



GENERAL ELECTION 15: THE STAR'S NEWS ARTICLES' FRAMING AND HOW IT  
INFLUENCES FIRST-TIME MALAYSIAN VOTERS

NG KAH KEI

A RESEARCH PROJECT  
SUBMITTED IN  
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
BACHELOR OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION (HONS)  
FACULTY OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES  
UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN

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**DECLARATION**

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the result of my 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 “General Election 15: The Star’s News Articles’ Framing And How It Influences First-Time Malaysian Voters” prepared and submitted by Ng Kah Kei in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Corporate Communication (Hons) is hereby accepted.

Date: 27 April 2024

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Supervisor,

Ms. Jullian Khor Gee Khing

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### ABSTRACT

General Election-15 (GE-15) has brought about a significant change for Malaysia. First-time Malaysian voters have emerged as a major influence in this political shift. Simultaneously, social media, particularly Facebook, has played a pivotal role in shaping the news frame and enabling every citizen to access the latest information, issues, and crises. Additionally, the voting behaviour of first-time Malaysian voters has become a significant area of research during GE-15. The objective of this study is to identify the news frame set by The Star's Facebook during GE-15 and to examine how Facebook news influences the voting behaviour of first-time Malaysian voters. This research employs two quantitative approaches: content analysis to investigate how The Star's Facebook Page set the news frame, and the distribution of a survey questionnaire to 100 first-time Malaysian voters from the Klang Valley region who participated in GE-15. The findings of the research indicate that The Star's Facebook Page featured 12 categories among 237 news articles during the GE-15 campaign period. Furthermore, the study concludes that The Star's Facebook news has indeed influenced the voting behaviour of first-time Malaysian voters, and the main reason is the news from The Star's Facebook is informative.

**Keywords:** *General Election-15, Facebook, The Star, first-time Malaysian voters, voting behaviour, influence, news frame*



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 General Election

In general, democracy is defined as “rule by the people.” It is commonly understood to mean that citizens elect their representatives in free and fair elections. Beyond this, several definitions exist. For instance, some of them view democracy as giving people more protection from the state and more individual liberties. Democracy enables people to hold their leaders responsible and offers them the power to influence significant decisions that affect their own lives. However, there are other advantages as well. Democracies appear to be faster to develop, more peaceful both within and between nations and better governed than autocracies (Bastian et al., n.d.). Therefore, the procedure of democracy is necessary to complete through general election. A general election will need to include all the citizens within the country to vote for an impartial government.

Nasruddin et.al (2019) claimed that the purpose of elections is to ensure that national objectives and values are met. A key principle of the rule of legislation is the assurance of an impartial election, meaning that it will not be influenced by outside powers. Modifications to the general election system also have a significant impact on an individual’s capacity to engage in democratic processes and the state’s broader political dialogue as voters, candidates, or party members. Beyond any legal obstacles, people’s willingness to participate in the democratic process can be influenced by how fair they believe the voting process to be (Lopez, 2022). Candidates from different political parties or independents run for seats in the legislature, such as the Congress or Parliament, during a general election. While the specifics and regulations governing general elections differ from nation to nation, most include voters selecting the candidates or parties of their choice.

Under the Fixed Term Parliaments Act, general elections are scheduled to take place every five years (BBC, 2023). A Parliament can only exist for a maximum of five years from the date of its founding. However, if there are specific circumstances that happen, the general election could be held earlier or later (UK Parliament, 2023). Based on the United Kingdom's general election regulations, every constituency is represented in the London House of Commons by an individual known as a Member of Parliament (MP). The election date will be decided before the Parliament dismisses.

The procedure of election day is people must go to the respective polling stations to vote. They will get a voting paper that lists all the candidates. The candidates shown in the voting paper are the people who want to be the Member of Parliament of that area. On the voting paper, each voter must cross the names of the candidates they most wish to represent. Every individual is only qualified to cast one vote (UK Parliament, 2023). A new Parliament can be formed through the voting results of the citizens in the general election.

Members of Parliament are affiliated with groups known as political parties. To win the general election, a political party must secure half of the seats in Parliament. A political party is said to have won an outright majority if they were able to achieve this outcome. Following that, the head of this party will receive an invitation to establish a new government from the King or Queen of that country. The party chief will nonetheless take on the role of prime minister (BBC, 2023).

## **1.2 General Election in Malaysia**

Malaysia is a monarchy under the constitution that practices parliamentary democracy. The head of state is His Majesty the King. The most significant institution in a nation that upholds its principles of democracy is parliament. Each of the 222 elected members of the House of Representatives (Dewan Rakyat) represents a parliamentary constituency. The

general election regulation in Malaysia has a similarity with the United Kingdom. For instance, a general election will be held every five years and the parties with the most elected Member of Parliament and manage to secure the seat of the House of Representatives can form a federal government to rule the country (The Official Portal of Parliament of Malaysia, 2021). Chu (2022) claimed that the campaign period for the general election in Malaysia lasts for up to 15 days (about 2 weeks).

After that, the parties which have won to become members of the House of Representatives, are required to take the necessary swear in front of the Speaker before taking their place. By taking the act of swearing, the members promise to uphold, defend, and maintain the Constitution as well as to carry out their duties faithfully and fully as members. They also pledge to have genuine faith and allegiance to Malaysia (The Official Portal of Parliament of Malaysia, 2021)

### ***1.2.1 History of General Election in Malaysia***

According to Yuen (2022), it has stated that the first general election in the Federation of Malaya was held in 1955. There are 7 parties that took part in the first general election in Malaysia. 3 of the parties that have the controversial in this general election are the Alliance Party (Parti Perikatan), National Party (Parti Negara) and Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). The Alliance Party was made up of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malaysia Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). More than 80% of voters supported the Alliance Party. As a result, the Alliance Party won 51 of the 52 seats and was required to form a government in the first general election. Tunku Abdul Rahman, the leader of the Alliance Party, was chosen as the Federation of Malaya's first Prime Minister (Yuen, 2022).

According to the Constitution of Malaysia 1957, Malaysia established the Election Commission of Malaysia (SPR) on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1957. The Election Commission had just 2 members and 1 chairman when it was first formed. The Election Commission now has three 3 members, up from 2 until Malaysia was formed in 1963. An additional member either from Sabah or Sarawak was assigned on a rotating basis. The Election Commission is responsible for conducting the voter registration and election record review processes. The State Legislative Assembly or House of Representatives general elections should be handled by the Election Commission, as would any by-elections in the event of a resignation. The Election Commission's policy is to ensure free and fair elections to protect, oversee, and uphold the democratic process in Malaysia (Election Commission of Malaysia, 2023). Also, the Election Commission of Malaysia has the responsibility of announcing the election's winner on the same day as the general election is held (Chu, 2022). Nonetheless, Malaysia has held 15 times of Malaysian General Elections based on the timeline from the year 1955 till the year 2022.

### ***1.2.2 "Undi18"***

Moreover, the requirement to as a voter for general election is a person who is a citizen of Malaysia. Additionally, a Malaysian is eligible to vote when he/she reaches 18 years old. The particular reason for the circumstances is the Malaysian parliament passed an act which stated that lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 for general elections which is called "Undi18" in July 2019. The revisions to Malaysia's federal constitution are permitted because 211 out of 222 parliamentarians expressed support for them. According to former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, young people in Malaysia are becoming more politically conscious than they were a few years ago. Giving people the chance, space, and voice to shape the nation's democracy through elections requires taking this action (Tirtayana, 2021). The electorate increased to 21.02 million when the voting age was lowered by 5.8 million. The benefits of

increased engagement, political responsibility, and responsive policymaking were suggested by this broader enfranchisement (Chai, 2022).

Legislators on all sides of the issue concurred during the motion's discussion that 18-year-olds should be able to vote, but they also emphasized that young people need to be adequately educated about democracy and politics. Malaysia will now be in step with the majority of nations in the region and around the world after lowering the voting age to 18. While Indonesia maintains a voting age of 17, Singapore has kept its voting age at 21 (Leong, 2019). Therefore, the Election Commission (EC) forecasted that by 2023, there will be 7.8 million additional voters, a 50 per cent increase from 2019 (Tirtayana, 2021).

### ***1.2.3 First-Time Voters***

First-time voters to understand how crucial free and fair elections are to their own lives and the communities in which they reside (Council of Europe Portal, n.d.) There were 5 million out of the 21.1 million eligible Malaysian voters are first-time voters who are under "Undi18". Although the bill greatly increases the opportunities for young Malaysians to participate in the national political process, it is unclear how this larger electorate would affect the results of the next election. Also, first-time voters for GE-15 have been registered automatically as eligible voters (Vochelet, 2022).

### ***1.2.4 The 15<sup>th</sup> General Election in Malaysia***

The 15<sup>th</sup> General Election (GE-15) held in Malaysia was on 19 November 2022. In this general election, almost 21.1 million Malaysians are eligible to vote. The campaign period for GE-15 was only 14 days which was less than one day as compared to the previous general election (Chu, 2022).

In this general election, 3 parties are the most controversial which are The Alliance of Hope (Pakatan Harapan), The National Front (Barisan Nasional) and The National Alliance

(Perikatan Nasional). According to Mohamad & Suffian (2023), they explained that the results of the 15th General Election in Malaysia showed that ethnicity continues to be a major determinant of election outcome. Although a much greater proportion of Malay voters did not support PH, they were split between Barisan Nasional (BN) and Perikatan Nasional (PN). In three-cornered races between PN, BN, and PH, particularly in marginal seats with a Malay majority and seats with a non-Malay majority, this circumstance ultimately provided PH with an additional advantage.

After reviewing the result of GE-15, it has brought a new history for Malaysia. As the result from GE-15 has shown in a Hung Parliament, this means none of the parties secured half of the House of Representatives seats. Even though there have been major changes to Malaysian politics in the last 20 years, ethnicity continues to play a major role in determining the results of elections (Mohamad & Suffian, 2023). In the end, based on the voting result of the 15<sup>th</sup> general election Malaysia formed a Parliament which was a coalition among PH, BN and GRS.

### **1.3 General Election content on Facebook**

There are various angles from which to view the interplay between political actors and news media. According to Mohammed & Manan (2020), back to the earliest general election, all the political parties usually use traditional media such as booklets, flyers and brochures to reach the people. With the rise of social media, the political parties started to use online platforms to disseminate each of the election candidates' information. Opposition parties began to use internet platforms more effectively in the 2008 election. They use emails, group nets and websites to contact the public. After that, Malaysians were exposed to political news and opinions that differed from what they typically saw in the mainstream media.

Mohammed & Manan (2020) stated that even while the government continued to control the traditional media, politicians and opposition parties were aggressively using social media, particularly Facebook, to interact with voters. Numerous studies have documented Facebook's influence on Malaysia's 13th general election. The general election campaign is run via Facebook to inspire voters to use their rights on election day. These politicians can manage their own media presence on Facebook. Facebook enables candidates to directly connect with voters, irrespective of their political affiliations or inclinations, in contrast to traditional broadcast media which operates under stringent gatekeeping and bureaucratic regulations.

Facebook became the popular use of media platform to channel more information to Malaysians compared to other social media platforms such as X and Instagram. YouTube, Twitter, or Facebook videos are used to announce and clarify all government policy concerns and announcements. The fact that Malaysians responded with remarks and recommendations shows how widely the material was received (Chinnasamy, 2018). Political party conceptions or interpretations among first-time Malaysian voters would shift as a result of disparate suggestions, compliments, and the number of reads, views, and reactions, such as Facebook buttons (Ng et.al, 2023). Therefore, the general election content can spread widely through Facebook to reach more people.

#### **1.4 Social Media**

Social media began in the early 2000s. Around 2004, MySpace became the first social media platform with one million active monthly users. One could argue that social media as we know it started at this point. While some major social media platforms, like Facebook, YouTube, and Reddit, have been operating for a decade or longer, others are far more recent (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). Hamid & Rahman (2018) reviewed that social media is a platform and

tool that lets individuals generate and share knowledge and information with others. Social media facilitates worldwide communication and knowledge sharing among people.

Additionally, it is growing in popularity and significance as a source of knowledge. This shows that social media is one of the platforms to assist people to get improvement. Social media makes it easier for people to communicate and share knowledge globally. It is also becoming more and more important as a source of information. For instance, family matters can be shared through social media and healthy or beauty sharing can be disseminated via social media platforms too. Social media has a significant impact on users and plays a crucial role in politics and elections (Hamid & Rahman, 2018). This is due to social media's ability to spread information and influence readers. Hamid & Rahman (2018) also claimed that the use of social media and how it affects Malaysia's election landscape, particularly with the start of the 14th general election.

There are different social media platforms that can be found currently. For example, Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok and WhatsApp are the trending social media platforms that everyone is using. Walsh (2023) stated that although social media is widely used, not every business can benefit from every site. Find out which of these popular social media sites your audience will respond to the most. Besides, marketers can use social media platforms to engage their target audience, increase brand awareness, and even build a devoted community if they have the proper tools, resources, and plans in place. The fashion industry, food industry and e-commerce industry have become the domain in using social media. Each of these industries has used the right social media platforms to build its reputation and boost its popularity. As an illustration, Nike keeps a separate X account for customer service alone, which helps them to keep their marketing messaging and customer service conversations apart (Keyhole, 2023).



Among the social media platforms, they also can be identified into several types of social media. Israel (2023) justified that the traditional social networking site is part of the types of social media. It includes Facebook, LinkedIn, X and Threads. Traditional social networking services work well for connecting you with people and magnifying your message. With these adaptable platforms, you may share textual and visual information with anybody you choose.

Moreover, Instagram, Pinterest and Snapchat are image-based social media. Image-based social media are used for visual storytelling, brand-building and social commerce. These kinds of social media can send users to an outside website by providing multiple options for in-app shopping. By creating a strong in-app shopping presence, you can sell directly to your clients. Additionally, Facebook Live, Instagram Live and YouTube have been classified as livestream social media. Throughout the pandemic, live streaming experienced a surge in popularity. At the end of 2022, roughly a third of 16 to 64-year-old internet users were weekly livestream viewers (Israel, 2023). However, the priority of social media platforms is based on the preferences.

### **1.5 Facebook**

Facebook is a social networking website that was founded in February 2004 by Harvard University students Chris Hughes, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz, Eduardo Saverin and Mark Zuckerberg. Facebook is a company in addition to being a social media site. On May 18, 2012, Facebook made its first public offering (IPO) and began trading under the symbol FB on the Nasdaq stock exchange. The business changed its name to Meta on October 28, 2021. Facebook trades under the symbol MVRB as of December 1, 2021 (Kerner, n.d.). Not until 2006, when it opened to users 13 years of age and up, did Facebook truly take off, quickly surpassing MySpace to become the most widely used social network globally (Nations, 2021).

Kerner (n.d.) stated that several features can be found on Facebook. The main feature of Facebook is finding and connecting with friends and family. Users can locate acquaintances quickly with the use of the search interface. Facebook users can view news from the connections and groups they follow by using the News Feed feature. A post can have comments or likes added to it. Facebook's timeline is where user profiles and updates are shown. Facebook's wall served as the initial location for user profiles and updates, while the timeline is its replacement. Posts, friend listings, status updates, images, videos, and details on user activity are all included in the user timeline. With those features, Facebook can let people connect with friends and remain updated on their activities. Facebook may be used to establish and manage interest-based communities on almost any subject. It is a platform that enables like-minded people to get together, converse, exchange ideas, and plan. For instance, users can share their news through Facebook to exchange ideas and share opinions.

Facebook is managed by Meta, Inc., the same company that controls Instagram, WhatsApp, and Threads. Facebook is still actively in use today, despite the fact that it may not be the innovative new platform it once was and may even have lost appeal with younger users. Facebook has reached monthly action users (MAU) as compared with other social media platforms (Walsh, 2023). According to the most recent data, which was released in January 2023, there are currently about 28.18 million Facebook users in Malaysia, growing at a rate of 0.97 per cent. The age of male and female users is approximately 51.34 per cent and 48.66 per cent, respectively (OOSGA, 2023).

### ***1.5.1 Facebook Context in Malaysia***

According to OOSGA (2023), In Malaysia, finding material, reading fresh stories, occupying free time, and maintaining relationships with others are the four main reasons people use social media. Out of the 32 million individuals living in Malaysia, according to Internet

World Statistics 2017, 22 million use Facebook. This demonstrates that over two-thirds of people use Facebook every day, particularly when it comes to sharing and channelling information online.

For further reference, in January 2023, Facebook's ad reach in Malaysia amounted to 61.3 per cent of the country's internet user base (Kemp, 2023). OOSGA (2023) stated that the age group popular using Facebook in Malaysia is the age between 25 to 34 years old. The second most popular age group of Facebook users found in Malaysia is between 18 to 24 years old. One explanation could be that Facebook was a part of this generation's upbringing and has since become a big part of their life. Even if it might be claimed that Facebook is losing ground to more trendy social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok in terms of popularity overall, Facebook continues to be popular when it comes to news (Deloitte, 2021). Therefore, the Facebook context in Malaysia still has the power to influence the behaviour among the people.

### ***1.5.2 The Star's Facebook***

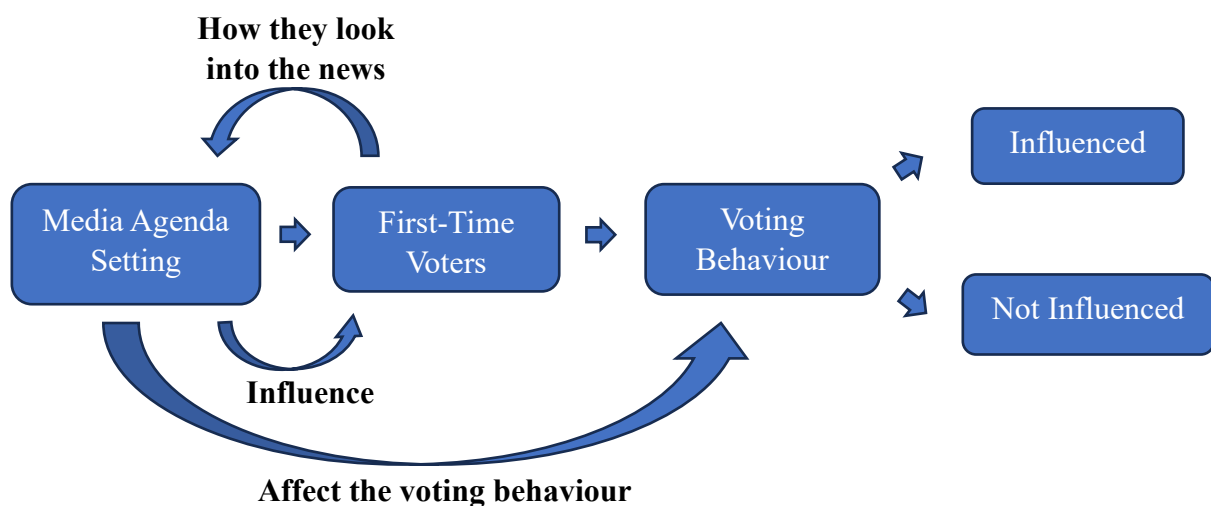
The Star's Facebook was created on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2008. The Facebook Page of The Star is mainly designed to allow them to showcase important stories that they have covered every day. It also provides information on their events, activities, and promotions to their esteemed readers. Readers are encouraged to express their opinions and suggestions in the comment areas of our postings, but they are cautioned that doing so should not jeopardize anyone's safety, well-being, or the integrity of our country or community. Therefore, the Facebook Page of The Star has created a convenience for both news organisations and readers to read the news and interaction directly.

## **1.6 Problem Statement**

The Election Commission of Malaysia predicted that 85 per cent of voters will turn out in the 15<sup>th</sup> General Election, but the result of the final voting rate of only 74.4 per cent has been

recorded (FMT Reporters, 2022). Also, one of the overseas Malaysian students, Jonathan Lee pointed out that young Malaysians don't often view themselves as part of the change, therefore we want to provide them with the platform to do so and encourage them to get more involved in politics (Vochelet, 2022). Also, Facebook news shows on Facebook can sway the voting behaviour towards young Malaysians. The researcher intended to identify what is the news agenda set by the Facebook Page of The Star that will influence the voting behaviour or not. Besides, the actual result is lower than the predicted voting rate will create a curiosity for us to identify the voting behaviour of Malaysians after they read or saw the Facebook news about GE-15.

### 1.7 Conceptual Framework



*Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework*

According to Figure 1.1, the conceptual framework that needs to be carried out throughout this study is to investigate what the media sets the frame of the news on social media. After that, the researcher intended to seek how the first-time voters on GE-15 look at the news shared by The Star's Facebook Page. Then, the researchers want to investigate does the news framed by The Star will influence the voting behaviour or not. Thus, this is the conceptual framework to guide the researcher can have a clear direction to carry out the study.

### **1.8 Significance of Study**

Understanding the general election landscape in Malaysia, especially among young Malaysians is important in this research. The social media news from news portals' Facebook Pages will find great value in the findings. However, the limitation of this study is the time constraint to conduct this research throughout the period. Understanding what are the news frame set by The Star's Facebook and how The Star's Facebook news influences first-time Malaysian voters' voting behaviour in Facebook news of the GE-15 are significant studies in this research.

### **1.9 Research Objective**

1. To study on what are the news frame set by The Star's Facebook in GE-15.
2. To study how The Star's Facebook news on GE-15 influences first-time Malaysian voters' voting behaviour.

### **1.10 Research Question**

1. What are the news frame set by The Star's Facebook in GE-15?
2. How did The Star's Facebook news about GE-15 influence the voting behaviour of first-time Malaysian voters?

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Background of Agenda Setting Theory

The inception of Agenda Setting Theory dates back to 1922, when Walter Lippmann voiced his concerns about the crucial role that mass media might play in shaping the public's perception of a particular issue. Lippmann discusses how the media can establish a specific agenda and affect the views of the public. After that, Lippmann indicated the foundation of the Agenda Setting Theory (Zain, 2014). In-depth analysis of Agenda Setting Theory, McCombs and Shaw have justified that the public's interests are greatly influenced by the media's goals as a result of this mediated worldview. Public perception is shaped by factors that are prominent on the media agenda. Social researchers who study how the media's coverage shapes public agendas typically concentrate on public concerns. A news organization's agenda can be determined by looking at how it covers public problems for a week, month, or year. Whatever the topic, across this period, some are highlighted, some are very briefly discussed, and many are brought up infrequently or never at all (McCombs, 2002). As acknowledged by Zain (2014), the Agenda Setting Theory is vastly developed and more than 350 research were done after McCombs and Shaw's findings in 1972.

Mucundorfeanu & Vana (2012) justified that there are two kinds of outcomes from the Agenda Setting Theory. The theory's primary effect, which is the first effect worth discussing, is evident from its hypothesis. The fundamental tenet is that while the media does not directly shape public opinion, its agenda does reflect and include the topics or concerns that the public is considering. Another implication of the theory flows from this presumption, connecting the individual agenda with the public agenda.

Since the idea's inception, the Agenda Setting hypothesis of mass media has been crucial in understanding how media audiences are impacted by the media. Numerous research

and conversations have continued to highlight the impact that the mass media's frame has on the general people. The agenda of the mass media is increasingly being disseminated by the new media, as it keeps developing and gains strength. There are benefits to new media over traditional media. It is deemed reasonable to research agenda theory setting and the idea of intermedia building (Zain, 2014). Mass media plays a role in creating agenda setting including the timeliness of this phenomenon. Also, the ability of various media to set agendas varies. The Agenda Setting hypothesis appears to be a useful tool for comprehending the media's ubiquitous role. The news media has a huge and well-established ability to shape national policy and draw attention to a select number of important public concerns.

On the other hand, the news media not only provides information about public affairs, but viewers and readers can also determine how important an issue is based on how much attention it receives in the media. Furthermore, the news media's ability to set agendas extends beyond this initial phase of drawing public attention to a specific subject. The media also affects our comprehension and viewpoint on the subjects covered in the news, which is the following phase in the communication process. The possibility for a more comprehensive understanding of the media's effect on public opinion is evident when considering the agenda abstractly. The things that specify the agenda are objects in the abstract. The objects of all the agendas we have covered are public issues, but they could also be other things or subjects, like the agendas of political candidates running for government. The things that the public and media are focusing their attention on are known as objects (McCombs, 2002).

### ***2.1.1 Framing Theory***

Gregory Bateson introduced the idea of framing for the first time in 1972. According to his definition, psychological frames are a type of metacommunication that function as a "spatial and temporary bounding of set of interactive messages." The act of placing news items and

story content inside a known context is known as framing. Similar to the agenda-setting tradition, framing concentrates on the substance of the issues at hand rather than a specific topic, which broadens the scope of the inquiry. The premise of framing theory is that certain events are brought to light by the media, which then contextualizes them. According to framing theory, news items are introduced by the media with predefined and limited contextualization, which creates this frame. Frames are employed as cognitive shortcuts to connect stories to the larger picture or as tools to improve understanding (Arowolo, 2017). Therefore, the researcher has used the Framing Theory which part of the Agenda Setting Theory to carry out the study.

## **2.2 Agenda Setting Theory in General Election Context Via Facebook News**

Salman et al. (2016) stated that McCombs and Shaw looked into the 1968, 1972, and 1976 presidential elections. Two components were the focus of the 1968 study: information and consciousness. They looked at how the mass media sets agendas and tried to evaluate the correlation between the topics that voters in a particular community considered essential and the actual content of the media messages that were broadcast throughout the campaign. McCombs and Shaw concluded that voters' perceptions of the campaign's main topics were greatly influenced by the mainstream media.

As an illustration, McCombs (2002) claimed that the first research on the news media's power to shape agenda was done in Chapel Hill and looked at a month after the 1968 US presidential campaign. Following this study, it has looked over far longer time spans. For instance, a nine-wave panel survey conducted for a year during the 1976 U.S. presidential election revealed comparable evidence of the public's powerful agenda-setting impact. When the whole 1960s were examined, there was a strong link observed between the news magazine coverage patterns and the public opinion trends expressed in the answers to the Gallup Poll question regarding the most pressing issue confronting the nation.



Moreover, local agenda-setting consequences have also been discovered, and there is evidence for both national and local agenda-setting effects in a wide range of global contexts. In the spring of 1995, the two main issues facing the people of Pamplona, Spain, were unemployment and urban congestion. A significant degree of correspondence was found when all six of the major public agenda items were compared to the local press coverage from the two weeks prior (McCombs, 2002). In the same way that McCombs and Shaw have broadened the scope of their research over time, other scholars have also probed the topic of agenda formation to encompass topics such as international, medical, advertising, and history. Nonetheless, we were able to investigate the social media act as one of the important platforms to disseminate the general election news to the public. Social networking is become the go-to source for information exchange and acquisition. Therefore, the cost of entry for campaigners hoping to have an impact on politics has significantly decreased due to the outbreak of the Internet. As a result, the power of well-established political parties is waning, and politics is becoming more accessible to individuals with strong web design skills and a desire for change (Salman et al., 2016).

Salman et al. (2016) also demonstrated that social media has taken the lead in determining the political agenda ever since Malaysia's General Election in 2008. Due to the news posted or shared on social media becoming the topic of conversation, some observers have concluded that social media is now mainstream rather than the alternative media it once was. This was evidenced in the manner that political news is disseminated among the public via social media, particularly Facebook.

In addition, the social media news that is written by journalists or reporters on general elections will influence the voting behaviour of the public, especially first-time voters. The reason is that social media news has applied the Agenda Setting Theory to alter the level of awareness of the public. For example, the media determines the order of importance of news

stories based on public opinion and the extent to which they will impact the audience (Communication Theory, n.d.). Based on the analysis from different researchers, the general election news will alter the voting behaviour of the voters through the context of social media news. Therefore, Agenda Setting Theory is applicable when the journalist or reporter crafts the general election news to influence the turnout rate during the voting day of the general election.

### **2.3 Background of Media Dependency Theory**

Media Dependency Theory (MDT) was introduced by two researchers Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur in 1976. MDT is the study of how mass media affects audiences' interaction with media and social systems (Lin, 2015). MDT has been a theoretical framework for understanding the relationships between people, institutions, and media on both a macro and micro level for over three decades. Over that time, a lot of individuals have learned to rely heavily on digital media in their daily lives. Ball-Rokeach discussed the implications of this growth and predicted the impact of the Internet on media dependency in 1988 she wrote “The integration of the Internet into an expanded media system disrupts traditional relationships, potentially broadening the scope of comprehension, direction, and recreational objectives that individuals, groups, and organizations can achieve through their dependency on media.” In the years after Ball-Rokeach wrote those words, the Internet has grown to be a significant information and entertainment resource in the United States (Riffe et al., 2008).

Besides, MDT maintained that media, audience, and the larger social structure are all connected. Since there was not much that the public could learn from actual life, they could use the media to obtain more knowledge to meet their demands. An audience develops a dependent relationship when media use is significant. By exploiting its media influence, the media can also establish a relationship of dependency on target audiences to help them achieve their objectives (Communication Theory, n.d.).

Other than that, Riffe et al. (2008) claimed that MDT assumes that people are proactive in choosing and utilizing media information and have clear goals in mind. It proposes three dependency areas, each with two sub-areas, wherein various people differ in how much they rely on media: 1. for action orientation and interaction orientation; 2. for self-knowledge and social cognition; and 3. for both social and lonely play. Specifically, the interaction and action orientation dependencies presuppose that individuals make deliberate choices about their behaviour to achieve objectives. Moreover, Ball and DeFleur's modernization according to Rokeach's theory in 1990, became increasingly difficult for people to understand society without relying on the media because, in the past, people depended more on interpersonal connections with people and networks. Because the mass media system has developed into a vital social institution, people are forced to rely on it for information in their daily lives (Ng et.al, 2023).

#### **2.4 Media Dependency Theory in General Election Context Via Facebook News**

Credibility and dependence are particularly important during unpredictable and changing periods, like elections. Media use increases during elections which results in changes of power (Mehlman-Brightwell, 2021). The fact that news media organizations now rely on platforms such as their algorithms for user engagement has raised concerns since then. One obvious early result from this developing research focus is the phenomena of platform dependency, but little is known about the scope of this dependency and how it appears in daily life. Researchers have looked closely at how news is distributed on social media platforms within the past ten years. The fact that platforms, particularly Facebook, have become more significant in media distribution during this time, bringing news articles to audiences and audiences to news media organizations, is one of the main reasons for this research interest (Meese & Hurcombe, 2021).

There are two reasons the phenomena appeared. Initially, social media platforms began to present themselves as locations where users could interact with one another and see media material, including news. Second, news media companies started to see these platforms as fresh chances for a struggling economy (Meese & Hurcombe, 2021). This can justify that people are dependent on media to get the latest news, especially from social media. Therefore, the Media Dependency Theory (MDT) was applied to social media users. Nevertheless, social media news has influenced the people during the General Election period. The MDT can be applied in the General Election context, particularly the context shown in social media news. According to Soliman & Osama (2022), there were a lot of people have become curious about how social media was influencing the race for United States (US) president. The effective and crucial impact social media played during the US presidential elections in 2016 is the basis for this inquiry. For example, Twitter had a significant role in drawing in a large number of American people to the presidential election contest by providing the poorest contenders with an excellent opportunity to utilize the tools and resources available on the platform. People rely on the information disseminated from social media news.

After that, Soliman & Osama (2022) added that the public started to rely more on social media in 2012, especially Facebook. After a few sponsored Facebook sites pushed a candidate before the elections, two out of five Americans, according to American opinion polls, used Facebook to find the latest information about the US presidential elections. The role that social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter play in spreading false information during political campaigns for president has raised serious concerns in light of these tendencies. Furthermore, Mehlman-Brightwell (2021) justified that as social media was utilized to disseminate false information during the 2016 US presidential campaign, it is critical to investigate any connections between media reliance, news reliability, and user perceptions of foreign meddling in the 2020 and 2016 US presidential elections. Thus, particularly in democracies, people find

the news media to be most significant and influential during election campaigns and other times when they need to learn about the platforms and policies of various political parties (Soliman & Osama, 2022). As a result, MDT is playing a role in constructing Facebook news for the people, especially during the General Election-15 campaign period.

### **2.5 Review of Agenda Setting Theory and Media Dependency Theory**

Despite there being some positive implications of Agenda Setting Theory, this theory also has its limitations. The main limitation of Agenda Setting Theory is when applying this theory how much and how directly the media can shape public opinion. According to certain recent research, an individual's or audience's exposure to media agenda-setting may be lessened by personal factors. These primarily benefited from media consumers' prior knowledge and comprehension of the topic or agenda that the media presents. It is more difficult for the information they have learned from the media to sway their attitudes. Furthermore, individuals who live distant from the information source or find it difficult to receive information from the mass media are unable to be influenced by it in the formation of their opinions (Salman et al., 2016). Also, Agenda Setting Theory may not be very predictive, even if it offers a framework for comprehending media effect. It is difficult to anticipate outcomes with precision because of the media's complex and multidimensional influence on public opinion. Therefore, these are the limitations that still can be doubted in Agenda Setting Theory.

Media Dependency Theory (MDT) has created a convenience for the news media to construct the message to the public dependently. However, there are still some parts that can be refined in MDT. Vitaly, MDT holds that the level of uncertainty surrounding news reports influences the level of media dependence. For instance, the ambiguity can originate from a variety of sources. It could involve a lack of knowledge of a certain phenomenon, such as

whether a new technology created by an adversary country endangers the security of the country. The claim made by the MDT can be expanded upon to support the claim that journalism has a particularly significant impact on public awareness of developing global issues (Zamith, n.d.). Thus, these are the aspects of Media Dependency Theory's limits that remain open to question.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research and Data Collection Methods

This study has adopted into using the research and data collection methods. The methods and approaches used to collect data for study are known as data collecting methods. These techniques can be either quantitative or qualitative, and they can range from straightforward self-reported surveys to elaborate experiments. A few popular techniques for gathering data are focus groups, experiments, observations, interviews, surveys, and secondary data analysis. Following data collection using these techniques, research hypotheses can be tested and conclusions regarding the study's topic can be drawn from the analysis of the data (Question Pro, n.d.). Therefore, both secondary and primary data collection will be used throughout the study which are content analysis and survey questionnaire.

Content analysis is a research method used to discover patterns among messages that have been captured (Luo, 2019). Researchers can measure and examine the occurrence, significance, and connections of particular words, topics, or concepts by using content analysis. According to Luo (2019), both quantitative and qualitative content analysis are possible, with the former focused on counting and measuring and the latter on interpreting and comprehending. The content analysis method can analyse the data from books, newspapers and magazines to construct secondary data for the study. Quantifying the frequency of specific words, phrases, topics, or concepts in a collection of writings from the past or present can be done using content analysis. For instance, the researcher can use statistical analysis such as SPSS Software to identify trends over time or between candidates and could examine the frequency of terms like “unemployment,” “jobs,” and “work” to investigate the significance of employment issues in political campaigns (Luo, 2019). Hence, the content analysis method will

be used in this study to analyse the data from the social media news portal regarding the General Election-15.

Besides, the survey method will be conducted throughout the study to meet Research Question 2. Numerous fields employ surveys as a means of data collection. When attempting to learn more about a group of people's traits, inclinations, viewpoints, or beliefs, they are an excellent option. Surveys can be used for longitudinal investigations, which include surveying the same sample multiple times over a protracted period, as well as cross-sectional research, which gathers data only once (McCombes, 2023). There are two main formats for surveys: paper forms and online forms. A paper survey is a more conventional means of gathering data, and data loss is a common consequence. Additionally, difficult to manage and process are paper forms (Formplus, 2022). In the survey questionnaire method, the researcher can set a parameter that we intend to get the information from targetted audiences. The researcher can also combine the open-ended and closed-ended questions into the survey questionnaire (Formplus, 2022). So, the research result may not be too messy and invalid throughout the study.

### **3.2 Purposive Sampling Method**

Purposive sampling, occasionally referred to as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, is a type of non-probability sampling in which researchers pick survey participants based only on their personal views. Since every survey respondent is chosen based on a certain profile, researchers can use purposive sampling to target a specific segment of the population (Alchemer, 2021). Throughout this study, researcher implemented the purposive sampling to conduct the survey. According to The Star, 7 out of every 20 readers live in Kuala Lumpur or Petaling Jaya, accounting for approximately 99.7 per cent of readers who live in core urban areas (Nasrin, 2022). Through this analysis, the most reachability of readers of The Star in Malaysia is in Klang Valley. Also, the researcher only targeted respondents who were first-time



voters in General Election-15 in 2022. Therefore, the researcher has minimized the range of the respondents by using purposive sampling to carry out this study.

### **3.3 Content Analysis**

The content analysis that will be used for this study is analysing the content from the social media news portal which is The Star on Facebook. The researcher will start to collect and analyse the data collected from The Star from the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2024 to the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2024. The timeframe for the news collection is from the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2022 to the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2022. This period is the General Election 15 (GE-15) campaign which was 14 days. Within this timeframe, the frequency of the keywords during the campaign period will be analysed accordingly. After that, the data will be generated by using SPSS software. The data will determine whether the result from The Star meets Research Question 1 by using the content analysis method.

The theory applied in the study is the Agenda Setting Theory. Researchers can identify the Agenda-Setting Theory as it segregates the news that the news portal intended to let the audience know. For instance, the researcher separated the keywords during the General Election 15 campaign period into different categories based on the visibility rate of the keywords. The segregation themes of the content analysis were referred to 5 journals and articles which included Social Media, News and Political Information during the US Election: Was Polarizing Content Concentrated in Swing States? written by Howard, P. N., Kollanyi, B., Bradshaw, S., & Neudert, L. M. (2018), The Voice of the People in the News: A Content Analysis of Public Opinion Displays in Routine and Election News written by Becker, K (2020), Instagram and Political Campaigning in the 2017 German Federal Election. A Quantitative from Haßler, J., Kümpel, A. S., & Keller, J. (2023), The elites and accusations: A quantitative content analysis of populism on social media during the 2021 Norwegian parliamentary

election written by Nygaard Falch, Ø. (2022) and Dimensions of Political Conflict and Party Positions in Multi-Level Democracies: Evidence from the Local Manifesto Project from Gross, M., & Jankowski, M. (2020).

After that, to validate the data of content analysis, the researcher is required to conduct the inter-code reliability test. In order to validate the data, the researcher conducted the inter-coder reliability test with Kong Wen Li, who is studying Bachelor of Communication (Honours) at Sunway University and Chin Sin Rhuy, who is studying Bachelor of Corporate Communication (Honours) at Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur.

### ***3.3.1 Benefits of Content Analysis***

There are several benefits when carrying out the content analysis method. The first benefit is content analysis is a non-intrusive gathering of data. It is possible to study social interaction and communication without having people directly involved, so your role as a researcher has no bearing on the outcomes. Moreover, content analysis is observable and repeatable. When done correctly, content analysis follows a methodical process that makes it simple for other researchers to duplicate and produces highly reliable results. Besides, the content analysis method is extremely adaptable throughout the research. For example, all we need is access to the right sources to perform content analysis at any time, at any place, and at a reasonable price (Luo, 2019).

### **3.4 Survey**

The survey was constructed by using Google Forms and divided into 3 sections. Section A is designed to gather demographic information from the respondents. This section consists of closed-ended questions that inquire about the respondent's gender, race, and occupation. The target respondents for this survey are Malaysians, particularly first-time voters for the General Election during the GE-15 and live in Klang Valley. Furthermore, Section B was prepared to

assess the frequency of scrolling Facebook and the political knowledge of the respondents. This section includes 4 closed-ended questions, incorporating both multiple-choice and Likert scale questions. It aims to identify the political knowledge of Malaysians who are first-time voters and assess the influence of Facebook on their daily lives. Lastly, Section C comprises 12 questions intended to understand the voting behaviour of respondents based on their interaction with Facebook news portals. This section only includes closed-ended questions, such as multiple-choice. Section C will be aligned with the results obtained through content analysis from The Star news portal on Facebook. This section seeks to validate the results of the content analysis through the responses of the survey participants. Additionally, it aims to examine whether the content from The Star news portal has an impact on the voting behaviour of the respondents.

The theory applied to this study is the Media Dependency Theory (MDT). Based on the questions in the survey, can examine whether the respondents will depend on the news that disseminates from the social media, especially the news of General Election 15. Throughout the result of the survey, the researchers were able to know the voting behaviour of first-time voters probably will be influenced by the content from the social media news portal.

Moreover, there are ethics of the survey need to be considered before disseminating the survey to the public. The ethical use of surveys in research is the focus of survey ethics. It covers the questions you ask in an ethical survey, how you ask them, and what you do with the answers. The purpose of ethical surveys is to safeguard respondents' rights and privacy by making sure that their responses are used in a way that complies with both the law and their expectations. In the context of surveys, any problem or quandary involving moral values that researchers encounter when conducting surveys is referred to as an ethical concern. These worries frequently centre on finding a balance between protecting participants' rights, privacy, and well-being and collecting useful data. For example, handling sensitive information is a

typical ethical dilemma. Researchers are required to guarantee that respondents' personal or confidential information is secure and not shared with outside parties (Williams, 2023). Therefore, the researchers have the responsibility to protect the confidentiality of information from the respondents to prevent the unethical and morally wrong situation happens.

#### ***3.4.1 Pilot Study***

According to SAGE Publication (2016), a pilot test is methodically given to a varied cross-section of the sample to make sure the entire survey schedule goes as planned and that coding and analysis can be completed correctly and effectively. There are multiple justifications for doing a pilot study. Throughout the entire survey process, they assist in identifying potential issues and determine whether the project is reasonable, practicable, and well-thought-out from the beginning to the end. Pilot researchers address several aspects that will impact the study's performance before conducting the full-scale investigation. Thus, the researcher conducted a pilot test with 10 people before sending out the survey. The 10 people were randomly picked, which met the criteria of the purposive sampling. They helped the researcher to fill in the survey to address any mistakes and any improvements in the survey.

#### ***3.4.2 Benefits of Survey***

DeFranzo (2024) justified that making surveys is simple, especially with today's advanced survey software options. A lot of researchers are inclined to gather much of their data online. The benefit of the survey is cost-effective. With the rise of the technology era, free online survey platforms such as Google Form, Jotform and others are getting viral to be used by researchers. Therefore, the printing cost for the survey has been minimized as compared to the previous. Moreover, the survey allows the researchers to set the parameters that what question and who will be the respondent for the study. By using the survey, researchers can get

the result that is valid and reliable for the study. Hence, the survey has shortened the time consuming for the researchers instead of having the interview session.

### **3.5 Validity and Reliability**

Sürücü & Maslakci (2020) mentioned that for each issue they find in their research or for each topic they wish to explore, researchers create a conceptual model that incorporates certain variables. The scale's validity is the first of these characteristics. Validity is a measure of how well a measuring instrument fulfils its intended function and asks whether the instrument measures the behaviour or quality that it is meant to. Despite their close relationship, validity and reliability refer to separate aspects of the measurement device. In general, a measuring device can be valid and reliable at the same time, but if it is valid, it is also probably reliable. However, validity cannot be guaranteed by reliability alone. A test may not correctly reflect the anticipated behaviour or quality even if it is deemed reliable. Therefore, the study has extended into validity and reliability of the data collected from the survey and content analysis.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Content Analysis

#### Political News and Information

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Candidates	122	51.5	51.5	51.5
Government	10	4.2	4.2	55.7
Campaign materials	17	7.2	7.2	62.9
Call for action	31	13.1	13.1	75.9
Economy & Finance	4	1.7	1.7	77.6
Potential for development	24	10.1	10.1	87.8
Education	8	3.4	3.4	91.1
Health	7	3.0	3.0	94.1
Civil rights	5	2.1	2.1	96.2
Labour policies	7	3.0	3.0	99.2
Races & Religion	1	0.4	0.4	99.6
Traffic & Infrastructure	1	0.4	0.4	100.0
Total	237	100.0	100.0	

***Table 4.1 Result of content analysis***

The content analysis was based on 237 news articles from the Facebook Page of The Star during the GE-15 campaign period from 5<sup>th</sup> November 2022 to 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022. The GE-15 news shared by The Star Facebook page has been divided into 12 categories. There are 122 news articles with the keywords and the title is ‘Candidates’. The news article that has appeared the keywords or phrases such as ‘number of candidates for the parliamentary seat’ and ‘representatives of the party’ will be categorised into ‘Candidates’. Types of candidates such as ‘disabled candidate’, ‘oldest candidate” and ‘individual candidate’ have been segregated into this category. 63 news articles on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2022 wrote about ‘Candidates’. Besides, 20 news articles on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2022 shared the news with the keyword of ‘Candidates’ whereas 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022 had 13 news articles. Moreover, on 12<sup>th</sup> November

2022 showed 8 news articles relating to 'Candidates' and on 15<sup>th</sup> November 5 news articles talked about 'Candidates'. The more to the Election day, the fewer the news articles share about news with the keyword of 'Candidates'. Nevertheless, there were 9 news articles, 2 news articles and 2 news articles on 16<sup>th</sup> November, 17<sup>th</sup> November and 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022 respectively.

Besides, news articles with 'Government' keywords have been identified in 10. The news articles included the keywords or phrases of 'integrity government', 'stability of government and politics' and 'stable government' that have been segregated into this category. There were 3 news articles with 'Government' keywords on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022. On 8<sup>th</sup> November, there were 2 news articles whereas on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2022, there was 1 news article shared about 'integrity government'. There were 4 news articles with the 'Government' keyword on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Additionally, there was 1 news article has been segregated into this category.

Moreover, the news articles that related to 'vandalism of the posters or flags of candidates' or 'political parties or the promotional materials used by the candidates' were under the 'Campaign materials' category. There were 17 posts in this category. There were 2 news articles written about the vandalism of the posters of the candidates on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022. On 6<sup>th</sup> November 2022, there were 3 news articles posted about the vandalism of the flags and posters of the candidates and there were 6 news articles shared on the promotional materials used by the political parties in different areas. Besides, there were 3 news articles written about the vandalism of the poster of the candidate on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022. There was 1 news article posted about vandalism of the flags and 2 new articles posted about the promotional materials used by the candidates on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

‘Call for action’ is the keyword that relates to ‘calling people to vote’ and ‘calling youth to vote’. This category has contained 31 posts during the GE-15 campaign period. 10 news articles on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2022 posted about ‘calling people to vote’. On 9<sup>th</sup> November 2022, there were 6 news articles shared about the candidates calling people to vote on GE-15. Simultaneously, 2 news articles told the youth to vote on GE-15 on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Moreover, there were 3 news articles called people to vote and 2 news articles called the youth to vote on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022. On 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022, there were 8 news articles with titles that called first-time voters to vote.

There were 4 news articles related to the category of ‘Economy & Finance’. There was 1 news article focused on the manifesto of the economic improvement of Malaysia on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Besides, there were 2 news articles shared about the topic with the keywords ‘economy and financial’ on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Also, on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022, there was only a news article shared about the economic and financial improvements for future Malaysia.

Moreover, 24 news articles had a similar keyword which is ‘development’ such as ‘improve the life of the rural area’, and it was segregated under the ‘Potential for development’ category. There was a news article claimed by Anwar that improved the life of the farmer on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Additionally, there were 5 news articles on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2022 with the keywords ‘development’. On 13<sup>th</sup> November 2022, there were 3 news articles with phrases of ‘improve the life of the rural area’. There were 4 news articles on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022 stating the development of life in Malaysia. Moreover, 5 news articles on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2022 were segregated into this category. On 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022, there were 2 news articles written specifically about the improvement life of in rural areas whereas 3 news articles with ‘development’ keyword. There was 1 news article that stated the headline with the keyword ‘development’ on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022.



Education has 7 news articles shared about this topic. On 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022, there were 2 news articles claiming that Syed Saddiq will prioritise the education issues. There was a news article stating that the candidate will focus on education issues on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Besides, there was 1 news article focused on sharing the manifesto from the candidates regarding the education issue on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022. There were 3 news articles shared about the news with the keyword 'education' on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

The 'Health' category has only 7 news articles related to 'health improvement'. There was a news article focused on the manifesto of 'health improvement' on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Moreover, there were 3 news articles shown on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2022 regarding the health issue. On 16<sup>th</sup> November 2022, there was 1 news article shared about the health issue. There were 2 news articles on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022 categorised in this category.

'Civil rights' covered the topics talked about 'youth empowerment' and 'women empowerment' and there are 5 posts shared in this category. There was 1 news article shown on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022 about 'youth empowerment'. Additionally, there were 3 news articles shown on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022 regarding 'youth empowerment'. Also, on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022, only 1 news article was shared about the manifesto about 'women empowerment'.

Furthermore, 'Labour policies' included 7 posts among the 237 posts shared on The Star. The news articles with 'improve foreign labour policies' and 'eligible receive the salary on election public holiday'. There was a news article on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022 claiming that the election public holiday and workers should receive a salary. On 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022, there was a news article titled 'improve the foreign labour policies' and 2 news articles about the labour policies. Additionally, there were 2 news articles has were segregated into this category on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Also, on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022 has a news article with the 'labour policies' phrase.

‘Races & Religion’ and ‘Traffic & Infrastructure’ have 1 post shared during the GE-15 period respectively. On 9<sup>th</sup> November 2022, there was a news article stating with the manifesto that using the phrase ‘race issue’. Next, the news articles reported the manifesto regarding the ‘improvement of traffic and infrastructure’ on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

**Mean of Political News and Information**

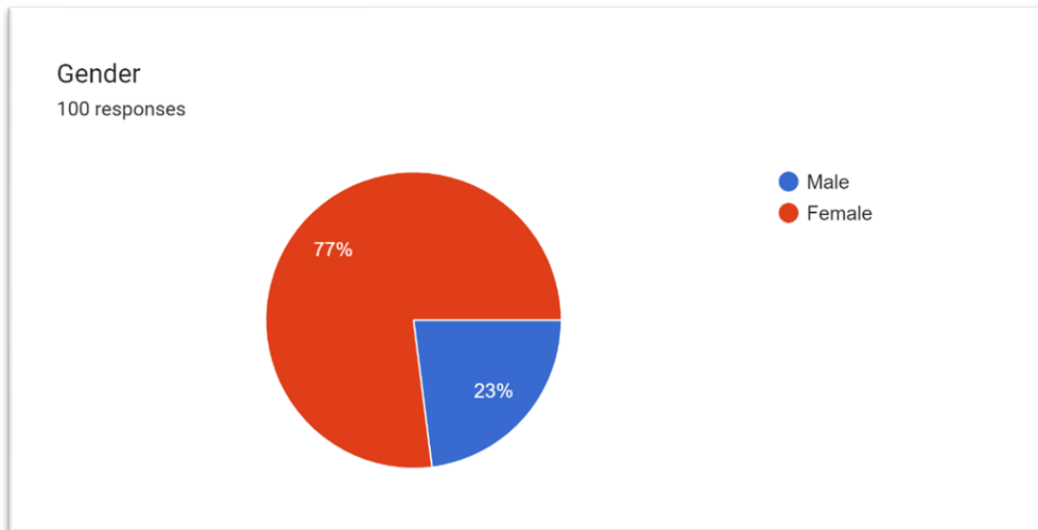
Mean	N	Standard Deviation
3.0844	237	2.70774

*Table 4.2 Mean of the content analysis result*

The mean of the content analysis for The Star Facebook news during General Election-15 as shown in Table 4.2 is 3.0844.

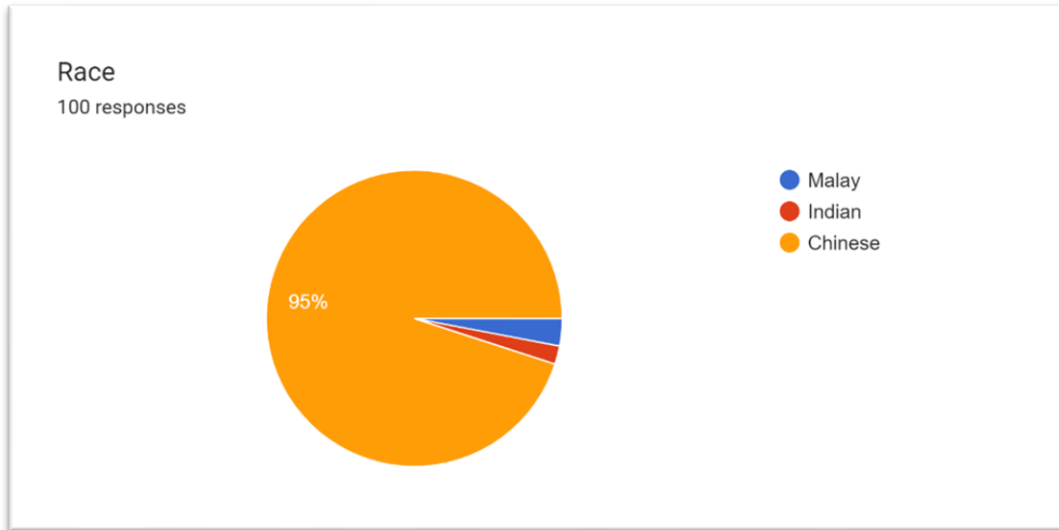
**4.2 Survey**

*4.2.1 Demographic*



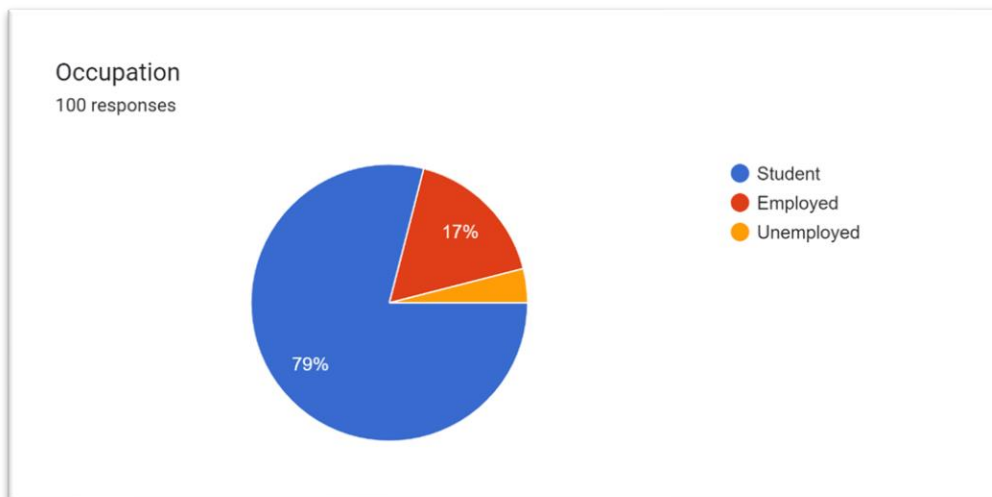
*Figure 4.1: Gender of the respondents*

Out of the 100 respondents, there are 77 respondents, equals to 77% are female whereas 23 respondents that equals to 23% are male.



**Figure 4.2: Race of the respondents**

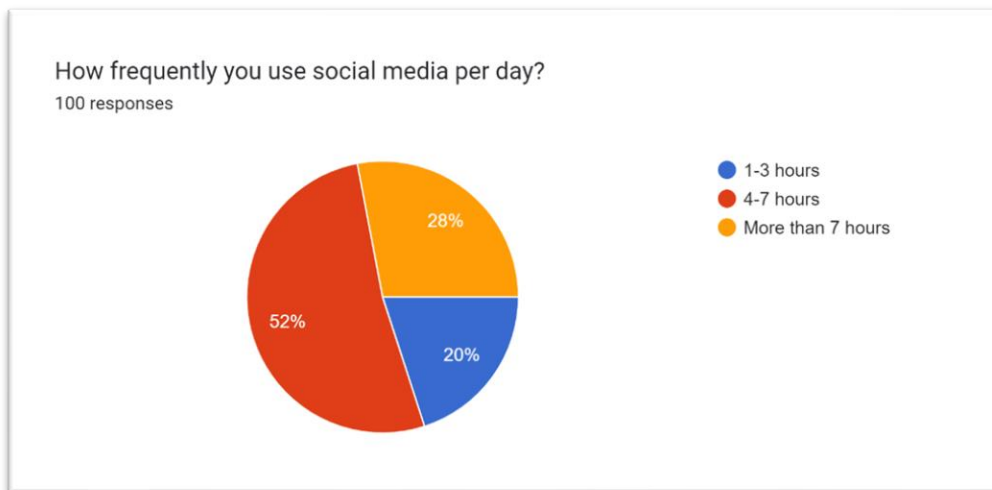
Most respondents are Chinese which occupied 95% which equals 95 out of 100 respondents. 3 respondents which is 3 per cent are Malay. There are 2 Indian respondents which is equal to 2%.



**Figure 4.3: Occupation of the respondents**

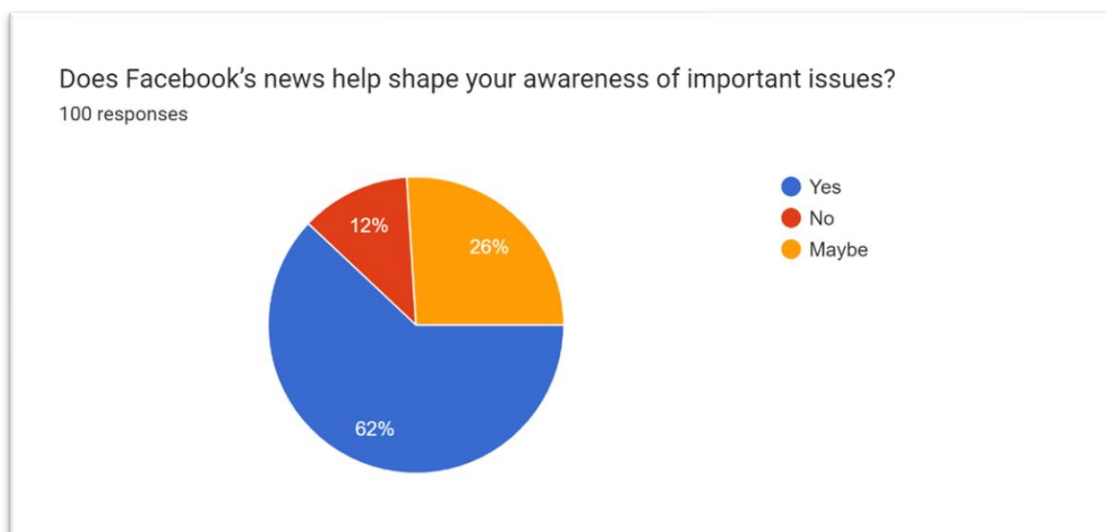
Figure 4.3 shows that the majority of the respondents are students as 79 respondents are students which is equivalent to 79%. 17 out of 100 respondents are employed equal to 17%. There also have 4 per cent that equal to 4 respondents are unemployed.

**4.2.2 Frequency of scrolling Facebook and political knowledge**



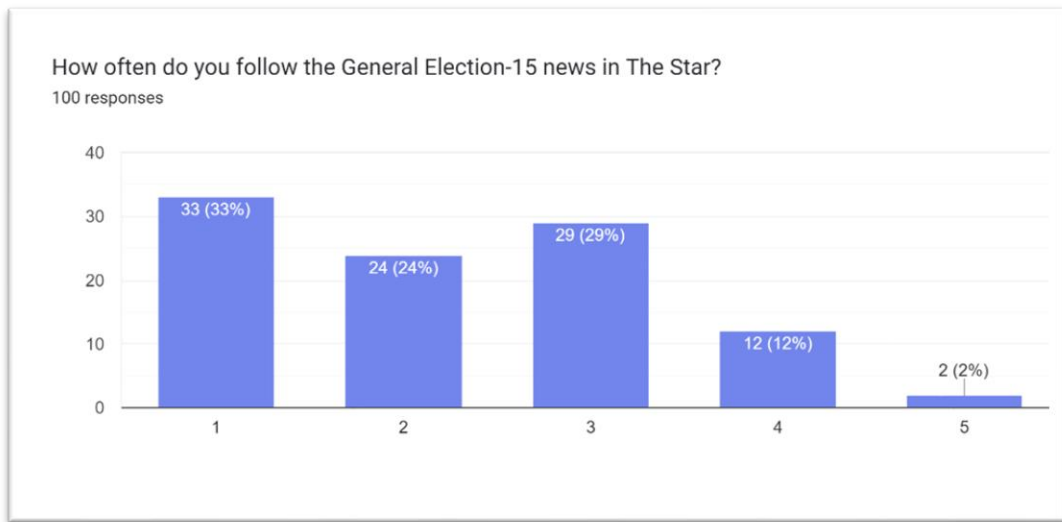
**Figure 4.4: Frequency of using social media per day**

According to Figure 4.4, there are 52 respondents (52%) chose 4 to 7 hours to use social media per day. There 28% of 100 respondents have spent more than 7 hours using social media in a day. The remaining 20% of respondents have used social media 1 to 3 hours per day.



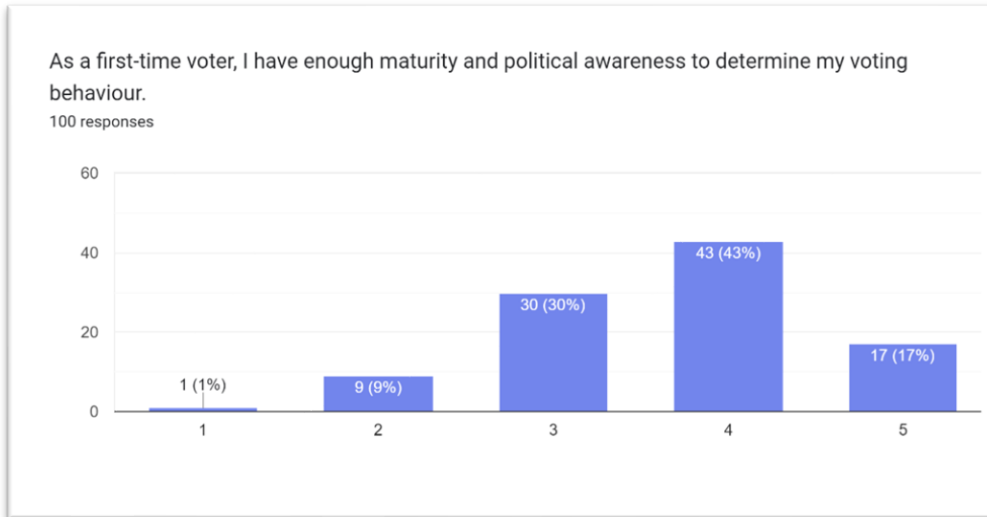
**Figure 4.5: Facebook's news influences awareness of important issues**

Figure 4.5 indicates that Facebook’s news helps shape the respondent’s awareness of important issues. The highest number of respondents have chosen “Yes”, which consists of 62% which equals 62 respondents. There are 26% out of 100 respondents chose “Maybe”. The remaining 12% of respondents have selected “No”.



**Graph 4.1: Interest in following the General Election-15 news in The Star**

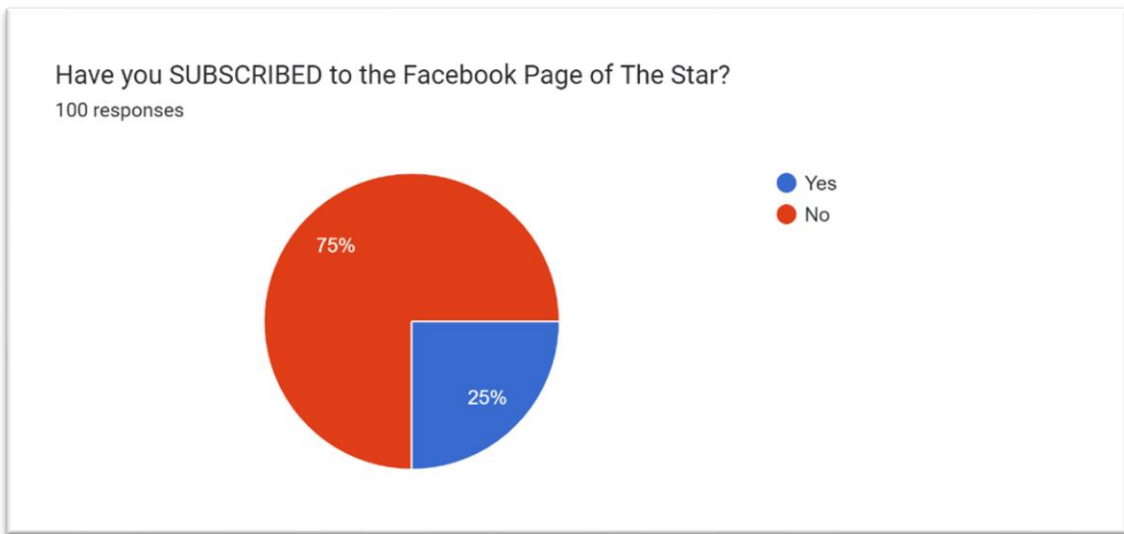
Based on Graph 4.1, there are 33% out of 100 respondents rarely followed General Election-15 news in The Star. Additionally, 24% of respondents possess some interest in following General Election-15 news in The Star while 29% out of 100 respondents neither rarely nor frequently follow the General Election-15 news in The Star. Simultaneously, 12% of respondents were slightly frequent to search through the General Election-15 news whereas 2% of respondents demonstrated a high interest in following the General Election-15 news.



***Graph 4.2: Maturity and political awareness to determine the voting behaviour***

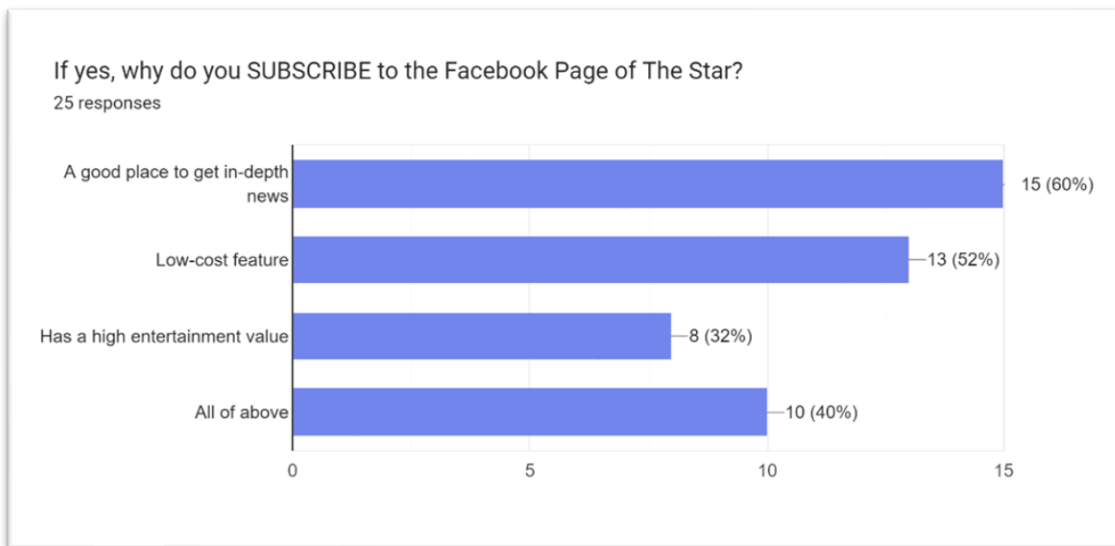
The survey demonstrated that 17% of respondents strongly agree that he/she has enough maturity and political awareness to determine his/her voting behaviour. There are 43% out of 100 respondents agreed that they have enough maturity and political awareness to determine their voting behaviour. Moreover, 30% of respondents believe that they have neither enough nor insufficient maturity and political awareness to determine their voting behaviour. Meanwhile, 9% of respondents deemed that disagreed, and 1% of respondents considered that strongly disagreed that they have enough maturity and political awareness to determine voting behaviour.

**4.2.3 Voting Behaviour Based on Facebook News Portal**



**Figure 4.6: Subscribe to the Facebook Page of The Star**

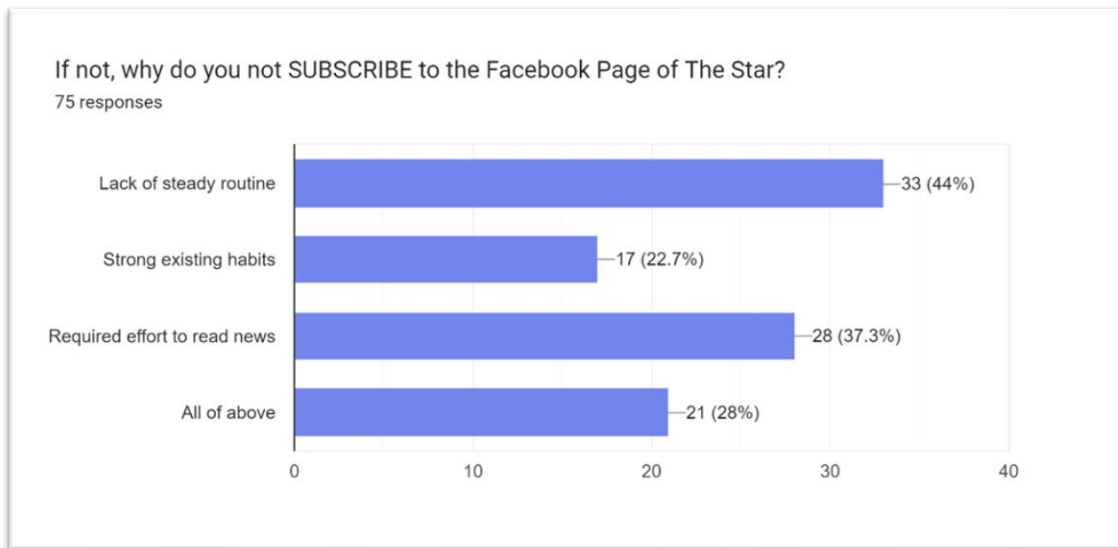
Based on Figure 4.6, there are 75% which equal to 75 respondents did not subscribe to the Facebook Page of The Star. Also, there are 25% that equivalent to 25 respondents have subscribed to the Facebook Page of The Star.



**Graph 4.3: The reason for subscribing to the Facebook Page of The Star**

Based on the 25 respondents who chose “Yes” for the previous question, there are 60% which equals 15 respondents subscribed to the Facebook Page of The Star because it is a good

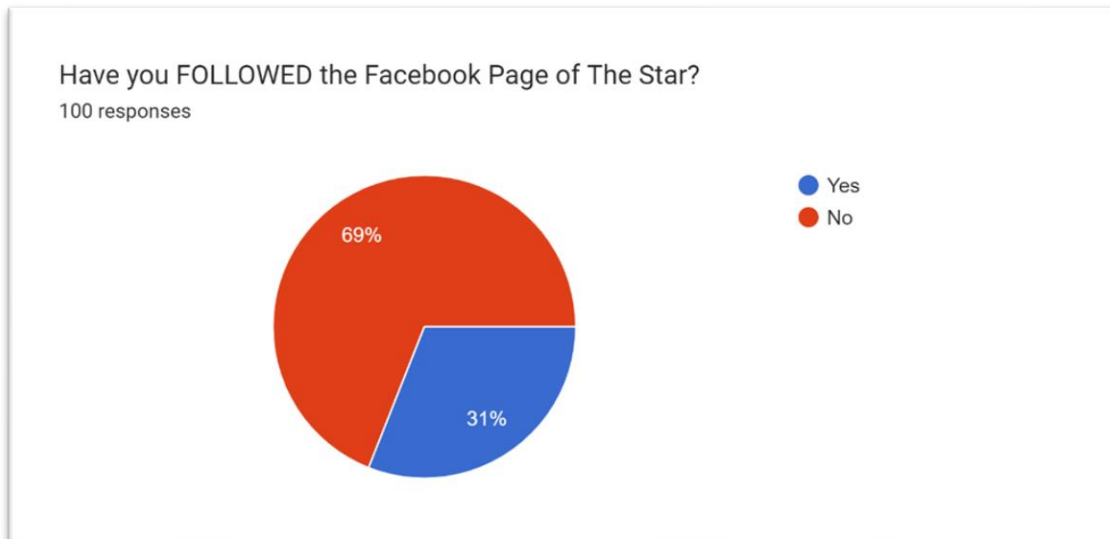
place to get in-depth news. There are 52% which equals 13 respondents subscribed to the Facebook Page of The Star because it is a low-cost feature. Nevertheless, there are 40% equivalent to 10 respondents opted for all the reasons which made them subscribe to the Facebook Page of The Star. Meanwhile, only 32% of the respondents that equal to 8 out of 25 respondents picked the reason that is Facebook Page of The Star has a high entertainment value.



***Graph 4.4: The reasons for not subscribing to the Facebook Page of The Star***

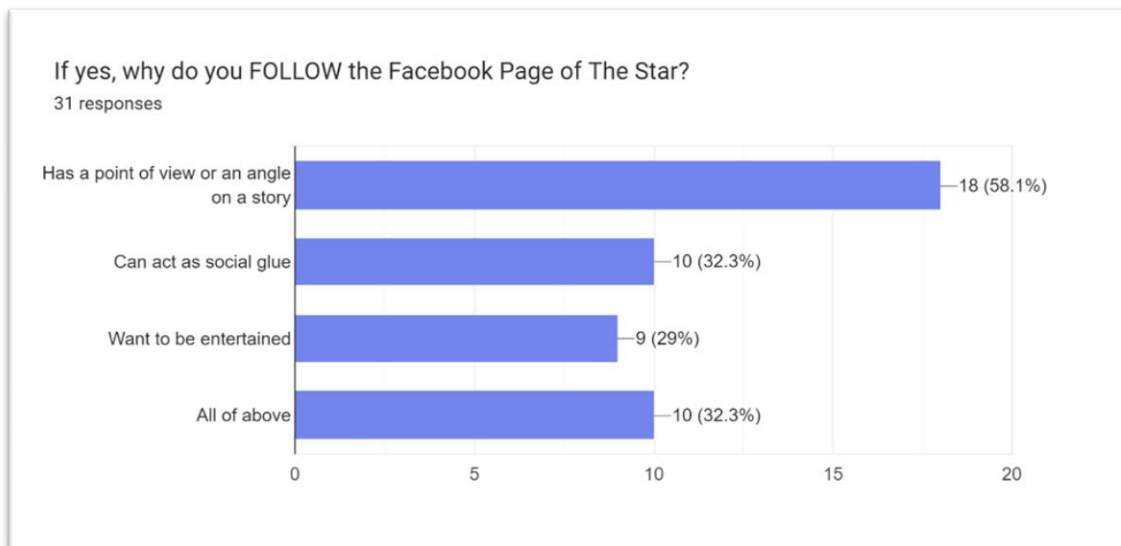
Based on the Graph 4.5 shown above, there are 75 respondents chose “No” from the last question. There are 44% out of the 75 respondents equal to 33 respondents did not subscribe to the Facebook Page of The Star because they lack a steady routine. There are 37.3% out of the 75 respondents, corresponding to 28 respondents who picked the required effort to read news that made them not subscribe to the Facebook Page of The Star. 28% that equal to 21 respondents picked all of above the options as the reason they did not subscribe to the Facebook Page of The Star. Meanwhile, 22.7% equivalent to 17 respondents have strong existing habits that made them not subscribe to the Facebook Page of The Star.





**Figure 4.7: Follow the Facebook Page of The Star**

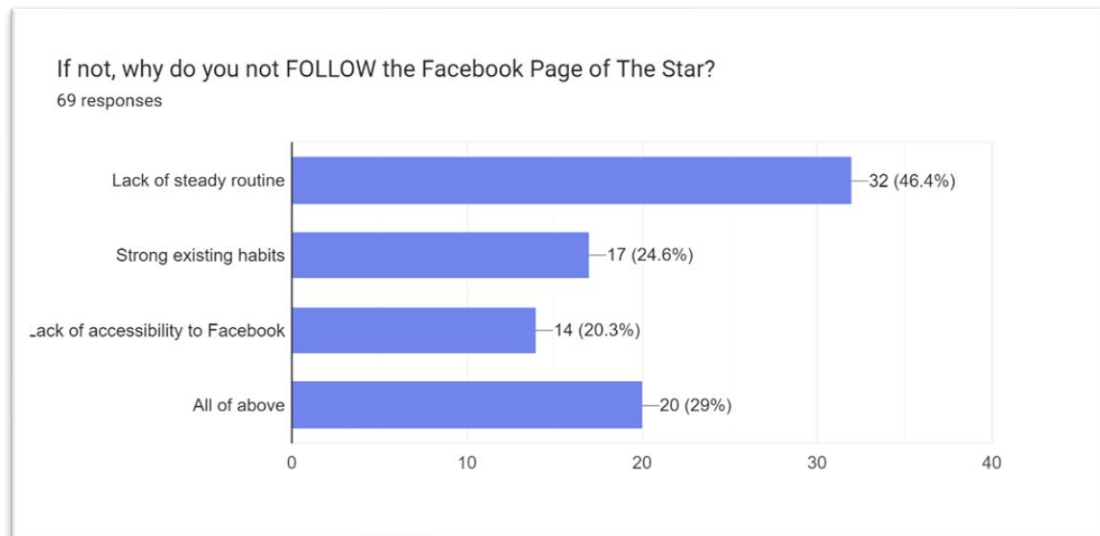
Based on Figure 4.7, there are 69% which equal to 69 respondents who did not follow the Facebook Page of The Star. Also, there are 31% equivalent to 31 respondents have followed the Facebook Page of The Star.



**Graph 4.5: The reasons for following the Facebook Page of The Star**

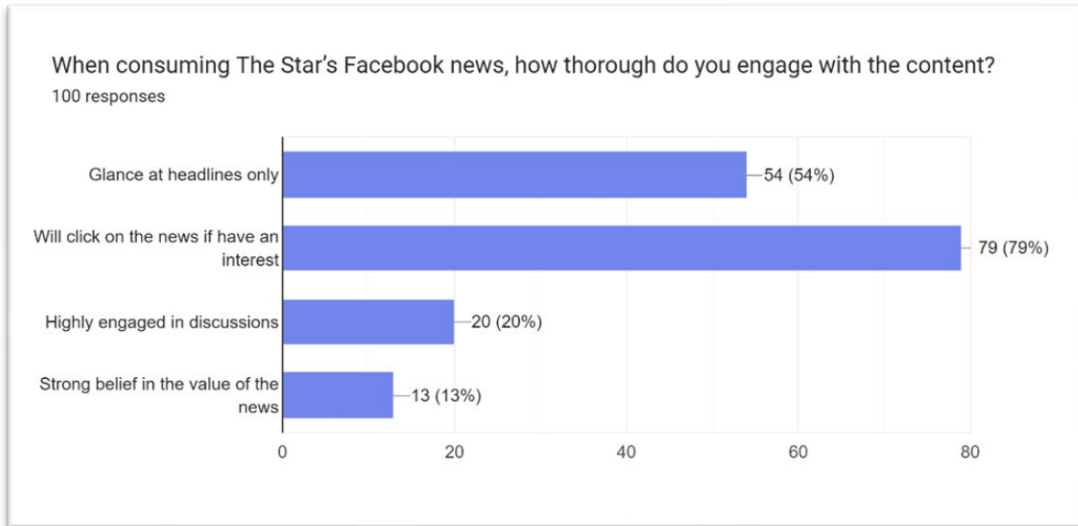
According to Graph 4.5, 31 respondents who chose “Yes” for the previous question, there are 58.1% equal to 18 respondents followed the Facebook Page of The Star because they could have a point of view or an angle on a story. There are 32.3% which is equal to 10

respondents who followed the Facebook Page of The Star because it can act as social glue. Nevertheless, there are 32.3% equivalent to 10 respondents opted for all the reasons which made them follow the Facebook Page of The Star. Simultaneously, 29% of the respondents equal to 9 out of 31 respondents wanted to be entertained after following the Facebook Page of The Star.



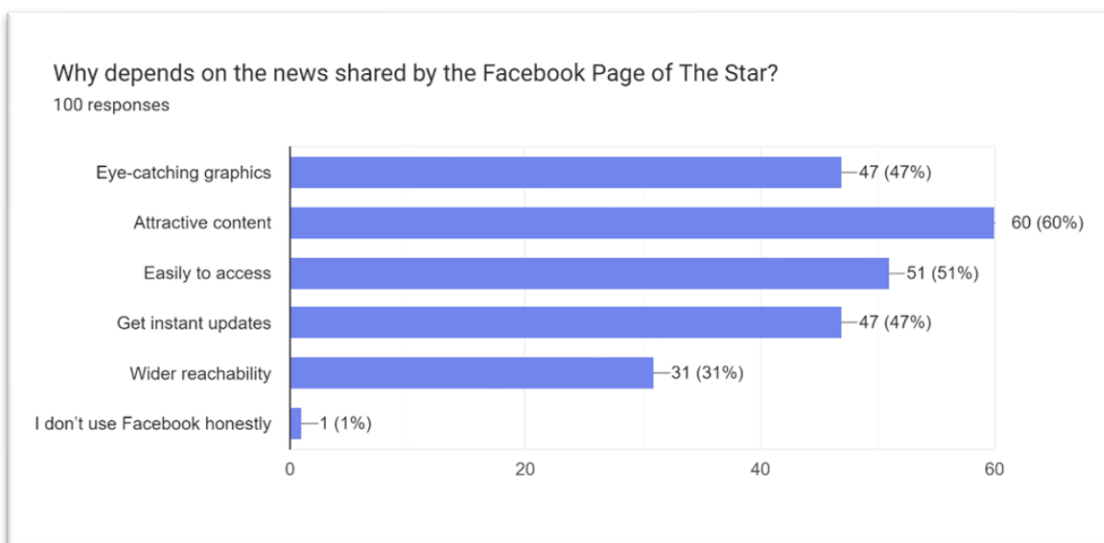
***Graph 4.6: The reasons for not following the Facebook Page of The Star***

Based on the Graph 4.6 shown above, there are 69 respondents chose “No” from the question previously. There are 46.4% out of the 69 respondents which equals 32 respondents did not follow to Facebook Page of The Star because they lacked a steady routine. Moreover, 29% that equal to 20 respondents picked all of above the options as the reason for not following to Facebook Page of The Star. There are 24.6% equivalent to 17 respondents have strong existing habits that made them not follow the Facebook Page of The Star. Besides, 20.3% out of the 75 respondents, corresponding to 14 respondents picked a lack of accessibility to Facebook that made them not follow the Facebook Page of The Star.



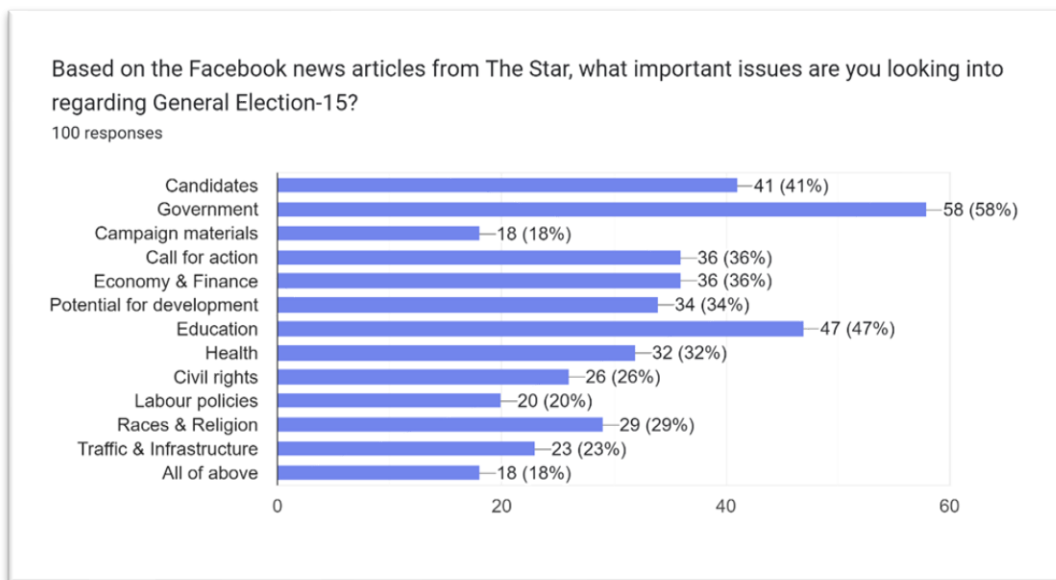
**Graph 4.7: How thoroughly engage with The Star's news content**

According to Graph 4.7, there are 79% out of the 100 respondents have chosen that they will click on the news from The Star's Facebook news when have an interest in it. 54% out of the 100 respondents only glanced at the headlines when consuming The Star's Facebook news. Moreover, 20% of the respondents will highly engage in discussions when consuming The Star's Facebook news whereas 13% of the respondents said they have a strong belief in the value of the news from The Star's Facebook news.



**Graph 4.8: The reasons for depending on news shared by the Facebook Page of The Star**

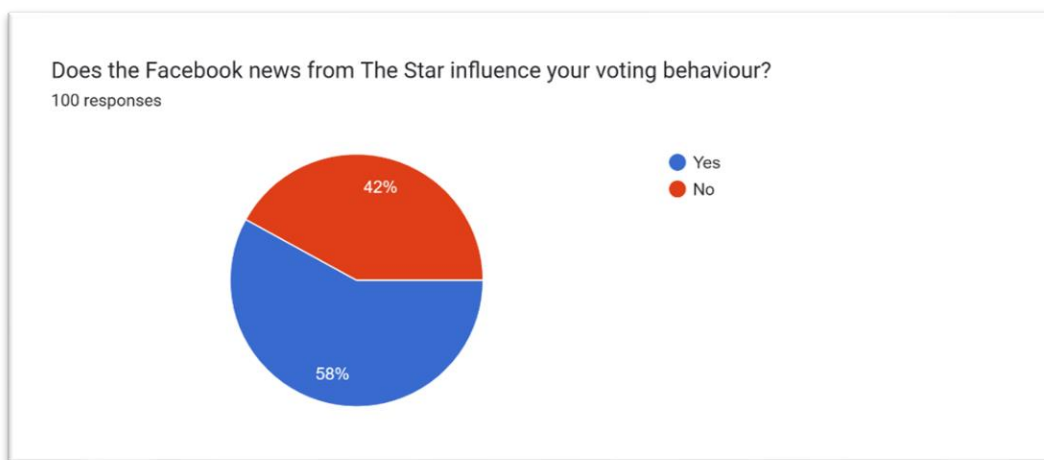
Graph 4.8 shows that the reasons of the respondents depend on the news shared by the Facebook Page of The Star. 60% of the respondents depend on the news shared by the Facebook Page of The Star because of its attractive content. Meanwhile, there are 51% of respondents rely on the news shared by The Star’s Facebook page because it is easy to access. There are 47% out of the 100 respondents chose news shared by The Star’s Facebook page to have eye-catching graphics and get instant updates respectively. Besides, 31% of respondents chose the news has a wider reachability. However, there is 1% of respondents stated that he/she did not use Facebook.



**Graph 4.9: Important issues when looking into General Election-15**

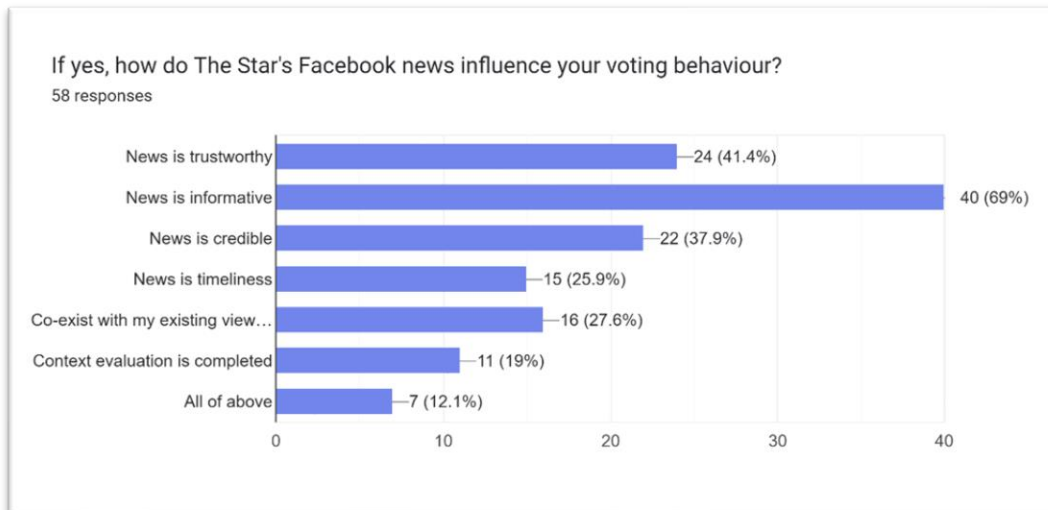
58% of respondents chose ‘Government’ as their important issue when looking into the General Election-15 whereas 47% of respondents have opted for ‘Education’ as an important issue. There 41% of the respondents seek the ‘Candidates’ as the important issue when looking into the news of General Election-15. Additionally, 36% of respondents chose ‘Call for action’ and ‘Economy & Finance’ respectively. Besides, 34% of respondents picked ‘Potential for development’ as their important issue to look into the news during the General Election-15. 32% of respondents chose ‘Health’ issues whereas 29% chose ‘Race & Religion’ when looking into

the Facebook news from The Star regarding General Election-15. Moreover, 26% chose ‘Civil rights’ issues, while 23% of respondents picked ‘Traffic & Infrastructure’ as the important issue to look into regards the General Election-15 news. There are 20% of respondents have selected the ‘Labour policies’ as the important issue when looking into the Facebook news from The Star regarding General Election-15. Meanwhile, 18% of respondents picked all of above the options and ‘Campaign Materials’ as the important issues when looking into the Facebook news from The Star regarding General Election-15 respectively.



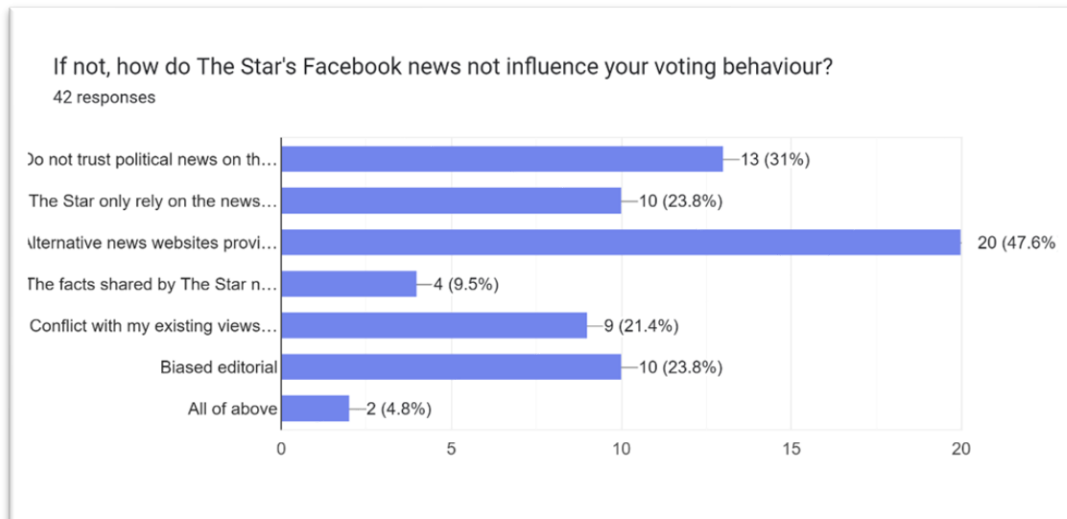
***Figure 4.8: Facebook news from The Star influences respondent's voting behaviour***

Based on Figure 4.8, there are 58% which equal to 58 respondents chose “Yes” about the Facebook news from The Star that has influenced their voting behaviour. Also, there are 42% that equivalent to 42 respondents chose “No” because Facebook news from The Star did not influence their voting behaviour.



***Graph 4.10: The reasons for The Star's Facebook news influence respondent's voting behaviour***

According to Graph 4.10, there are 69% out of the 58 respondents have chosen that the news from The Star's Facebook news is informative which influenced their voting behaviour. 41.4% out of the 58 respondents believed that The Star's Facebook news influenced their voting behaviour as the news is trustworthy. Additionally, there are 37.9% which equivalent to 22 respondents thought that the news from The Star's Facebook is credible and influenced their voting behaviour, while 27.6% which equal to 16 respondents believed that news from The Star has co-existed with their existing view and value. Moreover, 25.9% equal to 15 respondents thought that The Star's Facebook news influenced their voting behaviour because of the news's timeliness. Besides, 19% out of the 58 respondents felt that the news from The Star published the context evaluation that influenced their voting behaviour in General Election-15. Simultaneously, 12.1% which equals 7 respondents picked all of above the options that the news from The Star's Facebook has influenced their voting behaviour.



***Graph 4.11: The reasons for The Star's Facebook news does not influence respondent's voting behaviour***

Based on Graph 4.11 concluded that the reasons of the respondents felt that the Facebook news from The Star did not influence their voting behaviour. The most chosen option is 47.6% which is equivalent to 20 respondents who believed that alternative news websites provided greater in-depth analysis. The second highest option is 31% of 42 respondents do not trust the political news on the Facebook news from The Star. Also, 23.8% out of 42 respondents thought that news from The Star only relies on news with sensationalism and shock value and has biased editorials respectively. Besides, 21.4% out of 42 respondents felt that news from The Star conflicted with their existing views and values whereas 9.5% which is equivalent to 9 respondents thought the facts shared by The Star no longer matter to influence their voting behaviour. Meanwhile, there are 4.8% equal to 2 respondents have chosen all of the options.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Discussion

Based on the findings, for the first research question, the researcher has found out that the news frame set by The Star's Facebook in GE-15 have been categorised into 12 categories. The researcher has identified 237 news articles related to the campaign period of GE-15 on The Star's Facebook Page. According to Beckers (2020), by concentrating on public opinion displays that differ in their openness, representativeness, and engagement of the citizens, we were able to gain a unique insight into when and how journalists convey public opinion. The 12 categories of the news article which is the news frame set by the Facebook Page of The Star such as 'Candidates', 'Government', 'Campaign materials', 'Call for action', 'Economy & Finance', 'Potential for development', 'Education', 'Health', 'Civil rights', 'Labour policies', 'Races & Religion' and 'Traffic & Infrastructure'. The news frame set by The Star intended to engage with audiences with related content during the campaign period of GE-15.

Based on the news frame set by The Star's Facebook, the researcher gathered data from the respondents which found out that the voting behaviour of the respondents was influenced by the news from The Star's Facebook. According to Marquart et.al (2020), they mentioned that they were unable to identify the inferences for the motivation of youth to share the political content online. This means that in the year 2020, some of the researchers are still not able to prove that social media will influence youth voting behaviour. In contrast, a few respondents acknowledged that social media had an impact on their choices. This is because the information individuals encounter on social media shapes their opinions of politics and certain political parties, whether favourable or unfavourable (Ng et.al., 2023). Nevertheless, throughout this study, the researcher was able to justify that Facebook can influence voting behaviour,



especially the Facebook Page of The Star. The reason is there is the newest study in the year 2023 which can support this recent study.

Moreover, the researcher also indicated a question to identify whether the news frame set by The Star has met the interest of the respondents. Nevertheless, most respondents were chosen the they were interested in 'Government', but the most keywords that appeared in the news articles during the campaign period of GE-15 were 'Candidates'. So, the researcher concluded that the news frame set by the media have a deviation from the interest of the respondents.

Moving on, the second research question is to investigate how The Star's Facebook news about GE-15 influences the voting behaviour of first-time Malaysian voters. The findings showed that the majority of respondents who have been influenced by The Star's Facebook were they thought that news from The Star is informative. The news articles shared during the GE-15 campaign period were informative to influence the voting behaviour of first-time voters. Besides, the second highest choice was picked is the respondents who thought that news from The Star was trustworthy. The reason is Star Media Group was well-regulated by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC). The Star continues to rank highest among Malaysia's English-language news portals in terms of brand trust (The Star, 2023). However, still, some respondents chose that news article from The Star did not influence their voting behaviour because the alternative news website provided greater in-depth analysis. HONG (2021) claimed that alternative news websites express different views from mainstream media. Therefore, through this question, the researcher can identify the second research question.

In general, the respondents who were first-time voters in GE-15 in the year 2022 have enough maturity and political awareness to determine their voting behaviour. Additionally,

most of the respondents have subscribed or followed to The Star's Facebook Page because they can get in-depth news and have a point of view on a story when reading the news article from The Star. On the contrary, most of the respondents did not subscribe to or follow The Star's Facebook Page because they lacked a steady routine. Besides, the highest selection that the respondents chose why they depended on the news shared by the Facebook Page of The Star is news articles from The Star have attractive content. The researcher has proof that the Media Dependency Theory was effective in this study.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study has answered the two research questions. The first research question is to explore what are the news frame set by The Star's Facebook in GE-15 whereas the second research question is to examine how The Star's Facebook news about GE-15 influences the voting behaviour of first-time Malaysian voters.

The research can identify the Facebook news frame from The Star and how it influences first-time Malaysian voters. Based on Agenda Setting Theory and Framing Theory applied in the study, the way the news frame is set by The Star significantly addresses the attention of the public to influence their perception. The Media Dependency Theory used in the study allows the researcher to identify how first-time Malaysian voters depend on Facebook news to influence their voting behaviour. In addition, this study has recognised that the news articles from The Star shared through the news portal influenced the voting behaviour of first-time Malaysian voters. Also, the researcher has identified that the reason the news articles influence first-time Malaysian voters' voting behaviour is because the news is informative.

## **5.3 Limitations**

Despite the researcher constructed the research smoothly, there are still some limitations in this study. For instance, the researcher did not have enough time to analyse other

news portals besides just The Star's Facebook Page. If the researcher had been able to analyse additional news portals, they could have discovered a more diverse range of angles about the news frame set by other news outlets. Moreover, another limitation throughout this study is that the researcher did not expand the scope of the research to include respondents from different areas. If the researcher had been able to expand the sample size for the research, the results of the study would have provided a more diverse set of answers to justify the research question.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on the limitations identified throughout this study, several recommendations are suggested for future research. Firstly, the researcher should explore additional news portals to enable comparisons and examine different angles regarding how news frames are set. Additionally, increasing the sample size by expanding the research area, such as recruiting respondents from different states, could enhance the result of the study. Therefore, by addressing these limitations, the researcher can improve the quality of future studies.

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## APPENDIX

## Appendix A

## Survey Questionnaire

**General Election 15: The Star's Facebook News Agenda and How It Influences the First Time Malaysian Voters**

Good day !

I am Ng Kah Kei, a final year undergraduate of Bachelor of Corporate Communications (Honour) at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) Sungai Long. This survey is conducted as a study on how Facebook coverage of GE-15 influences first-time Malaysian voters' voting behaviour.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you for participating in this survey. I want to assure you that all information provided in this survey will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Your personal data will be handled responsibly and will only be used for research purposes. Your participation is vital in helping us gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between Facebook and the voting behaviour of first-time voters in Malaysia.

Once again, thank you for your time and commitment to this research endeavour.

*\* Indicates required question*

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1. Email \*

\_\_\_\_\_

**Section A: Demographic**

2. Gender \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Male

Female

3. Race \*

Mark only one oval.

- Malay
- Indian
- Chinese
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Occupation \*

Mark only one oval.

- Student
- Employed
- Unemployed

**Section B: Frequency of scrolling Facebook and political knowledge**

5. How frequently you use social media per day? \*

Mark only one oval.

- 1-3 hours
- 4-7 hours
- More than 7 hours

6. Does Facebook's news help shape your awareness of important issues? \*

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

7. How often do you follow the General Election-15 news in The Star? \*

Mark only one oval.

- 1   2   3   4   5
- 
- Rare      Frequently

8. As a first-time voter, I have enough maturity and political awareness to determine my voting behaviour. \*

Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4   5

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Stro      Strongly Agree

**Section C: Voting Behaviour Based on Facebook News Portal**

9. Have you SUBSCRIBED to the Facebook Page of The Star? \*

Mark only one oval.

Yes    Skip to question 10

No        Skip to question 11

**Section C: Voting Behaviour Based on Social Media News Portal**

10. If yes, why do you SUBSCRIBE to the Facebook Page of The Star? \*

You may choose more than one option

Check all that apply.

- A good place to get in-depth news
- Low-cost feature
- Has a high entertainment value
- All of above

Skip to question 12

**Section C: Voting Behaviour Based on Facebook News Portal**

11. If not, why do you not SUBSCRIBE to the Facebook Page of The Star? \*

You may choose more than one option

Check all that apply.

- Lack of steady routine
- Strong existing habits
- Required effort to read news
- All of above

Skip to question 12

**Section C: Voting Behaviour Based on Social Media News Portal**

12. Have you FOLLOWED the Facebook Page of The Star? \*

Mark only one oval.

Yes Skip to question 13

No Skip to question 14

**Section C: Voting Behaviour Based on Facebook News Portal**

13. If yes, why do you FOLLOW the Facebook Page of The Star? \*

You may choose more than one option

Check all that apply.

Has a point of view or an angle on a story

Can act as social glue

Want to be entertained

All of above

Skip to question 15

**Section C: Voting Behaviour Based on Facebook News Portal**

14. If not, why do you not FOLLOW the Facebook Page of The Star? \*

You may choose more than one option

Check all that apply.

Lack of steady routine

Strong existing habits

Lack of accessibility to Facebook

All of above

Skip to question 15

**Section C: Voting Behaviour Based on Facebook News Portal**

15. **When consuming The Star’s Facebook news, how thorough do you engage with the content?** \*

You may choose more than one option

*Check all that apply.*

- Glance at headlines only
- Will click on the news if have an interest
- Highly engaged in discussions
- Strong belief in the value of the news
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

16. **Why depends on the news shared by the Facebook Page of The Star?** \*

You may choose more than one option

*Check all that apply.*

- Eye-catching graphics
- Attractive content
- Easily to access
- Get instant updates
- Wider reachability
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

17. **Based on the Facebook news articles from The Star, what important issues are you looking into regarding General Election-15?** \*

You may choose more than one option

*Check all that apply.*

- Candidates
- Government
- Campaign materials
- Call for action
- Economy & Finance
- Potential for development
- Education
- Health
- Civil rights
- Labour policies
- Races & Religion
- Traffic & Infrastructure
- All of above

18. Does the Facebook news from The Star influence your voting behaviour? \*

Mark only one oval.

- Yes Skip to question 19
- No Skip to question 20

**Section C: Voting Behaviour Based on Facebook News Portal**

19. If yes, how do The Star's Facebook news influence your voting behaviour? \*

You may choose more than one option

Check all that apply.

- News is trustworthy
- News is informative
- News is credible
- News is timeliness
- Co-exist with my existing view and value
- Context evaluation is completed
- All of above

**Section C: Voting Behaviour Based on Facebook News Portal**

20. If not, how do The Star's Facebook news not influence your voting behaviour? \*

You may choose more than one option

Check all that apply.

- Do not trust political news on the social media news from The Star
- The Star only rely on the news with sensationalism and shock value
- Alternative news websites provide greater in-depth analysis
- The facts shared by The Star no longer matter
- Conflict with my existing views and values
- Biased editorial
- All of above