

Social Media Political Information Use and Voting Behavior of the Malaysian Youth

Tan Jue Jun^{1*} 

¹Faculty of Creative Industries, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), Malaysia

Email: tanjj@utar.edu.my

CORRESPONDING

AUTHOR (*):

Tan Jue Jun
(tanjj@utar.edu.my)

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ABSTRACT

The Malaysian lawmakers approved a legal amendment to lower the voting age from 21 to 18 years old on July 16, 2019. The new policy had empowered the very first batch of the 18 year-olds to cast their vote in the Johor state election which was held on March 12, 2022. Political analysts generally believe that what's up in the near future would be the General Election 15 (GE15). For the first time ever Malaysians witnessed the transfer of power in the national political landscape since independence, politicians and big data analysts generally hailed the 2018 GE14 a 'social media election', given that social media had been used extensively by both the ruling and Opposition coalitions as major campaigning battleground, especially in their efforts to reach and sway the wired young voters. By employing an online self-administered survey questionnaire with 217 Malaysian first-time voters at a local university who rely heavily on social media for political information, this paper aims to learn how do these wired youth make use of social media platforms to learn about politics and observe voting. Findings of the current study suggest that social media political information use does not prompt the wired youth to be more likely to vote, but instead, distracts them from performing voters' duty. On the contrary, voting behavior is more likely to be predicted by political variables such as party affiliation and political interest. Subsequently, research implications for practice and directions for future studies were discussed.

Contribution/Originality: This study documents the role of social media political information use in predicting voting behavior among the first-time voters who grown up digitally in the context of GE14. Findings of the study would offer baseline data and evidences to relevant stakeholders such as social scientists and information strategists in their efforts to advance both research and practice by designing appropriate research measurements, as well as conducting meaningful electoral campaigning or political and civic activities for an emerging class of new generation voters.

1. Introduction

Scholars have paid attention to the motivation capacity of social media on youth to engage in various political activities because political attitude and behavior formulated at a younger age generally persist into later stages of life. For instance, as suggested by [Niemi and Hanmer \(2010\)](#), individuals generally form political identity at their youthful age. They are undergoing citizen engagement norms and habits forming processes that would stay across their life course ([Amna et al., 2009](#); [Sapiro, 2004](#); as cited in [Xenos et al., 2014](#)). Meanwhile as suggested by [Tufail et al. \(2015\)](#), social media is impactful in developing, modifying and changing political efficacy, as well as vote casting intention of the educated youth.

Despite younger voters are consistently being blamed for less likely to vote, [Mohd Hariszuan \(2014\)](#) brought our attention to the whopping increase of 20% newly registered voters in the Malaysian 2013 General Election 13 (GE13), majority of whom are young adults, compared with a 6.2% increase of newly registered voters during the 2008 GE12. According to him, the enormous increase of young voters was indeed an indication of young adults' high interest in the general elections. In the 2018 GE14, the number of voters who voted was 82.32%, or 12, 299, 514 out of the total number of 14, 940, 624 registered voters ([The Star, 2018](#)). Among the total registered voters, 20.2% are aged between 21 and 30; meanwhile, 23.4% is made up of those aged between 31 and 40 ([Welsh, 2018](#)). Voters aged 30 and below made up almost a quarter of the Malaysian electorate ([Welsh, 2018](#)), and hence their political behavior and attitudes matter in maintaining and developing democracy.

As observed by the latest report released by we are social and Hootsuite via DATAREPORTAL, as of January 2021, there were 28 million active social media users in Malaysia, which equals to 86% of the Malaysian total population in the same period (32.57 million) ([Kemp, 2021](#)). The report also reveals that 99.4% of users access social media via mobile phones, spending three hours daily on social media. In a survey report released by the [Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission \(MCMC\) \(2020\)](#), young cohorts in their 20's and 30's form the country's highest number of Internet users (a total of 67.2%), with 46% and 21.2% respectively ([Tan, 2022](#)). As observed by the [MCMC \(2020\)](#), the five most frequent online activities among the Malaysian Internet users are text messaging, visiting social networking platforms, watching or downloading video/online TV, voice/video calling and information surveillance.

Given young individuals are the dominant users of social media and for whom using social media has become part of their daily life, how do these wired youth make use of social media platforms to learn about politics and voting is an important question to answer. Extant scholarship suggests that general use of social media and consumption of nonpolitical information on social media do not predict social capital, as well as civic and political participation, both online and offline ([Baek, 2015](#); [Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012](#); [Hyun & Kim, 2015](#)). On the contrary, consuming social media for political content correlates with various forms of political participation ([Dimitrova et al., 2014](#); [Dumitrica, 2016](#); [Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012](#); [Park et al., 2009](#); [Skoric et al., 2016](#)). On this ground, this study takes into account only young individuals who rely heavily on social media for political information. With this in mind, the following research question was formed: How likely is political informational dependency of social media to predict voting behavior of the youth?

The Malaysian lawmakers approved a legal amendment to lower the voting age from 21 to 18 years old on July 16, 2019. The change also included provisions for voters to become registered voters on electoral rolls automatically and at the same time, lower the age of election candidate to 18 years old. On this ground, this study is a continuation of research effort by media and political science researchers to understand the role of social media in predicting political attitudes and behavior, in particular among the first-time voters who grown up digitally. The study is weighty in an age of concern over the lack of political interest and motivation to participate among the younger generations. Findings of the current study would offer baseline data and evidences to relevant stakeholders such as social scientists and information strategists in their efforts to advance both research and practice by designing appropriate research measurements, as well as conducting meaningful electoral campaigning or political and civic activities for an emerging class of new generation voters.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Media and the Malaysian General Elections

A bit player in the 2004 GE11, social media in Malaysia came of age with the 2008 GE12. Extant literature suggested that social media became a notable instrument in promoting democracy during the GE12 by exposing voters from all walks of life to more political information, as well as opportunities to discuss and deliberate political issues ([Lalitha Muniandy & Balakrishnan Muniandy, 2013](#); [Mohd Azizuddin & Zengeni, 2010](#); [Willnat et al., 2013](#)). Among the various social media platforms, blogs were playing substantial role in the dissemination of politically independent information, most of which were critical of the ruling coalition – Barisan Nasional (BN) ([Willnat et al., 2013](#)). Likewise, social networking sites (SNSs) and online forums were utilized to serve as interactive and personalized platforms for voters to discuss politics with friends and relatives ([Willnat et al., 2013](#)). With little or no access to government-controlled mainstream television broadcasting, video sharing sites such as YouTube was fully exploited to make known the Opposition's events and speeches ([Willnat et al., 2013](#)), and to serve as propaganda tools to assail the government via video clips portraying alleged wrongdoings of the ruling coalition members ([Mohd Azizuddin & Zengeni, 2010](#)). Because of underestimated the power of the Internet and social media, the ruling coalition was not serious in adopting the online media as alternative means to communicate with the general public ([Mohd Azizuddin & Zengeni, 2010](#)). As a result, BN suffered a defeat payoff in the GE12 despite maintaining its power ([Mohd Azizuddin & Zengeni, 2010](#)), with its failure to regain Kelantan while losing Penang, Selangor, Kedah and Perak state governance (five out of 13 states), lost 82 seats in the 222-seat Parliament house of representative and obtained only 50.6% popular votes compared to the Opposition's 49.4%. As concluded by [Muhammad Izawan et al. \(2017\)](#), the GE12 marked the beginning of the Internet to be known as an innovative medium to conduct electoral campaigning, but heavy users of the Internet were not more likely to vote.

Succeeding the momentum garnered from the GE12, both the ruling coalition and Opposition acknowledged the importance and implications of the Internet and social media in reshaping the Malaysian political landscape ([Lalitha Muniandy & Balakrishnan Muniandy, 2013](#); [Muhammad Izawan et al., 2017](#)). Social media was put to use intensively as a means of communication during the election campaigning between the candidates, party machineries and voters ([Abdul Malek, 2019](#)), and it was targeted most apparently on the young and first-time voters ([Muhammad Izawan et al., 2017](#)). For this reason, the

2013 GE13 has since been touted as Malaysia's inaugural 'social media election' (Asohan, 2013). Among the 13.3 million registered voters of the GE13, 30% of them are first-time voters (Tapsell, 2013) with the majority are netizens made up of young adults (Mohd Hariszuan, 2014). SNSs, in particular, have become dynamic battlegrounds to sway voter choice, especially in urban areas (Tapsell, 2013). Almost all parties and candidates joined the online battlefield with their websites, blogs and social media accounts such as Facebook, Twitter or YouTube (Mohd Azizuddin, 2014). Not only that, BN too formed legions of cyber troopers in hope to lead the online public sphere, conduct political attacks against its rival and counter pro-Opposition messages (Mohd Azizuddin, 2014; Tapsell, 2013; Willnat et al., 2013). Meanwhile, owing to continuous denial access to the mainstream media (Willnat et al., 2013), the Opposition, on the other hand, continued to televise their mass gatherings and election campaigning lives via various online multimedia channels, particularly YouTube. The Opposition was skillful at taking up high profile gaffes of BN, which were made available by netizens on YouTube as one of their attacking tools against the rival (Mohd Azizuddin, 2014). As a result, BN lost the popular vote to the Opposition (49% vs. 51%) with an even slimmer majority despite continued to be in power on 5 May 2013 (Asohan, 2013). The ruling government later on admitted its failure in handling negative public perception on social media as part of the reasons which costed them displeasing election results (Mohd Azizuddin, 2014). This echoed Willnat et al.'s (2013) conclusion that the Opposition was a step ahead and more deliberate in their digital political communication mechanism than the ruling parties during the GE13 campaigning. Even though social media has accelerated the tempo of political deliberations to a new peak during the GE13, several studies observed that social media indeed played a role as notable means of communication to facilitate electoral campaigning between candidates and voters, but was not the principal factor to shake the election results (Abdul Malek, 2019; Lim, 2013).

For the first time over the 60 years of independence since 1957, the 2018 GE14 is a historical event that witnessed the first-ever transfer of power in the nation's political landscape. A new and young alternative coalition – Pakatan Harapan (PH) won with 113 seats out of the 222 parliamentary seats by obtaining a simple majority; while the decade-long ruling BN coalition was voted out of power, retaining only 79 parliamentary seats. In addition to that, there was a simultaneous seismic change of power at the state levels, mostly in favor of PH, leaving BN behind with only two states – Pahang and Perlis. For various reasons and factors that could cause the game-changing results and political shift, social media plays a substantial role (Najwa & Amalina, 2018; Welsh, 2018). Samsudin (2019) described the GE14 campaign as a social media war. According to Weiss (2006; as cited in Moniruzzaman & Kazi Fahmida Farzana, 2018), BN suffers a declining support-base over the past one-and-a-half decades in favor of new-generation politics, of which a tech-savvy enthusiastic young cohort is the lifeline. According to Election Commission of Malaysia (2018), there were 14, 636, 716 registered voters in the GE14. Among all, 41% were aged between 21 and 39 (Lim, 2018; Najwa & Amalina, 2018). Furthermore, Internet access is highest among those aged between 20 and 34 (54%), and 35 and 49 (25%) (Samsudin, 2019). According to Sara Chinnasamy (2018), political leaders prefer social media as their primary choice to upload political activities despite the pervasive spread of fake news on online platforms. Political issues and campaigning are now more dependent on online and electronic media (Sara Chinnasamy, 2018), with Facebook, and a little bit Twitter, are the major SNSs employed by the Malaysian political parties and politicians (Lee, 2017). Among all, Facebook was playing a dominant role in the GE14 social media campaigning which facilitated the dissemination of diverse array of information such as news from online mainstream news sites, portals, personal blog

posts, interactive and personal videos uploaded by netizens (Sara Chinnasamy, 2018). Not only that, both Facebook and WhatsApp played major mobilization role in provoking the voters' emotion, anger and sentiment of nationalism in particular, which was one of the factors that influence voting behavior (Welsh, 2018). Due to its extensive reach among the population, politicians and big data analysts hailed the GE14 a 'social media election' (Free Malaysia Today, 2018), or to be more specific – 'Facebook election'.

2.2. Voting Behavior of the Malaysian Youth

In their effort to investigate political engagement differences between younger (aged 21 – 40) and older (aged 41 – 70) Malaysians based on analyses from the World Values Surveys (WVS) Wave 6 (2010 – 2014) data, Norhafiza and Grasso (2020) concluded that young people are less active than their elder counterparts in conventional activism such as voting, party and labor union membership. Likewise, they found no significant differences between these two generations in unconventional political participation such as signing a petition, joining boycott activities and attending demonstrations. The findings also observed the Malaysian younger cohorts, regardless gender and ethnicity, as apathetic generations because they do not seem to be active in both conventional and alternative forms of politics. This is added with observation of educated young people are significantly less politically active in voting compared to the older generations.

In a similar vein, according to a survey conducted by local public opinion pollster Merdeka Centre together with civil society group targeting youth voter registration – Watan in August 2017, as cited by Hadi Azmi et al. (2018), 71% of young Malaysians between the ages of 21 and 30 considered themselves have no influence over policymaking, while one in four perceived voting as fruitless. Despite the youth being perennially labeled apathetic in politics, Serina (2018) observed that there was higher possibility among the youth to vote against ethno-religious boundaries in her study to deconstruct the Malay vote in the GE14. According to her analysis, these younger cohorts envision for a clean government that is able to warrant access to opportunities for all and effectively improve the people's livelihood.

3. Methodology

An online self-administered survey questionnaire was conducted in December 2018 at the Universiti Malaya (UM), Malaysia with links to online survey questionnaires via Google form in three languages (Malay, English and Chinese) which was attached to an email invitation sent to all UM students via an official email application system provided to the UM community. Back-translation was carried out to validate the accuracy of the questionnaires' translation. Screener questions were set to ensure respondents are (i) Malaysian students aged between 18 and 24 (during the survey period); and (ii) they use social media specifically for political news and information. Given that this paper is part of a larger study on politically participative wired Malaysian youth, this returned 379 valid respondents with 217 cases of whom are identified as eligible voters.

3.1. Measures

Respondents' demographic characteristics include gender, age, ethnicity and party affiliation (neutral or non-neutral).

Social media political information use was measured with 15 items of political information consumption goals (Table 1) constructed based on the conceptualization of SNS dependency theoretical framework proposed by Kim and Jung (2016) and Carillo et al.'s (2017) model on individual media dependency and persistence use of ubiquitous media systems. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement on a five-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" for the 15 items in the following format: "I consume political information on social media to [fulfil each goal]".

Table 1: Measurement Items for Social Media Political Information Use

No.	Item
1	To form my own political identity or beliefs
2	To evaluate my political behavior
3	To observe how others cope with problems or situations like mine
4	To decide on which party or candidate, or what political cause to support
5	To decide on how to vote during elections
6	To keep up to date with various local and/or international political affairs
7	To understand various local and/or international political affairs
8	To be exposed to the different thoughts and/or behavior of people with different political beliefs
9	To learn from others' experiences on ways to deal with or respond to people with different political beliefs and/or behavior
10	Because I really enjoy reading political information posted on this platform
11	Because it is a convenient way to spend my free time
12	When I am alone
13	To interact with friends
14	To look for activities to do together with my friends
15	To immerse myself in a political event without being there physically

Voting behavior was measured by asking two questions: "Have you registered as a voter?" and "Did you vote in the recent GE14 (held on 9 May 2018)?" Respondents had options to answer either "yes" or "no" for both questions.

Political interest was set as a control variable in the study, given that individuals with higher level of political interest are more likely to engage in various public and civil affairs (Ye et al., 2017). The measure was constructed based on items modeled in Barrett and Zani's (2015) study. Respondents were asked to specify their level of political interest based on three items via a ten-point scale ranging from "not at all" to "to a great extent" in the following statements: "I discuss socio-political issues with friends and acquaintances", "I am interested in politics" and "I am interested in election news".

3.2. Analysis

Content validation exercise was performed to check on the face and content validity of all items in the survey questionnaire. This was followed by a pilot test, of which the data was then used to perform construct validation to determine if the operational definitions of variables reflect the true theoretical meaning of concepts via parallel analysis (PA) and exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Prior to hypothesis testing, accuracy of data was examined through missing values, outliers and skewness and kurtosis coefficient. Partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 3 (Ringle et al., 2015) was consulted to perform a non-parametric method for multivariate analysis.

4. Result

Findings of the current study show that, of all the 217 eligible voters, only slightly more than half of them (123 respondents or 56.7%) reported to have registered themselves as a voter, while less than half of them (102 respondents or 47%) casted their votes in the GE14. Among all races, Chinese respondents tend to be the most active in registering themselves as a voter and to cast a vote in the GE14. Male respondents were found to possess more active voting behavior than their female counterparts. Respondents with political affiliation tend to be more active in their voting behavior than those who claimed to be politically neutral (refer [Table 2](#) and [Table 3](#)).

Table 2: Voting Behavior of the Respondents by Ethnicity and Gender (N = 217)

Voting Behavior		Ethnicity				Gender	
		Chinese	Indian	Malay	Others	Female	Male
Registered Voter	Yes	52 (72.22%)	7 (46.67%)	60 (48.39%)	4 (66.67%)	84 (51.53%)	39 (72.22%)
	No	20 (27.78%)	8 (53.33%)	64 (51.61%)	2 (33.33%)	79 (48.47%)	15 (27.78%)
Voted in the GE14	Yes	47 (65.28%)	3 (20%)	49 (39.52%)	3 (50%)	65 (39.88%)	37 (68.52%)
	No	25 (34.72%)	12 (80%)	75 (60.48%)	3 (50%)	98 (60.12%)	17 (31.48%)
Total		72	15	124	6	163	54

Table 3: Voting Behavior of the Respondents by Party Affiliation (N = 217)

Voting Behavior		Party Affiliation	
		With Party Affiliation	Neutral
Registered Voter	Yes	55 (72.37%)	68 (48.23%)
	No	21 (27.63%)	73 (51.77%)
Voted in the GE14	Yes	51 (67.11%)	51 (36.17%)
	No	25 (32.89%)	90 (63.83%)
Total		76	141

Respondents in the current study possess a moderate level of political interest as the overall mean of political interest is 5.446 (SD = 2.478). Among the three indicators, "I am interested in election news" scored the highest mean (M = 6.135; SD = 2.488), followed by "I discuss socio-political issues with friends and acquaintances" (M = 5.127; SD = 2.470) and "I am interested in politics" (M = 5.077; SD = 2.477).

To learn if social media political informational use predicts voting behavior of the youth, findings of the current study shown in [Table 4](#) suggest that social media political informational use indeed distracts voting behavior ($\beta = -0.189$, $p = 0.01$). That said, the more one relies on social media for political information, he/she is more likely to not register as a voter, as well as to cast a vote in elections. Despite being a control variable, political interest was found to possess a positive significant effect on voting behavior ($\beta = 0.325$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 4: Path Coefficients of the Voting Behavior Structural Model and Significance Assessment Results

Path	Beta	Standard Error (SE)	t value	p value	Significant (p < 0.05)?
SMPIU → VB	-0.189	0.081	2.331	0.01	Yes
PI → VB	0.325	0.069	4.685	< 0.001	Yes

SMPIU: Social Media Political Information Use; VB: Voting Behavior; PI: Political Interest

5. Discussion

How likely is social media political information use to predict voting behavior of the Malaysian youth? A negative relationship was discovered, with relying heavily on social media for political information does not necessarily predict voting behavior, but on the contrary, distracts one from performing voter's duty.

Descriptive statistics discussed in the previous section indicates that of all the eligible voter respondents, only half of them registered as a voter, and less than half of them had casted their votes in the GE14. These findings correspond with extant studies conducted in both international and home contexts. For instance, despite the fact that SNS use appears to influence political engagement, research indicates that reliance on SNSs plays little role in instilling confidence in government (Zhang et al., 2010) as well as affecting voting intentions (Johnson et al., 2011). Breuer and Groshek (2014) conducted a study to explore social media's role in shaping political attitudes and behaviors of the Tunisians in times of political transition. Their findings suggested that relying on SNSs and YouTube would not itself relate to greater voting likelihood. In the case of Malaysia, Norhafiza and Grasso (2020) found that young Malaysians aged between 21 and 40 are less likely to participate in conventional political activities, coupled with lower tendency to cast a vote in national elections compared to elder Malaysians aged between 41 and 70.

To explain this phenomenon, Curtice's (2010) as cited in Hudson (2010) point of view is worth the attention. According to him, as young adults do not take voting as necessary, they are less likely to embrace voting habits as part of their civic responsibility. Likewise, as echoed by Mitchell et al. (2015), younger cohorts couldn't be bothered to vote in the elections because they may feel or have little attachment to their community or even their country. This is similar to Salman and Saad's (2015) observation that the Malaysian wired youth are generally comfortable with their lives, and hence, they may care lesser political-related issues. Coincidentally, the respondents surveyed in the current study are the product of Malaysia's success story in the 1980s and 1990s, as described by Norshuhada et al. (2016), whereby this cohort enjoys political stability, economic growth, social riches and good life. For this reason, this cohort is more educated, technology savvy and enjoys middle class life (Norshuhada et al., 2016). The line of reasoning echoed Wass's (2005) assertion that low voter turnout amongst the younger generation is not merely a passing phenomenon but a generational feature due to the reason that politics plays little role throughout the formative years of this generation. Yet, Wass (2005) is optimistic to conclude that young people may still possess a positive attitude towards political participation, their passive voting behavior may be caused by the lack of political socialization.

Another likely reason to explain this phenomenon may be attributed to the very social nature of social media. As noted by Tufail et al. (2015), "social is a phenomenon in the society through which people interact with each other and make connections whereas,

media is a medium by which people transfer information, connect with different people and have so many links in the information” (p. 16). With this in mind, social media users create their profile within a bounded system, keep their lists of connected friends and thus stay in the loop of what’s going on in their networks of friends and those of others. As such, one may assume that the wired youth surveyed in the current study consume political information on social media platforms more for social and networking purposes, rather than for political participation and activism. Not to rule out also, although young age individuals consume political information on social media, they may be looking for more personal political information (e.g., what political causes friends are supporting or who friends are voting for) instead of political commentaries and analyses or local and international political news and affairs. With that said, merely consuming political information on social media is not sufficient to prompt one to be a dutiful voter but the form or nature of political information an individual consumes matters. Equally worthy of attention is the social media users’ attitude towards political information and quality of their use of media platforms.

On another view, as argued by [Malia et al. \(2017\)](#), lackadaisical attitude among the Malaysian youth on political issues and cynicism about politics may contribute to passive voting behavior. [Rosyidah et al.’s \(2021\)](#) findings on connections between social media and political participation among the Malaysian youth in East Coast is another tip-off to the outcomes of the current study. According to their findings, despite spending averagely two to four hours online daily, with reading news as the most performed online activity (45%), youth participants in the study acknowledged no trust in online political news (48.1%) as one of the top three barriers to online political participation. This is followed by no interest in political news (41.2%). [Choi et al. \(2017\)](#) echoed this line of reasoning with findings revealed that social media heterogeneity predicts political participation when individuals perceive political newsfeeds as needful. As this is beyond the scope of the current study, yet if true, it is deemed harmful to the democratic process of a nation.

On the ground that using social media for political information may not mobilize one into performing a voter’s duty, findings of the current study coincide with [Norhafiza and Grasso’s \(2020\)](#) findings that voting behavior is more likely to be predicted by political variables such as party affiliation and political interest. Indeed, [Rosyidah et al.’s \(2021\)](#) findings discussed above also highlighted the importance of political interest in political participation.

Also to note that, findings of the current study correspond with existing literature (e.g., [Lu et al., 2016](#); [Norhafiza and Grasso, 2020](#); [Tufail et al., 2015](#); [Wen et al., 2013](#)) which suggest that male are more politically active than female. In the current study, male respondents were found to be more likely to register themselves as a voter, casted their votes in the GE14 as well as possessing higher level of political interest compared to their female counterparts. This suggest that gender gaps in political participation persist across democracies. Even though the government has shown its seriousness in pushing for a gender-responsive agenda by placing more women in the country’s decision-making positions in recent years, more can be explored as to why females still possess a more passive voting behavior by taking the government’s gender-responsive agenda as critical interaction into consideration.

6. Conclusion

While not exhaustive, this paper attempts to register the effect of a medium that not only grows in popularity and penetration but also has a prominent position in explaining and influencing the democratic process by identifying the relationship between social media use for political information and voting behavior of the young adults aged between 18 and 24. Contrary to extant scholarship which suggests a positive relationship between social media use and political participation, findings of the current study observe opposite insight, at least in the case of Malaysia. That said, the current study suggests that social media political information use does not predict voting behavior among the Malaysian youth, but instead, distracts them from performing voters' duty.

Anyhow, several limitations hinder flat conclusion. The current study only addresses usage of general social media for political information without delving into specific social media platforms. As different social media platforms may attract different users owed to their unique nature and functionalities, future studies may want to look into social media political information use and its implications on political attitude and behaviors specifically on a few remarkable social media platforms based on different research context. Next, respondents of the current study are Malaysians from a local university with specific age range. Future studies may enlarge the scope of studies, and also to take different social contexts (e.g., peninsular versus Sabah and Sarawak, different socio-demographics) into consideration to generate robust findings for better generalization. Given the current study only engaged a quantitative analysis, such findings may indicate an incomplete picture of the youth as apathetic voters against this setting. With this regard, there is a need to also engage qualitative approach to delve in-depth comprehensive contextual explication of how the youth observe voting.

Youth are the potential leaders, consumers and users who possess great power in shaping the country's social, economic and political landscape ([Iman Khalid & Azizah, 2015](#)). Following the government's move to lower the voting age to 18 from 21, this wired cohort has been identified by the local media as potential political kingmakers because these 1.5 million new voters are deemed impactful in changing the country's political game ([Zakiah et al., 2019](#)). Indeed, as analyzed by [Welsh \(2018\)](#), youth alienation was one of the key factors that turned the political fortunes of BN in the GE14. For this reason, he named the younger voters as "change generation".

As argued by [Welsh \(2018\)](#), emotion narratives were mobilized via social media during the GE14 campaigning and this had subsequently attracted favorable support from the youth who intended to vote for a change. Despite emotional campaigning may not last long as it fades over time, social media has been proven as a considerable route to reach young voters, at very least, extending the diffusion of information.

While it is beyond the scope of the paper to offer predictions for the soon-to-come election cycle, findings of the current study highlight several meaningful issues by which both the governing and Opposition coalitions should take note. Among all, the reality that using social media may not guarantee vote deserved the most attention. Based on this observation, it is important to note that political marketing is not simply a matter of flattering and provoking the people, but more on dwelling and keeping abreast with the voters' demands ([Bennett, 2017](#)). On this ground, policy makers and party machineries should not bombard social media blindly but need to employ social media strategically to keep tabs on, as well as to constantly and alertly identify the changing demands from

voters in order to conduct meaningful engagements by which the “change generation” deem promising so as to disseminate information that could resonate with the new generation voters.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researcher used the research ethics provided by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Malaya (UMREC). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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