

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Brassieres or bra are necessary clothes for women. The main function of a brassiere is to support the body's curves. The history of brassieres is inextricably intertwined with the social history of the status of women, including the evolution of fashion and changing views of the body.

At various times since recorded history women have used a variety of garments and devices to cover, restrain or elevate their breasts. Brassiere-like or bikini-like garments are depicted on some women athletes in the seventh century BC in the Minoan era. Similar functionality could be achieved by both outerwear and underwear.

Brassieres became more common and more widely promoted over the course of the 1910s, aided by the continuing trend towards lighter, shorter corsets that offered increasingly less bust support and containment. In 1917 the U.S. War Industries Board asked women to stop buying corsets to free up metal for war production. This was said to have freed some 28,000 tons of metal, enough to build two battleships.

It has been said that brassieres took off the way it did in large part because of World War I. The Great War had changed gender roles, putting many women to work in factories and uniforms for the first time. The war also influenced social attitudes towards women and helped to liberate them from corsets. Brassieres 'came out', from something ('bust girdle') discretely tucked into the back pages of women's magazines in the 1890s, to prominent display in department stores such as Sears, Roebuck and Montgomery Ward by 1918. Advertising was now promoting shaping the bust to contemporary fashion demands, and sales began to grow (Thesander, 1997).

Since women have more choice in brassiere sizes; the focus has changed from choosing brassieres in an average size to wearing brassieres that actually fit perfectly. The lingerie market at the turn of 21st century was driven by the advent of modern technologies and fabrics that help in designing innovative products such as laser-cut seamless brassieres and molded T-shirt brassieres. Designers are putting greater emphasis on rich-looking fabrics, laces, embroideries and brighter, more daring colors.

The global lingerie market in 2003 was estimated at \$29 billion. Brassieres accounted for 56 per cent while briefs represented 29 per cent of the lingerie market in 2005. The world's largest lingerie manufacturer, Victoria's Secret, operates almost exclusively in North America. The European market is quite fragmented, with Triumph International leading the market. The lingerie market in Asia saw strong growth, with Wacoal leading the market (Pitsinee & Krissana, 2008).

The Asia lingerie market got a boost a few years ago with the introduction of specialty lingerie stores and multi-brand stores that carry American and European labels (Ui, 2008).

Since there is the overall 12-billion-baht lingerie market in Thailand (Pitsinee & Krissana, 2008) now, another manufacturer plans to launch a revolutionary new line of lingerie for the Thai market.

The new company is Hanesbrands. In September 2006, Sara Lee Corporation spun off its branded apparel American and Asian business as a separate company called Hanesbrands Inc. Hanesbrands manufactures and sales of low-cost *innerwear* (T-shirts, brassieres, and underwear) and hosiery. The company sells its products at wholesale prices to mass-market discount retailers like Wal-Mart and Target, as well as department stores. With revenues of over \$4.5billion in 2006, Hanes is one of the largest companies in the innerwear industry and enjoys economies of scale that allow it to offer its products at prices below those of its competitors. This advantage has become especially important in recent years, as department stores have begun to offer their own private label brands which typically provide department stores with higher

margins than third party brands. Hanes is the exception to this rule because it is able to offer its products at prices below what it costs department stores to manufacture or purchase their own private label merchandise. The Company's portfolio of brands include Hanes (its largest brand), Champion (its second largest brand), Playtex (its third largest brand), Bali, Just My Size, Barely There, Wonderbra, L'eggs, C9 by Champion, Duofold, Beefy-T, Outer Banks, Sol y Oro, Rinbros, Zorba and Ritmo (Company overview, 2008).

In order to be a new competitor in the Thai lingerie market in the adult segment, this research will be conducted focusing on the lifestyle of modern Thai office women in term of their brassiere choosing behavior.

Thai office women consumers depend heavily on many factors in choosing brassieres. For young office women, their peers, families, or the society are the main powers that control their choosing behavior (Phipps & Simmon, 1995). For elderly office women, they tend to give more importance to how they spend their money. Especially office women who work in the metropolis of Bangkok, they can receive fast news about marketing promotion, or information of the products through various channels. They will consider the convenient places to shop and compare the prices with some other places. They have a lot of information about the market. Product, Prices, Place, and Promotion are other influential issues to consider among office women buying behavior (Zikmund & d'Amico, 2002).

Office women are the group who has their own interests and independence to choose their lifestyle. Their lifestyles in terms of interests and activities differ from one another. In studying their interests or opinion, marketers will be able to launch strategies to suit their lifestyles and interests. This is excellent for both buyers who can get what they want and sellers who can serve what the customers desire.

To study these key issues will be beneficial to support good influences on society and promote good quality brassieres in the Thai lingerie market as well as to render some insights to the body of knowledge about the choice of choosing brassieres among office women. This study will look at reasons for office women to

decide to purchase a brassiere and it will also assess what kind of brassieres women like the most.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aims to answer the following questions:

- 1.2.1 What are the considerations of office women in choosing brassieres?
- 1.2.2 What are office women's behaviors in brassiere purchase?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are the following:

1.3.1 Main Objective

To find out the considerations of office women in choosing brassieres in urban areas of Bangkok

1.3.2 Sub-Objective

To explore the brassiere purchasing behavior of office women in Bangkok

1.4 VARIABLES AND DEFINITIONS

The definitions of the terms of this study are as follows:

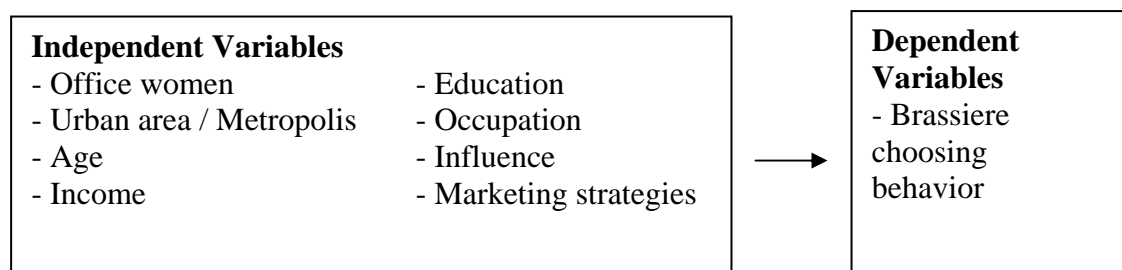
Independent Variables

The independent variables of this study will likely affect brassiere purchasing behavior of office women in the metropolis of Bangkok such as age, income, education, occupation, influence, and marketing strategies.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables of this study will reflect the reasons for brassiere choosing of office women in urban areas of Bangkok.

Figure1. Conceptual framework of brassiere purchasing behavior.



| <u>Variables</u> | <u>Conceptual Definition</u> | <u>Operational Definition</u> | <u>Indicator</u> |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|
| Office women | Females who are working at any workplace | Females working in the buildings or the towers in the Sukhumvit area | Females having a workplace located on Sukhumvit Road in Klong Teoy or Wattana District |
| Urban area/Metro polis | A well-developed area with modern facilities | A well-developed area with all kinds of infrastructure such as electricity, water pipeline, health facilities, convenient shops, department stores etc. | An area around Sukhumvit Road in Klong Teoy or Wattana District |
| Age | Number of years a person has lived since one was born | Complete years as of the last birth date | Actual number from 23 or over |
| Income | Monthly monetary rewards that one has gained | Monetary rewards gained in working for a living on a monthly basis | Less than 10,000, 10,000-15,000, 15,001-20,000, 20,001-25,000, 25,001-30,000, over30,000 |
| Education | A degree of attending school | The highest degree of attending school | High school, Vocational School, Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate |
| Occupation | A kind of job | The job that one does for a living | Government Officials, State Enterprise employees, Private sector employees, Self-Employed, Others |
| Influence | A power to affect one's action | The power to affect the selection of brassieres | Current fashions, Self-taste, Friends, Families, Models |

| <u>Variables</u> | <u>Conceptual Definition</u> | <u>Operational Definition</u> | <u>Indicator</u> |
|-----------------------------|--|---|---|
| Marketing strategies | A process of planning on how to sell goods | A process of planning in order to present, advertise, and sell things known as “four Ps”: product, price, place and promotions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Things of concerned for brassiere selection: Brand, Quality, Design, Material - Actual range of price that affects your Brassiere purchasing - Place to buy brassieres: Standalone Brassiere shops, Department stores, Mail order, Internet order, up to convenience - Types of promotion that affect the purchase of brassieres: Special discount, One for two, Premiums, Lucky draw, Others |
| Brassiere choosing behavior | A brassiere selection paid for by money | A selection of brassiere paid by money in terms of the amount of money spent, number of brassieres bought each time, and types of brassieres selected | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An amount of money spent for buying brassieres each time: less than 100 BAHT, 100-300 BAHT, 301-500 BAHT, 501-800 BAHT, more than 800 BAHT - Number of brassiere bought each time: 1, 2, 3, more than 3, not certain - Type of brassieres selected: All over comfort bras, Under wire bras, Wire free bras, Sports bras - Frequency of buying brassieres per month: 1-2 times, 3-4 times, 5-6 times, more than 7times, not certain |

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study intended to focus on the lifestyle of Thai office women in term of their brassiere choosing habits. The subjects were chosen from the Sukhumvit area in Klong Teoy and Wattana District where they have been working.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on the Brassiere choosing considerations of office women. The finding of this study can be used as baseline data for lingerie producers to acquire more information about consumers and develop strategies for launching new brassieres.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter One is the introduction which includes the background of Brassieres, statement of the problem, objectives, scope of the study, variables and definition of terms, and significance of the study. Chapter Two presents the theory of determinants of consumer behavior, the theory of decision making, the external factors affecting purchase decisions, the marketing strategies, and related previous study. In Chapter Three, the research methodology regarding the subjects, materials, data collection, and data analysis are revealed. The result of the study is in Chapter Four which is generally presented through tables, graphs and explanations. In Chapter Five, conclusions, discussions, and recommendations are described.