

**THE KEY FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE BUYING
BEHAVIOR OF THAI CONSUMERS ON BRANDED JEANS**



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ABSTRACT

Jeans are part of everyday life of Thai people, therefore the purpose of this research paper is to identify what is the top factors that affect the decision making behaviour of Thai's towards buying a pair of jeans.

This research will focus deep down on the two major factors which are visual and tactile inputs to classify which input actually has the most impact. The research uses a qualitative approach and the data was collected by an in-depth interview. Interviews were conducted at 5 main Levi's original stores in Bangkok, Thailand with 25 Thai respondents that have purchased jeans.

This study revealed that most Thai's put more emphasize on tactile inputs or the feeling of the jeans, rather than the visual or look of the jeans. Fit, durability, and quality were the first ranking inputs, while design, colour and price followed.

The study can further help merchants to understand the nature of Thai's when choosing bottom apparel and adapt to the customers preference.

KEY WORDS: Visual Input / Tactile Input / Jeans / Customer behaviour / Thai's

28 Pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Now then, which pair of jeans would fit me best?” is the most common question and thought that comes into mind when shopping around for a pair of jeans. Throughout the years, jeans were always part of mainstream fashion. Even now, jeans are being widely accepted in the “casual workplace” environment, many companies are now implementing “casual Fridays” which allows employees to wear jeans to work instead of the traditional slacks and shirt. That said, consumers still have problems in picking out a pair of jeans and researchers have always been dazzled at what actually are the factors that people look out for when picking a pair of jeans. There are many studies out there that use quantitative surveys for collecting data beforehand and/or afterwards the buying, but what if there is a research that actually grabs the thoughts of buyers while the thoughts are still fresh in their minds after buying a pair of jeans?

The phrase “Jeans never die” is always a topic in the fashion industry and there are always two sides to the story. It dates back to the 1850’s when denim jeans were initially used for utilitarian jobs that need heavy labor. Therefore durable clothes were needed and denim jeans were then declared as “essential”. Back then the factor that influenced people to be the owner of a pair of jeans was work, but what influences people nowadays? Is it the fashion trend? Is it the everyday use? Is it the multiple purposes and durability? Whatever the answers to those questions are, it is a fact that denim jeans are still the number one bottoms wear in demand. (Cotton Incorporated Lifestyle Monitor (2014, February) pants that are in demand. Retrieved from <http://lifestylemonitor.cottoninc.com/category/topic/denim/>)

In Thailand, jeans are also worn throughout the country. From farmers to politicians, students to office workers, jeans are one of the essential pieces of clothing in a wardrobe, even though a hot country like Thailand may be one of the limitations that could prevent people from considering wearing jeans. However, jeans also have an upside in Thailand. They are easy to buy, and they can be worn without washing for

days during the rainy season which laundry could be a pain. (Travi, P. (2012 November). Denim in Thailand. Retrieved from <http://www.rawrdenim.com/2012/11/take5-bangkok-thailand-denim-paradise/>) Getting around in Thailand is easiest by motorcycle, so durable jeans also are good protection both from falling and from being grazed by the exhaust pipe. Dozens of fashion companies sell denim jeans such as Levi's, Lee, Wrangler, Chaps, Nudie, Gap, Mcjeans. Also due to the mimicking industry in Thailand, lower costs jeans are also easy to find, with the fabric also being close to an original store brand but having a much lower price.

In Thailand, jeans are not considered new fashion apparel. They have been around for almost a century, though the original jeans were created ever since the late 1800s. (Bellis, M. Retrieved from http://inventors.about.com/od/sstartinventors/a/Levi_Strauss.htm) The first pair of "blue jeans" was invented by Levi Strauss and Jacob Davis in 1873, which in the time they were originally designed for cowboys and miners due to the durability of the fabric. Ever since then, jeans have been in the mainstream and looks like it will be for a long time. As of now, North America leads the worldwide market for jeans at 39% of global purchases for jeans, followed by Western Europe at 20%, Japan and Korea at 10% and the rest of the world at 31%.

Previous studies were conducted, mostly in countries which had large jeans consumption such as the United States (Lipson, 2012) and Canada (Rahman, 2012). These countries had winters and cool weather, which were ideal to using the thick fabric that is called jeans. Thailand is a hot country and the environmental features in the country do limit the consumption of jeans. The findings may be different from those of previous research. The objectives of this study are mainly to explore the underlying motives of consumers purchasing intent of jeans in Thailand.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Jeans are basically a type of clothing, and clothing is also considered a necessity which helps keep our bodies warm. Nowadays in addition to the basic functions of clothes, they now serve as fashion items. There are trends and reasons why people wear different types of clothing. There are reasons behind the ways people decide to buy a certain pair of jeans. There are aspects that jeans help tell how significant an individual is, express the status of the person and personal image. (O'Cass, 2000) Consumer behavior refers to the activities in which people acquire, consume and dispose products and services (Blackwell et al., 2001) so that means that this research shall only focus on the acquisition feature of behaviours.

2.1 Jeans in Thailand

2.1.1 The local trends

Jeans are like a fashion statement in Thailand, they are worn by everyone from kids to trendy teenagers, from rock musicians all the way over to middle age women, ladyboys, and even actresses (James, 2009). Why are these jeans popular for the Thai market? Some may argue that they are part of the “lazy life” of people (Cooper 2012) and some might say that it's because jeans are just easy to find and buy in Thailand and anyone can wear them regardless of their origin (James, 2009). “Jeans are an art” (Levi Strauss, 1853) said the great Levi Strauss, who himself never ever wore a pair of jeans in his life, although he was the founder of Levi's and Co. which eventually created the first pair of jeans. That art has been one of the driving forces of Thai fashion over the years too, as street fashion has shown to be more popular.

There are those curious people that often question why even wear jeans which are made from thick denim & cotton cloth since Thailand is a tropical country. Yes, Thailand is a hot country not far from the equator and the Sun's beaming heat, Thailand also has a rainy season that would seem to be an obstacle for the wearing of jeans since it would get very heavy. Despite of all those objections Thai people still stay main stream for jeans, that is because they are not only physically attracted to the jeans, but as well as emotionally (Fletcher 2012). An example that was researched by Fletcher (2012) was that even people in hot climates tend to wear jeans because they help protect them from the sun. While this is not entirely wrong, it does protect people from ultraviolet rays but it doesn't seem to help with the main point which is wearing jeans makes you even hotter. Another emotional factor is that they think jeans are just easy to find and easy to wear anywhere, which is entirely wrong (Fletcher 2012) as jeans until not long ago were considered impolite in many cultures such as Japan (Cox, Rupert 2008)

Jeans were considered as "impolite" in the Thai work environment because they were seen as bottoms wear for "labour" workers. They were made durable and also since labour workers used jeans Thai's would perceive that their appearance was dirty (Neng, 2011). However, nowadays, work places in Thailand seems to accept the jean trends more and more, people in offices now even wear jeans to work.

2.1.2 Prices of Jeans in Thailand

Jeans range from ultra-expensive designer styles that range to 20,000 a pair, to about a mere 250 baht a pair and everything in between (Alibaba, 2014). Cheap jeans are a yes for much of Thai society where consumers may find at local markets, though these jeans are non-branded. Meanwhile, consumers can even buy a pair of cheap jeans then dress them up with fabric paint, Swarovski crystal or stencils and suddenly have a pair that looks like they just came out from a top designer brand.

For Thai's, the prices of jeans are one of the main factors to eventually decide to buy a pair of jeans, but this study will not include "Price" as one of the factors, as price is actually the financial status of that person (Rahman 2011). Also, studies interpreted that price is a low concern while buying jeans and people are rather concerned on the quality and durability (Padariya, 2007). Extant research also found

that according to the results, the perception of price was often related to the quality of jeans. (Rahman, 2011).

2.1.3 Thai Brand Consumption

People in Thailand usually are addicted to brand name products. Brand is a powerful tool to attract more consumers in Thailand to buy particular products, especially clothing (Lerkpollakorn, 2011). Some may even regard it as equity as it can add values to the products. With a well-known brand name, consumers would appear to be more likely to purchase the products in much higher prices. As far as the same level of product quality is concerned, consumers would prefer buying brand-name products (Bello and Holbrook, 1995).

The logic also applies for jeans as well, there are non-branded local jeans which can be found in Chatuchak market (James, 2009) until the high end brands such as Levi's or CK Jeans which are found in high end shopping malls like Siam Paragon. All of this leads to two reasons why Thai people are concerned with the brands that they buy and wear; identity and lifestyle. The identity factors for Thai people play quite a strong influence on their behavior for consuming fashion clothing (Lerkpollakorn, 2011). Thai's are "pleasured" at being noticed using brand name products, most tend to cling on to the concept of "we are what we have". The way of life or lifestyle is another factor that usually influences the consumption, simply put, occupation is the easiest example. Different people from different occupations will have different needs.

2.2 Consumer Behaviour

2.2.1 Visual or Tactile?

There are two main factors that help people decide when buying a product, which are the visual input and the tactile input (Rahman 2011). For example, a particular person may decide to buy the pair of jeans because of the colour and the design, this is a visual input. Meanwhile, another person may buy jeans based on the texture and fit, this is a tactile decision. A simple concept that can be applied is that tactile is left

brained; focusing on the analytical aspects, while visual is right brained focusing on the visual aspects.

The visual input, or appearances and aesthetic responses, can also be defined as an experience. Experiences are both visual and emotional, that occurs in reaction to a specific stimulus (Berlyne, 1974; Veryzer 1993). This sensory stimulation can encourage viewers to imagine how a product looks or feels when in use. Attributes such as colour, style, and shape can arouse emotions. According to past studies, visual appeal is mostly used to differentiate between products (Schmitt and Simonson, 1997). The other input, or the tactile sense of touch, which refers to sensations aroused through the stimulation of reception from the skin, can also perceive a wide array of information (Peck, 2010). The tactile input is often used to judge a products substance like stiffness, roughness, softness and smoothness. It is also used to judge the fit and comfort towards the human skin.

There are also times that people influence may affect a consumer to buy a pair of jeans that they do not exactly like, that are visual inputs, as that person uses appearances to persuade customers, it changes the emotion. Brand is also a visual input, as the brand will influence the decision making emotion of the buyer.

This research will focus on the behaviour from both visual and tactile inputs when consumers choose their jeans, as well as the concerns people have when buying jeans. A study by Rahman (2011) indicated how visual and tactile inputs might influence consumer's evaluative processes when they shop for a pair of denim jeans. A qualitative method was adopted with a sample of 42 Canadian females aged ranging from 18 to 27 years old. Rahman (2011) found that dark colour jeans are often associated with high prices, thus people that have low income skip looking at dark jeans.

2.2.2 Difference between men and women

Past research (Padariya 2007) did do some analysis distinguishing males and females. Males were found to be more concerned with style, colour/design, durability, comfort, variety and discount. Females, on the other hand, were concerned with price, place, safety and quality as factors to buy jeans.

Females also tended to use more emotional factors for their decision making. Pine (2012) found that what a woman chooses to wear is heavily dependent

upon her emotional state. One hundred women were asked what they wore when feeling depressed and more than half of them said jeans. Only a third would wear jeans when feeling happy, therefore the study (Pine,2012) showed a high possibility that most women would decide to go out and buy jeans when they are depressed, rather than buy fancy clothing.

2.3 Gaps in Literature

Even though past research covered many aspects of consumer behaviors, many gaps were still found in the literature. Most research (Campbell et al. 1976) used open-ended questions which allowed the customers to contribute their mind, which means that further investigations of emotional and psychological benefits to the consumer are needed. This is because there were some respondents that failed to give sufficient or enough information on their preferences for certain product attributes over other alternatives. Also most of the samples from the past research were towards the feminine sides, as more women were interviewed than men in almost all past research (Auty & Elliott, 1998). Existing studies were also conducted outside Thailand. The weather and environment where these studies were conducted also were in favour of the research. Jeans are best worn in cool conditions, however Thailand is a hot country, which the mind-set of the people towards buying jeans will contribute a whole new perspective of study.

Attitude is also a gap for many studies (Carey et al., 1996); attitudes do tend get in the way of research, which refer to likelihood of people who learn to behave in such a way that corresponds to satisfied or dissatisfied conditions toward something. It can be referred to internal feeling that reflects tendency of satisfaction or dissatisfaction toward something such as brand, service. As results of psychological experiment, attitude cannot be apparently observed but requires behaviors of people. Attitude is the internal feeling that people use to evaluate or judge something based on favorable or unfavorable feeling toward people, objects, events, and surrounding situations. Those who prefer something have positive attitude toward such things and, vice versa, people

who dislike something will have negative attitudes (Wipada 2008). As for this research the aspect of attitude will be drawn out as much as possible.

The current research will evaluate both the visual and tactile inputs. The visual perspective will be defined by if the customer decides by using sight, smell, and emotion of Thai consumers. The tactile perspective will focus on the touch and feel that Thai consumers use while deciding.



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Population and Sample

25 samples of people that walked into the store and bought jeans were selected. The selection criteria for the participants of this research were quite straightforward. The participants must be a customer that walked into the store and tried on a pair of jeans and bought them. The objective of the study is to see the key factors that influence the behaviour of buying jeans. The participants were chosen regardless of their education, gender or age. The store that was the place of research collection was Levi's Original Store at five locations which were Mega Bangna, Central Rama 9, Central Lardprao, Seacon Square, and Central World. The interviews were conducted in a closed environment where people may feel at ease. After a purchase, respondents were approached and asked to join an in-depth interview. A total of five respondents per location were chosen to add up to a total of 25 samples from all five locations.

Out of the population of about 100 consumers per day that walk into the store, the sample participants are narrowed down to a purposive sample of participants which are consumers who buy jeans. These consumers possess the knowledge to answer the specific questions prepared that are drilled down to focus on the behavior of consumers that actually buy products, and to grab the aspect that actually ignites the thought into the minds of consumers that create the decision to purchase the product. These samples are readily available and convenient to provide the information required for this study.

Respondents were all informed that participation was voluntary and they were assured their anonymity would be preserved. To increase the participation rate and show appreciation to the subjects, a complementary limited edition handkerchief which only 500 pieces were made were given as a gift to each participant. Interviews were written down on paper as well as recorded on a sound recorder if given permission from the participants. The assessment and interview with each respondent ranged from

15 minutes to 25 minutes. According to Grunert and Bach-Larsen (2005), a sample size of 20-100 is acceptable for qualitative studies such as this. All interviews were conducted until the last question.

3.2 Research Design

Many consumer studies range from board-view exploration to in-depth analysis (McCracken, 1988) with the majority of apparel studies based on quantitative research. With this in mind, a quantitative research design which is aimed at collecting qualitative data for discovering in-depth information and hidden motivations of the participants were used. A descriptive design which is used to identify the characteristics and behaviour of the consumer towards their shopping behaviour was employed. A structured interview with a questionnaire was used to gain extensive information and knowledge of the participant.

Mostly open-ended questions were asked. The questionnaire was not intended for the use of the participant, but intended to be a guide for the researcher to use to ask and write down the answers from the participants. All questions were on a nominal scale that included all the relevant categories on the questionnaire. A question will be asked without the participant looking at the answers that could be relevant. An example of the question is “what was your decision to enter this store and buy jeans?” with the nominal scale housing all the possible categories such as the following; window display, planned shopping day, internet research, advertisement, notice, promotion, influencer, do not know, personal taste, and others. Most questions tend to grab the relevant information needed such as the reason they came to buy jeans, the reason they actually choose that pair of jeans and also the reason that they think that particular factor influences them to buy the jeans.

Participants will be asked to look at a table of jeans (Table 1) and will be asked to pick one that they favor from the chart. This is intended for participants to use their visual and tactile comparison of the jeans compared regardless of price. This information will then be used in comparison with their actual purchase. This table is also used to validate the data that is collected from the participants. If a same pair was

chosen but the main factor that was something else rather than the fit and style of jeans it highly means that they are fit focused.

The stages of interview consisted of three sections, the introductory section, the actual interview, and the reward giving. The introductory section started as soon as a potential participant successfully paid for their jeans. After an introduction of the researcher was done, the potential respondent was politely asked to participate in this research. Once a participant agreed, the participant was taken into an area which was set up for the interview. A glass of cold water was prepared with a snack to decrease nervousness and stress; this also aimed to make the participant feel welcomed and comfortable. After the interview was complete, the reward was given.

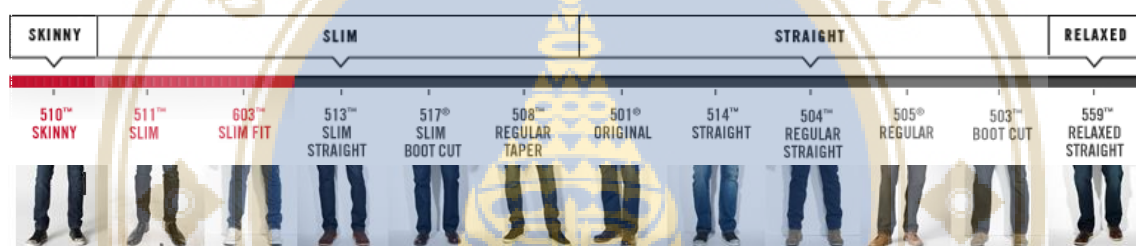


Figure 3.1 Categories of jeans (Men)

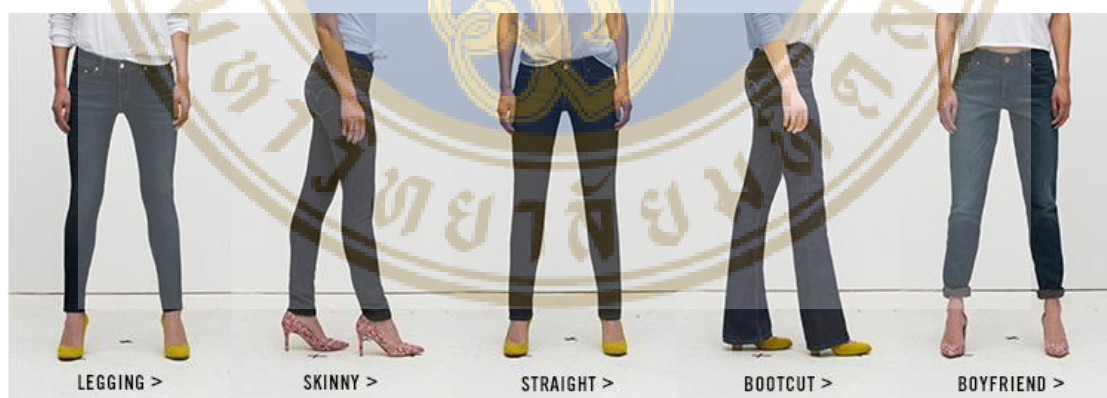


Figure 3.2 Categories of jeans (Women)

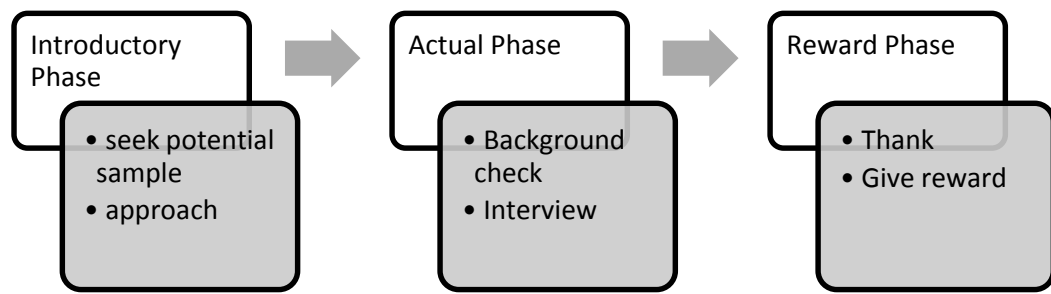


Figure 3.3 The interview framework

3.3 Data Analysis

The data was then sorted into categories for analysis and comparison according to the words and phrases that were given in the context. In some cases, the participants' responses contained multiple viewpoints and beliefs that had the same amount of weight towards the question. To avoid distortion of data by multiple responses, if the participant mentioned several words, they were considered as one response. For example, beautiful, colourful, and attractive belonged to the same "design" category.

The analysis will be based on either visual inputs or tactile inputs. As mentioned previously, visual inputs are about appearances and aesthetic responses (Rahman, 2011) they are experiences that occur in reaction to a specific stimulus. Examples of visual inputs can be classified as color, style, and shape. Tactile inputs are touches and sensations aroused through the stimulation of receptors in the skin (Klatzky, 2010). Tactile inputs can also be classified into two subdivisions, cutaneous and kinesthetic (Klatzky, 2010). Kinesthetic systems refer to the signals from muscles, tendons and joints. Cutaneous systems are stimulations from the skin.

Codes were then created for easier data review for both visual and tactile judgment, for example, PR for price, and DE for design. As the study investigated the visual and tactile inputs that might influence consumer's evaluative processes when they shop for jeans, the qualitative method examined both sensory and cognitive responses

towards the decision. These responses were then counted by tally per code, and then were identified as either significant visual or tactile responses.

Data that was analysed were digested into simple pieces of information. Long answers from the in-depth interview were compressed into short and understandable phrases. If a participant was asked about the main aspect that he or she chose when the decision to buy a pair of jeans was made, the answer would be quite long. For example, an answer may be “I chose this because when I tried out the jeans they looked good on me, I tried many others but this was the one I wanted. The overall design was also great and the price was also reasonable for this type of jeans”. This chunk of information will be analysed to see the main prospect. For this example, we have extracted the words “looked good on me” “fit” “comfortable” and “reasonable” all these were then dropped into one of eight categories which were quality, fabric, comfort, durability, fit, design, colour, brand, and price. As this participant said that it looked good on him, as well as good fit and comfortable, this will then reflect that this is on the tactile input side. Reasonable price for the quality received will then mean that this participant values quality.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Analysis

Starting off the research, participants were asked to validate their “preferred” input to segment the participants into two groups. Table 1 & Table 2 are shown for them to pick a pair from the table. The table consisted of all the jean fits available, though the fit names are not shown (skinny, slim, straight). If the participant chooses the same pair of jeans from the table towards the jeans that they have bought, they therefore will be classified as visual inputted. The logic (Rahman, 2011) behind this is that their preferred jean fit was the same from what they bought, it would cordially mean that they would look at the jeans that they like and choose their preferred pair, and therefore they are visual. Those that cannot pick or bought a different pair of jeans compared to the one that they chose from the table, are classified as tactile inputted. These two basic segments will help the research to explain their characteristics between their real visual and tactile decision and behaviour towards the purchase. These groups will be used to compare with Rahman’s (2012) study on jean evaluation. The information which is gathered will later be validated to see if the analysis and segmenting is correct.

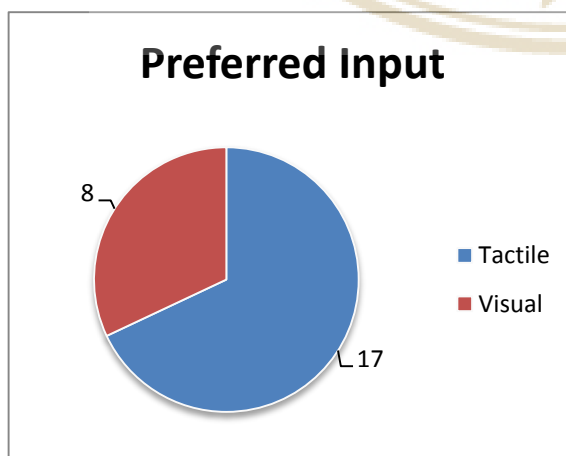


Figure 4.1 Preferred input

Table 4.1 Judgement by preferred

	Tactile	Visual
Tactile		
Quality	5	2
Fabric	1	0
Comfort	4	0
Durability	1	0
Fit	3	1
Visual		
Design	0	3
Color/wash	0	1
Brand	1	2
Price	1	1

4.2 Validation & Findings

From a sample of 25 participants, 8 picked the exact same pair of jeans that they have bought. 17 of the participants choose different type of jean that has been purchased or could not choose because they needed to see try out the jeans first. Therefore we shall classify the 8 of that has picked the same pair of jeans as “visual preferred” and for those 17 that could not make a decision until they see the actual jeans are called “tactile preferred”. This research will then challenge Rahman’s (2012) research on whether those in Thailand have the same behaviour as those in different countries. The research will also challenge Rahman’s (2012) theory of using pictures to clarify the segments of visual versus tactile inputs as well. For the input segmentation, the validation will be based on the time and the decision to shop. Towards the end of the validation, if the information is accurate, research will move on to the ultimate discussion on what truly motivates the behaviour of Thai people to select a pair of jeans.

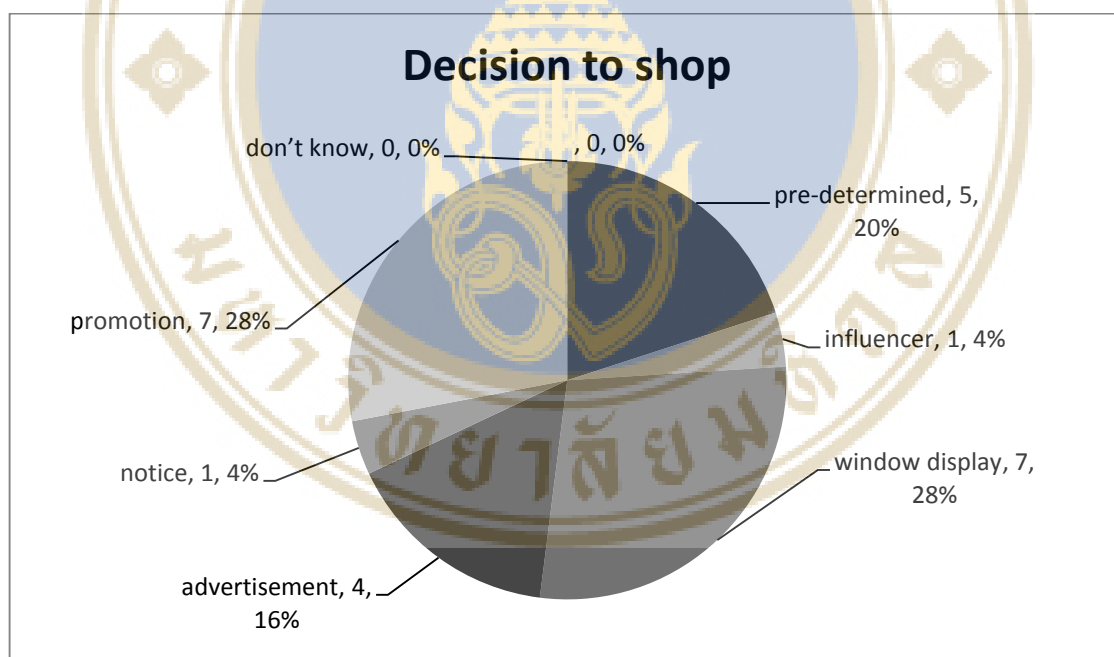
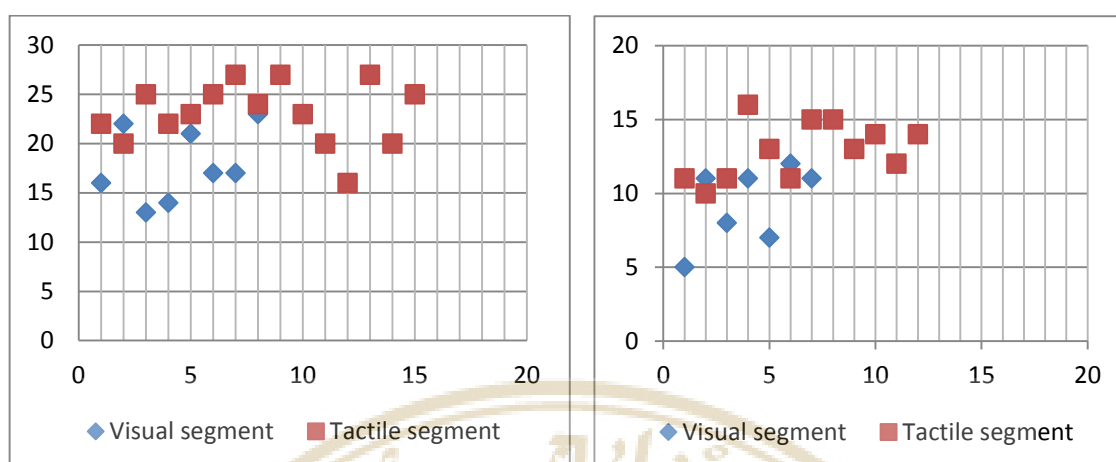


Figure 4.2 Decision to shop (External factor)

Table 4.2 Total time for purchase

Table 4.3 Time in fitting room



4.2.1 Visual theory

Participants that use visual inputs to make a purchase for jeans can be described in several ways (Rahman, 2011). Visual input shoppers tend to have a visual image in their heads already when they arrive at the store, and most visual shoppers do tend to ask for the type of product they have in their heads and head right to the jeans that they have in mind. In past researches (Rahman 2012, James 2011, Ocass 2008) however, do not focus on the time participants use to buy their jeans for the judgement of inputs.

The average time taken for people in the visual input segment was 17 minutes before making a purchase; this also includes the time that they took to try out the jeans and the time while paying at the cashier. For those in the tactile segment the average time used was 24 minutes, which was greatly higher than those in the visual segments. From this information, the tactile segment has used more time than the visual segment partially because they take more time in trying on the jeans in the fitting room than those that use visual inputs when making a purchase.

The visual judgement of Thai's when deciding to buy a pair of jeans can be classified into two parts, the actual product decision to buy and the decision factor that determines their behaviour. In this study, the highest factors that made a participant wanting to come to shop for a pair of jeans or the decision factor are tied at promotions and the window display. Feedback from the interview shows that promotions are decisive because it is the time that the participant can buy quality items at a lower cost. The window display is also one of the highest factors because participants claim that the

product looks good through a window display. Participants that mainly say that window display are the main driving factor behind their decision to shop are mostly from the “visual preferred” group (80%) as for the participants that claim that promotion influences their decision are from the “tactile preferred” group. An interesting fact is that those from the “visual preferred” group also took less time to pick as these participants take less care on the fit and feel of the jeans, but took more care on the external look of the jeans. The main decisive factor for the visual preferred group was colour and design. From this data validation, the visual segments are confirmed to be visually inputted.

4.2.2 Tactile theory

For participants who fall into the tactile preferred segment, these people are described to have the need to wear and try out the jeans before a purchase. Tactile preferred samples have the urge to feel the fabric, thread, and texture when the jeans are worn on their bodies. Thai people highly are conscious of how the fit of the jeans will look on their body. Thai's will analyse every aspect from waist to feet to see if the jeans are compatible with their body type from colour, fit, shape and comfort. These shoppers do not have the visual image of what jeans they are willing to pay for before trying them out and if it looks good on their body.

According to the findings, the tactile inputs were mostly leading to the quality of the jeans, which quality was often linked to ease of comfort, durability, and fit. It is evident that a positive sensory experience from trying on the jeans can increase participants' cognitive persuasion and affective response. As Peck (2010) described in her article, “fitting is defined as a preference for the extraction and use of information obtained through touch”. It includes two dimensions: instrumental touch (cognitive persuasion) and autotelic touch (affective response). The image of a consumer involved in instrumental touch is that of a problem solver consciously engaged in the goal-direct activity of searching for information and arriving at a final judgment, or in other words a participant that tries on various jeans until one finally comes to a conclusion. In contrast, autotelic touch involves a consumer seeking fun, sensory stimulation and enjoyment with no purchase goal necessarily salient. In this study, it is obvious that most

of the participants drew a great deal of instrumental information through tactile examination when judging the quality of jeans.

The tactile judgement in Thai's is also classified into two parts, the actual product decision to buy and the decision factor that determines their behaviour. Tactile segmented people have given information for their decision to come buy a product by their own determination. The decisive factor that determines their behaviour to buy is quality and fit, as explained above. The time used for the tactile preferred group was slightly greater than those from the visual group as these participants use high instrumental touch while selecting jeans. The time they use in the fitting room is abundantly higher than the visual group who use only an average of 7 minutes in the fitting room. Tactile participants used up to 15 minutes in the fitting room, each of them trying on an average of four items at a time.

4.3 Behaviour

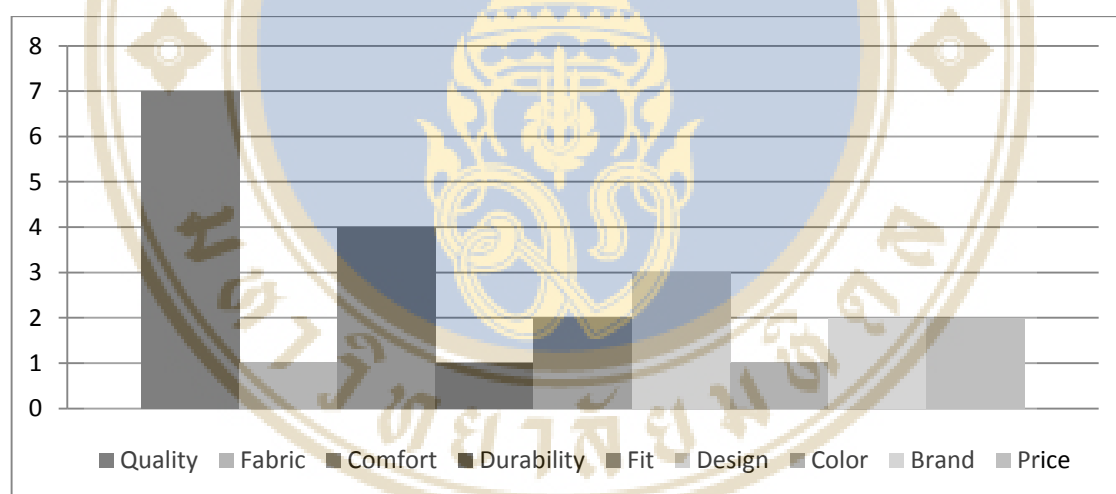


Figure 4.3 Ultimate behaviour factor

4.3.1 Ultimate behaviour

From all of the participants, almost half of those answered that the overall quality of the jeans is the most important factor that drives them to choose the certain pair of jeans for the purchase. Nine out of twenty-five participants said that quality in a jean determines almost everything. When asked if the quality was good but the fit looked bad on them the replies were all in line as “as long as the quality is good, it’s ok”. Participants were also asked why they thought that each attribute that they selected

were the key factors for them. Most participants that answered quality replied that because quality is the overall grade of the jeans. Another question, “what exactly is quality?” was asked which the answers were “the stitching, fabric and overall quality”. This shows that Thai people really put into mind the overall quality of the pair of jeans when buying jeans. When quality is high, Thai’s do not mind if the price is high as we can see from Table 9 that only a handful of participants have price as their factor.

Quality, fit, design and fit are the leading factors that ultimately affect the buying behaviour. All four of these factors, if compared with Rahman’s (2012) research, all factors except brand fall into the tactile category. Moreover, the count is more than 70% of all participants use a tactile factor as their ultimate factor when choosing to buy a pair of jeans. With this information, a conclusion can be made that most participants look for a jean that has the tactile characteristics more than visual characteristics. When the participants were asked to judge the quality of each stimulus, they tended to pay more attention to the fabric properties (e.g., perceived weight, texture, durability and comfort) and stitch (e.g., placement, visibility and thickness) rather than the colour. The following excerpts from several interviews clearly stated that fabric and stitch played a very important role when evaluating the quality of denim jeans.

Participants were asked if an increase in price would as well increase their selected attribute. The information gathered explains that if prices were high the selected attribute used to determine to buy a product was also high. A selected example from the research can be seen when a participant that answered comfort as a driving factor for buying jeans. When asked if the price was increased would the comfort increase as well, the answer was yes. In Peck’s (2010) research, it was clear that comfort would not increase with price, because comfort would increase by emotional and physical aspects.

4.3.2 Other information

Brand is not an affinity of any input (Rahman, 2012) as brand is defined by the image, mood and tone and marketing strategy of a garment company. Rahman

(2012) claims that brand may be put into a visual input as people usually use visual preceptors to “visualize” the brand. Brand is not associated with tactile inputs as well because brands cannot be “worn” or “felt”.

Price was also a relatively less important factor that affects the decision making process. The finding was similar with other prior research studies where consumers often use price to infer quality when other attributes were not available (Hsu and Burns, 2002; Olson, 1977). However, when other attributes are present, price becomes less convincing as other attributes have greater impact than the price for Thai consumers.

4.3.3 Second party influencers

Several participants came with a companion, a group of friends, or with their family. When asked if the company that they have brought along affected their choice to buy jeans or not the answer was yes. Many of the samples said that the influence from someone else helps them make the decision as well. When asked why, most participants answered that it was because their friends and family will help tell them if the product is good or bad.

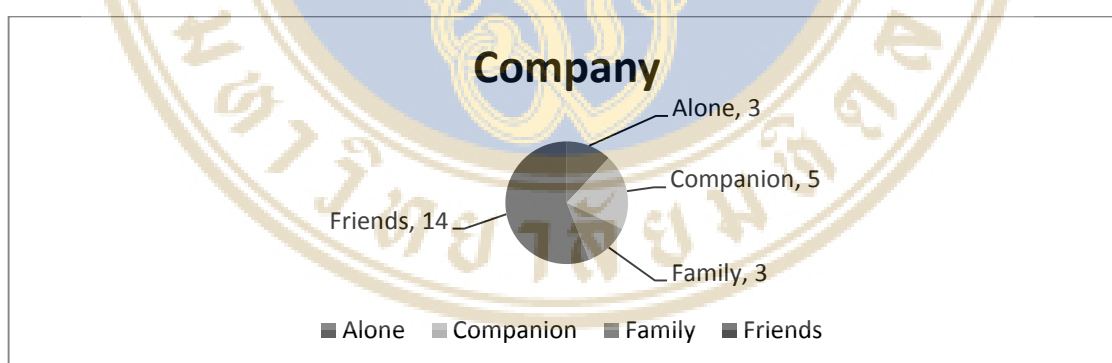


Figure 4.4 Company

In James (2011) research, the study explained that second party influencers did not have an impact when buying products. In countries like the United States or Canada, shoppers usually shop alone. This logic is explained in this research because 90% of the participants were accompanied by at least one other person. Therefore, it can be concluded that Thai people are different from other countries as they shop with

company that helps them in the decision making process, as well as influence their shopping behaviour for jeans.

4.4 Discussion

The core of this research is mainly to identify the key factor that Thai consumers use to buy jeans. That key factor has been analysed as “quality”. Quality in this research is defined as overall factors of durability, fit, and comfort, which all are put directly into the tactile input. Thai researches (Pavinee, 2011) claim that Thai’s are brand addicted. Thai consumers buy apparel to upgrade their social status, and to build their confidence. The quality in a jean can reflect the image of the person wearing it. The time that has been used before buying jeans cannot be used to assume if a person would buy a pair or not, as from this research there are participants that use 5 minutes to 30 minutes before deciding to buy jeans. If the jeans do not trigger their input and key factor, there is a high possibility that the consumer will not buy the product. Quality can also be compared to other attributes, like price. A high priced jean by logic would only mean that the quality of those jeans is high, though further research will be needed to prove this logic.

Rahmans (2012) research claims that people that are visually inputted are able to judge the pricing better than those who are tactile inputted. Though this was not analysed thoroughly, participants were also asked to guess the price of the limited edition jeans that were given to them as a gift. Those that guessed correctly or near were more tactile inputted consumers.

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS/CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

5.1.1 Conclusion

Quality, fit, design and brand are the leading factors that ultimately affect the buying behaviour. All four of these factors, if compared with Rahman's (2012) research, all factors except brand fall into the tactile category. Thai people highly are conscious of how the fit of the jeans will look on their body. Thai's will analyse every aspect from waist to feet to see if the jeans are compatible with their body type from color, fit, shape and comfort.

Thai people that use less time when buying a pair of jeans can be highly judged as visual inputted. These people can be called as having a rough image of what they want already placed in their heads. Thai people that use more time when buying jeans are more tactile inputted as they would need time to feel and analyse the jeans until they make a purchase.

5.1.2 Relationships between visual and tactile inputs

According to this study, design was the most frequently used cue for visual judgment whereas qualities of fabric hand such as fit and comfort were more frequently used for tactile judgment. Vision was able to elicit greater intense sensation, whereas touch was able to elicit more association with the functional or instrumental aspects of denim jeans. Clearly, it was difficult for some subjects to derive quality information (durability and comfort) through vision rather than by touch. It is evident that touch enabled participants to make more accurate judgments and many subjects indeed used tactile inputs to reinforce, support and re-assess than through vision.

5.2 Recommendations to manufacturers

There are two theories stated in this research, the segmentation of tactile and visual inputted customers and the ultimate key factors that affect customer behaviour towards jeans. A recommendation for designers or even jean manufacturers is that they should pay more attention to are the tactile attributes of a product. The findings show that most Thai's are segmented into the tactile input segment and are conscious of the tactile attributes. The three most important factors for Thai's that are in the majority tactile segment are quality, fit and comfort. The more attention designers pay to these attributes, the more likely those consumers will recall, respond to and accept the products. Thai's are concerned on how the jeans will look on their body, many different jean types should be made to fit all body sizes and shapes

Information gathered from the research can be used to help classify the two segments easier. Those who take more than ten minutes in choosing and fitting the jeans will almost always be classified as tactile segmented. Once these customers are identified, sales people should allow these customers as much time as possible to carefully go through the aspects of the jeans that they will buy. For classifying those who are visually inputted, sales people must look for people who come in and ask for a specific model or those who use less time in fitting because these customers look at the external appearance of the jeans. These customers should also be presented with products that have similar appearance, both colour and design.

Sales people may use information in this research to increase their sales by encouraging customers to buy a product because information from this research claims that consumers listen to second party advice. Overall, Thai's feel more confident if someone else sees them look good. Had the majority Thai's been visually inputted, designers should create jeans that "look" expensive but "average in quality" which could higher the chance visual inputted customers would buy their jeans.

5.3 Limitations and further research

5.3.1 Limitations

This research was limited to only customers that entered to Levi's Original Store in five locations, which means that all participants were Levi's customers. Even though Levi's are the leading brand of jeans in the Thai market, a research that is able to capture various consumers will always be a better research than using one consumer group. Price has been a strong factor that affected the customer's behaviour. This research has not evaluated the tactile or visual judgement that a customer has towards jean price. If multiple jean samples were given for participants to test by touch to figure which jeans seems more expensive, this would analyse the tactile judgement on price. Giving samples and allowing them to only see the design and colour of the jeans before judging the price would capture the visual judgement of the participants. This would see which input is more accurate and what customers use to determine their behaviour of buying jeans. If visual inputs are more accurate, jean manufacturers could design jeans to "look" expensive and fall down on jean quality and vice versa with tactile inputs.

To embrace the best product values and benefits, it is important to enhance the positive sensuality that exists within an apparel product. Therefore, if a research was made in Thailand again to analyse the Thai behaviour, actual products should be used to further study the visual and tactile inputs of the participants. Creating and delivering garments with desirable values are essential to sustain fashion practitioners' competitiveness and connect with their customers. Confidence is a major concern for Thai people when buying jeans according to Pavinee (2011), unfortunately this research did not ask participants about if they felt confident in their jeans. Though confidence cannot be used as a factor, it can be associated with comfort and fit, as fit can shape the body of the wearer.

5.3.2 Recommendations for further research

As this research was limited to only customers in Levi's stores, if further research can capture responses from other brand customers would improve the accuracy of the research. Levi's are considered as one of the higher positioned jean manufacturers, therefore a sample from lower positioned jean manufacturers like Mc jeans, or Wrangler would also capture the behaviours of those in the lower positions which may focus on different factors. Higher positions like Pronto or CK Jeans can also be samples for further research to capture behaviours of the higher market.

As Thai's are more tactile and quality oriented in choosing jeans, further research should drill down on the quality factors that affect the behaviour. The factors of quality should also be compared with price such as fabric, texture, comfort, durability and design. If future research can conclude that not all high priced products have high quality it would be a more complete research. Real materials and jeans should be brought for the analysis on jeans as well. A complete research that can test the visual and tactile perceptions of samples would prove to be a good research. Sample of jeans can be displayed and allowing participants to look at the jeans and tell if the price was high low or medium. Then the next phase would be allowing the participants to touch and feel the material before judging what the price would be. This would allow researchers to tell which the more accurate judgement is, and what judgement consumers use more when purchasing jeans.

This research is available as reference to all researchers who wish to extend this research. May this be of help and inspiration to all researchers who wish to study the consumer behaviour of customers from the jeans market all over the world.

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