

FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS IMPORTED BEDDING BRANDS

Piyathida Praditbatuga & Nichapa Thirakomen

Assumption University,

Bangkok, Thailand

Email: piyathida.ying@gmail.com

Abstract: *The objective of this study was to determine the factors that influence consumer purchase intention towards imported bedding brands in Thailand, based on the Theory of Reasoned Action model (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Data was collected via questionnaires applying the convenience sampling technique to select respondents. One hundred and eighty sets of questionnaires were distributed to customers in department stores in Bangkok once the reliability and validity of the instrument were established. A total of 140 sets out of the 180 sets were completed and returned. The independent variables were attitude towards products and subjective norms, and the dependent variable was purchase intention. Frequency and percentage were used to analyze demographic profile. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze respondents' perception of each variable. Hypotheses were tested with Multiple Linear Regression Analysis. The results from the Multiple Linear Regression Analysis demonstrated that attitude towards product and subjective norm both significantly influence consumer purchase intention. However, attitude towards product (Beta = 0.618) had more influence on purchase intention than subjective norm (Beta = 0.151).*

Keywords: *Imported bedding, Theory of Reasoned Action, attitude toward product, subjective norm, purchase intention*

1. INTRODUCTION

In an era where advancements in technology has enabled consumers to access higher quality products at lower prices, luxury is widely available in the market to meet all economic capacities and demands. Even sleeping is considered a luxury that can be appreciated. In 2016, the market offers a wider range of bedding products to choose from; as such, consumers are paying more attention to details such as beautiful designs, matching color schemes, and fabric quality than they did in the past. As a result, the bedding industries in both global and local markets are ever growing with many new entrants. In Thailand, consumers can also enjoy a wider range of choices in the market, either through imported bedding brands (e.g. Calvin Klein Home, Sanderson, Ralph Lauren Home, Yves Delorme, Schlossberg, Missoni, Etro, Bassetti, Roberto Cavalli, etc.) or local brands (e.g. Santas, Pasaya, Exotica, Nice, Synda, Piumino, Cannon, etc.). Manufacturers now have to develop better quality products and effective marketing strategies to capture consumer attention by trying to understand what consumers look for, what triggers their purchases, and what will bring about repeated purchases.

The findings from an abundance of existing market research on consumer buying behavior for various apparel products reveal that consumers typically use price, style, quality, size/fit, color, fabric, brand name, and the country of origin when making choices for apparel (Hsu & Burn, 2002). As bedding is defined as a category of cloth products made in the forms of flat sheets, fitted sheets, pillowcases, comforters, or bed skirts (Smith, 2004), it can also be included

into the categorical group of apparels. These studies were also referred to in consumer buying behavior analysis of bedding in the research on bedding attributes by Smith (2004), who also found the main attributes of bedding used by consumers included price, color, style, brand name, fiber content, packaged sets, fabric type, and thread count. A brand manager of an imported bedding product, in order to survive in the market nowadays, needs to think of more creative and effective marketing strategies to attract new consumers whilst simultaneously keeping the existing ones satisfied: for example, by differentiating the brand from its competitors through several approaches, knowing consumers' specific preferences, creating a strong brand image, and raising brand awareness.

In this study, the focus is on imported bedding brands. Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was applied to determine the possible factors influencing Thai consumers' purchase intention towards bedding. The study will focus on existing consumers by exploring the factors that are related to their purchasing intentions towards bed linen. It is hoped that the results from this study will provide better understandings for managers and help them to develop proper marketing plans and strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was developed from previous theories of attitude. TRA explains the relationship between attitudes and behavioral intentions, which is then used to predict how individuals will behave. The decision of a person to behave in a certain manner is based on the anticipated outcomes of performing such a behavior (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). According to Ajzen and Madden (1986), individuals will have "behavioral intention" to perform some behavior, which arises from a belief that doing that behavior will lead to some expected outcomes, before they actually perform it. In light of this, it can be said that "behavioral intention" is determined by attitudes to "behaviors and subjective norm" (Ajzen, 1992). The theory also extrapolates that the stronger the intention, the greater effort to achieve intended behavior and the higher the likelihood that the behavior is actually performed (Ajzen, 1992).

Thus, the main constructs of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) model consists of 1) attitude towards behavior, 2) subjective norm, and 3) behavioral intention. The conceptual framework of this study was developed based on this TRA model. However, attitude towards object is applied instead of attitude toward behavior as this study measures intention to buy a specific object: that is, imported bedding brands. To be able to measure the attitude towards bedding, some criteria need to be applied. That leads to the necessity to set certain attributes of bedding that consumers normally use, to assess the quality of bedding products and satisfaction they will get.

2.2 Product Attributes

Product attributes play an important part in forming attitude towards the products, and therefore is used here as criteria to measure respondent attitude. Product attributes of bedding that are considered critical in the buying decision include design, price, color, image, style,

brand name, fiber content, package sets, fabric type, and thread count, which help to distinguish the product from others (Abbott, Holland, Giacomini, and Shackleton, 2009; Hsu and Burns, 2002). Price, in this sense, refers to the perceived value of goods and services measured in some medium of exchange (Hsu and Burns, 2002). Color is the quality of an object or substance with respect to light reflected by the object, usually determined visually by measurement of hue, saturation, and brightness of the reflected light, saturation or chrome, and hue (Hsu and Burns, 2002). Together with style, which is defined as a particular kind, sort, or type, as with reference to form, appearance, or character, it is a factor that greatly influences the intentions to buy, especially when consumers have specific colors or color schemes they seek to match with their bedrooms. Brand name is a word, name, symbol, etc., especially one legally registered as a trademark, used by a manufacturer or merchant to identify its products distinctively from others of the same type and is usually prominently displayed on its goods (Smith, 2004). In addition, fiber content, the composition of the yarn used in the garment, and thread count, a measure of the fineness of fabric as the total number of vertical and horizontal threads in one square inch, are also included here as attributes technically specific to bedding specifications (Smith, 2004).

According to Smith (2004), product attributes of bedding include design, price, color, image, style, brand name, fiber content, package sets, fabric type, and thread count. All these attributes of bedding were used collectively as an independent variable which is attitude towards object (bedding).

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Figure-1) of this study is developed based on TRA. The link between attitude towards object and purchase intention is based on the studies of Smith (2004); Summer, Belleau and Zu (2006); Wu, Zhu and Dai (2010); Byoungho and Kang (2011); and Kramer (2012). Specific attributes related to bedding products such as price, color, style, brand name, fiber content, package sets, fabric type, and thread count were added as the criteria to measure consumer attitude (Smith, 2004). The link between subjective norms and purchase intention was based on the study by Lin (2007), Hung et al., (2011) and Chang (2012).

2.4 Research Hypotheses

H₀: Attitude towards bedding and subjective norm do not influence consumers' purchase intention toward imported bedding brands.

H_a: Attitude towards bedding and subjective norm influence consumers' purchase intention towards imported bedding brands.

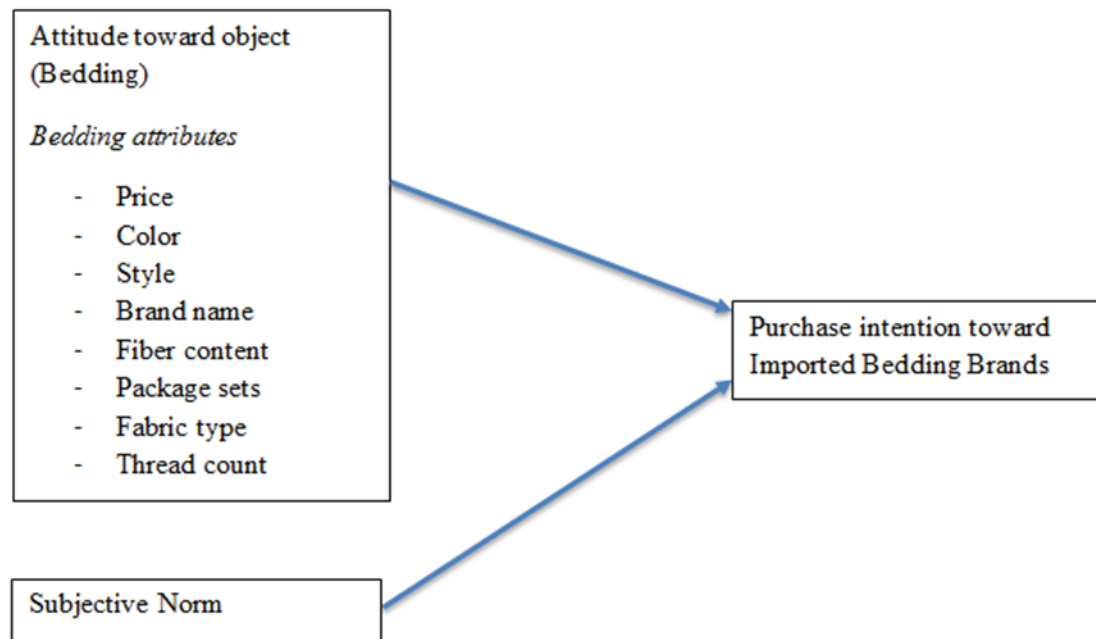


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of this study

3 METHODOLOGY

A self-administered questionnaire was conducted to determine the influence of attitude towards bedding attributes and subjective norms on consumers' purchase intention towards imported bedding brands. Eight questionnaire items of attitude toward object (bedding) are based on Smith (2004), 2 items of subjective norm are based on Lin (2007), and 3 items of purchase intention on imported bedding brands are based on Hung et. al. (2011).

Target population is buyers who have purchased imported bedding brands in the department stores in Bangkok. Due to the time constraints of the research, a rule of thumb for sample size calculation was applied. Based on Green's formula, the minimum sample size for a regression technique is $N \geq 50 + 8M$, where M is the number of independent variables, (Green, 1991). Therefore, a minimum of 66 responses was required. The sampling technique used in this study was a convenience sampling. One hundred and forty sets of questionnaires were distributed to random consumers who visited to purchase, or have purchased, imported bedding brands at retail stores in leading department stores in the Bangkok Metropolitan area. One hundred and forty valid questionnaires were returned and considered valid for data analysis. Mean evaluation was used to determine the level of attitude towards bedding, subjective norm, and purchase intention on bedding products. The hypothesis of this research was tested using Multiple Linear Regression Analysis (MLR).

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic profiles consisted of all personal backgrounds that is significant in identifying the target group: gender, income, educational background, and marital status. However, age was not included in this study as most of the imported bedding consumers are families or well-to-do couples over 30s. In the case of families, any member (or indeed several

of them) might do the shopping for the whole family, as bedding is part of home furnishing. That is why age was not brought up in this study. From 140 respondents, there were fewer males (42.9%) than females (57.1%). The majority of the respondents were married (61.4%) and well educated (66.4% of the respondents held a bachelor's degree).

In terms of consumer's monthly income, the joint majority (22.1% each) were those that earned 40,001-50,000 THB per month and those that earned above 70,000 THB per month. Interestingly, monthly income analysis shows that the 40,000-50,000 group and the above 70,000 group share the highest frequency. The first group is unexpected because a monthly income was in the range of 40,000-50,000 Baht. This discrepancy might be explained by the fact that many times, when a group of consumers were asked to answer the questionnaire for this study, it would be the youngest adult in the group who did the survey. The elders, who clearly paid for the products, refused to answer. Additionally, as the question asked about monthly income, not "family income", the subjects were likely to only give theirs. Another reason might be because consumers bought imported bedding brands as a gift for others instead of for themselves.

The respondents strongly agreed that all the attributes of imported bedding brands in this study (price, color, style, brand name, fiber content, package set, fabric type, and thread count) were important to their decision to purchase imported bedding brands. However, it was found that the level of agreement regarding color, style, fiber content, fabric type, and thread count respectively were regarded as especially important, considering the very high percentage of "Strongly agree". Package sets, brand name, and price were just slightly less than the others at "Agree."; whilst price had the lowest level among all attributes. Interestingly, many studies found that price was among the top leading factors influencing purchase intention (Abbott, Holland, Giacomini & Shackleton, 2009; Hsu and Burns, 2002). In this study, price was rated as the least important factor. This might be explained by the fact that imported bedding brands are expected to be expensive, and well-to-do consumers cherish this attribute. Therefore, in the case of imported bedding brands, price was not something they pay special attention to. It was expected that the overall percentage and the percentage of each item in the part of purchase intention would be rated as "Agree", and indeed it did, with an average score of 3.87. The ratings for each item, as well as overall score, were only at the moderate range of "Agree" and were lower in comparison to the two variables, despite being interpreted as "agree." These moderate ratings can be explained by the fact that consumers are not only limited to imported bedding brands as they also have the choice to purchase from local brands if the attributes fit their preferences.

The result from MLR revealed the linear combination of overall attitude towards bedding and overall subjective norm could significantly influence the purchase intention towards imported bedding brands at $R^2 = .140$, adjusted $R^2 = .127$, $F(2, 137) = 11.117$, $p = .000$. In addition, attitude towards imported bedding brands (Beta = 0.618) had more of an influence on purchase intention towards imported bedding brands than subjective norm (Beta = 0.151). The influence of overall attitude towards attributes and subjective norms on purchase intention is in accordance with the Theory of Reasoned Action and several past studies such as Summers, Belleau, and Xu's (2006); Wu, Zhu, and Dai (2010); Chang (2012); Kramer (2012); Kang

(2015). However, the results from MLR showed that the combination of attitudes toward bedding attributes and subjective norm could influence the purchase intention towards imported bedding brands at only 14%. Therefore, there are other factors that may influence purchase intention toward imported bedding brands; for example, perceived behavioral control and social comparison information (Chiou, 1998; Lin, 2007).

5. CONCLUSION

Comparing with subjective norms, attitude towards bedding attributes had more influence on the purchase intention of imported bedding consumers. It is therefore marketers of bedding brands should focus more on improving bedding attributes to increase consumer's purchase intention. Fabric quality (fiber content, fabric type, thread count, and style) seems to be the most important factor contributing to the purchase decision; while price, although also important, has the lowest level of influence among the attributes. This implies that for those who seek imported bedding brands, price is the last consideration; they expect price to be in line with quality. Therefore, instead of competing based on the price with other brands, the company should focus on improving product quality and design. Marketers can increase consumer's purchase intention by notifying potential consumers that they have good designs, good fabric quality, high thread count, and superior workmanship.

However, social influence from family, friends, colleagues, and celebrities could also influenced the purchase intention of imported bedding consumers. Therefore, the marketer should concentrate on word-of-mouth marketing strategy. Word-of-mouth is a powerful strategy for Thai social influence. For example, when marketers want to advertise their campaigns or give special discounts, they can promote the campaign directly to their consumers and ask consumers to bring their friends and families. It will help them to gain more potential consumers and facilitate word of mouth. Another idea for marketers is to use celebrities as endorsers of imported bedding brands and presenters in advertisements. Famous people can help to influence a higher degree of attention and recognition. Using a celebrity in advertising is likely to positively affect consumers' brand attitudes and purchase intention.

There are certain limitations in this research, which future research are recommended to address. The data collection in this study was limited to only the retail stores of an imported bedding brand in Bangkok Metropolitan, making the results quite limited in scope. Future research on this topic is, therefore, recommended to cover a greater range of subjects in other provinces, and from other channels of distributions such as online and overseas stores. This would help marketers to have more insight into factors influencing their customers' purchase intention towards imported bedding brands. Additionally, this research was limited to attitude towards bedding and subjective norms as antecedents of purchase intention. Future research should study other factors that can induce consumers' purchase intention such as perceived behavioral control and social comparison information (Lin, 2007).

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