ROLE MODELS INFLUENCE ON YOUNG ADULTS
PURCHASE INTENTIONS AND BEHAVIORS

Chung Yen Nee

Bachelor of Business Management with Honours
(Marketing)
2006
ROLE MODELS INFLUENCE ON YOUNG ADULTS PURCHASE INTENTIONS AND BEHAVIORS

CHUNG YEN NEE

This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Business Management with Honours (Marketing)

Faculty of Economics and Business
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYSIA SARAWAK
2006
Statement of Originality

The work described in this Final Year Project, entitled "Role Models Influence on Young Adults Purchase Intentions and Behaviors" is to the best of author's knowledge that of the author except where due reference is made.

31.03.06
(Date Submitted)

Chung Yen Nee
9947
ABSTRACT

Role Models Influence on Young Adults Purchase Intentions and Behaviors

By

Chung Yen Nee

This study replicates portions of Martin & Bush (2000) in a Malaysian consumers' context, intended to determine role models influence on young adults purchase intentions and behavior. Moreover, it intends to examine whether parents (direct) or celebrities (vicarious) role models are more influential on young adults purchase intentions and behaviors. The scope of this study is limited to young adults who aged between 19 – 25 years old. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed to 250 respondents that were selected from University of Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). However, only 237 completed questionnaires have been utilized. The results of Simple Linear Regression showed that role models have significant influence on young adults purchase intentions and behaviors. However, celebrities (vicarious) are found to be more influential than parents (direct) role models in influencing young adults purchase intentions and behaviors. This studies suggested that both parents and celebrities role more have significant influence on young adults purchase intentions and behaviors. Additionally, other issues raised from this study include the issues of consumer socialization theory, social learning theory and the theory of stimulus-organism-response. From the discussions, this study also suggested that policy makers should take into account the importance of parents in instilling good moral in today's' young adults.
ABSTRAK

Pengaruh Orang Rujukan terhadap Intensi dan Perangai Pembelian Pemuda

Oleh

Chung Yen Nee

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Firstly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Ernest Cyril de Run for his valuable guidance, advice, supervision and encouragement throughout the process in completion of this study. Thank you for all your patience and comments that enabled me to finish this paper on schedule.

Besides, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to all my friends and course mates who had helped me in completing and distributing the questionnaires. I also would like to thank the respondents for their sincerity and cooperation in their views during the administration of questionnaires.

Last but no least, my deepest thank goes to my loving parents and relatives for giving me their supports and advices in my life.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................... X
LIST OF FIGURES .......................................................................................................... Xi

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION
1.0 Introduction .............................................................................................................. 1
1.1 Background of Research ......................................................................................... 1
1.2 Problem Statement ................................................................................................. 5
1.3 Objective of the Research ....................................................................................... 6
1.4 Significance of Research ....................................................................................... 7
1.5 Conceptual Framework ......................................................................................... 8
1.6 Scope of the Study ................................................................................................. 9

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW
2.0 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 11
2.1 Role Models .......................................................................................................... 11
2.2 Positive Role Models and Negative Role Models .................................................. 13
2.3 Potential Role Models for Individuals ................................................................... 13
2.4 Parents as Role Models ......................................................................................... 14
2.5 Celebrities as Role Models .................................................................................. 16
2.6 Hypothesis ........................................................................................................... 19

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
3.0 Introduction................................................................................ 21
3.1 Research Design........................................................................ 21
  3.1.1 Population and Sample...................................................... 21
  3.1.2 Data Collection.................................................................. 24
  3.1.3 Research Instrument......................................................... 25
3.2 Pre-Test.................................................................................... 26
  3.2.1 Result of the Pre-Test........................................................ 26
  3.2.2 Reliability Evaluation....................................................... 27
3.3 Variables in the Questionnaires............................................... 27
  3.3.1 Role Models.................................................................... 27
  3.3.2 Purchase Intentions and Behaviors.................................... 28
3.4 Data Analysis........................................................................... 29

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS
4.0 Introduction............................................................................ 31
4.1 Frequency Distribution............................................................ 31
4.2 Respondents' Demographics.................................................... 32
4.3 Mean....................................................................................... 33
  4.3.1 Individual Means............................................................. 33
  4.3.2 Overall Means............................................................... 36
4.4 The Findings of Hypothesis Testing.......................................... 36

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
5.0 Introduction............................................................................ 41
5.1 Discussion of Hypotheses and Findings............................................41
5.2 Theoretical Discussion.................................................................43
5.3 Managerial Implication...............................................................46

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION, LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH
6.0 Introduction.................................................................................48
6.1 Conclusion..................................................................................48
6.2 Limitations of the Research.......................................................50
6.3 Future Research.................................................................51

REFERENCES
APPENDICES
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Sample Size According to Faculties in Unimas........................................23
Table 2: Respondents' Demographics.........................................................................32
Table 3: Individual Means and Standard Deviation Values for Role Models Influence.
  Purchase Intentions and Purchase Behaviors..........................................................33
Table 4: Overall Means and Standard Deviation Values for Role Models Influence.
  Purchase Intentions and Purchase Behaviors..........................................................36
Table 5: Simple Linear Regression Analyses: Role models Influence on Young
  Adults Purchase Intentions and Purchase Behaviors..............................................37
Table 6: Summary of Issues Raised by Findings.........................................................45
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Social Learning Theory ............................................................. 8
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This chapter point out the research background, problem statement, objectives of the research, the significance of the research, conceptual framework as well as the scope of the study.

1.1 Background of the Research

Throughout the process of growing up, a wide variety of influences and behavior of people around us shape the attitudes and moral of us (Gunter & Furnham, 1998). From the closest relationships like parents to the least close like idol are believed to have impact on our day to day decision making especially on our purchasing decisions (Gunter & Furnham, 1998; Wilamasinis, 2004). In other words, a young person will get influence form his or her surrounding role models and is therefore transform to a fairly sophisticated consumer in the future (Gunter & Furnham, 1998).

Others argue that media also appear to have a great influence on a child’s decision-making skills and behavior in the market place (Wilamasinis, 2004). As studies revealed that the materialistic values instill in a child’s behavior are positively related to television exposure (Kraak & Pelletier, 1998), excluding the child who is living in a strong communications pattern family (Moschis & Moore’s.
1982). Nonetheless, others still argue that family, friends and other reference groups are some of the major groups a buyer obtained information from, affecting their buying behavior (Enis, Cox & Mokwa, 1993). Meanwhile, others argue that parents and media both played a vital role in individuals' purchasing behavior (Gunter & Furnham, 1998). Parents is considered to have the most influential factors that affect decision on purchasing household items whereas peers and media play an important role in influencing the discretionary purchases of individuals (Gunter & Furnham, 1998).

As a child grown to become young adults, several patterns of purchasing intentions and behaviors will undergo formation and change (Gunter & Furnham, 1998). Besides, the child discretionary income and expenditure will rise as their age increases (Dotson & Hyatt, 2005). Moreover, preference for products and brands are likely to be different too as the individual is getting older. Nonetheless, others argue that such behaviors are likely to remain the same, provided that the person remains in the same specific subculture experience during his or her formative years (Mochis, 1987). Upon that, some of the influences of brand and other stimuli acquire during adolescents period will persist to adulthood. Studies had shown that quite a number of adult women were using the same brand as they were using while they are still a teenagers (Gunter & Furnham, 1998). This indirectly indicates that the consumptions behaviors acquired from the observation of their role models' during their adolescents are unlikely to be different as they reach over their twenties.
Therefore, this study will tend to look into the impact of role models on young adults purchase intentions and behaviors. Besides, the study is trying to determine whether the young adults still look up to their parents as their consumptions role models or are they more prone to follow their favourite celebrities through media and other kind of marketing stimuli.

**The Importance of Young Adults Market**

Marketers have always been putting more emphasized on the teenagers market (Shoham & Dalakas, 2003; Taylor & Cosenza, 2002) due to their influence on parents’ expenditure, ability to spend with their own money and increasing spending as well as becoming a trendsetter (Martin & Bush, 2000; Zollo, 1995; Caruana & Vassallo, 2003). Therefore, others argue that the amount of attention that advertiser and marketers pay to the teenagers market is far too much, neglecting the other demographical and economically crucial market (Carrigan & Szmigin, 1999). Others argue that the young adults market who are under the range of age nineteen to twenty-five that fall under the category of Generation Y should get more attentions (Dotson & Hyatt, 2005; Martin & Turley, 2004). Similarly, others consider they are the next big generations (Cui, Trent, Sullivan & Matiru, 2003).

In Malaysia, the population of teenagers that fall under the age ranging from ten to nineteen is 5068 thousand and the population of young adults from age twenty to twenty-nine are in the amount of 4261.7 thousand (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2003). Although the population show that the younger generations depict a
larger market for Malaysian’s market target, others argue that the later market are
the market segments that are easier to target since they are being brought up in a
consumer oriented environment (Brand & Rachel, 2000). Studies in US found that
this group’s purchasing power is much higher as compare with the younger
generations (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003). They are the young generations that have
every intention to earn lots of money apart from building their ideal profession and
personal life (Martin, 2005). Therefore, they are recognized as the wealthiest batch
that is either working or still studying whereby most of them who are still studying
are also holding part time jobs as well (Martin & Turley, 2004). Besides, this group
tends to turn to media as source of information (Jorgensen, 2003). Similarly, they are
the most watched group by the media in recent years (Dias, 2003; Howe & Strauss,
2000).

As a result, more and more demographer, market analysis and researchers are
aware of these young adults significant role in receiving their marketing and
advertising strategy in obtaining information in the market place in this twenty-first
century (Keating, 2000; Paul, 2001). Thus, it is important for Malaysians’ marketers
to know which individuals or role models that shapes the consumptions pattern of
this group in order to target them as well as increasing the knowledge on
Malaysians’ consumer behavior.
1.2 Problem Statement

Role models are regarded as potential group of people that are able to leave impact on the consumption intentions and behaviors of individuals (Martin & Bush, 2000). Role models can range from direct models like parents, peers, relatives and even to vicarious role models like celebrity (Martin & Bush, 2000; Bandura, 1986). Nonetheless, others argue that parents are among the most likely socialization agents to influence children’s consumptions behavior (Feltham, 1998; Caruana & Vassallo, 2003). Others also perceive that parents have the ability to provide informational influence as children look up to their parents as knowledgeable and thus will observe and imitate parental consumption behavior (Park & Lessig, 1977; Feltham, 1998). On the other hand, others argue that celebrity role models in advertisement play a major role in influencing consumers’ purchasing intentions (Daneshvary & Schwer, 2000). Thus, resulting in the determination of the most influential role models on consumers’ consumptions pattern between direct influence like parents and vicarious influence like celebrity become ambiguous.

Meanwhile, researchers have pinpointed the significance of modeling in imitation of behavior (Wilkie, 1990). It is stated that role models are able to influence consumers in three ways (Wilkie, 1990). First, role models are believed to be able to teach new behavior to consumers (Wilkie, 1990). Secondly, role models can increase the probability of purchase (Wilkie, 1990). Finally, it is believed that role models are able to deter negatives behavior of consumers (Wilkie, 1990). For example, modeling is useful to discourage negative behavior like smoking and
Despite the potential influence of role models had on individuals, less study look into the influence of these role models that may have on a target market (Bush, Alan, Martin, Craig & Victoria, 2004). Others also argue that the markets' affiliation with the products like how individuals develop their attachment towards certain brand or product and their perception of brand's value are likely to be ignored by researchers (Chandler & Heinzerling, 1999). Therefore, this study intends to examine the positive relationships between role models influence on young adults' purchase intentions and behaviors. Besides, the most influential role models between parents (direct) and celebrity (vicarious) on young adults are also being determined.

1.3 Objectives of the Research

The purpose of this study is divided into two components. First is to determine whether role models have positive influence on young adults purchase intentions and behaviors. Secondly, it is to determine whether young adults are influenced more by parents (direct) or celebrities (vicarious) role models.
1.4 Significance of the Research

This study provides insights to Malaysian's marketers for developing appropriate interpersonal and marketing programme aimed at young adults. Apart from being as a source of information for decision-making, the study also gives information on the group of individuals that influence the Malaysian's young adults the most. Upon that, it enables the marketers to know whether Malaysian's young adults prefer to look up to their parents or celebrities as their consumptions role models. By knowing the role model that exert the most influence on young adults purchase intentions and behaviors, marketers can know which group of individuals to focus on in order to go into the young adults market as well as to enhance their purchases intentions and behaviors. In addition, the study allows marketers to allocate suitable spokesperson in the advertisement and in the public policy communications campaign that targets at young adults.

Furthermore, this research can be a reference for future research purposes. The results and the findings are not only beneficial for managerial decision but also can be used as comparison for future research. The study is able to increase the Malaysian's knowledge on local consumer behaviors.
1.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Social Learning Theory

Source: Modify from Peter and Olson, 1996

Consumers’ knowledge on certain goods and services are resulting from the process of learning (Foxall, Goldsmith & Brown, 1998). This information stored usually becomes the foundation for one’s behavior in the future (Foxall et al., 1998). Two models namely the cognitive-psychological model and the social learning model has been used widely to describe and predict how consumers learn and make decision on consumption-related questions (Moschi & Churchill, 1978).

Social Learning Theory Framework depicted in Figure 1 shows how consumers learn their behavior through the observation of others (Solomon, 2004).
This type of learning is a complex processes (Solomon, 2004); involving four sub processes which consist of attention processes follow by retention process, production processes and motivation processes (Peter & Olson, 1996).

Attention processes is referring to the way which observer attempt to and extort information about the main features of the modeled behavior (Peter & Olson, 1996). Consequently, retention process will occur whereby the observer retains the observed models and the models’ behavior in memory (Peter & Olson, 1996). Meanwhile, production processes take place when the observer is able to perform the observed behavior and motivation process is a condition arises whereby the retained behavior is practical for the observer (Solomon, 2004). Finally, the observational learning process will come about after going through the four sub processes mentioned with the observer acquired and performed the behavior that was earlier demonstrated by a role model (Mowen & Minor, 1998).

1.6 Scope of the Study

This research intend to determine the impact of role models on Malaysians’ young adults purchase intentions and behavior. The research also look into whether it is parents or celebrity role models that perceived by Malaysians’ young adults to be their most influential consumption role models. The research will be conducted on 250 (Luck, Taylor & Robin, 1987) undergraduates from University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), excluding the undergraduates from the faculty of Medicine and
Health Science. These undergraduates will be chosen on a non probability sampling design to complete this research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter looks into the literatures that relate to the research problems. The literatures will reviews some of the important concept that has been studied by other researchers regarding the topic of this research. The meaning of role models, positive and negative role models as well as the identification of potentials role models are reviewed. Besides, parents and celebrities influence on the purchase behaviors and intentions are being reviewed as well. Upon that, the hypotheses are also developed in this chapter.

2.1 Role Models

Consumer behavior is affected by many factors that are beyond ones control (Anonymous, n.d.). In other words, consumer buying process is a complex process, affected by many internal and external factors. Throughout the growing period, individuals will receive influence from their culture, peers and role models in the formation of their consumptions behavior (Anonymous, n.d.) through the process of socializing or modeling (Solomon, 2004). Since the study at hand is emphasizing on the influence of role models on the purchasing behavior and intentions, it is necessary to define the meaning of role models in terms of their influence on consumer behavioral intentions.
Role models can be defined as someone we look up to, possessing some successful attributes or behavior that we admire and would like to imitate (Donahue, 2002; Schroeter, 2002). They can be anyone whom individuals came to have contact with either directly or indirectly that are able to leave impact on our decisions making (Bandura, 1977). Besides, it can also be defined as:

“...person(s) an individual perceive to be similar to some extent, and because of that similarity, the individual desires to emulate (or specifically avoid) aspects of that person’s attributes or behaviors” (Gibson & Barron, 2003, p198)

Nonetheless, others argued that role models needless to be someone who is popular or well-known in the public eye, instead just need to be able to inspire others by representing possible exemplars of professional skill and being successful in certain professions that is able to motivate individuals to do their very best in order to achieve desired goals (Donahue, 2002).

Therefore, all these definition regarding role models allows a wide variety of individuals to be considered as role models (Gunter & Furnham, 1998). It could range from the closest individual to the least close individuals, consisting of parents, relatives, friends, teacher, athletes and famous individual (Bush et al., 2004). Thus, any individual could be possibly influence us in our consumption behaviors and intentions that we could regard as our consumption role models (Gunter & Furnham, 1998).
2.2 Positive Role Models and Negative Role Models

Role models might appear in two forms; either they appear to be positive role models or negative role models towards individuals. Generally, positive role models are someone who shows positive attribute or behavior, encouraging and inspire individuals to achieve certain goals and lead a useful life (Martinelli, 2002). A research done by the Oklahoma Health Sciences Center has shown that teenagers with positive peer role models were less likely to be indulging in tobacco usage (Martinelli, 2002).

However, role models do not always appear to be positive role models for individuals. Their inspiration might not always be a good thing for individuals (Anonymous, 2005). When two members of Spice Girls were pregnant back in 1998, there was a controversy whether they should be considered as positive role models whereby parents worried they might encourage pregnancy among young girls (Anonymous, 2005). Therefore, bad attitude like smoking and drinking consumption depicted by certain entertainer might encourage young people to consider that it’s cool to be act like them when they look up to these entertainer as role models.

2.3 Potential Role Models for Individuals

Prior studies had revealed that individuals are receiving influences from different group of people that can be considering as role models (Martin & Bush, 2000). These include parents (Commuri & Gentry, 2000; Chan & McNeal, 2003;...