

## **The influence of role models on young adults purchase**

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### **Abstract**

This study explores the influence of direct (parents) and vicarious (celebrities) role models on young consumer's purchase intention and behavior in Malaysia. The study partially replicates previous studies conducted in the west while exploring the eastern perspective. The data was collected using convenience sampling. Respondents were mostly undergraduate students at a public university in Sarawak, Malaysia. They were asked to respond to a structured questionnaire which was based on previous studies conducted in the same area. Regression analysis was carried out to estimate the impact of role model influence on purchase intention and behavior. The results indicate that both direct and vicarious role model significantly influence purchase intention. However finding do suggests that the direct role model does not influence purchasing behavior. This study significantly contributes in understanding the role model influence on ever growing youth market in Malaysia.

### **Introduction**

Role models are regarded as a potential group of people that are able to leave impact on the consumption intentions and behaviors of individuals (Bush and Martin, 2000). Role models can range from direct models such as parents, peers, relatives and to vicarious role models such as celebrities (Bandura, 1986; Bush and Martin, 2000). As a marketer, it would therefore be important to note whether parents or celebrities play an important role in influencing young adults purchase behavior.

In Malaysia, the population of teenagers under the age ranging from ten to nineteen is more than five million and young adults from age twenty to twenty-nine are around four and a half million people (Anonymous, 2008). The combine population of this segment constitutes a quarter of the total Malaysian consumer market. Despite the potential influence of role models on young adults, a limited amount of study has looked into the influence of these role models on a target market particularly in Malaysian context (Bush and Martin, 2000).

Malaysia is unique as a country due to its multiracial, multicultural, multi-religious, and multilingual social construct (Abraham, 1999; Tsunashima, 2004; Waller and Fam, 2000; Waller, Fam, and Erdogan, 2005). These communities live side by side in harmony to maintain a peaceful society despite preserving their own ethnic identities (Razak and Mokhlis, 2003; Tsunashima, 2004). Malaysia has a total population of 27 million people. Malays are the largest ethnic group, which represent more than 13 million people. This followed by Chinese with around 6.2 million and Indian around 1.8 million people (Anonymous, 2008). The national language is Bahasa Malaysia, however, different groups (Chinese, Iban, Indian etc.) speak their own languages (Shumsul, 2003). Major religions in Malaysia are Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism (Asma and Lrong, 2001).