

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter consists of a summary of the study, a summary of the findings, discussions of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

5.1.1 Objectives of the study

The study 'Factors Influencing Customers' Decision on Purchasing Toothpaste in the Bangkok Area' was aimed to explore the factors that influence the decision on purchasing toothpaste of the customers aged over 25 years in the Bangkok area. Furthermore, it was aimed to identify the demographic details of the customers, and to find out their problems and suggestions for further study.

5.1.2 Subjects, Materials, and Procedures

The subjects used in this study consisted of 120 customers aged over 25 years in the Bangkok area. The data were collected during January, 2009.

A questionnaire was used as the instrument to collect the data. It was distributed only to people aged over 25 years in the Bangkok area who buy toothpaste for themselves or their families. Those 120 people were requested to return the questionnaires on the same day. The questionnaire consisted of three main parts; (1) general information, (2) factors influencing the respondents' decision on purchasing toothpaste and (3) additional comment. All data received from the questionnaires were analyzed using the SPSS program.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

5.2.1 General information of the respondents

From the study, it was found that the majority of the respondents were female and were aged between 36 - 40 years. Most of them were single. Most of them had a bachelor's degree. The majority of the respondents were private company employees and they received an average salary of 30,001 - 40,000 Baht. They often bought

Colgate with Anti-cavities formula. Most of them often bought toothpaste at supermarkets. Half of them usually compared brands of the same size and half did not compare. Moreover, the majority of the respondents compared prices among different brands in the same shop.

5.2.2 Factors influencing the respondents' decisions on purchasing toothpaste

Overall most respondents were not sure if the 4P's (places, people, prices, promotion and mass media) influenced their decisions to purchase toothpaste. On the other hand, they thought the product factor influenced their decision the most.

Results on each factor are explained below:

People: Dentist's suggestions were rated as influential on respondents' decision.

Mass media (advertising): Respondents were not certain if mass media influenced their decision.

Product: Many features of product such as quality and formula were rated as influential on their decision.

Price: Respondents were not sure if prices influenced their decision.

Promotion: Also, they were not certain if any kind of promotions influenced their decisions.

Place: Supermarkets were rated as having the highest level of influence on their decisions.

5.2.3 Additional comment of the respondents

After gathering and grouping all answers of open-ended questions, the most influential factors were places i.e. supermarket, promotion, and media which is TV.

5.2.4 The Testing of Hypotheses

After all hypotheses were tested, it was found that:

1) Respondents with different genders and marital status had the same opinions on the 4P's.

2) People of different ages, education levels, occupations, and salaries had different opinions on the 4P's.

5.3 DISSCUSSIONS

The results of this study show that there were many factors influencing the decisions to purchase toothpaste. Some important factors are to be discussed below.

5.3.1 Personal Background

From the personal information of respondents, the majority of them were female and were aged between 36 - 40 years. Most of them were single. Most of them had a bachelor's degree. The majority of the respondents were private company employees and received an average salary of 30,001 - 40,000 Baht. The consumer buying behavior theory of Kotler (2005) states that consumer purchases are mainly influenced by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors. Therefore, if this study had been done with other groups of subjects, the results would be different.

5.3.2 Product Quality

The results of the study showed that among the 4P's, the product factor influenced their decision the most. Moreover, the majority of respondents said that they often bought Colgate with Anti-cavities formula. These confirm a research on buying decision of McDonald & Leppard (1992) saying that one of the most potent forces is the nature of the product itself, and the extent to which the customer 'trusts' the seller. Therefore, a marketer should consider investing in research and development to launch the new product to gain more market share.

In addition, quality was considered as higher level of influence on decision making. It is interesting that from the cross check answer in part three of the questionnaire, the answer was formula. The respondents might think that if it is a good formula, and has good quality, too. Anyway, both quality and formula are under product factors which were the most influential among the 4P's. Thus, a marketer should try to develop the right 'product' for the target market. In other words, they should try to satisfy the needs of customers with the quality goods and service (Perreault & McCarthy, 2003).

5.3.3 People's Suggestion

Dentist's suggestions were rated as having a higher level of influence on making decisions, while suggestions of celebrities such as superstars, singers, or politicians on ads were rated less influential. Referring to the cross check answer in part three of the questionnaire, most answers were also dentist's suggestions. This may be because a dentist is an expert on curing teeth and can provide people with information on how to take care of their teeth, so people believe in him. Such response seems to fit with Phipps & Simons (1995) saying that one of the five basic stages of decision process is to search enough information to make a decision and takes into account their attitudes and beliefs.

5.3.4 Mass Media

TV commercials were rated as having a higher level of influence on decision making. Referring to the cross check answer in part three of the questionnaire, the answer was also that TV commercial influenced their decisions the most. The result is aligned with the Motivational marketing theory of Imbrial (2007) which is that TV commercial remains the most powerful of all marketing channels due to being easy to understand. According to Parente (2006) who advised that a company can use traditional media to reach a more broadly based target and be sure to determine the target's relevant behavior, purchase frequency, timing of purchase, and the target's passion (sports, game, music, etc.). However, Blythe (2000) indicated that there are both advantages and disadvantages of TV advertising. Therefore, a marketer needs to trade-off and select the right channel to the right target audience.

5.3.5 Price

As for price, it was surprising that the opinions from the rating scale show no concern about price, but in the open-ended question part, respondents thought promotion also leads them to buy. This implied that they take into account price before deciding to buy. This fits with what Smith & Berger (1998) who said that high-educated buyers' intent to purchase was significantly positively influenced by the price frame manipulation.

5.3.6 Place

Supermarkets were the place where respondents often go to buy toothpaste. This fits with the new lifestyle and behavior changing nowadays.

5.3.7 Results of the Hypotheses

Customers with different demographic backgrounds such as ages, educational levels, occupations, and amount of salary have different opinions on factors affecting their decisions for purchasing toothpaste, while people with different genders and marital statuses did not have different opinions on the 4P's. Referring to the segmenting dimensions of Perreault & McCarthy (2002), demographic characteristics of potential customers affect a size of target markets and promotion. Although, this questionnaire was not a focus group, the results also confirmed that some personal backgrounds play a part in different opinions on factors affecting decisions on purchasing toothpaste.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussions above.

5.4.1 The majority of respondents were females aged between 36 – 40 years. Most of them were single and most of them had a bachelor's degree. Moreover, they were private company employees and received an average salary of 30,001 - 40,000 Baht.

5.4.2 The most influential factor on the respondents' decisions to purchase toothpaste was the product itself. In the area of product factors, quality and formula were highly influential.

5.4.3 The important factors are dentist's suggestions and advertisements on TV. The majority of respondents thought that the attractive promotion was discount.

5.4.4 Customers with different genders and marital statuses did not have different opinions on the 4P's, while customers with different ages, educational levels, occupations, and salaries have different opinions on the 4P's.

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 The weakness of this research is the limitation of the sampling size. For a more concrete picture and accuracy of research findings, the survey should be conducted with a greater number of subjects in more different locations.

5.5.2 The limited time and budget compelled the findings in analysis. Further research should include an in-depth interview or a focus group to diversify answers.

5.5.3 The questionnaire which consists of three parts might be adjusted in order to get more information.