UTILISATION OF DAP LEADERS' BLOGS
AND DAP'S OFFICIAL WEBSITE IN
CREATING POLITICAL AWARENESS

YAP SING YEONG

MASTER OF COMMUNICATION

FACULTY OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN
APRIL 2013

ABSTRACT

**UTILISATION OF DAP LEADERS' BLOGS AND
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Political parties have constantly found strategies and tactics to affect voters and create political awareness. This is evident during election campaigns. The study questions and identifies the different strategies that the DAP's (Democratic Action Party) leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 election campaign period, and investigates the different strategies that the DAP used in its party's website during the 2008 election campaign period. Data was collected using content analysis, thematic content analysis, and in-depth interviews research methods. Findings revealed through the analysis of the DAP leaders' blogs, DAP's website, and interviews with DAP leaders that DAP leaders did not fully utilise their blogs. In other words, new media was not an effective means for DAP in creating political awareness during the last general election. Findings also revealed that the traditional ways of campaigning, for instances, door-to-door visits and public talk, were still the main choices in the rural area where the Internet access was still not available. It was also revealed that lesser number of politicians blogged after the 2008 general election. It cannot be denied that social media may overtake blogs in creating political awareness.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis entitled **"UTILISATION OF DAP LEADERS' BLOGS AND DAP'S OFFICIAL WEBSITE IN CREATING POLITICAL AWARENESS"** was prepared by Yap Sing Yeong and submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Communication at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman.

Approved by:

_____

(Ms. Sharon Wilson)   Date:…………………..
Supervisor
Department of Mass Communication
Faculty of Creative Industries
Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman

FACULTY OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN

Date: August 2012

SUBMISSION OF THESIS

It is hereby certified that **YAP SING YEONG** (ID No: **09UJM09075**) has completed this thesis entitled "UTILISATION OF DAP LEADERS' BLOGS AND DAP'S OFFICIAL WEBSITE IN CREATING POLITICAL AWARENESS" under the supervision of Ms. Sharon Wilson (Supervisor) from the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Creative Industries, and Dr M. Jaganathan (Co-Supervisor) from the Department of General Studies, Faculty of Creative Industries.

I understand that the University will upload softcopy of my thesis in pdf format into UTAR Institutional Repository, which may be made accessible to UTAR community and public.

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(YAP SING YEONG)

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UTAR or other institutions.

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(YAP SING YEONG)

Date August 2013

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BN   Barisan Nasional

DAP   Democratic Action Party

HINDRAF   Hindu Rights Action Force

ICT   Information and Communication Technology

IT   Information Technology

MIMOS   Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic Systems

MSC   Multimedia Super Corridor

NEM   New Economic Model

NITC   National Information Technology Council

PAP   People's Action Party

PAS   Parti Islam Semalaysia

PC   Personal Computer

PKR   Parti Keadilan Rakyat

PR   Pakatan Rakyat

UMNO   United Malays National Organisation

US   United States

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

In order to create political awareness among citizens and voters, political parties and politicians need to disseminate their ideologies and spread their political messages and there is no better way to do so than through media. To this extent, political parties need to invest considerable amounts of energy and resources on media.

In the past, Malaysians received their daily news and information from traditional media encompassing newspapers, radio and television. With new development in information technology, people can access cyberspace to seek and acquire information from all over the world. Compared with traditional media, new media, including the Internet, forms a two-way communication folder between political parties and the broader public, and allows them to communicate effectively. New media technology allows political parties to easily read and respond to the latter's comments, and even adopt some of their suggestions. In other words, new media extends its reach to a wider target audience. Besides, Web technology also provides adequate and fair space for debate, allowing the

public to use cyberspace as a place to express and voice their views and concerns. The audience cannot perform this is a kind of interaction in the physical world due to legal or technological restrictions in traditional media.

According to Ramanathan (2008), "In Malaysia, as noted by some scholars, the bi-partisan nature of media, especially print media, the newly-established online media and websites of bloggers, has become more evident since 1999" (p. 235). Through the Internet, political parties and leaders are able to present content and disseminate information more effectively, and also in more attractive ways to the public. In this situation, the implementation of various multimedia tools includes audio, video, YouTube, animated graphics, emails, and social networking sites such as Facebook, and Twitter.

In the last 2008 general election, we saw a new phenomenon – a growing convergence between political parties (especially the opposition parties) with new media, which resulted in change in the political landscape. After the ruling BN coalition slumped to its worst ever election results, by losing its two-third majority and four states to the opposition parties (Kelantan has been governed by Pan-Islamic Party since 1990), without doubt, opposition parties are fully utilizing this popular communication channel – the Internet to win support from voters. Since mainstream media did not provide fair reporting of the news for opposition parties, because it is directly or indirectly controlled by government-linked individuals (Tan and Ibrahim, 2008, p. 14), the Internet has been recognised as one major factor that contributed to BN's loss of its two-third majority in the parliamentary seats.

The MSC's 10 Point Bill of Guarantees promises no censorship of the Internet (*MSC Malaysia 10 Point Bill of Guarantees*, n.d.), resulting in free access *t*o online information and freedom of online expression. This has made the Internet an avenue for more liberal discourse, and at the same time bringing in media liberalization. In other words, the Internet is the medium that the government has not strictly controlled. As a result, a lot of Malaysian readers prefer to go online.

In this manner, Park and Kluver (2009) stated that:

In recent years, there has been an explosion of research about blogs to examine the role of this emerging technology as a presence in everyday life, especially in the developed nations of the West, including the United States of America, Europe, and Australia. Notably, though research illustrating the role of blogs on Asian societies is still lacking (p. 4).

There have been a small number of studies that connect the political power of the blog to the technological nature of the medium. We believe this is an important failure in previous studies of the political significance of blogs, as the answer to this question has significant theoretical consequences for our understanding of the long term political impact of information technology (p. 5).

Besides the lack of research on the roles of blogs, Ezhar and Govindasamy (2009) highlighted that:

The involvement of communication researchers in election research started in the early 1980s with studies focusing on the role of the mass media in elections. Most of their communication studies focused either on analysis of the coverage and role of mainstream newspapers (Abu Bakar, 1998; Ahmad, 1983; Ismail, 2001; Ismail and Abu Hassan, 1996; Othman, 1983).

Based on the reviewed studies in the country, it is clear that media sources, media channels, and media messages have been the dominant themes of political communication research in Malaysia. The number of studies that actually investigated the power of the media to influence voting behaviour in Malaysia, on the other hand, is surprisingly small (p. 146).

With the rise of Internet users and penetration in Malaysia, voters can easily obtain political information about DAP. However, whether accessing political information through the Internet will result in support for DAP still remains a big question. Based on the above reasons, the researcher would like to identify the different strategies that the DAP used during the 2008 general election campaign period.

1.2 Research Objectives

Ramanathan (2008) said that, "Despite most of mainstream media's active endorsement of the ruling BN component parties resulting in DAP getting minimal exposure in media, DAP enjoyed the spectacular success in the last elections with 28 parliamentary seats" (p. 235). Therefore, the central objective of this study is to investigate how new media was utilized by DAP in creating political awareness among citizens in the local political sphere.

In brief summary, there are two objectives of the study as follows:

1. To identify the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 election campaign period.

2. To investigate the different strategies that the DAP used in its party's website during the 2008 election campaign period.

The author believes that online content was a way or strategy used by the political party to disseminate information, discuss or create thought on an issue. Strategy is a term in such common use that in many ways it has come to

mean 'deciding', 'planning ahead' or merely 'doing something'. In other words, strategy is a collection of ideas, preferences and methods which explain activity by connecting it to a desired effect or a stated goal (Cornish *et al.*, 2011, p. 1); whereas Paul (2010, p. 10) explained that the term strategic communication is usually meant to denote one or more of five things, enterprise level strategic communication; strategic communication planning, integration, and synchronization processes; communication strategies and themes; communication, information, and influence capabilities; knowledge of human dynamics and analysis or assessment capabilities.

In this study, the researcher raised the role of strategic communications as a means of creating political awareness by DAP in the last election, by seeking how strategic communications can serve the political objective of DAP. With the rise of the Internet, the researcher was trying to clarify how DAP was effectively using new media to run the election campaign, with the purpose to clearly communicate candidates' messages to the voters, to gain competitive advantage over its political rivals, and to win support from the voting public.

1.3 Significance of Study

Before the appearance of new media, political parties only manage to rely on traditional media including newspapers, television or radio to interact with people. However, the emergence of the Internet has resulted in many analysts saying that computer-based digital media have had a huge impact on

local political realm, most notably in the 2008 elections (Johns, 2008; Ramanathan, 2008; Seneviratne, 2008; Wong, 2008). Given the evidence, 2008 marked the year and turning point in which online politics finally reached the "mainstream" audience.

Obviously, new media has democratise politics by imposing interpersonal political discussion and enhancing political involvement, allows political parties disseminate political information and to get feedback from audience. As already noted, embracing new technology started a new chapter in Malaysian history because online tool had much of a real impact on voters.

However, the theoretical framework of how efficient the political parties have fully utilised new media to produce political awareness is still lacking. In this sense, the researcher intends to present previous studies and research on how political parties and candidates have utilised new media, and the influence and impact of the Internet on voters during the 2008 general election.

With the rising power of the Internet in this electronic age, a growing number of political parties and politicians are actively using the Internet to reach out to the electorate. The objective of this study is to identify the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 election campaign period.

This study will contribute towards the body of knowledge in the areas of technology, communications, and politics. This study expects to contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between new media technology, communications, and Malaysian politics. It is hoped that this study benefits to political parties and politicians at large, either from the ruling BN coalition or the opposition PR, by examining the extent and role of new media in producing political engagement and campaigning.

1.4 Problem Statement

The unexpected outcome of the 2008 general election has created a lot of debates and discussions among academia, media practitioners, and political analysts. One of the arguments highlighted was that the Internet did play a significant role in the last general election, where the opposition parties aggressively used new media and made unprecedented election gains in Malaysian history. Ever since the Internet arrived onto the Malaysian scene, the one question that has dominated and shaped the discussion is the impact it will have on politics, especially during elections. With the rise of blogs in Malaysia during the last general election, the issue is whether such blogs are able to affect election outcomes (Gomez and Han, 2010, p. 15).

In general, new media technology has altered the process of information flow in the area of political communication by increasing the possibility for two-way communication between political parties and the audience. Even Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak started his blog *1Malaysia.com.my* ("Check New Postings", 2009, p. N2). Deputy Prime

Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, also launched his personal website at *www.mymalaysia.com.my* (Kong, 2010, p. N4). Evidently, politicians realize the use of new media, especially to spread their messages, promote their policies while at the same time, offering a mechanism for people to share their views. Thus, the ultimate purpose of politicians using new media is to create political awareness and build support.

Along these lines, former Home Minister, Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, said that the government no longer regards online news portals and weblogs as new media but as mainstream, because they have become more popular than traditional news sources (Ramendran, 2008, p.4). In addition, Media Prima Berhad's executive chairman, Datuk Johan Jaaffar pointed out that traditional media, is under threat (Jaaffar, 2009, p. 17). New media is enticingly provocative and hugely popular, especially among the young. As stressed by both Syed Hamid and Johan Jaaffar, the Internet is becoming more powerful and potent than ever before. It may even overtake traditional media as a source of political information among young people.

Further, Welsh (*www.opendemocracy.net*, 2008) wrote in her election post-mortem on Malaysiakini:

> A critical component of the opposition's stronger campaign was its more   aggressive move to modern campaign techniques…the use of polling of the electorate and the embrace of the Internet, blogs and SMS worked   more the advantage for the opposition. PAS was perhaps the most effective of all the opposition parties in using its website to reach out to its supporters. Yet, PKR and DAP were also close behind, using email list-services and   YouTube.

Nevertheless, from the perspective of Farid (2010):

Because of the absence of licensing requirements, the sheer simplicity and non elitist platform of publishing online, Internet publication manages not only to put a dent on the hegemony of political control of the ruling party, but manages also to wrest control of five states from the federation of 13 states in Malaysia during the 2008 general election (p. 4).

Considering the media blackout and biased news from government-controlled mainstream media, people prefer to access the Internet since it provides alternative information. Since cyberspace has become the new battleground in the information war between political parties，every political party including the DAP, has no choice but to embrace new media.

As previously mentioned, numerous studies have concluded the potential effects of the Internet in the last general election, where new media was deemed to have played a crucial role in swinging votes away from the BN coalition. However, according to a survey conducted by Dr. Baharuddin Aziz, other professors and students from Mara Technology University on 8 March, 2008, even though the Internet was cited by many as a decisive factor in the Malaysian 2008 general election, television continued to be the preferred choice of medium for election-related information. Cyberspace was cited as only the fourth most preferred choice behind television, newspapers and political campaigns (Baharuddin, 2008, p. 8).

In an interview with *AsiaMedia* (Shah, 2008), Zaharom Naim claimed that he would not go so far as to say that new media played a very crucial role in the opposition's victories. Other factors such as the people's anger at the

apparent inability of the BN government to address certain issues, for example corruption, contributed greatly to the people's anger. Furthermore, PKR member of parliament, Tian Chua shared the same view. He highlighted that critical point was not the Internet but corruption ("Politicians Used Facebook", 2010, p. D14).

Also, immediately after 8 March, 2008, a lot was written about how PR had the upper hand when it came to new media. Some of its new candidates such as Jeff Ooi, Tony Pua and Elizabeth Wong happened to be bloggers. However, Yeoh (2010) asserted that in reality, "The opposition didn't have much of a new media strategy and merely benefited from an online media space that was, at the time, largely critical of the government" (p. 13).

Another researcher who focused on the transformation of opposition parties in Malaysia, was Ufen (2009), who acknowledged that new media was one of the factors that contributed to electoral gain for the oppositions in the last 2008 election. However, there was no any analysis provided by Ufen, concerning on how the opposition parties fully and effectively used the Internet. Even though he pointed out that the online communication was used mostly by civil society, however, he did not refer particularly to the Internet use by opposition parties (Rosyidah, 2010, p. 1). Ezhar and Govindasamy (2009, p. 146) pointed out that there have been limited studies focusing on websites of political parties in Malaysia.

Based on previous research, (Ezhar and Govindasamy, 2009; Farid, 2010; Jaaffar, 2009; Rosyidah, 2010; Shah, 2008; Ufen, 2009; Welsh, 2008; Yeoh, 2010), the researcher found that none could explain the power of the Internet during the 2008 general election. The effectiveness of new media in swinging votes still remains questionable. Furthermore, there has been little research done how DAP had used the Internet in the last general election. In order to respond to this question, the objectives of this study are to identify the different strategies that the DAP used in during the 2008 election campaign period. The researcher views the gap as an ideal area to fill in.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the reason that the Internet becomes more deeply integrated into public life, mass audience have become familiar with new communication technology. Hence, in this study, the researcher aims to find out to what extent new media are used by DAP in creating political awareness. Thus, the researcher prompted to test the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 general election campaign period?

The above research question would help the researcher to reach the first objective, which is to identify the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 general election campaign period.

RQ2: What are the different strategies that the DAP used in its party's website during the 2008 general election campaign period?

The research question above meanwhile focuses on the extent DAP utilises its official website as a significant communication tool to create political awareness. This research question would help the researcher to reach the second objective of this study, which is to investigate the used of DAP's official website in creating political awareness among electorate, by using web technology to communicate party's ideologies, to spread political information, and to present party's views on certain issues during 2008 election campaign period.

1.6 Literature Review

As expressed by McNair (2003):

First, and most obviously, political actors must use media in order to have their messages communicated to the desired audience. Therefore it is of utmost importance to discover the roles played by politicians' blogs and political party's official website as a medium of communication between politicians and citizens (p. 12).

However, in the Malaysian situation, Wong (2008) revealed:

BN's underestimation of new media came from their belief that they could tstill rely on mainstream media to obtain support from voters. In their reporting of the run-up leading to polling day on 8 March, 2008, mainstream media were focused on the positively of BN while they marginalized or slammed the opposition parties (p.11).

Moten (2009) strengthened this proposition with the claim as follows:

Electoral Studies Unit of the International Islamic University Malaysia, carried out a content analysis of eight newspapers, radio and television,

showed that the space allotted to opposition parties ranged between 20% and 35% during 13-day campaign period (p. 38).

Under the circumstances, Naim addressed that alternative media have improvised communication systems by using a combination of the Internet, mobile phones, blogs, e-mails, SMS and the YouTube. They were used effectively by opposition parties to raise consciousness and create awareness" (Seneviratne, 2008, p. 68).

Although the past studies stated that new media contributed to the political earthquake of the last general election, there is a need for further research to prove how a particular political party used the Internet-based media to build political awareness. This has opened the researcher's eyes to trigger new research efforts - to study how DAP has fully utilised the network medium in creating political awareness in the last general election. Therefore, the objective of this study is to identify the different strategies that the DAP used during the 2008 general election campaign period.

1.7 Methodology

In this study, the researcher used a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. In order to obtain the best results, the researcher applied the concept of triangulation to analyse the data. In this study, the researcher carried out quantitative content analysis and qualitative in-depth interviews to find out if DAP is on the right track by widely using new powerful force of the Internet to make political communication more

accessible in order to create political awareness. Jick (1979) defined the term triangulation as the, "Use of multiple methods mainly quantitative and qualitative methods in studying the same phenomenon" (p. 602).

1.7.1 Content Analysis

Kerlinger described that, "Content analysis is a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective and quantifiable manner for the purpose of measuring variables" (Gunter, 2000, p. 56). Meanwhile, the usage of thematic content analysis is aimed at an assessment (frequency) of the presence of specified themes, issues, actors, states of affairs, words or ideas in the texts or visuals to be analysed, and which themes, issues or actors are sought, depends completely on the theoretical concepts that are to be operationalized. The themes, issues or actors sought should be mutually exclusive (no overlaps) and the complete set should be exhaustive (no unclassified texts).

In order for the researcher to analyse and understand the content elements of DAP leaders' blogs and official website, content analysis was conducted to evaluate the influential power of DAP leaders' blogs and official website in creating political awareness. As pointed out by Baharuddin, 2008; Idid and Wok, 2010; Kuppusamy, 2008; Mersat, 2009; Mokhtar, 2008; Moten, 2009; Ong, 2008; Ramanathan, 2008; Savarimuthu, 2008; Tan, 2008; Ufen, 2008; Zain, 2008, there are four main issues highlighted in media in a run up to the 2008 general election, which are corruption, crime, inflation, and press

freedom. The researcher applied quantitative content analysis to find out whether DAP leaders cum bloggers presented their views by attacking BN, defending their own party when attacked by BN, or remaining neutral; and also applied thematic content analysis to calculate the frequency of appearances ofthe four units of analysis.

1.7.2 In-depth Interviews

The second research method applied by the researcher in this study is in-depth interviews. Hocking *et al*. (2003) explained:

> Intensive interviews are conducted on a one-on-one basis involving the researcher and the interviewee. The interview requires respondents who are willing to give the time necessary to conduct the interview correctly. This method also requires that the researcher know the subject matter very well, since the researcher is participating in an open-ended discussion, talking with the respondent, and recording the interview (p. 209).

The researcher interviewed DAP leaders cum bloggers based on a particular criteria or sampling methods, to hear their views about the utilisation of their blogs to create political awareness during the election campaigns.

The researcher interviewed:

1. Tony Pua Kiam Wee (Member of Parliament for Petaling Jaya Utara)

2. Liew Chin Tong (Member of Parliament for Bukit Bendera)

3. Jenice Lee Yin Ha (Assemblyman for Teratai)

4. Lim Lip Eng (Member of Parliament for Segambut)

1.8 Scope of Study

The researcher decided to focus on DAP as the party become the third largest party in the country by winning 28 parliamentary seats in the 2008 election (Pandian, 2010, p. 511). Besides, DAP was the first political party in Malaysia to have an official website which has been operating since 1996 (Rosyidah, 2010, p. 4). In addition, A study of Gong (2010, p. 11) found that out of the 57 of the candidates created blogs prior to the election on 8 March, 2008, DAP candidates contributed most with 20 blogs or equivalent to 35%.

Content analysis was conducted by analysing the articles posted by five DAP political bloggers, which covered throughout specified periods during the last general election beginning from the nomination day on 24 February until the ending of polling day on 8 March, 2008. The criteria of selecting five DAP leaders' blogs were based on their political position within and outside the party (*http://dapmalaysia.org*, n.d.), in which the leaders must be either a member of parliament or state assembly representatives.

The researcher intended to interview five DAP respondents and DAP IT manager who ran DAP's official website, to examine how they used various new media technology, especially including their blogs and the party's official website to create political awareness.

The purpose of performing DAP leaders' blogs and official website contents analysis was to evaluate the used of the DAP's strategy to fully utilise

new media to raise political awareness, by exposing corruption, crime, inflation and press freedom issues.

1.9 Definition of Terms

1.9.1 Political Awareness

There are many ways to ascertain political awareness. At the superficial level, political awareness may be related to knowledge regarding current political issues, basic historical facts, names of major political leaders and parties. Middle-level political awareness could be associated with knowledge regarding government policies, the structure of a political party, as well as initial participation in political activities such as attending public lectures organised by political parties. A higher level of political awareness is associated with active membership in political parties, as well as participation in non-governmental organisations (Ramli, 2003, p. 136). In this study, the researcher defined political awareness as voters' level of support to DAP and DAP's candidates in the 2008 general election.

1.9.2 Corruption

Corruption can be defined as a betrayal of the public trust for reasons of private interest (Rosenbloom *et al*., 2009, p. 513). Shively (2005, p. 118) defined corruption as officials who perform their public tasks improperly to receive personal benefits. In this study, corruption is defined as the use of legislated powers by government officials for dishonest gain, or dishonest

authorities using the people's money for individual or personal purposes.

1.9.3 Crime

A crime is a wrong the sanction of which involves punishment (Kenny, as cited in Rogers, 1998, p. 13). In this study, the researcher defined crime as an unlawful activity and for which punishment is imposed upon conviction.

1.9.4 Inflation

Inflation means that each unit of currency will purchase fewer goods and services (Henslin, 2005, p. 393), or if the demand cannot be matched by an increase in supply, prices for the insufficient products or services will rise (Perry and Perry, 2002, p. 448). In this study, the researcher defined inflation as sustained rising prices of goods and services.

1.9.5 Press Freedom

Freedom of speech allows one to state preferences about policies and to criticise government actions, whereas press freedom permits wider dissemination of dissenting views (Bealey *et al*., 1999, p. 48). Furthermore, Baker *et al*. pointed out that a free press performs three essential features for a democracy: a "watchdog" role, the provision of knowledge and information, and the facilitation of public discussion (Mohd, 2009, p. 7). In this study, the researcher defined the term as "the right and freedom of communication and

expression on the Internet".

1.10 Conclusion

This study provided the political parties and politicians, especially candidates in the general election, to have a better understanding of the roles of new media, by identifying the used of new media by DAP to create political awareness during the 2008 general election period.

In Chapter Two - Literature Review, the previous as well as current related studies of the relationship between media and politics are reviewed. In addition to that, relevant theory to support the studies is also used.

In Chapter Three - Methodology, the methodologies used to conduct the study, which are content analysis and in-depth interviews are presented. This chapter explained the quantitative and qualitative research methods, characteristics of the two research methods, reasons for choosing the two research methods, and also the triangulation.

In Chapter Four - Findings, the findings of the content analysis and in-depth interviews are displayed. Tables are used to explain the results of the findings.

In Chapter Five - Discussions and Analysis, the findings of the content analysis and in-depth interviews are explained. Also, interpretations,

comparisons, and analysis of the results are presented.

In Chapter Six - Conclusion, the conclusion of the findings with relation to the objectives and research questions, implications and limitations of the study, and recommendations for further study are presented.

1.11 Summary of Chapter One

Table 1.1: Summary of Chapter One

Research Question One	First Research Objective	Research Methods
What are the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 general election campaign period?	To identify the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 general election campaign period.	Content Analysis In-depth Interviews
Research Question Two	**Second Research Objective**	**Research Methods**
What are the different strategies that the DAP used in its party's website during the 2008 general election campaign period?	To investigate the different strategies that the DAP used in its party's website during the 2008 general election campaign period.	Content Analysis In-depth Interviews

The research questions, research objectives, and research methods are central in a thesis research. Therefore, it is very important to define a good set of research questions, relevant research objectives, and appropriate research methods. In this process, when the research questions have been determined, the researcher must set the research objectives and choose appropriate research designs with the purpose to answer the research questions significantly and effectively.

Table 1.1 above summarised the three core components in chapter one, which are research questions, research objectives, and research methods, with the aim of providing a better and clearer understanding of the chapter. The RQ1 in this study is: "What are the different strategies that the DAP's leaders

used in their blogs during the 2008 general election campaign period?" For the purpose of answering this research question, the researcher set the research objectives as to identify the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 general election campaign period. To obtain significant results by addressing the first research question, choosing suitable methods of data collection is a very crucial step in carrying out a research process. In accordance to that, the researcher applied content analysis and in-depth interviews research methods.

The RQ2 is: "What are the different strategies that the DAP used in its party's website during the 2008 general election campaign period?" The researcher designed the second research objective as to investigate the different strategies that the DAP used in its party's website during the 2008 general election campaign period. Same as the first research question, different research methods were carried out, which are content analysis and in-depth interviews. In summary, each research question is reflective of the research objectives to be achieved and the research methods to be carried out.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to assess the role of new media in creating political awareness during the last general election. In order to get in touch with the public during the general election, political parties have to fully embrace new media. Political parties obviously require an outlet to articulate their policies and ideologies to a mass audience. This is known as political communication.

According to Roskin *et al*. (2003), "Political scientists have long recognised the dependence of politics on communication, and since the mass media is capable of reaching an infinitely larger audience, therefore it yields a greater voter or public-opinion return than face-to-face communication" (p. 153-154).

There are several definitions of political communication. Jarren defined political communication as, "The central mechanism in the articulation, aggregation, production and implementation of collectively binding policies. Political communication is not only an instrument of politics,

it is politics" (Esser and Pfesch, 2004, p. 386). Meanwhile, McNair defined political communication as, "The purposeful communication about politics" (Idid and Wok, 2010, p. 4).

Idid and Wok (2010) noted that:

Political communication was much more than persuasion and election studies. It is interesting to find out whether voters were influenced by media, by friends, by their own families or political parties, when they entered the ballot boxes" (p. 4).

Apart from the above statement, from the perspective of Idid and Wok (2010), "Understanding media effects on the audience and the voters is studying media and politics. The two disciplines are combined to be in one discipline called political communication" (p. 4).

There are various functions of the mass media in political communication. As expressed by McNair (2003):

Firstly, in democratic political systems, the media functions both as transmitters of political communication which originates outside the media organisation and also as senders of political messages constructed by journalists, (p. 12).
Secondly, the media plays an important role in the political process as the transmitter of messages from citizens to their political leaders (p. 14), in which media serves as the citizens' voice in the communication process.

The third function of media is surveillance. Straubhaar and LaRose (2003) perceived, "Surveillance refers to the audience who has to keep track of what is going on around their sociologists (p. 52).

Furthermore, Perse (2001) argued that, "through its surveillance function, mass media watches, monitors and reports on political matters. Most people keep track of political issues through the mass media, judge which issues are vital or significant" (p. 83).

Esser and Pfesch (2004) said that, "Mass media's primary function refers to the creation of publicity by selecting, processing and conveying information according to media-specified criteria, formats, and presentational styles" (p. 387).

Apart from the functions of mass media as mentioned above, in recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the question about media that do not only inform, but also persuade their audience. Beck (2004) indicated that:

> Opinions, attitudes, and even behaviour are no longer believed to be totally immune from media audience (p. 293), since political information can reach its recipients via mass media, this blends into a general renaissance of the idea that mass media can affect their audiences' orientations not only by means of complex cognitive processes, such as priming or framing but also in a more direct persuasive way (p. 317).
>> The analysis suggested that the reception of persuasive messages which carrying evaluative content from mass media, can indeed be consequential for individual electoral behaviour. Depending on which media they use, citizens differ systematically with regard to the likelihood of voting for or against particular parties or candidates at national elections (p. 318).

Besides that, Swanson (2004) posited that, "Political parties relied on the sophisticated use of mass media to persuade voters - the "consumers" of

political communication" (p. 48). In this instance, media's advocacy functions may be viewed as reinforcing or altering voters' existing political opinions, and media transmits direct political messages through the process of persuasion.

With the various functions of mass media as noted above, Roskin *et al.*(2003) stated that, "Political scientists have long recognised the dependence of politics on communication, and mass media reach an infinitely larger audience, and therefore yield a greater voter or public-opinion return, than does face-to-face communication" (p. 153-154).

However, there are those who are sceptical of media's level of influence. They doubt whether media really make such an impact in shaping the population's view, or it is really a significant new force in politics. In this case, Spraks (2004) raised an argument:

> The extent to which traditional media are satisfactory embodiments vary from country to country, but it is generally recognized that even in the best cases, there are limitations on what may be said. For instance, the various forms of state censorship are well known; in addition, concentrations of ownership and dependence upon advertising revenue are also important factors which tend to make the existing media rather poor representatives   of the public sphere (p. 77-78).

> Crucially, McNair (2003) shared the same opinion on this matter:

> While analysts may argue about the bias of reporting, all newspapers take pride in their 'public voice', where the editorials voiced out the political opinions on behalf of the public and directed at policy-makers. Alternatively, the editorials may construct as the authoritative voice of the editors, presenting the political scene from a detached distance. In both cases, the editorial is intended as a political interference by the authority or political parties (p. 13).

In this regard, Sparks (2004) concluded that, "The existing mass media are even more inadequate as vehicles for a genuinely global public sphere as they serve a very small audience (p. 79).

In the Malaysian context, Anuar (2005) argued that:

There are forces in society that trying to gain access to media, by hoping exercising influence and control over the media. The forces included the state, political parties, corporate entities, lobby groups, and civil society groups, among others. In many cases, particularly in countries where democracy is weak, the strong relationship between the state and mainstream mass media has been established over the years, which resulted in threatens media freedom and credibility. And this relationship, as in the case of Malaysia, is made more obvious during the period of general elections, when the political hegemony of the ruling party requires critical protection and promotion (p. 25).

In conclusion, fully and effectively utilisation of media in politics, has become key to win any political election, based on the reason that media has always had a close relationship with politics. With media are changing and growing more powerful, political parties and politicians have to use media to shape political prospects and persuade voters to support the candidate*s* during election.

2.2 Conceptual Literature Review
2.2.1 Uniqueness and Development of the Internet

Generally, the uniqueness of the Internet can be explained with six features. Flew described (2005):

The first feature is manipulation Digital information is easily changeable and adaptable at all stages of creation, storage, delivery and use. The second feature is net-workable, in which digital information

can be shared and exchanged among large numbers of users simultaneously, and across enormous distances (p. 3).

Apart from that, as expressed by Stovall (2004), "The third uniqueness is that the Web can deliver information immediately. Broadcasting, particularly television, can also do the same thing and with great impact, but the Web's qualities offer an immediacy that broadcasting cannot match" (p. 8). Besides that, on the Web, news reporters and editors not only can include their reports with full text and biographical information, they can also include audio of the sources and video of the scenes where the story took place. This means that the Internet allows the display of colourful pictures, music, and audio as well as data and text, which represent its multimedia capability of the Internet.

Furthermore, Flew (2005) asserted that, "Web technology is based on hypertext principles, which allows for the linking of related information, from one source to other sources, by using simple point-and-click" (p. 4). The sixth feature of the uniqueness of the Internet is the Net. It is supposed to create a reasonable level-playing field whereby more diverse range of opinions can compete and flourish (Chadwick, 2006, p. 23). As *Time* magazine managing director Richard Stengel said, "News posting at 3a.m. could elicit 50 responses within minutes" (Foo, 2008, p. N50). On this level, Flew (2005) stated that, "There is a clear evidence of interaction between those using the Internet and those interactivity creates the possibility for feedback loops, returns paths between producers and users, and forms of simultaneous (synchronous) or slightly delayed (asynchronous) many-to-many communication" (p. 13).

Undoubtedly, with a wide variety of unique characteristics the Internet possesses, information technology revolution has produced critical turning point in political communication. The Internet with its robust interactive capacity helps the democratic process by encouraging high level of political engagement among citizens. The Internet represents the newest and perhaps the most significant manifestation in the media landscape. The Internet with its continuous updated news that is very quick and easily accessible by audience, has become a prominent and multiple source of news and information for general public. It is no wonder that political parties and politicians can communicate more effectively with their members and public at large, especially during election period.

After discussing the relationship between new media and political communication in general, it is necessary to provide background information on the development of the Internet in Malaysia, and also the MSC's Bill of Guarantees that encourage the opposition parties to use new media to disseminate political messages and mobilise the people.

As explained by Minges and Gray (2001):

The root of Malaysia's Internet development can be traced back to 1988, when the MIMOS set up an university computer network called Malaysian Computer Network. It had four dial-up lines to Australia, Korea, Netherlands, US, and offered e-mail and participant in news groups. In 1992, the expensive dial-up connections were replaced by a satellite link to US, and Malaysia obtained a permanent connection to the Internet (p. 19).

Loo (2003) further discussed:

> With the government's focus on generating an ICT-based economy, the issues of open public discourse, capacity-building, knowledge empowerment, good governance and media freedom are being debated more openly in the public domain compared to the years before 1995. Academic and governmental deliberations have taken on equally fresh dimensions as reflected by the various forms organized by the NITC. With the expanded public sphere created by ICT and the government's focus on creating a knowledge-based economy, signs of direct engagement between the government and citizenry in the public domain are emerging, albeit cautiously, through the activities of the NITC, which is fundamentally a think-thank instrumental in planning, formulating and directing the country's information technology development portfolio and, to some extent, preparing the IT-related speeches of government ministers   (p. 187).

In order to transform Malaysia into a modern state by the year 2020, and attract investors to operate in MSC, Brown (2005) claimed that:

> Rather than viewing the Internet with doubt, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad primarily embraced the Internet as part of an information technology revolution. Since the primary goal of Mahathir's Vision 2020 was witness Malaysia take its place amongst the industrialized nations, in this situation, the Internet provide the driving force for economic growth. In 1993, Mahathir thus launched the MSC project – a series of business incentives designed to create an Asian "Silicon Valley" in Malaysia. Included in the MSC "Bill of Guarantees" was a promise not to censor the Internet (p. 46).

Admittedly, through the implementation and the government's much publicised the MSC initiatives, Malaysians are exposed to the potential of the Internet, as it is within the government's interest to develop the Internet sector in Malaysia. Such growth is fundamentally sparked by attractive technology policies, since the MSC's Bill of Guarantees disallows the censorship of the Internet. As traditional media remains tightly controlled, the presence of MSC Bill of Guarantees allows free and open discussions of opinions and ideas.

Thus, opposition parties have the opportunity to expose wrongdoings and disclose opposing views through their blogs and official website. Needless to say, the Bill of Guarantees of MSC has improved and boosted media independence, and contributed towards a more democratic society in Malaysia.

In Malaysia, 1998 was a watershed year. Mahathir's shock sacking of his popular deputy, Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, sparked a political reform movement, which in catalysed an explosion of activity on the Internet. Numbers of sites sympathetic to the movement were launched that year. In 1999, according to an anti-defamation committee of UMNO, the ruling political party recognized more than 40 websites that it said were being used to defame the authority and its leaders. Most of these sites became inactive after the year of 2000, when Anwar lost his court appeals and started served in jail. Much of the content on some of these sites was indeed insensitive. However, there were also instances of independent journalists who tried to provide more responsible and professional contributions. They included Sabri Zain's online *Reformasi Diary* and *Saksi*. There are other sites set up a year or more after the Anwar sacking took this more professional direction, which included *Malaysiakini* and *Harakah Daily* in late 1999, and *Agenda Daily* in 2000 (George, 2003, p. 908).

The *Reformasi* movement was revived through political parties and, moreover, with protest movements organized by civil society that employed new media (Ufen, 2008, p. 162). The Internet news portal *Malaysiakini*, was

set up in 1999 as the Malaysia's first commercial Internet newspaper, which publicized institutional corruption and other issues, particularly in the judiciary (Moten, 2009, p. 39). During the 2008 general election, *Malaysiakini* was so overwhelmed by visitors on polling day which result in the site broke down. According to the company's CEO Premesh Chandran, at its peak, the site was attracting some 500,000 visitors an hour, a quick jump from between 100,000 and 200,000 hits it gets a day (Yong, 2008).

In terms of domestic ICT diffusion, significant disparities in computer and Internet access continue to exist in the country, especially between urban and rural locales. Higher penetration rates mean that more – although certainly not all – Malaysians have the potential ability to produce and consume politically oriented content online (Smeltzer and Lepawsky, 2010, p. 88). Even though the Internet played a relatively small role in the 2004 election, but Internet penetration has surged since then with the continued roll-out of high-speed broadband facilities (Lee, 2008). The number of Internet users has, however, jumped from approximately 15% of the population in 1999, to almost 35% in 2004 and 59% in 2008 (MCMC, 2008).

Apart from this, Gross (2008) posited that:

The uncensored Internet allowing for its blossoming as an alternative source of information and a forum for dissent, something mainstream media has not been able to do.

Pepinsky (2011) said that:

The regime's efforts to establish wide Internet usage among Malaysians, in turn, means that opposition sympathizers (and, indeed, the mass of apolitical Malaysians too) can now access political reporting that are far more independent than that found in the established media, and can debate current events while covering topics considered impermissible by existing regulations on political speech (p9).

The availability of alternative sources of information has empowered opposition parties that are marginalized by the traditional media controlled by authoritarian regimes. Since then, uncensored access to new media represented as a means to guarantee free access to information and freedom of expression.

With the advances in communications technology and rise of the Internet, it is essential in this study to explore in the following section, whether opposition parties in Malaysia have embraced new media in order to gain support in the general election.

By discussing the relationship between ICTs and politics, in particular, the researcher described the role of Malaysia's rapidly expanding Internet in local politics, which enabled political parties and politicians to be more actively leveraged ICTs in their election campaign.

2.2.2 New Media and Political Communication

As pointed out by Ramanathan (2008):

In Malaysia, both mainstream media and websites are divided into pro-government and opposition, and there seems to be a fight between these two groups control over the media. Both sites seem convinced

That control over media is an essential ingredient for their electoralprocess success, and the "media and poster war" has become a regularfeature in recent 1995, 1999 and 2004 general elections (p. 235).

Moreover, Thomas (2009) found that:

Opposition parties have been unfairly treated by mainstream media, based on reasons that national newspapers are licensed, owned, controlled and directed by BN or business aligned to BN, while radio and television are controlled by Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture (p. 36).

Even as authorities announced the Internal Security Act and the Sedition Act will be repealed (PM announces repeal of ISA, 2011; Shagal, 2012), and removal of annual renewal of press permits under the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PM announces repeal of ISA, 2011), however, it is still necessary to look into how rules and regulations that serves to restrict press freedom in Malaysia.

According to Wang (2001, p. 80), law such as the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA), impinges on the media's effectiveness in playing its role as disseminator of information, and watchdog over the government of the day. PPPA regulated that all newspapers and regular publications should possess a publishing permit issued by the Ministry of Internal Security, which has to be re-applied annually (Anuar, 2005, p. 29).

Besides the PPPA, in an interview by *AsiaMedia*, Zaharom Nain described that further laws including the Official Secrets Act (OSA), which allows for the arrest, fine and/or imprisonment of any person caught

publishing or publicizing what are deemed to be "official secrets," a vague term for virtually any government document (Shah, 2008, p. 3).

Zaharom further illustrated that the Sedition Act, another catch-all act that prevents the publication and distribution of "seditious" material. Actions deemed seditious are punishable with a fine and/or imprisonment (Shah, 2008, p. 4). There is almost no investigative reporting in Malaysia because of the existence of quite a number of draconian laws, such as the Internal Security Act (ISA) that allows the indefinite imprisonment of any individual without trial. Hence, anyone can be arrested by the police and locked up without any reason offered for the arrest (Shah, 2008, p. 3).

PPPA, ISA, OSA and Sedition Act not only instill fear among the journalists, they also prevent media professionals from practising investigative journalism, and from playing any role as the custodians of truth (Wang, 2001, p. 82).

Under this condition, opposition parties hardly a mention in the mainstream media, but with the appearance of the Internet, they have begun campaigning excitedly in cyberspace, purposely of reaching young, urban, educated voters (AFP, 2008).

As noted by the above scholars, there is no denying that Malaysians have been kept in the dark and fed by the ruling parties with propaganda through mainstream media.

In contrast with the above arguments, Thomas (2009) stated that, "Even with strict control in the current media environment, the Internet, blogs and YouTube dramatically revolutionised the availability, accessibility and speed of information, and the airing of alternative views and news" (p. 36).

In the local conditions, Seneviratne (2008) highlighted that:

With the popularity of the Internet soared in this decade, both government and opposition newspapers going online, and also with the mushrooming of websites of all shades and dimensions. In this regard, the Internet allowed political parties to reach out to a very important constituency which was non-existent in previous elections (p. 66).

In addition to that, Ramanathan (2008) mentioned that:

Over the past four years it can be seen that new media have multiplied at an even faster rates, where many observers have noted that the rapidly increasing of the Internet before the 2008 general elections, has had a remarkable impact, especially upon young voters (p. 235).

The above perspectives were agreed on by the online news portal *Malaysiakini*'s chief executive officer Premesh Chandran. He believed that the Internet had a major influence on the outcome of the 2008 general election, because the issues that made a difference, such as corruption and interference in the judiciary, were only carried on news sites like *Malaysiakini*. There were large swings in urban and semi-urban areas, especially (to opposition) among first-time young voters. Significantly, from websites that carry political news to social networking, there is no doubt that the Internet has provided previously unavailable platforms to politicians and election candidates to reach out to the electorate (Savarimuthu, 2008).

Previous researches (Ramanathan, 2008; Savarimuthu, 2008; Seneviratne, 2008 and Thomas, 2009) have shown that alternative press has altered the process of information flow in the area of political communication. Clearly new communication technology offers a variety of opportunities for greater political participation and disclosure to the opposition parties and public. In order to gain support in the general election, DAP has to find a place in the cyberspace and effectively embraces the Internet. With new media becoming a key instrument for electoral activities, it is essential in this study to investigate the use of new media by DAP to spread its candidates' information and present party's views not covered by mainstream media during the last general election campaign period.

2.2.3 Blogs

Hogg *et al*. (2008) described:

A blog is a shortened version of the term used for an online diary: web log. Blogs are Web sites in which items are posted in reverse chronological order that combine text, images, media objects and links to other blogs, web pages and media news sites (p. 1).

In Jalil's view (2010):

The social media, or blogs in particular, has become one of the new technology that have been recognized for its importance in bringing about information to members of society. It has a great impact on the

development of society. It makes it easier and faster for communication to take place among individuals and groups in society (p. 5).

Furthermore, Herring *et al*. (2007) noted that, "Weblogs are popular to a certain extent, because weblogs are easily accessible, inexpensive self-

publication of content for a potentially huge audience on the Internet, while being more flexible and interactive than previous publication formats, print or digital" (p. 1).

More broadly, Chadwick, (2006) indicated that:

The rise of political blogging has been based upon very simple text-based   sites that are quick to load and easy to use. It is also the case that a website is still much cheaper than a series of television advertisements (p. 22).

In this sense, Milakovich (2010) stressed that:

For those who feel excluded from the governing public media, the Internet - with its estimated 30 billion websites and 112 million weblogs or "blogs" - offers rapid access to an alternative world of expression, networking and   organizing. One of the effects of this new form of communication is that it   could build up the postmodern challenge to traditional authority structures   (p. 3).

Jalil (2010, p. 1) concluded that social media in a way functions like that of normal mass media, containing information that is newsworthy to citizens. It enables the flow of information that is freer, more diversified and more immediate. This is said to be the equilibrium function of social media as it enables active citizens that are denied access of information to set up their own medium such as blogs and thus enabling others to have access to the information contained in them.

In Malaysia, the exponential growth of social media and its usage had sparked interest in the implication of social media, especially blogs in the democratic process in Malaysia. Blogs are amongst the most focused among the social media, which had caught the attention from both academic and the authority (Jalil, 2010, p. 4).

Since 2003, blogs have gained increasing exposure and coverage for their role in breaking, shaping, and spinning news stories. The role of blogs has become increasingly mainstream, as political consultants, news services and candidates began using them as tools for outreach and opinion forming (Mohd and Zengeni, 2010, p. 4). Zaharom Naim pointed out that new media such as blogs would help to spread the opposition's messages. Political dissident and Malaysia's ex-Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim wrote his own blogs (*http://www.anwaribrahim.com* and *http://anwaribrahimblog.com*), which have news links and videos of his PKR campaign activities. In 2007, Anwar used the site to release a video clip that allegedly showed a high-profile lawyer, V. K. Lingam, brokering top judicial appointments – a scandal that triggered a full royal commission of inquiry (Mohd and Zengeni, 2010, p. 10).

Bloggers have broken the government-controlled mainstream media and exposed independent news. In the past year and a half, there was an influential amount of opposing views towards the authority, for instance, criticising the government of cronyism, corruption, and continuous misuse of public funds. Due to control over mainstream media by the authority,

Malaysians preferring to blog to express their frustrations. Despite some strong allegations of corruption involving government officials, and threats of a vote for a change in government leading up to the 2008 general elections, the ruling coalition dismissed Malaysian bloggers of having any effect on society. Bloggers were labelled as being "bored, lonely, and unemployed housewives." In a prominent statement by another official,

bloggers were also called "monkeys" (Zain, 2008).

A study conducted by a group of researchers at UKM (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) found that, the freedom existed in cyberspace was used extensively by bloggers to channel political information not normally found in mainstream media. During the 12th general election in 2008, majority of political bloggers used the cyber sphere to campaign for opposition candidates. This result showed that more bloggers supported the opposition than BN. Of those who identified themselves, 15 were supporters of opposition parties either PKR, DAP or PAS compared to only seven identifying themselves to be with the BN (Nasir, 2010).

With mainstream media that was perceived as echoing the voice of the BN, new media which was accessible to a large segment of the population, became very popular by giving a balanced coverage of issues. Blogs play an important role as a forum for the opposition parties to send out information about current issues, to interact and share opinions with online users. Blogs were utilized fully by the opposition parties not only to create awareness

among citizens, but also to outline the opposition's joint stands on these issues.

2.3 Empirical Studies

2.3.1 Utilisation of the Internet

Walter Anderson, contributing editor of *FamilySecurityMatters.org*, said the Internet has the ability to allow candidates to reach "a larger audience of potential voters" with more immediacy, and greater interactivity than TV ever could (Dougherty, 2008, p. IT15). By analysing 1996 - 2000 US national election studies data, Tolbert and McNeal found that access to the Internet and online election news was positively associated with voting and other forms of political participation (Xenos and Moy, 2007, p. 707). Trammell (Park and Kluver, 2009, p.6) who examined the hyper-linking practices of blogs maintained by US Democratic Party candidates running for the 2004 US presidential election, explained that blogs can strengthen the 'closed-network' nature of the community of a politician's supporters. Besides that, Nardi *et al.* (Jalil, 2010, p. 6) viewed that, "Blogs have been featured extensively in the popular media and have entered political campaigns, news organisations, businesses, and classrooms". In short, the Internet has become not only an important campaign tool, but also a significant communication channel for politicians, primarily because of the power of relational networking (Park and Kluver, 2009, p. 3).

> As stated by Milakovich (2010):
>
> The advantage of the Internet as a medium for citizen participation has been touted for various purposes only for a relatively short period of time - prior to 2008 there was no comprehensive strategy to successfully apply information technology to electoral processes (p. 4).
>> US President Barack Obama was the first candidate for national office to successfully merge ICT and employ the Internet and social networking, to generate new voters as well as garner increased campaign contributions. The use of the Internet for political communication accelerated during the 2008 presidential campaign partly due to Obama's tech-savvy campaign advisors; its widespread use may have significantly impacted the results of the 2008 presidential elections (p. 5).

Obama's 2008 successful run for the presidency was the first American national political campaign to successfully utilise new media technologies to gather political contributions and generate new voters. Obama's use of electronic media reached out effectively to millions of younger, tech-savvy new voters who grew up with ICT and were motivated to participate by speed, networking and sharing of information (p. 5).

The above statement was supported by Obama's former national special events director, Roger Fisk, who noted that the usage of new media attracted many young people who, by definition, are "much more interested in tomorrow" (Sivanandam, 2009, p. 10). More than any other previous campaign, the Obama campaign proved that tremendous mobilising and fund-raising potential of a comprehensive Internet strategy was most successful.

Veteran campaign strategist Joe Trippi, who ran the Howard Dean campaign for president in 2004, said, "The tools [for elections] changed between 2004 and 2008. Obama won every single caucus state that matters, and he did it because of those tools, because he was able to move thousands of people to organise." (Hill, 2009, p. 1-2). Hill (2009, p. 6) summarized that by using interactive Web 2.0 tools, Obama's campaign changed the way politicians mobilise supporters, raise money, advertise to voters, defend against attacks and communicate with constituents.

Essentially, the Internet is another opportunity not only for political parties and politicians to address current issues and share their ideas with bigger audience, but also for the readers to express their views. Even with the

growth of blogging amongst electoral campaigns in other countries, there are still lacks of studies in this area in the local context.

2.3.2 Role of New Media in the 2008 General Election

While there is a lack of empirical research in this area, details of the 2008 general election showed that there is some dynamic effect from the employing of the new media. Since 1990s, political parties in Malaysia have gradually more applied the Internet as a communication and information tool. However, it was in the 2008 general election that the impact was made clear (Rosyidah, 2010, p. 1). Malaysia's weak opposition parties were up against a hostile mainstream media owned by the ruling BN and restrictive campaign rules. As a result, controlled through ownerships by the ruling BN government, but they went online and turned effectively to blogs, online news portals, and YouTube to dodge a virtual blackout on mainstream media (Tarrant, 2008).

The Internet has allowed opposition parties like DAP, PAS, and PKR to reach young voters, especially those between the ages of 21 and 40 in their offices and homes. The Internet is now a major factor in the Malaysian politics scene (Koh, 2008, p. 25). According to a survey conducted by Zentrum Future Studies Malaysia from 20 February to 5 March 2008, they found that alternative media had a big influence on voters. The survey found about 65% of the respondents trusted blogs and online media for reliable information, as against 23% who relied on television and about 15% on newspapers (Moten, 2008, p. 39).

In a survey conducted by Institute of Policy Studies, Singapore on the impact of the Internet in the 2008 general election. 45.9% of voters regarded the Internet as an "important" alternative source of information, while another 17.5% said it was "very important" (Baharuddin, p. 3). In his opinion, the Internet has indeed emerged as a viable alternative to mainstream media as a channel of information.

Ibrahim Suffian, who runs an independent polling firm, the Merdeka Center, acknowledged in a local news website report that Malaysians are resorting to digital media for their information. "In previous surveys conducted by Merdeka Center, we found that about 90% of the people got their political information from the traditional media. But the 2008 election results show that the BN only managed to garner slightly more than half of the popular vote. So it implied that many people did not believe what they had read. They turned to secondary sources for information, such as alternative media, and especially the Internet. The secondary market for alternative news is between 60% and 65%. We believed this is what tipped the balance in favour of the opposition in the last elections." (Fama and Tam, 2010, p. 80).

Baharuddin (2008, p. 9) summarised that the Internet has indeed emerged as a viable alternative to mainstream media as a channel of information. He noted that, unlike mainstream media sources, individuals could access and re-access materials at their convenience. Text and video clips can be read and viewed repeatedly, as well as being forwarded to friends and family members. He cited the example of the Lingam video clips, together

with visual images of events such as the *Hindraf* and Anwar's election rallies, which he claims have helped swing voters to the opposition. Another example of the Internet utilization was Anwar Ibrahim used his blog to inform the public of his whereabouts during the 2008 general election campaign. *New Straits Times* reported that, "It enables young, first-time candidates, such as DAP's Hannah Yeoh and PKR's Loh Gwo Burne to draw record crowds of more than 10,000 to their hastily organised *ceramah* (public rallies) in USJ, Selangor, in the first week of campaigning" (Tan and Ibrahim, 2008, p. 85).

Commenting on BN's loss in the online war during the election, Abdullah Badawi said that, "We did not think it was important. It was a serious misjudgement. We thought that the newspapers, the print media, the television were important but young people were looking at text messages and blogs". He further admitted that the influence of new media "was painful" (Tan and Ibrahim, 2008, p. 86). Former Information Minister Datuk Shabery Cheek also recognised that Internet commentators played a key role in the last general election by catering to voters who wanted an alternative source of news. He recognised that blogs are now a global social trend and that people will still look for alternative news regardless of how free mainstream media is from government control. He readily admitted that alternative media, like bloggers, play a significant role by being the most direct and simple way for people to express their opinion.

Acknowledging bloggers views cannot be ignored, he added, "We've overlooked their roles and failed to understand their feelings" (Tan and

Ibrahim, 2008, p.86).

Dean Jones, an Australian freelance journalist, said that what has made the 2008 general election such a watershed was the power of the Internet. BN thought that they understood this, but the election results demonstrated that they had no idea what they were dealing with (Johns, 2008, p. 56). More precisely, Wong (2008) asserted that BN's underestimation of cyberspace was based on their belief that they could still count on mainstream media to generate voters support. In their coverage of the run-up leading to polling day on 8 March, 2008, mainstream media, as they had done in the past, were mainly focused positively on BN while they marginalising or slamming the opposition (p. 11). According to Jones, the true power of the Internet lies in its capacity to deliver and disseminate breaking news, instant views, raw and uncensored opinion. In other words, the Internet empowers its users with the ultimate weapon against BN-style culture of secrecy and lies: Instant and international exposure (Johns, 2008, p. 56). As pointed by Professor Welsh, "No matter what level of manipulate over blogging the ruling BN introduces, they cannot control cyberspace. BN needs to change its campaigning methods to reach out effectively, especially to younger voters." (Low, 2008).

More than that, many analysts see the Internet as an enabler, complementing traditional forms of campaigning. For instance, one of the factors perceived victory of the opposition in the 'battle of the Internet'. While BN depended on a traditional campaign strategy, which had served it so well in the past, the opposition embraced the possibilities offered by the new media.

E-mails, blogs and social media sites, were used extensively for the first time. Essentially, the opposition turned a necessity into a virtue (Fama and Tam, 2010, p. 80).

According to international statistics gathered by the *New Straits Times* (*NST*), Malaysia had a 60% Internet penetration rate during the 2008 general election (Koh, 2008, p. 25). Conversely, even with the 60% Internet penetration rate during the 2008 general election, the statistical figure indicated a low 35% of the population have PCs in the home, and 69% of our population is urbanized, as pointed out by the Association of the Computer and Multimedia Industry of Malaysia (Faruqi, 2010, p.N41). Nonetheless at the end of 2009, broadband penetration rate has inched up to 33.2%, which is above the 30% target set for 2009 and the 50% mark by year-end seems achievable, however, Broadband player RedTone International Bhd group CEO Zainal Amanshah said, "Yes, it is achievable but it is the gap between the urban and rural or semi urban areas being narrow? If not, there needs to be a new solution as penetration rates alone do not tell the truth. What is the service quality (and speed)? That is what we should be focusing on instead of pure penetration rates," (Sidhu, 2010, p. B1).

Apart from that, new media analyst, Oon Yeoh opinioned that the influence of the Internet is limited mainly to urban voters, considering that many rural voters would not have had access to the Internet, and to information sent via online media, blogs or email. The above view is also endorsed by Tricia Teoh, the former director of the Centre for Public Policy

Studies, who likened the Internet to the "Fourth Estate" with the most impact on urban areas and feels that urban voters "being more exposed to issues" are more likely to be critical of the government (Tan and Ibrahim, 2008, p. 85).

With DAP currently still tempered by barriers such as urban-rural divide in the Internet, the party is facing difficulties in spreading messages to voters in rural areas. On the basis of low level of online transactions between the community and DAP, it is highly debatable that the party is applying the wise and clear strategy, by utilizing new media technology in the last general election.

2.3.3   DAP Leaders' Blogs

In Malaysia, where the opposition is denied easy access to mainstream media, the Internet has become a powerful weapon that they can use to gain publicity (Gong, 2010, p. 4).

Leader of the opposition DAP, Lim Kit Siang runs three blogs *(http://www.limkitsiang.com,* *http://blog.limkitsiang.com*, and *http://limkitsiang.blogspot.com*), which are meticulously updated with multiple posts every day, and many of the party's leaders follow suit (Mohd and Zengeni, 2010, p. 10). Lim argued that blogging is one way to get word out and an opportunity to circumvent media control. He said, "We cannot neutralize the state-controlled media, but Internet pick-up rates will keep getting higher. We will not be blacked out forever" (AFP, 2008).

Former advertising copywriter, Jeff Ooi, 52, who made his name writing a political blog, *Screenshots* (*http://www.jeffooi.com*) (AFP, 2008), was appointed by DAP to head the party's "e-campaign" (Mohd and Zengeni, 2010, p. 10). Jeff Ooi, who won a seat in northern Penang state under the banner DAP, viewed that news and views on blogs appealed to a different sections of people, and were not limited to urban-youth alone. He said that, "It is not really restricted by age. We are attracting many concerned citizens who are above 45 years old, and these are the people who are more interested in politics and the oppositions' viewpoint. Our campaign videos will be transmitted through YouTube because it is unlikely for BN controlled television stations to broadcast them, of course" (AFP, 2008).

Tony Pua, another DAP candidate who made his name as a blogger, pointed out that the new media played a central role in informing people about the issues. He admitted that he was surprised at how effective it turned out to be. He believed that the Internet may be more influential than people thought it would be and no one expected the result (Yong, 2008). No one could imagine before the 2008 general election that bloggers who contested in the election could win. Tony Pua, with no mass grassroots, paved the way by winning the Petaling Jaya Utara parliamentary seat, beating Chew Mei Fun by almost 20,000 votes. This obviously shows that Malaysians have come to rely on cyberspace for information when deciding their votes (Lee, 2008).

Furthermore, opposition candidates are now using their blogs to solicit funds for their election campaigns. Tony Pua said that e-donation was a new

means for the party to raise funds. He added, "Previously, we obtained funds through conventional resources such as *ceramah* and dinners. The Internet is now another essential channel which has helped us greatly to get more funds." Through their joint website, DAP's Petaling Jaya candidates had collected more than RM10,000 via credit card and online transfers, while another RM20,000 was banked into their Maybank2U account. However, he added that conventional fund-raising methods were still yielding better results. They managed to collect some RM45,000 over five nights of *ceramah* (Ng, 2008).

In the last general election, bloggers had surprised many analysts by their involvement in opening new spaces in the public sphere and influencing election results. Many Malaysians, especially young voters who had accessed the Internet, turned to bloggers to get alternative news about the election, particularly news and campaign from opposition parties (Mohd and Zengeni, 2010, p. 10). A study by Gong (2010) revealed that, "Out of the 57 of the candidates created blogs prior to the election on 8 March, 2008, DAP candidates contributed most with 20 blogs or equivalent to 35%" (p. 11).

Retired BN leader, Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, acknowledged that the opposition knows the power of the Internet, and used blogs to reach voters. This was clearly seen when BN lost several states to the opposition (Smeltzer and Lepawsky, 2009, p. 92). A survey conducted by Baharrudin on 8 March, 2008, found that there was a direct correlation between the frequency at which one visits blogs and the likelihood that the person voting for the opposition. Roughly 70% of those who visited blogs had voted for the opposition coalition.

There was also a direct correlation between the individual's level of credulity towards Internet sources and his or her support for PR. Those who voted for PR also tended to believe online material more (Baharuddin, 2008, p. 5-6).

2.3.4 DAP's Official Website

Compared to BN, opposition candidates admitted that they were limited by restricted sources. BN had an edge because it owns major media outlets. In Malaysia, almost all the print media, as well as radio stations and television channels, devoted much of their air time and election coverage to promote the BN government's achievements. Content analysis of the mainstream media indicated that during the 13-day campaign, BN bought approximately 1,100 pages of full-page colour advertisements in all local newspapers. The contesting parties made greater use of the new media than previously to reach the voters. Many political parties created their own websites long before the election were announced. For the opposition parties, which find little mainstream media coverage, the Internet provides access to a wider audience. DAP, PAS and PKR offer well-designed websites with much information about party policies and activities (Moten, 2009, p. 27).

Rosyidah (2010) stated that:

The government has been actively using IT for some time, and now all the political parties in Malaysia, particularly the opposition parties, have embraced IT for their own party's purpose. Originally, DAP was the pioneer of the opposition parties in their use of IT. For DAP, IT was embraced as a measure of serving the public interest, and DAP members resolved in the meeting of DAP Central Executive Committee on 13 April, 1997, to adopt "IT For All" as a national policy objective. Their aim was to ensure that Malaysia made the

quantum leap into the digital era to ensure that there would be equitable IT development for all without creating a new gap between "information-rich and information poor". DAP also put much effort into promoting IT for its own members. The party started with a mailing list group, 'Bunga Raya', which was used to communicate with their members and public. The mailing list group was a quick and convenient way of sending information and forum discussions among the party and its members. However, it was suspended for some time before the party set up its web site in 1996. It was launched under the domain *http://www.dapmalaysia.org* (p. 2).

As expressed by Yeoh (2008):

DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang, was the key person behind DAP official website which started operating since 1996. Lim began embracing the Internet in the mid-90s, even bothered to learn HTML (Hyper-Text Markup Language) just for his party could have its own website, and was one of the key drivers in continuously upgrading the party website, publishing the press statements and also encouraging its members of parliament to start blogs of their own (p. N46).

Idid and Wok (2010) said opposition parties received very little favourable coverage by mainstream media, and compensated for this handicap through new media, i.e., the Internet, specifically through the parties' websites, weblogs of candidates and YouTube Internet videos" (p. 7).

Currently, DAP's website contains party's history, vision, mission, leadership, video, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, press releases since January 2002, and hypertext links to 47 leaders' blogs. Readers can also give their feedback on the statements written by party leaders as well as their views on the events organised by DAP (*http://dapmalaysia.org*, 2009).

2.4 Global Examples
2.4.1 Singapore 2011 General Election

In the following section, the researcher would like to provide two global examples of Singapore and United States, where the use of new media was a major feature of the elections.

BN's overall votes in the 2008 general election dipped to 51% from 63% in 2004 general election, and four more state governments toppled (Weiss, 2009, p. 742). Likewise, in the Singapore 2011 general election, the ever-ruling PAP won 60.1% of the votes, down from 66.6% in 2006 (Portmann, 2011, p. 30).

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (Portmann, 2011) said that:

The PAP understood "that this election was a watershed election", as voters made clear that they desired "to see more opposition voices in parliament to check the PAP government." The Internet and social media had also "had an impact in this election, quite bigger than in previous elections." (p. 30).

The 2011 Singapore general election was the first election in which new media and social media including Facebook, Twitter, and Podcasts were officially allowed as a campaigning tool for all parties and candidates (*New Media Roundup of Singapore General Election*, 2011).

According to Portmann (2011):

While the PAP posted its worst result in since independence, the opposition wins represent their best performance. Observers were

55quick to label the polls as an "Internet election", implying that media activism in the city-state's cyberspace had a crucial impact on the election (p. 5).

> With the loosened grip on political discussion in the cyberspace, Singapore's opposition parties, which have limited financial and human resources, for the first time had the chance to utilise social networks like Facebook or Twitter to mobilise supporters for election rallies (p. 29).

Ortmann (2011) explained that:

Singapore is one of the most cyber-connected cities in the world, and the Internet played a crucial role in the 2011 general election. Many citizens avoided the traditional press, which is monopolized by government-linked corporations, and turned instead to alternative web portals such as *The Online Citizen* and the *Temasek Review* for unbiased news reports and critical opinions. The new media reported live from election rallies via Facebook and Twitter. These platforms allow readers to take part in discussions and to comment directly on events as they unfold (p. 158).

In accordance to that, the BBC's (British Broadcasting Corporation) South East Asia correspondent, Rachel Harvey viewed that the explosion of new media has opened up greater space for debate in a country where traditional platforms - TV, radio and newspapers - are strictly controlled (Doronila, 2011).

Arun Mahizhnan, Deputy Director of Singapore's Institute of Policy Studies, said the Internet certainly helped communicate this sentiment on a scale that was unprecedented, and with the speed, as well as the sharing of views (Hoe and Saad, 2011).

However, while the relaxation of rules on new media has opened up more space to reach voters, some observers viewed that this may only have had limited impact on the overall electoral results (Hoe and Saad, 2011).

A survey conducted by Singapore's Institute of Policy Studies suggested that the influence of the Internet media on the election result had been overrated and that the ballot was not an "Internet election." Of 2,000 Singaporean voters polled for the survey, only 41.1% read election news online. Moreover, only 30% of the respondents turned to Internet media such as Facebook and political blogs for information, and of these, 90% continued to use traditional media such as newspapers and television as sources of information. Regarding the outcome of the survey, Tan Tarn How, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies and one of the study's Principal Researchers said in an interview:

> I had thought that the consumption of the Internet, social networking sites and party political websites would be higher, but mainstream media was still the dominant media during the election (Mahtini, 2011).

Tan said the use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter as sources of information during the election was notably higher than the last election in 2006. The readerships of political blogs offering a wide range of different views, such as *The Online Citizen*, *Yawning Bread*, and *Temasek Review*, have also developed since 2010 when Institute of Policy Studies conducted its previous survey (Mahtini, 2011).

Ravi Philemon, Head of Community Outreach at socio-political blog, *The Online Citizen*, said:

> If you go by what's reflected on the internet, you would think the opposition would win hands down. But that did not happen (Hoe and Saad, 2011).

Portmann (2011) also claimed that:

The PAP's drop in popularity has occurred for many reasons. Unhappiness with the authority's handling of hot social issues is one reason; the alienation of the PAP rulers from their subjects and their proud style of governing also played a role. Most voters clearly wanted to send a warning to their leaders (p. 31).

Same as its neighbouring country, Malaysia, it is hard to determine whether new media had significant impacts on influencing voters' views, or other factors also contributed to the unprecedented swing in support to the oppositions in the 2011 election.

2.4.2 United States 2008 Presidential Election

The United States 2008 presidential election was the first in which all candidates - presidential and congressional - attempted to attach directly with American voters via online social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace. It has even been called the "Facebook election." (Fraser and Dutta, 2008).

According to a survey by the Pew Research Centre, nearly half (46%) of Americans used the Web, e-mail, or text messaging for news about the presidential campaign, to contribute to the debate, or to mobilise others. Some 35 % of Americans said they watched online political videos - three times as many as during the 2004 presidential election. And roughly 10% said they logged on to social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace to engage in the election (Fraser and Dutta, 2008).

US President Barack Obama was the first candidate for national office to successfully merge ICT and employ the Internet and social networking sites, to generate new voters as well as garner increased campaign contributions. The utilisation of the Internet for political communication accelerated during the 2008 presidential campaign partly due to Obama's tech-sense campaign advisers. Its extensive use may have significantly impacted the outcome of the 2008 presidential elections (Milakovich, 2010, p. 5).

Obama's masterful leveraging of networking platforms marked a major e-ruption in electoral politics - in America and elsewhere - as campaigning shifts from old-style political machines towards the horizontal dynamics of online social networking sites. The web, a ideal medium for genuine grass-roots political movements, is transforming the power dynamics of politics. There are no barriers to entry on sites like Facebook and YouTube. Power is diffused based on the reason that everybody can take part (Fraser and Dutta, 2008).

Obama, who was often seen thumbing messages on his BlackBerry during the campaign, is a new-generation politician who sensibly understands the electoral power of the Web. Besides Facebook and YouTube, other online tools used by the Obama campaign were MySpace, Twitter, Flickr, Digg, BlackPlanet, LinkedIn, AsianAve, MiGente, Glee, and others (Fraser and Dutta, 2008).

Furthermore, Obama's relationships are not the just traditional ties of Democrats - teachers' unions, party faithful and Hollywood moneybags - but a network of supporters who used a distributed model of phone banking to organise and get out the vote, helped raise a record-breaking $600 million, and created all manner of media clips that were viewed millions of times. It was an online movement that begot offline behaviour, including producing youth voter turnout that may have supplied the margin of victory (Carr, 2008).

The above statement was supported by Obama's former national special events director, Roger Fisk, who noted that the usage of new media attracted many young people who, by definition, are "much more interested in tomorrow" (Sivanandam, 2009, p. 10).

As expressed by Ranjit Mathoda, a lawyer and money manager who blogs at Mathoda.com:

> Thomas Jefferson used newspapers to win the presidency, Franklin D. Roosevelt. used radio to change the way he governed, John Fitzgerald Kennedy was the first president to understand television, and Howard Dean saw the value of the Web for raising money. But Senator Barack

> Obama understood that you could use the Web to bring down the cost of building a political brand, produce a sense of connection and engagement, and distribute with the command and control method of governing to allow people to self-organise to do the work." (Carr, 2008).

Marc Andreessen, a founder of Netscape and a board member of Facebook, asserted that:

> I think it is very important that Obama was the first post-boomer candidate for president. Other politicians only focused on using the Internet to raise money. Obama was the first politician I dealt with who

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understood that the technology could be used in new ways." (Carr, 2008).

In conclusion, more than any other previous campaigns, the Obama's campaign showed the incredible mobilising and fund-raising potential of a wide-ranging Internet strategy. Veteran campaign strategist, Joe Trippi, who ran the Howard Dean campaign for president in 2004 said, "The tools (for elections) changed between 2004 and 2008. Obama won every single caucus state that matters, and he did it because of those tools, because he was able to move thousands of people to organise." (Hill, 2009, p. 1-2). Hill (2009, p. 6) summarised that by using interactive Web 2.0 tools, Obama's campaign changed the way politicians mobilise supporters, raise money, sent messages to voters, defend when attack by rivals, and of course, communicate with constituents.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

One way to develop an understanding of online audience's motivations to seek out information and to satisfy their needs, is to start with an appropriate theoretical framework. As such, the theoretical framework in this research was grounded in the communication theory from the perspective of framing. The researcher found framing was the most appropriate theory to support the topic. Therefore, the researcher applied this theory to guide the research.

2.5.1 Framing

One of the most frequently quoted definitions by Entman (1993) states that:

> To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and or treatment recommendation for the item described (p. 52).

In addition, frames stress some information about an item, which is the subject of a communication, thereby enriching them in salience. The word salience itself needs to be defined: It means making a piece of information more obvious, meaningful, or memorable to audiences. An increase in salience enhances the probability that receivers will perceive the information, distinguish meaning and thus process it, and store it in memory (Fiske and Taylor, as cited in Entman, 1993, p. 53).

As expressed by Scheufelel and Tewksbury (2007):

> Frames, in other words, become invaluable tools for presenting relatively complex issues, such as stem cell research, efficiently and in a way that makes them accessible to lay audiences because they play to existing cognitive schemas. As a micro construct, framing describes how people use information and presentation features regarding issues as they form impressions (p. 12).

In a study conducted by Weaver (2007, p. 143-144):

> It is not clear why framing has become so much more popular with academicians than either agenda setting or priming in the past decades, but it may have something to do with the uncertainty or the comprehensive nature of the term. ''Frame'' can be applied to many different aspects and different types of messages. It can also be studied by means of systematic content analysis or more interpretive textual analysis alone.

When forming political opinions, people often consult others for guidance. Indeed, the last twenty years of public opinion research shows that citizens base many of their opinions on what they hear from elites, and on what they discuss with other citizens (Druckman and Nelson, 2003, p. 1). In the Malaysian situation, with the government's guarantee not to control access to online information, politicians and political parties are actively setting up political blogs and political parties' official websites, in hopes of sending out information, exchanging opinions with audience, shaping an individual's political views, and refining their political stances.

Previous approach to framing research in Malaysian context included Chai and Hussein, 2011 (explores the framing of the 2008 general election by the English language press); Lee and Hasim, 2009 (looks at how national and provincial newspapers frame news of the image, personality and reputation of a politician); Smeltzer and Lepawsky, 2010 (examines how Malaysia's media have framed the relationship between information and communication technologies and the country's electoral process).

In the 2008 election campaign period, there were plenty of political issues that DAP bloggers and DAP can use to influence the voters. However, of all the current issues published on DAP candidates' blogs and party's website, only a few were dominant, which were corruption, crime, inflation, and press freedom.

The reasons of applying framing approach in this study was to use the framing concept in order to analyse the contexts of articles published on DAP leaders' blogs and party's official website; or in other words, to investigate how the DAP and DAP leaders framed the issues during the 2008 general election campaign period, whether they focused more on attacking BN, defending DAP when attacked by BN, or remain neutral. Secondly, in the Malaysian context, as the opposition parties were denied the space in mainstream media, the researcher would like to look into the different strategies that the DAP leaders utilised in their blogs.

The researcher will further explain and include more detailed discussions, how to frame the four units of analysis specifically in the next chapter.

2.6 Conclusion

New communication technology clearly offers new opportunities for political communication as the Internet access spreads wide across the globe and deeper into national societies. Besides, it also brings new opportunities for direct access to politically relevant information and for interactive disclosure among citizens themselves (Moog and Beltrao, 2001, p. 56).

In Malaysia, Internet-based media outlets have flourished in the country, mostly because they are allowed to operate without governmental licensing control or censorship (Ezhar and Govindasamy, 2009, p. 139). The

Malaysian 2008 general election provided a particularly strong example of this phenomenon. As users already had the perception that the media coverage by mainstream mass media on the election was biased, the Internet emerged as a more trustworthy medium which led to people switching to the Internet as their main source of information. In politically-charged environments where access to mainstream mass media is limited and media content controlled, users with high political motivation automatically turn to the Internet (Banerjee, 2008, p. 4). Internet growth in Malaysia has not only change the media environment, but also provided affected political communication by offering a significant challenge to the authorities. It is not surprising that the Internet has both energised and mobilised voters like never before in Malaysia.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter looks into the process by which the research questions shall be answered by presenting the methodology used by the researcher to investigate and to identify the different strategies that the DAP used during the 2008 general election campaign period. Since the researcher intended to obtain accurate and precise results, thus it is crucial to select the most suitable research methods. For the purpose of this study, the researcher opted to use quantitative research method - content analysis, by analysing the articles published on DAP leaders' blogs and party's website; and also qualitative research methods - in-depth interviews, by interviewing DAP leaders cum bloggers, on how they are using blogs during the last general election. Basically, this chapter explains quantitative and qualitative research methods, triangulation, reliability, validity, and reflexivity, and also reasons for choosing content analysis and in-depth interviews.

3.2 Quantitative Research

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) described quantitative research as:

Charts and graphs illustrating the results of the research. Commentators use words such as 'variables', 'populations' and 'result' as part of their daily vocabulary, even if we do not always know just

what all of the terms mean, [but] we identify that this is part of the process of doing research. Research, then as it comes to be known publicly, is a synonym for quantitative research (p.4).

In addition, Golafshani (2003) claimed that:

A quantitative researcher attempts to fragment and state clearly phenomena into measurable or common categories, which can be applied to all of the subjects or wider and similar situations. The researchers' methods involve the "use of standardized measures so that the varying perspectives and experiences of people can fit into a limited number of predetermined response categories to which numbers are ssigned" (p.598).

In short, quantitative research involves measurable variables, and is based more on numbers rather than the personal observation as in qualitative research.

With the development of technology, many politicians express their political ideology and convey their political messages to the public more openly using the Internet. This refers to the DAP bloggers who posted articles containing the four units of analysis, corruption, crime, inflation, and press freedom. The choice of four units of analysis was appropriate given that these issues were highlighted in both mainstream and new media in the run up to the 2008 general election (Baharuddin, 2008; Idid and Wok, 2010; Kuppusamy, 2008; Mersat, 2009; Mokhtar, 2008; Moten, 2009; Ong, 2009; Ramanathan,2008; Ufen, 2008).

In this process, other than calculated the frequency of appearance of the above four units of analysis, the researcher also carried out an analysis on

DAP leaders' blogs to determine whether DAP leaders took full advantage of the popularity of social networking sites to send out their election campaign information. Thus, the question is: "What are the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 general election campaign period?"

Before presenting the findings and analysis, it is necessary for the researcher to describe the concept of content analysis, and how the researcher applied the research method of content analysis to analyse the DAP leaders' blogs and DAP's official website.

3.3 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p. 18). Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p. 18) further described that as a technique, content analysis involves specialised procedures. It is learnable and divorceable from the personal authority of the researcher. As a research technique, content analysis offers new insights, enhances a researcher's understanding of particular phenomena, or informs practical actions. On the other hand, Krippendorff (2004) defined content analysis as, "A research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts for other meaningful matter to the contexts of their use" (p. 18). Meanwhile, according to Pennings *et al*. (2006), "The term 'content analysis'

refers to 'any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (p. 58).

> Neuendorf (2002) defined content analysis as:
>
> The systematic objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics. It includes the cautious assessment of human interactions; the analysis of character shows in TV commercials, films, and novels; the computer-driven investigation of word usage in news releases and political speeches; and so much more (p. 1).

Wimmer and Dominick (2003) explained that, Neuendorf's definition involves three concepts that require explanations. Firstly, content analysis is systematic. This means that the content to be analysed is selected according to clear and consistently applied rules. Sample selection must follow accurate procedures, and each item must have an equal chance of being included in the analysis. In addition, the evaluation process must be systematic - all contents under consideration are to be treated in exactly the same manner. There must be uniformity in the coding and analysis procedures, and in the length of time, coders are exposed to the material. Systematic evaluation simply means that only one set of guidelines is used for evaluation throughout the study (p. 141).

Secondly, content analysis is objective. A key objective of any scientific investigation is to offer a description or explanation of a phenomenon in a way that avoids the bias of the investigator. Thus, objectivity is desirable. Thus, objectivity is desirable. However, there is no such thing as true objectivity - "knowledge" and "facts" are socially agreed on. According to

this view, all human inquiry is inherently subjective, but there must be consistencies among inquiries (p. 141).

Thirdly, content analysis is quantitative. The objective of content analysis is the accurate representation of a body of messages. Quantification is essential in fulfilling that objective because it helps researchers in the quest for precision. For example, the statement, "70% of all prime-time programmes contain at least one act of violence" is more accurate than "Most shows are violent." Additionally, quantification allows researchers to summarise results and to report them clearly. If measurements are to be made over intervals of time, comparisons of the numerical data from one time period to another can help simplify and standardise the evaluation procedure. Finally, quantification gives researchers additional statistical tools that can assist in interpretation and analysis (p. 141).

Babbie (2001) viewed that:

> It is easier to repeat at segment of the study than it is in other research methods. Also, the researcher might be required to recode only a part of data rather than all of it. A third advantage of content analysis is that it allows the study of processes going on over a long time (p. 314).
> > Safety is another advantage of content analysis. If the researcher discovers a botch in a survey, it is easier to repeat at portion of the study than it is in other research methods. Moreover, the researcher might be required to recode only a portion of data rather than all of it. A third advantage of content analysis is that it permits the study of processes occurring over a long time (p. 314).

Finally, content analysis has the advantage of all unobtrusive measures, namely that the content analysis seldom has any effect on the subject being studied (Babbie, 2001, p. 314). For instance, in this study, since the articles have already been written by DAP leaders and published on their blogs and official website, thus the processes and results of content analysis carried out by the researcher have no effect on the DAP and DAP leaders. The other reason for the researcher to employ content analysis is that, this research method enables the researcher to draw inferences about media effects (Gunter, 2000, p. 91).

In general, the researcher followed the discrete steps as follows:

- Defining the Population

- Selecting a Sample

- Data Collection

- Training Coders

- Coding the Content

Before seeking the sample, the researcher had to establish the universe or population to be sampled from (Babbie, 2001, p. 307). At this point, Neuendorf (2002) said that:

> The researcher gets to define the population for the study. The population is the set of units being studied, the set of units to which the researcher wishes to generalize. For content analysis, this is often a set of messages; it may, however, be a population of people, whose messages are then collected and analyzed. Once the population is defined, it must serve as the   basis for any sampling (p. 74).

In this research, the population is defined as the total articles in 47 DAP leaders' blogs from the nomination day on 24 February until the ending of polling day on 8 March, 2008.

After defining the population, the researcher needed to select a sample. Neuendorf (2002, p. 83) described sampling as the process of selecting a subset of units for study from the larger population. However, Neuendorf (2002) stressed that, "There is no universally accepted set of criteria for selecting the size of the sample" (p. 88). To this extent, Krippendorff (2004, p. 113) suggested that researchers need to analyse a sample of texts in place of a larger population of texts. On the other hand, they need a sampling plan to make certain that the textual units sampled do not bias the answers to the research question.

In this study, the researcher determined the sample size as the total articles in four DAP leaders' blogs from the nomination day on 24 February until the ending of polling day on 8 March, 2008. The researcher selected samples from among the 47 DAP leaders cum bloggers based on their political position within and outside the party (*http://dapmalaysia.org*, n.d.). The informants who fulfilled the criteria were Lim Kit Siang, Tony Pua Kiam Wee, Liew Chin Tong, Jenice Lee Yin Ha, and Lim Lip Eng.

Once the samples were collected, the next step was to collect the data. The texts that were analysed in this study were articles retrieved from the five DAP leaders' blogs and party's official website. To obtain articles published on DAP leaders' blogs and party's official website, the researcher used the primary source - DAP's official website which provided hyper-links to the leaders' blogs.

For the ease of discussion, the researcher searched all articles containing corruption, crime, inflation and press freedom. In this process, the researcher counted the number of times the four units of analysis appeared on the five DAP leaders' blogs and DAP's official website. This process refers to coding the manifest content (Babbie, 2001, p. 310).

The fourth step involved training coders. Krippendorff (2004, p. 129) mentioned that coders may be asked to interpret texts in terms that are unfamiliar or difficult, even seemingly contrived or meaningless to persons without knowledge of the research questions. Although instructions ideally should be understood as written, it is typical for content analysts to provide coders with additional training in using the recording instructions. In such a condition, Neuendorf (2002) expressed that coders should work together in a training session to find out whether they can agree on the coding of variables (p. 51). During the training session, coders' coding methods need to be calibrated so that they view the content in the same way, as they code independently without discussion or collaboration (p. 133). Thereafter, in an

independent coding test, coders will note the reliability on each variable (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 51). In this study, the researcher provided training session with two coders, one PhD student and one master's student. The researcher explained and discussed with the coders the rules used in categorization, and how to determine whether the DAP leaders are using their blogs to attack BN, defend their own party, or remain neutral.

The last step is coding the content. As defined by Krippendorff (2004, p. 220), coding is the transcribing, recording, categorising, or interpreting of given units of analysis into the terms of data language so that they can be compared and analysed. The contents would be systematically evaluated using content analysis procedures applied by the coders. For coding purposes in this research, every article that contained the four units of analysis, i.e. corruption, crime, inflation and press freedom, were taken as a coding unit.

3.3.1 Unit of Analysis and Framing

Neuendorf (2002) defined unit of analysis as, "The element on which data are analysed and for which findings are reported" (p. 13). Neuendorf (2002) stated that:

> In a content analysis, a unit is an identifiable message or message component, which serves as the basis for identifying the population and drawing a sample, or on which variables are measured. Units can be words, characters themes or time periods, and these types of units are called units of analysis (p. 72).

Whereas Krippendorff (2004) on the other hand explained that:

> In content analysis, units may be single words or longer text segments, photographic images, minutes of video recordings, scenes in fictional television programs, Web pages, utterances, distinct experiences – anything that could have distinct meanings to an analyst (p. 220).

One of the most frequently quoted definitions by Entman (1993) states that:

> To frame is to select some aspects of a supposed reality and make them more prominent in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and or treatment recommendation for the item described (p. 52).

In addition, frames underline some information about an item, which is the subject of a communication, thus elevating them in salience. The word salience itself needs to be defined: It means making a piece of information more obvious, meaningful, or memorable to audiences. An increase in salience enhances the probability that receivers will perceive the information, distinguish meaning and thus process it, and store it in memory (Fiske and Taylor, as cited in Entman, 1993, p. 53).

As expressed by Scheufelel and Tewksbury (2007):

> Frames, in other words, become invaluable tools for presenting relatively complex issues, such as stem cell research, efficiently and in a way that makes them accessible to lay audiences because they play to existing cognitive schemas. As a micro construct, framing describes how people use information and presentation features regarding issues as they form impressions (p. 12).

In a study conducted by Weaver (2007, p. 143-144), the term framing has become much more common in communication research articles:

> It is not obvious why framing has become so much more popular with communication scholars than either agenda setting or priming in the decades, but it may have something to do with the uncertainty or the comprehensive nature of the term. ''Frame'' can be applied to many different aspects of messages and to many different types of messages. It can also be studied by means of systematic content analysis or more interpretive textual analysis alone.

When forming political opinions, citizens often turn to others for guidance. Indeed, the last twenty years of public opinion research demonstrates that citizens base many of their opinions on what they hear from elites and on what they discuss with other citizens (Druckman and Nelson, 2003, p. 1). In the Malaysian situation, with the government's guarantee not to control access to online information, politicians and political parties are actively setting up political blogs and political parties' official websites, in hopes of sending out information, exchanging opinions with audience, shaping an individual's political views, and refining their political stances.

Previous approach to framing research in Malaysian context included Chai and Hussein, 2011 (explores the framing of the 2008 general election by the English language press); Lee and Hasim, 2009 (looks at how national and provincial newspapers frame news of the image, personality and reputation of a politician); Smeltzer and Lepawsky, 2010 (examines how Malaysia's media have framed the relationship between information and communication technologies and the country's electoral process).

In the 2008 election campaign period, there were plenty of political issues that DAP bloggers and DAP can use to influence the voters. However, of all the current issues published on DAP candidates' blogs and party's website, only a few were dominant, which were corruption, crime, inflation, and press freedom.

The reasons of applying framing approach in this study was to use the framing concept in order to analyse the contexts of articles published on DAP leaders' blogs and party's official website; or in other words, to investigate how the DAP and DAP leaders framed the issues during the 2008 general election campaign period, whether they focused more on attacking BN, defending DAP when attacked by BN, or remain neutral. Secondly, in the Malaysian context, as the opposition parties were denied the space in mainstream media, the researcher would like to look into the different strategies that the DAP leaders utilised in their blogs.

In this study, the researcher measured and draw inferences about media effects of DAP leaders' blogs and DAP's official website, by investigating how the DAP and five DAP leaders framed the issues, within the specified time period from nomination day on 24 February, 2008, until end of polling day on 8 March, 2008; and look into whether DAP and DAP leaders focused more on attacking BN, defending DAP when attacked by BN, or remain neutral. Operational definition for the four units of analysis were provided in chapter one.

3.3.2 Reliability

Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p.18) explained that research techniques should result in findings that are replicable. That is, researchers working at different points in time and perhaps under different circumstances should get the same results when applying the same technique to the same data.

Neuendorf (2002) defined reliability as:

An precise representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability, and if the outcome of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be trustworthy (p. 112).

Krippendorff (2004) illustrated that:

To present validation of a coding scheme, the researcher would like to explain the term of inter-coder reliability. Inter-coder reliability, or reproducibility, is the extent to which a process can be replicated by different analysts working under varying situation, at different location, or using different but functionally equivalent measuring instruments. Representing reproducibility requires reliability data that are obtained under test-test conditions; for instance, two or more individuals, working independent of each other, apply the same recording instructions to the same units of analysis. Disagreements between these observers' performance are due to both intra-observer inconsistencies, and inter-bserver differences in the interpretation and application of given recording instructions. Compared with stability, inter-coder reliability is a far stronger measure of reliability (p. 215).

Once data has been gathered, some estimate of coding reliability must be determined. Hand-calculated reliability coefficients are not difficult to compute. One example is Holsti's (1969) reliability formula that is straightforward, requiring only information about the number of coding

decisions the coders must make, and the total number of decisions made by each coder (Hocking *et al.*, 2003, p. 185).

Reliability = $\dfrac{2M}{N1+N2}$

M = total items agreed upon

N1 = total items coder 1 selected

N2 = total items coder 2 selected

In order to check inter-coder reliability, the researcher conducted pilot study or pre-test. The purpose of the pilot study is to avoid poorly defined units of analysis, to detect any mistakes, and to allow the researcher to make changes in the coding scheme.

In summary, the categories in content analysis must be meaningful, indicators must be relatively discernable (i.e., explicit), and message units manageable, if coding is to have reliability (Garrison et al., 2006, p.2). Researchers must select their coding methodology and design their data analysis in accordance with the research question(s) (Garrison et al., 2006, p. 3).

Since it is possible for measurement unreliability to be generated by coders (Babbie, 2001, p. 142), training can prevent a great deal of unreliability (Babbie, 2001, 143). In this study, the researcher designed a relatively

straightforward coding scheme, which can be of great assistance in the training of coder.

In this process, the researcher drew a coding sheet that allowed the researcher and coders to place a mark (the coding sheet is attached in Appendix B), which would help in determining whether the articles posted on DAP leaders' blogs and party's official website were "attacking" BN, remaining "neutral" or "defending" DAP. And lastly, the coding sheet enables the researcher to examine the degree of agreement and disagreement between the researcher and coders by using Holsti's formula.

3.3.3 Validity

Hocking (2003) indicated that:

Reliability is a necessary but not sufficient condition for establishing measurement validity. Validity is most defined as whether a coding system measures what you want it to measure. As with other methods, validity can be a real concern with content analysis (p. 186).

Krippendorff (2004) further explained:

Validity is that quality of research outcome that leads us to accept them as true, as speaking about the real world of people, phenomena, events, experiences, and actions. A measuring instrument is considered valid if it measures what its user claims it measures. A content analysis is valid if the inferences drawn from the available texts withstand the test of independently available evidence, of new observations, of competing theories or interpretations, or being able to inform successful actions (p. 313).

Krippendorff (2004, p. 316) highlighted that validation reduces the risk of making decisions based on misleading research findings; whereas according to Hocking (2003, p. 186), it should be apparent that the definitional process involved in determining what the units of analysis will be critical to validity in content analysis, therefore in this study, the researcher used his own definitions for the four units of analysis when it comes to what is considered valid.

3.4 Qualitative Research

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) noted out that:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It includes of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representation, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recording, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, trying to make sense of, or to explain phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 4).

In addition, according to Blaxter *et al*. (2001):

Qualitative research is concerned with collecting and analyzing information in as many forms, mainly non-numeric, as possible. It tends to focus on exploring, in as much detail as possible, smaller numbers of examples which are seen as being interesting, and with the purpose to achieve 'depth' rather than 'breadth' (p. 64).

Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand (Denzin and Lincoln 2003, p. 4).

Therefore in this study, the researcher also employed qualitative thematic content analysis and qualitative in-depth interview research method alongside the quantitative research method of content analysis.

3.4.1 Thematic Content Analysis

Besides applying content analysis through coding, the researcher also conducted thematic content analysis by calculating the frequency of categories and themes.

According to Roberts and Popping (as cited in Pennings *et al*., 2006, p. 58), two basic types of content analysis can be distinguished: thematic content analysis and relational content analysis. Thematic content analysis aims at an assessment of the frequency of the presence of specified themes, issues, actors, states of affairs, words or ideas in the texts or visuals to be analysed. Which themes, issues or actors are sought depend completely on the theoretical concepts to be operationalised. The themes, issues or actors sought should be mutually exclusive (no overlaps). The frequency of distribution of such a nominal variable indicates which themes, issues, facts or actors are mentioned more or less frequently in the texts or visuals being analysed.

After conducting a census of all the articles published on DAP five leaders' blogs and official website, the researcher set up appropriate categories, and sorted the categories into themes based on their interconnection as shown

in Table 3.1. The four categories namely corruption, crime, inflation, and press freedom are logically consistent with the research questions and related to the aims of this study. For instance, the researcher placed six themes under category of corruption, which are corruption perception index, cronies, cronyism, money politics, Port Klang Free Zone scandal, and unaccountable disbursement of public funds. Admittedly, forms of corruption varied and are not restricted to these activities. However, in this study, the above six themes appeared on the DAP leaders' blogs and official website.

Table 3.1: Units of Analysis on
Five DAP Leaders' Blogs and DAP's Official Website

Categories / Themes	Corruption	Crime	Inflation	Press Freedom
1.	corruption perception index	crime index	household income	control of the mass media
2.	cronies	rape	individual earnings	freedom of speech
3.	cronyism	Royal Police Commission	living standard	free speech
4.	money politics	safety	oil prices	press freedom index
5.	Port Klang Free Zone scandal	security	real income	
6.	unaccountable disbursement of public funds	unsafe	rising price	

In this study, research method of thematic content analysis was utilised to measure what the researcher needs to measure. The researcher calculated the frequency of appearance of the four units of analysis on five DAP leaders' blogs and party website, during the 2008 general election campaign period. Operational definitions for the four units of analysis were provided in chapter one.

3.5 In-depth Interviews

Sommer and Sommer (2002) addressed that:

In-depth interview is a special form of unstructured interview. The interviewer follows the respondent's answers with a request for more information at an increasing level of depth. It is this process of utilising the respondent's answers to explore more deeply into the topic that gives the depth interview its name (p. 114).

According to Boyce and Neale (2006), "In-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspective on a particular idea, program, or situation" (p. 3). Meanwhile Hocking *et al.* (2003, p. 209) defined in-depth interview as a one-to-one process involving the researcher and the interviewee. The intensive interview requires respondents who are willing to give time and effort to conduct the interview correctly.

These definitions by Boyce and Neale, 2006; Hocking *et al.* 2003 and Sommer and Sommer, 2002, underline an essential characteristic of in-depth interviewing, in which the success depends on the rapport established between the interviewer and the respondent. In-depth interviews are useful when the researcher want detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviours, or to explore new issues in depth. Interviews are often used to offer a more complete picture of what is happening (Boyce and Neale, 2006, p. 3).

According to Flower (1998, p. 368), although in-depth interviews take several forms and shapes, there are some common elements that define them:

1.   The priority of the process is to find out how respondents understand questions, and perform the response tasks. There is no particular effort to replicate the data collection procedures to be used in the full-scale survey.

2.   Informants often are brought into a special setting in which interviews can be recorded and observed; hence these are often referred to as "laboratory interviews."

3.   Most critically, the basic protocol involves reading questions to informants, having them answer the questions, and then using some strategy to find out what is going on in the respondents' minds during the question-and-answer process.

3.5.1 Preparations and Procedures of Interviews

Determining goal of the interviews and deciding exactly what the researcher needs to explore are important before designing the interview questions. In this study, the objective of conducting in-depth interviews was to gather views and detailed information from the five DAP leaders. This would help the researcher to determine how the party's leaders have utilised new media during the last general election campaign.

To ensure the interview questions were workable and clearly worded, the researcher conducted a pilot test of the interview questions with Chow Yu Hui in June 2010. Yu Hui is a committee member of the DAP Socialist Youths, the youth wing of DAP. Lastly, the researcher made alterations and other necessary revisions after completing the pilot study.

At the beginning, the researcher constructed and organised the process of an interview by ensuring that the sequence and content of the questions made sense, but the researcher was also prepared to alter the order of questions during the actual interview. As pointed by Gillham (2005):

> Even though the researcher may start by compiling a list of interview questions the researcher might want to ask, the researcher has to expect that these will be added to, or subtracted from, and finally yield the set of questions that will ultimately comprise the interview schedule (p. 18).
>> In addition, during the process of an interview, the researcher will follow up the interviewee's responses to develop supplementary or subsidiary questions (p. 24).

To formulate questions related to the study, apart from carrying out a comprehensive literature review on the topic, and consulting the researcher's supervisors, the researcher had gained permission from Jun-E Tan and Professor Zawawi Ibrahim, authors of *Blogging and Democratization in Malaysia*: *A New Civil Society in the Making*, to use the interview questions designed by both Jun-E Tan and Professor Zawawi Ibrahim.

Before setting up the interviews, the researcher briefly outlined the objectives of the interview, reasons for selecting the interviewees, interview questions, and the expected duration. This would give the interviewees

flexibility in arranging time for the interviews and preparing their answers.

Boyce and Neale (2006) stressed that, "There should be no more than 15 main questions to guide the interview" (p. 5). In accordance to that, the researcher formulated 10 questions that would help to answer the research questions. The interview questions are attached as Appendix C. To make sure the interviews went smoothly and efficiently, the researcher familiarized himself with the interview questions, so that he did not have to keep referring to it during the interview (Dawson, 2002, p. 69). If necessary, the researcher would revise the schedule after each interview.

During the interviews, the interviewees acceded to the request for the interviews to be tape-recorded. Personal stereo sized tape-recording equipment and normal size cassettes were used during the interviews. In addition to that, the researcher took notes in the interviews session.

Once all the interviews have been concluded, the researcher analysed and organised the material. The researcher transcribed all the interviews after they were conducted (see Appendix D). Gillham (2005) stated that, "Transcription is the process of producing a valid written record of an interview" (p. 121). Transcription is a form of translation. This procedure is important because it allows repeated examination of the interviewees' answers, and to ensure that their answers are captured on their own terms, rather than by translation of the researcher's words. At the final stage, the researcher re-read the transcript several times, and produced quotations from them before

presenting, interpreting, and examining the key findings of the interviews in order to answer the research questions.

The researcher kept the interview questions short. Language that could be understood was used and jargons and double-barrelled questions were avoided, and questions were asked in predetermined order based on specificity.

3.5.2 Forms of Questions

The following forms of questions were used by the researcher in the in-depth interviews (see Appendix C).

i. Open Questions

Open questions are broad queries that allow interviewees to have wide latitude of appropriate responses. Because open questions are broad, interviewees have an opportunity to steer communication towards specific topics that are of their interest or reflect well on them (Wood, 2004, p. 382). In this study, the researcher asked an open question such as, "What is your motivation for blogging?"; "How often do you update your blog so that your visitors or followers will have something new to read whenever they visit your blog?"; "Who are your audience?"; "Do you think that more politicians have become active bloggers after the last 2008 general election?"; Do you think new media played a very crucial role in the opposition's victories in the 2008 general election?"; "If we make comparisons among blogs, Facebook and

Twitter, which communication tool do you think is the best to create political awareness?"; "Do you think Facebook and Twitter will replace blogs in the next general election?"

ii. Probing Questions

Wood (2004, p. 384) stated that probing questions go beneath the surface of a response to gather additional information and insight. In this study, the researcher asked a probing question, "Can you cite examples to show that you are fully utilizing the blog to create political awareness?"; "Do you think they have become more politically aware after reading your blog?"

iii. Summary Questions

Summary questions represent questions that cover what has been discussed. Communication that summarises an interview provides an opportunity for the interviewees to check whether they agree about what they have discussed, and what they have followed. Although summary questions

are often phrased as statements, they still function as questions (Wood, 2004, p. 384). In this research, the summary question is, "Do you have anything to add before we finish this interview?"

Table 3.2: List of Interviewees

Samples	Positions
Tony Pua Kiam Wee	2. Member of Parliament for Petaling Jaya Utara, Selangor Darul Ehsan 3. National Publicity Secretary of DAP 4. Prominent blogger 5. Ranked 42nd in the 70 Most popular bloggers in Malaysia (http://syedsyahrul.blogspot.com, 2008)
Liew Chin Tong	1. Member of Parliament for Bukit Bendera, Penang 2. DAP strategist 3. International Secretary of the DAP Central Executive Committee 4. Advises the Chief Minister of Penang on policy matters 5. Honorary Secretary of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Malaysia Group 6. A member of the Malaysian Parliament Europe Friendship Group
Jenice Lee Yin Ha	1 Assemblyman for Teratai, Selangor Darul Ehsan 2 Assistant to Selangor Menteri Besar for Youth and Sports Department 3 DAP Socialist Youth (DAPSY) National Deputy Chief
Lim Lip Eng	⚘ Member of Parliament for Segambut, Wilayah Persekutuan ⚘ Secretary of DAP Wilayah Persekutuan

In this study, the objective of conducting in-depth interviews was to gather views and detailed information from four DAP leaders cum bloggers, who are Tony Pua Kim Wee, Liew Chin Tong, Jenice Lee Yin Ha, Lim Lip Eng (Table 3.2). This would help the researcher to determine and to identify the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 general election campaign period.

Notes:

1. At the proposal stage, the researcher planned to interview Lim Kit Siang, Jeff Ooi Chuan Aun and Tony Pua Kiam Wee. However, the researcher failed to receive a reply from both Lim Kit Siang and Jeff

Ooi Chuan Aun. Therefore, the researcher interviewed Liew Chin Tong, Jenice Lee Yin Ha, Hannah Yeoh Tseow Suan, and Lim Lip Eng as the interviewees. All these five interviewees fulfilled the criteria set by the researcher as mentioned in chapter one.

2. The researcher did not receive any response from Goh Kheng Teong, the DAP IT manager and webmaster who ran DAP's official website. The researcher failed to get any replacement since Goh Kheng Teong is the only staff who manages the party's website. In this situation, the researcher assumed that DAP was not willing to disclose their election strategy. Therefore, the objective to gain a deep understanding of the roles and functions of the party's website during the last election could not be achieved.

3. It is unlikely that the researcher will be able to collect data from all the feedback of the DAP leaders' blogs in the Internet, as there are constraint of time and other resources to do so.

3.6 Triangulation

Jick (1979) referred the term triangulation as the, "Use of multiple methods mainly qualitative and quantitative methods in studying the same phenomenon" (p. 602). Hussein claimed that (2009):

> In recent years, the utilisation of qualitative and quantitative methods in studying the same phenomenon has received noteworthy attention among scholars and researchers. To prove the significance it has received, some researchers argue it to be a third research method in addition to qualitative and quantitative research methods (p. 2).

At this point, Golafshani (2003) recognised that, "Triangulation as applied in quantitative research to test the reliability and validity can also clarify some measures to test and maximise the validity and reliability of a qualitative study" (p. 1).

Essentially, as perceived by Dawson (2002):

Many researchers believe this is a good way of approaching research, as it enables the researcher to counteract the weaknesses in both quantitative and qualitative research (p. 20).

Based on the statements above, the researcher applied the concept of triangulation, which is to employ mixed-research methods by combining quantitative content analysis and qualitative in-depth interviews. This would help the researcher to eliminate bias as much as possible, support and complement the both research methods of quantitative and qualitative research to attain an in-depth look.

3.7 Reflexivity

From the perspective of Babbie (2001):

Traditionally, social scientists have tended to emphasize the importance of "objectivity" (p. 279).

When the researcher abandons objectivity in favor of adopting views of the people they are studying, the researcher lose the possibility of seeing and understanding the phenomenon withinframes of reference unavailable to the subjects. Social researchers often refer to the concerns just discussed as a matter of reflexivity, in the sense of things acting on themselves. Thus, the researcher's own characteristics can have an effect on what the researcher sees and how the researcher interprets it. More than that, the research setting could affect the person's responses. In other words, the researcher might obtain different results depending on where the researcher carried out the interview (Babbie, 2001, p. 280).

Lincoln and Guba (2003) said:

Reflexivity-as well as the poststructural and postmodern sensibilities, concerning quality in qualitative research-demands that the researchers question each of themselves, regarding the ways where research efforts are shaped, contradictions, and paradoxes that form our own lives. The researchers must question themselves, too, regarding how those

binaries and paradoxes shape not only the identities called forth in the field, and later in the discovery processes of writing, but also the researchers' interactions with respondents, in who the researchers become to the respondents in the process of becoming to the researchers themselves (p. 283).

To be more precise, Gibbs (2007) viewed that, "Reflexivity is the recognition that the product of research inevitably reflects some of the background, environment and bias of the researcher. The scientific model claims that good research is objective, accurate and unbiased" (p. 91).

For this reason, the researcher remained politically neutral to avoid the researcher's own political preference, which could produce an unintentional bias on the study. Throughout the thesis writing, the researcher avoided painting a good picture of DAP, and at the same time, avoided portraying negative image of ruling BN in carrying out coding by keeping the interview questions natural and presenting the results in natural way.

3.8 Conclusion

Blaxter *et al*. (2001) indicated that:

There has been common debate within many of the social sciences concerning the relative qualities of quantitative and qualitative strategies for research. The positions taken by individual researcher vary considerably,   from those who see two strategies as entirely separate and based on alternative sight of the world, to those who are happy to mix these strategies within their research projects. As a result, quantitative strategies have been seen as more scientific or 'objective', qualitative researchers have felt the need to argue their case strongly (p.64).

In this respect, Williams (2007) suggested that:

Quantitative and qualitative research methods examine and explore the different claims to knowledge, and both methods are designed to tackle a specific form of research question. At the same time as the quantitative method provides an objective measure of reality, the qualitative method allows the researcher to look at and better understand the complication of a phenomenon (p. 70).

In accordance to that, Creswell and Clark (2007) concluded that:

Mixed methods research involves both collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. It is not enough to simply collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data; they need to be "mixed" in some way so that they form a more complete picture of the problem than they do when standing alone (p. 6).

Essentially, the researcher intended to obtain accurate and precise results, thus it was crucial to select suitable methods in this study. As stressed by Creswell and Clark (2007), "Based on the reason that mixed methods research offers strengths that counteract the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research, and the mixed methods research provides more comprehensive evidence for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone (p. 9)", the researcher recognise the benefits of gaining the best of both research methods through the combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

With the purpose to achieve the research objectives, which are to identify the used of blogs by DAP leaders in creating political awareness, and to investigate the use of DAP's official website to produce political awareness, the RQ1 questioned that, "What are the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 general election campaign period?", and the RQ2 questioned, "What are the different strategies that the DAP used in its party's website during the 2008 general election campaign period?" The findings in this study to the two research questions would lead to a clear understanding of DAP applying new communication tool in the wired world.

Over a period from April 2010 to September 2010, content analysis and in-depth interview research methods were carried out. This chapter is dedicated to the analysis and interpretation of the data, and how the conclusions are met.

Findings of First Research Question (RQ1)

After having a broad idea of what was intended to investigate, the researcher formulated the first research objective, which is "To identify the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 general election campaign period.", and RQ1, "What are the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 generalelection campaign period?"

The above research objective and research question stated the relation between three factors (DAP leaders, DAP leaders' blogs, and political awareness). The research question is: "What relation exits between the factors", and the answers of this question were sought by conducting analysis.

4.2.1 Content Analysis

In order to secure a comprehensive look at the coverage of the four units of analysis, which are corruption, crime, inflation, and press freedom, the researcher collected 77 articles from five DAP leaders' blogs namely Lim Kit Siang, Tony Pua Kim Wee, Liew Chin Tong, Jenice Lee Yin Ha, Lim Lip Eng and 15 articles from DAP's official website, over the entire 13-day last election campaign period from 24 February, 2008 to 8 March, 2008. These 77 articles (samples) were selected from total 312 articles (population) by 46 DAP elected representatives (http://dapmalaysia.org/newenglish/au_er_p.htm,

n.d., and   http://dapmalaysia.org/newenglish/au_er_sa.htm, n. d.).

Even though Lim Kit Siang did not reply to the researcher's request for an interview, however, since Kit Siang was the prominent and veteran DAP leader and blogger, it is a necessary to analyse Kit Siang's blog in order to find a consistency of frequency of appearances, for the four units of analysis between Kit Siang's blog with other four DAP leaders' blogs. Nevertheless this was not meant to be a comparison but merely a guide.

4.2.2 Coding Sheet

A coding sheet noting 27 paragraphs contained units of analysis of corruption, crime, inflation and press freedom *(*see Appendix B*)*. Lim Kit Siang's blog contained all the four units of analysis of corruption, crime, inflation and press freedom; Tony Pua's blog contained units of analysis of corruption and inflation; Liew Chin Tong's blog contained the units of analysis of corruption and inflation; and units of analysis of corruption and crime were included in Jenice Lee's and Lim Lip Eng's blogs.

Table 4.1: Identifying Blogs Articles from Study Data

Category	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C
Attack	15	22	15
Neutral	12	4	12
Defend	0	1	0
Total	**27**	**27**	**27**

94

The final data consisted of 27 paragraphs, with 15 from Lim Kit Siang's blog, two from Tony Pua's blog, three from Liew Chin Tong's blog, five from Jenice Lee's blog, and finally two from Lim Lip Eng's blog. Based on the analysis done on the total 27 paragraphs published on five leaders' blogs (Table 4.1), the three coders shared the same views where 15 paragraphs (55.5%) attacked BN, and four paragraphs (14.8%) stood between attacking BN and defending DAP. However, coder B placed one paragraph in the defend category (0.04%).

4.2.3 Reliability

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{3M}{N1+N2+N3}$$

$$= \frac{3(19) \times 100}{27+27+27}$$

$$= .70$$

After the coding of data by the researcher and the other coders was complete, the study yielded a reliability of 70% agreement among coders. According to Frey, Botan and Kreps (2000, p. 241), a coefficient of .70 or above generally is considered reliable, whereas the ones below .70 are suspect.

4.2.4 Thematic Content Analysis

Based on data analysis performed by the researcher, the findings were as follows:

Table 4.2: Number of Articles on Five DAP Leaders' Blogs

Bloggers	Number of Articles
Lim Kit Siang	35
Tony Pua	24
Liew Chin Tong	4
Jenice Lee	12
Lim Lip Eng	2
Total	**77**

When comparing the five blogs, the number of articles posted by the five DAP leaders cum bloggers are summarised in Table 4.2. Lim Kit Siang, was the most prolific blogger with 35 articles. Tony Pua, Liew Chin Tong, Jenice Lee, and Lim Lip Eng were less active compared to Kit Siang.

Table 4.3: Total Frequency of Four Units of Analysis on Five DAP Leaders' Blogs

Units of Analysis	Lim KS	Tony Pua	Liew CT	Jenice Lee	Lim LE	Total
Corruption	28	1	1	3	1	**34**
Crime	19	0	0	2	0	**21**
Inflation	11	1	2	0	1	**15**
Press Freedom	7	0	0	0	0	**7**
Total	**65**	**2**	**3**	**5**	**2**	**77**

As presented in Table 4.3, the term corruption comprised the largest category with a total of 34 out of 77 (49.2%) articles. Lim Kit Siang published the most – 28 out of 34 (82.3%). It is interesting that corruption only appeared once on Tony Pua's, Liew Chin Tong's, and Lim Lip Eng's blogs. Crime was the second most frequent issue with a total 21 out of 77 articles (27.3%). Inflation came in third (19.5%) followed by press freedom (1%).

Table 4.4: Presence of Election Campaign Information on Blogs

Bloggers	Articles about Election Campaign	Total Number of Articles	Percentage (%)
Lim Kit Siang	12	35	34.29
Tony Pua	20	24	83
Liew Chin Tong	1	4	25
Jenice Lee	6	12	50
Lim Lip Eng	1	2	50
Total	**40**	**77**	**51.9**

Table 4.4 showed the number of articles about the election campaign by DAP leaders on their blogs. As presented in Table 4.4, Tony Pua, Jenice Lee, and Lim Lip Eng preferred to use their blogs to provide online information about upcoming events, and announcements of the *ceramah* or political rallies, to organise volunteers, and they also used blogs to encourage blog readers to donate to their election campaigns. Out of the total 24 articles published by Tony Pua, 20 articles were about the election campaign (83%). As for Jenice Lee and Lim Lip Eng, the total of 12 and two published articles, half (50%), were about spreading information of election campaign. In contrast, only 34.3% and 25% of Lim Kit Siang and Liew Chin Tong's blog articles were related to election events.

4.2.5 In-depth Interviews

Notes:

1. Due to time limitations, Tony Pua and Jenice Lee were unable to provide detailed answers for some questions. The researcher conducted follow-up emails to review Tony Pua's interview data, and request elaboration regarding a particular response but no reply was obtained from Pua.

(1) General information

As an introduction, the researcher asked the interviewees about their motivations for blogging and blogs updating.

> "*My motive for blogging is to spread information to those concerned about what is happening in the country, the example cited was when the prime minister launched the NEM.*"

Pua, who started blogging in 2005, also mentioned that his motivation to blog is to reflect his opinions about education through his website *educationmalaysia.blogspot.com*.

For Lee, a state assemblyman for Teratai, Selangor, expressed that:

"*My motivations for blogging are to disseminate information and maintain connection with my constituent or potential voters. I do not really blog and thus do not identify myself as a blogger. In my point of view, it all depends on how one defines the term "blog".*

Liew preferred to use the term "website" rather than "blog" (Liew's website is *http://liewchintong.com*) because his website includes all the news about his work and also stores information about himself. For Liew, another main platform for him to express his views was the appearance on Astro live television.

As to the audience of their blogs, according to Liew and Lim, they admitted that their blogs are not the main communication tool with voters, and thus they have no ideas who are their readers.

In Liew's point of view:

"*Even though before the 2008 election, a blog was seen as a tool for activists to put forward their certain points of view for their followers, but frankly, I don't think I had followers in that sense.*"

Lim believes there was only a small number of audience who read his blog.

As for Pua,

"*I found that for my blog of Education Malaysia, the audience is mainly*

students and academics."

Lee who has been blogging for the last three years, said:

"*Young people with Internet access are the audience of my blog*".

As for updates, Liew who started blogging in 2006, updated his blog twice a week. Pua and Lee said that on average they update their blogs two or three times and three to four days per week respectively.

Lastly, Lim mentioned that:

"*I do not really update my blog because news articles about me are*

published quite often in newspapers, sometimes even up to two or three

times a week. For me, my blog is just a personal record of news

publishing, through copying the link from newspaper portals and posting

it on my blog".

(2) Political awareness

To achieve the first research objective in this research, which is to identify the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 general election campaign period, several questions were dedicated to the DAP leaders on political awareness. Three questions were asked followed by questions on whether audience have become more politically aware after reading DAP leaders' blogs, whether blogging is a platform to create political awareness among readers, and to give examples to show that the interviewees were fully utilising their blogs to produce political awareness.

Pua, member of parliament for Petaling Jaya Utara, said:

"*Even though blogging is not the only platform, but is one of the platforms.*"

He added that through blogs, the public can get information with regards to what is happening in the country. In this case, the public will become more aware about current affairs in the country. Pua shared his insights by giving an example:

"*When the prime minister launched the NEM, some information was not published in the newspapers, and so people will go to the blogs to*

get alternative views to decide which opinions are better. Therefore, it
represents a good example of an explosion of public contribution
towards discussions."

Contrary to the view by Pua, Liew argued that:

"*It is hard to determine whether readers have become more politically*
aware after reading my blog, the reason is I really don't know who the
audience of my blog is. However, it is easier to determine the   followers
through Twitter."

Even though Liew again stressed that his website is not his main
communication tool, he would make his website more comprehensive in the
future to actively engage with his audience. Liew illustrated that:

"*Because the ruling government no longer monopolises the means of*
communication, for examples, online newspapers or even SMS, as time
goes by, alternative media play a bigger and bigger role."

Liew further expressed:

"*One interesting point was recognised in the Economic Report 2008,*
where telecommunication companies experienced a surge in SMS

traffic during nomination day on February 24, 2008 and polling day

on March 8,2008 during the last election period. It proved that sending

messages through hand phones is very effective."

Liew initiated further discussion by saying that:

"A blog is not an isolated tool but a part of the package of media tools,

for example, when someone reads something interesting on the blogs,

they can forward the messages to others through SMS."

On the other hand, Liew, member of parliament for Bukit Bendera
said:

"As a party, DAP and PR have run a very clear theme and consistent

stories in the whole election campaign. For instance, DAP had a very

good, clear storyline which was about corruption, crime, the unjust

and unfair New Economic Policy; in other words, DAP had a very

clear focus on certain issues and not go all over the place or to talk the

whole world without having a central point. Apart from DAP, PKR was

more focused on economics and PAS was concentrated on welfare state.

Besides the website, DAP also had a theme song to bring out the image

of unity among races."

Lee shared the same opinion with Liew:

"*I also have no idea since I have never conducted any study whether audience has become more politically aware after reading my blog.*"

With regards to whether blogging is a major platform to create political awareness among readers, according to Lee:

"*I used my blog to create campaign page, post news articles, video clips, and also to report my activities and views on current issues.*"

Touching on how DAP leaders cum bloggers were fully utilising their blogs in creating political awareness,

Lim, the member of parliament for Segambut, described that:

"*The readers who read my blog are limited to a small number, but through my blog, they can know about what I have done for the people and my achievements as a member of parliament.*"

Contrary to the other four respondents, Lim did not spend much time and energy on blogging. For instance, there were only two articles and videos posted on his blog during the 13-day election campaign period. Besides, the posts were done by his volunteers. At this point, an interesting question arises

on how Lim spread out information to the general public.

"*Firstly, I send out messages to the public through mainstream media like newspapers. Secondly, to hold press conferences about the local issues in my constituency. Ceramah was another way to reach out to voters in which I am invited by media to cover my speech. Another two methods were through SMS and emails. I tried to get as much contact numbers and email addresses of the residents and voters of my constituency as possible. Besides emailing the voters about the important or crucial issues for them to consider before they vote, I also created some slogans to attack my political rivals in my SMS. Other than electronic or wireless media, conventional methods are still useful, which include banners, walkabout at pasar malam, pasar pagi and going around the neighborhood.*"

(3) Role of new media in the opposition parties' victories

In response to the role of online media in propelling opposition candidates to victory in the 2008 general election, the researcher also designed an interview question that was in line with the first research objective.

Liew, who was appointed as election strategy adviser to DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng, explained:

> *"I won't use the word "alternative media" but "alternative sources of information". Alternative sources of information include ceramah, which draws thousands of people. Besides, SMS also plays an effective role, since the messages you got from your friends are more credible than any person who told you, and lastly, blogs which function as activists' tool to forward their point of view."*

Another important point that needs to be emphasised is that the opposition parties still had to rely on traditional campaign methods, for example distributing leaflets and organising *ceramah*. On this matter, Liew said:

> *"All kinds of medium played a role and PR had to use both new and traditional media in the whole election process. Overall, alternative sources of information played a very important role based on the reason that alternative media represents alternative sources."*

Lee, the Teratai state assemblyman agreed, adding that new media is not the only factor since it can only play a crucial role in urban areas with good Internet connection. However Yeoh and Lim were more confident that new media definitely played a major role in their victory in the last general election.

However, Lim added that:

"The factor of areas has to be taken into consideration, in which the influences of the Internet only confine in the areas such as Klang Valley, Penang, Johor Bahru or Ipoh. However, the factor of new media did not work in other states."

Tian Chua (member of parliament for Batu, Kuala Lumpur) meanwhile viewed that, besides the factor of new media, the low performance of the former prime minister, Tun Abdullah Badawi, who failed to live up to the promises made during the 2008 general election, for instance to fight against corruption and to reduce crime rate, also could not be ignored ("Politicians used Facebook", 2010). Lim and Yeoh agreed with the statement.

(4) Blogging after the 2008 general election

In relation to the impact of blogs after the last general election, Pua mentioned that:

"More politicians started blogging after the 2008 general election."

However, Liew and Yeoh disagreed:

"Less politicians have become active bloggers, for example, prominent blogger and member of parliament for Jelutong, Penang, Jeff Ooi had

stopped blogging since 2009."

Liew's stressed on the matter adding:

"*A year ago, Twitter was not a major communication tool. But nowadays, Twitter becomes a more interactive social media.*"

Liew who registered his Twitter and Facebook accounts in 2009, is relatively more active on tweeting. Liew said that he tweets two to three times per day.

"*I debated that a year ago it was a year of Facebook, and two years ago was all about blogs, even though some people argued that blog is an ideal platform to post long articles.*"

Since Liew is a frequent contributor to the online news portal *TheMalaysianInsider*, blogging is not a significantly tool useful for him.

Lim pointed out that:

"*Jeff Ooi had stopped blogging at all even though Jeff Ooi was a front runner in blogging. So I stressed that the above example clearly*

showed blog was a thing of the past."

(5) Comparisons among blogs, Facebook and Twitter; and whether Facebook and Twitter will replace blogs in the next general election.

With the popularity of Facebook and Twitter, the researcher asked the informants whether Facebook and Twitter will become the driving force in the Malaysian political landscape.

As pointed out by Liew:

"*Nowadays a more interactive social media network is Twitter, so I am more active on twittering.*"

Lee shared her view that:

"*Both Facebook and blogs are effective tools to create political awareness. However, in this case not for Twitter as message contained in Twitter is too short (only limited to 140 characters).*"

Lim concurred with Liew. Lim further described that:

"*Before 2008, Twitter and Facebook were not so popular, whereas blogging is quiet influential since politicians used their blogs to send out statements to the community. However, after 2008, the influences and importance of blogging were very much diminished, since the*

power of blogging has been taken over by Facebook. The reason is, most of the Internet connected people or communities are on Facebook, because the contents on Facebook are short and very straight to the points."

Lim, who is active in tweeting, asserted that:

"Tweeting in Malaysia applies more to politicians and it represents a communication tool between media and politicians."

Therefore it is not surprising that most of the Lim's followers of his *Twitter* are the media people. He added that:

"The politicians from BN also read on tweets, with the purpose to attack or reply their rivals' stands on certain issues."

For other online communication tool, blogs, Lim said that:

"The limitation of blogs is that people have to purposely access to particular blog in order to read the content. I concluded that Facebook is still the most essential tool for politicians to reach out to voters and to send out messages to the public in general."

Lee's opinion was that:

"There are both strengths and weaknesses of the three mediums. Blogs

are much better for giving more detailed *information. As for Twitter,*
users can only send and receive short messages; and the major
limitation for Facebook is that users cannot put too many information
or cover the whole story. However, it is easier for the readers to absorb
information on the Facebook, since the information was presented in
the form of short bite-sized paragraphs."

The researcher then asked about the possibility of *Facebook* and
Twitter replacing blogs in the coming general election.

According to Lim:

"The two most powerful tools would be the Facebook and SMS in the
coming general election. I am of the view that Facebook is a most
significant tool for politicians to spread their news, whereas blogging
is a sunset thing."

4.3 Findings of Second Research Question (RQ2)

Table 4.5: Total Frequency of Four Units of Analysis

on DAP's Official Website

Units of Analysis	Frequency
Corruption	3
Crime	2
Inflation	1
Press Freedom	1
Total	**7**

As shown in Table 4.5, the first unit of analysis, "corruption" appeared three times out of seven on DAP's official website (42.9%). The second unit analysis, "crime" was with the frequency of two (28.6%), followed by "inflation" (14.3%) and "press freedom" (14.3%).

**Table 4.6: Overlapping of Articles on DAP Leaders' Blogs
and DAP's Official Website**

	Number of Articles		Number of Articles
DAP 's Official Website	15	Lim Kit Siang	11
		Lim Guan Eng	2
		Penang DAP	2
Total	**15**	**Total**	**15**

This segment tried to explore the influences of 15 articles from DAP's official website during the 13-day 2008 general election campaign period. As mentioned in Table 4.6, of the total 15 articles from the DAP's official website, 11 articles were retrieved from Lim Kit Siang's blog, two from Lim Guan Eng's blog, and the remaining two articles from Penang DAP's website.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Discussions and Analysis of First Research Question
   and Research Objective

The first research question is "What are the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 general election campaign period?"

The findings of this study showed that besides Lim Kit Siang, the other four DAP's bloggers did not fully use their blogs to create political awareness, which is not in line with the literature review. Gong (2010) illustrated that:

> Blogs proved to be a successful medium for publicity and information flow, as well as useful setting for socio-political discourse and resource mobilization (p. 4).

Baharuddin (2008, p. 9) who conducted a survey on polling day 8 March, 2008 found that the Internet has indeed emerged as a viable alternative to mainstream media. Tan and Ibrahim (2008, p. 85) provided further example of the power of the Internet which enabled young, first-time candidates such as DAP's Hannah Yeoh to draw record crowds of more than 10,000 to their hastily organised ceramah in USJ, Selangor. This analysis was supported by Smeltzer and Lepawsky (2009):

The opposition knows the power of the Internet, and this has been reflected when several states lost to the opposition. What's more, retired BN leader Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik acknowledged that the opposition used the blogs to reach the voters (p. 92).

Another study suggested that even though blogs played a significant role in the last general election, the interviewees namely Chin Tong and Lip Eng noted that fewer politicians blog after the 2008 general election. This argument was supported by Professor Peter Herford ("Blogging might," 2010) who argued that, "The future of blogging may be under threat as new trends in social media and news dissemination emerge online. Facebook which is only in its seventh year but already has 500 million users" (p. N17).

With regards to the five DAP leaders' blogs, it is interesting to note that not much attention was placed on all the four issues namely corruption, crime, inflation and press freedom, by the four leaders cum bloggers other than Kit Siang. Out of 77 articles, only two articles by Tony Pua mentioned corruption and inflation; Chin Tong only discussed corruption and inflation; while Jenice Lee and Li Eng only highlighted the issues of corruption, crime and inflation.

During the study, the researcher also found that Tony Pua used blogs more extensively in their campaign compared to Chin Tong and Kit Siang. Tony Pua and Jenice Lee used blogs to spread campaign information to supporters, for instance, posting campaign updates and informing them of

upcoming events. They also used blogs to raise funds and to upload videos clips of public talk.

The analysis indicated that in the Internet communication environment, DAP leaders did not fully take advantage of the available communication avenue to communicate with constituents, spread information and perhaps more importantly, to win over votes. Although the opposition parties had very little favourable coverage by mainstream media, blogs have not evolved a strategic into medium to create political awareness in DAP. Even though all the respondents in this study namely Tony Pua, Chin Tong, Jenice Lee, and Lip Eng won in the last general election, the findings suggest that all the five informants received support from the public not due to the utilisation of blogs, but the dissatisfaction of the people towards the BN government that failed to fight various issues like corruption, crime, and high living cost.

5.1.1 Content Analysis

Lim Kit Siang was the sole blogger who mentioned all four units of analysis in his blog, and other four bloggers did not produce any article on the issue of press freedom. Since the focus of this research is to examine how effective the DAP leaders utilised their blogs to create political awareness, one very interesting result of this research is that the findings in Lim Kit Siang's blog supported to views raised by some scholars that corruption, crime, inflation and press freedom were highlighted in new media, where Lim Kit

Siang had mentioned the four issues 65 times in the run up to the 2008 general election. However, another very interesting result of this research is that it contradicts the views raised by Baharuddin, 2008; Idid and Wok, 2010; Kuppusamy, 2008; Mersat, 2009; Moten, 2009; Ong, 2008; Ramanathan, 2008; Ufen, 2008; Zain, 2008, that corruption was highlighted in new media in the run up to the 2008 general election, where Tony Pua only mentioned about corruption once in his 24 blog articles, Jenice Lee mentioned corruption three times in her 12 blog articles, while Liew Chin Tong and Lim Lip Eng highlighted the issue once out of three and two articles respectively.

5.1.2 Coding Sheet

The researcher chose paragraphs that highlighted the units of analysis for the analysis (the reasons of choosing the units of analysis are described in chapter one and three), as the purpose of the research is to find out the used of blogs by DAP's leaders through the method of attacking BN, defending DAP or remaining neutral. Since there was no censorship imposed by the authorities on the networking sites, in the overall coverage, most of the articles published on DAP leaders' blogs were placed in categories of attack and neutral. To this extent, the researcher found that DAP leaders used their blogs to publish articles on explosive issues, to express unhappiness about the state of the country, to attack the authorities, and to try to influence the public as well as voters' decisions on key election themes.

5.1.3 Thematic Content Analysis

There is one significant example to demonstrate how Tony Pua effectively used the Internet to mobilise people during the election campaign period. Firstly, the capacity of crowd at Tony Pua's *ceramah* in Damansara Jaya, Selangor despite the rain (*YouTube uploads of the PJ ceramah*, 2008). The very encouraging support and enthusiasm from the supporters had converted into popular votes to Tony Pua, in which he had won the parliamentary seats in the election. Evidently, Tony Pua fully used new media tools to get their message across.

5.1.4 In-depth Interviews

Analysis of the data interviews from the five DAP politicians revealed some interesting findings. Firstly, the respondents offered diverse perspectives on the first research question. Pua said that their readers have become more politically aware after reading their blogs. In contrast, Liew and Lee did not share the same views since they were not sure whether their followers have been more concerned about current issues after reading their blogs. The findings clearly indicated that the interviewees did not share the same views whether blogs served as a critical platform to create political awareness.

Secondly, one of the interviewees, Lim, said he still had to rely on traditional campaign strategies to spread out information to the public, such as

conducting press conferences, holding public talks or *ceramah*, going around the neighborhood, visiting markets, and hanging banners. From the answers provided by Lim, it clearly indicated that since major Malaysian media outlets are controlling by BN, candidates from opposition parties were getting very little favorable coverage by mainstream media. In such situation, they still rely on traditional ways of campaigning.

Thirdly, even though opposition parties denied BN two-thirds majority in the parliament for the first time in Malaysian history, Lim claimed that new media played a significant role in their victory in the last election. However, some respondents pointed out that the factor of areas has to been taken into consideration, since new media can only play a crucial role in urban areas with good Internet connection. Besides, from the perspectives of Lim, BN own weaknesses was another major factor contributed to the major setback in election.

5.2 Discussions and Analysis of Second Research Question and Research Objective

Since DAP headquarters did not produce any article during the election period, in such a context, the researcher's opinion on the matter is that DAP's official website did not play a crucial role in getting attention from readers in order to create political awareness.

The finding is contrary to the RQ2. Where this finding suggests that DAP emphasized more on using its leaders' blogs to disseminate information, rather than through its own official website. Since the researcher failed to receive reply from the webmaster who run the party's website, the researcher faced problems to carry out further analysis on DAP's website, whether the website functioned as a massive tool in building political awareness during the last general election period. For additional information, the researcher had emailed Goh Kheng Teong, the DAP information technology manager and the webmaster who run the DAP's official website, to enquiry about the reason DAP headquarters did not produce articles to express its official stands on various issues during election period. However, no reply was received to the inquiry sent to the DAP headquarters.

The findings of this study support the literature review. The evidence suggests that DAP did not try to strengthen the party's presence on the Internet for political campaigning through its website, in other words, DAP's official website is not prominent campaign tool for the party as yet. Priyowidodo (2010) noted that, "The website is still not an effective means to distribute the programs of political parties. Public or party members still need direct communication in the field" (p. 13). The findings are further supported by Rosyidah (2010), who stated that, "The personal blogs of party leaders are more popular than the political party websites" (p. 14). The first evidence was that DAP headquarters did not produce any articles during the electoral period.

The 15 articles published on the web site, 11 were from Lim Kit Siang's blog, two were from Lim Guan Eng's blog, and another two were from Penang DAP's website. At this point, the researcher makes an assumption that DAP had no intention to publish articles to represent party's views on the current issues. The second evidence was that the four units of analysis only appeared seven times during the 13-day election campaign period. Thus, based on the content analysis conducted on DAP's official website, DAP did not fully use the official website for its own advantage to mobilise people and to gain support from voters.

In achieving the second objective, the researcher found that DAP did not fully use its website to its advantage during the last general election period. This was due to the fact that DAP headquarters did not produce any articles during the election period and merely reproduced from various blogs. Even with the rise of the Internet and the power of new media, it seems that DAP did not depend heavily on its website. Thus it was not a crucial element in DAP's election campaigning strategy during the 2008 general election.

5.3 Conclusion

For the research methods of content analysis, most of the articles published on DAP leaders' blogs were placed in categories of attack, rather than defend and remain neutral. Apparently, DAP leaders preferred using their blogs to attack the authorities and to express frustration about the state of the

country, by trying to influence the public as well as voters' decisions on key election themes. Lim Kit Siang and Liew Chin Tong utilised their blogs to address critical issues during election campaign period; whereas Tony Pua, Jenice Lee, and Lim Lip Eng preferred to use their blogs to provide information about election campaigns. According to some of the respondents during the interviews, it is hard to determine whether readers have become more politically aware after reading their blogs, the reason is they have never conducted any study. However, other respondents said that their audience becomes more politically aware after reading their blogs.

As for second research question, the findings clearly showed that DAP did not fully use its website to send out information. The evidence was that the DAP headquarters did not produce any articles during the election campaign period. Of the 15 articles published on the site, 11 articles were from Lim Kit Siang's blog, two from Lim Guan Eng's blog and another two from Penang DAP's website. In this regard, DAP's official website did not function as a major campaign tool for the party.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

Elections in Malaysia are held for the House of Representatives (*Dewan Rakyat*) of the bicameral parliament at the national level and for the state legislative assemblies (*Dewan Undangan Negara*) of the 13 states. Members of respective houses are elected from single-member constituencies using the first-past-the-post system. This a large amount of majority electoral system is a legacy of British colonial rule in Malaysia. The constitution of Malaysia requires that parliamentary elections be held at least once every five years. Nonetheless, the prime minister may dissolve the parliament with the approval of the Yang di Pertuan Agong, the King, before the expiration of this five-year period. The constitution requires that a general election, supervised by a politically neutral election commission, must be held within three months after the dissolution of the parliament (Moten, 2009, p. 22).

> As stated by Ufen (2008):
> The twelfth election was a turning point episode in Malaysia's history. Despite the unshakable dominance of the ruling BN, which has held control over the country since independence in 1957, and even with the limited competitiveness of elections, the opposition was, unexpectedly, able to strip the federal government of its two-thirds majority (p. 155).

Therefore, arguments arise whether the unexpected outcome of the 2008 general election was due to new media being effectively used by the

opposition parties.

As such, two research questions were formulated: "What are the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 general election campaign period?", and "What are the different strategies that the DAP used in its party's website during the 2008 general election campaign period?"

In this study, quantitative research method of content analysis, qualitative research methods of in-depth interviews were used.

6.2 Summary of Findings

This research seeks to fill the gap in Malaysian research on political communication, by focusing on whether the opposition's success in the last general election was due to utilisation of new media; or due to other reasons, such as people's anger against the inability of BN government to combat corruption, crime, and inflation. The findings speak to the problem statement that influence of new media was not the sole factor that contributed to the unexpected results in the 2008 general election, in which DAP managed to capture 28 parliamentary seats. Findings from this research supported the studies that the national issues such as corruption, crime, and high living cost are other factors contributing to the political tsunami of the last general election (Ezhar and Govindasamy, 2009; Farid, 2010; Jaaffar, 2009; Rosyidah,

2010; Shah, 2008; Ufen, 2009; Welsh, 2008; Yeoh, 2010).

The findings show that there were 77 articles published on five DAP leaders' blogs during the 13-day election period. Out of the four units of analysis, corruption was the only issue mentioned by all five bloggers, whereas press freedom was only highlighted by Lim Kit Siang. On the other hand, Lim Kit Siang was the sole blogger who mentioned all the four units of analysis, namely corruption, crime, inflation, and press freedom in creating political awareness. The findings suggested that politicians from DAP did not fully use their blogs to disseminate messages about the four crucial issues and persuade their online public, other than Kit Siang.

From the in-depth interviews, the analysis reveals some interesting findings. Even though the five DAP leaders have set up their blogs, the total number of articles posted were minimal besides Kit Siang. This indicated that DAP leaders did not actively utilise their blogs as a campaign communication tool to drum up political support. More specifically and importantly, these findings are just a beginning. Some interviewees said that blogs may possibly be replaced by Facebook in the future during elections. Thus, political practitioners should view Facebook as major tool in election campaign.

Transformation of the online world allows political candidates to bypass traditional media outlets and connect directly to citizens, promote their candidacy and stay relevant throughout the election campaign. However, the

results revealed that DAP and its leaders did not take advantages of the electoral power of the Web. The party's website and political blogs did not play a major function in creating political awareness. Overall, the researcher summarised that blogs did not have a significant impact during the election campaigns. Blogs were not the main choice for politicians to inform, persuade voters, and ultimately to garner support.

6.3 Implications of Study

As mentioned in chapter one, there was lacking of research on the roles of blogs in our country (Ezhar and Govindasamy, 2009, p. 146). In this situation, this study focused extensively on utilizing of blogs by DAP leaders and political party's website by DAP. The researcher demonstrated the importance of analyzing the content on five DAP leaders' blogs and DAP's official website. The results have identified important findings for the study. From the results, personal blogs of DAP leaders are more popular than the political party websites.

Firstly, findings showed that traditional ways of campaigning, for instance, reach out and touch people personally, door-to-door visits and public talk, were still the main strategies in rural areas where Internet access is limited or still not available. In other words, DAP and other opposition parties cannot overestimate the influence of new media on Malaysian voters.

This result is in line with Priyowidodo's finding (2010), which stated that, "The website is still not an effective means to distribute the programs of political parties. Public or party members still need direct communication in the field" (p. 13). In addition, in a study carried out by Moten (2009, p. 27), "Besides new media, political parties also used *ceramah* to reach out to and feel the pulse of the people. Compared to 2004, *ceramah* in the 2008 elections were frequent and were filled with high-spirited public speeches." Also, Idid and Wok's (2010, p. 7) research also found out that, "BN, with its advantage of incumbency, could stage intensive campaign. The opposition parties relied heavily on political *ceramah* and door-to-door campaigning."

Table 6.1: DAP Leaders Who Stopped Blogging

DAP Leaders	Last Posting
Chong Chieng Jen	4 Mar, 2011
Chow Kon Yeow	1 June, 2008
Fong Kui Lun	6 Jan, 2011
Jeff Ooi	15 Oct, 2009
Loke Siew Fook	18 Aug, 2009
Teng Chang Khim	22 Feb, 2010

Secondl*y*, informants such as Liew and Lim argued that less politicians blogged after the 2008 general election. One key example was besides Jeff Ooi, there were other five leaders from DAP stop blogging (Table 6.1). Three of the six DAP leaders, who were Jeff Ooi (member of parliament for Jelutong, Penang), Fong Kui Lun (member of parliament for Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur) and Teng Chang Khim (Selangor assembly speaker and state assemblyman for Sungai Pinang, Selangor), replied the researcher's email that they had turned to Facebook to communicate with public. So this represented

a major phenomenon that showed blogs were no more relevant to the political landscape.

Table 6.2: DAP Leaders Who Have Blogs and Facebook

DAP Leaders	Blogs	Facebook
103	46	73
	44.7%	70.9%

Note: The researcher referred DAP leaders as DAP elected representatives.

Thirdly, this research demonstrated another significant finding - the rise of social networking tools like Facebook. Out of total 103 DAP leaders, 73 leaders have set up Facebook accounts, if compared to 46 leaders who have blogs (Table 6.2), and with Malaysia has about 12.7 million active Facebook accounts (Rahim, 2011, p. N16), the researcher expects blogs to lose its impact and the importance of blogging will decrease.

Apart from this, since there were totally 312 articles published by 47 DAP bloggers during the 13-day election campaign period, that means averages of seven articles were published by one DAP blogger. In this condition, the researcher made a conclusion that DAP bloggers had not effectively uitilsed their blog to create political awareness, or in other words, blogs were not an effective communication tool for DAP.

Williams and Gulati (2009) highlighted that Facebook goes beyond simply communicating the campaign's theme and information on how to make

participating easier. Active engagement by the candidates and well maintained sites can make the candidates more accessible. With prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said Malaysia was one of the world's top users of social media sites such as Facebook (Koas, 2011), in this situation, to run better online campaigns and ensure success in the next election, candidates from DAP and other political parties should be more focused on social networking tools like Facebook. By using such tools, candidates can interact with supporters through Facebook. Social networking websites are an extremely easy way to share quick bits of campaign information. Furthermore, political polling research company Merdeka Centre head Ibrahim Suffian said politicians were aware of the phenomenon of social networking sites like Facebook as an easy way of getting in touch with young voters (Aziz, 2009, p. M2).

According to Suffian:

Facebook can keep the Internet-savvy part of the masses alert of what the politicians are up to while obtaining support on issues he or she is championing. It also allows them to acquire messages across quickly, and can be used as a tool to employ volunteers and donors for their campaigns.

Tian Chua, member of parliament for Batu, said:

Due to time constraints updating my status via Facebook was much easier than writing blog. Facebook can be seen as an added value for politicians but traditional ways of reaching out to the people are still essential (Aziz, 2009, p. M3).

Dr Mohd Puad Zarkashi, Deputy Education Minister, illustrated that:

Two friends from Sabah had complained about some facilities in a distant school and they showed me pictures. I had my officers take

instant action on the matter, So, Facebook allows me to be in direct contact with the people and it is more personalized (Aziz, 2009, p. M3).

Lastly, Teresa Kok, Selangor executive councilor, member of parliament for Seputeh and assemblyman for Kinrara, pointed out that:

> Facebook is a cool social networking service to share thoughts among friends. I only have to write a short, simple update on an issue and within seconds I acquire feedback. My messages will be streamed to their feeds in the shortest time and if they like what they see, they can 'share' it with their friends and empower the effect (Aziz, 2009, p. M3).

This study could significantly contribute to the knowledge of the political communication field, and contribute to a better understanding of the blogging phenomenon in Malaysia. By examining the implications of new media on the political sphere in our country, the use of information technology will be a permanent feature of election campaigns.

With Facebook getting more popular day by day, the researcher predicts that blogging will lose its place, and argued that Facebook will have a much wider impact in Malaysian politics. For the next election, the researcher expects Facebook would dominate the election campaign. In this condition, the researcher suggests that the awareness of the politicians and political parties should distribute more resources on the rising power of the online social media, especially Facebook, in order to prepare a just battle in the future election.

6.4 Implications of Framing

The study conducted by the researcher on the framing concept was with the purpose to analyse the contexts of articles published on DAP leaders' blogs and party's official website; or in other words, to investigate how the DAP and DAP leaders framed issues during the 2008 general election campaign period, whether they are more focused on attacking BN, defending DAP when attacked by BN, or remain neutral. By applying framing concept, this concept bears the importance to examine, and to extend understanding of the operation of this approach within the online media environment.

By examining the usefulness of the concept, it is hoped that this research would make a significant contribution to the study in political communication as it relates to the emerging Web technology that grounds this new trend, which is the new media that play an influential role in framing. Since new media are willing to take on issues that mainstream media might shy-away, the public subscribe to new media with the purpose to seek out information on the topics of corruption, crime, inflation, and press freedom.

However, since the four campaign issues were not highlighted on the DAP leaders' blogs and party's website (Table 4.3 and Table 4.5), the researcher faced difficulties in determining the correlations between the four issues, with DAP leaders' blogs and DAP's official website. The researcher was not able to examine the online media framing effect, and also to explore

the potential of blogs and party's website as effective tools for framing across the four issues.

6.5 Implications of Methodology

In this thesis, content analysis and in-depth interviews research methods were employed.

The research method of content analysis enabled the researcher to analyse presentation style of DAP bloggers on the four issues. The results showed that the DAP leaders cum bloggers were more focused on attacking their rivals or remaining neutral rather than defending themselves and their party.

The researcher applied thematic content analysis to show the relative importance of certain issues during the election campaign period, by calculating the frequency of the four units of analysis, which were corruption, crime, inflation, and press freedom. The findings showed that DAP leaders cum bloggers emphasised more on corruption, followed by inflation and crime. The content analysis showed that corruption was the most significant issue used by DAP in their campaign during the 2008 general election.

Alongside with research methods of content analysis, qualitative in-depth interviews also offer great value in this thesis. Through the in-depth

interviews, the researcher obtained detailed information and a clearer understanding on one of the objectives of this study, which was to identify the used of blogs by DAP leaders in creating political awareness. By gathering significant information through in-depth interviews, the researcher was able to explore the minds and thought processes of the five DAP bloggers, and this helped the researcher to understand and identify how DAP candidates used their blogs to create political awareness in the last general election.

It was found that these research methods could help to explain the nature of political communication and relationship between politicians and to public. As such, using both quantitative and qualitative research methods can enrich the field of political science and media studies, and explain how politicians and political party utilise blogs and official party website to produce political awareness.

6.6 Implications to Practitioners

The results of in-depth interviews found that the practitioners, which were the DAP leaders cum bloggers, other than Lim Kit Siang, did not perceive blogs as powerful online media tool to disseminate information to the public to win election.

The interviewees also found that Facebook will replace blogs in the coming election. According to the interviewees, blog are decreasingly

recognised as a political force. On the other hand, Facebook is increasingly being recognised as an important and major part of election in the future. For instance, Facebook is good to reach out at group of youngsters because this group is mostly Facebook users.

Crucially, it is worth noting that the results of this study demonstrated that more practitioners should use Facebook as an interactive platform in the next election.

6.7 Limitations of Study

Before discussing the recommendations for future research, it is important to consider some limitations of this study. First and foremost, Lim Kit Siang, Jeff Ooi and Goh Kheng Teong failed to respond to the researcher's inquires to conduct interviews. Therefore the researcher had to find replacements, and based on the criteria of selection choose Liew, Lee, and Lim.

Secondly, the small sample size of this research means that the findings cannot represent the entire population. In this research, the content analysis on five DAP leaders' blogs does not allow the researcher to draw statistically meaningful and notable conclusions. To further obtain a more significant result, it is better to have a larger sample size. Future researchers should use larger samples that would enable them to get a bigger and more comprehensive picture of the phenomena. The results of this study were not sufficient enough

to precisely answer research question one, thus the researcher is unable to make any significant prediction. It is unlikely that the researcher will be able to collect data from all the feedback of the DAP leaders' blogs in the Internet, as there are constraint of time and other resources to do so.

Fourthly, the researcher was told by Liew's assistant that due to blog upgrading, some of his previous articles on the blogspot may be lost. In this circumstance, the only way to find related blog articles was using Google.

Lastly, due to time limitations, Pua was unable to provide detailed answers for some questions. The researcher conducted follow-up emails to review Pua's interview data, and request elaboration regarding a particular response but no reply was obtained from Pua.

6.8 Recommendations

From the response provided by Liew, Lee, and Lim, it was difficult for them to determine whether the public has become more political aware after reading their blogs, since they have never conducted any study on this matter; besides, they also have no idea who the audience of their blog is. To overcome this limitations, survey should be carried out on blogs readers to determine whether they have become more political aware after accessing the DAP leaders' blogs. The survey can obtain the public's views and perceptions about the used of DAP leaders' blogs and its official website to create political

awareness. A more comprehensive analysis can help the researcher to better understand if political blogs and website can have a really big impact in Malaysian political life.

Another useful follow-up to this study can focus on how DAP or other political parties use social networking tools like Facebook, Google+ and Twitter in their political communication.

6.9 Conclusion

This study fills the lacuna in the area of political communication in Malaysia by examining the extent to which DAP leaders used blogs and the official website to create political awareness. The researcher found that the astounding results of the last 2008 general election were brought about by various factors, not just new media. These include the inability of BN government to tackle various issues effectively like corruption, crime, and inflation (Ezhar and Govindasamy, 2009; Farid, 2010; Jaaffar, 2009; Rosyidah, 2010; Shah, 2008; Ufen, 2009; Welsh, 2008; Yeoh, 2010). Also, DAP leaders and the party itself did not fully utilise blogs and party's website to gain political advantage during the election campaign.

The researcher also found that DAP leaders prefer to use their personal blogs to disseminate information, rather than through the party's official website. The researcher provided some important evidence regarding the

power of blogs as a political communication tool will diminish in the future. At this level, the growing popularity of other social networking sites including Facebook has huge potential to replace blogs.

Information, Comminication and Culture Minister Datuk Dr Rais Yatim said broadband penetration had increased to 63.4% from only 11% in 2006 while cellular subscription jumped 127% from 19.5 million to 37 million during the same period (Rais, 2012, p. 16). Apart from broadband in the country will be more extensive, for the next general election, there will be 1.8 million new voters who would be voting for the first time. Dr Baharuddin predicted that there will be "digital media warfare" for the hearts and minds of these voters who would have grown up being extremely comfortable with new media technology (Baharuddin, 2008, p. 10).

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As conclusion, new media is fast and wide-reaching and more efficient in developing two-way dialogue between the public and candidates. The use of information technology will be a permanent feature of election campaigns. Future contests will be much more Internet-based and less focused on

traditional media. By expecting a higher rate of Internet penetration and increasing Internet usage, greater frequency of using social networking sites by political parties and candidates to reach out to voting population will become the norm in election campaigns. With the rise of the social networking sites such as Facebook, blogs are losing their allure for many people – particularly the younger generation in the next general election.

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APPENDIX A

TABLES

Table 1.1: Summary of Chapter One

Research Question One	First Research Objective	Research Methods
What are the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 general election campaign period?	To identify the different strategies that the DAP's leaders used in their blogs during the 2008 general election campaign period.	Content Analysis In-depth Interviews
Research Question Two	**Second Research Objective**	**Research Methods**
What are the different strategies that the DAP used in its party's website during the 2008 general election campaign period?	To investigate the different strategies that the DAP used in its party's website during the 2008 general election campaign period.	Content Analysis In-depth Interviews

Table 3.1: Units of Analysis on
Five DAP Leaders' Blogs and DAP's Official Website

Categories / Themes	Corruption	Crime	Inflation	Press Freedom
1	corruption perception index	crime index	household income	control of the mass media
2	cronies	rape	individual earnings	freedom of speech
3	cronyism	Royal Police Commission	living standard	free speech
4	money politics	safety	oil prices	press freedom index
5	Port Klang Free Zone scandal	security	real income	
6	unaccountable disbursement of public funds	unsafe	rising price	

Table 3.2: List of Interviewees

Samples	Positions
Tony Pua Kiam Wee	6. Member of Parliament for Petaling Jaya Utara, Selangor Darul Ehsan 7. National Publicity Secretary of DAP 8. Prominent blogger 9. Ranked 42nd in the 70 Most popular bloggers in Malaysia (http://syedsyahrul.blogspot.com, 2008)
Liew Chin Tong	7. Member of Parliament for Bukit Bendera, Penang 8. DAP strategist 9. International Secretary of the DAP Central Executive Committee 10. Advises the Chief Minister of Penang on policy matters 11. Honorary Secretary of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Malaysia Group 12. A member of the Malaysian Parliament Europe Friendship Group
Jenice Lee Yin Ha	4 Assemblyman for Teratai, Selangor Darul Ehsan 5 Assistant to Selangor Menteri Besar for Youth and Sports Department 6 DAP Socialist Youth (DAPSY) National Deputy Chief
Hannah Yeoh Tseow Suan	⅄ Assemblyman for Subang Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan ⅄ State Treasurer for DAP Selangor
Lim Lip Eng	⅄ Member of Parliament for Segambut, Wilayah Persekutuan ⅄ Secretary of DAP Wilayah Persekutuan

Table 4.1: Identifying Blogs Articles from Study Data

Category	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C
Attack	15	22	15
Neutral	12	4	12
Defend	0	1	0
Total	27	27	27

Table 4.2: Number of Articles on Five DAP Leaders' Blogs

Bloggers	Number of Articles
Lim Kit Siang	35
Tony Pua	24
Liew Chin Tong	4
Jenice Lee	12
Lim Lip Eng	2
Total	**77**

Table 4.3: Total Frequency of Four Units of Analysis on Five DAP Leaders' Blogs

Units of Analysis	Lim KS	Tony Pua	Liew CT	Jenice Lee	Lim LE	Total
Corruption	28	1	1	3	1	**34**
Crime	19	0	0	2	0	**21**
Inflation	11	1	2	0	1	**15**
Press Freedom	7	0	0	0	0	**7**
Total	**65**	**2**	**3**	**5**	**2**	**77**

Table 4.4: Presence of Election Campaign Information on Blogs

Bloggers	Articles about Election Campaign	Total Number of Articles	Percentage (%)
Lim Kit Siang	12	35	34.29
Tony Pua	20	24	83
Liew Chin Tong	1	4	25
Jenice Lee	6	12	50
Lim Lip Eng	1	2	50
Total	**40**	**77**	**51.9**

Table 4.5: Total Frequency of Four Units of Analysis on DAP's Official Website

Units of Analysis	Frequency
Corruption	3
Crime	2
Inflation	1
Press Freedom	1
Total	**7**

Table 4.6: Overlapping of Articles on DAP Leaders' Blogs and DAP's Official Website

	Number of Articles		Number of Articles
DAP 's Official Website	15	Lim Kit Siang	11
		Lim Guan Eng	2
		Penang DAP	2
Total	**15**	**Total**	**15**

Table 6.1: DAP Leaders Who Stopped Blogging

DAP Leaders	Last Posting
Chong Chieng Jen	4 Mar, 2011
Chow Kon Yeow	1 June, 2008
Fong Kui Lun	6 Jan, 2011
Jeff Ooi	15 Oct, 2009
Loke Siew Fook	18 Aug, 2009
Teng Chang Khin	22 Feb, 2010

Table 6.2: DAP Leaders Who Have Blogs and Facebook

DAP Leaders	Blogs	Facebook
103	46	73
	44.7%	70.9%

Attack = I
Neutral = II
Defend = III

Attack reflects a negative image of BN, or could damage the reputation and harm the BN.

Neutral stands between the attack and defend.

Defend reflects DAP leaders cum bloggers defend DAP when BN harmed DAP, or damaged the reputation of DAP.

Coding Sheet: Lim Kit Siang's Blog - Contains the Term of Corruption

Date	Articles	Paragraphs	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C
26/2/08	Challenge – distribute BN's 2004 general election manifesto together with its 2008 manifesto	In fact, many Malaysians will find that instead of the 2004 BN Manifesto of "A Malaysia of excellence, glory and distinction", the past four years have seen "A Malaysia of Mediocrity, Humiliation and Dishonour" as illustrated by the plunge in Malaysia's Transparency International **Corruption** Perception Index from No.37 in 2003 to No.43 in 2007.	I	I	I

26/2/08	Challenge – distribute BN's 2004 general election manifesto together with its 2008 manifesto	Secondly, on **corruption.** On this subject, the 2008 BN Manifesto pledge to "continue to enforce anti-**corruption** measures without fear or favour". This is a far cry from its 2004 manifesto where it declared "an all-out campaign against **corruption**, without fear or favour" and pledged to "promote a culture of zero-tolerance for **corruption**".	I	I	I
26/2/08	Challenge – distribute BN's 2004 general election manifesto together with its 2008 manifesto	The 2008 BN manifesto is a big letdown as it has abandoned the 2004 pledge to promote "a culture of zero-tolerance for **corruption**". Today, there is a culture of even greater tolerance of more rampant **corruption** than the time of the Mahathir administration as evidenced by Malaysia's worsening ranking in the transparency International **Corruption** Perception Index in the past four years of Abdullah premiership.	I	I	I

26/2/08	Challenge – distribute BN's 2004 general election manifesto together with its 2008 manifesto	And the phase "zero-tolerance for **corruption**" had disappeared from the lexicon of the Abdullah administration!	I	I	I
27/2/08	Vote for change to ensure that Malaysia is united, prosperous and progressive	The figures speak for themselves. It means that the Barisan has been telling one big lie to the people. Because of the NEP and **corruption**, Malaysia is way behind the four Asia dragons.	I	I	I
27/2/08	Vote for change to ensure that Malaysia is united, prosperous and progressive	The shocking revelations of the Lingam Commission of Enquiry indicate that the integrity, credibility and independence of the judiciary have been comprised. The impression is given that judges can be bought and sold like chattels and goods in the market. It is quite evident that rule of law has been **corrupted** by wheeling and dealing in the courts. Because the highest levels of justice have been **corrupted**, it is not surprising that it has a **corrupting** influence down the chain of administration of law and order.	I	I	I

27/2/08	Vote for change to ensure that Malaysia is united, prosperous and progressive	**Corruption** and cronyism have marginalized the average Malay, Chinese and Indian and made them poor.	II	I	II

Coding Sheet: Tony Pua's Blog - Contains the Term of Corruption

Date	Articles	Paragraphs	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C
6/3/08	Who shall I vote	MPs are elected so that they can be part of the law-making machine we know as Parliament and they have bigger issues to fry, like **corruption**, the state of judiciary, governance, racist supremacy ideology, fundamental freedoms, etc.	II	I	II

Coding Sheet: Liew Chin Tong's Blog - Contains the Term of Corruption

Date	Articles	Paragraphs	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C
4/3/08	Michael Backman: Malaysia needs a strong opposition	In the past few years, the Malaysian Government has presided over an extraordinary number of scandals that are appalling by any standards: the trade minister's allocation of car import permits to friends, relatives and supporters; the billion-dollar fraud at the **Port Klang Free Trade Zone**; and so on.	I	I	I

Coding Sheet: Jenice Lee's Blog - Contains the Term of Corruption

Date	Articles	Paragraphs	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C
26/2/08	Surat kepada pengundi-pengundi DUN Teratai	Memantau kerajaan negeri Selangor, mencegah perlakuan **rasuah**, penyelewengan, penyalahgunaan kuasa dan kelemahan pelaksanaan dasar.	II	II	II
28/2/08	General Election	Do you think our politicians in power are **corrupt**?	I	I	I
28/2/08	General Election	Do you think our civil service is **corrupt**?	I	I	I

Coding Sheet: Lim Lip Eng's Blog - Contains the Term of Corruption

Date	Articles	Paragraphs	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C
27/2/08	My 4 Plans	Eradication of **Corruption** - Fair courts and severe sentences are the answers.	II	II	II

Coding Sheet: Lim Kit Siang's Blog - Contains the Term of Crime

Date	Articles	Paragraphs	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C
26/2/08	Challenge – distribute BN's 2004 general election manifesto together with its 2008 manifesto	Firstly on **crime**. In the 2008 manifesto, BN promised: "Bring down the country's **crime** index". What did the 2004 BN manifesto promised on **crime**, law and order? Let me quote from it: "Improve the level of personal safety for every individual"!	I	I	I
26/2/08	Challenge – distribute BN's 2004 general election manifesto together with its 2008 manifesto	When Abdullah became Prime Minister in October 2003, the **crime** situation was already out of control which was why one of his first reform promises and measures which won him all-round plaudits and support among Malaysians was the establishment of the Royal Police Commission to reduce **crime** to restore to Malaysian their twin fundamental rights to be free from **crime** and the fear of **crime**, whether in the streets, public places or the privacy of their homes.	II	I	II

26/2/08	Challenge – distribute BN's 2004 general election manifesto together with its 2008 manifesto	In the past four years, however, the **crime** index had worsened from 156,315 cases in 2003 to 224,298 cases in 2007 – a sharp rise of some 45% when it should have gone down as recommended by the Royal Police Commission which proposed a 20% drop in the **crime** index in the first 12 months of its report.	II	I	II
26/2/08	Challenge – distribute BN's 2004 general election manifesto together with its 2008 manifesto	For the first time in the nation's 50-year history, the crime index last year crashed through the 200,000 psychological barrier. Women in Malaysia are now more unsafe today than four years ago – as the incidence of rape had more than doubled from a daily average of four women in 2003 to 8.5 women last year!	I	I	I

| 27/2/08 | Vote for change to ensure that Malaysia is united, prosperous and progressive | The shocking revelations of the Lingam Commission of Enquiry indicate that the integrity, credibility and independence of the judiciary have been comprised. The impression is given that judges can be bought and sold like chattels and goods in the market. It is quite evident that rule of law has been corrupted by wheeling and dealing in the courts. Because the highest levels of justice have been corrupted, it is not surprising that it has a corrupting influence down the chain of administration of law and order. This has set a bad example for the country resulting in a decline of morals and an increasing **crime** rate. Security has become a major problem, and the people are afraid for their lives and property. | II | I | II |
| 28/2/08 | Barisan Nasional 2008 Manifesto of lies and falsehoods | I have already highlighted the misrepresentation of the 2008 BN Election Manifesto with regard to the worsening problems of crime and corruption. | II | I | II |

Coding Sheet: Jenice Lee's Blog - Contains the Term of Crime

Date	Articles	Paragraphs	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C
26/2/08	Surat kepada pengundi-pengundi DUN Teratai	Dipengaruhi oleh sebab-sebab tertentu, sesetengah mangsa-mangsa kes **jenayah** tidak membuat laporan polis.	II	III	II
26/2/08	Surat kepada pengundi-pengundi DUN Teratai	Jesturu itu, keadaan sebenar **jenayah** tidak dapat diketahui.	I	I	I

Coding Sheet: Lim Lip Eng's Blog - Contains the Term of Crime

Date	Articles	Paragraphs	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C
27/2/08	My 4 Plans	Strengthen **Crimes** Legislation and Reinvigorate Enforcement at all comers of the country.	II	I	II

Coding Sheet: Lim Kit Siang's Blog - Contains the Term of Inflation

Date	Articles	Paragraphs	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C
28/2/08	Barisan Nasional 2008 manisfesto of lies and falsehoods ?	That translate into an annual growth rate of 3.6%, and at an **inflation** rate of 2.6% over that period, real household income grew at 1.0% per year.	II	II	II

Coding Sheet: Tony Pua's Blog - Contains the Term of Inflation

Date	Articles	Paragraphs	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C
3/3/08	Question time: PJU's Chew vs Pua	So we believe in a system whereby grants directly to the poor and to the lower middle income to cope with the **rising price** increases.	II	II	II

Coding Sheet: Lim Lip Eng's Blog - Contains the Term of Crime

Date	Articles	Paragraphs	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C
27/2/08	My 4 Plans	Strengthen **Crimes** Legislation and Reinvigorate Enforcement at all comers of the country.	II	I	II
28/2/08	Barisan Nasional 2008 manisfesto of lies and falsehoods ?	That translate into an annual growth rate of 3.6%, and at an *inflation* rate of 2.6% over that period, real household income grew at 1.0% per year.	II	II	II

Coding Sheet: Tony Pua's Blog - Contains the Term of Inflation

Date	Articles	Paragraphs	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C
3/3/08	Question time: PJU's Chew vs Pua	So we believe in a system whereby grants directly to the poor and to the lower middle income to cope with the **rising price** increases.	II	II	II

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Coding Sheet: Liew Chin Tong's Blog - Contains the Term of Inflation

Date	Articles	Paragraphs	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C
5/3/08	We have to stop the rot and make a new deal	So far, the government side has been getting their tactics wrong, stressing on global forces making it impossible for it to keep **inflation** down.	I	I	I
5/3/08	We have to stop the rot and make a new deal	The government can't reduce **oil prices**; they can't do this; they can't do that, and so people have to accept their fate.	I	I	I

Coding Sheet: Lim Kit Siang's Blog - Contains the Term of Press Freedom

Date	Articles	Paragraphs	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C
27/2/08	Vote for change to ensure that Malaysia is united, prosperous and progressive	Contrary to world trends towards more democracy, the Barisan government has suppressed **press freedom** more and more, under PM Abdullah, Malaysia's World **Press Freedom** index slipped from 104 in 2003 to 124 in 2007. **Freedom of speech** is banned in colleges and universities. This is a regressive law and resembles the harsh ban on **free speech** in communist countries, and causes them to fall behind in economic development.	I	I	I

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APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your motivation for blogging?

2. How often do you update your blog so that your visitors or followers will have something new to read whenever they visit your blog?

3. Who are your audience?

4. Do you think they have become more politically aware after reading your blog?

5. Do you think that blogging is an effective platform to create political awareness among readers?

6. Can you cite examples to show that you are fully utilizing the blog to create political awareness?

7. Do you think that more politicians have become active bloggers after the last 2008 general election?

8. Do you think new media played a very crucial role in the opposition's victories in the 2008 general election?

9. If we make comparisons among blogs, Facebook and Twitter, which communication tool do you think is the best to create political awareness?

10. Do you think Facebook and Twitter will replace blog in the next general elrction?

11. Do you have anything to add before we finish this interview?

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT – TONY PUA

The transcript of in-depth interview with Tony Pua, was included here to present ideas of informant related to Tony Pua's experience in using blog in creating political awareness.

Questions and Answers	Remarks
What is your motivation for blogging? My motivation is to spread information to people to know more about what is happening in the country, and to know more about education through my blog, *educationmalaysia*.	Spread information to people
How often do you update your blog so that your visitors or followers will have something new to read whenever they visit your blog? Two or three times a week.	
Who are your audiences? For my general blog, is the general public who concerned with the affair of the country; for *educationmalaysia*, is the students and academics.	
Do you think they have become more politically aware after reading your blog? Ya, for general blog, they get informed what is happening in the country.	

Questions and Answers	Remarks
Do you think that blogging is an effective platform to create political awareness among readers? Yes, but blog is one of the platforms, so is not the only platform.	
Can you give one example to show that you are utilising the blog to create political awareness? For example when the prime minister launched the New Economic Model, so you read the newspapers, newspapers told you what all is about, but there are other things that they are not told. So people will go to the blogs to read the alternative views about New Economic Model, and decide which opinions are better.	People will get alternative views for certain issues
What kind of benefits could the visitors obtain by reading your blog? More information and more knowledge about the issues.	
Do you think that more politicians started blogging after last 2008 election? I think many politicians started after the last election.	

Questions and Answers	Remarks
Do you think the traditional media, The Rocket, played a very major role in the opposition's victories? I think different media would have different role. Not everyone has Internet access, so different people who make use of different media, so we have to take up all media and not just one media. *Do you think alternative media played a very crucial role in the opposition's victories in the 2008 general election?* People print out the information out and give it to people who didn't access to the Internet.	

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT – LIEW CHIN TONG

The transcript of in-depth interview with Liew Chin Tong, was included here to present ideas of informant related to Chin Tong's experience in using blog in creating political awareness.

Questions and Answers	Remarks
What is your motivation for blogging? I actually don't really blog, blog to me is just to store all the news about my work, also to store information about myself. Blog is not a main communication tool for me, and I don't like identify myself as a blogger. My main platform was my appearance on Astro live television.	Blog is not a main communication tool
How often do you update your blog so that your visitors or followers will have something new to read whenever they visit your blog? Nowadays twice a week; mainly news items for my articles, perhaps my interviews.	Twice a week
I preferred to use the term "website" rather than "blog", to bring together news and my work. I think the blog before last election was tool for the activists to push forward certain points of view and have a following. I frankly don't think I have a following in that sense. Perhaps some people follow my work not necessary through my website. Nowadays the more interactive social media probably Twitter, I am reasonably active on Twitter. In fact, I managed my tweet myself, and I also manage my website mainly by myself.	preferred to use the term "website" rather than "blog"

Questions and Answers	Remarks
Who are your audiences?	
I really don't know, as I said blog is not my main tool. There are people who read my words and follow me. I think I am not actively generating content.	I have no idea who are my audiences
Do you think they have become more politically aware after reading your website?	
Really hard to engage, I have no idea who is visiting my blog; whereas for Twitter, because someone said they will follow you, in that sense, I know who are following my tweet; but for blog, it is still not my tool. Hopefully I will be more active; archiving my work, my statements but also actively engages the audience by providing information.	I have no idea who is visiting my blog
Do you think that blogging is an effective platform to create political awareness among readers?	
I think is one of them. I think the ruling government has no longer able to monopolise the means of communication. Blog like online newspaper or other means, or even has become alternative source of communication as time goes by. Alternative media means a communication roll bigger and bigger and post a threat to BN's propaganda.	Blog has become alternative source of communication
If you like you can check out the 2008 Economic Report, when the budget was presented. In the year of 2008, it was so funny that when the economic report recognized that during the March election, there is a surge in SMS traffic and it has brought more profit to telecommunication company, because everyone is sending SMS.	
I think you cannot see blog as isolated tool, but you could see is one of the packages, part of the new media; for example, some people read something interesting on the blogs, and they will forward that out to the rest of the world.	You cannot see blog as isolated tool, but you could see is one of the new media

Questions and Answers	Remarks
Can you give some examples to show that you are fully utilizing the blog, or your website, to create political awareness?	
As a party, in the last election, I think we run a rather consistent theme and consistent story in the whole campaign. But I would give you some guideline, DAP became the first political party in this country had a website, so that was part of it. In the 2008 election, one is good about the DAP, we had a very clear storyline about corruption, crime, something was about the NEP (New Economic Policy), in such a way that it was unjust, unfair. So we had a very clear focus, and we didn't go all over the place. In the last election, I think some people go all over the place talk about the whole world without having a focus. But in the last election, DAP runs a very clear theme that I think was good.	DAP and Pakatan Rakyat run a consistent election theme
Also the Pakatan Rakyat had a very clear and focus election theme in the last election. PKR was talking about the economics, and PAS was talking about the welfare state.	
What kind of benefits could the visitors obtain by reading your website?	
To come back to the DAP story, I think the main point is that we run a consistent story, the party's website is part of it. Besides the website, we had the SMS, we had *The Rocket*, we had a theme song, an election song to bring out the image of unity among races, we had a lot of other things that were so energetic. All these are bringing the image of coherence and make it very clear for people that it is time for change.	
Jeff Ooi used his blogs to raise a lot of funds, and also Hannah Yeoh in the last election, I think both of them done really well.	

Questions and Answers	Remarks
Do you think that blogging is an effective platform to create political awareness among readers? Yes. Not only the website, we also have email list. Blog cannot be singular. If you read a book, Google is talking about cloud, you cannot see blog or website as an isolated tool, you have to see as part of the other things, so it becomes as a package. So blog is one of the elements. ***Do you think that more politicians have become active bloggers after the last 2008 general election?*** I think less, Jeff Ooi is not blogging anymore. I think blog has changed, as I say it is evolving. A year ago, you will not see Twitter as a major media. Today I am twitting two to three items a day. A year ago, if I am not mistaken, I registered in September or October last year, I really start tweeting. It wasn't seen as a main thing a year ago, but today it is so important. Those who used to follow blog, may be now follow Twitter more. A year ago it was a year of Facebook, everyone talks about Facebook, the year before 2008 is still about blog, even though some people argued that blog is an ideal platform to post long articles. Last year was about Facebook, 2009 was about Facebook, which I didn't jump to the level. I had a Facebook account but I didn't do much in my Facebook account. But I am now relatively active on Twitter.	 Less politicians blogged after last election Twitter is so important today Year of 2009 was about Facebook

Questions and Answers	Remarks
Do you think alternative media played a very significant role in the last general election?	
I wouldn't say "alternative media", but I would like to use the word "alternative sources of information". Alternative sources of information play an important role, and when you say alternative sources of information that include *ceramah*, which is traditional means which is always be there. But you do notice that In the last election, our *ceramah* drawing tens of thousands of people and that I think is important.	I would like to use the word "alternative sources of information", rather than "alternative media"
I think SMS played a major role in the last election. The SMS is quiet effective, because SMS is not only SMS, but it actually a message from your friends that you know are usually more countable than anyone or any other persons, who tell you something like this. So it is effective because it is something that was told to you by your friend. So it is important when it comes to communication. SMS, *ceramah*, blog, *Harakah,* all played a role in the whole process.	SMS played a major role in the last election
All kinds of medium played a role and PR had to use both new and traditional media in the whole election process. Overall, alternative sources of information played a very important role based on the reason that alternative media represents alternative sources.	PR had to use both new and traditional media

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT – JENICE LEE

The transcript of in-depth interview with Jenice Lee, was included here to present ideas of informant related to Jenice Lee's experience in using blog in creating political awareness.

Questions and Answers	Remarks
What is your motivation for blogging? To disseminate information and maintain connection with my constituents or potential voters. *How often do you update your blog so that your visitors or followers will have something new to read whenever they visit your blog?* On and off, no fix time but in average three to four days. *Who are your audience?* Young people with Internet connections. *Do you think they have become more politically aware after reading your blog?* I have no idea, since I never conduct any survey. *Can you cite examples to show that you are fully utilizing the blog to create political awareness?* Create campaign page, post news articles, video clips, and to report my activities or my views on current issues. *Do you think that more politicians have become active bloggers after last 2008 election?* Yes	

Questions and Answers	Remarks
Do you think alternative media played a very crucial role in the opposition's victories in the 2008 general election? Yes, but not all. Alternative media could play a crucial role in the areas with good Internet connections. ***If we make comparisons among blog, Facebook and Twitter, which communication tool do you think is the best to create political awareness?*** There are both strengths and weaknesses of the three mediums. Blogs are much better for giving more detailed information. As for Twitter, users can only send and receive short messages; and the major limitation for Facebook is that users cannot put too many information or cover the whole story. However, it is easier for the readers to absorb information on the Facebook, since the information was presented in the form of short bite-sized paragraphs.	There are both strengths and weaknesses of the three mediums.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT – LIM LIP ENG

The transcript of in-depth interview with Lim Lip Eng, was included here to present ideas of informant related to Lip Eng's experience in using blog in creating political awareness.

Questions and Answers	Remarks
What is your motivation for blogging? Before Facebook became so popular, blogging is quiet influential when it comes to the statements produced by the politicians to the community, which was before 2008. After 2008, to me personally, the influence and importance of blogging has been very much diminished, because the power of blogging has been taken over by Facebook. Because most of the people, I mean the Internet connected people or community, I can say if not all, most of them are on Facebook, but not blogging. They just don't go to someone blogs and read, they just read on whatever is publishing on Facebook. The content on Facebook is very short, is very straight to the point. For blogs, you have to purposely go to someone blogs to read. To me, blogging is a sunset thing. As for Twitter, to me, tweeting in Malaysia only applies to politicians, that are the communication between the politicians and the media, like I am very active in tweet, but I can say most of my followers who read my tweets, they are all from the media. The politicians from BN also read on tweets, to attack or reply their rivals' stands on certain issues. So in that way you can say Facebook is still number one, when it comes to politicians wants to spread their news, statements or what they are doing daily. Tweet is still far behind.	Before Facebook became popular, blogging is so influential. After 2008, the power of blogging has been taken over by Facebook. To me, blogging is a sunset thing. Tweeting in Malaysia only apply to politicians, that is the communication between the politicians and the media.

Questions and Answers	Remarks
How often do you update your blog so that your visitors or followers will have something new to read whenever they visit your blog? I do not really update my blog because news articles about me are published quite often in newspapers, sometimes even up to two or three times a week. For me, my blog is just a personal record of news publishing, through copying the link from newspaper portals and posting it on my blog. ***Do you think they have become more politically aware after reading your blog?*** The readers who read my blog are limited to a small number, but through my blog, they can know about what I have done for the people and my achievements as a member of parliament. ***How did you send out information to the public?*** First, through the mainstream media. I try to have a press conference every alternate day to the public in general, about the local issues in my constituency during the campaign, what is wrong, what is unfair, what has not been done, most of them will report in newspapers. Second, holding the *ceramah*. I invited the media so they will report my speech, which is my tool to reach out to the voters.	Through my blog, they can know about what I have done for the people Mainstream media *Ceramah*

Questions and Answers	Remarks
Third, through SMS. I try to get as many contact numbers of my voters of my constituency, to tell them what is happening. I also try to create some slogans to attack my political rivals, and sent to voters through SMS and ask them to forward it. This was not only helping me but also my colleagues in PR during my campaign.	SMS
Fourth and also the last, was using electorate, I mean the wire method, which is through emails. I have emailed a lot to my constituencies, to email them about the important or crucial issues they have to think of and consider before they vote.	Emails
Besides the electronic methods, conventional methods also useful and working, that is through banners that hang up along the roads and at the junctions; and also *ceramah* and walkabouts. I will walkabout with loudspeaker at *pasar malam* (night market) and *pasar pagi* (market), going around in the neighborhood. ***What I know Jeff Ooi had stop blogging.*** Yes, at all. ***The last article posted was in 2009.*** Yes. He was one of the front runners in blogging. That clearly shows that blog is the thing of the past. Tian Chua (Member of Parliament for the Batu constituency), had mentioned that besides new media, another factor should be taken into consideration was the performance of Abdullah Badawi. Because Pak Lah had made a lot of promises, however, he failed to deliver all the promises, for example, to combat against the corruption or reducing the crime rate. So according to Tian Chua, the low performance of the former prime minister is also the huge factor. So do you agree with the statement? Yes, I agree.	Conventional methods

Questions and Answers	Remarks
Do you think that more politicians have become active bloggers after the last 2008 general election?	
I don't think so, except for the very few famous one, like Raja Petra. The rest I don't think people read their blogs. Like my blog, I don't think people will read.	Less politicians blogged after last election
Do you think new media or the Internet played a very significant role in the last general election?	
Yes. I have to qualify my answer, although I say yes but only combine at the urban areas such as the Klang Valley, Penang, and may be Johor Bahru. If you are talking about Pahang, Terengganu, Sabah, Sarawak, I don't think it works.	New media only play a significant role in urban area.
If we make comparisons among blogs, Facebook and Twitter, which communication tool do you think is the best to create political awareness?	
Before 2008, Twitter and Facebook were not so popular, whereas blogging is quiet influential since politicians used their blogs to send out statements to the community. However, after 2008, the influence and importance of blogging were very much diminished, since the power of blogging has been taken over by Facebook. The reason is, most of the Internet connected people or communities are on Facebook, because the contents on Facebook are short and very straight to the points."	
The limitation of blogs is that people have to purposely access to particular blog in order to read the content. I concluded that Facebook is still the most essential tool for politicians to reach out to voters and to send out messages to the public in general.	

Questions and Answers	Remarks
Do you think Facebook and Twitter will replace blog in the next general election? I still think Facebook, but not Twitter, will be the more essential tool for politicians to reach out to voters to spread out their message to the public in general. However, if talking about the media statement, it means the statements given to the journalists and media, it still tweet. I don't know about the public, if the public is the media, I don't know their followers; almost all our followers are media and politicians. So, Facebook is still number one. The second tool in the coming election, I think is still SMS.	Facebook is still the most essential tool for politicians to reach out to voters The useful tools in the coming election are Facebook and SMS