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Understanding Media Exposure among the Ethnic Malay in Malaysia for the Purpose of Communicating Road Safety Messages

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Abstract

In the last ten years about 7,000 people, mostly from the ethnic Malay, are killed on Malaysian roads annually. The road safety campaigns are carried out to create awareness among Malaysians, but communicating to the multi-lingual society is no mean feat. This study attempts to determine the media exposure among the Malays, as they are the most vulnerable group of road users. Such understanding would allow messages to be delivered effectively. A nationwide survey to determine media exposure among the all ethnics was carried out. The study shows that ethnics in Malaysia, including the Malays, generally preferred media of their respective mother tongue.

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1. Introduction

In 2012, 6,877 lives were lost on the Malaysian roads (Royal Malaysia Police, 2013). A study by Nagaraj, Tey, Ng and Balakhrisnan (2008) indicated that road crashes are the fifth leading cause of death among Malaysians. In 2009, Malaysia recorded 3.55 deaths per 10,000 vehicles and 28.8 deaths per 100,000 populations (MROADS, 2010). This figure is far poorer when compared to developed countries. For instance, there are only 3 deaths for every 100,000 population in Sweden, and 5 out of 100,000 in the United Kingdom. Table 1 shows a five-year data on road crashes in Malaysia.

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Table 1. Fatalities, injuries and crashes for 2008-2012

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Fatalities	6,527	6,745	6,872	6,877	6,917
Injuries	25,747	24,672	21,397	25,570	24,439
Crashes	373,071	397,330	414,421	449,040	462,423

Source: MROADS (2013)

Road crashes result in a substantial economic cost to the nation. Mohamad (2010) estimated that Malaysia lost an equivalent to 2.65 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or about RM10 billion (USD 3 billion) a year to road crashes, compared to 0.5 to 2.0 per cent in developed countries. Road crashes also bring about social implications, such as families losing their bread winners.

Motorcyclists constitute the largest bulk of the victims, making up 59 per cent of fatalities among all road users. In 2010, more than 4,000 deaths involved motorcyclists, followed by car drivers and passengers, and pedestrians. A highly motorised nation, Malaysia has 22.7 million registered motor vehicles with about an equal numbers of cars and motorcycles (MROADS, 2013). As for the reasons of road crashes, the behaviour of road users is known to contribute for more than 60 per cent. One possible intervention to improve the behaviour is through effective road safety communication campaigns.

The road safety communication campaign according to Delhomme (2009), is a purposeful attempt to inform, persuade, and motivate population (or sub-group of a population) to change its attitudes and/or behaviour to improve road safety, using organised communications involving specific media channels within a given time period. The campaigns are often supplemented by other activities such as enforcement, education, legislation, personal commitment, and rewards.

The OECD (2008) pointed out that road safety campaign is one of the possible interventions to improve performance level in countries with lower performance, especially when combined with interventions, such on seatbelt wearing, drink driving, speeding, and reducing young driver risk.

1.1 Deaths among the Malay Road Users

The Malays are the most vulnerable road users in Malaysia as indicated by the number of deaths from car and motorcycle crashes, as well as the number pedestrians killed. Road deaths are even more apparent among the male Malay youths aged 16-25 in rural areas. They have been singled out as the most vulnerable group of road users compared to any other demographic groups in Malaysia.

The group, generally made up of less educated and low income, is prone to motorcycle crashes along the state or federal roads in the rural areas in Malaysia. In 2010, the number of deaths involving young Malays male aged between 15 and 25 was 853, or 12.41% of all total deaths from road crashes in Malaysia (MROADS, 2010). Table 2 shows the number of road deaths among the Malays in Malaysia:

Table 2. Road deaths among the ethnic Malay in Malaysia for 2010-2012

	2010	2011	2012
Car	886	698	686
Motorcycle	2010	1854	2427
Pedestrian	202	165	170
Total	3098	2717	3,283

Source: MROADS (2013)

2. Objective

Messages would not reach intended audience in the absence of effective communication campaigns. An effective communication campaign, however, would not happen unless the right messages for the right target audience are channeled through the right media. Generally, the objective of this study is to understand the media in which the target audience is exposed to. Specifically, this study attempted to determine the right media channels to communicate with the most vulnerable group on the Malaysian roads, namely the Malays, and specifically the young Malay male in the rural areas.

3. Methodology

A nationwide survey involving 1133 respondents was carried out to identify the media exposure among respondents. The survey was designed to determine the most watched television channels, the most listened radio stations, the most read newspaper segments, and the most visited websites across ethnic groups. The data was collected in six different regions throughout Malaysia, covering both rural and urban population. The self-administered questionnaire was handed out to respondents through purposive sampling.

The purposive sampling technique or judgment sampling was chosen as it could deliberately allow the selection of respondents with regards to qualities they have. It is a nonrandom technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of informants. Simply put, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard 2002, Lewis & Sheppard 2006).

This was to ensure that the data were representative of the Malaysian population, in terms ethnic distribution, education, and income level, both from urban and rural areas. The first part of questionnaire was designed to gauge exposure towards the media, and hence divided under sub-category of television, radio, newspapers, and internet. The respondents can tick the media which they are normally exposed to, which can be more than one. Similarly, they were also asked on the preferred websites and also social sites such Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and blogs. The questions pertaining to demographic such as race, age, education level and income were also included.

4. Data analysis

4.1. Demographics

Data analysis on demographic revealed that racial composition obtained mirrored the actual Malaysian populations. The ethnic Malay was represented by 58 per cent, followed by the ethnic Chinese (28%), the ethnic Indian (11.2%) and other races (7.4%). Male made up for 53 per cent of respondents while female respondents were 47 per cent. As for the age groups, 34.25 per cent were in the 26-35 years of age, followed by 25.24% for those in the 16-25 age cohorts. Those aged 36-45 were represented by 21.36% while the remaining 19.15 per cent were those above 45. Both the distribution of income and education among respondents showed they were represented by a normal curve.

4.2. Media exposure and ethnics

As a multi-ethnic country with multi-lingual society, it is important to determine the choice of media among respective ethnics. While Bahasa Malaysia is the nation's official language and generally understood by all, Malaysians of different ethnic groups generally prefer their own mother tongue's language. Thus, understanding the preferred medium of communication with regards to the mother tongue would be useful in disseminating messages on road safety effectively. The study reveals that television is the most important medium of information for all the three ethnics; followed by newspapers, and radio. The internet is also making its presence felt, and has reached the indigenous people in rural areas.

4.3. Analysis on the media exposure among the Malays

Four different types of media, namely television, radio, newspapers and internet were analysed to determine the choice of communication medium among ethnic Malay. Figure 1-4 explains the preferred medium of communication among the Malays. For the television channels, the Malays prefer TV3, Astro, and RTM 1 which air most of the programmes in the Malay language. In contrast, the least favoured channels are the TV8 and NTV7, which programmes are targeted for the English and Chinese speaking audience.

For the newspaper selections, the Malays mostly preferred *Berita Harian*, *Harian Metro*, and *Utusan Malaysia*. These three Malay dailies left behind the popular English dailies such as the *The Star* and *The New Strait Times*, at the fifth and eighth place respectively.

Similarly, the Malay radio stations, namely Era and Hot are the top choices among the Malay respondents. The English radio channel only came in fifth among after four Malay language channels. However, the Malays are also very much addicted to the internet, especially Facebook and YouTube.

This analysis generally explains that the choice of media among the Malays is not confined only to those of their mother tongue language, but also English. However, they are very much inclined towards the media which use on the Malay language. A cross tabulation analysis shows that the English language are mostly preferred by the urban educated Malays; while those in rural areas, low income, and less educated Malays generally stick to the Malay media.

The internet penetration among the urban Malays is also higher than their rural counterparts.

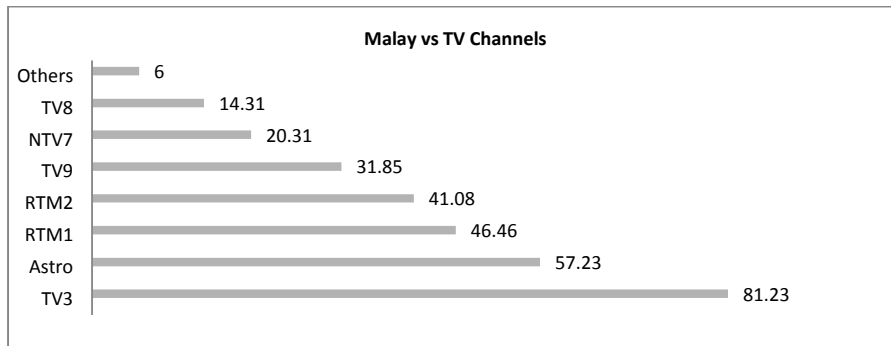


Fig.1. TV channels preferred by the Malays

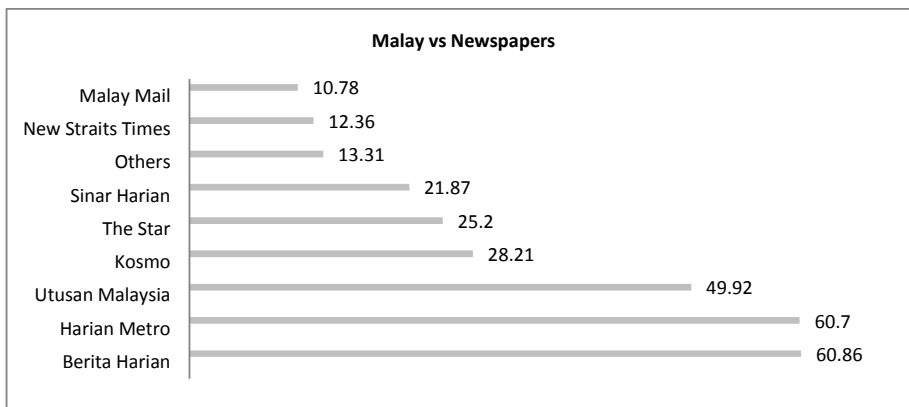


Fig.2. Newspapers preferred by the Malays

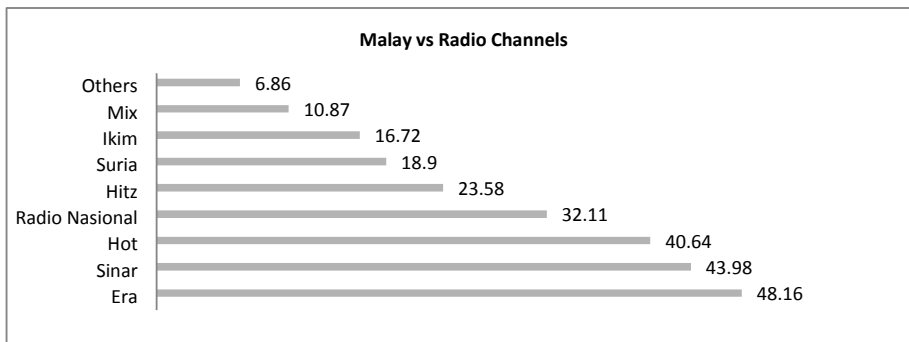


Fig.3. Radio channels preferred by the Malays

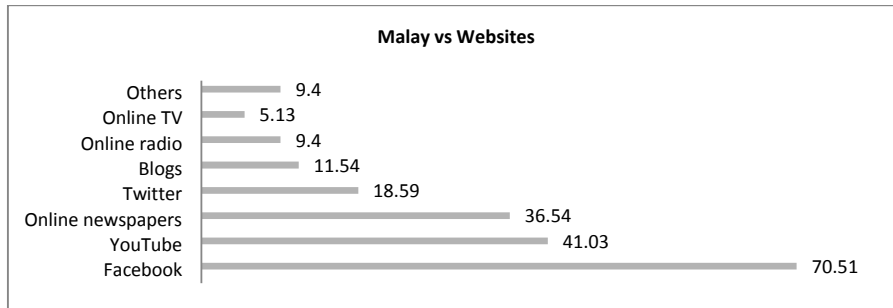


Fig.4. The websites preferred by the Malays

As a comparison, the data was also analysed for the ethnic Chinese in Malaysia. For television channels, the Chinese generally prefer satellite television Astro, NTV 7, and TV8, which the programmes are mostly in English and Chinese. The Malay language channel TV3 is only ranked fourth among the ethnic Chinese, while the government owned TV1, another Malay language channel is hardly preferred. The Chinese daily Sin Chew Jit Poh and English daily The Star are the newspapers of their choice. Similarly, the Chinese radio stations My FM and 988 are two most dominant channels, followed by an English language channel Hitz FM.

The Facebook and YouTube are obviously the most popular websites among the Chinese. In addition, the ethnics Indian are also analysed for the media of their choice. Like the Malay and Chinese, it appears that the Indians also prefer the media of their own mother tongue, whenever the option is available. The satellite TV Astro, for instance, is a favourite among the Indians as it has a number of Tamil channels. Indians also choose Tamil newspapers and radio, while social media Facebook and YouTube are their choice whenever they go online. The data was also analysed for other ethnics in Malaysia, who are made up of diverse groups of indigenous people who live in the rural areas and in Sabah and Sarawak. The survey indicates that they do share some similarities with the Malays in their medium of communication. Nevertheless, they also prefer their respective newspapers and radio channels in their mother tongue. The internet is also making inroads to their community, with 68% admitted that they do have Facebook account.

4.4. Media Exposure among Male Malay Youth in Rural Areas

The analysis zooms into this group as to enable a better understanding of media exposure; and hence, enabling an effective intervention such as road safety campaign to be designed for them. The reason being that they are mostly killed on the roads; and therefore, need to be targeted at road safety campaigns. Kopfman and Smith (1996) stated that a campaign targeted at a specific segment of a population rather than a large heterogeneous population is more likely to be successful. Analysis on the data surveyed for this group revealed that they are mostly exposed to television (97.22%), newspaper (94.44%), radio (88.99%) and the Internet (69.44%). As for the television, Astro is their number one choice, and that they prefer to watch movies, news and sports. Their viewing time is 8pm to 11pm daily.

As for the newspapers, their preferred media is Harian Metro, whereby the sports segment appeared to be the most appealing to them. For the radio channels, they prefer the Malay language Era channel with the highest listening time from 8am to 11am. As for online media, the YouTube and Facebook are their main choices, and 8% of the respondents claimed that they use the Internet for more than four hours a day.

5. Conclusion

The study provides insights on the preferred medium of communications among ethnics in Malaysia, specifically the Malays, including the young Malays male, aged between 16 and 25 in rural areas. This enables intervention programmes, such as advertising campaigns to be carried out in an effective manner as there is a greater chance that messages would reach intended audience. The difference in mother tongue languages and media preference would make it difficult for authorities to plan and disseminate information to target audience.

Therefore, the campaign implementer must firstly identify the right communication channel for the right

audience. For instance, when addressing the most vulnerable road users in Malaysia, namely the young Malay male in rural areas, the media chosen to deliver messages must not be the same with those for urban educated male or any other ethnic groups. Proper research in media exposure is very important as the selection of the right media would help disseminate the message to audience and influence the outcome of the intervention. In case of Malaysia, whereby the country is made up of various ethnics, an in-depth understanding on the medium of communication is vital as to ensure that message would reach intended audience.

While it may be complex for the media planner to come up with the right medium or channel for the right ethnic, it is generally safe to communicate in Bahasa Malaysia (primarily spoken by the Malays) as it is also understood by all ethnics. Next, the English medium deems to be important when the messages are targeted for the non-Malay speaking population. However, in case of advertising road safety messages, it best to buy a combination of newspaper space, TV and radio programmes in the respective audience mother tongue languages.

The internet should not be left out as Facebook and YouTube has been making inroads even in rural areas. This research would enable media buyers to enhance potential to effectively reach among the audience. This not only would save the money, but also get the message across effectively. With fast changing in media landscape these days, similar research should be carried out more often in order to understand the dynamic of communication landscape across the ethnic groups in Malaysia.

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