

Consumer Socialization among College Students In Malaysia

The purpose of this paper is to study adolescent consumer socialization in Malaysia. This study adopted the convenience sampling method. Data were obtained using self-administered questionnaires, distributed to 3500 first year students at the Universiti Putra Malaysia in 2001. A total of 2219 set of completed questionnaires were analyzed. Sixty seven point nine percent of the respondents were female and 32.1% were males. Respondents in both groups were in their late adolescent stage. The findings indicate that adolescents learned about consumerism skills through their interaction with peers, parents and media in consumption activity.

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Adolescents are age of transition from childhood to adult status. At this age, adolescent in a process to adapt the physical, physiological changes and identity formation. Adolescent forming their identity through socialization process. In the Malaysian society, adolescent consumers have rapidly come to present one of the most lucrative markets as the population of this segment is projected to grow in the future. According to Yearbook of Statistics Malaysia (2000), 20.7% adolescent were in the age group 10 to 19 years old from 23.3 million of the Malaysian population in 2000. It has been estimated that the young people increases by 2.3% per annum, from 4.47 million in 1996 to 4.82 in 2000. Marketers have recently discovered the potential purchasing power of adolescents (O'Neill, 1992). Today's adolescents seem to have more money to spend than did previous generations, a trend that may be related to changing family structures (Doss, Marlowe & Deborah, 1995). Children and adolescent learn financial management behavior through observations and participation (incidental learning) and through intentional instruction by socialization agents (Rettig & Mortenson, 1986; McNeal, 1987; Moschis, 1987; Danes & Dundrud, 1993).

Consumer socialization research indicates that parents influence children and adolescents by letting them observe and imitate their behaviors, by interacting with them in their consumption, and by providing them with opportunities for guided consumption (Ward, Wackman & Wartella, 1977). Peers may also contribute to adolescent's acquisition of marketplace knowledge. Indeed, studies have found that peers are important reference sources for adolescent in selecting products (Gilkison, 1973; Mascarenhas & Higby, 1993). Adolescent are more likely to interact with peers compared to parents in adolescent age (Brown, Mounts, Lamborn & Steinberg, 1993). According to Moschis (1978), exposure to media will influence adolescent socialization process. For further discussion, this paper will answer all the question related to the adolescent interaction with socialization agents in their consumption activity.

Methods

The population of the new intake for May semester 2001/2002 at Universiti Putra Malaysia was 5380 students. Respondents were in their late adolescent stage. The selection of the respondent done based on the student residential college. This study adopted the convenience sampling method. Data were obtained using self-administered questionnaires, distributed to 3500 first year students at the Universiti Putra Malaysia in 2001. A total of 2219 set of completed questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS program 'Statistical Package for the Social Sciences'. Statistical analysis include frequencies, means and Chi-square.

Findings

Profile of The Adolescents

This study involved 2219 respondent, which consist of 67.9% female, and 32.1% male respondent. Perhaps, it was due to the fact that female are more intelligence and hardworking than male. Statistics from Perangkaan Pendidikan Malaysia (1998), shown that almost 70.0% students in local public institutions of higher learning (IPTA) are female. Respondent selected from various race where two third were Bumiputera including Sabah and Sarawak. In conclusion, more than two third respondent were female and Bumiputera, ages from 17

to 21 (mean :19.7 years), 38.0% come from rural areas, one third stayed at school hostel and single (not married). One from two respondents is middle child in their family and mean of sibling is 4.6 per family.

Adolescent Interaction with Peers

In general, majority of respondents indicate that sometimes they have interaction with their friend about consumption. The findings of the study indicated that sometimes respondent shopping at same outlet with their friend. Male respondent indicates that they never shopping at same outlet with friend more than female respondent. Higher percentage of Indian respondent indicate they always shopping at same outlet with friend compared to Chinese (18.6%) and Bumiputera (13.3%). There is 61.3% of respondent stated that sometimes friend influencing what thing they want to buy. Peers may also contribute to adolescent's acquisition of marketplace knowledge. Indeed, studies have found that peers are important reference sources for adolescent in selecting products (Gilkison, 1973; Mascarenhas & Higby, 1993). Out of 16.3% respondents stated they observed in their friends shopping behavior and what are the product their friend buying to make sure they buy the right product especially male respondent. Generally, adolescents have interaction with friend in consumption activity and mean of influenced is 4.5. In depth analysis shown that majority of respondent stated that sometimes they have interaction with friends in consumption activity. Mean time per day adolescent was interact with friend is 10.1 hours. There are differences in time usage between male and female in shopping activity, sport and study group. Based on composite score, female respondent have more interaction with friends in consumption. Bumiputera respondent are the higher group that have interaction with friend. Research done by Abdul Razak and Safiek (2001), also find that Bumiputera are the higher group that have interaction with friends compared to others.

Adolescent Interaction with Parents

Result shown that majority of respondent has interaction with parents in consumption. Higher percentage of female respondent stated that their buying behavior always same with their parents (14.9%) compared to male (10.6%). There is 18.2% of respondent stated that they always accompanied by parents while going out for shopping. Majority of the respondent, which stated their parents always accompanied them in shopping, are female, Indian, from urban area and high family income. Female respondent always ask their parents permission when buy something. Percentage of Indian respondent got permission from parents when shopping (48.4%) higher than Bumiputera (33.3%) and Chinese (18.8%). There is 30.8% respondent stated that their family always have discussion about financial aspects. Higher percentage of female respondent (32.5%) stated that their family always discuss about financial aspects than male (26.7%). Most of the respondent, which stated that their family always discuss about financial, comes from rural area and poor family.

Almost 53.0% respondent stated that parents give freedom when shopping and 35.0% stated that they always discuss and go shopping with parents. Parents give more freedom to male respondent when they go shopping. Mean of mother influenced in consumption is 6.4 meanwhile the value of father influenced is 5.5. This indicate that mother have more influenced in consumption compared to father. Mean time interaction between adolescent and parents is 10.5 hour per day. In depth analysis shown that mean time per day adolescent chat with parents is 2.9 hour, shopping (2.1 hours), phone calls (0.9 hours), discussion (1.5 hours), dinner (1.5 hours) and doing housework (2.3 hours). Mean time of female respondent talking, shopping and doing homework with parents higher than male. Based on the findings we can conclude that mother have more influenced in shopping activity of adolescent and female respondent allocated more time in talking, shopping and doing housework with parents. Mean composite score of adolescent interaction with parents shown that female respondent have more interaction with parents in consumption activities. Moschis and Moore (1979), also find that female always interact with their parents in consumption aspects.

Adolescent Interaction with Media

Almost 20.0% of respondent stated that they never buy product and brand advertised through television, radio and magazine. Higher percentage of male respondent (23.0%) stated that they never buy product and brand, which advertised through media compared to female (18.1%). Indian respondent are the most respondent stated that never buy product advertised through print and electronic media compared other respondent. There is 48.4% respondent stated they never depend on advertisement to choose the best product. Higher percentage of male respondent stated that they never depend on advertisement to choose the best product. About 60.7% of Indian respondent never depend on advertisement to choose the best product compared to Chinese (53.5%) and Bumiputera (43.8%). Majority of respondent stated that sometimes

advertisement provide a useful information. Percentage of female respondent stated that sometimes advertisement provide a useful information higher (80.2%) than male (73.5%).

Meyer and Anderson (2000), suggests that quality, style, price and brand are the criterion adolescent look for when shopping. Majority of respondent stated that sometimes they buy branded product and 34.1% respondent stated they never buy branded product. Percentage of female respondent stated they never buy branded product are higher (36.4%) than male (29.2%). Almost 71.0% of respondent stated that sometimes they confident that advertised product have high quality and 25.0 % respondent stated they never have any confident the product is high quality especially male and Indian respondent. Female respondents always reading magazine to get information compared to male and Bumiputera respondent also always reading magazine to get information compared to other races. Mean composite score of interaction between adolescent and media shown that Bumiputera more often use media in consumption activity compared to other respondents. Respondent were also asked their frequency and time usage of media in daily life. Mean time of adolescent using media per day is 15.1 hours. More than 50.0% respondents stated they are always watching television. Percentage of female respondent stated they always watching television higher (58.8%) than male (48.2%). Mean time of female respondent watching television also higher than male respondents. Bumiputera respondent watching television more longer (4.2 hours) than Indian (3.0 hours) and Chinese (2.8 hours)

Mean time of adolescent reading books or magazines is 2.2 hours. Percentage of female respondent stated they always read book or magazine are higher (52.4%) than male respondent (37.2%) and mean time of female respondent read book and magazine also longer (2.3 hours) than male respondent (2.0 hours). Female respondent listening radio (3.1 hours) more longer than male (2.5 hours). Percentage of female respondent that stated they always listening to radio (59.6%) higher than male respondent (46.5%). Based on the findings, we can conclude that there are significant difference time in using media between gender and race. Female respondent watching television, reading book or magazine and listening radio more longer than male respondents. Previous research concludes that the frequency of media usage by adolescents have positive significant relationship to their consumer behavior (Moschis & Churchill, 1978; Moschis & Moore, 1982; O'Guinn & Shrum, 1997). Based on scale from one to ten, respondent were asked their perception how far media influenced their consumption activities. Analysis found that newspaper is the most influenced media to adolescents consumption compared book or magazine, television, radio and internet.

Implication & Recommendation

The most revealing findings of this study is that interaction between adolescents and parents can influence consumer socialization. This study also found that mother has more power in influencing adolescent consumption. Therefore, parents have to implement systematic, practically and efficient management habits in their family. Consumer education module can also be used to educate children at home. This research indicate that majority of respondent have interaction with their peers in consumption activity. So, to educate this adolescent, group approach will be more suitable and efficient to use. They have to be supported to join club and organization. Through organization, adolescent can develop their knowledge and skills in management aspect to their daily life. This research also found that majority of respondent used media in their consumption. This study suggests that media have to play their role to more educate consumer about consumer education. Message and information about consumption skill have to create in more creative to be more exciting and easy. The purpose of advertisement has to educate consumer and not only encourage consumer in spending their money. Issues of consumption not only focus on problems in housing or ethnicity. These issues are global and have to manage with wisdom. Consistent with National Consumer Policy, which mean to encourage sustainable consumption between consumer and supplier to accomplish "Malaysian Vision 2020".

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Endnote

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