

## ACCULTURATION OF CONSUMERISM AMONG THE ORANG ASLI COMMUNITY IN MERSING, JOHOR

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### INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on consumerism among the Orang Asli community, specifically in the district of Mersing, Johor. The Orang Asli have long been in contact with the mainstream society and the outcome has been that there has been a change in their consumerism culture (Rosnon, 2010). The influence of globalisation also has brought in consumerism influences and this has made it difficult to prevent the pervading of such influences into the Orang Asli society. The influence of globalisation, which also accentuated consumerism, is difficult to prevent from seeping into this community. As with other communities, the Orang Asli community has been exposed to cash-based economy and consumerism (Rosnon, 2010; Sarjit, Rosnon & Ma'rof, 2010; Sarjit & Rosnon, 2013). This influence has, and continues to, creep into this community even though their settlements are located deep in the interior regions. The consumerism among the Orang Asli community can no longer be viewed as being different from that of other communities. However, what persists as a problem is that this community, which has been categorised as a minority community, has long undergone a consumer acculturation process, accepting a consumerism that earlier had been alien to the Orang Asli community (Ma'rof & Mohd Taufiq, 2008; Rosnon, 2010).

Consumerism among the Orang Asli community needs to be considered in a different way compared to that of the mainstream society (Rosnon, Sarjit & Ma'rof, 2018). This is because the Orang Asli are not only marginalised but the majority of them fall in the categorisation of being poor, not only economically, but also in terms of power and education (Rosnon, 2014; Rosnon & Sara, 2015). Their desire to enter the consumer world has caused this impoverished and weak community to end up as victims of that very consumerism itself. They frequently buy goods at high prices due to their remote location (Rosnon, 2010; Sarjit, Rosnon & Ma'rof, 2010; Sarjit & Rosnon, 2013). They are also linked to inadequate knowledge and experience in managing their income, especially in planning their expenditure. Furthermore, their exposure to the mass media and consumer socialisation agents has caused them to form strong wants towards certain goods and services.

Consumerism and lifestyle are two elements that have a close association and mutually influence one another. The first wave of globalisation experienced in Malaysia is the consumerism, be it material or non-material, that crept into the life of society at various levels, particularly into the upper class and upper middle class (the newly rich). It can be seen today that the globalisation process has caused minority societies, such as the Orang Asli, to also feel its impact. The Orang Asli have started to use luxury goods and services (Rosnon, 2010). The lifestyles and consumerism trends of the lower classes possess certain similarities with that of a portion of the middle class in other parts of the world. The middle class has a set of new social interests, such as their quality of life that encompasses high consumerist levels, with emphasis on leisure and also places importance on education as a means of consolidating their position and wealth.

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In general, financial behaviour and spending behavior has never been stable (Shahryar & Tan, 2014). It is dynamic in nature and may differ from one generation to another. Currently, Orang Asli play significant roles in assisting the countries' economy, while the expenditure has been identified as a major part of the overall consumer spending in Malaysia. Financial behaviour comprises of four main aspects, holistic financial planning, sufficient income for living expenses, controlled expenditure, and financial management that could resolve financial problems (Jariah, 1987). Theoretically, financial management aims to assist individuals to manage their money effectively by taking into account their resources, their financial budget and such (Wolf, 1981). The process of financial management is related with how money is spent and how the plan is executed (Garmen & Forgue, 2018). An individual's current financial standing must be evaluated in order to manage one's financial planning for the future (Shahryar & Tan, 2014). There are two major financial management matters that are discussed which are financial budget and record keeping of expenditure (Ruth & Francille, 1981). Henceforth, within the Orang Asli community, it is crucial to evaluate about their financial and spending behavior. Despite limited resources, they are exposed to the mainstream economy system which includes financial management as their well living expenses and savings.

This study was done to analyse the buying patterns of luxury goods and utilisation of luxury services in the daily lives of the Orang Asli. It was also intended to identify the patterns of financial management and spending behaviour among the Orang Asli community. This article is divided into three main parts. The first part deals with literature analysis, in order to study the background of the Orang Asli, the theoretical acculturation model framework, and the behaviour of consumers. This is important to study the development of the Orang Asli and their economic standing as well as develop an understanding of consumer acculturation. The second part concerns itself with the research methodology while the third part is of research findings that touch on patterns of knowledge and behavior in purchasing and utilisation of luxury services, and also finance management, taking into account the objectives of this study.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Background of the Orang Asli Community

The Orang Asli are a minority group, be it from the standpoint of location, social aspect, psychology or economy (Gomes, 2004; Ma'rof & Mohd Taufiq, 2008). However there is a segment of them that has been assimilated by the mainstream Malaysian community. The Orang Asli population in 2010 was 178, 197, a mere 0.6 % of Malaysia's population of 28.3 million. (Department of Orang Asli Development, 2016, p.24). 'Orang Asli' is a Malay term meaning "original people" or "first people" (Nicholas 2000, p.1). Anthropologists and administrators applied the terminology to 18 ethnic subgroups under Negrito, Senoi and Proto-Malay (Rosnon, 2016, p.26). They consist of three groups, namely Senoi, Proto-Malay and Negrito (Department of Orang Asli Development, 2016). The Senoi are the biggest group with a total population of 97,858 (54.9%), followed by the Proto-Malays with a population of 75,332 (42.3%) and finally the Negrito with a population of 5,009 (2.8%) people (Department of Orang Asli Development, 2016, p.23-24).

In terms of occupation, although the number of Orang Asli is not large, there are Orang Asli who have found employment as professionals (Rosnon, 2010; Sarjit, Rosnon & Ma'rof, 2010; Sarjit & Rosnon, 2013). But the majority of them still focus on their traditional means of livelihood, namely

being involved in agriculture and jungle activities (Ma'rof & Mohd Taufiq, 2008). In terms of education, a portion of the Orang Asli have pursued further studies till university level but the number of dropouts among their children remains relatively high (Hasan, 2009; Rosnon, 2014; Rosnon & Sara, 2015; Rosnon, 2016). Economically, the *The Star* newspaper (19-2-1997) reported the statement of the Chief Director of the JHEOA, stating that 80.8 percent of the Orang Asli live in poverty (compared with 8.5% at national level) with 49.9% of them being classified as living in hard-core poverty level (Nicholas, 2000, p.30). The poverty of the Orang Asli is reflected not only by their low income level but also by their rather low quality of life. The majority of the Orang Asli has still not received basic facilities like piped water, electricity, proper toilets and roads (Nicholas, 2000, p.30-32). On top of that, they have low material comfort levels, for example having poor levels of home furnishings and equipment. It needs to be stressed that the Orang Asli lag far behind in many aspects of life (William-Hunt, 1998). At the same time, Act 134, that is the Orang Asli Act, is believed to hasten their development (Hasan, 1998). Among the segment that lives in urban areas, it has been found that their economic situation is not much different from that of their neighbourhood communities, especially the Malays.

### **Acculturation and Consumerism : Theoretical Background**

Researching the acculturation and consumerism process among the Orang Asli provides a better understanding regarding the cultural dynamics that act as the foundation for consumerist behaviour. According to the Sarjit, Rosnon & Ma'rof (2010) acculturation refers to the cultural, individual, group or human modification, namely accepting, utilising or borrowing traits from other cultures. It also refers to the mixing of cultures due to prolonged contact. Consumerism, meanwhile, refers to the concept that is used to describe a condition whereby a person's happiness is related to the purchase, ownership or usage of a product. Consumerism is used to describe the tendency of humans to identify themselves with a certain product or service that is utilised, especially commercially branded products that can enhance the status of the user, such as the usage of luxury goods (Rosnon, Sarjit & Ma'rof, 2018; Sarjit, Rosnon & Ma'rof, 2010). In short, the culture that is infiltrated by consumerism can be termed as consumerist culture.

Consumer acculturation is one component of acculturation and socialisation. Whereas acculturation is more general in nature, consumer acculturation is more specific, especially when it refers to the process of consumerism (Ma'rof & Mohd Taufiq, 2008). Consumer acculturation may be viewed as a socialisation process, whereby an individual learns behaviour, attitudes and values that are different from those of his original culture (Lee, 1988). The acculturation concept, meanwhile, refers to the phenomenon that ensues when groups of individuals that have differing cultures are in continuous contact with each other, resulting in changes in prevailing cultural patterns, be it of either one, or both groups (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936, p.149). Changes may occur either in the dominant culture, subculture, or in both groups. According to Berry (1997), in practice, acculturation tends to produce more significant changes in one of the groups. Typically, consumer acculturation of the minority group is determined by the extent to which they can adapt themselves to the new consumerist culture (as suggested by Magafia et al, 1996) and produces behavioral changes as a result of this contact (Ward & Arzu, 1999).

There are two dimensions to the structure of acculturation. Acculturation influences the actions of consumers in two ways; by resocialising consumers and by managing the acculturation of the individual (Liu, 2000). Consumer socialisation teaches the individual about consumerism within a

certain culture. It gives a very profound influence on the behaviour of the individual. This depends on the involvement of the socialisation agent, in that it decides whether the socialisation process produces a certain outcome. This case because the socialization agent play an important role in determining whether the community is changing or not. The second method is through acculturation influences on the consumer behaviour by means of reinforcement and alteration of self acculturation changes. This is very important for the individual to adjust himself and at the same time retain his integrity. The conflict between changes and continuity in the acculturation process provides an impact on the choice of product by the consumer and how they utilise it. The individual will assimilate different acculturation strategies according to the changes and continuity and this, in turn will have an influence on different consumerist focus. The factors of environment and character of the individual also play important roles in acculturation processes and the relationship between acculturation and the behaviour of consumers (Liu, 2000).

### **Socialisation Perspectives and Consumer Acculturation**

Socialisation of consumers is defined as “the process by which youths obtain relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes which function as consumers at the market place” Ward (1974). In the beginning, there was more debate on socialisation for children and teenagers as consumers, but then there have been researchers who have given more emphasis on socialisation of adult consumers (Goodwin & Sewall, 1992). This was because when a community moves in from elsewhere, the majority of them are adults and have had prior socialisation experiences. Though this is somewhat different from earlier experiences, it is capable of modifying the resocialising process. There are three principal approaches, namely the cognitive development approach, individual communication approach and the social learning approach which dominate sociological studies (O’ Guinn & Faber, 1987). Among all these social study approaches, especially those relevant to immigrant socialisation, much emphasis was given to interaction and socialisation processes. The basic concept in the social studies approach is that the socialisation agent is the main medium whereby values, attitudes and knowledge are translated through individual socialisation. The four main socialisation agents are made up of family, friends, mass media and institutions. Consumer socialisation happens through models, reinforcement and social interaction (Liu, 2000).

These four socialisation agents give different forms of emphasis in the socialisation influence of individuals, by means of the information and influence that they receive to make them different. The family provides a more apparent influence on the individual. When relocating, the family will bring along with them the consumer tradition that is connected to their values and original culture, or speed up socialisation by integrating socialisation influences from within members of the family and then present them with a wider outlook, knowingly or unknowingly. Friends, on the other hand can be classified into two types, namely friends from within the same cultural background and friends from an external community culture. Friends from the own culture will share the same cultural background influences with the individual and this is also known as acculturation (Liu, 2000). The bond among them will retain their own particular values, culture and attitudes. Continued exclusive interaction among individuals and their friends will cause them to be more and more isolated from the mainstream society. Meanwhile, their friends in the mainstream society, will provide them with more information regarding consumerism in their new-found culture. The information about consumerism matters is obtained through friends as well as through personal observation in the course of their daily living. This information enables them to adapt themselves in their new culture.

Besides this, the mass media also has the capability to alter the social reality. The media rarely displays information about consumerism skills such as the price and information relating to the product. Rather, the media projects consumerism more from the lifestyles of the rich (O' Guinn & Faber, 1987). Based on the 'Cultivation' theory, individuals take more notice of what is shown in the mass media, even though what is shown may be biased (O'Guinn & Faber, 1987). Individuals who watch television more have a greater propensity to form social perspectives which are biased. If the acculturised individual has little experience of the mainstream culture, they will be more easily impressed upon and influenced by the messages conveyed by the mass media. Studies show that acculturised individuals view social reality from the majority, or mainstream culture and of course, this will lead them to be taken up by the lifestyle of the rich, as projected by the television programs (Lee, 1989). Institutions such as consumer protection groups can help individuals to be acculturised in consumerism aspects properly and efficiently in the environment of the mainstream culture. This is because institutions can be associated with sales personnel or retailers who can give a skewed understanding to the individual.

The approach of this social study can help in explaining how acculturised individuals understand consumerism in mainstream culture and why the results of this study vary with each individual. This difference is caused by the different influences of socialisation agents towards different individuals. The environmental factor creates barriers on socialisation agents for them to connect with the mainstream society. For example, the environment is the acculturation factor at the work place. When working at a place where the majority of the workers are either from mainstream culture or from the native culture, the different type of friends will surely provide different influences. Individuals who do not have sufficient information of the mainstream culture will rely more on the mass media and advice from family to gather information regarding consumerism.

Two acculturation dimensions, namely the attitude of the individual pertaining to mainstream culture, and the original culture of the individual, will influence their tendencies to choose socialisation agents. Individuals who maintain a positive attitude towards the mainstream culture will be more inclined to obtain information from the mainstream culture, for example through the mass media, peers and members of the mainstream culture. As for individuals who are more aligned with their original culture, they will not be interested in external culture influences, and will rely more on friends from their own culture. Empirical studies have indicated that individuals who have been assimilated are more inclined to consult friends, colleagues and sales staff from the 'external' society before making purchases. Whereas individuals who have been less assimilated will value their own customs more and hold on to their traditions (D'Rozario & Douglas, 1999). The willingness and coercion factors in choosing socialisation agents becomes the determiner of how acculturised individuals view and comprehend the consumer reality in the mainstream culture environment. These differences in understanding and learning lead to differences in consumer behaviour, for example in the preference for advertisements, and using different criteria in making buying decisions.

Ownership of the latest goods and products according to the times plays a vital role in the self-management of the individual in the aspects of choosing and purchasing of goods. Ownership and purchase of goods, especially new products, will cause strong change of behaviour, whereby the mainstream culture aids consumers to shift to new cultures, and traditional customs are foregone. Conventionally, ownership and consumerism reminds these individuals of earlier affairs and forms a basis for them to consolidate themselves. As such, this matter will help to resolve

conflict and tension in the process of their life changes. For different individuals, with differing ways of life and reactions to acculturation, the emphasis in shifting and continuity of culture will also differ. For assimilated individuals, they have a greater tendency to change themselves to a new identity, namely that of the mainstream culture. For them, products purchased and used from the mainstream culture will more greatly reflect the current trends. For integrated individuals, emphasis is given to both change as well as continuity of their native cultures. Latest products will be used and assimilated into their daily lives but traditional products continue to be valued. The individual integrated consumer pattern is the result of a combination between their native culture and the mainstream culture. Isolationist individuals continue to hold fast to their native cultures and do not wish to accept new cultures. For these individuals, native products represent symbols of their native homelands and are greatly valued because they are irreplaceable. As for marginal individuals, they refuse to neither retain their native culture nor assimilate into the mainstream culture. There is change as far as improving their native culture is concerned but they do not want to accept the mainstream culture. Products that are symbolic of both these two types of cultures will not be accepted. A third form of culture will emerge as a result of marginalisation; marginal consumerism will be formed by retaining this new culture, and new consumer patterns that are characterised by this third culture, will come into being.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Quantitative approach with survey technique was carried out using questionnaire forms to obtain data in a descriptive manner. The questionnaire form was divided into six main parts namely: respondent's background, economic capital, ownership and purchase, consumer value, financial management and behaviour and finally, resolving of financial problems. However, the discussion of this paper encompasses only three parts, namely: respondent's background, ownership and purchase (acculturation of consumerism), and lastly financial management and spending behaviour. Financial management and spending behaviour was measured based on a 15 - item scale adapted from Kempson, Perotti and Scott (2013) and World Bank (2013) measured on a five point Likert type scale. It included behaviour related to budgeting, over spending, expense monitoring and saving, planning for future and unexpected expenses. All items have been modified and adapted to suit the context of Orang Asli. The study was conducted in three Orang Asli communities located in the district of Mersing, Johor. These communities were the Orang Asli community at Kampung Orang Asli Punan, Kampung Orang Asli Peta and Kampung Orang Asli Tanah Abang. A total of 231 respondents were involved in three Orang Asli settlements in Mersing district, Johor, consisting of 117 males and 114 females. Selection of respondents was done by simple random sampling, that is, family head or father who managed the family's expenditure, working mothers who managed the family expenditure or non-working mothers who frequently managed the family expenditure, working youths who managed expenditure or non-working youths who frequently made expenditures. The age of the respondents was between 16 to 60 years. Gathered data was analysed descriptively using statistics package *SPSS 20.0 for Windows*.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Background of Orang Asli Study

The study was conducted in three Orang Asli community villages located in the district of Mersing, Johor. The communities were the Orang Asli community at Kampung Orang Asli Punan, Kampung Orang Asli Tanah Abang and Kampung Orang Asli Peta. Kampung Tanah Abang was categorised as suburban as it was less than 10 km from the trunk road and has undergone somewhat visible social changes, and its dependence on the jungle for economic resources amounted to about only 10.0% (Ramlee, 2001).

Kampung Peta and Kampung Punan, on the other hand, are categorised as remote areas, that is, they are located more than 10 km away from the trunk road and these villages are classified as backward (Department of Orang Asli Affairs, 2008). The main tribe that resides in these research areas are the Jakun, who represent the Proto-Malay. According to Nicholas (2000), the Proto-Malay are those who lead a settled life (as compared with the Negrito), where the majority of them are involved in agricultural livelihood, rubber tapping and fishing. Information from the Department of Orang Asli Affairs, Mersing district census of 2008 show that the population of Kampung Orang Asli Punan is 236, that of Kampung Orang Asli Kampung Orang Asli Tanah Abang is 510 and that of Kampung Orang Asli Peta, 264. The total population of the Orang Asli in Mersing district is 1,711 (Department of Orang Asli Affairs – Mersing District, 2008). As for Kampung Tanah Abang the source of income there consists of fish breeding (assisted by RISDA) and the main crop is oil palm (assisted by FELCRA and Department of Orang Asli Development). However there are also those who work in the private sector as factory workers and as gardeners in certain agencies. As for the remote areas of Kampung Peta and Kampung Punan, the source of income is also from rubber cultivation and farming under the sponsorship of RISDA and the Malaysian Rubber Board. But among the community of Kampung Peta, there are some who make an income from handicraft production which is then sold. This is due to the fact that Kampung Peta is located within the Taman Negara area, Endau-Rompin, Johor.

The educational levels of the respondents are: primary school (47.6%), secondary school (19.2%) and those who have not attended school at all (32.8%). The school drop-out rate is quite apparent. Through interview and observation it is found that many of the children in these areas are not motivated to go to school and the attendance rate in schools is rather low. Most of those who had not gone to school consist of adults. They claim that children in these areas are more keen to help their parents at the rubber smallholdings, and that the transportation problem also poses a hindrance to their attending school. In terms of belief, generally the majority of the villagers are animists (81.3%) However, there are some amongst them who are Muslims (11.3%), Christians (6.5%) and Indians (0.9%).

### Financial Management and Spending Behaviour

Even though the majority of the Orang Asli in the survey area have low income, this study was done in order to identify whether the Orang Asli practise financial management. Financial management covers four chief aspects, namely: financial management has to be based on comprehensive financial planning, income needs to be sufficient to cover expenses, expenditure needs to be controlled and lastly, financial management should be capable of resolving financial problems

(Jariah, 1987). The income of the Orang Asli community in the research area averages between RM 200 to RM 400 per month.

Generally, the Orang Asli community researched did not have proper financial planning. This situation is understandable as the majority of the Orang Asli do not have a high income. Therefore careful planning is needed so that their income proves to be sufficient. However most people realise things such as how important it is to manage limited resources (Bertisch, 1994, Garmen & Fogue, 2018), and that money management represents a vital aspect of household livelihood (Karen, 1988, Garmen & Fogue, 2018), and also that domestic crises can surface due to failure in controlling financial affairs (Hallman & Rosenbloom, 2003). However, research findings show that only a small portion of the Orang Asli have this realisation. For example, only 10 % of the Orang Asli believe that their income is sufficient for their daily expenses, especially for those in remote areas and 22.5% of the Orang Asli society are not in debt. On the other hand, the majority of Orang Asli are in financial difficulties. This is because of their meagre income; they say that they do not have the time to manage it properly and a big part of this income is used up. Based on observations, Orang Asli in this research have strong desire to possess luxurious items which then urged them to apply for loans and end up in debts. For instance, in order to possess any electrical items fro their household, they would either have to make a full payment or via installment.

Moreover, the data reported that 16% of Orang Asli practices savings and 56.3 % utilized all their money fir daily expenditure and for debt repayment. Worse, contingency savings are also neglected, whereby 12.1% do not have savings for emergency usage. This shows that the majority of the Orang Asli who have been studied are in a dire situation and embroiled in financial problems. Financial problems arise when the individual's wants or desires continuously influence spending decisions (Danes & Haberman, 2007). Money is a tool for man to procure food, shelter, comforts of life, peace and happpiness in the course of running his life (Mate, 1991), so without adequate money, man would be at a low level of well-being. In remote areas, the source of income is barely enough to maintain the family and thus savings tend to be something that cannot be done, simply because there is no surplus cash to put into savings. Table 1 show the Financial Management and Spending Behaviour among the Orang Asli.

Table 1: Financial Management and Spending Behaviour (N=231)

Bil	Financial Management and Spending Behaviour				N	S	SM	O	A
	Never (N)	Seldom (S)	Sometimes (SM)	Often (O)					
1	Membuat perancangan sebelum berbelanja / <i>Plan prior to expenditure</i>				17.7	20.8	7.8	33.8	19.9
2	Sentiasa ikut perancangan yang telah dibuat / <i>Follow financial budget</i>				17.7	17.3	16	32.9	16
3	Berbelanja berdasarkan kemampuan/ <i>expenditure based on affordability</i>				0.4	8.2	10	35.5	45.9
4	Ada wang sekarang guna sekarang / <i>If you have money, use it</i>				10.4	22.1	11.3	26.4	29.9

5	Ada wang hari ini simpan untuk esok / <i>Save the money for the future</i>	3.9	40.7	13.9	26.4	15.2
6	Sentiasa tiada wang untuk menabung / <i>Always have no money to save</i>	16	29.9	18.6	25.1	10.4
7	Saya tidak merancang Perbelanjaan kecil (runcit) / <i>No budget plans for minor expenses</i>	32.6	41.3	7	11.7	7.4
8	Pernah membeli barangan tidak perlu / <i>Buying unnecessary items</i>	42.4	40.3	13.4	3.9	-
9	Berhutang / <i>In debt</i>	22.5	43.3	21.6	4.8	7.8
10	Mampu menjelaskan hutang setiap bulan / <i>Able to pay monthly debts on time</i>	6.5	37.7	13.4	27.7	14.7
11	Tidak dapat beli barang keperluan disebabkan kekurangan wang / <i>Unable to buy necessities due to short of money</i>	10	38.1	18.2	16	17.7
12	Memajak barang untuk mendapatkan kewangan / <i>Pawning possession to obtain money</i>	60.2	26.4	11.3	0.9	1.3
13	Saya akan pastikan duit belanja seharian tidak mengganggu wang simpanan saya / <i>Ensure that expenditure does not utilize any of my savings</i>	8.3	42.6	26.1	8.7	14.3
14	Saya menabung untuk kegunaan ketika kecemasan (terdesak) / <i>My savings are for emergency purposes</i>	12.1	36.4	25.1	8.2	18.2
15	Saya tidak mempunyai wang untuk bayar kos perubatan / <i>I do not have money to pay medical bills</i>	26.4	37.2	24.1	8.7	3

### Acculturation of Consumerism among the Orang Asli

Consumer acculturation among the Orang Asli community shows a process of socialisation wherein they, as marginalised consumers, learn behaviour, attitudes, and consumerist values which are found in a culture which is quite different from that of their own, namely that of the mainstream culture. The Orang Asli as a community, as found in this observed area, occupy a social position that is easily discerned by other communities (based on their way of living and physical appearance) and they are persistently acculturised by the majority mainstream consumerism (particularly that of the Malay culture). This acculturation process occurs only in one direction whereby the consumerist culture of these Orang Asli has shifted towards receiving the consumerist culture of the greater society, and not the other way around. Throughout the observation, it has been found that the Orang Asli community in the research area have undergone changes, including changes in their ownership of goods, just as in most other areas where Orang Asli are to be found, especially those who live in towns. Based on interviews conducted on the Orang Asli, the concept of luxury goods and services, from their view point, includes electrical items (refrigerators, televisions and rice cookers). The mainstream society may regard these as basic necessities, but for the Orang Asli, these are luxury

items because they cannot really afford to have them. Things like jewellery, wrist watches, and other adornments are also considered to be luxury items.

Nowadays, they are increasingly exposed to goods from outside which are brought into their community by traders or members of their own community. Ownership of goods which are considered as 'luxuries' runs parallel with the acculturation process that they undergo. In relation with this, many other factors contribute to the speed, or conversely to the slowness, of the consumer acculturation process besides the factor of money ownership. Among them, as emphasised by Godwin & Carroll (1986) and Baily & Lown (1993), are the factors of consumer demography such as age, gender, occupation, knowledge of consumerism, level of education and attitude towards goods. All these factors mentioned have a role in moderating the relationship between acculturation and consumer behaviour amongst the Orang Asli (Rosnon, 2010). These factors definitely decide, or influence their acculturation processes and consumer culture. This can be seen in the case of consumer acculturation being more obvious in Kampung Tanah Abang, which is more exposed and accessible in terms of location compared with the other villages. This is because the other villages are rather isolated and remotely located and most of the villagers are still comparatively bound by the traditional way of life. But for the Kampung Peta area, even though they are in the interior, their ownership of goods is similar to that of the settlements on the outskirts of towns. This is because the surroundings have influenced this area. Kampung Peta is located in a tourist site, namely Taman Negara, so contact with external influences occurs more easily. Because of these contacts, the Orang Asli here are more exposed to the influences of the mainstream developments.

Bank services, transports, post offices, and a number of other similar services have also been tagged as luxury services. The Orang Asli consider these to be luxury services as they are not found in their place of residence. Ownership and utilisation of these goods and services which are considered luxuries reflect the consumer adaptation process in that community. The belongings that they own are obtained from the nearby towns such as the towns of Kahang and Nitar. Goods that are bought in these towns consist of furniture, electrical equipment and vehicles. Table 2 shows the purchase data and knowledge of goods. The Orang Asli are aware of the luxury goods that are available. The data reveals that the Orang Asli community is aware of 'luxury' eating outlets such as restaurants (79.7%), McDonald's (47.6%) and KFC (55.1%). They come to know of them through mass media such as television, radio and so on.

Besides that, they also get to know of these places through social contacts, like neighbours, colleagues at work and also through publicity. However, the Orang Asli community hardly spend money at these places due to shortage of cash, remote location of their settlements and poor accessibility. These drawbacks cause them not to spend money at these places. Data reveals that the Orang Asli community have already started visiting SPA Although the figure is only 0.4%, this is a positive development. Purchase of furniture at Courts Mammoth is 4.8% and daily needs at Giant supermarket is 11.3%. The conclusion that can be made is that consumerism among the Orang Asli has started to grow along with the mainstream development. They already have knowledge of luxury goods but setbacks in terms of finance and accessibility have made it not possible for them to own these goods or to spend money at these places.

Table 2:  
Percentage distribution of respondents according to knowledge and purchased of luxury goods (N=231)

Luxury Goods purchased	Knowledge		Have purchased	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Food</b>				
KFC	55.1	48.9	11.3	88.7
McDonald's	47.6	52.4	7	93
Pizza Hut	45.9	54.1	6.1	93.9
'Mamak' restaurant	74.5	25.5	53.9	46.1
Restaurant	79.7	20.3	37.8	62.2
<b>Furniture / Electrical Goods</b>				
Singer	24.7	75.3	1.3	98.7
Seng Heng	22.1	77.9	0.4	99.6
Courts Mammoth	29.4	70.6	4.8	95.2
<b>Beauty &amp; Health</b>				
Avon	24.2	75.8	2.2	97.8
Spa	20.8	79.2	0.4	99.6
Saloon	22.9	77.1	2.2	97.8
<b>Daily Necessities</b>				
7-Eleven	15.6	84.4	2.6	97.4
Tesco	19.5	80.5	4.8	95.2
Giant	27.7	72.3	11.3	88.7
Carrefour	19	81	2.6	97.4
Econsave	13.4	86.6	0.9	99.1
Mydin	13.4	86.6	1.7	98.3

Note : All figures are in percentages

There are also those among the Orang Asli who have used banking and modern health services. They save money in banks and use banking facilities for financial transactions such as repayment of loans. A large proportion of the Orang Asli have made use of health services such as hospitals and government clinics. Data shows that 99.6% of them have been to hospitals that are situated at the

nearest town and have been to government clinics that are located close to their dwellings. There are also amongst them who have been to private clinics (paying) and this figure stands at 32.5%. Although they say they have traditional medicine men (*bomoh*) at their villages, these medicine men are resorted to only for the remedy of ailments of the 'spirit'. Diseases that are clearly biological, such as injuries and the like, are referred to clinics and hospitals. Communication systems are finding their way into the lives of the Orang Asli. Data shows that 41.1% of them use mobile phones. Thus luxury services have basically started to mushroom in their lives, but financial problems act as an obstruction for them to own and utilise these services. Table 3 depicts the knowledge and usage of luxury services by the Orang Asli.

Table 3:  
Percentage distribution of respondents according to knowledge and purchased of luxury services (N=231)

Usage of Luxury Services	Knowledge		Have Purchased	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Telecommunications</b>				
Astro	78.4	21.6	5.6	93.5
Internet	18.6	81.4	0.9	99.1
Mobile phone	57.6	42.4	41.1	58.9
<b>Transport</b>				
Express Bus	39.8	60.2	26.2	73.8
LRT	19.7	80.3	2.7	97.3
Commuter/Train	33.6	66.4	11.5	88.5
Taxi	80.8	19.2	68.9	31.1
<b>Medical</b>				
Clinic/Government Hospital	99.6	0.4	99.6	0.4
Clinic/Private Hospital	39.8	60.2	32.5	67.5
Dental clinic	42.4	57.6	33.3	66.7
<b>Delivery/Despatch</b>				
Pos laju (Express Post)	25.5	74.5	10	90
Fax	13.9	86.1	1.3	98.7
<b>Savings and Mortgage</b>				
Bank	63.9	36.1	53.5	46.5
Pawn shop	35.7	64.3	7.4	92.6

Note : All figures are in percentages

Adaptation of consumerism among the Orang Asli in the research area occurs due to a number of factors, besides the factor of money possession. Among them, as emphasised by Godwin & Carroll (1986) and Baily & Lown (1993) are the consumer demographic factors such as age, gender, consumerism knowledge, level of education and attitude towards goods and services. Upon analysis, these factors serve to moderate the relationship between consumerism and consumerist behaviour. Other than that, the location factor clearly plays a part in facilitating the acceptance of consumerism. Observation at the research area found that consumerism more noticeably occurs at Orang Asli villages at the outskirts of towns compared to remote areas. This is because the community at the town outskirts are rather well organised, with facilities such as roads, housing, piped water, electricity and well-stocked shops. The relationship of the community at the town outskirts with the other communities is also made easier and as such, the community members are more exposed to mainstream community consumerism.

In this regard, consumerist adaptation among the Orang Asli takes place due to contact, and through this contact, they managed to obtain information. Adaptation is positively related to the actions of the individual in looking for various sources of information about products and is closely related in a positive way to the interest of one to search for advertisements to gather information and using friends as sources of information regarding a certain product (Gordon 1964; D'Rozario & Douglas, 1999). Because of this, the exposure factor plays an essential role. One interesting fact is the existence of awareness amongst the Orang Asli, whereby they are bold enough to declare that the mass media frequently depicts a distorted or false reality. The mass media rarely provides knowledge concerned with consumer skills, such as price and specific product information. To them, the mass media is more interested in projecting consumerism that is easily visible and depicting the lifestyles of the rich. This type of opinion has in fact been presented by O'Guinn & Faber (1987). For example, results of interviews discovered that individuals who have just been exposed to new products perceive the social reality of the mainstream society (as depicted in television programs) as biased towards the lifestyles of the rich. This awareness is quite obvious among the adult Orang Asli; they are less interested in products that are shown in the mass media, especially advertisements on television. This older group seem to be less keen to imitate or accept what is being promoted by the mass media. Even so, the 'negative' advertisements of products that are promoted by the mass media, especially television, are the same influences that have a great impact in the lives of some of the Orang Asli. There have been cases where they have been willing to sell their produce such as vegetables and free-range chicken eggs just to buy foodstuff of inferior nutritional value such as instant noodles, which have been advertised on television. Orang Asli children also spend a lot of money on food that has low nutritional value, especially snacks.

In addition, the Orang Asli have begun to become victims of hedonistic consumerism. This is due to their exposure to mainstream consumerism, causing them to value materialism and status, which in turn, leads them to deny themselves the more essential requirements in their lives. This causes the Orang Asli community to be gullible and entrapped by consumerism, bringing harmful repercussions for them. Being shackled by debt, brought about by their desire to purchase and own certain products, has become a common affair among the Orang Asli community. In their quest to fulfil their wants, they have failed to think deeply about the full implications of fulfilling these desires. As such, the acceptance of mainstream consumerism has caused the Orang Asli to be trapped in the quagmire of materialistic hedonism.

## CONCLUSION

This article has focused on financial management and consumerism among the community of the Orang Asli in the district of Mersing, Johor. At present, the Orang Asli community, just as the other communities, has been engulfed by the consumerism of the Malaysian mainstream community. Overall, the Orang Asli have been increasingly exposed to consumerist acculturation, whereby they have adopted the practices of the consumer culture, in keeping with the times. However they do not have the relevant consumer knowledge relating to financial management and have ended up becoming victims of the business community, who have attempted to gain maximum profits by capitalising on the vulnerable position of the Orang Asli. They have become the targets for luxury goods, but they do not have the capacity to pay for these goods in cash, causing them to become trapped in debt. The factors of cash shortage and compulsive desire to own these goods have made them choose inferior quality goods and also fall victim to traders. Therefore it is necessary to expose these so-called marginalised community to knowledge relating to consumerism so that they are able to manage their finances better and spend their money wisely.

In the past, the Orang Asli community depended on goods that they themselves produced and they led a life of self-subsistence. But now, they have adapted to the using of alien industry consumer products. This situation has made them more and more dependent on commercial goods to such an extent that they have neglected to produce their own traditional goods. In this matter, money plays a central role as a medium of exchange to obtain the needed goods. Their traditional products and services have begun to be sidelined. Their involvement in the free market economy and consumerism has eroded their cultural domain and finally has caused the extinction of their native expertise and knowledge. If this situation were to persist, the Orang Asli would lose their culture and then their identity itself. The wave of globalisation has clearly shown that the Orang Asli have started changing in terms of consumerism and using of services. They are using modern goods and services provided. They have started to become acculturised by the majority-community culture. This is the effect of rapid development, through the influence of mass media and social contacts which are easily accessed. As such, globalisation has brought changes to the Orang Asli community in channeling the resources of the Orang Asli community by means of goods and services.

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