

**THE EXPLORATIVE OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN LUXUARY
HOME DECORATIVE PRODUCTS**



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HOME DECORATIVE PRODUCTS**

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THE EXPLORATIVE OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN LUXURY HOME DECORATIVE PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of this thematic paper is to show the explorative of consumer behaviour in specific business. The business that was chosen is home decorative products regarding the ascending in demand and supply of the real estate in the present. Consumer behaviour is one of the aspect in marketing that the entrepreneurs need to understand them. Understanding how the consumer think would help creating the effective marketing strategy; the papers is conducted to analyse the various factors that would possibly drive this business to the core from different perspective including both consumer's perspective and distributor's perspective. The consumer's perspective would help understanding the need or the demand of the market while the distributor's perspective would help understand the supply and the situation in the market. The research was conducted interviewing with different levels of employee from the distributor side and the top-level management consumers from different company regarding the premium market. This paper will touch base on the aspect of consumer behaviour in home decorative business and would be the usage of creating business success.

KEY WORDS: Consumer Behavior/ Home Decorative/ Premium/ High End

22 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the present, home decoration market is continuously growing up with strong tendency as much as the rising of the real estate business. Regarding the establishment of the Associations of South East Asian Nations (ASEANS), the various fields of business would be rising up including industrial and retail fields. The investors from many countries would come to invest in Thailand as one of the top attractive nations for the investors in ASEAN. Thailand is ranked as number 3 from all ASEANS nations, No 1 is Singapore and follow up by Malaysia as no 2. (World Bank, CBRE Research, 2015)

With the rising of the foreign investors and tourists, the demand of the property is making their incline in real estate field. CBRE' top 100 residential transactions indicate the rising from year 2014 with average of 42 million baht to 63.3 million baht in 2015. The highest value of transaction is a condominium unit that worth 247 million baht. Furthermore, based on CBRE sales record, the top 10 transaction were between 100-247 million baht, top 11-20 transaction were between 60-90 million baht and top 21-30 were between 40-60 million baht. The percentage of the total transaction in 73% in condominium and 27% is the luxury house in Central Business District or CBD (<http://www.thailand-business-news.com/real-estate/51314-budgets-of-top-end-home-buyers-on-the-rise-in-bangkok.html>). With this sales record, it can show the strong demand of the premium luxury real estate that also represent the strong demand for luxury home decorative products either.

There are many home decorative distributors in the present. The segmentation of home decorative is divided into various segment for example Home Pro, SB design square, Index Living Mall etc. The segment that we are focusing in this paper is luxury segment which including Crystal Design Center, DM Home (Or Decormart Design Center), Euro Creation, Architectura etc.

Most of the consumers in the premium segment buying the products with supporting from architecture and interior designers so the relationship of the distributors and the designers is really important because the designer would suggest their clients to the distributors which they have competitive relationship first for the better negotiation in price. Furthermore, they can accomplish the project faster since they have been working together.

1.1 Problem Statement

The demand of the real estate is rising up together with the demand of the home decorative products. With the increasing in population of foreign investors and high income local investors, the luxury home furnishing is becoming more enviable.

1.2 Research Question

What are the factors that influence the decision making of the consumer before purchasing luxury home decorative products?

1.3 Research Objective

The purpose of this research is to see how the trend or the market is currently going and how it effect the business and consumer behavior in the near future and to understand the factors that influence the consumer behavior in Bangkok of this business.

1.4 Expected Benefit

The final report would be included the information of the current situation in the market, how the consumer or the client making their decision before purchasing the products and how the distributors should planning for the marketing strategy with those factors.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The objective of this paper is to study the current market of luxury home decorative products in Bangkok and the factors that influence the consumer behaviors. There are several factors that would influence the business and the marketer need to understand those factors to create the potential marketing strategy for competitive advantage.

2.1 Consumer Behavior Theory

There are several theories for the definition of the consumer behavior. Consumer behavior is a study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires (Solomon, 1996).

Engel et al, (1995) identify the consumer behavior as the dominant research perspective as logical positivism. Positivism implies a research approach in which rigorous empirical techniques are used to discover generalized explanations and laws. It is within this perspective that the grand model of consumer decision-making have been produced. When traditional models were revised later.

The process and activities people engage in when searching for, selecting, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services so as to satisfy their needs and desires. Behavior occurs either for the individual, or in the context of a group, or an organization. Consumer behavior involves the use and disposal of products as well as the study of how they are purchased. Product use is often of great interest to the marketer, because this may influence how a product is best positioned or how we can encourage increased consumption (Belch, 1998).

From definition of the theories mentioned above, consumer behavior is the process of individual or group search, select, purchase, evaluate, use and dispose of the products which including tangible products, services, ideas or experiences for their own satisfaction. The marketer will later evaluate those products usage to create marketing strategy to increase those product's consumption.

2.2 Purchasing Decision Making Process Theory

The purchasing decision making process is identified as the process of decision making before purchasing the products with more than two options. The process related to psychological and physical behaviors. (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1994)

Solomon, (2002) Buying decision process is the process of making decision of the consumers; those consumers must go through series of steps which consist of:

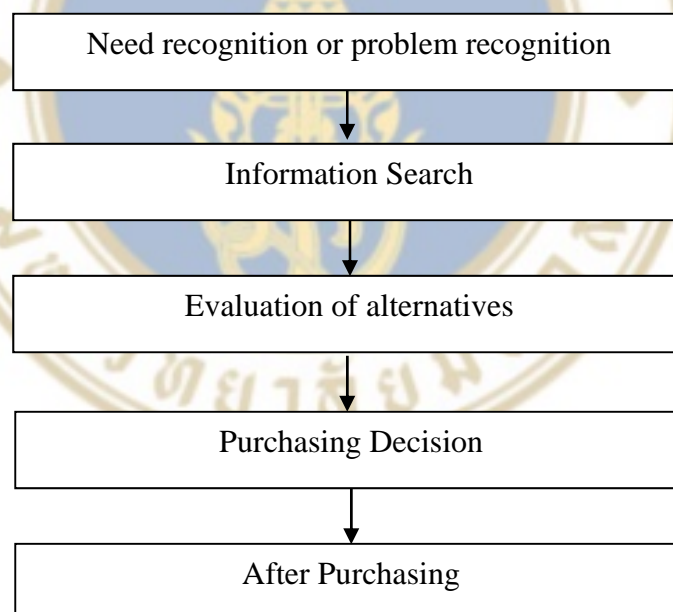


Figure 2.1 Process of purchasing decision

1. Schiffman and Kanuk, (1994) Need recognition or problem recognition occurs when consumers see a significant difference between their state of affairs and some desired or ideal state. The desired might be occurred by inner self or stimulation

for example hungry, thirsty, pain as the physiological needs or desire in psychological needs. The problem occurs when consumers perceive that there is a problem to be solved that may be small or large, simple or complex. A problem arises when either the consumer's current state declines in quality (need recognition) or his/her ideal state increases in quality (opportunity recognition) (Solomon et al., 2002). Problem recognition occurs naturally but is often spurred by marketing initiatives that create primary demand, then stimulate secondary demand (Solomon et al., 2002).

2. Schiffman and Kanuk, (1994) Once consumers recognize a problem or need, if the stimulation is strong enough, they might possibly make their purchasing. But if the stimulation isn't strong enough, the desires will be accumulated through the information search. In the information search phase, consumers scan their environment for the data they need to make a reasonable decision. Some consumers search for the information in marketplace after recognizing a need (pre-purchase search). Others, especially strong shoppers, prefer gathering and tracking for the information just for fun (Internet surfing) or in order to gather the latest information for future use (Solomon et al., 2002). Information seeking is generally more intense for larger purchases, when consumers need more information prior to purchase and can easily find and use this information. The marketers need to understand their source of information including:

- Personal source: family, friends, neighbors etc.
- Commercial source: Advertisement, salesperson, packaging, exhibition
- Public source: Mass media, office of the consumer protection board
- Experiential source: their own personal experience
- Experimental source: the association that evaluate the quality of the products or the association that doing the research of the current market situation. If the consumers evaluate the products from the distributors, the marketers can control the information that the consumers will receive but if the consumers search for the information by this source, the information will be more accurate.

Much of the effort that goes into a purchase decision occurs at the stage when consumers must choose from among the available alternatives. Consumers with the information they have gathered from the previous step. The marketers need to understand their criteria even individual might have different criteria and the individual criteria might not be able to identify another criteria. Some might weight on the attribute, some

might weight on the loyalty, some might weight on the brand. It's up each consumers how they weight each criteria.

After the evaluation of the alternatives, the consumers would create the purchase intention in their minds and follow up by the purchase decision. Before they making their purchase there are 3 factors that would influence the purchase decision.

1. Attitude of the others: attitude of the related people would have the effect with the decision making in both positive and negative way.

2. Anticipated situational factors: Consumers will estimate the related factors such as family total income, the cost of products etc.

3. Unanticipated situational factors: Attitude of the consumers and the salesperson, the consumer's concern of the income

After making the purchase, the behavior after post purchase will be identified regarding the consumers satisfaction of the products. The satisfaction will be determined through the expectation of the consumers that come from the sales person, the gathered information, the advertisement from the company. If the advertisement is overdone, the expectation will be higher than the real quality of the product and that would create the consumers dissatisfaction.

2.3 Conceptual Model

Nicosia Model: This model focuses on the relationship between the firm and its potential consumers. The firm communicates with consumers through its marketing messages (advertising), and the consumers react to these messages by purchasing response. Looking to the model we will find that the firm and the consumer are connected with each other, the firm tries to influence the consumer and the consumer is influencing the firm by his decision. (Nicosia, 1976) This conceptual model is similar to the previous decision making process but in clearer perception.

Field 1

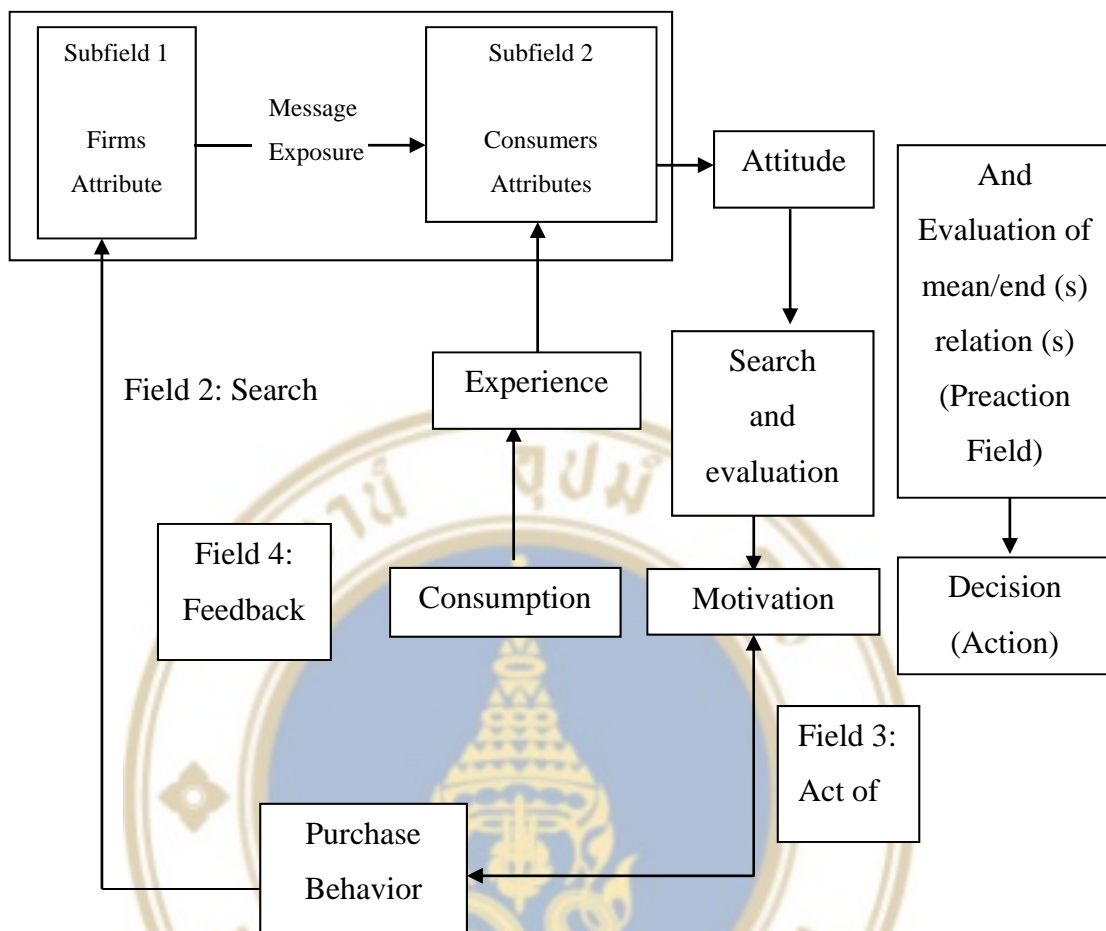


Figure 2.2 Nicosia Model of Consumer Decision Process

Source: Nicosia (1976).

The Nicosia model is divided into four major fields:

1. Field 1: The consumer attitude based on the firms' messages.

The first field is divided into two subfields. The first subfield deals with the firm's marketing environment and communication efforts that affect consumer attitudes, the competitive environment, and characteristics of target market. Subfield two specifies the consumer characteristics e.g., experience, personality, and how he perceives the promotional idea toward the product in this stage the consumer forms his attitude toward the firm's product based on his interpretation of the message.

2. Field 2: search and evaluation

The consumer will start to search for other firm's brand and evaluate the firm's brand in comparison with alternate brands. In this case the firm motivates the consumer to purchase its brands.

3. Field 3: The act of the purchase

The result of motivation will arise by convincing the consumer to purchase the firm products from a specific retailer.

4. Field 4: Feed back

This model analyses the feedback of both the firm and the consumer after purchasing the product. The firm will benefit from its sales data as a feedback, and the consumer will use his experience with the product affects the individual's attitude and predisposition's concerning future messages from the firm.

The Nicosia model offers no detail explanation of the internal factors, which may affect the personality of the consumer, and how the consumer develops his attitude toward the product. For example, the consumer may find the firm's message very interesting, but virtually he cannot buy the firm's brand because it contains something prohibited according to his beliefs. Apparently it is very essential to include such factors in the model, which give more interpretation about the attributes affecting the decision process.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research would conduct in qualitative perspective, the research would conduct in both distributor's perspective and consumer's perspective so we can understand truly understand consumer behavior in home decorative business and the information from the research would be more accurate.

The research would be conduct in two different perspective.

Interview: one on one interview will provide qualitative result to my paper. My plan is to conduct one on one interview with some distributor's salesperson and manager to get deep information from them. The interview should last about 30 minutes to 1 hour if possible. Meanwhile the interview will also do with the consumers to get the different perspective.

Target group: Distributors employee on different position

1. Sales Person
2. Marketing
3. Sales Manager
4. Marketing manager

Interior Designers: Consumers/Clients

Observation: To see the real situation during the process of purchasing. How the consumer engage to the distributors, the interaction, problems.

Table 3.1 Interviewee's profile

| Name | Stakeholder | Occupation |
|---------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| Interviewee 1 | Company | Product advisor |
| Interviewee 2 | Company | Sales executive |
| Interviewee 3 | Company | Chief of product advisor |
| Interviewee 4 | Company | Supervisor |
| Interviewee 5 | Customers | Interior Designer |

Table 3.1 Interviewee's profile (cont.)

| Name | Stakeholder | Occupation |
|---------------|--------------------|---|
| Interviewee 6 | Customers | Managing director and Interior Designer |
| Interviewee 7 | Customers | Managing director |
| Interviewee 8 | Customers | CEO |
| Interviewee 9 | Customers | CEO |

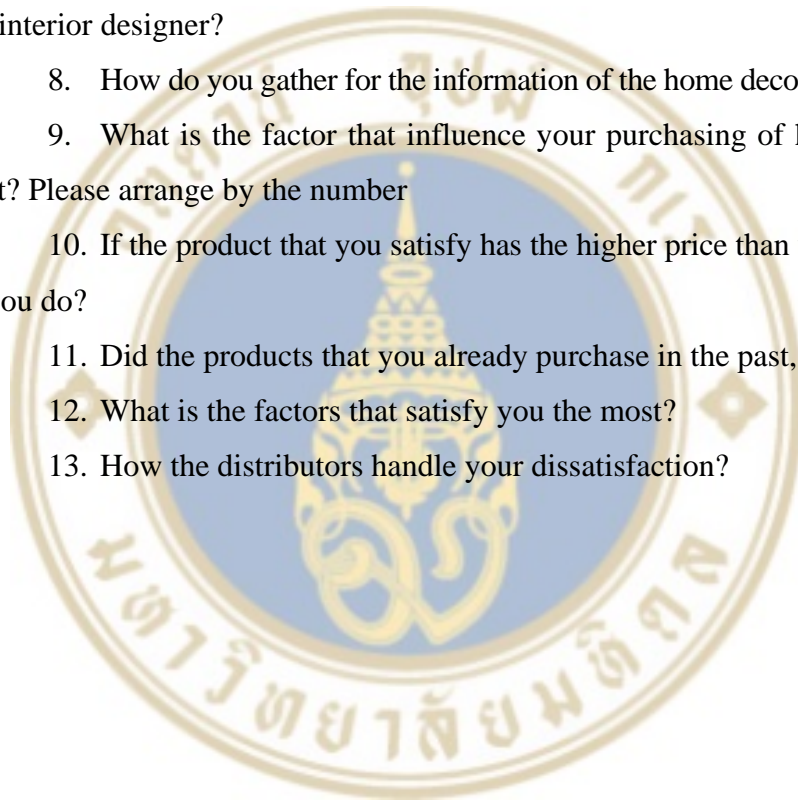
3.1 Interview Question:

3.1.1 Distributors/Manufacturers

1. What is your current position?
2. How long have you been in this business field?
3. Who is your strongest competitors?
4. What is their competitive advantage and what is your competitive advantage?
5. What is the most popular products?
6. In your perspective, why that products is the most popular one?
7. What are the factors that influence the consumer for making purchase the most?
8. Are those factors helping you in closing the deal with the consumers?
9. What would you do if you try all the product demonstration you can do, but you still can't closing the deal?
10. What would you do if the sale rate of your department drop lower than in the past?
11. Do you have any strategy to attract the customers to making purchase with you or your company?
12. After the consumer making their purchase with you, how do you take care of them for the service?
13. If the consumer have dissatisfaction with the products, how to you handle the situation?

3.1.2 Consumers/Clients

1. How often do you purchase home furnishing products?
2. What is your most favorite place for purchasing home furnishing products?
3. How do you know that distributors?
4. How do you choose the distributors?
5. Could you please tell us your favorite distributors?
6. Do you hire the interior designer for home decoration?
7. Do you make your purchasing of home decoration based on your opinion or your interior designer?
8. How do you gather for the information of the home decoration products?
9. What is the factor that influence your purchasing of home decoration the most? Please arrange by the number
10. If the product that you satisfy has the higher price than you expect, what would you do?
11. Did the products that you already purchase in the past, satisfy you?
12. What is the factors that satisfy you the most?
13. How the distributors handle your dissatisfaction?



CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

After the data collection through 2 ways of the research method including observation and interview, the analysis would start with the observation part to see the real consumer behavior in the real situation.

The observation was conducted through the different place including:

1. Imported brands home decorative products distributor in Thonglor
2. Avenue of home furnishing and restaurants in Raminthra
3. Various brands of home furnishing distributors, Ratchada

The customers possibly come individually/family or arrive with their interior designers or even interior designers only. But after the discussion with the salespersons, most of the premium home has the contact with the interior because they need to plan for best solution of the design and they don't want to waste their money for unnecessary things.

For the individual walk-in customers, most of them are lack of the knowledge of the products, what they would focus is the design of the products, they like. They would start asking for the information of that products. The question mostly start with,

“Where is the country of origin of this brand?”

“What is the material of this products?”

“Why the price of this product is high, what is the different?”

From here, I would assume that initially when the walk-in customers come into contact with the distributors, apart from the design because they already see the real furniture and has the real touching for the material. They want to have their confident in the quality of the products that would be reasonable to the premium price that they have to pay later after making decision.

For the prepared customers (or come with interior designer), they have prepared the information from internet or discussion with their interior. They would have the product which they are looking for. They would ask the salespersons for those products to see the real design. Then the come up question is about the price and inventory. When the issue of the price is occurred the negotiation for the discount and promotion would be set. Most of the customers asking for promotion and discount. If they are not satisfy with the price, they would try to find the substitute brand first and then check for the inventory.

After the further observation, the customers also asking for the after sale service before making purchasing decision. The issue that occurs here are about warranty, lead time (in case of the requirement of imported products), delivery and installation. The thing that the customers seem to worry the most is the warranty. They would ask for the time of the warranty and protection in case of there is the problems occur with the products.

Through the process of purchasing Schiffman and Kanuk, (1994), the theory was linked to the situation that we observed here the customers need to recognize their need and gather the information through the various source. From the observation, the source of the customers are the experiential source and personal source which is the family or the interior designers that they are hiring. After their arrival at the distributors, they would gather the information through the commercial source which is the salesperson. When the information is all gathered. They are possibly evaluate for the alternative before making the purchasing decision. Attitude of the others is one of the most important thing because its home furnishing products, the family would come and discuss in groups or with their own hired designer. Another that would have the influence here is unanticipated situational factors from the salesperson. Because the sales person would try to do the products demonstration to catch the customers' attention. The decision might possibly change through this process. After they make purchasing decision, it would be follow up by after sale service process.

Here is the initial assumption through the observation only. We will continue to analyze further into deeper detail of the customers and distributors through the interview. As we divided the interview into two different perspectives, we would clearly understand deeper from both sides.

As we conduct the interview, first start from the distributor's perspective. The interview was conducted through different organizations through different levels of employees. The experienced of the employees is in this business field more than 9 years.

The interviewee was asked about their competitors. Most of them mentioned about their competitors in terms of the price. Compare to the competitive advantage between these factors that they have mentioned variety of the brands, reputation, Inventory, Design and quality, Price. Price is the greatest issue in the competition.

1. Interviewee 1

“At the present, there are a lot of distributors that distribute various brands. One brand was sold through many different competitors so there are not much different between the different distributors”

2. Interviewee 3

“Some of the distributors has the same brand with our company, but they buy in large quantity to create the volume driven for some products so the customers chose to buy some products from them because it's cheaper”.

About the products, the interviewees was asked about the popular products of their own company and the reason that differentiate those products from the other distributors. All of them focus on the quality of the products first.

3. Interviewee 2

“The products is the premium products that come with the high price, so the quality is the first thing that we should focus on”.

All of them focus in the same way and with the additional information they added there might be some other factors like the brand loyalty, inventory, price and service. When they was ask for the factors in their perspective that influence the consumers purchasing decision. They believe that the most important things is the quality of the products, follow up by price, service, inventory and variety of the products. The products quality is the most important issue but as one of the interviewees mentioned earlier, one brand could be distribute by various distributors so the issue that come up next is the price war and service that the distributors offer. The inventory give the important role in the urgent project but not most of them because most of the home furnishing take a long time in the premium market.

4. Interviewee 3

“There is more than 5 years project in some case before the customers sign up for the purchasing so the lead-time has less effect in this market.”

After sale service is one of the important role in this market too because some of the products that has the mechanic system like the electronic device, the kitchen ware or the sanitary system need the installation guide from the professional in this field. The company that has the after sale service team would get the competitive advantage here. Furthermore, after a time using there might me some problems occur with the products, the after sale service also need to take care of this issue or if they can't give the solution to those problems during the warranty, the exchange of the products or refunding should be provide to customers as the solution.

To understand more about this market, the interview was conducted to interview from the consumer's perspective. The question was started with the frequency of purchasing, from the sample that we conducted the interview, it's depend on the consumers that they are during the building of their house or innovation or not to purchasing the mechanical equipment or not. During the home building or innovation, the consumers would visit the distributors in more than 1 time a month. If not, the consumers would visit the distributor in 3-6 times a month or depend on their lifestyle. But for the small decorative products, it possible that there is higher frequency of visiting distributor. The customers possibly know the distributor through different channels; word of mouth, advertising and PR, or it's near their living.

5. Interviewee 8

“Word of mouth is the best channel that the customers would acknowledge the existence of the distributors. The premium distributors don't do much advertisement through the television or radio channels but it's well-known in the group of high society customers.”

The research question was conducted further into deeper detail about the interior designers. Most of the customers hired their own interior so the information that received from the distributors is confirmed true. They need to consult with the interior designers because not many of them has the knowledge about the home furnishing products. They would defy their need by telling the interior designers what design or the concept of the house they want.

6. Interviewee 6

“It’s a must to hire the interior designer if you want to build a house or renovating because if you want your house to come out in best design you need to understand the furniture in various term including design, mechanism through the overall structure.”

When the interviewees were asked about the factors that influence their purchasing intention, all of them focus on the design and quality first and the after inventory would come last. From here, we can assume that from the consumer’s perspective in premium products, they expect for the design and quality from the premium price products that they have to pay.

7. Interviewee 6

“I expected to get the designers product because I already paid too much for it. If I want the price to become lower I can just wait for the promotion later.”

When we asked about the after sale issue, most of the consumers answer in the same way, they are all satisfied with the products they purchased because the products were analyzed through various factors before they purchase.

8. Interviewee 9

“First, I will try to get the design that fit me most. If the price is too high, I will ask for discount or find the substitute products with similar design from the other brands.”

9. Interviewee 8

“If I’m not satisfied with the products, I will ask for the products exchange or refunding into another products that they have and we can do that to most of the distributors.”

From overall of the process here, regarding Nicosia Model, the theory is confirmed true. The distributors as the subfield 1, expose the marketing message to the consumers in the subfield 2 through various PR channel including magazine, online channels, events etc. It creates the consumers perspective or the attitude through the way of communication. Some advertisement isn’t suitable for the premium products because it change the position of the products in consumer’s attitude. The premium products aren’t suited with the radio or television channel because it changes the premium perception to mass perception. After the consumers do the search and evaluation from

different ways including internet surfing, consulting with their interiors and real products demonstration, it would create the purchase intention for them. And after, they purchased the products, it would give the feedback back to subfield 1 or the company through the using of the products.



CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there are several factors involve in consumer behavior in purchasing of luxury home decorative products. The loyalty toward the distributors is one of the initial factors when the consumers decide to choose where they are going to purchase the products. The well-known brands or distributors will create the good perception toward the consumer's mind. Meanwhile, the strong relationship with the interior also create the great opportunity to the consumers because the premium habitat need the interior designers to take care of the decorative process. The interior designer would recommend the distributors that they has the great relationship with.

In term of products, the first factors that come up is design and quality of the products, the distributors believe that the consumers will be attracted to the best quality with great design because the premium customers would need the uniqueness; they want something outstanding from the others. The consumers also believe in the same way, they are willing to pay in high price for the distinguished products with the best material the brand can offer. The Price is the upcoming factors in the distributor's perspective, but from the consumers perspective some agree with price is the second important factors but some said that the function is upcoming one and follow up by the inventory, variety of the brand, service and location.

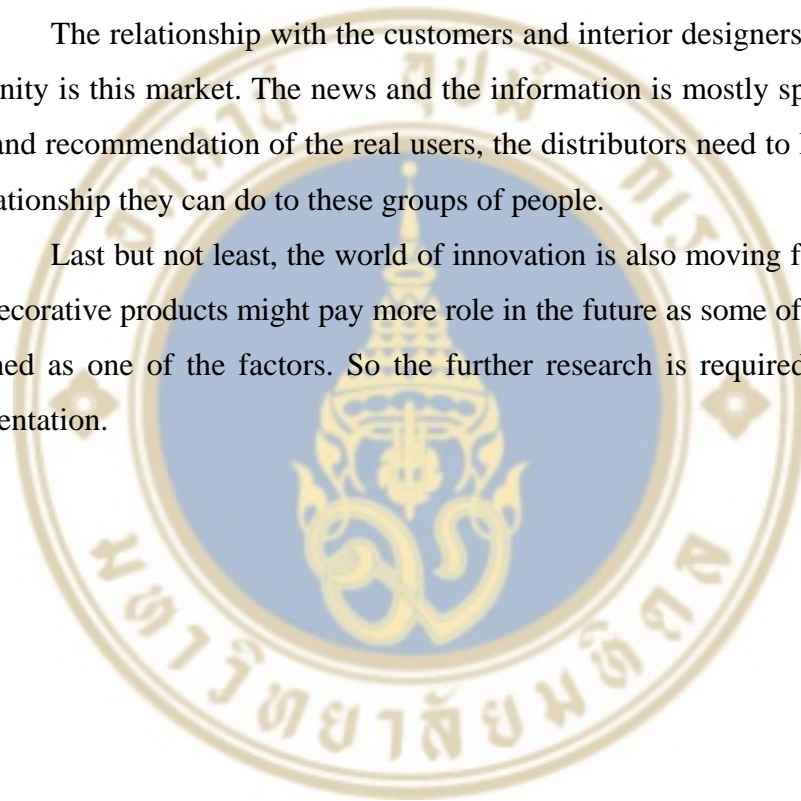
The theories of the consumer behavior are confirmed true. By evaluation of their own need, they gather the information through various sources. They evaluate for the alternative in term of price and design don't match with their conditions. After they satisfy with their needs, they make the purchasing decision and the result of the satisfaction in products and distributors would come out as the feedback.

5.1 Implementation

The research can be used by the distributors to arrange the factors into the action plan of the company. They can rearrange the importance of each factors so they can focus their marketing plan on the right issue instead of wasting investment in the wrong way. The premium products don't need much advertisement because it would make the image of the brand drop off. The promotion is a good option but should be so often. The most important thing is the quality and design, choosing the right brand would be the greatest competitive advantage of the distributors.

The relationship with the customers and interior designers is also the great opportunity in this market. The news and the information is mostly spread by word of mouth and recommendation of the real users, the distributors need to keep up with the best relationship they can do to these groups of people.

Last but not least, the world of innovation is also moving fast. The function of the decorative products might play more role in the future as some of the interviewees mentioned as one of the factors. So the further research is required before the real implementation.



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