

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents (1) a summary of the study, (2) a summary of the findings, (3) a discussion of significant findings, (4) the conclusion, and (5) recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This research study was conducted to find out the Perceived Value and Desirable Characteristics of Wooden Toys in the view of Parents of Children aged under 7 years old.

5.1.1 Objectives of the study

The study was developed to evaluate the perceived value of parents of children aged under 7 years old towards wooden toys; as well as to identify the desirable characteristics of wooden toys. Moreover, the research study was designed to seek for the degree of parents' perceived value towards wooden toys.

5.1.2 Subjects, Materials, and Procedures

5.1.2.1 Subjects

The sample group of this study contained Thai parents of children aged under 7 years old at toy departments, specialty toys stores (Toys R Us at Central World and For Kids on Ratchadapisek Road), the Children's Discovery Museum (Bangkok), Yooyenwitthaya School, St. Dominic School, as well as work places in Bangkok via the internet. The questionnaires were distributed both hard copy form and in a Microsoft Word file via the internet during December 22, 2008 to January 16, 2009. The total number of participants was 108 parents.

5.1.2.2 Materials

A self-administered questionnaire developed by the researcher according to research objectives was deployed as the instrument for this study. The questionnaire used both in close-ended and open-ended questions, with a total of 65 questions divided into four sections. The first section contained 9 close-ended questions to gather the background information of parents. The second section

consisted of 28 close-ended questions, rated according to a Likert Scale to evaluate the educational value, entertainment value, safety, and attractiveness (design & functions). The third section contained 25 close-ended questions (Likert Scale) to clarify the desirable characteristics of wooden toys in the dimensions of design, functions, benefits, and price. For the last section, three open-ended questions surveyed parents' previous play experiences and suggestions for good toys.

5.1.2.3 Procedures

The quota sampling method was chosen to classify respondents who had a child or children aged under 7 years old. The questionnaires were distributed both in hard copy and Microsoft Word file via internet to the target sample from December 22, 2008 to January 16, 2009. However, only 110 questionnaires were returned to the researcher and only 108 samples were determined valid and used for data analysis. 30% of the 108 were parents at department stores, specialty toy stores and the Children's Museum; 40% were from parents at Yooyenwithaya School and St. Dominic School. And the balance of 30% were participants at work places who returned the questionnaires through the internet. The collected data was analyzed by SPSS version 15.0 and presented in frequency distribution, percentage, and relevant descriptive statistics. In addition, the correlation between the independent and dependent variables that influenced parents was calculated at the mean based in percentage.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

5.2.1 Background Information of the Parents

Among the sample population, the majority was female (76.4%), aged about 36 – 40 years old (36.5%), with a Bachelor's degree education (67.6%). Moreover, 92.5% of the respondents had 1-2 children with the age range at 5-7 years old (44.1%), and 3-5 years old (31.5%). Furthermore, 88.0% of the respondents had never been involved in children's education. Most of the parents worked in the private sector (62.9%) at the operation level (51.1%); only 34.0% were managers or higher. Most of

the respondents (27.2%) earned monthly income over 50,000 baht, and 55.2% of the group also had monthly income per family over 50,000 baht.

5.2.2 How do parents perceive the value of wooden toys?

Generally, parents perceived value of wooden toys in terms of educational value, entertainment value, safety, and attractiveness (design & functions) at high level but did not agree that wooden toys contained highest value in those dimensions compared to other kinds of toys (e.g. plastic and electronic toys). Predominantly, the parents perceived that wooden toys encouraged a child's development, and were convinced that their children should have wooden toys for educational purposes.

As for entertainment value, the most important factor for wooden toys is that they should be fun to play with. In terms of attractiveness, the parents prioritized color, form, and function and agreed that current wooden toys are doing well in these dimensions.

According to the study, most of the parents had a moderate level of satisfaction towards existing wooden toys in terms of education, entertainment, safety and attractiveness. The results also imply there is plenty of room for improvement in all the dimensions mentioned before.

When considering price, the parents had low satisfaction and thought that wooden toy companies could do more to make wooden toys worth their price in terms of educational value, entertainment value, and design and functions.

Sex had an influence on perception in terms of educational value (see Table 6, p.24) and safety (see Table 7, p.24), and safety vis-a-vis price (see Table 8, p.25); that is female parents had a more view than male parents in these categories.

In addition, to clarify the degree of parents' perceived value towards wooden toys, the findings show that the educational background of the parents had no influence on the perceived value in terms of education and the enhancement of a child's development (see Table 9, p.25). Moreover, educational background had no influence in terms of safety (see Table 12, p.28).

Conversely, those in the Bachelor's degree and Master's degree or higher education group tended to make more negative comments or have a lower level of agreement than the under Bachelor's degree and "other" group in terms of satisfaction

with wooden toys in comparing education (see Table 10, p.26) and entertainment value to price (see Table 11, p.27).

5.2.3 What are desirable characteristics of wooden toys?

According to the study, parents would like wooden toys with innovative designs which are different from traditional toys. However, the toys should still have familiar characteristics. In other words, the toys should not be too complicated to figure out what they are. Furthermore, desirable toys should be colorful and all wood material was preferred.

In terms of desirable functions, the toy should have a variety of functions; for example, transformable functions. As well as, functions which enhanced a child's development were necessary.

It was the consensus among the parents that desirable toys should encourage a child's development both in terms of physical, IQ, EQ, social interaction, linguistic, mathematics, imagination, and sensory skills. And the most important thing was that the toys should entertain children and promote family relationships.

The parents felt that wooden toy prices should be lower. They also understood and predominantly agreed that wooden toys were more expensive than plastic toys. The parents agreed that wooden toy prices could be higher if they had safety guarantees and were environmental friendly.

In conclusion, it can be inferred from the findings that **Thai parents in fact do not care what materials are used for toys (wood or non-wood), they evaluated good toys with the same criteria: educational value, entertainment value, safety, and attractiveness.** In other words, wood material does not get more credit when comparing price. The majority of the parents said that they did not have many toys when they young but that they appreciated and enjoyed their play experiences.

To clarify the degree of parents' perceived value towards the desirable characteristics of wooden toys, the findings lead to the conclusion that all parents, irrespective of educational background, had the same requirements for toy functions in that they should promote education (see Table 19, p.35) and family relationships (see Table 18, p.34). Also, the Master's degree and higher education group had the

least satisfaction with wooden toy functions (see Table 17, p.33) and prices (see Table 20, p.36).

However, the parents who had Bachelor's degree, and Master's degree or higher had accepted the higher prices for wooden toys compared to plastic (see Table 21, p.37), and a higher price level for safety guaranteed (see Table 22, p.38).

In terms of family monthly income, the study indicated that family income has a negative relationship to the satisfaction with wooden toy prices (see Table 23, p.39) and acceptance of the same pricing level for domestic and western wooden toys (Table 24, p.40). Family income also negatively affected acceptance levels of higher prices for wooden toys compared to plastic toys (see Table 25, p.41).

5.3 DISCUSSION

This section concerns the interesting issues drawn from the summary of the findings in the study.

Firstly, according to the study, it was confirmed that *parents wanted toys that concentrated on quality and safety, child development, and reasonable prices*. In terms of safety (see Table 4, p.22 question number 4 - 6), most of the parents voted "strongly agree" in support of toys complying with physical tests, flammability tests, and hazardous substances tests (mean score 4.4, 4.3 and 4.3 respectively). Regarding child development and desirable functions, table 14, p.30 shows that parents wanted toys with functions which promoted a child's development and education at a mean score 4.4. Table 15, p.31 also supported the statement that desirable toys should enhance a child's development in terms of physical, IQ, and EQ at the mean score 4.5 up. Regarding desirable characteristics of wooden toys in terms of price, table 16, p.32 demonstrated that most of the parents strongly agreed that wooden toy prices should be lower (mean score 4.2).

According to the study by Bachelor's degree students at Thammasat University in 2005, *parents prioritized safety, child development, quality, and reasonable prices as the most influential factors in buying toys*. Furthermore, a research study by TEMBA at California State University, Hayward in 2006 also found that *the parents located in California were aware of quality and safety, and*

price when choosing toys for their children. Hence, this leads to the conclusion that parents always consider these four main criteria in choosing toys for their children: quality (safety), child development (benefits), attractiveness (design & form), and price.

In terms of marketing, many wooden toys in the market refer to *Montessori theory* and apply the “*discovery learning*” concept (e.g. Dysuma, Nienhuis). *Most of the parents prefer toys that promote a child’s development.* And recently, people in the educational sector have been emphasizing the *Multiple Intelligences Theory* stressing the need to concentrate on more than only Intelligence Quotients (IQ) (วนิชยา เรือง, 2550). Gardner (n.d.) also explained that children who were better at other kinds of intelligences besides Linguistic and Logical-Mathematical intelligence are often diagnosed with “*learning disorders*” or “*ADD – Attention Deficit Disorders*”.

On the contrary, วนิชยา เรือง (2550) tried to show that children who succeed at school may not be able to live happily in society or work with other people because although they have a high IQ, they have lower intrapersonal intelligence. Nowadays Thai parents are more aware of these dimensions. Currently, there are several **alternative schools and kindergartens** that offer courses with a non-academic focus promoting child-centered learning, with higher tuition fees. For example, the Children’s Discovery Museum (Bangkok), Pleng Prasiddhi School, and Rung Aroon School.

Toys are considered as teaching tools or educational tools to encourage a child’s development and the development of multiple intelligences. Parents therefore need to be careful about selecting the toys in terms of educational value, entertainment value, safety and attractiveness.

Secondly, the study reconfirms the statement in the background section of this research that today’s parents are willing to spend more to have their children get the best things, even though those parents did not have that when they were young. According to Table 26 p.42, although these parents did not have fancy toys, they valued the importance of play and tried to find good toys for their children. Although, these parents have only simple toys, they enabled them to create new play rules and

enhanced their fertile imagination. These parents had a good impression of their open-ended toys, and only one said that about close-ended toys (electronic toys).

Interestingly, these parents mentioned that the most enjoyable play for them in the past was outdoor play or active play that encouraged development in terms of physical, social interaction and emotion, which can be compared to *Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence, Interpersonal Intelligence and Intrapersonal Intelligence in the theory of multiple intelligences*; the children of the 21st century may not have the same experience.

Thirdly, according to the findings of this research in terms of entertainment and benefits, it can be concluded that children is one of relevant factors in buying or choosing toys. If they do not enjoy playing with the toy, the parents will absolutely not buy it. This is supported by the research study “Brand Child” (Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003) which found that children today have a big influence on their family’s purchases. Moreover, the findings show in table 26 p.42 indicated that some parents recommended that good toys should allow children to participate in the development or creation of their own toys.

In addition, according to the findings on the correlation between sex and the dependent variables, marketers of wooden toy companies should focus on communication strategy with female and male parents as the below suggested approach shows:

- Females – This group tended to positively support wooden toys; marketers should target this group through the media in order to strengthen their positive attitude.
- Males – Marketers should publicize the benefits of wooden toys to convince this group to become customers in the future.

Furthermore, in reference to the findings on the correlation between parents’ educational background and several of the dependent variables, it can be concluded that *education had no influence on perception in terms of education (see table 9, p.25), safety (see table 12, p.28), and the functions for promoting a child’s development (see table 19, p.35) or family relationships (see table 18, p.34)*. This may have been because of field inspections for “unsafe toys” by Dr. Adisak and the Thomas the Tank recall in 2007. Also, globalization information technology has helped many Thai

parents access information easily either in English or Thai, whatever their educational background. When today's Thai parents have a child, they will try their best to search good things for them. As a result, the finding showed no difference in this dimension.

Last but not least, regarding the result on the correlation between family monthly income and the dependent variables, parents who earned higher income are more demanding. This group of the sample parents had the lowest satisfaction on all questions, but it might be that they had more knowledge and information to make decisions than the other groups. They knew about many imported toys and can afford them, and that led them to be choosier than the other groups when buying toys. However, in the view of marketers, the big challenge is to show this group that *domestic wooden toys are no different than imported toys in terms of benefits, quality, and safety*. Then, the marketers need to convince parents to become loyal customers in the future because this group can afford wooden toys; this will be good for toy companies in terms of price constraints. In other words, *the most important mission for wooden toy marketers is changing the Customer's Perceived Value (CPV) of this group. Consequently, these parents will be willing to pay for domestic wooden toys*.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above.

Mostly of the findings in this project study verify the other research studies done before; even though the research was not developed with exactly the same objectives, some parts relate to the dimensions of this study. These are briefly summarized below:

Regarding the Perceived Value of Wooden Toys, *parents still focus on the four main criteria in selecting toys for their children: quality (or safety), promoting a child development, attractiveness to children, and reasonable price*. Therefore, toy companies should be aware of these dimensions when developing wooden toys. Even though the parents perceived the value of wooden toys to be at a high level, it was not higher when compared to other kinds of toys or materials. Therefore, this should not be the focus or marketing plans as this is not the strongest point of wooden toys.

Regarding the Desirable Characteristics of Wooden Toys, the parents would like wooden toys to be innovative and different from traditional toys, colorful, and with a variety of functions to attract and entertain children. Moreover, toy functions that promote a child's development and family relationships are necessary. Finally, the toys should be safe for children in every respect.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made for future research.

5.5.1 As data collection was done at department stores and toy stores during the weekend when many parents go shopping, it was inconvenient for the respondents to take time for the research. Generally, parents need to keep an eye on their children to prevent unexpected accidents. Therefore, many parents were unable to fill in the questionnaire although they would have liked to. In the future, researches should consider doing data collection at kindergartens and elementary schools with the cooperation of class instructors, at the Children's Discovery Museum in Bangkok, or at offices via the internet. This will help researchers to obtain a larger sample group and save time.

5.5.2 In reference to the returned questionnaires, the results showed that many parents were confused about wooden versus educational toys. According to the last question in the first section, several parents wrote "Lego" and other kinds of educational toys instead of wooden toys. Therefore, the researcher would recommend the addition of a "focus group interview" apart from the questionnaire in order to verify the data for more validity and reliability, including verifying an understanding of toy safety standards and the ability to identify safe and unsafe toys.

5.5.3 To increase the knowledge of wooden toys or toys in general, consumer behavior, the media's influence and buying channels would be interesting issues for further investigation. Although previous research might have covered these areas, the lifestyles of Thai people are changing rapidly. Hence, updated information about consumers for every aspect will be useful for toy manufacturers, distributors, or other concerned parties.