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The Influence of Social Media Marketing Communication on the Development of Malaysian Culture

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Abstract. The proliferation of social media has transformed marketing communication, offering new avenues for cultural promotion and tourism development. In Malaysia, platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and *Douyin* present significant potential for showcasing cultural heritage to both local and international audiences, yet their strategic effectiveness in promoting sustainable cultural tourism requires further exploration. This study examines the influence of social media marketing communication on the development and promotion of Malaysian culture through digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and *Douyin*. Using the Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) and Media Mix Plan Theory, the research evaluates the effectiveness of these platforms in increasing engagement, cultural awareness, and tourism interest among both local and international audiences. The findings indicate that video-based content, especially on TikTok, achieved the highest engagement rates due to fast-paced visuals, trending music, and effective use of hashtags and timing. Moreover, the campaign successfully contributed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 and SDG 16) by fostering intercultural understanding and peace through creative cultural representation. The results highlight that social media is a strategic communication tool for promoting Malaysia's cultural image and enhancing sustainable tourism initiatives. This study underscores the strategic role of social media as a powerful tool for sustainable cultural marketing. Academically, it enriches the literature on digital cultural tourism and SDG integration in marketing strategies. Practically, it provides actionable insights for cultural organizations and tourism boards to design authentic and effective digital campaigns that boost cultural preservation, economic vitality, and global cultural image.

Keywords: social media; marketing communication; Malaysian culture; sustainable tourism; digital engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Kwai Chai Hong (*Ghost Lane*) is a historic and cultural neighborhood located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which attracts a large number of tourists and residents with its unique street art, historic architecture, and rich cultural activities (*Breaking the Waves*, 2022; Chua & Ahmad, 2021; Tausig, 2019). *Ghost Lane* not only showcases its rich history and cultural heritage but also promotes community and economic development, making it a vibrant and attractive cultural tourism destination (Blyablina, 2015; Heidelberg, 2015). The research campaign targets young and middle-aged people who are interested in travelling and those who are curious about Malaysian culture, with the aim of promoting Malaysia's rich cultural heritage through the display of street art, historical guided tours, and cultural performances (Groß, Sand, & Berger, 2023; Käng, 2017; Liew, Hussin, & Abdullah, 2022; Volgger, Pforr, Stawinoga, Taplin, & Matthews, 2018; Wu, Law, Fong, & Liu, 2019).

Frequent users who rely on our posts to travel to attractions depend heavily on reviews to seek information about the functionality of the posts, such as the pros and cons of attractions, travel experiences, and more (Baka, 2016; Kim, Park, Yun, & Yun, 2017; Liu & Park, 2015; Mariné-Roig, 2017). This research project primarily serves Malaysian locals and tourists traveling to Malaysia. Tourists include people from China, Japan, Korea, and many other countries. Therefore, several social media platforms were used to strengthen consumer intention, such as Instagram, TikTok, and Douyin.

Instagram plays an important role in generating influence, requiring a longer cycle and more patience compared to other social media platforms, as it is more private and often limited to a personal circle of friends (Song, 2021; Terttunen, 2017). TikTok has a faster update frequency and higher hotspot sensitivity, with a wider range of young user groups than Instagram. Once a video becomes a hotspot, countless imitators emerge, sharing their daily lives. Additionally, Douyin is a short video platform that mainly serves the Chinese population, targeting most Chinese users without many restrictions or costs. Once it becomes a hotspot, it can gain significant exposure and greatly help in spreading Malaysian culture.

Figure 1. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)
Source: Personal/Self-created document based on the UN SDGs logo

SDG 4. The content produced is not educational in the strict sense, but within the content, it provides information in the hope of helping people from an international background gain a better understanding of the people of Malaysia. Educating the masses helps people gain a better understanding of our culture; this has the potential to minimize misunderstandings caused by the clash of international cultures with ours. The content uses Malaysian art as an entry point to slowly immerse the audience into the culture of Malaysia, enabling a well-rounded understanding of Malaysia.

Furthermore, according to SDG 16, emphasizing the first part of peace, the content helps improve relationships across cultures, establishing peace. In the video content, this campaign depicts friendly relationships between individuals from different country backgrounds. It is hoped that this depiction will serve as an example that no matter the background, people can still live together with minimal friction and learn new things alongside each other (Adetunji, Rashid, & Ishak, 2018; Ong, 2025; Tang & Chan, 2020; Tjiptono, Khan, & Yeong, 2022; Yang & Wardi, 2024).

Therefore, several locations have been chosen as benchmarks for the promotion of this research campaign, such as Panggung Street, National Art Gallery, and TRX. These places, which have the sole purpose of exhibiting art, content-wise, have displayed art exclusively

produced by local culture alongside tales of famous Malaysian historical figures. They are the best places for people to get a first impression of what the culture is all about, making them melting pot centers of art. Besides that, they feature a main attraction—a nook filled with wall paintings depicting the simple life of the past.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of social media marketing communication on the development and promotion of *Malaysian culture*, specifically through the case study of Kwai Chai Hong. It seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of different platforms (Instagram, TikTok, Douyin) in enhancing audience engagement, cultural awareness, and tourism intention. The benefits of this research are twofold: academically, it enriches the literature on digital cultural tourism and SDG integration in marketing; practically, it provides actionable insights for cultural organizations and tourism boards to design effective, authentic, and sustainable digital marketing strategies that can boost cultural preservation and economic vitality.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Importance-performance analysis (IPA) is an analytical technique developed by Martilla and James to evaluate the importance and performance of the elements of an entity. Though initially developed for marketing purposes, the IPA has been applied in many other areas such as tourism, health care, education, food services, banking, and so on. The IPA model can assist in identifying the role of stakeholders in relation to communication efforts.
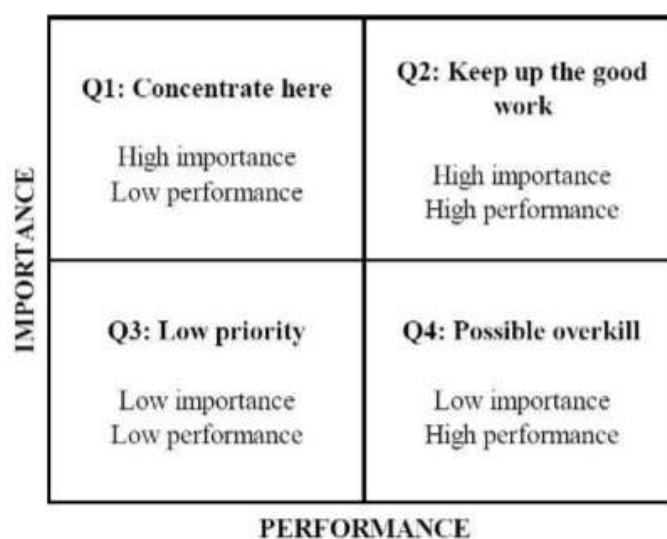

Figure 2. IPA Grid
Source: Adapted from Martilla & James, 1977

In addition, to support this research campaign, the concept of Media Mix Plan Theory focuses on several related elements, such as audience, place, promotion, social media platforms and products offered. This concept is created with the aim of communicating digital advertising and marketing strategies for a company. Apart from that, this concept is also related to the channel plan used by a company to promote certain products. If this concept is linked to the "content product" about tourism created by this research campaign, there are three social media

platforms used to attract the attention of the audience regarding tourism in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, both local and international audiences. Every content published on social media is uploaded in the form of images and videos.

Figure 3. Media Mix Plan Theory
Source: Personal/Self-created document for this research

Therefore, each content post is given a caption to provide an explanation of the uploaded images or videos. Hashtags, music or audio and location are also included to provide a more detailed explanation of the images or videos as well as to attract content to viewers to watch, view and provide reactions in the form of likes, comments or shares. Several image posts using "carousel pictures" mode, which means several images were uploaded in one content post, making it easier for viewers to see more content through one post and "static image" with the aim of acting as an AI intermediary in content uploaded using layouts.

Materials used in the research can be written as a separated subsection. Please provide details of manufacture and purity of materials e.g. $Fe(NO_3)_3.9H_2O$ (99% purity Merck, Germany) was employed as iron oxide precursor.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The engagement rate goes up and down depending on the type of content, however for TikTok, there is a benchmark that views are usually around 130+, this benchmark will increase from time to time due to frequent posting patterns and also timing. Time management was measured between 7 pm and 8 pm as this is when our target audience is most active. Instagram

only shows the views for video content; therefore it has the most views with short transition videos that has all the attractions in Kuala Lumpur that have been visited during pre-visit and actual shooting. The reason might be that there are more hashtags for this post that attract related audiences as there are more places that included in the video, and the music choice is also one of the trending background music that people use to create their reels. Not only that, but the time we post also affects views.

The transition videos have the best engagement and views with number of 11.6k. The engagement and views of the videos would be higher compared to the image content is because TikTok is more like a platform where people watch videos and the fast paced music and transition would grab the audience's attention and make them stay to continue watching the whole video instead of swiping the image one by one. Overall, most of the engagement and views of the content manage to keep the followers on our page and as our page slowly gets more and more people to watch our content, TikTok's algorithm also pushes our content to more people's feeds.

As for Dou Yin, the top three views are the transition videos. Compared to the other content, the hashtag is more into places in Malaysia that people might not know, therefore this could lead to the viewers did not really search the keyword because they do not even know the existences of this place especially foreign tourists from China. Videos would have better views, because Dou Yin is a platform where the audience usually prefer to watch short videos rather than pictures.
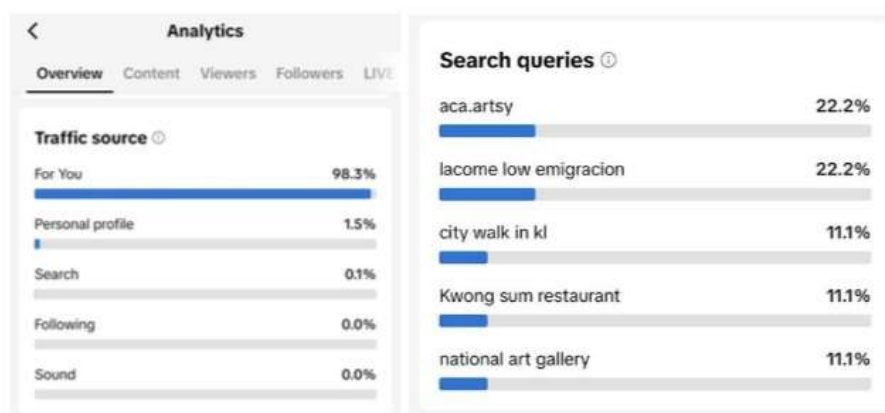

Figure 4. Analytics from Instagram
Source: Personal Instagram Analytics Data, 2025

Through several contents that have been uploaded on Instagram, it has received good support from viewers with an average age of around 18 - 34 years. This represents that viewers in their teens and adults are very interested in finding out and watching more about tourism content in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Figure 5 Analytics from Dou Yin
Source: Personal Douyin Analytics Data, 2025

The typical use system that used on Dou Yin was oriented towards the interest of the audience or public through the place and food exploration activities in several contents. Not only that, but this campaign also did online relationships with viewers through content that has been uploaded to ask about their MBTI and replied to every comment received on several social media accounts belonging. Other than that, this research campaign implements brand objectives through various content uploaded on social media to increase brand awareness and lead generation regarding tourism in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which is a must-visit. Sample tactics used to attract the attention of viewers or the public to content uploaded on social media was through content promotion or sharing. The use of hashtags, music and location also have a big influence on engaged viewers because it could make it easier for viewers to access every uploaded content. The color choice of each uploaded content was very eye-catching and each content produced was very aesthetic in line with the interests of viewers in the current era.

Therefore, this research campaign contributes to literature by proposing a method to promote Malaysia's cultural image in terms of the sustainable development dimensions. The findings contribute to an understanding of tourists' attention in perceiving sustainable image in accordance with the Media Mix Plan Theory. This research has shown to support a beneficial impact on their own social and cultural sustainability. Other than that, the promotion platforms developed in this study can also be adopted by future research in sustainable marketing and other relevant areas.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that social media marketing communication is vital for promoting and developing Malaysian culture by using visual storytelling and interactive engagement on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and *Douyin*, effectively reaching local and international audiences. The Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) highlights that video content featuring strong visuals and trending audio greatly boosts audience engagement and awareness of

cultural tourism sites. Aligned with SDG 4 and SDG 16, this campaign supports education and intercultural harmony by fostering cultural appreciation and peaceful coexistence. Future research could explore the long-term impact of social media campaigns on cultural preservation and community identity in Malaysia.

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