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THE INTERNET JOURNALISM DISTURB MALAYSIAN SOCIAL POLITICAL HARMONY

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Abstract

Internet journalism has been recognized to provide better efficiency on information gathering and adapting to the modernization of technology and life of our society. Dissemination of news and information is more flexible, efficient and instantaneous covering the widest possible audience across geographical barriers and providing medium for public discussion, public opinion and concerns on various aspects such as political, social and economic development. Internet journalism plays important roles in our society nowadays as the medium to influence public opinion, providing forum for discussion especially on issues of public concern, providing critical monitoring of political development, building up the intellectual environment and cultural interest of the public and setting up political agenda. However, issues arise regarding the reliability and capability of internet journalism in reporting and covering few breaking news in Malaysia, the roles of internet journalism in socio-political harmony and the development of media law to control the distribution of news through online medium. Therefore, this paper will investigate the advantages of utilizing internet journalism as a medium for disseminating news and information, their roles in shaping the social and political harmony of our country, issues regarding disturbance caused by internet journalism and the implementation of laws to control news dissemination.

Keywords: Internet Journalism, Journalist, Socio-Political Harmony, Media Laws.

INTRODUCTION

The environment of information and news production and dissemination have been evolving in significant ways alongside the advancement of communication technologies, changing the

traditional approaches of journalism on reaching broader geographical areas of the readers or society further shaping the socio-political harmony among citizen in Malaysia. The potential of internet journalism to acquire interactive approach is developing and moving forward through the set up of new trends of information distribution, building virtual community with thousands of refreshing ideas and views and influencing public opinion. In order to promote public participation and engagement on political and social aspects, researchers have been utilizing the online medium to connect with the society, announce public deliberation for problem solving plans and also political agenda, engaging people as citizens and spreading awareness, standing up for the disadvantages (Manusevitch & Walker, 2009).

Generally, information and communication technologies combining with the advancement of the internet, the profession of journalism undergoes radical changes in many ways for instance the internet offering a vast array of resources to the media professional and media journalist acquiring endless technological advancement. The internet also allowed journalist to be the conciliator force in democracy superfluous and inventing a unique type of conveying information by the term used as internet or online journalism convergence between the foundation proficiency and roles of journalist and the civic prospective of online journalism (Harris & Sandborn, 2014). A study by Bennett (2001) stated that the internet is an interactive medium that allow immediate response and provision of assistance especially in the engagement of distinctive interactions between the journalist and the readers, and also a standards-based communication medium that has been largely influence the social environment of our society and political views.

Computermediated communication or internet journalism allowed stability and effectively unlimited channel capacity in which somehow similar to printed journalism but it offers opportunities for combining media approaches in a manner that was thought impossible to be achieved. Nowadays, with the advancement of technology, various journalists are utilizing the online medium to convey news and information to the public, reaching widest possible audience and disseminate knowledge to the public instantaneously (Lombard *et al.*, 2002).

SIGNIFICANT OF THE STUDY

Findings from this study will provide detailed information on the advantages of utilizing internet journalism as a medium for disseminating news and information, their roles in shaping the social and political harmony of our country, issues regarding disturbance caused by internet journalism and the implementation of laws by the government to control news dissemination. Findings from this study allowed better understanding on the concept of internet journalism and its influence and implications towards social political harmony and further shaped the knowledge and social political environment of our country. This study also served as a baseline study for social research by providing latest insights on internet journalism phenomena and its cultureamong Malaysian citizen to aid as a guideline for social culture and politics study. Further development and evolution in journalism field is highly expected by the public in order to provide better dissemination of news, acquisition of more resources and information especially on social and political aspects.

TERMS AND DEFINITION

Journalism is one of the types of mass communication, which involves conveying news and information towards a large audience through various kind of communication medium and according to Bardoel and Deuze (2001), journalism can be define as a profession within a solid organization settings conducting particular institutional state of affairs by adopting the advancement of technology, shaping the environment for information gathering and distribution and technological conditions even enhanced the field of journalism. Other than that, journalism can be define as the proficient selection of actual news actualities to the readers by utilizing technological distribution methods allowing exchange of views and ideas through the advancement of technology (Harris & Sandborn, 2014).

Internet Journalism

Internet journalism can be considered as the process of publishing articles by utilizing the internet and due to the emergence of online news sites which produce original content for the World Wide Web, the internet further developed a new type of journalism known as the internet or online journalism. As another form of mass communication, internet journalism have been shaped by different aspect of media logic, influencing many media modalities, uniquely distinguished internet journalism from the communication logic of printed media and broadcast media. Media modalities such as the cable companies, printed media, broadcast media outlets, internet service providers, wire services and magazine companies have to adapt their production pattern of news to complement and collaborated with the internet (Deuze & Dimoudi, 2002) and this continuous process can be observed as the union of institutional media logics with the advancement of technology and evolution of internet journalism. Nowadays, the function of technology in efficiently distributing news and information has radically changed and become the essential approach in the modern journalistic field which further serve as the most necessary aspect of information gathering and information distribution process and has even become the starting point of any intellectual venture into internet journalism (Manusevitch & Walker, 2009).

Journalist

A journalist or known as the editor and writer of published materials can be define as a person who worked in a media institution either for broadcast media, printed media or online media, who is responsible to gather information, process news and disseminate knowledge or the output of information to the large audience or readers, serving their public interest especially on political issues. Journalists can also be described as the individuals employed in the newsroom or editorial board conducting one of the four main aspect in journalism which are selection of information, gathering of data or researching, writing the articles and lastly editing the content of the news, this profession are also known as the reporters, media journalist and editors working within an online newsroom in some media institution (Bardoel & Deuze, 2001).

RESEARCH QUESTION

This study is conducted to serve the purpose of providing better understanding on the concept, roles and influence of internet journalism towards social political harmony in Malaysia.

1) What are the concepts and advantages of utilizing internet journalism for information distribution?
2) To what extent internet journalism may influence social political harmony of our country?
3) What are the challenges and issues regarding social political disturbance caused by internet journalism?
4) What are the laws implemented to control distribution of news through online medium and the rationale of its development and implementation?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objectives of this study are:

1) To elaborate on the concept of internet journalism and its advantages in information distribution.
2) To determine the extent of its influence towards social political harmony of our country
3) To provide current issues and challenges regarding social political disturbance caused by internet journalism.
4) To elaborate on the development and implementation of stringent media law to control dissemination of news through internet journalism.

LITERITURE REVIEW

Internet journalism is powerful enough to influence public opinion but many researcher and scholars also strongly believe that nowadays, the audiences are actively involved in information gathering and they are not gullible or easily dominated by the media. Certain studies found out that the sole purpose of mass media is to transmit the idea of dominant groups in society to the mass of population as audience is expected to be easily dominated and can be largely influence by the media. The nationwide research conducted by David Morley premised on a postulation that it is possible to develop a structured set of relations between particular linguistic forms and particular ranges of ideological meanings (Morley, 2008) which the study further shifted to understand the variability of the relationship which involved the argument that similar linguistic forms produce different discursive functions in distinct contexts while distinctive linguistic forms allow similar discursive function and contexts of audiences. Various factors have been taken into account to further understand the audience research and to face sociological problems in the aspect of the study, factors such as race, age, sex, religion, geography, biology and class have been analyze in a systematic way to determine decoding practices in mass communication (Morley, 2008). His nationwide audience study contribute to the characterization of two perceptions which firstly, audience is always actively involved and that media content is open

to interpretation and that several number of key issues have been debated regarding audience activity and media power especially on political agendas further facilitate the macrostructures of media and society (Morley, 2008).

In addition, nationwide audience research explore the understanding on contemporary audience research focusing on outstanding issue of media communication and unanswered questions regarding the issues in which further information on active audience have been highlighted along with the understanding on transnational audiences, methodological involved on conducting audience research, conceptualization of audience characterizations and also the advantages and disadvantages of encoding-decoding model of mass media (Morley, 2008). In that study, Morley (2008) also highlighted that the audience research was conducted to further understand about the term audience in mass media and communication and instead of offering a problem-solving methodology, the nationwide research expanded unanswered questions of audience research in order to discover more knowledge that essentials to develop strong foundation of the audience research and contribute to society and modernization (Morley, 2008). His findings are deemed useful in our study in order to provide detailed elaboration regarding issues on internet journalism and its influence towards Malaysian social political harmony.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative approach can be defined as the method that developed knowledge base on constructivist perspectives for example individual experiences, meaning from social and historic occurrences in order to generate theory. This method also employ participatory perspectives that involved political or certain issue related and also collaborative or change oriented. The implementation of qualitative approach in research allowed grounded theory studies, phenomenologies, narratives, ethnographies and case studies to provide a comprehensive finding from open-ended data. This study chose to utilized content analysis as method of scrutinizing available data and only the reliable information. Content analysis can be described as a rigorous and systematic approach in analyzing published data and documents generated and obtained in the course of research of our interested field. Content analysis can also be defined as a research approach for making valid and replicable inferences from published information to the contexts of their use.

Content analysis in this study involved the development of concepts derived from available knowledge on the concept of internet journalism, its advantages, its role in shaping and influencing the social and political harmony in our country, issues related to social and political disturbance due to fallacies spread through internet journalism and the development and implementation of media law as a respond and measure to control the media. The structure of analysis and the discussion is operationalized on the basis of previous knowledge by scrutinizing written and published materials regarding the topics. Throughout the whole process, we have adapted content analysis to suit the unique requirements of our research questions and objectives (White & Marsh, 2006).

Table 1: The summary of Qualitative Content Analysis in this Study

Research Questions	Sources	Concept / Content Analyzed
What are the concepts and advantages of utilizing internet journalism for information distribution?	- Deuze and Dimoudi (2002) - Bardoel and Deuze (2001)	Definition of Internet Journalism
	- Lariscy *et al.*, 2009 - Lowrey, 2006 - Abbot, 2001	Advantages of Using Internet Journalism and Its Contribution to the Society
	- Ross (2013)	
To what extent internet journalism may influence social political harmony of our country?	- Deuze and Paulussen, 2002 - Lombard *et al.*, 2002 - Abbot, 2001	Influence of Internet Journalism Towards Social Political Harmony
What are the challenges and issues regarding social political disturbance caused by internet journalism?	- Zakaria *et al.*, 2010 - Alsagoff *et al.*, 2011)	The 1998 Political Chaos and Economic Turmoil and the Developmentof Multimedia Super Corridor
What are the laws implemented to control distribution of news through online medium and the rationale of its development and implementation?	- SKMM (2012) - Malaysian Commissioner of Law Revision (2006)	Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 and Multimedia Commission Act 1998
	- Anuar (2005) - Sani (2008)	Rationale on Its Development and Implementation

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The Concept Of Internet Journalism

Internet journalism had been recognized to provide better efficacy on information gathering and adapting to the modernization of technology and life of our society. Internet journalism play important roles in our society nowadays as dissemination of knowledge and news through this medium is considered the fastest and more flexible covering widest possible audience, signal and present new trends and ideas, building virtual community of common interest and sharing the same vision and point of views, as the medium to influence public opinion, providing forum

for discussion especially on issue of public concern, provide critical monitoring of politics and business development, building up intellectual environment and cultural interest of the public, setting up political agenda and also stand up for the disadvantage and raise awareness on the underprivileged (Deuze & Dimoudi, 2002). Moreover, Malaysian citizen are currently displaying active participation in online forum and discussion regarding political issue of Malaysian government. Internet journalism certainly plays a major role in setting up political agenda, influence public opinion and also giving the society a chance to speak their mind during forum discussion and articles commentary.

Ross (2013) stated in his study that there was increased political-party participation in citizen journalism and social media during 2013 general election (GE13) which practically initiate cyberwar between political parties and that many Malaysian journalism organizations managed to build more stable platform with wider coverage of audience through the medium of internet journalism. The internet journalism also allowed opportunities to the public for political transformation and democratization in a way that the society are able to expressed their point of views without restrictions by the government (Abbot, 2001). In addition, internet journalism also significantly influence social and political aspects of other countries for instance the breaking news of plane crash of U.S. Airways flight 1549 into the Hudson River and the tragic events of September 11, 2001, in New York City in which many online articles and also blogs publishing news on that particular events and some of the news have also lead to misunderstanding among citizen and other political agenda (Lariscy et al., 2009) which also raise issue regarding the influence of online journalism toward social political harmony of a country (Lowrey, 2006).

Influence Of Internet Journalism Towards Malaysian Social Political Harmony

Internet journalism have raised the viewpoint that it can be acquired as a vehicle for political transformation and democratization in which distribution of audio and video files, documents, email petitions, communication among people with the same vision, can be conducted through internet journalism (Abbot, 2001). The ability of internet journalism to disseminate information instantaneously provides certain level of communication medium reaching audience across geographical boundaries and become the main means of communication and source of news. Other institution, also utilized internet journalism as a medium for political parties, human rights activist, environmental protection, racial equality, marketing and electronic commerce and religious movements. Furthermore, internet journalism take role in performing necessary functions for a society that employs complex technology to control the environment by transferring the stacks of information for the specificity of the environment, and the related aspects of the variety parts of the society in response to adaptation to modernization. This medium also contributed largely on the field of social science research which allows better understanding on the very basic cause to why the information is being transferred, the outcomes of the news outbreak and how the news and information will influence our modern society (Lombard et al., 2002).

Other than that, internet journalism also leads to public deliberation which can be define as a political process through which a group of people circumspectly examines a predicament and thinking of the best solution after a period of respectful consideration (Deuze and

Paulussen, 2002) in which public discussion is important to engage citizen with the issues to construct an informed public opinions and further develop public policy. On multifaceted issues where alternatives are not apparent and a solution is required, public deliberation has been recognized to produce the best answer in a political process developing clarifications that account for conflicting significances and concerns (Deuze and Paulussen, 2002). Deliberation can also provide a legitimating purpose once policy is implemented, because the capability to display consideration of option on views and rationales will further validate a decision among those opposing the policy (Deuze & Paulussen, 2002). Thus, the primary outcomes on political interest, political knowledge and political efficiency as the implementation of deliberation can be utilized to empower citizens for further political engagement and socio-political harmony.

Issues On Internet Journalism: The 1998 Political Chaos And Economic Turmoil

As the financial crisis strikes many country during the year of 1997 to 1998 and leads to the economic turmoil in Malaysia, had forced Malaysia to resort for public debt or borrowing which requires Malaysia to seek for internal or external economic sources of money, manpower, capital and expertise. The initiation of Danamodal, Danaharta, Corporate Debt Restructuring Committee, Merger of Financial Institution and Bond Market were conducted by the government in order to triumph over the economic turmoil and public borrowing from internal sources (Central Bank and Financial and Commercial Banks) was implemented but due to insufficient sources, Malaysia was forced to resort to external borrowing which further influence public opinion on political matters of the country and the opposition taking advantages of causing riot (Zakaria et al., 2010). The financial turmoil further degraded due to the implementation of wrong policy responses, public panic, anti-market rhetoric and damaging the balance   sheets of corporate sectors and banks thus causing political chaos and affected the society. Conversely, many studies have applauded the effort of government to remedy the financial crisis and the method enforced and concept of Mahathiriskonomisme by the former prime minister is found to be fairly rewarding and effective (Zakaria et al., 2010).

The financial crisis that affect Malaysia in the year 1997-1998 have bring along political instability and friction between former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim in which the deputy minister was sacked from his position in the parliament due to his point of view on current economic policy and the freedom of politics world which is contradict with the point of view of the former prime minister (Zakaria et al., 2010). Moreover, the financial crises have caused the resignation of Malaysian central bank's governor and his deputy due to the distinctions in opinion regarding Malaysian monetary policy and that the imposition of internal security law to Anwar Ibrahim for alleged crime of homosexual acts have resulted in political chaos and rallies on the streets especially by Anwar's supporters demanded resignation of the former prime minister (Zakaria et al., 2010). As an attempt to reduce the huge impact of financial crisis and political chaos, the government stabilize the economy by imposing currency restrictions, implement regulations on foreign stock investors and halting currency trading and further multiplying the effort to gain public confidence by controlling malicious news that may cause harm towards the government by enforcing media law and multimedia act (Zakaria et al., 2010). There are an influx of interest and awareness on the significant of new multimedia technologies and communication medium

and former Prime Minister of Malaysia build a Multimedia Super Corridor in concordance to the increase interest on publishing of news portals and blogs and other form of internet journals and that Malaysia has been known to have the most sophisticated multimedi and communication projects with the development of Multimedia Super Corridor. The purpose of developing such project is to promote and organize the national policy towards the era of digitalization in which Malaysia has become one of the top developing countries in this globalization era to have policies under digitalization, privatization, deregulation and liberalization (Alsagoff et al., 2011).

Implementation Of Laws To Control Internet Journalism And Its Rationale

Issues regarding media freedom are closely related to the development and implementation of media rules and regulations. One may think that freedom in publishing news through the channel of printing media, broadcasting media and the internet allow dissemination of true information and that the public deserve to know everything that they are interested to know and that requires the journalist to gather information and distribute to the large audience. For instance, Malaysian constitution had developed several legislature and regulations regarding the freedom of media for instance the Printing Presses and Publications Act, Sedition Act, Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission Act, Communication and Multimedia Act, Broadcasting Act, Control of Imported Publication Act, FINAS Act and BERNAMA Act (Anuar 2005; Sani 2008) with the purpose of controlling the input and output of the media disseminate information to the public which further facilitate the perpetuation of myths. In the shed of light on internet journalism, we will only elaborate on the regulation related to internet journalism which is Communications and Multimedia Act 1998.

Communication & Multimedia Act 1998

Communication Act 1998 had been established as the primary regulatory reference for practicing information distribution followed by the governance of Communication and Multimedia Act 1998. The purpose of implementing the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 and Multimedia Commission Act 1998 is mainly to promote national policy objectives for the communications and multimedia industry, to establish a licensing and regulatory framework in support of national policy objectives for the communications and multimedia industry, to establish the powers and functions for the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission and to establish the powers and procedures for the administration of this Act (Malaysian Commissioner of Law Revision, 2006). The implementation of Communication and Multimedia Act 1998 strongly stated that the Ministry of Energy, Communication and Multimedia is fully liable for regulating the multimedia and broadcasting industry (Alsagoff et al., 2011).

The development of Communication and Multimedia Act 1998 has resulted in the construction of Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) which mainly operate to regulate the multimedia acts and to uphold communication and multimedia objectives for the government's national policy. This commission has the power to enforce the stipulations of the communications and multimedia law, to build a civil society by nurturing

local content and culture, to promote safe and secure network, to advise Malaysian Minister, regulate and supervise on any matters regarding national policy objectives for communication and multimedia purposes, to promote the development and encourage self-regulation of the communications and multimedia industry, to maintain the integrity of licensed media institutions to operate under multimedia act and to recommend reforms to the communications and multimedia law in a case which found appropriate for change (SKMM, 2012).

Related Cases Regarding Communication & Multimedia Act 1998

In 2009, the MCMC had warned Malaysiakini to discard the footage of controversial cowhead protest and two provocative videos from the website as it is offensive to some race and may disturb national security and social political harmony, under Section 211/233 of Communication and Multimedia Act 1998 and this media laws have been enforced as a show of force and strict implementation of developed policies in order to reduce any act of defamation that may cause riots and chaos in the country. Other than that, in another case that resulted in the enforcement of this law was an acts of posting sensitive online comments through internet journalism websites, insulting the Sultan of Perak, one individual that pleaded guilty had been charged with RM 10,000 fine while five other individuals were waiting for trials in jurisdictional court.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the internet journalism had been proven to be more flexible, accessible and instantaneous on distributing news and information for widest possible audience across geographical barriers. The advantages of internet journalism such as providing public discussions influence public opinions and allow medium for public concerns along with building up virtual community with common interest especially on social and political views have encouraged participation of the citizen towards many aspects of life. The extent of internet journalism in influencing social political agenda have been studied and findings showed that internet journalism have raised the viewpoint that it can be acquired as a vehicle for political transformation and democratization in which distribution of audio and video files, documents, email petitions, communication among people with the same vision, can be conducted through internet journalism.

In order to control the utilization on internet journalism, Malaysian constitution have developed Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 to control the input and output of the media disseminate information to the public. In concordance to the increase interest on publishing of news portals and blogs and other form of internet journals former Prime Minister of Malaysia build a Multimedia Super Corridor to promote and organize the national policy towards the era of digitalization in which Malaysia has become one of the top developing countries in this globalization era to have policies under digitalization, privatization, deregulation and liberalization. Therefore, further development and evolution in journalism field is highly expected by the public in order to provide better dissemination of news, acquisition of more resources and information. Findings from this study allowed better understanding on the concept of internet journalism and its influence and implications towards

social political harmony and further shaped the knowledge and social political environment of our country. This study also served as a baseline study for social research by providing latest insights on internet journalism phenomena and its culture among Malaysian citizen to aid as a guideline for social culture and politics study.

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