



Airing potty concerns

BY JOHN TAN

WHEN we think of influencers, we often associate them with glamour. Many, if not most, influencers build their following by curating content on lifestyle and beauty topics.

Marissa Wong Wern Chin, however, has received the spotlight for talking about toilets in Malaysia, gaining over 127,000 followers on TikTok for her toilet reviews.

Using the slogan "Berak bersama Marissa Wong", the 28-year-old Subang Jaya native's content humorously centres around her experience using public toilets in the Klang Valley.

"It started with food reviews. I was thinking why people like to watch food reviews because they can relate. They eat three times a day. So what is that one thing that is opposite from food review?"

"Then it came to me, I realised the toilet situation in Malaysia is interesting. We do not publicly talk about the toilet situation but we complain a lot. And, not a single person has done toilet reviews properly," Wong told *theSun*.

Lost in algorithms

The absence of toilet reviews prompted the music and arts graduate to take up the challenge. Her reviews initially started out in English but eventually transitioned into Malay due to

► Marissa Wong strives to raise awareness about maintaining cleanliness in public toilets

the algorithms. Instead of reaching Malaysians like she had wanted, Wong noticed her videos were attracting viewers in Western countries such as the US, UK and Australia.

"Due to the cultural differences, they did not understand the references. Hence, I aim to focus on Malaysians, which are my main viewers right now. They can relate and resonate with the content. It is also easier for me to explain the content. A lot of terms that we try to use in English do not apply. It might sound rude if I say it in English but in Malay, it is fine."

Thumbs up for petrol stations

Since making the switch, Wong has reviewed over 300 toilets in the past two years. She observed that Malaysian public toilets lack basic necessities such as proper lighting, water and soap.

"When you go into a toilet, it should be dry and clean. And, there should be light and water. A lot of Malaysian toilets have pipes but sometimes, they have no water. Some places do not even have lights in their toilets."

"Toilets should also have soaps and ventilation as well. Toilets should be well-ventilated and either have a window or fan. These are important criteria."

Other criteria such as the interior design and scent are bonuses, said Wong. Surprisingly, toilets at fancy venues such as cafes, restaurants and shopping malls are lacking when it comes to providing these basic necessities. While they may have aesthetically pleasing exteriors and interiors, their toilets are not well-maintained. Toilets at petrol stations, in comparison, offer better facilities.

"Petrol stations have the best toilets. They have improved a lot compared with 10 years ago. Their toilets are better than shopping malls now, especially the ones in Petron and BHP. They have good lights. Some even have music and fans."



Wong is also a stand-up comedian.

So, petrol station toilets in the city are improving and well maintained."

Feedback welcome

When asked if Wong hears back from any of these businesses, the Chinese-Thai influencer revealed many take well to her suggestions, utilising them for the betterment of their toilets. Staff at one cafe even recognised her and were excited for Wong to see the improvements.

"I mentioned how everything was nice and felt good, except the toilet. I mentioned how the ventilation was bad. After a few months, I returned to eat there and they recognised me. They encouraged me to visit the toilet and to my surprise, they followed all my suggestions. This time around, they added ventilation, perfume, soap and light."

Bad toilet etiquette

That said, businesses are not entirely to blame for dirty public toilets. Users also have contributed to this, Wong has seen the effects of irresponsible toilet etiquette. From unflushed poop to toilet items being stolen, Wong believes heavy punishment should be levied to improve the condition of public toilets throughout the country.

"I suggest the government slap fines on those who are caught misusing public toilets. Additionally, I suggest we make minor (law offenders) clean toilets instead of giving them fines. If you commit minor crimes such as not paying your fines three times in a row, you should be subjected

Marissa Wong's top 10 toilets (in no particular order):

- ➔ Starhill Bukit Bintang
- ➔ Gardens Mall
- ➔ Kopitiam Meng Yang Restaurant Two
- ➔ KK Mart Gotong Raya
- ➔ Shell Pandan Indah
- ➔ Klinik Leo ss14
- ➔ Ikea Damansara
- ➔ BHP R&R Jejantas Sungai Buloh
- ➔ KLPAC
- ➔ Shell TTDI

Reason: Good facilities, consistently maintained and free for public use.

to community service, which is washing the public toilets. This will certainly solve the cleanliness issue."

Pushing for more change

Wong aims to use her platform to further her cause. For one, she hopes to collaborate with private and governmental institutions, aiming to assist with their marketing efforts during their awareness campaigns.

"With topics such as this, if the delivery is done too seriously, the public might be bored and would not engage with it. But if I come into the picture, I can make it more interesting by injecting some fun and humour into it."

Her recent collaboration with the Federal Territories Department is one example. The campaign, titled *Kempen Bersih Setiap Tempat*, saw her advocating for cleanliness in a humorous yet educational manner.

Content-wise, she aims to review over 100 toilets this year, including facilities outside the Klang Valley such as at famous tourist destinations.

"These spots are important because they influence tourists' impressions of Malaysia. If the toilets are dirty, it will give them a bad impression of Malaysia."

"If I can improve the toilets at tourist places, it will give them a better impression when they come over. Other than that, I am looking at reviewing refurbished toilets such as rest and relaxation toilets," she added.



Wong says many establishments have responded positively to her suggestions.

Wong wants the government to fine those misusing public toilets.