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Framing Malaysia Heritage Through The Lens of Online Media

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Abstract

The heritage of a country provides clues to its past and how its society has evolved over time. Heritage includes both tangible and intangible aspects of the country. Existing research on heritage by the mass media has primarily focused on tourism, historical conservation, or landscape value in particular. Thus, there is a lack of studies looking at other valuable heritage issues in the country. This study adopts framing analysis to determine the representational dynamics employed in online news articles on heritage issues in Malaysia. Data were collected during the study timeframe from online newspapers in Malaysia between January and July 2022, and it was found that 176 articles covered Malaysia's heritage. The findings show that English language news portals published the highest rate of heritage news. Heritage news was mostly published as straight news type of news and used authority as the main source of information. This study identifies two frames, which are tangible and intangible heritage. The findings of the study are essential for creating awareness among the public about the different types of cultural heritage available in the country.

Keywords: Heritage, Malaysia, Framing Analysis, Heritage Representation, Online Newspaper.

Introduction

Malaysia is one of the countries with a rich heritage that contributes to the establishment of its national identity. Malaysia has strong historical and cultural roots because it is a multicultural country with many different cultures (Ow et al., 2023). A country preserves its identity due to the sociocultural traditions of its residents (Orbasli, 2001). It is the customs that have been passed down from generation to generation that make up the country's

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intangible cultural heritage and give them their distinct character (Lim, 2011). Therefore, historical communities are pivotal for heritage and cultural studies.

Although Malaysia inherits abundance of heritage but the understanding on the heritage in the country is vague or unclear. According to Timothy (2018), a legacy is a valuable inheritance from the past that will be handed on to future generations. Heritage resources in Malaysia are substantial and extensive throughout the entire nation, and they comprise several objects, locations, and events that were not previously regarded to be typical heritage tourism products. Moreover, individuals are growing more sophisticated in their travel preferences and aspirations, requiring a greater focus on the underlying significance of places, local identities, and their own relationships to the locations they visit (Timothy, 2018). These improvements suggest a growing appreciation for Malaysia's historic tourism.

The environments, tools, traditional dwellings, and monuments of historic communities frequently express and sustain its intangible living heritage. Nevertheless, historic cities and their communities, particularly those designated under UNESCO World Heritage Sites, should be conserved. Modernization, urbanisation, and globalisation frequently endanger the sustainability of World Heritage Sites. Especially when historic cities attract capital (re)investments that result in real estate price appreciation, the commodification of history, displacements, population reduction, and demographic shifts are likely to occur (De Cesari & Herzfeld, 2015). Thus, it is essential for the people to be aware on the significant of these heritage for them to value them in ensuring its sustainability.

Media coverage of heritage is of crucial importance. It is essential to remind and increase the awareness of the public on the heritage in the country and also to educate them in valuing the existence of the heritage. Media representation of heritage is thus vital to aid the understanding of people in valuing the nation's heritage (Gore et al., 2005; Rust, 2015; Showkat, 2016; Tan and Karmilah, 2019). Examining media framing in terms of understanding the value of heritage is therefore vital for gaining a deeper understanding of this topic. It is also important to note that there are few studies that use media or communication theory to analyse public knowledge and understanding of heritage issues in the media. Therefore, by employing framing as the theoretical framework for this study, it would complement prior research on the communication spectrum.

Literature Review

Heritage in Malaysia

Malaysia is a country of many races and cultures, which are enriched by its historical journey of colonisation and independence. The diversity of ethnicities present in Malaysia has resulted in the development of distinct local knowledge disciplines, such as architecture, handicrafts, traditional costumes, music, and dance, which depict a colourful legacy and a fusion culture.

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Valuing heritage is one method for revitalising historic cities. Malaysia is rich with its intangible living heritage as well as its tangible heritage. Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage defines it as "customs and oral traditions, music, languages, poetry, dance, festivities, religious ceremonies, as well as systems of healing, traditional knowledge systems, and skills connected to the material aspects of culture, such as tools and the habitat" (Bouchenaki, 2003). It suggests that the relationship between tangible and intangible history is inter-related, which Kirshenblatt-Gimblett also supports 2004. Protecting cultural or living heritage necessitates caring for its tangible heritage.

Cultural heritage is the collection of things that are important to a community, a nation, or humanity as a whole. This includes monuments (like buildings, inscriptions, and cave dwellings), groups of buildings, sites, and areas, such as archaeological sites. Natural heritage includes natural features, geological and physiographical formations, and defined natural areas that are home to animals and plants that are in danger of going extinct. It also includes natural sites that are important from a scientific, conservation, or natural beauty point of view (UNESCO, 1972). Intangible heritage means "traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants," such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practises, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practises about nature and the universe, or the knowledge and skills to make traditional crafts (UNESCO, 2003).

According to the National Heritage Act (2016) intangible cultural heritage is an act or movement of people which can be seen, touched, tasted, smelt or heard, when it is done or exists, but no longer can be enjoyed when it was lost or missing. National Heritage Act 2005 also explained that the cultural heritage intangible is like a form of expression, language, utterances, sayings, songs produced by music, note, lyrics, can be heard, singing, folk songs, oral traditions, poetry, dance, acting and others that are generated through the performing arts. In addition, theatrical performance, sound and music arrangement, and martial arts are also a heritage that reflect Malaysian culture (Salleh, 2010).

Media Portrayal of Malaysia Heritage

Heritage is a living entity that is susceptible to the passage of time, shifting geographical, historical, and social conditions, and human action. It could possibly be interpreted as a discourse between the past and the future. As a discourse, heritage is not presented but rather accepted; it is made and altered, not given (Giaccardi, 2012). Therefore, heritage can be seen of as an expression of the collective memory of a family, of a social group, or even, in rare instances, of humankind as a whole (Ascaniis & Cantoni, 2022). Heritage conservation is indeed an important issue in Malaysia (Tan & Karmilah, 2019).

Despite the importance of natural heritage to world heritage, the word 'heritage' is closely associated with the word 'culture,' emphasising the dimension of time, as heritage is passed through time, and human intentional action, as heritage is passed from one generation to the next because it is deemed worthy of sharing and preserving (Ascaniis & Cantoni, 2022). Hence it is significant for the media to place importance on the awareness in valuing our heritage in Malaysia. Recent study by Tan and Karmilah (2019) indicated that, the media has not put much attention issue related to the heritage. In line with this, Abdullah et al (2021) stated that Malaysian media have not given much attention on issues related to heritage despite being a significant subject in Malaysia.

Media coverage and portrayal are essential in educating and creating awareness among readers of the particular country in order for them to value their heritage. This is because, according to Yang (2021) through media representations, readers establish a way of making

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sense about themselves and the world. Therefore, media play an important role in educating and also providing knowledge on the heritage in emphasising the importance of heritage conservation to the public.

Framing Analysis

The study of how humans are aided in their attempt to make sense of the world around them by means of pre-existing schemas is the focus of framing theory (Goffman,1974). Contemporary events in the media are organised according to these schemas to facilitate readers' comprehension (Reese, 2007). Frames help explain disparate and thinly connected occurrences "in terms of causes and effects and solutions," thus, making readers feel they grasp and understand events (Boesman et al., 2017). Framing refers to the process of making some elements salient while obscuring others in producing content (Vu & Lynn, 2020).

A news media frame is "a cognitive device used in information encoding, interpreting, and retrieving; it is communicable; and related to journalistic professional routines and conventions" (Pan & Kosicki, 2001). As Entman (1993) noted, framing process involves selecting and rendering aspects of an event salient so as "to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (p. 52). The mass media play a crucial part in the framing process. The media's framing of issues may also lead to divergent perspectives among individuals. Different responses are elicited from individuals depending on whether the information is presented in a favourable or negative light (Ferguson and Gallagher 2007). Consequently, the mass media are significant informational conduits with the capacity to influence public opinion on certain problems.

Essentially, the main objective in framing is selection and highlighting. This is because the public and policymakers might be affected by media attention to pay more attention to and reflect upon a topic of significance (Soroka, 2002). In conclusion, the impacts of framing are unpredictable and may have an effect on the general population based on the issues themselves. Thus, coverage of an issue or occurrence in terms of heritage based on specific themes and traits could provide a deeper understanding of the subject and have an impact on how the audience perceives it.

Methodology

This study employed quantitative content analysis. In quantitative content analysis approach, the data are presented in the form of frequency, in terms of numbers of article or percentage (Krippendorff, 2019). A total of 176 articles were drawn from January 2022 until July 2022. This time frame is chosen during the study is conducted. This study examines how the online news reports heritage-related news within a year of 2022. According to the reporting website, there are 30 popular platforms of online news in Malaysia (Media Pod, 2023). In this study, the articles were collected from all online news platforms archives using keywords such as 'heritage', 'tradition', 'custom', 'inheritance' and 'legacy'. However, there were only 18 online news media platforms that published news related to the keywords mentioned as stated in table 1. The unit of analysis was article, which included straight news, features, editorials, column, and letters.

The framing of heritage news in selected Malaysia online news portal was analysed based on three categories which are (i) news coverage, (ii) types of news, (iii) news source and (iv) news frames. This study employed an inductive coding approach, where the researcher established

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categories after examination of data. The inductive coding approach examines texts or an article with an open mind to identify all potential frames (Matthes & Kohring, 2008).

Findings and Discussion

(i) News Coverage

The following is a list of online news portal and number of articles that appear when searching for the keywords

Table 1
List of online news portal and number of heritage-related articles

Language	No.	Online news	Number of articles (N=176)
Malay	1	Berita Harian Online	5
	2	Harian Metro Online	6
	3	Astro Awani Online	6
	4	Utusan Malaysia Online	5
	5	Sinar Harian Online	3
English	6	Free Malaysia Today	25
	7	Malaymail	14
	8	The Rakyat Post	2
	9	Malaysiakini	5
	10	The Star Online	15
	11	The Sun Daily	3
	12	Sarawak Report	1
	13	New Straits Time Online	10
	14	The Borneo Post	5
Chinese	15	Sin Chew	24
	16	Oriental Daily	39
	17	Kwongwah	6
	18	China Press	2

Table 1 shows that a total of 18 online news platforms were selected based on the number of heritage-related articles published, ensuring a sample coverage that represents the online news readership in Malaysia. In this study, five Malay language, nine English language, and four Chinese language online news platforms were analysed.

The analysis reveals that English language news portals published the highest percentage of heritage-related news, with a total of 80 articles (46%). This was followed by Chinese language news portals at 40% (N=71), and Malay language news portals at 14% (N=25). Among the Chinese online news portals, Oriental Daily recorded the highest number of heritage news articles with 39, followed by Free Malaysia Today with 25 articles and Sin Chew with 24 articles.

During the study period, the Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2022) reported the top five Malaysian online news portals with the highest reach in 2022: (1) Malaysiakini, (2) Astro Awani Online, (3) The Star Online, (4) Berita Harian Online, and (5) Harian Metro Online. These top five news portals accounted for 21% (N=37) of the heritage-related news articles published in 2022. Among them, The Star Online had the highest coverage of heritage news during the study period. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of the news articles.

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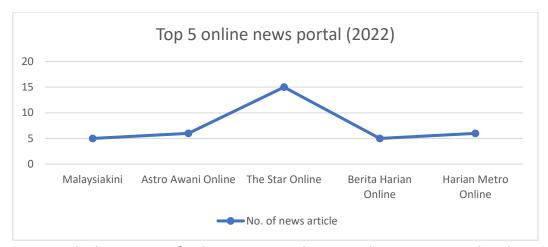


Figure 1: Top 5 highest rating of online news portal covering heritage news related.

(ii) Type of news

Based on the content analysis, the news articles can be categorised into four categories which are straight news, editorial, column and letter. Characteristics for type of news are as follows:

- **Straight news:** Basic straightforward news stories, usually providing facts and information.
- **Editorial:** A recurring space in a newspaper where a writer regularly expresses their own research, views, or opinions.
- **Column:** A section of the newspaper where a particular writer, often an expert or recognized figure in a specific field, shares their views, opinions, analysis, or commentary on various topics of interest.
- Letters: Letters by individuals and public giving their views on an issue or topic

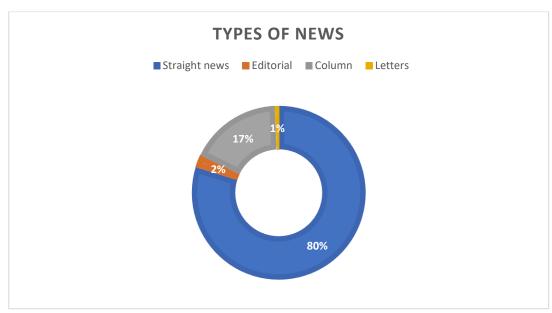


Figure 2: Types of news

Figure 2 shows that the majority of heritage news articles (80%, N=135) were published as straight news, while 17% (N=29) were in column format, and only 3% were in the form of editorials and letters. Zhang and Johnson (2010) assert that straight news reporting plays a

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vital role in solidifying the reputation of news outlets by emphasizing factual accuracy, transparency, and impartiality. Straight news reporting aims to present information without bias or personal opinions.

Table 2
Types of news covering heritage news

Item	Malay language (N=25)	English (N=80)	Chinese (N=71)
Straight news	21	56	58
Editorial	1	3	0
Column	2	17	10
Letters	1	4	3

Table 2 shows the distribution of types of news covering heritage news based on Malay, English and Chinese language news portals. Table 2 indicate that for straight news, Malay language news portal scores the highest percentage, 84% of the heritage news, followed by Chinese language portal, 82% and 70% for English language news portal. However, Chinese news portal attains the highest frequency which a total of 58 heritage articles were published as a straight news. The data shows that straight news type for heritage articles is more prevalent in Malay and Chinese language news compared to English language news portal. Columns are regular features written by columnist who often expresses their perspectives on various topics. In the context if heritage news, column articles might include expert insights or interpretations of heritage related issues. Based on the data gathered in Table 2, English and Chinese news portal have published a total of 27 heritage articles in column meanwhile only 2 articles were published in Malay language news portal.

Overall, the data suggests that straight news articles form most of the heritage news coverage, focusing on objective reporting of factual information. However, there is also a significant presence of opinion-oriented content, including editorial articles, column articles, and letters, which provide a platform for expressing different viewpoints, interpretations, and public engagement with heritage-related issues.

(iii) News Sources in Reporting Heritage

This study identifies five categories of news sources pertaining to authorities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academician, general public and other sources. Table 3 shows that authorities were the most frequently used sources which equal to 47% (83 articles). Authorities, such as government officials, experts, and spokespersons, often have access to valuable and reliable information. They are positioned to provide insights, data, and official statements on various issues, including policy decisions, public safety, and legal matters (Deuze & Witschge, 2018). This is one of the reasons why, majority of news are referring to authorities as sources.

Other sources came in second with a total of 71 articles. This category likely comprises a diverse range of sources that do not fit into the aforementioned categories. It includes business owner, artist, performer, event organiser, independent journalists, freelance writers, guest contributors, etc. These articles may offer unique perspectives, alternative viewpoints, or niche coverage of heritage-related issues. Meanwhile, sources like general public and academician record 10 articles and 7 articles respectively. Representatives from NGOs was the least used sources which is only five articles. Including sources beyond authorities allows for a broader range of perspectives to be represented in news coverage. Non-authoritative

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sources such as community members, grassroots organizations, and affected individuals can provide unique insights, lived experiences, and alternative viewpoints that may not be captured by authorities alone. Hanusch and Vos (2016) emphasise the importance of incorporating diverse sources to enhance the pluralism and inclusivity of news reporting.

Table 3

News sources used in the coverage of heritage news.

Item	Malay (N=25)	English (N=80)	Chinese (N=71)	Total (N=176)
Authorities	16	36	31	83
NGOs	1	1	3	5
Academician	2	3	2	7
General Public	2	6	2	10
Others	4	34	33	71

(iv) News Frame

The findings identified two main frames in the sample which are tangible and intangible heritage. Tangible heritage includes all material traces such as archaeological sites, historical monuments, artifacts and objects that are significant to a community, a nation or and humanity (Hasan, 2014). Intangible heritage defined as a source of identity, creativity, and diversity. Examples of intangible heritage are custom and oral traditions, music, languages, poetry, dance, festivities, religious ceremonies, traditional knowledge systems, skills connected with material aspects of culture (John, 2022). Figure 3 shows distribution of tangible and intangible heritage news. 59% (N=102) of the online heritage related news are reported on tangible heritage meanwhile 41% (N=74) about intangible heritage.

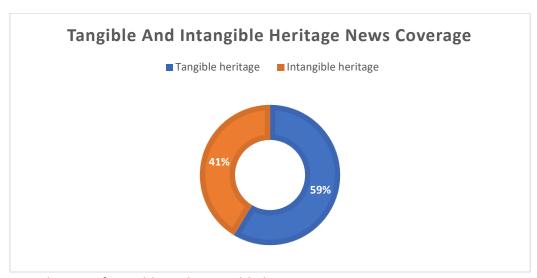


Figure 3: Distribution of tangible and intangible heritage news

Figure 4 presents the frequency of news articles related to different categories of tangible heritage which is the first frame of this study. News about heritage town or place receive a significant amount of coverage with 44% (N=31) of the heritage news coverage. These articles likely highlight the cultural, historical, and architectural significance of towns that have been designated as heritage sites. The higher number of articles indicates a considerable interest in exploring and promoting these towns' heritage value. There are 26 articles focused on historical monuments which scores second highest. This category includes

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structures or landmarks with historical, cultural, or architectural importance. The number of articles suggests a substantial attention given to studying, preserving, and raising awareness about these monuments. The category labelled "Others" comprises 22 articles which is the top three highest ranking of most reported news. These articles cover various aspects, such as traditional crafts, historical documents, cultural practices, or unique architectural features that don't fall under the other defined categories.

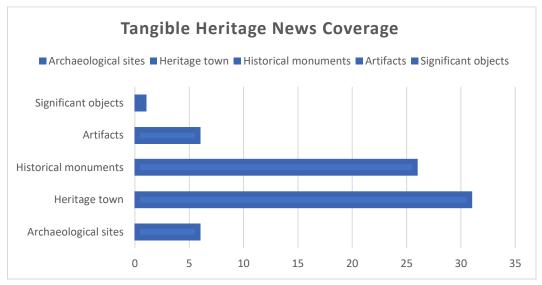


Figure 4: News covering tangible heritage.

Overall, the analysis of the data indicates that heritage towns and historical monuments receive relatively more attention in terms of the number of articles. This suggests a significant interest in exploring and discussing their cultural and historical significance. However, it is worth noting that the number of articles in each category does not necessarily reflect the importance or value of the tangible heritage it represents.

Figure 5 shows second frame of this study which is the distribution of intangible heritage news coverage. It shows that skills connected with material aspects of culture and custom and tradition receive a substantial amount of coverage with 22 articles respectively. Skills as one of the intangible heritages encompasses traditional craftsmanship, artistic skills, and techniques related to material culture. Meanwhile custom and tradition covers various cultural practices, rituals, and social behaviours that are specific to a particular community or culture. Festivities rank third with a total of 13 articles. This category includes articles about cultural celebrations, traditional festivals, and ritual. Figure 5 also states that none of the articles were published about poetry. However, there are 3 articles mentioned about dance and 2 articles on music. These articles report issues such as traditional music genres, instruments, and the preservation of musical and traditional dances. Other aspects of intangible heritage are shown in figure 5 below.

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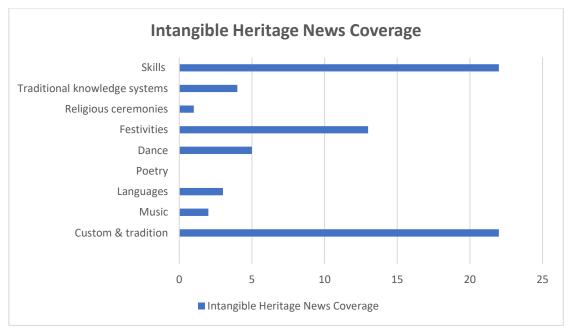


Figure 5: Intangible heritage news coverage

In summary, analysis of the data highlights a varied coverage of different aspects of intangible heritage. Custom and tradition, as well as skills connected with material aspects of culture, receive significant attention, suggesting a focus on the cultural practices and craftsmanship associated with intangible heritage. However, some categories, such as poetry and religious ceremonies, have a limited presence in the analysed news articles, indicating potential areas for further exploration and coverage.

Conclusion

In conclusion, heritage serves as a valuable resource for understanding a country's past and the evolution of its society over time, encompassing both tangible and intangible elements. While existing research has predominantly focused on tourism, historical conservation, and landscape value, this study aimed to address the gap by exploring other significant heritage issues in Malaysia. The findings indicate that English language news portals had the highest rate of heritage news coverage. Most heritage news articles were presented in a straight news format, with authority serving as the primary source of information.

Through the analysis, two distinct frames emerged: tangible heritage and intangible heritage. These frames provide valuable insights into the diverse dimensions of cultural heritage in Malaysia. By identifying and understanding these frames, it becomes possible to create awareness among the public regarding the different types of heritage present in the country. This research highlights the importance of comprehensive and balanced coverage of heritage issues in online media. By going beyond traditional topics and exploring the broader spectrum of Malaysia's heritage, this study contributes to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the country's rich cultural tapestry. The insights gained from this study can serve as a foundation for future endeavors aimed at preserving, promoting, and celebrating Malaysia's diverse heritage.

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