

ANALYSIS OF POSTERS, BANNERS, BROCHURES etc.

By
AZIZUL HALIM YAHYA & HAJI ISMAIL SUDIN
School of Mass Communication
Institut Teknologi MARA

INTRODUCTION

Advertising, a growing specialisation in business administration has been utilised since the 19th century with the beginning of the the print media in large towns in Peninsula Malaysia. At that time Advertising is used to channel various information about products, services and ideas. In the 1990s election campaign the goverment used the concept of advertising in the form of propaganda to deliver their messages. The use of this form of advertising was usually done during the time of election. This method was found to be effective in the effort to change the opinions of voters.

THE MASS MEDIA AS OF 1990

Malaysia, like any other country, has various media of communication. The two main media in the country are the print media that is the newspapers and magazines and the electronic media, that is radio and television. Among other media used to deliver messages are billboards, posters, stickers, pamphlets, booklets and others.

In the print media, the major daily newspapers are produced by two organizations, The Fleet Group and The Utusan Melayu Group.

Political parties including the party that is ruling the country have an interest in these papers. The Fleet Group produces three dailies in English, The New Straits Times, Business Times and the afternoon tabloid, the Malay Mail. In addition it produces the Chinese newspaper,, Shin Min Daily News , the Sunday Malay and Berita Minggu.

The Utusan Melayu Group, produces newspapers in the Malay language in both Jawi and Romanised scripts. The other newspapers are The Star and the Sunday edition, Sunday Star, which are closely related to the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA). Whereas two Indian newspapers, are owned by people related to the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). These two latter political parties are part of the main ruling party.

There are some other not so well known newspapers that are slanted towards the opposition parties like the monthly Rocet, printed by the Democratic Party (DAP) in the English and Malay language and the Harakah, a newspaper produced every forth night by Party Islam Se Malaysia. On the other hand Watan is produced twice a week.

About the electronic media, the operating of the broadcasting media is under the control of the Ministry of Information. This ministry consists of the Broadcasting Department that handles Radio Television Malaysia (RTM). RTM owned two TV channels that broadcasted programmes in Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil.

There is also a private station known as TV3 Network. This television station is owned by Sistem Television Malaysia Berhad (STMB). Radio Malaysia on the other hand broadcasts throughout the country with different channels to cater for the different races and languages of the Malaysians. In certain areas, there are regional radio stations that are designed to cover specific areas only. As RTM is owned by the government and the privately owned STMB is also owned by people belonging to the ruling party, so during the election, most of the news broadcast in 1990 was pro-government.

DATA ANALYSIS

The election campaign in 1990 was carried out for only 10 days. The election in that year was the first since independence wherein voters were given an alternative to either support the Barisan Nasional or Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah. For the first time also the voting was observed by Commonwealth Observers Group. About 1000 candidates competed for seats during the election throughout the short and intensive campaign.

Campaigns involved the using of various media found in the country, though there was control over the use of the electronic and the printed media especially the newspapers. Control over political campaigns was made through several laws, for example the Internal Security Act (ISA). These laws gave more power to those in control to curb political activities.

TYPES OF MEDIUM USED IN THE 1990 ELECTION

In the 1990 election, the analysis revealed that about 4.8 percent of space in the print media had been used by the ruling parties to obtain votes. The newspapers were The New Straits Times, Berita Harian and Utusan Melayu and they were used to criticise the opposition parties. The survey also found that the government's parties usually used a full page of advertisement in the newspapers to deliver messages to the voters.

Though the amount of advertisements published through the newspapers were small but the effect was great because the newspapers are read by many people in the country. The languages and visuals used also attracted attention of the voters and indirectly raised the doubts of voters towards the opposition parties. The opposition parties on the other hand published their manifesto and advertisements in the monthly Rocket, Watan and Harakah. Although these newspapers were not read by many peo-

ple, they constituted one of the ways used by the opposition parties to deliver information to their supporters.

However, one of the media widely used in the 1990 election was posters. About 61 (49.1%) (Table 1) posters from 124 types of materials studied was used to deliver messages. This clearly showed that posters were the type of medium best preferred by the contesting parties to portray their individual party. The frequent use of posters was because of its unique characteristic that could easily attract the attention of voters.

The second medium most frequently used was handouts like pamphlets, leaflets and booklets. From the 124 materials studied, 47 (38.52%) of them were handouts. This medium was widely used as it was easy and fast to distribute to the public without much obstruction. Information from the survey showed that most of the constituencies were flooded with handouts.

Other than the above mentioned media were not widely used. Most of them only used other media as supporting media. These media were stickers (3.28%), billboards (2.46%), newspapers (4.8%) and flags (0.82%) (Table 1).

The electronic medium was not used much as a medium for campaigning as it was strictly controlled by the government. Television was not allowed to be used as a medium for campaign but the parties contesting were allowed to use the radio. However the air time given was limited and only the major parties contesting were allowed air time. The government had come out with a formula based on the number of parties contesting, to determine the use of the radio medium. From this formula, Barisan Nasional was allocated 117 minutes air time and Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (PAS, DAP and *Semangat 46*) was given 91 minutes air time

In the 1990 election, the use of media was more or less the same as during the other elections before this. The media was better used by the ruling parties than the opposition parties. Through this study it was found that all parties used the media to improve their images, and personalities of their candidates, parties or leadership. The study also found that those contesting used the media for different purposes.

The researchers found that the 124 materials were used for different purposes. Forty-one (10.34%) were used to improve images of personalities of candidates, parties or party leaders. However 23 (15.86%) were used to criticise the opposition parties and 15 (10.34%) used to criticise the government. About 15 (10.34%) were used by the opposition party to pressure for change. And 13 (9.86%) was used to discuss issues of an area. However 11 (7.58%) were used to support the government. Four (2.75%) were used to highlight the government's achievements (Table 3).

As usual religious issues were also brought up again in the 1990 election but the amount was reduced, that was only three (2.06%) and for other purposes were also three (2.06%). From all the purposes for using the medium, 17 (11.72%) did not contain any text or specific purpose. This medium only portrayed the parties' logo. What was clear was that the use of media during the election was almost identical with the other elections. The campaigns were mostly towards the improvement of the personalities and images of candidates or parties besides trying to influence voters against the other parties contesting.

As there was less control over using of the mass media either the printed as the electronic media so the using of the other media was intensified. As control was

imposed on both these media the opposition parties turned to two other media, posters and handouts as an alternatives.

THE MEDIA USED BY THE OPPOSITION PARTIES AND INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES

Opposition Parties

In the 1990 election, posters and handouts were used by the opposition parties to deliver their manifestos and messages to voters. The study also showed the opposition parties using billboards 2 (2.98%) to channel information to voters (Table 1).

The intense use of these media, was clearly due to the difficulty in penetrating the widely distributed print media, namely the newspapers and the electronic media meaning television and radio. The government has objected to the use of television for campaigning purposes but had allowed contesting parties to use radio to deliver their speeches. However as mentioned before the time allocated on the air was limited.

Independent Candidates

From the study it was found that the independent candidates only used posters to attract the attention of voters. The study showed that three types of posters were used by the independent parties.

THE MEDIA USED BY THE RULING PARTIES

The use of different types of media by the ruling parties on the other hand were overall equally utilised. The ruling parties used various media to deliver their messages. However, posters and handouts became the main medium. The survey found that 23 (44.23%) were posters and 17 (32.70%) were handouts, and others used were merely as supporting media, for instance newspapers 6 (11.5%), stickers 4 (7.70%), billboards 1 (1.9%) and flags 1 (1.9%) (Table 1).

ANALYSIS ON MEDIA USED BY PARTIES CONTESTING

Both group of parties chose posters as their main channel because this medium has been used frequently in every election since the country gained its independence. The used of this medium was perceived as effective in delivering messages and also because the cost of implementation was also comparatively very low and above all, it could easily be seen by the voters.

The posters in display were mostly used to criticise the opposition parties or to improve the images of candidates or parties contesting. The survey found that from the 35 posters put up by the opposition parties, 6 (17.14%) criticised the government parties or personalities of the other parties and 29 (82.85%) were used to support the party or candidates contesting. Whereas the ruling parties used 21 (91.30%) to support the party or candidates contesting and only 2 (8.70%) were used to criticise per-

sonalities from the opposition parties (Table 2).

Almost all the posters studied showed candidates, slogan and logo of a party. Sometimes only the slogan and logo was shown. Overall the opposition parties mostly used posters as this medium was allowed during the election without much sanction. Also the opposition parties were not allowed to utilise television or radio to disseminate their messages and above all none of the message was published in the main newspapers. So the opposition parties were forced to use the poster medium as a substitute medium for delivering messages.

To deliver information more effectively, handouts were also used. Handouts were chosen as the second main medium because they could be distributed according to constituencies. Handouts were usually circulated in areas that were frequently visited by the public. Contents of the handouts were mostly about the parties manifestoes or reasons why voters should choose the opposition parties or the government. Among the facts highlighted in handouts such as pamphlets, booklets and brochure were topics such as:

- i. At the time of sorrow, beauty contests were organized
- ii. This is the last lie of Mahathir.
- iii. How BN manipulated the people of Pulau Pinang.
- iv. Voice of DAP.
- v. PAS manifesto.
- vi. Opposition the use of electronic media for the benefit of Barisan Nasional.
- vii. We are now at the crossroads.

From the messages found in the handouts mentioned above, it is clear that the handouts were generally used as an instrument to exhibit the weaknesses of the other contesting parties. In each handouts there were messages to convince the voters that the other parties contesting were unreliable and their own party was good. The use of these handouts indirectly influenced the voters. Handouts circulated during the last hours of the campaign swayed some loyal voters and cultivated the feelings of uncertainty towards a particular party. For example of the effectiveness of the handout medium was seen during the circulation of printed pictures of Tengku Razaleigh Tengku Hamzah wearing a headress with a cross when he was in Sabah, and this caused some voters to be cautious about voting for Semangat 46. Later the opposition party tried to reciprocate by publishing handouts of Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir using the same headress and dancing. But the handouts were circulated too late to be of any effect. However what was clear was that the handout medium became an effective instrument for changing the opinions of voters towards this issue and this happened frequently during the 1990 election .

As stated earlier, the newspapers are owned and influenced by the ruling parties. The Berita Harian and The New Straits Times were both linked to UMNO, so were other mainstream newspapers owned by the Utusan Melayu Group. MCA and MIC also had influence over organization of some main newspapers. MCA had strong influence over The Star and the weekly newspaper, Sunday Star and MIC members had a hand over the running of two Tamil newspapers.

This allowed the ruling parties to excessively use the daily newspaper for publishing political advertisements that mostly criticised the opposition parties. Though the amount of advertisements was small, 6 (4.8%) (Table 1), but because of their vast circulation throughout Malaysia and because they are read by all levels of society, it made the newspaper medium one of the most effective media in changing public opinions on an issue.

The opposition also owns some newspapers, but the papers are not very popular among the people and only published monthly (Roket) or fortnightly (Harakah). As both newspapers are only published irregularly, the advertisements printed were less effective as the opportunity to be seen (OTS) was small. That is the reason why the opposition parties seldom used their print media.

THE USE OF CARICATURES IN THE 1990 ELECTION

The effectiveness of caricatures as a medium of communication is due to its creating art in advertisement. Caricatures could function as a form of communication due to their simple character. So a message could easily, accurately and effectively be delivered though only a few lines. Caricatures in the print media could easily be understood and hence effective if they use accurate images and dialogues. Besides, humour could also be utilised.

The use of caricatures in the 1990 election showed that caricatures played an important role in political propaganda. The study found that 17 (13.71%) from the 125 material studied used caricatures to deliver their messages. From the 17 caricatures, 8 (47.06%) were used by the ruling parties and 9 (52.94%) were used by the opposition parties (Table 4). During the campaign, the opposition parties used cartoon illustrations that portrayed the leaders of the other contesting parties. The salient character usually criticised the action done by the contesting parties. As the duration for the campaign was short, both parties tried to destroy the image of one another. The study found that from the 17 media, 3 (17.64%) were used to support a party whether to improve the party's image or to tell about its achievements and 14 (82.35%) were used to criticised the other contesting parties (Table 7).

The use of cartoons in the election campaign was something common. Characters in caricatures showed the unruly action of the other contesting parties. And the illustration usually also showed the leaders of the other contesting party, for instance Tengku Razaleigh and Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir.

These caricature were drawn in such a way that they could be easily understood and looked natural but gave tremendous effect to the readers. The caricatures were found to be mostly in the Malay language. The study also found that 76.47% used the Malay language, 5.88% used the Chinese and the English language, and the other 11.7% used a combination of all languages (Table 6). The type of message portrayed were usually in the form of sarcasm or criticism. The illustrations, were usually cartoons acting out various criticisms towards the other contesting party. If the illustrations were by the opposition parties, so the caricature would usually be on Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, Samy Vellu or Ling Liong Sik. However if the illustrations were pro government, the advertisement would show caricatures of leaders or strong personalities from the opposition parties such as Lim Kit Siang and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah.

From the 17 caricatures studied, 8 (47.06%) were from the ruling parties (Table 4). Through these caricatures, the ruling parties tried to show the weaknesses and negative aspects of the opposition parties.

Usually the visuals shown were symbolic in nature but could be easily understood by the readers. The main topics usually explained the meaning of the visual. For instance, an advertisement by the Barisan Nasional showed caricatures of all opposition party leaders playing musical instruments. The main comment written was "Orkestra Caca-merba," the only orchestra in the world where all the musicians played their own individual songs. Through these caricatures and advertisement topics, the voters assumed that the opposition parties had different objectives and differed from one another. There were also advertisements that showed caricatures of opposition leaders sitting in a boat. Underneath it was written "Do not choose the unholy alliance that shakes in instability".

The ruling parties also used symbolic pictures of animals. The use of animal illustrations created a deep effect especially when the illustrations were accompanied by appropriate texts that symbolised the other contesting party.

The use of caricatures and dialogue accompanied by accurate comments made an advertisement with caricature more effective than advertisement that used plain pictures, especially if the party intended to show the weak side of the opposing leaders. When a face or a caricature of a leader was given a bad image, the loyal voters would begin to have doubts over their chosen party.

The use of caricatures in the 1990 election mainly centralised on posters, that is 8 (47.06%), secondly, handouts totally 5 (29.41%) and finally the newspapers, that is 4 (23.53%) (Table 5). The effects derived from newspapers caricature could be considered great readership.

The type of caricatures that represented the two contesting groups could indirectly allowed both parties to show the weaknesses of the other party in the caricatures. The opposition party had used caricatures of Mahathir to show that he had so far caused the various problems in the country. Through this caricature the opposition party tried to project that all this while the ruling parties were the cause of the numerous problems of the people in the country.

The use of cartoons in politics indirectly influenced the voters. The message delivered was clearly understood by the voters as the party used caricatures of the other parties' leaders for the purpose of smearing their images.

In one of the advertisements shown in the newspapers, the ruling party also used caricature of the people of Malacca fighting the Portuguese. At the bottom of the visual was written "Support will bring about a fall, as their names were written in Malayan history as the traitors of the nation."

The use of caricature and symbolic comments indirectly caused the readers to feel that the advertisement referred to the opposition parties. This affected the opinions of the voters towards the other contesting parties.

So the use of caricature had given an impact on the voters' perception. These caricatures either referred directly or indirectly to the other parties, caused changes in the opinion of voters. This clearly showed the ability of caricatures in changing public opinion especially when the caricature was accompanied with text and suitable comments.

could change the opinions of the voters towards the party they had supported. The government, for instance had used caricature symbolically to change the perception of voters and this tactic was found to be very successful. The use of newspapers as one of the media had allowed the caricatures a greater opportunity to being seen (OTS).

The opposition parties also used caricatures as one of their efforts to cause opinion change but the use of the medium was limited as the message delivered did not achieve the anticipated effect.

Though the amount of caricatures collected in the study were quite small, their effect was however tremendous. The voters could easily be rolled over if the caricatures used were accompanied by suitable comments. By using sentences that did not over criticise the other party, the caricature could attract the attention of the public and change their perception about the other contesting party. This usually happened to voters in the rural areas that absorbed information thoroughly from the newspapers.

Hence the use of caricature in election campaign would continue till the coming election as this was proved to be one of the effective way of reaching their target audience.

TABLE 1
MEDIA USED BY PARTIES IN THE 1990 ELECTION

MEDIA	BN	OPPOSITION	INDEPENDENT	TOTAL	
Poster	23	35	3	61	(49.0%)
Newspaper	6	0	0	6	(4.8%)
Stickers	4	0	0	4	(3.28)
Leaflet/ Phamplet/ Booklet	17	30	0	47	(38.0%)
Signboard Billboard	1	2	0	3	(2.4%)
Flags	1	0	0	1	(0.8%)
Badges	2	0	0	0	-
Total	54	67	3	124	

TABLE 2
REASON FOR USING POSTER BY PARTIES

PARTIES	CRITICS		SUPPORTS		TOTAL	
BN	2	20%	21	41.18%	23	37.70%
OPPOSITION	6	60%	29	56.86%	35	57.40%
INDEPENDENT	2	20%	1	1.96%	3	4.90%
TOTAL	10	100%	51	100%	61	100%

TABLE 3
MEDIA USAGE FOR 1990'S ELECTIONS

MEDIA USAGE	FREQUENCY	%
Image enhanced	41	10.34
Criticising personalities	23	15.86
Without text	17	11.72
Need changes	15	10.34
Criticising government	15	10.34
Local issues	13	9.86
Pro-government	11	7.58
Achievement	4	2.75
Religious issue	3	2.06
Others	2	-
TOTAL	145 {124}*	100

{*NOTE: Some media used more than one topic}

TABLE 4
CARICATURES USED IN 1990'S ELECTION (PARTIES)

PARTIES	FREQUENCY	%
BN	8	47.06
Oppositions	9	52.94
TOTAL	17	100.00

TABLE 5
CARICATURES USED IN 1990'S ELECTION (MEDIA)

MEDIA	FREQUENCY	%
Poster	8	47.06
Leaflet	5	29.41
Newspaper	4	23.53
TOTAL	17	100

TABLE 6
CARICATURES USED IN 1990'S ELECTION (LANGUAGES)

LANGUAGES	FREQUENCY	%
Bahasa Malaysia	13	76.47
English	1	5.88
Chinese	1	5.88
Mixed	2	11.77
TOTAL	17	100.00

TABLE 7
CARICATURES USED IN 1990'S ELECTION (FUNCTIONS)

USAGE	FREQUENCY	%
Support	3	17.65
Criticised	14	82.35
TOTAL	17	100.00

KEY OF MEDIA THAT BEING USED IN THE 1990'S ELECTION

TYPES

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1. POSTER | 6. PAMPHLETS |
| 2. NEWSPAPER | 7. BOOKLETS |
| 3. STICKERS | 8. BADGES |
| 4. SIGN BOARD | 9. FLAGS |
| 5. LEAFLETS | |

LANGUAGES

1. BAHASA MALAYSIA
2. ENGLISH
3. CHINESE
4. TAMIL
5. MIXED

COMMENTS

- A. CRITISED THE GOVERNMENT
- B. IMAGE ENHANCED
- C. DISCUSSING ON ACHIEVEMENT
- D. LOCAL ISSUES
- E. RELIGIOUS ISSUES
- F. CRITICISED PERSONALITY
- G. NEEDS CHANGE IN THE GOVERNMENT
- H. PRO-GOVERNMENT
- I. WITHOUT TEXT
- J. ETC.