

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**VALIDATING CULTURAL
LANDSCAPE IN CONSUMER
BRAND PREFERENCES**

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of the requirements for the degree of
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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the results of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any degree or qualification.

I, hereby, acknowledge that I have been supplied with the Academic Rules and Regulations for Post Graduate, Universiti Teknologi MARA, regulating the conduct of my study and research.


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ABSTRACT

Culture has played a significant role in all aspects of human life affecting individual behaviours and decisions making. To ascertain, understand and interpret its impact, cultural frameworks are adopted. Since the past Malaysian cultural studies has relied on Western based frameworks to explain the Malaysian cultural related behaviors. Such frameworks are based on the assumption of population homogeneity. However, due to some unique and critical shortfall of these frameworks, it may not be a complete yardstick to assess consumer behaviour in an ethnically diverse population. In addition to this, another major shortfall in many Malaysian cultural based studies is the ethnicity scope, which has always been too narrow; limiting to Malays, Chinese and Indian ethnics only, while ignoring the other ethnics. As such, the outcomes of the studies may not adequately reflect nor explain the Malaysian consumer cultural behaviours. In an effort to fill the gap, this study is tailored in a local setting to explores potential cultural factors that are more reflective of the Malaysian population. Qualitative and quantitative procedures are employed with more than 1000 consumers from different ethnics participated in the study. The procedures include literature reviews, focus group interviews, expert opinions, pilot test, multivariate test of normality, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Pearson Correlation Analysis, Reliability Test, Validity Test and Multiple Regression Analysis. From the procedures seven factors were identified; Selfness, Religiosity, Humanity, Communion, Ethnic Identity, Moralistic and Environmentalism. The factors have been empirically tested for unidimensionality, reliability and validity, indexed a clearly good model fit. The nature of the seven factors accommodates the diversity perspective of the Malaysian consumer cultural behaviors. Humanity, moralistic, religiosity and ethnic identity factors are relatively newer factor, indicates a diversion from the existing cultural frameworks. This has provided an alternative cultural platform that would be more reflective of the Malaysian populations. In the order of ranking, Ethnic identity ranked the most important followed by Environmentalism, Selfness and Religiosity factors respectively, as being determinant of brand preference. This supports the view where individuals see themselves as part of a social group, formed by laterally extended relationships rather than pursuing their own personal interests at the expense of others. Therefore, though consumers are more likely to prefer brands of which attributes match their own self-image, self-expression and lifestyle, yet at the same time emphasized the needs and tolerance towards the community and social responsibilities. In the context of marketing, the findings suggest that Malaysian consumers tend to prefer brands with compatible abstract meanings as a function of Religiosity, Selfness, Humanity, Communion, Ethnic identity, Moralistic and Environmentalism, where such associations are seen from simultaneous perspectives of preservation of individual life, society and nature. The knowledge of the determinant factors provides useful insight for marketer towards focusing and directing marketing efforts towards determinant factors for optimum outcomes. This knowledge is critical when introducing an existing brand into a culturally distinct market as well as to ensure that the correct positioning of their brands in the market.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS	ii
AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF CHARTS	xiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Research Background	1
1.2 Problem Statements	2
1.2.1 Inadequacy of National Cultural Constructs	2
1.2.2 Malaysia as a Heterogeneous Population	6
1.2.3 Definition of Ethnicity is Narrow	8
1.2.4 Changing Cultural Values	9
1.2.5 Consumer Cultural Behavior and Brand Preference	12
1.3 Research Questions	14
1.4 Research Objectives	14
1.5 Significance of Study	15
1.5.1 Theoretical Contributions	15
1.5.2 Managerial Implications	16
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	17
2.1 Introduction	17
2.2 Malaysian Population Profile	18
2.3 Culture on Behaviour	21
2.4 Culture Definitions	27
2.5 National Culture	32

2.6	Cultural Frameworks	33
2.7	Generic Cultural Constructs	58
2.8	Consumer Brand Preference	85
2.8	Research Conceptual Framework	95
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		107
3.1	Introduction	107
3.2	Research Methodology	108
3.2.1	Construct Development	109
3.2.2	Instrument Development and Survey	114
3.2.3	Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)	117
3.2.4	Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)	119
3.2.4	Pearson Correlation Analysis	130
3.2.4	Multiple Regression Analysis	130
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS		132
4.1	Introduction	132
4.2	Literature Reviews and Group Interviews Findings	132
4.2.1	Authority and Power Construct	135
4.2.2	Religion Construct	135
4.2.3	Coexistence Construct	136
4.2.4	Dealing with Ambiguity Construct	136
4.2.5	Self/Society Centred Construct	137
4.2.6	Time Orientation Construct	138
4.3	Demographic Profile	138
4.4	Pilot Test Findings	141
4.5	Multivariate Test of Normality Findings	141
4.6	Preliminary Analysis Findings	141
4.7	Exploratory Factor Analysis Findings	142
4.8	Confirmatory Factor Analysis findings	148
4.9	The Seven Factor Model	154
4.9.1	Selfness Factor	155
4.9.2	Religiosity Factor	157
4.9.3	Humanity Factor	158
4.9.4	Communion Factor	159