

**FACTORS INFLUENCING MILLENNIAL MOTHERS'
BUYING DECISIONS OF COMPLEMENTARY FOOD FOR
INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN**



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entitled
**FACTORS INFLUENCING MILLENNIAL MOTHERS'
BUYING DECISIONS OF COMPLEMENTARY FOOD FOR
INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN**

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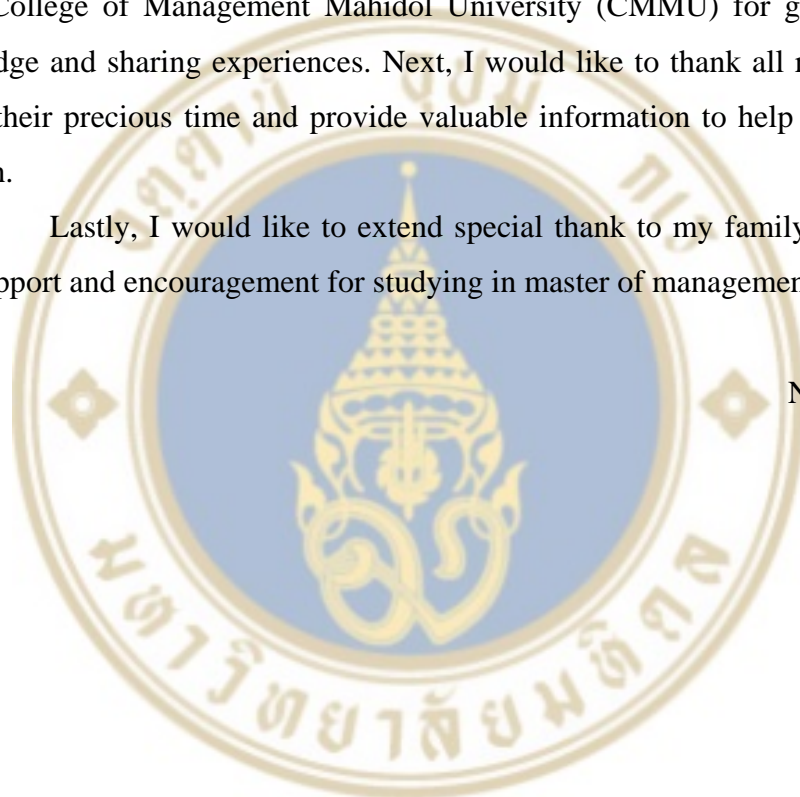
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FACTORS INFLUENCING MILLENNIAL MOTHERS' BUYING DECISIONS OF COMPLEMENTARY FOOD FOR INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to study the factors influencing millennial mothers' buying decisions of complementary food for infants and young children. Regarding the conceptual framework, the influence of marketing mix includes product, price, place and promotion. A qualitative method was used to collect data by in-depth interviews with thirty respondents who possessed experience in purchasing complementary food for infants and young children using various channels and live in Bangkok Metropolitan Region. For the factors affecting buying decisions related to the marketing mix, the results from the questionnaire revealed that respondents emphasized the factors from the most important factor to the least important factor, which are product quality, promotion, price, and place.

The result of this study showed the factors product quality is the first thing buyers consider because young kids have low immunity. Therefore, manufacturers should invest in the study of nutrients that are beneficial to children of different ages, styles, colors and sizes, as well as appropriate packaging to appeal to kids. Many buyers make purchases during 'Buy One Get One' promotional periods because it saves a lot of money. This research indicates that most buyers make their purchases in supermarkets and hypermarkets. Thus, manufacturers should place their products for distribution to cover both channels. Manufacturers should set competitive prices in the market suitable for the quality of the products. If the price is too low, it would make consumers think that the product is inferior.

KEY WORDS: Millennial Mother / Complementary Food / Young Children / Infants / Buying Decision

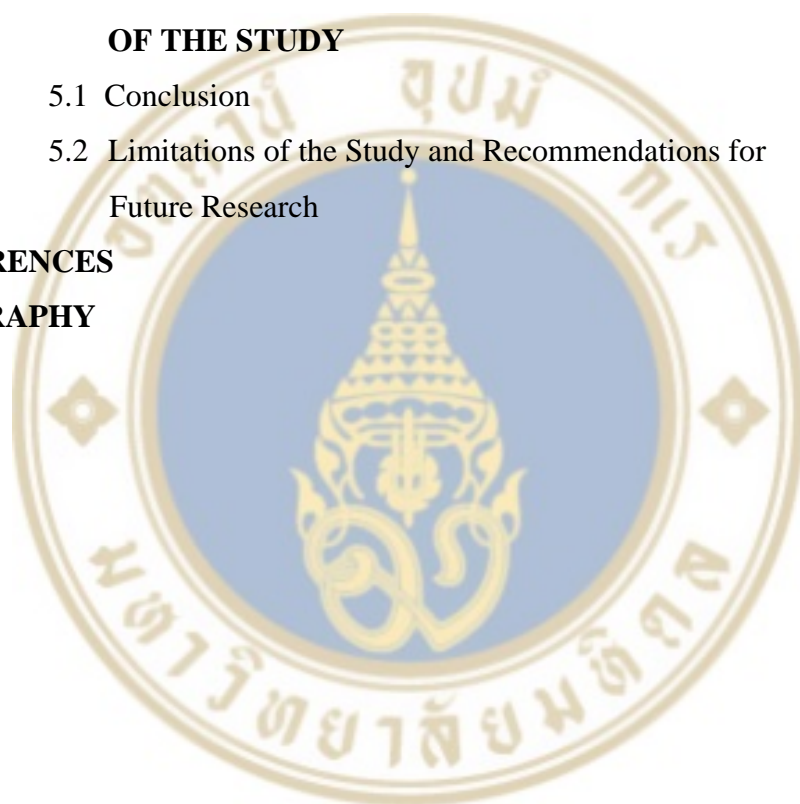
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

According to United Nations recommendations, infants should be breastfed for at least the first six months. In this period, a mother does not have to feed a baby any other food or fluids. After that, infants should receive appropriate complementary feeding with continued breastfeeding up to two years or beyond (WHO, 2005). To keep young children healthy during this period, complementary food should be nutritious, clean and safe, as well as fed in adequate amounts (WHO, 2000).

Particular nutrients such as zinc, iron, vitamin B-6, vitamin D, niacin, vitamin E, magnesium, phosphorus, biotin, and thiamin are included in complementary foods, which may not be present in sufficient amounts with the normal feeding of breast milk (Butte N, 2014). In the past, there were two kinds of complementary food that were specially prepared and usually family foods. For example, a mother may prepare rice with egg and pumpkin soup for children 9-11 months, while the family eats noodle soup. When the child is older, the mother will give the noodle soup to the child as well (WHO, 2000).

Processed complementary food for infants and young children makes up 8% of the healthy food market in Thailand and tends to grow continuously (Kasikorn Thai Research Centre, 2015). The processed complementary food market is comprised of a combination of local and imported products such as cereal, fruit drinks, corn-based snacks, and cookies in the country's market with over 15 brands of baby food in Thailand because products mostly are imported from abroad. Since Thailand is a country with abundant resources and economic crops, it provides a great opportunity for entrepreneurs to develop and design processed complementary foods for infants and young children to meet the demands of millennial mothers who are modern and pay attention to their children's nutrition.

Nowadays, millennial mothers' behaviors are different from Generation X and the Baby Boomer generation. Some of them do not believe in old people and advertising. They always seek a new way to take care of children because they are digital natives. They always use the internet to search for information and communicate with others to share their experiences before they buy products for children. Most of them prefer organic products and are willing to pay higher prices if the product is better for their children's health (RLG Research Centre, 2016).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

SEANUTS (2012) reported that Thailand presents the lowest rate of breastfeeding with approximately 5-7% of Thai children being underweight. This could have an effect on brain development and cognition. Brain development takes a long time and different amounts of time for each part of the brain to fully develop (Grossman, 2003). During the first years, the brain experiences rapid development (Dobbing, 1990). During this time, children should receive adequate dietary intake for the developing brain, with full nutrients like iodine, iron, and Omega-3 (WHO, 2005).

Getting children to consume complementary food appropriate to their age is important because complementary food helps children get the correct nutrition according to nutrition guidelines in case the mother is unable to adequately breastfeed. This helps to develop the muscles used for chewing and swallowing, as well as helping to prevent diseases caused by eating habits both in the short and long term (Thai Health Promotion Foundation, 2010).

Nowadays, the role of a mother has changed. Many millennial mothers who were born between 1980 and 2000 have to work outside of the home, leading to insufficient time to take care of children fully (Gesell, 2010). Especially, preparing complementary food for enhancing the development of children normally requires a long time to get food with complete nutrients. Therefore, processed complementary food for infants and young children is an alternative way to provide them with full nutrition, promote healthy interaction and stimulation, which is crucial for the development of the baby's brain.

1.3 Objective

The research is interested in studying the factors influencing millennial mothers' buying decisions of complementary food for infants and young children. The findings of this study could be used as guidelines for entrepreneurs to develop products and strategies that meet the demands of millennial mothers.

1.4 Potential Output

Factors influencing millennial mothers' buying decisions of complementary food for infants and young children would be explored by emphasizing marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion).



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Millennial Mothers

Mothers born between the years 1980 through 2000 are part of the millennial mother period, also known as Generation Y (Gesell, 2010). Most millennials are digital natives, constantly using the internet and digital gadgets to communicate with others (Murphy, 2011). The millennial generation is becoming the largest consumer segment, meaning they have more purchasing power that can impact the world economy (Bucuta, 2015). Based on their shopping habits, they place a premium on value when they buy grocery products at grocery stores and traditional supermarkets.

The RLG Research Centre (2016) stated that Thailand has 28.5 million mothers, with 8 million being millennial mothers. Since early 2016, there have been 500,000 newborn babies. Half of these are born to millennial mothers. According to the Thai Millennial Mother survey (RLG Research Centre, 2016), they could find new trends of Thai millennial mothers.

1. WOMOM Phenomenon *“be a woman, be a mom, I can still be myself”*
Pregnant mothers prefer to be in shape. Being pregnant does not stop them from wanting to be fit. Organic products are listed in their mind and they are willing to pay more expensive prices for their baby’s health.

2. 7 to 7 GRAN (nan) NY Hours: When millennial mothers have to go outside or work, grandparents could be the first choice for help. Some mothers use childcare services to help in raising their child. Some kids have to stay with grandparents or childcare services from 7 am to 7 pm.

3. NO RULE is the New Rule: Millennial mothers are not rebels. They are just redefining the definition of “the best” for them. For example, when they have to choose a school for their children, they tend to choose the nearest school with an acceptable reputation and good quality over a famous school.

4. TAKE IT EASY Theory: They allow their children to grow according to his/her age and environment, not controlling too much or being too strict. They let their kids decide what they want.

5. INTERNET OF “mother” THING: They will spend money and time on technology if it could ease motherhood and keep their child safe. For example, they sometimes choose to do online shopping because they do not have time to travel to the store.

6. TRANS-PARENT Culture: Millennial mothers like to discuss matters with other experienced mothers, especially about how they raise their children and any difficulties they might have.

2.2 Complementary Food for Infants and Young Children

The Thai Health Promotion Foundation (2010) stated that complementary food is food other than the food that babies get from breast milk or formula feeding. Such food is meant for nutritional supplementation or to create familiarity for eating solid foods for babies aged six months and older. It is intended for children to get the nutrients required according to the guidelines for adequate nutrition and growth. It also helps children to adjust from consuming liquid food to semi-solids and later, food for adults, to properly develop food consumption.

The importance of Complementary food:

1. Complementary food helps children get the correct nutrition according to the nutrition guidelines in case the mother is unable to adequately breastfeed. Typically, children from birth to six months can consume breast milk alone for sufficient growth. However, complementary food can be fed to children aged six months and over if the mother is unable to breastfeed or doesn't have enough milk because babies will have extrusion reflex, i.e. the ability to wrap the mouth and use the tongue to nudge out food when eating semi-solid liquids. However, these symptoms will disappear and they will be able to swallow food when the baby is older than 6 months. Additionally, the digestive system, renal, nervous system, and muscles would begin to work better.

2. Consuming complementary food helps to develop the muscles used for chewing and swallowing. Children aged six months onward are able to control the balance of the head and body well. They are also able to use their hands to pick up things and put them in their mouth, meaning they can act to accept food when hungry or reject food when full, thereby preventing overfeeding that can cause obesity. Additionally, consuming complementary food also helps children to adapt to eating semisolid food and become familiar with various types of food, which helps them to be able to consume solid food. Feeding semi-solid food too late can cause them to reject solid food.

3. Consuming complementary food helps prevent diseases caused by eating habits, both in the short and long term. Protein-energy malnutrition, iron deficiency, obesity, diabetes, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart disease and tooth decay comprise some of the potential diseases. Therefore, feeding complementary food to children appropriate to their age is important for preventing these diseases.

Getting children to consume complementary food appropriate for their age is important because feeding complementary food to children younger than 6 months can cause them to develop food allergies, especially to eggs, peanuts, nuts, fish, and seafood.

2.3 Influential Factors for Millennial Mothers' Intention to Buy Complementary Food for Infants and Young Children

2.3.1 Buying Decision Process

When making decisions concerning the purchase of products or services, consumers typically conduct a five-stage process for their purchase decisions. These stages are comprised of needs identification, data search, and assessment of options, as well as purchase decision and post-purchase behavior (Marshall and Johnston, 2010).

The buying decision process normally begins when a consumer realizes they have an unsatisfied need. *Problem recognition* is the apparent dissimilarity between an idyllic situation and the real situation. The idyllic situation is the way that a consumer hopes something is, while the real situation is the way it actually is (Hoyer, MacInnis and Pieters, 2012).

The second step is *information search*. Consumers search for information about the various options that exist to satisfy their need. Kotler and Keller (2011) stated that information sources can be divided into four groups:

1. Personal source means family friends and neighbors
2. Commercial source means advertising and salespersons
3. Public source means mass media and consumer ratings groups
4. Experimental source means touching a product, investigating the product and using it

Evaluation of alternatives means consumers appraise dissimilar products or brands according to the product's characteristics and advantages. Kotler and Keller (2011) stated that assessment involved "the consumer making decisions based primarily on conscious and rational thought"

Purchase decision involves a consumer deciding to purchase a product that got the highest score in the evaluation stage. It can be divided into 3 aspects: from whom to buy, when to buy and also not to buy.

Post purchase behavior is the last step of the buying decision process. Kotler and Keller (2011) stated that if the product or service does not meet consumer expectations, the consumer is disappointed. This leads to certain actions, which include abandoning, returning the product or even taking public action such as complaining to/about the company via social media. If a product meets expectations, the consumer will buy the product again and talk to others about it.

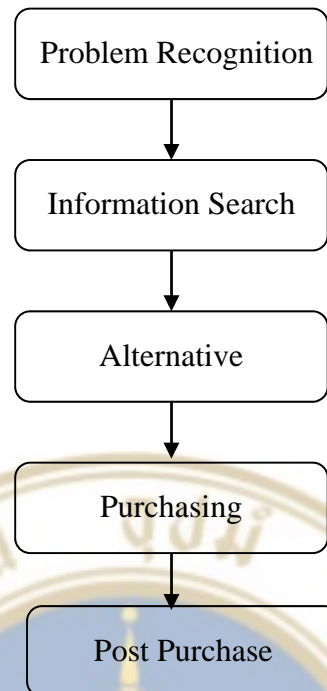


Figure 2.1 Buying Decision Process

Source: Kotler and Keller (2011)

The purchase decision process can be manipulated by many factors, as found by Hoyer, MacInnis and Pieters (2012) and detailed as follows:

1. The aspects of the marketing mix
2. Mental factors including consumer incentive, capability, prospects, insight, intelligence and outlook
3. Social aspects comprised of family, suggestion groups and culture also sway the process of making decisions

2.3.2 Marketing Mix

The marketing mix is a very important concept of the marketing plan. The set of actions or methods that a company employs to endorse its product in the market comprise the marketing mix. The concept aim is to earn maximized profit. The 4Ps are price, place, product and promotion (Marshall and Johnston, 2010).

2.3.2.1 Product: A product can be defined as anything that delivers value to serve consumer needs (Marshall and Johnston, 2010). Consumers always buy the goods or services that pop-up in their minds first. This means brand awareness

can drive more purchase decisions and have high brand awareness, resulting in high market share and superior quality evaluation.

1. **Product Quality:** The concept of food quality can be outlined as follows: food products have to be safe for consumer health and should fulfill consumer requirements for nutritional value. This is determined by their sensory attributes, level of microbiological chemical composition, toxicological contaminants, physical properties, labeling, packaging and shelf life. From this concept, food safety is the primary emphasis for food quality (Lasztity, 2009).

2. **Branding:** To make a familiar image to attract consumers and optimistically enhance the sales of a product, branding is a method employed by the food industry. As stated by Kotler, Pfoertsch and Michi (2006), a brand is a promise. It is the entirety of insight. Based on past experiences, associations and future expectations, a brand maintains a unique position in customers' minds. Loyalty is the result of a good brand image. Repeat purchasing might be induced due to inertia, whereby a customer reaches for a familiar brand name, package, logo, or color. Brand choice is easy to justify if that brand is known to be of high quality and reliable. Customers do not have to consider the choice of product or brand. Customers may return to a brand just because they like it, as defined by repeat purchasing and true loyalty, which can sometimes be a more attentive process. With a particular brand, customers get the features and characteristics they want, further sustaining their opinions of high product quality (Iacobucci, Shannon, Grigoriou, 2015).

3. **Packaging:** Packaging is a useful means of preserving and protecting food. It must be strong and durable, depending on the type of food. The quality of packaging is important. Products should be manufactured under hygienic conditions. The material should be stored correctly and be free of taste and odor. The type and size of packaging should be decided according to the product, with strong conditions and estimated shelf life. Millennials tend to choose single-serve cartons, heat-and-eat foods and other items in smaller packages, a trend that plays into their need to have exactly what they want without having to compromise (Radomir, 2009).

2.3.2.2 **Price:** The price of a product is not only representative of its monetary value; it is a meaningful way of expressing a product's intangible value in comparison with the values of competing products. Competitors and collaborators

may have dissimilar quality, positioning and image for their products and brands. Customers employ prices as a way of gaining information about potential quality. General sense dictates that a product with a higher price must be of better quality (Marshall and Johnston, 2010).

2.3.2.3 Place: Place refers to the location and distribution channel used to get the product to the consumer. Place affects a consumer's perception in terms of the value and benefit of obtaining a product. Important factors of place include good location and accessibility (Charoensettasilp and Wu, 2012).

2.3.2.4 Promotion: Loundon and Bitta (2002) stated that sales promotion plays an important role in decision making. Sales promotion is able to promote a company effectively via profit increasing from higher sales and increased sales margin.

As defined for this research, a celebrity endorser is a famous person hired to publically endorse a product. This means the endorser is someone the general public admires or respects for some various reason. As such, the public are likely to take note of their supposed preferences and potentially copy them. Public recognition by a large population and a high degree of public awareness are hallmarks of a celebrity. Advertising by celebrities has been a useful marketing and promotional tool used by a large number of businesses. A significant aspect of celebrity publicity is the supposed link created by the endorser with the product being endorsed (Rengarajan and Sathya 2014).

2.4 Conceptual Framework

According to theory, the marketing mix factor could have an intention on consumers. Then they will buy complementary food for their baby. The following model explains the conceptual framework to be used in this study.

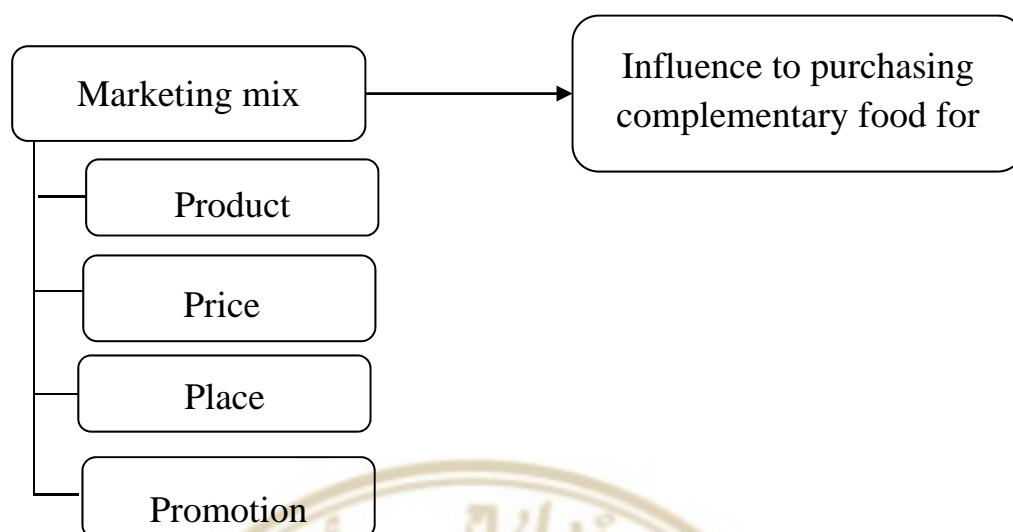
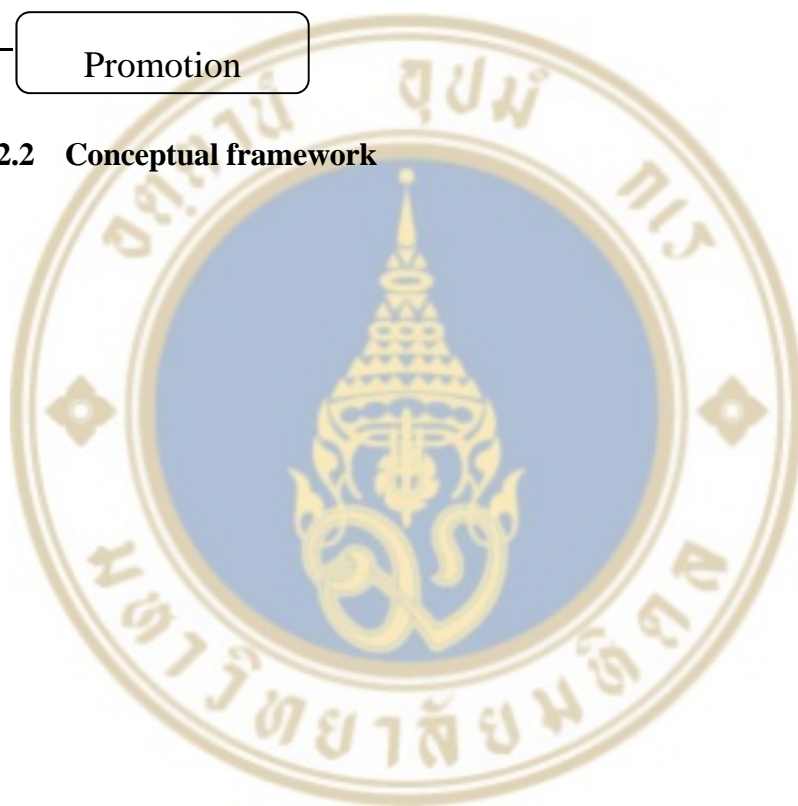


Figure 2.2 Conceptual framework



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The primary goal of the current research was to investigate the factors influencing millennial mothers' buying decisions of complementary food for infants and young children. This study will use a qualitative research method to collect data. A qualitative approach aims to understand the experiences and attitude of respondents (Merriam, 2009). It provides information about their emotions, opinions, behaviors, and beliefs, which provide insightful results that could help to describe information in detail (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Focus group interviews, discussions, semi-structured interviews, word association or sentence completion, observation, collages and thematic apperception (cartoon test) were included in the list of acceptable qualitative research methods (Zikmund and Babin, 2012).

For this study, in-depth interviewing was selected to collect information from respondents. For the purposes of this research, interviews were done on an individual basis with only the researcher and respondent present. Thus, researchers were able to ask any questions and follow up on answers with searches for supplementary details when unique or unusual behavior was needed for research (Zikmund and Babin, 2012).

3.2 Population and Sampling

In this research, the target population was millennial mothers with children aged over six months. The sampling size was thirty respondents who used to buy complementary food for infants and young children from any channel. Because of limited time, the sample group focuses on millennial mothers living in the metropolitan area of Bangkok, which includes the surrounding areas of Nakhon Pathom, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Samut Prakan, and Samut Sakhon. They will be interviewed using in-depth questions with open-ended answers to share their experiences and needs.

3.3 Data Collection

To identify the factors, the researcher has to collect data from the respondents. An in-depth interview is applied to individual respondents in order to explore their attitudes and opinions. The interviewer also used open-ended questions, which give the opportunity to the respondents to express their experiences, opinions and needs freely (Babbie, 2008). Thus, it would help the researcher to gain insightful information for analysis of the outcome. The interviews may take around 30 minutes each.

To study the factors influencing millennial mothers' buying decisions of complementary food for infants and young children, the researcher separated the questions into two parts. The first part aimed at getting answers about millennial mothers' personal information. The second part asks about how marketing mix factors affect the purchasing decisions of complementary food for infants and young children. The marketing mix is an important concept to earn and maximize profit and serve customer needs. The list of questions is provided as follows:

Table 3.1 The list of questions

Marketing Mix	Questions
Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How does the quality of a product impact your buying decision? ● Are you concerned with organic products? ● How does the brand have an impact on your buying decision? ● How does the packaging have an impact on your buying decision?
Price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How does the price have an impact on your buying decision?
Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How often do you buy complementary food for your children? ● Where do you buy complementary food? ● How much do you pay per bill?

Table 3.1 The list of questions (cont.)

Marketing Mix	Questions
Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do promotions have an impact on your buying decision? • What types of promotions will make you decide to buy? • How do advertisements have an impact on your buying decision? • How does the presenter have an impact on your buying decision?

3.4 Data Analysis

Content analysis methodology is widely used in qualitative research to analyze information. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) stated that there were three approaches to analyzing content text data: conventional, directed and summative. Coding types are obtained from data text in conventional analysis. The analysis starts from relevant research findings and theory, which are used as guidance for initial code in a directed approach. Lastly, summative analysis includes counting and comparisons, which would be used to interpret underlying context. As a result, a research analyst would be used to interpret data appropriately (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study of the "factors influencing millennial mothers' buying decisions of complementary food for infants and young children" employed qualitative research. Data collection was done by conducting in-depth interviews. The samples were thirty millennial mothers with children aged over six months and living in Bangkok or the surrounding metropolitan area. The data analysis was divided into two parts as follows:

4.1 Demographic Data

Table 4.1 Demographic Data

Demographic Background	Count	Frequency percentage (%)
Age Range		
27 -31	11	36.67%
32-36	19	63.33%
Occupation		
House wife	7	23.33%
Employee	18	60%
Business owner	5	16.67%
Education		
High School	2	6.67%
Bachelor's degree	24	80%
Master's degree	4	13.33%

Table 4.1 Demographic Data (cont.)

Demographic Background	Count	Frequency percentage (%)
Income (baht)		
15,000 - 25,000	12	40%
25,001 - 35,000	8	26.67%
35,001 - 45,000	6	20%
More than 45,001	4	13.33%
Number of Children		
1	20	66.67%
2	8	26.66%
3	2	6.67%
Age of Children		
Newborn - 5 Months	2	4.76%
6 Months - 1 Year old	12	28.57%
1 Year old - 2 Years old	4	9.52%
2 Years old - 3 Years old	7	16.67%
More than 3 Years old	17	40.48%

A millennial mother is a mother who was born between the years 1980 and 2000, meaning they would currently be roughly 16-36 years old. From the table above, it can be seen that there was no interviewee between the ages of 16-26 years because mothers were asked whether they had bought complementary food before the interviews were conducted. There was no mother under 25 years that had bought complementary food because they did not have much money and most did not take care of their own children; the children were being cared for by their grandparents and most of the grandparents didn't have any knowledge of proper nutrition for children. Consequently, the children ate bananas or rice as a dietary complementary food. This group was not targeted. The interviewees must have had experience in buying complementary food. Therefore, those interviewed that had purchased complementary food were aged between 27-31 years old (36.67 percent) and 32-36 years old (63.33 percent).

4.2 Marketing Mix

This factor is concerned with product quality, branding, packaging, price, place, and promotion. Respondents were asked to provide comments accordingly:

4.2.1 Product

1. Quality: All interviewees assigned the most importance to product quality because all were concerned about their child's health. They tended to buy complementary food when not having enough time to cook or when they travelled to foreign countries. Therefore, buying complementary food must take into account the quality of the food comparable to other food they cook. The nutrition in food must be adequate for the growth of children at that age, particularly children with less weight than the threshold. One of those interviewed said, *"I had a baby weighing more than the threshold so a doctor ordered me to strictly control the amount of breast milk and complementary food I gave."* Additionally, she said, *"the energy and nutrients for each milk or complementary food feeding must be calculated because my child will gain weight if the complementary food provides too much energy"*. In addition to food quality, interviews also asked additional questions concerning organic food to see if they paid attention to it. It turns out that there were only two that paid attention to food produced from organic raw materials because the children were allergic to certain kinds of complementary food products. Thus, organic food was substituted when complementary food was first started to be fed.

2. Branding: From the interviews, it was found that the brand was less important than the quality. If the product is of good quality and has been mentioned in a positive light, they would be willing to buy it even if the brand was not a global brand. This is because there are numerous complementary food products from private labels being sold widely on the internet. Of those interviewed, all had the experience of buying products with private labels and commented that some products with private labels were more reliable than global brands because they knew the source of the material. There was no preservation, so they could be kept for only a short period of time and appeared to be more nutritious than global brand products, which are vacuum packaged in bottles or bags.

Interviewee 17 said, "I ordered frozen complementary food products through Instagram because people were saying that they were more delicious than the ones packaged in bags or bottles that are regularly sold. Products were convenient to prepare because all that was needed was to simply thaw and heat, after which the product would be ready to be eaten. Additionally, it also appeared to be fresher and tastier than the children's complementary food products that are regularly sold."

3. Packaging: The majority of the interviewees used age and ability to handle some of the criteria for purchase decisions. Mostly, the mothers would buy complementary food products that were in sachets and needed to be mixed with water for children younger than 1.5 year old. Such children are not able to handle utensils to eat, so they need to be fed by adults. On the other hand, kids could grab complementary food products that are crispy or pastries. In addition, the colors on the bags help children have a craving for food increase. The interviews were conducted with the suggestion to modify the size of the bag according to the age of the child. A child is still small, but little hands can still hold six large bags. For children older than 1 and a half that can handle objects, food in vacuum bags will be bought for them to eat by themselves. This would also help train their small muscles. Additionally, the colors on the bag will also help increase their craving. The interviewees were suggested to modify the size of the bag according to the age of the child eating the product. This is because kids that are small have small hands, so big bags will be hard for them to handle, resulting in them often spilling it.

Interviewee 15 stated, "the children often sound glad when I pick up a bag of pink complementary food because pink is the color that they like. They would also eat it faster than any other color."

4.2.2 Price

Most interviewees thought that the prices didn't really affect their buying decisions because child complementary food prices are not that much different. Therefore, they pay more attention to the quality. Even if the price is higher for better quality, they would be willing to buy for their children to get the best quality and avoid the risk of illness from eating food with poor quality. Hospital treatment for children is as high as for adults. When their children are sick, the parents would have to take time off from

work to care for children and lose income. Therefore, they would prefer to buy food with better quality. Another point is that complementary food products are very cheap even when compared to competitor's prices. This still would not be able to motivate people to buy because most people think that the product is of inferior quality. Most interviewees spent no more than 300 baht to purchase complementary food each time. Only one person spent around 1,000 baht per time.

Interviewee 4 said, "Paying more for food today is better than paying for medical bills tomorrow".

Interviewee 12 offered, "I do not normally buy complementary food because cooking would be done at home and food would only be bought when the food at home runs out. That is when different types of complementary food have to be bought. At the time of purchase, they have to buy food for the adults as well as two children. They are aged nine months and six years, so the amount spent each time is roughly 1,000 THB"

From the above, it can be seen that the price is in line with the quality, i.e. a product with higher price will gain confidence from consumers that the product is of better quality than one that is cheaper.

4.2.3 Place

17 out of 30 interviewees would buy products from nearby supermarkets in department stores, such as Tops Supermarket (Central), Home Fresh Mart, etc.. This is because supermarkets in department stores are mostly large with a variety of items and brands to choose from. Further, each brand has different sizes and flavors to choose from when compared to buying elsewhere. Additionally, purchasing at a supermarket in department stores can also earn points for loyalty card holders. Discount coupons can also be used to purchase items such as coupons for a 50 THB discount with the purchase of 500 THB from Tops Supermarket, newspaper coupons, coupons with discount deducted from the accumulated points, the use of reward points redeemable for cash, etc. 8 out of 30 interviewees would go to buy products from a hypermarket i.e. Big C or Tesco Lotus. Because they live in metropolitan areas, it is more convenient to go shopping at a hypermarket. The other 5 mostly purchased products at a supermarket near their area from standalones such as Villa market, Tops Supermarket, Foodland, etc. The interviewer was surprised because no one bought products from a convenience

store. Most argued that a convenience store had very few options. Many offer no child complementary food products at all.

Interviewee 11 said, "I bought products from the mall because there are a lot of options. There are often discounts or money-saving offers because raising a child today is more costly than in the past. Whatever can be saved must be saved."

Interviewee 8 "I mainly bought complementary food at supermarkets in the mall because there's a lot to choose from. I can bring the kid with me because it's mostly on Saturday and Sunday, which are the days I have to be with my child, so I bring my child with me."

Interviewee 6 stated, "When I had gone outside Bangkok, I went into 7-11 and there was only Cerelac. My child no longer eats Cerelac, so it wasn't bought."

22 of the 30 interviewees made their purchases once a month because they didn't want their children to be eating child complementary food products every day. As such, they bought about 4-6 bags per month. 7 out of 30 people bought every week with 3-5 bags each time for their children to eat on a regular basis. There was only one person that would buy products because they had run out. She was a housewife, so she had time to cook complementary food.

Interviewee 11 said, "I buy children complementary food every Sunday. My child is raised by grandma the rest of the week and I was afraid that she would buy food that is not age-appropriate. Child complementary food is bought and left with the grandma to feed my child."

Interviewee 12 stated, "I usually buy extra when I go out, such as to see a doctor at the hospital or go out to the province. However, I cook my own food to feed my child when I stay home. I don't usually buy complementary food, but it is always available at home."

4.2.4 Promotion

The majority of interviewees gave importance to promotion second to product quality because quality complementary food is expensive. However, parents were willing to pay to get them to eat a healthy diet. If there is an attractive promotion for a brand, they would be interested in buying a brand new product or if the product purchase

promotion is offering more value for price. The promotions that attract millennial mothers to purchase goods are placed in order as follows:

1. Buy one get one (both products are the same)

Interviewee 11 said, "if the complementary food brand that is usually purchased has a 'buy one get one' promotion, it will be the only brand bought by buying more than double the normal price because they save a lot."

Interviewee 1 stated, "if a complementary food brand is reliable and offers a 'buy one get one' promotion, it will be bought for the children to try. If they like it, the purchase will be repeated."

2. Baby development toy

Interviewee 9 offered, "if complementary food offers a toy for child development, I'll buy it because most of the toys are often really useful to children."

Interviewee 8 said, "I would mostly buy complementary food at a department store and often take my children with me. When my children see that there's a toy, I would buy the complementary food."

3. Promotional discount

Interviewee 2 said, "I would mostly buy at lower prices because I think that if it is a 'buy one, get one' promotion, the one that is free would be almost expired. If the offer is a child development toy, it would not be worth it. Therefore, I think that promotional discounted products are for the highest quality and worthy because the discount is usually only 10-20 THB, so the quality can still be reliable."

Interviewee 20 said, "Promotional discounts can make it tempting to buy complementary food because I'm quite busy. I have no time to track promotional items. However, every time I go out to buy complementary food, there are usually many brands being discounted."

Interviewee 13 said, "I have membership cards for almost every supermarket, so I get more discount than those who are not members. Tops supermarket usually gives good discounts to customers with membership."

Additionally, it was also asked whether or not advertisements and presenters played any part in the decision to buy the product. It turned out that only 10 interviewees thought that the ads and presenters played some part in their decision to buy the product because that product must be of good quality. Otherwise, the presenter would not

endorse the product because his/her reputation could be ruined. 20 interviewees thought that the presenter contributed to the purchase only through television advertising. There was no reliability that would help make the purchase decision easier because all brands only presented positive aspects.

Interviewee 12 said, “I do not believe the information and advertisements on the websites of products because all companies have to say that theirs is the best.”

Interviewee 3 stated, “Most presenters are not actually users, making them unreliable. I don’t believe that Mali actually drinks the milk she’s presenting. She just happened to be famous at the time, so she was chosen to be a presenter. Mothers who always feed their children should be chosen as presenters to make it seem more reliable, such as Aom Phiyada or Nina Suthita. Both of them usually cook complementary food for their children and have written books on child complementary food, including frequently sharing their knowledge of child symptoms on social media.”

Interviewee 16 offered, “Reviews by actual users should be posted on social media. The reviews can be from popular or unpopular persons such as Pey Panwat, Tata Young, May Fueangarom, Aom Phiyada, or Wiangping’s mother (Fame in Facebook), etc. This can be done by shipping the product to them to be tried. They would be free to review the product. If the reviews were optimistic, it would be more credible than television commercials.”

4.3 Discussion

Overall, the study demonstrated that some findings were consistent with previous research on millennial mothers’ buying decisions of complementary food for infants and young children. Product quality is the first thing buyers consider because young kids have low immunity. If they consume food with low quality, they can more easily become sick. Therefore, manufacturers should invest in the study of nutrients that are beneficial to children of different ages, styles, colors and sizes, as well as appropriate packaging to appeal to kids. Additionally, researches have shown that some consumers pay attention to private brand products. This is because the products are thought of as being fresher and more nutritious, as well as being more conveniently purchased through online channels. Additionally, they also provide delivery services, thus

saving time. This is a great opportunity for new manufacturers to enter the market by offering products that are fresher than the current products generally sold.

Manufacturers should set competitive prices in the market suitable for the quality of the products. If the price is too low, it would make consumers think that the product is inferior. However, they would still be willing to buy the more expensive product for their kids if the quality is high.

This research indicates that most buyers make their purchases in supermarkets and hypermarkets. Thus, manufacturers should place their products for distribution to cover both channels. Distribution in convenience stores is also interesting because currently there is only one vendor, i.e. Nestle CERELAC. Thus, manufacturers should choose a product that is different from CERELAC to penetrate the market share in this distribution channel.

This research indicates that many buyers make purchases during 'Buy One Get One' promotional periods because it saves a lot of money. If vendors want to increase the number of sales, this approach is the best way. However, the promotion must be during a different period. If it is offered during the same period every year, consumers will not buy the product at the regular price, but will wait for the promotion and purchase a large quantity. This can cause problems for the manufacturers and distributors on the management of inventories, resulting in decreased sales during no-promotion periods. Manufacturers should focus their public relations/marketing on social media channels more than others because most consumers find information on products from this channel more than others. Additionally, presenters of products should have actual experience using the product to show sincerity, which will also gain consumers' trust in the product even more. There may even be comments on Youtube, IG, Facebook, etc.

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1 Conclusion

This research studied the factors influencing millennial mothers' buying decisions of complementary food for infants and young children. Regarding the conceptual framework, the influence of marketing mix includes product, price, place and promotion. A qualitative method was used to collect data by in-depth interviews with thirty respondents who possessed experience in purchasing complementary food for infants and young children using various channels. For the factors affecting buying decisions related to the marketing mix, the results from the questionnaire revealed that respondents emphasized the factors from the most important factor to the least important factor, which are product quality, promotion, price, and place.

Overall, the study demonstrated that some findings were consistent with previous research on millennial mothers' buying decisions regarding complementary food for infants and young children. However, a few noteworthy differences emerged. Firstly, millennial mothers are unconsciously influenced by marketing gimmicks such as branding, brand image and celebrity endorsements before making an impact on their decision. Some of interviewees commented that some products with private labels were more reliable than global brands because they knew the source of the material. Further, there was no preservation, so they could be kept for only a short period of time and appeared to be more nutritious than global brand products that were vacuum packaged in bottles or bags. They also did not trust in celebrity endorsements because most presenters did not actually use the products they endorsed, making them unreliable. Entrepreneurs should hire real users to represent their products. The marketing factors influence mothers' buying decision of complementary food is consistent with a previous study by Macdonald and Sharp (2000). Secondly, a similarity between this research and previous research from RLG Research Centre, (2016) is that the product quality factor is a key influencer for complementary food purchases. However, there is a sheer difference

in this study in that millennial mothers are not expecting organic ingredients and global brands, but simply prefer normal ingredients and full nutrition like added zinc, iron, vitamin B-6, vitamin D, niacin, vitamin E, magnesium, phosphorus, biotin, and thiamin.

In conclusion, we can see that millennial mothers do not need anything special in complementary food, but the complementary food should meet nutrition standards. The company should show sincerity when they communicate products to customers because millennial mothers are digital natives, using the internet to communicate with others and share information they search for.

5.2 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

The limitations of this study include its small sample size and the scope of respondents. Firstly, the sample size is small as there are only thirty respondents who were interviewed. Further, participating respondents resided in the metropolitan area of Bangkok, including Nakhon Pathom, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Samut Prakan, and Samut Sakhon. This small scope of respondents may not be able to represent all consumers' decisions. Therefore, future research should collect data by sampling a larger group from a larger geographic region, as well as conducting in-depth interviews with respondents in both urban and rural areas to obtain more diverse opinions. Moreover, this research was prepared by conducting interviews with only mothers. Therefore, the researcher proposes that future studies perform observational research on children's needs in the aspect of food taste, form, color, and packaging. The age range of children must be divided because food supplement products are for children ranging in age from 6 months to 6 years. When they are 3 years old or more, various developments will be clearly seen, including decisions on little matters. Therefore, manufacturers should keep the needs of children in mind because they are the actual consumers.

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