

ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPER CONTENT

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Methodology and sampling

Methodology

Content analysis is used in this research. It is a method structured to analysed the content in a magazine, book or newspapers.

Content analysis is also a research technique that is capable of systematically and objectically visualizes quantitatively the published contents.

Reasons For Content Analysis :

This research uses content analysis because :

1. It visualizes a situation quantitatively.
2. Examine the content with the objective of segregating the pros and contras.
3. To zero-in to the persuasion approach techniques of a message or issue.

Sampling

The application of purposive sampling technique for the research is due to the date coinciding with 1990 general election. The researchers decide to choose newspapers like *Utusan_Malaysia*, *Berita Harian* and *The New Straits Times*, with 16 issues each but the *Stars* only had 15 issues. The samples included issues published on Sunday during the research period. Samples are taken from issues dated 7 October to 22 October 1990.

Samples are abstracted from newspapers at the period after the dissolving of the Parliament on 5 October 1990 until the publishing of the results of the General Election on 22 October 1990.

Except for The Star, the four other sample newspapers involve 16 issues each including the Sunday's edition. Star newspaper only involve 15 issues during the research period as it did not published on Deepavali. However Utusan Malaysia, Berita Harian, The New Straits Times and Malay Mail published their individual newspapers on that day which was a public holiday.

Unit analysis for this research are news items, pictures, caricatures including cartoons and advertisements that are related to the election campaigns. News items means reports on events and election statements by the political party leaders.

As the research is aim to look at the perceptions and attitudes of newspapers, it is only appropriate to also survey the other aspects like head-lines in the front page, caricatures, advertisements and pictures published in them. These are among the symbols of communication capable of influencing the readers.

Moreover this observation derived from the suggestion of the book 'Theories of Mass Communication' by De Fleur and Rokeach (1970). According to the book:

“Propaganda messages are delivered in the forms of story, news pictures, film, record photograph, speeches, books, surmons, posters, wireless-signal, rumours, advertising bill-boards and broadcast letters.”¹

Only advertisements related to the election are included in the sampling.

Data Collection

Pages consisting of news related to the research are collected. This facilitate recording, analysing of data and classification of news to those supporting the ruling parties from those opposing them. In this way, it can easily determine the number of news printed daily and whether they favour the ruling parties or otherwise.

ANALYSIS :

Structure

In this section, the researcher analyses and presents data together with its interpretations. Results of the study are based on **descriptive interpretation method**, structured to support the content analysis that is of a quantitative nature.

Quantitative Method

Quantitative research through data analysis of the content of every newspapers and their findings are reported here in this chapter. This section consists of items like types of news, source of news, news services, number of pages, and the biasness of headlines and news content from the newspapers studied, towards the political parties

competing in the 1990 election.

The choices of pages to be studied is based on their carrying election/politic related news. This is guided by the sign with words "Pilihanraya 1990" on pages of newspapers chosen as samples.

Descriptive Interpretation

The supporting data consists of a number of headlines aimed to strengthen the conclusions on the data obtained through content analysis. It discusses about headlines, editorials and caricatures carried by the consecutive newspapers during the length of the research.

Results of Research

In this section is results obtained through content analysis of four newspapers that are chosen as samples of the study. They are *Utusan Malaysia*, *Berita Harian*, *The New Straits Times* and *The Star*. The analysis involve issues from 7 October 1990 to 22 October 1990. The duration of the research is based on its relationship to the general election and this includes the time during the announcing of the dissolving of the Parliament until the date when the results of the election make known. There seems to be no uniformity in the data obtained on the number of pages from all the newspapers studied as they differ in sizes and layout.

Outcome of the research shows that *Utusan Malaysia* printed as much as 564 news columns related to the election, whereas *Berita Harian* carries only 507 columns, *NST* on the otherhand printed 514, *The Star*, 370 and the newspaper that carried the least news that are election related is the *Malay Mail* with only 59 columns during the whole period of the research.

On the whole, the study shows that most of the news are types that report events of the election. From all the news gathered about the election, 81.6 percent news from *Utusan Malaysia* are news about events; 92.3 percent news from *Berita Harian* also about election events, while 84 percent from *NST*, 83.5 percent from *The Star* and 84.7 percent from *Malay Mail* also carry news that are related to events about the general election.

Besides that, *Utusan Malaysia* carried 11.3 percent feature story on issues about the election, *Berita Harian* on the other hand printed 3.6 percent and then 5.4 percent news from *NST* on feature story. It also shows that 6.5 percent news from *Star* and 5.1 percent from *Malay Mail* also printed feature about the election. This means that *Utusan Malaysia* gives more comment and interpretation on the development of the election compared to other newspapers.

The researcher also tried to look at the focus of the content of each newspaper studied. *Utusan Malaysia* that carries the slogan 'to spread the ideas of the people' actually printed 31 percent of its news on the category of 'image building' of parties or contestants of the election. *Utusan Malaysia* however gives most weight on news on policies and issues about the election (33.9%) and 32.6 percent on events of the election. On the other hand, *Berita Harian* that carries the slogan "for the people, for you" also allocated 58.2 percent of its news to 'image building' but only 12 percent on

the category of policies and election issues. *New Straits Times* a newspaper that do not carry any special slogan, pays most attention to events that happened (49%) and only 36.9 percent of its news are allocated for image building. *NST* also carries 19.1 percent of its news on issues and policies of the election. *Star* is a tabloid that is constantly perceived as 'neutral'. This newspaper has a very different type of news content as compared to the other newspapers as 87.8 percent of its news is merely reporting of election events and only 4.6 percent are categorised as news for image building and 7.6 percent discussed about election issues and policies.

Malay Mail a newspaper tabloid also gives most attention to events during election campaigns (45.8%) but almost equal percentage is also allocated to news on issues and policies of the country. However *Malay Mail* only carries 5.1 percent of news on image building.

The process of communication practice by the newspapers were also studied. News on election relating to issues, policies, events etc. usually are reported directly in all the newspapers in the country.

Data shows that 82.6 percent of news from *Utusan Malaysia*, 87.6 percent of *Berita Harian's* news, 94.9 percent of news from *NST*, 98.1 percent from *Star* tabloid and 95 percent from the *Malay Mail* are reported directly and explicitly. However *Utusan Malaysia* published a great number of news supporting the Barisan Nasional and so is also the newspaper that carries the most news reported indirectly and implicitly (15.8%) compared to other newspaper.

Through the content analysis of the researchers, almost all local newspapers studied depended on their own organizational correspondents (journalist). Most of the news reported are anticipated news/planned activities by the sources, such as campaign, seminar, news conference etc. Data shows that *Utusan Malaysia* carries 83.9 percent news written by their own journalist, *Berita Harian* publish 72.6 percent, *NST*, 91.6 percent and *Star* about 50.3 percent. However *Malay Mail* only carries 22 percent of its news from its own journalists and 72.9 percent news from the paper are from unidentified sources. *Star* too publish 38.6 percent news from unidentified source.

The study tries to look at the political parties favoured by the substance of the headlines. Data through content analysis shows that 56.7 percent news from *Utusan Malaysia* favoured some parties contesting. From the overall total, 44 percent of the news supported Barisan Nasional. Looking at the strength of the support, 31.7 percent of the extend of the support is 'medium', 8 percent 'weak' and 17 percent of the support is 'strong'. The study finds that 70.8 percent substance of the headlines of news from *Berita Harian* also favoured some parties contesting and from this total, 61.3 percent favoured Barisan Nasional. From this figure, 28 percent news give 'medium' strength of support and 24.1 percent 'strong' support to the party. *New Straits Times* on the other hand publish 47.5 percent news where the substance of headlines favoured some of the parties contesting in the election and out of this 37.7 percent is towards Barisan Nasional. *Star* also allocated 39.7 percent of its news favouring some parties contesting and from this figure, 24.9 percent of it favoured Barisan Nasional but from this percentage, 21.1 percent only give 'medium' support to the party.

Lastly, in *Malay Mail* the newspaper tabloid that least carries substance of headlines favouring any parties contesting, carries only 8.5 percent news supporting the Barisan Nasional. From this percentage, 3.4 percent substance of its news headlines

give strong support and 3.4 percent give 'weak' support to the party.

The study also tries to look at the substance of headlines against any party contesting. From the five newspapers studied, not many of the substance of headlines are against any party contesting. However *Berita Harian* carries the most news where the substance of its headlines are against some parties contesting (32.5%). The same applies to *NST* (26.3%) and *Utusan Malaysia* (23.9%), but the *Star* and the *Malay Mail* least carry headlines with substance that is against any party.

The party most frequently criticised in the *Utusan Malaysia* is *Semangat 46* (6.2%), but *Berita Harian* most frequently criticised all opposing parties (11.4%). *NST* on the other hand is equally against *Semangat 46* and all opposing parties (6.8%). *Malay Mail* pays more attention criticising DAP, PAS and PBS (1.7%). The finding that is most unique in this study is that the substance of headline in the *Star* tabloid most frequently criticises Barisan Nasional (2.2%).

Most of the criticisms from the substance of the headline are 'strong' with *Utusan Malaysia* criticising 'strongly' in 37.1 percent of its news.

Berita Harian on the other hand carries substance of headlines that criticise 'mediumly' (14%). Criticism of substance of headline from *NST* is also mostly 'strong' the same goes for the *Star* (3.2%) but all criticism from the *Malay Mail* are weak.

Further analysis shows favour from items of news body towards some political parties. Data proves that almost all local newspapers frequently in favour of some political parties contesting in the election in items of their news body. For instance, *Utusan Malaysia* allocated 79% items in its news body favouring some political parties and from this figure, 63.1% is in favour of Barisan Nasional. However most of the support are medium in strength.

Berita Harian on the other hand allocated 77.9 percent a total almost equivalent to *Utusan Malaysia* where items of its news body are in favour of some political parties. From this statistic, 66.7 percent is allocated for Barisan Nasional where the pattern of support is usually medium in strength (36.1%).

For the *NST*, only 59.7 percent of items in its news body favoured any political party and from this figure, 49 percent favoured Barisan Nasional with medium strength of support.

Star like its counterpart *NST* also allocated 52.5% items of its news body in favour of some political parties and from this total 34.6 percent goes with support towards Barisan Nasional with medium strength (27.3%).

Lastly the *Malay Mail* tabloid carries the least items of news body supporting any party in the election. From this, 18.6 percentage is in favour of Barisan Nasional and like all other newspapers the strength of the support is medium. Items of news reported in news body are the responsibility of journalists and for that the supports given are effort of journalists who write the news items.

Table 14 and 15 visualise the criticism of items in news body against some political parties. The study finds that most of the items from news body are not against any political party (54.6%) in *Utusan Malaysia*, but some items are against *Semangat 46* (11.8%) and Barisan Nasional (9.7%) and the characteristic of this opposition is medium in strength (32.4%). In *Berita Harian*, most of the items from the news body are against all opposition parties (14.8%) and *Semangat 46* (8.3%) and only 3.9 percent of the items from news body criticise Barisan Nasional. The same factor occur in *NST* where most of the items in the news body are against opposition parties (12.4%),

Semangat 46 (8.3%) and DAP (6.6%). On the other hand, only 3.3 percent of news items are against Barisan Nasional. However items from news body of the *Star* are almostly equally against Barisan Nasional (8.4%) and DAP (7.8%) but this opposition is mostly weak in character. In the *Malay Mail*, criticism in items from news body are mostly focus on DAP (8.5%) mediumly. On the whole all local newspaper mostly carry news items neutral in character.

The news headline slant studied can be clearly seen in *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian* with *Utusan Malaysia* carrying 61.3 percent and *Berita Harian*, 63.5 percent.. However news from *NST* and *Star* are less slant compared to *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian*. *NST* only carries 39.3 percent of slanted news headlines and *Star* 38.9 percent. On the other hand news headlines from the *Malay Mail* are not slanted towards any party.

The slanting of the news headlines if study closely and in detail shows that 48.8 percent of the slanted news headlines from *Utusan Malaysia* are positively towards Barisan Nasional and further breakdown of the slanted news headlines shows that the positive slant towards all other parties are basically equally distributed and this includes the opposition parties. On the other hand, headlines of *Berita Harian* also slanted towards BN (55.4%), *NST* slanted towards BN too (33.1%) and *The Star*, 25.4%.

With regard to negative slant of news headlines the research studied shows that most of the news from local newspapers do not carry any news headlines particularly slanted against any political party. Data analised prove that 69 percent news from *Utusan Malaysia*, 62.9 percent news in *Berita Harian*, 74.1 percent news from *NST*, 83.2 percent news from the *Star* and 98.3 percent news headlines from the *Malay Mail* are not slanted negatively. However *Utusan Malaysia* did printed 8.8 percent news headlines against Semangat 46. *Berita Harian* also published 13.2 percent news with headlines slanted against opposition parties on the whole. *NST* also duplicated steps taken by *Berita Harian* as it printed news headlines that slant negatively towards all opposition parties. On the other hand, *Star* deviantly carries news headlines that slanted against the Barisan Nasional (4.6%) instead. Finally, as usual, the *Malay Mail* is neutral in most of its news headlines.

Now the researchers try to study the positive slant of news body. Content of the news is the responsibility of journalists. Results of the findings through this research shows that 78.9 percent content of news body in *Utusan Malaysia* slanted positively. *Berita Harian* also carries 69 percent news content in its news body that slanted favouring some political parties contesting in the 1990 election. However *NST* only carries 49.2 percent of positively slanted news content. *Star* also printed 50.3 percent. The paper that least carries positively slanted news content is the *Malay Mail* with only 25.4 percent.

This study further tries to focus in detail the positively slanted news content and finds that most of the news slant are in favour of Barisan Nasional. For instance *Utusan Malaysia* printed 63.8 percent of its news slant positively towards the Barisan Nasional while *Berita Harian* opted for 59.2 percent. *NST* 42 percent, *Star* 33.5 percent and the *Malay Mail* 20.3 percent.

Data also looks into characteristics of negatively slanted news content relating to the 1990 election. The findings show that three of the local newspapers studied; *Utusan Malaysia* (12.8%), *Berita Harian* (8.7%) and *New Straits Times* (8%) most

frequently printed news content against Semangat 46 party. In contrast, *Star* adopts a neutral attitude so it carries the percentage of news content that is almost equally against Barisan Nasional (6.8%) as well as DAP (6.2%). The negatively slant of news content in *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian* is medium in strength but the negative slant of news content in the *New Straits Times* (16.1%) is strong while 8.9 percent of the negatively slanted news content in *Star* and the 6.8 percent slant from the *Malay Mail* which are against the DAP, are usually 'weak' in character.

Through data analysis it is found that most of the election news are displayed on the **second to the fifth pages** of all the newspapers. *Utusan Malaysia* puts 45 percent of its news relating to the election between pages 2 to 5. *Berita Harian* also printed 49.5 percent of its election news in between the same pages. *New Straits Times* and the *Star* put 62.5 percent and 64.6 percent respectively in these pages and the *Malay Mail* also printed 37.3 percentage of the election news on these pages.

From the five newspapers studied, *Berita Harian* most frequently print news regarding the 1990 election on the front page (16%) follow by *Utusan Malaysia* (10.6%), *New Straits Times* (9.7%) and the *Star* (8.4%). In contrast, the *Malay Mail* does not display any news about the election in its front page.

Results of this research shows that most of the prominent characters featured in the news are Ministers. For instance *Utusan Malaysia* print 30.7 percent news on election involving Ministers. *Berita Harian* on the other hand carries 22.9 percent news where the personalities are Ministers, *New Straits Times* on the other hand carries 26.5 percent, *Star*, 33 percent and the *Malay Mail* 10.2 percent.

Besides that 10.8 percent of the 1990 election news in *Utusan Malaysia* are about the Prime Minister. The same goes for 19.3 percent of the election news from *Berita Harian*, 13.2 percent from *New Straits Times*, 11.9 percent from the *Star* and 10.2 percent from the *Malay Mail*. Another interesting element found through the study is that 43.8 percent of the prominent personalities in the election news from *Utusan Malaysia* are from the Barisan Nasional. *Berita Harian* also followed closely with 58.8 percent of its election news involving personalities from the Barisan Nasional, *New Straits Times* has 51.2 percent news about personalities from Barisan Nasional, the *Star*, 61.1 percent and the *Malay Mail*, 40.7 percent. To sum up, we can say that candidates from Barisan Nasional are personalities most frequently featured in the 1990 election news in all local newspapers.

The classification of parties most prominent in all the newspapers were studied. All local newspapers most prominently featured news on Barisan Nasional. *Utusan Malaysia* has allocated 43.8 percent of its news on Barisan Nasional. On the other hand *Berita Harian* spare 58.8 percent, *New Straits Times*, 51.2 percent of their news, *Star*, 61.1 percent and *Malay Mail*, 40.7 percent of its news on election about Barisan Nasional. The study also identify that the second party most prominent in the election news is Semangat 46. *Utusan Malaysia* carries 6.4 percent, *Berita Harian*, 4.5 percent, *New Straits Times*, 6.8 percent, *Star*, 7.6 percent and *Malay Mail*, 5.1 percent of its election news discuss about *Semangat 46*.

The researchers are also interested to know about the party that is third prominently discuss in every news on the election. Data analysis shows that Semangat 46 is the third prominently party discuss in election news. At this level *Star* is still the newspaper that most frequently discuss about *Semangat 46* (3.8%) as the third promi-

ment party featured in its news and this is followed by *Malay Mail* (3.4%), *Utusan Malaysia* (2.8%), *New Straits Times* (2.1%) and *Berita Harian* (0.6%). (See Table 30)

Usually in the election campaign exist main pressure groups supporting parties contesting in the election and this is also reported in all local newspapers. Due to that the researchers are keen to know through data analysis which pressure group is most frequently reported on their activities. The pressure group almost equally reported in all local newspapers studied are racial group, academic institutions and tribal group (Table 31).

The study tries to identify the leading political personalities most frequently discuss in the news studied. For this factor, *Utusan Malaysia* carries 40.6 percent news about other members of the ruling parties, *Berita Harian* on the other hand carries 41.2 percent, *New Straits Times*, 30 percent, *Star*, 34.9 percent and *Malay Mail* also carries 30.5 percent of news about personalities from the ruling parties. However the political personality most frequently talk about is Dr. Mahathir. Here *Utusan Malaysia* allocate 13.3 percent of its election news discussing about Dr. Mahathir, *Berita Harian* also allocate 15.2 percent of its news on Dr. Mahathir, *New Straits Times*, 14.6 percent, *Star*, 10.3 percent and *Malay Mail*, 8.5 percent. (Table 32)

The second prominent political personality discussed most frequently in all news is Tengku Razaleigh. This factor can be seen in the data study. *Utusan Malaysia* carries 6.2 percent of its election news about Tengku Razaleigh making him the second prominent political personality. *Berita Harian* also carries 4.9 percent, *New Straits Times*, 4.5 percent, *Star*, 6.2 percent and *Malay Mail*, 1.7 percent about Tengku Razaleigh. (Table 33)

Table 34 shows that the third prominent political personality most frequently discuss in news is Lim Kit Siang that is 1.2 percent in *Utusan Malaysia*, 0.6 percent in *Berita Harian*, 2.7 percent in *New Straits Times*, 1.4 percent in *Star* and 1.7 percent in *Malay Mail*.

Every news item is expected to have a certain theme. Sometimes there are more than one theme in a news item. So this study is also structured to extract the themes in news. Table 36 shows analysed data on themes used in news. The theme most frequently used is 'peace' where 12.1 percent election news from *Utusan Malaysia*, 22.3 percent from *Berita Harian*, 12.6 percent news from *New Straits Times* and 4.3 percent from *Star* carry the theme (peace). However *Malay Mail* does not carry any news with the theme (peace) but gives more attention to the theme on 'winning prospects of party' that is 13.6 percent. Other newspapers also stress on the same theme that is 'winning prospect of party' with *Utusan Malaysia* carrying 8.9 percent of its news on election with the theme, *Berita Harian*, 6 percent and *New Straits Times*, 11.3 percent. However the *Star* only allocated 1.9 percent of its news to that theme.

The second prominent theme found in the election news is 'Winning prospect of candidate' with *Utusan Malaysia* allocating 14.9 percent of its news to it, *Berita Harian*, 16.6 percent, *New Straits Times*, 7.4 percent, *Star*, 5.1 percent and *Malay Mail*, 6.8 percent.

Table 38 on the other hand shows the third prominent theme found in news. Through data analysis it is found that the theme 'winning prospects of party' is the third prominent theme use in all local newspapers. For example, *Utusan Malaysia* carries 14.3 percent, *Berita Harian*, 14.2 percent, *New Straits Times*, 9.8 percent, *Star*,

1.1 percent and *Malay Mail*, 3.4 percent of the theme in their election news.

Editorial

The following analysis is on editorial columns because this section can be used as a guideline to perceive the policy and stand of a newspaper. The policy supporting/against a political group/issue can be clearly seen through the reporting of the electoral campaign.

Studies from Western Communication experts showed that editorial columns are capable of influencing the readers to vote for parties supported by local newspapers in an election.

Sidney Kraus and Dennis Daris (1976) said:

“When the media, especially newspapers, support an issue or a candidate in an editorial — usually located on a page devoted to analysis and opinion — they are promulgating that, in their view, the issue should be supported or the candidate should be elected.”²

The stand of a newspaper relating to an issue can be seen in topics of editorial columns collected as samples of a research.

Topics of editorials relating to the 1990 election were collected from all the local newspapers studied. Among the topics are:

Utusan Malaysia

- 05.10.90 - Overcome the problem of the lost of voters
- 06.10.90 - Duration of Election
- 08.10.90 - Withdraw with Dignity
- 09.10.90 - Do not question the choice of candidate
- 10.10.90 - Uncertainty in the division of seats in Pahang
- 11.10.90 - Those who do not contest
- 12.10.90 - Democracy is Functioning
- 13.10.90 - Action of Desperado
- 15.10.90 - Avoid Tension in Electoral Campaign
- 16.10.90 - A promise that is confusing
- 17.10.90 - Invites unnecessary unrest
- 18.10.90 - Clear that Semangat 46 kills PAS
- 19.10.90 - Not only the voice of Dr. Mahathir
- 20.10.90 - Not too late to write
- 22.10.90 - The meaning of winning in Barisan Nasional
- 23.10.90 - The people's mandate

In general, all local newspapers support the Barisan Nasional government in the topics from editorial columns collected. Writings that frequently question the capabilities of opposition parties in their effort to fight against the Barisan Nasional,

constantly become themes in newspapers editorial columns. *Utusan Malaysia* brings up about the contest between opposition parties in the same constituency and treats the promise given by the opposition as political gimmicks. The newspaper also accuse the opposition parties of using the election as a gamble to revenge/test their popularity when combined to fight against the Barisan Nasional. *Utusan Malaysia* said:

“Keadaan seperti ini tiada lain dari barisan pembangkang berada dalam keadaan desperado.”⁵

According to the *Utusan*, this is none other than the act of desperado among the opposition. The newspaper also attack PBS for pulling out of Barisan Nasional at the time when all the people are getting ready to face the election. Taking account of the effect of this action, the editorial columns from *Utusan Malaysia* said:

“Ekoran daripada tindakan itu, suasana di pasaran saham turut tergugat yang membawa kepada keruntuhan harga saham-saham di pasaran. Dalam masa yang sama, keadaan itu meninggalkan kesan yang tidak disenangi oleh rakyat khususnya di Semenanjung.”⁶

Meaning that the action of PBS caused chaos and uncertainly in the country and people.

The editorial on the following day in *Utusan Malaysia*, clearly tries to create dissatisfaction among members of the opposition party by writing:

“Hari ini ahli-ahli PAS telah dapat melihat dengan sejelas-jelasnya betapa mereka telah ditipu oleh Presiden Semangat 46, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. Bersama-sama dengan Setiausaha Agung DAP, Encik Lim Kit Siang, beliau berangkat ke Sabah bagi mengesahkan penyertaan PBS ke dalam barisan pembangkang.”⁷

The support of *Utusan Malaysia* towards the Barisan Nasional is explicit and clear when it says that the people must give their undivided support to Barisan Nasional especially after what PBS has done.

“Keberanian Dato’ Sri Dr. Mahathir sewajarnya harus dimandatkan oleh rakyat melalui sokongan yang penuh kepada beliau dan pada pilihanraya umum ini, masyarakat Malaysia harus menunjukkan bahawa kita umumnya adalah bersatu dalam mempertahankan perpaduan seperti yang diperlihatkan oleh beliau.”⁸

Berita Harian

Editorial columns of *Berita Harian* are even more overt in opposing the opposition especially the Presiden of *Semangat 46*, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and PAS leaders. This can be seen in the following editorial topics by *Berita Harian*.

- 05.10.90 - Election : all are ready
- 07.10.90 - The Party is more important than the candidate.
- 08.10.90 - Tape : Why did Ku Li requested for a court intervention.
- 09.10.90 - Make sure that politic is not a subversive destroyer.
- 10.10.90 - PAS cannot gamble on the morality of Islam
- 12.10.90 - Memory on divide and rule
- 13.10.90 - The people really understand the meaning of democracy.
- 14.10.90 - Idealism of PAS is being challenge.
- 15.10.90 - Opposition Squandering with Promises.
- 17.10.90 - The tactics that will not weaken Barisan Nasional.
- 18.10.90 - Statements by Lorrain affects the creadibility of Ku Li.
- 21.10.90 - A test of spiritual strength and intelligence for the Ummah of Islam.
- 23.10.90 - Warning to the leaders with greed and pride.

A rough survey on the focus of the editorial columns collected from the *Berita Harian*, shows that efforts are made to create uncertainties among the people towards the capabilities of the opposition to rule efficiently compared to the present government. The person constantly under attacked is Tengku Razaleigh as repeatedly three times the newspaper directly criticise the Presiden of *Semangat 46*. The newspaper also brings up the BMF scandal and relating it to the ex finance minister following the statement made by the ex chairman of BMF, Lorrain Esme Osman. Lorrain accused Tengku Razaleigh of being the man responsible for the scandal.

Berita Harian said :

... isu yang penting di sini bukanlah soal sama ada kita harus mempercayai tuduhan-tuduhan Lorrain bahawa Tengku Razaleigh adalah orang yang sanggup menggadaikan amanah yang diberikan kepadanya sebagai Menteri Kewangan Malaysia, tetapi bagaimana Tengku Razaleigh sebagai seorang yang bercita-cita menjadi perdana menteri di negara ini mahu membersihkan nama baiknya. Perkara ini adalah serius dan kita berharap rakyat tidak perlu menunggu sehingga beliau menjadi perdana menteri sebelum beliau menerangkan kedudukan sebenarnya.”⁹

A few days before that *Berita Harian* criticises Tengku Razaleigh's manifesto for *Gagasan Rakyat*. Among other things promise in the manifesto is the giving away of allowances to recognise the contribution of those above 55 years old who has no income. Other promises include the increasing of subsidy for the price of rice, to eliminate toll and to stop all extravagant projects.

According to *Berita Harian*:

*"Demi menjadi popular, Tengku Razaleigh tidak takut bersikap boros."*¹⁰

Meaning that for the sake of popularity Tengku Razaleigh is not afraid to be extravagant.

Similar to *Utusan Malaysia*, *Berita Harian* also commented on the action taken by PBS to abundant BN as an act "of politic without principle."

*"Yang jelas tindakan 'menikam dari belakang' oleh musuh dalam selimut seperti yang dilakukan oleh PBS ini adalah ciri politik Sabah yang cuba dieksport ke Semenanjung. Amalan politik ini adalah berbahaya kepada pembentukan sebuah kerajaan yang stabil dan kukuh dan cukup berbahaya kepada demokrasi."*¹¹

The paper also say that the action of PBS has changed the electoral situation to one that stress more on religious issues.

According to the newspaper:

*"Tindakan PBS itu mengubah corak persaingan politik pada soal Islam yang berpecah di kalangan UMNO, PAS, HAMIM dan BERJASA dengan barisan pembangkang bukan Melayu dan diwarnakan oleh helah politik Kristian yang ditaja oleh PBS."*¹²

To sum up the stand of *Berita Harian* it is clear from the start when it says :

*"Tujuan sesuatu pilihanraya adalah untuk memilih wakil rakyat dan kerajaan yang mampu memberi kesenangan serta kestabilan. Ini secara langsung bermakna kita perlu memastikan kesinambungan sistem pemerintahan demokrasi sekarang."*¹³

This means that we should ensure the existence of the present democratic system.

New Straits Times

During the duration of the research only seven times does *NST* mention directly in its editorial columns about the 1990 election. However, it is still clear that the newspaper supports the Barisan Nasional.

Here are some topics of editorial in *NST* :

- 06.10.90 - Barisan's record is clear
- 12.10.90 - A short campaign
- 14.10.90 - The voters to decide
- 16.10.90 - No such thing as a free ride
- 17.10.90 - Untimely and regrettable
- 20.10.90 - Making a vital choice
- 23.10.90 - A vote for progress and prosperity

A day after the dissolving of the Parliament, *New Straits Times* starts to give its support to Barisan Nasional. The newspaper says:

"A clear victory is what the Barisan needs to govern with that continued stability upon which continuing peace, harmony and economic growth very much depend."¹⁴

About the opposition, the newspaper says :

"...there is the nebulous contention of the opposition that it is time for a change in Government. If taken seriously, the contention becomes a question : Change to what? The opposition so far offered little that is substantive in answer."¹⁵

The *New Straits Times* also gives attention to the action of PBS in withdrawing from BN and reminds the party on the consequences to the question on nasional unity. According to the newspaper:

"Whatever might be the glorious dream or the grand design of the PBS, it should (and must) take into consideration the over riding objective of national unity which it must admit could be fragile in an intensified atmosphere during election time."¹⁶

Not like the other two samples of Bahasa Malaysia newspaper, *New Straits Times* is not that explicit in its criticism on the opposition party. In fact immediately after

the election, the newspaper wrote that all hatchets and bitterness that have happened should be forgotten and encourage all political parties to cooperate for the sake of national development.

““Whatever the differences, post-election time behaves the various parties to down and bury their political hatchets as soon as possible for the common good. The opposition should cooperate and help the BN Government to get on with the work of further developing the nation.”¹⁷

The Star

This paper gives a lot of comments on the 1990 general election in its editorial columns especially those written by V.K. Chin. Among the factors touched by the newspaper is the removal of old faces, duration of campaign, the presence of Commonwealth observers, the pulling out of PBS from BN and the winning chances of opposition parties.

The column “Comments” which is actually an editorial column in the *Star* gives interesting and objective write outs. The newspaper gives an accurate sum up of the 1990 general election when it says:

“Though people may be confused by the political barage, there are two catchwords which the voters have been asked to decide on. They are, continuity and change.”¹⁸

Even though the *Star* is not salient in its support towards BN, but its stand is clear when the Chief Minister of Sabah, Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan pulls out of PBS from BN. The newspaper said:

“Its party may have differences with the Federal Government but he cannot jeopardise the racial and religious harmony existing in the country because he was trying to score political points.”¹⁹

The support of the newspaper towards BN can only be seen through its comments made in its editorial column about the activities of the opposition party members, for instance their dissatisfaction over the short period for campaign and the promises and acceptance of the people towards the opposition parties. About the period of campaign, the newspaper says the duration is sufficient as all political parties have been talking about it a year ago. It says:

“Opposition parties like to make mountains out of mole-hills and this understandable under local circumstances where they are constantly out-manoeuvred by the Barisan.”²⁰

About the promises made by the opposition, the newspaper defined it as :

“Gagasan may wish to give the people what they want, but they will all be promises. It has no track record though some of its leaders might have been in the government before.”²¹

With regard to the position of PAS, it says :

“Can the leopard change its spot? That is what PAS would like the voters, at least the non-Malays, to believe it can...

It is of course an election gimmick which will fool nobody.”²²

Topics of editorial columns in the *Star* are:

- 06.10.90 - Getting set to do battle for people's hearts and minds.
- 08.10.90 - Choosing the candidates.
- 09.10.90 - Sufficient time for campaigning.
- 10.10.90 - Desperate more by PAS with its latest political gimmick.
- 11.10.90 - PAS is still unacceptable to non-Malays.
- 12.10.90 - DAP's bid to arrest flagging fortunes.
- 13.10.90 - Onus of the Commonwealth election observer team.
- 15.10.90 - Let's give credit where credit is unwanted, too.
- 16.10.90 - Even Santa Claus needs to get his presents from somewhere.
- 18.10.90 - Pairin's action a big blow to racial harmony.
- 19.10.90 - Why the Barisan Nasional is seeking continuity.
- 20.10.90 - Why Gagasan wants change?
- 23.10.90 - Bigger mandate for the Barisan Nasional.

On the whole the editorial column is a serious column that brings about heavy comment on an issue. This means it has effects and the readers of this column are those that are influentials (opinion leaders) that can contribute in building the attitudes of other people.

According to Mustaffa Suhaimi :

*"Ada pengkaji yang membuat rumusan bahawa halaman editorial bukan bermaksud untuk pembaca umum tetapi khusus untuk satu golongan pembaca yang lebih banyak berfikir termasuk orang-orang yang bertanggungjawab seperti para pemimpin, pendidik, tokoh-tokoh masyarakat, para intelek, para ilmuwan dan sebagainya, yang ucapan atau buah fikiran mereka didengar dan diambil berat oleh orang ramai."*²³

This means that the editorial column is not for general readers but specifically for those who ponders like leaders, educationalist, distinguish members of the society, intellectuals etc.

Overall most of the local newspapers supported the Barisan Nasional and constantly give sharp criticism through their editorial columns which is a prestidgeous column interpreting issues for its readers.

Caricature and Pictures

Drawings that are comical but contain deep messages are among material interested by newspaper readers. The art of drawing in the shape of a political cartoon is called caricature and this is always printed in the newspapers. The caricatures have become a sample of this research except from the *Star. Berita Harian* presented caricatures in a subtle manner to hit at the opposition parties. On the other hand, *Utusan Malaysia* outrightly supported the Barisan Nasional. In the column "Senyum Kambing" which is published daily on the front page of *Utusan Malaysia* synically attacked the opposition.

However the *New Straits Times* which has the contribution of the famous cartoonist, Lat, is moderate in its out looks at the general election.

Besides the caricatures, there are photographs published by the newspaper that carry their own messages which can also influence the readers. In fact a photo carries a thousand meaning. One photograph is said to be responsible in destroying the chances of an opposition to win over the voters and that is the picture of Tengku Razaleigh wearing the *tengkolok* carrying the symbol of a cross when he visited Sabah. The picture is used by *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian* on the front page while the *New Straits Times* carried the photo on page two on 19th. October, 1990. The *Star* however, does not use the photo which was recorded by a photographer from *Reuter* news agency.

The using of these photographs is a sort of propaganda. This systematic effort through the mass media influence the thoughts and behavior of the target audience for the benefit of a certain group. In this context, the photo is published to provoke members of the society especially the supporters of *Semangat 46* towards Tengku Razaleigh's action of wearing a headness with a cross symbol on it.

Utusan Malaysia editorial column says:

"Akhbar ini turut sertai perasaan sedih bersama-sama dengan masyarakat Islam di negara ini melihat bagaimana seorang pemimpin seperti Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah memakai tengkolok yang bersalib di satu upacara istimewa dengan Ketua Menteri Sabah kelmarin..."

*... Adalah sesuatu yang mengecewakan apabila umum melihat betapa kerana dorongan untuk berkuasa manusia sanggup membuat apa sahaja. Tidak ada penghinaan yang boleh digambarkan apabila seorang Islam sanggup melakukan sesuatu yang disogokkan ke atasnya sekalipun diketahuinya perbuatan itu menimbulkan kesangsian dan merendahkan martabat Islam."*²⁴

In other words, the newspaper is saddened by the doings of Tengku Razaleigh who had been sought to such lowlying gimmick, for the sake of power. The *Berita Harian* is also cynical towards Tengku Razaleigh through a photograph published on the 16th. of October, 1990 which visualised him dancing with some DAP leaders on a stage.

Photographs of BN leaders mixing closely with the people are shown frequently in the newspapers.

Harold Lasswell says :

*"Propaganda in the broadcast sense is the technique of influencing human action by the manipulation of representation. These representations may take spoken, written, pictorial or musical form."*²⁵

Advertisement

Advertisements are among the important force in a newspaper. From this the newspaper obtained its source of income to increase its revenue.

During the period for research, it is found that advertisement is no longer limited to only a source of income, but also has become an instrument for propaganda that is advertisement with a political structure. These advertisements however mostly supported the BN and none supported the opposition parties.

In the report given by the Commonwealth Observers :

"Opposition parties also complained that no daily newspaper would accept their advertisements. We had no way of verifying this but on the final days prior to polling, full page BN advertisements appeared in the dailies. We saw no similar opposition advertisements."

In a talk in Bangsar, Tengku Razaleigh said that newspapers refused to publish the opposition's advertisement, though spaces in the papers have been booked earlier. Only one Chinese newspaper that agreed to carry the advertisement about the manifesto of the Gagasan.

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