

17 October 2007

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MALAYSIANS have been fascinated with the magic of credit cards. It is a status symbol and it makes shopping easy and convenient.

Most people do not realise that whatever amount spent using a plastic card should be paid in full to the bank plus interest at a later date.

In other words, there is no free lunch but a few free bonus points when swiping a credit card.

While the government is encouraging Malaysians to be clever consumers, I believe that stricter regulations should be enforced when it comes to credit card recruitment drive campaigns by banks that are commonly found in most shopping malls.

Visit any shopping complex and chances are that at least two credit card consultants would chase after you.

A friend of mine who tried unsuccessfully to obtain his first credit card in life finally got his after a five-year wait.

Soon he collected four other credit cards.

Six months later, he was blacklisted for his overspending habit as he had accumulated a debt of RM25,000.

Soon after, he lost his job and family members stayed away from him. Suits started to follow

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Written by Administrator

Friday, 11 September 2009 12:36 -

and he is no better now than when he was without a credit card.

This is a common example happening everywhere, especially for people who are from the lower-income group which has little knowledge about good spending habits.

Apparently, this is the same group which most likely would sign up for new credit cards during recruitment campaigns by banks.

Bank Negara should introduce tighter laws and discourage banks from using unethical methods to woo potential customers.

It is a privacy invasion when banks ask their customers to refer friends. When that happens, the public would receive unwanted calls from banks.

Worst of all, banks collect our personal details without first getting our approval. This can be considered a potential security threat.

On a serious note, a debit card is always a better choice because you can spend within your limits.

Anyway, why carry a plastic card when you can afford to use cash and pay the old-fashioned way?