

A STUDY OF THE LIFESTYLE OF WORKING
WOMEN IN KUALA LUMPUR/GOMBAK AND THE
SABAK BERNAM DISTRICT

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وَتَبَرَّكْتُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

WOMEN IN KUALA LUMPUR/GOMBAK AND THE
SABAK BERNAM DISTRICT

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study is about working women's lifestyles in Kuala Lumpur/Gombak and the Sabak Bernam district. Malaysia being a developing nation has almost 40% of working women who contribute to the development of the country. As working women, it is assumed that they have their own lifestyle compared to non-working women.

There are various definitions of lifestyles. It is also known as how one live. To determine how one live, statements concerning activities, interests and opinions are taken into consideration. Many studies in the United States found that AIO statements can explain the lifestyle of a person based on the data collected.

In Malaysia, even though there were a few lifestyle researches carried out, none of them were related to the lifestyles of the working women in Malaysia. Therefore, there is a need to carry out such a research in order to seek more information about how a working woman lives, her activities, interests and opinions towards certain matters and her environment.

It was found that working women in Malaysia are generally neutral or moderate in their lifestyle. As compared to other women around the world, they are also caring, love to cook, love to stay at home (homebody), and quite conservative and fashion conscious. However, they are more adventurous,

ambitious, like to travel, like politics and love to read. This explains their exposure to the world outside through their daily routines at the workplace.

There are some limitations of the study that have been discussed in the first and the last chapter. These limitations should be looked into for future lifestyle research in Malaysia. Finally, a study of this nature should be expanded in future because there are a lot of interesting information that could be identified and discovered which would benefit a lot of people and organizations, especially marketers.

APPROVAL PAGE

TITLE OF PROJECT PAPER: A STUDY OF LIFESTYLES OF WORKING
WOMEN IN KUALA LUMPUR/GOMBAK AND
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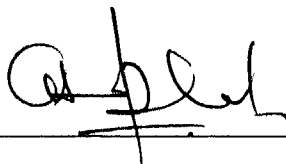
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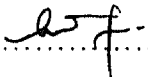


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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project paper is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. Reference notes acknowledge other resources and a bibliography is also appended.

Date: 30th October 1997

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of background of the study, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, an overview of the methodology used, limitations, definition of terms and organization of the project paper.

In marketing, customers are important in determining the success of a product. The aim of marketing is to meet and satisfy customers' needs and wants. Therefore, marketers must study their target – the customers' wants, perception preferences, shopping and buying behavior, so on so forth. In other words, the marketers should focus on the customers and this means doing three things: (1) understanding customer trends, (2) mastering consumer information, and (3) learning to apply that knowledge to real-world customer strategies (Francese and Piirto, 1990).

A customer is an individual or a group of individuals to whom a marketer provide one or more products or services (Smith, 1994). Customers refer to all individuals and households who buy or acquire goods and services for personal consumption. Their buying behavior is called consumer-buying behavior.

The customers of a product consist of men, women, adolescents, as well as children. They have high purchasing power that necessitates a marketer or

producer to be alert of their wants and needs. The marketer has to capture the customers' interest by doing the three things mentioned earlier.

To find more information regarding customers' purchasing behavior, a marketing research has to be carried out by the management. It is defined as the planning, collection and analysis of data relevant to marketing decision making and the communication of the analysis results to the management (McDaniel and Gates, 1991). The research is important in improving the quality of decision making, finding out what went wrong and more understanding of the marketplace.

There are various kinds of research approaches that can be used. Some examples are observations, focus groups, surveys and experiments. These types of approaches provide primary data, which can be used by most marketing research projects. All of them focus on the customers who are the main target of a product or service.

It has been said that knowledge is power. Therefore, knowing about customers is marketplace power. The better the marketer knows the customers, the more successful he will be at tailoring the products and promoting them. Otherwise, his competitors probably would. Moreover, based on marketing research, the marketer can segment the product market. The process is called market segmentation. It plays a key role in the marketing strategy of an organization or company. It is also a powerful marketing tool because it helps the marketer to define customer needs and preferences

since all markets include groups of people, with different product needs and preferences.

The major segmentation variables are geographic, demographic, psychographic and behavioral. However, in this paper the focus of market segmentation is more on psychographic and demographic segmentation. Generally, psychographics are also called lifestyle or activity and attitude research, which combines with the objectivity of the personality inventory with the rich, consumer-oriented descriptive details of qualitative motivation research investigation (Weinstein, 1994). Undoubtedly, lifestyle is a popular concept for understanding consumer behavior in the marketplace, and for that this paper will try to view the lifestyles of a focus group in the market – working women.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

One of the biggest customer populations in a market is women. Women traditionally stay at home to serve their family as wives or mothers. The family is central to a woman's life. However, their roles and places have changed. Instead of staying at home, they go out to work or study. The number of working women increased rapidly throughout the world. In USA alone, almost 60% of the women are working. This is also true in other Western countries. In Southeast Asia, the number is also increasing everyday. For example, recently, in Malaysia almost 40 percent of the women population is working.

These women are working based on their qualifications in order to fulfill their needs, wants and necessities. As working women, they earn their own money and could spend in accordance to what they want and need. Working women have more purchasing power compared to those who are not working. However, sometimes their purchasing power becomes greater when they get married, because they get additional money to spend from their spouses. Dual career couples are increasing in the Malaysian society, thus explaining the increase in the women's purchasing power.

Marketers and consumer researchers have been increasingly interested in the working women because the number of working women gets larger everyday. It is the size of the working women's market that makes it so attractive. As for other consumers, their purchasing power or buying behavior is influenced by various factors of market segmentation variables mentioned earlier.

It is assumed that as working women, they have their own lifestyle compared to women who are not working. It is also an interesting fact to find out whether they really have a lifestyle of their own. If they really do, the question would be what kind of lifestyle they have when they are able to purchase things with their own money. Their lifestyles also include their attitudes, interests and opinions towards relevant issues.

Thus, this paper attempts to analyze the lifestyle of working women in Malaysia based on a survey carried out in two different areas. The first area is

Kuala Lumpur/Gombak, which is urban. The second is Sabak Bernam, which is considered rural. The survey is based on existing research instruments, which has been modified to suit the Malaysian scenario.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The main purposes of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze the lifestyles of working women in Kuala Lumpur/Gombak and the Sabak Bernam district.
2. To find out the correlation between demographic factors and lifestyle group dimensions of working women.
3. To identify general activities, interests and opinions on certain issues among working women in Kuala Lumpur/Gombak and the Sabak Bernam district.

1.3 Research Questions

Lifestyle or psychographic segmentation is based on activities, interest and opinion (AIO) statements. For the purpose of this study, the following research questions will be asked:

1. What are the lifestyles of working women in Kuala Lumpur/Gombak and the Sabak Bernam district?
2. What is the relationship between demographic factors and the lifestyles of the working women?
3. What are the working women's attitudes, interests and opinions on several issues?

1.4 Overview of Research Methodology

This study looks into the lifestyles of working women in both the urban and rural areas in Malaysia. An instrument consisting of 79 AIO statements and 5 open-ended questions was distributed to each of the respondents in the chosen areas.

The population of the study is working women from both the urban and the rural areas. They work as teachers, lecturers, clerks, bank officers and editors. A total of 170 respondents were chosen for the study.

The questionnaires were distributed to the chosen respondents and they were given two weeks to complete the questionnaires. Ample time was given due to various reasons such as their workload and tight schedules.

The data analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 7.0). Statistical techniques used were frequency counts, Pearson correlation, factor analysis and qualitative methods. The open-ended questions were analyzed based on the number of responses to each of the five questions.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

There are a few limitations to the study. The limitations include:

1. Lifestyle is an individual's personality, social and psychological aspects. Therefore, it is somewhat objective. It is difficult to measure and usually

based on the self-respect of consumers. In addition, there are still some on-going disputes over terminology, misuse of data and reliability.

2. Lifestyle is a complex area and the focus group can be an effective means for identifying relevant issues for the psychographic instrument. Therefore, the more data collected, the better information could be found.
3. AIO statements made up the heart of the survey where a large number of activities, interests and opinions should be asked in the survey to gather more information.
4. The number of respondents should be large to ensure that the findings resemble the lifestyles of working women in Malaysia as a whole.

1.6 Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined as follows:

- a. **Consumer buying behavior** refers to the buying behavior of final consumers – individuals and households who buy goods and services for personal consumption.
- b. **Lifestyle** refers to a person's pattern of living, expressed in her attributes, interests and opinions.
- c. **Market segmentation** is dividing a market into distinct groups of buyers with different needs, characteristics or behavior who might require separate products or marketing mixes.
- d. **Marketing** is a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and values with others.

- e. **Psychographics** refers to the technique of marketing lifestyles and developing lifestyle classifications. It involves measuring the major AIO dimensions.
- f. **Psychographics segmentation** is dividing a market into different groups based on social class, lifestyles or personality characteristics.
- g. **Target market** is a set of buyers sharing common needs or characteristics that the company decides to serve.
- h. A **marketer** is someone seeking a resource from someone else and willing to offer something of value in exchange.
- i. **Demographic segmentation** is dividing the market into groups on the basis of demographic variables such as age, gender, family size, family type, family life cycle, income, occupation, education, religion, race and nationality.
- j. The **market** is the set of all actual and potential buyers of a product or service.
- k. A **human need** is a state of felt deprivation of some basic satisfaction.
- l. **Wants** are desires for specific satisfiers of deeper needs.
- m. **Demands** are wants for specific products that are backed by an ability and willingness to buy them.

1.7 Organization of the Project Paper

This project paper is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 presents an introduction and background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, an overview of the research methodology and the definition of terms.

Chapter 2 is divided into five main sections. The first section defines the concept of lifestyles based on some marketing researchers' views. The second section explains psychographics as a lifestyle technique of measurement. The third section describes the AIO statements as the important tool of lifestyle research. Section four explains other lifestyle techniques of measurements, i.e. VALS2, LOV and PRIZM. Section five discusses the working women's lifestyle in Malaysia. The final section is the summary of the chapter.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology used in collecting the data. The chapter consists of seven sections. The first section explains the research methodology used. The second section describes the samples of the study. The third section explains the location of the study while the fourth section is about the research instrument. The fifth section explains the time allocation. The sixth section explains the research procedures and the final section describes the data analysis.

Chapter 4 reports the results of the study. The chapter is divided into the introduction, analysis of respondents' characteristics, analysis of demographic factors, respondents' lifestyle group dimensions, analysis of group dimensions, analysis of correlation, an analysis of open-ended questions and a crosstabulation analysis.

Chapter 5 concludes the paper. In this chapter, the researcher discussed the major findings, limitations of the study, and implications of the results of

the study. The researcher ends this chapter by making some suggestions for future research directions in this area. The researcher also wrote a conclusion for the chapter.

A copy of the research instrument is attached in the Appendix of the project paper.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of five sections. The first section is about the nature of lifestyles – the concepts. The second section explains psychographics as a lifestyle technique of measurement. The third section describes the AIO statements. The fourth section explains other methods of lifestyle measurement such as VALS2, LOV and PRIZM. The researcher will also discuss the lifestyles of working women in Malaysia and ends the chapter with a summary.

2.1 The Nature of Lifestyle – the Concepts

The concept of consumer lifestyles has been defined in many ways. According to Kotler and Amstrong (1996), lifestyle is a person's pattern of living as expressed in his or her psychographics. Lifestyle captures something more than the person's social class or personality. It profiles a person's whole pattern of acting and interacting in the world.

Lifestyle is similarly defined as a mode of living that is identified by how a person spends his/her time (activities), his/her interests in the environment, and his/her opinions of himself/herself and the world around him/her (Assael, 1995). This means that what a person does as well as his/her interests and opinions towards the environment is considered as his/her lifestyle.

Hawkins, Best and Coney (1995) defined lifestyle as how one live. One's lifestyle is a function of inherent individual characteristics that have been shaped and formed through social interaction as one move through the life cycle. Thus, lifestyle is influenced by the factors of social class, reference groups, family and individual characteristics such as motives, emotions and personality.

The term lifestyle in general refers to unique patterns of activities, interests and opinions that characterize differences among consumers (Foxall and Goldsmith, 1994). Both writers emphasized that a consumer's lifestyle reflects the patterns of time, spending and feelings that make up the reality of much of how people live; what they think is important and how they spend their time and money.

Moreover, according to Mowen (1995), lifestyle relates to how people live, how they spend their money, and how they allocate their time. From his view, lifestyle concerns the over-actions and behaviors of consumers; or the term lifestyle can be used to describe different levels of aggregation of people. He also agreed that lifestyle and personality could be closely related. Nonetheless, lifestyle and personality should be distinguished because they explain different aspects of the individual.

Similarly, Evans and Berman (1992) defined a final consumer's lifestyle as the way, in which a person lives and spends time and money. Moreover, it is a function of the social and psychological factors internalized by that person,

along with his or her demographic background. The social aspects of lifestyle include culture, social class, social performance, reference groups, opinion leaders, the family life cycle, and time expenditures (activities). Whereas the psychological aspects lifestyle include personality, attitudes (opinions), the level of class consciousness, motivation, perceived risk, innovativeness and the importance of a purchase.

Michman (1991) viewed lifestyles as how individuals spend their time, what they consider important about their immediate surroundings, their opinions on various issues and their interests. Lifestyle can be considered as a system; a concept that both influences and is influenced by the market. It can be developed to show the relationship between culture and society, group and individual expectations and values, purchase decisions on the market reaction of consumers.

A person's lifestyle is the person's pattern of living in the world as expressed in the person's activities, interests, and opinions (Kotler, et. al, 1996). According to them, lifestyle portrays the "whole person" interacting with his or her environment and marketers will search for relationships between their products and lifestyle groups. Lifestyle research also helps in developing effective marketing strategies by the management team of a company.

Engel (1995) defined lifestyle as patterns, in which people live and spend time and money. It reflects a person's activities, interests, and opinions (AIOs). According to him, people use constructs such as lifestyles to construe the