

CREDIBILITY OF TELEVISION, NEWSPAPER AND INTERNET WITH POPULAR VOTES OF BARISAN NATIONAL DURING ELECTIONS BY RACE

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ABSTRACT

Researchers have been concerned with media credibility on several counts. One is the concern of media effects on the audience. The reasoning is that the more credible the media, the more effects the media are said to have on the audience. Media credibility is the degree of believability of the source of information by the audience. This article presents a longitudinal study on media credibility and relates the concept of media credibility to popular votes during the general Malaysian elections. This article also traces the degree of credibility of three major media, newspaper and television, and the Internet. Specifically the article has two main objectives, namely, to gauge the level of media credibility over a period of time, and to analyze the changing credibility level of specific media to popular votes during the general elections.

Keywords: *information, media credibility, general election, vote, Malaysia*

INTRODUCTION

Studies on source and channel credibility have attracted the attention of scholars over the past two decades. Scholars were interested to understand how credibility was conceptualized, measured and how they were then related to other variables of interest, such as effects on the audience and an increase in knowledge.

Electronic and print media, as sources of communication, play a vital role in disseminating information. Media are important in modern society. They provide information and entertainment to members in society. As more people obtain their information on several issues from the mass media, the media must maintain their credibility or risk losing the confidence of the audience. The basic assumption of studying source credibility is that the credibility of a source influences the effects of the message it presents (Lee 1978). Therefore, the audience media exposure and information seeking habits are guided by their perceived media credibility.

Media credibility is the degree of believability of the source of information as perceived by the audience. Credibility implies the quality of a report written or broadcasted. A number of factors contribute to making a source or channel “credible”, namely, objectivity, accessibility, freedom to report, currency of the report, and relative expertise. These factors should be considered when assessing the credibility of information received from media sources.

Many studies on credibility have been done by scholars in the West (Kioussis 2001; Greenberg 1966) but scholars and practitioners in developing societies have not given due attention in studying credibility of media and source (Oorjitham 2000) This paper aims to investigate the degree of credibility Malaysians have on their media. In several studies conducted over the past two elections, it was found that Malaysians have some amount of incredulity over the media. The degree of what they perceived of their media credibility has changed over the years. The other objective of this study is to relate the findings on credibility with the results obtained during the general elections in an effort to understand the influence of the media during elections.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

The objective of this article is to examine the relationship between media credibility and popular votes during elections. Specifically, the article has two main objectives, namely, to gauge the level of media credibility over a period of study, and to analyze the changing credibility level of the specific media to popular votes during general elections. It is a study to understand how people perceive credibility of the media, and how this can be related to the level of popular votes of political parties. Both electronic and print media play an important role in disseminating information, but political parties also say that they also provide the information, as the media do not penetrate every household in the country. The findings will explain the changing evaluation of credibility on the newspaper and television from the time elections were held in 1990 up to the recent elections in 2004. In addition, the changing evaluation of Internet credibility is looked into after the introduction of Internet in the nation, starting from the 1999 election.

MEDIA CREDIBILITY

Media credibility has been the issue of concern among many scholars for a number of reasons. The media institution is an important institution in society. People depend on the media to obtain information from which sources they can then make decisions and judgments. Information from the media is also used to augment information obtained from interpersonal sources. During crisis people are ever dependent on the media for information, seeking out the latest for their own behavioral intent. Studies during elections illustrate the dependence of voters on the media to help them make their own choice in the selection of candidates or parties.

People’s dependence on the media are conditional, and one of the conditions being the trust they have on the media. If people perceive the media to be spreading untruths, then gradually their trust in the media would fall and people would withdraw from seeking information from the media. Hence, media owners and

practitioners are conscious of audience judgment on their performance. Trust can be obtained on a number of platforms, one being the believability people have on the media and second is the assessment they make of reports contained in the media.

Media have to contend with several concerns over the past few years. Several studies have reported the majority of the public put little faith in the media with little distinction being made between newspaper and television credibility (Burgoon, Burgoon and Wilkinson 1981). Moreover, many feel that the news they obtain from the press is rather biased.

There has always been a keen debate over whether people trust the newspapers more than television. Results of studies over the past two decades have been mixed, with some studies suggesting people having more trust in television while others giving evidence that people trust the newspapers more than they trust television. A recent study, however, suggested that newspaper credibility far exceeded television credibility (Kiousis 2001). On the other hand, there are also studies that have found television to be more credible than either the newspapers or radio. Westley and Severin (1964) had suggested that the credibility assigned to a medium is not uniform but was dependent on the individual's preference for and use of the medium.

Television news and public affairs viewing have been shown to be positively associated with political interest, knowledge and opinion holding (Atkin and Gantz 1978). However, when subjects were compared in terms of being reliant on television or newspapers (Clarke and Fredin 1978), newspaper use was more strongly associated with political knowledge and with discriminating perceptions about politics. Apparently, newspapers provide more political information than television and the information is learned better and held longer by readers than by TV viewers (Miro 1983). McLeod, Bybee and Durval (1979) found that newspaper reading was a primary factor in generating knowledge about political issues and the candidate issue positions during a political campaign.

A survey of a sample of Wisconsin adults conducted in late 1961 and early 1962 by the Wisconsin Survey Laboratory found that 927 out of 1,057 respondents responded adequately to the credibility question (Westley and Severin 1964). The results generally showed a tendency for persons of high socioeconomic status to give higher credibility to the newspaper and to provide a lower credibility to television.

On the contrary, a study conducted in Grand Rapids, Michigan with a systematic sample of 428 respondents drawn from the telephone directory (Reagan and Zenaty 1979) found that out of the 266 adults interviewed, 80% used both the daily newspaper and a local TV station as a regular source of news. However, they regarded television as more believable and truthful than newspapers in presenting news (Reagan and Zenaty 1979).

A survey by Scripps Howard News Service and Scripps Survey Research Center at the Ohio University School of Journalism showed that less than 15% of all Americans thought newspapers as very reliable (Jaben 1999). Little more than half thought newspapers and television as fair in their reporting, while three-quarters or more deemed reporters were biased, inaccurate, and prying. Simultaneously, more than 40% had lost at least some faith in the media.

An effort to define rating changes of the media over the past decade was made by "Respect Ratings". It provided a series of data designed to compare the highest

scores- “very favorable” (1985) and “Grade A” (1995) among newspapers, network TV news and local TV news (Hess 1995). Results showed that in 1985 all three types of news presentations had about the same percentage of enthusiasts with local TV programmes leading in every demographic category except for college graduates and the 18-29 age group, while local TV and newspapers were tied among high-income people. Preference for local TV news was most pronounced among African Americans, senior citizens, low-income people, Southerners and Democrats (Hess 1995).

Maier (2004) indicated that since 1985, believability of the daily newspaper had fallen by a quarter, from 80% in 1985 to 59% in 2002 based on a summary of readings, including data gathered by the Pew Research Center. The study also pointed out that there had been a rapid decline in newspaper readership since the 1980s, with slightly more than half of Americans (54%), reading a newspaper during the week. Indeed, the three television network news divisions and local news also saw significant drops from 1985, when they were all above 80 per cent for believability.

The Pew Center for Civic Journalism launched a study to examine the perceived lack of fairness in the media (Marks 1997). In 1989, 34% of Americans thought that the press dealt fairly with all sides when reporting on political and social issues. The number had since dwindled down to 27%, with 67% believing that the media tended to favor a position. Americans also believed that the press too often intruded into the private lives of people and that the coverage on the personal and ethical behavior of political leaders was excessive. Such concerns came amidst an increasing lack of trust in the media’s reliability. In 1985, 55% of the Americans believed that the media got their facts straight most of the time but by 1999, that was down to 37%.

Another area of studying credibility of media is currently focused on the Internet. Studies on the credibility of the Internet have been considered significant as more people are seeking information from it (Flanagin and Metzger 2000). And in some countries, the use of the Internet exceeds television use. Results on the credibility of the Internet have been mixed, with some studies indicating that the credibility of the Internet has been higher than established traditional media, that is, television, radio, and newspapers (Johnson and Kaye 2002), while another series of studies found Internet credibility to be lower than the established traditional media. A concept called “webelievability” was introduced. “Webelievability” is defined as the degree to which people judge online information as credible (Johnson and Kaye 2002: 619). Reliance on the established traditional media was also found to have made people to have online credibility (Johnson and Kaye 2002). Hence, people who made use of the established traditional media for daily use were in a better position to evaluate the credibility of the Internet, with respondents saying that there were hardly any checking made on claims on the Internet. Another study placed the situation differently with people having more trust on the Internet than on television (Kioussis 2001). Burbules (2001) outlined three conditions pertaining to credibility from the Internet context. First, Internet relates to the problem of sheer volume in which the amount of information or sources is overwhelming. Second, the Internet is considered as a self-sustaining reference system since other information through the Websites is available in order to be more credible. Third, its speed of growth and rate of dispersion in relation to information circulation is within split seconds. These three conditions somehow make people to regard the Internet as credible in

finding any information or sources, including election information. Web users have more trust in their favourite medium than the traditional media (Bucy 2003).

In Malaysia, not many studies have been conducted on how people perceive the credibility of the media (Oorjitham 2000). In the 1970s, Grenfell once noted that if Malaysians did not believe the electronic media, they would switch off their television sets. There was hardly any continuation done after the study. Hardly any studies exist in other developing countries for comparisons to be made. A pertinent concern is the relationship of media and Internet use with elections that forms the relevance of this paper.

CONSTITUENTS OF CREDIBILITY

What constitutes credibility? Past studies have claimed that credibility of a medium is strongly linked to the daily use of the medium (Johnson and Kaye 2002). The more audience members use a particular medium the more likely they would deem the medium to be credible. Hence, television has been rated as more credible than newspapers because more people rely on the electronic medium than the print medium.

The findings by Johnson and Kaye (2002) added to the reservoir of knowledge when they found that users of established traditional media were the best predictors of online credibility rather than demographic or other variables. Earlier studies have found age to be a good predictor of credibility, that the younger group would have more trust in the media than their elders (Bucy 2003). Credibility of the Internet as a source of information was found to be as high as radio, magazines and television but not as high as newspaper credibility (Flanagin and Metzger 2000).

There are various indicators of media credibility. Some have used five indicators: how factual is the medium, the extent to which it is motivated by money, whether it invades people's privacy, what is its concern for the community, and whether it can be trusted (Kioussis 2001; Johnson and Kaye 1998; Gaziano & McGrath 1986). Bucy (2003) operationalised credibility of the medium to mean believability, fairness, accuracy, informativeness, and in-depthness measured, using a 7-point scale (1=not at all, 7=very trustworthy). Flanagin and Metzger (2000) used five dimensions for their Internet information credibility study, namely, believability, accuracy, trustworthiness, bias and completeness. Burbules (2001) used four dimensions of credibility, namely, the judgment of the credibility, timeliness, comprehensiveness, and reliance on value consideration.

This study used a single item to measure credibility of media. Respondents were asked to evaluate the extent to which they agree on a statement that the respective media were trustworthy, on a four point scale with 1 being not very trustworthy and 4 being very trustworthy. The media asked about were on the newspapers, radio, television, and the Internet. However, for this paper, only three types used namely newspaper, television, and Internet are considered for analysis and discussion.

POPULAR ELECTION

Elections are means for citizens to express and exercise their rights in installing their own form of government. Malaysians have been going to the polls since elections were held in 1959, with the 11th elections being held in 2004. Many books have

been written on Malaysian politics, elections and by-elections (Means 1991; Hwang 2003), stressing communalism, issues, leadership and parties being dominant over the years. The role of media during elections has been studied either in the form of content analyzing the media or relating the voters use of the media with their choice of party. This study would relate the role of the media with the elections results from 1990 to 2004. An analysis would be made to relate popular votes and media credibility.

MEDIA AND ELECTION

Malaysians prefer watching television and reading the newspapers but do not like listening to the radio as much. It is a similar media scenario in many developed and developing countries where television is the most favourite medium over the other media. Television enters into the household and becomes a household box for family members to watch their entertainment programmes and be immersed with the news.

Malaysians are very well exposed to electronic and printed media. Over 90% of Malaysians households have television and the majority of adult Malaysians watch television daily. In 2001, 84% of Malaysians watched television and it was 82% in 2002 (*Media Guide* 2003). A total of 74% and 72% of Malaysians listened to the radio in 2001 and 2003, respectively. A total of 50% and 51% read newspapers for the same period. In April 2004, the study found that 62% Malaysians watched television daily, 46% read newspapers and 24% listened to the radio everyday. Indeed, the dominant media in Malaysia were strongly supportive of Barisan Nasional, based on the studies conducted in 1990, 1995 and 1999 elections (Idid 2004) supporting the findings that the contents of the mainstream media were favorable toward Barisan Nasional.

Elections are closely related to media performance as evidenced in several studies in the West. People depend on the media for information to make decisions on their choice of party. Media-Agenda studies highlight the importance of media setting the agenda for the electors to consider while public opinion studies provide empirical evidence of issues that are of concern to the general population (crime, environment). Those studies are to be taken seriously by political parties if they want to win the elections.

In Malaysia several studies have found the influence of the media to be mixed, in terms of the issues that are highlighted for the voters to consider. In the 1990 elections, issues raised by the media were acceptable to some sectors of the population but in 2004 the media issues became significantly related to the public issues (Idid, forthcoming)

Apart from the issues that are to be discussed, it is also pertinent to raise the issue of media credibility. To what extent are the media credible? Electoral process and media coverage complement each other. However, the credibility of the media in disseminating information and in acting as sources of information about the elections are issue to be discussed.

Pitts (2004) stressed the value of trust of the media as media needs to win back the public trust as some people believe that the media are biased. Thus, to be trusted, the media must always present both sides of every story. The values that

readers bring to the table, of course, shape their perceptions of what is news and what is not.

On the other hand, media access is one of the important avenues for political parties and candidates to reach voters. The media also need the cooperation of political parties and candidates to use them as news for the interest of voters. The issues that were raised during elections by political parties and the candidates involved are important ingredients for media coverage. As such, during election campaigns, the press is active in providing coverage of parties and political personalities. In providing such coverage, they help in the electoral process of the country.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

It was later in the 1980s that some questions were raised over the issue of media credibility. Studies were done in 1990, 1995 and 1999 at the time when Malaysians were going to the polls. The respondents were asked their perception of the media. It was assumed that the media played an important role in disseminating information to the people to enable them to make up their minds when voting. Data were also collected on the amount of coverage given by the media to the respective political parties during the election campaigns. While media credibility was measured through survey research, the amount of votes obtained was provided by the official results of the Election Commission for the general elections in 1990, 1995, 1999, and 2004. The ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition got the greatest share of votes in 1990, 1995, 1999, and 2004 but met with stiff opposition in 1990 and in 1999.

However, surveys on the credibility of the local media gave a surprising result (Oorjitham 2000). Respondents selected were registered voters aged 21 and above. They were selected through quota sampling throughout Peninsula Malaysia. Care was taken to obtain a proportionate sample of respondents to reflect the gender composition, the racial composition, and the age composition of the voters in the country. The respondents were interviewed face-to-face, each interview lasting about 30 to 40 minutes. Numerous questions were asked ranging from their perception of party, candidates, intention to vote, issues to media use, types of media used, and credibility of the media.

The respondents were asked what they perceived of their media in terms of credibility based on a four-point scale. However, this report considers low credibility and high credibility by posing the question as whether the media can be believed or not. The scale of 1 indicates "do not believe at all" and 2 indicates "do not believe" are classified as low credibility while 3 indicating "believe" and 4 indicating "believe totally" are combined to form high credibility. They were interviewed a month before the elections and one month after the elections. Both the answers of the respondents for the two occasions were combined.

THE CHANGING NEWSPAPER, TV AND INTERNET CREDIBILITY IN MALAYSIA

The respondents in the 1990 study were made up of 2847 Malaysians (N1=1384, N2=1463) while the respondents for the 1995 study comprised of 1882 (N1=903,

N2=979), and the total respondents for the 1999 study comprised of 3512 (N1=1969 and N2=1543). The total respondents interviewed for the 2004 study were 2651 (N1=651 and N2=1140).

Table 1 shows the changing degree of credibility of Malaysian newspapers. Results show that there was an increase of 4% in the newspaper credibility in 1990, that is, from about 86% to about 90% in 1995. However, there was a decrease of about 15% in the subsequent five-year period (1999). On the contrary, in 2004 (79%) there was an increase of 4% from the previous election (1999), picking up the momentum of trust.

A similar trend was seen for TV credibility (Table 2). There was a slight increase of 5% from 1990 (88%) to 1995 (93%), followed by a plunge of 17% in the subsequent period of 1999 (76%), but increased slightly by 4% in 2004 (80%). Figures obtained from the four elections indicated an increase in the credibility of the media from 1990 to 1995, then a decrease, followed by an increase of media credibility in the election year of 2004. When broken down into newspaper and television, the pattern for both the media was similar to the general media credibility as a whole.

Table 1:
Changing degree of newspaper credibility

Believability	High (%)	Low (%)	Total (N)
1990			
N1	87.1	12.9	1384
N2	84.8	15.2	1463
Total	85.9	14.1	2847
1995			
N1	92.0	8.0	903
N2	88.8	11.2	979
Total	90.3	9.7	1882
1999			
N1	74.5	25.5	1969
N2	75.8	24.2	1543
Total	75.1	24.9	3512
2004			
N1	80.0	20.0	651
N2	79.9	20.1	1140
Total	80.0	20.0	2651

High—believe and believe totally; Low — do not believe at all and do not believe

**Table 2:
Changing degree of TV credibility**

Believability	High (%)	Low (%)	Total (N)
1990			
N1	88.8	11.2	1384
N2	87.7	12.3	1463
Total	88.2	11.8	2847
1995			
N1	95.6	4.4	903
N2	89.6	10.4	979
Total	92.5	7.5	1882
1999			
N1	74.6	25.4	1969
N2	77.5	22.5	1543
Total	75.9	24.1	3512
2004			
N1	80.0	20.0	651
N2	80.0	20.0	1140
Total	80.0	20.0	2651

High—believe and believe totally; Low — do not believe at all and do not believe

Analysis of the results by race showed that Malay respondents believed less in the two media compared to 10 years ago (Table 3 and Table 4). The height of the degree of believability was in 1995 and in 2004. Similarly, the Chinese also indicated a decrease in their degree of believability for both the newspaper and the TV for the same period of time. However, the Indians are rather stable in their degree of their believability towards the newspapers and TV.

**Table 3:
Changing newspaper credibility by race**

Believability	High			Low		Total (N)
	N1	N2	Sub-total	N1	N2	
1990						
Malay (N1=633, N2=782)	86.7	84.5	85.5	13.3	15.5	1415
Chinese (N1=530, N2=497)	88.5	90.3	89.4	11.5	9.7	1027
Indian (N1=99, N2=109)	83.8	87.2	85.6	16.2	12.8	208

1995						
Malay (N1=462, N2=479)	91.6	87.5	89.6	8.4	12.5	918
Chinese (N1=333, N2=456)	94.0	91.0	92.3	6.0	9.0	789
Indian (N1=108, N2=44)	88.0	79.5	85.7	12.0	20.5	152
1999						
Malay (N1=1007, N2=327)	70.3	74.6	71.4	29.7	25.4	1334
Chinese (N1=582, N2=79)	78.7	87.3	79.8	21.3	12.7	661
Indian (N1=185, N2=24)	83.8	95.8	85.7	16.2	4.2	209
2004						
Malay (N1=1035, N2=805)	54.4	76.3	65.8	45.6	23.7	1840
Chinese (N1=367, N2=273)	60.5	89.7	75.8	39.5	10.3	640
Indian (N1=94, N2=62)	68.1	82.3	74.4	31.9	17.8	156

High—believe and believe totally; Low—do not believe at all and do not believe

**Table 4:
Changing TV credibility by race**

Believability	High			Low		Total (N)
	N1	N2	Sub-total	N1	N2	
1990						
Malay (N1=636, N2=783)	89.3	86.5	87.8	10.7	13.5	1419
Chinese (N1=539, N2=495)	87.0	88.3	87.6	13.0	11.7	1034
Indian (N1=100, N2=111)	90.0	89.2	89.6	10.0	10.8	211
1995						
Malay (N1=462, N2=479)	95.1	89.8	92.5	4.9	10.2	941
Chinese (N1=333, N2=456)	96.7	90.8	93.4	3.3	9.2	789
Indian (N1=108, N2=44)	94.4	81.8	91.1	5.6	18.2	152

1999

Malay (N1=1008, N2=327)	70.3	75.5	71.6	29.7	24.5	1335
Chinese (N1=564, N2=80)	78.4	85.0	79.3	21.6	15.0	644
Indian (N1=186, N2=25)	86.0	96.0	87.3	12.5	4.0	211

2004

Malay (N1=1035, N2=805)	54.4	74.9	65.0	45.6	25.1	1840
Chinese (N1=367, N2=273)	60.5	90.5	76.3	39.5	9.6	640
Indian (N1=94, N2=62)	68.1	83.8	75.1	31.9	16.1	156

High—believe and believe totally, Low—do not believe at all and do not believe

Tables 1 to 4 above explained the credibility of newspaper and TV over a 20-year period, and this was then analyzed from the vantage point of race.

Figure 1 below shows the results of popular votes for BN from 1990 to 2004. The popular votes for BN was about 53% in 1990, in 12% to 65% in 1995, dropped 8% to 57% in 1999, and up again by 7% to 64% in 2004. The results show an increase in percentage from 1990-1995 but later in 1999, BN popularity soared. However, later on there was an increase in the popular votes obtained by BN for the year 2004 election.

Figure 1:
Popular votes of Barisan Nasional (1990 – 2004)

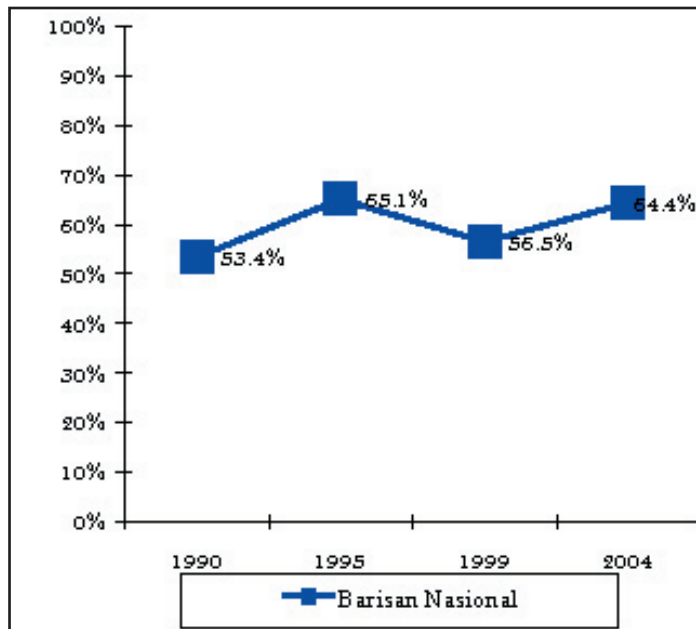
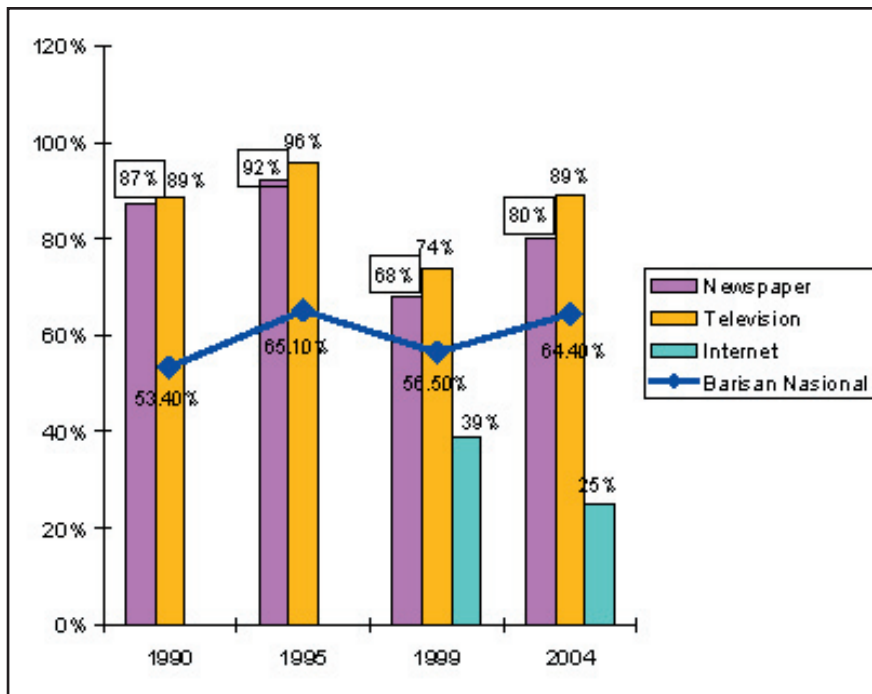


Figure 2 shows the popular votes of BN and the believability towards newspaper, television, and the Internet in Malaysia. The results in this finding showed that in 1990 the believability towards television (89%) was higher than newspaper (87%) and in 1995 the situation still did not change, in which believability for television was about 96% and newspaper 92%. However, in 1999 there was a drop in the level of believability towards the media although television (74%) was still higher than newspaper (68%). In 2004, believability towards television and newspaper increased up to 89% for television and 80% for newspaper.

Internet believability study was conducted as of 1999 election. The results showed that when the BN popular votes were critical in 1999, Internet believability went up the ladder (39%). Then in 2004, the reverse occurred, that is, with an increase in the BN popular votes, there is a decrease in the Internet believability (25%). Thus, there exists a negative relationship between BN popular votes and Internet believability.

Figure 2 also shows that as the popular votes for BN went up there was a corresponding increase in the credibility of the media (newspaper and TV), but when the credibility of the media (newspaper and TV) dipped, there was also a decrease in the popular votes obtained by BN. Therefore, there is a positive relation between established media credibility (newspaper and TV) and popular election of BN.

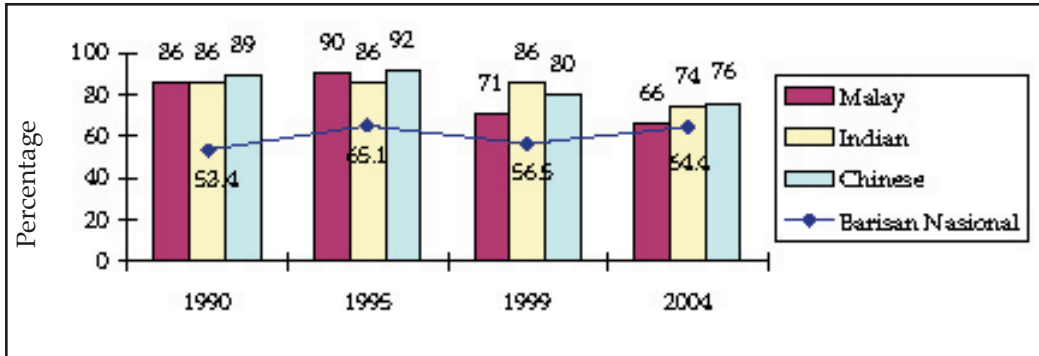
Figure 2:
Popular votes of BN and credibility of newspaper, television and Internet



Figures 3 to Figure 5 below show the results of the popular votes of BN and the credibility of television, newspaper and Internet according to race. Specifically, Figure 3 shows popular votes of BN and credibility of newspaper among races;

Figure 4 presents popular votes of BN and credibility of television among races; while Figure 5 presents popular votes of BN and credibility of Internet among races

Figure 3:
Popular votes of BN and credibility of newspaper among race



The Malays in 1990 and in 1999 believed substantially in newspapers, in which in 1990 the percentage of newspaper believability was 86%. In 1995, newspaper believability was 90% but in 1999, it was 71% for newspaper. However, the situation worsens in 2004, when the Malays believed less in the newspaper (66%). Indians, on the other hand, believed in newspapers consistently from 1990 through 1999 elections, with 89% believability rate. However, in 2004 they tended to believe less in the newspaper, a drop of 12%. The decrease in percentage also leads to a slight increase in votes for BN in that year.

Figure 3 also shows the result of Chinese towards the popular votes of BN and credibility of newspapers. Their believability of newspaper increased from 1990 (89%) by 3% in 1995 (92%) but they believed slight less in newspaper from 1999 (80%) and in 2004, their believability decreased by 4%. The Malays believability in television in 1990 (88%) increased by 5% in 1995, where TV credibility was 93% (Figure 4). However, the believability in 1999 was only 72%. The situation worsens in 2004 when the Malays believability for TV was only 65%.

Figure 4:
Popular votes of BN and credibility of television among race

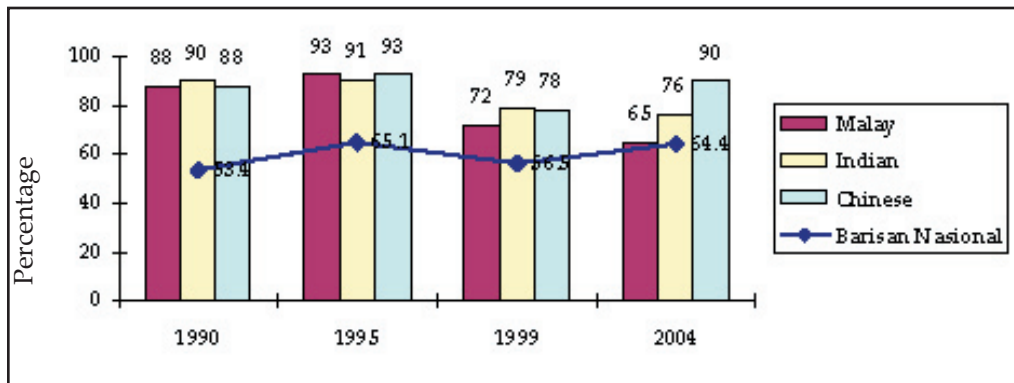
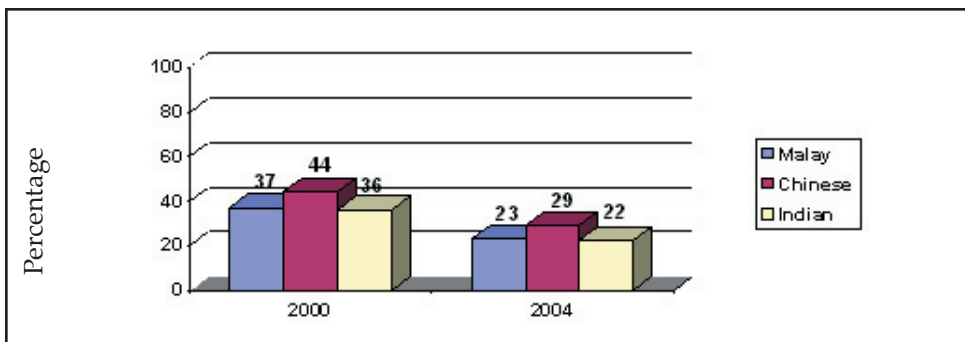


Figure 4 also shows the result of the Indians regarding the popular votes of BN and the believability towards TV. Indian believability in TV is rather consistent over the years except for 1999 where believability went down to 79%. The Chinese, on the other hand, are rather high in their believability in TV with 88% in 1990, 93% in 1995 and 90% in 2004. The lowest is in 1999 where the believability was only 78%. However, the believability is in line with the popular votes of BN.

Figure 5 presents the believability of Internet as of 1999 election. The Chinese has the highest believability in Internet compared to the Malays and the Indians. Nonetheless, the believability in Internet is still low compared to newspaper and TV across races.

**Figure 5:
Popular votes of BN and credibility of Internet among races**



CONCLUSION

The study observed the credibility that Malaysians associated with newspapers and television over a 20-year period, and the Internet since 1999. The period marked a rise and a decline in the trust that Malaysians had over the two forms of media, the established mass media (newspaper and TV) and the new communication technology (Internet). There was a rise in the trust for television and newspaper for 1990 and 1995, but there was a dip in 1999. When analysed by race, a similar pattern was observed for the credibility of newspaper and TV. The trust the Malays, Chinese and Indians had for television and newspapers were similar to the overall general population election trend.

There was a rise and a decline in terms of popular support for BN over the four elections beginning from 1990 to 2004. It was high in 1995 and again in 2004, but there was a decline for the election 1999.

When the figures for media credibility were plotted with the popular votes of BN in 1990, 1995, 1999 and 2004, there was a correlation between the two. It could be deduced that when the voters had confidence in the media they sought information that they would rely upon. It is not implied that media credibility caused the rise in popular votes, but it is suggested that there is a correlation between media credibility and popular votes obtained by BN. Perhaps the voters expressed media trust in terms of their trust in the media institution, knowing that media are closely linked to personalities associated with BN. What we would be getting in the future is that

any findings on media credibility would suggest some patterns of popular votes that BN would be getting in the elections.

The study somewhat touched on the political and media scenario in Malaysia and emphasized that voters relied on the media to provide them with information.

However, Internet is a new medium that most Malaysians are still skeptical about, and its credibility is still low compared to the established media, the newspaper and TV.

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