

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Plastic is a synthetic material which is used in massive amounts every single day. Most plastics are reusable; however, frequently this is not the case. Those plastics which are not reused or cannot be reused will be littered or left as rubbish waiting for disposal. Some garbage will be buried, but it takes decades to biodegrade naturally. If the disposal of plastic is improperly managed by burning, it will cause the air pollution. Carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, and other kinds of toxic gas not only harm human health but also accumulate in the atmosphere and cause the greenhouse effect. The heat which is trapped between the Earth's surface and the atmosphere is believed to be the cause of a gradual global warming which has brought about changes in the balance of nature and a loss of biodiversity.

Plastic is used widely in every sector because it's useful, cheap, light-weight, chemical-proof, able to electrically insulate, convenient, durable, available, etc. Also, plastic bags are one of the most popular plastic products which are used in our daily life. As a result, plastic bags are used in very large numbers everyday to meet the high demand of people, business and industry. This causes gigantic piles of plastic waste ¹ which is needed to be disposed of properly everyday, or else, it will lead to a great damage to the environment. Moreover, there is a need to reduce the use of plastic bags. A study of the behavior in using plastic shopping bags is needed as a pilot study to gain information for further research or for use in developing environmental campaigns for global warming mitigation in the future.

¹ In 2000-2001, the estimated amount of plastic garbage only from communities all over Thailand is at 3,007.246 metric tons per day or 1,094,637.54 metric tons per year (the survey conducted by the Department of Pollution Control).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The following ‘Statement of the Problem’ has been formulated relating to university student behavior in using plastic bags.

1.2.1 What is university student behavior in using plastic bags in everyday life?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Main Objective

1. To study the overall behavior of university students in using plastic bags in their everyday life.

1.3.2 Sub-Objective

1. To discover if university students have knowledge and understanding of the advantages and the disadvantages of plastic bags.

2. To discover what university students know and understand about global warming.

3. To discover the behavior of university students in using plastic bags before, during and after shopping.

4. To discover the behavior of university students in disposing of plastic bags after using.

1.4 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

1.4.1 ‘University students’ refer to undergraduate students who are currently studying at Thammasat University, Silpakorn University, and Chulalongkorn University.

1.4.2 ‘University student behavior’ refers to the activities or actions of undergraduate students in using plastic bags.

1.4.3 ‘Merchandisers’ behavior’ refers to the activities or actions of food or store vendors in giving plastic bags to shoppers.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted with undergraduate university students who were randomly selected from Thammasat University, Silpakorn University, and Chulalongkorn University; in a similar number and gender from each university. The total number students who were asked to fill in the questionnaires were 120.

1.6 SIGIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is concerned with the behavior in using plastic bags of university students. It will provide data of the behavior of the students in the use and disposal of plastic bags in their everyday life. The findings will show the characteristics and frequency of such behavior regarding environmental concerns, especially in view of the global warming phenomenon. Since this phenomenon has become a big issue in which many people are interested and worried, the information acquired will be useful to initiating or planning environmental campaigns.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study of university student behavior in using plastic bags is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the study which provides background, problem statements, objectives, definitions of terms/variables and definitions, scope, significance, and organization of the study. The second chapter is the review of literature. The third chapter describes the methodology of the study. The results of the study are presented in the fourth chapter. Conclusions, discussion and recommendations are presented in the last chapter.