

## Confucian Value-Based Leadership Communication: A study on Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad

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### ABSTRACT

The study on leadership communication is one of the most often researched topics on leadership. However, there have been only a few studies focused on Confucian value-based leadership in a multicultural society. Therefore, this study is designed to develop a leadership communication model that works in an intercultural context. The aim of the study is twofold, first, is to identify the attributes of Dr. Mahathir's vision formation and vision articulation associated with Confucian values, which focus on leadership communication; and second, is to provide a Confucian model of leadership that can be applied by multi-cultural leaders. This study analysed 37 speeches and interviewed 15 Chinese leaders. Findings reveal that Dr. Mahathir applied numerous attributes in developing his speech content, such as value-based cores, growth and ideological goals to capture his audience's minds and hearts simultaneously. This study identifies three main attributes of Dr. Mahathir's vision articulation; they include clarity, inspirational imagery and challenge. Five Confucian values which are relevant to the Chinese community and Dr. Mahathir's leadership communication are also presented in this study. The Confucian values are *Zhi* (wisdom), *Xin* (trust), *Xiao* (filial piety), *Ren* (benevolence) and *Zhong yong* (moderation). This study also contributes to the expansion of the leadership communication research in Malaysia and other Asian countries.

**Keywords:** *Confucian values, leadership communication, vision, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, intercultural*

### INTRODUCTION

Recently, many leadership communication researches have been using diversified approaches to study effective vision communication which is an essential tool to motivate people to action, inspires them and creates commitment among followers (Mittal, 2015). However, only a few studies were focused on Confucian value-based leadership in a multicultural society (Miles & Goo, 2013; Robertson & Hoffman, 2000; Wang, Wang, Ruona, & Rojewski, 2005). Although scholars have long considered how leaders communicate vision and values to establish a sense of purpose, they tend to overlook on how these messages can be useful to establish a shared sense of purpose, unity; especially in a multicultural country diversified by religious faith and background such as Malaysia.

In addition, the cultural differences concerning to leader-follower relationships suggest that different leadership values may be more effective in one of these cultures from another culture. Confucianism is one of the most important and influential Chinese philosophy in Malaysia (Cheah, Norhafezah, & Mohd Khairie, 2014). In the present Malaysian Chinese society, the influence of Confucianism can still be found in their everyday lifestyle. For a good understanding and successful practice of leadership communication in Malaysia,

it is important to consider the impact of Confucian values. Thus, we suggest that a vision formation and articulation combined with Confucian values will give us an idea of how it can be practiced in multicultural countries.

Malaysia is a multi-cultural country consisting of Malays (50.1%), Chinese (22.6%), Indians (6.7%) and numerous small fractions of indigenous people (20.6%) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2014). Due to political and economic influences, Confucian values have immersed with Malaysian culture, and in terms of practice, the perspectives of the Chinese towards a Malay leader are also a topic worthy of discussion.

During his premiership, Dr Mahathir Mohamed has inspired many developing nations in terms of transformative visioning. Dr Mahathir's innovative policies, such as the "Look East Policy" are certainly pioneering and original (Ahmad Atory, 1997). He has been guided by great visions for the country and has been courageous in the face of adversities both from home and abroad. In 1991, Dr. Mahathir announced "Vision 2020". In order to achieve this, a united Malaysian people would be necessary. The Chinese community fitted well into the multi-cultural Malaysian framework, deepened by political and economic assimilation, but are still able to preserve the special features of Chinese education and ethnic Chinese culture (Yan, 2005). The content of Confucianism has therefore no longer centred on China, taking on a multi-cultural economically oriented viewpoint encouraged by the Malaysian government.

Chinese values have, to date, been a relatively understudied component of the leadership vision communication literature. Prior researches on leadership communication generally focused on the impact of culture on values and leadership, but were more Western-oriented, largely ignoring the fact that there were differences in values and attitudes that dominated the Chinese society for the Malay political leaders in Malaysia.

The understanding of different cultural perspectives on leadership communication is essential to multicultural countries like Malaysia. Cross-cultural misunderstanding occurs principally because different cultures have different expectations of what constitutes good leadership communication. Thus, in order to be able to have an effective leadership in Malaysia, the purpose of this research is to explore the Confucian perspectives on leadership communication, which in many ways has come to define Asian modes of communication. A model of leadership communication also needs to be developed in a multicultural context for both Malay and Chinese leaders in Malaysia, rather than simply adapting a theory from the West (Cheah, Norhafazah & Mohd Khairie, 2014). Thus, this study seeks to answer these research questions: i) How the value of Confucianism affects the Chinese community's perspective on the leadership of Dr. Mahathir? ii) What is the Confucian based leadership communication model?

In view of these, the main objective of this study is to analyse Dr. Mahathir's leadership communication which is based on Confucian values. Specifically, this study aims to explore the attributes of Dr. Mahathir's vision formation and vision articulation towards Chinese community in Malaysia. In addition, this study plans to establish a leadership communication model based on Confucian values.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Confucian values*

National cultures and values differ greatly (Taleghani, Salmani, & Taatian, 2010; Mohamad Said, & Zulhamri, 2012). Individuals pertaining to a certain culture or sub-culture vary in their

communication behaviour and in their motivation for collecting and disseminating information (Scandura & Dorfman, 2004; Sudarmanti, Bauwel & Longman, 2015). In general, culture is defined as shared interpretations about beliefs, values, and norms that affect the behaviours of people.

For more than 2000 years, Confucianism has influenced philosophy, social ethics, education, political ideology, leadership, culture, and the way of life in general throughout East Asia (O'Keefe & O'Keefe, 1997). In fact, Confucian values have spread their roots deeply in many Asian countries, such as Japan, Korea, Thailand and Malaysia. Therefore, it is important to understand the Confucian values and their implications for leadership communication practices in a Malay-dominated society in Malaysia.

From the Confucian perspective, it is actually not possible to consider communication from leadership. Both communication and leadership must be considered in terms of a balanced relationship which is based on the five basic virtues. The virtues are *Ren* (benevolence), *Yi* (righteousness), *Li* (appropriateness), *Zhi* (wisdom) and *Xin* (trustworthiness). This approach to leadership is clearly very different from that which has been traditionally utilized in the West (Tu, 2000).

The value that is highly emphasized by the Chinese and associated with leadership is *Ren* (harmony) (King, & Zhang, 2014). Chinese leaders display a distinctive and effective way of negotiating complex environments. They act in such a way as to create a harmonious environment in which all parties would be satisfied and happy with the result (Han, 2013). Moreover, individual differences is considered as an important factor that will influence the outcome, as people from different cultures have different values and beliefs, thus perceive leaders differently. Suggestion: Moreover, individual differences (people from different cultures have different values and beliefs) is considered as an important factor that will influence the perceptions of leaders. It is interesting to see how a Malaysian of Chinese ethnic perceive a Malay leader contrarily in this context.

Another important aspect of Confucian thought concerns the ethical orientation. *Yi* or righteousness which means the leader is expected to uphold the highest standards of moral conduct (Lin, Ho, & Lin, 2013). Individual self-interest is to be sacrificed for the good of the organization. Interesting enough, it has been proposed that the ethical orientation of Confucius has been adopted more closely by Western managers. King and Zhang (2014) suggested that Confucian ethics are consistent with and form the basis of many of the managerial ideas developed by the Western leadership.

Appropriate behaviour, or *li*, is dictated through Confucian thought in terms of one's relationship with superiors, parents, husband or wife, elders, and friends (The Five Relationships) (Lin, Ho, & Lin, 2013). Confucius was very concerned with relationships and social propriety. The Confucian term *li* actually refers to rituals. Rituals are manifested not only in terms of appropriate behaviours and roles, but also for ceremonies and other social processes. Chinese culture and business practices may sometimes be perceived as lengthy on formality by the Westerners.

*Zhi* (wisdom) means to know or to understand. Wisdom seems to refer to someone who is wise, as in someone to having a certain type of knowledge (Yan & Sorenson, 2006). Malaysian Chinese put great emphasis on the education (*Zhi*) of their children, sticking to the fine traditions of Chinese culture and by teaching Chinese literature themselves.

Confucian concepts of *Xiao* filial piety, devotion to duty, focus on family, reciprocal duty, respect for the aged, honouring worthy people, harmony and co-existence have the

influence on Chinese peoples' behaviour (Yan & Sorenson, 2006). Because Malaysia is an ethnically complex place, the ethnic groups must work together with one heart in order to advance in development, to become one and to belong to the same family. The ideology of "Do not do to others what you wouldn't want done to you" ultimately creates a country demanding equal treatment for the Malaysian practitioners of Confucianism (Zheng, 2006).

The final requirement of effective leadership is to earn trust (*Xin*). Otherwise, there would not be any followers as the only definition of a leader is someone who has followers. Trust is a conviction that insinuates a leader to always means what he or she says. It is the belief in something that is very old, called 'integrity.' A leader's actions and a leader's professed beliefs must be congruent, or at least compatible.

#### *Leadership Communication: Vision Formation and Articulation*

It is apparent that while the content of the leader's message is substantial, the process by which the message is communicated appears to be just as important. Indeed, the attributes of communication is important and clearly a distinguishing factor as whether a leader's message will be understood by individuals or not (Mayfield, Mayfield, & Sharbrough, 2015). Empirical research has demonstrated that three dimensions pertaining to the concept of leadership communication, which are vision articulation, vision implementation and charismatic communication style were positively correlated with followers' perception (Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Thus, a leader must possess good leadership communication to lead effectively (Fairhurst, & Connaughton, 2014). It has been further reported that leaders displayed high levels of intellectual ability, experience and communication competence (Khatri, Ng, & Lee, 2001; Khatri, Templer, & Budhwar, 2012). These denote that charismatic leadership hinges upon the leader's ability to construct messages in a coherent fashion and engages in effective communication practices.

Zaccaro and Banks (2001) has developed a vision model that combined a variety of leadership studies since 30 years ago. The study has identified 10 attributes that are required in order to achieve effective leader vision. This model can be further categorized into two factors, namely the vision formation and the vision articulation. Message content refers to what is stated in the vision while vision articulation refers to how the vision is delivered. In general, the studies found that both the content of the vision and the vision articulation have strong influence on the perception of vision, leadership, and organization. (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Baum, Locke, & Kirkpatrick, 1998; Berson, Shamir, Avolio, & Popper, 2001; Willburn, Hackman, & Criswell, 2008).

Charismatic leaders who are centred on values, beliefs, and a deep sense of mission are capable to motivate their followers to do more than what they think they could achieve (Mayfield, Mayfield, & Sharbrough, 2015). Among its magnitudes are building of respect and trust through followers' recognition, in line with the mission and goals of their firm.

Inspirational motivation refers to the leader's ability to articulate values and goals which cause followers to transcend their own self-interests. Again, followers identify with inspirational leaders and they are ready to exert efforts in order to achieve the mutual goals promoted by the leader and to meet the leader's expectations (Mayfield, Mayfield, & Sharbrough, 2015). Transformational leaders invoke inspirational motivation by providing followers with challenges and meaning for engaging in shared goals and undertakings (Johansson, Miller, & Hamrin, 2014). Such leaders demonstrate high levels of hope, confidence, and optimism, leading their followers to be hopeful, confident, and optimistic.

While some have argued that vision and inspirational motivation should be combined into a single construct, others maintain the usefulness of a distinction between the two concepts (O'Connell, Hickerson, & Pillutla, 2011).

As a conclusion, it is important for leaders to have a clear vision. Although Bennis and Nanus (1985) tried to highlight the term "vision" with different angles and described it in different ways, it can be easily understood that vision is the ability of a leader to predict and perceive future, in a precise and accurate manner with a well-defined route map on how to get into this future successfully. In accord with Zaccaro and Banks (2001), this study is designed to grasp the idea behind vision formation and articulation, starting with content analysis and then in-depth interview.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Content Analysis*

The study utilized a content analysis and in-depth interview. The first step of this study was to identify the visions that were attributed in Dr. Mahathir's speech. This was done by analysing 37 speeches of Dr. Mahathir during the annual Opening Ceremony of General Assembly of Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the annual Gerakan National Delegates Conference from 1981 to 2003. This research took some steps to explore the formation of the content which was reflected in the vision of Dr. Mahathir and to discover the vision's underlying themes in the context of the culture and history as a whole. Content from the speech texts were coded and analysed using NVivo 10 software program. We believe that this strategy would provide a sufficient sample size and the data required for analysis.

Nvivo 10 was previously used to examine semantics in political, communication, and business settings (Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004; Hart, 2000; Seyranian & Bligh, 2008). It was also used to analyse both historical and contemporary American leaders and politicians. In this paper, Nvivo 10 was utilized to examine a historic, non-Western leader.

Refer to *appendix A*

### *In-depth interview*

This research was performed based on a series of interviews; each was timed for approximately 45 minutes. These interviews were conducted for a time period of July 2013 to January 2014. The interviews were designed to showcase the leadership thoughts and their perception towards Dr. Mahathir's leadership communication. Beyond their leadership status, the leaders are also recognized as role models for other leaders for at least two years. In order to collect a holistic perspective on leadership communication, informants were selected to represent three groups of leaders namely, the political leaders, leaders of business organizations and reporters. The three groups of leaders were chosen because it is believed that these groups would give maximum variation that may contribute to the understanding of the concept of leadership (Creswell, 2013).

Refer to *appendix B*

Each leader answered a standard set of a total of eighteen semi-structured questions and a few questions unique to them or to their sector. Samples of the interview questions were as follows: What are the characteristics/values that you believe every leader should possess? How would you describe Tun Dr. Mahathir's communication? What are your views

on being a leader, the Confucian way?

The interviews were audio-taped (with permission) and then transcribed. The text prepared, edited, and verified by the interviewees before they were analysed. The researchers used NVivo 10 software program to analyse the data in this study. The data obtained after the coding was compiled for the purpose of data analysis.

#### *Data analysis*

Data were transcribed after each process of interview. All data sources were initially coded to discover potentially important themes. Through a process of constant comparison of various sources and emerging themes, the coding process became increasingly focused until several factors emerged as central to idea of the study's central phenomenon. This process consisted of derived interpretation based on three phases: open, axial and selective coding. These phases were based on the procedures proposed by Glaser (1978), Strauss (1978), and Strauss and Corbin (1990).

After all texts of the speech were included in the source, the next step is to categorize the study based on the research goal and then break them into the nodes based on the themes discussed earlier. After all the themes were included in the nodes, the next step is to find a sub-theme of the study. After the findings were produced, the next step is to use the model to show a holistic model of the study which will detail the themes of the study based on the findings of the nodes obtained.

All the questions were first designed and written in English by the researchers. One of the researchers, who is a Malaysian Chinese and understood Chinese culture, is bilingual in English & Chinese. Then, the researchers translated the English questions to Chinese, which were translated back to English to ensure the meaning of the questions were the same as intended in the original questions (Brislin, 1986).

### FINDINGS

Data analysis resulted in two broad categories: vision formation attributes and vision articulation attributes, from which six important themes emerged, three themes from vision formation and three themes from vision articulation. Vision formation attributes consisted of value-based core, growth and ideological goal, while vision articulation attributes consisted of clarity, inspirational imagery and challenge. Whereas, Confucian five values are namely *Zhi* (wisdom), *Xiao* (Filial Piety), *Xin* (Trust), *Ren* (Benovelence) and *Zhong Yong* (Moderation).

#### *Vision formation attributes*

Vision formation attributes consisted of three main themes: value-based core, growth and ideological goal.

##### *a) Value-based core.*

The analysis showed that value-based core is the most emphasized attributes by Dr. Mahathir in his speeches. He stressed on the importance of values, culture and ethics in the society. In order to make the administration as a key pillar of the reform work culture, Dr. Mahathir produced a slogan called "Clean, Efficient and Trustworthy". This approach was taken to eliminate corruption and to improve the effectiveness of public administration.

According to him, this slogan will be more meaningful if the leaders, whether among political leaders or civil servants, practice these values seriously. In his speech he said:

Efficiency and political honesty is important, especially in these times where Malaysia is facing economic turmoil. I am proud of the MCA together with a determination to revive the economy and endeavour to prevent any undesirable incidents occur when a problem like this befall the country (Sample 16).

We are grateful that this did not happen in Malaysia as all prepared to put aside the interests of the individual in the interests of the people and Malaysia. People realized that with the interests of the country, the greater goal, namely racial harmony and national stability can be achieved. People are aware that only a stable country where people of different races, live in harmony only to build, develop and prosper (Sample 32).

#### *b) Growth*

Growth is the second most frequent theme appeared in Dr. Mahathir's speeches. This showed that Dr. Mahathir was concerned with the country's development. Based on the texts studied, the analysis showed that growth themes were included in forms of statements concerning the development of the country that were focused on the economy and social growth. These were evident in the speech of Dr. Mahathir at MCA Party Event in 1990:

Today, the country's economy has achieved rapid growth. In the first three months of 1990, growth is remarkable, e.g. 10.4%. This means that employment opportunities have improved. Factories advertise job positions every day. Candidates do not need to write a letter of application. "Walk-in interviews" held for various types of work. Small and large businesses grew rapidly. Profit companies doubled. Purchases of goods are in demand because consumers have money to spend. The increase in GDP or GNP is not a statistic but is something that has an impact on everyone in Malaysia (Sample 8).

If we look back, we will find the programs of national development have been beneficial to the communities, such as the Bumiputeras, Chinese and Indian. We find that the effect is positive development and now the number of poor people of all races has decreased. Increasing the quality of people's health and things like infant and maternal mortality rate showed a downward trend (Sample 10).

#### *c) Ideological goal*

Ideological goal is an attribute that refers to a direction and guidance towards realizing a long-term objective (James & Lahti, 2011). Ideological goal is a set of particular ethics that include vision, which is a principle or doctrine that explains how followers can realize the vision in order for it be successful. This theme involves any forms of statements that are related to a long-term goal and it also represents the bright future of the country.

The analysis showed that Dr. Mahathir frequently stated that the policies created were for the purpose of achieving peace, harmony and unity in the country. This indicates that he was concerned about his promises to the nation. These were evident in his speech at

Opening Ceremony of MCA annual general meeting, when he immediately became the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia in 1981:

New Economy Policy is not created for one race only. The New Economy Policy takes into consideration how it can benefit each race. The sooner the New Economy Policy is achieved, the sooner we can no longer supply our energy, time and money to the implementation of the programs under this policy (Sample 1).

#### *Vision articulation attributes*

The second category, is called vision articulation. It consists of three main attributes: clarity, inspirational imagery and challenge.

##### *a) Clarity*

Among the attributes, the most frequently mentioned by the informants about Dr. Mahathir's communication was clarity. A leader who communicates with clear language can provide a distinct understanding of the same message delivered (Hall & Myatt, 2008; Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014; Padlock, 2008). Informant 1 described his view as follows:

Yes, it is clear and easy to understand. Most of his speech, did not cover many topics, just focus on one or two points only. His speech was not too long (Informant 2).

I have been to some places where he often gave speeches, he will be straight to the point. He will tell a story and after that he will tell the message or meaning to be conveyed. So I think not only the Chinese, but everyone will feel that he only told as it happened. For example, he would only call an elephant, an elephant, he would not call it as a rabbit (Informant 13).

##### *b) Inspirational imagery*

Leaders tend to have inspirational imagery of dignity, confidence and loyalty from followers (Dubinsky et al., 1995; James and Lahti, 2011). In addition, leaders can lead followers who have passion, pride and confidence in themselves and also goals.

Some informants specifically stated that Dr. Mahathir is capable of delivering communication package that is perfect in all of its forms, from body language and tone of voice to gestures in creating a strong first impression and maintaining a positive response. For example, informant 3 stated

Overall, Tun is a wise man, a successful leader. He knows how to present himself so that he has the support of the people. If not, he may not be able to assume the position as prime minister for so long (Informant 3).

Tun can inspire and influence followers and establish a clear relationship with the community. Tun making personal visits to the country holding various public meetings and hearing and often talk with people. In this way, Tun always managed to reach and communicate directly with the public (Informant 12).



### *c) Challenge*

The third theme is the challenge. Communicating of a challenging vision should lead to the creation of a more difficult and special vision (Masuda et al., 2010). Leadership challenge involves many changes in the status quo. Therefore, leaders must challenge the status quo, in order to find opportunities to innovate, improve and enhance the development of the country (Boerema, 2011).

Based on informant's feedback, Dr. Mahathir often criticized political matters, especially in the administration of government. This situation often annoyed the parties involved.

No previous Prime Minister, except Tun opposed the injustices of the capitalist system, the negative value of the West and religion openly, courageously, systematically and effectively so that shook the world in addition to increasing the national honour (Informant 12).

### *Confucian values*

After in-depth interviews were completed, we identified five Confucian values: *Zhi* (wisdom), *Xin* (trust), *Xiao* (Filial piety), *Ren* (benevolence) and *Zhong yong* (moderation). We identified the cultural roots of each value and explore each relevance to the Chinese communities and Dr. Mahathir's leadership communication.

*Zhi* (Wisdom): According to Confucius, knowledge is wisdom. The type of knowledge that Confucius defined as wisdom was that which would contribute to a better life, for the individual; and for the society, the purpose of transforming and improving. He believed that all human beings could benefit from self-cultivation. He inaugurated a humanities program for potential leaders, opened the doors of education to all, and defined learning not merely as the acquisition of knowledge but also as character building. Education has always been an extremely important means of personal advancement in China.

From the time I was young, I was exposed to Confucian concepts in the family from parents and grandparents. Additionally, while in various leadership positions in society, I was able to learn more fully of the concepts that Confucius taught and also put them into practice. These experiences gave me an understanding of the great worth of the teachings of Confucius and the benefits that they could bring to people. The full value of this knowledge of Confucian thought was brought to the forefront of my mind as my understanding of leadership theory grew. I came to realize that the ideas of Confucius could be of great worth to leadership theory research (Informant 8).

*Xin* (trust): A person's integrity of being truthful and sincere to oneself and the society is of great importance. When one is truthful to oneself, one would then be able to fulfil one's obligation to look after one's family in a caring and sincere way. When an individual can achieve this, then for one to care and contribute to one's society would come in a natural way. Therefore, sincerity and integrity of an individual are the key strengths of the Confucian ethics when applied to the society (Low & Ang, 2011).

*Xiao* (Filial piety): Confucius taught people on the value of family closeness and fatherly care and stressed the importance of peace and unity in social relationships. Confucius stressed on the importance of family. In a family unit, the father is the key figure. He should be the role model, a good example to his children. For the son, it is the son's duty to obey without questioning, and honour his father.

Showing care and concern to his followers, the benevolent Confucian leader is like a father to his followers. Besides, the family spirit is often fostered (Informant 2).

Chinese are taught from a young age to be loyal to their family and kin. Hsu (1984) claimed that loyalty to the family will continue to play a critical role among Chinese. Family is important in any culture, but it is extraordinarily so in Chinese culture. More importantly, relationships among family members provide the human basis for the moral virtues of the Chinese (Low, 2009, 2002).

*Ren* (benevolence): The concept of benevolence *ren* is to become the most genuine, sincere and humane person possible. The process of becoming *ren*, a benevolent gentleman, is also called a superior person and self-perfection by Confucius. He believed that human perfection can be attained by anyone. Those who devote themselves to the process of *ren* are called *junzi*. People are encouraged into becoming a gentleman not only for the sake of social harmony, but also for the sake of self-control of the individual (Li, 2003).

*Zhong yong* (moderation): *Zhong yong* described harmony in the universe and how individuals participate and promote harmony through a simple path (Yao, Yang, Dong, & Wang, 2010). Based on the daily practices of the Chinese community, the informant believes that the *Zhong yong* leads to moderation which would achieve harmony. Meanwhile, the informants emphasized that Confucius said, "*Zhong yong*, intends to encourage moderation and avoid extremism. This is because the main goal is to achieve harmony."

In summary, leadership communication based on the values of Confucianism could help to improve the quality of leadership in families, education, business, politics, and any other situations in which leadership plays an important role. The Confucian value-based leadership is particularly important because it stresses the necessity for each leader at any level, to search within himself to determine his mission and vision as a leader. This firm foundation, deeply rooted in the philosophy and ethics of Confucianism, and a consideration of the good points from the West can be useful to create a model that will, if implemented, revolutionize leadership at all levels of society.

DISCUSSION

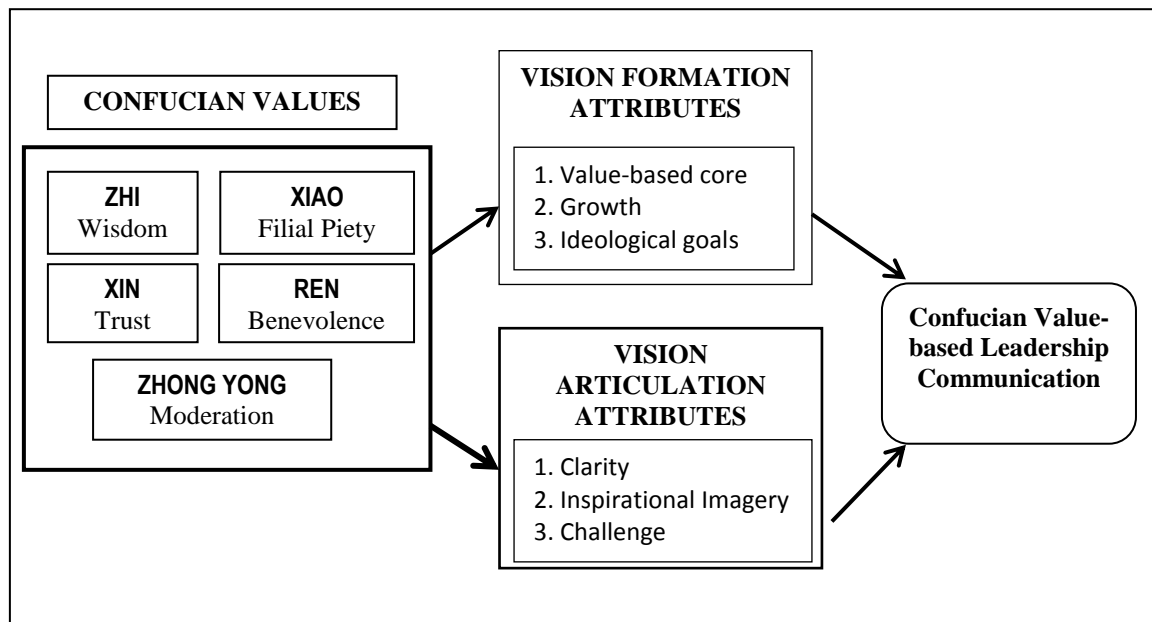


Figure 1. Confucian value-based leadership communication model

The results of this study expand the idea of leadership communication and provide empirical support to the framework of Zaccaro and Banks (2001) in which there are two major elements in leadership communication, namely vision formation and vision articulation. Furthermore, this study contributes to the framework of Zaccaro and Banks (2001) in a different social context, which combines the perspectives of Western values and the values from Confucianism. The results can give an idea of how it can be integrated and practiced in countries with racial and religious diversity.

The model illustrated in Figure 1 shows leadership communication as a process that occurs in two steps, vision formation and vision articulation. Of course, the first component is the formation of a meaningful vision. This component involves, creating a vision for the future, or the desired future state, envisioned in an innovative form to attain racial unity in Malaysia. The desired vision has to be meaningful and appropriate to the effort based on personal, organizational values as well as inclusiveness. With this set of visions, leadership provides a frame of reference to improve commitment and support of the community, based on culture, politics and history, by which the community can gather for the advancement and success of the nation. People believe that the leader used a variety of different actions including change-oriented vision of the present and the future in the pursuit of achieving the vision.

Once the vision is established, leadership communication plays an important role in the acceptance and achievement. This is the second step and it is a complex process. Here, the role of a leader is to communicate the vision established by holding out hope and leading followers to believe in order for them to work together to achieve that vision. Different leaders use different vision attributes. Obviously, the attributes of the most effective communication are through the delivery of a clear, straightforward and compelling vision. Generally, the leaders from the Chinese community believe that Dr. Mahathir has inspirational images such as attraction, deep impression and a well-respected figure

especially from the perspective of paternalistic relationship. Dr. Mahathir also dared to challenge and took the risks despite the difficulties and the possibilities of failure.

The proposed model combines the features of the vision formation and vision articulation with the values of Confucianism. This model shows that both are compatible with the values of leadership communication in Malaysia. Assuming that the leader has been shaping and delivering the vision, they may also hold personal values in the performance of their vision. This can be accomplished in several ways. Charismatic leaders show empathy (*Ren*) to listen, understand and share the feelings of the people. In addition, they need to focus on energy, hopes and aspirations, and expressed their confidence in the ability to effectively implement the vision, followed by community support (*Xiao*), trust (*Xin*) and loyalty to the leader. Most importantly, charismatic leaders must have wisdom (*Zhi*) and sincerity while performing a challenging vision. They serve as a role model that shows the behaviour of moderation (*Zhong Yong*) and the desired action to the people. As a whole, these values offer deeper understanding of the leadership communications in knowledge, attitude and leadership skills. These views create significant recognition in leadership communication that considers three main aspects: the formation of a vision, the formed vision that was delivered and the delivered vision that was blended with the values of Confucianism.

The study also revealed that in addition to have some of the characteristics of the charismatic leader from the West, informants emphasized that moral values and humanity as well as the moderation from the perspective of Confucianism are also crucial. In the context of Dr. Mahathir's leadership communication, the majority of the informants agreed that Dr. Mahathir is a charismatic leader who has a strong vision, desire to make a change, willingness to cooperate and great effort to strive the goals successfully. His charismatic character was formed based on that unique personality and behaviour (House et al., 1991). In addition to the characteristics and practices of charismatic leadership, he also designed and integrated cultural values from Confucianism such as wisdom, harmony, simplicity and craft. These remarkable nature and behaviours of Dr. Mahathir's are the main reason for the presence of his charisma.

The vision formation, vision articulation and values of Confucianism have formed the framework of integrated communications vision that can guide research in leadership for better future communication. The study concluded that a communication model of leadership in the context of the Chinese community in Malaysia (Figure 1) is the result of the attribution of charismatic leadership and behaviour based on assessment of followers and combination of Confucian values.

#### FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

Since this study only involved Chinese informants, further research can be carried out with the involvement of community with other cultures, for example Indian society. The understanding of leadership communication in the context of other communities will benefit leadership in Malaysia. We believe that cultural settings and traditional wisdom in the studies of their contemporary leadership practices may offer several new insights for leadership research.

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to develop a leadership model that works in the intercultural context. A look at Confucian-based values in Malaysia shows that Confucianism can provide the fuel to make the engines of industry work. It provides leadership communication attributes that are characterized by wisdom, filial piety, trust, benevolence and moderation. We hope that this study has illustrated the intellectual value of digging deep into the cultural fabric of a society to understand the multiple sources influencing contemporary leaders' beliefs, values, and actions.

### BIODATA

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix A: Samples of Dr. Mahathir's Speeches

	<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Sample 1</b>	MCA 29 <sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	19 September 1981
<b>Sample 2</b>	MCA 30 <sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	3 October 1982
<b>Sample 3</b>	MCA 31 <sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	16 October 1983
<b>Sample 4</b>	MCA 33 <sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	16 November 1986
<b>Sample 5</b>	MCA 34 <sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	11 July 1987
<b>Sample 6</b>	MCA 35 <sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	31 July 1988
<b>Sample 7</b>	MCA 36 <sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	30 July 1989
<b>Sample 8</b>	MCA 37 <sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	28 July 1990
<b>Sample 9</b>	MCA 38 <sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	28 July 1991
<b>Sample 10</b>	MCA 39 <sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	15 August 1992
<b>Sample 11</b>	MCA 40 <sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	26 June 1993
<b>Sample 12</b>	MCA 41 <sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	18 June 1994
<b>Sample 13</b>	MCA 42 <sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	2 September 1995
<b>Sample 14</b>	MCA 43 <sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	6 July 1996
<b>Sample 15</b>	MCA 44 <sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	30 August 1997
<b>Sample 16</b>	MCA 45 <sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	30 May 1998
<b>Sample 17</b>	MCA 46 <sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	17 July 1999
<b>Sample 18</b>	MCA 47 <sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	17 June 2000
<b>Sample 19</b>	MCA 49 <sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Opening Ceremony	27 July 2002
<b>Sample 20</b>	GERAKAN National Delegates Conference	21 November 1981
<b>Sample 21</b>	GERAKAN National Delegates Conference	25 September 1982
<b>Sample 22</b>	GERAKAN National Delegates Conference	23 July 1983
<b>Sample 23</b>	GERAKAN National Delegates Conference	6 June 1987
<b>Sample 24</b>	GERAKAN National Delegates Conference	26 November 1988
<b>Sample 25</b>	GERAKAN National Delegates Conference	23 September 1989
<b>Sample 26</b>	GERAKAN National Delegates Conference	9 June 1990
<b>Sample 27</b>	GERAKAN 20 <sup>th</sup> National Delegates Conference	3 August 1991
<b>Sample 28</b>	GERAKAN 21 <sup>st</sup> National Delegates Conference	1 August 1992
<b>Sample 29</b>	GERAKAN 22 <sup>nd</sup> National Delegates Conference	29 May 1993
<b>Sample 30</b>	GERAKAN 23 <sup>rd</sup> National Delegates Conference	30 July 1994
<b>Sample 31</b>	GERAKAN 24 <sup>th</sup> National Delegates Conference	22 July 1995
<b>Sample 32</b>	GERAKAN 25 <sup>th</sup> National Delegates Conference	5 Oktober 1996
<b>Sample 33</b>	GERAKAN 26 <sup>th</sup> National Delegates Conference	16 August 1997
<b>Sample 34</b>	GERAKAN 28 <sup>th</sup> National Delegates Conference	24 July 1999
<b>Sample 35</b>	GERAKAN 29 <sup>th</sup> National Delegates Conference	23 September



		2000
<b>Sample 36</b>	GERAKAN 30 <sup>th</sup> National Delegates Conference	29 September 2001
<b>Sample 37</b>	GERAKAN 31 <sup>st</sup> National Delegates Conference	5 October 2002

Appendix B: Background of Informants Summary

Informant	Age	Organization	Post/ Expertise	Background Profession	Date of Interview
<b>Informant 1</b>	52	GERAKAN	National	Doctor	30-6-2013
<b>Informant 2</b>	53	MCA	State	Doctor	28-7-2013
<b>Informant 3</b>	50+	The Federation of Chinese Associations Malaysia	National	Accountant	6-8-2013
<b>Informant 4</b>	80+	National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia	Ex- National member	Entrepreneur	27-8-2013
<b>Informant 5</b>	38	DAP	State	Ex-Lecturer	27-9-2013
<b>Informant 6</b>	50+	The Federation of Chinese Associations Malaysia	State	Accountant	2-10-2013
<b>Informant 7</b>	39	DAP	National	Politician	24-10-2013
<b>Informant 8</b>	50+	National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia	State	Optometrist	29-10-2013
<b>Informant 9</b>	32	United Youth Movement of Malaysia	National	Entrepreneur	29-10-2013
<b>Informant 10</b>	31	Guang Ming Daily	State	Reporter	19-11-2013
<b>Informant 11</b>	33	People's Justice Party	National	Politician	
<b>Informant 12</b>	60+	Kwong Wah Jit Poh	State	Senior reporter	11-12-2013
<b>Informant 13</b>	36	GERAKAN	National	Lawyer	30-12-2013
<b>Informant 14</b>	40+	Sin Chew Daily	State	Reporter	7-01-2014
<b>Informant 15</b>	48	MCA	State	Politician	7-01-2014