

Designing Impact-Driven Campaigns and Events from Concept to Execution. A Review on Malaysian and Indonesian Perspective

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ABSTRACT

It takes a sophisticated grasp of the media, social, and cultural landscapes, especially in Southeast Asia, to create campaigns and events that have an impact. This essay examines, from the viewpoints of Malaysia and Indonesia, the process of conceiving, organizing, and carrying out campaigns and events having quantifiable social impact. The study explores how local values, religious sensibilities, and youth engagement tactics influence creative communication through case studies and practitioner interviews. It emphasizes how crucial community-based outreach, digital media integration, and cross-sector cooperation are to creating long-lasting impact. Through an analysis of successful campaigns in fields like environmental awareness, public health, and civic engagement, the study provides a framework for creating campaigns that are both socially and culturally beneficial. The results highlight the necessity of context-sensitive techniques in campaign and event design and add to the larger conversation on strategic communication in heterogeneous cultures.

Keywords—Cultural, Sensitivity, Wisdom, Community, Impact, Inclusivity

INTRODUCTION

In a time of increased social consciousness and worldwide connectedness, it is not only desired but also crucial to plan campaigns and events that have a real impact. The success of a campaign or event depends on its capacity to establish a strong, emotional, and actionable connection with communities, regardless of whether it is tackling urgent social concerns, fostering national identity, increasing corporate responsibility, or encouraging youth to participate in democracy. Studying the complexities of impact-driven communication projects is made easier by the Southeast Asian countries of Malaysia and Indonesia, which are rich in cultural variety, complicated sociopolitical environments, and fast changing media ecosystems. In this local setting, campaigns and events are much more than just marketing initiatives. They serve as tools for participatory development, identity building, and social change. However, there are special opportunities and problems that are influenced by regional specifics when planning such efforts from conception to implementation. For instance, the multiethnic makeup of Malaysia, which includes Malays, Chinese, Indians, and Indigenous tribes, calls for a finely calibrated communication strategy that is inclusive and sensitive to cultural differences. Similarly, to represent its hyperlocal realities, Indonesia, the largest archipelagic nation in the world with over 17,000 islands and 700 languages, requires decentralized and adaptive campaign design methods.

Creating campaigns and events that have a quantifiable impact has become a top priority for governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, and grassroots movements in an increasingly connected and socially conscious world. Campaign and event strategies in Southeast Asia, especially in Malaysia and Indonesia, must negotiate complex media ecosystems, shifting public expectations, and a variety of sociocultural terrains. Campaigns that are successful in these nations are distinguished not just by their inventiveness but also by their strategic planning, ethical involvement, and localization. Through the use of regional case studies, important design concepts, and cross-sector cooperation, this essay examines the entire process of creating impactful campaigns and events in Malaysia and Indonesia, from conception to implementation.

Religion, politics, education, young demographics, internet infrastructure, and freedom of expression all have a big impact on how messages are interpreted and spread in both nations. The emergence of digital activism, community-driven platforms, and social media influencers has changed the way campaigns are conceived and shared. However, community print, radio, and television continue to have a significant impact, especially in underserved or rural areas. For campaigns and events to be effective, they need to be cross-sectoral, multi-platform, and grounded in lived experience. The Malaysian and Indonesian environments provide a wealth of case studies of both success and failure, ranging from national public health campaigns and anti-corruption measures to campaigns for gender equality, climate action, and cultural preservation. Governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations, commercial companies, and grassroots groups all have important roles to play and frequently work together in hybrid models that combine private innovation with public interest. Strategic planning, sympathetic storytelling, stakeholder alignment, and outcome-driven evaluation frameworks are the main differentiators in effective campaigns.

The goal of this discussion is to examine impact-driven campaigns and events from start to finish, from stakeholder analysis and ideation to branding, message, execution, and post-event evaluation, all while using Malaysian and Indonesian perspectives. Global best practices will be localized, marginalized voices will be heard, data will be used to inform decisions, and technology will be used to expand reach and increase resonance. This helps us to understand that influence is fundamentally qualitative, based on long-term sustainability, community trust, and emotional changes, even though it is frequently quantified through reach, engagement, and behavior change. It also examines how cultural diplomacy, regional collaboration (for example, through ASEAN frameworks), and South-South knowledge sharing might increase local effect on a global scale as it travels through the conceptual and practical stages of campaign creation in these two Southeast Asian countries. In addition to being regionally important, this Malaysian and Indonesian viewpoint advances worldwide knowledge on how to create campaigns and events that inspire genuine change by going beyond visibility.

Brief Definition of Campaigns and Events

Campaigns and events are essential instruments for social engagement, marketing, and strategic communication because they provide organized ways to affect public opinion, behavior, or policy. Scholarly definitions differentiate between the terms' scope, aims, and execution tactics, despite the fact that they are frequently used interchangeably in informal contexts. Generally speaking, a campaign is a planned sequence of communication efforts intended to accomplish particular goals within a specified time frame. "A purposive attempt to inform, persuade, or motivate behavior changes in a relatively well-defined and large audience, generally for non-commercial benefits to the individual and/or society" is what Rice and Atkin (2012) define as a campaign. Usually, campaigns are linked to marketing, political mobilization, public awareness, advocacy, or behavior modification. To continuously reinforce messages over time, they need meticulous planning, audience segmentation, and the utilization of several media platforms (Kotler & Lee, 2008).

Campaigns in Southeast Asia are frequently linked to national development objectives, particularly in multiethnic countries like Malaysia and Indonesia where the messaging needs to take into account language and cultural diversity (Lai, 2018). On the other hand, an event is a special event or experience planned for a specific audience at a specified time and place. It is frequently used to initiate products and messages, promote community, or increase participation. Events are "transient occurrences with a set schedule and purpose, often characterized by their ability to create memorable and symbolic experiences," according to Getz (2005). According to Allen et al. (2011), events can be categorized as corporate, cultural, communal, or political, and they frequently function as a tactical element of a larger campaign.

Events like festivals, expos, and national celebrations are crucial venues for advancing tourism, unity, and cultural legacy in Malaysia and Indonesia (Yunis, 2016; Susilo, 2019). Crucially, when designed in accordance with the requirements of the target audience and quantifiable results, campaigns and events both contribute to strategic impact. Events use sensory touchpoints to produce emotional resonance and instant visibility, whereas campaigns frequently rely on ongoing messaging (Bowdin et al., 2011). In reality, both are frequently incorporated into successful initiatives: events serve as milestones or activation points within the larger strategy, while campaigns supply the long-term narrative and goals. To sum up, campaigns and events need to

be defined and understood in both theoretical and contextual terms. Understanding these fundamental ideas is crucial for creating successful, impact-driven projects, particularly in varied societies like Malaysia and Indonesia where communication needs to be inclusive and nuanced.

The Rise of Purpose-Driven and Experience-Based Engagement

Communication, branding, and event management have seen a significant shift in recent years toward purpose-driven and experience-based engagement, particularly as audiences, especially Millennials and Gen Z, expect more social value, emotional resonance, and authenticity from the organizations and brands they support. This pattern is indicative of a larger shift in public expectations, where individuals and consumers are actively influencing narratives and bringing about change rather than being passive consumers of information (Freeman et al., 2021). Initiatives that are based on well-stated social or ethical principles—often in line with sustainability, inclusivity, justice, or community development—are referred to as purpose-driven engagement. As stated by Hsu et al. (2021), purpose-driven marketing "develop a deeper, long-term relationship with stakeholders based on shared values by going beyond transactional goals." This has turned into a strategic necessity in both the business and nonprofit sectors as stakeholders evaluate organizations more on their social effect than their financial performance (Porter & Kramer, 2011). As an illustration, Southeast Asia is seeing a growing use of purpose-driven branding to tackle issues unique to the region, such as young unemployment, environmental degradation, and multicultural inclusion (Kurniawati, 2020).

At the same time, experience-based engagement places a strong emphasis on crafting emotionally stirring, immersive moments that let consumers engage with a brand or message in a personalized, frequently multisensory way. The idea of the "experience economy," which was first popularized by Pine and Gilmore (1999), holds that value is co-created by the caliber of the experience rather than just the good or service provided. This translates to interactive workshops, digital storytelling, pop-up activations, and virtual reality experiences in the context of campaigns and events. According to Tussyadiah et al. (2018), these formats support the development of memorable interactions that improve emotional investment and message retention. Hybrid tactics, which combine emotionally engaging delivery with meaningful information, are the result of the junction of purpose and experience. This is especially noticeable in social marketing, brand activism, and cause-based events, where the audience journey must seem personally relevant and the storytelling arc must reflect authenticity (Andrews & Kim, 2020). In Indonesia and Malaysia, for instance, campaigns promoting gender equality or climate change frequently use community-based storytelling in conjunction with in-person or virtual events to spur action (Nordin & Zakaria, 2019).

Furthermore, this trend has been accelerated by the digital revolution and the widespread use of social media. Real-time channels for experience sharing and value alignment are offered by platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, which encourages businesses to create projects that are not only emotionally compelling but also easily shared (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). As a result, campaigns and events are increasingly evaluated for their capacity to spark long-term community involvement, behavioral change, and social momentum in addition to their immediate results. A significant shift in the way businesses interact with their audiences can be seen in the convergence of purpose and experience in engagement strategies. A route to more inclusive, influential, and resonant communication is provided by adopting purpose-driven and experiential approaches as Malaysia and Indonesia negotiate difficult social, environmental, and economic issues.

Importance of Strategic Planning and Measurable Outcomes

Strategic planning is crucial to developing and executing effective campaigns and events. It comprises the systematic establishment of goals, identification of target audiences, allocation of resources, communication strategies, and performance benchmarks. Bryson (2018) asserts that the importance of strategic planning lies in its ability to align actions with clearly stated objectives, ensuring that campaigns are impactful and successful. In addition to serving as a road map for action, strategic planning, according to Mintzberg et al. (2005), is a tool for risk control, obstacle prediction, and decision-making direction in dynamic situations. Strategic planning plays a crucial role in communication and event management because of the intricacy of stakeholder interests, media channels, and audience expectations. Unplanned events often suffer from scope expansion, budget overruns, and message dilution (Getz, 2012). Events with a strong strategic base, however, are more

likely to achieve audience satisfaction, branding consistency, and long-term involvement. This is especially crucial in multicultural settings such as Malaysia and Indonesia, where advertisements must be prepared for a range of linguistic, cultural, and religious audiences (Lai, 2018; Ratri, 2020).

Equally important is the emphasis on measurable outcomes that show how effective a campaign or event was. Examples of outcomes include shifts in behavior, awareness, policy acceptance, and stakeholder engagement levels. The days of relying only on vanity metrics like impressions or attendance numbers are coming to an end, according to Macnamara (2018), as evidence-based evaluation techniques that monitor outcomes using key performance indicators (KPIs), impact assessments, and data analytics are taking their place. Measurement tools not only validate the efficacy of a plan but also provide feedback for continuous improvement (Watson & Noble, 2014). Especially in quickly changing digital contexts, adaptive strategy-making necessitates the integration of planning and measurement. In Southeast Asia, where internet penetration and mobile-first behavior are increasing, campaign effectiveness must be regularly evaluated and adjusted in real time. For instance, audience targeting, influencer partnerships, and message refinement can all benefit from digital interaction data from sites such as Instagram or TikTok (Kemp, 2023). Without measurable outcomes, it becomes difficult to defend investment or scale effective therapies.

Additionally, funders, sponsors, and institutional partners are placing an increasing amount of importance on accountability and return on investment (ROI), particularly for non-profit or public sector projects. Logic models and theory-of-change frameworks have been widely utilized to link activities to the intended social impact (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). When strategic planning is linked to measurable outcomes, organizations can demonstrate not only what was done but also what was accomplished and why it was significant. Combining strategy planning and outcome measurement is now required rather than optional. Campaigns and events face the risk of becoming obsolete and squandering funds if they are not carefully planned and evaluated. However, in Malaysia's and Indonesia's more competitive and socially conscious media landscapes, companies that implement a systematic, data-driven approach are more likely to have noteworthy, scalable, and enduring impacts.

METHODOLOGY

Using a qualitative research technique, this study looks at how impact-driven campaigns and events are planned and carried out from Malaysian and Indonesian perspectives, with a particular emphasis on the contextual elements that affect strategic communication choices. The research examines a few high-profile, community-based campaigns from both countries that were carried out renowned for their social impact, inventiveness, or cultural resonance using a multiple case study methodology. Other methods include analyzing pertinent campaign materials, media content, and observational data where it is available. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of how campaigns are ideated, planned, executed, and evaluated within specific cultural, political, and media environments. Thematic analysis of the data is used to find recurrent themes, tactics tailored to the particular context, and particular difficulties that arise at various phases of campaign development. Consideration is paid to the ways in which digital platforms, audience interaction strategies, and local values affect choices and results. Scholars and practitioners seeking to improve the efficacy and cultural relevance of upcoming impact-driven initiatives can benefit greatly from this qualitative methodology's rich exploration of the subtleties in campaign design across Malaysia and Indonesia, which is grounded in lived experiences and contextual insights.

Theoretical Foundations of Impact-Driven Campaigns

Strategic communication principles that prioritize audience involvement, behavioral change, and social consequences serve as the foundation for impact-driven initiatives (Rice & Atkin, 2012). These projects, as opposed to solely promotional campaigns, seek to influence attitudes, raise public awareness, and motivate action on societal concerns. Campaign strategists are guided by theories like the Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003) and the Social Marketing Theory (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971) when creating initiatives that are specific to the cultural and societal makeup of their target audiences. Making a significant, quantifiable social impact has become more important in Southeast Asia's strategic communication and event management techniques, especially in Malaysia and Indonesia. Events and campaigns are increasingly being used as forums

for public education, civic involvement, and social change rather than just promotional or celebratory purposes. Investigating the fundamental ideas of communication, marketing, and culture that influence impact-driven campaign and event design in both nations is essential to comprehending the underpinnings of such projects.

Impact-driven events and campaigns are calculated attempts to influence particular policy, social, or behavioral changes. Impact-driven initiatives place a higher priority on objectives including social justice, environmental sustainability, public health, and civic duty than commercial campaigns, which frequently seek to sell goods or services (Rice & Atkin, 2012). Campaign-related events work as experience platforms that inspire communities and stakeholders to take collective action, in addition to being promotional tools (Getz, 2005). Such programs must take into consideration the multiethnic populations, varied religious sensibilities, distinct political environments, and varying literacy levels in Malaysia and Indonesia. Theory-based planning is therefore crucial for success.

Social Marketing Theory

Social Marketing Theory, which modifies commercial marketing concepts to advance social good, is at the core of many impact-driven campaigns. Understanding the motivations, obstacles, and rewards of the target audience is crucial for behavior change, whether it be stopping smoking or conserving water, according to Kotler and Zaltman (1971). The "4 Ps" of the theory—product, pricing, place, and promotion—assist campaign designers in creating interventions that are not only compelling but also understandable and pertinent. The Let's Go to the Health Post (Ayo Ke Posyandu) campaign in Indonesia effectively used social marketing concepts to promote maternal and pediatric health visits to community clinics. It presented health as a useful service (product), highlighted its affordability (price), situated it in communities (location), and disseminated the word through radio and religious leaders (promotion) (UNICEF Indonesia, 2019).

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory developed by Everett Rogers in 2003 describes how novel concepts or practices proliferate within a social structure. The approach is especially applicable to initiatives and gatherings that aim to bring about change, whether it be in the areas of digital literacy or environmental conservation. Campaign strategists can use the five adopter categories—innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards—to assist them organize their messaging according to the audiences' adoption curve positions. In order to normalize safe internet usage, the Digi CyberSAFE initiative in Malaysia, which promotes digital literacy among youth, used early adopters known as student ambassadors and school workshops. Working through pre-existing peer networks, a traditional diffusion method, helped the campaign acquire traction (MCMC, 2020).

Agenda-Setting and Framing Theories

According to the agenda-setting theory, the media tells individuals what to think about rather than what to consider (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Campaign and event organizers raise awareness of specific topics when they coordinate with mainstream or social media to highlight them. By examining how messages are conveyed and how language, imagery, and metaphors are employed to influence perception, framing theory takes one step further (Entman, 1993). The #PantauBersama election monitoring campaign in Indonesia tapped into nationalist feelings by framing civic engagement as a patriotic obligation. By working with citizen journalists and influencers, it was able to successfully bring electoral integrity to the national agenda (Wijayanto, 2020). In the meantime, Malaysia's Sayangi Malaysiaku (Love My Malaysia) campaign for National Day framed national unity as a shared obligation using language that was inclusive and emotionally impactful (Bernama, 2018).

Cultural Dimensions Theory

In campaign training, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory provides a useful framework for analyzing and creating culturally relevant strategies. Communicators can improve relevance, efficacy, and ethical integrity by

matching cultural values with campaign goals, messaging, and delivery methods. Incorporating cultural considerations into campaign strategy is not only strategic, but also crucial as global communication becomes more intertwined. comprehension audience receptivity in Malaysia and Indonesia requires a thorough comprehension of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (1980). Both countries have high collectivist scores, which means that collective well-being and harmony frequently take precedence over personal objectives. Campaigns that emphasize interdependence, social proof, and communal values typically have higher success rates. For instance, in order to conform to cultural standards, environmental campaigns in Indonesia frequently portray waste reduction as a component of gotong royong, or the collective labor ethic. In a similar vein, Malaysian public health initiatives frequently use muhibbah (harmony) to encourage inter-racial collaboration in times of crisis, such as COVID-19 (Lim & Lee, 2021).

Event Management Theory: The Strategic Planning Framework

Impact-driven initiatives adhere to frameworks like Goldblatt's Five Cs of event design: Concept, Coordination, Control, Culmination, and Closeout (Goldblatt, 2002) when they are implemented into events. These guidelines direct the creation of effective, culturally aware, and community-engaged events that are goal-oriented. Events like Indonesia's Festival Kampung Iklim (Climate Village Festival) and Malaysia's Hari Sukan Negara (National Sports Day) are examples of well-planned occasions that not only offer entertainment but also inform and inspire sizable crowds to adopt sustainable practices. Both combined the fundamental principles of event management theory stakeholder mapping, timetable management, and quantifiable impact indicators with program planning.

Stakeholder Theory and Participatory Approaches

The necessity of involving all parties who could have an impact on a campaign or event is emphasized by the stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984). This encompasses civil society, schools, local governments, religious organizations, and increasingly, online influencers throughout Southeast Asia. Models of participatory communication are also becoming more popular in Indonesia and Malaysia. According to these approaches, campaigns ought to co-create messages with communities rather than just spreading them (Servaes, 2008). Such a strategy is exemplified by Indonesia's Gerakan Sekolah Menyenangkan (Fun School Movement), which asks parents and teachers to collaborate on creating educational initiatives.

Challenges in Theoretical Application

Although these theories offer solid underpinnings, there are difficulties in putting them into practice. Theory-to-practice translation may be impeded by religious conservatism, censorship, political sensitivity, and unequal access to digital infrastructure (Khoo, 2021; Heryanto, 2008). Furthermore, theories created in Western settings need to be modified to take into consideration the distinctive realities of Southeast Asia, including the significance of religion and unofficial communication channels. Designing projects that are socially transformative, strategically sound, and culturally relevant requires an understanding of the theoretical foundations of impact-driven campaigns and event management. The effective use of social marketing, innovation diffusion, framing, stakeholder engagement, and event management theory in Malaysia and Indonesia has produced powerful campaigns that tackle everything from democracy and the environment to health and education. These theories must, however, be used with institutional understanding, cultural sensitivity, and a dedication to community empowerment. Southeast Asian communicators can successfully negotiate complexity while producing quantifiable and long-lasting effects by firmly establishing campaigns and events inside theoretical frameworks.

Relevance Of Campaigns and Event in Southeast Asia: Cultural, Political, And Social Dynamics

Southeast Asia's social, political, and cultural landscapes are significantly shaped by campaigns and events. Home to over 650 million people from countries including Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines, this diverse and quickly evolving region represents a singular fusion of customs, political advancements, and community-based beliefs. In this situation, using campaigns and events to strategically

communicate is not only pertinent but also necessary for influencing legislation, fostering social cohesion, engaging the public, and protecting cultural assets.

Southeast Asia is known for its diverse range of ethnic groups, languages, and faiths. Events and campaigns are essential resources for maintaining intangible cultural heritage and fostering cross-cultural understanding. For instance, national cultural events such as Malaysia's "Citrawarna" and Indonesia's "Festival Pesona Lokal" not only honor regional customs and crafts but also boost the travel and creative industries (UNESCO, 2021). Cultural campaigns serve as soft power tactics as well, allowing governments and non-governmental organizations to promote internal harmony among varied communities and affirm national identity in a globalized world. Additionally, initiatives that highlight native languages, traditional dress, and religious holidays support the preservation of cultural continuity, especially for young people living in metropolitan areas. Tan (2019) points out that localized initiatives give minority groups a chance to make their voices heard in the prevailing national discourses, thereby reversing the homogenization that comes with globalization.

Campaigns play a crucial role in the region's democratization and civic participation. For example, election campaigns in Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines show how grassroots and internet tactics influence political outcomes and public engagement. Social media advertising had a significant role in swaying young voters in Indonesia's 2019 presidential election, illustrating how online forums are become essential forums for political debate (Lim, 2020). Beyond elections, civil society is mobilized and governments are held accountable through issue-based advocacy campaigns like those supporting women's rights, environmental protection, or anti-corruption. For instance, the Bersih movement in Malaysia influenced national political reforms by demanding election reform and transparency through large-scale rallies and online platforms (Weiss, 2020). Campaigns thus serve as both instruments of state power and as vehicles for resistance and democratic expression.

In the social sphere, campaigns and events encourage group efforts and community involvement, particularly when it comes to public health, education, and disaster relief. Public health initiatives throughout Southeast Asia played a crucial role in promoting vaccination uptake and spreading correct information in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. To guarantee broad and efficient reach, government-led campaigns in nations like Singapore and Vietnam integrated digital and traditional media (Nguyen & Wee, 2021). Furthermore, Southeast Asian individuals are mobilized around global causes by events like Earth Hour and International Women's Day, which localize messaging to reflect circumstances unique to the locality. In order to reach a larger audience, social campaigns frequently work with artists, influencers, and religious leaders; this highlights the strategic significance of cultural nuance in communication methods. Youth organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also used campaigns to question social norms, such as those that address stigma around mental health issues or gender-based violence. A new generation of activism in Southeast Asia is reflected in these grassroots initiatives, which are becoming more digital, participatory, and intersectional (Kusuma, 2022).

It is impossible to overestimate the significance of campaigns and events in Southeast Asia. They serve as vital instruments for social change, political engagement, and cultural preservation. Campaigns and events will continue to be crucial to Southeast Asians' ability to express their identities, challenge authority, and influence their shared destinies as the region navigates globalization, digitization, and changing geopolitical dynamics. Designing campaigns that resonate and have an impact requires an awareness of the cultural, political, and social fabric of the area for educators, legislators, and communicators alike.

Cultural Diversity and Identity

One of the world's most culturally varied regions is Southeast Asia. Particularly in multi-ethnic, multi-religious cultures like Malaysia and Indonesia, cultural identity is a major topic of discussion. While Indonesia is home to more than 300 ethnic groups spread across more than 17,000 islands, Malaysia is home to significant ethnic groups such as Malays, Chinese, Indians, and indigenous peoples (Heryanto, 2008; Zainal & Ahmad, 2017). Because of this diversity, campaign and event planning must use highly specialized and culturally sensitive messaging. Malaysia and Indonesia both score highly on collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance, according to Hofstede's (2001) cultural aspects. This suggests that campaigns ought to be clear and

reassuring, respect authority institutions, and align with community values. Backlash or disengagement may arise from culturally inappropriate messages or formats, particularly those that disregard religious sensitivity (Lim, 2020). In order to gain trust and guarantee that the message is relevant, it is essential to take into account regional cultures, languages, and religious beliefs.

Political Structures and State Influence

The design of impact-driven projects is also influenced by the political climate in Indonesia and Malaysia. Although both nations have democratic systems, they are influenced by powerful state institutions, differing degrees of media censorship, and political favoritism. For example, in Malaysia, initiatives including official support or collaboration frequently acquire greater credibility, but they may also have limitations on their reach and messaging because of political sensitivities or censorship (Abbott, 2011). Similar to this, decentralization in Indonesia has given local governments more authority, necessitating multi-level political maneuvering and coalition building during campaigns (Buehler, 2010). Campaigns pertaining to health, civic engagement, or national unity are frequently started by government organizations, and those that fit with national narratives or development agendas are more likely to be effective (Zainuddin et al., 2019). However, there is a growing tension and negotiation space between state and grassroots actors, as seen by the expanding use of social media and events by youth movements and civil society in both countries to question mainstream narratives (Lim, 2013; Nugroho et al., 2012).

Social Shifts and Digital Transformation

The way audiences in Malaysia and Indonesia consume and react to messages has changed due to rapid social and technical advancements. Engagement has been redefined by the emergence of the digital middle class, youth activism, and mobile-first internet usage. Daily interactions are dominated by platforms like WhatsApp, YouTube, and TikTok, particularly among younger groups (Kemp, 2023). These days, socially conscious advertisements frequently combine digital storytelling with traditional ideals, resulting in hybrid communication models that are both locally based and globally inspired. Furthermore, younger generations are becoming more aware of topics like religious plurality, environmental sustainability, and gender equality.

Events and campaigns that ignore changing social consciousness run the danger of coming across as tone deaf or unauthentic. Campaigns must negotiate media gatekeeping while utilizing grassroots virality because, as Tapsell (2017) points out, the Indonesian media ecosystem is extremely competitive and influenced by both political and commercial interests. The great cultural diversity, political systems, and social transformations in Southeast Asia are inextricably linked to the significance of campaigns and events there. Communication tactics that strike a balance between tradition and modernity, local and global ideals, and authority and grassroots voices are effective in Malaysia and Indonesia. To build ideas that resonate and last, impact-driven project designers need to be politically smart, socially sensitive, and culturally educated.

Socio-Cultural and Media Landscapes in Malaysia and Indonesia – Diversity, Language, And Religion in Message Design

Prominent countries in Southeast Asia, Malaysia and Indonesia, have different national identities and societal systems despite having comparable histories and cultures. It is crucial to comprehend the cultural and societal backgrounds of these countries in order to analyze their political structures, media environments, educational systems, and communication methods. Both nations are distinguished by their religious variety, ethnic heterogeneity, and developing postcolonial identities, all of which have an impact on public participation, social norms, and government. Using a comparative approach, this essay investigates the social and cultural structures of Malaysia and Indonesia, looking at social ideals, nationalism, language, religion, and ethnicity. It provides insights into how these factors influence civil society, policymaking, and daily interactions in each nation by doing this. Designing effective communication campaigns and events requires an understanding of Malaysia's and Indonesia's sociocultural and media environments. Despite being close by and having certain historical and religious similarities, these two countries have diverse cultures and vibrant societies. Their linguistic diversity, ethnic diversity, and deeply held religious traditions influence not just public life but also

how communications are received, debated, and accepted. To guarantee inclusivity, resonance, and relevance, campaign designers must carefully negotiate this complexity.

Malaysia and Indonesia are home to some of the most ethnically and religiously diverse populations in Southeast Asia. In addition to many indigenous communities like the Orang Asli and the peoples of Sabah and Sarawak, Malaysia formally acknowledges three major ethnic groups: Malays, Chinese, and Indians. The fourth most populous nation in the world, Indonesia is home to more than 700 live languages and more than 300 ethnic groupings, with Javanese, Sundanese, and Malay being the most often spoken (Heryanto, 2008; Zainal & Ahmad, 2017). Multilingual and multicultural messaging is not only a tactic but also a requirement in both nations. One advantage, though, is that Indonesian, as a unifying language, makes it easier for people from very different ethnic groups and tribes to communicate with one another. It also serves as a bridge across cultures, particularly in numerous national-scale campaigns.

Additionally, religious identity is crucial in the public arena. In both nations, Islam is the most common religion, but there are sizable numbers of Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Catholics, Confucians, and other religions living alongside it. Moral principles, aesthetic choices, and behavioral expectations are all influenced by religion. Because of this, campaigns need to be sensitive to taboos, holidays, and religious customs. For instance, both credibility and cultural alignment can be increased by including Halal considerations into food-based events in Malaysia or applying Islamic principles in health campaigns in rural Indonesia (Lim, 2020; Ratri, 2020).

The design of messages is further complicated by language. Although English is extensively used in urban and business contexts, and other vernacular languages (such as Tamil, Mandarin, Iban, etc.) are locally prevalent, Bahasa Malaysia is the official language of Malaysia. Despite being more widely used as a result of nationalist initiatives, Bahasa Indonesia is nonetheless influenced by regional dialects, accents, and code-switching (Sneddon, 2003). Therefore, transcreation adapting the main idea to various cultural and language contexts is just as important for successful campaigns as translation.

At the same time, both nations' media consumption patterns are changing quickly. These days, news, entertainment, and mobilization are primarily obtained from digital platforms, particularly social media. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp have surpassed traditional media in both Malaysia and Indonesia, especially among younger audiences (Kemp, 2023). But there are risks associated with this change as well, such as dispersed audiences, echo chambers, and the dissemination of false information, which make message management more challenging and call for subtle, flexible communication techniques (Tapsell, 2017). Malaysian and Indonesian media and sociocultural ecosystems necessitate hyper-localized, culturally aware, and carefully segmented message design. It is possible for campaigns to be misunderstood or rejected outright if they do not represent the linguistic, religious, and ethnic identities of their target viewers. On the other hand, initiatives that effectively include these cultural components are more likely to promote involvement, trust, and significant impact.

Ethnic and Cultural Diversity

A characteristic that distinguishes both Malaysia and Indonesia is their ethnic pluralism. Malays (around 69%), Chinese (23%), Indians (7%), and Indigenous peoples (Orang Asli and others) make up the majority of Malaysia's population (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023). A multiethnic social structure that continues to shape national policy and political discourse is the result of the historical movement of Chinese and Indian groups during British colonial rule (Hirschman, 1986). On the other hand, Indonesia is home to more than 1,300 recognized ethnic groups, with over 270 million people. The Javanese make up the largest group (about 40%), followed by Sundanese, Madurese, and others (BPS Indonesia, 2023). Even if conflicts between central and regional identities may occasionally occur, the country's slogan, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), demonstrates an official commitment to multiculturalism (Ananta et al., 2015).

In both countries, ethnicity is deeply linked to political representation, educational opportunities, and economic access. Malaysia's Bumiputera policy gives preferential treatment to ethnic Malays and Indigenous groups in housing, education, and business a legacy of the New Economic Policy (NEP) introduced in 1971 to correct

socio-economic imbalances (Gomez & Saravanamuttu, 2013). Indonesia, on the other hand, practices a more decentralized multiculturalism, particularly after the fall of Suharto in 1998, allowing regions more autonomy in managing regional government affairs and the authority of the central government delegated to regional governments, including provinces, cities, and regencies (Aspinall & Fealy, 2003). Meanwhile, matters covering foreign policy, defense and security, justice, monetary and fiscal matters, religion, and other areas of authority stipulated by law remain within the authority of the central government in Indonesia.

Religion and Spiritual Beliefs

Despite existing within distinct sociopolitical systems, Islam is fundamental to both Malaysia and Indonesia. The state actively promotes Islamic principles through organizations like the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), and Islam is the official religion of Malaysia. Alongside civil law, Islamic law (Shariah) largely regulates Muslim personal affairs (Mutalib, 2005). Religious leaders influence public opinion, and politicians frequently use Islamic morality to win over voters, particularly Malay voters. Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism are the six religions that are legally recognized in Indonesia, the most populous Muslim-majority nation in the world. Despite not being a nation founded on any one faith, Islam has a significant effect, especially in areas like Aceh that follow Shariah law. However, Pancasila, Indonesia's form of religious pluralism, is founded on five tenets: social justice for all Indonesians, democracy guided by the wisdom of wisdom in representative deliberations, Indonesian unity, belief in the Almighty God, and just and civilized humanity. Nationalism and development narratives also overlap with religious identities. Religion frequently serves as a source of social mobilization, cultural identity, and political legitimacy in both nations in addition to serving as a spiritual compass (Heryanto, 2011).

Language and Communication

Another area where larger cultural and societal trends are reflected is language policy. While English continues to play a significant role in international diplomacy, business, and education, Malaysia advocates Bahasa Malaysia (Malay) as the national language, signifying unification and Malay identity. Indigenous languages, Tamil, and Chinese dialects are all spoken in their own groups but are frequently ignored by governmental institutions (Asmah, 2004). The nationalist movement gave rise to Bahasa Indonesia, Indonesia's national language, which serves as a unifying instrument. As a representation of postcolonial modernity and national identity, it is widely spoken by people of many ethnic backgrounds (Sneddon, 2003). The five regional languages with the greatest number of speakers in Indonesia are Javanese, Sundanese, Malay, Madurese, and Minangkabau. These five regional languages continue to be widely used in local media and everyday communication, adding to Indonesia's linguistic diversity. Language is linked to power and access in both situations. Fluency in English is frequently associated with both educational attainment and urban status. Furthermore, language is a crucial element of message framing, audience targeting, and public persuasion because the media in both nations function in multilingual environments (Khoo, 2014).

Nationalism and Identity Politics

National identity formation in Malaysia and Indonesia has followed divergent paths. Malaysian nationalism has historically centered on Ketuanan Melayu (Malay supremacy), a concept that posits Malays as the rightful custodians of the nation. This ideology has shaped policies and political rhetoric, often at the expense of multicultural inclusiveness (Shamsul, 2001). Indonesia's nationalism, built on anti-colonial resistance and unity in diversity, is more civic in orientation but has faced increasing ethno-religious tensions. Identity politics has grown in influence, as seen in high-profile cases such as the Islam prosecution of Jakarta's Christian Chinese Governor Period 2014-2017, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) for blasphemy, revealing the volatility of religion in the political sphere (Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2018). Both nations grapple with balancing ethnic majoritarianism and multicultural ideals, a tension that influences policymaking, electoral dynamics, and intercommunal relations.

Social Norms and Values

Shared values in Malaysia and Indonesia include respect for authority, family-centeredness, collectivism, and social harmony. These values are grounded in traditional philosophies such as adat (customary law), Islamic teachings, and Asian cultural heritage. In both societies, hierarchy is respected in familial, professional, and governmental structures. The concept of gotong royong (mutual cooperation) in Indonesia and muhibbah (interethnic goodwill) in Malaysia are cultural expressions of communal solidarity. These norms are often mobilized in community projects, crisis response, and public health campaigns (Prawira, 2020; Lee, 2019). However, modernity, urbanization, and digital globalization have introduced shifts in generational values. Youth in both countries increasingly engage with global pop culture, digital activism, and progressive social movements, creating intergenerational tensions around gender roles, political expression, and religious interpretation (Lim, 2013).

Civil Society and Media

Civil society in Malaysia has expanded in recent decades, particularly after the Reformasi movement of the late 1990s. Organizations advocating for electoral reform (e.g., BERSIH), environmental justice, and minority rights have gained visibility. However, state control over media and repressive laws such as the Sedition Act and Printing Presses and Publications Act continue to restrict dissent (Weiss, 2014). Indonesia has experienced a more rapid democratization since the fall of Suharto in 1998. Decentralization and media liberalization have empowered local governments and civil society actors. However, religious conservatism and online misinformation pose challenges to inclusive civic participation (Aspinall & Warburton, 2018).

Digital platforms in both countries are now crucial for social discourse, activism, and campaign mobilization, making them double-edged tools for democracy and disinformation. Malaysia and Indonesia present complex and dynamic cultural and societal landscapes shaped by colonial legacies, religious pluralism, ethnic diversity, and modernization. While both countries share certain cultural traits—collectivism, religiosity, and respect for tradition—they also diverge in their state ideologies, ethnic politics, and approaches to national identity. Understanding these contexts is critical for effective governance, policymaking, and international engagement. As they navigate the challenges of globalization, digital transformation, and rising identity politics, Malaysia and Indonesia continue to offer rich examples of how culture and society shape the trajectory of modern nationhood in Southeast Asia.

Conceptualization In Framing the Campaign Message

The conceptual phase involves identifying the issue, defining the desired impact, understanding the audience, and developing the campaign narrative. Research and stakeholder engagement are critical at this stage. In Malaysia, the "R U OK?" mental health campaign by the Ministry of Health used data from national health surveys and focus groups to frame a culturally relevant message on emotional well-being, which was reinforced through local languages and dialects (MOH Malaysia, 2021). Similarly, Indonesia's "#BijakBerplastik" (Be Smart with Plastic) campaign by Danone-AQUA integrated environmental messaging with Islamic values of stewardship (khalifah), which resonated strongly with Muslim communities (Suryani, 2022). These examples illustrate how effective framing aligns campaign goals with societal values and beliefs.

Planning on Strategy and Stakeholder Collaboration

Setting goals, choosing communication methods, budgeting, identifying partners, and creating key performance indicators (KPIs) are all included in strategic planning. Collaboration across sectors is frequently crucial. Campaigns like "Sayangi Malaysiaku" during National Day festivities in Malaysia effectively integrated NGOs, media, government organizations, and educational institutions to promote a cohesive message of patriotism (Bernama, 2018). To encourage youngsters to practice good hygiene, the Ministry of Health, UNICEF, local schools, and religious organizations collaborated on the "Generasi Bersih dan Sehat" (Clean and Healthy Generation) campaign in Indonesia. These illustrations highlight how crucial inclusive stakeholder mapping is to guaranteeing sustainability and broad reach.

Execution by Delivering with Cultural Intelligence

Organizing resources, carrying out tasks, and making sure that messaging is consistent across platforms are all part of execution. Due to widespread internet use and social media use, especially among young people, digital media has taken center stage in both Malaysia and Indonesia (We Are Social, 2024). These days, platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok are frequently used for sharing interactive content. On-ground activities are still vital, though, particularly in disadvantaged or rural areas. To combat vaccination hesitancy, for instance, Malaysia's "Program Imunisasi COVID-19 Kebangsaan" mainly focused on mobile clinics, community town halls, and local influencers (Lim & Lee, 2021). In Indonesia, initiatives like "Pelajar Peduli Lingkungan" instilled environmental ideals in young people through school-based contests and community cleanups.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Impact evaluation needs to go beyond gaudy metrics like shares and likes. Instead, it should measure behavioral change, policy influence, and community feedback. Surveys, focus groups, analytics dashboards, and longitudinal tracking are some of the techniques. For example, post-campaign study of Indonesia's "Suara Tanpa Rokok" anti-smoking program revealed a quantifiable decrease in the number of young people starting to smoke in the regions that were targeted (WHO Indonesia, 2019). The success of the "Kempen Keselamatan Jalan Raya" (Road Safety Campaign) in Malaysia was evaluated by combining statistics on traffic accidents, media coverage analysis, and stakeholder interviews (JPJ Malaysia, 2020).

Challenges and Opportunities

Political meddling, financial limitations, online disinformation, and disparities in literacy are some of the obstacles faced by campaigners in Malaysia and Indonesia. However, there are increasing prospects due to technological progress, student activism, and public-private collaborations. A favorable environment for campaigns with a social impact is also created by the growth of the creative and social entrepreneurial sectors in both nations. In Malaysia and Indonesia, creating impactful ads and events calls for a collaborative, evidence-based, and culturally sensitive approach. Campaigns can result in significant and long-lasting social change if they use both digital and traditional media, engage a variety of stakeholders, and connect messaging with local values. These two countries' experiences provide important lessons for communication professionals on how to turn vision into impact in multicultural environments.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the design and execution of impact-driven campaigns and events in Malaysia and Indonesia reveal a dynamic interplay of cultural sensibilities, socio-political contexts, and evolving media ecosystems. Both countries demonstrate a growing recognition of strategic planning, audience engagement, and measurable outcomes as key pillars of effective campaign design, yet they also face unique challenges shaped by local governance, religious values, and digital literacy levels. In Malaysia, campaign success often hinges on multi-stakeholder collaboration and alignment with national development goals, while in Indonesia, grassroots mobilization and the use of local languages and narratives have proven effective in fostering participation and trust. Across both contexts, the integration of social media platforms, influencer partnerships, and community-based storytelling plays a pivotal role in amplifying reach and ensuring message resonance. Moreover, case studies from each country underscore the importance of culturally sensitive messaging, adaptability, and the ability to pivot based on feedback and data analytics. Ultimately, the Malaysian and Indonesian experiences illustrate that designing impact-driven campaigns and events from concept to execution is not a linear process but a fluid, iterative journey that must remain deeply rooted in context-specific understanding and sustained by a commitment to long-term social transformation.

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