



Understanding the Perception and Engagement of the Public on COVID-19 PSAs (Public Service Announcement) During the COVID-19 Period.

Researchers:

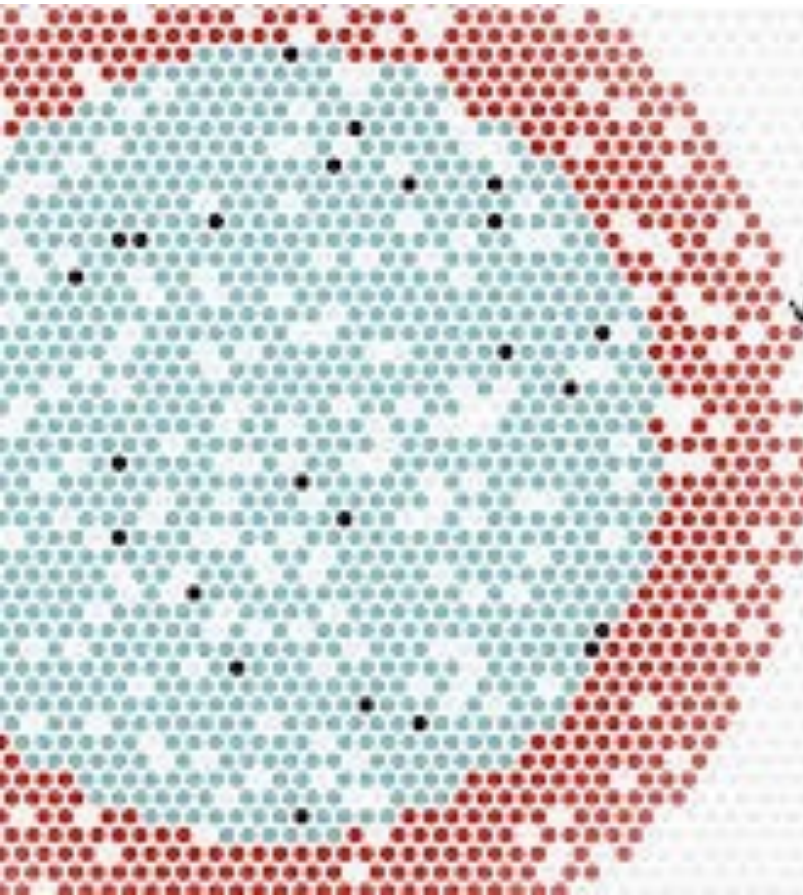
1. Dr. Shifa Faizal
2. Dr. Suffian Hadi Ayub
3. Dr. Suhaimee Sahaar@Sabaar
4. Dr. Khairudin Murad
5. Pn. Nurul Hanani Omar
6. Pn. Raja Putri Nadiah

Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam

Covid-19: A Perfect Storm

- The changes were so sudden and abrupt, leaving organisations and the public with barely enough time to plan, prepare and implement new setups and arrangements; leaving them to adjust and find alternative approaches (Lohani, 2019).
- In a time of crisis like the current COVID-19 outbreak, PSAs are widely used to disseminate information about the pandemic to the public with the aim to improve the public's awareness, prevention and intervention strategies through the use of mass and digital media.





- PSAs on Covid-19 in Malaysia focused on issues concerning the public to increase awareness, knowledge and recommending solutions.
- The messages were tailored to each and every phases of the pandemic. It attempts to persuade public beliefs, attitude, and stimulates positive behavioural changes.
- This research is conducted to understand at the ground level, the perception and acceptance of the society on the PSAs directed at them particularly on COVID-19.

PSAs are not new to us

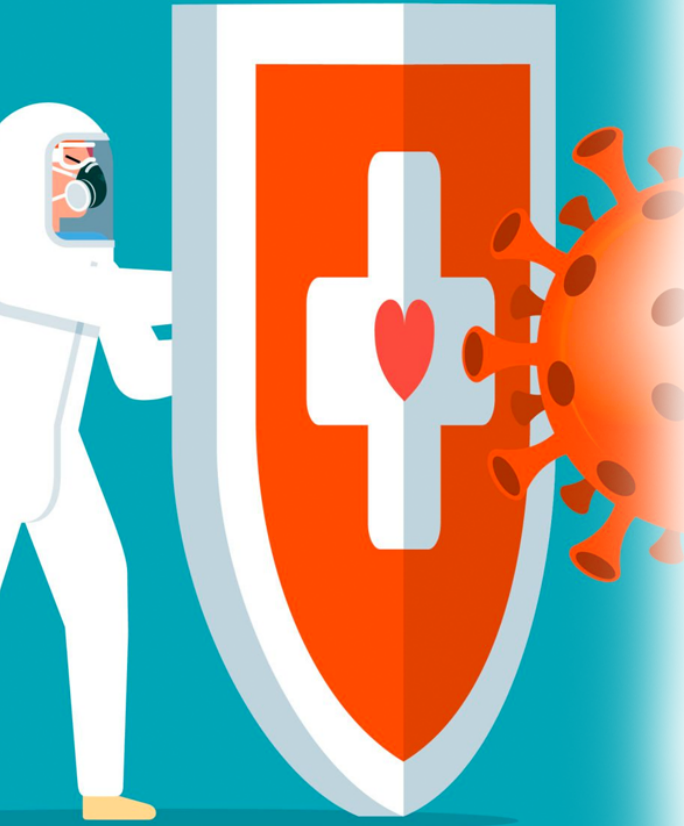
- Public service announcement (PSA) is an integral communication practice especially for government campaigns focused towards the society.
- In Malaysia, PSAs are commonly related with programmes run by the government or voluntary agencies on health issues such as the anti-smoking, obesity, and cancer awareness campaigns, among others.
- Like the current crisis- the COVID-19 outbreak, PSAs are widely used to improve public's awareness, prevention and intervention strategies through the use of mass and digital media.
- Messages such as frequent hand washing, social distancing and regular sanitisation were the main focus of these PSAs at the initial stage, and later PSAs also focused on vaccination etc.

The way we use media has changed

The main challenge in our digital society today is the engagement with media and the way media is used to retrieve information and how it impacts the targeted audience.

Thus, the role of national agencies such as MCMC is not only to monitor and safeguard people's safety on their media usage and engagement, but also to ensure the health information (in this case on the COVID-19) crafted by the government is disseminated strategically and efficiently.

This study aimed to explore and understand the engagement and perception of the public on COVID-19 related PSAs and to better understand whether the approaches used were efficient in delivering the intended message to a multicultural Malaysia, which also includes disadvantaged groups such as children, the disabled and the elderly.



Key Findings of the Study

1. PUBLIC INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

Cognition; All informants viewed the finding of information within the spectrum of the internet usage and how it helps them as part of social utility.

Internet Usage; This begged the issue on the measurement of the effectiveness to ascertain its credibility which includes types of media, trustworthiness and the quality of information provided by the media

Social Utility; The informants were found to specifically meet the benefits that could potentially increase the awareness and further educate them based on the exposure of the PSAs through the selection of various social media channels that are available pre and post pandemic.

2. PERCEPTIONS & INDICATORS OF PSA

Media Consumption; The participants have positive perceptions on the PSAs disseminated by the government, and agreed that the information on COVID-19 were very prominent on the internet/social media platforms.

Negative; The SMS was also cited as providing conflicting messages. As most participants acquired information from various sources that feeds with information that is current such as Telegram and WhatsApp.

3. EFFECTIVENESS OF PSA AS COMMUNICATION PLATFORM

Activities; The informants find it overwhelmingly challenging to align between PSAs and various other COVID-19 messages disseminated by many governmental agencies. This can be conclusively meant information overload could cause a serious breakdown in the chain of information and further resulting in the failure to create awareness.

Expression; The exposure to effective content that provide an emotional storyline about COVID-19 survivors or the front liners are considered by the informants as an outlet for them to express their feelings over MCO and pandemic in general.

Traditional TV; The informants agreed content showed on traditional TV correlates with the importance of the context that they live in. It was opined that personality and key opinion leaders highlighted on traditional TV could make a good strategy to enhance audiences' confidence.



Recommendations

- **Content & Context;** There must be a strong correlation between the content created for the PSA and the context that the intended audiences are familiar with. This is important as familiarity will essentially breed holistic understanding of the issues highlighted in the PSAs
- **Media selection and preferences;** There must be a concerted effort by the content creator to ensure consistent message across platform.

Thank you



Faculty of
Communication
and Media Studies

