study. In this regard, the researchers were personally recommended by one of top executives to contact the first participant. Then, the following ones were introduced and approached. Ten Thai employees were accessed and interviewed at their work offices in various places in Bangkok. Each interview lasted on average one hour. However, the participants did not agree to be recorded. Hence, detailed records were taken during the interviews. The interview contents were manually analyzed and guided by the research questions in the identification of key themes that have emerged. Ten interviews were conducted in Thai, and then interpreted into English.

For ensuring participants' privacy, their name and surname were modified. Throughout the interviews, a number of questions and issues were discussed and examined along the following themes. The first theme was focused on participant's personal and professional background, previous and current career experiences. Afterwards, the interview was emphasized on employee's perceptions on foreign superiors including their experiences, comparative perspectives of the Western and Asian superiors particularly the participants' perceptions, interaction, and experiences while working under the supervision of Chinese managers.

In data analysis, Layder's approach (Layder 1998) was conducted. Theories, management concepts, and past empirical research results were taken into account, while

Table 2 Comparison of Chinese and Thai transformational leadership

Chinese transformational leadership	Thai transformational leadership
Expected to demonstrate moral values and behaviors which foster perceptions of fairness	Interpersonal relationships are most important
Work and personal life are less separated	Face saving is highly expected by the employees
Interpersonal relationships of leaders and employees are less formal. Leaders are usually regarded as parents ore elder brothers or sisters	Top-down management approach is not productive for building an innovation
Authoritarian leader is favored by the employees	Consultative and democratic leader are preferred by the employees

the research still remain open chance for interpretation that emerge from the data itself. Data was coded and assessed several times prior to select important sections and sorted by theme. All subjective data of the interviewees were evaluated and analyzed throughout the evaluation and comparison of common issues. However, data was also analyzed during the interview. The researcher intended to look for insight in which situation, setting, images, and meaning were key issues. Therefore, the communication of meaning, the amount of times a definite phrase or speech pattern, and the frequency and variety of messages was the unit of measurement. The advantage of using the researcher, rather than software programs, to analyze the data was to encourage the opportunities to obtain insightful interpretations as well argued by Suddaby (2006) (Table 3).

Results

Perspectives on the Chinese Leaders

In the Thai automotive industry, Chinese leaders are not professional executives who always demonstrate their expertise among the followers as well as the Japanese ones in the employee's perspectives. Eight out of ten interviewees revealed that many Chinese leaders have no direct experience in the automotive industry but they are appointed or promoted to supervise the key functional departments such as the Dealer Relationship, the After Sales Service, the Auto Parts, etc. This situation raises

some questionable perspectives of the Thais toward their Chinese leaders.

> The Chinese leaders are not intelligent as well as the Japanese. They are only sent for the first assignment for their career advancement. They do not personally intend to come to Thailand. Therefore, some leaders who do not know what is the actual key success for the car selling business because they never work in this business before (Sompong).

> I believe that the Chinese executives are not able to cope with any problems because they are just good at pretending to know. If you ask them to comprehensively talk about the issues concerning the automotive production, you will suddenly recognize that they are just salespeople, not senior executives …(Wiwat).

> Prior to work here, I worked for several multinational car companies for over 15 years, e.g. Swedish, German, Japanese, and Indian. Personally, I am afraid to directly say that the Chinese leaders have no strategic thought as well as other nationalities I used to work for. They prefer to play organizational politics among their own group and us. This behavior causes many problems especially work group collaboration… (Peerapol).

> I feel that Chinese leaders have their own targets and reasons. Sometimes, they don't reveal their hidden strategies to me but I understand. However, I think they should show their sincerity by trying to open more feeling and respect to us… (Jira).

Table 3 Demographic attribute of participants

No.	Pseudonym	Age	Sex	Position	Experience in the Thai automotive industry
1	Sompong	45	Male	Top management	23
2	Somjin	47	Male	Middle management	23
3	Somboon	47	Male	Middle management	15
4	Wiwat	45	Male	Middle management	25
5	Somjade	47	Male	Middle management	20
6	Sompetch	44	Male	Middle management	16
7	Peerapol	45	Male	Middle management	15
8	Somyos	43	Male	Middle management	19
9	Sanit	47	Male	Middle management	18
10	Vilaivan	28	Female	Middle management	6
11	Charoen	35	Male	Middle management	10
12	Pipat	35	Male	Middle management	11
13	Piboon	40	Male	Middle management	16
14	Jira	45	Male	Middle management	20
15	Surapol	37	Male	Middle management	11

An important reason supporting employee's perspective mentioned earlier is the Chinese leaders have fewer attempts to learn and adapt themselves in the Thai working culture. Top-down management approach is mainly applied without hesitation. All Thai employees pointed out that they never see the Chinese leaders demonstrate any actions that reflect their understandings of the Thai culture. They do what they would like to do by asking no one. In this regard, the Chinese leaders are seen as the authoritarians who usually decide things without listening to ideas of their employees who have extensive direct experience in the Thai automotive industry.

I don't see the Chinese leaders' cultural adaption. They always show and exercise their own Chinese culture. Furthermore, they try to force their Thai employees to accept it… (Sompetch).

The Chinese leaders usually make all decisions without asking our opinions. Sometimes, we cannot manage it (laugh). We perform because they are our leaders. If you ask me how the leadership they are, I don't hesitate to inform you that they are the dictators…(Somyos).

They don't care about how I think and affect from their decision making. I feel that they don't learn how I work and value things or tasks. They may consider me as the salary man who works for money, but I am not. I need the boss to care about my feeling when I have to work on any tough project… (Vilaivan).

The Chinese leaders at all levels need to listen to the voices of the Thais. This is Thailand, not China where they can exercise their dictatorship. I don't like to work with the dictators. I used to work for the Japanese and the German. The jobs were tough but creative. The leaders were culturally sensitive. They paid attention to our Thai culture. They knew how to handle people but the Chinese is never do so…(Somjade).

The Chinese leaders are not good team players. The interviews disclosed that the Chinese leaders usually direct their Thai employees to compete with other teams. Importantly, they also usually command their subordinates to look the colleagues who are not the team members as the enemies. This situation is much undesired in the Thai society because the Thais usually do not want this situation in general. The employees usually feel uncomfortable under this working condition. They would really like to maintain their good and smooth friendship with all related colleagues because friendship brings work cooperation and success. This is different from the Chinese way of management which is the Chinese leaders usually compete each other in order to get higher promotion.

From my experience with this company, I can directly tell you that the Chinese leaders are political animals. They always play politics, and are not good at managing business and generating new creative ideas. They always try to search for the weak points of their colleagues in order to gain benefits. In my opinion, it's shameful…(Somyos).

It's very boring when I have to work under the supervision of the Chinese. They spend the whole day with the search of mistakes of their colleagues. It's similar to work a battlefield but the enemies are my friends and colleagues. I hate to be forced by the Chinese. I don't understand that why I have to laugh on a mistake made by my friends in another business unit. I used to ask the Chinese but the reasons were nonsense…(Sanit).

The Chinese leaders don't know how to work in a team. I am not sure they are able to spell a word "teamwork". They are ready to kill all weaknesses including their team members at any time. I personally feel that they don't have sincerity to their friends. They sometimes recommend me to take inside information from my friends in other departments. It's so terrible for me because I don't want to lose my friends…(Sompetch).

The Chinese leaders are not trustable. Although, all interviewees disclosed that their Chinese leaders are usually approachable but they also still revealed that it was very difficult to rely on them because they usually do not keep their words. Under the Chinese management, all orders, commitments, and decisions must clearly be written and then to send through any kinds of verbal communications such as email, memo, etc. The written evidence will be used as a reference in a case of conflict because the Chinese leaders are usually not responsible for their wrong decision-making. In this circumstance, a solution of the Chinese leaders is to push all mistakes to the employees by referring to their cultural innocence in the Thai automotive business context. The interviewees pointed out that the Chinese leaders are not problem solvers. When a problem emerged, they often seek for persons who will be responsible for that mistake rather than to resolve it.

I have to beware of Chinese leaders when I have to deal with them. If some mistakes happen, they don't hesitate to throw the negative effects to me immediately …(Somjin).

All decision makings must be written and recorded for reference. I am not sure that they will keep their words because I used to have several problems with their behaviors…(Peerapol).

The Chinese leaders sometimes take my ideas to be theirs. The situation is that I discuss with them about some dealer management strategies, and then I hear them to present it in a meeting with the top executives. I was very disappointed… (Sanit).

The Thai employees feel that they have no clear career direction and progress under the Chinese management. The reason is the Chinese leaders prefer more the Chinese employees than the Thais. In the time of data collection, there were many cases that the Chinese ones who were imported from China replaced the high performance Thai employees. This practice proves Thais have no future in the firm. Importantly, it is also obviously demonstrated that the Chinese leaders are not trustworthy.

I see no future of my career in this company because I am not a Chinese…(Wiwat).

The Chinese prefers the Chinese. They import some Chinese expatriates to replace the Thai employees who are forced to resign. I think 1 day I will be one of those who leave…(Somboon).

I am not sure I will work with this company for long time. It's a Chinese. The culture and ways of management are completely different from the European, American, Swedish, Japanese, and Indian. It's difficult for me to see my future because my boss is very narrow-minded. He doesn't open for idea sharing in any points of problem solving. Actually, it's not only a case of my boss. All the Chinese leaders in this company are the same. In my opinion and experience, the Indian car maker is more conservative than the other mentioned one but the Indian leaders give future and opportunities to grow. In this company, it's very hard to find a bright future…(Somjade).

The Chinese leaders usually do not respect their Thai employees. It is a very important factor that leads to work productivity. They often rudely shout to their subordinates and sometimes are not able to control their stress and emotion. They do not look the Thai employees as the asset. Many interviewees indicated that their Chinese leaders often complained and blamed them in front of the others.

Almost the whole of my life is spent in the Thai automotive industry. I don't see any foreign leaders show rude behavior as the Chinese. They never see me as a human being but a machine which they pay for their operations…(Somboon).

I don't feel the Chinese boss pays respect to me. Although, I am older than him but I respect him as a leader. I always follow his directions and recommendations but he never listen to my advices as an expert. He sometimes makes me lose my face in front of the others during the meeting…(Vilaivan).

The Chinese leaders are very aggressive. If they are not satisfied with the performance of mine or team, they are usually not able to control their temper. They shout everyone by using rude words in English and Chinese. I know the meaning because a translator, a Thai national, tells me…(Somyos).

The Chinese leaders do not care about work life balance of their subordinates. They usually force the Thai employees to work overtime or in their holidays directly and indirectly. It is considered as an interruption. Although, the Thai employees understand Chinese work values and culture but they would not like their leaders to interrupt their free time such as on weekend or in the evening after the working hours. It is considered that the Chinese leaders do not separate the work life and family life that is totally different from the work life balance of the Thais.

The Chinese leaders don't know how to balance work and private time. They usually contact me whenever they want such as at night, early morning, or dinner time. It's Ok for me, if they occasionally do this. But the situation is not like that…(Somjin).

I don't want the Chinese leaders talk with me after we go for lunch or dinner with clients or dealers immediately. I need time and space. I used to inform them indirectly, but they didn't learn… (Vilaivan).

I would like to spend my free time with family on weekends, but I have to turn that valuable time to working period with the Chinese. It's very terrible for my kids. It's fine if it happens sometimes, but it is not. I try to escape by not hanging on the phone but the Chinese leaders usually keep calling. With this behavior plus no career advancement, I might be leaving the company soon…(Somyos).

Impacts of Chinese Leadership on Innovative Work Behavior

Idealized Influence

All interviewees indicated that the Chinese leaders were not able to inspire their creative ideas and innovative work behavior because they are not trustable and cannot be the good role model. The study revealed that the role model must be the highly trustable leader. Furthermore, the employees must be able to depend on that leader. Apart from trustworthiness, the interviewees also indicated that the Chinese sometimes demolishes their innovative ideas

by forcing them to follow the Chinese ways of management rather than allowing them to think freely.

> It's impossible to be inspired by the Chinese leaders. I never receive any praises from the Chinese but only complaints… (Peerapol).

> My creative ideas are usually destroyed when I discuss with the Chinese. They pretend to know everything about the Thai automotive industry. I use "pretend" because I prove that they know nothing several times. When they don't know, they will ask me the solutions I have. It's Chinese's tricks… (Somjade).

> They (Chinese) announced that the innovative products and management practices were needed but it is not able to emerge under the Chinese management styles. Chinese's authoritarian leadership does not match with the Thai culture. I don't need to work with a leader who never listens to my ideas… (Sompetch).

> Why do I have to behave or work innovatively? Because the Chinese needs employees who are likely to follow without any questions. If you love to ask and raise questions, you are not suitable to work with the Chinese. Your innovative ideas and work behavior will not be exercised… (Sompong).

Intellectual Stimulation

From the interviews, the Chinese leaders are seen as the intellectual thieves rather than the intellectual stimulator. There are several times that the Chinese leaders claim the ideas formulated by their employees as theirs. This situation leads the Thai employees to keep silent or carefully present their originally created ideas to the Chinese leaders at all levels.

> I don't trust any words of the Chinese leaders. They used to steal my ideas, and then revise it. They are good at presenting and face dressing…(Sanit).

> I always shut my mouth after I learned that it's dangerous to expose my ideas to the Chinese leaders. Sometimes, they take mine and don't give credit to me. I will not create anything, if I am not sure about the results I will get from this company…(Wiwat).

> The Chinese never gives credits to the idea generators. Their management mind set is to take someone's ideas as a shortcut to success… (Somyos).

Individual Consideration

As mentioned earlier, the Chinese leaders do not pay attention to the career growth of their Thai employees. For this reason, it is difficult to drive motivation for accomplishing the tasks particularly the new market development tasks for this new car brand. In this situation, the employees do not contribute any capabilities and resources for the Chinese because they lose their confident on the leaders and also do not see career advancement.

> The Chinese leaders do not care about me or my colleagues. Probably, we are Thais, not Chinese. This is a reason why I and many Thai employees are waiting to leave and work day by day. We do not know why we have to help the company to innovate any business strategies in order to become one of leading automotive companies in Thailand or ASEAN… (Somboon).

> If you are not a Chinese, please do not expect to grow in this company. It's true because the Chinese leaders are implementing their replacement strategy by forcing the Thais to leave and then to put the Chinese in place. Some new Chinese junior executives are those who used to work with the leaders as the secretary. They are not keen on the automotive business. Therefore, should I expect to grow?… (Sompetch).

Inspirational Motivation

All the interviewees pointed out that the Chinese leaders are the rookies in the Thai automotive industry. They are seen as executives who realize nothing about the automotive sales and marketing competition in Thailand. A consensus of the interviewees, the company is able to effectively and smoothly operate without the Chinese leaders.

> The Chinese leaders are not ready to conquer the world. They need time to learn how to adapt themselves with the others. Importantly, they must see the others as friends, not labors…. (Sompong).

> The Chinese leaders make me lose my confidence in my ideas and strategic thoughts. I have to learn how to take care of leader's feeling and preferences rather than to focus on my work performance for avoiding any conflicts and surviving in this company… (Vilaivan).

Discussion

Although, this is a case-based empirical study but the findings significantly expand the understanding of the Chinese leadership outside China in many points. Interestingly, many findings do not support the concepts of the scholars about the Chinese leadership. Probably, those

previous empirical studies are conducted in the mainland, while this study is focused on the Chinese leaders working in the other parts of the world. However, the findings can significantly be applied by both Chinese and other foreign leaders who are planning to work with the Thais. In this section, the key points from the study are discussed as follows.

First, Chinese transformational leadership is highly desired by the Thais for fostering their innovative work behavior but there are no Chinese leaders exercise it in this study. From the interviews, the Thai employees agree to behave innovatively, if their leaders support and inspire their ideas. Obviously, transactional leadership is replaced. The Chinese leaders prefer to base their management and leadership practices on the exchange relationship. Top-down management approach is traditionally used in the organization. In doing this, the Chinese leaders are seen as the dictator rather than the superior because they are impolite and not humble. These findings are supported by Yukongdi (2010), which indicates that the Thai employees do not prefer the practices that the leaders dictate, direct, and control all activities without any participation. From the study, the Chinese leaders will never success in Thailand because the management practices found in this case also contrast with the Thai work-related values indicated by Komin (1990). According to Komin, the successful leaders in the Thai business context should properly be able to manage smooth relationship with the employees. The conflicts must be avoided as much as possible because the Thais are usually indirect and often to hide their thoughts and emotions when they dislike something about the leaders.

Second, trustworthiness is easily destroyed by the transactional or authoritarian leadership. From the findings, the Thai employees will never innovate under the transactional or authoritarian leadership. They need the leaders to pay respect to them before start to build personal relationship. Interpersonal respect called "Kiet" in Thai must firstly be given by the Chinese leaders. "Kiet" can be given through several leadership practices such as don't blame the employees in public, keeping words, don't say any rude words, etc. According to Piansoongnern (2013), trustworthiness is a key important factor leading to successful management of the leaders in Thailand. The employees always base their social position and relationship with their leaders on trust. Without trust, the tight interpersonal relationship will never begin.

Third, according to Piansoongnern (2013), brother-sister relationship is not appeared in the study. It is another important factor affecting innovative work behavior. If the employees perceive their leaders as elder brothers or sisters, they are likely to contribute all their capabilities and resources to the firm. In the study, the Chinese leaders never behave like that. They are often perceived as the innovation thieves who usually steal employees' ideas. For this reason, it could be considered that employees' innovative work behavior will not be exhibited if the Chinese leaders do not behave as the moral role model (Li and Shi 2008).

Fourth, this study supports Li and Shi (2008) that the Chinese leaders prefer to combine their work and family life together. This Chinese work-related value has an impact on the management practices done with the Thais. In the study, the Chinese leaders usually call or invite the employees to discuss about the jobs on weekends or after the office hours. Although, the Thais are flexible but this practice is not desired. The reason is that the employees do not respect and trust their Chinese leaders at the first place. The Chinese is seen as an outsider, and then turn to a dictator who usually raises and makes troubles. Therefore, the employees always escape any invitations of the Chinese. This means that they would not like to behave as the owners who always innovate but just the salary men.

Last, the results support and extend the concept of managerial flexibility being debated in the *Global Journal of Flexible Systems Management* during the past years (Bamel et al. 2013; Böhm 2013; Piansoongnern 2013; Jaiswal and Bhal 2014; Birasnav et al. 2015). This concept is beneficial to help leaders in managing diverse and cross-cultural workforce effectively (Böhm 2013). According to a study of Bamel et al. (2013) about managerial flexibility, this study confirmed that teamwork, communication and collaborative decision-making and work place for creativity impact on employee's motivation in generating new creative ideas, innovative work behavior, and organizational innovation, respectively. In addition, the results also confirmed that open communication decreases the prejudice and increases the cooperation in organizational members (Bamel et al. 2013). This present study further confirmed a study of Birasnav et al. (2015) that transactional leadership behavior is the important factor leading to build strong trust and commitment as well as to foster information exchange among members in an organization (Piansoongnern 2013).

However, the results of this study may not be generalized since it is unique in looking at the management practices of one Chinese-Thai organization, which would naturally be different from any other organizations. Though, the findings could serve as good reference points for some of the situations raised about Chinese leadership and innovative behavior and thus provide a foundation for similar investigations by other Chinese-Thai firms.

Managerial Implications

Therefore, the researcher recommends the Chinese leaders and all foreign leaders who have to work with the Thai employees or in the Thai business context to do the following steps below for enhancing employee's innovative work behavior.

First, creating trust. The leaders must start building and gaining trust from the Thai employees by demonstrating respect to them. Saving face orientation should be reminded all the time when the leaders have to give comments or complaints. If the employees feel or perceive that they are losing their face, they will behave in some negative ways directly and indirectly. In Thailand, if the leaders give respect or "Kiet", they will gain it higher in return from their followers.

Second, enhancing brother-sister relationship. This relationship will be enhanced by using an open-mined character of the leader. The leaders must ensure that all employees are able to talk openly with them. Importantly, they also take what they hear into account. From the study, the Chinese leaders often announce that they are open but employee's perceptions are different. If the leaders can clearly show their sincerity, the employees will admire them as elder brother or sister. This is called "Bunkhun" in Thai. It is go beyond an exchange relationship. When the employees realize that they have to return Bunkhun to the leaders, they will contribute all capabilities and resources to develop the firm innovatively.

Third, being the moral role model. The Thais are Buddhist. Therefore, the leaders should behave as the moral leaders. The Thai employees highly desire the leaders who strict on ethics and moral. If they perceive that their leaders behave like that, they will not hesitate to give all supports to develop the organization and try their best to innovate work process.

Fourth, providing clear vision and direction. The leaders should provide clear vision and direction to all employees.

Once they have clear vision and direction as well as respect and believe in their leaders as elder brother or sister, the employees will work without reluctance because the Thais always prefer to create and exercise social relations over work (Fig. 1).

Limitations of the Study

There are few limitations occurred during the investigation of this research as follows.

1. There are few Chinese leading firms in Thailand. Although, there are a number of Taiwanese firms located in Bangkok and industrial estates nearby but the researcher intends to focus on the Chinese firms from the mainland only.
2. It is difficult to approach the Chinese firms because they are not comfortable with the research in Thailand
3. Quantitative research approach is also very difficult to officially conduct with the Thai employees working in the Chinese firms. The companies usually do not permit the researchers to collect data by referring to the their business confidentiality. The researchers did try several times to distribute a structured questionnaire in three Chinese leading firms but all were rejected. Therefore, the snowball technique was applied.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. The expansion of number of case studies in other industries in Thailand is recommended particularly a comparison of Chinese leaders in different organizations.
2. A comparative study of Chinese and another Asian leadership is recommended in order to compare similarities and differences of practices and implementations.

Fig. 1 A leadership model emerged from the study
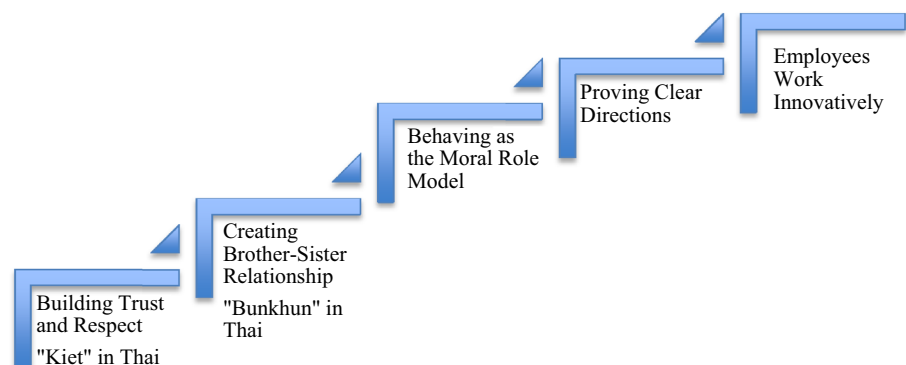
3. Chinese leaders who are working in the ASEAN countries should be studied in order to compare the findings with this empirical study.

4. Quantitative method should be applied with the Chinese leaders in Thailand or other Asian countries in order to confirm the results of this study.

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Key Questions

1. How do Chinese managers lead their Thai employees?
2. What are the barriers of Chinese managers in managing across culture?
3. How should Chinese managers gain trust and respect from their subordinates outside China?

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