

Branding Through Art: The Rise of Mural Art with the Concept of Culture and Nature in Business Promotion in Malaysia

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Received: 21 September 2025; Accepted: 30 March 2026; Published: 1 April 2026

ABSTRACT

Mural production in Malaysia has received widespread coverage among painters, businesses and the community. Murals are not just for aesthetic purposes; however, other objectives of murals are for promotional purposes for traders as one of the attractions in terms of aesthetic value, theme and the use of cheerful colours as one of the methods of attracting consumers of various ages. The method used to analyse the selected works in this research is based on discussions with traders who want to hold mural paintings in their business spaces. Based on the analysis source, the painter has presented cultural themes and natural resources as themes in the selected works. Traders decided on the themes after discussions. Mural paintings like this should be displayed in public spaces, especially in areas that attract large crowds and in business settings, as they serve as attractions and convey a message that acts as a valuable lesson to the community.

Keywords: Branding Through Art, Mural, Culture and Nature, Business Promotion, Malaysia



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1 INTRODUCTION

Body Murals are a form of visual art that is painted or applied directly to walls, ceilings, or other large permanent surfaces. They are usually public, expressive, and used for narrative, activism, or aesthetics. Mural art is a form of public art that has been used for centuries to beautify urban spaces and convey messages to the public (Sooriyan et al., 2023). Murals serve as a medium for expression, but we still have a limited understanding of their communicative role (Merman et al., 2025). The production of murals is not just for aesthetic purposes. However, they are also produced for promotional purposes. Promotion in mural art refers to various strategies, activities, and efforts aimed at increasing the visibility, appreciation, and support for mural art, such as large-scale paintings or artworks that are usually done on walls, buildings, or public spaces. Businesses rely on promotional strategies to capture the attention of consumers. Mural art promotion involves raising awareness, encouraging engagement, and supporting artists and communities. The production of murals should also be in accordance with the appropriate theme, design, and colour as a step to attract consumers for promotional purposes. In the evolving marketing and branding landscape, businesses are increasingly turning to unconventional mediums to engage audiences and create a lasting impression. One such powerful medium is mural art, which has seen a significant resurgence across urban and rural areas in Malaysia. Once primarily seen

as a form of street expression, mural art has now been adopted by corporations, small businesses and tourism boards as a tool for placemaking, storytelling and brand positioning.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of murals in Malaysia is increasingly receiving support from the government and NGOs. Mural art is a form of public art that has been used for centuries to beautify urban spaces and convey messages to the public (Sooriyan et al., 2023). This is because murals can also beautify old abandoned spaces and buildings and make them beautiful places. In addition, murals as a medium for expression, a comprehensive understanding of their communicative role is still underexplored (Merman et al., 2025). Furthermore, murals are not just for aesthetic purposes but also as a promotional medium for businesses. In addition, another purpose of the production of mural projects is to promote the construction of community identity and support networks among the people (Apandi, 2018). In addition, we propose to enhance community art projects with technology-driven innovations, including making the event accessible to diverse participants, providing autonomy and guidance through community applications, and increasing the visibility of artworks. Finally, this study provides valuable insights that can benefit from technology-supported design for local community projects aimed at community building and formation (Na Li et al., 2024). Mural art has economic significance, community popularity significance, and freedom significance (Prodi et al., 2022).

In the current technological development, digital media can be used as a medium to promote the heritage and innovation of mural art within the framework of SDG 11, focusing on new communication channels and digital transformation strategies. Based on cultural communication theory and digital media research, this study places mural art in the context of heritage preservation and innovation. A qualitative analysis of digital platforms, content dissemination and interactive technologies was conducted to assess their impact on artistic communication. Findings revealed that diverse digital channels increase audience engagement and open new avenues for preserving traditional art forms (Si Chen et al., 2025). Therefore, through the use of technology, mural art is a successful tool for sustainable community development, and the process of mural creation, with its multiple stages, enables community members to become active participants in social interaction and builders of both sustainable communities and sustainable urban environments (S. Petroniene et al., 2022).

Mural art has been studied as a driver of local economic development, attracting visitors and tourists who can easily access these open-air museums (Molina et al., 2021). Furthermore, mural art can contribute to economic growth by creating opportunities for artists, craftsmen, manufacturers, suppliers and transporters (Sooriyan et al., 2023). In addition, it can contribute to social capital and community development through citizen participation and the preservation and appreciation of local and indigenous cultures. Mural painting offers multi-dimensional benefits that foster both economic and social development (Sooriyan et al., 2023).

This paper delves into the role of mural art in non-genetic heritage, followed by a discussion of the needs and innovative paths of mural art. This paper also puts forward diverse modes of non-genetic heritage and mural art innovation, emphasising the combination of tradition and modernity, the interaction between local and global, and the joint promotion of various forces to provide theoretical support and practical paths for mural art heritage and innovation (Xiaoding Chen, 2025). In addition, from the cultural perspective, there is the phenomenological materiality of life experience. The way a certain group of people inhabits public space is a way to see culture in action. The artistic ability to translate culture through the narratives painted in the past and present is a tool for seeing culture in action. The mural enlivens the relationship between culture and cultural heritage, making the painted narratives and the spatially significant public forums (Marusek et al., 2024).

3 METHODOLOGY

Body The discipline of art methodology includes various frameworks, ideas, and approaches that are used in the creation, analysis, and investigation of art. The discipline of art criticism and formal analysis has gone beyond its conventional boundaries in recent decades to include methodologies that are practice-based, interactive, and multidisciplinary. This expansion is a reflection of the changing importance of art in society and academia. This study made use of a qualitative research technique, and specific methodologies were employed to investigate how mural art that mixes environmental and cultural themes is used in company marketing in Malaysia. This approach provided a way to get more comprehensive knowledge of the meaning, purpose, and effect that the use of mural art has on marketing and branding efforts.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

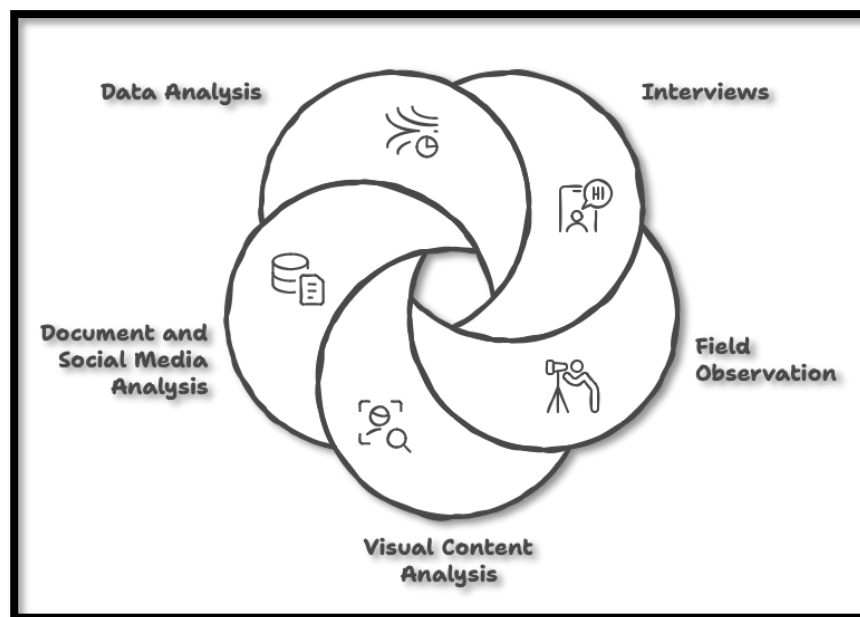


Figure 1 The diagram shows the five methods used to collect research information.
(Sources: Muhammad Salehuddin Zakaria, 2025)

3.1.1 Interview

This research encompasses the interview process as an initial research step, the ongoing decisions to be made during the interviews with the artists and conducting research on the work, up to the analysis and reflection on this process upon completion (Falk Hubner, 2024).

Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including business owners who commissioned or adopted the mural art. Local artists involved in the creation of the mural, Municipal or tourism authorities involved in approving or promoting the mural art. Interviews were conducted with customers or visitors to gather insights into their perceptions and engagement with the mural. Approximately 10–15 interviews were conducted, either face-to-face or via online platforms, depending on accessibility and availability, to obtain feedback on the mural.

3.1.2 Field Observation

On-site observations were conducted to assess the interaction of residents or tourists regarding mural art that can provide an attraction for promotional purposes. Pedestrian traffic and consumer behaviour.

In addition, the visibility and role of this mural are important in attracting attention to the business. This field study is important to gather feedback from consumers who are present to see and witness this mural painting. Field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues, environmental context and spontaneous consumer reactions.

3.1.3 Data Analysis

In this study, the data analysis method uses qualitative content analysis. That is, the data obtained through interviews will be transcribed. In addition, other materials obtained, such as field notes and visual materials, have been coded to identify recurring mural themes, such as cultural identity representation, environmental aesthetics, or nature, which can provide effective branding for community and tourist involvement through the production of selected murals.

3.1.4 Visual Data Analysis

Photographic documentation of the murals was conducted to analyse the visual themes from the artists who produced the selected paintings, including cultural and natural motifs, branding elements, and placement. The murals were examined based on the use of local cultural symbols (e.g., traditional clothing, folklore, festivals). Representation of natural elements (e.g., flora, fauna, landscape). Inclusion of brand logos, products, or business messaging. The design also integrates with physical spaces such as shopfronts, hallways, and walls, among others.

3.1.5 Document and Social Media Analysis

Additionally, we reviewed additional materials such as business websites, promotional materials, social media posts, and hashtags like #PenangStreetArt and #IpohMural, as well as local tourism brochures and news articles to understand how mural art was used in digital branding and promotional campaigns.

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION



Figure 2 Seri Malaysia Apartment, Kuala Lumpur. 25 Feet x 10 Feet, 2025
Source: Siti Nurulfaidah Nazeri, 2025

As modern civilisation develops, the appreciation of aesthetic beauty has become more individual, and as a result, mural art tends to meet the needs of micro-environment development while maintaining its traditional educational function. Decoration and interest have become new requirements for murals. This means mural art can contribute to the improvement of the cultural environment (macro-environment) or spatial environment (Jing Qi, 2014).

This mural painting depicts four individuals representing various races in Malaysia. They are depicted in their respective traditional costumes: A Malay man wears a baju Melayu and a songkok. The Chinese woman is dressed in a red cheongsam. An Indian woman adorns an orange saree. An indigenous Iban ethnic man, dressed in traditional clothing and sporting a feather headdress, is also depicted. In addition, the background is decorated with red and white lines, which are the Malaysian flag, which gives a cheerful, bright and enthusiastic visual effect. This mural's unique position on the elevator wall enhances the utility space, making it more attractive and filled with artistic value that contributes to a cheerful atmosphere.

The main theme of this mural is to focus on cultural diversity and racial unity in Malaysia. It emphasizes the values of harmony, tolerance, and pride in cultural identity, which are the strengths of a diverse society living harmoniously in Malaysia. The smiles of the characters in this mural depict joy and goodwill. Overall, this work not only serves as an aesthetic decoration in public spaces but also functions as a visual education medium to remind the public of the importance of appreciating diversity and maintaining national harmony.

Therefore, this mural is not just a work of art, but it can also function as a very effective visual promotional tool in the business world, such as being able to attract the attention of customers if displayed at business locations and so on. Bright colours such as red, yellow and green and cheerful expressions make this mural "eye-catching". In fact, its location in the elevator area ensures that people passing by will see and stop for a moment, just like a billboard. In addition, murals like this can represent brand values, namely characters of various races in traditional clothing with a message of diversity, inclusiveness and unity. Businesses can use murals like this to show that they are friendly to customers regardless of race or background. Next, it can increase the identity of the place or business, namely, if this mural is in a business building, it gives a unique identity and is easy for customers to remember. It can be a "visual landmark" that makes it easier for customers to recognise the business location. In addition, murals like this can also be an indirect marketing medium, which has the potential to attract people to take pictures and share on social media. Indirectly, it provides free promotion to the business or place through "word of mouth" and digital sharing. Finally, it can add value to the customer experience, namely, a friendly and beautiful atmosphere that improves the experience of visitors or customers. Additionally, customers are more likely to return or feel positive towards businesses that care about arts and culture.



Figure 3 Juaseh Tengah National School, Negeri Sembilan 22 Feet x 8 Feet, 2022.
Source: Siti Nurulfaidah Nazeri, 2022

This mural is clearly themed on patriotism and pride in the Malaysian nation. It displays several important elements, such as the image of the Jalur Gemilang. Meanwhile, the main background of this mural is the majestic Malaysian flag fluttering on the wall. It symbolises loyalty, unity and the spirit of patriotism. The colours red, white, blue and yellow highlight the national identity. The figures and security personnel on the left can be seen as images of the first Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku

Abdul Rahman, who was chanting 'Merdeka' at Dataran Merdeka, Kuala Lumpur, on 31 August 1957. It symbolises sacrifice, courage and responsibility to defend the sovereignty of the country. The artwork also depicts the iconic Malaysian buildings, namely the Petronas Twin Towers, the Kuala Lumpur Tower, and the Sultan Abdul Samad building. These buildings symbolise progress, history and the identity of Malaysia's heritage. The presence of modern buildings (KLCC) and heritage (Sultan Abdul Samad) shows a balance between development and tradition. The composition and colour style of the painting uses bright, high-contrast and clear colours, giving a vibrant and energetic effect. The composition of the mural that flows with the folds of the Jalur Gemilang gives the effect of movement and dynamics.

This mural painting can also serve a promotional purpose and attract students to attend school. In addition, in private schools, it is a marketing source to ensure that the school remains beautiful with mural paintings as a business attraction in attracting students to register at the school. Therefore, murals like this need to be produced not just for aesthetic purposes. However, it features cultural images and local identity for the purpose of promoting an organisation or Malaysia.



Figure 4 Indigo Hill, Raub, Pahang, 20 Feet x 18 Feet, 2021
Source: Siti Nurulfaidah Nazeri, 2021

Indigo Hill Mountain, located in Raub, Pahang, is one of the highest natural plantations, located just a short drive from the stunning Indigo Hill Resort, a popular relaxing destination among Malaysian domestic tourists. The mural is also located in East Raub, Pahang. The surrounding atmosphere of the area is humid, suitable for the growth of moss and orchids, and home to a variety of creatures such as frogs and birds – a magical setting for fairy tales, a dream home for the best durian growing. Standing tall at an altitude of over 1700 metres, the location is known for its beautiful white cloud horizons, cool weather and pristine fertility due to its untouched nature. More than just its dramatic greenery, the region is home to a newly discovered durian plantation. The place also houses over 200 mature durians in 3.1 acres of land; the majority of the trees are found to be over 45 years old. Furthermore, the durians in this area are popular among the locals of Raub; this naturally grown plantation is a local favourite durian spot. This is an exclusive durian drop that was previously enjoyed only by locals in the area. This top-tier durian releases a strong flavour that will stick in your mouth, a classic out-of-this-world experience.

This mural displays a combination of natural beauty with rugged activities that are synonymous with the highlands and forests in Pahang. Among the main elements in the mural are visuals of natural scenery showing mountains, waterfalls, lush forests, and rocky rivers. This element depicts the uniqueness of the natural landscape of Mount Indigo, which is rich in flora and fauna, while also highlighting the beauty of ecotourism in Raub. An image of a classic Jeep vehicle is featured at the

bottom of the mural, with a man driving a classic yellow Jeep crossing a rocky river. This element symbolises rugged tourism activities such as jungle trekking, off-roading, and challenges crossing rivers that are often an attraction for visitors in the highlands. In addition, there is an Indigo Hill logo on the top left of the mural, displaying a logo that reads “Indigo Hill” with an image of a tree rooted in a golden circle. This logo reinforces the identity of this tourist area as a destination that combines ecotourism, recreation, and natural heritage. The style of this mural painting, such as the green, blue, and golden colours, dominates the mural, giving it a calm, natural, and exclusive atmosphere. Realistic techniques are used to depict the flowing water, river rocks, and jeeps, making this mural more lively and interesting.

The purpose of this mural, produced at Indigo Hill, is to attract the community to the tourism sector. The mural produced at Indigo Hill, Raub, Pahang, indeed functions as a symbol of business promotion, not just decoration. Based on the description from the perspective of business promotion, such as identity and branding, the presence of the Indigo Hill logo on this mural emphasises the identity of the location as a tourism and business product. It helps visitors identify this area more easily, and it makes it an iconic "visual landmark". This mural is also a tourist attraction by featuring paintings of mountain views, waterfalls, and rugged jeeps, giving a clear picture of the activities and experiences offered – namely ecotourism, rugged adventures, and nature. This kind of visual can attract tourists to come, experience the promoted experience for themselves, and become photographic material to share on social media (free promotion). In addition, murals like this have aesthetic and indirect marketing value, which can beautify the surrounding area while improving the image of the business as an attractive, modern, and visitor-friendly place. It functions like a large billboard, but in the form of art, it is easier to remember and leaves an emotional impact on visitors. Ultimately, it can boost the local economy. The presence of visitors not only benefits the management of Indigo Hill but also the local population through small businesses such as food, accommodation, souvenirs, and tour guide services. The murals on Indigo Hill serve as a creative business promotion tool, combining elements of nature, adventure activities, and location branding. It is not just an artistic medium but also a visual marketing strategy that can increase tourist attraction and contribute to local economic development.



Figure 5 Royal Belum Rainforest Resort, Pulau Banding Perak, 10 Feet x 6 Feet, 2020.
Source: Siti Nurulfaidah Nazeri, 2020

The mural in Figure 5 is themed around the rafflesia flower and the kenyalang bird found in the forests of Malaysia. This mural painting was produced at the Royal Belum Rainforests Resort, Pulau Banding, Perak, in 2020. Murals like this are produced as a symbol of state and cultural identity, namely the image of the rafflesia flower, the largest flower in the world, which is widely found in the tropical rainforests of Borneo, including Sabah. It symbolises the uniqueness of Malaysia's biodiversity and the richness of nature. Meanwhile, the image of the kenyalang bird is an important symbol of the Dayak community in Sarawak, especially the Iban people. It symbolises majesty, heroism, and traditional

beliefs. There is a diversity of natural and cultural heritage, such as the combination of these two images, depicting the richness of the natural and cultural treasures of the Borneo community. It also shows the close relationship between humans and nature in the lives of local communities. Indirectly, this mural is a symbol of tourism attraction because these two icons are often used as symbols to introduce Sabah and Sarawak at the national and international levels. Murals with this theme function as a tourism promotion that highlights the uniqueness of the flora and fauna, as well as the exotic culture that is the main attraction of East Malaysia. In addition, it is a conservation message because the rafflesia flower is becoming increasingly rare and the kenyalang bird is a protected species, illustrating the message about the importance of maintaining environmental sustainability. It reminds the community that natural and cultural heritage needs to be preserved so that it can be inherited by future generations. Murals themed around the rafflesia flower and the kenyalang bird can be considered as a symbol of business promotion, especially in the fields of tourism, culture and local products.

Combining these two symbols in a mural directly promotes Borneo's unique nature and cultural heritage. Such murals can be a visual attraction for tourists to take pictures and share on social media (indirect marketing). In addition, they can elevate the identity of the place as a business brand or tourism destination, giving local traders an advantage in selling related products (crafts, souvenirs, and traditional foods). The mural themed with rafflesia flowers and kenyalang birds conveys the pride of Borneo's identity, the richness of biodiversity, and the cultural heritage of indigenous people, as well as symbolising tourism promotion and environmental conservation. It is not just a work of art but also a visual education medium that explains the importance of preserving the uniqueness of East Malaysia.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the growing trend of using mural art as a branding tool in Malaysia, particularly focusing on how cultural and natural elements are integrated into visual storytelling to promote businesses. Through visual analysis, interviews, field observations, and social media engagement, the researchers revealed that mural art is more than just decoration; it functions as a strategic medium for identity, connectivity, and commercial visibility. Incorporating Malaysia's rich cultural heritage and diverse natural environment into mural designs helps businesses create authentic and local branding that appeals to both local consumers and international tourists. Murals often evoke emotional resonance, nostalgia and pride, which in turn strengthens brand loyalty and community engagement. In addition, mural art encourages experiential interaction as visitors are drawn to visually captivating spaces, taking photos and sharing them on digital platforms, thereby organically expanding brand reach. This visual storytelling is in line with modern marketing strategies that prioritise experience over advertising and culture over commodification.

Ultimately, mural art in Malaysia has proven to be a powerful intersection of culture, nature and commerce. It offers a meaningful, cost-effective and sustainable form of promotion that supports not only business growth but also urban beautification, cultural preservation and tourism development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to thank all those who contributed in this research.

FUNDING

This research is self-funded.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors played equal contributions towards the production of this paper.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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