

FACTORS INFLUENCING PURCHASING DECISIONS OF TOYS FOR PRESCHOOL
 CHILDREN: A CASE STUDY OF PARENTS IN SAKON NAKHON PROVINCE,
 THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to study factors influencing the selection and purchase of toys for preschool children in Sakon Nakhon province. A sample of 257 parents was chosen as key persons who bought toys for their children. The sample was selected from four districts in Sakon Nakhon province; Mueng Sakon Nakhon, Phangkhan, Sawang Dandin, and Waritchaphoom. A questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. 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 affecting toy selection and purchase. Moreover, five influencing factors were: gorgeousness, durability, country of origin, personal selling, and advertising, were also rated as very important. The findings suggest that safety and child skill development were considered as being factors influencing parental decisions to buy toys for their children.

Keywords: factor Influencing, purchasing Decisions, preschool children, parental decisions, toys

INTRODUCTION

Recently, Thai parents have attached great importance to their children's education and health, and have paid 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 (HKTDC Research, 2014). 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, and education (Pearson & Ballantine, 2008). In addition, the process of playing with toys can stimulate the child's ability to think and become interested in learning. For examples science experiment toy sets, cooking toy sets, brain-based toys, and building blocks 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 (Duangkamol, 2014). In 2012, toys and games in Thailand had sales of US\$0.3 billion, accounting for a market share of 25.0% (Canadean Company Reports, 2014).

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According to the parents surveyed, parents are the key persons who make the decision to buy toys for children (Ogba & Johnson, 2010). Parents hope those toys can enhance child development and help them when they are older (Hogan, 2007; Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009).

At present, business competitors have become very strong, and parental purchasing decisions are complicated in terms of understanding consumer behavior. Therefore, it is important for the toy industry to understand consumer-purchasing decisions, as they could then improve their products and other marketing activities based on parental toy purchasing decisions. Research studies about toys selection have been previously examined (Onanong, 2001; Eakarat et al, 2012), however, the research has been conducted in metropolitan areas; little work has focused on small cities or villages, where increasing growth has occurred 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 Sakon Nakhon province. The main components studied were:

- 1) What were the background characteristics of the preschool children's parents?
- 2.) What were the factors influencing the selection and purchase of toys for preschool children in Sakon Nakhon province?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A model for factors influencing purchasing decisions of toys for preschool children was developed for this study (Figure 1). This 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.

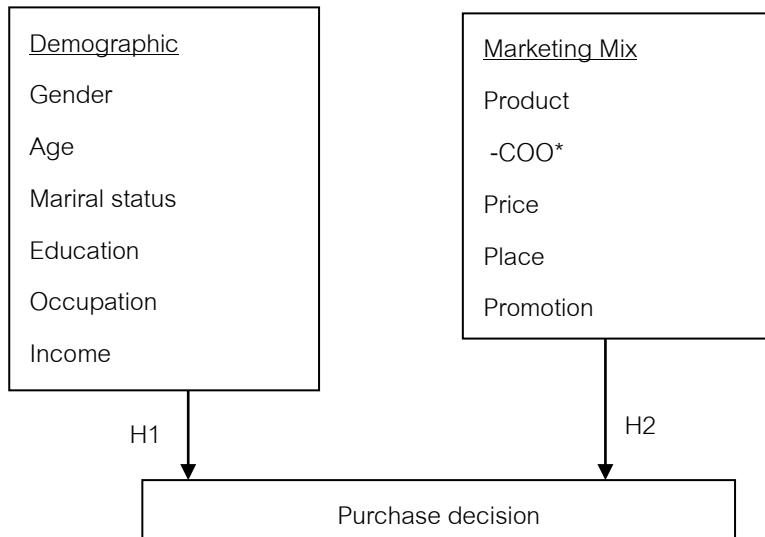


Figure 1 Research model

Demographics refer to parental characteristics that influence purchasing decisions of cloth dolls; gender, income, education, and occupation (Eakarat et al. 2012; Onanong, 2001). In this study, the conceptualized demographic influencing factors were gender, age, marital status, education, occupation, and income. In addition, Linsay (2008) studied the behaviors influencing mothers' consumption of educational toys, which confirmed that budget was one of factors influencing these purchasing decisions.

H1: There is a positive relationship between demographics and purchasing decisions.

An important factor affecting parental toy purchasing decisions is marketing mix. Parents were concerned about product, price, place, and promotion for cloth dolls (Eakarat et al. 2012). In addition, safety, child skill development, and efficiency of the product were also related concerns (Onanong, 2001).

H2: There is a positive relationship between marketing mix and purchasing decisions.

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, Muaeng 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.

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 (Carole & Almut, 2008). In this study, definitions of demographics and marketing mix were developed according to previous researches. Six items were selected for demographics (gender, age, marital status, education, occupation, and income), and four items for marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion).

In the reliability test, this paper tested the reliability of the model using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. Mohsen and Reg (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 to 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 DISCUSSIONS

This section 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 (1) respondent profile; (2) purchasing decision behavior, and (3) 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.

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

Samples	Item	Frequency	%
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
Income	Missing	21	8.2
	< 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

According to Table 1, there were 26 percent more female respondents than male respondents; the predominant age range was 31 – 40 year olds, at 40.4 %, followed by 21 – 30 year olds, respectively. 86.2 percent of respondents were married. 26.4 percent 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 less than 15,000 baht.

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

Measure	Item	Frequency	%
Source	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

TABLE 2 (Continue) Parental purchasing behaviors for toys for preschool children (n = 257)

Measure	Item	Frequency	%
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

Table 2 presents parental purchasing behaviors for toys for preschool children. 30.7 percent bought toys at general stores, and 27.2 percent at department stores. Half of the respondents spent 100 – 250 baht in each toy purchase. 63 percent occasionally bought toys for their children. 43.6 percent of respondents searched for information about toys from their friends and relatives. In terms of buying participants, 45.9 percent were children, and 44.4 percent were spouses. 74.3 percent of respondents selected plastic toys for their children due to reasons of safety (43.2%), cheapness (20.6), and durability (16.0). 47.9 percent of respondents did not specify the country of origin for the purchased toy product.

TABLE 3 Pearson Chi-square statistics and P-value of factors influencing the parental purchasing behaviors for toys for preschool children

Factor	Marital status		Education		Occupation		Income		
	X ²	df	P-value	X ²	df	P-value	X ²	df	P-value
Source	5.264	7	.628	93.147	35	.000*	1.385	42	.000*
Budget	1.519	4	.823	40.355	20	.005*	74.872	24	.000*
Frequency of buying	3.807	3	.283	35.454	15	.002*	28.168	18	.060
Communication	.670	3	.880	49.463	15	.000*	51.119	18	.000*
Buying participant	15.757	3	.001*	14.865	15	.461	50.991	18	.000*
Material	14.762	4	.005*	21.817	20	.351	30.572	24	.167
Reason	3.580	4	.466	31.445	20	.050*	45.385	24	.005*
Country of origin	6.480	6	.372	57.554	35	.010*	98.184	42	.000*
							28.009	24	.260

*P < .05

H1: Demographic factors affecting purchase decision

Gender, age range, marital status, education level, occupation, and income were examined. As 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 also had significance relationships with source (.000), budget (.005), frequency of buying (.002), communication (.000), reason (.050) and country of origin (.010). In terms of occupation, there were significant relationships with source (.000), budget (.000),

communication (.000), buying participants (.000), reason (.005) and country of origin (.000). In addition, income also showed a significant relationship with source (.000), budget (.000), frequency of buying (.025), and communication (.000). The results are consistent with prior researches that were conducted in metropolitan areas. One research concluded that the factors that influenced the purchasing decision behavior of cloth dolls were education, occupation, and income (Eakarat et al, 2012), and a study of factors related to parental selection criteria of toys for preschool children identified occupation and education (Onanong, 2001).

TABLE 4 Analysis of Variance and P-value of factors influencing the parental purchasing behaviors for toys for preschool children

Factor	Durability			Safety			Cheapness			Salespersons		
	df	F	P-value	df	F	P-value	df	F	P-value	df	F	P-value
Source	4	3.841	.005*	3	5.501	.001*	4	1.268	.283	4	2.548	.040*
Budget	4	6.562	.000*	3	4.424	.005*	4	.787	.534	4	7.428	.000*
Frequency of buying	4	1.197	.313	3	.618	.604	4	1.610	.172	4	1.531	.194
Communication	4	1.825	.125	3	.890	.447	4	.367	.832	4	.391	.815
Buying participant	4	.769	.546	3	.449	.718	4	1.293	.273	4	.492	.742
Material	4	2.380	.052	3	1.279	.282	4	2.916	.022*	4	.546	.702
Reason	4	4.090	.003*	3	7.789	.000*	4	2.548	.040*	4	.262	.902
Country of origin	4	10.772	.000*	3	11.637	.000*	4	8.660	.000*	4	1.850	.120

*P < .05

H2: examine marketing mix factors affecting purchasing decisions

Table 4 presents 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 product and source (.005), budget (.000), reason (.003), and country of origin of toy (.000). Safety of toy is one of important factors that concern parents. Safety also has significant relationships with source (.001), budget (.005), reason (.000), and country of origin of toy (.000). For the price of products, there were significant relationships between materials of product (.022), as reasons to buy (.040), and country of origin (.000). As expected, salespersons showed significant relationships with source (.040) and budget (.000). The results showed the same trends with prior researches on factors influencing the purchasing decision behaviors of cloth dolls, which identified product, price, place, and promotion (Eakarat et al, 2012) and a study of factors related to parental selection criteria of toys for preschool children. It was concluded that the factors influencing purchasing decisions were safety, child skill development, and efficiency of the product.

Although the research findings provide meaningful implications for toy business companies, this study also has some limitations. For example, the sample data was collected from kindergartens and childcare development centers of four districts in Sakon Nakhon province. For future research, it may be worthwhile collecting data from other parts of country. Trends about trustworthiness of country of origin due to globalization should be given more consideration and discussion.

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 Sakon Nakhon province. 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 can influence 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 small cities.

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