

# Stakeholder Analysis: Who are the Key Actors in Establishing and Developing Thai Independent Consumer Organizations?

P. Ondee, and S. Pannarunothai

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of and Obstacles to Establishing Independent Consumer Organizations in Thailand

**Abstract**—In Thailand, both the 1997 and the current 2007 Thai Constitutions have mentioned the establishment of independent organizations as a new mechanism to play a key role in proposing policy recommendations to national decision-makers in the interest of collective consumers. Over the last ten years, no independent organizations have yet been set up. Evidently, nobody could point out who should be key players in establishing provincial independent consumer bodies. The purpose of this study was to find definitive stakeholders in establishing and developing independent consumer bodies in a Thai context. This was a cross-sectional study between August and September 2007, using a postal questionnaire with telephone follow-up. The questionnaire was designed and used to obtain multiple stakeholder assessment of three key attributes (power, interest and influence). Study population was 153 stakeholders associated with policy decision-making, formulation and implementation processes of civil-based consumer protection in pilot provinces. The population covered key representatives from five sectors (academics, government officers, business traders, mass media and consumer networks) who participated in the deliberative forums at 10 provinces. A 49.7% response rate was achieved. Data were analyzed, comparing means of three stakeholder attributes and classification of stakeholder typology. The results showed that the provincial health officers were the definitive stakeholders as they had legal power, influence and interest in establishing and sustaining the independent consumer bodies. However, only a few key representatives of the provincial health officers expressed their own paradigm on the civil-based consumer protection. Most provincial health officers put their own standpoint of building civic participation at only a plan-implementation level. For effective policy implementation by the independent consumer bodies, the Thai government should provide budgetary support for the operation of the provincial health officers with their paradigm shift as well as their own clarified standpoint on corporate governance.

**Keywords**—Civic participation, civil society, consumer protection, independent organization, policy decision-making, stakeholder analysis.

THAI civic participation in protecting consumer rights has been receiving wide public attention at the national and provincial levels. In particular, both the 1997 and the current 2007 Constitutions<sup>1</sup> of Thailand have mentioned the establishment of an Independent Consumer Organization (ICO) as a new mechanism to play an important role in proposing policy recommendations to national decision-makers in the interest of consumers and to promote ethical trade practices [1], [2]

Over the last ten years, no independent organizations have yet been set up because of lack of a consensus among key policymakers (consumer groups and government bodies) on the functions and autonomous scope of the ICO, including its Provincial Independent Consumer Bodies (PICBs). In the consumer groups' views, the ICO and the PICBs should not only play a leading role by issuing recommendations to policy/decision-makers but also by performing other missions of consumer protection (such as research for policy development, being a consumer watchdog, enhancing civil awareness and complaint handling related to protection of consumer rights). In addition, the ICO, the PICBs and their secretariat must not be controlled by the central government (such as the Prime Minister's Office and the Office of the Consumer Protection Board<sup>2</sup>) [3]. These opposing views of

<sup>1</sup> The 1997 Thai Constitution was drawn up in Section 57 that "... The law shall provide for an independent organization consisting of representatives of consumers for giving opinions on the enactment and issuance of law, rules and regulations and on the determination of various measures for consumer protection" [2]. The 2007 Thai Constitution has still been legislated in Section 61 that "... There shall be an organization for the protection of consumers, to be established as an entity independent from State agencies and consisting of representatives of consumers, which shall have the duties to give opinions for assisting considerations of State agencies in connection with the making and enforcement of laws and by-laws, give opinions in connection with the determination of measures for consumer protection and examine as well as report the performance or omission of acts protecting consumers" [1].

<sup>2</sup> The Office of the Consumer Protection Board (OCPB) of Thailand is a national authority for consumer protection managed directly under the Prime Minister's Office. The OCPB has played roles in enforcing laws on consumptions of goods and private services, making proposals for consumer policies and measures to central government, drafting consumer protection laws and rules, handling complaints, educating consumers, promoting ethical

Prasit Ondee, Ph.D. candidate, is with Naresuan University, Phitsanulok 65000, Thailand. (corresponding author to provide phone: +66-8-7201-9257; fax: +66-5522-2150; e-mail: prasitonddee@hotmail.com).

Prof. Dr. Supasit Pannarunothai is Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Naresuan University, Phitsanulok 65000, Thailand (phone: +66-8-1596-5622; fax: +66-5526-1198; e-mail: supasitp@nu.ac.th).

the Office of the Consumer Protection Board, the ICO and the PICBs should only have a duty to contribute to the development of policy contents in order to be a new mechanism of presenting more explicit needs of consumers. Nevertheless, they must be controlled by the Office of the Consumer Protection Board. As such the Office of the Consumer Protection Board has yet to be a main organization of legal power that covers all parts of upholding consumer rights (such as issuing national policy proposals, drafting laws, handling complaints, conducting mediations, educating consumers, and creating and supporting consumer networks) [4]–[6].

In some studies that evaluated enforcement of the 1997 Thai Constitution, Wankaew, et al [7] found that the central government obstructed the ICO establishment and legislation. As the central government and its government bodies shall lose some existing legal power for consumer protection if the ICO is formed. The ICO might later thwart some governmental policies and measures. The study also indicated that most Thai people have not obviously understood the essence of the Constitution and laws on civic-political participation under participatory democracy paradigm. In addition, the study implied that national civil society organizations, regional consumer groups, and organizations of indigenous people could not collaborate on policy movement of the ICO establishment because of no common purpose among them. Even the organizational nature of these consumer groups have been disturbed by patron-client relations (patronage relationship). Moreover, the patronage system has also infiltrated into the Thai bureaucracy, politics as well as business sectors [8]–[10].

The most frequently mentioned causes of scheme and policy failure were that people have not emphasized the importance of participation in such a scheme and policy work because of the influence of local political culture and old paradigm. However, bureaucratic culture can be found within groups of public officials and civic participants, and it causes the scheme failure also [11]. Therefore, the next part of the paper presents a brief review of literature on the Thai sociopolitical culture in order to better understand society and the political context. This is focused on the bureaucratic and civic cultures, including a participatory-democratic consciousness of most people in Thailand.

### *B. Thai Sociopolitical Culture*

In the past, the traditional patronage system was a social mechanism in Thailand to reduce social class oppression and extortion by the Thai government and its bureaucrats [13]. Nevertheless, now the patronage system has grown stronger in the Thai political culture and society [14]. As Thai society has been a loosely structured social system [14]–[16] and the prevailing social sanction system is weak [14].

The patron-client relationship system has more influence in the political sector and in some government bureaucracies [9],

[10], [14], [17]. Accordingly, bureaucratic clientelism is a characteristic of the Thai bureaucracy [9]. As such, some central government bureaucrats and permanent officials, of either sub-national government or provincial authorities, have been clients of some politicians who hold individual business interests of their kith and kin. These government officials also gave business opportunities as rewards to such politicians, or ignored unlawful acts of those politicians [10]. In addition, the informal patronage system has influenced relations between some government superiors (patron) and their subordinates (client) within the government agencies. Because the government superiors desired to be served by their subordinates and the subordinates desired to receive career progression as a reward [10], [13].

In the initial stage of Thailand's political development over the last century, the state-building process strengthened the national government and its public bodies by centralizing both political and administrative powers [17]. The era of military juntas faded in the 1970s and thereby businessmen have begun to play roles in political sphere. The number of businessmen elected to the parliament has increased. In long term, distinction between political and economic power becomes blur. This was reinforced by the ongoing assimilation of domestic large capitalists who constituted the majority of the members of parliament. "... As a result, the stage was set for big business and politics to merge completely, and the vehicle for this was Thaksin Shinawatra" [18].

The controversial prime minister (Thaksin Shinawatra) was drawn into national politics because of his wealth derived from telecommunications and broadcasting concessions since 1980s, he then, "stepped across the line dividing between business and politics" [19] and possessed the power as the prime minister during 2001-2006 [18]. His patronage relationship influenced not only the central government bureaucracies but also independent public bodies such as the Election Commission of Thailand, and the National Counter Corruption Commission [20]. These phenomena evidently indicated that the patronage system still penetrates into both the bureaucratic and political systems. As a result, the absence of counterbalance power of the civil society means that the civil society groups are weak [10].

The central state mechanism in supporting the monopolization of power has been strong. Empowering and promoting non-governmental organizations and civil society in participatory governance had never been realized [21], [22], until the political upheaval in May 1992 popularly and collectively known as political reform. This was regarded as one of the major turning points witnessed Thai politics in this century. The most concrete outcome was the promulgated 1997 Constitution that expanded the rights of Thai people to work in "civil society movement," and greatly extended direct civic participation in the government policymaking, as well as created new organizations to ensure accountability under law

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domestic trades, creating and supporting consumer networks and cooperating

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with other agencies since 1979 [12].

[23]–[25]. The movement by the people has had a strengthening effect on civic politics at both nationally and locally, and led to social change and the shifts in the political system [25].

Over the past decade, there were an increasing number of civil society organizations, but the impact of these organizations on the government and bureaucratic policies as well as practices of state development mechanism has been limited [26]. The government bureaucracy in Thailand is a strong centralized policymaking system. The culture of Thai bureaucracy has yet had to penetrate various domains of the civil society sphere. As such, the traditional patronage relationship was initiated in order to build an empire of administrative power of the bureaucracy [21], [27]. Moreover, the Thai educational system within schools and universities has not moved away from one-way lecture to think critically [21]. Furthermore, most people have not enough opportunity to develop their self-governance [17], [28]. The consequences of such human resource development on a sociopolitical consciousness, the people have been cultivated as client or servant (*'Phrai'* in Thai) [21], [29], in particular, rural and parochial persons have become accustomed to appeal for helps from the central government and authority [29].

During the past seven decades after changing from absolute monarchy to democracy, Thailand constantly draws public attention on overthrowing the Constitutions in order to solve the problem of political corruption [28]. The dimensions in not only shaping the participatory-democratic consciousness of citizens but also facilitating civic groups to participate in formulation process of the government policy have been blindfolded.

However, between the years 2000-2003, a lesson learned from promoting the roles of civil society in shaping the future of Thai national health system was that the identification and mobilization of stakeholders especially civil society actors and other "key actors" was the beginning to point toward a strong policy movement under civic-based key actions [26].

Having given some background to the complex sociopolitical cultures of both the government bureaucracy and citizens, attention now turns to review the Thais' cultural context in the political and democratic development of Thailand against the backdrop of the policy movement of ICO establishment and sustainment in the near future. This was needed to create more understanding of the three key ideas: stakeholders' power, interest and influence in Thais' contemporary thought. In the next part of this paper, the significance of stakeholder analysis and the key actors (definitive stakeholders) in policy development and implementation are presented. The research question and objective of this study are shown below.

### *C. What is Stakeholder Analysis and Why are Key Actors an Important Part of Policy Process?*

Stakeholder research has attracted increasing attention when Freeman [30] published his book on "Strategic Management: A Stakeholders Approach" in the middle of

1980s. The stakeholder analysis (SA) is a method of systematically gathering and analyzing data on stakeholders (individuals, groups and organizations) in order to identify stakeholders and the key actors in a system, assess their respective interests (stakes), and predict the potential to influence policy development and implementation [31]–[33]. The SA is a six fold process. Firstly, identifying the main purpose of the SA, identifying a policy and developing an understanding of the system and decision-makers in such system. Secondly, identifying principal stakeholders. Thirdly, collecting and recording the SA data. Fourthly, identifying patterns and contexts of interaction between stakeholders. Fifthly, investigating three key stakeholder attributes consisting of power, interest and influence as well as stakeholder classification. Finally, defining policy alternatives and using the SA information [32], [34]–[36].

The SA is a step in building the relationships needed for success of a participatory policy that provides a starting point by establishing political movement groups based on the "key actors" who operate by setting out an approach to be achieved [36]. Policymakers and project managers can use the SA to identify the key potential actors and to assess their knowledge, interests, alliances and importance related to the policy. This allows the policymakers and managers to interact and participate more effectively with key stakeholders and to increase support for policy advocacy. When the SA is conducted before implementing a policy, the policymakers and managers can detect and act to prevent opposition to the policy. When the SA is used to guide the policy implementation, the policy is more likely to succeed [32]. Reich showed how the SA could be used for problem identification, policy formulation, and identification of implementation strategies "... that could improve the political feasibility of health policy; and overall enhanced impact of health policy, by improving the chances that a policy would achieve its intended effects" [37].

SA is especially useful to policy champions-persons or teams willing and able to lead and manage the policy process. Policy champions proactively promote policy reforms, publicly support the policies and foster the support of others. They frame discussion of an issue, build consensus, attract resources, and seize and create opportunities to move the policy development and reform forward [38]. Moreover, the policymakers and managers can use SA to find the key players, predict whether they might support or block policy formulation, and develop strategies to promote supportive actions as well as decrease opposing actions before attempting to implement major policy reform at the local, regional, national levels [32], [35]. SA, as one approach to conducting policy analysis, highlights the importance of key actors and interest groups in the decision-making and policy processes in order to improve the chances of achieving policy reform.

From the above review of Thai traditional socio-political cultures regarding the patronage system and conflict of interests, implies that there are formidable obstacles to developing participatory democracy and creating modern

domestic civic culture. A question left for developing countries, like Thailand, which are attempting to establish independent consumer bodies and to facilitate civil society's role in the policy-making process is "who are key actors in shaping participatory democracy and enhancing domestic civic consciousness?" Moreover, a result of deliberative actions, focused on Civil-Based Consumer Protection (CBCP) in Thailand before this study, has shown that nobody could evidently point out "**who should be key players in establishing and sustaining the PICBs.**" It was necessary to conduct a study to answer this important question before implementing a pilot project of the PICBs. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to discover definitive stakeholders in establishing and developing the PICBs in Thai context. The survey method employed and key findings of the study are presented, with the stakeholder analysis, in the next section.

## II. METHOD

This was a cross-sectional study. The data presented below were collected by means of a survey carried out during August and September 2007. The subjects were 153 stakeholders associated with policy decision-making, formulation and implementation processes of the CBCP from ten pilot provinces in Thailand. The population covered key representatives from five sectors (academia, government officers, businessmen, mass media and consumer networks) who participated in the deliberative forums at each province before this study. As in our previous study, stakeholder identification involved listing principal stakeholders from a variety of stakeholder groups involving corporate governance and focused on consumer protection. Some key questions were: who is responsible for decision-making and the implementation of the intended policy [35]; "... who has money (resources), skill or key information; who are potential beneficiaries; who might be adversely affected; who has existing rights; who is likely to be voiceless; who is likely to resent change and mobilize resistance against it; and whose behavior has to change for success" [34]. In the process of data collection, the key stakeholder representatives who participated in the deliberative discussions were asked via telephone to participate in the study. Afterwards a formal official letter and a structured questionnaire were sent to the respondents by post, and follow-up phone calls were made to increase response rate. The respondents subsequently returned the completed questionnaire by post. A 49.7% response rate was achieved.

The questionnaire was designed from a literature review, and used to obtain multiple stakeholder assessment of three key attributes consisting of *power*, *interest* (attention) and *influence*. In terms of operational definition, power was defined as the combined measure of the amount of resources and legal authority a stakeholder possesses as well as his or her capacity to access and mobilize these resources in order to formulate and implement the policy for the CBCP. Stakeholder power came from 'five main sources' consisting

of: firstly, the relevant legal authority in the policy decision-making and implementation including rule and law enforcement; secondly, the possession of up-to-date information for upholding consumer interests; thirdly, having an expertise in consumer protection based upon not only consumer laws but also consumer policy, planning and management; fourthly, the possession of budget and resources for supporting the operation of civic consumer groups; and finally, the ability of stimulating mass mobilization for the policy change. Interest was interpreted as the degree to which one stakeholder claims call for close attention to the policy work and the study on the CBCP. Influence referred to the ability which stakeholder used to persuade another, or others, to execute the intended policy of the CBCP, the establishment of PICBs should therefore be paid close attention.

The content validity of the questionnaire was examined by three experts in the relevant field of the study. Comments from these experts as well as thirty respondents, who tried out the questionnaire, were taken to form a consensus by iterative discussion within the research team. The internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire was obtained by an overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.94. Reliabilities (by coefficient alpha) were 0.71, 0.76, and 0.96, for the power, interest and influence subscales, respectively. The questionnaire contained a variety of graded categories, where the respondents were asked to measure the importance of each stakeholder in different settings. The list of stakeholders was pre-defined by the authors, but the stakeholder respondents were free to revise and fill in six stakeholder groups (politicians, experts, government officers, business traders, mass media and consumer groups). In the category labeled *power*, the stakeholder respondents were asked to assess a power index for each stakeholder that was derived from analyzing scores of his or her "five main power sources," according to above definition, on a 1-0 scale with 1 being "possession of power" and 0 being "without possession of power." Afterward the scores in all power subcategories were summed to result in a power index between 5 and 1: 5 (highest), 4 (high), 3 (moderate), 2 (low), and 1 (lowest). In the *interest* category, the stakeholder respondents were asked to score, on a Likert-type scale of 5 (highest) to 1 (lowest), how each stakeholder paid close attention to either implementing or studying the issue of corporate governance focused on consumer protection during the ten-year period of the previous Thai Constitution. In the *influence* category, the stakeholder respondents were asked to score, on a five point Likert scale of 5 (highest) to 1 (lowest), the ability of each stakeholder to persuade other stakeholders and to facilitate collaboration in establishing a concrete independent body for consumer protection within their province.

Data were analyzed by comparing means of all three stakeholder attributes (power, interest, and influence), and classification of "stakeholder typology" based on a combination of the key attributes that stakeholders possess (see Fig. 1). In stakeholder theory, each stakeholder has at least one to three characteristics and the relative importance of

stakeholders is determined by their specific mix of these attributes. Stakeholders with all three attributes are called “definitive stakeholders” or “key actors.” Expectant stakeholders, those holding two of the attributes, are divided into dominant (power and influence), dangerous (power and interest), and dependent (interest and influence) subgroups. Three classes of latent stakeholders possess only one characteristic each: dormant (power), discretionary (influence), and demanding (interest) [35], [39], [40]. Further, “... the analysis lumps all those who possess none of these attributes into a residual ‘Nonstakeholder’ category” [40].

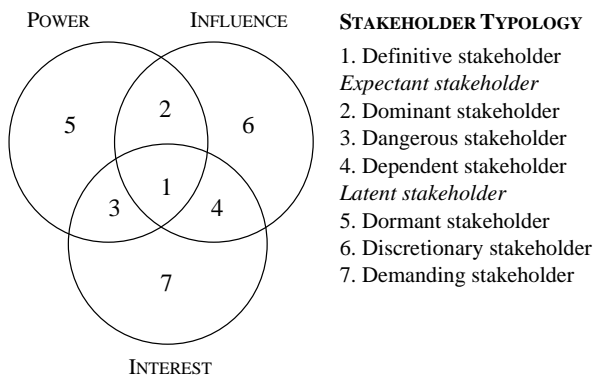


Fig. 1 Stakeholder typology based on the key attributes  
Sources: Adapted from Flagestad, and Hope (2004) [39],  
Chevalier (2001) [40]

### III. RESULTS

To fulfill the aim of the consumer protection system, based on civil society movement and focused on the establishment of PICBs, a strong group of definitive stakeholders was needed. The dominant stakeholders could be mobilized and equipped with their paradigm shift on participatory democracy and closer attention in order to become an alliance of definitive stakeholders. However, “... it is difficult to mobilize the dependent stakeholders with legal authority, as this requires legislation, which is a lengthy process. It is also important to have more than one key stakeholder in each system to balance their power” [41]. Based on the study results, Table I summarized multiple stakeholder assessment of the three key attributes (power, interest and influence) of definitive, expectant and latent stakeholder.

#### A. Definitive Stakeholder

The definitive stakeholders are those “... whose interests and participation are taken most seriously, or for granted, by (policymakers and) planners” [42]. In other words, these stakeholders achieved a high score on all three key attributes. Technically, the definitive stakeholders were those with the upper third of the mean class for all key attributes. The results showed that the Provincial Health Officers (PHOs) were the definitive stakeholders, who had legal power, influence and

interest in the policy development on the CBCP and the establishment of PICBs. The PHOs are public bodies with bureaucratic performance under the control of the provincial chief medical officers (PCMOs). The PCMO is a principal of the Provincial Consumer Protection Subcommittee (general authority of consumer protection) who has not only influence in decision making for policy, planning, regulatory enactment on consumer protection of merchandises and various commercial services, but also has the legal authority to enforce relevant laws on food safety, the quality, control and safety of health products as well as services in both public and private sectors.

‘The Consumer Protection and Public Health Pharmacy Section’ has been a major performance mechanism of each PHO with the responsibility to address consumers’ health concerns and to implement other missions for upholding consumer health rights—such as premarketing control, post-marketing surveillance, complaint handling, information dissemination, consumer education, and consumer empowerment. In particular, the PHO’s Section has played roles in supporting knowledge and techniques for civic groups and consumer volunteers as well as in encouraging them to take joint actions.

The findings from descriptive analysis were indicated in views of the PHOs’ insiders (nine respondents) that there were only a few PHOs who emphasized the importance of encouraging civil society groups and their participation in the process of measures-formulation and legislation for consumer health protection and food safety throughout the ten years of the previous Thai Constitution. However, most PHOs realized the importance of building consumer participation in bringing them close to some implementations—such as the post-marketing monitoring of fresh food marketplaces, consumer education and information dissemination.

Due to the influence of civil society, including consumer groups, NGOs, and media on policy issues [43], this study focused on identification and assessment of the PHO’s key attributes by consumer groups and NGOs (n=24), mass media (n=8) as well as the PHO insiders (n=9). The mean scores showed very little variation on the ‘power’ variable (from 3.89 to 4.04). In outsiders’ perspectives, the respondents in both mass media and consumer sectors expressed opinions that the PHOs possessed direct legal authority, skills and budgets. In particular, they had a group of local and community health volunteers with a strong health network. These abilities would lead to mobilizing accessible resources and their legal authority for policy formulation and implementation on the CBCP as well as creating and authorizing new civil society bodies for upholding consumer rights and interests for promoting ethical trade practices, according to the Constitution.

TABLE I  
STAKEHOLDERS IN THE POLICY FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION FOR ESTABLISHING THE PICBS

List of Stakeholders	Types of Stakeholder	Means [Standard Deviation]		
		Power	Interest	Influence
<b>1. Definitive stakeholders</b>				
Representatives of Provincial Health Offices (n=69)	Public sector	3.91* [0.82]	3.77* [0.93]	3.78* [0.88]
<i>Expectant stakeholder</i>				
<b>2. Dominant stakeholder</b>				
Representatives of Provincial Consumer Protection Subcommittees (n=70)	Public sector	3.94* [0.92]	3.32 [1.29]	3.76* [1.19]
Representatives of Provincial Transportation Offices (n=4)	Public sector	4.00* [0.82]	3.25 [1.71]	3.75* [0.96]
<b>3. Dangerous stakeholder</b>				
None	-	-	-	-
<b>4. Dependent stakeholder</b>				
Public universities (n=41)	Expert/ Academic	3.12 [0.95]	3.90* [1.00]	3.71* [0.98]
Local newspapers in the central region (n=2)	Mass media	3.00 [1.41]	4.00* [1.00]	3.67* [0.58.]
Civic consumer groups/networks (n=76)	Consumer group	2.84 [1.10]	3.75* [1.08]	3.68* [1.11]
Foundation for consumer protection in the deep southern region (n=5)	NGO	2.40 [0.89]	4.00* [0.71]	4.00* [0.71]
<i>Latent stakeholder</i>				
<b>5. Dormant stakeholder</b>				
Municipal authorities (n=10)	Public sector	3.90* [0.99]	3.40 [1.17]	3.60 [1.17]
<b>6. Discretionary stakeholder</b>				
Local citizen radio in the north-eastern region (n=7)	Mass media	2.71 [1.11]	3.57 [0.79]	3.86* [0.90]
National television media (n=7)	Mass media	3.57 [0.98]	3.43 [0.98]	3.86* [0.90]
<b>7. Demanding stakeholder</b>				
Public Health College (n=8)	Expert/ Academic	2.88 [0.99]	3.88* [0.64]	3.50 [0.76]
Provincial community radio network in the northern region (n=7)	Mass media	2.43 [0.79]	3.86* [0.90]	3.43 [1.51]
Foundation for strengthening civic groups in the northern region (n=9)	NGO	3.00 [0.71]	3.75* [1.16]	3.50 [1.41]
Provincial/Local citizen groups (n=76)	Civic group	2.89 [1.20]	3.68* [1.21]	3.42 [1.18]

The first column of this Table presented only salient stakeholders involved with the establishment of PICBs.

\* = The stakeholder achieved an upper third of the mean class on a key attribute. The means of key attributes were divided equally into three levels: high (3.67- 5.00 points), moderate (2.34-3.66 points), and low (1.00-2.33 points).

n = number of respondents

The results of the PHOs' interest assessment by PHO insiders, consumer groups and mass media, the mean scores showed little variation (from 3.54 to 3.78). In outsiders' perspectives, the respondents in both mass media and consumer group sectors gave also some reasons that the PHOs paid high attention to citizens' participation issue, compared to other organizations within the consumer protection system, and opened the opportunity for them to reflect opinions to the PHOs' health plans during the past ten-year period of the previous Constitution.

Nevertheless, the mean scores on the PHOs' influence variable were assessed by the three respondent groups that indicated at different levels. As such, the PHOs' insiders were identified and at a high influence level, but the respondents in both mass media and consumer group sectors rated such

PHOs at a moderate level. This was a different perspective on the PHOs' influence. At this point, it was a necessity to find out the PHOs' standpoint and some background in order to predict their possible influence on the policy development process.

Some findings of the study were that only two out of nine respondents (22.2%), who were the PHOs' key representatives, expressed their own paradigm on the CBCP. Another finding indicated that just one out of nine key representatives of the PHOs (11.1%) was highly likely to initiate and participate in establishing such independent consumer body. In addition, an implication of the PHOs' standpoint, which related to the finding mentioned above in this section, was that the most PHOs have taken place their own standpoint of building civic participation at only a plan-

implementation level. Therefore, to improve the chance of success of the policy-making process, it needed to mobilize the PHOs with their paradigm shift and own clarified standpoint on corporate governance as well as the CBCP.

### *B. Expectant Stakeholders*

The expectant stakeholders were those who held two of the three key attributes: power, interest and influence. In Fig. 1, they were divided into three sections: firstly, the intercept section was the dominant stakeholders (power and influence); secondly, the intercept section was the dangerous stakeholders (power and interest); and finally, the intercept section was the dependent stakeholders (interest and influence). In Table I, the results in this subsection showed as follows.

Firstly, the dominant stakeholders were those who had legal power and influence, but lacked interest in the matter. They could be mobilized to be interested in the subject matter and then became the definitive stakeholders. In a possible approach to the policy development process and the power counterbalancing, these mobilized dominant stakeholders became an important batch of definitive stakeholders. The two found in the same public sector were the Provincial Consumer Protection Subcommittee (PCPS) and the Provincial Transportation Office (PTO). The PCPS was the authority for consumer protection with bureaucratic performance. In each province, the PCPS has been under the control of the provincial governor who comes from the central government and the political patronage, and who has even held a concurrent post as the PCPS president. The PCPS possessed legal authority to not only control the quality and safety of commodities including commercial services, but also decision-making for consumer measures and plans, strengthening civic consumer groups as well as cooperating with other agencies. Furthermore, the PTO was the bureaucratic body under the control of the provincial transportation chief. The provincial transportation chief has been one member of the PCPS with responsibility focused on the quality and safety control of land transport services in both public and private sectors. Within this group of the dominant stakeholders, the scores showed very little variation on power (from 3.94 to 4.00) as well as influence variables (from 3.75 to 3.76). The PCPS and the PTO have possessed both direct authority and legitimate influence over the policy development. However, they lacked attention on the CBCP, because they had taken place their own standpoint of creating civic participation at only a plan operation level. Furthermore, their paradigms had not yet shifted to corporate governance.

Secondly, the dangerous stakeholders were those who possessed legal authority and paid close attention to either implementation or study of the intended policy issue. They had no influence over policy development process, due to the lack of a correct understanding and an ability to negotiate with other stakeholders over their own legitimate benefits. As they were misinformed, they could create serious problems. Herein, nobody became a dangerous stakeholder in the consumer protection system based on civil society.

Finally, the dependent stakeholders were those who paid close attention to either implementing or studying the intended policy issue as well as possessing influence over the policy development process. However, they lacked legal authority and resources to move the policy issue, such as academia and civic actors. They could form an alliance with the dominant and definitive stakeholders to provide valid information. In the academic/expert sector, these were public universities. In the mass media sector, one was the local newspaper printed in the central region. Lastly, in the civic group sector there were NGOs for consumer protection. These were the foundation for consumer protection in the deep southern region, and the civic consumer groups/networks around the country. The dependent stakeholders could acquire a political force by appealing to governmental policymakers, even though each of them lacked legal authority.

### *C. Latent Stakeholders*

The latent stakeholders were the least salient stakeholders [40] who possessed only one of the key attributes. In Fig. 1, the latent stakeholders were divided into three sections. Firstly, the non-intercept section was the dormant stakeholders (power). Secondly, the non-intercept section was the discretionary stakeholders (influence). Finally, the non-intercept section was the demanding stakeholders (interest). The results are presented in Table I.

Firstly, the dormant stakeholders were those who possessed only one characteristic which covered legal power and resources. The dormant stakeholders showed no concern for the CBCP and the establishment of PICBs. Hence, they lacked influence in the policy decision-making, formulation and implementation processes. This included the municipal authorities.

Secondly, the discretionary stakeholders were those who possessed only influence. They could persuade other stakeholders to execute the intended policy on the CBCP, and hence the establishment of PICBs will be given closer attention. However, they had no authority and paid momentary attentions to the policy issue. Nonetheless, it needed support from the discretionary stakeholders as an alliance of the key actors in order to build pressure in political arenas and to support the policy. These were the local citizen radio in the north-eastern region, and the national television media.

Ultimately, the demanding stakeholders were those who paid close attention to either implementing or studying the intended policy issue, but had no legal authority as well as lacked influence. Therefore, they could merely present their concerns and appealed for addressing the problems from the central government and authority, or join the civic campaign. However, they were also supportive alliances of the key actor in order to lead the intended policy to political arena and even the policy existence. In the academic/expert sector, one was the Public Health College. In the mass media sector, one was the provincial community radio network in the northern region. Lastly, in the civic group sector there were NGOs,

such as the foundation for strengthening civic groups in the northern region, and the provincial/local citizen groups.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

In a commonly held view of democracy, there were many ways in which people could participate in the policymaking processes and so influence governments (or states) to adopt and support the policy they wanted. Nonetheless, there was an opposite and universal belief that power in the policy formulation was in the hands of a few, and most policy was decided by a small group of elites within the government [44]. In Thailand, over the past decade, no independent organizations for consumer protection under the purpose of the Thai Constitutions have been set up. Although, the 'Foundation for Consumers' (a non-governmental and nonprofit organization) and consumer networks attempted to facilitate establishment of the independent consumer bodies and to guide civic roles in the government decision-making. In addition, nobody could identify who were key actors in the establishment of PICBs before performing the pilot project.

Firstly, the provincial governors were assumed to be the definitive stakeholders holding direct legal authority and full influence because of having the most power for administrative decision-making and strategic plan formulation in their provinces. In addition, they might pay greatest attention to the CBCP because of holding a concurrent post as the PCPS president with roles in building and strengthening consumer groups. Further, the PHOs were assumed to be the dependent stakeholders because they emphasized the importance of empowerment and support to community health volunteers by fostering a strong health network over the past two decades. They might thus possess high influence over the policymaking process, but their own powers did not cover the entire mission for protecting consumer rights, for example housing consumer protection, auto consumer safety, consumer direct marketing, and commanding subordinate bodies and other agencies to work together. As such, these powers have been in the hands of the provincial governors.

The key findings of the study disclosed that the PHOs were the definitive stakeholders while the provincial governors, representing the PCPS, became the dominant stakeholders. Due to PHOs possessing not only had high attention, manpower resources (including the health volunteer network) and influence, but also held potent power such as direct legal authority, knowledge and skills on facilitating civic participation. Even though their powers weren't comparable with the provincial governors' powers, they possessed also great influence over others, not inferior to the provincial governors. However, the most PHOs had taken place their own standpoint of creating civic participation at only a plan operation level, and their paradigms hadn't yet been shifted to the corporate governance through equilibrium in administrative decision-making process. According to an academic analysis of Thai civil society in health development by Suphawong and Kardkarnklai [21], most bureaucratic

projects for promoting civic participation were often formulated and instructed from above, and hence the civil society organizations joined just in the project implementation process. As a result, the authoritarian subculture had been cultivated by some health decision makers and their obedient cliques in order to maintain their power empires to monopolize decision-making power over both the planning and budget allocations [9], [21]. Additionally, the authoritarian pattern was also found upon the patronage system [9], in which involved adherence more to the personal relationships than to regulation of the institutions [45]. This authoritarian culture has yet been a characteristic of the health bureaucratic organizations including the PHOs that reflected upon their indefinite standpoint on the CBCP. Therefore, it may be barriers to the policy determination, adoption and implementation of the establishment of PICBs.

The dominant stakeholders were those who had legal power and influence, but lacked interest in the matter. They could be mobilized to be interested in the subject matter and then became the definitive stakeholders. In a possible approach to the policy development process and the power counterbalancing, thus mobilized the dominant stakeholders became an important group of definitive stakeholders. With regarded to the provincial governor in each province, the provincial governor held highest administrative authority and great capacity for exhorting other stakeholders to adopt and carry out the intended plan, but he neglected attention to an issue of civic movement. As results of the policy goal of Ministry of Interior including all provincial administrative authorities was not clarified with their negative attitude as well as either efforts in controlling citizen groups' working or no budgetary support to the operation of the citizen groups [46]. Further, the bureaucrats had still carped at the disruptive and destabilising effect of the citizen groups and NGOs organized and inspired protests and demonstrations as well as the consequent sabotaging of the government development projects [47] e.g. power plants, construction of fuel gas pipeline, etc. Furthermore, a finding of the deliberative actions before this study was indicated about the PCPS's attitude that some of the PCPS members had to bear tasks in both upholding consumers' rights and creating civic participation by leaving of the national authority of consumer protection (OCPB). These attitudes reflected upon a standpoint of the provincial governors and the PCPS as well as their traditional paradigm that had been far away from a spectrum of the fundamental concept on civil society empowerment.

Based on the main purpose of the CBCP and having the PICBs, these are several policy alternatives that should be feasible in Thai political context. Firstly, the PHOs (definitive stakeholders) should authorize the movement duty to build up and sustain the PICBs. Secondly, the provincial governors and the PCPS including the provincial transportation chiefs (dominant stakeholders) ought to be mobilized to pay closer attention and became the definitive stakeholders with this movement duty of the establishment of PICBs. Finally, the dependent (such as the public universities, and civic consumer



groups), the discretionary (for the most part as mass medias, e.g. the national television media and the local citizen radio in the north-eastern region) as well as the demanding stakeholders (for the most part as citizen groups/NGOs such as the foundation for strengthening civic groups in the northern region, local citizen network, etc.) should be mobilized and organized to participate as an active civil society in establishing such PICBs.

In the third alternative, it has been difficult to mobilize all three stakeholder groups (the dependent, discretionary and demanding stakeholders) with legal authority because "... this requires legislation, which is a lengthy process" [41]. In addition, it needs to have more than one key stakeholder in each system to counterbalance the dominant role played by the definitive stakeholders. Therefore, the PHOs had better be a main key player with the duty to the policy implementation and development of having the concrete PICBs as well as sustaining them. The provincial governors and the PCPS had also to be mobilized to become a principal batch of the PHOs. As such all key players (the PHOs, the provincial governors as well as other PCPS members) must be enhanced to accomplish an ideological shift from a traditional to a new paradigm approach to the CBCP, and even be facilitated to clarify their own standpoint of promoting civil society empowerment.

However, the preferred alternative recommended above placed reliance on the government bodies, while the third alternative was based on the ideological leadership of the civic movement. There was thus a necessity to be supported by the dependent, discretionary and demanding stakeholders as an alliance of the key actors in order to build pressure in political arenas and even the policy existence. In addition, some of them (academia) could provide valid information to not only the government policymaker but also legislation for such policy. This alternative option needed real implementation under the Thai political culture in transition.

The SA was a highly effective instrument for developing understandings of the system, the actual roles and standpoints of actors and some influential stakeholders in the policymaking processes as well as the distributional effects of an intended policy [34], [35], [48]. It could also identify who was able to affect the policy and how [34]. Conducted before implementing the policy, policymakers and managers could detect and act to prevent opposition to the policy [32]. This allows the policymakers and managers to interact more effectively with salient stakeholders, as well as to extend supports for the given policy.

Nonetheless, there were several limitations to the study. The hidden agendas, attitude and standpoint of each stakeholder in relation to the CBCP were difficult to identify. It was also difficult to investigate and define specific problem issues of the consumer protection system involved with the patronage relationships of individual stakeholders across organizations (such as personal relations between a politician and a bureaucrat, or between a government official and a businessman). In a short time-frame of this study, it was

difficult to reach a high understanding of organizational culture of each stakeholder in the system, especially subcultures within various civic consumer groups. Moreover, some evidences on cultural study among consumer groups were stored and collected unsystematically for research utilization, thus, limited the scope of this study to a description of the definitive and the dominant stakeholders. It was difficult to find the marginal as well as the voiceless stakeholder groups who might be likely to affect the policy. This study was limited to seek participation from a few important organizations—such as the provincial chambers of commerce and internal trade authorities. As the results, the provincial chambers of commerce were concerned with the promotion of marketing among business traders. In addition, the internal trade authorities may give the higher importance of reducing consumer individuals' expense, compared to their other actions for consumer rights protection (such as promoting consumer participation in product label monitoring system, strengthening consumer institution, and so forth). Thereby, they did not also emphasize the importance of participation in this study. Another limitation was the participation of only the principals of the organizations to the study survey—such as the provincial governors and the PCMOs. Finally, interviews on phone calls were difficult while some subjects could not identify their own organizational roles in the system.

Moreover, in this study, there was a key methodological weakness with the quantitative approach to data collection that the SA did not take into account possible relationships between stakeholders. As such, a stakeholder might affect the strength of all key attributes of another stakeholder, or others, whether these exist as passive property or were activated or established for specific reason [39]. Therefore, to remove the weakness, there is a necessity for further research to identify patterns and contexts of interaction between stakeholders by either employing a qualitative study with snowball sampling or using a sociometric technique.

## V. CONCLUSION

The 1997 and the current 2007 Thai Constitutions have mentioned the establishment of independent organizations as a new mechanism to play a key role in proposing policy recommendations to national decision-makers in the collective consumers and to promote ethical trade practices. Over the last decade, no independent organizations have been set up. Moreover, nobody could define and elucidate who should be key actors in establishing and developing the PICBs.

The results showed that the PHOs were the definitive stakeholders as they had legal power, influence and interest in establishing the PICBs. They emphasized the importance of building consumer participation in bringing them closer to implementation, such as the post-marketing monitoring in fresh food marketplaces, consumer education and information dissemination throughout the ten years of the previous Constitution. In particular, they had still a batch of community

health volunteers who provided a strong health network. However, there were only a few key representatives of the PHOs who expressed their own paradigm on the CBCP. In addition, most PHOs had their own standpoint for building civic participation at only a plan-implementation level. Thai government should provide budgetary support to the operation of the PHOs with their paradigm shift as well as own clarified standpoint on corporate governance for effective policy implementation of the PICBs. As such, they should have the duty to build up and sustain such PICBs. This recommendation needs implementation under the new Thai Constitution.

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