

# The impact of Photographic Images in Print and Online Media for Political Campaign in Malaysia

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## Introduction

Malaysia is one of the countries that practices parliamentary democracy rule. With reference to Article 113 (1) of the Federal Constitution, elections allow the principle of freedom for a citizen to voice out their hopes and choose their own leader who will speak out for their rights. Voters are also the determinants towards the victory of any election, whereas political parties will fight for votes via campaigning tactics to influence and persuade voters to vote for them. General election is a significant event for the ruling power, as any decision made will determine the citizen's future from all walks of life. Referring to Oxford dictionary, election is defined as "the process of choosing a person or a group of people for a position, especially a political position, by voting" (p: 490).

Communication delivery is also significant in relaying messages to the community, which is evident from the past general elections - since the first general election in 1955 up to the 13<sup>th</sup> general election on April 3, 2013 under the leadership of Dato Seri Najib Tun Razak. The pattern of message delivery showed a great impact on the community, apart from bringing forth a great impact on the political system in Malaysia. According to Michael C. Leemay (2002), elections are often associated with '3M', which is very popular and significant in any election campaign, either in developed or developing countries that refers to 'Media, Money and Machinery' (Zaherawati Zakaria 2008: 279).

To obtain absolute victory, political parties often resort to communication strategies that revolve around print and electronic media in efforts to influence the voters to sway their votes. Apart from verbal communication such as public debates or speeches, electronic media such as radio, television, video, internet, and also the print media such as newspapers, flyers, banners and posters are regarded as an independent broker of information. Refer to Shanto Iyengar (2011:191), Media-based campaigns take place on two stages: free media (news coverage) and paid media (candidate advertisement). However he argues that media, taking on the role as a medium campaign channel brings a great impact on the community as it influences their minds and perspectives on arising problems in the country (agenda setting) whilst shifting citizens' take on public issues (framing), altering the criteria by which voters make their choices (priming), whereas the evidence demonstrated considerable changes in public sentiment (persuasion) (p: 13).

More than 150 years since its introduction to the world in 1826, photography has been utilized across a wide range of print, electronic and other forms of media such as in advertising and commercial, video and film-making, fine art photography, portraiture and journalistic form (Warren 2002: 257-

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