



## **IMPACT OF *TA'AWUN* (MUTUAL COOPERATION) PRACTICES ON RESPONSIBLE CONSUMERISM MOVEMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper explored the impact of *ta'awun* (mutual cooperation) practices among young executives in sustaining responsible consumerism movements in the community. The study obtained the insights of 10 young executives from various sectors, ages 25-30, through personal interviews. The findings revealed the impact of *ta'awun* (mutual cooperation) practices towards sustaining the challenges in the responsible consumerism movement initiatives, motivations for taking part in the movements, and collective efforts undertaken by these individuals to promote responsible consumerism. The study recommends young activists in the consumerism movement formulate more effective strategies for harnessing the power of youth engagement in sustainable development initiatives.

**Keywords:** *Responsible consumerism, Young executives, Mutual cooperation, Sustainable development.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The world has agreed to execute the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to sustain prosperity, peace, unity, and justice. All the SDGs are to be executed in mutual cooperation (Blum et al., 2021; UNDP, 2015). Goal Number 12 Responsible Consumption and Production aims to ensure the world community subscribes to sustainable consumption and production which is essential to sustain the livelihoods of current and future human population (Blum et al., 2021; Carlsen & Bruggemann, 2022; UNDP, 2015). Any irresponsible action leads to planetary crises in terms of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

Prior to the existence of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there has been consumer movement. The consumer movement is a broad term that encompasses the efforts of individuals, organizations and government agencies to protect and promote the rights of consumers (Pertschuk, 1983; Beard, 2000; Chatzidakis, Maclaran & Varman, 2021). This includes campaigns for product safety standards, truth in advertising laws, improved access to credit and more equitable pricing policies. Additionally, it involves initiatives to ensure that people have access to quality goods at fair prices while maintaining their rights as consumers. The ultimate goal is to create an environment where businesses are held accountable for their practices while allowing consumers to make informed decisions about what they buy (Beard, 2000; Chatzidakis et.al., 2021).

Later, the consumer movement has been enhanced to the consumerism movement. The consumerism movement is a social and economic order that encourages the purchase of goods and services in ever-increasing amounts (Buskirk & Rothe, 1970; Pertschuk, 1983; Beard, 2000; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004). It is based on the idea that personal satisfaction and happiness can be achieved through consumption, which drives economic activity, creates jobs, raises wages, increases profits for businesses and government revenues. The movement also seeks to protect consumers from unsafe products, misleading advertising practices, unfair pricing policies and other exploitative business tactics (Pertschuk, 1983; Beard, 2000). Ultimately it strives to ensure that people have access to quality goods at fair prices while maintaining their rights as consumers.

The main differences between the consumer movement and the consumerism movement are: firstly, the consumer movement focuses on protecting and promoting the rights of consumers, while the consumerism movement encourages people to purchase goods and services in ever-increasing amounts (Beard, 2000; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004; Chatzidakis et.al., 2021). Secondly, the goals of the consumer movement are to ensure that people have access to quality goods at fair prices while maintaining their rights as consumers, whereas the goals of consumerism are to drive economic activity, create jobs, raise wages and increase profits for businesses and government revenues (Beard, 2000; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004). Finally, the consumer movement is often proactive in its approach by campaigning for product safety standards, truth in advertising laws, improved access to credit and more equitable pricing policies; meanwhile, with consumerism there is a greater emphasis on marketing strategies that convince people they need certain products or services regardless of whether they actually do or not.

As for the responsible consumerism movement, it is a movement that seeks to promote conscious and ethical consumption. It encourages people to think carefully about the impact their purchases have on the environment, society, and economy. Responsible consumerism also emphasizes the need for businesses to be held accountable for their practices and products in order to ensure that consumers are getting quality goods at fair prices (Jastrzębska, 2017; Wang & Chou, 2020; Lubowiecki-Vikuk, Dąbrowska & Machnik, 2021). Additionally, it promotes sustainable living by encouraging individuals to buy locally produced items when possible and reduce waste through reuse or recycling.

Thus, the key differences between the consumer movement, consumerism movement, and responsible consumerism movement are: firstly, the consumer movement focuses on protecting and promoting the rights of consumers, whereas consumerism movement encourages people to purchase goods and services in ever-increasing amounts, and responsible consumerism movement promotes sustainable consumption habits that are mindful of their environmental impacts (Jastrzębska, 2017; Wang & Chou, 2020; Lubowiecki-Vikuk et.al., 2021). Secondly, the goals of the consumer movement are to ensure that people have access to quality goods at fair prices while maintaining

their rights as consumers, whereas with consumerism and responsible consumerism movements, there is a greater emphasis on driving economic activity, creating jobs, raising wages and increasing profits for businesses and government revenues (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004; Chatzidakis et.al., 2021). Finally, the strategies used by the three movements vary significantly; for example, the consumer movement may focus on campaigning for product safety standards or truth in advertising laws, while with both forms of movements (consumer and consumerism) marketing strategies are often utilized to convince people they need certain products or services. Responsible consumerism movement, on the other hand, encourages consumers to make informed decisions about what they buy while taking into account the environmental and social impacts of their purchases.

The world is expected the young people to be in the responsible consumerism movements. Young executives are in an ideal position to initiate responsible consumerism movements, as they have the power to influence their peers and build a culture of sustainable consumption (Dimitrova, Vaishar & Stastna, 2021; Khan & Abbas, 2023). They can also use their knowledge, skills, and resources to create awareness about the importance of consuming responsibly (Khan et al., 2020; Dimitrova et al., 2021). By engaging with various stakeholders such as governments, businesses, civil society organizations and consumers themselves, young executives can help ensure that responsible consumerism becomes part of our collective social responsibility (Blum et al., 2021; Carlsen & Bruggemann, 2022).

Young executives are also expected to engage actively in the responsible consumerism movement as they have a unique perspective on the challenges and opportunities that arise from this movement (Khan et al., 2020; Blum et al., 2021; Dimitrova et al., 2021). They can bring fresh ideas, innovative approaches, and new insights into how to effectively promote sustainable development initiatives. Additionally, their involvement helps create awareness among other young people about the importance of responsible consumption and its impact on society (Blum et al., 2021; Carlsen & Bruggemann, 2022). By engaging in these movements, young executives can help ensure that future generations will benefit from more efficient, equitable consumption practices.

Young executives are essential in any society to engage in responsible consumerism movements. They bring a unique perspective and energy to the table, with their fresh ideas and enthusiasm for social change (Blum et al., 2021; Carlsen & Bruggemann, 2022). Young executives often have access to resources that may not be available to older generations, such as technology, networks of contacts, and innovative approaches to problem-solving (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, Dąbrowska, & Machnik, 2021; Khan et al., 2020; Umanailo, 2019). Furthermore, they can provide an important bridge between younger generations and those already involved in sustainability initiatives (Lubowiecki-Vikuk et al., 2021; Blum et al., 2021; Carlsen & Bruggemann, 2022). By engaging young executives in responsible consumerism movements, we can ensure that future generations will inherit a more sustainable world.

*Ta'awun* (mutual cooperation) manifests spiritual-driven mutual cooperation to initiate and sustain movements in society. The mutual cooperation among young executives in society can be a powerful force for sustainable development (Mhd Sarif & Ismail, 2022). Through their collaboration, they can create awareness and promote responsible consumerism initiatives that benefit both the environment and society at large. By working together, these individuals are able to pool resources and skills, which allows them to develop more effective strategies for implementing these initiatives. Their collective efforts also demonstrate the importance of youth engagement in promoting social responsibility through consumption practices.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

*Ta'awun* is an Arabic term that translates to mutual assistance, solidarity, and cooperation. The idea of *Ta'awun* is rooted in the belief that all Muslims are part of one large community (Ummah) and should strive to help each other out whenever possible. This could range from providing financial or material aid during times of hardship, offering advice or support when needed, or simply being there for someone if they need it. *Ta'awun* (mutual cooperation) is spiritually driven mutual cooperation in attaining *al-birr* (righteousness) and *taqwa* (piety) (Mhd. Sarif & Ismail, 2022). *Taqwa* is an Islamic term often translated as “God-consciousness” or “piety” which refers to the practice of being conscious and aware of God at all times (or *Tawhidic*) and living in a way that is Pleasing Him (Mhd. Sarif & Ismail, 2022). It encompasses all aspects of life, from personal behaviour to social interactions.

The concept of *Ta'awun* encourages people to think beyond their own needs and wants and instead consider how they can benefit others as well as themselves (Mhd. Sarif & Ismail, 2022; Yuhertiana et al., 2022; Lust, 2022). In Islam, it is believed that those who help others without expecting anything in return will be rewarded by God both in this life and the next. This idea of mutual assistance has been used to encourage people to look out for one another and lend a helping hand when needed. The concept of *Ta'awun* extends beyond just individual relationships; it also applies on a broader scale with countries or organizations working together for the common good. *Ta'awun* is an important principle in Islam that encourages people to look beyond their own interests and instead focus on helping others. It promotes a spirit of cooperation and solidarity among people with different capacities and uniqueness to work together for the greater good.

Mutual cooperation is the act of working together in a spirit of trust and collaboration to achieve a common goal. It involves both parties putting their best efforts into the relationship, respecting each other's opinions, and being willing to compromise when necessary (Dorrough, Froehlich, & Eriksson, 2022; Lust, 2022). Mutual cooperation can help build strong relationships between individuals or organizations as well as make it easier to complete tasks quickly and efficiently (Yuhertiana et al., 2022; Lust, 2022). When mutual cooperation is present, everyone involved benefits from increased productivity and an improved sense of accomplishment.

There are two reasons for mutual cooperation among people and organizations. Firstly, mutual cooperation enables improved productivity. Mutual cooperation enables people and organizations to increase productivity by reducing the amount of time it takes to complete tasks and allowing for more efficient use of resources (Galegher, Kraut, & Egidio, 2014; West, Tjosvold, & Smith, 2008; Dorrough et al., 2022). This can also lead to better results as everyone is working together towards a common goal. Secondly, mutual cooperation leads to increased trust. When people cooperate, mutual trust is built which can help create strong relationships between individuals or organizations that last over time (Yuhertiana et al., 2022; Lust, 2022). This trust makes it easier to work together in the future on new projects and initiatives, making collaboration smoother and more effective.

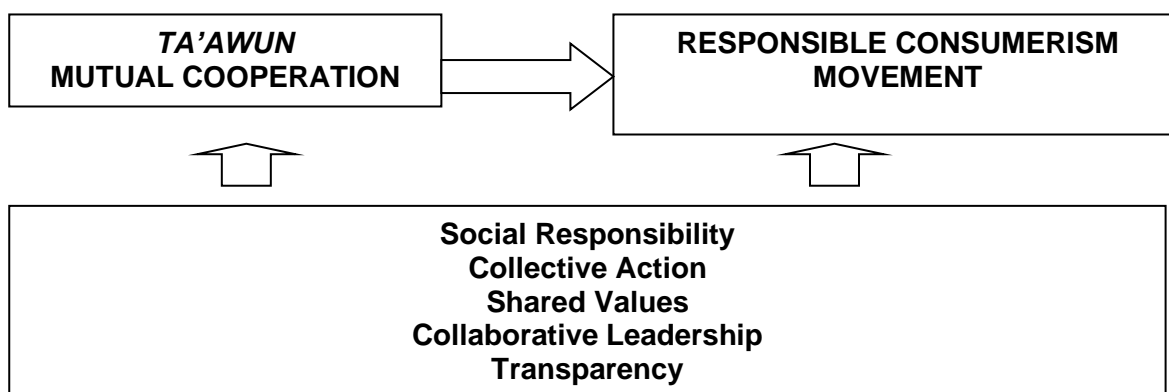
There are essential benefits of mutual cooperation for people and organizations. Firstly, mutual cooperation allows for increased efficiency. When people cooperate, tasks can be completed more quickly and efficiently as everyone is working together towards a common goal (Yuhertiana et al., 2022; Lust, 2022). This can help reduce costs and increase productivity overall. Secondly, mutual cooperation encourages open communication which can help foster better relationships between individuals or organizations as well as create an environment of trust and respect. Finally, mutual cooperation helps to generate new ideas that might not have been thought of if the parties

involved were working independently from each other. This increased creativity can lead to improved products or services and ultimately benefit everyone involved in the process.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There are six concepts in the mutual cooperation among young executives for responsible consumerism movement. Firstly, a recognition of social responsibility as a driver for responsible consumerism movement (Dimitrova, Vaishar & Stastna, 2021; Khan & Abbas, 2023). Young executives should recognize the importance of being socially responsible and take action to promote sustainable consumption, production, and disposal of goods. They should understand how their decisions as consumers can impact the environment and society at large. Secondly, the driver of collective action in the responsible consumerism movement (Yuhertiana et al., 2022; Lust, 2022). Cooperation among young executives is essential for any successful consumerism movement. Through collective action, they can create awareness about responsible consumption practices and influence others in their communities to follow suit. Thirdly, mutual cooperation requires a shared set of values that all members must agree on in order to effectively work together towards a common goal (Blum et al., 2021; Carlsen & Bruggemann, 2022). In this case, it would be responsibility when it comes to consuming products or services ethically and sustainably. Fourthly, young executives should strive to foster a collaborative leadership style that encourages the exchange of ideas and constructive feedback (Mhd Sarif & Ismail, 2022; Yuhertiana et al., 2022). This will ensure that all members are working together towards achieving the same objectives with mutual understanding, respect, and trust. Fifthly, mutual cooperation is only possible when there is transparency among all parties involved (Galegher, Kraut, & Egidio, 2014; West, Tjosvold, & Smith, 2008; Dorrough et al., 2022). Young executives should be open about their actions and decisions in order to build credibility within the movement as well as maintain accountability for their actions. Finally, mutual cooperation is highly spiritual, emotional, and cognitive driven (Galegher, Kraut, & Egidio, 2014; West, Tjosvold, & Smith, 2008; Dorrough et al., 2022). Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework of the research.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Research



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research collected the personal interview data through a manual note-taking approach. The duration of the interview was between 30-45 minutes. The informants verified the interview transcripts. Before data analysis, the researchers used triangulation to validate the interview results (Anderson, 2010; Flick, 2019). For the triangulation, the researchers approached two independent



qualitative researchers who are familiar with the context of the research to verify the validated interview transcripts (Flick, 2019; Silverman, 2020). The verified and validated interview results were analysed with thematic content analysis. The main interview question was “What is your opinion as a young executive in a business enterprise towards engaging in responsible consumerism movements with mutual cooperation?”

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study obtained the insights of 10 young executives from various sectors, ages 25-30, through personal interviews. The informants responded to the primary interview question, “What is your opinion as a young executive in a business enterprise towards engaging in responsible consumerism movements with mutual cooperation?”

A young executive (YE1), age of 26, working in a banking company said: *“I believe that it is important to engage with responsible consumerism with dynamic movements and crowd-sourced initiatives. In my community of sub-urban, I find that all categories of residents can work on mutual cooperation. They had a regular activities that involved with businesses, governments, civil society organizations and consumers themselves. The young residents took part also in the programs. The community leaders trusted some youth to lead the programs. Young executives like us who might have very little time to spend with them are not spared. Consumerism programs are included in their programs. I think by engaging actively in these efforts, we as the young leaders can help create awareness about the importance of consuming responsibly and ensure that future generations benefit from more efficient, equitable consumption practices.”* YE1 mentioned two points to engage in responsible consumerism movement with mutual cooperation, namely “dynamic movements and crowd-sourced initiatives.”

Another young executive (YE2), age of 30, who is working in a telecommunication service company for 5 years mentioned: *“I have working in the telecommunication service industry for some years and I can relate on how our company to this social issue. I believe that young people are important segment in the society. They are also our target for new services and hardware. I also support the SDG on consumerism. Everyone should engage in responsible consumerism with mutual cooperation. At our company, we must ensure that we are providing our customers with quality services while also considering the environment and other stakeholders involved. By engaging in responsible consumerism movements with mutual cooperation, we can create a sustainable business model for our company as well as benefit our customers by providing them with better services.”* YE2 argued about offering quality services that are consumer friendly and yet profitable to the company.

In a different tone, a young executive (YE3), age of 27, who is working in an automotive spare parts company for two years stated: *“I am proud with my employment. Even though I am majoring in finance, but I have a strong passion in automotive. I find this job is rewarding financially and passion. As a young executive, I believe it is important to be at the forefront of responsible consumerism movements. I am committed to ensuring that our company works with mutual cooperation and collaboration towards achieving sustainable consumerism practices. Young people have deep interest in automotive. I also wanted them to be responsible consumers. I strive to ensure that our products are ethically sourced and produced without any negative environmental or social impact.”* YE3 has pointed at rewards and passion.

Unlike the previous informants, a young executive (YE4), age of 26, who working in a supermarket said: *“I am just less than 2 years in this retailing sector. My attitude as a young executive of*

*supermarket in Selangor towards engaging in responsible consumerism movements with mutual cooperation is enthusiasm with dedication. I believe that such collaborations between businesses and consumers are essential for creating sustainable solutions to the challenges facing our global economy. By working together, we can create more efficient products and services that benefit both businesses and customers alike while also helping to reduce environmental damage and promote social justice. I am committed to doing my part in promoting responsible consumerism and look forward to seeing the positive changes that can come from our collective efforts. At our supermarket, we implement sustainable packaging initiatives, such as using biodegradable or recycled materials in their products and reducing single-use plastics. In addition, our supermarket also promotes the purchase of locally sourced produce by providing incentives to customers who shop for local products.”* YE4 contended that mutual cooperation can be nurtured through “enthusiasm with dedication.”

As for a young executive (YE5), age of 25, who is working in a transportation company mentioned: “My attitude as a young executive in a transportation company in Klang Valley Selangor is to be proactive in engaging with responsible consumerism movements. I believe that by working together, we can create sustainable solutions for current and future generations. I am committed to making sure that our company upholds the highest standards of ethical practices, while also ensuring that we are doing all we can to support mutual cooperation within the industry. Even though our company is a transportation company, we have been involved in the responsible consumerism movement through the implementing green initiatives and technologies to reduce emissions and increase sustainability, such as electric vehicles or renewable energy sources, and also partnering with organizations that are dedicated to responsible consumerism by donating resources, volunteering time, or sponsoring events related to the cause.” YE5 argued that sustainable solutions are important for future generations.

Another young executive (YE6), age of 27, working in a courier company mentioned: “as a young executive in this courier company, I am passionate about engaging in responsible consumerism movements with mutual cooperation. I believe that by collaborating together, we can create sustainable practices and help to reduce our environmental impact. By committing to fair trade standards, ethical sourcing practices, and green initiatives, we can ensure that our products are responsibly produced and consumed. Additionally, I am committed to educating consumers on the importance of sustainable consumption so they can make informed decisions when purchasing goods or services from our company. Our courier company engages in responsible consumerism movements with mutual cooperation by partnering with other companies to create sustainable packaging solutions that reduce the environmental impact of deliveries and supporting local businesses by sourcing supplies from them and promoting their products through marketing campaigns.” YE6 emphasised on “fair trade standards, ethical sourcing practices, and green initiatives”.

Not too different from other informants, a young executive (YE7), age of 30, who is working in a car service company said: “as a young executive, I believe that responsible consumerism is an important part of any business enterprise. We should strive to ensure our products and services are ethically sourced, produced responsibly, and marketed in a way that benefits both the consumer and the company. Mutual cooperation between businesses and consumers will help create an economy that is sustainable for everyone involved. It is my goal to promote this kind of responsibility within my organization by engaging in initiatives like product recycling programs or partnering with local organizations dedicated to environmental protection. Ultimately, I believe that responsible consumerism is essential to the long-term success of any business. It is my mission to ensure our company practices responsible consumerism and works together with other

businesses and consumers for a better future. For example, our company has been involved in responsible consumerism initiatives through the implementation of a product recycling program, encouraging consumers to return their used items for reuse or repurposing, and partnering with local organizations dedicated to environmental protection and sustainability initiatives, such as planting trees in the area or working on energy-saving projects.” YE7 argued that responsible consumerism movement can be done when producers-consumers stick to “ethically sourced, produced responsibly, and marketed in a way that benefits both the consumer and the company.”

Echoing YE7, a young executive (YE8), age of 27, who is working in a takaful insurance company stated: *“as a young executive in takaful insurance business, I am committed to engaging in responsible consumerism movements with mutual cooperation. I believe that it is our duty as an organization to ensure we are making ethical decisions and considering the environment when making purchases. Furthermore, by working together with other organizations, we can create more sustainable solutions that will benefit all parties involved. For example, we have established partnerships with other companies to develop more sustainable solutions for the production of goods and services. Our company has developed programs that promote responsible consumption, such as providing incentives for customers who purchase eco-friendly products or services.”* YE8 also emphasized on ethical decisions and customer-eco friendliness.

Likewise, a young executive (YE9), age of 27, who is working in a printing company said: *“as a young executive, I understand the importance of engaging in responsible consumerism movements with mutual cooperation. It is essential for businesses to be socially and environmentally conscious, both to ensure success as well as benefit our communities and planet. My attitude towards this is one of dedication and enthusiasm - I am committed to finding ways that we can support these initiatives within our company and actively promote them to other organizations. For example, we have been implementing sustainable printing practices such as using recycled paper and eco-friendly inks, and partnering with local charities or organizations to create promotional materials that are focused on promoting responsible consumerism movements, such as campaigns that encourage reducing single-use plastics and waste”.* YE9 is convinced that responsible consumerism is a collective responsibility.

As for a young executive (YE10), age of 27, who is working in a food company said: *“as a young executive in food company, I believe that it is our responsibility to engage in responsible consumerism movements with mutual cooperation. This means engaging with consumers and other businesses alike to create products that are mindful of the environment and considerate of our global community. By taking part in these initiatives, we can all work together to build a more sustainable future for everyone. As for the company, the company has invested in sustainable practices such as using renewable energy sources, reducing plastic packaging and utilizing local ingredients to reduce transportation costs. In addition, the company has partnered with other businesses to create a collaborative network of responsible consumers who are committed to supporting ethical and environmentally friendly products.”* Indeed, YE10 argued that responsible consumerism is a global agenda and requires everyone to be part of the movement.

In summary, the informants argued that young executives in business enterprises have fiduciary duties towards engaging in responsible consumerism movements with mutual cooperation with consumers and key stakeholders. The informants suggested that the responsible consumerism movement could be done through the movements of “dynamic movements and crowd-sourced initiatives” (YE1), offering quality services that are consumer friendly and yet profitable to the company (YE2), provision of rewards and passion (YE3), nurturing through “enthusiasm with dedication” (YE4), sustainable solutions for future generations (YE5), practicing “fair trade



standards, ethical sourcing practices, and green initiatives” (YE6), provision with “ethically sourced, produced responsibly, and marketed in a way that benefits both the consumer and the company” (YE7), promoting ethical decisions and customer-eco friendliness (YE8), practicing collective responsibility (YE9), and mark as a global agenda and requires everyone to be part of the movement (YE10).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that young executives from various sectors have strong desires to engage in *Ta'awun* mutual cooperation with consumers and other key stakeholders to promote responsible consumerism initiatives. The findings suggest that these individuals are motivated by their fiduciary duties, dynamic crowd-sourced initiatives, quality services that are both profit-driven and customer friendly, ethical sourcing practices, green initiatives, collective responsibility and global agenda-setting. These insights can be used by businesses across different sectors as a guide for developing effective strategies for engaging in responsible consumerism movements. It is clear that the involvement of young executives is critical if we want to make real progress on achieving a more responsible consumerism future. The findings from this study have important implications for businesses and responsible consumerism movements. It is clear that young executives are keen to be part of the solution and take collective responsibility for promoting responsible consumption. Businesses should consider engaging with these individuals in order to better understand their attitudes and motivations towards sustainable initiatives, as well as create strategies that allow them to actively participate in the movement. In addition, key stakeholders should provide resources such as training, mentorship programs, incentives or rewards to encourage young executives' engagement in the cause. Ultimately, mutual cooperation among all parties involved will be essential if we want to make real progress on achieving a more responsible consumerism future.

## *Acknowledgments*

The authors would like to express their appreciation for the support of the Department of Business Administration (DEBA), Kulliyah of Economics and Management Sciences International Islamic University Malaysia, through the Department of Business Administration Research Grant Scheme, DEBA22-013-0019 entitled: “Sejahtera Consumerism” and also the informants, individuals, and supporters of the project.

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