

Factors Influencing Purchasing Decisions of Toys for Preschool Children in the Countryside of Thailand

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Abstract: This research aims to study factors influencing the selection and purchase of toys for preschool children in countryside of Thailand (Sakon Nakhon Province located in the North East). A sample of 257 parents was chosen as key persons who bought toys for their children selected from four districts in Sakon Nakhon Province, Mueng Sakon Nakhon, Phangkhoon, Sawang Dandin and Waritchaphoom. A questionnaire was used as a data collection tool and the obtained data were statistically analyzed and compared. The results showed that demographically, there were significant differences in ratings as a result of the education level, occupation and income of the parents affected toy selection and purchase decision. Moreover, five factors of product characteristic and marketing mix gorgeousness, durability, country of origin, personal selling and advertising were also rated as very important for toy purchasing decision. From parent view, safety and child skill development were considered as important factors to buy toys for their children.

Key words: Toys, purchasing decisions, preschool children, countryside, parent view, product

INTRODUCTION

Recently, parents have a great interest to their children's education and health and have linked to increasing attention to the quality and safety of toys. As their education and income level rises, parents are more willing to pay higher prices for toys that are safe and offer quality assurance (Anonymous, 2014a). Despite the tough economy and strained family budgets, parents are willing to spend money for toys for their children as they believe that toys will bring their children happiness, experience and good education (Parsons and Ballantine, 2008). In addition, the process of playing with toys can stimulate the child's ability to think and become interested in learning for instance science experiment toy sets, cooking toy sets, brain-based toys and building blocks that might provide learning stimulation.

Thailand is one of the largest toy exporters in the world with an export volume of about 6,000 million baht in 2014. The market volume of the toy industry of Thailand was about 10,000 million baht in 2014. In 2012, toys and games in Thailand had sales of US\$0.3 billion, accounting for a market share of 25% (Anonymous, 2014b). According to the survey, parents are the key persons who make the decision to buy toys for children (Ogba and Johnson, 2010). They hope those toys can enhance child development and help them when they are older (Hogan, 2007; Golinkoff *et al.*,

2009). At present, business has become very competitive and parental purchasing decisions are complicated in terms of consumer behavior. Therefore, it is important for the toy industries to understand consumer-purchasing decisions resulting they could improve their products and other marketing activities based on parental purchasing decisions. Research studies about toys selection have been previously examined (Onanong, 2001). However, the research has been conducted in metropolitan areas, a lack of study had focused on small cities or the countryside where business's growth has been highly increasing due to people having higher salaries and incomes.

Statement of the problem: This study aimed to examine the factors influencing parental purchasing decisions of toys for preschool children in the countryside (Sakon Nakhon Province). The main components studied were:

- What were the background characteristics of the preschool children's parents?
- What were the factors influencing the selection and purchase of toys for preschool children?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research model and hypotheses: A model for factors influencing purchasing decisions of toys for preschool children was developed for this study (Fig. 1). This model

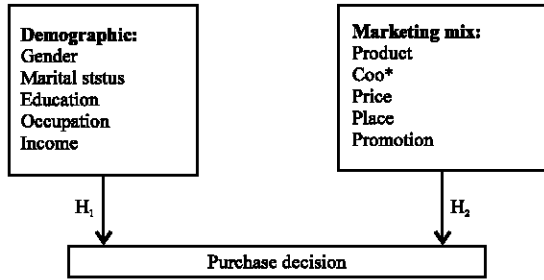


Fig. 1: Research model

consists of the important factors that possibly influence parental purchasing decisions of toys for their preschool children. Two constructs demographics and marketing mix were examined as key mediating factors.

Demographic: Demographics refer to parental characteristics that influence purchasing decisions of cloth dolls; gender income, education and occupation (Onanong, 2001). In this study, the conceptualized demographic influencing factors were gender, age, marital status, education, occupation and income. Linsay (2008) studied the behaviors influencing mother’s consumption of educational toys and it was confirmed that budget was one of factors influencing these purchasing decisions.

- H₁: there is a positive relationship between demographics and purchasing decisions

Marketing mix: An important factor affecting parental toy purchasing decisions is marketing mix. Parents were concerned about product, price, place and promotion for dolls. In addition, safety, child skill development and efficiency of the product were also considered (Onanong, 2001).

- H₂: there is a positive relationship between marketing mix and purchasing decisions

Data gathering instrument: A survey questionnaire was distributed to parents, the target samples of preschool children from kindergartens and childcare development centers from four districts in Sakon Nakhon Province, Mueang Sakon Nakhon, Phangkhon, Sawang Dandin and Waritchaphoom. The respondents were requested to complete and return the questionnaire during the specified sampling period. The questionnaire was composed of four parts, based on the statement of

problems as follows. Part 1 involved the profile characteristics of preschool parents including gender, age range, marital status, education level, occupation and income. Part 2 was composed of questions to gather information about parental behaviors for purchasing decisions of toys. Part 3 focused on factors influencing purchasing decisions of preschool children parents in four aspects which were product, price, distribution channel and integrated marketing communication. Part 4 was composed of open-ended questions, allowing respondents to suggest what they expected of toys products for preschool children.

Validity and reliability of measurement instrument: Content validity is used to define how representative and comprehensive the items concerned in a research project are in presenting the hypothesis and it can be assessed by investigating the process of measurement instruments (Kimberlin and Winterstein, 2008). In this study, 6 definitions of demographics gender, age, marital status, education, occupation and income and 4 marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion) were investigated.

The reliability test was done using the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. Tavakol and Dennick (2011) suggested that alpha was an important concept in the evaluation of assessments and questionnaires. There were different reports about the acceptable values of alpha, ranging from 0.70-0.95. The reliability of this research was 0.710 which is within an acceptable range.

For data collection, 257 parents were identified as key persons who bought toys for their children. A statistic software program for windows was used for data analysis in order to calculate percentage, ANOVA, t-test and Chi-square.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study describes the results from the questionnaire initially assessing the descriptive statistics to establish the basic characteristics of the respondents and control variables. The data analysis of the questionnaire is shown under the headings of respondent profile, purchasing decision behavior and factors influencing purchasing decisions. In the last part, the findings and their linkage to the existing literature and related researches were discussed in order to ascertain whether this new data supports or contradicts the existing information.

According to Table 1, there were 26% more female respondents than male respondents the predominant age

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the respondent profile (n = 257)

Samples/Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	95	37.0
Female	162	63.0
Age		
≤20	10	3.9
21-30	75	29.2
31-40	104	40.4
>40	67	26.1
Missing	1	0.4
Marital status		
Married	219	86.2
Divorce/widow/widower	35	13.6
Missing	3	1.2
Education		
Elementary school	30	11.7
Junior high school	37	14.4
High school/vocational certificate	48	18.7
High vocational certificate	50	19.5
Bachelor	68	26.4
Graduate school	24	9.3
Occupation		
Student	8	3.1
Government staff	49	19.0
Employee	25	9.7
Business owner	59	23.0
Farmer	59	23.0
Housewife	36	14.0
Missing	21	8.2
Income (\$)		
<15,000	128	49.8
15,001-20,000	71	27.6
20,001-25,000	23	8.9
25,001-30,000	19	7.4
>30,000	13	5.1
Missing	3	1.2

range was 31-40 years old at 40.4% followed by 21-30 years old, respectively. The profile characteristics of preschool parents were married 86.2 and 26.4% of respondents were bachelor degree graduates. In terms of occupation, most respondents were business owners 23 and farmers 23%. Half of the respondents had monthly incomes of <15,000 baht (420 USD).

Table 2 showed parental purchasing behaviors for toys for preschool children. There was 30.7% bought toys at general stores and 27.2% at department stores. Half of the respondents spent 100-250 baht 3-7 USD in each toy purchase and 63% occasionally bought toys for their children. It was found that 43.6% of respondents searched for information about toys from their friends and relatives. In terms of buying participants, 45.9% were children and 44.4% were spouses. There was 74.3% of respondents selected plastic toys for their children due to reasons of safety (43.2%), cheapness 20.6 and durability 16.0. Almost 47.9% of respondents did not specify the country of origin for the purchased toy products. Hypothesis testing:

- H₁: demographic factors affecting purchase decision

Table 2: Parental purchasing behaviors for toys for preschool children (n = 257)

Measure/Items	Frequency	Percentage
Distribution		
Pedlar	8	3.1
Stall	13	5.1
Flee market	53	20.6
General store	79	30.7
Department store	70	27.2
Toy store	25	9.7
Online shop	5	2.0
Others	3	1.2
Missing	1	0.4
Budget (\$)		
<100	48	18.7
100-250	130	50.6
251-500	50	19.4
501-100	22	8.6
>5,000	7	2.7
Frequency buying		
Every week	31	12.1
Every month	57	22.2
Occasionally	162	63.0
Others	7	2.7
Communication		
Newspaper	12	4.7
Friend/relative	112	43.6
Internet	79	30.7
Other	47	18.3
Missing	7	2.7
Buying participant		
Child/children	118	45.9
Spouse	114	44.4
Friends	15	5.8
Others	10	3.9
Material		
Wood	33	12.8
Plastic	191	74.3
Paper	14	5.5
Metal	12	4.7
Others	7	2.7
Reason		
Safety	111	43.2
Cheapness	53	20.6
Durability	41	16.0
Gorgeousness	39	15.2
Others	12	4.6
Missing	1	0.4
Country of origin		
Not specify	123	47.9
Thailand	49	19.1
China	10	3.9
Japan	6	2.3
South Korea	1	0.4
Europe/USA	5	1.9
Others	5	1.9
Never concerned	58	22.6

The profile characteristics of preschool parents (gender, age range, marital status, education level, occupation and income) were examined. The result was shown in Table 3. It was found that there were significance relationships between marital status and buying participants 0.001 and toy material 0.005. Education level and purchasing decision behavior factors

Table 3: Pearson Chi-square statistics and p-value of factors influencing the parental purchasing behaviors for toys for preschool children

Factors	Marital status			Education			Occupation			Incomes		
	χ^2	df	p-values	χ^2	df	p-values	χ^2	df	p-values	χ^2	df	p-values
Distribution	5.264	7	0.628	93.147	35	0.000*	1.385	42	0.000*	79.764	28	0.000*
Budget	1.519	4	0.823	40.355	20	0.005*	74.872	24	0.000*	60.525	16	0.000*
Frequency of buying	3.807	3	0.283	35.454	15	0.002*	28.168	18	0.060	23.342	12	0.025*
Communication	0.670	3	0.880	49.463	15	0.000*	51.119	18	0.000*	47.572	12	0.000*
Buying participant	15.757	3	0.001*	14.865	15	0.461	50.991	18	0.000*	9.096	12	0.695
Material	14.762	4	0.005*	21.817	20	0.351	30.572	24	0.167	12.769	16	0.690
Reason	3.580	4	0.466	31.445	20	0.050*	45.385	24	0.005*	24.754	16	0.074
Country of origin	6.480	6	0.372	57.554	35	0.010*	98.184	42	0.000*	28.009	24	0.260

*p<0.05 shows significantly different

Table 4: Analysis of variance and p-value of factors influencing the parental purchasing behaviors for toys for preschool children

Factors	Durability			Safety			Cheapness			Salespersons		
	df	F-values	p-values	df	F-values	p-values	df	F-values	p-values	df	F-values	p-values
Distribution	4	3.841	0.005*	3	5.501	0.001*	4	1.268	0.283	4	2.548	0.040*
Budget	4	6.562	0.000*	3	4.424	0.005*	4	0.787	0.534	4	7.428	0.000*
Frequency of buying	4	1.197	0.313	3	0.618	0.604	4	1.610	0.172	4	1.531	0.194
Communication	4	1.825	0.125	3	0.890	0.447	4	0.367	0.832	4	0.391	0.815
Buying participant	4	0.769	0.546	3	0.449	0.718	4	1.293	0.273	4	0.492	0.742
Material	4	2.380	0.052	3	1.279	0.282	4	2.916	0.022*	4	0.546	0.702
Reason	4	4.090	0.003*	3	7.789	0.000*	4	2.548	0.040*	4	0.262	0.902
Country of origin	4	10.772	0.000*	3	11.637	0.000*	4	8.660	0.000*	4	1.850	0.120

*p<0.05 shows significantly different

also had significance relationships with toy's distribution 0.000, budget 0.005, frequency of buying 0.002, communication 0.000, reason 0.050 and country of origin 0.010. In terms of occupation, there were significant relationships with toy's distribution 0.000, budget 0.000, communication 0.000, buying participants 0.000, reason 0.005 and country of origin 0.000. In addition income also showed a significant relationship with source 0.000, budget 0.000, frequency of buying 0.025 and communication 0.000. The obtained results were consistent with prior researches that were conducted in metropolitan areas. They concluded that the factors that influenced the purchasing decision behavior of cloth dolls were education, occupation and income and a study of factors related to parental selection criteria of toys for preschool children identified occupation and education (Onanong, 2001).

- H₂: examine marketing mix factors affecting purchasing decisions

Table 4 presented information about products (durability of products and product safety), prices (cheapness of price) and promotions (salespersons). It was found that there were significant relationships between durability of products and toy's distribution 0.005, budget 0.000, reason 0.003 and country of origin of toy 0.000. Safety of toy was one of important factors that concern parents. Safety also has significant relationships with toy's distribution 0.001, budget 0.005, reason 0.000

and country of origin of toy 0.000. For the price of products, there were significant relationships between materials of product 0.022 as reasons to buy 0.040 and country of origin 0.000. As expected, salespersons showed significant relationships with toy's distribution 0.040 and budget 0.000. The results showed the same trends with prior researches on factors influencing the purchasing decision behaviors of cloth dolls which identified marketing mix (product, price, place and promotion) affected parental selection criteria of toys for preschool children. It was also concluded that the factors influencing purchasing decisions were safety, child skill development and efficiency of the product, respectively.

This research findings provide meaningful implications for toy business companies, however, this study also has some limitations. For example, the area of data sampling was limited only in Sakon Nakhon Province (the North East part) and it should be expanding to countryside in another region. Moreover, effects of globalization and social trends should be considered. The next study focusing on trends about trustworthiness of country of origin due to globalization affected to toys are on-going investigated.

CONCLUSION

This research was conducted to study the background characteristics of preschool children's parents and factors influencing the selection and

purchase of toys for preschool children in countryside of Thailand. The key factors affecting purchasing decisions were demographic and marketing mix factors. For purchasing decisions, consumer characteristics were validated to be important factors determining decision making in terms of whether or not they will buy toys for their children from certain countries such as income, occupation and education level. Moreover, safety and durability of products from certain countries were found to be very important factors. For marketing channel distribution, salespersons affected purchasing decisions. The results were consistent with studies of the purchasing decisions of toys in metropolitan areas. The findings provide toy business companies with a good understanding of how to set marketing strategies and consumer behavior in purchasing decisions in the countryside.

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