

# **An investigation of the marketing mix factors influencing the purchasing behavior of Thai hair salon owners regarding hair color products**

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## **Abstract**

The objective of this study was to investigate the marketing mix factors influencing the purchasing behavior of Thai hair salon owners regarding hair color products. The participants of this study were Thai hair salon owners who have run their business over one year, and their salons are located in Pathumwan, Bangrak, Sathon, and Wattana districts of Bangkok. The research instrument was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: (1) the general information of the participants, and (2) the influencing factors based on the marketing mix. Copies of questionnaires were distributed directly to the participants, and 100 copies were returned. The obtained data were analyzed by using mean scores and standard deviation.

The results showed that all 7P's of the marketing mix factors: product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence influenced the purchasing behavior of the owners of large, medium-sized and small hair salons. However, each business size gave important differences in prioritizing 'P.' The owners of large hair salon prioritized product followed by physical evidence, process, price, place, people, and promotion, respectively. As for the owners of medium-sized salon, they prioritized product followed by people, process, price, place, promotion, and physical evidence, respectively while the owners of small hair salon prioritized product followed by people, process, price, promotion, physical evidence, and place, respectively

**Keywords:** marketing mix, hair color product, hair salon

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### Introduction

Regarding hairstyles, people are interested in dyeing their hair. One of the main reasons that people dye hair is to make themselves look younger (Singh, 2011).

According to the data from the United States Bureau of Labor Statics (Salon Statistics, 2010), the number of beauty salons in 2005 was 20,300, which increased by over 5.5% over in seven years. Many people visit the salon like visiting grocery store. Some women go weekly, but most go once a month (Salon Statistics, 2010).

In Thailand, the number of hair and beauty salons has increased rapidly because people become even more concerned about their appearance (Perfect Plan Supply Company, 2004). For the business owners and companies that supply them, their target market has included both men and women. They include company employees and school and university students who use the services of a salon for treatments including shampooing, drying, cutting, snipping, steaming, and coloring respectively (The Office of Business Promotion and Development, 2003)

Additionally, it is fashionable for Thai teenagers to imitate Korean and Japanese movie stars and singers (Kasikorn Thai Bank Research Center, 2009). For this reason, popular Korean and Japanese styles have influenced Thai fashion in terms of clothes, cosmetics, hair styles, and hair colors of Thai teenagers. As a result, hair color products are now not only used to conceal grey hair, but they are also used according to fashion.

According to the research results of Kasikorn Thai Bank Research Center (2009), 70 % of hair color products were placed in department stores, and 30% were placed in beauty salons. The consumers of hair color products can be separated into two groups. The first group consists of consumers who buy hair color products and apply them at home because these products are easy to use and also for economic reasons. The second group consists of consumers who use hair salons' service because they want good services, professional hairstylists, quality products, and a reasonable price. As a result, some manufacturers of hair color products have developed relationships with

hair salons because they want to increase their marketing value.

### Statement of the problem

Consumer purchasing behavior is very complex because there are many factors involved in the decision to make a purchase. Sometimes, consumers do not spend much time thinking about buying high or low value products, as their needs are more important. For this reason, manufacturers of such products should implement strategies that encourage consumers to buy their products by setting the marketing plan

Kotler (2012) stated that marketing was the processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and so as to benefit the organization and stakeholders. Marketing management is the art and science of choosing target markets and getting, keeping, and growing customers through creating, delivering, and communicating superior customer value. Marketing is not done only by the marketing department. It needs to affect every aspect of the customer's experience. To create a strong marketing organization, marketers must think like executives in other departments, and executives in other departments must think more like marketers.

Though, there have been several research studies on the services of a hair salon and the factors influencing purchasing beauty products from hair salon owners. However, studies on hair color products, which are used in a hair salon, via the 7P's scale have not been found. This paper investigated which factors based on the marketing mix model (7P's) influenced the purchasing behavior of the large, medium and small-sized salons in Bangkok.

### Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate which factors based on the marketing mix model (7P's) influenced the purchasing behavior of the large, medium and small-sized hair salons in Bangkok.

### Research questions

The research questions are as follows :

1. Which factors, based on the 7P's of the

marketing mix, influenced the purchasing behavior of large hair salon owners in Bangkok in 2012?

2. Which factors, based on the 7P's of marketing mix, influenced the purchasing behavior of medium-sized hair salon owners in Bangkok in 2012?

3. Which factors, based on the 7P's of marketing mix, influenced the purchasing behavior of small hair salon owners in Bangkok in 2012?

### **Significance of the study**

The findings of this study may provide information about the influences on the purchasing behavior of salon owners in Bangkok. The results could be used as a guideline for hair color product manufacturers to develop their products in terms of quality and after sales services in order to better compete in the hair color product market.

For example, if a manufacturer discovers that product quality is the most important factor influencing the purchasing behavior of hair salon owners, they should pay more attention to this factor in marketing strategy planning, in order to increase the company's income. At the same time, if company employees are the least significant factor that influences the purchasing decisions of their customers, then the manufacturer should make this element the least important aspect of their marketing strategy planning. As a result, when manufacturers know the problems, strengths, and weaknesses of their products, the gaps may be filled; and their customers will get a higher level of satisfaction.

### **Hair color product market in thailand**

For current Thailand economic situation and K-Pop or J-Pop culture, consumers consider buying product more than the past. As a result, manufactures should pay attention to research and develop their products so as to fit with the hair color of Thai and Asian people. Price should not be so high, and at the same time it must be appropriate with fashion trend while safety should not be neglected. It was found that hair color product market was growing continually because there were innovative products from many brands which affected the marketers to distribute their products to hair salons and do-it-yourself market.

In terms of hair color product market, there are professional market and retail market. For professional market, hair color products are designed for hair salons. Promotion and presentation activities are held for hair salon owners all over Thailand to know products in details. For retail market, the target groups are people who love to dye their hair by themselves at home; hence, the advertisements are used as tools in marketing channel especially in supermarkets and convenient stores.

### **Purchasing behavior of hair salons**

As a quality product and price are important in hair salons, purchasing behavior of hair salons of each business size may be the same or different. For example, the purchasing process of a small business would prioritize cost over quality, while medium-sized and large businesses focus more on quality than on price (Chaiyasit, 2002).

In order to meet the needs of their customers, organizations must always develop their products, charge an appropriate price and deliver the goods effectively. They must also make the existence of the products known through promotion, prepare to select employees to deal with the actual data of the products, develop processes for delivery and production and pay attention to physical evidence or presentation. For these reasons, the marketing mix is defined as the set of controllable marketing variables that a company blends to produce the best response of the needs of the customers (Lolane, 2010).

Because the company needs to reach their target group, the marketing mix stresses the mixture of a variety of factors in marketing strategies. Reviews of the related marketing mix (7P's) theory which are applied in hair salon business and hair color manufacture are explained as follows.

### **The Marketing mix**

McCarthy (2002) classified marketing mix tools which was called the *four Ps* of marketing: product, price, place, and promotion. However, it was given the breadth, complexity, and richness of marketing; as a result, people, processes and physical evidence were added.

*Product:* A successful company needs to identify the customer's needs and develop

products with the right level of quality to meet the customer's needs in the present and the future. In general, consumers mostly pay attention to the quality of the products. The quality of a product is something that a manufacturer is expected to maintain. However, there are many reasons for consumer's decision-making and purchasing, but quality is one of the main factors. Consumers may also have expectations about how unique a product is, about the differences in product design in different regions, as well as the variety of products and the development and improvement of the products.

*Price:* The price needs to be competitive, but that does not mean the price has to be the cheapest. For example, a small business may be able to compete with larger businesses by adding extra services or details to attract customers' attention. It is necessary to realize that customers expect to receive high quality products.

*Place:* The product must be available in the right quantity in the right place and at the right time. Place refers to the ways of displaying products to customer groups. This could be in either a shop window or via the Internet. Some product distribution activities include the following: (The Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2009)

*Promotion:* A promotion is the way a company communicates with customers about what promotion the business has or will be offering to customers in the future. Promotions include activities such as advertising, public relations, corporate identity, sales management, special offers, and exhibitions. Promotion must send a consistent message and give customers a reason to their preferred product.

*People:* Because a product's brand is in the employees' hands, staff members must be properly trained, well motivated, and have right attitude toward their job. If they have a good attitude toward the products, they will devote themselves to encouraging their customers to purchase these products (The Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2009).

*Process:* A customer trying to reach a company by phone is a vital source of income and returning value. This part of the process may be the first experience of a company that many customers have. There is no value in making the rest of the company runs perfectly if

this part is faulty. As a consequence, this 'P' could be a great source of competitive advantage if it is used wisely (The Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2009).

*Physical Evidence:* This 'P' demonstrated by an organization must confirm the assumptions of the customers. Attractive packaging suggests quality and gives the consumers confidence in the product before they have seen it in use. Conversely, poor quality packaging suggests a poor quality product to the consumers.

## Methodology

### Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 100 hair salon owners in Bangkok who have been running their business for over a year. These salons must be registered with the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration to comply with health and safety regulations. The selected hair salons are located in Pathumwan, Bangrak, Sathon, and Wattana districts in Bangkok.

The hair salon is categorized into three types based on the size of the business, which are as follows:

1. Small business: There are less than four seats and five staff members.
2. Medium-sized business: There are with four to ten seats and five to nine staff members.
3. Large business: There are with more than ten seats and more than nine staff members.

The researcher had investigated salon owners of the three salon businesses of the four areas at random in order to get different results. In addition, the researcher also selected the participants based on their willingness to participate in this study.

For total number of salon business after investigating, it was found that there were 26 of large business, 40 of medium-sized business and 34 of small business.

### Instrumentation

The information regarding the marketing mix factors influencing the purchasing behavior of Thai hair salon owners in regard to hair color products was obtained through a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. In Part I, the participants were asked to specify the size of their business and whether or not they were

responsible for purchasing hair color products. In Part II, the participants were asked to rate the degree of their agreement to the statement provided in each section. The agreement scales are rated by Likert (1932) as follows: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree.

### **Pilot study**

The researcher was asked to examine the questions included in the questionnaire and to determine if they were appropriate and valid. The project advisor examined the questions, and agreed that the questions were appropriate and valid to use in this study. The questionnaires were pilot tested with three hair salon owners of large, medium-sized and small hair salon whose salons were located in Wattana area of Bangkok in the second week of July 2012 to find if the wording in the questionnaire was appropriate and comprehensible. After the pilot test, some changes were made, and the questionnaire was ready to use in the main study.

### **Data collection**

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed in terms of the 7P's of the marketing mix which influence the purchasing behavior of hair salon owners in large, medium-sized and small hair salons in Bangkok. The questionnaires were given to participants in the third week of August 2012. The researcher visited hair salon owners and gave the questionnaires to the participants. The researcher collected the questionnaires after they completed them.

### **Data analysis**

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed in terms of the 7P's of the marketing mix which influence the purchasing behaviors of hair salon owners in large, medium-sized and small hair salons in Bangkok, Thailand. The factors influencing hair salon owners were considered with a view to increase the marketing channels of the hair color product manufacturers.

As the format of rating score by a typical five-level Likert items, they are: strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). For example, in the category of 'Price,' if each item has a high score, it can be concluded that a reasonable price along with quality and quantity is expected by salon owners.

### **Results**

For large hair salons, the results of the study revealed that the factors of the marketing mix which influenced the purchasing behavior of 26 large hair salons the most was 'Product' with a weighted score of 4.38. 'Physical Evidence' ranked as the second most influential factor with a weighted score of 3.68. 'Process' ranked as the third most influential factor with a weighted score of 3.62. 'Price' ranked as the fourth most influential factor with a weighted score of 3.56. 'Place' ranked as the fifth factor with a weighted score of 3.52, followed by 'People' and 'Promotion' with a weighted score of 3.32 and 3.26, respectively.

**Table 1** Large hair salons (n=26)

The Marketing mix factors	M	S.D.
Product	4.38	0.25
Physical Evidence	3.68	0.30
Process	3.62	0.58
Price	3.56	0.95
Place	3.52	0.74
People	3.32	0.69
Promotion	3.26	0.61

For medium-sized hair salon as indicated in Table 1, the results showed that 'Product' was the most influential factor affecting the purchasing behaviors of 40 medium-sized hair salon owners with a weighted score of 4.42. 'People' was ranked as the secondary factor, with a weighted score of 3.85. 'Process' was ranked as the third

most influential factor, with a weighted score of 3.82, and 'Price' was ranked fourth with a weighted score of 3.78. The fifth, sixth and final factors were 'Place', 'Promotion,' and 'Physical Evidence' with a weighted score of 3.69, 3.65 and 3.57, respectively.

**Table 2** Medium-sized hair salons (n=40)

The marketing mix factors	M	S.D.
Product	4.42	0.17
People	3.85	0.48
Process	3.82	0.56
Price	3.78	0.75
Place	3.69	0.61
Promotion	3.65	0.52
Physical Evidence	3.57	0.10

As Table 2, the 34 participants of small hair salon owners ranked 'Product' as the most influential factor with a weighted score of 3.91. 'People' was ranked as the second most influential factor with a weighted score of 3.85. 'Process' ranked as the third most influential

factor with a weighted score of 3.82. The fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh most influential factors were 'Price', 'Promotion', 'Physical Evidence,' and 'Place' with weighed scores of 3.73, 3.65, 3.57, and 3.52, respectively.

**Table 3** Small hair salons (n =34)

The marketing mix factors	M	S.D.
Product	3.91	0.45
People	3.85	0.48
Process	3.82	0.50
Price	3.73	0.98
Promotion	3.65	0.52
Physical Evidence	3.57	0.10
Place	3.52	0.67

In summary, each of the 7 P's of marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence) influenced the purchasing behavior of large, medium-sized and small hair salon owners, but they ranked the most influential factors differently, depending on their size. 'Product' was the most influential factor for large, medium-sized, and small hair salon owners, while 'People' was the secondary factor for medium-sized and small hair salons, and 'Physical evidence' was the secondary factor for large hair salons. 'Process' and 'Price' were the third and fourth most significant factors for large, medium-sized and small hair salons. 'Place' was the fifth most important factor for large and medium-sized hair salons, while 'Promotion' was the fifth most important factor for small hair salons. The sixth factor was 'People', 'Promotion' and 'Physical Evidence' for large, medium-sized and small hair salons, respectively. The least influential factors for large, medium-sized and small hair salons were 'Promotion', 'Physical Evidence' and 'Place' respectively.

### Discussion

Based on the results found in this part, each P of the marketing mix had an influence on the purchasing behavior of large hair salon owners. The most influential factor was 'Product', as indicated in the study that was conducted by Zhao (2006), which claimed that the quality of product was of the most concern to consumers and should therefore be prioritized in terms of the marketing mix.

The second most influential factor was 'Physical Evidence', as indicated in the study that was conducted by Morris (2006), which supports the idea that well-known signboards and

advertisements for products in hair salons are instrumental in attracting clients. In addition, the study of Panyasupat (2010) also confirmed this result, as the participants ranked the factor of 'Physical Evidence' at the same level as the participants in this study.

'Process' was the third factor which affected the purchasing behavior of large hair salon owners. The study of Wongnichatorn and Kongtanasintorn (2010) indicated that service issues, such as the importance of clean and safe utilities, are the third most significant factor for Japanese customers when selecting the services of day spa. At the same time, the study of Zhao (2006), and the study of Panyasupat (2010) also confirmed that the factor of 'Process' was significant and an aspect that businesses need to focus on.

'Price' was the fourth factor, and the study of Zhao (2006) and Wongnichatorn and Kongtanasintorn (2010) confirmed that reasonable price and quality are very significant factors that businesses need to focus on.

'Place' was ranked as the fifth factor, and the study of Wiwatanakantong (2010) and the study of Panyasupat (2010) also confirmed that place was a significant marketing factor influencing the purchasing behavior of customers.

'People' was the sixth factor, and the study of Wongnichatorn and Kongtanasintorn (2010) and Panyasupat (2010) emphasized the significance of this factor as it can increase the number of customers.

'Promotion' was the seventh factor, and a study by Wiwatanakantong (2010) and Wongnichatorn and Kongtanasintorn (2010) confirmed the importance of promotions such as advertising via websites, brochures and related

documents, which can attract clients to use the service.

For medium-sized hair salons in this section, the results revealed that all 7 P's of the marketing mix influenced the purchasing behavior of medium-sized hair salon owners, but the most influential single factor was 'Product'. The study that was conducted by Saohasakul (2006), supported the idea that the 'Product' was customer's main concern and affected their purchasing behavior. At the same time, the study of Zhao (2006) revealed that the quality of product was the single most influential element.

As 'People' was the secondary importance as a factor in this research, and the study of Wongnichatorn and Kongtanasintorn (2010) emphasized the significance of this factor.

'Process' was the third factor which affected the purchasing behavior of medium-sized hair salon owners. The study of Wongnichatorn and Kongtanasintorn (2010), as previously mentioned, also indicated that service processes were the third factor that Japanese customers ranked as the most influential in choosing the services of a day spa. At the same time, the study of Zhao (2006), and Panyasupat (2010) also confirmed that the element of 'Process' was a crucial need. 'Price' was the fourth factor, and the research of Zhao (2006) and Wongnichatorn and Kongtanasintorn (2010) confirmed the importance of the factors of reasonable pricing and a high level of quality. 'Place' was ranked as the fifth most influential factor, and the study of Wiwatanakantong (2010) and Panyasupat (2010) also confirmed that this factor had an influence on customer's purchasing decisions.

'Promotion' was the sixth factor, and the study that was conducted by Hirankitti *et al.*, (2009) confirmed the importance of promotions such as advertisements on websites as an effective tool to attract clients to use their services. In addition, the study of Wongnichatorn and Kongtanasintorn (2010) also supported the idea that brochures and related documents were an important aspect of marketing promotion. Moreover, the study also confirmed that promotion plan should be developed to satisfy the needs of their customers.

The final factor was 'Physical Evidence,' and the study of Wongnichatorn and Kongtanasintorn (2010) and Morris (2006) confirmed the importance of this factor as a

pleasant environment, clean premises and attractive signboard are essential in attracting, and retaining customers.

For small hair salons in this section, each P of the marketing mix influenced the purchasing behavior of small hair salon owners, but the single most influential factor was 'Product,' and the study of Saohasakul (2006) and Zhao (2006) supported the idea that the aspect that most influenced the purchasing decision of consumers was product quality.

'People' was ranked as the second most influential factor, and the study that was conducted by Wongnichatorn and Kongtanasintorn (2010) and Panyasupat (2010) indicated that a polite and well-mannered staff was the most important requirement for this business.

'Process' was the third most influential factor, and the study of Wongnichatorn and Kongtanasintorn (2010) as previously mentioned, ranked "Process" as the most influential third factor, while Panyasupat (2010) confirmed that the most significant requirement for this aspect was clean and safe utilities. The study of Wiwatanakantong (2010) confirmed that the method of payment is also a significant factor and should be acknowledged as such. 'Price' was the fourth factor, and again, the study of Wongnichatorn and Kongtanasintorn (2010) and Zhao (2006) supported the findings of this study by establishing the importance of reasonable pricing, another aspect of the marketing mix which salon owners should focus on.

'Promotion' was ranked as the fifth factor, and the study of Anusap (2003) and Hirankitti *et al.*, (2009) confirmed that promotions and advertisements on a website which utilized sex appeal were the needs that salon owners should focus on.

'Physical Evidence' was the sixth factor, and again, the research of Wongnichatorn and Kongtanasintorn (2010), Panyasupat (2010), and Morris (2006) also confirmed the importance of the influential factor of marketing strategies.

The last factor was 'Place' and the study of Wiwatanakantong (2010) indicated that place affected consumer behavior in terms of service. The study of Panyasupat (2010) indicated that this factor should not be neglected.



### Conclusion

In conclusion, 'Product' was the most influential factor for the small, medium-sized and large businesses alike. 'People' was the secondary factor for medium and small hair salons while 'Physical Evidence' was the secondary factor for large-sized hair salons. 'Process' and 'Price' were the third factor and fourth most influential factors for large, medium and small hair salons, respectively. The fifth factor for large and medium-sized hair was 'People', while for the small hair salons the fifth factor was 'Promotion'. The sixth factor for large hair salons was 'People', while for medium-sized hair salons it was 'Promotion' and in smaller hair salons it was 'Physical Evidence'. The least influential factors for large, medium-sized and small hair salons were 'Promotion,' 'Physical Evidence,' and 'Place', respectively.

According to the results, the study can be used as a guideline for a hair color product company to analyze the effectiveness of their marketing strategies and attempt to improve them. As 'Product' was clearly the most influential factor, large, medium-sized and small hair salon owners ranked this factor among the marketing mix factors. Hence, a variety of hair shades, the availability of the highest quality products, continuous improvements in the product line, and the uniqueness of the product must be considered a priority for hair color manufacturers. It was also found that 'Physical Evidence' and 'People' were the secondary factor for large, medium-sized and small hair salons respectively. If hair color manufacturers would like to reach these target groups, brand signboards and impressive packaging of 'Physical Evidence' must be used in large hair salons, while trained sales representatives and wholesalers were also important factors for medium-sized and small hair salons. 'Process' was ranked as the third factor for large, medium-sized and small hair salons. This result revealed that the accuracy of information provided by company's sales representatives and salon wholesalers, as well as the delivery process and the option to order via email, SMS, or phone are essential for hair color manufacturers as small, medium-sized and large business had the same requirement. It was found that all three of the business models, small, medium-sized and large, all prioritized 'Price' as the fourth factor, and as a result, hair color manufacturer should rank this

factor as the fourth most influential aspect, and that value for money in terms of size, as well as the quality of the product are an important requirement. 'Place' was the fifth factor for large and medium-sized hair salons, whereas 'Promotion' was the fifth factor for small hair salons. This result revealed that hair color manufacturers should pay attention to the availability of products from wholesalers because this factor can encourage large and medium-sized hair salons to make further purchases. In addition, the promotion channel via a studio for training purposes met the needs of small hair salons. The sixth factors for large, medium-sized and small hair salons were 'People,' 'Promotion,' and 'Physical Evidence', respectively. This result suggests that hair color manufacturers should pay less attention to the importance of sales representatives, promotional discount and impressive packaging in the marketing mix. The least influential factors for large, medium-sized and small hair salons were 'Promotion,' 'Physical Evidence,' and 'Place', respectively. As a result, hair color manufacturer should prioritize these factors as the least significant.

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