Personalised Campaigns in Party-Centred Politics: Facebook and Instagram as Arena for Political Communication

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ABSTRACT

Social media like Facebook and Instagram place the focus on the individual politician rather than the political party, thereby expanding the political arena for increased personalised campaigning. The need to use social media to communicate a personal image as a politician and to post personalised messages online seems less obvious in a party-centred system of Malaysian politics. Within this framework, the personalised and dialogical aspects of social media may be contradicted with the political parties' structural communication strategies. The study uses data from content analyses of eight Malaysian politicians' Facebook and Instagram accounts during the 14th General Election in Malaysia. The study adopts quantitative approach by presenting descriptive and exploratory analyses. The findings show that politicians depended more on Facebook as their personal media platform and used Instagram as an image booster. The study explains that different features offer by Facebook and Instagram serve as a determinant for politicians' decision in using them. The study concludes that both Facebook and Instagram push for personalisation in political communication that requires private exposure and individual initiatives. Overall, the study shows that like other world leaders, Malaysian politicians are keeping abreast with the technology in reaching out various segments of the society for political communication on social media.

Keywords: *personalised campaign, election, social media, GE 14*

INTRODUCTION

Although Malaysia claims to be a democratic country, its political practice shows otherwise. Many of its institutions operate within a system that is directly answerable to the government in power. The imposition of strict laws and regulations restrains Malaysia from a full democratisation. As asserted by Case (2002), Malaysia fulfils the semi-democratic structure in South East Asia. The view which concurs with Crouch (1996) and Kim (2001) who claim Malaysia as employing authoritarianism in its country's system. Such limited democratic affordances could be illustrated from the way the media and electoral process are being monitored by the government (Mohamed, Abdul Manan, and Ghazali, 2019). It could be argued that the media could not fully exercise its fourth estate role in the country. Ownership is found to be a way to wield political control. It is not something new to learn that the ownership of media institutions has helped the government to control the dissemination of warranted news in the country. The "control will determine the kind of news coverage and position and perspective taken by the media as well as the space it provides for alternative and dissenting views" (Kim, 2001, p. 83). The media freedom in Malaysia has been tightened through this means on the basis to maintain country's multi-racial harmony, economic and

political stability, national security, and to avoid media exploitation (Shahizan, Pauzi, Hashim and Mustana, 2012; Sani, 2005). It is, therefore, fair to suggest that the mainstream media would focus issues that address the interest of the government while giving negative portrayal or ignoring altogether news pertaining to political opposition parties.

However, Malaysian media sphere has since changed with the coming of the Internet. The Internet allows for alternative voices to provide news that differs in practices, context, and content of the government controlled mainstream media. Alternative media serves as another agents of information among middle class and younger generations to obtain differing political views and perspective to assist them in making decision before election. Mohamed (2017) claims that alternative media in Malaysia is mostly anti-government since it adopts an oppositional stance to the government. At the early days, the alternative media in Malaysia has been used to promote struggle, mobilisation, and transformation against the dominant political power. The democratisation of public participation that challenged the status quo in the country has been more pronounced. Among the several critical alternative media operating through the Internet are *Malaysiakini*, *the Malaysian Insider*, and *Malaysia Today*. With the existence of the alternative online media, the traditional mainstream media is under the close scrutiny of the public.

The power of the Internet should not be underestimated. In 2012, for example, the information dissemination via the Internet was able to mobilise 84 non-governmental organisations ranging from different social classes and groups to challenge the then political power in a mass gathering called *Bersih* (Ghazali, 2019). Although it was not successful in affecting the government in power, the fact that Bersih as the first major demonstration in Malaysia is remarkable. As social media has gained popularity, the opposition parties started to adopt it for their political communication especially for 2008 general election which started to fragment the Malaysian political media. In the 13th general election, they engaged actively with their electorate via social media, notably Facebook. To keep up with the trend, the former Prime Minister, Najib Razak, was quick to adopt Facebook as a way of reaching the public.

Social media has been updating its interfaces and functions from time to time. Existing platforms such as Facebook, twitter and online news portals offered more features such as live broadcast and a range of multimedia performances. New media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp were introduced to users. These developments offer new avenues and methods for politicians to reach their electorate bypassing cost and legal pressures. Regardless political affiliations, these platforms offered politicians a fair ground to share their political goals. These developments have further affected how Malaysian politicians engage with the electorate during the 14th general election held in 2018. The many features offered by social media could have been strategically used by politicians to add on more interesting character in Malaysia's political landscape.

In relation to the technological advancement, the present study looks at how Malaysian politicians take advantage of these platforms by focusing specifically on Facebook and Instagram. Instagram is relatively new in Malaysian politics, as the politicians in previous elections did not yet adopt it. The 14th general election was the first time where politicians were able to incorporate Instagram into their media portfolio. This could serve as a point of comparison in understanding how selected politicians use Facebook as opposed to Instagram, hence better understand the role of social media and visual communication in politics and elections. The topic under investigation is relevant since Malaysian is highly involved in a virtual community to engage with people of similar interests, specifically political issues.

The Internet has grown exponentially to become part and parcel of nearly everyone's life at home, workplace, school, college, and in any places in public and private life. The Internet has contributed in the area of commercialisation, information dissemination, and opinion formation in

Malaysia. The high Internet speed in Malaysia make users spend more time online. The Internet users survey 2018 by Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC, 2018) reveals that 87.4% of the Malaysia's population used the Internet; with smartphone appears to be the most popular platform of access. Not only that, engagement in social networks is particularly high at 85.6% (MCMC, 2018). MCMC (2018) further reports that social media is popular for connecting people, building communities, voicing out one's opinion, and business' marketing and advertising. The popularity of social networking sites (SNSs) is further made possible by the improved Internet backbone and overall better utilisation of Information Technologies (Wok and Mohamed, 2017). The more the social networking sites support these features, the popular they would become. This explains why Facebook appears as the most popular social network tool followed closely by Instagram.

As the leading social media platform globally, Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg at Harvard University in 2004. The initial idea of Facebook was to create a student directory containing their profiles and pictures which later on became available to the public in 2016 (Haumann, 2015). Facebook offers many social activities ranging from blogging, exchanging messages, to sharing photos and many others with the prime aim of socialising. O'Brien and Torres (2012) remind that Facebook is extremely open public environment which could erode online privacy. However, it also benefits the users to reach larger community online. Using Facebook, users could create their online profiles to interact with people on the networks. They could write a post of up to 63,206 characters. Facebook continuous developments on its interfaces and features could be suggested as one of the contributing factors to draw more and retain large online community. In 2014, Facebook introduced auto play to allow videos to be automatically streamed on users' timelines. This facilitates the rise of video content in support of digital world. It further allows for effective political communication as videos containing political messages become alternative to television. On April 2016, Facebook launched FB live that allows users to share live broadcast. FB live further enhances the dynamic of media as anyone could broadcast their contents. This proves to add advantages to political communication especially to those with limited access to the mainstream media.

Meanwhile, Instagram was developed by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger and acts as a photo and video sharing platform. Instagram has become very popular, gaining one million users in just two months, 10 million in a year, and up to almost 800 million as of September 2017 (Casaló, Flavian, Ibanez-Sanchez, 2018) since its launch in October 2010. Today, Instagram is the 6th most popular social media tool with over a billion users worldwide. The popularity of Instagram could be observed in Malaysia too. MCMC (2018) also reported that there are 13.74 million Instagram users in Malaysia, an increase from 46.7% in 2016 to 56.1% of the population. Celebrities and politicians alike prefer Instagram to maintain their visibility and online presence. Instagram is dedicated to highly visual communication where users could upload up to 10 pictures or videos in a single post. To add different look and feel to each post, users could choose different filters to their visuals with a limited amount of text. The image does the primary story telling while the text is secondary in Instagram. Similar to Facebook, followers could like and leave comment on posts. Since 2016, users have been able to post Instagram Stories and lasts for 24 hours and live videos that disappear immediately after the broadcast unless the user saves them to his or her mobile device.

Political communication has massively moved to virtual spaces. The sharing of political contents on social media is seen rising from time to time. MCMC (2018) discovers that 86.9% users identify social media as one of the main online information portal. Manaf, Taibi and Manan (2017) propose that social media could bring significant impacts since radio, television, and newspapers share social media contents on their platforms. Therefore, it could be argued that the traditional mainstream media are no longer leading and able to control the content of news in their effort to maintain a national-popular ideology as discussed by Ghazali (2019), since the social media are increasingly used to create and share political news for users' comprehension.

Facebook, for example, is not only popular among the general public but also among the Malaysian politicians in particular. During the 13th general election, while the government tried to

maintain their stronghold over traditional media, the opposition parties have actively engaged the electorate via Facebook. To record, a number of studies look at the impact of Facebook usage on the 13th general election in Malaysia (e.g., Gomez, 2014; Sani and Azizuddin, 2014). While a study by Zanuddin, Sern, Ahmad, Hassan, Zawawi, Hashim, and Ishak (2017) tried to ascertain issues shared by Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) candidates' Facebook more specifically. Similarly, Yeap (2013) discovers how groups of citizen organised campaigns on Facebook to encourage voters to turn up on the electionday. A study conducted by Lee (2017) unearthed that the level of Facebook adoption among Malaysian politicians varies. He noted that most prominent politicians from the main coalitions were active on Facebook. Therefore, it is the intention of this study to help understand how Facebook has been used by politicians from different political parties, thus establishing a relationship between the social media platform with political communication.

Instagram has also been adopted by world leaders as a fundamental part of their communication tool. World leaders have been observed to have shared their official pictures with a worldwide audience. Twiplomacy (2017) records 140 heads of state and government, as well as foreign ministers, own and manage personal and institutional accounts on Instagram. The number represents 72.5% from 193 United Nations (UN) member states. In Malaysia, Khairy Jamaluddin is one of the popular politicians on social media with 866,000 followers on Instagram as of 2017. As a considerably young politician, he maintains a healthy and fashionable lifestyle which made up most of the content of his posts on Instagram. However, after May 2018, Khairy's popularity has been surpassed by the new re-elected Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, whose followers reaches 1.5 million as of April 2019. Hence, political presence on social media is undeniably important for extending political communication to virtual community. The study expects that political parties and politicians have invested effort and time to maintain greater social media presence.

As mentioned above, while many studies have been focusing on Facebook in relation to political communication, research on Instagram is limited since Instagram as a political communication tool is relatively a new phenomenon, particularly in Malaysia. The staging of political personality and political manifestos of politicians using Instagram has not been sufficiently studied yet. The study is believed to be timely due to Instagram increasing popularity and importance. Therefore, the present paper attempts to describe and compare the use of Facebook and Instagram among selected politicians from three main political coalitions contested during the 14th general election (GE14) in Malaysia. It looks at how Malaysian politicians take advantage of these platforms in communicating with electorate.

METHODS

The official campaign period for the GE14 was from April 28th until May 8th, 2018. In Malaysia, politicians are not allowed to campaign openly other than the stipulated period. Given this, the study contends that observing Malaysian politicians' use of Facebook and Instagram during this period may draw an interesting political communication scenario. Data were collected between 28th April, the nomination date, until Midnight May 10th, 2018, a day after the election.

The study draws on the Facebook and Instagram posts of eight prominent Malaysian politicians. The politicians were selected based on: 1) candidacy in the election 2) prominence in Malaysian politics such as the level of power they have within their respective parties, and 3) Instagram activity which requires the selected politicians to be active and have a significant number of followers. The three main coalitions that contested in the election were the then incumbent government coalition, Barisan Nasional (BN); the main opposition coalition, Pakatan Harapan (PH) composed of four main parties that are Parti Keadilan (PKR), Parti Pribumi (PBM), Parti Amanah Malaysia (AMANAH) and Democratic Action Party (DAP); and the smaller Islamist coalition,

Gagasan Sejahtera led by the Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS). Samples were taken from each coalition in the attempt to have a more representative data. The eight politicians selected were:

Table 1: List of sampled politicians in relation to their political roles and number of followers on Facebook and Instagram

No.	Name/Party	Prominence	Facebook Followers	Instagram Followers
1	Najib Razak (BN)	BN Presiden Ex-PM	3,400,000	165,000
2	Hishamuddin Hussein (BN)	UMNO Vice President Ex-Defense Minister	583,000	165,000
3	Khairy Jamaluddin (BN)	UMNO Youth Chief Ex-Youth Minister	1,200,000	866,000
4	Mahathir Mohamad (PH)	PH Candidate for PM President Party Pribumi Ex-PM	2,600,000	106,000
5	Azmin Ali (PH)	Keadilan Deputy President Ex-Menteri Besar Selangor	251,000	72,900
6	Nurul Izzah (PH)	Keadilan Vice President Daughter of Anwar Ibrahim	613,000	167,000
7	Hadi Awang (PAS)	PAS President Ex-Chief Minister of Terengganu	354,000	21,500
8	Ahmad Dusuki (PAS)	Well-known preacher Nephew of late Tuan Guru Nik Aziz	1,200,000	265,000

This paper describes how Facebook and Instagram were used during GE14 among selected politicians from the three main political coalitions contested. To understand this problem, the present study adopts content analysis as it is a common method for electoral studies (Idid, 2017) and able to provide descriptive and exploratory data to answer the research question. Previous studies have adopted content analysis to look into the relationship between politicians and Facebook and Instagram. A study by Shafi and Vultee (2018), for example, content analyse Facebook posts of Barack Obama and Mitt Romney during the 12th American presidential Primaries. Similarly, Bronstein, Aharony and Bar-Ilan (2018) analyse the content of the Facebook pages of 10 candidates in the 2015 Israeli general election. Content analysis was also used to study political issues on Facebook during the 13th general election in 2013 by Manaf, Taibi, and Manan (2017) and Zanuddin et al., (2017). Content analysis is also a preferred method in analysing the content of Instagram during election. Towner and Munoz (2017) adopts content analysis to compare the posts and issues shared by Hillary Clinton and Bernie Senders in 2016 American presidential primary. While Liebhart and Bernhardt (2017) look at how Instagram was used by Austrian President, Alexander Van Der Bellen in presidential election campaign in 2016 using the same method.

Each study reported have developed a content sheet to measure basic functions of Facebook and Instagram. For this study, researchers also designed a standardised code book and code sheet which were based on the researchers' early observation of numerous Malaysian politicians' Facebook and Instagram accounts to suit the functions and categories in both platforms. The unit of analysis was each Facebook and Instagram post from selected politicians' accounts. Details of each post such as the type of posts and issues shared were the variables. Three undergraduate students were trained and monitored by researchers to collect and code the data. Each post was screen-captured, archived, and manually recorded and analysed by coders. The Holsti's CR (1969) inter-coder reliability were conducted to test the trustworthiness of the findings. In general, the result of the test shows that all variables were above the minimum reliability value i.e., 0.7. All data were recorded and analysed using the statistical software IBM SPSS software.

RESULTS

The Number of Facebook and Instagram Post

At the time of the study, all selected candidates used Facebook and Instagram. However, data shows great variation in the total number of post from Facebook and Instagram. A total of 870 posts were gathered and analysed while only 168 posts were drawn from Instagram. Clearly, each politician was mostly active on Facebook as compared to Instagram during the campaign period. Table 2 depicts this discrepancy.

Table 2: The most active politician according to the number of post on Facebook and Instagram.

No.	Politician	Facebook Post	Instagram Post
1	Najib Razak (BN)	146	8
2	Hishamuddin Hussein (BN)	89	15
3	Khairy Jamaluddin (BN)	112	13
4	Mahathir Mohamad (PH)	59	2
5	Azmin Ali (PH)	57	21
6	Nurul Izzah (PH)	163	28
7	Hadi Awang (PAS)	81	20
8	Ahmad Dusuki (PAS)	141	61
	Total	*848*	*168*

The result reveals that Nurul Izzah Anwar, a PH candidate, was the most active politician on Facebook with a total of 163 posts followed closely by an opponent from BN, the then Prime Minister Najib Razak with 146 posts. The third most active was Ahmad Dusuki of PAS party who shared 141 posts. In the meantime, the three least active candidates on Facebook were Azmin Ali (57 posts) and Mahathir Mohamad (59 posts) from PH and Hadi Awang (81 posts) from PAS. The result indicated that even though a candidate belonged to the same political coalition, he or she did not use Facebook the same way. For instance, Nurul Izzah from PH was the most active, while her fellow party members, Mahathir and Azmin were recorded as the least active. This implies that each politician was running their social media independently without following a specific guideline or shared practises proposed by each political party. Facebook, like other social media platforms, privileges personal campaign over group and in this sense, political parties. The study further reports that when comparing the official Facebook of each political party, i.e., BN, PH, and PAS, with individual politicians as indicated in Table 1, the latter have greater number of Facebook followers.

While on Instagram, a PAS party member and a well-known preacher, Ahmad Dusuki, appeared to be the most active with 61 posts. Although he was the least experienced as a politician as compared to others, his active online presence significantly contributed to the total number of posts for PAS. It is also interesting to uncover that PAS president Hadi Awang was also active on Instagram and had more posts compared to both Najib Razak and Mahathir. In the meantime, Azmin Ali and Nurul Izzah of PH were moderate in using Instagram in terms of the number of posts. It could be drawn that PAS politicians were more active than the politicians from the other parties whose posts amounted to 81 and almost 48.2% of the total posts. The results help to negate the many claims that PAS is the least social media savvy (Salman, Mustaffa, Salleh, and Ali, 2016; Lee, 2017). However, it is too early to regard this as a strong determinant to establish impact and effectiveness by looking at the number of posts alone.

Types of Posts on Facebook and Instagram

Both Facebook and Instagram allow for different types of postings. In Facebook, the main posting types are text, photo, and video. Caton, Hall and Weinhardt (2015) suggested that what politicians post on their Facebook informed a lot about the kind of politician they were and how savvy they were when managing the media. As such, this study also looks at the types of post. Table 3 lists the types of Facebook posts shared by the candidates in the study.

Table 3: Types of Posts on Facebook

No.	*Types of Posts*	*Video*	*Photo*	*Live Streaming*	*Status Update*	*Text*
1	Najib Razak (BN)	41	72	24	3	1
2	Hishamuddin Hussein (BN)	11	72	7	0	0
3	Khairy Jamaluddin (BN)	38	72	2	0	1
4	Mahathir Mohamad (PH)	14	31	20	0	0
5	Azmin Ali (PH)	13	36	7	0	3
6	Nurul Izzah (PH)	8	111	47	0	1
7	Hadi Awang (PAS)	1	36	41	1	3
8	Ahmad Dusuki (PAS)	19	91	28	6	0
	Total	*145*	*521*	*176*	*10*	*18*

There were 521 photos shared by all candidates on Facebook, followed by 176 live streams and 145 recorded videos. The remaining were not significantly used for political communication during the campaign period such as text-based posts which accounted for 28 posts only. The text-based posts were not fully utilised by these candidates as they did not attempt to communicate their views in greater length. However, they only updated short status or provided lengthy articles that support their candidacy, making text-based posts the least preferred. As for FB Live, since it was only introduced in 2016, the politicians especially PH fully exploited this function during GE14. Nurul Izzah, for example, used this feature for 47 times within 14 days of the study period. This is followed by Hadi Awang (41), Ahmad Dusuki (28), Najib Razak (24), and Mahathir (20) who used the function moderately. The remaining did not use it significantly.

FB Live becomes a means for political opposition parties to reach voters due to limited coverage on the Malaysian mainstream media. Most of them used this platform to broadcast their press conference, campaign trails, and speeches within the campaign period. The opposition leaders further broadcasted their last mandate on the eve of May 9th, 2019 to a worldwide audience since access was only give to the head of BN on the mainstream media. FB live is an interesting feature on Facebook as it allows users to comment and invite others to watch to increase engagement. It also gives notification to friends on Facebook friend list, making users aware from time to time. From the researchers' general observation, Mahathir Mohamad was the most popular candidate on the election's eve as his final FB live drew 2.7 million audiences with 100k shares. Although Najib Razak also used FB live frequently, he did not go live on Facebook like Mahathir. It is interesting to learn that although he could have used FB live like other head leaders, his last address was only aired on television.

Similar to Facebook, Instagram also features different types of posting. As indicated in Table 4, altogether, the photo made the most of the posts that is 105 photos were shared. Ahmad Dusuki of PAS scored the highest number of single photo sharing followed by Nurul Izzah. It could be noted that 62.5% of the politicians was still using Instagram conservatively as they did not make the most of

the features available on Instagram. The candidates also shared almost the same number of multiple photos (30) and videos (31). Even though photo collage is quite popular on Instagram, none of the politician used the option at the time of the study. Only a few politicians created Instagram stories, but they were not analysed in this study as it was difficult for coders to keep up with the content since Instagram stories are only available for 24 hours.

Table 4: Types of Posts on Instagram

No.	Types of Posts	Photo (Single)	Photo (Multiple)	Video
1	Najib Razak (BN)	8	0	0
2	Hishamuddin Hussein (BN)	10	5	1
3	Khairy Jamaluddin (BN)	8	2	4
4	Mahathir Mohamad (PH)	2	1	0
5	Azmin Ali (PH)	9	7	6
6	Nurul Izzah (PH)	23	4	2
7	Hadi Awang (PAS)	10	6	5
8	Ahmad Dusuki (PAS)	37	5	13
	Total	*107*	*30*	*31*

From these results, Facebook and Instagram were used congruently when it comes to the types of posts. Although the former allows FB live which gives more immediacy in terms of content to audience, the sharing of photos is still a preferred means of communication. However, it is understandable if the use of photos on Instagram is dominant, as the platform primarily focuses on visual communication. Therefore, it could be iterated that politicians have yet to fully utilise all features on social media.

Content of Facebook and Instagram Posts

Types of posting and frequency alone is not a strong justification to draw conclusion on how political candidates were using Facebook and Instagram during GE14. Hence, the study further analysed the content of each posting in both platforms. Table 5 details out the content of Facebook posts.

Table 5: Content of Posts on Facebook

Types of Posts	Frequency	Valid Percent
Selfie	4	0.5
Personal Activity	153	18.9
Object/Thing	54	6.7
Professionally-produced Campaign Material	129	15.9
Campaign Activity	362	44.7

Infographic	48	5.9
Repost	47	5.8
Poster	13	1.6
Total	***810***	***100***

The content of the Facebook shared by the politicians could be categorised into eight types. 44.7% of campaign activities appeared to be the most shared content on the platform followed by personal activities (18.9%) and professionally-produced campaign materials (15.9%). Since the study was carried out during a campaign period, as expected, the formal and campaign related activities dominated the content of the posts that is 60.6% of the total posts. The posts were mostly focused on candidates going on their campaign trails, giving speeches, meetings and socialising with voters. Nurul Izzah was identified to be the most active in sharing campaign activities which amounted to 102 posts. As the third most shared issue, professionally-produced campaign materials tried to project candidates' campaign and manifestos. The content ranges from dramatised videos, music clips, brochures to animations. One of the most prominent examples of a professionally-produced content was a 10-minute short film entitled 'Harapan' or hope shared by Mahathir Mohamad. The short film carries PH's agenda in the hope of creating a new Malaysia which presented Mahathir as a grandfather having a conversation with two little children. It tries to trigger the viewers emotionally when Mahathir shed tears as he explained how essential for Malaysians to love and save Malaysia. See Figure 2. The dramatisation of Mahathir's old age and past glories and the need for a government change is a powerful message intended to the audience. As discussed by Shafi and Vultee (2018) and Bene (2017), emotional and personal contents is more engaging as opposed to serious and formal posts.

Besides campaign issues, personal activities of politicians were the second highlight of Facebook posts. This includes photos of foods and daily routines. For example, Ahmad Dusuki and Nurul Izzah shared 37 posts of this type respectively. The other types of contents that were shared insignificantly included object/thing (6.7%), infographic (5.9%), and repost (5.8%).

Meanwhile, the study only records five types of contents on Instagram. Table 6 summarises the content of posts throughout the campaign period.

Table 6: Content of Posts on Instagram

Types of Posts	***Frequency***	***Valid Percent***
Personal Activity	10	5.9
Object/Thing	6	3.6
Professionally-produced Campaign Material	62	36.9
Campaign Activity	90	53.6
Total	***168***	***100***

Politicians studied in this research do not follow a particular set of rules when posting on Instagram. Instagram could be regarded as both personal and public platforms, hence it was recorded that politicians uploaded a range of contents from political statements or hard-hitting announcements to the food they eat and fun selfies. They also did not seem to set any boundaries between formal political contents and informal everyday life activities. It is 53.6% of the content shared by the politicians were related to their campaign activities. This is followed by professionally-produced campaign materials which made up to 36.9% of the total posts such as professionally photographed

image of the politician on campaign trails or campaign poster. As shown in Figure 3, the poster did not specify any names at the name section. Although the message was general that is to guide voters how to vote correctly, but the association with PH logo could be interpreted as informing the public to vote for any candidate from a component party of PH. The use of logo is important to let people identify to which party a politician belongs to, and in this example Nurul Izzah identified herself with PH like other politicians did normally. Other kinds of contents were also shared but were not significant in numbers. Again, this could be because the politicians were focused on their campaign at the period. Other contents that were shared include personal activities (5.9%) and objects (3.6%).

A personal photo shared by Najib Razak on the day after the campaign period started which was on the 29th April, 2018 is interesting to be elaborated. Najib posted Nasi Lemak burger (See Figure 4) with a caption comparing the traditional Malaysian cuisine, Nasi Lemak, usually offered at breakfast with the more hipster Nasi Lemak burger that was made available at McDonald's, a popular fast food franchise. The non-political post was an attention-grabbing at the official start of the election. Is it questionable as to what Najib was trying to portray? Was he trying to tell that he was unaffected by the campaign heat or was he trying to make a symbolic political comparison that the Nasi Lemak burger is PH while the traditional Nasi Lemak is a representation of the BN coalition? Only Najib Razak has the answer. It shows here that personal social media platform allows politicians to create issues to be focused on. What appears to be personal could also be political. The Nasi Lemak photo became the subject of interest as numerous comments and discussions among Instagram followers could be observed.

DISCUSSIONS

The use of social media during political campaign by politicians to reach out their electorate and the wider public about their campaign activities has gained popularity over the years in Malaysia. Their usage has blurred the boundaries between the public and private as well as the personal and political since politicians are in control of their social media accounts. Generally, the politicians' social media presence during election has helped to complement and incorporate in a broad-based political communication strategy. This is particularly important since public visibility of the political opposition parties has been limited in the traditional mainstream media particularly before the PH took over Malaysia. Therefore, the social media has been the main platform for the opposition party as evidenced in the results reported above. The immediacy and flexibility of these informal structures (Shuster, 2013) further lend support to the increase adoption among politicians in Malaysia. The politicians did not have to pass through a particular gatekeeper and they could post their latest development and political aspirations any time that they wish.

Ross and Burger (2014) claimed that social media could provide an opportunity for the politically less attracted people to get more involved in politics. This statement explained why social media are favourable platforms for GE14 candidates. The findings demonstrated that the politicians studied depended more on Facebook as their personal media platform and used Instagram as an image booster. Different features on Facebook and Instagram served as a determinant for politicians' decision in using them, such as FB live as opposed to Instagram Stories. Both platforms push for personalisation in political communication that requires private exposure and individual initiatives. Most importantly, Facebook and Instagram allowed politicians to create their communication content. Not only they have the ability to select and design the messages they wanted to send out, politicians could also portray their preferred image.

From the present study, Facebook is more prominent at the individual level as compared to the party level. Each politician appeared to approach Facebook differently in communicating with their electorate regardless of their political affiliation. Hishamuddin Hussein from BN for example used it more conservatively as compared to Najib Razak who had more creative approach to Facebook

such as a personal post of him with his family besides his campaign activities. The study also revealed that quality overpowered quantity. Though it is important to maintain online visibility through consistent posts, attracting users' reaction and engagement required strategy and effort. As posts could lose visibility due to unresponsiveness, hence, strategic production and placement of posts' content could be advantageous. As reported, Ahmad Dusuki was among the most active candidate in this study, yet, the contents of his posts did not necessarily effective. It could be that Mahathir's posts that compelled the public's emotions could attract higher engagement. Similarly, Malaysian politicians shared both personal and political photos and videos throughout the study. The latter helped to inform the audience on their political manifestations which were more or less known to the public, while the former helped to offer audience with additional information that tell-tale the other side of their personality. Najib Razak's post on Nasi Lemak burger was an evidence of this. This approach could transcend the formal and bureaucratic nature of political communication of Malaysian politicians to connect the audience with their politicians more personally.

CONCLUSION

It should be noted that the effectiveness of Facebook and Instagram as political communication tools can best be measured through user reactions and engagement. How Facebook and Instagram users respond to a politician's post is valuable public opinion data. However, the study is limited in this way since it only focuses on the selected politicians' use of Facebook and Instagram. As mentioned previously, from the perspective of the public, social media could offer the politically less attracted people to be more involved in politics as Malaysian has been reported to be using social media heavily as compared to the traditional media. Therefore, the results of this study could considerably help to understand the Malaysian political media scape. All in all, Malaysian politicians are adopting social media, in the context of this study Facebook and Instagram, like other world leaders to be part of their strategy in communicating political messages to the public.

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