

Managing Political Information: A Malaysian Perspective

*Jamilah Ahmad**

Abstract

Dalam perkembangan demokratisasi dan ekspresi hak hak sipil dan politik warga negara Malaysia, pola kontrol yang dikembangkan rezim penguasa (Barisan Nasional) dalam 50 tahun terakhir di media massa mulai menuai resistensi dan cenderung tidak efektif. Publik Malaysia menghendaki pemerintah Malaysia mulai mengubah pola manajemen informasi politik. Disamping itu, media massa sendiri diharapkan mampu berperan lebih besar sebagai agen intermediary dalam mendorong proses transparansi dan akuntabilitas kebijakan pemerintah. Artikel ini menunjukkan keterbukaan informasi publik merupakan prasyarat demokrasi politik untuk membantu pemerintah Malaysia dalam meminimalisasi mis-manajemen tata kelola pemerintahan terutama dalam kebijakan pembiayaan dan pengelolaan sumber daya.

Keywords:

Media regulation; management political information, transparency; accountability.

Introduction

Managing information means to manage the collection and distribution of information from one or more sources to segmented

* *Jamilah Ahmad* is a lecturer in School of Communication, University Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia. She can be contacted at email jahmad@usm.my

audiences which have the right to that information. Management of information also means the organization empowers the control over the messages structure, processing and *delivery*. The set of messages can also be defined as ‘an agenda *setting*’ information that was *delivered* to meet organization agenda to inform, influence, persuade or gain support.

Hence, be it political, social or economic, managing information to segment or ‘preferred *audiences*’ may have tendency or positivity or negativity impact of the messages *delivered* (Jamilah, 2008). As an example, Malaysian government concept of ‘1 Malaysia’ (One Malaysia) by the current Prime Minister, Dato’ Seri Najib Tun Razak was mooted because of high racial tension on race issues among Malaysian Chinese, Indian and Malay. The concept which can be perceived as an ideology was package to Malaysian *audiences* and *well* received by all races in Malaysia.

Similarly, such concept was often used by any ruling party or government in Malaysia or abroad to convey their intention and *policy*. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia has done tremendous development in Malaysia during his 22 years of tenure as Prime Minister. During his leadership Dr. Mahathir has *well* packaged most of government ideology, *policy* and concept in a form of public campaigns to gain support from general public or segmented publics which among those are listed below (Gomez, 2004);

Table 1. Government Policy through Public Communication Campaigns

Year	Campaign
1982	“Bersih, Cekap, Amanah’ (Efficient and Trustworthy)
1983	‘Kepimpinan Melalui Tauladan’ (Leadership Through Example)
1983	“Polisi Kerjasama Malaysia” (Malaysian Incorporated <i>Policy</i>)
1983	‘Dasar Pandang KeTimur’ (Look East <i>Policy</i>)
1991	“Malaysia Boleh!” (Malaysia Can!)
1991	“Wawasan 2020” (Vision 2020)
1992	‘Inflasi Sifar’ (Zero Inflation)

1995	“Projek Koridorraya Multimedia” (Multimedia Super Corridor)
1997	“Dasar Penerapan Nilai-Nilai Islam” (The Assimilation of Islamic Values)
2005	Islam Hadhari (<i>Civilisational Islam</i>)
2008	1 Malaysia

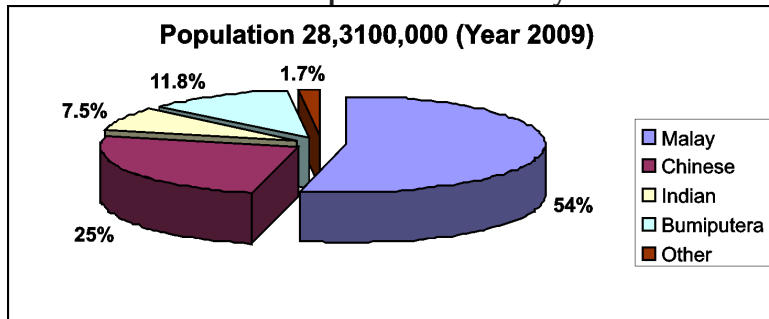
During the tenure of Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as Prime Minister of Malaysia, he mooted the idea of ‘Islam Hadhari’ which is define as “*Civilizational Islam*” a theory of government *based* on the principles of Islam as derived from the Qur’an. It was originally founded by Tunku Abdul Rahman in 1957 (but under a different name), and was promoted by the former Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. The concept brought forward was criticized by opposition parties and Islamic fundamentalist as ‘a key campaign strategy’ issue during 2004 by Tun Abdullah (at that time the Prime Minister of Malaysia) to win vote in Malaysia general election instead (Chong, 2006).

Existing Conditions of Public Control in Malaysia

Throughout the last decades, Malaysians have enjoyed regular elections and political stability. *However*, a full-fledged democracy requires fulfillment of three essential conditions: extensive political competition, a high level of political participation as *well* as guaranteed *Civil* and political liberties. Malaysia consists of 13 *states* (11 in peninsular Malaysia and 2 in the *West Malaysian Borneo*) and 3 federal territories. Each *state* is further divided into *districts* & a subdivision of a *district* is called sub-*districts* (*mukim*).

Malaysia is a federation; the governance of the country is divided *between* the federal and the *state* governments which is selected by the people through general election held every five years. The highest ranking of the country is the King (Yang Dipertuan Agung). Malaysia is an Islamic country that is also multiracial with the Malays dominating half of the overall population followed by Chinese, Indian, *Bumiputera* (the people of Sabah and Sarawak) and *others*. As of December 2009, the Malaysian population was more than 28 million.

Picture 1. Population of Malaysia



Source: <http://www.statistics.gov.my>

The country currently ruled by *Barisan Nasional*; a coalition party that was lead by Prime Minister Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak of UMNO. The other parties that form the coalition include *Gerakan, MCA and MIC*. The chosen government has been ruling the country since independence and adapts to the socio-economic development models (economic system) as a set of mechanisms and institutions for implementation of decisions concerning production, income, & consumption within a given geographical area.

The development model which is named The Malaysia Plan has undergone few phases. Each phase consists of development plan for the next five years. This five-year development plan has been continuously updated to suit the need and requirement of the country.

Table 2. Malaysia Plan

<i>Policy</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
Malaya Plan 1	1956-1960	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce rural poverty • Diversify economic activities
Malaysia Plan 2	1961-1965	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize on large-scale development
Malaysia Plan 3	1966-1970	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large-scale development covering all sectors of the economy
Malaysia Plan 4 to Malaysia Plan 5	1971-1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eradicate poverty • Restructure <i>society</i>

Malaysia Plan 6-10 to Malaysia Plan	1991-2000 2001-2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eradicate poverty among the poorest • Faster growth of a trading and industrialized Bumiputera <i>society</i> • Foster development of a united <i>society</i> • Economic development & related issues • Racial unity
-------------------------------------	------------------------	--

Besides the five-year development plan, the Malaysian government has also initiated various public communications campaign. These campaigns are aims at many different aspects of life among Malaysian; *however* the ultimate aim is to benefit the *society* at large. The public communications campaigns cover the economic sector through the '*Inflasi Sifar*'; leadership through the '*Kepimpinan Melalui Teladan*' and '*Bersih, Cekap, Amanah*'; patriotism through '*Malaysia Boleh*' and *others*. Some of the public Communication campaigns are as listed below.

1. Media in Malaysia

The media are essential in the modern world of democracy because it can inform the people and influence their decisions in private and public life. It may also seek to lay down an agenda for the nation to pursue. A free press helps to preserve and promote democracy by safeguarding the independence of its institutions, including *itself*, and ensuring their accountability.

The media are also essential to a democratic *society*. There are two functions of freedom of the press in a democracy: one is the formative function, where a free press permits the flow of information necessary for citizens to make informed decisions and for leaders (public servants) to stay side by side of the *interests* of their constituents (the electorate); and the second is the critical function, where the press in particular serves as the people's watchdog, ensuring independent criticism and evaluation of the government and other institutions that may seize democratic *power*.

The mass media include printed, electronic and other online information channels. The media used in Malaysia include print, online and *web-based* media/channels such as television, radio, newspapers, blogs and *others*.

Many media outlets in Malaysia are either owned directly by the government of Malaysia (e.g Bernama) or owned by either one of the component parties of the coalition government; the Barisan Nasional. Media ownership in Malaysia starts with the government wholly own media channels under the Ministry of Information that controls the electronic media namely, TV1, TV2 and all government radio stations and the media agency, BERNAMA.

Another media/channel dominant in Malaysia is the Media Prima which was not owned by the government but was strongly influenced by the government. Media Prima ownership spread through the electronic and print media. Media Prima owns the Sistem Televisyen Malaysia Bhd which broadcasts most of the free aired channels that include TV3, 8TV, Channel 9 & NTV7. On the print media the Media Prima owns the New Straits Times Press (M) Bhd; New Straits Times, New Sunday Times, Malay Mail and Sunday Mail which are published in English and the Malay language publications that include the Berita Harian, Berita Minggu and Harian Metro. The Media Prima Berhad is practically influenced by the UMNO of the BN. Another primer print media publication named Utusan Melayu (M) Bhd group owns the distribution of Malay language newspapers which include the Utusan Malaysia, Mingguan Malaysia, Utusan Melayu, Kosmo as well as magazines such as the Mastika, Wanita. These have close links with the dominant party UMNO. Another component party of the ruling BN the MCA owns the Star, Sunday Star, Nanyang Siang Pau, and China Press. MCA also owns the radio station called STAR fm.

Timber tycoon Tiong Hiew King owns Sin Chew Median Corp Bhd that publishes Sin Chew Daily and Guang Ming Ribao is well connected to the *states* political elite in Malaysia (Mustafa, 2002). Another Sarawakian timber tycoon Lau Hui Kiang was given permission by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir to operate the Chinese Oriental Daily as a way of checking the growing influence of Tiong in the Chinese community. Since the coalition government consists of the political parties representing the three major races in Malaysia, the media are also controlled through the three major languages. The Tamil newspaper Tamil Nesan is published by the wife to Samy Velu who is the President of Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), one of the party in the coalition party. Tamil daily, Malaysia

Nanban, is another print media that is also closely allied with the MIC (Mustafa, 2002).

Ananda Krishnan, a personal friend to Tun Dr Mahathir, owns the paid satellite TV Astro and Maxis Communications Bhd that operates cellular services. Vincent Tan Chee Yioun and Tong Kooi Ong who are also Mahathir's close allies control the Nexnews Bhd that owns The Sun, a free newspaper that is distributed freely via selected outlets; The Edge, a *weekly* published publication; and Asia Inc.

2. Freedom of speech and Press

The concept of freedom of the press developed in the *seventeenth* and *eighteenth* centuries in the US and Europe. A free press performs three essential features for a democracy: a "watchdog" role, the provision of knowledge and information, and the facilitation of public discussion (Oates, 2008). First, the role of a free press is to serve as a "watchdog" on government and its officials (as *well* as a watchdog of private centers of power). The news media should serve as the watchdog of democracy and can perform the task of protecting of the people's *interests*. The press must be able to expose failures of and abuses by government and government officials—with this capacity providing probably the greatest democratic safeguard against both malfeasance and misfeasance by government. Advocates of a free press always feel that government has a tendency to manipulate the media and cannot be trusted because of the *power* it holds. *However*, a free press does not mean free only from the overt restrictions of the government, which is a narrow conception of the freedom of the press, but also from other overt and covert influences; externally (i.e. from foreign powers and ownerships) and internally (i.e. the ownership of individuals who are close to the government and editorial censorship).

Secondly, as people need information relevant to their political *concerns*; the press has a helpful role to play which flows from its role as an informer and educator of the people. Although the press is not the only forum and people can still use other methods of expression such as public gathering and demonstration. The press can effectively exercise this right of the people on their behalf through its space, which is absolutely necessary in a democracy. When the press represents and speaks on behalf of all the sections of the *society*, particularly the voiceless, it makes democracy a truly representative regime.

Third, the press can also act as a day-to-day parliament of the people by discussing the public matters in a way that may be more effective than the parliament *itself*. The press can provide an important forum for the people to debate and discuss the pros and cons of the issues and problems confronting them. Through news reports, articles, letters to the editor, interviews, panel discussion etc, the forum created by the press may supplement, and sometimes act more effectively, than parliament. The press can therefore act as an impartial, objective and constructive critic of official policies and programmes, and protect the *interests* of the nation from the politicians' vote-centered actions or inaction. Democratic processes do not always lead to the best decisions being made. But at least *they* allow for the general participation in decision-making that is characteristic of a *society* free from the domination of elites

The Malaysian constitution provides *restricted* freedom of expression of media organizations & individuals. The Constitution provides that freedom of speech may be *restricted* by legislation "in the *interest* of security...(or) public order." Malaysia was rank number 141 (Not Free Media) in 2008 by Global Press Freedom Rankings. Malaysia was rank above Singapore which was at ranking 153 and below Indonesia which is at ranking 114 (Partly Free)

3. Media Law

There is a list of law governing the media and any other acts related to the freedom of speech in Malaysia. Among those listed include the following (Kirankit et., al.):

1. **Defamatory Act, 1957** – malicious *statement*
2. **Printing Presses and Publications Act, 1984** – act against government & the country instability
3. **Sedition Act, 1948** - act speech, words or publication are seditious
4. **Copyright Act, 1987**- intellectual property
5. **Internal Security Act (ISA), revised in 1972** – subversive and violence
6. **Official Secrets Act, 1972** – release of information by government official (during or after service)

Managing Political Information in Malaysia

1. Governance of Political Information

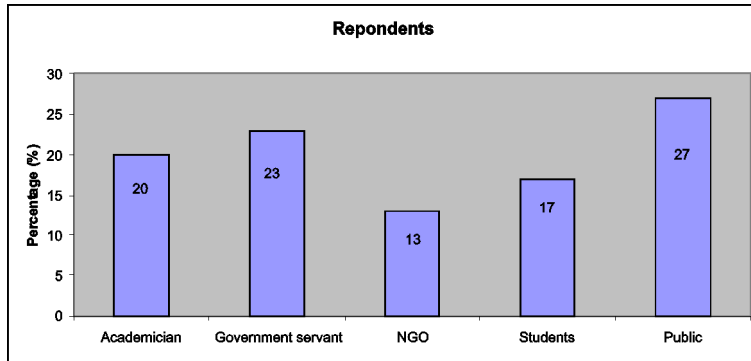
Democratic systems of the Malaysian government follow the twin principles of collective ministerial responsibility to parliament and of individual ministerial responsibility for the department (Gomez, 2004). Although in Malaysia, ministerial responsibility has been formally accepted as part of the parliamentary system, it is frequently traded off in favor of party solidarity and party discipline. Ministers in Malaysia are not accountable to parliament, but only to government or, more precisely, to their component party in the ruling coalition. Similar to this, members of parliament depend more on the party leadership than on their constituency in their nomination as a party candidate.

Members of the parliament are also involved in the governance of political information in Malaysia. Part of the ministerial responsibility is to govern as *well* as disseminating the sufficient amount of political information to the necessary group. The governance of political information in Malaysia includes:

- The legacies of colonial rule & independence struggles
- The development of political institutions
- The styles of leadership – embraced Asian values
- The leadership transitions
- The economic policies, political identities, political cultures
- The branding of national identity, ideology, philosophy affirmative action
- The psychological warfare designed to win the “heart and minds”
- The Media laws

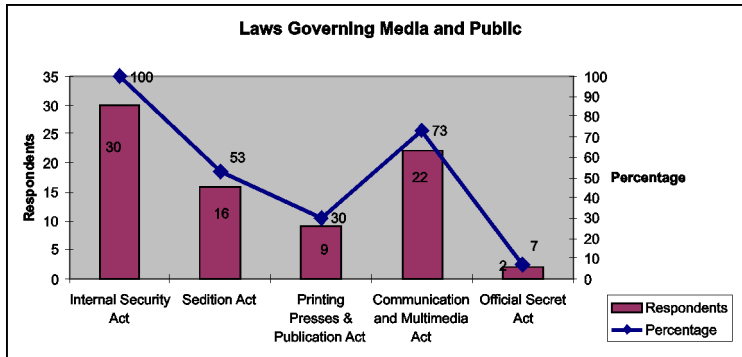
The recruitment of communication *based* practitioners, public relations, journalist to be information officer, press secretaries, and diplomatic officer is to help out campaigning and disseminate government *policy* at grass root level. These people should be carefully selected to ensure the smooth transmission of information to the public.

A simple survey was carried out to gauge opinions on the political information management in Malaysia. This survey was conducted by talking to 30 respondents which are the academicians, students, government employees, NGO representatives and the general public.



Each of the respondents where asked about their opinion *based* on their knowledge, observation and exposure to the information management in their workplace or surroundings. First, *they were* asked to name a few of the laws available in Malaysia pertaining to the governance of media rights and public opinion. All respondents are aware of the Internal Security Act otherwise famously known as the ISA and a majority of 73% is also familiar with the Communication and Multimedia Act. The awareness and knowledge of these two acts could be due to the fact that it was the most sensational act such as the ISA. The new media technology has open up opportunity for more people to have freedom of speech and lead to the awareness of the Communication and Multimedia Act existence among the respondents.

More than half of the respondents (53%) are aware of the Sedition Act which was meant for anything you say that offends anyone can land you in prison for up to three years. The Printing Presses and Publication Act was only noticeable to nine respondents, whereas for the Official Secret Act (OSA) was only mentioned by two respondents.



2. How do Government Managed Political Information

There are no media that are free from government controls (Mustafa, 2002). Many of the regulations regarding the size and reach of media business combinations, protection of national security, protection of the rights of individuals, and cultural safeguards strongly influence what may and may not be published to the open public. *However*, violations are kept in check by the fear of regulatory legislation. According to Gomez (2004) and Hassan (2004), *they* both agree that in times of war or similar threats to national security, controls have often become quite severe, including laws that prohibit criticism of the government. Most of the information about government that the media present is supplied by government sources, giving government officials control over what to disclose or conceal and allowing them to present information from the government's perspective. Whether government's role as the main supplier of news about its activities impairs democracy, and if so how much, as *well* the questions of whether government control of the media is more likely to be accepted or rejected questions remains as an unsettled argument. It is also argued that the media, besides the influences of the government, has also been influenced from the other overt and covert influences externally and internally (Oates, 2008)

To maintain the media control by the ruling government, there are regulations and guidelines set by the government. The '*Rukun Negara*' which is also the known as the declaration of national philosophy is a set of guidelines that must be followed by all government offices including schools and universities. It consists of five *basic* beliefs which include

the trust and belief for the god, loyalties for the King and the country, to honour the constitution, sovereignty of the laws and to be a good and loyal citizen.

The government have also outlined the *policy* and vision that to be observed by all public universities. The *policy* and vision transpire in the development of its curriculum as *well* as the lifestyles of the students while *they* are in campus. Knowing that students are the most influential group of people and will be the future leaders, the government has put an extra effort to ensure the values of loving the country been cultivated from the very beginning. Among the steps taken by the government is the implementation of the Universities and University Colleges Act (AUKU). This is in a form of and oath undertaking by the students on the very first day of their tertiary *education* life. Students must also take up the Core University of ethnic relations which consists of elements of being a good Malaysian citizen.

To ensure the syllabus and the information given to students are politically secured an accreditation body called the Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA) was initiated by the government to supervise and accredit the entire subject syllabus in both public and private universities. Those colleges in Malaysia must receive the accredited status by MQA before *they* can conduct courses. The *Education* Ministry has also introduced the position of Deputy Vice-Chancellor for the Industry & Community Network Division at five (5) public universities. This division is aimed at fostering network *between* the *educational* institution and various industries.

Government agency such as the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission has the *power* to refrain or censor broadcasting news and information depending on the guidelines set by the government through the Ministry of Information and other related bodies. These censorship screening are imposed to drama, film, theater, patriotic movies, songs and also public debate. Government also has their control on advertisement on all media including electronic and print media. Advertisement on cigarettes and alcoholic drinks are prohibited in Malaysian media.

The government controls information regarding election through the Public Service Announcement (PSA). The inception of security

commission (an independent body) to overcome public doubt and raise integrity to fight hotly debated issues involves the police, corruption and political icon is another initiative taken by the ruling government to control the political information circulating in Malaysia.

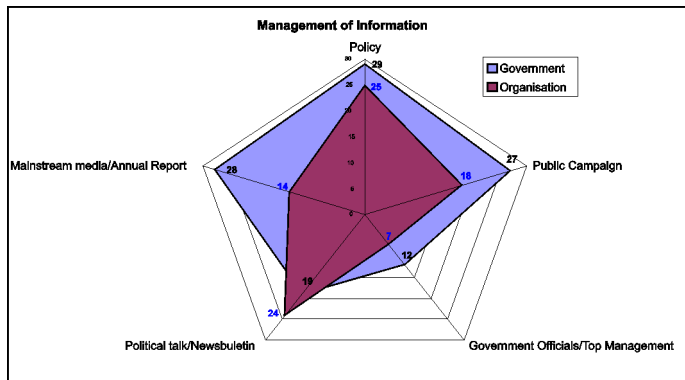
Another approach used by the government to control the information especially among the youngsters is through the implementation of National Service known as 'Latihan Khidmat Negara' program. The national service program was developed to create understanding towards the national mission and *policy* and to build the patriotism spirit. It is aimed at youth aged 18 years old and above or those who have just completed the secondary school. Among other approaches undertaken by the government include the branding of ideology through theme and concept such as 'Buy Malaysian First', '1 Malaysia', 'Look East *Policy*' and Vision 2020.

These approaches *were* run by the selected government's representative who can be anybody from the Minister or the government's officer

3. Functions of Communicator in Government

- Service provider
- Regulator of services
- Development facilitator
- Social integrator
- Change leader/agent
- Mediator and negotiator

The selected respondents *were* assessed on their knowledge of how information was managed in their organisation and how *they* perceived the information management done by the government. Respondents *were* asked to pick three of the most effective way done in their organisation and the government. Regardless, it is in the government or organisation, *policy* the most common ways of managing information as tabulated in diagram below. *However*, news bulletin works better in organisation compare to government which held their management of information better through public campaign. Briefing by government officials or top management seems to be the least preferable way by the respondent in information management.



4. How Opposition Parties Managed Political Information

The mass media in democracy are expected to give voice to public opinion so that the government will know where majorities and minorities stand. The view that the media *frame* the news to reflect the opinion of various publics or the opinions of the majority is another myth that has little relation to political realities. Nonetheless, it has major consequences because political observers often equate the thrust of media coverage with a single, unanimous public opinion when there is no such unanimity. There seems to be agreement that the role of the media in *society* is to inform the public of what it needs to know and to serve the public *interest*.

The press has tremendous *power* to determine the focus and tone of public *discourse*. Whatever is widely reported becomes news and sets the agenda for public discussion and further investigation and reporting. To the extent that issues are truly important to people's *lives* and relevant to their personal and political decisions, the quality of public *discourse* is elevated and the goal of an informed public is *well* served.

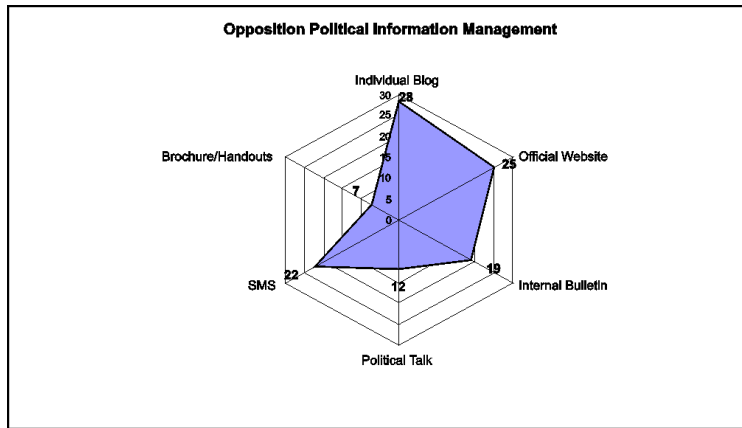
The danger arises when members of the press abuse the *power* to set agendas for public debate and discussion in ways that threaten the quality of public *discourse* and, as a result manipulate individual and collective decision-making. Atkins (2002) recognises this danger, writing that the press may "exert an adverse influence over the tone and character of public debate in subtle ways". Atkins (2002) argues that press freedom poses a threat to the quality of public discussion, and ultimately to democracy, through the potentially harmful effect of such freedom on the quality of "democratic decision-making". His *concern* for the detrimental effects of unlimited press

freedom on the quality of public debate and on the democratic system was agreed by Hassan (2004). In addition, when issues of little or no significance become the focus of public debate, particularly with intrusions into people's private *lives*, the quality of public *discourse* is *debased* and the goal of an informed public is subverted.

Opposition sought for *alternative* media to convey their ideology since the *mainstream* media are being controlled by the ruling government. Today, more people choose the online media such as blog and online forum to debate and talk about issues that are current or of their *interest*. The online technology provides avenue for individuals to voice their opinion. In Malaysia, individual like Raja Petra Raja Kamarudin was convicted under Internal Security Act (ISA) through his writing in his personal blogs that was against the government. Some of his writings *were* said to be of incite and have the potential to create crisis among Malaysian.

Alternative media owned by the opposition includes Harakah which is owned by the PAS; Rocket by DAP; Aliran published by the Keadilan and many other *websites*. One of the more famous *website* run by the opposition is the MalaysiaKini (Mustafa, 2002). These *alternative* media will include in their publications critics towards the BN government *policy*, transparency, highlight government inability and inefficiency and also address 'sensitive' social issues e.g. corruption, ethnic and religious issues to cast vote from the non-Malays.

When the respondents *were* asked about the way opposition in Malaysia manage the information or how *they* perceive the information management done, most of them agree to the usage of technology. Opposition had made the full use of technology to disseminate their ideology and political information. Individual blog and official *website* *were* the most mentioned by the respondents, 28 hits and 25 hits respectively. As the cost of telecommunication is more affordable today, short messaging service (SMS) becomes popular among the opposition as one of the medium to be used in managing their political information. Conventional method that is via handouts are no longer popular as it perceived as less effective and costly, only mentioned by 7 respondents. As opposition do not have control over the *mainstream* media, their internal bulletin helps to disseminate their information. Media publication such as 'Harakah' and 'Aliran' has its own followers which are mainly the opposition members.



5. Best Practice to Managed Political Information

It is business as usual as far as the status of the media industry and its relations with the Malaysian *state* is concerned. Laws detrimental to democracy such as the Sedition Act and ISA (Internal Security Act) are still in place and applied by the government over time in response to certain circumstances in Malaysian *society*. However, it is important that *Civil society* groups raise media consciousness and literacy among the nongovernmental organizations and ordinary citizens. Such awareness can not only alert the people to problems of journalistic distortions and media credibility gap but also help create a group of discerning audience or critical readership and the awareness to their rights and the governing law.

Best media practices should include the transparency and fair distribution of Government *policy* and funding. Public should be informed about the *policy* legislated as well as knowing where the government is spending their income tax in little more detail. By doing so, the public will have a better idea of what is the country's situation or stability. Forming a more credible Public Commission to look into misconduct or mismanagement of public *money* or services is essential.

Almost 93% of the respondents indicated that mass media could be a good medium to political information management. However, media should be ethical and follow media ethics and should be obligated to tell the truth and not manufacture or elaborate stories, even if it does not sound as good. Media role is to portray/highlight 'ideal leader' (spiritual mentor) & create peace journalism.

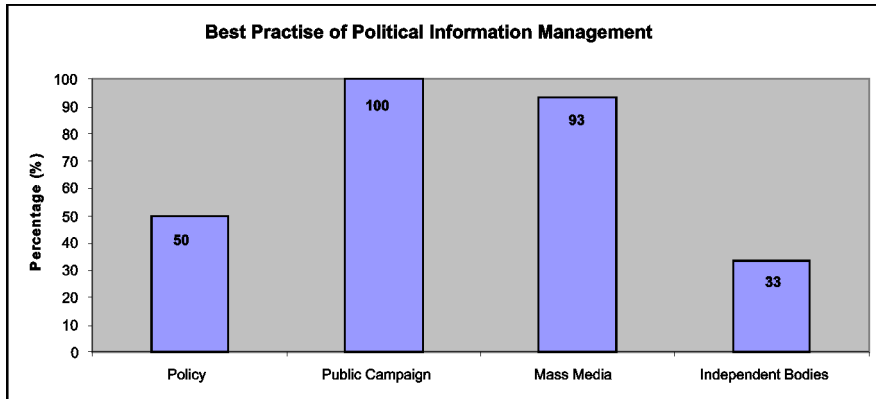
Media also play role as voice of social agenda; 'watchdog; mobilisation agent & *Civil* forum that shared values to convey public sentiments towards both the negative and positive issues. Media must act as intermediaries to create the culture of investigative journalism, citizen journalism & peace journalism that is not emotional, controversial & sensational but giving the right perspective to the public.

Looking at how media is best practice in Malaysia, first and foremost is to reshuffle the media ownership. It should be non-partisan and liberal to all parties. Media must be able to report the truth on each *event* or issues without having to favour any party. The idea is not to abolish the act as a whole but to restructure and make it less political bias to just one party.

A total of 50% respondents felt that *policy* still helped in managing political information with certain condition to be improved or changed to meet the best practices requirement. A less stringent Media laws or abolish some act that are more 'political bias' acts such as the Defamatory Act, 1957, Printing Presses and Publications Act, 1984, Internal Security Act (ISA), Official Secrets Act, 1972.

It is also important to audit government ministries that under public scrutiny to ensure that information are *well* disseminated to the target group. Government communicators are trained not only to disseminate but to allow two-way communication & *discourse* on *policy* to ensure healthy anticipation from public. *They* have to play 'problem-solving facilitator role' in attempt to solve both local and international conflict. Therefore activities such as public campaign agreed by all respondents (100%) are best to be used as a medium to communicate any *policy* or political information to general public. Campaign helps to boost up awareness and encourages participation from target group or general public.

To adapt classical democratic theory, citizens in a democracy ought to possess the ability to devote attention to *Politics*, forming opinions and participating in the process of government. Applying the same concept of democratic leadership, 33% of the respondent feels that forming an independent body is one of the ways to achieve satisfaction in managing political information. This way it will also create view competence among public and to be able to choose the right government or *policy* to be practiced. Indirectly, this approach will teach public the skills of understanding *Politics* more generally, and come to grips with their own positions. The above discussions transpire from the survey findings illustrated in the diagram below.



Conclusion

Media control in Malaysia is almost as old as the existence of mass media in the country. Malaysia falls under the category of democracy country and the government is firmly controlled by the ruling coalition, Barisan National for more than half a century. The ruling party has over the years created and reinforced numerous mechanisms to ensure an obedient media that will not jeopardize the *status quo* through the enforcement of *policy* which also include numerous laws governing the media in Malaysia.

Overall, *we* can say that Malaysian public do not favour to *policy* that is bias to one political party. *Policy* gives government authority and *power* to handle the dissemination of information especially political information to its general public. Government information should be transparent and conveyed for public *discourse*. Public need to know government decision on any development, agenda and *policy* to minimized the possibilities of mismanagement on government funding and resources. Malaysia public are more educated and exposed to their surroundings, therefore, *policy* is no longer the only way to manage political information. In reality, people living in democratic world are open to changes and debates on their rights and freedom. *****

Reference

Ahamd, Jamilah. (2008). 'The effect of Interplay Between *Politics, Culture and Practice in Malaysia.*' Poznan University of Economics. Department of Economics Journalism and Public Relations. *Poland. Volume 12. page 32.*

Atkins, W. (2002). *The Politics of Southeast Asia's new media.* London: Curzon.

Gomez, E. T. (2004). *Politics of the media business: The press under Mahathir; In Reflections: The Mahathir years.* Edited by Bridget Welsh, 475-85. Washington DC: Johns Hopkins University.

Hassan, R. (2004). *Media, politics and the network society.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Mustafa K. A. (2002). *Defining democratic discourses: The mainstream press; In Democracy in Malaysia: Discourses and practices.* Edited by Francis Loh Kok Wah and Khoo Boo Teik, 138-64. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon.

Oates, S. (2008). *Introduction to media and politics.* London: Sage

Chong, T. (2006). The Emerging Politic of Islam Hadhari, Retrieve from www.iseas.edu.sg on 12 Dec 2009.

<http://www.statistics.gov.my>

<http://www.iseas.edu.sg>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_Hadhari