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INTRODUCTION

The use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) or online social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, YouTube, etc grows tremendously in 21st century politics. These social media have been instrumental as a significant tool, not only for political campaigns, but also as a platform for politicians to encourage the general people to engage in political domain (Steenkamp and Hyde-Clarke, 2012). Since the last election in 2008, a social media revolution has transformed the political and journalistic landscape, not only in Malaysia, but the world indeed. Research indicated the Malaysia’s 12th General Election in 2008 proved to be a historic event as the new media was effectively used as an alternative vehicle for the information provision during the election campaign’s weeks (Liow, 2012).

Before the 13th General Election, the Prime Minister, Dato’ Seri Najib had claimed that the 2013 General Election will be Malaysia’s first “social media election”. He admitted that the mushroom development of social media has encouraged greater openness, but it could be a double-edged sword for his party (UMNO) (Syed Jaymal Zahid, 2013). True, if one uses social media networks correctly, it could have a positive impact or influence on the relationship between political parties and the public (Crompton, 2008; Wills and Reeves, 2007; Zittel, 2007). According to a monitoring website, socialbaker.com, currently there are about 13.6 million Facebook users (out of 28.3 million of population) in Malaysia. Toeing to this thought, the ever-increasing growth of social media networks has relentlessly changed the way we interact with each other and has an insidious influence on how public consumes messages and news. Due to the fact that Malaysians are turning more to the Internet to get information, which has led to politicians setting up Facebook and/or Twitter accounts to reach out to their voters especially during an election campaign. During the General Election 2008, blogging tends to attract more socio-political cyberspace election info-sharing and debate (Syamsul Anuar Ismail and Hasmah Zanuddin, 2008). This study, hence, is to examine the use of social media, especially Facebook, Blog and YouTube during the 13th General Election.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term social media is used to describe “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplen and Haelein, 2010; Mayfield, 2008; Newson et al., 2009). In other word, it is a platform that facilitates information sharing and participation from users of the media in order to create and distribute the content. Social media encompasses different forms, for instance social networks—Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, etc, Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, micro blogging, wikis, podcasts, pictures, video to name a few (Kaplen and Haelein, 2010; Weber, 2009; Steenkamp and Hyde-Clarke, 2012).
CHAPTER 11  WINNING THE ELECTION SEATS OF GE13: PRELIMINARY STATEMENTS OF ISSUES FRAMES USING FACEBOOK

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Hasmah Zanuddin
Tham Jen Sern

INTRODUCTION

The credibility of new media to penetrate and influence a large population of Malaysian political views, most of all the political actors, have increasingly used this medium to inform, communicate and get connected with their target voters. Since the unexpected lost of its two third share of parliamentary seat in General Election 12 (GE12), the usage of new media for GE13 during election campaign is highly significant especially by the candidates from both incumbent party, Barisan Nasional (BN) and Pakatan Rakyat (PR). The role of new media as a tool in the mobilization of voters is absolutely salient as it changes political behaviour. As new media has permeated the elections sphere, it has been used to disseminate information; building the political parties and helps them promote and position themselves to win the heart of voters. New media has always been a major contributing factor of success in GE12 especially for PR, the ruling party’s opponent, and GE13 has witnessed both incumbent actively uses the social networking sites especially Facebook to frame issues of election with the intention to influence the ‘netizens’. This social media is globally a vital tool in any political campaign. These social networking sites especially Facebook and Twitter, both extensively used during GE13 by both parties were presented either directly from the candidate himself, or through their youth wings, supporters or through ‘friends’ personal accounts on Facebook.

Malaysia has 13 million Facebook users, with 46% penetration from the 29 million Malaysian populations (Socialbakers, 2012). This paper aimed to explore the issues portrayed by political incumbents from the nomination day until a day after the Election (20th April – 6th May 2013). So far framing analyst has widely examined the traditional media, but there is a limited study on framing via social media. This paper explicates the analyses of six Facebook content concerning States and Parliamentary seats posted by different political parties representing the two main political groups: BN and PR. The study examined how these candidates or their administrators frame issues through their Facebook wall post or article link base.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of media today has become an important cultural resource as the media is the communication centre for politicians to influence, to acknowledge and to tell the citizens regarding their political views, policies and political messages, as well as to define social position and status of political nominees. Through the media, political actors are able to generate publicity to gain public’s trust. Thus, the media has become important agents for the positioning of political actors through media discourse to either legitimize or delegitimize certain hierarchies of positions.