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Leveraging Social Media for National Unity: The Role of CSR Merdeka Advertisements, Slacktivism, and Clicktivism

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ABSTRACT

In the digital age, leveraging social media through CSR Merdeka advertisements offers a powerful avenue to promote national unity in Malaysia by engaging in slacktivism and clicktivism behaviours. This study examines how social media advertising fosters national unity by encouraging slacktivism and clicktivism while utilising nudging theory to shape audience perception and engagement. The study analysed fifteen CSR Merdeka advertisements from Petronas, Celcom, and TM using a triangulation approach combining content analysis, surveys, and focus group discussions (FGDs). Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques were employed, including sentiment analysis, thematic analysis, word clouds, and Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA). Results indicate that CSR Merdeka advertisements effectively incorporate themes of national unity, with engagement levels significantly influenced by nudging techniques. The findings suggest that targeting slacktivism and clicktivism behaviours enhances message dissemination and audience engagement, making CSR campaigns more effective in fostering national unity. Recommendations are provided for future CSR campaigns to better engage audiences and promote unity through innovative content.

Keywords: Clicktivism, nudging theory, CSR Merdeka advertisements, national unity, slacktivism, social media

INTRODUCTION

National unity remains a critical goal in Malaysia's multicultural society, where diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds coexist. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Merdeka advertisements have emerged as a key tool for promoting unity, leveraging the widespread reach of social media platforms. The rise of digital activism, particularly slacktivism and clicktivism, presents opportunities and challenges in engaging audiences (Halupka, 2018). Slacktivism, characterised by minimal-effort digital

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actions like sharing or liking content, and clicktivism, involving online petitions and other low-effort online activities, have shown the potential to spread awareness and foster engagement (Smith et al., 2019). This study explores how CSR Merdeka advertisements on social media can be optimised to promote national unity by examining the relationship between these digital activism behaviours and audience engagement in national unity campaigns. Specifically, Merdeka advertisements from 2020 to 2022, marked by increased digital engagement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, are analysed.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A triangulation approach was employed to ensure comprehensive analysis, combining content analysis, surveys, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Fifteen CSR Merdeka advertisements from 2020 to 2022, produced by three prominent Malaysian corporations, Petronas, Celcom, and TM, were selected for analysis. These companies were chosen due to their significant market presence, consistent production of Merdeka-themed advertisements, and representation of diverse industries (energy, telecommunications, and technology), offering a broad perspective on CSR approaches (Singh & Misra, 2021).

Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques, including sentiment analysis, thematic analysis, word clouds, and Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), were applied to identify and analyse themes related to national unity within these advertisements (Churchill & Singh, 2022). Audience engagement and sentiment were assessed through surveys and FGDs with university students aged 20–25. This age group was selected due to its high social media usage and engagement in digital activism, making it a key demographic for understanding the impact of slacktivism and clicktivism on national unity campaigns (Skoric et al., 2016). Teenagers were not included in the sample, as the focus was on young adults with the potential for higher civic engagement and digital literacy. These are critical for understanding how minimal effort in online actions could influence larger societal outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of CSR Merdeka advertisements revealed significant insights into their effectiveness in promoting national unity through social media.

Table 1 shows that thematic analysis using NLP techniques identified togetherness, pride, and cultural diversity as dominant themes across the advertisements. The consistent use of terms like “unity,” “heritage,” and “diversity” reinforced these themes, indicating a strong focus on collective identity and national cohesion.

Sentiment analysis demonstrated a predominantly positive reception of the advertisements, with an average sentiment score of 0.78 on platforms like Twitter and YouTube. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) further corroborated this positive sentiment,

where participants expressed feelings of inspiration and connection to the conveyed messages.

Table 1
Key Findings from CSR Merdeka Advertisement Analysis

Category	Key findings
Thematic Analysis (NLP)	• Dominant themes: togetherness, pride, cultural diversity • High-frequency terms: "unity," "heritage," "diversity"
Sentiment Analysis	• Overall sentiment: Predominantly positive • Average sentiment score: 0.78 (Facebook and YouTube)
Engagement Metrics	• 85% willingness to share on social media • High prevalence of slacktivism and clicktivism (ages 20-25)
Nudging Techniques	• 25% higher engagement with personalised messaging and visual storytelling • 70% of FGD participants emphasised visual storytelling's importance

Engagement metrics highlighted the prevalence of slacktivism and clicktivism behaviours, particularly among the 20–25 age group. A substantial 85% of survey respondents indicated a willingness to share these advertisements on social media, suggesting a high potential for viral spread and increased visibility of unity-focused content.

The effectiveness of nudging techniques was evident, with personalised messaging and visual storytelling driving a 25% higher engagement rate compared to generic content. Notably, 70% of FGD participants emphasised the significance of visual storytelling in generating positive sentiment and engagement with national unity themes.

These results indicate that CSR Merdeka advertisements successfully leveraged social media to promote national unity. By incorporating emotionally resonant themes and utilising effective nudging techniques, these campaigns fostered positive sentiment and encouraged active engagement, particularly through slacktivism and clicktivism behaviours among younger audiences. This approach demonstrates the potential of digital CSR campaigns to contribute to social cohesion and national unity efforts in Malaysia.

The findings suggest that CSR Merdeka advertisements can promote national unity, especially when engaging in slacktivism and clicktivism behaviours effectively. Advertisements that employed nudging techniques such as emotional appeals and interactive content were more effective in fostering engagement. It aligns with the principles of Nudging Theory, which suggests that subtle cues and prompts can influence behaviour and decision-making (Sunstein, 2020). By appealing to the audience's emotions and social identities, these advertisements created a stronger connection to the concept of national unity.

However, while slacktivism and clicktivism can increase reach and initial engagement, their direct impact on overcoming unity barriers remains unclear and requires further

investigation. The translation of online engagement into real-world actions and attitudinal changes is complex. Other factors, such as education levels, cultural literacy, and face-to-face intercultural interactions, may also play crucial roles in promoting national unity (Pettigrew, 2021). These factors could work with digital engagement to create a more holistic approach to fostering unity. For example, individuals who are more educated about the cultural backgrounds of others may be better equipped to navigate and appreciate the messages conveyed in CSR campaigns, leading to deeper understanding and stronger unity.

The prevalence of slacktivism and clicktivism among younger audiences suggests that these behaviours can be strategically targeted to enhance the reach and impact of CSR campaigns. While these forms of digital activism may not necessarily lead to immediate real-world actions, they can catalyse further engagement. Future research should explore how to leverage these initial online interactions to encourage more meaningful participation in unity-building activities, such as community events or intercultural dialogues.

CONCLUSION

CSR Merdeka advertisements on social media have demonstrated significant potential as a tool for promoting national unity in Malaysia. By strategically targeting slacktivism and clicktivism behaviours and applying the Nudging Theory, these campaigns can enhance audience engagement and foster positive sentiment towards unity. However, it is crucial to recognise that digital interactions are just one component of a broader strategy for fostering national unity.

This research contributes to the field by providing insights into the effectiveness of digital CSR campaigns in the Malaysian context, particularly through the understudied lens of slacktivism and clicktivism. It offers practical implications for leveraging digital engagement in future CSR campaigns while highlighting the need for a multi-faceted approach to fostering national unity. For CSR campaigns to have a more profound impact, emotionally resonant and relatable content that appeals to Malaysia's diverse identities should be integrated with offline initiatives, such as educational programs and opportunities for meaningful intercultural exchanges. These efforts can play a comprehensive role in strengthening Malaysia's social fabric.

Further research is needed to fully understand the long-term impact of digital activism on national unity and to identify complementary strategies that can enhance its effectiveness. Ultimately, combining online engagement with real-world actions will be key to promoting a more cohesive and harmonious Malaysian society.

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