

## **A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE DIFFERENCES IN FAMILY COMMUNICATION AMONG YOUNG URBAN ADULT CONSUMERS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR MATERIALISTIC VALUES: A DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS**

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### **Abstract**

The study attempts to uncover the characteristics of materialism groups in Malaysia. It assesses the differences between materialism groups, i.e., low and high materialistic groups, using demographic and family communication dimensions. The data was collected through self-administered questionnaires. The sample consisted of 956 respondents. The majority of the respondents were Malays followed by Chinese and Indians. The proportion of female respondents was higher than the male respondents. Most of the respondents were single and in the age group of between 19-29 years old. Independent sample t-tests were used to compare mean scores for the study variables between 'high' materialism and 'low' materialism groups and significant mean differences were found between 'high' and 'low' materialism groups in terms of socio-oriented family communication construct. Specifically, it was found that the 'high' materialism group has considerably greater ratings on the constructs. Internal consistency reliability assessment using Cronbach coefficient alpha revealed that all the three constructs had high reliability. A stepwise discriminant analysis performed on two family communication variables found that one variable was significant in differentiating the two materialism groups. The variable was socio-oriented family communication. The implications, significance and limitations of the study are discussed.

**Key words:** Materialism group; Young Adult Consumers; Demographic profile; Family Communication; Discriminant Analysis

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Socialization agents are found in all societies (e.g., Bindah & Othman, 2012, 2011; Reimer & Rosengren, 1990). One important socialization agent is the family and it can be found in all societies (see Bindah & Othman, 2012, 2011; Reimer & Rosengren, 1990). Studies have found that people often interact with socialization agents and then take in consciously and unconsciously social norms, values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors endorsed by these agents (e.g., Kasser, 2002; Schor, 1999; Korten, 1999). As postmodern society grows more and more atomistic, individualistic and alienated, socialization agent becomes more and more powerful, (see Bindah & Othman, 2012, 2011; Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). Ward (1974a) offered a classical definition of consumer socialization: "the processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace" (p. 2). Materialism among today's youth has also received strong interest among educators, parents, consumer activist and government regulators for several reasons (Korten, 1999). For instance, in a study conducted by Korten (1999) in the U.S, it was found that two-thirds of college students in 1967 mentioned the importance of developing a meaningful philosophy of life was very important to them, and money was not at the forefront of their preoccupation. However, by 1997, those figures were reversed. Although materialism has long been of interest to consumer researchers, surprisingly however, with such a growing concern about adolescent becoming too materialistic, research into this area has paid little attention to young adult consumers and their endorsement of materialistic values.

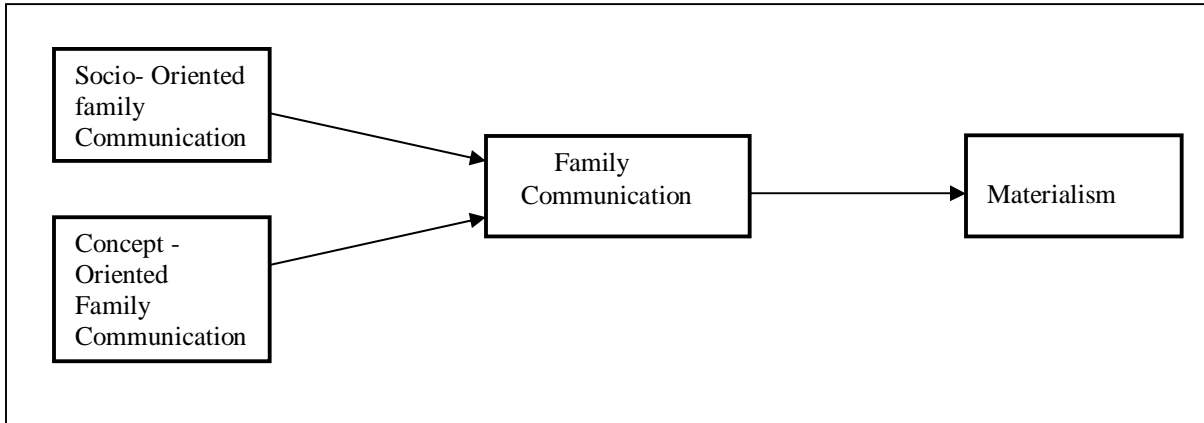
The purpose of this paper is to conduct an empirical study to explain the mechanism responsible for young adult consumers' development of materialistic values (see Fig 1 for illustration). The role of family communication in the development of materialistic values among young adult consumers in particular are addressed. Based on theoretical and research perspectives, two hypotheses are developed. Most of the consumer socialization researchers have placed their emphasis on key relationships between variables in their model, with very few exceptions of studies addressing distinct materialism groups among socialization agents among young adult consumers (e.g., Goldberg et al., 2003). Research addressing specific distinct materialism group differences across socio-oriented family communication and concept-oriented family communication has not been found. Indeed, no empirical study has examined the predictive power of family communication factors simultaneously in discriminating materialism groups among young urban adult consumers. Hence, there is a need to examine the differences of family communication factors across distinct materialism subgroups and to identify the most important factor in discriminating between these materialism groups.

### **1.1 Objectives of Study**

1. To examine the differences between low and high materialism groups among young urban adult consumers using demographics dimension.
2. To examine the differences between low and high materialism groups among young urban adult consumers using family communication dimension.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following section presents the conceptual model for the study and establish the relationship between family communication environment and materialism.



**Fig 1.** Conceptual Framework (Adapted from Mochis & Churchill, 1978).

### 2.1 Materialism.

Materialism is defined from various social, cultural, psychological, and economic perspectives: a way of life, a value orientation, a cultural system, a personality trait, a second-order value, an aspiration (e.g., Bindah & Othman, 2012, 2011; Daun, 1983; Fox & Lears 1983; Ward & Wackman, 1971; Inglehart, 1981; Mukerji, 1983; Belk 1984; Richins & Dawson, 1990; Kasser, 2002). Daun (1983) described materialism as a lifestyle in which a high level of material consumption functioned as a goal and served as a set of plans. Materialism lends meaning to life and provides an aim for everyday work. Fox and Lears (1983) regarded materialism as the ceaseless pursuit of the “good life” through consumption. Ward and Wackman (1971) defined materialism as “an orientation which views material goods and money as important for personal happiness and social progress” (p. 422). And Inglehart (1981) considered materialism as an economic orientation to life, a cultural or structural variable, giving precedence to economic values over other values such as freedom, civil power, aesthetics, and friendship. He argued that materialism was a value situated within the constellation of a value system. Similarly, Mukerji (1983) regarded materialism as a cultural system in which material interests are not made subservient to other social goals and material self-interests are prominent.

Belk (1984) observed that materialism reflects the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions. At the highest levels of materialism, such possessions assume a central place in a person’s life and are believed to provide the greatest sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. More relevant to this paper, Richins and Dawson (1990) considered materialism a value orientation with at least three components: a status component, which reflects the intended and actual use of material objects as a means of social recognition and to symbolize one’s personal success; the expectation or aspirational component of materialism concerns the extent to which an individual believes that acquisitions of material objects will lead to personal happiness and enjoyment of life; and an affective component represented by the degree to which an individual actually does find possessions to be a source of satisfaction. Materialism is an organizing or second-order value that incorporates both the

importance placed on certain end states (achievement and enjoyment values) and beliefs that possessions are appropriate means to achieve these states, (Richins & Dawson, 1990).

Richins and Dawson's (1992) view of materialism rests on the two processes of acquisition and possession. They believe that these processes organize and guide the materialist's plans and behaviours under the expectation of certain favourable end states. There are three themes in their concept of materialism. First, acquisition is central to the lives of materialists. It not only serves as a focal point, but also organizes behavioural patterns. Acquisition serves as a set of plans and goals that directs and guides daily endeavours. Second, acquisition is a means of achieving happiness and well-being in life. To materialists, both acquisition and possession of goods are essential to satisfaction and well-being in life. Finally, materialists use possessions to display success or status. They judge their own and others' success by the number and quality of possessions accumulated. They view themselves as successful to the extent they can possess products that project the desired self-image. Materialism represents a mind-set or constellation of attitudes regarding the relative importance of acquisition and possession of objects in one's life. For materialists, possessions and their acquisition are at the forefront of personal goals that dictate their "way of life." They value possessions and their acquisition more highly than most other matters and activities in life. For Richins and Dawson (1992), materialism is a value that "guides people's choices and conduct in a variety of situations, including, but not limited to consumption areas" (p.307). It should be able to influence not only the type of products purchased, but also the quantity.

For Kasser (2002), materialistic values can be assessed by a six-item aspiration index. Their respondents were asked to rate how important their aspirations of financial success were, from not at all to very important. For example, respondents might choose to identify with "You will have a job that pays well." Wishes for financial success, an appealing appearance, and social recognition are considered people's extrinsic aspirations, while self-acceptance (desires for psychological growth, autonomy, and self-esteem), affiliation (desires for a good family life and friendships), and community feeling (desires to make the world a better place through one's own actions) are regarded as intrinsic aspirations.

This paper adapts the view of materialism as a value orientation, which is centred on three main components: acquisition centrality, acquisition as the pursuit of happiness, and possession-defined success (Richins & Dawson, 1990). According to Richins and Dawson (1990), materialism viewed as a value, is described as an organizing central value that guides people's choices and behaviour in everyday life. It is an enduring belief that acquisition and possessions are essential to happiness and success in one's life. Broadly defined, materialism is any excessive reliance on consumer goods to achieve the end states of pleasure, self-esteem, good interpersonal relationship or high social status, any consumption-based orientation to happiness-seeking and a high importance of material issues in life (Ger & Belk, 1999).

## **2.2 Family Communication and Materialism**

The degree of influence that a child has in purchasing is directly related to patterns of interaction and communication within the family (Carlson & Grossbart, 1988; Carlson, et al., 1992; Rose, 1999). Research on family communication has linked the type or quality of communication to a variety of parental practices and consumer competencies in children. Family communication provides a foundation for children's approach to interact with the marketplace is inextricably linked to parental approaches to child-rearing (Carlson & Grossbart, 1988; Rose, 1999), and influences the development of children's consumer skills, knowledge, and attitudes (Moschis, 1985). Research in this area has generally utilized a single respondent, with early research primarily focusing on adolescents (Moschis & Mitchell, 1986) and later research examining the perceptions of mothers of younger children, under the age of 10 (Carlson, Grossbart & Tripp, 1990; Rose, Bush & Kahle, 1998).

The domain of family communication includes the content, the frequency, and the nature of family member interactions (Palan & Wilkes, 1998). The origins of family communication research in marketing can be traced to a study conducted in political socialization which utilized two dimensions from Newcomb's (1953) general model of affective communication (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972). The first dimension, *socio-orientation*, captures vertical communication, which is indicative of hierarchical patterns of interaction and establishes deference among family members (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972). This type of interaction has also resulted in controlling and monitoring children's consumption-related activities (Moschis, 1985). The second dimension, *concept-orientation*, actively solicits the child's input in discussions, evaluates issues from different perspectives, and focuses on providing an environment that stimulates the child to develop his/her own views (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972). This type of communication results in earlier and increased experience and learning of different consumer skills and orientations among children (Moschis, 1985).

Several studies of consumer socialization have utilized these dimensions to create a four-category typology of family communication (e.g., Carlson, Grossbart and Walsh 1990; Moschis and Moore 1979a; Rose, Bush and Kahle, 1998). Pluralistic parents (low socio-orientation, high concept - orientation) encourage their children to engage in overt communication and discussions. This communication pattern results in children that possess independent perspectives and become skilled consumers. Consensual parents (high socio-orientation, high concept-orientation) encourage children to formulate independent ideas, but maintain a hierarchy of power within the family and control and monitor their children's consumption environment. Laissez-faire parents (low socio-orientation, low concept-orientation) can be characterized as having low levels of parent-child communication in general. Children in this type of environment are more influenced by external socialization agents such as the media and peers. Finally, protective parents (high socio-orientation, low concept-orientation) emphasize obedience. They promote vertical relationships with their children, focus less on issue-oriented communication, and tightly control and monitor their children's consumption (Moschis, 1985).

Pioneering studies in the social science area have shown that the family environment affects the endorsement of materialistic values (e.g., Moschis & Moore, 1979b; Moore & Moschis, 1981; Flouri, 2000). Research have found that family environments were very important predictors of the adolescents' materialism to the extent that their mothers' materialism level and report of family communication style alone could reliably predict their child's level of endorsement of materialistic values (Flouri, 2000). Children in families that use socially-oriented communication patterns, which stress harmony among family members and the avoidance of conflict demonstrate higher levels of materialism (Moschis & Moore, 1979a). Children in families that use concept-oriented communication patterns, which encourage independent thinking, demonstrate lower levels of materialism (Moore & Moschis, 1981). Adolescents who communicate less frequently with their parents about consumption have been found to be more materialistic (Moore & Moschis, 1981). It should be stressed, however, that socially-oriented and concept-oriented communication patterns are not mutually exclusive. For example, a survey found that Chinese families exhibited high levels of socially-oriented as well as concept-oriented family communication (Chan & McNeal, 2003). Furthermore, evidence suggests that the influence of family communication, as generalized to other situations, persists well into adulthood; it appears to become part of the developing individual's personality that he carries outside the home (Moschis, 1985).

Chang et al. (2008) conducted a study to examine the relationship between family communication structure and vanity traits, and investigated different traits in consumption behavior. A convenience sample of 504 vocational high school students in northern Taiwan was used in the survey. The study findings indicated that when people are socio-oriented, they tended to care about physical appearance and when people are concept-oriented, they tended to have an achievement trait. Another study from Nguyen et al. (2009) used the life course approach, as an overarching framework for studying the development of materialism in Thailand. Following a survey among young adults (aged 20 to 32), the result of their study indicated that family disruption influences materialism among those young adults from lower social classes. In a recent study, Moschis et al. (2009) incorporated the influences of family structure and socialization processes into the 'life course' perspective. The researchers explained that the integration of the literature with life course perspective facilitates the investigation on

the nature of materialism and its impact on consumer behaviour. Data were collected among young Malaysian adult (aged 18 to 22 years), and a positive relationship was hypothesized between the person's exposure to a socio-oriented family communication environment during the adolescent years and the materialistic values held as a young adult. A product-moment correlation was used to test the relationship between these two variables. The relationship was however not significant.

Chaplin and John (2010) took a different approach, in viewing parents and peers as important sources of emotional support and psychological well-being, which increase self-esteem in adolescents. Supportive parents and peers boost adolescents' self-esteem, which decreases their need to turn to material goods to develop positive self-perceptions. In a study with 12–18 year-olds, we find support for our view that self-esteem mediates the relationship between parent/peer influence and adolescent materialism. As expected, we find a negative relationship between overall parental support and adolescent materialism. Adolescents with more supportive parents were less materialistic.

Benmoyal, Bouzaglo and Moschis (2010) have examined the direct and indirect effects of family structure on the development of materialism in France. Among the hypothesis developed for the study, a positive relationship between the person's exposure to a socio-oriented family communication environment during his or her adolescent years and the strength of materialistic values held as a young adult was posited. However; the partial correlation between the two variables was not significant. Recently, Moschis et al. (2011) examine the role of family communication and television, by assessing their effects on youths in four countries that represent the Eastern and Western cultures: Japan, Malaysia, USA, and France. The study used an anonymous self-administered survey of young adults aged 18 to 32 years in two diverse Eastern countries: Japan and Malaysia. The findings suggested that the influence of the socio-oriented family communication structure on materialistic attitudes in Western cultures might be indirect by affecting the youth's patterns of television viewing. The findings also suggested that concept-oriented family communication had no effect on youth's development of materialistic values, regardless of cultural background. On the other hand, Vega and Donald (2011) have examined the roles that television, advertising and family communication played in stimulating materialism in children. A survey was administered to children aged 10 to 14 demonstrated that higher levels of television exposure, advertising recognition, trust in advertising, and consumer communication each predicted higher levels of materialism. Neither socio-oriented nor concept-oriented family communication patterns moderated the relationship between advertising/television and materialism.

Based on the background study, the following hypotheses are developed to identify factors that distinguished 'high materialism' and 'low materialism' groups, and to determine the relative importance of these factors in predicting group membership.

**Ho1.** Young adult consumers who score 'high' on materialism tend to have a higher score on socio-oriented family communication at home compared to those who score 'low' on materialism.

**Ho2.** Young adult consumers who score 'high' on materialism tend to have a lower score on concept-oriented family communication at home compared to those who score 'low' on materialism

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The following section mainly provides a discussion on the sample procedures and measurement and reports the inter-item reliability of the main constructs.

#### **3.1 Sample and procedures**

Materialism and family communication amongst young adult consumers were examined through a survey conducted in the Klang Valley in Malaysia between January to March 2011. The target population were college students in public universities and private colleges of higher learning across the Klang Valley region in Malaysia as most institutions of higher learning in the country are concentrated in this area. College students were chosen for the study because generally they represent the future of a country because, with a good education, most of them will become middle-class professionals. On the other hand, most well-educated college students in the future will become relatively high-income professionals and spend much more money on products or services. Understanding their values and inclinations is useful for predicting the purchase patterns of young Malaysian working professionals.

The survey questionnaires was given to 1,200 randomly selected university and college students; Out of the 1,200 closed-ended structured questionnaires, 1002 completed questionnaires were returned in the survey, for a response rate of 83.5%. Of these returns, 956 completed questionnaires were usable for the data analyses.

## **3.2 Measures**

All of the constructs were measured by multiple items. Generally, the respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point scale the extent to which they agreed with the statements (1 = Somewhat disagree, 5 = Strongly agree). Demographics variables were also collected and included gender, age, ethnicity, religion, marital status, gross personal monthly income.

### *3.2.1 Materialism Construct*

Our key constructs were assessed using previously published, multi-item measures using a five-point Likert format adapted from Richins and Dawson (1992). As a means of testing the Material Value Scale (MVS) cross-cultural applicability using an alternative format, we followed the recommendations of Schuman and Presser (1981) by replacing the MVS's mixed-worded Likert format with a 15-items interrogative question format (Wong, et al. 2003). Thus, rather than forcing respondents to agree or disagree with statements (e.g., I admire people who own expensive cars, homes, and clothes), we asked respondents to react to questions (e.g., How do you feel about people who own expensive cars, homes, and clothes?) using a set of specific response options (e.g., do not admire vs. greatly admire). We altered the direction (i.e., left or right side) of these anchors to mirror the original direction of the Likert-style MVS (MVS-Likert). The inter-item reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.69. The mean formed the measure of materialism, with higher scores indicating stronger endorsement of materialistic values.

### *3.2.2 Family communication*

Family communication was operationally defined as overt interaction between parents and the child concerning goods and services (Churchill & Moschis, 1979). *Socio-oriented family communication* structure was measured in line with previous research (Moschis & Moore, 1979a). It consisted of seven- items measuring the degree to which parents request children to conform to parental standards of consumption. The statements were modified with responses measured on a five -point Likert scale ranging from (1) 'Strongly disagree' to (5) 'Strongly agree'. The modification was made to standardize the scale for the various sections of the questionnaire and to encourage consistency in responses. These statements included: "My parents often use to say that the best way to stay out of trouble is to stay away from it", "My parents often use to say that their ideas are correct and I shouldn't question them", "My parents often use to answer my arguments with saying something like "You'll know better when you grow up?", "My parents often use to say that I should give in when he/she argues rather than risk making people angry", "My parents often use to tell me what things I should or shouldn't buy", "My parents often wanted to know what I do with my money", "My parents often use to complain when they don't like something I bought for myself". *Concept-oriented family communication* structure was

measured in line with previous research conducted by Moschis et al. (1984) and Moschis and Moore (1979a). A five-items measure was adopted and modified to form concept-oriented family communication scale. These statements included: “My parents often use to ask me to help them buy things for the family”, “My parents often use to ask me what I think about things they buy for themselves”, “My parents often use to tell me to decide about things I should or shouldn’t buy”, “My parents often use to say that I should decide myself how to spend my money”, “My parents often use to ask me for advice about buying things”. The modification was made to standardize the scale for the various sections of the questionnaire and to encourage consistency in responses. The inter-item reliability scores for socially-oriented and concept-oriented family communication were 0.70 and 0.67 respectively.

#### 4. RESULTS

The following sections presents the findings of the survey conducted based on discriminant analysis.

##### 4.1 ‘High’ Materialism and ‘Low Materialism’ Groups: A Demographic Comparison

The subjects of the present study were classified into two materialism groups. That is, respondents who tend to agree more with the materialism statements were classified as ‘high’ materialism; those respondents who did not agree much with the statements were categorised as ‘low’ materialism. The classification of high and low materialistic values among young adults, is based on previous study conducted by Goldberg et al. (2003) on materialism among young adults, where their analyses were conducted by dividing the sample into quartiles and focusing on youths who were the most and least materialistic—those in the highest quartile and lowest quartile. The analysis in the study conducted by Goldberg et al. (2003) follows that of Richins (1994) who used the bottom and top quartiles of scores on her ‘Adult Materialism Scale’ to classify respondents so as “to achieve a clear separation” (p. 524). Similarly, Richins and Dawson (1992) compared the top and bottom terciles. This approach is akin to the “known groups” approach (Wiggins, 1973). Because it is known with relative clarity what to expect of those who fall at either end of the scale, we focus on a comparison between them. In contrast, it is not so clear what to expect for those closer to the middle of the scale and so it is harder to predict how they will score on the various criterion measures.

Chi-square tests of independence were used to examine the demographic differences between ‘high’ materialism group and ‘low’ materialism group. Among the demographic variables, however, no significant differences were found between ‘high’ materialism and ‘low’ materialism groups. Table 1. presents the Chi-square results for the study.

**Table 1. High materialism and Low materialism: A Demographic comparison**

Characteristics	‘Low’ Materialism (N= 527)		‘High’ Materialism (N=429)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b> ( $X^2 = 0.000$ , $p\text{-value} = 0.997$ )				
Male	210	39.8	171	39.9
Female	317	60.2	258	60.1

<b>Age</b> ( $X^2= 0.332$ , $p$ -value=0.954)				
18 & below	27	5.1	25	5.8
19-29	443	84.1	356	83.0
30-39	48	9.3	42	9.8
40-48	8	1.5	6	1.4
<b>Ethnicity</b> ( $X^2= 2.553$ , $p$ -value=0.466)				
Malay	262	49.7	233	54.3
Chinese	159	30.2	111	25.9
Indians	56	10.6	46	10.7
Others	50	9.5	39	9.1
<b>Religion</b> ( $X^2= 4.706$ , $p$ -value=0.319)				
Islam	302	57.3	254	59.2
Buddhism	114	21.6	81	18.9
Hinduism	49	9.3	41	9.6
Christianity	48	9.1	48	11.2
Others	14	2.7	5	1.2
<b>Marital Status</b> ( $X^2= 2.548$ , $p$ -value=0.467)				
Single	467	88.8	372	86.9
Married without children	21	4.0	21	4.9
Married with children	36	6.8	30	7.0
Widow/Widower/Divorcee	2	0.4	5	1.2
<b>Education</b> <sup>a</sup> ( $X^2= 5.399$ , $p$ -value=0.249)				
Primary School or Less	0	0.0	1	0.2
PMR/SRP/LCE	1	0.2	2	0.5
SPM/SPVM/MCE	61	11.6	40	9.3
College Diploma	157	29.8	150	35.0
Professionalqualification/University degree.	308	58.4	236	55.0
<b>Monthly Gross Personal Income</b> ( $X^2= 6.600$ , $p$ -value=0.252)				
Less than RM1,000	348	66.0	281	65.5
RM1,000 to RM1,999	73	13.9	56	13.1
RM2,000 to RM3,999	78	14.8	57	13.3
RM4,000 to RM5,999	20	3.8	30	7.0
RM6,000 to RM7,999	7	1.3	3	0.7
RM8,000 to RM9,999	1	0.2	2	0.5

Note: <sup>a</sup>PMR/SRP/LCE is equivalent to nine years of formal elementary and middle school education.

#### **4.2 'High' and 'Low' materialism Groups: Comparing the Family Communication Factors**

Independent sample t-tests were used to compare mean scores for the study variables between 'high' materialism and 'low' materialism groups. As shown in Table 2, the present findings are encouraging whereby significant mean differences were found between 'high' and 'low' materialism groups in terms of socio-oriented family communication construct. Specifically, it was found that the 'high' materialism group has considerably greater ratings on all constructs.

**Table 2. Comparing the Mean Scores of the Family Communication factors**

Main Constructs	Mean <sup>a</sup>		t-value	Significance <sup>b</sup>
	'Low materialism'	'High materialism'		
Socio-oriented family communication	3.22	3.38	-3.544	0.000
Concept-oriented family communication	3.36	3.40	-.779	0.436

Note: <sup>a</sup> Higher scores represent greater agreement with the attributes; <sup>b</sup> Level of significance using t-tests.

From the independent sample t-tests analysis, a profile of 'high' and 'low' materialism groups can be drawn up. Specifically, young adult consumers who were characterized by a socio-oriented family communication at home, were more inclined towards 'high' materialism than 'low' materialism. The result of this study converged with the findings of Moschis and Moore (1979a), that socio-oriented contributed reliably to the prediction of materialism, whereas concept oriented communication, failed to reliably contribute to the prediction of materialism. Specifically, Moschis and Moore (1979a) conducted a study among adolescents from junior and high school student and found the correlation between socio-oriented family communication structure and materialism, to be statistically significant while the relationship between concept-oriented communication structure and materialism was insignificant. In contrast, a study conducted by Moore and Moschis (1981) have found that children in families that use concept-oriented communication patterns, which encourage independent thinking, demonstrate lower levels of materialism.

### 4.3 Predicting Group Membership: A Discriminant Analysis

While the significant mean difference tests as discussed above provided a preliminary insight into the differences between the two materialism groups, the use of independent sample t-tests was not able to determine the relative importance of each factor that best discriminates between 'high' materialism and 'low' materialism. Therefore, a discriminant analysis was needed to provide an exploration into the discriminating power of these factors. A total of three variables have been included in the discriminant analysis. These variables were: socio-oriented family communication, concept-oriented family communication and materialism.

### 4.4 Analysing Group Differences

The mean differences between two different groups, namely 'high' materialism and 'low' materialism groups, with respect to socio-oriented family communication and concept-oriented family communication were examined. The results revealed that the group who tended to be less materialistic was significantly different from the group who tended to be more materialistic in terms of the study constructs. As expected, the groups mean differences were consistent with the findings reported in the independent sample t-tests analysis. When compared to 'high' materialism, young adult consumers who are less materialistic were less inclined towards a socio-oriented family communication at home.

**Table 3. Materialism Group Differences**

Variables	'Low Materialism'		'High Materialism'		Wilks' Lambda <sup>a</sup>	F	Sig
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev			
Socio-oriented family communication	3.22	4.666	3.38	5.005	.987	12.561	0.000

Concept-oriented family communication	3.36	3.842	3.40	4.238	.999	.607	0.436
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Statistically, the higher the F-value of a particular variable, the more important the variable is (Hair et al. 2006). It was found that socio-oriented family communication is an important predicting variable, with the F-value recorded at 12.561 (see Table 3). Wilks' Lambda is another measure of group differences based on individual variable, ascertaining the within group variance with the total variance (Hair et al. 2006). In contrast to F-value, the smaller value of Wilks'  $\lambda$  (i.e., near 0) indicates that the group means seem to be different, and thus the null hypothesis should be rejected (Hair et al. 2006). It was shown that the Wilks'  $\lambda$  values for socio-oriented family communication were low, reported at 0.987, leading to significant p-value of 0.0000. The results have thus far indicated that socio-oriented family communication is the most important significant factors in discriminating the two materialism groups.

#### 4.5 Discriminant Function

Table 4 presents a summary of the discriminant function. There was no discriminant function with the eigenvalue of more than one produced for the two materialism groups. The canonical correlation was 0.196, when squared value implied that this model could explain 44.2% of the variance in the dependent variable (i.e., materialism). The standardised function coefficients and the structure matrix measures aid in the interpretation of the relative importance of the variables to the function. The higher the standardised function coefficients for a given variable, the more important the variable is (Hair et al. 2006). It was reported that socio-oriented family communication (0.487) made the greatest contribution to the function. Next, when the structure matrix correlation was examined, socio-oriented family communication (0.575) was shown to have the highest correlation with the function.

**Table 4. Discriminant Analysis of the Two Materialism Groups**

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient	Pooled within groups Coefficients
Socio-oriented family communication	.083	.487**	.575
Concept-oriented family communication	-.032	-.141	.126

Note: Eigenvalue = 0.040; Canonical Correlation = 0.196; Wilks' Lambda = 0.962; Chi-square = 37.202  
 \*\*p<.0000

The classification results of the discriminant analysis are presented in Table 5. Approximately 56.5% of the respondents in 'low materialism' group were correctly classified, while 58.3% of the respondents in 'high materialism' group were correctly classified.

**Table 5. Classification Results of Discriminant Analysis**

Actual Group	Group Centroids	Number of Cases	Predicted Group Membership	
			'Low materialism'	'High materialism'
'Low Materialism'	-.180	527	298 (56.5%)	229 (43.5%)
'High Materialism'	.221	429	179 (41.7%)	250 (58.3%)

Note: 57.3% of the grouped cases were correctly classified.

Overall, 57.3% of the respondents were correctly classified based on the discriminant function. The classified matrix showed that predictive accuracy of the function was 57% between the 'high' materialism and 'low' materialism groups. Out of the two hypotheses developed for the study, hypothesis (1), regarding materialism group membership was supported with the use of discriminant analysis. The current findings reported socio-oriented family communication to be an important factor in discriminating the two materialism groups. On the other hand, hypothesis (2) regarding materialism group membership was not supported.

## **5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The information presented in this article suggests that parents appear to play an important role in the consumer socialization of their offspring, not only in their childhood but well into adulthood and they are instrumental in teaching them the rational aspects of consumption. Youngsters appear to acquire a variety of other consumption-related orientations values (i.e., materialistic values) from their parents.

This study was established to identify factors that distinguished 'high materialism' and 'low materialism' groups and to determine the relative importance of these factors in predicting group membership. Out of the two (2) hypotheses tested, hypothesis 1 regarding materialism group membership using discriminant analysis was supported, indicating significant differences between 'high materialism' and 'low materialism' groups based on socio-oriented family communication construct studied. Compared to those who score high on materialism, young adults who scored low on materialism were less likely to adopt a socio-oriented family communication at home.

Future research should concentrate and better understanding of the nature of family influence. We need to understand the communication processes involved in the transmission and acquisition of certain values (such as materialism) and behaviors from parent to child and how these vary by socio-demographic characteristics. Asides from socio and concept oriented family communication influences on materialism, other research should consider the role of religiosity in family communication processes and its influences on materialism. The research reviewed here suggests that family communications have been examined in the context of how parents affect the development of materialistic values of their children, as they grow into adulthood. The study is limited to several urban areas in the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Future sample should include young adult consumers from rural areas.

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