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**The Language of Advertising and
it's Portrayal of Older Women**

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The Language of Advertising and it's Portrayal of Older Women

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the depiction of the social group of older adults above the age of 46 in Malaysia, in order to gain an understanding of the cultural mores inherent in Malaysian society towards older adults. Specifically this study will employ the frame work developed by Harwood and Roy (1999), to conduct a quantitative content analysis on a total of 390 magazine advertisements from 14 mainstream magazines in Malaysia. The analysis revealed that older adults were portrayed less frequently in advertisements in comparison to adults below the age of 46 years. Despite being featured less frequently than their younger counter parts these older adults were however portrayed positively in the magazine advertisements. Despite having more female characters than male characters portrayed in the overall advertisements that were coded, older men appear more substantially within their gender group as opposed to older women. However when compared within age group categories, older women are depicted more frequently than older men in print advertisements in Malaysia.

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Introduction

Studies in advertising have shown that; given the explicitness and desirability associated with advertising images (Harwood and Roy 1999) the portrayal of particular subgroups (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity) in society by the advertising media can be indicative of the perceptions and attitudes of society towards these subgroups, (Peterson 1992; Harwood 1999; Harwood and Roy 1997; Karen and Harwood 2002; Harwood and Roy 2005). Therefore groups' in society that are approved of, well liked and accorded a favourable place in society will appear often, and well-portrayed in advertising messages. Subgroups that are not important to society would be less frequently or portrayed in negative, stereotypical manner.

Previous research in the area of the social influences of advertising has attempted to determine the importance and the place of particular subgroups within a society through their depiction in advertisements. A number of such studies have examined the portrayal of older adults by various media like television programmes, television commercials, newspapers and magazines, (Peterson 1998; Harwood 1999; Harwood and Roy 1999; Harwood and Roy 1997; Carrigan and Szmigin 1998; Carrigan 1999). This study attempts to explore how older adults (above the age of 46years) are portrayed in magazine advertisements in Malaysia. The study uses content analysis as a research tool in examining the portrayal of older adults in magazine advertisements, in order to gain an insight into the values and attitudes associated by Malaysian society towards the subgroup of older adults.

Theoretical Framework of Study

Research on elderly in advertising have largely been premised on two main theories; the cultivation theory which focuses on the socialization influences of advertising (Gerbner et.al. 1986; Carrigan and Szmigin 1998) and the ethnolinguistic vitality theory, which considers the status and position of subgroups in society based on their presence or absence in advertisements, (Robinson 1998; Harwood and Roy 1997; Harwood and Roy 1999, Gantz et.al. 1980). The theoretical framework behind this study stems from previous findings that have shown older adults to be under-represented and negatively portrayed in television and print advertisements, (Gerbner et. al. 1980; Harwood 1997; Harwood and Anderson 2002). Additionally, these studies conducted largely in developed countries, also indicate that the advertising media perpetuates a stereotypical portrayal of older adults in society; reinforcing the idea of their fragilities and dependent attributes as opposed to any capabilities that the subgroup might possess, (Zhang et.al. 2006).

Although studies in the area of group portrayal and the influence of advertising on the perceptions of audiences have been extensively researched on in countries like the U.S. (Harwood and Roy 1997; Peterson 1992; Robinson 1998), and the U.K. (Carrigan and Szmigin 1998, Zhang et.al. 2006), research of this nature has been scarce in Asia (Cheng 1996), and particularly so in

Malaysia (Ramayah et.al, 2000). In an effort to contribute towards such research work in Asia, this study aims to gain an understanding of the cultural mores inherent in Malaysian society towards the older adults in Malaysia.

Objectives and Research Questions of the Study

Employing the framework developed by Harwood and Roy (1999) in their study on “*The portrayal of older adults in Indian and U.S. Magazine Advertisements*”, this study is a content analysis of magazine advertisements containing people from 14 different mainstream magazines in Malaysia. Magazines that were identified as the market leader in their category were chosen for analysis and a total of 6 categories for the magazines were created based on the study by Harwood (1999). The purpose of this study is to employ content analysis as a research tool to examine the presence and portrayal of older adults in magazine advertisements in Malaysia. Through this, it is the aim of this study to understand further, existing norms and attitudes associated with older adults and the concept of ageing in Malaysia. In pursuing the objectives of the study the following research question was explored;

Previous research has lamented the under-representation of older adults with other age groups, in various advertising media (Gantz et. al. 1980; Peterson 1992; Harwood 1999; Kessler et.al. 2004). The current research examined whether such under-representations were also present in magazine advertisements in Malaysia. Hence the first research question is as follows:

RQ1: Are older adults shown less frequently than younger adults in magazine advertisements in Malaysia?

Secondly, in going beyond analysing the quantitative portrayal of older adults, this study also looked at the quality and manner in which these older adults were portrayed. Examining various variables associated with the appearance of these models (Harwood 1999), specific attention was given to such things as whether these older models appeared healthy, robust, determined or appeared to be presented in a confused, incapable and sickly manner. In this context, the second research question is:

RQ2: When portrayed in magazine advertisement, are older adults portrayed in a less positive manner than their younger counterparts?

Finally, consistent with previous research which has established the trend in advertisements to feature older men more than older women, (Harwood 1999; Peterson 1992) this study also examined whether older men above the age of 46 were portrayed more frequently than older women, in the same age category, in Malaysian magazine advertisements. Therefore, the fifth research question is:

RQ3: Are older men featured more than older women in magazine advertisements in Malaysia?

The Malaysian Situation

Malaysia enjoyed an economic boom in the 1980's and the 1990's resulting in increased industrialization of the economy and greater urbanization of the population. The rapid economic growth Malaysia has seen has resulted in greater access to media and satellite broadcasting. The country now has access to 22 TV channels, 8 radio stations from the All Asian Satellite Television and Radio Co. (Astro), added to the already existing local channels and radio stations, (Kilburn, 1997). In addition to TV and Radio, Malaysia boasts a total of 28 local newspapers and approximately 36 locally published magazines of various genres, (Press Guide, 2006).

Perhaps as a direct result of better access to education and medical facilities, the life expectancy rate for the average Malaysian has increased. The average life expectancy rate for Malaysian males is estimated at 71.8 years; similarly the life expectancy rate of female Malaysians has also been estimated at an average of 76.3 years, (Department of Statistics, 2006). In lieu of such statistics, the population of older adults in Malaysia is expected to increase from a total of 7% in 2006 to an estimated total of 21% of the population by 2050. It is imperative that with such statistics looming, Malaysians recognize that the elderly will constitute a vital portion of the population that was once predominantly youthful.

The Malaysian perspective with regards to older adults differs somewhat when compared to countries such as the U.K. and the U.S. The very first and obvious disparity would be the age for retirement. In Malaysia the retirement age for individuals is on attainment of 56 years for men and 50 years for women. This is a much lower age for retirement when compared to the U.K. for example; where the mandatory age for retirement is 65 years (2005 issue of Global Forum) for individuals. The disparity between the two countries on the mandatory age for retirement suggests that the Malaysian society has a much lower yardstick as to measure exactly what the term "older" means. It would seem that adults in Malaysia are thought of as being older at a much earlier age in life than is the norm in the western countries.

It is necessary to note here that the reason for deciding on 46 years as the criterion after which adults are considered older in this study is largely premised on the above mentioned fact. The maturity cycle of adults often begins around or after the age of 45 (Peterson 1998) and, coupled with the general consensus of Malaysian adults being perceived of as getting older at a much younger age, this study has decided to consider older adults above the age of 46 as "older adults" for the purpose of analysis.

Methodology

Content analysis was used as the main research tool in conducting this study to determine the representations and overall role of elderly people in magazine advertisements. This method of analysis was chosen consistent with previous research conducted on the analysis of communication content, (Harwood et.al.,

1999, Peterson 1992, Roberts, S.D. and Zhou, N. 1997, Harwood and Anderson 2002).

This study examined print magazine advertisements in Malaysia. Employing the framework employed by Harwood and Roy (1999), this study utilized content analysis in examining the frequency and depiction of older adults in different types of magazine advertisements. It was agreed that an analysis of 14 magazines would yield a sufficient sample size to conform to the requirements of conducting significant frequency analysis. As such, the coding of the magazine advertisements was conducted collectively. The magazine that appeared as the market leader in each genres were selected based on the highest number of readership. Specifically the magazines were; *Cleo*, *Feminine*, *FHM*, *HAI*, *Healthy Magazine*, *Jelita*, *Malaysian Business*, *Men's Health*, *Mingguan Wanita*, *NONA*, *Remaja*, *Seventeen*, *Bacaria* and *VMagazine*. A total of 390 advertisements containing clear depictions of people were collected for coding. This conforms to past study sample sizes and is sufficient to allow generalisations, ((Kassarjian[^], 1977).

The sample of 390 advertisements obtained were coded following the framework and coding categories established by Harwood and Roy (1999) in their study done on the portrayal of older adults in magazine advertisements in India and the U.S. The coding process was divided into coding the characteristics of the advertisement itself, followed by the characteristic of the characters appearing in the advertisement. Whilst coding special attention was given to the age of the characters portrayed, through such dimensions as how old they appear to be in the advertisement.

Particular attention was paid to features such as extensive grey hair, extensive wrinkling of face and hands, use of aids such as cane or wheelchairs, that were indicative of advanced years in the characters. Such characters that displayed these distinguishable features of being elderly were coded into the age group elderly. This referred to adults of 60 years and above. The second age group chosen to categorise the character's age was that of older adult, between 46 years to 59 years. Here characters that appeared to have slightly greying hair, small amounts of wrinkles and appearance of being more matured and in their middle years of life (for example with family or with the appearance of being more portly) were coded. The third category developed for age was within the range of 22 to 45 years (adult).

Characters with a youthful appearance, exhibiting exuberance as well as having no wrinkles and being very sleek and trim were coded. The fourth category developed for age coded characters appearing to be in the age group of 13-21 years (young). Characters that had an appearance of being very active, led an outgoing social life (for example portrayed with friends and in the outdoors), appear young and student like or rebellious, and especially of characters that seem to still be in the process of puberty (bodies that haven't fully matured i.e. beards and moustaches, chest size etc.) were coded. The final category coded for age was between 0 to 12 years (children), characters that seemed to be child like, children and babies were coded into this category. These categories were used as a distinction to identify the age group that characters belonged to,

therefore allowing the frequency and portrayal of adults above the age of 46 years to be analysed. The two age group categories of older adult (between 46 years to 59 years) and elderly (60 years and above) has been combined into one category; that of older adults 46 years and above. It is important to note here that the following sections of the study have collapsed the two categories for ease of discussion and also to facilitate a sample size that was sufficient for the testing of frequencies in age group portrayals. Upon completion of coding for the sample of 390 adverts, the information from the code sheets were into the SPSS 12.0 programme for analysis.

In answering **Research Question 1**, it was decided that simple frequency distribution tests using SPSS would be the best way to measure the frequency of older adults portrayed in relation to other age groups. This was due to the SPSS programme being able to account for the large sample size of advertisements obtained; as well as the different age groups coded. Similarly to examine the manner in which older adults were portrayed, ANOVA test was decided as the best method to analyse any significance between the age groups, (Harwood and Roy 1997). This second analysis was conducted in relation to **Research Question Two**.

In answering **Research Question Three**, a simple frequency analysis was chosen as the method best able to determine levels of significance in the portrayal of older men and older women. Hence, Research Question 3, which looks at whether older men were portrayed more frequently than older women in the magazine advertisements; could be determined based on the levels of significant difference indicated through the frequency analysis.

Results

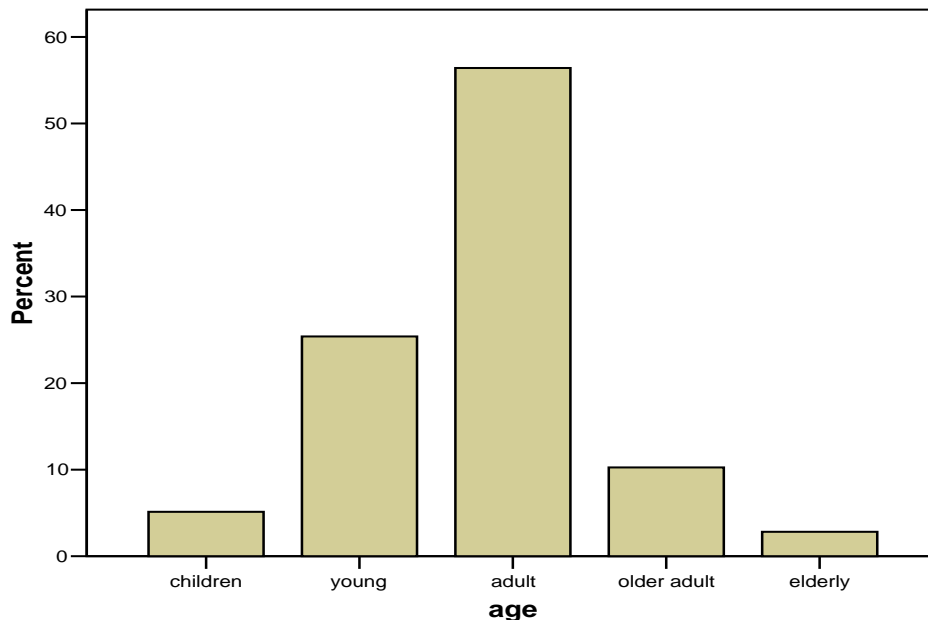
Of the 390 advertisements containing people that were identified in the sample size, only 51 (13.1%) of the advertisements featured older adults above the age of 46 years, (please note that this includes both the category of older adults 46 years to 59 years and the category of elderly 60 years and above). The majority of advertisements were found to portray adults between the ages of 22 to 45 years. There were a total of 220 (56.4%) advertisements depicting at least one person from the age group of adults. Young people in the age category of 13 to 21 years were portrayed in 99 (25.4%) of the advertisements from the sample size collected. Children, below the age of 13 years, were depicted in 20 (5.1%) of the 390 advertisements collected.

It was decided that because raw data comparisons of age groups would be misleading (due to the varied genre's of magazines that were chosen), percentage comparisons would be more reflective of the portrayal of age groups in magazine advertisements, (Gantz et.al. 1986). Hence, Table 4.1 lists both the frequency and percentage of appearance of the different age groups in the sample magazine advertisements. This is followed by a graph, Figure 4.1.2 that pictorially presents the same data. The data indicates that older adults above 46 years of age were underrepresented in comparison to other age groups.

Table 4.1: *Frequency and Percentage of Age Groups Portrayed in Sample Magazine Advertisements*

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Children	20	5.1
Young	99	25.4
Adult	220	56.4
Older Adult	40	10.3
Elderly	11	2.8
Total	390	100

Figure 4.1.2: *Percentage of Age Groups Portrayed in Sample Advertisements*



In relation to **Research Question 1**: “Are older adults shown less frequently than younger adults in magazine advertisements in Malaysia?” The distribution of frequency showed that older adults above the age of 46 years are portrayed less frequently than adults between the ages of 22 to 45 years, as well as young people between the ages of 13 to 21 years. The data shows that children between the ages of 0 to 12 years were also underrepresented in the sample advertisements. A one-way ANOVA of independent design was conducted to examine the significance of portrayals between the age groups; and if there was a significant difference between the age group of older adults above the age of 46 years and adults who are younger than 45 years of age.

The results showed that there *is* a significant difference in the frequency of portrayals across the various age groups, $df (4, 385) p < 0.05$, please refer to

table 4.2. More specifically through the Tukey HSD Test it was found that the significant difference between groups occurred between the age group of older adults (46-59 years) and the age group of adults (22-45 years) combined at the 0.05 level. The analysis also showed a significant difference between the age group of older adults and the age group of young (13-21 years), combined at the 0.05 level, (see table 4.2.1). Therefore, the frequency of older adults featured in the magazine advertisements was significantly lower than adults aged between 22 to 45 years of age and also of young people between the ages of 13 to 21 years. These results indicate that older adults are indeed portrayed less frequently in comparison to younger age groups in Malaysian magazine advertisements.

Table 4.2: ANOVA, Differences Between Age Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	454904.959	4	113726.240	9.755	.000
Within Groups	4488312.541	385	11657.955		
Total	4943217.500	389			

Post Hoc Tests

Table 4.2.1: Multiple Comparisons, Significant Differences Between Groups Tukey HSD

(I) age	(J) age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
children	young	-62.99798	26.46989	.123	-135.5453	9.5494
	adult	-45.07273	25.21683	.382	-114.1858	24.0403
	older adult	52.60000	29.56935	.387	-28.4422	133.6422
	elderly	11.43636	40.53038	.999	-99.6473	122.5200
young	children	62.99798	26.46989	.123	-9.5494	135.5453
	adult	17.92525	13.06705	.646	-17.8883	53.7388
	older adult	115.59798(*)	20.22884	.000	60.1558	171.0402
	elderly	74.43434	34.31576	.194	-19.6166	168.4853
adult	children	45.07273	25.21683	.382	-24.0403	114.1858
	young	-17.92525	13.06705	.646	-53.7388	17.8883
	older adult	97.67273(*)	18.55908	.000	46.8069	148.5385
	elderly	56.50909	33.35873	.439	-34.9188	147.9370
older adult	children	-52.60000	29.56935	.387	-133.6422	28.4422
	young	-	20.22884	.000	-171.0402	-60.1558

		115.59798(*)				
	adult	-97.67273(*)	18.55908	.000	-148.5385	-46.8069
	elderly	-41.16364	36.75953	.796	-141.9123	59.5850
elderly	children	-11.43636	40.53038	.999	-122.5200	99.6473
	young	-74.43434	34.31576	.194	-168.4853	19.6166
	adult	-56.50909	33.35873	.439	-147.9370	34.9188
	older					
	adult	41.16364	36.75953	.796	-59.5850	141.9123

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

To examine levels of positive portrayals between older and younger adults in relation to Research Question 2, one way ANOVA tests on 5 variables denoting the characteristics and manner of models portrayed in the advertisements were conducted. Tests to find the significance of positive portrayals of older adults in comparison to their younger counterparts was analyzed on the following variables; portrayal of attractiveness (see table 4.3 and 4.3.1), competence (see table 4.3.2 and 4.3.3), health (see table 4.3.4 and 4.3.5), socio-economic status (see table 4.3.6) and expression (see table 4.3.7) across the age groups. It was found that there was no significant difference in portrayals between older adults above the age of 46 years and younger adults below the age of 46 years, (at the combined level of $p < 0.05$). Older adults when portrayed were found to be depicted in a favourable manner, as were their younger counterparts.

Table 4.3: ANOVA, Differences of Attractiveness Between the Age Groups
Attractive

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	13.704	4	3.426	10.421	.000
Within Groups	126.566	385	.329		
Total	140.269	389			

In order to determine **Research Question Three**; to examine whether older men above the age of 46 years were portrayed more frequently than older women (Research Question Five), descriptive statistics such as frequency analysis was conducted by selecting cases (if male =1). It was found that of the sample advertisements a total of 79 (20%) advertisements portrayed male characters. Similar frequency analysis for select cases (if female =2) were conducted on the sample advertisements and it was found that there were 253 advertisements that portrayed female characters, (please note that as explained in methodology, there were 58 advertisements where for various reasons the sex of the character could not be specified). These simple frequencies are illustrated in table 4.6.

Table 4.6: *Frequency and Percentage of Sex Distributions in Sample Advertisements*

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	79	20.25
Female	253	64.85
Can't Tell	58	14.87

Of the 79 advertisements featuring male characters, frequency analysis showed that 20 (25%) of the adverts portrayed older men above the age of 46 years, (please see table 4.6.1). Of the total number of advertisements featuring females, only 22 (8.7%) advertisements portrayed women above the age of 46 years (please see table 4.6.3).

Table 4.6.1: *Age Distribution of Males in the Sample Advertisements*

Age Groups	Frequency	Percent
children	5	6.3
young	15	19.0
adult	39	49.4
older adult	13	16.5
elderly	7	8.9
Total	79	100.0

Table 4.6.3: *Age Distribution of Females in Sample Advertisements*

Age Groups	Frequency	Percent (%)
children	9	3.6
young	75	29.6
adult	147	58.1
older adult	21	8.3
elderly	1	0.4
Total	253	100.0

When compared within the same age group bracket, female older adults were featured in 22 of the 51 advertisements portraying older adults in the sample size. Older men were found to be featured in (20) of the magazines containing older adults, (please note that 9 of the 51 advertisements containing older adults had gender portrayals that were not able to be identified and thus fell into the cant' tell category). These descriptive statistics indicate that females above 46 years were shown more frequently (n=22, 43%) in comparison to their male counterparts within the same age group (n=20, 39%) in the sample magazine advertisements analyzed. Thus, older women were found to be

portrayed more frequently than older men in the magazine advertisements from the sample obtained. These descriptive statistics indicate that although a large number of advertisements feature women in the sample size, younger women are preferred as models in advertisements to older women (as only 9% of the ads featuring women have depictions of older women) whereas amongst men, mature and older adult models albeit less frequently portrayed than younger men; are more substantially within their gender group (25% of the adds featuring males).

Table 4.6.5: *Frequency and Percentage of Males and Females Portrayed in Sample Advertisements within Age Groups*

Age Groups	Total Number of Advertisements portraying Age Groups	Females		Males	
		N	Percentage (%)	N	Percentage (%)
Children	20	9	45	5	25
Young	99	75	75	15	15
Adult	220	147	67	39	17.8
Older adults	51	22	43	20	39

(N = number of advertisements in which male/female models are portrayed)

Conclusion

In tandem with previous studies conducted in the U.S., U.K., and China (Peterson 1992; Harwood and Roy 1999; Carrigan and Szmigin 1998; and Chen and Chen 2000), the results of this study found that older adults above the age of 46 years were portrayed less frequently (being featured in only 13% of the sample advertisements) in comparison to younger adults in mainstream magazine advertisements in Malaysia. This is despite the population of older adults currently comprising an estimated 18% of the Malaysian population (Department of Statistics Consensus 2000). The results of this study indicate that the advertising media are portraying a distorted representation of the demographic aging that is beginning to take shape in Malaysia.

It is important to note here however that although older adults were portrayed less frequently than their counterparts, they were however portrayed positively. The analysis of older characters depicted in advertisements, evaluated positive portrayals of them on 5 main aspects namely; competence, health, facial expression, attractiveness and the socioeconomic status of older adults depicted in the advertisements. On all these 5 characteristics that were determined to be indicative of a character being presented in a positive manner in adverts (Harwood and Roy 1997), the results showed that there was no difference in

the positive depiction of older and younger age groups. In contrary to what was found by Gerbner et. al. (1980) and Peterson (1992) of negative portrayal of older adults in print advertisements; the findings of this study suggest that both the older and younger age groups were positively portrayed.

Research in the area of media representations of older characters concurs on the depiction of older adults being largely positive in commercial based media, (Gantz et.al. 1986). The reason behind the more positive portrayals of older adults in advertisement media is theorised as an attempt on the “*part of advertisers not to alienate a potentially affluent market of older adults and also not to loose existing consumer loyalties*”, (Zhang et.al. 2006:278). It is important to note, however that, despite the overall positive portrayals of older models in the media, the dichotomy of older adults being featured in minor or background roles, portrayed in roles that are relatively inconsequential and exhibiting lower capabilities in comparison to younger models is still a cause for concern (Harwood and Roy 1999; Zhang et.al. 2006).

The Malaysian society, entrenched in traditional value systems still vacillate on extended family institutions in contrary to most western societies that are predominantly nuclear in nature. Despite increasing trends of globalisation and modernisation, Malaysia has managed to retain the Asian values of “collectivity and relationships; respect for elders, loyalty, social hierarchy, religion; harmony and saving face”, (Muhamad and Merriam 2000:2). Indeed according to the Department of Statistics Population Consensus 2000, 48% of older adults live with extended family relations or co-residences. However, studies have noted that familial care of older persons has decreased somewhat in the last ten years, (MIER 2005). Due to urbanisation and employment migration patterns amongst young adults, trends of emerging nuclear families have been noted especially in the metropolitan areas of Malaysia.

Irrespective of such trend changes in Malaysian society, respect for elders is still a tenet of the values shared by the three ethnicities in Malaysia. Although concerns of health and financial security are common facets of aging across Asian and Western cultures, Eastern values demonstrate strong filial piety that is often reinforced by religion that are central to many Asian cultures, (MIER 2005). Advertising media and the portrayal of older adults in them exhibit these context specific differences. For example, studies in Western countries have found that some print adverts tend to depict older adults in a humoured and ridiculed way, (Gerbner et. al. 1986, Peterson 1992). This method of depiction would not be accepted by Malaysian society due to respect for older adults that is inherent in the mores of their culture and value systems. Despite the under-representation of older adults indicates that the Malaysian society may not prefer to be reminded of the aging process; Malaysian societal values that often venerate the older people within their family and greater society institutions would not condone the portrayal of these older adults in a negative, ridiculous or inappropriate way, (Muhamad and Merriam 2000; Mat and Taha 2003).

Therefore it can be concluded that although older adults may be infrequently portrayed in advertisements, it may be that the cultural value and respect given

to older adults in lieu of societal norms, would be why they are not depicted in a demeaning or negative way in Malaysian magazines.

In exploring issues of gender bias within the age group of older adults, the study findings indicate that in contrast to previous research on the “double jeopardy of being old and female”, (Harwood and Roy 1999:275), older women were more frequently portrayed in relation to their male counter parts within the same age group.

The descriptive frequencies revealed that of the 51 advertisements from the sample magazines, 43% featured older women and 39% featured older men. These statistics indicate that the stigmatisation of being ‘old’ and ‘female’ inherent in western advertising media is not reflected in Malaysia. One of the rationales behind these findings could be due to a large number of magazines in the study sample comprising of magazines within the genre of women rather than other genres. Out of the 14 magazines which had the highest number of readership in Malaysia and were chosen for coding, 7 of the magazines were from the genre of women. Furthermore, out of the 390 advertisements that fulfilled the criteria for coding, 220 advertisements contained clear depictions of women. Therefore, a large number of advertisements in the sample size were from Women’s magazines and were targeted at women in Malaysian society. It is logical to assume then that such advertisements would feature more women models that would be able to relate and appeal to this segment of society.

The higher number of older women being portrayed in the magazine advertisements suggests that older women were thought of by advertisers as the ideal model to invoke positive responses from the target audience. Previous studies have noted that older women, especially in Asian contexts have been featured often in domains and product categories that are more domestic orientated (Harwood and Roy 1999). The magazine genre of women were noted informally to feature more advertisements promoting cooking utensils, household appliances, cleaning supplies as well as health and hygiene products. Older women in Asian culture have traditionally been venerated for their experience and knowledge in the management of successful family relationships, filial piety and extended family interactions, (Omar et.al 2005).

As such, by using successful looking older women as models in promoting domestic products, advertisers would be positively insinuating that the use of the product could perhaps help women to achieve the same success in their own domestic lives. Having previously established that strong and successful family relationships is often central in Asian cultures (Muhamad and Merriam 2000; Omar et.al. 2005), such persuasiveness on the part of advertisers would logically be thought to evoke a positive response from the large readership of women these magazines enjoy. This could theoretically be the reason behind the higher percentage of older women featured in the magazine advertisements in comparison to older men. This result, in contrast to a number of previous research findings, (Harwood and Roy 1999; Tupper 1995) indicates that western trends that have implied that older women are not the preferred choice for the promotion of products for marketers is not reflected in Malaysia.

The outcomes of this research suggest that patterns of portrayals of older adults in magazine advertisements that had previously been researched on in other countries are mirrored in Malaysia. The under representation of older adults suggest that older adults in Malaysian society are perceived to play smaller roles and contribute less towards society in comparison to other age groups. If indeed this idea is an inherent part of the value and belief systems in Malaysia, then advertisement media are contributing towards the perpetuation and entrenchment of such wrong values. Considering that the older adult population is one that is growing in affluence and size, the exacerbation of such misleading values would be detrimental to older adults and Malaysian society at large.

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