

**Consumerism in Malaysia:
Mass Media, Lifestyles and Identities**

Consumerism in Malaysia: Mass Media, Lifestyles and Identities

Andreas Totu

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

Kota Kinabalu • Sabah • 2010

<http://www.ums.edu.my/penerbit>

A Member of Malaysia Scholarly Publishing Council (MAPIM)

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Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Andreas Totu

Consumerism in Malaysia: Mass Media, Lifestyles and Identities /
Andreas Totu

Include index

Bibliography: p. 157

ISBN 978-967-5224-29-4

1. Consumption (Economics)--Malaysia. 2. Consumer behavior--
Malaysia. I. Title.

339.4709595

Cover Designer: Albert Frederick
Layout Designer: I-Teamwork (M) Sdn Bhd
Text Typeface: Times New Roman
Font and Leading Size: 11/15 points
Printed by: I-Teamwork (M) Sdn Bhd

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vi
PREFACE	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	ix
CHAPTER 1	1
Consumerism as a Way of Life	
CHAPTER 2	25
The Many Landscapes of Malaysia	
CHAPTER 3	63
The Cultural Imperialism Thesis and Cultivation Analysis	
CHAPTER 4	109
Consumerism in Malaysia	
CHAPTER 5	145
Conclusion	
NOTE	153
BIBLIOGRAPHY	157
INDEX	179

LIST OF TABLES

2.1	Gross Domestic Product by industry, Malaysia 2000 – 2005	33
2.2	Total retail market size in Malaysia	35
2.3	Foreign-owned wholesale and retail companies in Malaysia	35
2.4	Malaysia Key Competitive indicators	38
2.5	Major activities at shopping premises	44
2.6	Advertising expenditure for Malaysia, 1997 – 2007	57
2.7	Advertising market share, 2000	57
2.8	Advertising expenditure by type of media, 1999 – 2000	58
2.9	Top 10 advertising agencies in Malaysia, 2000	58
2.10	Giant Media Companies as of 2006	80
4.1	Ranges of age of respondents	114
4.2	Two categories of age of respondents	114
4.3	Distribution of age by gender	114
4.4	Distribution of household income	115
4.5	Distribution of household income by groups	115
4.6	Distribution of income groups by area of residency	115
4.7	Distribution of respondents by area of residency	116
4.8	Distribution of respondents by ethnic groups	116
4.9	Ethnic groups by household income and area of residency	117
4.10	Parents' level of education	117
4.11	Experience of travel	118
4.12	Factors influencing respondents' daily decision making	118
4.13	Non-consumerist activities and food & beverages	119
4.14	Non-consumerist activities and local foods & beverages by area of residency, income and ethnicity	120
4.15	Amount of TV viewing among respondents	120
4.16	TV viewing by age and gender	121
4.17	Amount of TV viewing within areas of residency and ethnic groups	121
4.18	TV channels and the frequency of viewing	122
4.19	Watching soaps in the RTM1 by ethnicity	123
4.20	Frequency of watching TV programmes	123
4.21	What do respondents do when an advertisement is on air?	124
4.22	Respondent's preferences towards advertisements	125
4.23	Preference to advertisements and advertisements watching	125

4.24	Reasons behind advertisements watching	125
4.25	Advertisements show latest lifestyles by gender	125
4.26	Advertisements show latest lifestyles by gender by age	125
4.27	Reasons to dislike advertisements	126
4.28	Preference to advertisements and ads are annoying	126
4.29	Frequency distributions for consumerist attitude index	127
4.30	Frequency distributions for consumerist desire index	128
4.31	Frequency distributions for consumerist habits index	128
4.32	Consumerist attitude index by area of residency	129
4.33	Consumerist desire index by area of residency	130
4.34	Area of residency and level of income against consumerist indicators: Gauging the association between the two variables	131
4.35	Consumerist habit index by area of residency	132
4.36	Consumerist attitude index and TV viewing	133
4.37	Partial correlation test on TV viewing and attitude indicators after controlling the other variables	134
4.38	TV viewing and the attitude towards consumerist indicators by area of residency	134
4.39	Levels of agreement towards consumerist statements/items by amount of TV viewing by family values	136
4.40	Levels of agreement towards consumerist statements/items by amount of TV viewing by community values	136
4.41	Non-consumerist activities and food & beverages	141

PREFACE

This book was written based on my research when I was doing my PhD thesis at the University of Wales, Cardiff, United Kingdom. The idea of the research was prompted through my daily observations of my own children and also my nephews and nieces. Their lifestyles have always been interesting, particularly when I compare to the lifestyles that I had been through during my childhood. Since I have great interests in looking at the role of mass media in the realm of culture, thus this research was initiated.

The research examines the cultural transformation of youth lifestyles in Malaysia as a result of exposure to television and advertising from the cultural imperialism perspective. The central question here relates to the role of television and advertising in homogenising the culture of Malaysian youths into a standardised and monolithic global culture characterised mainly by consumer culture. This study employs a triangulation method – a combination of survey methods and focus group discussions.

The survey data were analysed using a cultivation analysis approach to assess the impact of mass media exposure (particularly television and advertising) on the consumption attitudes, desires and habits of Malaysian youths. The respondents consist of youth aged from 15 to 24 years old. Based on the findings of the quantitative and qualitative analyses, it is clear that television and advertising, although significant, do not homogenise the culture of Malaysian youths towards consumerist lifestyles in a totalising manner.

The social, cultural and geographical structures and the individual's intimacy with traditional values and beliefs determine the effects of media texts on the viewers. Such findings reject some parts of the assumptions of cultural imperialism. What transpired in this study is that, although television and advertising are likely to influence how young people in Malaysia perceived the social reality, the enculturation effects depend upon other factors – in particular locations and community values. If there is any element of homogenisation, the process should not necessarily be seen as deliberate cultural imperialism by developed countries, but simply as a correlate of modernisation.

What is more appropriate, therefore, in the discussion regarding the meeting of the culture of developed and developing countries such as Malaysia is the notion of 'hybridisation' or 'glocalisation'. As seen in the post-modern societies, which have increasingly characterized the world since the late 20th century, the consequence is often cultural hybridity of both global and the local.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many individuals and organizations to thank for their assistance and support, directly or indirectly, throughout the completion of this book. Firstly, special thanks and gratitude must be given to the Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning (PPIB), Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) to make the publication of this book possible. Secondly, my sincere appreciation to Professor Justin Lewis and Dr Rod Brookes and everyone whose contribution has been just as important if less direct must be content with a more generalised expression of gratitude. Finally, nothing would have been possible without the love and support of my parents and parents-in-law, brothers and sisters, brothers and sisters-in-laws, and especially to my beloved wife Carolyn Thasius Joeman, our precious children, Aaron Kester, Alistair Kevin, Andre Keane and Allyson Cassandra Ashleigh. I laboured on this book, and they stood by me.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

4As	Association of Accredited Advertising Agents
ABC	American Broadcasting Corporation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASTRO	All Asia Television and Radio Company
BCCCS	Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies
BN	Barisan National (National Front)
BNBCC	British North Borneo Chartered Company
BNM	Bank Negara Malaysia (Malaysia Central Bank)
CNN	Cable News Networks
EON	Edaran Otomobil Malaysia
FDI	Foreign Direct Investments
GATT	General Agreements on Tariff and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Products
GSS	General social Survey
HES	Household Expenditure Survey
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ISA	Internal Security Act
ISP	Internet Service Provider
JARING	Jaring Advance Research Integrated Networking System
KFC	Kentucky Fried Chicken
MAA	Malaysian Advertisers Association
MAS	Malaysian Airlines
MASO	Malaysia Society for the Study of Obesity
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	Malaysian Indian Association
MIDA	Malaysian Industrial Development Authority
MIER	Malaysian Institute of Economic Research
MIM	Made in Malaysia
MIMOS	Malaysia Institute of Microelectronic Systems
MSC	Malaysian Super Corridor
NDP	National Development Policy
NEP	National Economic Policy
NCP	National Cultural Policy
NORC	National Opinion Research Center
NQT	'Not Quite There'
NSTP	New Straits Time Press

NWICO	New World Information and Communication Order
OPP1	First Outline Perspective Plan
OPP2	Second Outline Perspective Plan
OSA	Official Secret Act
PDA	Personal Digital Assistant
PPIB	Pusat Penataran Ilmu dan Bahasa (Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning)
QSR	Quick Service Restaurants
RM	Ringgit Malaysia (Malaysian Currency)
RTM	Radio Televisyen Malaysia
SMK	Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (Government Secondary School)
TCC	Transnational Capitalist Class
TNAAs	Transnational Advertising Agencies
TNCs	Transnational Corporations
TNP	Transnational Practices
TV3	Sistem Televisyen Malaysia Bhd
U&G	Uses and Gratification
UMNO	United National Malays Organisation
UMS	Universiti Malaysia Sabah
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VCR	Video Cassette Recorder
VHSC	Violence, Horror, Sex and Counter Culture