

THE CUSTOMER'S PURCHASE DECISION OF LAO KHRUNG LOCAL WOVEN CLOTH PRODUCT THE CASE OF PUNUMRON COMMUNITY DAN CHANG DISTRICT, SUPANBURI PROVINCE.

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ABSTRACT: The study of market condition, development of marketing strategies, and customers' purchase decision of the Lao Khrung cloth products of Punumron Sub-district, Dan Chang district, Supanburi province was mixed-method research combining quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. The data were collected and analyzed by using relevant documents, observation, in-depth interviews, and questionnaire. The sample was 400 units and purposive sampling method was used. The study revealed that sales will increase during tourist season and during special religious events. High price cloth can be sold mostly to high-income customers. The marketing strategies must focus on producing a cloth with unique patterns associated with Lao Khrung heritage. The cloth must be colorful and the pattern must display tradition and beliefs. Customers are people in Supanburi province who appreciate the beauty and uniqueness of the cloth. The publication should be how the cloth is made by showing weaving skills during events, also by the telling of history associated with the cloth and the Lao Khrung people.

Keywords: purchase decision, Lao Khrung local woven cloth product

1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Lao Khrung was an ethnic group from Laos. They lived in Phu Krung Mountain, Luang Prabang. After the war between Thais and Laos in which Thais won, the Lao Khrung people were forcibly moved to many parts of Thailand. They like to live in harmony with nature and love their long tradition. They maintain their rituals, beliefs, tradition, culture and pass on to the next generations. The children and grandchildren learn and maintain many old important events; such as Songkran Festival, Wedding ceremony, new housebreaking, Buddhist Ordination, harvesting ritual, birth celebration, funeral, and so on. Every ritual is somehow associated with their special woven cloth, the Lao Khrung woven cloth. As time goes by, due to the change in the economic environment, the Lao Khrung people start to commercialize its special cloth rather than produce for self-consumption as before [1]. The Lao Khrung woven cloth is a handmade art cloth that weaved by the hands of the villagers. The task requires special skill, knowledge, and obviously the love in local arts. It displays the combination of the beautiful tradition of Laos in conjunction with Thais.

Most of Lao Khrung people migrated to the northeastern and central part of Thailand; such as the provinces of, Nakhon Pratom, Supan Buri, Chainat, Uthai Thani, Nakhon Sawan, Kumpang Petch, Phitsanulok, and Sukothai. Their religions are Buddhism and Brahminism. They believe in spirits, especially ancestors' spirits. They are still maintaining their beliefs and ways of life presently. One of the evidence of their long history is the way they dress and the way they weave their special cloth. The famous cloth of Supan Buri, Chainat, and Uthai Thani are the products of Lao Khrung descendants [2]. The housewife groups are mostly engaged in agriculture. They owned land as in inheritance from ancestors. They farm sugar cane, rice and chilies.

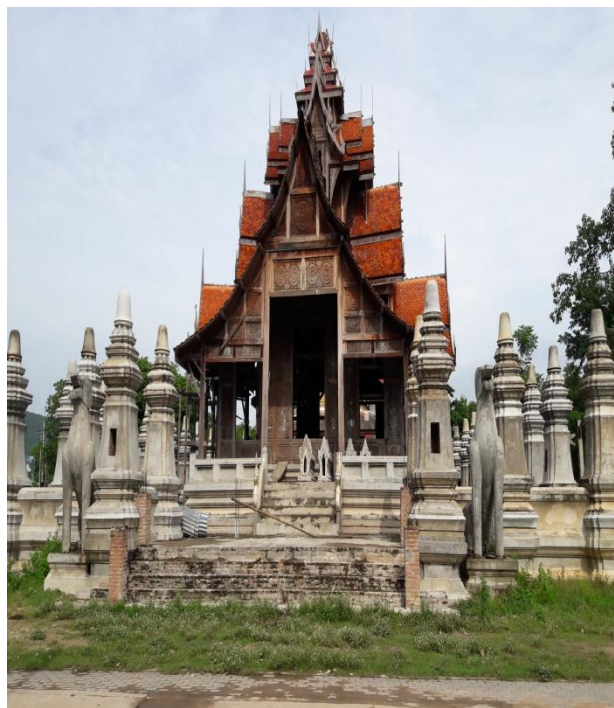


Fig 1. Lao Khrung Temple at Punumron community

The income comes firstly from agriculture, follows by cloth weaving. The production of Lao-Khrung woven cloth enables the community to earn more money. Lao-Khrung woven cloth is an art that has been passed on from older generations since they move to Punumron over 80 years ago. The designs and patterns are traditional and reflect vast experience in cloth making. The ability to produce is according to one's experience. Experts will be able to make difficult patterns around 2 pieces per month and that will generate about 5,000 to 6,000 baht per month. The experts' age is around 60 years old. The patterns are mostly traditional with some adaptation

to the present time. However, they try to change as little as possible. The traditional pattern concepts are kept and shown in the form of lucky animals those believed to bring fortunes,

such as swan and duck. The art of making of the cloth is passed along from generation to generation. There is no formal teaching or training from the government agencies whatsoever. The knowledge is enhanced in the community through actual practice and group participation. Usually to be able to make the cloth would take around 2 months to learn. Apart from the animal patterns, geographic patterns are also popular. At present, the colors used are no more natural. Chemical colors are used because they are easy to buy, brighter, and long-lasting. The materials come from U-Thai Thani province. The products consist of of Teenjok Woven cloth, Morhom Woven cloth, Loincloth, Silk, Scarfs Woven cloth. [3] The Lao Khrung woven cloth is very important to the way of life of the Lao Khrung people. The cloth has been produced for self-consumption. It is used mainly for special occasions; for example, Ancestors' spirits worship ceremony. They are also used to make many religious cloths. Due to the change in the economic environment, Lao Khrung people cannot make a living solely by harvesting. They need to produce more cloth and sell them to make ends meet. Nowadays some Lao Khrung cloth is still made by natural material but some are made by synthetic material. Cotton is easier to find because today the cloth makers can buy cotton from the market, unlike the ancient time that they had to grow cotton by themselves. They buy cotton from Kornkan and UthaiThani Provinces. Chemical is used for dying because it is easily and readily available. Today cloth making is more commercialized than the old days due to consumerism. However, production is still scarce. Also, there is a concern that even if the supply of cloth is increased, there may not be demand for all of them. For all these reasons, the researcher is interested in studying the market condition, the development of marketing strategies, the purchase decision of the Lao Khrung cloth products of Punumron Sub-district, Dan Chang district, Supanburi province in order to increase steady income for the housewife group. In addition, it will help in preserving the incredible arts of cloth weaving by spreading the products more vastly.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To study the market condition, develop marketing strategies, and purchase decision of the Lao Khrung cloth products of Punumron Sub-district, Dan Chang district, Supanburi province.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is mixed-methods research, a combination of quantitative and qualitative researches. Data were collected by the analysis of the relevant document, in-depth interview, observation, and questionnaire to the target informants.

Target area and key informants

The target area was the Punumron sub-district. The population consisted of; customers of the woven cloth, entrepreneurs, and tourist, totaling 13,470

(<http://service.nso.go.th/nso/web/stat.series>). Taro Yamane's formula was used to calculate the sample of 95% significant level. The total number of sample was 400. Purposing sampling method was used to gather the data.



Fig 2. The housewife group at Punumron community

Research tools

1. Quantitative data were collected by a questionnaire. The development of the questionnaire derived from the study of related concepts and theories. The tool was then tested for validity by 3 experts.
2. The qualitative tools were an observation form and a constructed interview form.
3. A community meeting was conducted for in-depth interviews to find the market condition, develop marketing strategies, and purchase decision of the Lao Khrung cloth products. The housewife group was also asked for their roles in the development of the strategies.

Data collection

1. The collection of data on the market condition, development of marketing strategies, and purchase decision were as follows;
 - 1.1 The target samples were the housewife production group, the housewife entrepreneur group, and the tourists.
 - 1.2 The tools were an observation form, a constructed interview form, and a questionnaire.
 - 1.3 The data were collected by the research team and assistant researchers.
2. A community meeting was conducted for in-depth interviews to find the market condition, develop marketing strategies, and purchase decision of the Lao Khrung cloth products.

Data analysis and presentation

For data analysis and presentation, the researcher conducted data organization, data check for validity and reliability. The following were the taken steps;

1. The statistical techniques used for the quantitative data analysis were descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, and standard deviation

The analysis of qualitative data was as follows;

1. After the data were collected, the researcher organized all the data and developed an analysis and synthesis table form.

2. Then the researcher conducted a data reduction to filter in only the information relevant to the study. The researcher organized tables to segregate data into groups and then analyzed by interpretation technique leading to data induction.

3. The researcher then compared the synthesized data with the actual data gathered by primary observations.

4. Organized the data into events, specific time frames and frequencies. Then the data were used to analyze in conjunction with other relevant data.

5. Designed presentation formats, which were mostly descriptive and lead to research discussion and conclusion.



Fig 3. Sales at trade events by the housewife group

4. RESEARCH CONCLUSION

To study the market condition, develop marketing strategies, and customers' purchase decision of the Lao Khrung cloth products of Punumron Sub-district, Supanburi province.

The research results revealed that the demographic factors of the 400 respondents consisted of: gender, 77.3 % is female counting at 309 people and male represent 22.80% accounting for 91 people; age, the majority is 41-50 years old at 49.80% followed by over 50 at 25.00% and the least is 21-30 at 12.30%; education, highest is bachelor degree at 44.50% followed by high school at 40.80% and then least is higher than bachelor degree at 1.75%; monthly income, 10,001-20,000 baht per month yielded highest at 49.50% followed by 20,001-30,000 at 30.50% and the last is income over 30,000 is at 4.80%; occupation, employees is the highest

at 46.50% followed by students at 30.30% and the least is own business at 6.30%.

Marketing condition found to be a moderate opinion (mean = 3.38). When considered by items, the highest mean is at sales is highest during high tourist season (mean = 4.03), followed by reputation of Punumron's product (mean = 3.90), the least is most customers live in Supanburi (mean = 2.68). The findings corresponded to the research of Auntika Thipjumnong [4]. Her study was the marketing development of the cloth woven products in Kasaesin, Songkhla province. She found that there are two important factors to the group production for occupation and extra income, 1) produce and sales at group center, consignment to sales outlets, and sales at trade events, 2) produce according to customer's order, pricing depending on the difficulty of production, the customers are civil officers and private persons in the area. The problem found was high price and scarcity of materials, less demand in the area. The decision to buy the cloth was durability (highest with mean = 4.05), beautiful and attention to detail (mean = 4.02), and reputation of the production area (mean = 4.00). The cloth should be produced with varieties and in line with the customer's need. Moreover, there should be a campaign designed to persuade people to use woven cloth every day and at special events. The qualitative findings found that market condition is sluggish; cloth can be sold mostly during tourist season or special religious events. The cost is high from the price of materials as well as labor. In addition, the weaving time is long due to the age of the makers. All these reasons drive the price of the cloth up to 17,000 -28,000 baht per piece. Thus this cloth can only be made by order and sell to richer customers only.



Fig 4. The shop of Lao Khrung cloth products

The development of marketing strategies found that the opinion levels of all 4 factors; product, price, place (distribution channel, and promotion are in high level (mean

=3.82). When considering each factor found that the factor of Lao Krung local woven cloth is in high level (mean = 3.63). For each item, the highest mean is the woven cloth has a unique pattern and distinguishable (mean = 4.64), followed by the cloth has high quality and standardize production at a high level (mean = 4.37), the least is a reduction of poor quality production at high level (mean = 3.85). On the price factor, the total picture is at a high level (mean = 3.56). For each items, the highest mean is price setting in-line with production cost (mean = 3.79), followed by price is in-line with quality in high level (mean = 3.52), the least is organize promotion during events; such as, emphasis on being a sentimental present as New Year's gift, Valentines or Mother's day is at medium level (mean = 2.84). On place factor, the total picture is at a high level (mean = 3.73). For each item, the highest mean is sell products near market and tourist destination (mean = 3.53), followed by location is suitable as having parking space is in medium level (mean = 3.50), the least is selling through the internet and on-line is at the medium level (mean = 3.26). On the promotion factor, the total picture is at a high level (mean = 3.79). For each item, the highest mean is participate in trade events is at medium level (mean = 3.38), followed by advertising through local media such as radio, newspaper is at medium level (mean = 3.3.29), the least is organize promotion during events; such as, emphasis on being a sentimental present as New Year's gift, Valentines or Mother's day is a medium (mean = 3.15), and offer special promotions; for example, coupon and special price is at medium level (mean = 3.15). The research findings are similar to the research of JutaratTungsomboon [5] who studied the marketing strategy for local woven cloth; the case of local woven cloth of Rajburi. The quantitative findings revealed that the producers in Rajburi use marketing mix factor of products and prices at medium level, and place and promotion at a low level. Their customers consisted of government officers.

The analysis of the relationship between marketing factors of product, price, place, promotion and production outcomes of sell quantity, revenue, and profit found that there is a relationship at a significant level of 0.01. The result is in-line with the qualitative study of the housewife group via a focus group. The emphasis is put on the unique pattern designs of Thai Lao Khrung cloth. The cloth shows a mixture of bold colors and the pattern follows the culture and beliefs of ancestors. Moreover, there is a development in production by using silk to combine with cotton to enhance and create new images and colors. On price factor, prices are set according to pattern design, production difficulty. The weaver will set the price with the housewife group according to the cost of thread and labor. On place factor, the main stores are located in Punumron sub-district. On the promotion factor, the majority of publicity is through word of mouth, and display at government offices in Supanburi province. There is participation in advertisement and publicity through trade events organized by the government which able to increase income to the housewife group. Lastly, there is a development of publicity through on-line and social media; such as Facebook, Instagram, and so on.

On the purchase decision, the total picture is at a high level (mean = 3.63). For each item, the highest mean is purchase

because of the unique pattern and color represent ancient history (mean = 4.09), followed by admire the reputation of woven cloth from Punumron housewife group at high level (mean = 4.01), know about the origin of the cloth from distribution channel at high level (mean = 4.01), purchase after comparing price to other cloth at high level (mean = 4.01), the least is admire the Lao Krung woven cloth because of its color and uniqueness is at high level (mean = 3.87). On purchase factors, the total picture is at a high level (mean = 3.63). For each item, the highest mean is purchase to wear (mean = 3.72), followed by purchase when visiting Punumron temple at a high level (mean = 3.68), the least is purchase more than once is at the medium level (mean = 3.07). On the amount of purchase, the total picture is at a high level (mean = 3.63). For each item, the highest mean is purchase 1-5 pieces per year is at the medium level (mean = 3.25), followed by purchase more than 5 pieces per year in medium level (mean = 2.57). The results are in-line with the research of KankulnutChoothong [6], who conducted research on the factors influencing the purchase behavior of local woven cloth of government officers of Nakorn Sritummarat province. The research found that the cultural factors that have relationships with purchase behavior remain Thai identity. In addition, the social and psychological factors that have relationships with purchase behavior are purchase because it is suitable to be a gift to the elder and respected persons, and purchase because of self-affection. The marketing mix factors of product, price, place, and promotion influence purchase behavior. They consisted of details of the weaving, quality-price suitability, ease of purchase, and display of merchandise. They are in-line with the qualitative findings from the interviews of the entrepreneurs and tourists. The results stated that they purchase because of the participation in Buddhist religious events; such as Songkran festival, Visakha Puja Day, and Buddhist Lent Day. Most customers admire the colors and uniqueness of the cloth after they witness the long history from visiting the Punumron educational center which collects many utensils from the migration era. The pattern of the cloth transforms from the beliefs and fate of the ancestors to the present generation. Lastly, customers purchase for own use as well as gifts for special occasions.

CONCLUSION

From the study of market condition, development of marketing strategies, and purchase decision of Lao Krung cloth Punumron sub-district, Dan Chang district, Supanburi province, found that the customers who buy the Lao Krung woven cloth are tourists who come during Buddhist religious events. The majority is people in Supanburi province who admire the unique pattern of the cloth which show the Thai Lao Krung heritage. The cloth is colorful and designed with culture and beliefs inherited from generation to generation through publicity by demonstrating weaving skill and knowledge via history telling.

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