

## The Leadership Strategy of Malaysian Celebrities in Engaging Youth through Social Media Platforms

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### Abstract

Malaysian celebrities are increasingly using social media to inspire young people to join political parties and community organizations. This study examines celebrities' social media strategies with Malaysian youth. The qualitative study questioned 12 celebrities about how they use social media to lead. The researcher ran thematic analysis and transcribed interviews. Technology makes communicating with friends, followers, and celebrities easier, establishing bonds. Talking to celebrities' live thrills fans. Celebrities can discuss government policies with fans. Community leaders can connect residents with authorities to solve national and social issues. This method raises awareness, promotes policy and legislation, and improves social media. Social media is essential for information networks and social technology. Examine Malaysian and foreign celebrities, as well as many young social media followers' leadership methods. It helps explain Malaysian celebrities' cultural peculiarities and techniques.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Strategy, Celebrities, Youth, Social Media

### Introduction

The rise of social media and the reliance of young people and celebrities on this platform have captured the public's attention. Over the past few years, there has been a discernible rise in the development of innovative technology. As a result, social media has come to play an increasingly important role in the lives of celebrities. It has made it easier for them to maintain strong relationships with their fans, particularly those who are younger. As a consequence of the widespread use of social media platforms, particularly among younger age groups, people all around the world are observing this phenomenon because it is so prevalent. Not only can various social media platforms, such as TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, function as

sources of entertainment, but they also serve as instruments for community-based organizational activities, campaigns, and demonstrations of political leadership skills. People believe that social media is responsible for the birth of two significant new things: exciting new challenges for celebrities and new chances for young people. The impact of social media on the participation of young people in political activities has been significant, attracting much interest from specialists, as stated by Bayer, J. B., Anderson, I. A., & Tokunaga, R. S. (2022). Popular culture frequently references and satirizes the substantial impact of habit on social media use, even if it is not explicitly labeled as "habit." This phenomenon can be attributed to the recognition that the political attitudes and actions cultivated by individuals throughout adolescence tend to persist into adulthood and contribute to the development of leadership skills and maturity. This article is a preliminary study of how the usage of social media by celebrities as part of their leadership strategies to target younger generations is presented.

Nur Nadhirah (2018) asserts that social media plays a crucial function as a platform and application, facilitating the generation and exchange of information and knowledge among users. Individuals worldwide use social media platforms to communicate and exchange information. Furthermore, it is garnering recognition and emerging as a progressively vital source of knowledge (Kim et al., 2012). Social media platforms greatly enhance individuals' capacity to exchange knowledge and information with each other.

When examining the relationship between celebrities and social media, it is clear that they place a high value on digital well-being. Depending on each person's unique situation, this refers to the personal achievement of striking the right balance between staying connected to the digital world and taking breaks from it. Certain factors relate to the device and its use in a specific setting (Abeele, 2021). Prior media psychology studies have predominantly concentrated on consumer quality. Adolescents and famous individuals are the predominant consumers of social media on mobile devices. In order to comprehend smartphone usage and its associated personal encounters (e.g., as demonstrated by Bayer et al., 2023; Klimmt et al., 2017), it is critical to take into account the device's attributes, which in isolation can potentially exert influence. It is crucial to afford equal consideration to the majority of digital devices and their applications. This gadget's primary function is to activate the mobile phone. The subject of attraction has garnered significant interest, as evidenced and acknowledged by researchers such as Fasoli (2021), Flayelle et al. (2023), and Montag & Elhai (2023).

The phenomenon of social media emerged in the new millennium, beginning in 2003. It all started with Myspace. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are some examples of social media platforms. People around the world, especially in Southeast Asian countries, currently use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp as the most popular and prominent social media platforms. After all, the rapid growth of social media has resulted in significant shifts in the ways in which youth locate groups of youth who have the same interests, receive information or expertise, and exchange views. People use Instagram, one of the most popular social media platforms, to follow famous people, media figures, and celebrities, as it not only allows users to share photos and videos but also functions as a social networking tool. First released in 2010, Instagram is a photo-sharing app that has gained immense popularity worldwide, including in Malaysia. According to Lee (2016), Malaysians are among the most active Instagram users in the Asia-Pacific region. This social media platform is popular not only among adolescents and young adults but also among middle-aged and senior citizens. Other

than Facebook, Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms in Malaysia, with an increased number of users from 2016 to 2017 (MCMC, 2017). This finding comes as no surprise given that the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) conducted the survey on Internet users in Malaysia in 2017. (MCMC, 2017) Other than Facebook, Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms in Malaysia. Facebook currently owns the applications.

According to Statista's data published by Müller (2021), as of August 2021, the number of Malaysians actively participating in social media platforms was approximately 27.78 million. Müller (2021) predicts a further increase in this figure to 30.38 million by 2025. Research data reveals that individuals in Malaysia dedicate an average of 5 hours and 47 minutes daily to engaging with various social media sites. (Ho, 2019). Notably, research also revealed that women are more likely than men to devote a larger portion of their time to social media engagement. According to Ho (2019), a mere 11% of males allocate over 9 hours per day to their activities, in contrast to a significantly higher proportion of females, specifically 21%.

This study aims to examine how celebrities in Malaysia portray national leadership through social media platforms. This analysis aims to highlight the significance of the content Malaysian celebrities disseminate on social media platforms and examine its influence on the younger Malaysian electorate. This feature's primary goal is to empower readers to identify and critically analyze the impact of Malaysian celebrities in a wider context, especially when they take on leadership roles in disseminating information and knowledge via social media platforms. One approach to achieving this objective is to gather evidence pertaining to the factors associated with the anticipated involvement of Malaysian celebrities. From this standpoint, in order to enhance the utilization of this comprehension and foster greater educational prospects, it is imperative to motivate additional young Malaysian superstars to embrace leadership positions.

Social media platforms frequently discuss politics and elections (Muniandy & Muniandy, 2013; Shirky, 2011; Murwani, 2018; Ritongaq, 2019). This platform gives Malaysian celebrities the opportunity to interact informally with their followers and fans, allowing them to pose questions and articulate their perspectives on leadership, as well as declare their preferred political party that they believe is most suitable for the younger demographic. Not only is this information domain significant, but social media platforms also share a substantial array of supplementary information domains. This phenomenon can be attributed to the pervasive nature of social media, which has penetrated every aspect of human existence. In relation to politics and elections, social media platforms have a profound impact on users, exerting considerable influence in these domains. The primary purpose of social media is to facilitate the dissemination of information, thereby exerting an impact on its readers (Bakshy, Rosenn, Marlow, & Adamic, 2012). Ye and Wu (2010) argue that individuals' content on social media platforms has the potential to influence the wider public. Previous studies have extensively examined the impact of social media on the political process.

Due to the increased sophistication of social media user management and the advent of novel social media monitoring companies, social media has facilitated the commercialization of electoral data to unprecedented levels. The potential exists for social media to transform election information into a marketable commodity, wherein politicians financially

compensate for its creation, voters consume and generate it, and social media entrepreneurs or practitioners organize and shape it (Saraswati, 2018: 61-62). As to Murwani's (2018: 114) findings, individuals vying for their respective positions have shown a proficient grasp of leveraging social media platforms. They employed social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to enhance engagement with citizens, particularly targeting young individuals who were experiencing their initial eligibility to participate in voting.

### **The Purposeful Engagement of Important Celebrities in Social Media Platforms is Observed To Have a Significant Impact on the Younger Demographic**

The use of social media gives leaders the opportunity to directly communicate with employees and customers (Alghawi, Yan, & Wei, 2014; Huang & Yeo, 2018), maintain control over the tone, cadence, and timing of disclosures (Jung, Naughton, Tahoun, & Wang, 2018), and build trust with investors and financial communities (Elliott, Grant, & Hodge, 2018; Grant, Hodge, & Sinha, 2018). Strategic leaders could use social media for more than just information sharing; they could also use it to gather unadulterated, unfiltered insight. According to Castello, Etter, and Nielsen (2016), as power becomes more diffuse and diffused across ecosystem partners, strategic leaders are also resorting to social media as a means of generating attention, soliciting support, and obtaining resources. And as the complexity of organizational problems continues to increase, social media provides a platform for enhancing interfirm collaboration and the co-creation of knowledge (Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfield, 2013; Seidl & Werle, 2018). According to Rindova et al. (2006), one of the distinguishing characteristics of celebrity is that it garners large-scale public attention and favorable emotional responses from stakeholders. Whether one conceptualizes celebrity at the level of an individual or a corporation, this remains true. Stakeholders confer celebrity and other social approval assets on an organization (Zavyalova et al., 2017), and engaging in celebrities requires reciprocal exchanges with stakeholders, particularly the media and key information intermediaries (Sinha et al., 2012).

It could take the form of actions designed to position the company at the center of conversations and capture attentional market share, or it could take the form of self-promotional strategies targeted at strengthening the leader's persona. According to Rindova et al. (2006), successful strategic leaders are able to attract a greater amount of public attention by engaging many stakeholders in debates, discussions, and even scandals. Other methods of achieving celebrities involve leaders either inserting themselves as protagonists in already-existing conversations and debates or contriving drama in an effort to garner more attention and a higher online impact (Huang & Yeo, 2018). As suggested by Rindova et al. (2006), the construction of a dramatic story that drives audience attention, identification, and engagement with such enterprises by conjuring up a struggle and a protagonist is one possible extension of the practice of celebrity endorsement.

### **The Role of Social Media in Political Communication**

The actions of a variety of different parties can affect political discourse on social media. Partisanship, intra-party politics, and interaction with the general public all contribute, in concert, to the formation of complex communication patterns. Platform design and algorithmic decisions also play a role, in addition to people actively sabotaging interactions and contributing to the formation of a politically complicated environment. According to the findings of a number of different studies (Juan Carlos et al., 2018; Salman et al., 2018; Gunn

& Eli, 2013; Stefan & Linh, 2013), politicians employ platforms in a variety of different ways depending on the audience and the sociotechnical environment.

Orestis et al. (2018) examine the use of customized advertising services, while Robin Effing et al. (2011) investigate whether politicians' use of the platform influences the number of people who vote in elections. Other lines of investigation, in particular, concentrate on consumers' political behavior. They examine the use of social media platforms by various political partisans (Juan et al., 2019; Robin et al., 2011), the general reporting of user activity (Orestis et al., 2020), and the polarity and message content (Despoina et al., 2017; Raphael Ottoni et al., 2018). Juan et al. (2019) and Robin et al. (2019) contain these studies.

While there are also studies that focus on the use of social media during a period of social unrest (Onur et al., 2014), platform analysis as a space for social movement coordination (Zeynep & Christopher, 2012), and investigating how the behavior of different social groups differs and under what conditions they are polarized and separate (Christopher et al., 2018; Michael et al., 2011). There have been a number of studies that have investigated the relationship between social media and political communication strategies, both during and after election seasons, in American corporations (Gunn, 2017; Nir et al., 2019; Daniel & Shannon, 2018). Researchers have conducted these studies on a variety of social media platforms, but not on TikTok yet. Researchers in Malaysia have conducted studies on the use of social media in communication and political campaigns, but they have focused more on Facebook and Twitter application platforms (Shafizan & Kamaruzzaman, 2020; Gomes, 2014; Sern & Zainuddin, 2014; Sani & Azizuddin, 2014). However, there has not been any research done on the topic, such as through the application TikTok, which has been playing an increasingly important role in the arena of national politics since the year 2022.

## **Methods**

Conducting in-depth interviews facilitated the collection of qualitative data. The study sample consisted of Malaysian celebrities with direct involvement in various fields such as singing, acting, music, preaching, directing, sports, and modeling. These individuals also hold positions within political parties or are at least members of political parties. Additionally, they serve as founders, spokespersons, and ambassadors for community-based organizations. The justification for choosing this particular group of participants was to obtain a more thorough understanding of the possible involvement of Malaysian celebrities in leadership through social media, namely through involving young people in their strategies. Therefore, the study on celebrity leadership tactics (Rutledge and Hogg, 2020) deems the use of in-depth interviews suitable for elucidating how Malaysian celebrities use social media platforms to demonstrate leadership behaviors that could influence the younger generation.

Rutledge and Hogg (2020) describe the in-depth interview as a qualitative research methodology that involves conducting comprehensive interviews with a limited number of participants. Furthermore, Creswell (2014) asserts that various methods, including face-to-face interactions, telephone conversations, and focus group settings, can administer in-depth interviews. These approaches entail participants' systematic inquiry to gather pertinent information about the study. To gather the necessary information, we conducted a thorough interview using open-ended questions that facilitated a discovery-oriented approach to gather detailed information about an individual's perspective, personal experiences, emotions, and the significance they attributed to a particular subject or matter (Rutledge & Hogg, 2020).

The researchers instructed the participants to use semi-structured interview questions. The researcher designed these open-ended questions to comprehensively explore the celebrities' preferences and intentions for using social media for campaigning, leadership demonstrations, and live storytelling sessions with their fans. The researcher also used probing questions to delve deeper into the celebrities' responses. This study examines the significance of leadership and partisanship in politics, as well as their role in community-based organizations' activities specifically targeted at the youth demographic. In order to facilitate more comfortable and willing participation from individuals, researchers employ in-depth interviews to conduct comprehensive interviews with a limited number of participants. This approach is particularly useful in examining the influence of youth leadership through social media platforms, specifically in raising awareness about the significance of making informed choices regarding leaders and political parties (Ruthledge & Hogg, 2020).

## **Results**

### **Biographical Profile of the Participants**

This study uses a selection of twelve influential figures in the entertainment industry as the main sources of information. The entertainment sector in Malaysia can be classified into three distinct categories: mainstream celebrities, social media celebrities, and independent celebrities. This study specifically concentrates on popular celebrities who have different backgrounds, ages, levels of education, and experiences.

There is a grand total of twelve celebrity figures, comprising ten males and two females. The majority of the people surveyed fall between the ages of 38 and 74. The informants have extensive knowledge and experience in the entertainment business, and they hold influential positions. Five people were born in Kuala Lumpur, while the other four are from the states of Malacca, Selangor, Penang, and Negeri Sembilan. To preserve the anonymity of the participants, we substituted their real identities with pseudonyms.

The participants had diverse educational backgrounds, ranging from those with a Malaysian education certificate, signifying high school completion, to those with a doctoral degree. Interviews revealed that all the participants possessed substantial professional experience, held positions, and demonstrated active involvement in their respective political parties and organizations. Except for four individuals, all of them serve as ambassadors for political parties, carrying out a crucial role inside their respective organizations. Table 1 presents the biographical profiles of the participants. The following table provides a brief summary of the biographical details of informants who have chosen to use pseudonyms.

Table 1

*Biographical Profile of Informants*

No.	Informants	Age	Craft	Educational Standing	Experience in organization
1	IC 1	51	Producer, Director, Actor-Singer, Comedian, Songwriter, TV Host, Screenwriter	Bachelor	20
2	IC 2	74	Singer, Composer, and Actor	MCE	20
3	IC 3	44	Actor, Singer, Songwriter, Chef, Motivational Consultant, Lyricist, Entrepreneur	PhD	10
4	IC 4	51	Producer, Director, Actor	Diploma	20
5	IC 5	44	Singer, TV Presenter, and Executive Director	MBA	10
6	IC 6	38	Producer, Director, Actor, TV Presenter, Screenwriter, Politician	Bachelor	10
7	IC 7	38	TV Presenter, Freelance Religious Speaker, Lecturer	Bachelor	10
8	IC 8	41	Actor, Politician	Bachelor	10
9	IC 9	48	Actor, TV Presenter, Comedian	Diploma	10
10	IC 10	47	Singer, Composer, and Actor	Bachelor	10
11	IC 11	40	TV Presenter, Coach	Master	10
12	IC 12	42	Singer, Actor, TV Presenter	Master	10

**Themes**

In this study, the themes that emerge through the identification of noteworthy statements made by celebrities align with the research topic. The subsequent screening process consolidates each significant statement into a cohesive unit that embodies the essence of the thematic domain. After the screening process concludes, celebrities, political party leaders, and community-based organization leaders will organize and integrate the developed themes into their strategies.

Table 2

*Themes of Study*

Research Question	Theme
RQ 1: How do Malaysian celebrities strategize to lead political parties and community-based organizations?	1. Engaging through Social Media Platforms

***Engaging through social media platforms***

This topic provides a thorough understanding of the efforts of up-and-coming celebrities, who are not yet well-known but have recently gained familiarity with the inner workings of bureaucracy and authority in society. They aim to shape and predict the future socio-political landscape of the nation.

The first celebrity source has elaborated on their wise opinion.

*“The influentials of celebrity they have engage with social media and it follows with million followers who not only interested in their private life but also their leadership charisma from movie and songs they have showed and very important the fans are interested to know what political parties’ celebrities joined and what activities provided by celebrities in the community-based organizations”.*

The second celebrity source has expounded upon their astute viewpoint.

*“Celebrities exert a significant influence on social media, attracting millions of followers who display interest not only in their personal lives but also in their leadership qualities as demonstrated through their work in films and songs. Furthermore, fans are keen to ascertain the political affiliations of these celebrities and the community-based initiatives they engage in.”*

The third celebrity highlights how social media and digitalization played major role in their leadership campaign

*“Celebrities have a huge impact on the world of social media; their millions of fans are interested not only in their private lives but also in their abilities as leaders as seen in their movies and songs. In addition, followers are interested in learning about the celebrities’ stances on social and political issues and the volunteer work they do in their communities.”*

The third celebrity underscores the significant influence of social media and digitization in the portrayal of their leadership qualities.

*“Celebrities have a significant influence on the realm of social media; the millions of people who follow them are interested not just in their personal lives but also in their abilities as leaders, as demonstrated in their films and songs. In addition, fans are interested in gathering information regarding the celebrities’ positions on a variety of social and political topics, as well as the volunteer work that is done in the communities in which they reside.”*

The inclusion of the fourth celebrity highlights the notable impact of social media and digitization on the representation of their leadership attributes.

*“Celebrities wield considerable power on social media; the millions of people who follow them are interested not only in their personal lives, but also in their ability as leaders, as exhibited in their films and songs. Furthermore, fans are interested in learning about the celebrities’*



*stance on a number of social and political issues, as well as their charity activity in the communities in which they live.”*

The fifth celebrity shared the idea of digitalization with social media and their followers.

*“Celebrities have great power on social media because millions of people follow them for their personal lives and leadership in films and songs. Fans are also interested in celebrities' social and political views and community charity work.”*

The sixth celebrity commented on the digitalization of followers through social media usage.

*“Due to the fact that millions of people follow them for both their personal lives and the leadership roles they play in films and music, celebrities have a tremendous deal of power on social media. Fans are often interested in the social and political beliefs of celebrities, as well as the community charity work that celebrities do.”*

The seventh celebrity made a remark regarding the process of converting followers into digital entities through the utilization of social media platforms.

*“Influential celebrities use social media, and as a result, they have millions of fans who are interested not only in their personal lives but also in their leadership skills as shown in movies and songs. It's also important for fans to know which political parties' celebrities belong to and what activities they do for community-based organizations.”*

## **Discussion**

The ongoing fascination with celebrities has captured fans and followers for a significant period of time. The long-lasting fascination with celebrities has enthralled fans and followers for a significant period of time. However, technological improvements have greatly altered the extent of communication among fans, followers, and celebrities, leading to a more immediate and direct relationship. The shift from traditional television programs and periodicals focusing on celebrities to online platforms, including celebrity and social media websites, videos, and live updates, has enabled fans and followers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their favorite celebrities' lives, their perspectives on political issues, and social well-being issues in community-based organizations.

Interacting with celebrities in real-time is a thrilling experience for fans and followers. The widespread adoption of various social media platforms, such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, has resulted in a surplus of easily obtainable data regarding celebrities, covering their participation in political leadership and affiliation with community-based organizations. Social media has greatly altered how celebrities can carefully shape their online leadership image and develop direct contact with their followers and fans. However, technological improvements have greatly altered the extent of communication among fans, followers, and celebrities, leading to a more immediate and direct relationship. The transition from conventional television programs and periodicals that focus on celebrities to online platforms, such as celebrity and social media websites, has allowed fans and followers to have a more comprehensive understanding of their favorite celebrities' lives. The celebrities who participated in political parties will easily interact with their followers, explain their stand, and share the aspirations of government policies by doing interactive sessions with their followers and helping the local people who have difficulties reach the authorities by using celebrities as mediators, bridging the gap between people and leaders of communities to solve national and social issues. Celebrities can champion social issues.

Intelligent celebrities leverage social media to accelerate the process of communication, interaction, and thoughtful sharing with their fans and authority. This method aims to raise awareness about issues, encourage the implementation of policies and legislation for deliberation, and provide a holistic solution to improve the efficacy of social media. The extensive utilization of social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook have led to an excessive amount of readily available information on celebrities, including their involvement in political leadership and associations with community-based organizations. The advent of social media has had a profound impact on the ability of celebrities to meticulously craft their online persona and immediately interact with their followers and admirers. Social media plays a crucial role in communication networks and social technology. The aforementioned convergence has altered the manner in which individuals and celebrities engage with one another (Thomas, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

Malaysian celebrities have the ability to effectively convey their current leadership style, while voters have a complete understanding of their leadership objectives and aspirations. It is crucial for well-established political parties and community organizations to take on the responsibility of nurturing these exceptional individuals as potential leaders with great respect and admiration. Providing individuals with the right leadership training can help them develop their innate leadership skills and polish the ones they already have. By embodying cleanliness, honesty, efficiency, and reliability, celebrities are able to make meaningful contributions to society. To acquire important insights on effective leadership techniques on social media platforms, researchers can choose to conduct interviews or surveys with influential figures in the Malaysian entertainment business. When including young people, questions may center around the objectives of political and community-based organizations, the obstacles they face, and the most efficient tactics they use. Perform a thorough examination of young viewers' perspectives. Conduct a poll or arrange a focused discussion group to determine the factors that impact users' preference for specific celebrities on social media, their views on the leadership qualities demonstrated by these celebrities, and their behaviors when engaging with content. Examine and distinguish the leadership strategies employed by Malaysian celebrities and global superstars who possess a substantial number of youthful followers on social media platforms. It can offer a crucial comprehension of the cultural nuances and unique tactics employed by Malaysian celebrities. Scholars can gain a comprehensive understanding of the leadership strategies employed by Malaysian public figures on social media, as well as their efficacy in effectively captivating the younger generation by engaging in rigorous research. This research has the potential to offer useful insights for both scholarly discourse and practical strategies for efficiently leveraging celebrity influence to accomplish positive societal progress.

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