

Media and the Kadazandusun People's Way of Life

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Abstract

This study aims at exploring the inclination of belief about the ways of living among Kadazandusun people – whether leaning towards spirituality or materialism. Nowadays humanity are greatly consumed with the idea that happiness would only be achieved when someone accumulate huge worldly possessions and wealth. Obsession to acquire and accrue a great deal of material possessions to gratify people's needs, wants and desires has been said to be promoted by the mass media. Therefore, apart from exploring the choice of living styles, this study also examines the role that media might have in propagating materialistic values among the Kadazandusuns in Sabah. The outcomes of study show that Kadazandusun people are yet to indulge into extreme materialistic lifestyles, instead they are generally inclined quite strongly towards religious way of life. This study also found out that TV viewing appears to cultivate spiritual values instead of materialism.

Keywords: Advertising, Kadazandusuns, Spirituality and Materialism

1. Introduction

The effects of TV and advertising on viewer's attitudes and behaviours have been given a considerable attention by governments, public interest groups and researchers. Governments and public interest groups are usually concerned about the wellbeing of people while researchers and academicians in the area of mass media are very keen to investigate the possible effects of TV and advertisements on its viewers. TV, particularly advertising has always been accused of having a strong influence toward consumer's attitudes, behaviours and values. Previous literatures claimed that advertising is strongly influential in promoting materialistic values, especially to those who are constantly exposed to advertising messages and images. The roles of advertising in inculcating materialistic values appeared to be widespread across geographical and cultural boundaries.

2. TV (advertising) and Materialistic Values

The main question here is, does TV or particularly advertising, perpetuate materialistic values? Materialistic values are said to be essential attributes of consumer culture that are constantly promoted by TV and advertising. According to Gerbner et al. (1994), through the Cultivation Theory, television will influence personal values as well as societal perceptions, as dominant program content becomes assimilated into personal value structures over time. Studies have also examined the influence of mass media, on youth's development of specific consumer related motives and values in the context of consumer socialization, and the findings indicates that the correlation between the strength of favourable attitudes toward materialism and the amount of television viewing is statistically significant. A study conducted by Churchill and Moschis (1979) to assess the interrelationships among television viewing and materialism among adolescents found that the amount of television viewing was positively correlated with materialistic values. They found that the amount of television viewing among adolescents decline with age and that materialistic values tend to increase with the amount of television viewing (as cited from Bindah and Mohd Nor Othman, 2011). Another study conducted by Vel, P. & Moschis, G.P (2008) found a positive correlation between TV viewing and materialism. The study conducted by Bindah and Mohd Nor Othman (2011) also found a significant relationship between TV viewing and materialistic values among young adults in Malaysia.

The TV effects become formidable through advertising because ads are more attractive and constant. Early advertisements did not really attempt to construct or create consumers in any serious way. They were a sort of a take-it-or-leave-it notion: this is what we have, there are the prices, and this is where you get them. There is little attempt to create a particular customer (Corrigan, 1997). The early advertising approach, according to Kenway and Bullen (2001), has developed into a different trend in recent years, in line with the proliferation of consumer

culture. The face of advertising transgresses many of advertising's standard rules in highly creative and eye-catching manners.

Lee (1993: xi) observes that commodities and the meanings constructed around them through advertising are used to 'make visible personal affluence – to suggest sex potency and physical attraction and, perhaps more than ever before, to function as the index of intelligence, education and social literacy'. Lee (1993: 18) further argues that 'the powerful and often overwhelming imagery and language of sexuality, power, guilt, envy and above all, glamour is the key 'discursive field' of advertising. Advertising plays with emotions to spark the desire to want and want more, which ultimately generate the sense of material pleasure and satisfaction.

Advertising manipulates consumer's emotions by making them feel insecure. Such manipulation was identified by Jacobson and Mazur (1995) when they quoted a former advertising agency president Nancy Shalek:

"Advertising at its best is making people feel that without their product, you're loser. Kids are very sensitive to that. If you tell them to buy something, they are resistant. But if you tell them they'll be dork if they don't, you've got their attention. You open up emotional vulnerabilities and it's very easy to do with kids because they're the most emotionally vulnerable" (as cited in Kenway and Bullen, 2001: 46).

Advertisements promote perfect individuals through the use of sexy models wearing latest fashions with the hope of luring consumers to engage in consumption in the name of 'perfect self'. Advertising makes consumers feel that they will not be 'accepted' by society if they are imperfect. For instance, the presence of body odour on individuals makes them 'outcast' in society. The feeling of insecurity and fear of being outcast from a society drive them to make (sometimes unnecessary) purchases. Advertising also connects products with preferred emotions, such as happiness and popularity (Alexander and Hason, 1993). Take athletics, for example, they also argue that advertising gives people the impression that products can give them talent. Nike advertisements were accused of implying that their shoes would give a consumer athletic talent (Wolf, 1998). In Malaysia, soft drinks advertisements such as 100Plus and Red Bull have the tendency to connect their products with good achievements in sports.

Such excessive consumption and obsession of worldly possession have become a great concern, particularly with regard to cultural aspects and spirituality. The concern stems from the belief that cultural and spiritual components and values are the pillars of societal strength and growth. Materialistic values, on the other hand, are closely associated with immorality, non-essential, unimportant and wasteful. Such values have been promoted by advertising as what Soon and Chang (2003) postulate below.

"We are being made empty, being made to feel insufficient – empty from our own culture and spirituality. This emptiness is being replaced by the need to acquire things... clothing is just another example to illustrate the erosion of our culture and spiritual values".

The correlations between advertising and materialistic values have been investigated by several previous researchers (Barber, 2007 and Harmon, 2001). Barber (2007) has noted in his research that rapid marketing (through advertising) appear to replace religiously-derived values such as saving, deferred gratification, humility, obligation, and community orientation with spending, instant gratification, and self-centered, personal entitlement. Harmon (2001) analysed two large databases, the General Social Survey and the Simmons Market Research Bureau Study of Media and Markets, sometimes finding an association of heavy TV viewing with self-reported materialistic attitudes. The strongest associations were for the importance of having nice things, the importance of having a high income, and in taking care of one's self before others (as cited from Harmon, 2010). Burroughs and Rindfleisch (2002) drew upon values theory to declare materialism antithetical to wellbeing. They argued that it is the individual orientation of materialism, standing in sharp contrast to the collective-oriented values of family and religion, which creates psychological tension and reduced sense of wellbeing. This explanation fits well their study of 120 college students and their survey of 373 adults, all in the U.S. The explanation also works well with a study of U.S. and Singapore respondents (Swinyard, Kau and Phua 2001) that found happiness negatively related to materialism, but positively related to intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity (cited from Harmon, 2010).

This study uses a survey research using questionnaires. Survey questionnaires were developed through smart-survey – online survey software. Twenty survey forms were uploaded on 14 June 2012 on facebook for the purpose of pilot test. The total number of respondent for this study is 120. Data secured from the forms were analysed thoroughly. The reliability of the items to measure the spirituality and materialistic inclinations for this study achieved a very good internal consistency, which scored .851 and .963 Cronbach's Alpha value respectively.

3. Results and Discussions

Out of 120 respondents, 63 are females and 57 are males; 67 respondents from urban areas and 53 from rural areas. Majority of respondents (71.7%) are with college or university education, meanwhile more than 27% with

secondary education. Respondents are also varies in terms of age from as young as 14 years old to as old as more than 65 years old. There are about 26% of respondents below 25 years old; but majority (77.5%) of respondents fall under the age between 25-54 years old. Only 6.7% of respondents are more than 55 years old.

Majority of respondents (47.5%) watch TV less than 2 hours; 40% watch TV between 2-4 hours and only 12.5% watch TV more than 4 hours a day. These results indicate that Kadazandusun respondents do not watched a lot of TV. These results are quite in contradictory with the amount of TV exposure in the previous research conducted by the researcher (Totu, 2010). Such inconsistency could be due to the study samples. The samples of this study are taken from the 'facebook communities', which may be consisting of non-avid TV viewers. The result may be different had the samples were from a general population. The results of One Way ANOVA test show that there is no significant different of TV exposure between male and female respondents and between respondents from urban and rural areas, as well as between all age groups. All results achieved significant levels of $>.05$.

3.1 *The Lifestyles of Kadazandusun People*

The outcomes of the data analyses on the current lifestyles of Kadazandusun people appear to indicate that they are strongly inclined towards spirituality compared to materialist way of life. Such inclination can be observed from the Mean score of 4.58 for spirituality as compared to 3.44 for materialism. There is no significant difference of inclination to materialism between different age, gender and area of residency as well as education and income levels. The results of One Way ANOVA to test these differences produced insignificance levels of $>.05$. The same statistical test was performed to see the differences of inclination towards spirituality and the results appear to be similar, except for the aspect of gender. Gender is the only variable that has significant relationship with spirituality. The significant level attained was .007, which indicates a presence of difference in inclination towards spirituality between male and female respondents. A further analysis was performed using T-test and the result appear to show that female are more spiritual compared to male respondents, as indicated from the Mean scores, which were 4.7 and 4.4 respectively. The test results can be observed from Table 1 and Table 2 below.

The difference of religiosity between women and men has been consistently shown across the seven decades of polls conducted by Gallup Polling Association. According to the outcomes of the Gallup survey, women are found to be more religious as compared to men. A similar outcome was also released by the Pew Research Center in 2008 from the survey of 35,000 respondents in the United States. Generally, these two research centres provide similar reasons to justify the difference of religiosity. Among the reason why women tend to be more religious "...could range from traditional mothering duties to the tendency of men to take risks — in this case the chance they might not go to heaven". Other reasons are (cited from Britt, 2009):

1. Mothers have tended to spend more time raising children, which often means overseeing their involvement in religious activities.
2. Though two-income households are more common today, in the past women often had more flexible daily schedules, permitting more religious involvement during the week.
3. Women tend to be more open about sharing personal problems and are more relational than men.
4. More so than men, women lean toward an empirical [depending on experience or observation] rather than a rational basis for faith.

3.2 *The Role of TV on Kadazandusun People' Way of Life*

The effects of TV have been immensely debated and some of previous research outcomes reported that TV is indeed having a great influence on people's way of life (Barber, 2007 and Harmon, 2001). Majority of research tend to associate TV with undesirable attitude or/and behavioural changes. This study seems to show that TV has some sort of influence on the Kadazandusun people's way of life. Although this study found no evidence of effect of TV on materialistic inclinations among the Kadazandusun people (Table 3) TV, however, appears to have a significant relationship with spirituality as shown in Table 8. These results also indicate that the absence of significant relationship between TV viewing and materialism may be caused by their strong association with spiritual values. A further analysis was performed to examine whether all TV programs have contributed to this relationship. Partial correlation tests were carried out to investigate the possibility of spurious relationships.

The results of the partial correlation tests show insignificant relationships between TV viewing and spirituality, after controlling news & current affairs and religious programmes. These results appear to indicate that the previous significant relationship between these two variables were spurious. The initial significant relationship may have only been affected by certain variables that contained religious values, such as religious and news & current affairs programs. The correlations between spirituality and other programmes (drama, sitcom, discovery channels, music and game shows) appeared to be insignificant. Generally, the outcome of this research shows

that TV plays a role in the spiritual inclinations among the Kadazandusun people as shown in the Table 5 & 6 above.

4. Conclusion

This study appears to suggest that TV has some sort of influence on the Kadazandusun people's lifestyles. However, it draws a different result as compared to several previous research outcomes in the sense that this study appears not to support the positive relationship between TV viewing and materialism. This study appears to show that the Kadazandusun respondents were more inclined towards spirituality and TV viewing may have contribution in cultivating spiritual values to this community. The absence of a significant relationship between TV viewing and materialism may be resulted from their strong associations with spirituality. A spiritual person associates materialism with undesirable traits as nongenerosity, envy, and greed, which bring unhappiness and unsatisfactory wellbeing (Belk, 1985). Therefore, even though they were highly exposed to TV and advertisements, materialistic values will not easily penetrate their spiritual beliefs in religious teachings that are in sharp contrast with materialistic values. Nevertheless, the results of this study may only be representing the Kadazandusun respondents and cannot be treated as representative to the whole Kadazandusun community because of its limitations, particularly with regards to the sampling frame.

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Table 1: Spirituality by Gender Using One Way ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.813	1	2.813	7.566	.007
Within Groups	43.872	118	.372		
Total	46.685	119			

Table 2: The Difference of Inclination Towards Spirituality by Gender (T-test)

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Spirituality	Male	57	4.4140	.75674	.10023
	Female	63	4.7206	.43632	.05497

Table 3: Correlations between TV Viewing and Materialism (Bivariate)

		TV Viewing	Materialism
TV Viewing	Pearson Correlation	1	.056
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.547
	N	120	120
Materialism	Pearson Correlation	.056	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.547	
	N	120	120

Table 4: Correlations between TV Viewing and Spirituality (Bivariate)

		TV Viewing	Spirituality
TV Viewing	Pearson Correlation	1	-.192*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.036
	N	120	120
Spirituality	Pearson Correlation	-.192*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.036	
	N	120	120

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5:
Partial Correlations Test on TV Viewing and Spirituality
by Controlling Religious Programme

Control Variables		TV Viewing (Binned)	Spirituality
Religious Programme	Correlation	1.000	-.163
	TV Viewing (Binned) Significance (2-tailed)	.	.076
	df	0	117
	Correlation	-.163	1.000
	Spirituality Significance (2-tailed)	.076	.
	df	117	0

Table 6:
Partial Correlations Test on TV Viewing and Spirituality
by Controlling News & Current Affairs

Control Variables		TV Viewing (Binned)	Spirituality
News and Current affairs	Correlation	1.000	-.166
	TV Viewing (Binned) Significance (2-tailed)	.	.072
	df	0	117
	Correlation	-.166	1.000
	Spirituality Significance (2-tailed)	.072	.
	df	117	0

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