

# Exporting toys from belgium to the people's republic of china assignment



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Finally, the proposed marketing adaptations will be under consideration.

Lilliputiens: a company introduction Lilliputiens is a Belgian company that specialises in the production of fabric-based toys. What sets them apart is the extremely high product quality. Their aim is to ensure that all of their toys combine their three core values: provide quality toys at reasonable prices, which are fun to play with, great to look at and have an educational value. [pic][pic] In order to properly stimulate their little customers, namely boys and girls in the zero to five age range, they have created gentle toys made of soft fabric.

Their senses are stimulated thanks to the use of a diverse range of textures, sounds, shapes and colours. The toys are designed with the knowledge that toys enable children to imagine, touch, create and think. Those provide a key role in children's development. Another special feature of the toys is that they evolve in a way that accompanies the baby throughout his or her passage into early infancy. As the child grows, the new play elements are revealed, making new activities and games possible. As a consequence, these toys no longer need to be put back in the box after just three months!

Not only dolls but also a play mat, a food pyramid, a table set and a ruler are amongst the Lilliputiens' product line. [pic] [pic] [pic] 3. Consumption culture in the People's Republic of China China and its economic growth China is the greatest and most challenging new frontier that international marketers are facing today. China is the most populated country in the world. With one fifth of the world population and the largest population of children in the world, it is an enormous potential market. China's economic growth has risen 11% during 2007 and keeps developing.

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There is new money to spend by the 200 million acquisitive people in the middle class. But numbers are not everything; you have to win people's hearts to be and stay in business. Let that be the issue of this paper. [pic]

Figure 1: China's estimated per capita income per province in 2003 As shown in figure 2 and 3, China's economic growth passes unequally. Eastern regions have known a faster growth that has given rise to an enormous gap between Eastern and Western China. Eastern China has become more occidental with different needs as a result.

In this paper, only China's Eastern, urban regions will be discussed since China's ten largest cities, which contain only four percent of China's population, account for approximately 22 percent of its earning power and 19 percent of its spending power. The urban children's market contains around 100 million children. Figure 2 Figure 3 Export The Chinese market is a paradise for both internal and foreign investors. In 2006, Belgium has exported for almost 3 billion euro to China. This makes China Belgium's thirteenth trading partner with 1.1% of our GDP. However compared to India, Belgium's eighth business partner, the export ratio is lower.

To further improve export, good connections will be needed. Open economy According to Eugene Wang, China is relatively open to foreign investments. China has the largest supply of foreign direct investments. Compared to India, China's tariff protection is more modest and keeps declining. This has resulted in a rapid increase in the volume of imports. In 2003, China's imports rated 30% of its gross domestic product, which is twice the import ratio of the U. S. Foreign firms with facilities within China account for 25% of

all manufactured goods. These goods can be exported or could serve China's internal market.

Middle class people's consumption culture The present middle class or "new rich" have made money and acquired standing in only one generation. China has an ambiguous relationship towards foreign culture; Chinese both worship and avert it. Imported goods represent purchasing power, status and good taste. Chinese start to adore Western culture and lifestyle. Although the Western consumption culture conflicts with their traditional consumption culture of thrift and spending in proportion to income, the middle class have become a part of the consumerism culture, especially in the fashion consumption.

Albeit their norms and values tend to incline towards the Western culture, imitation is gradually transferring into their own consumption culture. "I consume so I exist" is the new attitude. The new rich surpass actual needs and as a result become more qualified for merchandising and advertisement. They spend a lot of money on consumer goods, like toys. A potential market is definitely there! Culture Cultures are learned by parenting as well as social interactions and therefore they can change. Despite the impact of current globalization, cultural differences will stay. One-child policy

The biggest cultural difference between the rest of the world and China is the "one-child policy". Since 1979, due to China's history and more specifically the population control, law states a maximum of one child per household. Observational data shows that there are 18% more boys than girls. Compared to the world average, this percentage lays 15% higher! In

China, men stand for responsibility for the family and are raised to become the head of the household. Therefore, people prefer to have a baby boy rather than a baby girl. However, in the urban regions this is gradually changing.

More and more parents cherish the same ambitions for their girl. In fact, in the big cities girls are preferred because parents will not have to worry about being able to provide enough hope chest. [pic] Figure 4: Advertisement to promote the one child policy: carry out family planning - implement the basis national policy Filiarchy Whether a child is born as a boy or a girl, it is born with much more responsibility on his shoulders than in the rest of the world. When it comes to education, health or money, parents will do whatever it takes to contribute to the success of live of their children.

For that reason, the one child determines the household. According to Mc Neal and Yeh, Chinese children influence the consumption pattern in such a significant way, namely by 68%, that outsiders look upon him or her as a “spoiled brat” or “little emperor”. In the case of toys, the influence on the parents’ purchases mounts up to 93% for children in the zero to five age range. On an annual basis, Chinese children exert a direct influence on play item purchases of three billion dollar per year. It can be said that China has shifted from a patriarchy to a filiarchy; kids have become the centre of the universe!

Six pocket syndrome Chinese parents spend much more time, money and effort on their only child’s development. Chinese children are not only raised by their parents but by the whole family. This second source of money, the

grandparents, lives in the same household due to other standards of living. This results in six adults indulging one child. This effect is better known as the “ 4-2-1 indulgence” or the “ six pocket syndrome”. Parental education In China, society is much more collective than in Belgium. This is reflected in the Chinese family and kinship system.

It is not unusual that grandparents live under the same roof. Not surprisingly, family has a tremendous impact on a child education. From birth, Chinese children are learned to respect and obey their elders. Unlike in Belgium, Chinese adults keep seeking for parental approval. Children’s personal expenditures In the first place, children learn about new products from other children, followed by advertisement and store visits. Research has shown that there is a difference in requests between boys and girls. Beyond expectations, girls ask significantly more for toys than boys! But who pays for their expenditures?

For children under the age of four, it are the parents and other relatives who buy and pay for the toys. Unexpected but true, according to Chan children start to spend their own money on their own wants and needs from the age of four, mostly toys and food! Mian zi Chinese children do not spend all of their money. A four year old saves around 75% of his pocket money. Their regular income can be spent but special incomes given on birthdays or Chinese New Year are expected to be saved. Learn how to manage money is a second but just as important reason why Chinese parents give their children money.

China derives from a socialist economy and has a culture that emphasizes on saving money because they believe this contributes to the development of one's prestige, which is called " mian zi". Mien-tsu & Lien Mien-tsu stands for a reputation through drive, ostentation and success ??? often expressed by personal wealth-. The more mien-tsu a person has, the higher his social status is and the more influence a person has on others and important decisions. A person's mien-tsu is dynamic; it can change over time by someone's success or failure. Lien represents the confidence of society in a person's sincerity and can only be lost by misconduct.

Together, they determine the importance of a person in his interpersonal relations among Chinese. In China, this is extremely important when doing business, because contracts are defined by trust and connections. Guanxi If a Chinese wants to be successful in business, he needs more than just brains. Guanxi is a personal network of influence and social relationships that is used to obtain a service or favor for ' reasonable purposes'. Guanxi can be compared to social capital and so it is not an act of bribery. The line between guanxi and corruption is rather thin.

Chinese have a different view on corruption and crime. Corruption is very big issue in China, even within the Chinese government, which censors certain information. As a result, statistics should always be used with cautiousness. Fake products In China, counterfeiting is a national sport. 40% of all counterfeit toys have China as its country of origin. Although China has signed international agreements on patents and production rights, there are two reasons why they do not hold on to them. First, it is a result of historical

factors. Most Chinese do not consider copying someone else's work as a crime.

Secondly, Chinese believe the Western companies are already rich enough, so counterfeiting does not harm the genuine producers. This way, China stays the epicentre of the fake industry. [pic] [pic] Cheaper before better The question: "Are Chinese genuine and counterfeit products are worse than Western products" has no unilateral answer. On the one hand, China stands for "cheaper -and therefore often dangerous- instead of better". Think of the Mattel incident, where Chinese toys had to be taken back because the paint had too much lead in it.

The "Made in China" is rather a warning than a quality label. On the other hand, a difference between "made in China" and "Made by China" has to be made. European companies who produce in China generally correspond to the Western criteria, so "Made in China" does not always indicate risks. According to Holslag, a researcher at the Brussels Institute for Contemporary China Studies, China will catch up to the Western norms concerning quality within the foreseeable future. Also a shift from knickknacks to high-tech products is taking place. Religion China is a country full of traditions.

One of them is Confucianism, which was the state doctrine until 1912. Confucianism is not really a religion but more a philosophy or guideline for everyday life and determines what to eat, how to behave, what to wear, ect. According to Confucius, laws are not a good basis of the State. He believes imbueing people with rituals is more effective to reach State stability.

Confucius' society is very hierarchic; everyone knows his position and should



act like it. Though society is not static. His idea was that talented people should be able to move up in society, which has had a great impact on the Chinese vision of life.

Later, Buddhism, Christian and mainly Taoism influences mingled with Confucianism into neo-Confucianism. So, it is not strange to find a Chinese who is a Confucian, Buddhist as well as a Taoist. [pic] Nature & Astrology & superstition Chinese culture stands in function of nature. Chinese consider themselves part of nature and try to live in harmony with it. In Chinese astrology, the zodiac of twelve animal signs represents twelve different types of personality. The zodiac traditionally begins with the sign of the rat, followed by the ox, the tiger, the rabbit, ect.

This year, Chinese New Year falls on 26th of January and stands in the sign of the ox. Superstition plays an important role in Chinese culture. Although fortune-telling is forbidden, people go to fortune-tellers to ask whether their child will be a boy or a girl. Language Mandarin is the most spoken language in China. If you speak Mandarin, you have 915 million native speaking conversation partners! Next to the official language, there are numerous dialects. Besides the different spoken languages, there are also two written languages. [pic] Emotions You will not often see a Chinese crying!

Chinese often get blame for not saying what they really think or feel.

Westerners find that Chinese behave in a cold manner. A possible explanation is the fact that people were hanged in the past for taking a different view on certain matters. Another explanation is that defending one's opinion is a Western way of dealing with a situation when there are

opposing thoughts. Chinese are learnt at school to accept what is told.

Business culture A difference between Belgian and Chinese culture is that Chinese do not work by a model as much as Belgians do.

In Belgium, people set up a plan and execute it. In China, people are much more flexible. They anticipate and react on the situation. A possible explanation can be found in their education. Chinese children come in contact with much more opinions during their family education. Laws, contracts and rules are less significant. Chinese have a different calendar, namely the Moon calendar. Fortunately, for business they also use the Gregorian calendar. Research studies Culture is defined by what we buy and why we buy it. National culture determines consumer behaviour, not income. (De Mooij)

At first sight, culture does not seem relevant when it comes to toys. Toys are used for children's entertainment. However, there certainly is a difference in usage between Belgium and China. As mentioned before, Chinese parents find it extremely important that their child stands out from the mass.

Therefore, Chinese parents buy toys to stimulate their children to learn as soon as possible rather than for entertainment. So, marketing, branding and advertising strategies should be adapted when exporting toys to China.

Hofstede But how different are the Belgian and Chinese culture?

According to Hofstede, one can define cultural difference on the basis of five dimensions on a 0 to 100-range scale. The degree of power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation determines a national culture. The higher the score, the more dimension

determines the culture. Belgium belongs to the more developed Latin countries cluster and China falls under the less developed Asian countries.

[pic] Figure 5: Cultural difference between China and Belgium Power distance More than Belgian culture, the Chinese culture knows a larger power distance.

In China, the acceptance of hierarchy and authority is higher. Since all people are treated fairly, they do not resist and respect higher ranked and elder people because these stand for wisdom. As mentioned before, Chinese rely much more on human relationships (guanxi) than on contracts.

Individualism Esomar research shows that China is a collectivist culture, in which loyalty and social network (Mien-stu, Lien & Guanxi) are important. In China, the group where you belong to defines your identity. In Belgium, people and society are more individualistic, which has enabled capitalism.

Masculinity Concerning the masculinity/femininity, there is not much distinction between Belgium and China. Both countries have some features of both characteristics. Uncertainty avoidance In Belgium, people believe they have faith in their own hands. In China, people depend much more on fate and believe their destiny is determined for them. In this fatalistic country, failure is unavoidable. Belgians are more threatened by risk and uncertainty than the Chinese. As a result, the Chinese are much more open to change. This confirms the Confucianism influence on China.

Long-term orientation Like other Southeast Asian countries, China is long term oriented. This has the similar effect as the Confucian values, which are acceptance of change, perseverance, thrift and pursuit of peace of mind.

Belgium, on the other hand, strives for immediate results like other Western countries. According to Hofstede, these cultural differences will remain over time, how much globalization even takes place. Now that the Chinese culture has no mysteries anymore, let's take a look at which adaptations are to be made. 4. Proposed Marketing adaptations

Cross-cultural awareness ??? the understanding that what is normal in one culture can be offending in another one ??? starts to gain credit. People start to recognize that to be successful in foreign business, the company should adapt the marketing mix to the country's values and culture. However, adaptation is very costly and time-consuming. Although China is becoming more Occidental, the marketing mix should be adapted only until the profits do not make up for the costs anymore. Segmentation There is no such thing as an average consumer! Therefore, there is no use -or value- in making an average product.

First, the company has to distinguish the different market segments based on similar product needs for consumers. For the Chinese toy market, a distinction between the urban and rural households can be made. The question " whether a market segment is specific enough to make it a segment on its own" depends on four P's. The first P stands for product. Children in urban China play with different and more qualitative toys than children in rural China. The second P stands for price. Since urban China is much wealthier, they are less price sensitive than rural China. Also the service level, the third P, differs.

The more cultivated East demands a higher servicelevel. The final P, promotion, varies from TV advertisement and word of mouth in urban China to only word of mouth in rural China. | | Size | Product | Price | Service | Promotion | | Urban | 36 % | High quality | High | High | TV + word of mouth | | Rural | 64 % | Different toys | Low | Low | Word of mouth | Table 1:

Segmentation: the four P's

Targeting In a next phase, the company has to make a strategic choice. This hard-to-reverse decision, namely the decision which specific market segment will be targeted, depends on the value that can be offered to customers.

Although the final consumers are children between zero and five years old, most of the time it will be the parents who will buy the toys. Since the most profitable segment is China's urban household segment, this market segment will be targeted. For the reason that this target group lives highly concentrated in the cities, they are easy to reach customers.

Positioning Brand positioning is the process by which marketers try to create an image or identity in the minds of their target market for a certain product. The question is whether a brand should be global or not. In this case, a global image of the brand is not important. It would be better to distinguish the positioning since in China the focus would be on learning during playing compared to recreation and entertainment in Belgium. Although it is costly, the company will benefit from this investment because of the positive effect on buying behaviour.

Two company images will not confuse customers since there is a language and character barrier between both countries. Price adaptations A price can

be determined on the basis of costs, by looking at competitors' prices or in proportion to the value created towards the end-consumer. I would suggest the company to go for the third option. Although the company's first goal should be market penetration ??? resulting in low prices ???, still a skimming pricing strategy seems best. The dolls are of a superior quality and luxury products demand a high price.

I believe 50 euro or 465 Chinese Yuan would be an appropriate price for a 25 by 15 centimetre doll. This high price can be justified because the toy cannot only be used for entertainment but also for educational purposes. Since the income of the middle class is only rising, according to my market research (see apendix) at this price there will be enough potential buyers. Another reason that justifies a high price is the high level of pre and after sales service Chinese demand, which will be discussed further. Product adaptations ??? Product specifications

Nowadays, toy manufacturers do not adapt the features of the dolls! But research has shown that it hurts the children's self-esteem. Therefore, the company should customize the skin colour, hair, eyes, height, ect. as shown in figure 6. [pic] Figure 6: A Chinese Lilliputien doll with yellow skin, dark hair and dark slit-eyed eyes. One of Lilliputiens' toys is the food pyramid by which children can learn how to put together well-balanced meals. Since people in China eat other vegetables, other meat and noodles and rice instead of potatoes, this pyramid should be adapted.

Another Lilliputien toy, the table set also should be modified since Chinese eat with chopsticks instead of fork and knife. [pic] [pic] Figure 7: Food

pyramid  
Figure 8: Table set ??? Assortment change Children like choice; therefore the product line should be expanded. The current themes like the circus, the Indians, the Pirates, the nativity of Jesus Christ could be supplemented with the twelve zodiac animals of the Chinese astrology. A doll of the child's animal sign can be given as a gift at the child's birth.

A less perfect acquisition for the assortment would be a Buddhist doll, Chinese would find it inappropriate and rude. ??? Brand name Due to a different language and moreover a different alphabet, it is crucial to change the company name and product names. "Lilliputiens" would be unpronounceable. My suggestion would be to render the company's name by transliteration, so that it sounds the closest to its original name. Pu-Tien means "all over the world", which fits with the company philosophy, to give all children over the world the chance to play. ??? Image

The new rich people love to show off their wealth. A good idea would be to create a good recognizable logo to put on each doll so that others can recognize the brand and they can brag about expensive purchase. The advertisement campaigns should be identifiable by showing rich and fortunate people. ??? Packaging Since the packaging has to sell the product, it is essential to make it as colourful and vibrant as possible. The company certainly has to use the colour red on the packaging, since in China, red has a positive connotation and stands for success, honour, fertility, happiness and love.

Qualitative information, about the fact that this toy is educational as well as entertaining, must be provided to the Chinese parents. A good idea could be

to use a combination of Chinese and English language in the toys manual. Due to internalization, the Chinese middle and upper class have become familiar with English. Toys are often given as a gift. The packaging has to look nice, because gifts are used to build up and strengthen relationships. The dolls are very soft and have different textures, therefore the company could use an open packaging so potential customers can feel and see the product before purchasing. Service level When a child has a need, it wants the need to be gratified as soon as possible. Since fast delivery is thus very important, there has to be enough inventory at any time. Because the Pu-Tien toys are more than just toys, this educational plaything stimulates senses and development of a child, there is need for pre sales service. Although China pays a lot of attention to pre-sales service as well as post sales service, they do not expect a guarantee on toys. Given that the dolls are made for children between zero and five years old, avoiding small parts and implementing warnings can prevent danger to children.

Safety regulations are less strict in China. Nevertheless, the company should keep their high level of quality. Since the dolls are made in Belgium, the company should exploit their country of origin effect and explicitly mention "Made in Belgium". Distribution strategy ??? Business culture In China, paper means nothing. So if contracts do not work, what will? You need to band with local people and win their trust. This is where the Guanxi comes in. To obtain a certain service or favour, a personal network of influence and social relationships are a must.

According to Li Qinfu, contact with the Chinese government also plays a very important role. When Westerners want to do business they contact their  
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lawyers, when Chinese do business they contact government officials. ???  
Parallel import I would not set a lower price in the Chinese market than in the home market because due to relative low trade barriers, the risk and impact of grey export from China to Belgium would be too big. ??? Mode of entry At first instance, due to low costs and a high control level, I would recommend the company to set up a website.

But on further consideration, children want their needs to be gratified as soon as possible. In addition, if the toys are reachable (merchandising), they will also nag more, which helps children to get what they want if they have shut-up parents. Shipment costs for a prior delivery would be too large in proportion to the retail price. Another reason why a website would not be a good mode of entry is the level of pre and after sales service a Chinese consumer demands. The target segment, namely middle and upper class people with high requirements, searches for qualitative, pedagogical responsible and save toys.

Therefore, these luxury toys should be sold in fancy local retail stores, not in ordinary supermarkets. The trade-off of using retail stores goes between the fact that the products are reachable, ready for delivery, a high service level and less control, more risk and higher investments. Since toy dealers are not motivated to deliver good sales support, a good way to check the service is ghost shopping. This market research technique of sending fake customers will tell if sales men give the right information and service to potential buyers and customers.

Since feedback from distributors does not come easily because they are independent, a good idea is to improve relationships with local parties by means of guanxi. Communication A good strategy is nothing if it is not well executed. Advertisement is the most culturally sensitive element of the marketing mix. Therefore, it is wise to decide well how to say what you want to say. ??? Media and the message When announcing the product launch to the potential customers by the media, the message strategy is of crucial importance. According to Hofstede, the communication style depends on the five dimensions of local culture.

China is a developing, high context and collectivistic country. The best communication style is a less informative and more persuasive and emotional approach. When advertising on TV, a good idea would be to use the least words as possible. Optimally, only utilize non-verbal language. Not only because collectivistic cultures are more visually orientated (De Mooij), but also because children between zero and five cannot read and have a very small vocabulary. Toddlers have very well developed visual capabilities and are sensitive to emotions. For that reason, a visual advertisement would do better.

In combination with a lot of colour, children's attention will be monopolized. Although Hofstede suggests a less informative approach, I believe that the message towards the (grand)parents should be informative (information on age, warnings...) and focus on the educational value of the product. Pu-Tien toys provide a key role in a child's development: its senses are stimulated thanks to the use of a diverse range of textures, sounds, shapes and colours.

As slogan I would recommend: " Pu-tien tested, child & educational  
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approved! " As mentioned before, Chinese culture has shifted from a patriarchy to a filiarthy.

As a result, advertisement will focus on children and their needs. ???

Advertisement and promotion Not only the message, also the medium by which potential consumers are informed matters. In a first phase of promoting the product, children need to get to know the product. To gain product awareness, the company should adopt sampling. By offering certain pre-school kindergartens and day nursery centres some free samples, children will come in contact with the Pu-Tien product range. This is a win-win situation. Schools will be thankful to receive teaching aids and our company will benefit from other children's word of mouth, which is the best marketing tool. If our product line appeals to the children, children will nag to their parents to get the product. Sampling has as advantage that it is the most effective promotion strategy but unfortunately it is extremely expensive. Advertising on TV will be a second step of the company's promotion strategy. Due to hypersegmentation, there are almost 3000 TV stations in China. With the given marketing budget, it would be too expensive to advertise on all of them. I would suggest advertising on one children's channel as well as on one adult channel.

Although the company's target group is children between zero and five years old and their personal expenditures start from the age of four, mostly adults will buy the product for them. Since grandparents live in the same household, also raise their grandchildren and are happy to spend their money on their grandchildren's formation, the commercial should consist of not only the child's parents but of the whole family. Also some traditional

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symbols or Chinese icons should be put in because it will help to make the connection between the Western and their own consumption culture.

As marketing manager, I think it is best not to invest money in global advertisement. I have computed the extent of standardization and found that toys are a cultural product. Therefore, the message and medium should change. It is not necessary to have one corporate brand image because the children in Belgium and China will not come in contact with each other, so it will not be confusing. Conclusion SWOT-analysis Strengths The major strength of the company's product is the educational value that comes with the product. Chinese find education extremely important. Weaknesses

A relative high price is chosen due to the risk and impact of parallel import. But a small segment with a high price can be more profitable than large volumes of low profit margin products. Opportunities Learning more about China, its culture, rules and laws and setting up a social network, with the government as well, will be extremely important. This will take some time, effort and money but it will enlarge the company's chance to succeed tremendously. Threats I believe the biggest challenge will be the fierce competition from less qualitative and counterfeit dolls that are much cheaper.

To conclude, as a marketing manager, I must say China stays a black box. When you have done all research that is possible; business in China still is risky. At least with the suggested adaptations the risk will be minimized and the success is multiplied. 6. References Interview Interview with my neighbour Yan Lu, a Chinese middle class woman living in Belgium since

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3/01/2009 <http://www.wing-international.com/> 03/01/2009 7. Apendices

[pic] Market research: Questionnaire: What is an appropriate price for the Pu-  
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Tien doll? 1) Are you a male/female? 2) How old are you? 3) What is your highest level of education you have achieved? 4) What is your marital status? 5) How much do you earn each month? 6) Do you live in one of China's big cities? 7) What is your housing type? 8) Do you have (grand)children? 9) How many (grand)children do you have? 10) Is it a boy or a girl? 11) Do you believe your (grand)child's development is important? 12) Do you like to spend money on your (grand)childrens (birthday)presents? 13) How much would you normally spend on your (grand)child's birthday? 14) Have you ever bought a Pu-Tien doll for your (grand)child? 15) Where you pleased with your purchase? 16) What was the occasion you bought the doll for? 17) How much did it cost you? 18) Did you found it a reasonable price? 19) What would have been the highest/lowest price at which you would buy a Pu-Tien doll?