



RESEARCH REPORT

Team 10

Name	Student number	Email
Bektemir Pratov	21148414	21148414@student.hhs.nl
Eimante Griniute	19132905	19132905@student.hhs.nl
Franciellen de Carvalho Albuquerque	21074356	21074356@student.hhs.nl
Philip Hussein	17001390	17001390@student.hhs.nl

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Abstract

This study aims to find a product that balances the educational and entertaining elements for BS Toys company, which will also encourage children 3-10 to spend time outdoors and get in touch with nature. For this research, a variety of research methods were used, namely photo survey, literature review, interview, and fly-on-the-wall. As a result, it was found out that combining children aged 3-10 is improper because 3-5 years old is a pre-operational stage while starting from the age of 6 they start using logic, which makes too simple games uninteresting for them. Despite this, there is one way of entertainment that will be used by both age groups. It is a group game that at the same time includes social and communication development, physical activity, and outdoor activities. The combination of these factors indicates that group games are currently the most appropriate method that will properly develop and entertain the child, which can be designed as a new product for BS Toys company.

Introduction

BS Toys is a Dutch company that designs and develops toys and games for children starting at the age of 3, involving education, creativity, and activity. Their designs are made to stimulate children to play in connection with the real world without any type of electronics. The brand believes that playing is an essential part of children's development since during this time they will be exploring their cognitive, motor, emotional and linguistic skills. Their goal is to provide quality time for children to play indoors or outdoors and alone or with friends.

Furthermore, we were presented with the challenge of designing an active toy or game with an educational element for BS Toys. Understanding how children learn and behave in different stages of their life is essential to the process of Research and ideation. That way, we can provide our users with the appropriate product that meets their needs and stimulate their development.

This Research will provide possible answers to the following Research Question:

What are the ways children between 3-10 play actively and educationally when they are outdoors and indoors?

Construct: Play actively and play educationally

Units analysis: Children between 3-10

Context: Outdoors and indoors

Literature review

(Student number: 19132905)

One of the most traditional methods for research is literature review. It is vital component for any design project, as it collects and analyzes broader information on a given topic. Literature reviews method is intended to gather information from published sources, converging most important information and connecting it between references. It is one of the most reliable research methods as researcher has access to libraries from all around the world, scholar articles and all other credible sources. Literature review does not leave a lot of room for interpretations, so all given information is transparent.

By this research we are trying to gain insight on:

- Child development in play from age 3 to 12
- Beneficial ways to support child's development through play
- Motivation to keep children active

Many parents understand the importance of playing in child development, but it can be easily confused with just entertainment rather than learning. As for many people learning stands for

acquiring specific skills: learning numbers, letters, writing. However, children learn best through play experiences. It is essential for child's growth. (Pamela Li, 2022)

“According to the Jean Piaget, kids' cognitive ability to reason, infer, and make connections is still developing. There are different stages for development:

- The preoperational stage: children (between ages of 2 and 7) can think in terms of symbols, but they are not yet able to effectively take other people's perspectives. Language skills are still developing.
- The concrete operational stage: between ages of 7 and 11, kids learn how to use logic to make inferences and reasons about the world. “ (Liu, 2018)

Other capacities of a child such as: understanding intentions, processing information, and switching perspectives, planning, and understanding their own behaviors are still very immature. (Liu, 2018)

By age 2 to 4, child is still not completely interacting with others. Kids might be doing an activity related to other children, but it is not direct interaction. By age 4 to 6, child starts to gain interest in the activity and other children involved, try to participate in cooperative play. At this age, child enjoy being outside, exploring nature and playing with its elements, such as: digging in the sand, running through the rain puddles. Playing from age 6 till 8: children start to take part in more structured activities, playing with other kids, using their imagination for games. Still enjoy playing outdoors and become a little more independent. Age 8 till 10, children start to be even more creative, enjoy challenges and activities which can test them. (Participation, 2000)

Understanding the different stages of children play helps to determine the best activities for children to stimulate their growth and development. It is also vital to know the benefits of playing as it improves social, cognitive, physical, and emotional well-being of a child. (Ginsburg, 2007)

One of the ways the play is beneficial is: it increases creativity. It is closely tied to divergent thinking, which generates new ideas, explores possible solutions. It may be free flowing and support out-of-the-box thinking. Stimulating divergent thinking can form personality traits such as curiosity and willingness to take risks.

Kids playing with each other often reciprocate each other's words, action to reach agreements, so pretend play or any games that involve communication is beneficial to child's development. Through communication, the kid can learn self-regulation. Well-regulated kid can wait for a turn, not grab, or steal objects from other children, control negative emotions. (Pamela Li, 2022)

It is important to give kids very clear instructions on how the game works, the goal of it and how to achieve it. Since children's cognitive abilities are still developing, it is important to lay down the achievable goal of the game. The kid can understand what he is supposed to do in a game but not necessarily connect game elements, in which case kid would fail learning skills.

It is an advantage building games on kids existing common knowledge of their daily life. A good design should reduce the cognitive load and minimize mental resources to understand or interact with the system. It is important to keep in mind that children working memory capacity is way smaller than adults, so they cannot carry as much information. Figuring out what went wrong and how to fix it can be frustrating and confusing for children, therefore design team must prevent possible errors as much as possible. (Liu, 2018)

It is crucial to keep kids active, as they get older, it can be harder to them to get enough daily activity. It is as important to keep kids motivated as well. There are three main keys:

1. Choosing the right activities for a child's age.
2. Giving kids plenty of opportunity to be active.
3. Keeping the focus on fun.

When a kid enjoys the activity, they are willing to do more of it. Improving their abilities can help them feel accomplished, which will motivate to continue with the activity or try something new.

Research Methodology

Interview Methodology

(student number: 17001390)

To elaborate on the formulated research questions and their subdivisions, a set of interviews has been conducted. Among other research methods which have been applied during the exploration of the research question, an interview was selected for list of the following reasons. First, there is an opportunity to interact with future customers directly. Hence, an interviewer can get a first-hand perspective on all the needs and wants of an individual, and record and observe his or her answers - be that verbal or nonverbal reactions. Another reason to lean towards this research method is that an interview is a flexible form of interaction. With the advance of the new technologies, interlocutors do not have to be in the same space physically thus giving a broader possibility for a researcher to accomplish his inquiries. In this case, the interview could be conducted through a telephone call or video conference. The conversation could be captured and saved digitally, provided there is consent from the other side. Consequently, recorded results could be further analyzed and reviewed by other members of the research team.

Whereas other research techniques were performed involving children and expert publications, the main scope of the interviews has been set on the parents of the children. As they are the ones who constantly observe, supervise, and provide material goods for their children, it has been agreed upon those parents and caretakers should be solicited. By these means, the research would gain a better understanding of children's behavioral patterns while spending time in different games and learning activities. Moreover, the exploration of the parental involvement in the game process, as well as the toy and game choices (including unconscious choices), could be established. Additionally, the parents' opinions on educational elements in the game could further enrich the research.

The combination of the research priorities and the focus on the topic of active and educational games resulted in the following sub-questions:

1. What are possible ways of learning actively for a child?
2. What instigates a child to participate in an active game?
3. What instigates a child to participate in a learning activity?
4. What are possible ways of acquiring a toy or a game?
5. What influences the child's and the parent's choice when acquiring a toy or a game?

List of the interview participants and their children:

Interviewed parents (name, age)	Children (name, age)
Sara, 29 years old	Noa, 5 years old
Doha, 27 years old	Ahri, 4 years old
Amal, 37 years old	Yousef, 11 years old; Karam, 7 years old
Magdalene, 31 years old	Amalia, 5 years old; Rital, 2 years old
Wafa, 29 years old	Amir, 6 years old

Four interviewed parents were acquainted with the researcher, one interviewed parent was met at the playground. In total five interviews were conducted where three of them were done in person and two interviews were collected through voice calls. Notes were carefully taken, which could be referred to in the appendix.

Results: Interview

Five out of five interviewed parents think that it is important for a child to play actively as well as to have educational elements in the game.

- Parents usually do not pay attention to whether a toy or a game is made from sustainable materials.
- Parents usually tend to buy toys or games that suit the child's gender.
- Parents tend not to spend more than 30 euros on the game that they buy without a special occasion
- Parents tend to choose original games over the ones that they already know or have at home.

Photo survey Methodology

(Student number: 21074356)

For this research, a photo survey was one of the methods used to answer our Research question. Personally, it offered me very interesting and positive insights. This method provided visual samples of realistic playing scenarios of children since the photos sent by their parents represented real moments of fun for their kids. In addition to that, I was able to compare the answers between the families and their similarities as well as their differences. Not only that but also, these same photos might be useful to create a mood board inspiring us in future steps of our

project, for example during ideation generation.

This creative method provided answers to the following sub-research questions:

- What are children's physical limitations between the ages of 3-6? What about 6-10?
- What elements are educationally appropriate for each age?
- How do kids connect with nature when playing outdoors?

To begin with, I read the section "Photo Studies" in the book "Universal Methods of Design" by Bruce Hannington. With the information gathered from the book together with the lessons in User Research, I was able to formulate a few interview questions for the parents. The idea was that they would answer each one of them with a picture of their child or children. That way, I could have a visual representation of their answer.

After that, I contacted 5 different families, as follows:

Parent's name	Nationality	Children's age
Ellen	Dutch	Daughter - 7
Henk	Dutch	Son - 8 / Daughter - 6
Jolanda	Dutch	Daughters - 4 and 6
Michele Pinheiro	Brazilian	Sons - 3 and 4
Michelle de Carvalho	Brazilian/ British	Son - 6

It took 3 days to gather the photos from these families. All of them were very cooperative and contributed highly to the results of this method's research. Following that, I made a collage of the best photos that represented parents' answers.

Results: Photo survey

As mentioned in the section "Methodology", five parents answered a few questions with the photos they believed better represented an answer, as follows:

What is the area your child plays the most?

Three parents believe their children play the most indoors. The other two claimed their children do not have a particular area where their kids play the most.



Figure 1

What is your child's favorite toy?

Three parents did not know what their children's favorite toy is. The other two provided different answers.



Figure 2

What do you consider "playing actively indoors"?

Two parents believe "cooking" is playing actively indoors. The other two provided different answers.



Figure 3

What do you consider "playing actively outdoor"?

Two parents consider "cycling" as playing actively outdoors. The others provided different answers.



Figure 4

What do you consider "playing educationally"?

All parents believe their children play educationally when they are the most focused on an activity.



Figure 5

What do you consider "interactive playing"?

Parents consider playing with friends or cousins as interactive playing.



Figure 6

What do you consider your child interacting with nature?

Three parents think that their kids are interacting with nature when they are playing at the beach. They mentioned that this can also be considered "Playing actively outdoors".



Figure 7

What do you consider your child exploring their physical limitations while playing?

Parents think their kids explore their physical limitations while playing outdoors or playing sports.

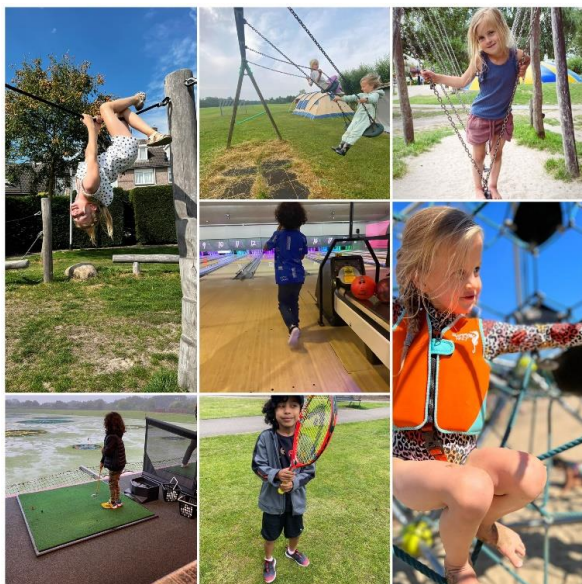


Figure 8

What type of activity makes you happy to see your child playing?

Ellen is happy when her daughter can play alone with her favorite toy.

Henk is happy when his children are playing together.

Jolanda is happy when her daughters play actively outdoors.

Michele Pinheiro is happy when her sons learn something while playing.

Michelle de Carvalho is happy when her son explores his limitations.

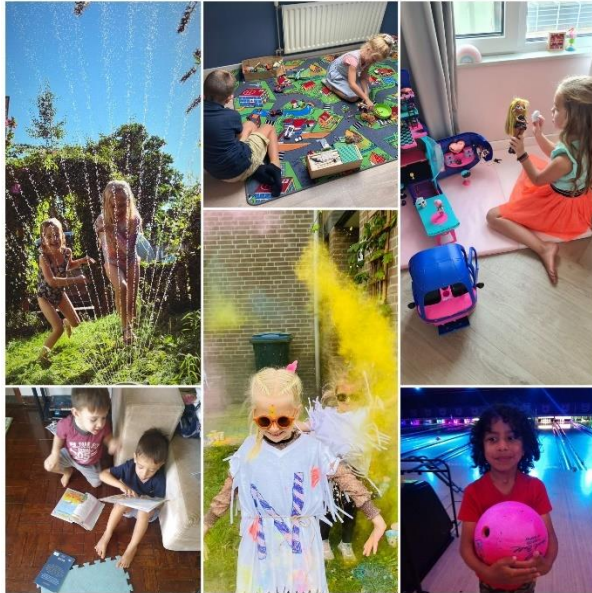


Figure 9

Fly on the wall Methodology

(Student number: 21148414)

Another user research method that has been conducted is fly on the wall. The method consists of observation of public areas or activities that are related to the design challenge. In our case, they are playgrounds, school yards, and toy stores. The researcher has to record all customer's interactions with the potential products, their behavior in specific areas, their emotions, and their conversation with other customers or employees. The data can be gathered and structured by quantitative and qualitative factors. Based on collected information, the researcher can sort the data and conclude which aspects of the product must be highlighted or ignored.

The main difference from other types of research is the lack of interference with people under research. Such technic provides minimal potential bias and behavioral influences on the target group. In addition, using the fly-on-the-wall method the researcher can reveal different ways of

using the product, and the natural user's behavior with their real thoughts and emotions while interacting with the product.

Our problem statement can be redefined in several research questions. **For observation of playgrounds:**

- How many minutes do kids play?
- The most common colors and sizes of toys?
- Do and how are parents involved in children's games?
- How many kids play in one group?
- Is there a gender barrier in children's groups?
- What is the age difference in the group?
- Do kids play with phones on the playground?
- Which toys do kids share with each other?
- Which toys are lying on the ground or on the bench and not being used?

Research questions for observation in toy stores:

- How many minutes do customers spend choosing a toy?
- Do they prefer more stationary toys or active games?
- The most common colors and sizes of toys?
- Does the eco-friendly factor matter for customers?
- What toys do kids ask for and what do they get eventually?
- How do kids behave while choosing a toy?
- Which product aspects do parents notice?
- How do children and parents interact with products and packaging?

Results: Fly on the wall

Our design team spotted several playgrounds in Den Haag, some of them were public, and others were school yards. The next information was recorded during the research:

- Kids play 20-30 minutes on average, with 3–8-minute breaks. They usually go home at sunset or when their parents call them
- Toys have rather soft and natural colors or bright and saturated ones. The second option is more noticeable on a sand playground.
- The average size of the toy is 20-30 centimeters.
- Parents always stay near to their kids and are strongly involved in their activities.
- Kids' groups have 2-3 people, have a small age difference, and do not split by gender.
- There were no kids with phones, all of them were playing active games
- No features in shared or unused toys were noticed, all toys were shared and played

- Children create toys from scrap materials: two kids stuffed tights and socks with sand and began to swing and fight with them

Branches of InterToys and local small toy stores were selected for observation as well with the following results.

- On average customers spend 10-25 minutes choosing a product
- Active games attracted more buyers and sold more respectively. However, the vehicle toy section has remained intact.
- Almost all of the customers preferred toys with a minimum of three colors on a package and middle size (10-30 cm)
- The shelf with eco-friendly toys was ignored by customers
- A child asked for a big green car, and after getting a refusal, he recommended as an alternative a giant version of the same car. Eventually, he gets a middle-size car.
- Children actively interact with toys and packaging, by rotating and observing them. They are attracted by parts that protrude from the box and they can touch them immediately. However, they spend almost less than 3 minutes on each toy and can be easily distracted.
- A kid got a lot of attention on products that were already touched and seen by someone.
- If the kid brings a toy to their parents, they pay attention to aspects in the following order: the design look > title > price > small description.
- A female customer tried to pick up the product and checked the weight of the toys to carry them
- Giant Lego Woodie gets kids' attention easily and kids were trying to find the pack with it to buy.
- All sold toys have transparent parts on their packaging.
- Kids start dancing if their parents accept their choice and after purchasing
- In one family grandparents have chosen more educational toys, and parents more games for fun.

Discussion and conclusion

After the Research, it came to our understanding that children between the ages of 3 to 5 are still in the pre-operational stage, for that reason, crafting, colouring, and building things are interesting ways of helping with their development. In contrast, children starting at the age of 6 know how to use logic and they reason better about the world. At this point, they want to test their physical limitations and connect with different elements it is unknown to them. We also learned that to stay motivated, kids from 6 to 10 prefer to have a reaching goal, they connect better when there is a process where they can go from the starting point to the end.

Playing in a group, either with siblings, friends or cousins makes children very happy. It is pedagogically important they develop this skill so they can learn how to share, cooperate, win or

lose, reciprocate each other's words and reach agreements. In addition to that, playing actively makes children cheerful, and playing outdoors brings very positive results, for instance, strength and good coordination.

When it comes to parents, we noticed that they find it very important for their kids to play outdoors as well as educationally and sometimes they like to participate in their children's playing time. However, they believe it is more convenient if kids can play by themselves or with friends.

Furthermore, parents do not like to spend too much time choosing a toy or game in a store and on average, do not pay more than 30 euros for it. During our observation in shops, we saw that female customer tend to choose lighter toys or games and children tend to choose the ones they can easily touch or is trending among their friends.

As a result, our group decided to design a game for children between 6 to 10. We believe their skills are well developed at this age and would be interesting and challenging to create an original game to stimulate their abilities.

When it comes to the methods used for this Research, these are our conclusions:

- The fly-on-the-wall observation has serious weaknesses on its base, such as a lack of connection between the researcher and target group, unknown motivations, and context behind participant behaviours. Furthermore, the observation is too based on assumptions and could potentially lead to inaccurate conclusions.
- The interview research methodology has a few limitations, namely: the participants in the interview are not representative of all parents making results that were drawn from answers subjective and cannot be extrapolated to a larger group of people.
- The literature review has its downsides such as information overload, and time-consuming finding reliable sources. It could lead to very biased opinions. However, it is an essential part of research as it helps to understand the market and topic. It provides the researcher with new ideas and gives larger inspiration.
- The Photo Survey provided positive insights since it is possible to observe a realistic point of view with the visual representation of a moment. However, many parents do not feel comfortable sharing pictures of their children and the lack of verbal communication might create possibilities for assumptions.

References

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Appendix

Interviews were conducted from 09.09 - 11.09.2022 and compiled in this manner for sake of ease of comparing the given answers.

1 Q. Could I record your name and age? How many children do you have and of what age are they?

Sara:

My name is Sara, I am 29 years old and I have one boy, 5 years old. His name is Noa.

Doha:

My name is Doha, I am 27 years old, I have one boy of 4 years old. His name is Ahri.

Amal:

My name is Amal, I am 37 years old and I have two boys 11 and 7 years old. Their names are Yousef and Karam.

Magdalene:

My name is Magdalene I am 31 years old and I have two girls of 5 and 2 years old. Their names are Amalia and Rital.

Wafa:

My name is Wafa, I am 29 years old and I have a boy of 6 years old. His name is Amir.

2 Q. Could you tell me more about your kids and what kind of toys they prefer to play with?

Sara:

Noa, in general, is a calm child, but if he has the company of his friends then he becomes very energetic and playful especially if they play outside. He likes ball a lot and always comes up with different new games. He invents the rules by himself.

Doha:

Ahri is an energetic boy that never sits in one place. He is easy to be distracted but sometimes he can also just sit and calmly listen to a story. He likes to play with anything he finds at his disposal. It doesn't matter indoors or outside - will play anywhere.

Amal:

Yousef and Karam like to play together a lot. Because of the weather in the Netherlands, they mostly stay inside, that's why the house is never clean, they will always make chaos around here. Yousef needs a company to play with. He likes soccer a lot. Karam is a bit different, he would rather be alone and play or draw something by himself. He also likes fishing and animals in general. Always comes up with different hobbies.

Magdalene:

Amalia is a very energetic little girl. But also very diligent and likes to take a lead in the game. She likes to play with dolls and animals - anything can talk or makes sounds. She adores animals - sheep, cows and cats are her favourites. She likes to play outside more. Rital on the other hand is very calm and shy and will never play with kids that she doesn't know. She likes to play with her sister and with kitchen stuff for kids - those small plastic pans and forks. She would rather stay inside than go out.

Wafa:

Amir likes to play with cars and trucks, also he loves his iPad and would stay 24 hours playing with it if we don't restrict him to play with it for only a couple of hours daily. He would like to play outside but sometimes he says that there is nobody at the playground so he would return disappointed and stay inside.

3 Q. What in your opinion is most important when it comes to (active) toys? What elements activate your child to play?

Sara:

A child must have some active toys so that he could develop properly. I think it's important for a toy to be easy to explain or grasp - so that he understands the rules alone or could perhaps play with it in his own way.

Doha:

I think of course a child should have active toys but, in many cases, any toy or game can become active when you have a walking piece of energy. I think it is important that a game could instigate a child's imagination. This would be the best way to play it then if he thinks that it is not a play but a real thing.

Amal

It is indeed important to have active games or toys. Especially when they can play with it inside or outside with equal fun and engagement. The game needs to have simple and interesting rules and a lot of possible outcomes.

Magdalene:

It is important that children have such a game or toy. It is good for their health and brains. I think a child should like a toy when he sees one, it should be attractive to him or her and easy to understand. As if it should say - now you need to move to have fun.

Wafa:

I think it's very important that a child play active games in the early stages of life. He will make friends that way and become more aware of the world outside. The game needs to be interesting

to the child and he should like it above all. It needs to include more than one kid, maybe they need to make teams be able to play it.

4 Q. Do you think it's important that a toy has an educational element in it?

Sara:

I think it's important but not in every case, it is crucial to have educational elements in a game. He can learn a lot just by interacting with other kids.

Doha:

In my opinion, it's very important to have that element in the game or toy so that a child not only runs around but also learns something useful in that process.

Amal:

It is important to have such a game because all other games require you to be faster or stronger but not smarter.

Magdalene:

I think it's important indeed. I would like to see my kids entertained and educated at the same time, but not sure if they will like it or not. Because sometimes they can be easily distracted when playing actively.

Wafa:

Yes, I think it's very important to have that element in the game. I think you could learn numbers or even foreign languages while playing. A child would memorize it easily then if he is engaged in the game and likes it.

5 Q. How much time and money you are willing to spend on choosing and buying a toy? Would you rather go to a toy shop or buy them on Internet?

Sara:

When it comes to choosing a toy or game, I would prefer to do it on the Internet because I don't have not so much time to go to the store. On the internet, you can read more about it, see what other people think about a game, and how they review it. Usually, I don't spend a lot of money on toys - 20 euros, probably I would spend more if Noa has a birthday or some other special occasion.

Doha:

I go to a local game shop to buy my son some toys. I go with him and see how he reacts and what he wants. Sometimes though he would play with it a bit and then it will lend in a pile of other toys that he doesn't play with that much. It's hard for him to be attached to a particular toy or a game. Because of that, I do not spend a lot of money on toys, probably 30 euros is my maximum amount.

Amal:

Usually, we receive our toys as gifts from friends and family. Sometimes my older son will go to a store by himself and choose a toy he wants. For my younger boy it doesn't really matter, he would play with his old toys. We don't spend a lot on toys because we, as a household, have more important stuff to spend money on.

Magdalene:

I usually go with my two daughters to a local game shop and they choose what they want there. We go there to buy small toys or games. If girls want something special or bigger, which probably will cost more money also, I would search it on the Internet and get it delivered to the door. I don't work myself so I can spend a little more time choosing between toys.

Wafa:

We usually buy our toys in a local game shop. Sometimes Amir would come from school with a game or toy in mind, probably what is trendy among his friends. No, if the toy is too expensive, we would negotiate and buy it only if he gets good grades at school. We would spend approximate 20 euros and maybe some more when we go to a friend's house for a visit and bring with us a gift for their son.

6 Q. Would you rather buy unknown games or toys at the toy store or something familiar?

Sara:

If I don't know the game but it interests me, and I think at a certain age you probably also know what your child likes to play with, then I buy it despite its unfamiliar look. All other very popular and old games he already has. I think he would rather try something new.

Doha:

Yes sure, I think there is no point in buying toys that are like those that Ahri already has.

Amal:

I never thought about it that way, but I think we are buying new toys when the kids are bored of those that they already have. Then they can choose something new and try new games. Maybe learn something new also.

Magdalene:

I think Amalia would rather go for some new unfamiliar game rather than for that that she already has. She would look at the package and pictures of the game and choose it that way even if she has never seen it before. Rital would rather buy something familiar just to add to her collection a new toy. She likes it that way.

Wafa:

I think it depends on Amir's mood if he chooses a new unfamiliar game or another way around. It depends on what his friends are playing with. When it comes to me I would rather buy an

unknown toy and would try to figure it out with my child but not all the time my opinion is the most important one if you know what I mean. He is hard to convince sometimes.

7 Q. Do you consider such aspects of a toy as the particular design, colour, and eco-friendly materials with which a toy has been made?

Sara:

Mostly I will buy toys consciously - I am aware of the environmental issues and I would rather buy eco-friendly toys and games. Also, I think a good design and nice colours are also very important because they can affect your child and raise in him a sense of esthetics and beauty.

Doha:

Honestly, I have never paid attention to whether a game or toy has certain colours in it or is of a particular shape. Nor have I paid attention to whether the toy is made from eco-friendly material or not. Probably it's going to cost more in this case.

Amal:

You know boys like vibrant colours and would never buy a pink toy or similar colours. I don't think that I have ever paid attention to whether a toy or a game is eco-friendly or not. I think I should do it in the future.

Magdalene:

I guess I was buying my girl's toys that are made mostly for girls but some of them also could be bought by boys, something like animals. However, I think that the majority of active games are made for both of them, and if not they should be. There should not be any separation between them while they play together. Frankly, I have paid attention to whether I'm buying eco-friendly toys or not.

Wafa:

I am trying to be more environmentally conscious, but I think when it comes to toys, I did pay enough attention or it just escaped my mind. Moreover, my child doesn't have an idea yet about using eco-friendly stuff, so he doesn't have any eco-friendly toys either. Amir likes red and black and purple colors, so the majority of his toys will have these colors