

**ADVERTISING AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION:
A CULTIVATION ANALYSIS ON HEALTH AND
BEAUTY ADVERTISEMENTS IN SABAH**



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UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, ARTS AND HERITAGE
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
2014**

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**THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS**

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, ARTS AND HERITAGE
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
2014**

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material in this thesis is my own except for quotations, excerpts, equations, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

Most identities are anchored in specific values; therefore the influence of western values on local identity construction has been a concern in Malaysia. The western values have been greatly promoted by the media, particularly the advertising. Therefore, this study aimed at examining the effects of TV advertising on identity construction among youth in Sabah, two western values namely individualism and materialism were the focus of the study. The influence of TV advertising on identity construction was explained using cultivation theory. A survey was conducted among 373 respondents who were selected from a local university in Sabah through multistage cluster sampling method. Focus group discussion was then conducted to obtain a deeper understanding of the influence of TV advertising. The results showed that local youth are more inclined towards individualistic identity than materialistic identity, exposure to TV advertising was a positive predictor of individualism and materialism adoption, however, only a small effect of TV advertising was found. The findings were discussed in relation to assumptions of cultivation theory, namely cumulative effects, mainstreaming effects and resonance effects. In conclusion, the findings essentially provided a new insight into the influence of health and beauty advertisements exposure on youth identity construction in Sabah.

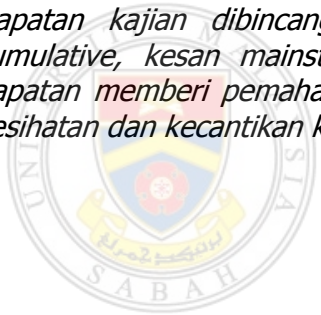


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ABSTRAK

PERIKLANAN DAN PEMBENTUKAN IDENTITI: SATU ANALISIS CULTIVATION ATAS IKLAN KESIHATAN DAN KECANTIKAN DI SABAH

Kebanyakan identiti berasaskan nilai-nilai tertentu; maka pengaruh nilai-nilai barat terhadap pembentukan identiti tempatan menjadi satu kerisauan di Malaysia. Nilai-nilai barat telah banyak disampaikan melalui media, terutamanya periklanan. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji kesan periklanan TV terhadap pembentukan identiti dalam kalangan belia di Sabah, dua nilai barat iaitu individualisme dan materialisme merupakan tumpuan dalam kajian ini. Pengaruh periklanan TV terhadap pembentukan identiti diterangkan dengan menggunakan teori cultivation. Satu tinjauan dijalankan dalam kalangan 373 responden yang dipilih dari sebuah universiti tempatan di Sabah melalui cara persampelan multistage cluster. Perbincangan kumpulan fokus turut dijalankan untuk mendapatkan pemahaman kesan periklanan TV lebih mendalam. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa belia tempatan adalah lebih cenderung terhadap pembentukan identiti individualistik daripada materialistik, pendedahan kepada periklanan TV merupakan peramal positif pengambilan individualisme dan materialisme. Namun demikian, hanya kesan periklanan TV yang kecil didapati. Dapatan kajian dibincangkan dengan andaian teori cultivation, iaitu kesan cumulative, kesan mainstreaming dan kesan resonance. Kesimpulannya, hasil dapatan memberi pemahaman baru tentang pengaruh pendedahan kepada iklan kesihatan dan kecantikan ke atas pembentukan identiti belia di Sabah.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE	i
DECLARATION	ii
CERTIFICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
ABSTRACT	v
<i>ABSTRAK</i>	vi
LIST OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF DIAGRAMS	xi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background	1
1.3 Economic Landscape	2
1.4 Social Landscape	4
1.5 Consumer Behaviour and Youth Culture in Malaysia	6
1.6 Mediascape in Malaysia	9
1.7 Statement of the Problem	11
1.8 Research Objectives	12
1.9 Significance of the Study	13
1.10 Scope of the Study	13
1.11 Conceptualisations of Terms	13
1.12 Conclusion	14
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Introduction	16
2.2 Identity	16
2.3 Values as the Core of Personal Identity	18
2.4 Current Identity of Global Youth	20
2.5 Identity Construction	21

2.6	Health and Beauty Advertising and Youth Identity	24
2.7	Consumption of Male Grooming Products	28
2.8	Individualism	30
2.9	Materialism	32
2.10	Theoretical Framework	36
2.10.1	Theoretical Background	36
2.10.2	Cultivation Theory	38
2.10.3	Cumulative Effects	41
2.10.4	Mainstreaming Effects	42
2.10.5	Resonance Effects	43
2.10.6	Criticism of Cultivation Analysis	43
2.11	Conclusion	44

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1	Introduction	45
3.2	Mixed Method	45
3.3	Observation on the Advertisements Frequency	48
3.4	Survey	49
3.4.1	Administrative Procedures	49
a.	Exposure to TV Advertisements	50
b.	Individualism Scale	50
c.	Materialism Scale	51
3.4.2	Sampling	52
3.4.3	Data Analysis	54
3.4.4	Validity and Reliability	55
3.5	Focus Group Discussion	57
3.5.1	Administrative Procedures	58
3.5.2	Sampling	60
3.5.3	Data Analysis	62
3.5.4	Validity and Reliability	63

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1	Introduction	66
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4.2	Frequency of Health and Beauty Advertisements on TV	66
4.3	Demographic Profile of Respondents	67
4.4	TV Viewing Patterns	70
4.5	TV Viewing and Health and Beauty Advertising Exposure	73
4.6	TV Viewing, Individualism and Materialism	74
4.7	Focus Group Discussion	80
4.7.1	Awareness of Health and Beauty TV Advertisements	80
4.7.2	Local Youth Identity	82
4.7.3	Advertising Exposure, Individualism and Materialism	83
4.7.4	Other Factors	86
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION		
5.1	Introduction	89
5.2	Individualism and Materialism across Demographic Variables	89
5.3	The Cultivation Analysis: TV Advertising, Individualism and Materialism	91
5.4	Limitation	98
5.5	Recommendation for Future Studies	98
5.6	Conclusion	99
REFERENCES		100
 APPENDIX		116

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1.1: Sectoral Growth and Share of GDP in Malaysia from 2011 – 2015	3
Table 1.2: Malaysian Adex January 2013/14 Market Share and Growth	11
Table 3.1: Number of Respondents by Schools	54
Table 4.1: Frequency of Health and Beauty Advertisements on TV	67
Table 4.2: Frequency of Health and Beauty Advertisements by Categories	67
Table 4.3: Demographic Data based on Gender, Age, Ethnicity and Location of Residency	68
Table 4.4: Individualism and Materialism	69
Table 4.5: Individualism and Materialism Difference across Gender, Age and Location of Residency	70
Table 4.6: Individualism and Materialism Difference across Ethnic Groups	70
Table 4.7: Amount of Daily TV Viewing	71
Table 4.8: What do respondents do while an advertisement is on air?	72
Table 4.9: TV Viewing Difference across Gender, Age and Location of Residency	72
Table 4.10: TV Viewing Difference across Ethnic Groups	73
Table 4.11: Amount of TV Health and Beauty Advertisement Exposure	74
Table 4.12: Correlations between TV Viewing and Exposure to Health and Beauty Advertisements on TV	74
Table 4.13: Partial Correlations between TV Viewing, Individualism and Materialism When Controlling for Demographic Variables	75
Table 4.14: Individualism and Materialism Differences across TV viewing	76
Table 4.15: Tests of Between Demographics and TV Viewing Effects	78
Table 4.16: Regression Analysis of Individualism	79
Table 4.17: Regression Analysis of Materialism	80

LIST OF DIAGRAMS

	Page
Diagram 4.1: Means Plots of Individualism across TV Viewing Groups	77
Diagram 4.2: Means Plots of Materialism across TV Viewing Groups	77



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study focuses on the influence of advertising exposure on youth identity in Sabah. In this chapter, the background provides some information on trend of beauty pursuit in Malaysian context, apart from that, other backgrounds presented include economic landscape, social landscape, consumer behaviour and youth culture in Malaysia as well as mediascape in Malaysia. From the backgrounds, the statement of the problem is identified and this study is then initiated with research objectives, the significance and scope of the study, conceptualisations of terms and conclusion are shown in this chapter.

1.2 Background

Mahathir (as cited in Furlow, 2005), the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia, had formulated Vision 2020 in driving Malaysia to become a developed country. He, however, recognized that the bigger challenge than achieving modernity is to maintain local cultural values as he would not expect Malaysia just to be a rich country. In this sense, some 'Asian values' which were developed earlier as Malaysian identity have to be retained after the tide of modernization, some of the values such as hard work, family, and community solidarity are essential to Malaysian development, these values should not deteriorate in the modern society.

However, some western values such as individualism and materialism (Samovar *et al.*, 2010) emerged and might influence our local identity. These values encourage people to be distinctive from others by consuming health and beauty products to enhance self appearance and increase self esteem which construct self identity (Dye, 2009; Khoury, 2006; Shrum *et al.*, 2012). The trend of beauty pursuit nowadays can be explained based on a survey conducted by Nielsen (2007) in 46 global markets, 79 percent of the world's internet consumers are

found to claim to be health and beauty products users. Close to three quarters of consumers make a consensus that the pressure to look good today is greater than it was in their parents' generation. Skin fairness is also considered one of the essential elements in defining beauty in eastern countries (Gillespie, 1995); this can be supported by Malaysia (22%) which was in the top 10 in the survey that they would spend more on skin lightening if money was no object; 58 percent of Malaysians has made it ranked in the top 10 markets who claimed to try to look stylish at all time (Nielsen, 2007). The trend indicates that image consciousness has been found considerably increasing.

This phenomenon of beauty pursuit can possibly be influenced by some factors such as social processes, local and global trends in the fashion industry, and adoption of foreign cultural practices. Among the factors, the role of advertisements is seen to play a very significant role in defining beauty through promotion of cosmetics, skin care, hair care and slimming products; the mass media also portray the meaning of beauty through its representation of women (Haliza Mohd Riji, 2006). Therefore, the proliferation of advertising is worrying, multinational advertisers or their multinational advertising agencies which are established in eastern countries have brought in certain Western values, beliefs and practices to the East (Frith and Frith, 2002). The inherent values found in the advertisements penetrated to Asian countries have indirect and unconscious influences on local identity (Arnett, 2002).

1.3 Economic Landscape

Since 1970s, Malaysia appearing as a middle-income nation has transformed its economy from the role as a producer of raw materials into an economy that is multi-sector oriented. Throughout the 22-year premiership of the fourth Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohammad, Malaysia successfully diversified the economy from a dependence on exports of raw materials to the growth of services, manufacturing, and tourism sectors (Report Linker, 2012). Mahathir launched Vision 2020 with expectation of attaining a nation that is greatly developed and industrialised by the year 2020, it also contains broad policy directions comprising different dimensions such as economic, political, spiritual, psychological, and

cultural (Totu, 2010). The current Prime Minister Mohamed Najib bin Abdul Razak continued the efforts in realizing high-income status by 2020, he encouraged domestic demand and reduce the economy's reliance on exports while expanding the value-added production chain through encouraging and attracting investments in Islamic finance, high technology industries, biotechnology, and services (Report Linker, 2012).

The main source of Malaysian economic growth is expected to derive from services sector which covers the most share of GDP as shown in Table 1.1, the sector is driven primarily by the expansion of finance and business services, wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and restaurants as well the transport and communications subsectors. Another important sector that contributes significantly to GDP is the manufacturing sector, which is expected to enjoy a high growth due to higher value add in the E&E subsector. Other sectors such as construction, agriculture and mining sectors are estimated to report positive growth until 2015 (Tenth Malaysia Plan, 2010).

Table 1.1: Sectoral Growth and Share of GDP in Malaysia from 2011 – 2015

Sectors	Annual Growth 2011 – 2015 (percent)	Share of GDP in 2015 (percent)
Services	7.2	61.1
Manufacturing	5.7	26.3
Construction	3.7	2.9
Agriculture	3.3	6.6
Mining	1.1	5.9

Source: Tenth Malaysia Plan, 2010

Retail appears as the largest sub-sectors in the Malaysian economy, particularly in the services industry, it is an important contributor with 13.3 percent of GDP (RM334 billion) in terms of sales in 2009, this sector becomes the attraction to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) worth RM1.2 billion in 2009 (Tenth Malaysia

Plan, 2010). The modernization and urbanization have altered the structures of retail landscape by substituting the retail in small scale with large and modern retailers including hypermarkets, convenience stores, and large shopping complexes. Such structural transformation provides better shopping environment as well as better facilities and entertainment (Lim *et al.*, 2003). Apart from that, demographic change, increasing affluence changes consumer behaviour and increases demand for better services, exploitation of alternative modes of retail trade such as franchise, direct selling and e-commerce are potentially to boost the growth of this sector in near future, therefore, retail is estimated to achieve an increase rate of 8.3 percent per annum, contributing 15.1 percent to GDP in 2015 (Tenth Malaysia Plan, 2010).

Department stores, supermarkets, and independent small grocers emerged as a major distribution channel for health and beauty products in 2012, this is because health and beauty retailers accounted for strong shares of sales from expensive perfumes and skin care products. Health and beauty retailers comprising many well-known beauty specialist retailers such as Sa Sa, parapharmacies or drugstores such as Watsons, and chemists or pharmacies such as Guardian, therefore, consumers prefer to buy health and beauty products through retail channels (Euromonitor International, 2013).

1.4 Social Landscape

Malaysia's population achieved 30 million in 2014 (The Star Online, 2014b). According to Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 2010 (Census 2010), Selangor appeared as a state with the highest population (5.46 million), followed by Johor (3.35 million) and Sabah (3.21 million). The entire country reached 86 persons per square kilometre of population density in 2010. The rapid development in Malaysia led to a higher level of urbanisation to 71 percent, Sabah reached 54 percent of urbanisation.

Of the total population in Malaysia, 91.8 percent were Malaysians whereas 8.2 percent were non-Malaysians. Malaysia consists of different ethnic groups such as Bumiputera¹ (67.4%), Chinese (24.6%), Indians (7.3%) and Others (0.7%). The

majority ethnic group (63.1%) in Peninsular Malaysia was the Malays. In east Malaysia, 30.3 percent of the population in Sarawak was the Ibans whereas Kadazan Dusun was the predominant ethnic group in Sabah, constituting 24.5 percent. Malaysia is an Islamic country, therefore, most of the Malaysians (61.3%) embraced Islam, other religions practiced in Malaysia included Buddhism (19.8%), Christianity (9.2%), Hinduism (6.3%) and Confucianism, Taoism as well as Tribal or folk or other traditional Chinese religion (1.3%). The median age of Malaysia's population was 26.2 years old, 27.6 percent of the population was made up by the citizens aged below 15 years old, working age population (15 to 64 years old) appeared as the predominant age group which constituted 67.3 percent. The proportion of population aged 65 years old and above was 5.1 percent. Men outnumbered women in Malaysia, 51.4 percent were men and 48.6 percent were women. Overall, 60 percent of Malaysian citizens were married, 62 percent of the Chinese recorded the highest proportion for citizens who were married, followed by the Indians (59.4%) and the Bumiputra¹ (59.2%). Census 2010 showed that men are more inclined towards marriage at a later age compared to women, the mean age at first marriage for men was 28 years and women was 25.8 years. Despite the fact that males married at later age, compared to previous decade, the new trend was that males were getting married earlier. Inversely, more females were getting married at a later age.

Malaysia has a literacy rate of 97.3 percent among the citizens, urban areas was recorded a higher rate at 98.3 percent compared to the rural areas at 94.5 percent. Malaysian citizens showed a higher literacy rate in 2010 compared to 2000. Among all states, Sabah achieved the highest increase of literacy rate (8.6%) from 86.8 percent to 95.4 percent. On the other hand, Malaysian citizens aged 5 – 69 years recorded more than 45 percent of computer literacy in each state. However, a difference of 26.5 percent of computer literacy rate occurred as a gap in between urban areas (68.6%) and rural areas (42.1%).

¹ The term is known as "sons of the soil"; it is a group constituting the Malays and the indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak who appear as the "original" people of Malaysia.

The total males (95.8%) aged six years and above who had attended school were more than that of females (91.1%), this percentage was recorded lower in less urbanised states such as Sabah and Sarawak compared to that of more urbanised states such as Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. The proportion of Malaysian citizens aged 20 years and above with higher education was 21.6 percent, the Bumiputra achieved the highest percentage at 22.1 percent, followed by the Chinese (21.1%), the Indians (19.3%) and the Others (16.4%).

1.5 Consumer Behaviour and Youth Culture in Malaysia

Malaysia's economic growth in recent years has shown a better performance through the increase in GDP in 2012. Consumers in Malaysia enjoyed a higher disposable income which increased their confidence level in consumer spending (Euromonitor International, 2013). Income was traditionally and primarily spent on food, however, people are now inclined towards urban, independent, and single life, younger Malaysians tend to shift their consumption towards more luxurious possessions such as car ownership, telecommunication devices such as mobile phones and televisions, they are also more likely to engage in leisure activities such as dining out and having fun in movie theatres and nightclubs (International Markets Bureau, 2011). Higher disposable income also led them to demand for health and beauty products ranging from top to toe such as skin care products (skin moisturizer, lotion, whitening products), hair care products (shampoo, hair conditioner), and personal care products (bath and shower products, shaving cream, oral care products). Besides, the stronger consuming power enabled the consumers to enjoy the premium cosmetics, perfumes, skin care products as well as other health and beauty products with sophisticated features (Euromonitor International, 2013).

As a consequence of growing level of purchasing power, Malaysian consumers tend to spend more throughout shopping activities. Shopping has been prevailing in Malaysia, particularly among the young people since the 1990s (Totu, 2010). Lim *et al.* (2003) has identified a Malaysian shoppers profile and found that most of the shoppers are within the age range of 21 – 30 years, 52 percent are males and 48 percent are females, 54 percent are single while 43 percent are

married. Among the shoppers, students make up the most at 23.3 percent, followed by workers in the service industry (13.5%) and workers in manufacturing, operators and transport industry (11.9%). Youth seemed to occupy an important role in contributing to Malaysia's economic growth. Wearing Levi jeans, eating at McDonald's, watching American movies, supporting British football teams as well as listening to the latest music from MTV are prevalent nowadays among Malaysian youth, irrespective of race, religion and geographical location (Wong, 2007). Malaysia is upholding traditional Asian ideas and hesitant to adopt Western cultural elements such as movies and popular music which are considered to promote values that run against the established conventions (Lee, 2005), however, the activities that Malaysian youth currently engaged in are indicating gradual acceptance and inclination towards foreign values and cultures.

The globalization and the entertainment industry have brought in widespread Western influences and pop culture. Malaysia becomes more westernized, sophisticated and cosmopolitan nation where younger Malaysians are gradually concerned with brand, status, image by purchasing luxurious items such as clothing and body accessories to impress other people. Tattoos, piercing and dying hair are apparently prevalent in the midst of youth particularly in urban areas nowadays as they often consider such body decos to be 'modern' and 'cool' (Totu, 2010). As noted in the study of Fernandez (2009), the Generation Y in Malaysia are brand conscious, most of them claimed that the branded clothing is very helpful in forging an image and identity that belong to them. Eadie *et al.* (1999: 105) asserted that "conspicuous brands can perform a vital social function for young people seeking the acceptance of peers while still retaining a capacity to express their individualism and personal tastes through the goods they purchase." To show who the Malaysian youth are, many have move towards the obsession with self appearance. As mentioned earlier, health and beauty products are largely accepted in both male and female market in Malaysia. Appearance is no longer a concern for females, males who thought to be tough and competitive in the past are now adapting to the pursuit of attractive and unique appearance with trendy sense of fashion (Gillespie, 1995). As evidenced in the study of Chin and Totu (2012), males

from Sabah, a state of Malaysia, showed a tendency towards metrosexualism² in which generally concerned with fashion trends, hairstyle trends, physical fitness and popular culture.

Based on what have been mentioned thus far, Malaysian youth nowadays are living in an increasingly commercialized and media-saturated environment. The western influenced society leads to the emergence of “global youth culture” in which described as a majority of the youth around the world have a cultural framework in common (Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, 2005). Although many would question how a unified culture could be incorporated to divergent social conditions, it is still possible if “the concept of youth culture is used to contextualise the lives of contemporary young people by acknowledging the combined or overlapping dimensions of personal and collective identity formation” (Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, 2005: 81).

Youth culture becomes a reference point for youth in creating their identity. This is often related to media as global youth culture is created, adapted, accessed and disseminated throughout the world via mass media that are rapidly developing and enlarging its networks to reach every different corners of the world. The channels where the worldwide news and information are shared through include the Internet, local and satellite TV and radio, and other popular media. In the mean time, youth-driven cultural influences are also transferred using music, direct advertising, websites and other means. Therefore, as long as the youth in Malaysia have the purchasing power, their consumption habits are obviously associated with the current youth culture, this is to be found as a result of the power of media. Media and communication channels serve as useful tools to generate and strengthen new youth cultures that cover a variety of elements such as music, movie and sports stars, and particular consumer goods and lifestyles.

² The term coined by Mark Simpson in 1994 and further defined as (1) twenty-first century male trendsetter; (2) straight, urban man with heightened aesthetic sense; (3) man who spends time and money on appearance and shopping; and (4) man willing to embrace his feminine side (as cited in Anderson, 2008).

The emergence of the global media-oriented youth cultures indicates the formation of a new tide of socialization. Youth cultures and youth media have appeared as wholly new agents of socialization, serving as a platform to new forms of socialization (Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, 2005).

1.6 Mediascape in Malaysia

Radio Television Malaysia (RTM), a Malaysian government-owned broadcaster introduced the first black-and-white television on December 28, 1963 (Adhikarya, 1977). The second black-and-white television was then introduced in November 1969 (Glattbach and Balakrishnan, 1978). An international standard satellite was also introduced to start transmission of programmes to Sabah and Sarawak in 1970, eight years later color television emerged on December 28 (Safar, Asiah and Gunaratne, 2000).

In 1983, the government monopoly in broadcasting system ended after controlling for more than 20 years. The first private station, profit-oriented Sistem Televisyen Malaysia Berhad, also known as TV3, obtained the license from government and came as a nascent TV station in the media industry in 1984. (Safar, Asiah and Gunaratne, 2000). Metrovision (a terrestrial UHF channel in major cities), attempted to follow the footsteps of TV3 as another licensed private TV stations in 1995, however, insufficient revenue gained due to limited coverage has become a massive difficulty to compete in the industry (Fuziah Kartini Hassan Basri *et al.*, 2011; Safar, Asiah and Gunaratne, 2000). Besides, in the same year, Mega TV (a 10-channel cable TV station) entered the competition as well. However, the operations of both TV station came to an end due to inadequate programmes to fulfill the market demand as well as financial barriers (Totu 2010).

In January 1996, Malaysia successfully launched the first satellite, Measat 1, this enabled the introduction of All Asia Television and Radio Company, popularly known as ASTRO as Malaysia's first satellite broadcasting station, it included 23 TV channels and eight radio channels. Two years later, in 1998, another licensed private terrestrial TV station namely NTV7, the new "feel good channel" initiated

operation with nationwide coverage (Safar, Asiah and Gunaratne, 2000). ntv7 upholding the mission to promote a happier and more enlightened Malaysia has striven to be unique among other Malaysian broadcasters; it has programming belts that include dramas, entertainment programs, comedies and so on. Such programmes are seen as products under specific brands, thus the uniqueness of ntv7 was to be holistically perceived as a media brand rather than a television station. In January 2004, a new private TV station namely 8TV was launched, the young urban viewers as well as the Chinese market were 8TV's targets, and this is because it offers popular imported programmes which appear to be the choice of young professionals. Media Prima Berhad, the Malaysia's leading fully-integrated media group, owns most of the private TV stations such as TV3, 8TV, ntv7 and TV9. Besides, it has high equity interest in The News Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Berhad (NSTP), the largest publishing group in Malaysia that publishes New Straits Times, Berita Harian and Harian Metro (Fuziah Kartini Hassan Basri *et al.*, 2011).

Apart from the government grants, radio and TV license fees which have been fuelling RTM's operations, another source of "income" for both RTM and private TV stations is advertising, especially the leading private commercial TV stations, TV3 who realised that the need to produce programmes that are appealing to attract sponsors and advertisers. In 1997, all TV stations achieved a total of RM780.2 million (US\$314 million) advertising revenue (Safar, Asiah and Gunaratne, 2000).

**Table 1.2: Malaysian Adex January 2013/14
Market Share and Growth**

Media Type	Jan 2014 (% Share)	Jan 2013 (% Share)	Growth (%)
Free-to-air TV	22.6	24.2	10.2
Pay TV	38	32.1	40.3
Newspapers	33.8	37.1	7.8
Magazines	0.8	0.9	2.8
Radio	3.2	3.9	-1
Cinema	0.4	0.3	91.4
In-store media	1.2	1.6	-11
Grand Total	100 (RM1.08billion)	100 (RM909.41million)	18.4

Source: Nielsen Media Research (as cited in The Star Online, 2014a).

According to Malaysian Adex for January 2013/14 Market Share and Growth, as shown in Table 1.2, newspaper takes the largest portion of total Adex market share (33.8%) in January 2014. Followed by TV media which are further divided into Pay TV (38%) and Free-to-air TV (22.6%). In January 2014, most of the media achieve growth in Adex, Pay TV achieves 40.3 percent growth whereas Free-to-air TV achieves 10.2 percent growth compared to January 2013. The growth rate indicates that advertisements on TV are increasing. The overall Malaysian Adex increases from RM909.41million to RM1.08billion.

1.7 Statement of the Problem

Malaysia is a developing Islamic country comprising multiethnic such as Malay, Chinese, Indian and several minority ethnic groups in Sabah and Sarawak regions. It is also one of the countries adopting collectivist values (Samovar *et al.*, 2010; Triandis, 1996; Zhang and Neelankavil, 2007). The indirect penetration of western cultural values through exposure to advertising becomes an issue in this study.

The role of advertisements should serve to protect Malaysian national language, religion, culture, tradition and identity. However, many advertisements nowadays indirectly promote values which are a clash or threat to traditional

Malaysian society (Frith and Frith, 2002). As a result of the emergence of individualism promoted by advertising, as opposed to collectivism, people become selfish as personal interests are the main goal to pursue, besides, less acceptance of customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion teaches among the youths as they seek for excitement and novelty which challenge tradition and conformity (Schwartz, 1992; Triandis, 1996). On the other hand, materialism manifest in advertising may contribute to an emphasis on material objects to construct and maintain identity (Shrum *et al.*, 2012) and achieve happiness in life as well (Richins and Dawson, 1992). Malaysia's Consumer Association of Penang in 1986 (as cited in Frith and Frith, 2002) contends that advertising generates consumer culture in which acquisition and consumption of objects are the standard to measure and judge quality of one's life. Hence, this becomes a great concern in Malaysia.

In Malaysia, Zamani (as cited in Zarina Zawawi and Faisal Ibrahim, 2010) contends that Muslims' religious practices as well as Islamic faith have played the main role in Malay identity formation. Community spirit is important to the nation, therefore, Muslims have their own communitarian practices through the concept of "ummah", which is the idea of Muslim unity, respect for one another and mutual cooperation, which constructing a local and unique identity of Malays. In contrast, Mahathir (as cited in Furlow, 2005) asserts that hedonistic values replace religious values in the West in which hedonistic lives embracing materialism, sensual gratification, and selfishness become dominant. Local identity will be in danger if Malaysians adopt western values through advertising. The amount of health and beauty advertisements on Malaysian TV is alarming (refers Chapter 4). Therefore, it is important to investigate the effects of exposure to advertising on identity construction.

1.8 Research Objectives

Based on the issue mentioned above, this study is initiated:

1. To measure the frequency of health and beauty advertisements shown on television.
2. To identify the identities of youth in Sabah, Malaysia.