SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SOURCE OF POLITICAL INFORMATION: FIRST-TIME

VOTERS AND THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON POLITICAL INTEREST

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DECLARATION

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources be they printed, electronic or personal.

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APPROVAL FORM

This research paper attached hereto, entitled Social Media as a Source of Political Information: First-time Voters and the Influence of Social Media on Political Interest prepared and submitted by Ally Jong Fang Yee, Alicia Ng Zi Qin, Choong Wen Yee, Lee Ming Yi, Nagadarshyini A/P Maniam in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Communication (Hons) Public Relations is hereby accepted.

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Social Media as a Source of Political Information: First-time Voters and the Influence of

Social Media on Political Interest

Abstract

Social media plays a critical role as a significant source of political information among Malaysians. Generally, youth are categorized as active users of social media in their daily lives. When the government lowered the minimum voting age to 18 years from 21, around 6.23 million Malaysians were first-time voters. However, disinterest in politics occurred among first-time voters. Fifteen interviewees aged 18 to 24 were selected to be the samples in this research to study about the influence of social media on political interest. This research applied Media Dependency Theory (MDT) as the theoretical framework. The contents of social media feed depend on the user's social networking and social media algorithm, which are able to shape perceptions. Therefore, the political information the first-time voters are exposed to is able to influence the political interest and the decision-making of voting. All the results have been divided into six main themes, which will be linked to the influence of social media on political interest and decision-making on voting. All data collected has been stated to the body of knowledge for future use.

Keywords: social media, political information, first-time voters, political interest

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Abbreviations	Definition
MCMC	Malaysia Communications and Multimedia Commission
GE15	Malaysian 15th General Election
GE14	Malaysian 14th General Election
UUCA	Malaysia's Universities and University Colleges Act
MDT	Media Dependency Theory

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Social media is a combination of internet-based applications that allows the creation and sharing of user-generated content by expanding on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media is also a platform to facilitate and share information between users. Social media plays an important role in connecting people worldwide, including sharing information and daily communication. It also serves an indispensable role as a significant information or knowledge source for the users (Nur Nadhirah Ab. Hamid & Safawi Abdul Rahman, 2018).

Social media users can be categorized into active social media users and passive social media users. Active social media users are more likely to have high social media connections and interaction with other social media users, such as commenting on other user's posts, also regularly creating content and sharing on their social media accounts (Choi & Sung, 2018). According to studies by Kim and Lee (2011) and Choi and Sung (2018) stated that active social media users experienced increased happiness when their positive self-image and expression themselves were validated and acknowledged by others on the platform therefore the active users tended to have more varied and frequent types of engagement with other users. However, Verduyn et al. (2015) stated that passive social media users refer to individuals who mainly browse through content on social media platforms without actively creating or sharing content or engaging in online interactions with other users. Compared with active social media users, passive social media users typically have lower levels of self-disclosure, low engagement with others, and are not willing to share their personal information or viewpoints on social media (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

Due to social media plays an important role in a various of functions towards people daily life, it led people today increasingly relied on social media as their daily necessity. Social media usage can be separated into different types of usage based on the amount of hours the user spends on the social media per day, such as heavy usage, regular usage and mild usage. When referring to heavy social media usage, it typically involves individuals who spend over two hours per day on social media platforms and actively participate in various activities, such as creating and sharing their own content, commenting on other users' posts, and more (Lin et al., 2016). According to a study Manago et al. (2012) stated that regular social media usage refers to the user who spends one or two hours on social media per day. They usually use social media to contact and keep in touch with their friends and family, share information and stay informed on current news or events. For mild social media usage refers to the user who spends less than an hour per day on social media and has a specific purpose of using social media such as checking for updates or periodically messaging friends (Clark et al., 2018).

High usage of social media can have a significant influence on political information. Social media platforms have become a major source of news and information for many people, and they can have a powerful impact on people's political views and beliefs (Gottfried et al., 2020). One way that social media can influence political information is through the content that people are exposed to. Social media algorithms are designed to show users content that is most likely to engage and interest them, people may be exposed to content that supports their existing opinions and biases**.** Social media platforms are popular because they allow users to interact with others and keep in touch. Users have stated that communication is their primary motivation for utilizing social networking sites (Trepte, 2021).

Social media can also be used as a tool for spreading disinformation and propaganda, which can have a significant impact on people's political beliefs and decision-making. Political actors can use social media to spread false or misleading information, manipulate public

opinion, and even interfere in elections. It is important to be aware of the potential impact that social media can have on political information and to critically evaluate the information that you encounter online. It's also important to seek out diverse sources of information and to engage with people who hold different views and perspectives (Rossini et al., 2021).

Based on the Internet Growth Statistics from Internet World Stats, the percentage of the world population that access the internet increased yearly. It steadily rose from 35.7% to 69% from 2012 to 2022. For the Malaysian context, according to the Internet Users Survey by the Malaysia Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) in 2020, 88.7% of the 2,401 respondents were internet users, which showed an increase of 1.3% from 87.4% in 2018. In addition, according to Kemp (2022), Malaysia's internet penetration rate reached 89.6% of the total population in Malaysia at the beginning of 2022. Statistics showed a steady rise over the last 10 years from 60.54% in 2012 (Statista, 2022).

Due to the ease of internet use, people relied on it as their daily necessity, leading to the increased time spent on the internet daily. MCMC stated that the range of heavy internet users is those who spend more than 12 hours a day on the internet, while those who spend 5 to 12 hours a day and less than 4 hours a day are the regular users and the mild users, respectively. According to the Internet Users Survey 2020, the research finding showed that more than half of the users, which were 76% of the respondents, spent at least 5 hours a day on the internet. Also, from 2018 to 2020, the research depicted a rise in the percentage of regular and heavy internet users, which were from 37% to 50%, and 14% to 21%, respectively, while the mild internet users showed a decrease from 49% to 26% ("Internet Users Survey," 2020).

As mentioned earlier, due to the adoption of Internet usage, people spend more time on the internet daily. Therefore, this resulted in a change in media consumption patterns among internet users (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000). Nowadays, people are more likely to rely on online information instead of other traditional media sources such as newspapers, magazines,

and television. Taneja et al. (2017) highlighted that people who were born into the digital age had less interest in news and political information from traditional sources. According to the Digital News Report 2022, Malaysians were more likely to access online news and social media as their primary sources of news ("Digital News Report," 2022).

Additionally, social networking through social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat ranked as the second most frequent online activity among internet users. It showed an increase from 85.6% in 2018 to 93.3% in 2020 ("Internet Users Survey," 2020). Additionally, according to Kemp (2022), 91.7% of the total Malaysian population were social media users at the start of 2022, which showed an increase of 8% compared to 2021. Besides, social media also plays a critical role as a political information and knowledge source among Malaysians. According to the National Youth Survey 2021, 46% chose social media as the primary source of political information, compared to other sources such as information from family members, friends, and television (Merdeka Center, 2021). Thus, social media has changed the way Malaysians experience politics by providing Malaysians a space to receive and deliberate political information (Tan, 2022). Additionally, with common access to social media as a source of political information, it would impact Malaysia's politics, such as swaying the election results. Even though social media was not the determining factor in the overall election results, it undoubtedly gave space, channels, and avenues for people or voters to debate and engage with political leaders and candidates in the election (Norshuhada Shiratuddin et al., 2016).

As discussed, people born in the age of omnipresent digital media preferred online resources rather than traditional sources of news. This group of people was categorized as digital natives who had the ability to process multiple sources of information (Kirschner & De Bruyckere, 2017). Generally, youth are categorized as a group of people who are active in using the internet and social networking in their daily lives. Due to the incredible exposure to digital

media among youth, most of the information they got, including political information, was from social media. Nizah and Sharif stated that, for youth, most political information is from online resources, especially social media (Siti Nurshahidah Sah Allam et al., 2022). However, the accountability of news media and journalists is a concern of people today due to the growing usage of digital platforms, which are interactive, immediate, and worldwide (Acharya, 2019). Still, the internet, especially social media, plays a significant role in influencing the political sphere in Malaysia and the young voters' voting decisions (Siti Nurshahidah Sah Allam et al., 2022). Additionally, the finding by Munir (2018) proved that social media could shape the political perceptions of young voters and alter their voting behavior. Knowing that youth plays a dominant role in representing and bringing huge impacts in any country (Nul Widaya Mohamed Nawi et al., 2020), the credibility and accountability of online political information are among the major factors that drives their political perceptions.

Due to Malaysia's latest election constitution amendment, in which the government lowered the minimum voting age to 18 years from 21 years, around 6.23 million Malaysians were first-time voters, while 1.4 million of them were the "Undi18" voters, aged 18 to 20 in the 15th Malaysian general election (GE15) on 19 November 2022. The first-time voters in GE15 included "Undi18" voters as well as youth aged between 21 and 24 who were ineligible to vote in GE14 despite being aged between 18 and 20 then (Azhar, 2022). Based on a news article by Farah Solhi and Fuad Nizam (2022), youth were expected to hold the key to the election due to the lowering minimum voting age, which would definitely change the political landscape in Malaysia. According to Nul Widaya Mohamed Nawi & et al., the youth generation in Malaysia is an invaluable asset in determining the country's future and development (2020). Hence, this clearly indicated the importance of first-time voters for the GE15. At the same time, the Malaysian government also showed an effort to strengthen the country's democratic

process, which encouraged the youth, especially first-time voters, to vote by having automatic voter registration (AVR) for all eligible voters (Azhar, 2022).

According to a news article by Ong et al. (2022), a journalist spoke to 22 first-time voters aged between 19 to 25 during an interview. The journalist found that half of the interviewees were unaware and apathetic about the current political situation before the GE15. The news article also stated that many interviewees did not know about the key candidates in the GE15. Also, some interviewees said they lacked political interest while they were most concerned about Malaysia's economic issues (Ong et al., 2022). At the same time, more evidence indicated that Malaysia's youth were not interested in politics. Based on the research findings of the National Youth Survey 2021, 71% of the respondents aged 18 to 22 were not interested in politics (Merdeka Center, 2021). Besides, according to a study by Tun Tan Cheng Lock Center for Social and Policy Studies (TCLC) of Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, only 25% of respondents aged between 16 to 30 were interested in Malaysian politics. Additionally, it was concerning to find out that only 40% of the respondents said they had enough political knowledge to vote, and only 42% said they understood Malaysia's major parties ("Poll: A Study of Malaysian," 2022). Hence, ensuring the political interest of youth in Malaysia is crucial. This is because youth is important in securing the country's democratic process in the long term through their participation. If youth are excluded from political participation or disenfranchised, decisions of the country would be influenced due to the little or no voice from the group. Consequently, it would lead to the destruction of the representativeness of the political system (The Importance of Youth Participation in Formal Political Processes, n.d.).

As stated, a lack of political interest occurred among youth in Malaysia. Most scholars did not come up with a theoretical and conceptual definition of political interest or a clear clarification to explain the perceptions. Generally, political interest could be viewed as the foundation for a democratic political belief system and identity achievement as the result of

identity development (Rebenstorf, 2004). Also, political interest is the core element of political motivation that drives an individual to participate in politics (Rebenstorf, 2004). In other words, it is a perspective toward taking part in politics (Robison, 2016). The statement could be understood where political interest has the potential to drive the political participation of someone. Therefore, having a political interest is a prerequisite for the desired characteristics of responsible and democratic citizens, such as critical loyalty, ability, and readiness for political participation (Siti Nurshahidah Sah Allam et al., 2022). Additionally, as a result of direct and indirect political participation, interested citizens equated involvement in the political processes (Robison, 2016). To sum up, an individual's level of political interest influenced political participation.

The Pakatan Harapan government believed that "Undi18" was expected to strengthen the youth's role in determining the nation's course. The election constitution amendment, which lowered the minimum voting age, was drafted based on the assessment that Malaysian youth (age 18) had greater political interest and knowledge due to their exposure to media technology, especially social media (Siti Nurshahidah Sah Allam et al., 2022). However, various evidence discussed above indicated there were still first-time voters in Malaysia who were clueless and apathetic about the current political situation. This would affect their political participation, especially in the general election, as they would consider if they were to go and vote (Ong et al., 2022). There was a large consensus among scholars that political interest motivated participation in politics; therefore, factors of the absence of political interest needed to be explored (Shamsu Dauda Abdu et al., 2017). Based on the findings of the National Youth Survey 2021, 68% of the respondents aged 18 to 22 think that political leaders were not paying attention to the citizens, while 79% of them thought that politics was complicated and they found it hard to be understood (Merdeka Center, 2021).

Besides, in Malaysia, legislative barriers discouraged youths from getting involved in politics, such as Malaysia's Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA), which prevented students from being involved in politics (Voon, 2018). The law expressly forbaded students from participating in political parties, organizations, or any other activities that were considered detrimental to the university's interests. Even though an amendment to the act, which was made in 2012, allowed students to show support or opposition to a political party, it is still illegal when a university's Board of Director considers the group or party to be "unsuitable to the interests and well-being of the students or the University." (Malaysia: Amend Law to Protect University Students' Rights to Expression, Peaceful Assembly, and Association, 2020). There was a case in which four students from a public university received disciplinary action from the institution just because of their alleged involvement in a by-election in 2010 (Voon, 2018). This indicated that the institution discouraged the students from participating in political activities

In addition, there was also a case in 2020 where one of the graduates from Universiti Malaya was charged under Section 504 of the Penal Code for intentional insult with intent to provoke a breach of the peace due to his protest during his convocation ceremony. His protest aimed to call for the resignation of the Vice-Chancellor of the university, Datuk Abdul Rahim Hashim, over the Malay Dignity Congress (Bedi, 2020). These cases clearly demonstrated that youth in Malaysia were not encouraged to have participated in politics. When restrictions occurred, as well as freedom of expression could not be satisfied, it led directly to disappointment and decreased political interest among the youth. Although the law allows the youth to become political party members, it still does not allow active participation (Voon, 2018).

1.2 Problem Statement

In Malaysia, most youths between the ages of 18 to 22 were found to have a lack of political interest. According to the report by Merdeka Center (2021), 71% of Malaysians aged 18 to 22 stated they were not interested in politics. Some factors that could have contributed to this were the disinterest in the political context, freedom of participation in political discussion, and peer influence on social media.

Firstly, the disinterest in politics among youth occurred when they received mass political information on social media. Although youth have the chance to get information on social media, they might be misunderstood and misrepresented due to the masses of information on social media. At the same time, they did not have enough political information (Haslina Halim et al., 2020). The political information by the government on social media and the abundance of political opinions from different people online influenced the youth's perception of politics. Leong (2015) found that Malaysian political parties, Barisan Nasional and Pakatan Harapan, used cyber-troopers to cyber-attack and cyber-warfare during Malaysia's 2018 election. Since the cyber-troopers were used to undermine and sabotage their messages and mitigate the influence of different parties, it would be hard for youth to identify which message was credible to follow. Additionally, the cyber-troopers used fake profile pictures and integrated all the propaganda with native information they wanted to convey to give these accounts a more convincing appearance of authenticity. Therefore, it would be hard for the general public to discern who was behind the particular account and to identify the message's credibility (Harris Zainul, 2020). Besides, an excessive amount of information would lead to frustration because the individual might not be interested in receiving more. That would decrease the willingness of the person to make any decision (Hadar & Sood, 2014).

Secondly, Malaysian university students did not have full freedom to participate in political activities (Nesya Tirtayana, 2021). Along with the democratic development in

Malaysia, the government has revamped the Universities and University Colleges Act of 1971. Although the act has lifted the restriction on allowing students to join any politics-related activities, some first-time voters were still unaware of the change. Most youth still thought they did not have the right to join any political party. They might only be willing to join when the university's administration required them to attend the specific program, or they might not be actively involved in all those political campaigns (Shamsinar Rahman & Che Hamdan Che Mohd Razali, 2018). However, the Secretary of Students Solidarity Malaysia, Haziq Abdul Aziz, mentioned that most students fear the university's action against them if they show their interest in politics. That was because the student was prohibited from joining any political activities, as this was a long-time culture in the Malaysian context. This general point of view led to the university students not believing their voices could be heard and that "one vote" will be meaningful for the general election (Shamsinar Rahman & Che Hamdan Che Mohd Razali, 2018). The youth would feel disappointed in politics as they felt their word would not be heard. It then led the young voter to become disillusioned (Lim, 2022).

Thirdly, social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter allow first-time voters to have peer discussions about political issues. They would also have the chance to communicate directly with the political actors (Ohme et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the postings from friends and followers or political actors, along with the original posts, would be integrated into their personalized social media diet and own interpretation. Therefore, first-time voters' perceptions or interpretations of one another political parties would be changed due to different recommendations, praises, and the number of reads, views, and reactions, such as buttons on Facebook (Ohme et al., 2017). Peers have a significant role in influencing individuals in the same age stage in encouraging or shaping their behaviour, either positive or negative. At the same time, peers allowed the shared community to feel safe and accepted (Lawrence, 2021). According to Olaniran and Williams (2020), those messages online would affect voting

turnover behaviour. Youth is most likely to be influenced by peers on social media, and it affects their political interest as well as their willingness to participate in politics.

The youth is always the future leader of the nation. It is crucial for all the youth to be interested in politics to be a part of participating in the formal political process. Also, youth will be the ones to drive force to the country's development with their voices and creativity (The Importance of Youth Participation in Formal Political Processes, n.d.). If the issue of lacking political interest was ignored, it would shape political apathy. According to Gans (2001), political apathy is a moral concept that hides the lack of political interest. The symptoms of apathy are a lack of responsibility, concern, awareness, and action, such as voting. It caused people to be passive, submissive, and even senseless towards the social issue (Sarfaraz et al., 2012). These consequences of political apathy would affect the nation's democratic process. Moreover, political apathy happened among young people between the ages of 18 to 24 (Sarfaraz et al., 2012). Consequently, it might allow the politicians who have the authority with little accountability to have a high possibility of misusing public resources and enforcing discriminatory policies. Therefore, it will decrease the citizen's ability to participate in political participation (Fraser, 2021). Also, greater political participation not only focuses on selecting the most extraordinary party but also on improving the quality of government and the country's development (Sirinic, 2015). According to Jamilah Hj. Ahmad et al. (2015), Malaysian youth relied on social media to seek information and educational purposes. In a nutshell, this research explored social media as a channel for first-time voters to get political information. This research focused on first-time voters aged 18 to 24 who were eligible to participate in GE15. With that, the researchers could investigate how social media influenced first-time voters' perceptions, affecting the political interest among this age group. At the same time, the researchers were able to study whether social media would affect first-time voters' political interests.

1.3 Research Question

RQ 1: How do first-time voters consume social media as a source of political information?

RQ 2: How are first-time voters' political interest affected by consuming social media?

1.4 Research Objective

RO1: To explore how first-time voters consume social media as a source of political information.

RO2: To investigate how social media affects first-time voters' political interest.

1.5 Research Significance

This research would raise society's awareness to pay attention to the problem of lack of political interest among first-time voters in Malaysia. Other scholars did not commonly discuss this problem, especially from the perspectives of first-time voters. Nur Nadhirah Ab. Hamid and Safawi Abdul Rahman (2018), Ali Salman (2018), Nor Hafizah Abdullah (2021), and Haslina Halim (2021) had discussed the role of social media in politics among youth in Malaysia. These scholars explored and studied how youth utilize social media to understand political information. Besides, Nedeya Zainon (2017), Norhafiza Mohd Hed (2017), and Tan Jue Jun (2022) discussed the factors of low political interest among youth in Malaysia.

Still, the context of studies by most scholars was mainly focused on youth, there was slighter research that specifically focused on discussing the first-time voter's age group, which was between 18 and 24 years old. As discussed, most first-time voters were less interested in politics, and this has become one of the major problems in the country. Therefore, this research aimed to raise first-time voters' awareness of the importance of simultaneously getting and comprehending political information and encourage first-time voters to participate in Malaysia's politics.

Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy. Elections are held every five years, and every Malaysian is eligible to be a voter, but it is optional for them to vote ("How Malaysia's Election System Works," 2022). Therefore, this indicated that each voter is important in making the country superior. There are 21.1 million Malaysians who were eligible to vote in the 2022 Malaysian General Election (GE15). Statistics showed that there were 6.23 million first-time voters in GE15, while 1.4 million of them were "Undi18" voters (Kamarul Azhar, 2022). As mentioned in the research background, it was concerning that much evidence indicated that Malaysia's youth were not interested in politics. Youth play a crucial part in the development of any nation as they would eventually rule the globe and hold the destiny of our nation in their hands. Saskia (2013) stated that youth would rule this globe in the future and possess the ability to improve the nation. Youth is a strong factor in social movements. Besides, youth play a key role in the development of a nation. They were ambitious problem-solvers and had a beneficial influence on other young people and nations (Saskia, ǒ2013). Furthermore, according to Jason and Rosihin Addin (2022), youth, especially the "Undi18" group, would become kingmakers of Malaysia due to the lowering minimum voting age. Hence, having awareness and attention to political information and being more interested in politics were significant for first-time voters because they were the driving factor of the general election's result. High political interest and sufficient awareness of politics allowed youth to evaluate the political parties before voting, then firmly choose the parties they trusted were most capable of leading our country to better development.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Usage of Social Media

With the increased use of social media, it is also observed that social media is often used as a source of information. Rajendran and Thesinghraja (2014) stated that youth used social media in order to seek information. Younger and middle-aged people prefer to get news and other information online rather than seeking information from traditional media. This showed that youth would be more likely to seek information from social media because of the ease of access to information, the interactive nature of social media, and the on-demand nature of news (Rajendran & Thesinghraja, 2014). Chan and Fang (2007) indicated that youth enjoy using social media to get information because social media integrates the function of traditional media. Social media was becoming a multimedia platform (Chan & Fang, 2007). Therefore, youth are willing to spend more time on social media to find the latest information on almost any topic on social media instantly instead of using magazines, newspapers, radio, and television in search of information.

The problem of fake news has increased seriously ever since social media became the primary mode for information sharing. Buchanan (2020) indicated that young adults were more engaged on social media and thus more inclined to share any type of post. Less conscientious people were less likely to examine the facts or truth of the narrative before spreading and getting the information (Buchanan, 2020). They just shared whatever information they saw on social media. Thomas et al. (2012) stated that there was limited legal precedent on social media as social media is a relatively new phenomenon. Furthermore, Chan and Fang (2007) indicated that people could mostly conduct everything anonymously on social media. This can assist in avoiding problems and shame from sharing fake news on social media. Therefore, it made social media exist much fake news because people did not take responsibility for their

behaviour on social media. Talwar et al. (2020) said that users were inclined to share all information and news that came their way on social media, which may unintentionally disseminate fake news. In other words, individuals want to communicate as much information as possible, and in the spirit of expediency, they may also publish fake news that appears to be accurate (Talwar et al., 2020).

Ren et al. (2022) showed that fake news spreads more quickly than authentic news. This was feasible since fake news had a larger emotional impact and drew more attention on social media. People were willing to accept fake news rather than the facts because they thought that the fake news was more interesting and matched their opinion (Ren et al., 2022). Geeng et al. (2020) said that shorter postings and memes frequently drew the attention of social media users. In addition to favouring brief messages, some users were drawn to posts that had a high level of community participation. Social media users are more likely to read and share short and funny information (Geeng et al., 2020). They did not care about the accuracy of the information posted on social media. Besides that, according to Buchanan and Benson (2019), people evaluated themselves as more inclined to share, like, and otherwise spread a message sent by a trustworthy friend. Most notably, the degree to which the communication source is trusted is more likely to be essential (Buchanan & Benson, 2019). This shows that people blindly accept the information from the person they trust and do not care whether the information is accurate.

2.2 Social Media as the Source of Political Information

Nowadays, social media is commonly used by youth as a tool for seeking information. Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) stated that social media was able to provide more political information and interaction, bringing individuals into the political process. Social media enabled users to experience politics on a more intimate, interpersonal level and obtain user-

generated political information they may not get from traditional media (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010). Therefore, youth use social media to seek out additional political information. Kaskazi and Kitzie (2021) also showed that youth use social media to seek political information. Youth would be able to share their political information, experience, and concern on social media (Kaskazi & Kitzie, 2021). Therefore, social media has become a source of political information for the youth.

Due to youth's reliance on social media to get political information, social media can easily shape their perception and voting behaviour. Munir (2018) depicts social media's influence on the youth's voting behaviour. The discussion and expressing views on social media have proved that social media are effective enough in changing youth voting behaviour (Munir, 2018). Therefore, social media has effectively changed political perception and voting behaviour. Marijan and Sahab (2020) said that youth usually gain political information on social media. Therefore, it leads youth to be influenced by social media in terms of shaping their voting behaviour. The increasing effect of social media on voting behaviour prompted political parties and politicians to start using social media to communicate with and influence votes in order to influence voting behaviour (Marijan & Sahab, 2020).

2.3 Political Interest

Political interest is defined as an internal motivation to be concerned and participate in politics, it is not because of the pressures from outside or a way to achieve goals but rather for the individual's satisfaction and the reward of participating in politics (Adam Shehata, 2017). People with political interest are more knowledgeable about politics and more likely to participate in politics in other ways. They were more likely to comprehend various viewpoints and information in order to fully understand political situations (Dubois & Blank, 2018). Based on Haslina Halim's (2021) research, the willingness of youth to seek political information is

related to political interest. Youth were especially motivated by this urge to look for more political information to help them have the ability to evaluate the political parties before voting (Thorson et al., 2019).

Political information in social media influenced political interest (Holt et al. 2013). Therefore, social media plays an important role in an individual to get and access political information (Muhammad Yar Khan, 2019). Besides, according to Norshuhada Shiratuddin et al. (2016), social media was defined as one of the platforms for providing people to share their political perspectives and, at the same time, obtain political information. For example, social media users were able to interact with political parties and candidates through Facebook during the election (Muhammad Yar Khan, 2019). Twitter has also become a useful platform for political interaction. However, some politicians used social media on the other side, such as using Twitter, as a battlefield, and they used it to spread rumors and scandals about other politicians or candidates (Sara Chinnasamy, 2018). Based on Nedeya Zainon's (2017) research, the reasons for the lack of political interest among youth are the dissatisfaction and corruption issue of the political structure in Malaysia. Political scandals could also affect people's political interest (Rebenstorf, 2004). Therefore, Rebensoft's (2004) research could prove that scandals or rumours of politicians, political parties, and political management were able to influence people's political interest. Based on Sarfaraz et al. (2012), research stated that one of the reasons causing political apathy was people were most likely to pay attention to negative political information, which was portrayed by the media. According to (Ogochukwu & Silas, 2014), distrust of the government system and policies became the cause of political apathy. High political participation could generate ambition among youth. However, political distrust and hopelessness occur when their hopes are unfulfilled (Ahmad, 2015).

Furthermore, youth were willing to seek more political information due to the motivation of political interest to evaluate the political parties before voting (Haslina Halim,

2021). Youth interested in politics would be more likely to vote and connect themselves with a political party than those who lack political interest (Sarfaraz et al., 2012). According to Muhammad Yar Khan (2019), political participation would increase proportion to the level of political interest. Political interest has significantly affected political participation because it motivates the individual to seek political information (Muhammad Yar Khan et al., 2019). Political interest became more crucial in youth's political participation because youth is the decision-making of the world in the future; they are an important element of the development of a nation (Saskia, 2013). According to Salman et al. (2017), Malaysian youth lack political participation as compared with other developing nations and also are not interested in politics because they express a lack of trust towards the political parties in general.

2.4 The Role of Social Media in Politics in Malaysia

Social media is such a vital tool that not even experts in their fields can deny its ability to change people's lives, for better or worse; it has the power to drag you down but the determination to send you soaring. It's a powerful medium for the dissemination of information and understanding. Information can be disseminated more rapidly than through traditional means, such as print or broadcast media. With the current state of technology, it is also being used in political activities, where politicians and political parties from all over the world use it to communicate with their constituents. Next, because of the broad availability of communication tools such as social media, young people now have far more options to learn about politics, engage in political discourse, and participate in political activities (Li & Chan, 2016). Researchers have been studying how the Internet affects political participation among the younger population for more than twenty years; this work was partly sparked by the fact that young people in mature democracies are becoming less interested in politics and less likely to vote (Bakker & de Vreese, 2011).

The 2018 GE14 featured the first-ever transfer of power in the nation's political scene. Pakatan Harapan (PH) gained 113 of 222 parliamentary seats with a simple majority, while the decade-long ruling BN coalition lost 79 seats. PH also gained power at the state level, leaving BN with only Pahang and Perlis. Social media can generate game-changing consequences and political shifts for different causes (Najwa Abdullah & Amalina Anuar, 2018). Samsudin A. Rahim (2019) called GE14 a social media battle because social media can influence someone by telling it in the right manner. According to Weiss (2006; as cited in M. Moniruzzaman and Kazi Fahmida Farzana, 2018), BN's support base has declined in favour of new-generation politics, of which a tech-savvy, energetic, youthful cohort is the lifeline.

Moreover, according to Sara Chinnasamy and Norain Abdul Manaf (2018), political leaders prefer social media despite the spread of fake news online. Facebook and Twitter are the main SNSs used by Malaysian political parties and politicians. Facebook had a major role in the GE14 social media campaigns, which spread the news from online mainstream news sites, portals, personal blogs, and interactive and personal films posted by netizens Facebook and WhatsApp aroused voters' emotions, fury, and nationalism, which influence voting behaviour (Welsh, 2018).

Furthermore, media coverage of integrity issues affects public opinions of politics and voter trends. Social media impacts political behaviour. It influences political information-based decision-making (Junaidi et al., 2014). WhatsApp and Facebook provide voters with alternative information. Researchers and polling organizations have found that internet consumers consider online news sources to be at least as dependable as traditional news websites, despite the fact that the Internet is often seen as less trustworthy (Pew Research, 2000). According to Elhadidi (2019), the credibility of social media is more difficult to demonstrate compared to traditional media. As a consequence, the flow of news on social media and new media platforms is both more rapid and more varied. As a direct consequence of this, there was a

degree of mistrust as well as a misunderstanding over the implementation of social media credibility. During the 14th general election (Chin & Welsh, 2018), both are unquestionably influential in people's decisions about whether to support BN or PH during the by-election. Social media also plays a big part in making dissent heard and normal by giving different voices a place to be heard. All of these things are important for social change. It could make politics more interesting and important to young voters, and it could also help grassroots efforts (Junaidi et al., 2014).

2.5 Media Dependency Theory

Definition

Media Dependency Theory (MDT) was first introduced by Ball-Rokeach and De Fleur in 1976. MDT is to study media impact on the relationship between individuals, media, and society rather than to discuss each property of the element (Jung, 2017).

According to MDT, when uncertainty and societal upheaval existed, people would depend more on the media for information. The macro level concerned the structural dependence relationships between audiences, the media, and other social systems. According to MDT, when uncertainty and societal upheaval existed, people would depend more on the media for information (Lowrey, 2004). Besides, at the micro level, media dependency has an unequal effect in that individual achievement of goals and requirements depended on information resources controlled by social and media organizations (Holt et al., 2014). When individuals became overly reliant on the mass media for information to resolve their ambiguity, the defining or structuring influence of mass-mediated information became significant. On the other hand, the media might play a significant role in restricting the variety of interpretations that viewers were able to make by regulating what information was and was not given and how that information was presented (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976).

Society

The more ambiguous or unclear society's information was, the more crucial media systems become to society. The mass media's resources could assist in clearing up any confusion for those who were trying to make sense of their surroundings; therefore, media become crucial (Jung, 2017). When society appeared at a high level of change and conflict, individuals would become more reliant on the sources of media (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976).

Media

The media system was positioned and described as an information system. DeFleur and Ball-modernization Rokeach's theory (1990) stated that in the past, people relied more on interpersonal interactions with people and networks to achieve their purpose of understanding society; however, it became difficult for people to understand society without relying on media. People must rely on the mass media system for information in their daily lives because it has evolved into an essential system in society.

Individual

Individual dependency was a requirement for media power to exist (Ball-Rokeach, 1998). The degree to which A depended on B depended on B's available resources to satisfy A and the objectives A wishes to achieve (Jung, 2017).
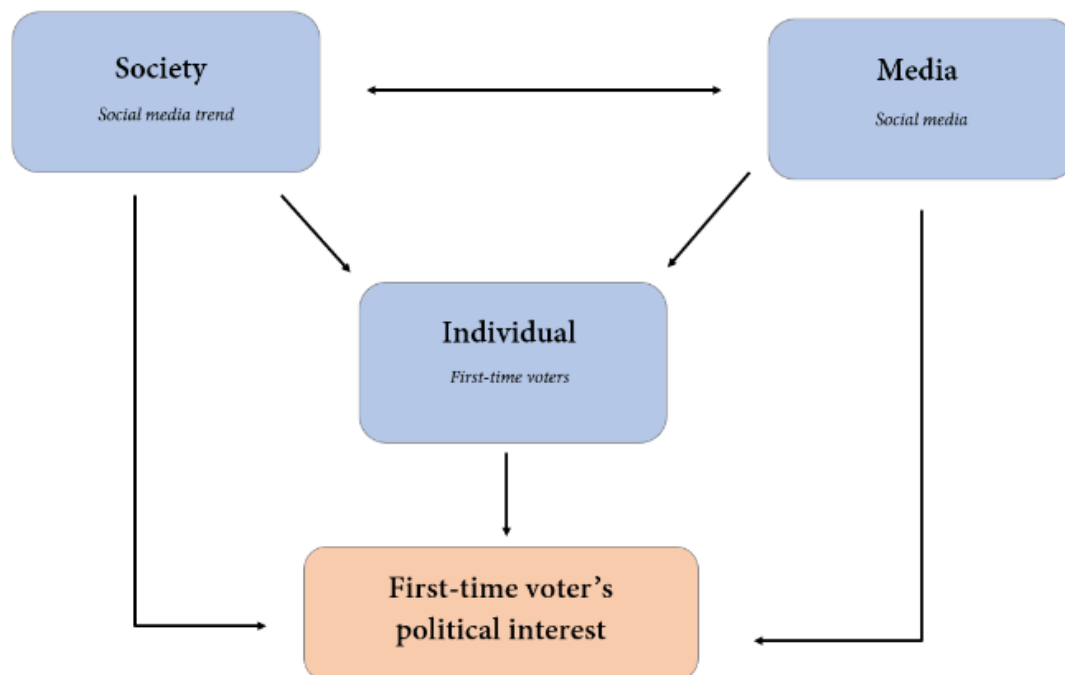
Figure 1

Based on the research objectives, this research aimed to explore how first-time voters consumed social media as a source of political interest and to investigate how social media affected first-time voters' political interest.

Therefore, the researchers were able to study how the media influenced the individual and the first-time voters' political interest by using the MDT. As mentioned in the research background, Malaysian youth have a better political interest because they were exposed to media technology, especially social media (Siti Nurshahidah Sah Allam et al., 2022). Hence, social media would be the main focus element in this research.

Social media is growing at a very rapid rate in the world and has become one of the inherent parts of society. Nowadays, people are more likely to use social media to obtain information than traditional media (Rajendran & Thesinghraja, 2014). It could be considered the social media trend in society; therefore, the researchers were able to use MDT to study how society influenced the first-time voter's political interest. Since this research mainly focused on discussing the first-time voter's context, the first-time voter's political interest was

the primary outcome that the researchers wanted to analyse. Therefore, the researchers might

apply this MDT theory to this research to evaluate how these three elements influenced first-

time voters' political interest.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach as the research was designed to investigate the perspectives and experiences of first-time voters regarding their social media usage, political information, and political interest. Generally, qualitative research is a process of inquiry that collected data from the context in which events occurred to indicate these occurrences. This method could have been used to determine the process in which events were embedded and the perspectives of those participating in the circumstances (Gorman et al., 2005, as cited in Jamali, 2018). In addition, according to Rosenthal (2016), qualitative research allows researchers to have an in-depth understanding of the various underlying reasoning, factors, behaviours, and motivations behind different human actions. The qualitative approach involved collecting and analysing data to understand the overall summary of the samples' concepts, opinions, and experiences (Bhandari, 2022). Also, it was helpful as this study mainly focused on the social sciences field.

This study aimed to explore the way first-time voters in Malaysia consumed social media as a source of political information, as well as to investigate how social media affected first-time voters' political interest. Hence, the qualitative research method was the most suitable for this study, as raw data could be retrieved directly from the samples about their opinions and experiences. At the same time, by using this research method, researchers would be able to create shared and contested meanings from patterns to explore and attempt to comprehend usually complicated and variable human behaviors and emotions (Newen et al., 2015, as cited in Buetow, 2018).

3.2 Sample and Sampling

This study employed purposive sampling, also known as judgmental sampling, in collecting the data. Purposive sampling is considered a non-probability sampling method, which refers to the deliberate selection of a sample that can be based on the judgment of the researchers (Etikan, 2016). Also, according to Lewis and Thornhill (2022), purposive sampling helps researchers to save time and resources, in which they could obtain a representative sample based on the judgment that determined the choice of element for the chosen representatives.

This research targeted Malaysian university students aged 18 to 24 of different races. This group of samples was the youth born from 1998 to 2004 who were first-time voters in the 15th Malaysian general election (GE15). Due to Malaysia's latest election constitution amendment, this group of samples was eligible to vote in GE15. Also, Malaysia is multiracial, with diverse races of Malays, Chinese, Indians, and other indigenous tribes. Hence, in order to collect the most useful and unbiased data, the perception of different races needed to be explored. During the data collection stage, the researchers focused on interviewing people from diverse backgrounds, while the number of interviewees of each race was balanced based on data saturation as well as time consideration. Additionally, as mentioned in the study background, this sample group was considered active social media users compared to the other age groups. Therefore, these samples helped the researchers in reaching the research objectives of exploring the way they consumed social media as a source of political information, as well as investigating how social media affected their political interest. Moreover, university students aged 18 and above were considered the youth in Malaysia who had mature thoughts and personal opinions. In order to reach the research objectives, this sample group would enable the researchers to collect the most valuable data effectively.

The number of the sample has been based on the data saturation. According to Guest et al. (2020), data saturation is a widely used approach for evaluating sample sizes in qualitative

research. The purposive sampling method emphasized the saturation of data. Usually, the researchers would need to obtain complete and extensive data by continuing to sample in order to get the most substantive information (Etikan, 2016). Mason (2010) highlighted that frequencies are rarely significant because one occurrence of the data might be just as informative as many for understanding how a topic worked. This was because qualitative research focused more on analysing meaning than formulating generalized hypothesis statements.

Besides, Guest et al. (2020) highlighted the term "theoretical saturation" used by Glaser and Strauss to describe saturation in their book The Discovery of Grounded Theory from 1967. Glaser and Strauss described saturation as usually occurring when no more data can be found wherein the researcher could establish category attributes. Additionally, their definition related to the point at which the theoretical model under development stabilized and was created specifically for developing and evaluating theoretical models with qualitative data (Guest et al., 2020). According to a methodological study by Morgan et al. in 2002, most of the new information in the dataset was generated in the first five to six interviews, and only a little further information was produced when the sample size reached 20 interviews. Between 80% and 92% of all concepts found in the datasets were identified in the first ten interviews. Subsequently, a study by Guest et al. found that 92% of the 114 identified themes were discovered during the first 12 interviews, and 70% of all 114 themes occurred in the first six interviews (Guest et al., 2020). These scholars proved that the number of samples might differ based on the data saturation during the data collection process to reach the most satisfied and essential saturation point. Hence, it could be concluded that 6 to 20 interviews would enable better data saturation. Therefore, in this research, the researchers have interviewed 15 samples to maximize effectiveness and ensure the saturation point can be reached.

3.3 Data Collection Method

In-depth interviews were conducted as the data collection method in order to collect detailed information from the samples. In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves having detailed one-on-one interviews with a small group of samples to investigate their viewpoints on a particular concept or idea (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Also, in-depth interviews involve open-ended questions and follow-up probes designed to elicit detailed information on the interviewees' experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge (Rosenthal, 2016). Similarly, according to Klenke (2016), the researchers were able to explore the interviewees' opinions and behavior toward the study through in-depth interviews. Therefore, researchers got to understand the interviewees' perspectives as well as their personal experiences deeply towards the research topic.

This study has conducted online interviews in order to reach the sample. According to Salmons (2011), online interviews or e-interviews refer to in-depth interviews conducted with computer-mediated communications (CMCs). Additionally, this study applied a synchronous approach in which interviews were carried out through video conferencing. That was because the video-conferencing method allowed spontaneous interactions between the researchers and the interviewees (James & Busher, 2009). In addition, based on Nehls et al. (2015), video-conferencing is commonly used as it is available for real-time face-to-face communication through technology. Online video-conferencing helped the researchers overcome the geography barrier, as the researchers and interviewees would have the flexibility to conduct the discussion at any location. That is also because the study focused on samples in different states in Malaysia. Moreover, the main reason online video-conferencing was applied to this study was due to its availability of immediate response, the ability to pick up multiple cues, especially facial expressions, voice inflections, and gestures, as well as the ability to use natural language for delivering opinions and perceptions (Nehls et al., 2015). By having the face-to-

face function through video-conferencing, the researchers could lead the discussions naturally and effectively by asking questions based on the replies given by the interviewees. At the same time, since the research aimed to explore the interviewees' perspectives and thoughts, direct and detailed data can be collected through this method. In addition, to effectively collect the data from the interviewees, researchers have prepared to interview in three languages, English, Mandarin, and Malay, which enabled the interviewees to choose their preferred daily language. Hence, it ensured a better flow of discussion between the researchers and the interviewees; at the same time, the interviewees would feel comfortable during the interview.

The type of questions that have been used in this interview is semi-structured question. According to McIntosh and Morse (2015), the semi-structured interview is a relatively detailed interview guide or schedule, and it is helpful in ascertaining subjective responses from the interviewees regarding a particular situation or experience they had. Open-ended questions were used, and the interviewees were free to express and elaborate on their responses (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Also, Laumann (2018) highlighted that open-ended questions provided the researchers with clear perceptions and opinions of the interviewees. As this study focused on investigating the sample's experiences and perspectives, semi-structured questions did help the researcher obtain reliable information effectively. For this research, the researchers have prepared semi-structured questions, while follow-up questions have been asked based on the interviewees' responses. The research questions are attached in Appendix A.

3.4 Data Analysis

This research used thematic analysis to analyse the data. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017), thematic analysis recognized patterns or themes within collected data. The thematic analysis aims to identify themes of the qualitative data and utilize the themes to direct the research findings. Hence, researchers were required to understand and be clear on the data

collected to have a better interpretation of the data. Based on a journal article by Maguire and Delahunt (2017), the scholars highlighted the six-phase guided framework by Braun and Clarke (2006) for did an effective thematic analysis, which is becoming familiar with the data, generating initial code, searching for themes, review themes, define themes, and write-up.

The first step, becoming familiar with the data is reading and rereading the transcript. Researchers need to be familiar with the body of the research data, as well as the interview transcript, before moving to the further step. This step was useful for researchers to highlight the early impressions of the interviewers' opinions and perceptions towards the discussion (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Next, generating the initial code is the second step for the thematic analysis. This stage was where researchers started to generate the data in a meaningful and systematic way. Also, researchers would code relevant research data and captured it interestingly during the open coding process to reduce irrelevant data and other small chunks of meant. During the procedure, researchers discussed and developed some ideas about the codes and soon worked through each transcript, coding every text segment that seemed relevant to or specifically addressed the research question. Lastly, researchers have modified and compared the codes before moved to the subsequent transcript (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Then, moving to the third step of the thematic analysis, which was the search for themes. A theme is considered a significant element in research, and it is a pattern to capture the essential moments of the research data. In this stage, researchers identified each code to fit it under a suitable theme (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) highlighted that there were no hard and fast ruled in making a theme. Besides, the following step of thematic analysis would have a review of the themes. Researchers reread and reviewed the data linked with each theme. Also, researchers evaluated whether the theme was related to context and how the themes function across the interview (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). After that, defining themes was the final refinement of the research themes. Researchers has took into

consideration how each theme connected to the other themes as well as how it related to the central theme. In order to better understand the research study and shape the data for representation in the researcher's final document, connections between categories and themes will be utilized (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Last but not least, all the data utilized has been recorded and written as a research report (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

In this research, the themes that the researchers expected to analyse were social media usage, political information, and political interest. These themes enabled the researchers to reach the research objectives, which were to explore the way first-time voters in Malaysia consumed social media as a source of political information, as well as to investigate how social media affected first-time voters' political interest.

3.5 Ethical Consideration

Meanwhile, in order to maximize the effectiveness of collecting high-quality data from the samples, ethical considerations have been taken to gain the trust of the interviewees during the interviews. According to Bhandari (2022), one of the primary considerations was the voluntary participation of the interviewee. Voluntary participation indicated that all interviewees have the freedom to choose to participate in the interview willingly. Also, all the interviewees could withdraw or leave during the interview when they were not obligated to continue without providing any reason. Meanwhile, informed consent was also one of the major ethical considerations during the data collection stage. All potential interviewees must be provided with all the necessary information in order for them to make a decision about whether or not to participate in the interview. This included details about the advantages, risks, funding, and institutional approval of the study. Additionally, researchers has provided the potential interviewees with all the relevant information, such as what the research was about and how long the interview would be taken (Bhandari, 2022). On the other hand, the other ethical

consideration that has been taken was confidentiality. Confidentiality indicated the protection of information supplied by interviewees from other parties. It was crucial to safeguard the privacy of the interviewees to avoid any harmful effect such as victimization (Bell & Bryman, 2007).

Besides, researchers have fulfilled ethical principles before the commencement of the interview in order to build a good relationship with the interviewees. An introduction from the interviewer is crucial before starting an interview. Self-introduction is the first step to gaining confidence, and it would make the interviewees felt comfortable answering questions during the interview. Besides, it is crucial to be transparent to the interviewees about the topic of the research, the time that would be taken for the interview, and whether the data collected will be attributed or anonymous (Harvey, 2011). By having the ethical principles stated, the researchers were able to collect data efficiently.

In order to ensure the research would be conducted in accordance with ethical considerations, informed consent forms has been used in this research. The interviewees would be required to fill in the informed and consent forms before the interviews. The informed and consent form is attached in Appendix B.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this study, two research questions have been investigated. Firstly, this research explored how first-time voters consume social media as a source of political information. Then, this research investigated how social media affects first-time voters' political interest. The results of the findings were obtained by conducting in-depth interviews with 15 interviewees from different states and multi-racial. The interviewees are youth born from 1998 to 2004 who are first-time voters in the 15th Malaysian General Election (GE15). The validation of the results relies on a set of interview questions specifically designed for the interviewees. The findings were linked with the research questions to ensure the objectives could be achieved.

4.2 Background

There were a total of 15 interviewees in this research, which consisted of 6 male interviewees and 9 female interviewees. In this research, there were 9 Chinese, 1 Malay, and 5 Indian. Besides, the age range of the interviewees is between 19 to 24, and the interviewees were from West Malaysia as well as East Malaysia in this research. Most of the interviewees' education level is from university, but there were two interviewees who had just graduated from secondary school. Meanwhile, during the data collection, the interviewees were required to rate themselves from "1-Not interested at all" to "5-Extremely interested" on their level of political interest. Surprisingly, none of the interviewees indicated they were in the range of "4-Very interested" and "5-Extremely interested".

Below shown the background information of the interviewees:

Interviewee	Gender	Race	Age	State	Education Level	Level of Political Interest
F1	Female	Chinese	19	Sarawak	Secondary school	2-Slightly interested
F2	Female	Chinese	19	Johor	Secondary school	3-Moderately interested
M1	Male	Chinese	20	Johor	University	3-Moderately interested
F3	Female	Indian	20	Perak	University	3-Moderately interested
F4	Female	Chinese	21	Melaka	University	3-Moderately interested
M2	Male	Malay	21	Kuala Lumpur	University	1-Not interested at all
F5	Female	Chinese	22	Melaka	University	2-Slightly interested
M3	Male	Chinese	22	Sarawak	University	3-Moderately interested
M4	Male	Indian	22	Penang	University	3-Moderately interested
M5	Male	Indian	22	Penang	University	3-Moderately interested
F6	Female	Chinese	23	Kuala Terengganu	University	1-Not interested at all
F7	Female	Chinese	23	Kuala Terengganu	University	2-Slightly interested
M6	Male	Chinese	24	Sabah	University	3-Moderately interested
F8	Female	Indian	24	Kedah	University	2-Slightly interested
F9	Female	Indian	24	Kuala Lumpur	University	1-Not interested at all

Table 1

During the data collection, the level of political interest of each interviewee was identified based on the interviewees' personal opinions. The level of political interest can be separated into 5 levels: not interested, slightly interested, moderately interested, very interested and extremely interested. According to the reasons mentioned by the interviewees, the level of political interest rated by themselves was possibly related to their willingness and frequency of political information searching. As mentioned, all the interviewees rated themselves in the range of 1-Not interested at all to 3-Moderately interested, and they stated that politics is not a major topic for them to learn. The findings indicated that the level of political interest could be influenced by information searching behavior and the influence of social media.

F6

" I choose 1- Not interested in my political interest level because only people shared on their social media I will know or read about the news. I will not search actively and I don't really put effort into reading or knowing about politics."

F5

"2-Slightly interested because I won't actively seek for political information and if I saw some political information pop out on my social media, I also won't click into it. However, if the headline of the post that I think is interesting, then I will click into it to know more."

M1

"I rate my political interest level as 3-Moderately interested. I think politics is just an additional factor that doesn't affect me much, nowadays people are rarely extremely interested in politics. I will actively learn about it but it doesn't mean I am extremely interested."

4.3 Level of social media usage

One of the most prominent themes is the level of social media usage. The level of social media usage can be illustrated through three levels, heavy usage, regular usage, and mild usage. Most interviewees recorded heavy social media usage, and they spent more than two hours on social media per day. Meanwhile, only one interviewee was recorded under regular social media usage, and she spent around one to two hours per day on social media. Below shown the time spent on social media per day and the social media usage of the interviewees:

Interviewee	Time Spent on Social Media Per Day	Social Media Usage
F1	5 - 6 hours	Heavy usage
F2	1 - 2 hours	Regular usage
M1	12 hours	Heavy usage
F3	5 - 6 hours	Heavy usage
F4	4 - 5 hours	Heavy usage
M2	6 hours	Heavy usage
F5	3 - 4 hours	Heavy usage
M3	2 - 2.5 hours	Heavy usage
M4	3 hours	Heavy usage
M5	2.5 hours	Heavy usage
F6	6 hours	Heavy usage
F7	3 - 4 hours	Heavy usage
M6	3 - 4 hours	Heavy usage
F8	4 - 5 hours	Heavy usage
F9	6 to 8 hours	Heavy usage

Table 2

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the majority of the interviewees have a heavy dependence on social media platforms as part of their daily routine. The interviewees are using social media to communicate, access news and information, engage in entertainment, and express their views on various topics. Most interviewees spent more than 3 hours on social media per day, while M1 can be highlighted in this finding as he spent up to 12 hours on social media daily. This finding indicated the social media trend nowadays among the youth in Malaysia.

M1

"I spend more than half a day on social media daily, which is around 12 hours or so. For me, social media is the main communication tool in my everyday life."

4.4 Type of social media users

The type of social media users can be explained by categorizing the interviewees into two main groups, which are active social media usage and passive social media usage based on the patterns of social media use, level of engagement, and the type of content they consume and create. According to the findings, all the interviewees are active social media users. Active social media users are more likely to have high social media connections and interaction with other social media users such as commenting on other users' posts, regularly creating content, and sharing on their social media accounts (Choi & Sung, 2018).

According to the findings, all the interviewees stated that they use social media as their source of the latest information and news. The interviewees actively used different types of social media applications and utilized different functions on social media such as chat box, story, comment, search, and entertainment.

M1

"I mainly utilize social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and Wechat to get the latest

information. Also, social media is my main communication medium with my family and

friends."

M2

"I use various social media applications in my daily life, such as Instagram, YouTube,

WhatsApp, and Telegram. I use these social media sites to connect with family and friends,

work, watch videos, and play games."

F6

"I use Instagram, Discord, and WhatsApp to contact friends in my daily life. I will also

constantly check information and news update through social media."

The research findings indicated a strong correlation between the types of social media users and the level of social media usage. The findings show that all the interviewees are active users who mostly also spent significant time on various social media platforms. Generally, the time spent on social media per day was linked with the patterns of social media use, level of engagement, and the type of content they consume and create.

4.5 Level of political awareness

One of the key themes that emerged from this data analysis was the level of political awareness among the interviewees. The research discovered that most interviewees had low political awareness levels, while some had moderate or high levels of political awareness.

Below shown the level of political awareness of the interviewees:

Interviewee	Level of Political Awareness	Level of Political Interest
F1	Moderate Political Awareness	2-Slightly interested
F2	High Political Awareness	3-Moderately interested
M1	High Political Awareness	3-Moderately interested
F3	Low Political Awareness	3-Moderately interested
F4	Low Political Awareness	3-Moderately interested
M2	Low Political Awareness	1-Not interested at all
F5	Low Political Awareness	2-Slightly interested
M3	Moderate Political Awareness	3-Moderately interested
M4	High Political Awareness	3-Moderately interested
M5	High Political Awareness	3-Moderately interested
F6	Moderate Political Awareness	1-Not interested at all
F7	Moderate Political Awareness	2-Slightly interested
M6	Low Political Awareness	3-Moderately interested
F8	Low Political Awareness	2-Slightly interested
F9	Moderate Political Awareness	1-Not interested at all

Table 3

According to the findings, several interviewees had limited comprehension of political topics. Most of the interviewees with low political awareness lacked political interest. Also, they do not follow current events or political news in their daily lives and may not be aware of political issues or policies. Interviewees who have low political awareness only understood general information about politics, especially during the general election. For example, the interviewees had little political awareness when they knew they were able to vote in GE15.

M2

"I do not know much about Malaysia's situation in terms of politics. I only know some

random factual information about politics."

F4

"I did not know much about politics. However, during GE15, I got to know about some

general political information because there was a lot of political information that popped out

on my feed during that time."

Research findings showed that some interviewees had a moderate level of political awareness. These groups of interviewees have some interest in or knowledge of politics. Some of them mainly follow current major events or political news occasionally. Generally, interviewees with moderate political awareness have a basic understanding of political issues or policies.

F1

"I will focus on major events or issues of the country. Sometimes, I will watch short

explanation videos to understand the situation of Malaysia's politics."

M3

"I understand the general knowledge of politics, such as I know the ministers, and I am

interested in understanding the nation's financial status."

A few of the interviewees had a high level of political awareness. Interviewees with high political awareness are those who have extensive knowledge about politics. Also, they have a deep understanding of political issues and policies.

F2

"I think my political knowledge is more than other people of the same age. I followed the

Democratic Action Party social media account and BBK. Also, I always read news from

social media accounts of the Star and China Press."

M1

"I always read the information from some liberals who will analyse political information and

the latest developments in politics. For me, I think our country is now entering the era of the

new government, and then our economy is slowly recovering. As a citizen, I also gradually

see hope."

In short, political awareness is an essential factor in shaping political interest, and increasing political awareness can lead to greater political engagement and participation. Usually, individuals who are more politically aware tend to have a higher level of political interest compared to those who are less politically aware. This is because political awareness exposes individuals to a wider range of political issues and encourages them to actively engage in political activities, such as voting, participating in political discussions, and joining political groups. Additionally, individuals with a higher level of political awareness are more likely to have developed political opinions and values, which further motivates their political interest. However, the findings showed that some interviewees had high political awareness but were not interested in politics. Based on the research findings, there might be no direct relationship between the level of political awareness and political interest.

4.6 Information searching behaviour

On the other hand, one of the significant themes in this research is information searching behaviour. Several interview questions were designed to identify the information

searching behaviour of the interviewees, especially on political information. The information

searching behaviour can be explained by categorizing the interviewees into two main groups,

which are active information searching and passive information searching.

Below shown the information searching behaviour of the interviewees:

Interviewee	Information Searching Behaviour	Level of Political Interest
F1	Passive	2-Slightly interested
F2	Active	3-Moderately interested
M1	Active	3-Moderately interested
F3	Passive	3-Moderately interested
F4	Active	3-Moderately interested
M2	Passive	1-Not interested at all
F5	Passive	2-Slightly interested
M3	Passive	3-Moderately interested
M4	Passive	3-Moderately interested
M5	Passive	3-Moderately interested
F6	Passive	1-Not interested at all
F7	Passive	2-Slightly interested
M6	Passive	3-Moderately interested
F8	Active	2-Slightly interested
F9	Active	1-Not interested at all

Table 4

The research findings indicated that more than half of the interviewees were passive in

information searching, while only 5 interviewees were active in information searching. Most

of the interviewees who had passive information searching behavior stated that they usually

read the information that popped out on their social media feeds or stories only. Usually, people

within their social network shared this kind of information, especially family and friends. This

research also found that most of the interviewees who were passive in information searching were less likely to have high political awareness, as they only learned political knowledge through their social media feeds and stories. Moreover, some also claimed they were not interested in politics. Therefore, they would not spend time searching for political information.

F6

"I didn't purposely search for political information. I just read the information on the feeds and stories that others posted on social media and read through the summarized procedures and information of the election on social media."

F7

"I don't purposely search for news or channels. I just got it from social media when the information popped out. I focus more on my academic or my personal life, so I am less likely to search for political information purposely."

As stated in the interviewees' backgrounds, all the interviewees were lack of political interest. However, few interviewees were actively searching for political information. Political interest would affect information searching behaviour but sometimes differ according to the interviewees' personalities and backgrounds. The claims by M1 can be highlighted in this research as he mentioned that the information searching behaviour would not be affected by his level of political interest. Also, F2 mentioned that she was a debate team member therefore she was used to learning political information even though she had only a moderate interest in politics.

M1

"I will actively learn about politics, but it doesn't mean I am extremely interested. When I see information that attracts me, especially on TikTok, I will search for it as I want to understand politics."

F2

"I was a member of a debate team. Basically, I would have an understanding of Malaysian politics. More or less, I'm exposed to this information, and I will read it. Usually, I just search and see the information when I want to know. As most of the information will have connections and further updates, I will continue to search for it in order to understand the complete information."

4.7 Changes in social media usage

One of the interview questions was designed in order to identify the changes in social media usage of political information among first-time voters before, during, and after the GE15. This question was to identify the interviewees' social media usage patterns when a major event was happening in the country.

Below shown the social media usage change of the interviewees:

Interviewees	Changes in Social Media Usage
F1	No changes at all
F2	No changes at all
M1	Great changes
F3	Great changes
F4	Little changes
M2	Great changes
F5	Little changes

M3	Great changes
M4	Little changes
M5	Great changes
F6	No changes at all
F7	Little changes
M6	No changes at all
F8	Moderate changes
F9	Moderate changes

Table 5

There were few interviewees who claimed that they did not have any changes in their social media usage before, during and after the general election. Most of them remain passive in information searching and learning about politics. This is because they lacked interest in politics, and they were not willing to spend time on learning politics.

M6

"My social media usage still remained the same, even my friends on social media were actively discussing politics and the general election. They shared their inked fingers and shared their opinions on politics. I only viewed their postings, and I did not search actively for the information because most of the time, I only focus on my personal development."

F6

"For me, there was no change. I think my social media usage still remains the same even though it was during the general election, because I am not really into politics. So, I did not purposely search for it. Usually, I will listen to the sharing by my parents and swipe through the information in my social media feeds and stories."

Some of the interviewees faced little changes in social media usage before, during and after the general election. Most of them were more willing to understand the politics before and during the general election. They became passive after the general election, as they wanted to fulfil their responsibilities as citizens to vote. Therefore, basic and relevant political information was needed for them to make decisions during the general election. In this case, they were more likely to read political information on social media.

F4

"Before the GE15, I did not actively search for political information as I was not interested in politics even when my parents were chit-chatting about politics. However, during the GE15, because I was a first time voter, I think I must have some or a little bit of political knowledge before I went to vote. Therefore, when I saw some interesting headline popping out on my social media, I will click into it and get more political information which I would not do in the past."

Some interviewees faced great changes before, during and after the general election. The general election changed the interviewees' information searching behaviour from passive to active.

M1

"Before this, I was less likely to search for political information. However, I actively use social media in order to get political information during the general election. As a first time voter, I need to understand the voting procedure and the political system. After the general election, I will be more concerned about the new government. Therefore, I always follow up on the country's latest developments."

4.8 Level of social media influence

One of the important themes in this research is the level of social media influence on the interviewees' political interest and decision-making on voting. This research discovered that most of the interviewees had moderately influenced by social media, while some interviewees had high influence and low influence. Only two interviewees were not influenced by social media toward political interest and decision-making on voting.

Below shown the level of social media influence of the interviewees:

Interviewee	Level of Social Media Influence	Time Spent on Social Media Per Day
F1	Moderate influence	5 - 6 hours
F2	High influence	1 - 2 hours
M1	Moderate influence	12 hours
F3	Low influence	5 - 6 hours
F4	Moderate influence	4 - 5 hours
M2	No influence at all	6 hours
F5	Low influence	3 - 4 hours
M3	High influence	2 - 2.5 hours
M4	Moderate influence	3 hours
M5	Moderate influence	2.5 hours
F6	Moderate influence	6 hours
F7	Low influence	3 - 4 hours
M6	Low influence	3 - 4 hours
F8	High influence	4 - 5 hours
F9	No influence at all	6 to 8 hours

Table 6

Among all the interviewees, only M2 and F9 were not influenced by social media on political interest and decision-making on voting, even though they had more exposure to

political information on social media. These interviewees had a clear and strong stand that social media would not affect their political interest and decision-making. This can be explained when the social media influence correlated with the level of political interest rated by the interviewees. Both M2 and F9 rated themselves as "1-Not interested at all" in their political interest. When the interviewees had a strong disinterest in politics, the information they exposed on social media will not influence their political interest and decision-making on voting.

M2

"I will not get interested even if I am exposed to more political information. As I am not interested in politics, when I am exposed to more about it, I would get annoyed by the information. Also, it will not influence my decision making in voting."

Besides, 4 interviewees had low social media influence, whereas the information they exposed on social media slightly affected their political interest, but not decision-making on voting.

F3

"Social media plays a role in affecting my political interest slightly. Postings about opinions by the others such as postings about political parties' people supported the most, reasons to support and also contribution of the political parties towards the country, would help me to gain some confidence toward the Malaysia government. However, social media would not affect my decision making on voting as I have my own stand and opinion on which party I would be choosing."

Furthermore, there were 6 interviewees who had moderate social media influence, whereas the political information they exposed on social media would affect their political interest.

M1

"Like the TikTok I just mentioned, watching the video creators analyze politics will be interesting. I will listen to them with interest and I will want to learn more about political information. The content of social media makes me more determined to make my own decision on voting. In the next election, I will observe more of their physical actions towards citizens than their speeches on social media to make decision making."

Additionally, there are 3 interviewees who had high social media influence, whereas the political information they exposed on social media affected their political interest and also their decision-making on voting.

M3

"The information that I exposed on social media definitely will shape my decision in the next general election. Originally they publish for the purpose of letting people know their political manifesto, including the various political parties to build a good image and let people know what they have via social media. I can see whether the political direction of Malaysia and the development of the country is in line with my hopes for Malaysia."

F8

"Definitely yes. The political information that I exposed on social media will affect my decision making in the next general election. It will shape by voting for the right one based on what they are currently doing."

In conclusion, based on the finding there is no direct correlation between social media influence and the time spent on social media. M3 and F8, who had a high social media influence on their decision-making on voting, stated that they will still be based on the information that showed the action and direction of the political parties through social media to make a decision on voting. It showed that the influence of social media depends on the specific contents the interviewees are exposed to, rather than the time they spend on social media. This was highly dependent on the individual's social network rather than the time spent on social media.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, this study answered the two research questions. Therefore, the findings will be further discussed in this chapter based on the research method used. The first research question is to explore how first-time voters consume social media as a source of political information, while the second research question is to investigate how social media affects first-time voters' political interest.

5.1 Social media as a source of political information

Based on the research findings, all the interviewees utilize social media as their source of information in their daily lives. The interviewees use Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok as the source of political information. As for the first research question, which is to explore how first-time voters consume social media as a source of political information, the findings showed that most interviewees heavily depend on social media to learn about political information. According to the findings, most interviewees are heavy social media users who spend more than two hours daily on social media. Also, all interviewees are active social media users who actively use various social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, WeChat, and more.

Furthermore, the research found that all the interviewees spent at least 1 hour daily on social media. They use social media for communication, entertainment, and information searching. Due to the ease of access to information and the interactive nature of social media, youth would be more likely to seek information from social media Clarke, J. (2020). According to the National Youth Survey 2021, 46% chose social media as the primary source of political information compared to other sources (Merdeka Center, 2022). The same goes for the interviewees, the research findings indicated that all the interviewees relied on social media as

a source of political information. The interviewees spent most of their free time on social media and consumed political information that appeared on their feeds. More than half of the interviewees also claimed their passiveness in information searching, as they usually consumed only information on their social media feeds. Thus, the interviewees were not willing to learn political information actively, and they only depended on whoever was on their social networks, such as family, friends, and relatives.

Some interviewees stated that they learned general political information to fulfil their responsibilities as citizens. As first-time voters, they think they must understand certain general political information such as voting procedures, political parties, and politicians to decide during the general election. Still, most of them were more likely to learn the information passively from social media instead of searching actively. Furthermore, some interviewees stated that they were more likely to understand political information when people within their social network shared it. When the interviewees only understand the information that appeared on their social media feed, the perspectives of the interviewees towards politics would be similar to people in the same social network. This is because people would be more likely to accept the information from the person they trust and be more inclined to spread a message (Buchanan & Benson, 2019).

One of the main reasons the interviewees consume political information from social media was because they think most of the information on social media is short and concise. Geeng et al. (2020) stated that shorter postings and memes frequently drew the attention of social media users. The interviewees preferred brief information and messages about the general election from social media. This was because they were unwilling to spend much time on learning politics, and they claimed that they were not interested in politics. Most of the interviewees were passive in information-searching behavior, and they just relied on what their friends

shared and the information that was shared by the social media users that they followed. They were unwilling to search for political information actively.

On the other hand, there were also interviewees who were actively searching for political information when they wanted to know in-depth information, especially during the general election. Some interviewees would search for further information when they were exposed to certain interesting and funny political content on social media. Geeng et al. (2020) have proven that social media users are more likely to read and share short and funny information. When they were exposed to these kinds of political information on social media, they would be more interested and willing to find out more about it. According to one of the interviewees, sometimes she feels curious about certain interesting political content from social media, and she would search for the particular news to know more and have the latest updates.

While social media has made it easier than ever to access information, it has also contributed to a phenomenon where youth may rely on social media algorithms to filter and prioritize what they see. As a result, every social media user has different types and amounts of political content on their social media feed, as it is based on the preferences and interactions of the content of the social media user. Also, this will cause youth to have limited exposure to diverse perspectives and impede the development of a well-rounded and nuanced understanding of politics.

5.2 Social media as an influence on political interest

As for the second research question, which is to investigate how social media affects first-time voters' political interest, the findings indicated that social media plays a role in influencing first-time voters' political interest and decision-making. Undoubtedly, social media has changed how Malaysians experience politics by providing them with a space to receive and deliberate political information (Tan, 2022). With the common access to social media as a

source of political information, it impacted for the first time voters' political interest and affected the decision-making during the general election.

As discussed, most interviewees were passive in information searching and relied on political information on their social media feeds. Therefore, most of the political information they learned from social media depended on their social network. According to Munir (2018), the discussion and expressing opinions on social media have proved that social media are effective enough in changing youth voting behavior. Based on the research findings, it could be highly possible that first-time voters were influenced by opinions within their social network. It shaped a similar political perception within the same social network and influenced first-time voters' political interest and decision-making because there is an echo chamber between them. An echo chamber forms when a group of people preferentially connect with each other to the exclusion of outsiders (Bruns, 2017). Their perceptions of politics could be shaped by the content within their social network on social media, such as family members and peers.

Meanwhile, some interviewees actively searched and learned information before and during the GE15. However, they were getting passive and less interested in politics after the GE15. This could be related to the social media trend that people nowadays are more likely to follow topics that are discussed most in the community. People often look to others for cues on what is popular or major and may desire to fit in or be seen as part of a group. They will be more likely to join the discussion with other people about the major event (Jones et al., 2017). For example, the general election is one of the major events in Malaysia, so the interviewees were more likely to find out and understand more about politics during the period. However, the level of political interest would fade after the general election, and the interviewees would become passive in information searching.

Furthermore, the degree to which the communication source is trusted is more likely essential to the first-time voter's political interest and decision-making on voting (Buchanan &

Benson, 2019). When the interviewees passively consumed political information on their social media feeds, they were not considered the credibility of the information posted by their trusted social media users within their social network. Even though they might question the credibility of the information, they would not make any effort to find out more. Moreover, one interview question asked whether the information the interviewees were exposed to on social media would shape their decisions in the next general election. Some of the interviewees stated that their decision-making was based on how good the political party was based on the postings that appeared on their social media feeds. When they were exposed to many negative comments and claims of a political party or a politician on social media, they were less likely to vote for the party. This showed that the opinions of politics of the interviewees could be influenced by their social network. Therefore, the interviewees' political opinions could possibly be similar to their social network. Due to the echo chamber between the interviewees and their social network, they were more likely to trust those with the same opinion as them and the content that was spread by the person they followed on social media. They did not consider the credibility of the information, therefore it will easily lead to misinformation and biased information for them, and it would affect their political interest and decision-making on voting.

Based on the findings, different interviewees faced different levels of social media influence on their political interests and decision-making in voting. Most of the interviewees were influenced when they consumed political information from social media, and it was highly dependent on the social media content they were exposed to. Some interviewees stated that social media would affect their political interests but not their decision-making in voting. M1 stated that social media had influenced his political interest rather than decision-making because the interviewee would be based on the action of political parties toward the Malaysians to make the decision. Also, social media slightly affected M6 political interest but no decision-making because his decision-making was shaped by the good deeds which his parents and

elders shared. Some of the interviewees stated that the political content on social media, whether positive information or negative information, would indirectly affect their political interests. For example, when they were exposed to negative postings about the government, it would reduce their political interest. However, political interest would increase if they were entertained by funny information.

Additionally, one of the findings that can be highlighted was that most interviewees got more interested in politics during the general election, which is one of the most significant events for all citizens because the content related to political information would be increased during the general election. Before and during the general election, there were a lot of political discussions by the users on social media, and there was more political information spread compared to usual (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). Meanwhile, most interviewees stated that they were more interested in learning more political information such as the voting procedures and the political parties, as they wanted to involve themselves in the general election. However, the interviewees' political interest level decreased after the general election. This scenario can be related to the social media trend where youth today are more likely to follow and participate in the discussion on trending topics. Therefore, their political interest was not sustained and differed based on the major events and discussions on social media.

On the other hand, social media plays a role in affecting the first-time voter's political interest during the general election. At the same time, social media could also shape the way first-time voters make decisions on voting. In this case, the increased exposure of content about politics on social media. The content would frequently pop up on their social media therefore, the political information which showed interestingly would attract the users who have the interest to see. According to the research findings, most interviewees claimed that social media would not fully influence their decision-making on voting. They stated that their decision-making would mainly focus on their judgment and evaluation of the contribution of the political

parties and politicians. Hence, some interviewees stated that social media did affect their decision-making. This is because the information they are exposed to on social media leads to their positive or negative impressions of politics or specific political parties.

5.3 Limitation and recommendation

The first limitation is the interview questions which needed to deeply identify the decision-making process of the first-time voters for the GE15. Based on the theme of the research, the level of social media influence, the researchers identified the interviewees' political interests and decision-making on voting. The interview questions covered only the way that they will be affected by social media but not the way of the decision-making process. In this case, the decision-making process of the interviewees can be one of the main discussions of the research, as the researchers will be able to learn the impacts of social media content the interviewees are exposed to and the change of the opinions of the interviewees towards their voting decisions. Therefore, research on the decision-making process by first-time voters during voting is recommended for future research to explore the impact of social media on what kind of content on first-time voters' social media and the social network influence their decision-making process during voting. In addition, the research found that the users were shaped by the posting and opinions of people in their social network; therefore, it is crucial to understand how the social network of the people and relationships affect their decision-making process. Investigating what kind of content on social media, such as news articles, opinion pieces, memes, or user-generated content, and the social network influencing the decision-making process of first-time voters could provide valuable insights.

The second limitation of this research is that the interview question is not specific to one social media platform to identify how social media affects the first-time voter's political interest and decision-making during GE15. However, in this case, the result that the researchers

get will be the discussion of a wide range of the interview question. It will have different discussions by the users between other social media platforms such as Twitter is mainly on informative discussion, Tiktok is focused on using videos as the content of information, and Instagram is more to photos and feeds (Hase et al., 2022) therefore, the result of this research will be too brief and the researchers were hardly to know what kind of information will affect the first-time voter political interest and decision making. So, the research on how social media affects the first-time voter's political interest and decision-making is recommended for future research to study what kind of social media platform and the content would affect the first-time voter's political interest and decision-making process during voting.

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, social media can shape the perception and behavior of first-time voters in several ways. Social media algorithms can create echo chambers, where users are only exposed to content and opinions that reinforce their existing beliefs and values. This can contribute to polarization and reinforce existing biases. It also can mobilize and activate first-time voters by providing a platform for political engagement and organizing. Young people have used social media to organize protests, rallies, and voter registration drives. Social media can amplify misinformation and fake news, which can mislead and confuse first-time voters. Platforms like Facebook have been criticized for their role in spreading misinformation during elections. As for Instagram, it mostly pictures and memes where everything is simplified, and it causes a lack of understanding among users.

With the rise of social media, political campaigns are now targeting first-time voters through these platforms, emphasizing the importance of engaging youth voices in the electoral process. However, it is important to note that social media should not be the only source of information for first-time voters. They should also take the time to research, analyse, and

critically evaluate the information they receive through social networks to make informed decisions. Social networks have become a vital tool for first-time voters in shaping their political consciousness and in influencing the political landscape, and their importance is expected to grow in the future. Overall, social media has a significant impact on the perception and behavior of first-time voters. While it can provide a platform for engagement and mobilization, it also poses risks of misinformation and polarization. It is important for young people to critically evaluate the information they consume on social media and consider diverse perspectives.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Social media as a source of political information: Impact of social media use on first-time voters' political interest in Malaysia

Section A: Social media usage & Political information

1. How long do you spend on social media per day?

2. Can you describe your usage of social media? What do you do on social media?

3. Do you use social media for information searching or knowing about the news?

4. How do you learn about politics in Malaysia? What channel do you use to seek political information?

5. How do you use social media to understand politics in Malaysia? How do you use social media to learn about political information during the past general election in Malaysia (GE15)?

6. Can you describe why you use social media as your source of political information?

7. In 2022, GE15 became a popular topic for active discussions on social media among Malaysians. Can you describe the change in social media usage patterns with political information before, during, and after the GE15?

Section B: Social media usage & First-time voters' political interest

1. Do you pay attention to political news and political information regularly in your daily life? Will you actively seek political information?

2. Do you think that social media plays a role in affecting your political interest? In what way?

3. Can you describe how social media influenced first-time voters' political interest during the past general election in Malaysia (GE15)?

4. In your opinion, can you suggest how social media should be utilized in order to generate political interest among first-time voters, particularly first-time voters for the next general election in Malaysia?

APPENDIX B: INFORMED AND CONSENT FORM

(PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY)

1. Investigator's Name :	**Faculty** :
Title of the research project :	
Purpose of study :	
Procedure :	
Contact Person :	
Note: 1. All volunteers involved in this study will not be covered by insurance *2. Contact person must be the principal investigator/supervisor*	
2. Particulars of Volunteer (Volunteer Identifier/Label) *(Please use separate form if more than one volunteer)* Full Name : Chinese character *(if applicable)* : New Identity Card/ : Gender : Passport No. Contact No. : Email	

3. Voluntary participation

You understand that participation in this study is voluntary and that if you decide not to participate, you will experience no penalty or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. If you decide to participate, you may subsequently change your mind about being in the study, and may stop participating at any time. You understand that you must inform the principal investigator of your decision immediately.

4. Confidentiality

All information, samples and specimens you have supplied will be kept confidential by the principal investigator and the research team and will not be made available to the public unless disclosure is required by law.

5. Disclosure

Data, samples and specimens obtained from this study will not identify you individually. The data, samples and specimens may be given to the sponsor and/or regulatory authorities and may be published or be reused for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. However, your identity will not be disclosed. The original records will be reviewed by the principal investigator and the research team, the UTAR Scientific and Ethical Review Committee, the sponsor and regulatory authorities for the purpose of verifying research procedures and/or data.

By signing this consent form, you authorize the record review, publication and re-utilization of data, information and sample storage and data transfer as described above

6. Declaration

I have read or have the information above read to me in the language understandable to me. The above content has been fully explained to me.

I have asked all questions that I need to know about the study and this form. All my questions have been answered. I have read, or have read to me, all pages of this consent form and the risks described. I voluntarily consent and offer to take part in this study. By signing this consent form, I certify that all information I have given, including my medical history, is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. **I will not hold UTAR or the research team responsible for any consequences and/or liability whatsoever arising from my participation in this study.**

7. Consent

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign below.

_____   _____

Signature of Volunteer   IC/Passport No.

_____   _____

Name of Volunteer   Date

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8. Statement of Principal Investigator/Supervisor

I have fully explained to the volunteer taking part in this study what he / she can expect by virtue of his / her participation. The volunteer who is giving consent to take part in this study
- Understands the language that I have used.
- Reads well enough to understand this form or is able to hear and understand the form' when read to him or her.
- Is of the age of majority of 18 or above.

To the best of my knowledge, when the volunteer signed this form, he or she understood:
- That taking part in the study is voluntary.
- What the study is about.
- What needs to be done.
- What are the potential benefits.
- What are the known risks.

A copy of this consent form has been given to the volunteer.

_____
_____
Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor   IC/Passport No.

_____
_____
Signature of Principal Investigator/Supervisor   Date

*Note: 1.   The principal investigator/supervisor conducting the informed consent process, must sign **and** date form **at the same time as the volunteer**.*