

The International Conference on Communication and Media 2014 (i-COME'14), 18-20 October 2014, Langkawi, MALAYSIA

A Survey on Young Voters Trust Towards the Campaign of *Janji Ditepati* Before 13th General Election

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Abstract

Election campaign is one of the best fields for candidates or political parties to impose their political messages in persuading voters to believe all the political claims and appeals. During the campaign, political advertisements will be produced as function to appeal, persuade, influence, change, reinforce and attack. Each of these elements in the political ads produced in order to influence trustworthiness and acceptance so that it can be converted in the form of a vote. However, a question that is often associated is to what extent the voters believe the political messages contained in political ads? Do all the messages that are designed by the contesting parties will influence voters in terms of trust? Belief in advertising messages is one of the main focus scholars on the effect of consumer trust in advertising. This study will explore the perceptions of young voters in Malaysia where this group is the main target for the 13th general election in Malaysia. The aspects of respondents' beliefs on claims under Janji Ditepati campaign will be studied. Therefore, this study will explain how political ads affect voters trust and how it may shape decision made by this group.

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Peer-review under responsibility of School of Multimedia Technology & Communication, Universiti Utara Malaysia.

Keywords: Trust; acceptance; attitude; political claims

1. Introduction

After the 12th Malaysia General Election, Barisan Nasional as the ruling party that had ruled this country over 50 years had lost 2/3 majority in parliament due on several issues that had influenced public's trust towards BN. The loss has become the main challenge for BN to regain trust from the people to give their full support to BN. Despite

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the fact that, Barisan Nasional's administration under Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak as the sixth prime minister is working hard by introducing some new policies at the national level such as 1Malaysia concept, Government Transformation Plan and Economic Transformation Plan to steer this country to a new level of achievement and progress. A part of that, it is a new challenge for Dato' Sri Najib to create a new political atmosphere especially building the trust between BN and the public to face the 13th General Election. After the 12th General Election, with the changes and advancement in information technologies and at the same time the process of information democratization, the government today is no longer operating in stealth mode. Today, people can easily get new information that may shape and influence their rational thinking process. Meanwhile, at the same time, the demand from the citizen is pretty challenging. Recently, however, two scholars have offered a contrasting vision of what citizens want from government. Applying their theory to campaigns suggest that voters want something very different than deliberation about issues. In their book *Stealth Democracy*, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) argue that citizens are dissatisfied with the government process as much as, if not more than, policy outcomes, and that this "process gap" helps explain their low evaluations of politicians and political institutions. People object to the process because they believe elected officials do not have the best interests of the public at heart (p. 44). Drawing on surveys and focus group data, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse demonstrate that citizens do not want more power or more responsibility: "The last thing people want is to be more involved in political decision-making" (p. 1). Rather, they would prefer a government that worked in the public's interest without their ongoing input. They also want governance that is free of unnecessary conflict and decision makers who "have found a way to take advantage of their position" (Lipsitz, et.al 2005). Therefore, it is a challenge for Dato' Sri Najib Tun Razak to create a positive relationship between his administration and the public especially by creating more programs and activities that specially targeted to the young voters in this country. The importance of creating positive relations with the young voters may influence or change the election result.

Trust is a concept and value that is really important in every single aspect of life. According to Soh (et.al 2009), trust has been recognized as an important element of human relations (e.g., Gambetta 1988; Luhmann 1980). Trust has become a systematic study in social sciences especially communication and political studies in understanding the influence of some messages on audience's trust and acceptance. For example, in advertising, consumers must have trust in ad-conveyed information for advertising to function more effectively as an information source (Soh., et.al 2009). Meanwhile, in politics public must have trust to the political actors. As we know, people are no longer living in an eyeless information society. For a campaign to be effective, public must have confidence on every single message that their received from the source, in this case is from contested parties.

Robinson (1996) defines trust as "one's expectations, assumptions, or beliefs about the likelihood that another's future actions will be beneficial, favorable, or at least not detrimental to one's interest" (Setyabudi Indartono & Chun Hsi Vivioan Chen, 2011). For a political party to be successful, campaigns are key political moments because they bring citizens and leaders into closer contact and provide citizens opportunities to learn about and choose among those who want to represent them. Scholars have lauded campaigns for their ability to communicate information that helps citizens make voting decisions (Sides, Lipsitz and Grossmann 2010). Campaigns create a relationship between leaders and supporters or public by defining certain types of relationship that will determine the political support. For example, through political engagement and mutual relationship created through campaigns, voters will have the chance to measure and evaluate the performance of the political leaders and for the future they will have a set of framework for their political decision.

2. Problem statement

After Barisan Nasional launched this campaign, it had become an integral part of their political communication campaigns. It is important for BN to inform to the public that they are seriously fulfilling all the promises that had been introduced and implemented to gain trust from the people. It has become part of the campaign strategy to attract more young voters to vote in 13th Malaysian General Election. For a major campaign, a candidate who enters a political campaign in the twenty-first century without a comprehensive strategy is doomed to failure (Powell & Cowart 2003). Political campaigns by their very nature carefully orchestrate and tailor attempts to reach and persuade voters (Tuman, 2008).

Trust is an integral important element in the political process. Political trust as a concept and construct has become increasingly important in recent debates and academic research (Schoon & Cheng, 2011). At the same time, the concept of 'Janji Ditepati' has become the main political theme or slogan for Barisan Nasional at the national level to persuade, inform, influence and regain public confidence, trust and acceptance. Prior to election campaign, voters will be exposed with various claims and promises developed and disseminated by contesting parties to influence public knowledge, cognitive and attitude. It is a part of psychological processes that constructed to influence voters' emotion and rational process. Some studies had been conducted before to evaluate the impact of political messages on voters' such as the affect, impact and influence of political ads on voters' emotion, likelihood, perception and decision. The numbers of young voters in Malaysia have increased to nearly 1.3 million and they will happen to be eligible and first time voters in 13th Malaysian General Election. Therefore, this target group has become the main target voters for contesting political parties to attract and influence this target group by influencing their support and confidence. Political trust does not emerge, nor does it operate, in a vacuum. Social trust, which refers to citizens' confidence in each other as members of a social community, is inseparable from the notion of political trust (Blind, 2006).

3. Research hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to measure the level of trust among young voters towards the Barisan Nasional political campaign "Janji Ditepati" focusing before 13th Malaysian General Election. Therefore three hypotheses were constructed to test either there are any significance differences between items that have been constructed.

- Are there any differences in terms of attitude between young male and female voters towards the concept of Janji Ditepati.
- Are there any differences in terms of trust between young male and female voters towards the concept of Janji Ditepati
- Are there any differences in terms of acceptance between young male and female voters towards the concept of Janji Ditepati

4. Methodology and sampling

In order to achieve objectives set earlier, this study has used the survey method to measure the level of trust among young voters towards the concept of 'Janji Ditepati' by Barisan Nasional. This method often used by social science researchers to study the impact of media content on public. Political communication scholars employ survey research as a primary tool for assessing attitudes, cognitions, and behaviors relevant to both politics and communication (Hoffmann & Young, 2011). This is an exploratory study; therefore purposive sampling was used in this research. Considering the connection between advertising and persuasion, researchers in mass communication have been very interested in studying the effects of advertising. The focus of these researchers has been either on the process involved whenever advertising media effects occur or on the differences in effects produced by the media context in which the advertisement embedded (Bryant & Thompson, 2002). Most of the research in advertising will focus on consumers' perception that including the consumer's attitude, trust, likelihood, emotion, decision making, involvement, mood and many more. In this study, researchers have short listed three items as measurement to measure trust, which are attitude, trust and acceptance. All these three elements will be used to measure respondents' trust towards the concept of "Janji Ditepati" by Barisan Nasional. The reason why this study choose these three elements is because it is important to understand how a political messages that disseminated through campaigns can influence voters' attitude in terms of believe, acceptance, knowledge, likelihood, experience, perception, acceptance, participation and decision making. To answer the research objectives, this study has decided to anchor out a survey to measure respondents' trust. A set of questionnaire has been constructed and tested before it was disseminated to the respondents. The questionnaire includes 15 questions and the demographics questions. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the 5-points of items of the scale. This study has been carried out in April 2012 and 105 respondents from the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, UiTM, Shah Alam were purposively chosen to participate in this study. Since this is a pilot study, therefore purposive

sampling was chosen as the sampling technique. The questionnaires were pretested based on the research objectives that have been constructed earlier before it was field administrated or distributed. Reliability test has been conducted by using Cronch Bach analysis and the result from the analysis is 0.74. It means that the reliability for the questionnaire is high and can be tested to test the hypotheses that constructed earlier.

5. Findings

This part discusses the finding based on the survey conducted to study the level of trust among young voters towards Barisan Nasional political communication campaign.

Table 1. Age of respondents

Age	Frequency (<i>f</i>)	Percent (%)
21	15	14.3
22	15	14.3
23	37	35.2
24	20	19.0
25	8	7.6
26	3	2.9
27	7	6.7
Total	105	100.0

Respondent's age does not differ greatly in this sense; with 21 years of age being the youngest with 14.3 percent and 27 years old with 6.7 percent being the oldest in the age category. Highest number of respondents was derived from 23 years old with 35.2 percent. However, the lowest came from those who aged 26 years old with 2.9 percent at 3 frequencies.

Table 2. Sex of respondents

Sex	Frequency (<i>f</i>)	Percent (%)
Male	40	38.1
Female	65	61.9
Total	105	100

Female dominates as the top respondent at 61.9 percent and trailing behind is male respondents at 38.1 percent. This may due to the fact that women in the urban area are slightly far ahead in terms of education, salary and state of liberalness.

Table 3. The mean of respondents attitudes

Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	sig
Male	40	3.6500	.74205	0.231	0.529
Female	65	3.6154	.74880		

Based on the table above, the finding found no significant differences the mean of attitude between male and female respondents towards Janji Ditepati ($t=0.231 > p0.05$). Mean for the level of attitude for male respondents is 3.650 and

for female respondents is 3.615. Therefore, there is no significant difference between sex and the level of attitude towards slogan Janji Ditepati.

Table 4. The mean of respondents trust

Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	sig
Male	40	3.3875	.79451	0.455	0.687
Female	65	3.3192	.71604		

Based on the table above, the finding found no significant differences the mean of attitude between male and female respondents towards Janji Ditepati ($t=0.455 > p0.05$). Mean for the level of trust for male respondents is 3.3875 and for female respondents is 3.3192. Therefore, there is no significant difference between sex and the level of trusts towards slogan Janji Ditepati.

Table 5. The mean of respondents of acceptance

Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	sig
Male	40	2.8063	.45463	0.819	0.164
Female	65	2.7231	.53423		

Based on the table above, the finding found no significant differences the mean of acceptance between male and female respondents towards Janji Ditepati ($t=0.819 > p0.05$). Mean for the level of acceptance for male respondents is 2.8063 and for female respondents is 2.7231. Therefore, there is no significant difference between sex and the level of acceptance towards slogan Janji Ditepati.

6. Conclusion

Trust is an important element in any situation and context. For a political party to success in political campaign, engagement between parties and supporters is essential. From the findings, it is clearly shows that there are no significant differences in terms of attitudes, trust and acceptance towards the slogan Janji Ditepati among the respondents. It means that the respondents in this study have positive feedback with the slogan introduced by Barisan Nasional. The slogan itself sounds positive and acceptable for the young voters. In certain circumstances, voters will evaluate claims made by parties rationally and positively. It may also affect their voting decision. Trust also may affect the attitude of the people. Attitude is the strong feeling towards some phenomena or scenario that happened surrounds us that may also influence our acceptance towards certain values and norms. Politic has the power to influence people perception and it may be used by political parties to persuade and influence the people by disseminating messages that are properly constructed intentionally to influence people's decision. The number of respondents in this study can be considered small and it has become the most challenging part in studying and understanding the perception of young voters on political campaigns that conducted by contested parties. The size of respondents should be increased to better understand the implication of political messages on this influential target groups. The numbers of young voters in this country will be increasing and it has become the main challenges for contested political parties to start with some new thing that can attract and influence their mind and heart. Their political decision will bring a significant change on our political landscape. Therefore, more studies should be conducted to understand this target group.

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