

# MARKETING

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WEEKENDER<sup>TM</sup>



# MEET THE REAL FACES OF AI

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**IPG Mediabrands: Anchored by humanity in the age of AI**

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# What Say



**“AI isn’t our biggest threat. It’s apathy.”**

Nils Leonard, Uncommon



**“The more brilliant the lightning, the quicker it disappears.”**

Avicenna



**“To live a creative life, we must lose our fear of being wrong.”**

Joseph Chilton Pierce



**“You can use AI to do many things but not to do everything in my opinion.”**

Mario Dughi, global marketing director at Unilever, during a Brand Innovators panel at SXSW London.



# Has the Bottom Fallen Out?

*“Pitch after pitch, brief after brief... and then one day, silence. That’s when you realise the bottom didn’t fall out... it was never there.”*

It’s a sobering thought. But not a negative one.

Marketing has never lacked buzzwords, bravado, or colour-coded decks.

But somewhere along the way, we stopped asking the hard questions. We became masters

## EDITOR'S NOTE

**... Agencies are bound by talent usage contracts with strict expiry dates, yet even those are often ignored until someone kicks up a fuss. And most times, the agencies take the fall. Sakit!...**

of noise, but apprentices of impact. And when results stall or a campaign flops, we scramble for spin:

*"It drove awareness."*

*"Engagement was above benchmark."*

But deep down, we know something is off.

### **The hard questions.**

Are we more obsessed with *claiming* success than *creating* it?

Are we letting spreadsheets and cells in Excel speak for ideas we're too afraid to fight for? Have we gone soft, doing just enough

to survive another review... hoping the *next* job will be the one where we finally get to do it right or make real income?

In our world, it's not just the campaign that matters; it's the IP, systems and thinking we build.

*(thanks Farrah)*

But here's the catch: once an agency is paid, the client owns the IP. That's the default.

They can reuse, repurpose and adapt the work freely, while we move on empty-handed, having given it all away lock, stock, and barrel at a bargain-basement price.

That's the weak link.

Agencies are bound by talent usage contracts with strict expiry dates, yet even those are often ignored until someone kicks up a fuss. And most times, the agencies take the fall. *Sakit!*

There's a lot to fix on how we work and how we are valued. But that's also what makes this moment thrilling.

Because when the bottom falls out, it's a chance to rebuild - stronger, sharper and with spine.



# IPG Mediabrands: Anchored by humanity in the age of AI



**Above, L to R:**  
**Anwer Khan, Managing Director, Initiative**  
**Stanley Clement, Chief Executive Officer, MBCS**  
**Sue-Anne Lim, Chief Executive Officer,**  
**Universal McCann**  
**Murali Ramasamy, Chief Financial Officer,**  
**IPG Mediabrands**  
**Darren Yuen, Chief Executive Officer, IPG Mediabrands**  
**Debica Sigamani, Chief Talent Officer, IPG Mediabrands**  
**Cindy Eliza Vaz, Chief Digital Officer, IPG Mediabrands**  
**Stephanie Foong, Chief Investment Officer,**  
**IPG Mediabrands**

***Excerpt:*** *As artificial intelligence reshapes the advertising world, IPG Mediabrands remains grounded in values – prioritising people, purpose, and ethics in an era driven by algorithms.*

The media landscape is constantly evolving, and while algorithms now often speak louder than humans, IPG Mediabrands offers a refreshing reminder that behind every transformation, it is people who truly drive progress.

As the advertising industry grapples with the implications of artificial intelligence (AI), IPG Mediabrands sets itself apart with a people-first approach that

## COVER STORY

blends creativity, governance and innovation.

Darren Yuen, CEO of IPG Mediabrands Malaysia, is resolute in his stance that whatever the company does, it must always be “authentic.”

“We cannot be an organisation that is solely and only driven by a technological advancement that is being put in place to make us smarter,” said Darren.

“We will always have to apply ourselves as the human mind – with our emotions, intellect, experience, speech, thought

processes, and most importantly, our governing ethics and the moral values that we live by.”

This perspective serves as a rallying cry for purposeful adoption. For Darren, the potential of AI must be tied to the real-world value it delivers.

“What’s important is that alongside adoption is application. We can use AI as a buzzword, but if it’s not going to move the meter, it becomes meaningless.

“How we adopt it – and more importantly, how we apply it – is critical to creating that value-change difference for our clients.”





**“We cannot be an organisation that is solely and only driven by a technological advancement that is being put in place to make us smarter”**

### Intent and ethics

The moral compass is a consistent thread in IPG Mediabrands’ AI conversation.

“Since we’re building and adopting AI to enrich human lives, we must be intentional. What is the cost of that intent? If it’s efficiency, it’s worth considering. But if it’s disruption for disruption’s sake, or rooted in malice or controversy, then we must weigh it carefully,” said Darren.

This thinking is embedded in the organisation’s ethical framework. Sue-Anne Lim, CEO of Universal McCann, said the company’s global AI policies are governed by three guiding principles – consent, transparency and consensus.

“We have strong and consistently updated global guidelines,” she said. “We train our AI agents transparently – what data is being used, where it came from, and what it’s designed to do. It’s not a black box.”



**“... what data is being used, where it came from, and what it’s designed to do. It’s not a black box.”**



**“AI cannot replace the ability to think laterally, to emotionally connect, or to draw from years of lived experience.”**

### **Creativity, augmented**

A recurring myth in the industry is that AI will replace human creativity. The IPG Mediabrands team responds in unison – AI is a co-pilot, but humans decide the route.

Anwer Khan, Managing Director of Initiative, said that while AI improves efficiency, it can't do what humans can.

“The core of what we do – innovation, ideation, original thinking – that is still, and will

always be, human. AI cannot replace the ability to think laterally, to emotionally connect, or to draw from years of lived experience.”

Stanley Clement, CEO of MBCS, agreed.

“When radio came out, it was supposed to kill print. When TV came, it was supposed to kill radio. Now, AI is supposed to kill everything else. But it's not the end. It's an evolution.”

Stanley added that AI will distinguish those who add value



**“Now, AI is supposed to kill everything else. But it's not the end. It's an evolution.”**

## COVER STORY



**“AI gives them space to think differently – not just do things faster, but do better work”**

from those who simply enter a prompt and expect miracles.

“We are the only ones who can make people move with a message. If you don’t train your craft – if you don’t understand your client’s needs, if you don’t know how to reframe a problem – AI will only expose your lack of depth.”

### **AI as a platform for growth**

For IPG Mediabrands, AI isn’t

about shrinking headcounts – it’s about expanding horizons.

Cindy Eliza Vaz, IPG Mediabrands’ chief digital officer, sees AI as a career catalyst. She said people previously stuck in repetitive tasks now have an opportunity to pivot and grow, as AI gives them space to think differently – not just do things faster, but do better work.

Cindy’s team is already seeing real transformation.

“When we build websites now, the AI-enhanced search functions allow for human-like queries. Instead of typing product codes for a mobile phone or the packages on offer, when you use the search button, with AI, we can say, here are the top 10 phones in the list.

“It’s a simple change, but it completely transforms the user experience.”

Sue-Anne echoed this shift: “AI will reset everything we know – UX, UI, advertising. Conversation may become the new UX. But these tools will only amplify who you already are. If you have strong craft, AI will supercharge your output. If you lack fundamentals, AI will only highlight it.”



## **A culture of compliance and consciousness**

Even as IPG Mediabrands embraces AI, it doesn't do so blindly. From internal AI consoles that protect data privacy, to client-specific risk frameworks, the agency is acutely aware of the responsibility that comes with innovation.

"We've built internal AI tools that keep client data safe within our ecosystem. It's not about jumping on trends – it's about justifying what you're doing. Transparency, honesty and justification – those are our core values," said Anwer.

This vigilant mindset extends to future risks – from misinformation to power consumption, to synthetic content eroding trust online. The team is actively working to stay ahead.

"We don't just follow trends – we build safety nets around them," said Sue-Anne. "The industry must evolve with a clear sense of responsibility. Clients trust us not just to create, but to protect their brands in a volatile environment."

## **Excitement and caution for the road ahead**

Looking to the future, the team

## COVER STORY



remains cautiously optimistic.

Darren is excited about having “better vision, clearer intent”, but worries about complacency and misuse.

“What scares me is when people think AI doesn’t affect them – or worse, when they use it without thought. We need to ensure our values guide every application.”

Anwer said original thinking is what brought humans here, and it’s what will keep us relevant.

But with every invention, there’s a risk of abuse.

“That’s what scares me – not AI itself, but how we humans might misuse it.”

Stanley summed it up best.

“We’re not just creators – we are custodians of culture and trust. Our role is to bring value at the input, not just measure it at the output. AI can be magic – but only in the hands of those who understand what makes us human.”



# APPIES Malaysia 2025 Winners Announced!

We have turned 10 years old and what a journey it has been. This is the only event in Malaysia where Live Presentations meet Live Judging.

“We will celebrate all the winners at the APPIES Malaysia Awards Night on August 8 at the Eastin Hotel and reveal what level of metal they won. Best of Best Special Winners (Red) and Best Presenter under thirty and above thirty (Black) will also be announced then,” says Prof Harmandar Singh aka Ham, President of APPIES Malaysia.

## APPIES 2025 WINNERS

After two full days of high-powered judging last week by more than 20 senior marketers and 143 stage presentations, the organisers of The APPIES Malaysia Marketing Campaigns Awards 2025 are pleased to

announce all the deserving winners...

*Gold/Silver/Bronze trophies and certs plus Merit certs winners in alphabetical order, by campaigns. Best of Best Special Winners and Best Presenter winners are decided from here.*

| CAMPAIGN  | BRAND                       | AGENCY / COMPANY                             |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
| #HealingDiLangkawi  | LANGKAWI 99 MAGICAL ISLANDS | CD Advertising                               |
| #Sembur, Play, Slay   | SAFI Shayla                 | MBCS   |
| A DIY CNY   | MR.DIY                      | MR.DIY                                       |
| Aiken Brightening illuminate CNY's eCommerce sales              | Aiken                       | PHD Media                                    |
| Atlas Ecopod: World's Slimmest Reverse Vending Machine          | Atlas Vending               | Ampersand Advisory                           |
| Bawa Balik Yang 'Itu'   | Farm Fresh                  | Edelman                                      |
| Bekpes Hot Tawan Puncak Kinabalu                                | Hot FM                      | Media Prima Audio                            |
| Belonging: Turning old clothes into new hope                    | RHB Bank                    | THE SHOUT GROUP/FCB SHOUT                    |
| CelcomDigi x SRG – Turning Disruption into Influence            | CelcomDigi Berhad           | ONE Team (M+C Saatchi & Naga DDB Tribal)     |
| Cracking the Secret Language: Ketibas, Ketibus, Ketitam         | Safi Hijabista Bodycare     | MBCS   |
| Dashing Bump-It!  | Dashing                     | Mutiara Harrison (part of McCann Worldgroup) |
| Dashing x Tottenham Hotspur — From London with Locker Room      | Dashing                     | Mutiara Harrison (part of McCann Worldgroup) |
| Dreams to the Heart of Sabahans, The Dreamer                    | CelcomDigi                  | Posterscope Malaysia                         |
| Elmina City - Where Wellness Lives, and Content Leads the Way   | Sime Darby Property         | WPP Media                                    |
| Enchanteur Luxe: The Scent of Music & Modern Expression         | Enchanteur                  | Mutiara Harrison (part of McCann Worldgroup) |
| Experience Nature's Oldest Skincare Secret                      | Spritzer                    | THE SHOUT GROUP/FCB SHOUT                    |
| FOMO & Fizz create Malaysia's #1 TV show in just 3 weeks        | Calpis Soda                 | Ampersand Advisory                           |
| Glow Like a Goddess: Aiken's Radiant Take on Festive Beauty     | Aiken                       | MBCS   |
| Igniting national pride: Bersama Satu Suara                     | MR.DIY                      | MR.DIY                                       |
| Jangan Scam Hatiku  | Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM)  | M+C Saatchi                                  |
| KFC Raya Meowriah: Making Raya Purr-fectly Inclusive            | KFC Malaysia                | Naga DDB Tribal                              |
| Malaysia's first ever Senior Esports Team                       | Goodday                     | Ampersand Advisory                           |
| Multiply the Goodness with Tropicana Twister                    | Tropicana Twister           | THE SHOUT GROUP/FCB SHOUT                    |
| Netflix's Squid Game Returns to Malaysia for Season 2           | Netflix                     | Trapper Media Services                       |
| Record Breaking Sales Growth, Goodday KidSTART                  | Goodday                     | Ampersand Advisory                           |
| Right Time, Right User, Real Results                            | CelcomDigi Fibre            | OMD Malaysia                                 |
| Romano X Dashing X Enchanteur - Surprise Your Love, Scent-fully | Romano, Dashing, Enchanteur | Mutiara Harrison (part of McCann Worldgroup) |
| RWG CEO 2.0: Eva's Back, And She Means Business                 | Resorts World Genting       | Naga DDB Tribal                              |
| SAFI's Scholarship Sparked a Raya Revolution                    | Safi                        | MBCS   |
| Stop That Dot: Empowerin g Women to Fight Breast Cancer         | Homesoy                     | Ampersand Advisory                           |
| The "Ele-vating" Shower Experience that Transforms Bath Time    | Carrie Junior               | PHD Media                                    |
| The Ekspres Campaign  | KLIA Ekspres                | BLWN   |
| The Purrfect Scent? Just Ask the Cat.                           | Scintify & Enchanteur       | Ogilvy Malaysia                              |
| The Real M Nasir  | Wonda                       | Ampersand Advisory                           |
| The Ultimate Elevator Pitch gets 3.4 Million Views              | Alliance Bank               | Ampersand Advisory                           |
| Ultimate Elevator Pitch: 60 Seconds that reinvent the category  | Alliance Bank               | Ampersand Advisory                           |
| Unifi Device Fiesta   | Unifi                       | GrowthOps Asia                               |
| Where Drama Meets Dinner: Dapur Goodday Ramadan                 | Goodday                     | Ampersand Advisory                           |
| Which Speedster Are You?  | CelcomDigi                  | Kingdom Digital                              |
| Winning Malay SMEs Through the Power of AI Pantun               | CelcomDigi Enterprise       | OMD Malaysia                                 |

**APPIES 2025 WINNERS**



**APPIES 2025 WINNERS**



**APPIES 2025 WINNERS**





## APPIES 2025 WINNERS



Official Awards Presentation and  
Celebration Night:

Date: **8 August, 2025.**

Venue: **Grand Ballroom,  
Eastin Hotel.**

Time: **6.00pm.**

Table bookings are now  
open [here](#). Or call Ruby  
03-77262588

**SPECIAL TROPHIES:** As  
part of our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary,  
we will also announce  
**APPIES** Winners of the  
Decade on this night. These  
include Ad Agencies, Media  
Agencies and Marketers of  
the Decade, based on their  
accomplishments to date at  
**APPIES MALAYSIA (2016-2025).**

# APPIES MALAYSIA 2025 AWARDS NIGHT



06:00pm

**Registration, Networking, Happy Hours**

06:40pm

**Ballroom doors swing open**

07:10pm

**Opening Address by Prof Harmandar Singh,  
President of APPIES Malaysia**

07:20pm

**GRAND DINNER (music performance)**

07:45pm

**APPIES Malaysia 2025 Marketing Awards  
(Merit, Bronze, Silver & Gold)**

9.20pm

**Intermission (music performance)**

9.45pm

**APPIES Malaysia 2025 Special Awards  
(Black & Red)**

10.15pm

**APPIES Malaysia (2016 - 2025) Winners of the Decade Awards**

10.45pm

**Thank You & Winners Gallery**

*All Programme details are correct at the time of publication,  
and may change as the event nears.*

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