

Social Media Usage among Rural United Malay National Organization (UMNO) Youths in Kampung Gajah State Legislative Assembly, Perak, Malaysia During the 13th General Election 2013

Azmi Abdul Malek

Abstract

The study investigated the social media usage among rural UMNO youths in Kampung Gajah state legislative assembly, Perak during the 13th General Election (GE13). The study aimed to examine the patterns and factors of social media usage among young UMNO voters as well as to study the extent of effectiveness of using social media to help and influence youths in the area of study. The study approached the literature as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, which addressed both theoretical and applied research. The significance of this recent study is the first, which dealt with this theme, to the author knowledge, which in turn encourages other researchers to work on further research on this important issue.

The study also sought to assess the extent to which the role of conventional media is still relevant as a means of communication during GE13 as well as identifying the important issues and other factors that affects youths in voting for party candidates. This study applies qualitative method of via in-depth interview towards 20 UMNO youth participants in GE13. The results found that social media such as Short Messaging System (SMS), Facebook and YouTube played an important role as a means of communication between the candidates, party machinery and voters during GE13 campaign period as well as affecting a number of voters in choosing the candidates in Kampung Gajah State Legislative Assembly, especially those who live outside the constituency.

However, social media is not considered as a decisive factor to the GE13 results in Kampung Gajah state legislative assembly. Aside from social media, conventional media such as radio, television and newspapers are still relevant and necessary in the effort to assist candidates and party machineries to run the campaign during GE13.

The study concluded that social media is only considered as a means of communication to facilitate the campaigns' journey, especially in providing information on campaign schedules and face-to-face meetings between candidates and voters, however it is not the main factor

affecting voters in choosing the candidates. Voters were also found to have chosen candidates as their elected representatives based on the candidates' backgrounds, the contribution of the ruling party, the history of party struggle and loyalty to a party, the strength of BN's party machinery and the weaknesses of opposition party's campaign machinery, in addition to financial stability during the election campaign period. This study is important in contributing towards exposing the effectiveness of social media on voting patterns. The findings of this research can be expanded in line with the 4th Industrial Revolution that portrays the role of information technology which influences the lives of humanity.

Keywords: Social media, general elections, rural youth, conventional media, Malaysia.

Additional information

Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, External Examiner, Professor of Sociology, Faculty of Humanities And Social Sciences, National University of Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia.

Muhammad Fuad Othman, Internal Examiner, Professor of Political Science, College of Law, Government And International Studies, North University of Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia.

Mohamade Ainuddin Iskandar Lee Abdullah, Supervisor, Associate Professor of Political Science, College of Law, Government and International Studies, North University of Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia.

Mohd Razali Agus, Supervisor, Professor of Sociology, College of Law, Government and International Studies, North University of Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia.

Abdul Rahman Abdul Aziz, Supervisor, Professor of Political Science, College of Law, Government and International Studies, North University of Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Azmi Abdul Malek, PhD. Political Science, College of Law, Government and International Studies, North University of Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia, Private Media and Political Science Consultant, Perak, Malaysia. azmi555448@gmail.com