

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF MILLENNIAL IN LANGKAWI ISLAND AND TUBA

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### ABSTRACT

The researcher focuses on millennial civic engagement education (CEE) from the aspect of information control through integrated marketing communication (IMC) and its exposure, which can lead to millennial environmental stewardship (ES). IMC is an effective tool for CEE, for gaining millennial attention, interest, desire and action (AIDA) irrespective of their understanding. This study also aims to explore millennial behaviors when CEE is promoted via IMC. Qualitative approach with semi-structured interview with the millennial was undertaken to get a trustworthy data on information and in-depth knowledge of the subject as well as the happening phenomenon. The findings revealed a lot of strategies that need to be implemented by the government, local authorities and NGOs on CEE via IMC as to promote ES in millennials mainly for the EET. The research involves a small number of millennials.

**Keywords:** attention-interest-desire-action; civic engagement education; environmental stewardship; environmental education tourism; integrated marketing communication.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Education enables millennials to understand the interconnection of knowledge in wider scope. The civic engagement education (CEE) through integrated marketing communication (IMC) enable millennial to move outside of self-perceived comfort zones and learn to think critically on real life issues. It is a cooperative learning that facilitates the said process. Using IMC as CEE method of learning enriches the educational process by engaging millennials in making a meaningful contribution to communities.

In this context, millennials apply environmental information for the sustainability of environmental education tourism (EET) and develop stewardship through linking established learning objectives with genuine needs. Therefore, CEE tackles the environmental stewardship (ES) among millennials by ensuring relevant knowledge is passed on to and acted upon by targeted group in the local community. The integrated media are convenient channels of CEE creativity to practice the element of effective communication in learning experience. IMC helps millennials in trying to gain attention, interest, desire and action (AIDA) on EET issues.

Literature review identifies that exposures to various integration in marketing communication develop the behavior in consumer character and attitude. This study involves millennials born between 1981 to 1997 aged 20 to 36 years old. The local community members (millennials) are showing different AIDA perception in ES at Langkawi Island. The development of Langkawi Island happened tremendously after its declaration as a geopark by UNESCO in June 2007. Since then, Langkawi receives huge number of visitors from year to year until now. Langkawi Island is beautifully located where Andaman Sea meets the Straits of Malacca. The island is positioned as one of the region's best island paradise destinations since 1990.

Tourism Malaysia together with the local authority especially Lembaga Pembangunan Langkawi (LADA) are dedicated to promoting the island and developing it as an ideal travel spot. Until now, the island has proven itself as one of Malaysia's best holiday gems. Besides, Langkawi is also famous for its beautiful islands and the unique geological landscape. There are 101 islands in low-tide and 99 islands in high-tide around Langkawi, which are rich with tourism products that are able to attract more tourists. However, only two islands have community resident which are Tuba and Dayang Bunting (Selat Bagan Pauh and Selat Bagan

Nyior). Another two uninhabited islands are Rebak Island and Beras Basah Island which have hotels and chalets for the convenience of travelers. Nevertheless, the development of islands is linked to reducing number of natural resources at the island. Furthermore, the quality of the environment either natural or man-made is essential for tourism.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between tourism and the environment is complex [7]. The local community (millennials) should be aware of the development around the island. It may involve many activities that can have adverse environmental effects. The traditional methods of delivering knowledge to consumers (millennials) have changed with media sources such as the internet and social media adding complexity to the knowledge deliverance. Integrated marketing communication (IMC) provides opportunities to reach millennials in various ways. In [3] of a research on the best IMC advertising in certain countries found cultural divergence in adoption and practices and also underlying weaknesses in process and practice. This research is aimed to examining the impact of IMC on millennial environmental stewardship.

“...a way of looking at the whole marketing process from the view point of the customer.” [4] Civic engagement education (CEE) can be delivered through new technologies, social media and apps when entering market at a lightning fast pace. Information technology (IT) plays its role in transforming the way education deliverance is conducted and how it will be communicated efficiently. IT has provided the mechanism causing change from mass marketing to a customer focused approach with databases and measurable ways to integrate communications. CEE in the context of marketing strategy through IMC approach focuses on a consistent message across all media channels. The IMC are widespread and varied. In [2] asserted a variety of concepts, approaches, methodologies and applications of IMC that would lead to stewardship and help individuals gain their attention, interest, desire and action (AIDA) on environmental issues.

In spite of all the technological advances, the heart of any quality marketing effort is a sound strategy. A quality strategy makes use of the right technology, tools and resources. IMC was claimed as being effective in reaching out to consumers (millennials) with the intended message, stimulating environmental awareness (CEE), creating trial environmental practices

and ultimately achieving environmental stewardship (ES). Through an effective IMC approach on CEE, it can create a strong knowledge base on a consistent message strategy projecting a unified voice. Consistent messaging avoids confusion and reinforces the knowledge on millennials over time, and builds greater awareness.

Talking about ES, the balance between population and resources is critical for the island's future development. Unlimited resources are relative to the present scale of human impacts, and this shows how important CEE is to the island's local community (millennials). The millennials as a youth sub-group, are active, eager to learn and inquisitive. IMC (environmental advertisement) plays its roles as an education tool, and has enormous potential to expand the CEE aspect [1]. The pressing environmental concerns faced by most islands are domestic waste, fisheries, forest cover, land use and land tenure. Further common environmental concerns such as soil loss, water shortage, solid waste disposal, toxic chemicals, endangered species, erosion and human habitat impacts, need focus, for a sustainable development. Thus, the pertinent question to ask at this point in time are how much exposure has the local community (millennials) of Tuba received and what kind of CEE has the IMC delivered that leads to ES.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study began with intensive literature review to understand the attribute in IMC of CEE. In addition, interview with local communities was conducted to probe their insight about the current situation and the problem at Langkawi Island and Tuba. Semi-structured interview with the millennials have been conducted within a period of two months. The conversations have been recorded using a tape recorder. This study managed to capture the input from 7 informants as the data capacity had saturated on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Tourism sector which is repeatedly associated to sustainable approaches is a nature-based tourism [5]. Developments done in nature-based tourism are closely related to the natural environment [6]. Marketing in related concept using various medium of IMC, reflects AIDA (attention, interest, desire, action) which leads to ES [2]. From the interview, informants gave

their opinions based on their surroundings on what should be done to conserve the island. Informants' point of view is subsequently highlighted.

**Informant 1** revealed some of the major approach that needs to be implemented in order to conserve and preserve the Tuba. First strategy is monitoring all daily household waste.

“E-Idaman (Environment Idaman Sdn. Bhd.) is the company managing solid waste and the cleaning of public areas in Kedah and Perlis. They came out with a Recycle Program (3Rs) and the “Rethink Recycling” campaign. Yet, we still need more recycle bins to separate paper, plastic and glass wastes”.

Second strategy focuses on education development program. Education institutions (schools) need to constantly renew their way of delivering message through CEE to millennials, local communities and tourists with the aim of exposing them to conservation, preservation and the importance of island environmental care.

“The schools' curricular activities play a big role in creating environmental awareness among students (e.g. English class activity of drawing a polluted river and toxic smoke emitted by factories, with the tagline “Love Our Neighborhood”. Some of the interviewed millennials had the experience representing their schools in “Green Cooker Challenge” at Alor Setar, using solar panels for cooking.”

Third strategy is the empowerment of non-governmental agencies (NGOs) by Malaysia government. The related agencies should take turn visiting the island in order to continuously deliver and support the CEE initiatives using various medium of IMC and educational programs / workshop.

“Urgent needs are... more environmental care signage, printed posters, recycle bins. The respected agencies need to come over more frequently and continuously in delivering CEE using IMC medium to local communities...they need to encourage participation in environmental programs / workshop as part of CEE.”

Fourth strategy is providing more supportive medium in helping students become more aware of environmental concerns. Religions are indirectly helping to increase communities' environmental concerns, by delivering good thoughts about caring for the environment.

“Mosques at Tuba play a big role in encouraging good deeds to local communities. The religious gathering after prayer happens every night, and is mostly attended by senior citizens

and millennials, male being more than female.”

Religions become a mediator for creating environmental concerns as part of CEE elements. Next strategy focuses on sustaining other attractions in Tuba such as mangrove, homestay and fishing activities.

**Informant 2** is claiming that the national Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) and free-to-air television stations such as Media Prima and Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (IMC medium) very rarely deliver environmental message for CEE purpose, as compared to neighboring countries such as Indonesia. According to the informant, these IMC media could advertise on billboards, posters and flyers regarding environmental awareness, but still require contributions and supports from various agencies. Artists and public figures such as actors and actresses from reality television programs (e.g. *Da'i; Ustaz; Ustazah*) are best mediators in delivering CEE message through various IMC channels.

**Informant 3, 4 and 6** emphasize more on various types of community support events; teachers as part of community members educating their students not to throw trash into the sea while boating, to avoid it being eaten by turtles and other marine lives. Related environmental messages (CEE) could be delivered to millennials through Whatsapp either personally or in a group with the text such as “Do not litter by the roadside because it is immoral” or photo from NGOs such as World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Other than that, informants stressed that environmental conservation, of managing systematic wastes and enforcement of heavy penalties on individuals who trash areas critical to natural ecology by authorities, need to be taken seriously.

### **Informant 3**

“In order to sustain and make the CEE message among communities more lively, schools (teachers) and authority should empower the millennials to be part of ‘environmental policing’ (become eyes and ears), in delivering information regarding misconduct of visitors on the island. Any wrongdoing will be informed in Whatsapp group together with the image proof and further actions will be taken by the authorities”.

### **Informant 4**

“For conservation of the island natural resources, the authority should implement control measures such as managing the record of visitors to Tuba. This helps the authority to enhance

the facilities at the island which consequently leads to increasing number of visitors from time to time and indirectly helps Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) to intensify marketing and promotions of visit to Tuba”.

#### **Informant 6**

“The controls by authorities, of communities and visitors attitudes, should be replaced by engagement methods that are more educational. NGOs and authorities should practice “engagement” with and between communities and visitors. Hmm...ha... NGOs can play part in turn-it-on engagement with the community and visitors by invitations and Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) with authorities for continuous commitment on CEE development. Experiential learning is relevant in engagement education where they are able to witness how their knowledge is applied to real-life situations”.

**Informant 5 and 7** revealed that Tuba millennials need more billboards, signage and mural drawings on environmental cares as part of CEE delivery at school and also around the island, especially at jetty, along the roadside and most visited areas. Proactive CEE messages through printed advertisements on segregating waste will educate communities and visitors as a whole, to avoid open burning and reducing amount of waste sent to landfills.

#### **Informant 5**

“We still need more cost-effective approaches such as digital marketing (IMC) by industry players to complement the efforts by the government on spreading CEE among local communities and millennials. Authorities together with NGOs can play a big role in digital marketing for CEE purposes. Both text and photo messages will be shared out among the millennials and informal learning will be practiced through the word of mouth (WoM).

#### **Informant 7**

“For me, the first billboard at the jetty needs to be upgraded by the authorities, to be more presentable. CEE messages should be two in one; informative and educating, to the visitors, as well as local communities. Furthermore, the more proactive CEE messages on signage and mural drawings by students in primary and secondary schools can become a learning foundation to them (learn by doing).

Despite all these arguments and opinions, it is worth mentioning that developments in Tuba have led to some impact on the environment. Therefore, strategies are needed in order to

sustain the island as an attractive destination for visitors and tourists.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study are expected to contribute towards new, more proactive and effective selected suitable IMC medium in delivering CEE message on environmental education to millennials, as well as the communities as a whole at Tuba. CEE is the best agent of change in ES to the millennials. Furthermore, the outcomes of this study can be beneficial to the government, tourism related bodies and NGOs that work hard to develop new tourist attractions in Malaysia. A proactive effort in this study is to track CEE on IMC medium at Tuba. Hence, this study can be a platform for MOTAC to promote environmental education tourism (EET) at international level. From the findings, authorities, government bodies and NGOs can utilize the informants' feedbacks to make changes and proliferate them to other potential islands. Other than that, Malaysian's EET on islands has the potential of being a part of tourism division. In conclusion, the highlighted issues and the suggestions given could not be resolved without the active involvement and co-operation from all parties. EET has a big potential to be one of the contributors of National Blue Ocean Strategy (NBOS) pillars. Apart from that, further in depth strategies are needed to ensure that our islands' natural resources will not become extinct. Above all efforts, it is hoped that Malaysia will be listed in a world travel guide as one of the famous EETs (nature preservation).

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