AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF POLITICAL BLOGS ON POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN MALAYSIA

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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August 2012
DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

(                                           )

AZMA ASNAWISHAH ABD HAKIM

31 August 2012
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Alhamdulilah (Praise be to God), to whom I pray and seek guidance, for giving me the strength to complete this memorable expedition.

My greatest gratitude to Professor Brian Corbitt and Dr Leslie Young, my two beloved supervisors for their encouragement throughout my journey in completing my PhD. Thank you for your informative suggestions and brilliant ideas, for being understanding mentors, giving me the flexibility to work at my own pace and helping me to make it through the ups and downs.

Thanks to my main sponsor Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia and my employer, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) for supporting me all the way in finishing this thesis. I would also want to thank my faculty members and Dean of Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, UiTM Shah Alam, for the words of wisdom and encouragement. And also not to forget the individual proof readers, statistican, and the learning advisors from the Study and Learning centre, RMIT for encouraging me to write and helping me with my English writing.

My heartfelt thanks to my beloved wife, Shamila and my kids, Aiman Syamil, Amree Syammen and Alisha Syameera for always being there with me to encourage and care, and giving me the strength to endure this journey. Not to forget my parents, Hj. Abd Hakim and Hjh. Khadijah, my parents in-law, Hj. Mohamed Shuhidan and Hjh. Maimun for their prayer, unconditional love, supports and attention. This thesis is dedicated to all of them in compensation for all the sacrifices that they made. Many thanks to my siblings and also my family-in-law for their non-stop assistance and supports. My gratitude is also attributed to all my friends for their continuos help and support along my PhD journey.
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIDC</td>
<td>Anwar Ibrahim Dot Com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANOVA</td>
<td>Analysis of Variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATLAS.ti</td>
<td>Archiv für Technik, Lebenswelt und Alltagssprache - text interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BN</td>
<td>Barisan Nasional</td>
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<tr>
<td>BP</td>
<td>Blogger Patriot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPN</td>
<td>Bloger Pembela Negara</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAP</td>
<td>Democratic Action Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GGMM</td>
<td>Gabungan Graduan Melayu Muda</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISA</td>
<td>Internal Security Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITU</td>
<td>International Telecommunication Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJ</td>
<td>Khairy Jamaluddin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMO</td>
<td>Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin</td>
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<tr>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Muslim Bloggers Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCA</td>
<td>Malaysian Chinese Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCBD</td>
<td>Malaysian Chinese Bloggers Directory</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCMC</td>
<td>Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIBC</td>
<td>Malaysian Indian Bloggers Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIC</td>
<td>Malaysian Indian Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>MNN</td>
<td>Malaysia News Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>MP3</td>
<td>MPEG-1 Audio Layer III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPBI</td>
<td>Malaysian Political Bloggers Interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSC</td>
<td>Multimedia Super Corridor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAB</td>
<td>National Alliance of Blogger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEP</td>
<td>National Economic Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-government Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NST</td>
<td>News Straits Times</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSA</td>
<td>Official Secrets Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAP</td>
<td>People’s Action Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAS</td>
<td>Parti Islam Se Malaysia</td>
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<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>PKR</td>
<td>Parti Keadilan Rakyat</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>People’s Progressive Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPPA</td>
<td>Printing Presses and Publication Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Pakatan Rakyat</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMIT</td>
<td>Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSS</td>
<td>Really Simple Syndication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>Short Message Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for Social Scientist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSDM</td>
<td>Sopo Sentral Directory of Malaysia</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUARAM</td>
<td>Suara Rakyat Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCA</td>
<td>Theory of Communicative Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>UMNO</td>
<td>United Malays National Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td>Universal Resource Locator</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>YDPA</td>
<td>Yang Di Pertuan Agong</td>
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</table>
ABSTRACT

An Exploratory Study on the Effects of Political Blogs on Political Activism in Malaysia

Interactive blogging activities have revolutionised the means of exchanging and disseminating political information, insights and opinions on an everyday basis, and have enabled the emergence of social networks among the bloggers. This study shows how and why Malaysians are using political blogs. Malaysia has been experiencing significant change in political communication. Political blogs are become a key tool in politics by both government and opposition parties and by citizens wanting to broaden the political discourse. Since most of the electronic and print media is controlled in Malaysia by government, blogs have become a popular alternative for people to find information about politics and to present alternative perspectives.

The research is grounded in theory which argues that democracy is best served by a public sphere where competing visions of the future can be expressed and subjected to debate without skewing or censorship to fit the agendas of dominating parties (Habermas, 1989). Achieving democracy requires input from citizens who give voice to society’s problems and who respond to the issues articulated in elite discourse. Blogs, it is argued in this thesis, offer a means of articulation and a forum for competing visions. The research also investigates the power of blogs as a technology to reinforce existing community ties as well as establish new ones, namely social media based networks.

The research involved three phases of data collection. The first phase comprised an extensive review of existing political blogs in Malaysia, This analysis showed there are seven categories of political bloggers in Malaysia. Each has their own agenda and objectives for developing blogs. Varying from support for the existing political elite to opposition, to simple political analysis. The second phase of this research involved interviews with political blog writers in Malaysia, from both government and opposition parties. These interviews highlighted the information sharing, social networking, political agenda setting and political development within Malaysian politics that has resulted from blogging. Finally, Malaysian citizens in 5 states were surveyed to explore their knowledge about blogs and the effects of political blogs on their participation in politics. The analysis of the survey showed that four factors promoted citizens’ participation as bloggers: blogs can encourage participation in politics and elections; blogs are a medium for political information; blogs can increase awareness of political issues, and can act as a catalyst for national issues.
The research shows that the theoretical perspective of democracy and challenging discourse through adopting a medium of participation is extending the insights of Malaysian citizens about politics. Blogs are playing a role in changing the traditional political landscape and fostering social networks based on political activism, resulting in increasing participation. From this a modified theory of citizen communication mediation is proposed. These modifications incorporate the added value of Web 2.0 applications attracting more people to political interest and activism, and incorporate the development of the use of social networking in interactive civic messaging. Both, it is argued here, have contributed to increased participatory political activism in Malaysia.
PUBLICATIONS


Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 The Scope of the Research

This thesis is an exploratory study of the effects of political blogs on activism in Malaysia’s national politics. This thesis will explore the how citizens’ blogs are used in participation in political activities through the use of Web 2.0 technology in web blogs. The research focuses on social networks in blog activities among Malaysians as a platform for political activism, and in particular the impact of communication and exchange of information that brings them to participate in political activities is examined. It has been stated that increasing citizen participation in politics can benefit the country and strengthen democracy (Chambers, 2005). The thesis aims to understand how blogs encourage citizens to participate in political activities, and how they might strengthen their understanding of democracy (Kellner, 2005).

1.2 Research Objectives

The research objectives are:

1. To explore the effects of political blogs on citizens’ participation in Malaysia’s politics through the use of Web 2.0 technology; and

2. To investigate Malaysians’ social networks in blogs activities as a platform for political activism, particularly that give effect of communication and exchange of information that encourage them to participate in political activities.
In this research, a mixed method approach is used to gather data, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods. The research involves interviews and questionnaires to identify the effects of political blogs in Malaysia on citizens’ participation in politics. The research involves an extensive review and analysis of existing political web blogs to explore the issues involved, the categories of blog writers, the groups of blog writers and bloggers, and the applications in blogs and services which are available. Interviews were conducted with blog writers to understand how they influence citizens to participate in political activities in their blogs. In the third stage, the research uses a survey questionnaire given to citizens to explore their knowledge of web blogs and the effects of political blogs on their participation in politics.

1.3 Background of the Malaysian Political System and Political Development

Malaysia is a south-east Asian country bordered by Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore and Thailand (Figure 1.1). The total population of Malaysia is 27.5 million comprising of several ethnic groups: Malays (50.4%), Chinese (23.7%), Indians (7.1%), Indigenous Malaysians (11%) and others (7.8%) (CIA, The World Factbook, 2011). Malaysia is a federal constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy, gaining independence

![Figure 1.1: Map of Malaysia, from http://www.mymalaysiabooks.com/maps/map_of_malaysia.htm](http://www.mymalaysiabooks.com/maps/map_of_malaysia.htm)
from Great Britain on August 31st, 1957. Under the Constitution of Malaysia, the Yang Di Pertuan Agong (YDPA) is appointed king and serves as the Head of State (Lee, 2003; Jones, 1995). The position of YDPA is subject to the rules of the Malaysian Constitution and is rotated every five years by the Sultans of the nine states of Malaysia, Terengganu, Kelantan, Perlis Kedah, Perak, Johor, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang and Selangor.

The Conference of Rulers of the nine states of Peninsular Malaysia is responsible for electing one of its rulers to serve as king. The king is the leader of the Islamic faith in Malaysia but the constitutional crisis in 1983 involved a confrontation over royal powers between the Prime Minister and the sultans of the various states in the federation. This incident influenced a change in the constitutional system where the Prime Minister passed a constitutional rule giving the Prime Minister personal legal immunity (Milner, 1996). Although the YDPA is Head of State, he is obliged to act in accordance with government advice.

The Malaysia legal system is based on English Common Law inherited from the colonial period (Milne & Mauzy, 1978, p.230). The constitution gives the judiciary the independence and authority to pronounce on the constitutionality and legality of government statutes and regulations. The legal system in Malaysia consists of subordinate courts (Magistrates’ courts and Sessions courts) and superior courts. There is another distinctive court system called the Syariah court which deals with Muslims and Islamic matters.

Similarly, Malaysia’s parliamentary system follows the principles of the British Westminster tradition. Through the constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy, a Prime Minister and his political party run the federal government. Executive power is vested in the cabinet which is headed by the Prime Minister. Parliament has two houses, an assembly called the Dewan Rakyat and a Senate called
the *Dewan Negara*. The *Dewan Rakyat* functions as the main legislative leader by passing bills which are transmitted to the Senate and finally consented to by the YDPA. The *Dewan Negara* is supposed to provide continuity of deliberation in order to check the first chamber’s legislation, i.e. emanating from the *Dewan Rakyat*. Members of Parliament are elected in constituencies democratically every 5 years. The selection of the Prime Minister derives from the members of the *Dewan Rakyat*. The current practice is that the leader of the political party becomes the Prime Minister when they command a majority of seats in parliament.

According to the Malaysian Constitution, a political party that has won two-thirds of the majority of parliamentary seats in the *Dewan Rakyat* has a mandate to form a government. Consequently, the strength of a political party constitutes the basis for selecting a Prime Minister as head of state and members of parliament. The Prime Minister is normally elected by members of the *Dewan Rakyat* and serves as the head of the political party winning the majority of seats in a general election. Cabinet members are chosen from the members of parliament by the Prime Minister and they are formally appointed by the YDPA.

Currently the two major political alliances operating in Malaysia are: firstly, the BN or National Alliance, which is currently in government; and secondly, the PR or Peoples’ Alliance which serves as the opposition party. The BN is composed of peninsular Malaysian (West Malaysian) parties and East Malaysian parties. The BN comprises at least nine other political component parties. These multi-racial component political parties consist of Malays, Chinese, Indians, and a few other ethnic groups. The three main alliance parties are the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). The other component parties which are multi-ethnic parties and part of the BN, are the People’s Progressive Party (PPP) and Gerakan.
Since its establishment in 1946, BN has dominated the Malaysian government and has never lost an election. The largest party in the pro-government alliance in Malaysia is UMNO. Since independence in 1957, UMNO is, and has been, the predominant political party, maintaining power through a coalition of component parties (Moten, 2008). The coalition of exclusively racial, as well as inclusively multi-racial parties with representations from the peninsular and East Malaysia has been a factor in BN's electoral success. The ethnic population characteristics of East Malaysia are more varied and complex than in West Malaysia, and represented by numerous indigenous groups such as the Iban, Melanau, Bidayuh, Kadazan and Murut communities.

The coalition in the opposition PR alliance consists of three main parties - PAS, PKR and DAP. PAS is a Malay party with its principles based on upholding Islamic teaching, while the PKR is a Malay-based party formed after the dismissal of Anuar Ibrahim from the post of Deputy Prime Minister in 1999 (Heufers, 2002). On the other hand, the DAP is a democratic, liberal and multiethnic party that proclaims equal rights for every citizen.

1.4 Political Blogs in Malaysia

There is an increasing awareness of the positive impact of Information Technology (IT) on Malaysia’s economic growth and global competitiveness. The government has shown its commitment to accelerating Malaysia’s entry into the Information Age through the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) project introduced in early 1996 (Ramasamy et al., 2004). The objective of the MSC is to transform Malaysia into a regional and global leader in IT development and applications (Muhammad Rais & Nazariah, 2003). MSC is an important tool designed for transforming Malaysia into a knowledge-based economy.
The MSC implementation in Malaysia has brought positive results for ICT. Statistics provided by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) have shown that approximately 16 million Malaysians were Internet users in the first quarter of 2009 (MCMC, 2010). Internet penetration for 2010 showed further impressive growth of 64.6% (Internet World Statistics, 2011 (http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia/my.htm). The Internet and the development of social media have facilitated a wide and popular acceptance of blogs as form of communication. However, this deliberative policy of infusing technology into Malaysian society impacted in 2008 in ways the government had not anticipated.

Malaysia's General Election on March 8, 2008 witnessed the BN's worst electoral performance in its history. The result of this election, which some commentators called a “Political Tsunami”, shocked many local and international political observers (Lee, 2008; Wong, 2008). In this election, BN won 140 seats while the opposition managed to win 82 out of 222 parliamentary seats. This constituted a significant decline in the number of seats won by BN compared to previous elections (Table 1.1). The BN's percentage of votes fell in all states in comparison to its 2004 performance where it won 90 percent of all seats in parliament. The “political tsunami” which hit Malaysia was a sign of a revolution in politics through the use of social media, particularly blogs. Apart from the loss of a large number of seats in parliament, five highly urbanized states (Perak, Selangor, Kedah, Wilayah Persekutuan and Penang) fell to the PR.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Barisan Nasional</th>
<th>Opposition</th>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The BN's percentage of votes in 2008 general election fell in all states and marked a substantial reverse of its 2004 performance. The highest percentage of changing votes came from voters in the wealthier states or territories of Penang, Selangor and Kuala Lumpur which are highly urbanised constituencies (Khoo, 2008). Despite the growing number of voters recorded, the analysis showed a large number of voters voted in favour of the opposition parties. The 2008 general election result also pointed to an increased turnout of the Indian population (Thomas, 2009). The largest swing to the opposition was from among ethnic Indian and Chinese voters (Ong, 2008; Brown, 2008).

Among the main factors accounting for the BN loses in these five states is believed to be the extensive use of information sources from the Internet. The influence of political information posted on the Internet is believed to be one of the factors that contributed to the unprecedented results of the 2008 election (Maznah, 2008; Koh, 2008). In 2008, the opposition party alliance relied on the Internet as a new information tool, one that proved to be effective in politics in the United States (Brown, 2008). Pepinsky (2009) states that Malaysian voters may be more "sophisticated" now than ever before. The current regime’s hands-off view towards the Internet enabled online journalists to report on the BN in ways not possible in traditional media (Gan, 2002). One of the key elements in this new use of technology in the election was blogging. This thesis focuses on understanding political blogging in Malaysia in terms of what it involves and evaluating its impact.

Blogs are referred to as personal online journal webpages and commentaries with minimal editing or censorship. The content is generally presented in reverse chronological order with hyperlinks to another online source (Barger, 1997; Drezner & Farrell, 2008). Studies of personal blogs have likened them to the traditional diary (Herring et al., 2004; Nardi et al., 2004; Trammell et al., 2006) but in an online format.
The content in a blog is frequently modified in which dated entries are listed in reverse chronological sequence (Blood, 2002; Herring et al., 2004; Walker, 2005).

Blog content generally is made up of personal opinions of bloggers on issues that interest people. The information posted in blogs is written in an informal style that reflects the views and personality of a blogger (Mercado-Kierkegaard, 2006). Web 2.0 applications are used in blogs and they include attaching pictures, giving comments, chat roll, animations and audio videos. Blogs are considered to be a powerful tool of democratization because they are employed on a massive scale and enable communication and collaboration which goes beyond geographical barriers (Hinchcliffe, 2007). With the increased use of this medium for political information, blogs have moved away from being just simple diaries to being valuable sources of political commentary.

Blogs are considered to be a popular alternative to finding information on politics in Malaysia because electronic and print media is controlled by the government. It is claimed that the mainstream media in Malaysia are heavily controlled by coercive legislation as well as by ownership and control of the major publications (Loh, 1996). Government control of the mainstream media is seen as a major factor for the emergence of political blogs in Malaysia and why politically contentious bloggers are having a significant impact getting around censorship concerning issues that are being printed or broadcast (Smeltzer, 2008). People are moving to the Internet for political information because of their dissatisfaction with the information published in traditional media (Tolberg & McNeal, 2003). In effect, blog readers use blogs as an alternative to traditional media as sources for political information (Graph, 2006).

Blogs are used by citizens to obtain political information rather than through traditional media because campaign messages are conveyed with less editorial intervention. Blogs have distinctive features, such as fast delivery, low cost and interactive content.
and are able to reach out to more readers compared to the coverage achieved by traditional media (Bimber & Davis, 2003; Kamarck, 1999). Blogs are also efficient because they offer a virtual space that is unlimited in the amount of commentary it can carry.

It is well-known to Malaysian citizens that the country’s mainstream media are owned directly or indirectly by entities linked to the BN. For example, media conglomerate, Media Prima, with the government as a major stakeholder, controls stakes in the major newspaper, The New Straits Times, and other newspapers such as Berita Harian, Harian Metro, and the television stations TV3, 8TV, NTV, TV9; several more radio stations are also government-linked (Zaharom, 2002). During elections, the opposition parties are not given opportunities to use paid advertisements for their political campaigns (Mustafa et al., 2003).

Malaysia’s newspaper reporting is not uniform and they usually abstain from reporting the activities of the political opposition (Heufers, 2002). Yet, the Malaysian Federal Constitution states that freedom of speech and expression is enshrined in Part II of Article (10)1. Nonetheless, this particular statutory Article limits the freedom of speech, assembly and association, by allowing the Parliament to impose restrictions when the action is inconsistent with the interests of national security and concerns of other countries, or with public order or morality, or to protect the privileges of Parliament or of any Legislative Assembly, or to provide against contempt of court, defamation or incitement to any offence (Federal Constitution, 1999).

In 2010, Malaysia was ranked 141 in the world in relation to lack of media freedom by the Press Freedom Index (Reporters without Borders, 2010). This indicator reflects the extent of violations against press freedom globally, and how much the authorities respect and preserve media freedom. At the same time, the legal restrictions imposed by Malaysia’s government to encumber the freedom and autonomy of media such as
the Printing Presses and Publication Act (PPPA) 1984, the Official Secrets Act 1972 (OSA) and the Sedition Act 1948 are implemented in order to control the information published by the mass media. The controversial powers available to the government under existing laws such as the Sedition Act, the OSA, and the Internal Security Act (ISA) are also applicable to the publication of articles in blogs (see the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) website at http://www.cmc.gov.my/index.php?c=public&v=art_view&art_id=30).

The traditional media such as newspapers come under tight restrictions from legislation and therefore there is a lack of critical commentary and political analysis (Felker, 2000; McIntyre, 2006). The publications and newspaper companies are bound by the Printing Presses and Publication Act (1984) which requires an annual permit review by the Ministry of Home Affairs (Heufers, 2002). For example, the permit for Harakah which is the PAS-affiliated periodical, was temporarily suspended in 1991 and 2000 for the political reports that violated publication rules (Heufers, 2002). Government restrictions on political material have made Malaysians increasingly disappointed with the lack of critical commentary and political analysis. Thus, citizens are continually turned to alternative sources for critical political information (Loh & Anuar, 1996). In the 2008 general election, blogs are considered to have played a significant role in the eventual outcome. As already mentioned in Chapter 1.4.

1.5 The rationale/significance of this study

The emergence of web blogs in Malaysia then has brought about a new communications medium through which individuals can develop an individualized voice and personal expression during elections. In the past, brochures, newsletters, banners and posters from political parties were used. As the trend of social media as a source for political information rose, it has become a real and not just potential platform for garnering political support and people’s participation. In recent years, citizens are
referring to alternative sources for information through Facebook pages, YouTube Channels, Twitter accounts, and political blogs. Therefore, blogging has the potential to change the way many individuals receive and disseminate information and provide insights, and opinions every day.

Web 2.0 technologies used in blogs enable the emergence of social networks amongst bloggers. Web 2.0 applications through blogs have been used for political campaigns since the US Presidential Election in 2004 (Cone, 2004; Rainie & Horrigan, 2007). In the 2008 US presidential election, Democrat candidate Barack Obama used blogs to reach out to his supporters. His political campaign strategy was also mediated through dedicated YouTube Channels where speeches and videos were uploaded. The effects of using Web 2.0 technology led to millions of viewers being generated. With the increased use of this medium for political information in making electoral decisions, blogs have moved away from being simple diaries to becoming valuable sources of political commentary (Lynch, 2007; Permutter, 2008, p.110).

A blog is considered as an influential source for news and information (Drezner & Farrell, 2004; Dutton & Shepherd, 2006; Pew Internet & American Life, 2005; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005). Blogs emerged as a powerful medium in many countries as an effective means of political communication and connecting with the electorate (Coleman, 2005; Jackson, 2008; Ferguson & Griffiths, 2006; Mercado-Kierkegaard, 2006; Chadwick, 2011). U.K. political blogging began to integrate into an important element of the emerging “political information process” involving new media (Chadwick, 2011). In achieving the process, British newspapers tend to have partisan ties with specific political parties in their editorial positions and readership bases (Chalaby, 1996).

The research asserts that political systems and journalism cultures in the United States provide more fertile ground for political blogging in other countries (Hyun, 2012).
Among the earlier studies of political blogs were ones conducted on the blogging activities in US politics and presidential elections (Kahn & Keller, 2004; Cone, 2004; Meraz, 2006; Tremmell et al., 2006; Rainie & Horrigan, 2007). Blogs in US were used in the 2004 presidential elections for political campaigns and became common tools for politicians to communicate with citizens (Lawson-Borders & Kirk, 2005; Trammell, 2007).

Furthermore, these researchers also indicate the potentially important roles of US political blogging in networked media spheres that give effects to the political situation (Bruns, 2007; Bahnisch, 2006) and political blogging is claimed to be a new form of citizen journalism challenging the “corrupted” mainstream media (Gillmor, 2004). For example in the 2008 US presidential election, Democrat candidate Barack Obama used blogs to reach out to his supporters. His political campaign strategy was also mediated through dedicated YouTube Channels where speeches and videos were uploaded. Web 2.0 technologies used in blogs enable the emergence of social networks amongst bloggers. Discourse about political blogs is largely centred in the United States that indicate the relative prominence of blogging community (Hyun, 2012).

According to Hindman (2008), the overall size of the US political public sphere was negligible and the leading voices in the blogosphere were as elite as those of the most exclusive editorial pages of the country’s newspapers. The U.S. political bloggers challenge dominance by the mainstream news media in the agenda-setting process (Meraz, 2011). Web 2.0 applications through blogs have been used for political campaigns since the US Presidential Election in 2004 (Cone, 2004; Rainie & Horrigan, 2007). The effects of using Web 2.0 technology led to millions of viewers being generated. With the increased use of this medium for political information in making electoral decisions, blogs have moved away from being simple diaries to becoming valuable sources of political commentary (Lynch, 2007; Permutter, 2008, p.110). This
research builds on those previous studies looking at the impacts of blogs in Malaysia politics, and enabling others to access similarities and differences with the US.

A few examples have emerged from Malaysia’s national neighbours concerning the impact on governments of using a blog to disseminate political information. For example Singapore has a high level of Internet usage and its government has tightened the law, especially on blogs’ owners, who’s articles criticize the government. The case of Gopalan Nair, who has been sentenced to prison for his blog writing (“Blogger gets 3 month”, 2008), was among the actions taken by the Singaporean government to take control of what was being published, especially in the form of political blogs. However, the Constitution and Election laws in Singapore have now been amended to permit political campaigns being carried out through cyberspace by media using podcasts, videos, blogs and short messaging services.

Political parties in Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand have been using social media for months during the recent political campaigns including blogs and websites to promote their platforms and candidates (AFP, 21 April 2011). In the Singapore General Election 2011, the ruling People’s Action Party (PAP) won with 60 percent of the vote after a hard-fought parliamentary campaign, in which opposition parties made their strongest inroads since Singapore’s independence in 1965 (The New York Times online, 7th. May 2011). However, since the Singapore mainstream media is highly regulated by the government, the news coverage may not be as balanced in terms of covering the opposition parties.

In the case of Malaysia’s current political environment, the use of technology has changed the way people discuss and interpret politics. Blogs are been used by political supporters as a channel for political activism and as a means to obtain up-to-date information on political issues. At the same time, the online news sites are able to publicize information on politics such as to rally supporters for a political programme,
which is not available in the mainstream media (Chin, 2003; Loo, 2003). Analysis shows that the Internet offers the most powerful communications medium yet for maximising information flows and thereby the competition of interests. It enables the efficient promotion of political options and provides individuals with access to a huge amount of up-to-date information by which people make their choices (Dahlberg, 2001). This significant use of the Internet by citizens has contributed to a new way of thinking about politics and has helped to resolve the issues associated with a lack of media freedom.

The controversial and unexpected outcome of the 2008 election in Malaysia highlighted important changes in Malaysian politics, where five states were won by the opposition parties. The Internet emerged as a key factor that contributed to the victory of the opposition party in Perak, Kedah, Penang, Selangor and Wilayah Persekutuan (Maznah, 2008). This result witnessed the smallest number of seats ever won by BN in a general election. This was also the year where the three opposition parties, the PKR (People's Justice Party), PAS (Pan Malaysian Islamic Party) and the DAP (Democratic Action Party) officially campaigned as a coalition called the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) or People’s Pact.

Political analysts have suggested several possible factors that may explain this turnaround, one of them being the role of opposition bloggers (Tan & Zawawi, 2008). The emergence of blogs as a source of political information among the citizenry is said to have contributed to the downfall of BN in the general election. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore the effects of political blogs on citizens’ participation in Malaysia’s politics through the use of Web 2.0 technology. This research will investigate the social networks of blog activities among Malaysians as a platform of political activism, particularly the effect of communication and exchange of information on participation in political activities.
Earlier research conducted on blogs concentrated on blogging categories and its association with traditional journalism (Wall, 2005; MacDougal, 2005). Further studies were done on the impacts of traditional mass media over the use of blogs (Johnson & Kaye, 2004; Robinson, 2006; Rosen, 2005; Singer, 2005) and most studies on blogs were done in countries that have a free media. Among the earlier studies of political blogs were one conducted on the blogging activities in US politics and presidential elections (Kahn & Keller, 2004; Cone, 2004; Meraz, 2006; Tremmell et al., 2006; Rainie & Horrigan, 2007). However, the study of these themes in Asian countries is still in its infancy.

Amoretti (2007) stressed the lack of research exploring ICT as a strategic tool for improving representative democracy and promoting the democratization process in developing countries. In countries where the mainstream media are tightly controlled by the government, blogs are often the only reliable sources for information (Glaser, 2004; Pain, 2005). Although there is research on the effects of the Internet on political participation (Griffiths, 2004; Coleman, 2005), research is lacking on the impact of Web 2.0 applications in blogs, specifically concerning Malaysian citizens' involvement in the political process.

In contrast, Smeltzer (2008) argues that blogging activities have not caused citizens to become politically active in Malaysia. He argues that a wide range of politically-based blogs in Malaysia do exist but they were not set up to foment political change. For this reason, more research into the effects of political blogs on citizen participation on political activism in Malaysia is required. This study fills that gap in the current literature by exploring the effects of political blog on citizens' participation through the use of Web 2.0 applications.
The research questions to be addressed in this research are then:

1. Do political blogs affect citizens’ participation in Malaysia’s politics?

2. How do the social networks that emerge in blogs serve as a platform of political activism?

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 presents a review of the previous research done on blogs and politics and the use of social media in politics. In this chapter, the reviews from the research begin with definitions of blogs and Web 2.0 applications. Furthermore, the research that comprises studies on the political impact of the internet is reviewed to understand their effect on citizens’ engagement with politics. The studies indicate the increase in the number of blog readers who use blogs as a tool for communication on and information about politics. These activities of communication and exchange for information have a direct impact on political outcomes. In relation to this study, the researcher asserts that blogs have increased political knowledge leading to more political participation. From the review of this literature, the researcher identifies the gaps that are present in the study of political blogs and participation in political activism.

Chapter 3 explains the research methodology and methods used in data collection for this research. This study uses an exploratory and descriptive research approaches to meet the research objectives. Exploratory research is used to find out ‘what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light’ (Robson, 2002, p. 59), while descriptive research will then present a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship (Neuman, 2006). In this study, a mixed methods approach was used to explore the effects of political blogs on citizens’ participation in political activities.
The mixed method approach is a stronger design than a single method because the supplement component enhances the project’s validity by expanding one’s understanding or verifying the results from another perspective (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). This mixed method is used here to collect data and incorporates instruments of blogs content analysis, interviews with political bloggers and survey questionnaires.

The mixed methods research approach in this study uses exploratory sequential design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This is a two-phase sequential design that starts by qualitatively exploring a topic before building to a second quantitative phase. The preliminary data collection strategy begins with a blog content analysis of political blogs in Malaysia. The second data collection strategy involves interviews with fifteen prominent or well-known political blog writers in Malaysia, both from the government and opposition parties. The political bloggers involved in the interviews are politicians and the supporters of political parties who own or maintain blogs, to understand how their writing in blogs influences or is intended to influence citizens to participate in political activities. The third data collection strategy is developing survey questionnaires given to three hundred Malaysian citizens. The survey has been designed based on the information gathered from interviews with political bloggers.

Chapter 4 is an analysis of political blogs in Malaysia. In this study, an extensive review of political blogs was performed, analysing the issues raised in the blogs, the categories of blog writers, and the contents in blogs, and applications available on blogs. There were 168 political blogs in Malaysia from both pro-government and opposition parties that were analysed. The criteria used to select political blogs were blogs that obtained the highest number of blogger participants, the highest number of visitor hits, and the blogs that were accepted as the most informative in terms of political content (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005; Drezner & Farrell, 2004; Kurtz, 2003).
These blogs were developed by political groups and individuals, and had been established between 2007 and 2009. The review of political blogs has revealed the categories of blog content, the different types of blog writers and the content of their blogs. The information gathered from the blogs analysis is used to formulate questions for the next stage of analysis, i.e. interviewing certain political bloggers.

Chapter 5 presents an analysis of semi-structured interviews with fifteen political bloggers and blog managers in Malaysia. The respondents include political activists, politicians, a freelance journalist and supporters of political parties. The interviews were constructed on the findings of blog content analysis where the information is used to devise the interview questions. The interviews were conducted in order to better understand the work done by and experiences of political bloggers, and the Web 2.0 applications used to advance citizens’ participation in political activism through blogs. This chapter also explores the effects of political blog on citizens' participation in political activities in Malaysia. The information revealed in this stage was used to construct survey questions to citizens.

Chapter 6 presents an analysis of a survey of Malaysian citizens. The survey questionnaires have been designed based on the information gathered from interviews with political bloggers in the second stage of data collection. The results were gathered from the research variables to identify the effects of political blogs on citizens’ participation in political activities. At the same time, the questionnaire attempts to identify Malaysians’ social networks in blogs activities that serve as a platform of political activism, especially the effect of communication and exchange of information that encourage them to participate in political activities.

Chapter 7 discusses the research outcomes with reference to the effects of political blogs on citizens’ participation in Malaysian politics. The findings from this study are highlighted with supporting research studies. This chapter also proposes a modified
model of Citizen Communication Mediation as it major contribution to this field of study. This chapter then examines the limitations of the study and proposals for future research.
Chapter 2
Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

There is increasing literature on blogs as an influential source for news and information (Drezner & Farrell, 2004; Dutton & Shepherd, 2006; Pew Internet & American Life, 2005; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005). The use of blogs is also considered to be a powerful force for democratization because it enables communication and collaboration, which goes beyond geographical barriers on a massive scale (Hinchcliffe, 2007). This chapter discusses the literature concerning political blogs, starting with the definition of a blog and Web 2.0 applications. Next, how blogs can promote political participation, civic engagement and social networks are discussed. Later, theories and models of communication and civic participation are also discussed. As this research focuses on Malaysian political blogs, the literature concerning certain factors and issues relevant to Malaysia are also addressed.

2.2 Definition and concept of a Blog and Web 2.0 Applications

An early definition in the study of blogs defined a blog as a means to edit one’s weblog or post to one’s weblog (Merholz, 1999). Another definition referred to blogs as a traditional diary in which the author records the events that happen in their daily life and keep it in blogs as their personal dairy where it can be viewed by the blogs’ readers (Herring et al., 2004; Nardi et al., 2004; Papacharissi, 2004; Trammell et al., 2006). Blogs, in their original form, tended to be associated with individuals who used sites to offer personal reflections on events or issues (Gunter, 2009). A blog also refers to an online personal journal, which is kept by the author in reverse chronological diary form (Barger, 2007; Herring et al., 2004) through which information is updated dynamically.
by the person in charge of the blog, or by others who participate in it (Bausch et al., 2002; Weil, 2003).

Another definition referred to blogs as online interactive journals that facilitate information exchange between users, or ‘bloggers’ (Thompson, 2003). Blogging is sometimes viewed as a new grassroots form of journalism and a way to shape democracy outside the mass media and conventional party politics (Gillmore, 2003). Drezner & Farrell (2008) defined a blog as a web page with minimal to no external editing, providing an online commentary, periodically updated and presented in reverse chronological order, with hyperlinks to other online sources. It is this definition that is used here.

### 2.2.1 Features of Blogs

The scholars in the study of blogs have discussed some of their important features. The writers or developers of blogs are called ‘bloggers’ and their activities in blogs are labelled as the ‘blogosphere’, which includes opinions, experiences, facts and questions (Coleman, 2004). Previous research found that the features that attracted bloggers and readers to the blogs are the links to other blogs, webpages, and forums (Bar-Ilan, 2005; Coleman, 2004; Drezner and Farrell, 2004; Johnson and Kaye, 2004; Singer, 2005; Thompson, 2003). The research added that the content of a blog depends on its writer, and whether they acted as news aggregators, or posted their personal diaries or used their blog as a political soapbox (Ekdale et al., 2010).

Nardi et al. (2004) and Huang et al. (2007) identified five motivational factors for blogging: to seek information, to provide commentary, to participate in community forums, to document daily life, and to express oneself. Their research found that bloggers were motivated to blog in order ‘to provide an alternative perspective to the mainstream media’, with day-to-day interactions, and the blogosphere provided them
with a channel for disseminating information and expressing political opinions (Ekdale et al., 2010).

Blog writers or bloggers have also been described as political bloggers or political activists (Klam 2004; Trippi 2004; Bowers and Stoller 2005). Political bloggers and blog readers service the blog by disseminating information, organizing events, and even publishing campaign literature. Bloggers also act as connectors or extraordinary political citizens who bring in hundreds of other supporters into a candidate’s camp (Trippi 2004). According to McKenna and Pole (2008), included among the activities of political bloggers are informing readers, checking the media, and engaging in political advocacy. In their study, the findings show that most bloggers inform readers about articles in the media or draw attention to key posts on other blogs. Most bloggers write posts that detect errors or biases in the media. Bloggers use their blogs to pursue activities and their ideology affects the content and purpose of their blog posts.

Another form of political activism engaged in by bloggers includes urging people to attend local rallies, for example, the ‘Bersih’ rallies in Malaysia were mobilized with the use of the Internet and several bloggers went on to win seats in parliament (Ulicny, et al., 2010).

2.2.2 Web 2.0

The use of Web 2.0 among Internet users facilitates creativity, information sharing and collaboration. An early definition was given by O’Reilly (2004), who described it as the idea of mutually maximizing collective intelligence and added value for each participant by dynamic information sharing and creation. McNutt (2008) defined Web 2.0 as incorporating the Internet platform, user-generated content and with an emphasis on social networking.
According to McAfee (2006), Web 2.0 websites include some of the following features and techniques:

i. Search:
   - Finding information through a keyword search.

ii. Links:
   - Connects information together into a meaningful information ecosystem using the model of the web, and provides low-barrier social tools.

iii. Authoring:
   - The ability to create and update content leads to the collaborative work of many rather than just a few web authors. In wikis, users may extend, undo and redo each other's work. In blogs, posts and the comments of individuals build up over time.

iv. Tags:
   - The categorization of content by users adding tags referred to as folksonomies to facilitate searching without dependence on pre-made categories.

v. Extensions:
   - Software that makes the web an application platform as well as a document server.

vi. Signals:
   - The use of syndication technology, such as RSS to notify users of content changes.

Web 2.0 is also referred to as a new ‘wave’ of Internet based applications that enable greater interaction between the user and the application through user generated content, such as photographs, video, and text comments, forming a media rich mosaic (Komito & Bates, 2009). Web 2.0 is considered as a “platform” that consists of principles and practices that tie together varying sources (O'Reilly, 2005). Blogs use Web 2.0 applications that allow users and writers to communicate in social media.
Social networks like MySpace and YouTube offer a selection of social media tools. According to Lai and Turban (2008), social media refers to the online platforms and tools that people use to share opinions and experiences including photos, videos, music, insights, and perceptions with each other. Online social networks are websites where people create their own virtual space (or home page), on which they post pictures, write blogs, share ideas, and link to other web locations that they find interesting (Wikipedia, 2008).

The Web 2.0 applications used in political blogs provide space for the dissemination and sharing of political information as the users producing and interacting with political information. The studies agree that the characteristics of Web 2.0 social groups can promote democratic participation (O’Reilly 2005; Preece, 2001; Preece & Maloney-Krichmar, 2005; Boyd 2006) as people can voice their opinions (Anderson, 2006). Thus, Web 2.0 provides applications that enable more interaction and participation among users (Carty, 2008; Harrison & Barthel, 2009).

2.3 Political Blogs

Blogs have been used in many countries as sources of information in political campaigns and information. Blogs have emerged as a powerful medium in many countries as an effective means of connecting with the electorate (Coleman, 2005; Jackson, 2008; Ferguson & Griffiths, 2006; Mercado-Kierkegaard, 2006). In the 2004 US presidential election, blogs were used for political campaigns and became common tools for politicians to communicate with citizens (Lawson-Borders & Kirk, 2005), with an emphasis on young voters (Trammell, 2007). After the terrorist attacks in the US on 11th September 2001, the first politically oriented blogs emerged as an alternative source of information.
People turned to blogs to express their feelings and locate information that was not available in the mainstream media (Blood, 2002; Drezner and Farrell, 2004; Scott, 2004). Later, the political bloggers in the US raised awareness concerning American domestic and foreign policy issues, and political elites started to adopt bloggers in their political campaigns (Kerbel and Bloom, 2005; Wallsten, 2005). For example, in the 2008 US election political blogs showed their importance as social networking tools.

Blogs have played a major role in determining how Malaysians choose their candidates (Tang, 2009; Lee, 2008: 25). Their impact was commented on in the daily newspapers immediately after the latest election in Malaysia by several government leaders who urged government ministers to have their own blogs as well. This was because the number of government party blogs was far behind that of the opposition party (Tan & Ibrahim, 2008). Online political information use and political participation have recently seen a potential growth in popularity and diversity (Pew, 2010). At the same time, the control from government and media companies on information posted (Bagdikian, 2004; McChesney, 2004; Simmons, 2010) have made citizens choose blogs for political information (Smith, 2011). In relation to this study, political blogs in Malaysia have the potential as an alternative sources for political information (Graph, 2006, Tang, 2009), due to tight control of mainstream media by the government (Smeltzer, 2008; Tang, 2009).

Blogs in Malaysia have been used as powerful weapons via cyberspace to influence readers by spreading news and information. The power of blogs has a big impact on the political situation in a developing country like Malaysia (Tang, 2009). For example, the 2008 general election was the worst ever showing by Barisan Nasional (BN) since 1969 (Beng et al., 2008), and the Internet was a significant contributor to the shift among the electorate in favour of the opposition (New Straits Times, 2008; Tang, 2008; Sani & Zengeni, 2010). During the post-mortem of the polls, UMNO admitted that they underestimated the power of the Internet. They admitted they had lost the media war
Information from alternative media like blogs influenced the readers and had both a positive and negative effect on the political situation in Malaysia.

The power of blogs, it is argued, can worsen the political situation in Malaysia if politicians or authors manipulate rumours and information for their own political issues or agenda (Utusan Online, 2007). As already mentioned in Chapter 1.4, political blogs in Malaysia, such as Malaysia-Today, play such an important role in exposing high-level maladministration and corruption that the bloggers are considered more trustworthy than newspapers (Chin, 2011).

Blogs in Malaysia have become a popular media for democratic discourse due to the government's strict stand and control on printed media and publications. Therefore, the Internet has become a popular avenue to channel dissenting views. As the Internet grows to become a powerful and influential medium in Malaysia, it has also become a medium to channel hatred and lies against politicians and the government of the day. Malaysia's opposition parties were up against a hostile mainstream media and they went online and effectively resorted to blogs, online news portals and YouTube to dodge a virtual blackout on mainstream media (Stewart, 2008, Tarrant, 2008).

In order to prevent this activity, the Government started to take stern action against bloggers through the use of existing law. After the 12th general election, the Government has been quite concerned about the misuse of the Internet for political information. There are a multitude of laws in Malaysia that have the effect of regulating speech (especially political speech), which have been used against bloggers who have been the subject of legal actions for the information they have posted in their blogs (Tang, 2009; Azmi, 2010). For example, Section 211 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 in Malaysia states: 'No content applications service provider, or other person using a content applications service, shall provide content which is
indecent, obscene, false, menacing, or offensive in character with intent to annoy, abuse, threaten or harass any person' (Communications and Multimedia Act, 1998).

In Malaysia, the usability of blogs has grown as a medium for political information; it has deliberative potential to influence citizens to participate in political activities. Malaysia is a country that has recently been increasing its exploration in the use of blogs as a way to influence citizens in political participation. This is because the mainstream media in Malaysia are far too controlled for politically contentious bloggers to have a significant impact on what issues are printed or broadcast (Smeltzer, 2008; Tang, 2009; Liow, 2012; Abbott, 2012). Therefore, blog readers use blogs as an alternative to traditional media as sources for political information (Graph, 2006, Tang, 2009; Diamond, 2010; Campus, 2012; Holt et al., 2013).

In recent years it has gained impetus as the leading form of alternative media available for the public to voice dissent and criticism against the Malaysian Government. One example of the use of political blogs was the successful organisation of a pro-democracy rally, 2007 Bersih Rally, which managed to gather over 40,000 participants although it was declared illegal by the ruling government (Rhafizuan, 2008: Sani, 2011).

2.3.1 Blogs and Political Participation

This study investigates political blogs, as little has been written concerning politics and blogs specifically (McKenna and Pole, 2008). More studies have been conducted in respect of the technology and literature concerning information technology and politics (Browning 1996; Bennett and Fielding 1999; Davis 1999; Barber 1998; Davis et al. 2002; Bimber 2003; Pole 2005; West 2005). Blogs are viewed as phenomenological social networks of democratic participation (Chambers, 2005; Steger & Williams, 2011; Towner & Dulio, 2011; Zhang et al., 2010; McKenna, L. and A. Pole, 2004; Verba,
Schlozman and Brady 1995, Shah et al., 2002; McLeod et al., 1999; Scheufele et al., 2003;) where people create what the people want and need on an equitable basis. In this study, the researcher intends to examine political blogs, which have affected Malaysians in choosing representatives in general elections (Tang, 2009; Lee, 2008: 25).

Studies have found that the Internet is an important democratizing mechanism that can lead to increased participation (McKenna, L. and A. Pole, 2004; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995, Shah et al., 2002; McLeod et al., 1999, Scheufele et al., 2003), civic engagement and trust (Jennings and Zeitner, 2003; Shah et al., 2005). The Internet has the potential to influence citizens’ participatory levels both online and offline (Livingstone, Bober, & Helsper, 2005; Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001; Wellman et al., 2001; Yamamoto, 2006) and promote greater political talk and political participation (Gil De Zúñiga, et al., 2010; Shah et al., 2005, 2007). The Internet provides opportunities to readers with interaction (Kaye, 2005) and a wide view of political issues, thus extending the public sphere (Boulianne, 2009; Dahlberg, 2007).

Researchers have emphasised the important roles of news media use and political discussion in relation to civic and political participation (McLeod et al., 1996; Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001). The scholars have emphasised that internet and personal networks are transformed into a source of political influence to citizens (Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Zuckerman, 2005). For information on politics, citizens obtain important political information through the process of social communication (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1995:23). Consequently, the study shows that the more a person collects media information the more they talks about politics (Campus et al., 2010). Thus, Shah et al., (2005) affirmed that online news consumption leads to increase face-to-face political talk, ultimately bring in public participation. Obviously, with the emergent of electronic discussion networks as tools communication like political blogs, has contributed to
political activism (Nah et al., 2006). Therefore, this study is done to explore the effects of communications and interactions in political blogs that effect political participation.

Studies show that news media use affects participation through an increase in political knowledge (McLeod et al., 1999; Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002; Eveland, Hayes, Shah, & Kwak, 2005). As a result of increased news consumption, political knowledge levels increase and political knowledge increase leads to political efficiency, and, consequently, political participation (McLeod et al., 1999, Scheufele et al., 2003). According to Kellner (2005), “the viability of democracy depends on citizens seeking out crucial information, having the ability to access and appraise it, and to engage in public conversation about issues of importance” (p.305).

Political theorists have described political participation as people talking and acting in the public realm with the aim of coming to agreement about community affairs (McKenna, L. and A. Pole (2004). There are four dimensions of political participation: voting, campaign activity, contacting officials and collective activities (Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba Schlozman & Brandy, 1995). Democratic participation requires that the voices of citizens in politics be clear, loud and equal: clear so that public officials know what citizens want and need, loud so that officials have an incentive to pay attention to what they hear and equal so that the democratic ideal of equal responsiveness to the preferences and interests of all is not violated (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995, p. 509). The findings from past research suggest that weblogs play a positive role in furthering participation and strengthening democracy and that writing a weblog is a new form of political participation.

Political blogs are used as a public forum for discussing the community, candidates, policy and voting. Another view is that political blogs are not about political participation but are merely online ‘soapboxes’ for people’s political expression. Political blogs offer the same structure like other blogs and have a space for a blogger to post articles,
comments, create interactivity between the readers and bloggers thus promoting social networks among them (Rhafizuan, 2008).

The studies in political research reveal that news media consumption and interpersonal political discussions have contributed to citizens' participation (McLeod et al., 1996; Shah, McLeod & Yoon, 2001). Therefore, the use of blogs has become increasingly important as a communication channel among citizens to get information about politics. Furthermore, there are studies that explain that blogs are associated with increased political discussion, a sense of community and political action (Kerbel and Bloom, 2005; Meraz, 2007). Indeed, the political discussions with family and friends have been associated with encouraging participation in political activities (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995; Kim, Wyatt, & Katz, 1999; Pan, Shen, Paek, & Sun, 2006). Consequently, political discussion raises awareness about collective problems, fosters deliberation, highlights opportunities for involvement, and encourages engagement in public (Walsh, 2004).

According to Haas (2005) political blogs are among the most read types of blogs. The reading of political blogs enhances the readers' political participation (Johnson & Kaye, 2004; McLeod et al., 1999; Kim et al., 1999) and there is evidence of such discussion having a direct impact on political participation. As a result of increased news consumption, political knowledge levels increase and political knowledge increases lead to political efficiency, and, consequently, political participation (McLeod et al., 1999; Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002; Scheufele et al., 2003). For politicians, it allows them an open forum to put forth their ideas and agendas (Bichard, 2006) and to communicate with citizens (Lawson-Borders and Kirk, 2005).

Blogs are considered to be a powerful democratization force because they enable communication and collaboration on a massive scale, which goes beyond geographical barriers (Hinchcliffe, 2007). According to Pew Internet & American Life (2005), a
growing number of people cite blogs and other online content-delivery sources (e.g., sites offering RSS) as a source for political news and information. Weblogs can encourage participation (Preece, 2001; Preece & Maloney-Krichmar, 2005) in online communities as people can voice their opinions (Anderson, 2006). Even though the increased use of blogs may decrease in newspaper readership, the study shows it does in fact lead to a decline in political participation (Lee & Wei, 2008).

In other ways it can also encourage people who share the same interests to participate and communicate in the community. There have been studies showing that blogs may have a direct effect on political outcomes (Drezner & Farrel, 2007). According to Ridings and Gefen (2004) the reason for people participating in online communities is to exchange and access information that interests them. The more the participants, the more meaningful and vibrant the discussion might seem to be. As the study of Ridings and Geffen (2004) pointed out, people often seek out a discussion board as a means of acquiring some expert advice or information on a particular subject area.

**2.3.2 Blogs as alternative medium for political Information**

The rise of news media on the Internet through blogs provides an alternative source for discussion, encouraging political talk and exchanging information about politics (Mutz, 2002; Mutz & Martin, 2001). Alternative media forms have existed in various forms alongside mainstream journalism for centuries (Downing, 2001). In addition, blogs represent an alternative source of information and political action organization, resulting in increased political engagement (Gil De Zuniga et al., 2009). Much of the research on Internet-based political discussion has focused on the medium’s potential to provide a democracy-enriching communication platform without restrictions of time and space (Coleman and Gøtze, 2001; Dahlberg, 2001; Dahlgren, 2005). In addition, research has revealed that the introduction of blogs is improving the freedom of the press (Gillmor, 2004; Kurtz, 2003) whereby blogging has provided substantial modes
Blogs have been identified as a medium for the people to get information (Banning & Sweetser, 2007). Studies show that blogs are used as a medium of increased personalization and thereby potential as an influential medium in politics (Bahnsch, 2006; Mayfield, 2004; Trammell, 2006). Blogs have an important role in contributing to mainstream media coverage of political events (Drezner & Farrell, 2008). Blogs are said to be an influential source for news and information (Drezner & Farrell, 2004; Dutton & Shepherd, 2006; Pew Internet and American Life, 2005; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005; Nachison, 2008) where bloggers can publish any issue or opinion in their blogs and have no restriction to any topic.

Blogging has created a fresh channel of communication through which people can obtain news and political information (Gunter, 2009). The dialogue in the online community influences participation (Thorson et al., 2006). It is also the place for people to exchange ideas and voice any comments on the issues discussed and stimulate critical thinking (Oravec, 2003). Research shows that interactive elements, including online chats, blogs, surveys and polls, are changing the way people consume news and information (Shiver, 2006; Singer, 2006; Kunkel, 2006; Lin & Jeffres, 2001).

The previous studies have shown that political blogs are among the most visited blogs by readers (Haas, 2005; John & Kaye, 2004). Active blog users are assumed to be more inclined to participate online (Hindman, 2007; Meijer, Burger, & Ebbers, 2009). The readers of the Internet are also able to get information on politics through the reading of political blogs (Rainie and Horrigan, 2007). Another study also found that bloggers could serve the public as informants, investigators, collators and compilers, and revisers and extenders of political information" (Perlmutter, 2008, p.110). The studies by scholars explain that among the main activities performed by political
bloggers are informing readers, checking the media and engaging in political support (McKenna & Pole, 2008). McKenna and Pole (2008) also indicate that 90 per cent of bloggers use their blogs to perform activist activities, such as encouraging their readers to contact elected officials or to attend rallies.

Other research claimed that the high possibility of citizens discussing online depends on more people seeking information from blogs (Gil De Zúñiga, et al., 2009). Blogs therefore affect political debate by affecting the content of media reportage and commentary about politics. In addition, blogs can create a menu of interpretive frames for the media to appropriate (Farrell and Drezner, 2008).

The use of blogs in Malaysia has helped to strengthen the democratization process and public deliberation. Blogs open the space for the people to participate in the exchange of ideas brought by the social media. Through the social media, people responded positively to the government’s policy via commenting on the Internet. Therefore, social media has become one of the main mediums for the citizens to voice and express their opinions (Sani & Zengeni, 2010). The use of blogs in Malaysia has helped to strengthen the democratization process and public deliberation. Blogs open the space for the people to participate in the exchange of ideas brought by the social media. Citizens who actively participated in Web 2.0 technologies have more potential to promote civic engagement (Mergel et al., 2009). Through the social media, people respond positively to the government’s policy via commenting on the Internet.

### 2.3.3 Blogs provide updated information

In a study of blog credibility, Johnson and Kaye (2004) reported that blog readers perceive blogs as a more credible source of news than any other medium, including online and offline forms of newspaper, television and radio news. Two reasons that help explain the perceived high credibility of blogs are that they often cover issues with
greater depth than traditional media and they are able to present complex issues in a manner that is relevant and understandable to their audiences (Johnson and Kaye, 2004; Rogers, 2005). In addition, some readers perceive blogs as more authentic than mainstream media.

Blogs have credibility to be a provider for political information because it covers issues with greater depth than traditional media. In addition blogs are able to present complex issues that are relevant and understandable to readers (Johnson & Kaye, 2004; Rogers, 2005). Researchers have confirmed weblogs has been considered as important to few countries in delivering political information and campaigns (Smith, 2009; Ward & Gibson, 2003; Anstead & Chadwick, 2008; Gibson & McAllister, 2006; Schweitzer, 2005). In the France 2007 presidential election, the use of Web 2.0 applications has brought changes in political communication (Serfaty, 2010; Lilleker, 2011).

During the 2004 US presidential election, blogs and social networking portal were widely used by the candidates (Hindman, 2008; Trippi, 2004), and has gained popularity in the 2006 midterm election (Gueorguieva, 2008). Later in US Presidential election 2008, information on the Internet through blogs was the main sources of political information for citizens (Pew Research Center, 2008, 2009). Web 2.0 applications have also played an important role in the 2010 midterm elections (Williams & Gulati, 2011). In fact blogs also have been widely used by the US presidents to send information to voters (Williams & Tedesco, 2006; Clayton, 2010). Among the reasons citizens refuse to use traditional media for political information is because it has not specifically focused on political information gathering (Ancu & Cozma, 2009; Bichard, 2006).

Blog posts are a form of narrative that reflects a blogger’s own perspective and judgment on an issue, leaving the interpretation and evaluation to readers (Baumer et
al., 2008). Most people who closely follow both political blogs and traditional news media tend to believe that the content in blogs is more accurate (Richard, 2009) and serves in exchanging up-to-date information (Abbott, 2004). These studies also found that blog readers still get most of their news from regular news sources, but they suspect habitual bias. People also have a tendency to follow political blogs that agree with their personal opinions.

2.3.4 Blogs and Web 2.0 Applications

The Web 2.0 applications used in blogs are interactive for users. Blogs provide powerful online expression (Carver, 2003; Oravec, 2002) where the applications used in blogs, such as online chat and comments provide support for communicating political views (Price & Cappella, 2002). According to Thorson et al. (2006), the content feature leads to increased participation. With the applications uses, blogs are viewed as phenomenological social networks of democratic participation (Chambers 2005) where people create what the people want and need, on an unbiased basis. Blogs are useful for politicians as they provide an open forum to voice their ideas and agendas (Bichard, 2006). The content features in Web 2.0 have the potential to lead to political participation (Thorson et al., 2006; Osimo, 2008). As such, the responses in online news forums may serve both to frame the issues of the day and to enhance civic engagement.

One of the applications in blogs is online forums. The use of the social language in online communities through online forums can encourage participation (Preece, 2001). Previous research has conceded that online forums can foster greater civic deliberation that benefits the democratic process (Dahlgren, 2005; Delli Carpini, Cook & Jacobs, 2004; Nichols et al., 2006).
The studies show that the comments section is an important application in blogs, where post readers can leave messages and give opinion on issues (Mishne & Glance, 2006; Trammell and Williams, 2004; Herring et al., 2004). According to Kwak et al. (2005), who defined integrative discussion as “the extent to which individuals bring information they have learned from the media into political discussion” is positively related to political engagement. Consequently, the studies show that communication that occurs online does not differ from face-to-face discussions in its participatory influence and effectiveness (Castells, 2007; Kerbel & Bloom, 2005; Shah et al., 2005; Trammell & Kaid, 2005).

One of the attractions of blogs is that pictures are attached, which explain the issues. According to Beers (2006: 115), the online news sources are forums where anyone can post stories or pictures or discuss what others have posted; thus bias is not located in any conscious editorial decision making authority. Another application used by readers is online polls. A study by Kent, Harrison and Taylor (2006) shows that online polls give people a sense that they are participating in the democratic process.

Giving comments in blogs is another application provided for blog readers. Commenting in blogs is a form of online communication that is more conducive to democratic deliberation than is linking (Koop, R. and H. J. Jansen, 2009). By visiting and commenting on other blogs, bloggers initiate a process of discussion that is oftentimes more intimate and responsive than simply linking to one another. Furthermore, by allowing comments on their blogs, bloggers also invite readers who are not bloggers to participate in their online discussions. The studies by Thorson et al. (2006), and Sillence and Baber (2004) also discovered that web-based community members would often make use of email, telephones or written comments to keep in touch. The medium used in communications in the online environment has led to increased participation.
Weblog-based knowledge communities can also form as bloggers link to blogs with similar themes and provide critical commentary (Oravec, 2003). According to Sundar et al. (2003), hyperlinks on a political website lead to more positive impressions of a political candidate and positively affect the perceptions of a website. Hyperlinking also facilitates the formation of networks in the blogosphere (Perlmutter, 2008, p.10). Kaye (2005) found that people visit blogs that focus on specific topics of interest and interaction. The user-generated content in blogs through Web 2.0 technologies brings the Web closer to an ideal personal, democratic, and do-it-yourself communications medium (Rheingold 2003). As a result, they form online communities comprising people who share similar interests.

In short, research on political blogs focus on the effects of participation. However, there is a lack of research in the same area regarding the applications of Web 2.0 in blogs. Therefore, this study will serve to fill the gaps in the current literature by exploring the effects of political blogs on citizens’ participation through the use of applications in Web 2.0.

2.3.5 The Usability of Blogs

Previous research has shown that the reasons for citizens using blogs are that they cheap and easy to create and maintain (Dearstyne, 2005; Drezner and Farrell, 2004; Jensen, 2003). As blogs remain relatively easy-to-construct, and are interactive, flexible, and an inexpensive mode of self-publication (Herring et al., 2005), blogs allow people to “post, at minimal cost, messages and images that can be viewed instantly by global audiences” (Lupia& Sin, 2003, p. 316).

The applications of Web 2.0 in blogs have the ability to store large amounts of information that contribute greatly to knowledge management (OECD, 2009). The other advantages of Web 2.0 applications are that they promote transparency and
participation (Veljkovic et al., 2012), and are an interactive form of communication (Cormode & Krishnamurthy, 2008; Sheun, 2008).

2.3.6 Social Networking

Communication and interaction in blogs play an important element as social networking tools (Gil De Zúñiga et al., 2009). Studies have shown that groups of people online can form and sustain social groupings, which meet this definition of community, where they share an online area for at least some of the time (Rheingold, 1993; Baym, 1998; Preece and Ghozati, 1998).

2.3.7 The Digital Divide

A study by Ruge (2003) shows that the digital divide is one of the reasons creating disadvantage in using the Internet in the democratic process. The digital divide is described as unequal access to ICTs based on such factors as race, ethnicity, income, education, gender (NTIA, 2000) and the disproportionate pace of development in societies having access to digital infrastructure and services (Paul, 2007). Tang (2009) explains that the digital divide means that the content of the Internet will only reach those who are well off and technologically savvy (Tang, 2009).

The issue of the digital divide also relates to the people's ability to access the information provided by the government which groups the people into the information ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’. This problem can be caused according to the place where they live. In contrast, urban areas tend to provide better facilities and services for the Internet and mobile instruments than rural areas (Kim, 2007). Consequently, a limitation of the Internet is the existence of the digital divide between those who have the skills and financial resources to have access to the Internet and those who do not (Norris, 2001, pp. 3-26).
Another study claimed that Asian governments, especially democratic ones, are overwhelmed by a number of major problems that are often overlooked in the West, such as high levels of illiteracy, insurmountable urban/rural divide, intrusive media and political regulation, traditions of elite-driven politics, and other elements of political culture (Kluver and Banerjee, 2005). In relation to this problem, the digital divide has threatened to cut off citizens from the chance to participate in searching for political information using the Internet as a medium of information.

2.3.8 Language Barriers

Another aspect concerning the low popularity of the usability of the Internet is the language barrier. Among the barriers for Internet adoption in most developing countries are language, economy, education, language and culture. In fact, Holms (2001) highlighted that language is probably the biggest barrier in using the Internet, as almost 90% of the websites are in English. This factor has brought the divide to more than 75% of the world’s population who are not using English as their medium of interaction. In Malaysia’s case, besides the discourse on the Internet being polarised on ideological grounds, there is also the possibility of fragmentation according to language and racial lines. Tang (2009) found that the views expressed on the Malaysian English language blogosphere are very different from those prevalent in the Malay language blogosphere.

2.3.9 Credibility of Information

Blog readers use blogs since they find them to be more credible than other sources of new information (Johnson and Kaye, 2004). Previous research found that the peer-review process in blogging increases the credibility of information; therefore, blogs achieved a credibility standing in line with traditional media (Gill, 2004; Banning and
Sweetser, 2007). In addition, the peer review process might lead to the best route for the moderation of online communities (Sundar, 2001).

Ulicny et al. (2010) stress that the credibility of information in blogs relies on identifying proper names and other features in blog posts that the system can identify automatically with high accuracy. The features include in-link and out-link URLs determining the blog’s link structure, dates, proper nouns (capitalized phrases), comments, and blog profile features, such as place names, occupations and titles. Thus, the political bloggers who make themselves accountable for what they say are more credible than an anonymous writer who can avoid the consequences for publishing his or her views.

Ceren (2006) suggests that link-based blogs have a system of checks-and-balances, where bloggers from different sides of the ideological spectrum keep each other honest. Bloggers network with other bloggers through cross-linking and cross-referencing. Bloggers formalize relationships with other bloggers through a blogroll or a sidebar of hyperlinks to the bloggers’ favourite blogs (McKenna, 2007, p. 219).

The major news organizations are expected to abide by statutory or voluntary codes of practice that are designed to ensure the quality of their journalism. There is a need to trace whether news blogs observe the quality controls of major news suppliers and whether they command public trust (Gunter, 2009).

2.4 Theory and Development of the Conceptual Framework

Shah et al. (2005) argue that political information seeking and citizen expression online have led to citizen participation in politics (Jeniffer & Zeitner, 2003), and have shaped levels of political engagement. Studies in political research reveal that news media consumption and interpersonal political discussions have contributed to citizens’
participation (McLeod et. al., 1996; Shah, McLeod & Yoon, 2001). Moreover, the Internet provides a source of political information and a channel for political expression (Dahlgren, 2000; White, 1997).

Shah et al. (2005) believe that media effects are related to two important forms of citizen communication: i) interpersonal political talk, and ii) interactive civic messaging. Shah et al. (2005) indicate that sharing political perspectives electronically and contacting political elites online may contribute directly to engagement.

A previous study by Verba et al. (1995) developed the Civic Volunteerism Model as a powerful means to explain causes for political participation. This model addresses three engagement mechanisms: resources, engagement and recruitment. They assert that resources are the most important in engagement mechanisms compared to others in explaining participation. Another study, by Tewksbury (2006), also discusses an important link between uses gratification research and the Internet; dependency and ritual also play a large part in determining how a person attends to media.

For this study, political blogs are considered as a social networking service as an online services platform that focuses on social networking among people who share same interest in political activities. Social network is defined as “a social structure made up of a set of actors (such as individuals or organizations) and the dyadic ties between these actors. Social Networks allow members to organize around a person’s relationship or interests rather that just focus on topics. People that know each other will connect by a variety of common interests” (Abdul Karim, 2010).

Social networks allow people to communicate and share information between each other by using tools such as MySpace, Twitter, Facebook and blogs. Coleman’s (1990) social theory may provide a framework for understanding group formation and interaction, at least, in organization-based social networking sites, and the placement
of trust in individuals within groups. According to Coleman (1990), a social networking site is a "constructed social organization".

The conceptual work by Habermas (1996) and Dahlberg (2001), introduces a framework for the analysis of online political discussion spaces that incorporates operational methods from an interdisciplinary corpus of studies. This framework enhances the ability of researchers to contextualize disparate online discussion cultures with respect to one another, characterize particular cases in terms of distinct scholarly conceptions of democracy, and test existing theories of online political communication in new ways. Habermas described democracy as best served by a public sphere where competing visions of the future can be expressed and subjected to debate without skewing or censorship to fit the agendas of dominating parties.

This public sphere is constituted in every conversation in which private persons come together to form a public. Citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion; thus with the guarantee that they may assemble and unite freely, and express and publicize their opinions freely (Habermas, 1974). Habermas was also concerned with the relationships between the feedback between a self-regulating media system and a responsive civil society. The political public sphere needs input from citizens who give voice to society’s problems and who respond to the issues articulated in elite discourse. Blogs, it can be argued here then, offer a means of articulation and a forum for competing visions.

The communitarian model (Dahlberg, 2001) emphasizes the power of technology to reinforce existing community ties as well as establish new ones. The communities, thus strengthened, can be premised upon indelible identity characteristics, such as race, gender, nationality, etc. or upon shared interests and ideology. Thus the communitarian impulse in online political forums entails high levels of in-group interaction and collective identity construction and other forms of bonding alongside a commitment to
strong in-group/out-group boundaries. The communication mediation model provides evidence that interpersonal networks of political discussion and informational uses of media result in increased community integration and civic participation (McLeod et al., 1996). Communication practices have a direct effect on participatory behaviours, as well as an indirect effect through gains in political knowledge and political efficacy, which result in participation (McLeod et al., 1999).

In this study, the model of Communication and Civic Participation by Shah et al. (2005) has been chosen as the conceptual framework, building on the theories outlined above. Shah (2005) argues that sharing political perspectives electronically and contacting political elites through the use of online media may contribute directly to engagement. This model argues that media effects will be related to two important forms of citizen communication:

i) Interpersonal political talk, and
ii) Interactive civic messaging.

The strength of this model is more about the discussion of ideas through the integration of online information seeking and interactive civic messaging and interpersonal political discussion concerning the process that results in participation (Figure 2.1)

![Figure 2.1: Adopted Model of Communication and Civic Participation (Shah et al., 2005)](image-url)
However the model needs more definition and detail to deal with political blogs. Shah (2005) claims that sharing political perspectives electronically and contacting political elites through the use of online media may contribute directly to engagement.

The Theory of Communicative Action (TCA), which was developed by Habermas (1984, p.86) stated, “...in which society seek to reach a common understanding and to coordinate actions by reasoned argument, consensus, and cooperation rather than strategic action in pursuit of their goals”. Habermas provides a theoretical basis for a view of planning that highlights widespread public participation, sharing information with the public, through public dialogue, rather than exercise of power.

In this study, the model of communication and civic engagement by Shah et al. (2005) was adopted. This model argues that sharing political perspectives electronically and contacting political elites through the use of online media may contribute directly to citizen engagement. According to Shah (2005), media effects on public is associated to interpersonal political talk and interactive civic messaging as referred in Figure 2.1. These two elements in models of communication and civic participation have promoted engagement of the public through the integration of action in interactive civic messaging and interpersonal political discussion. The study shows that in political deliberation, citizens discuss public problems and solution through conversation (Gastil, 2008).

In relation to this study, the elements of interaction of civic messaging and political discussion are seen through political blogs. By referring to Figure 2.2, the study is focuses on the use of political blogs by citizens that occurred in online information seeking. This is the process where the citizens seek out information about politics either by traditional means or online. In this study, the method of seeking online information about politics was through the using of political blogs. The scholars explained that online information seeking act positively for political engagement,
community involvement (Delli Carpini, 2000; Kwak et al., 2006; Taveesin & Brown, 2006) and has been linked to an increase in online interactive civic messaging that, ultimately, results in higher levels of civic participation (Shah et al., 2005).

In addition, previous research showed that the communications that occur online affects the participatory influence and effectiveness (Castells, 2007; Kerbel & Bloom 2005; Shah et al., 2005; Trammell & Kaid, 2005). The other views assert that the activities of bloggers that interactively communicate through blogs lead to increased participation (Thorson et al., 2006). Therefore, from the adopted model of Shah and the theory of Habermas, the following conceptual model is proposed (Figure 2.2)

![Figure 2.2: Development of Conceptual Model](image)

The citizens engaged in seeking information have taken place through interactive civic messaging and interpersonal political discussion. In interactive civic messaging, political blogs were used as media for seeking information by the Internet users and active bloggers. A blog is the appropriate medium for political information due to posting information at minimal cost and the contents can be instantly view by readers (Lupia & Sin, 2003: 316). Whereas in Interpersonal political discussions, it refers to the communication that occurs between the bloggers and users in political blogs.

The concept of participation has traditionally derived from involvement in the public sphere (Shah, McLeod & Yoon, 2001). Public sphere means all areas of social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed. Public sphere is established in
every conversation in which private persons come together to form a public. The public voice of citizens, joined in dialogue with the voices of other individuals is the fundamental elements of engagement into public opinion. In relation to this model, citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to intimidation; thus with the guarantee that they may assembly and unite freely and express their opinions freely (Habermas, 1974).

As Habermas (1989) emphasis in defining community has shifted from social interaction as an embodied set of relationships to social interaction as communication, on the speech-act which links people, communication and participation online has amplified conventional expressive and political participation. Therefore, the communication by citizens which occurs in blogs, has promoted public participation and sharing information, through public dialogue on political issues. Both the interactive civic messaging and Interpersonal political discussion are engaged at the same time by bloggers and readers in seeking political information in blogs. Rheingold (2000) explained the Internet was seen to have a role in promoting civic participation and linked with Habermas’s public sphere, a space ‘where people act as citizens by discussing the issues that concern them’. As a result, citizen participation in political activities has developed from participatory and political activism.
Each of the constituent elements in the research framework is described below (Table 2.1). This framework is used throughout the thesis as a consistent analytical model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements in the framework</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online information seeking</strong></td>
<td>Research shows that online information seeking acts positively for political engagement, community involvement (Delli Carpini, 2000; Kwak et al., 2006; Taveesin and Brown, 2006) and has been linked to an increase in online interactive civic messaging that, ultimately, and results in higher levels of civic participation (Shah et al., 2005). This study focuses on the use of political blogs by citizens as online information seeking political information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Political blogs)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interactive civic messaging</strong></td>
<td>The Internet obviously allows people to “post, at minimal cost, messages and images that can be viewed instantly by global audiences” (Lupia &amp; Sin, 2003: 316). Habermas argued that the political public sphere needs input from citizens who give voice to society’s problems and who respond to the issues articulated in elite discourse. Habermas used discourse to argue that citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion; thus with the guarantee that they may assemble and unite freely, and express and publicize their opinions freely (Habermas, 1974). The study refers to the activities engaged in by the active bloggers and citizens that use the Internet, i.e., political blogs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Active bloggers, Internet uses)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal political discussion</strong></td>
<td>Webster's dictionary states that discourse has two meanings: (a) formal communication of thoughts about a serious subject through words (spoken or written) and (b) rationality or the ability to reason. Habermas (1989) emphasis in defining community has shifted from social interaction as an embodied set of relationships to social interaction as communication, on the speech-act which linked people. Interpersonal political discussion refers to the communication that occurs between the bloggers and users in political blogs to promote public participation and sharing information, through public dialogue on political issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Communication)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Civic participation</strong></td>
<td>Evidence is accumulating that political messaging and sharing political information contributes directly to civic and political participation (Gil De Zúñiga et al., 2007). Blogs have bottom-up participation, as individuals can be more open and freely express their opinions. Communication and participation online has amplified conventional expressive and political participation. The internet was seen to have a role in promoting civic participation and linked with Habermas’s public sphere, a space ‘where people act as citizens by discussing the issues that concern them’ (Rheingold 2000). Citizen participation in political activities has derived from participation and political activism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Participatory, Political Activism)</td>
<td></td>
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2.5 Summary

This chapter has highlighted the features and applications used in blogs and related that previous research to a variety of theory based on blogs as sites of discourse and sites creating communities where blogs are seen as an alternative medium for political Information, where blogs provide updated information, and where blogs and Web 2.0 Applications increase access and interaction. The product was a conceptual framework to analyse political blogs in Malaysia. The next chapter will discuss the research methodology used to explore the effects of political blogs on citizens' participation in political activism in Malaysia.
Chapter 3
Research methodology and procedures

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology used to explore the effects of political blogs on citizens’ participation in political activism within Malaysia. In this study, both exploratory and descriptive research approaches are used to address the research objectives.

According to Sarantakos (2005), exploratory research aims to establish the most basic criteria of the research topic, often before the actual study has started. An exploratory study is a valuable means to find out ‘what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light’ (Robson 2002:59). The purpose of using exploratory research is to examine a little understood issue or phenomenon to develop preliminary ideas and move towards more refined research questions by focusing on the “what” questions.

The purpose of descriptive research is ‘to portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations’ (Robson 2002:59). Descriptive research will then present a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship. It is an outline of steps to answer the who, when, where and how questions (Neuman, 2006). This study adopted the approach of an exploratory sequential design which begin with exploring the topic through blog content analysis before proceed with next stages of survey questionnaire and bloggers’ interview.

In this study, a mixed methods approach was used to explore the effects of political blogs on citizens’ participation in political activities. Mixed methods approach uses both
quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedures, either at the same time (parallel), or one after the other (sequential), but does not combine them. According to Morse and Niehaus (2009), a mixed methods approach is a stronger design than a single method because the supplementary component enhances the validity of the project by expanding the understanding of, or verifying the results from another perspective. In this research, the objectives of study focus on two questions as follows:

1. Do political blogs affect citizens’ participation in Malaysia’s politics?

2. How do the social networks that emerge in blogs serve as a platform of political activism?

This chapter discusses the rational for the mixed method approach selected and describes the data collection techniques used, data analysis, validity and reliability and lastly the issues in ethical clearance in order to deal with the research objectives.

### 3.2 Mixed Methods Approach

According to Williamson (2002), a research project can use both qualitative and quantitative approaches to give a larger scale picture as well as detailed understanding of specific situations. The combination of these research designs is used because the collection of data from multiple data collections methods is intended to give more credibility to the research instrument (Sekaran, 2003).

Qualitative methods are usually used in gathering evidence that reflect experiences, feelings and judgements about individuals. According to Creswell (2003) a priority for one type of data or the other, depends on the interests of the researcher, the audience for the study and what the researcher is seeking in the study. The following advantages
of using a mixed methods approach as a research strategy were outlined by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011;12):

1. It provides strengths to the study that compensate the weaknesses and limitations of both qualitative and quantitative research.

2. It gives more evidence for studying research problems than either quantitative or qualitative alone.

3. It helps answer questions that cannot be answered by quantitative and qualitative approaches alone.

4. It offers a bridge across the sometimes adversarial divide between quantitative and qualitative research.

5. It encourages the researcher to apply multiple worldviews, or paradigms (i.e., beliefs and values) at the same time, rather than the typical association of certain paradigm with quantitative research and others for qualitative research.

6. It is practical by giving researcher choices to apply all methods possible to address research problems. Thus, it makes the results of research more reliable and bring more confident to researcher.

The use of mixed method approach for a PhD thesis has been recommended by scholars as a rigorous analytical framework (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Maxwell, 2005). Other researchers (Straus & Corbin, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) have stated that this methodology is used to better understand unknown phenomena that may be difficult to reveal quantitatively. Unfortunately, the growth of internet use, with the popularity of blogs as social media, requires the choice of data collection that uses multiple methodologies, as our understanding of social media is still in its infancy. Therefore, in order to answer the research questions in this study, a mixed methods approach is the most appropriate methodology to be used.
The mixed methods used in this study for data collection included web content analysis, interviews with political bloggers and survey questionnaires. Previous scholars in weblog research have also used a mixed methods strategy that combined content analysis and surveys in their studies (Papacharissi, 2002; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005). This approach has been used in gathering data, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods. In addition, the motivation for combining quantitative and qualitative methods in this study is that they together enable confirmation of data through triangulation.

The mixed methods approach is the strategy in which the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds. It employs strategies of inquiry that involve collecting data either simultaneously or sequentially to best understand research problems (Creswell, 2003; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). The major difference between partial mixed methods and fully mixed methods is that where full mixed methods involves the mixing of quantitative and qualitative techniques within one or more stages of the research process or across these stages; with partially mixed methods, the quantitative and qualitative phases are not mixed within or across stages.

In this study, the mixed methods approach design was constructed based on Creswell & Plano Clark (2011), which is known as exploratory sequential design. This is a two-phase sequential design which starts by qualitatively exploring a topic before building to a second quantitative phase as shown in the flowchart below (Figure 3.1):
Figure 3.1: Flowchart of the procedures in implementing an exploratory design adopted from Creswell & Plano Clark (2011)
The research is also exploratory. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), exploratory research is based on the principle that an exploration is required because of the variables; instrument or measurements are not available or unknown. This design is also appropriate to be used when the research is aiming at generalizing results to different groups, to explore a phenomenon in depth and/or measure the prevalence of its dimensions. The reason to generalize the findings of the qualitative data is due to the nature of this study as it deals with the growth of internet use and the popularity of blogs as social media.

Therefore, this study uses exploratory sequential research where the researcher is not familiar with the environment, as our understanding of social media is still in its infancy. This strategy also can be used to generalize qualitative findings based on a few individuals from the first phase to a larger sample gathered during the second phase. The procedures for an exploratory design using mixed methods approach in this study are shown in Figure 3.2 below:
The triangulation technique, used in this study, aims to achieve a substantial level of reliability in the research data. Triangulation can occur with data, investigators, theories and methodologies (Denzin, 1984). Meanwhile, Yildiz (2007) claims that triangulation of the data and findings by using different data sources, methods, researchers and data types, collected at multiple sites increase the rigor of the studies. The triangulation technique can be used for two purposes to collect information from multiple sources but is often aimed at corroborating the same facts or phenomenon (Yin, 2002). The study that is conducted with collection of several types of data from different sources,
achieves triangulation that increases the reability of the research process (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Therefore, the research needs to achieve triangulation that important of confirming the validity of the research.

In this study, triangulation occured in the methodology strategy that combined different approach of data collection. According to Denzin (1984), triangulation can occur with data, investigators, theories and methodologies. In this study, triangulation appeared in the technique of methodologies, where different types of data collections from each phase have been used to formulate the questions for the next phase of data collection. Thus the different method of data collected in each stages of data collection have supported the triangulation purpose (Yin, 2002), that is the first phase through web content analysis, the qualitative method in the second phase, and the quantitative method in the third phase.

Consequently, the collection of data from different sources provides reliability and triangulation of this study (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Triangulation is administrated in this study through using multiple data collected from different sources and techniques. The combination of both qualitative and quantitative data techniques forms a triangulation to ensure the accuracy and the realibility of the research findings by having sources of data collected from both survey questionnaires and interviews.

In this study, the preliminary data collection strategy is initiated with a content analysis of political blogs in Malaysia. The rationale of conducting the blogs content analysis is to describe in detail what is in the blogs, detail the issues which were discussed, assess the type and nature of the blog writers, what they were doing, and identify the applications used in Malaysian political blogs. From a total of 200 blogs selected, this study has reviewed 168 blogs for analysis. The selection of blogs was based on criteria set by Trammell and Keshelashvili (2005) ie; Blogs with a high number of readerships, resulting in numerous links to the blog. Further discussion of the selection is in Chapter
4. Appendix A lists the blogs that were evaluated as part of this study. A content analysis was conducted as the primary stage before continuing to the other stages, interviews with political bloggers and a survey questionnaire to citizens.

The second data collection strategy involved interviews with fifteen prominent political blog writers, from both the government and the opposition parties. The political bloggers who were interviewed are politicians and supporters of political parties, who own or maintain blogs. The interviews were done to understand how their writing in blogs influenced and/or were intended to influence citizens to participate in political activities. These political bloggers have developed their own political blogs to write about political issues from 2007 until 2009. The data collected from interviews is significant in giving a clear understanding of the work done by blog writers, the applications used and the process involved in posting political articles in blogs to readers.

Following analysis of both of the content and of the interviews with political bloggers, the results were used to construct a survey questionnaire to explore how and why citizens participate in political blogs, to find out about their demographic information, their knowledge about web blogs, the Web 2.0 applications used in blogs and the effects of blogs on their participation in politics.

The third data collection strategy involved distributing a survey questionnaire to 300 Malaysian citizens, based on the information gathered from interviews with political bloggers. For the sampling strategy, the researcher used purposive sampling. Based on Neuman's description (2006:22), 'purposive sampling is a valuable kind of sampling for special situations and it is used in exploratory research for judgement'. The survey questionnaires were distributed to citizens in 5 states (Perak, Selangor, Wilayah Persekutuan, Penang and Terengganu) in Malaysia as Figure 3.2. The respondents remained anonymous and completed surveys at their convenience and confidentially.
No individual data were kept. In order to get a high response from participants, the researcher personally distributed and collected the printed questionnaires that were allocated to the group of respondents for Penang during the Election Day. For the other locations, the bloggers were given the responsibility to distribute the questionnaire because it was believed that they could effectively reach the targeted type of respondents. This is not a perfect solution but does meet the criteria of purposeful sampling as the right people who could answer the survey were targeted.

In this study, the research design strategy used is exploratory design to generalize the qualitative findings based on the interviews with the political bloggers and then with a larger sample gathered in the survey. There are four major steps in this exploratory design:

1. Collecting and analysing qualitative data (semi-structured interview with bloggers) to explore a phenomenon.
2. Developing a survey instrument and identifying variables for quantitative data collections (survey questionnaires).
3. Collecting and analysing quantitative data using descriptive statistics.
4. Summarizing and interpreting the qualitative and quantitative results.

3.3 Data collection

In this study, data was collected from a blog content analysis, from interviews with political bloggers and from survey questionnaires.

3.3.1 Weblog Content Analysis

The first stage in data collection was done to extract information on blog content, issues discussed, types of writers and applications used in Malaysia political blogs.
Content analysis has been described as a formal system for drawing conclusions from observations of content, something all people do informally rather frequently (Stempel, 1989, p.124). In another definition given by Krippendorff (1980) content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context. Content analysis has already been used in studies on the use of web-blogs in the 2004 United States Presidential Election (Trammel, et al, 2006; Esrock and Leichty, 1998). Content analysis has previously been shown to be effective as a suitable methodology for the study of internet-based content, including political websites and blogs (Trammell and Keshelashvili, 2005; Herring et. al, 2004; Kerbel and Bloom, 2005; McMillan, 2000; Papacharissi, 2004).

As blogs have been widely used as the medium for communication and discussion on political issues in Malaysia, blog content analysis was adopted in this study, which has been the strategy for methodology for previous studies in this area.

a) Blog Content Analysis Process

The steps in data collection strategy for this study were adopted from Hansen et al’s (1998) approach in their use of content analysis. With regards to this study, there are three significant steps adopted for the blog content analysis as follows:

1. This study explores the extent of and effects of political blogs on citizens’ participation in political activism.

2. In order to find out the content of political blog, the analysis was done to extract the information, contents, issues, type of writers and applications used in Malaysia political blogs.

3. This study has examined the political blogs in Malaysia both from the opposition party and the government, and these blogs were those established from 2007 until 2009.
b) Selecting the sample of blogs

Based on the statistics by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Internet penetration in Malaysia had 16,902,600 million Internet users registered as at 2010. This represents 64.6% of the population (ITU, 2010). This level of internet use meant that internet activity was common and well developed across Malaysia. To gain an understanding of the extent of internet use for political blogging it was important to undertake an analysis of both existing blogs and especially their content. For that reason, this study has used blog content analysis as the first stage of data collection due to its advantage in coping with large volumes of unstructured data (Krippendorff, 1980; Kaid & Wadsworth, 1989).

The blog samples used in this study were selected from the blogs which were posting content, articles and discussions on political issues in Malaysia. The other criterion for sample selection was that the political blog had to have high numbers of readers, based on the result of an analysis of blog hits. These criterions were followed in order to ensure the credibility and influence of the political blogs. Out of 200 possible blogs that met these criteria, 168 from both pro-government and opposition parties were studied in detail. The first classification used was to develop an ‘A List’ of political blog in Malaysia. An A-list blog is defined as a blog that has a high level of readerships, resulting in numerous links to the blog (Trammell and Keshelavshili, 2005). A study by Wallsten (2008) conducts a descriptive content analysis of 5,000 random posts drawn from 16 “A-list” U.S. political blogs and 5,000 random posts drawn from 147 randomly selected U.S. political blogs. Herring et al. (2005) has defined ‘A-list’ blogs as the blogs that received many links, widely read and have numerous citations in the mass media.

These blogs then are amongst the most read and hyper-linked on the Internet, and considered amongst the traditional press to be agenda-setters (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005; Drezner & Farrell, 2004; Kurtz, 2003). These political blog were
categorised as ‘A List’ ranking of blogs established in the period from 2007 until 2009. This period of time is being considered as the new development in the political environment where most of the political parties started to develop their own blogs as a medium of conveying political information to citizens.

Technorati (2007) provides a coarse classification of the blogs authority categories that are based on the number of other Weblogs which link to such blogs. The researchers have suggested that the link between other blogs is the most reliable way to gain blogs authority and readership (Blood, 2002; Drezner, D.W., & Farrell, H., 2004). The high number of links to a particular blog that makes them especially salient (Drezner, D.W., & Farrell, H., 2004). In this study the selected blogs were those have achieved 100000 of hits from readers and received high number of links to other blogs. The reason of this number of blog’s hits as an indicator for selection was because when this study started in 2008, there were only small numbers of political blogs that have achieved 100000 of readers’ hits.

Consequently, the studies in the field of political blogs was a new area that started in early 2000, that focus on new media technologies, an alternative source for political information and political participation (Stromer-Galley, 2000; Williams et al., 2005; Xenos and Foot, 2005). The political blogs in Malaysia were widely developed and used by the political bloggers only after the 12th general election in 2008 (Beh, 2008; Gomez & Rasyidah, 2010). Therefore, the number of hits achieved by the blogs selected in this study was considered as meeting the criteria of highest rate of readers.

3.3.2 Preparation of data and analysis

For effective content analysis it is essential to determine the categories to be examined. Since there is no standard category construction for the content analysis of blogs (McMillan, 2000), this study has considered developing relevant categories in
content analysis as adopted in a study by Trammell et. al. (2006) including the demographics (eg. author, date), hyperlinks and topics discussed. Further discussion of the method of analysis is presented in Chapter 4.

3.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

The second strategy for data collection in this study is conducting semi-structured interviews with political bloggers in Malaysia. The purpose of the interviews is to have information on the effects of political blog on citizens’ participation in political activism in Malaysia. At the same time, the researcher wanted to have information on the effects of Web 2.0 applications used in blogs that promote citizen participation in political activities. Cavana et al., (2001) suggests that semi-structured interviews should start in an unstructured form and then follow a structure, where and when needed. This technique is adopted because interviews are usually used when we are seeking qualitative, descriptive and in-depth data that is specific to the individual and when the nature of the data is too complicated to be asked and answered easily (Pickard, 2007).

The political bloggers to be interviewed were shortlisted from their contact information. Then, they were contacted for their agreement to participate in interview sessions. The Blogroll Cross-Referencing Method of Lim (2009) that utilizes the blogrolls located on the starter blogs, or blog-seeds, was used to generate a preliminary list of bloggers with similar interests to the initial blogs. By clicking to the blog in the blogroll, the reader can find out the blogs which have discussion on the same interest.

From the selected blogs, the extensive research was performed, analysing political web blogs to explore the issues raised in the blogs, the categories of blog writers, and the contents in blogs, and services available on blogs. A number of political web blogs from both pro-government and opposition parties were analysed to examine the contents and the bloggers who participated in these discussions showed through the
list of blogrolls. Through this process, the researcher identified the political bloggers to participate in interviews.

Each interview began with self-assessment or reflection of the bloggers own perception of their position in society. This was done to enable the interviewees to adopt their own perspective (Neuman, 2006) and allows them to explore their perspectives and perceptions (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). Kvale (1996) stresses that interviews should attempt to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold meaning of peoples’ experiences, and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations.

In this study, each semi-structured interview was conducted with the political bloggers to explore the way blogs give effect to citizens’ participation in political activities. Interviews are accepted as means of data gathering (Anderson, 1987) and have been used in a number of academic researches. Scott and Usher (1996) assert that interview is an essential tool in educational enquiry because the respondents’ preconceptions, perceptions and beliefs are in an inescapably important part of the backdrop of social interaction. The close interaction in interviews enables the researcher to explore complex issues in detail and allows the researcher to provide clarification to probe and to prompt (Brown and Dowling, 1998). The human instrument through interview applies appropriate data collection techniques, complemented by tacit knowledge to the investigation (Pickard, 2007).

In this study, the interviews were conducted with political bloggers, blog managers and politicians who developed and maintain their own blogs. The interviews are used in this study as a strategy for data collection to obtain views, ideas, perspectives and experiences from prominent political bloggers in Malaysia. The methods of interview through the face to face communication is used to provide resourceful and sincere information on the work of political bloggers that give effects to citizens’ participation in political activities in Malaysia. In addition, interviews with political bloggers have
enabled the researcher to get information about the effects of blog on political issues discussed among the public and in mainstream newspaper.

The researcher conducted interview sessions with political bloggers from July until September 2009. The invitation to participate for interview was sent to forty political bloggers. Out of 40 invitations, 15 political bloggers responded positively and agreed to be interviewed. The number of participants for interviews was found to be sufficient since the data collected demonstrated that it had also reached a saturation point at 15 because all bloggers were giving similar views in the sessions. According to Gillham (2005), the researcher proceeds with the investigation until he or she is satisfied with the findings and contended that the research questions are answered, or the research has reached its saturation point.

The 15 political bloggers included political activists, politicians, a freelance journalist and supporters of political parties. The list of participants is given in Table 5.1 in Chapter 5. These bloggers were chosen from the ‘A-List’ bloggers derived from the preliminary stage in blog analysis. Each participant for the interview was approached through the information obtained in their blog. In recent years, political bloggers have provided an e-mail address and phone numbers as contact information in their blog. Political bloggers in Malaysia especially, have become more “transparent” by providing readers with personal and contact information. In a few blogs, they have made themselves visible by posting photographs. In the past in Malaysia, political bloggers refused to expose their personal information to readers. They were very vigilant not to disclose personal details in blog as they feared being tracked by the “authorities”.

The respondents selected to participate in interviews were the political bloggers. During the blogs content analysis, the researcher has discovered there were categories of blog writers includes politicians, political party, supporters of political party, freelance journalist and also the university students. These blogs writers have different style of
writing according to their interest as mentioned in Table 4.3. A blog manager is under a category of blog writer, who serve to develop the blog and provide articles on politics to be posted. Since politicians have less time to read and write articles in blogs, those tasks were given to blog managers to find the information for their blogs. All of the bloggers selected as respondent for the interviews were political blogs writers. They have been approached through the contact information posted in their blogs, either by the email address or the telephone number. Before they agreed to be interviewed, they filled out a questionnaire and consent form confirming their status as a political blogger.

For this research, bloggers were informed that the interview session and information gathered will be used entirely for academic purposes. This is because there is “sceptical and unsecure feeling” about the interview sessions being a method to trap them. This state of fear is felt by the bloggers, especially those from the opposition party. There are concerns among the political bloggers about information that is recorded and revealed to “unknown persons” as this may cause legal actions being charged to them, especially from enforcement officers. Many of bloggers asked whether the researcher is an officer from a law enforcement department (police from special branch unit) or a ministry officer (specifically from Ministry of Internal Affairs), when they were first contacted for the interview session.

The respondents selected for interviews are knowledgeable in blogs’ development even though among them are politicians or freelancers. Initially, during the interviews respondents have been asked questions on their view about Web 2.0 and applications. The researcher has found that respondents have answered positively on the questions about Web 2.0 The result showed that more than 73% of respondents like Web 2.0 applications in political blogs. Another question was asked to have respondents’ answer on the applications used and the result in Figure 6.21 explain the findings.
They also avoided interview sessions being conducted at their offices or homes. They preferred the interviews to be held at open places like a coffee shop. The “sceptical and unsecure feeling” the bloggers have towards interviews often brought unpleasant conversation at the beginning of each meeting, but with explanation given and the supporting research documentation from RMIT university, it gave them confidence and they both agreed to the interviews and cooperated until the end of interview session.

The process of each interview began with an invitation email to each identified blogger and invites them to be a participant in this study. The email also introduces the details of researcher; briefly explains about the objectives and the nature of the study. For bloggers who did not have an email address in their blog, the invitation was sent through the reader’s comment section in the blog. Some of the bloggers were contacted personally by phone for the interview to take place, but this was the least preferred method of communication since political bloggers in Malaysia often refuse to entertain callers who asked about their blogging activity. At all time approvals were generated following RMIT University Research Ethics requirements.

All bloggers signed agreements to participate based on anonymity. The bloggers have been informed their identities remain anonymous and will not be published in the research. The bloggers who replied and agreed to participate for the interview were contacted back by sending emails to get further information about a telephone contact number. Then, they have been sent the participant information invitation letter with consent form. The participants have been informed the estimated time consumed for the interview and each was asked for their permission to audio-record for the session.

During the period the researcher conducted the interviews, between June and September 2009, there were two by-elections scheduled in two Malaysian states (Penang and Kelantan). As a result most of the political bloggers were moving from one place to another especially for the campaign period before Election Day. The
researcher did not specify the place for interview but gave the blogger freedom to choose the place and time convenient to them. After mutual agreement was made for the appointment, the researcher emailed the bloggers to ask for a convenient time and the arranged for the place of interview.

The researcher recorded the interviews and also took notes during the interviews to highlight important issues that needed further elaboration. Taking notes during interviews is important as it helps the researcher in the data analysis process and provides a backup in case of recorder machine technical failure (Patton, 2002). The interview sessions were conducted using the Malay language as requested by the bloggers to help them to express their opinions clearly. For analysis, the researcher translated the interview data into English after transcription in Malay.

In summary then, the interview sessions with 15 political bloggers were conducted from June to September 2009 at times and places convenient to the respondents. The respondents consented to the interviews being recorded on audio tapes. On average, an interview session took about 45 to 60 minutes. The recorded conversation was guided with a list of prepared interview questions. The interview guide consisted of 19 questions which focused on the work of the experiences of bloggers, the way that blog can promote citizens’ participation to political activities; the applications used in blog and the task of respondents as political bloggers in Malaysia. (See Appendix B.)

In this study, the researcher has adopted the standard procedures that implemented to all participants to ensure quality of data collection. The procedures for interviews employed in this research were as follows:

1. The interview was done using a semi-structured method
2. The interview sessions were conducted at the venue and time convenient to the respondents.
3. The Malay language was used in all interviews as requested by the respondents.

4. The interview sessions lasted for an average of forty five to sixty minutes and were audio-recorded with each respondent’s permission.

5. The interview sessions were conducted with the researcher asking the questions based on the list of prepared questions. However, the respondents were given freedom to express further explanation on the issues by using the method of responsive encouragement (Gillham, 2005).

6. The researcher use snowballing methods on each interview to get more interview participants for the study.

3.4.1 Interview Data Analysis

The data was analysed based on the method explained by Creswell (2007) and Patton (2002), which uses reduction of data into significant statements, or horizontalization, and combination of statements or clusters of meanings into themes. The researcher describes what the participants experienced (textural description) and how they experienced it (structural description), based on the themes of the analysis. During the process, the researcher has repeated reading the transcripts to understand the general information given by the participants. Neuman (2006) stated that in qualitative research, a researcher organizes the raw data into conceptual categories and creates themes or concepts.

The researcher analyses data by organizing it into categories on the basis of themes, concept or similar features. Here the researcher has identified important concepts highlighted by bloggers and have been labelled for related categories that give explanation to research questions. To facilitate the analysis process, qualitative data analysis software called ATLAS.ti version 5.0 was used. The acronym stands for "Archivfuertechnik, LebensweltundAlltagssprache", which means “archive for
technology, the life world and everyday language", and the extension "tl" stands for text interpretation.

After keying in the data through ATLAS, the researcher used thematic coding enabled analysis of the blog information. Themes were developed from an inductive process from raw data, which was taken from the interview data with the political bloggers. An example of how these themes emerged is shown in the following text from one of the interviews:

Web 2.0 can encourage people to politics because it uses the applications of YouTube, pictures attachment, slides and audio. Web 2.0 is easier to use and have a lot of applications. Blog can be used to give more explanations to the news posted. In addition, we can attach pictures that can give clear view to our stories and readers enjoy reading the articles. Previously, it was difficult for the opposition party to defeat government since they have controlled sources of political information. But now with the blog, people can voice their own opinions with using YouTube, animations, audio and at the same time, they can give comments through online. There are strong influences of web 2.0 to users due to applications used. Even political leaders use Facebook to interact with public. (MPBI 8(13)).

The yellow highlights represent the “use of the applications of YouTube, pictures attached, slides and audio, which was the comments in the interviews; the blue highlights represent the theme of ‘The impact of the use of Web 2.0 applications in blogs’. Through the thematic analysis, this study used a data-driven approach by deciding on sampling and designing issues from raw data, then selecting subsamples. Then the researcher selected the criterion reference and source of subsamples for the code development (Boyatzis, 1998, p.42). The encoding requires an explicit ‘code’ that may be a list of themes (Boyatzis, 1998). A theme is a pattern found in information that describes and interprets aspects of the phenomena in which the researcher is interested.
For this study, the themes were derived from. According to Boyazits (1998), there are five purposes for thematic analysis:

i. As a way of seeing
ii. As a way of making sense out of seemingly unrelated material
iii. As a way of analysing qualitative information
iv. As a way of systematically observing a person, an interaction, a group, a situation, an organisation or a culture
v. As a way of converting qualitative information into quantitative data.

In the type of thematic analysis proposed for this study, its purpose is to enable the analysis of qualitative information by encoding its findings. In order to develop a thematic code, Boyatzis (1998) suggests three different ways to be considered:

i. Theory driven
ii. Prior data or prior research driven
iii. Inductive (from the raw data) or data driven.

For this research, the main elements of the codes were derived from the inductive (from the raw) data transcribed from the interviews with political bloggers. The instruments and data used in the interviews such as that audio-recorded, the transcripts and the consent forms, were and are kept both in hard and soft copy at a secured location in RMIT University.

3.5 Survey Questionnaires

The third phase of this research built on the analysis of the blogs and the outcomes of the interviews to develop and apply a survey of Malaysian citizens. Survey research is a cross-sectional design in relation to which data are collected predominantly by questionnaire or by structured interview on more than one case and at a single point in
time in order to collect a body of quantitative or quantifiable data in connection with two or more variables, which are then examined to detect patterns of association (Bryman, 2004). In quantitative research, questionnaires are used as tools to gather information in the form of facts and opinions by asking questions to people about what the researcher wants to discover in the study (Denscombe, 2003). Surveys may be used for descriptive, explanatory and/or exploratory purposes. According to Burns (2000), a descriptive survey aims to estimate, as precisely as possible, the nature of existing conditions, or attributes of populations, for example demographic composition.

In this study using a descriptive survey questionnaire sent to the target population is considered the most appropriate technique because it allows the gathering of data that provides answers to the research questions (Wiersma, 1995). Survey questionnaires are the best methods available to the social researcher who is interested in collecting data for describing a population which is too large to observe directly. The population of Malaysia is 26 million people. According to Babbie (2004), a survey is also an excellent vehicle for measuring attitudes and orientation in a large population. A survey is relatively inexpensive, saves time and is an effective way of obtaining information on a large number of issues being researched (Gillham, 2000).

In this study, a paper-based questionnaire was used. The questions were developed and adopted from the study made by researchers in political blogs. The survey questionnaire has gone through pilot purposes by given to political bloggers. This was done to ensure the questions provided in questionnaire have met the purpose of answering objectives of this study. The questionnaire was designed with simple and straightforward questions in Bahasa Malaysia to avoid misunderstanding of the contents.

The questions in survey questionnaire were divided into two main categories. In part A, the questions asked demographic information of respondents. In part B the questions
focused on information as political bloggers and political weblog readers. The questions covered issues on attitudes of readers towards blogs for political information, the Web 2.0 applications used in political blogs, ways of using blogs as a political media for political information and the ways political blogs promote political participation. The questionnaire for this study was approved by the RMIT University Human Research Ethics Committee and included a consent form provided to each respondent.

The questionnaire used in this research (Appendix C) consists of mixed elements of both open and closed questions. There were three major categories of closed questions used. These were:

1. The first category was dichotomous questions that allowed the respondents to choose from two possible answers.

   For example: I like Web 2.0 applications in blogs

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. The second category was multiple dichotomous questions which provided a list of possible answers and allowed the respondents to select more than one choice from the list.

   For example: What is the reason for you visiting political blogs? (You can tick more than one)

   | To know about political issues |
   | To read the political newspaper cutting |
   | To update information related to political |
   | Just to fulfill your leisure time |
   | To get to know about politicians |

3. The third category was open ended questions where it required respondents to provide answers in the places provided in the questionnaire.

   For example: List the positive impacts of political blogs that you have experienced:

   i. __________________________________________________________
   ii. __________________________________________________________
   iii. __________________________________________________________
   iv. __________________________________________________________
4. Another category of questions were formulated by using Likert scales. The Likert scale (Likert, 1932) is a bipolar scaling technique, which allows a respondent to select a choice that best demonstrates their level of agreement with a given statement. This is also known as attitude measures (Pickard, 2007: 187). The Likert scale questions have five options of answers formulated for respondents on specific issues. By using the Likert scale, the researcher attempts to understand attitudes of respondents toward blogs for political information, the use of blogs as political media and the way political blogs promote political participation. These questions required the respondents to choose their responses about political blog-based issues based on options: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree.

For example: Way of political blogs promotes political participation: Please respond to each statement.

(Tick one box only for each statement)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I prefer reading blogs articles which help me how to decide to vote in a election</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I prefer using blogs articles in which I can convince citizen to participate in political activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. I prefer using blogs applications in which you can encourage citizen to participate in politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. I will go to vote after I have read information in political blogs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. I believe political blogs can promote political participation from citizens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Using blogs motivates citizens’ involvement in politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Political blogs is an effective medium for social networking and communication between politicians and supporters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.1 Procedures of questionnaire distribution

This study has used non-probability sampling for the distribution of questionnaires. In this study, survey questionnaire were randomly distributed to 300 Malaysian citizens aged over twenty-one with 180 returned and completed questionnaires. The researcher chose this group of respondents because they are citizens who are eligible to be actively involved in politics and eligible to vote in elections according to Article 119 in the Malaysian Federal Constitution. The most practical approach for distributing questionnaires was to select a location where the study population could be found.

The survey questionnaires were randomly distributed to citizens of 5 states (Perak, Selangor, Wilayah Persekutuan, Penang and Terengganu) in Malaysia. As the
peninsula of Malaysia consists of eleven states, the researcher faced limitations to distribute questionnaire to each of states in Malaysia. Therefore, the states chosen for survey distribution were the states won by the opposition in the 12th General Election in 2008, as blogs were believed to be among the factors affecting the election outcome in these states which were won by the opposition parties (Maznah, 2008; Koh, 2008). Wilayah Persekutuan and Selangor are also the most highly urbanized states and these states showed the highest percentage of changing votes in the 12th general election (Khoo, 2008). Terengganu has an appropriate political history. This state was under the previous ruling party for the first 10 general elections, but was won by the opposition during the 11th general election. However in the 12th general election, the ruling party managed to win back the state.

During the distribution of survey questionnaires, the researcher was very fortunate that by elections were being held at that time, in Penang 2009. Therefore, the researcher took the opportunity of these events by distributing some questionnaires at Penang where the by-election was held. People were chosen at random and asked if they would be willing to fill in the surveys. This location of Penang was chosen also because these people were the meeting point for the political bloggers to obtain information on current political issues for their blogs posting. Thus, the data collected from this place would specifically meet the requirements of respondents that could provide answers that addressed the research objectives for this study.

At other survey locations, the researcher arranged with bloggers to distribute the questionnaires to people who were actively using blogs for political information. The bloggers were given the responsibility to distribute the questionnaires because they could effectively reach out to the targeted respondents. These bloggers were those who had participated in the interviews for this study. Some belonged to the pro-government party, some to the opposition party and some were neutral. When the researcher conducted the interviews with bloggers, they had been asked about the task
to assist the researcher to distribute questionnaires to the blog readers. The researcher explained the rationale for the task since they know the people who are actively blogging within the region. Each of the bloggers were given sets of questionnaires and they were asked to distribute and collect back the questionnaires within two weeks after the meeting.

The researcher used paper-based questionnaires to be distributed to respondents. The printed questionnaires were allocated to the groups of respondents.

3.5.2 Survey Data Analysis Strategy

The data preparatory procedures were undertaken as suggested by Fowler (1993). According to Fowler, there are five phases of procedures to be performed as follows:

a) Deciding on a format – the way that data will be organized in a file
b) Designing the codes – assigning appropriate values to responses
c) Coding – formatting categories for responses where applicable
d) Data entry – keying in data in appropriate storage medium
e) Data cleaning or editing – final checking on the data file to ensure accuracy, completeness and consistency

The findings from the questionnaires were analysed through use of the Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) statistical software package version 18.0. The statistical program SPSS (version 18.0) was used to perform a series of statistical analyses on the data including descriptive statistics, cross tabulation and graphing to examine the distribution of the responses. Further analysis including use of ANOVA, the Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test or also known as the Mann Whitney U test was carried out to test the significance among and between variables. The use of these tests is explained in Chapter 6. The research also evaluated the Likert-based questions to
determine key factors influencing citizen participation in political blogging in Malaysia and undertook an exploratory factor analysis.

### 3.5 Summary

This chapter has discussed the research methodology used in this study. A mixed methods approach is adopted to covered both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. The research begins with a blog contents analysis as a preliminary stage, followed by interviews with bloggers and from the interview information a survey questionnaire was developed. Since this study is about Malaysian political blogs, the respondents for this study were Malaysian citizens who owned and used blogs. They were Malays, Chinese and Indians. However the respondents remain anonymous, without specifically highlighting the races. This is due to race sensitivity of political views among Malaysians.

The analysis of the political blogs contents is presented as the first stage of the research in the following chapter.
Chapter 4

An Analysis of Political Blogs in Malaysia

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from analysing the contents of political blogs in Malaysia. The rationale for conducting the blog content analysis is to ascertain the contents, the issues that are discussed, the type of blog writers, what they are doing, who the bloggers are, and what applications are used in Malaysia’s political blogs. The blog content analysis is conducted as the preliminary stage of the data collection before continuing to the other stages, which includes interviews with political bloggers and a survey questionnaire to citizens (Appendix A lists all the blogs that were evaluated as part of this study). In the conclusion the findings will be tied back to the conceptual framework, specifically looking at civic messaging and political discussion.

This chapter will provide an understanding of the characteristics of blogs which includes personalized, web-based, automated and community-supported. Besides, this study has revealed the content category in political blogs, categories of political bloggers and blog political agendas and additional applications that useful to readers. This study also has discussed the issues arising in using political blogs and the benefits of reading or using political blogs. The problem faced in political blogs in Malaysia such as the security breach was discussed with the example in blogs. The suggestion to get rid of boxes was rejected as it will make the outcomes clear.

4.2 Blog Content Analysis

The definition of content analysis given by Stempel (1989:124) refers to a “formal system for doing something that we all do informally rather frequently, drawing
conclusions from observations of content”. The use of content analysis allows researchers to sort through large amounts of data with relative ease in a systematic fashion, and it can be a useful technique for allowing researchers to discover and describe the focus of an individual, group, institution or social attention (Weber, 1990). The use of content analysis to recognise characteristics within the examined content does not identify anything as being true or false but instead it provides a measure of the usage or presence of characteristics (McNabb, 2002). This also allows inferences to be made, which can be validated using other methods of data collection.

Content analysis has been used in studies on the use of weblogs in the 2004 United States Presidential Election (Trammel, et al., 2006; Esrock & Leichty, 1998). Other research using and advocating content analysis includes research studying Internet-based content, such as political websites and blogs (Trammell and Keshelashvili, 2005; Herring et al., 2004; Kerbel and Bloom, 2005; Papacharissi, 2004, McMillan, 2000). Therefore, since this study explores blogs and deals with large amounts of unstructured data in web-based research (MCMC, 2008), content analysis has been selected as the most appropriate method for the preliminary stage of the research (Krippendorff, 1980; Kaid & Wadsworth, 1989).

The blog content analysis in this study was adopted from the researchers on weblogs done by scholars (Trammel, et al., 2006; Esrock & Leichty, 1998; Trammell and Keshelashvili, 2005; Herring et al., 2004; Kerbel and Bloom, 2005; Papacharissi, 2004, McMillan, 2000; Karpf, 2008; Shaw & Benkler, 2012). Blog content analysis study explores with large amount of political blogs and deals with large amounts of unstructured data in web-based research (MCMC, 2008). Therefore, in this study the blog content analysis was considered as the most appropriate method for the preliminary stage of the research (Krippendorff, 1980; Kaid & Wadsworth, 1989).
Since there is no standard category construction for the content analysis of blogs (McMillan, 2000), this study has considered developing relevant categories in content analysis as adopted from a study by Trammell et al. (2006), such as author demographics, the political party supported, the year the blog started, hyperlinks to other blogs, the number of readers’ hits, and topics discussed. In addition, the categories of platform to be analysed was adopted from the studies of political blogs (Karpf, 2008; Shaw & Benkler, 2012). The details of information for each of blogs selected including the content, categories of blog’s writers, the applications used, the target blog’s reader, the objective of blogs and the political party supported, are explained in appendix 1.

The samples of political blogs in this study are chosen from political blogs developed in Malaysia between 2007 and 2009. An extensive review was performed to find blogs that belong to A-List blogs. An A-list blog is defined as a specific blog that has a high number of readers, resulting in numerous links to that blog (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005). These blogs are among the most well-known and are regularly linked to other blogs. The bloggers themselves are well represented in their writing and have the ability to make it interesting. In actual fact, the mass media views of important stories and news comes directly from this select “A-list” of blog sites.

From a total of the 200 blogs selected, this study reviewed 168 blogs for analysis. The unit of analysis for this study focuses on the contents of these blogs and the applications of Web 2.0 use. Since there is no standard category construction for the content analysis of blogs (McMillan, 2000), this study has considered developing relevant categories in content analysis as adopted from a study by Trammell et al. (2006), such as author demographics, the political party supported, the year the blog started, hyperlinks to other blogs, the number of readers’ hits, and topics discussed.
The number of 200 political blogs selected in this study was the result of political blogs found within the time given to complete the task. The time frame for blogs selected was completed within three weeks. As the researcher has mentioned that time was among the crucial limitation for this study, thus the number of blogs selected were the appropriate number to complete the task. As this study has the specific criteria for the blogs, only 168 political blogs met the A-list’ blogs, which were blogs that received many links, widely read by readers and have numerous citations in the mass media. In addition, the criteria for these blogs were those which received more than 100000 readers' hits.

This analysis, which was performed on the application use in the blogs, includes the comments section and discussion from readers, audio-video, pictures, animations, and any unique character attached. Discussions in the blogs to be examined were selected on the basis of those that have intellectual and academic debate amongst readers. The other criterion used for selection is that the study only considers those political blogs that have the highest number of readers based on blog hits. These criteria were followed in order to ensure the credibility of the political blogs selected for this study.

4.3 Limitations of blog content analysis

One limitation in doing blog content analysis is the impermanent nature of the content in blogs, where changes can happen a year after the blog is developed (Koehler, 1999). A similar problem appears in this research where the researcher discovered that changes have been made by the blogger on the front page of their blogs. There were bloggers who have changed a blog’s name that made difficult to look back at information provided in those blogs. The applications in some blogs have been replaced. For example, most blogs removed the oil price alert in the blogs, which was used in blogs in early 2008 due to the oil price crisis in Malaysia that resulted in a price hike. Therefore, the researcher has some difficulties to identify political blogs used in
the content analysis. In addition, the researcher has faced problem to recognise the type of applications that are in use in blogs.

4.4 Characteristics of weblogs

This section explains the characteristics and the descriptions of blogs. The political blogs selected for the analysis in this chapter have met the characteristics of a blog defined by Herring et al. (2004), who identified five characteristics such i.e: frequent updating, reverse chronological order, inclusion of personal journal material, ability of readers to add comments, and inclusion of hyperlinks. According to blogging pioneer Winer (2001), weblogs have four main characteristics as shown in Table 4.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Blogs</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personalized</td>
<td>Designed to be used by a single person, expressing individual personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web-based</td>
<td>Updated frequently, easy to maintain, and accessible via a web browser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automated</td>
<td>Allowing bloggers to present the content in an attractive format without HTML coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-supported</td>
<td>Linking to other weblogs or websites, enabling the sharing of information and ideas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 Analysis of the contents of Political Blogs in Malaysia

In this study, political blogs are developed by the political supporters, politicians and political groups who have their own agenda and political interests. The blogs observed in this study were established between 2007 and 2009. This period of time is significant because during this period in the political environment in Malaysia, most of the political
parties started to develop their own blog as the medium of conveying information to citizens.

In the 2008 general election, the opposition parties relied on the Internet as a new media. It was a strategy that first emerged in the 1999 general election (Brown, 2004) but was particularly effective in the 2008 election. After the election, even the Prime Minister admitted that the BN ‘lost the Internet war’ (The Age, 2008). In addition, politicians and political figures have developed their own blogs containing their personal details, bio data, and political activities that can be observed by the citizens.

In this research, an extensive review of political blogs was performed. The following sections reveal specific analyses: the contents in blogs, the categories of blog writers, and the issues raised in the blogs, applications used in blogs, and the benefits of political blogs.

4.5.1 The content of political blogs

The following Table 4.2 shows that the content analysis has revealed 9 categories of content type within political blogs:
Table 4.2: Categories of Malaysian Political Blogs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Category</th>
<th>Content Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articles of current political</td>
<td>• Local political activities information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issues</td>
<td>• Discussion on political programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Updated information on political issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current world issues</td>
<td>• Articles on international political issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discussions on international politics related to local politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper articles</td>
<td>• Articles commenting on political issues from mainstream newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• News on political programmes published in newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments and feedback from readers</td>
<td>• Discussion on political issues from readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Column for readers’ comments on articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Bloggers were given immediate feedback on political issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Chat rolls column for readers to chat and exchange ideas on political issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links application</td>
<td>• Links to the same political interest blogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Links to other blogs that share the same political issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Links to the main government offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Links to online newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Links to online TV and online radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog Archives</td>
<td>• List posting based on time of posting (months &amp; years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• List posting based on topics or names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio video, animations &amp;</td>
<td>• Articles supported with audio videos and pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>• Links to YouTube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Video clips of politicians speeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Video clips of political programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polls / vote online</td>
<td>• Online polls to politicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Readers’ opinion on political issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pre-election readers polls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downloading applications</td>
<td>• Online music and MP3s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Online movies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Articles

In this category most of the blogs contain articles concerning recent political information in Malaysia. Blogs from the opposition parties provide issues concerning the wrongdoings by the Government in either the state or federal administrations. In contrast, the Government website and blogs publish articles that promote politicians
and government activities. In these blogs, readers are informed of political activities in which they can participate and benefit there from.

b) Current issues in the political situation

In this category, political blogs contain the information on political activities and discussions about political developments. According to Pew Internet & American Life (2005), a growing number of people cite blogs and other online content-delivery sources (e.g., sites offering RSS) as a source for political news and information.

c) Current world issues

This category within political blogs provides discussions about political situations, political developments regarding their political party and current issues in other regions. It is in these types of blog that the readers have a place to share their comments concerning political issues.

d) Newspaper articles

This category refers to political blogs that post articles and news from the local newspapers, particularly, news related to political events and political party activities. Bloggers write personal views on issues taken from the mainstream newspapers. At the same time, the readers of these blogs can give their comments on the same issues and open it up for an interactive discussion amongst themselves.

e) Comments and feedback from readers

In this category of blogs, the readers can give comments and feedback on the information and articles published. The writers can view comments from the readers
and they can respond by answering their questions. Sophisticated blog tools are also emerging, as technologically savvy bloggers include extensive discussion facilities and other features in their blogs (Fichter, 2003). Furthermore, the blogs provide applications where the users can chat with other readers in discussing the political issues. They can exchange ideas that make their communication interactively. Bloggers can receive and send messages in their communication. According to web-based communities, members would often make use of email, telephones or written correspondence to keep in touch (Sillence and Baber, 2004).

f) **Links to related / same interest blogs**

This category refers to the blogs that include links to other blogs that have the same political interest with an example shown in Figure 4.1.
The links can also be created by bloggers from the same political party. Interestingly, these groups of bloggers have similar hyperlinks in their blogs. Consequently, this link application in blogs can encourage people to participate in online communications and can bind them together with other online communities who share the same political interests.

g) Blog archives

This category includes blogs that contain features that allow bloggers to provide archive lists organized according to the year of posted issues. According to Barger (1997), the term Weblog refers to a personalized webpage, kept by the author in reverse chronological diary form. The readers of these types of blog can retrieve political information in articles and issues published in a specific year (Figure 4.2). This
feature has made blogs a place of reference for readers to find specific issues of interest.

**Figure 4.2: Example of Blog archives**

### h) Links to online video and YouTube

This category includes blogs with features that link to online video and YouTube material. Here, political articles and news posted in blogs are supported by multimedia presentations and animations. These links can encourage readers to find out more about the information posted in blogs. For example in Figure 4.3, in the blog of these politicians, there is YouTube material that shows political speeches from the election campaign. Some videos online and YouTube material show clips that explain issues relating to political parties. Therefore, the blog readers can potentially be given a clear
view and explanation concerning certain issues, which can influence them towards supporting specific politicians and political parties.

Figure 4.3: Links to online video and YouTube

i) Online Polls

This category includes political blogs in Malaysia that provide applications for voting or polling online concerning certain issues or personalities. The blog readers who visit these blogs can participate in online polling whereby they only have to click on the box provided and the result will appear immediately in the form of a graph as shown in Figure 4.4.
Most of the polling is done on current political issues and this has received good responses from their readers. For example, the online polls for the by-election in Kuala Terengganu, on 17th December 2008, appeared in most of the political blogs and attracted readers to vote for their candidate. Even though these polls cannot be used as a measure of the actual election result, the political supporters can obtain an early indication of the candidates who may win a specific seat.

j) Downloading applications

Political blogs also provide readers with downloading applications of their interest. Among the applications where bloggers can download are articles, music, MP3, pictures and videos, as shown for example in Figure 4.5.
The entertainment applications such as video music and MP3 are designed to attract the young age groups of readers to be part of the online community. At the same time, these applications can encourage youngsters to gain information on political issues and have the potential to promote participation in political activities through political information.

4.5.2 The categories of political blog writers

The analysis of the content in the political blogs reveals that there are different types of blog writer differences in the Web 2.0 applications they embed and differences in the contents of their blogs (Table 4.3). Most bloggers have their own agenda and objectives for developing their blog. The various blogs use applications that are intended to grasp the attention of readers to persuade them to revisit the blogs. Most of the writers have links to other blogs that share a common agenda. The analysis
discovered that university students also contribute to a number of political bloggers in Malaysia. This shows a positive indication of young people's involvement in discussing political issues in the country. Furthermore, the introduction of government freedom of speech on the Internet for the dissemination of political information has been a catalyst in the use of blogs to express ideas by and for all citizens.

Table 4.3: The Categories of Political Bloggers and Blog Political Agendas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Blogger</th>
<th>Contents Included</th>
<th>Web 2.0 Applications Used</th>
<th>Political Agenda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Politicians         | • Information on political activities involved in by writers  
                      • Articles relating to politicians and the programmes of party's  
                      • Explain issues related to political party  
                      • Biography on political history of blog owner | • Links to writer's Facebook, Flicker, twitters and YouTube | • Give publicity about politicians  
                      • Political information to constituencies  
                      • Receive problem report from constituencies |
| Political Party/organizations | • Information about history and objectives of political party  
                             • Articles on national political issues | • Links to main government offices  
                             • Links to top party chiefs blogs  
                             • Links to branch party offices  
                             • Videos on party's programmes  
                             • Links to online newspaper | • Reference to party members  
                             • Provide understanding on party objectives  
                             • Advertise party programmes |
| Supporters of politicians | • Political articles | • Links to political leaders blogs  
                             • Links to video on political programmes  
                             • Links to blogs with similar interest  
                             • Online polls  
                             • Links to mainstream newspapers and alternative newspapers online  
                             • Comments section | • Information on political issues supported  
                             • Invite readers to support their party  
                             • Expressing dissatisfaction on current political issues |
| Members of a Political Party | • Articles on political issues | • Links to politicians blogs  
                             • Links to mainstream newspapers and alternative newspapers online  
                             • Comments section | • Explore political issues to make readers realize the true story  
                             • Experienced writers  
                             • To influence readers with writing skills |
| Freelance journalist /ex-journalist | • Articles on political issues | • Links to mainstream newspapers  
                             • Comments section  
                             • Chat roll  
                             • Advertisements | • To give information on politics to peers  
                             • To convince others to join political programmes |
| University students | • Articles on political issues  
                      • Articles on students political movement in universities | | |

91
i) Politician’s Blogs

The first category is the blogs owned and run by politicians. These blogs contain information relating to that politician’s political activities, their bio data, the political party that they support, articles relating to the politician and to the current political issues. An example is shown in Figure 4.6.

![Figure 4.6: Example of a blog of a Malaysian politician](image)

The politician’s supporters can obtain information about Malaysian politics from this blog and it links to other features like Facebook, Flicker, Twitter and YouTube. These
types of blogs are very useful for politicians to convey messages to their supporters and are effective as tools for communication. The blog readers can give comments, ask questions, and leave messages in the blog for a response from their political leaders via this specific politician.

As blogging activity increases, a hierarchy based on readership and popularity of blogs has developed among the personal publishers, creating an “A List” blog (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005). ‘A-List’ blogs are considered as the most read and linked to blogs on the Internet, and the most noted among the traditional press to be agenda-setters (Drezner & Farrell, 2004; Kurtz, 2003). For example, the blog of the former Prime Minister of Malaysia Tun Dr. Mahathir (http://www.chedet.com), this blog has gained popularity and has achieved a high number of visitors from bloggers.

ii) Political Parties or political organizations

The second category of blog websites refers to political organizations. For example in Figure 4.7, the blog by UMNO is the political blog belonging to the leading political party in Malaysia. UMNO has ruled the Government in Malaysia for all 52 years since independence and has the biggest membership of political parties amongst Malaysians.
This weblog provides a place of reference for members and non-members to obtain information about UMNO and its political activities. There are also news and links to related blogs and politicians.

iii)  **Supporters of politicians/ Members of a Political Party who are not satisfied with their leaders**

This category of blog owners refers to the supporters of a political leader. The contents of the blogs consist of articles on the activities of the bloggers’ favourite political leaders and gives support to his or her political works. Normally, this blog links to other blogs that support similar political leaders. As shown in Figure 4.8 as an example, these blogs post articles on political activities performed by politicians, thus encouraging readers to support his or her chosen politicians. They also show support by listing supporters and offer explanation for political actions.
Another category of bloggers includes supporters of political parties who are not satisfied with their political leaders. Their blogs contains articles written to condemn the wrongdoings of their leaders and also provides evidence of these wrong doings (Figure 4.9). The information written in this type of blog is aimed to persuade readers to reject the leaders and provides proposals to restructure the top positions within the political party. In addition, links to videos and pictures are provided to support their views, as well as links to other blogs that share the same political agenda.
In other instances a group of supporters of a political party create blogs eg *Blogger Pembela Negara* (BPN) & *Gabungan Graduan Melayu Muda* (GGMM)(Figure 4.10). This blogger group has its own group members who share the same interests and uphold the same political views. In addition, these blogs have a unique logo to show their group.
iv) **Freelance journalist / ex-journalist**

This category of blogger refers to ex-journalists who have an interest in political issues. The information and contents written in articles are more organized since the writers have experience in journalism. These articles are more interesting to read since the writer knows how to discuss the issues and uses interesting sources to support his or her views in blogs.
v) The students in higher institutions

This category of bloggers refers to the students of universities that discuss current political issues as referred to in Figure 4.11. These groups of students are supported by a specific political party to convey information to the younger generation and influence the political thought of university students, many of who can, or will soon be eligible to, vote.

Figure 4.11: Blog by students in higher education institutions

vi) Independent bloggers

This category of bloggers has no interest in any political party but they write articles on political issues for both pro-government and opposition parties. The bloggers post articles evaluating the administration system and political programmes of political parties (Figure 4.12).
Some of the articles discuss perceived wrongdoings by politicians but are not biased towards any specific party. These blogs encourage comments from readers on the issues discussed.

### 4.5.3 Additional applications in blogs that is useful to blog readers

The content analysis of political blogs in Malaysia has discovered additional Web 2.0 applications are used and embedded in some blogs. These applications have the potential to attract readers to visit blogs despite their political content. The applications are reported in Table 4.2. In the following Chapter 5, interviews with bloggers confirmed that applications are included in blogs specifically for this purpose. The applications include:
i) Business advertisements

Besides the articles on political issues, there are blogs with business advertisements posted. Businessmen can create advertisements for their products and services to be viewed by the readers of blogs as shown in Figure 4.13.


Most of the advertisements posted are related to products that suit the age and usage of readers. Advertisements posted in blogs can be a source of income to bloggers where businessmen have to pay for monthly rental fees. Consequently, business advertisements on particular products attract more readers to participate in online communities through blogs.
ii) Updated information for oil price watch, shares price index and foreign currency.

Political blogs have additional reference features for the bloggers, such as the oil price watch, the share market index and the currency exchange rate as referred to Figure 4.14.

![Figure 4.14: Updated information for oil price watch, shares price index and foreign currency](http://hanief.blogspot.com/)

These applications provide useful information on the price watch of oil for their daily information. Recently, information on the oil price has been considered as important information for Malaysian citizens, due to the world economic crisis, which has resulted in an unstable oil price index. Therefore, information on the oil price has benefited the bloggers in their daily activities. The stock exchange and currency price posted in blogs...
provides information to businessmen to update information for their daily business activities. These applications have the potential to attract more people to visit political blogs and be a part of the online community.

iii) Muslim Prayer time and clock

Political blogs offer applications that show a clock and Muslim daily prayer times. Since the majority of Malaysians are Muslim, this application is very useful for the blog readers to know about the time, as the reference for their prayer times. While they are blogging, they are able to manage time for other obligations from blog applications.

iv) Links to online Newspapers and online TV news

This application in political blogs provides links to current political issues and news from online newspapers and online TV. As shown in Figures 4.15 and 4.16, the sources of information for the news are taken from the mass media, either from electronic or print media. The political blogs links to those online TV and newspapers so that the reader can refer to the original sources of information. In addition, these links give the bloggers the online information published in those mainstream media that help explain political issues.
Figure 4.15: Links to online newspaper
(Sourced from http://www.belantan.blogspot.com, retrieved on 18 Jan 2009)

Figure 4.16 Links to online newspaper
(Sourced from http://www.novandri.blogspot.com, retrieved on 19 Jan 2009)
The analysis of the blogs highlighted more than just content and types of bloggers. The analysis also highlighted issues which both act as barriers to access to blogs or raised issues about credibility.

### 4.5.4 Issues arising in using Political Blogs

In the analysis of blog contents, this study has identified the issues related to politics and which affect access to and use of political blogs in Malaysia:

a) **Language barriers**

Some blogs are written using languages such as Cantonese, Hokkien, Mandarin, Tamil or dialects that cannot be understood by all blog readers. Therefore, the political issues may not be fully understood by all bloggers. The majority of blogs are in Bahasa Malay and it can be argued that this could disadvantage the Chinese, Indians and Eurasians who do not have strong skills in Malay.

b) **Personal opinions of writers - accuracy and credibility of contents**

Some articles written in blogs are derived from the personal views of writers. The blogosphere can become an echo-chamber where one hears only what one wants to hear (http://archive.salon.com/tech/col/leon/2004/11/03/echo_chamber/). Therefore, bloggers must cast a critical eye over any issues discussed in the blogs. Determining what biased commentary is sometimes difficult for blog readers. There is scepticism about the accuracy of contents in some blogs. Since some of the information comes from the writer’s own understanding and beliefs, this may provide a biased point of view. Johnson and Kaye (2004) cite the common arguments facing blog credibility as those faced by early online news sites: “anyone can create one, there is no
responsibility for content, information can be posted in an anonymous manner, and posters may not be bound by journalistic ethics”.

c) Articles are taken or copied from other blogs.

The articles in the blogs may come from the same sources of news such as newspapers, books, or articles, which might be copied by other bloggers and published in blogs. Therefore, there is no authenticity of information published in the blogs since information is copied and pasted from others. The key issue here is that this material might just reproduce an existing discourse with little if any commentary.

d) The information in blogs is not frequently updated

The analysis of blogs contents in this study discovered that there are few bloggers who did not update information in blogs where issues discussed were obsolete and no longer political issues were remained usually, but some remain unaltered.

It also became obvious in the analysis of the blogs that they offered significant advantages politically in the Malaysian context. These perceived advantages are reported here and were tested in the subsequent interviews (Chapter 5) and in the survey of Malaysian citizens (Chapter 6).
4.5.5 **Benefits of Political Blogs**

There was also an identification in the analysis that there were perceived views expressed there about the benefits of political blogs.

**a) Encouraging participation**

Participants in online communities often use referential posts, and shared their common interest in blogs (Conaway et al., 2005; Swan, 2002). As a result, this activity can develop into sophisticated social norms that encourage participation (Preece, 2001; Preece & Maloney-Krichmar, 2005) in online communities. Moreover, Preece (2001) argued that social language in online communities can encourage participation by making the community appear active to newcomers. The cross posting in the Malaysian political blogs use of common references, and use of common articles confirm that there appears to be intent to use the blogs to increase participation in politics through the blogs in Malaysia.

**b) Expressing views of bloggers**

Political blogs are the place where the bloggers can express various views and opinions on any matters of interest. There are no rules that can stop them from revealing any of their thoughts even though these may lead to exposing sensitive issues. According to Oravec (2003), weblogs provide individuals with distinct platforms for self-expression and discussion of ideas. Thus, any political issues can be posted and discussed for the viewing of bloggers. Gillmor (2004), and Kurtz (2003) argue that the introduction of blogs provides the freedom of the press. The blog is a flexible medium through which individuals can develop an individualized voice that can reflect facets of their personal style and idiosyncratic intellectual approaches (Oravec, 2003).
In the Malaysian blogs, the views expressed in the blogs owned by the political parties and by politicians were consistent in what they posted. They were pushing the existing government discourse. The opposition blogs were generally critical and often offered alternative perspectives. The neutral blogs and those run by students were often confrontational and contested the existing discourse. They often challenged the worth of existing government policy and used the blogs on occasions to expose what they perceived were ‘untruths’.

c) Decreasing social distance in media

Blogs have been identified as a close medium for the people to get information (Banning and Sweetser, 2007). They are also the place for people to exchange ideas and voice any comments about the issues discussed. Gunawardena (1995) states that research into online communities has shown that participants in text-based communities can develop a strong feeling of presence with other participants. Consequently, political blogs can encourage readers to participate and communicate in communities that share the same interests, which may not be possible through mainstream media. The Malaysian political blogs appear to be creating communities. The blogrolls illustrate the diversity and numbers of members and highlight the various ways people interact with the blogs. The analysis has highlighted that it is in the opposition-based blogs and those run by students that the more diversity of opinions exists.

d) Linking to other blogs

Discussion forums associated with many blogs can produce useful insights as well as links to colleagues worldwide. Weblog-based knowledge communities can also form as bloggers link to blogs with similar themes and provide critical commentary (Oravec, 2003). According to Sundar et al. (2003) hyperlinks on political websites lead to
positive impressions of a political candidate and positively affect perceptions about the website. These hyperlinks can assist in maintaining the contents and issues discussed according to the interests of specific bloggers. From another point of view, Ceren (2006) suggests that link-based weblogs provide a system of checks-and-balances, where bloggers from different sides of the ideological spectrum ensure that a balance of views is given. Therefore, political blogs that link to other blogs promote communication and participation in political activism.

The analysis of the Malaysian political blogs showed clearly that the blogs are linked with many sources of political and other information and are very often interlinked especially where there is a common discourse e.g. between blogs of supporters of a political party often are linked to promote the same policies or ideas. The more neutral blogs and those run by students had significant content that was both commentary and critical reflection, offering alternative sources of information for readers.

e) Organising information / issues for easy retrieval.

Some of the Malaysian blogs have categorised the contents according to topic for easy retrieval. Others have arranged information in archives according to issues posted in a related year. This organising of information, organising political information by chronological year, provides the reader an easy way to search for information according to their interests.

f) Influencing readers

The writers of blogs who use straightforward language make it easier for people to understand the issues. The Pew Internet and American Life Project (2006) reports that 51% of bloggers cite “to influence the way other people think” as a reason for writing blog posts. With the advantage of language use in blogs, politicians use blogs to
increase their influence from supporters. This view is supported by Trammell & Keshelashvili (2005), in that blogs are a medium of increased personalization and thereby have potential as an influential medium. Political blogs provide information on issues, often attached with video of speeches. Therefore, blogs can be used as the tools for the political parties and political figures to attract supporters. In the examples illustrated in the first part of this chapter, there is substantial evidence where bloggers are trying to influence the way Malaysian citizens think. The high incidence of politician owned blogs also supports a view that they see the advantages for them in keeping their profiles in the public view.

**g) Improving the perception of a blog's credibility rating**

This study found that the perception of blogs by blog readers ranged from being moderately credible to very credible as a source for information in the same way that research by Johnson & Kaye, (2004) had previously in the USA. The credibility of blogs is influenced by whether a blog is being moderated or not by blog readers through comments on any issues discussed. In addition, the information is perceived as credible where other bloggers having read a blog post contribute to the blog through a rolling discussion, thus providing corrections to the information when required.

**h) Attracting readers through animations, videos, and pictures**

The political blogs link to the applications, which use animations, online video, or YouTube to attract readers towards participating in blog activities. The presence of pictures on reported news websites acts as a non-verbal social behaviour that encourages feelings of social presence in readers of a news article. LaRose & Whitten (2000), in their studies, have identified photographs as an immediate behaviour communicating “social approval” and “social interest” online. Therefore, these type of applications attached to blogs can persuade readers to read information that is posted.
Table 4.2 above shows the extent of the use of these Web 2.0 features in the Malaysian blogs. These applications used all forms of applications and media to garner interest or show politicians smiling or mixing with people or showing them at projects completed.

i) Promoting open communication through comments and chats, and sending and receiving messages

The participants in the Malaysian political blogs actively communicated through shared comments and messages, and chatting with other bloggers. These activities appear to promote open communication amongst the online community in discussing political issues. Blogging has provided substantial modes for communicating a wide variety of perspectives on important environmental and governmental issues (Oravec, 2003). This research has shown that rich social relationships and communities can develop in even the simplest text-based environment confirming other research by (Baym, 1995; Jones, 1995), through the use of Web 2.0 applications in political blogs. Political blog also is appropriate medium of political information for woman who is a housewife, since most of them live and work in the home.

j) Providing up-to-date information

In the Malaysian political environment, blogs are being used by political supporters to get up-to-date information on political issues. This situation, which occurs because of the tight government control on the mass media through corporate ownership, ensures that the news coverage is always favourable to the current regime, and that challengers have little opportunity to publicly air their points of view (Zaharom, 2002; Brown, 2005). Since most of the electronic and printed media is controlled by the Government, blogs in Malaysia have become the popular alternative for readers to find information about politics. Blog as an alternative media for political information that
encourages both urban and rural citizens, especially the more educated urban citizens, to engage in political activity. Blogs contain mobilizing information which permits bloggers to update information directly from one location. Oravec (2003), claims that blogs are becoming popular in many professional and business contexts, providing up-to-date economic and social information related to particular industries or professional groupings. Hence, political blogs can be used by the readers to find up-to-date political information.

**k) Promoting critical thinking**

The information posted on blogs creates critical thinking amongst readers. Weblogs can serve as catalysts in stimulating critical thought and inspiring students to be lifelong learners (Oravec, 2003). Blogs provide a place for the bloggers and blog readers to give comments and critiques on the issues discussed. Therefore, the communications in blogs have created awareness about politics that promotes readers to participate in political activism. In the Malaysian political blogs there is intense debate, especially in the opposition-based blogs, neutral and student-led blogs. Communication is not by a select few but in most cases there are many participants in the conversations online. Political blogs cultivate social integration among readers with the effort to spread political information to villagers with no Internet access.

However some other issues arose around security which although present was not highly noted in the blogs. Seemingly it wasn’t a major issue.

**4.6 Security breach on Website (hackers)**

This study was conducted with the analysis of political blogs developed from 2007 until 2009. Within the timeframe of two years of political blogs study, there was only one case of security breach of information in blogs reported and highlighted in mainstream
media. The case of security breaches has affected the credibility of information in the Malaysian blogs. However, this was an isolated cases that happened during the peak season of blogging activity, during a by-election or general election. For example in the 2009 by-election in Kuala Terengganu, one of the blogs that was pro-government was hacked into and the visitors to the blogs were attacked by malicious software that harmed computers (Figure 4.17). Therefore, the readers started not to visit blogs that were pro-government and have questioned the credibility of information published in blogs. This was an isolated incident and there are few if any other such reports.

![Webserver compromises Umno site - Windows Internet Explorer](http://www.themalaysiantech.com/index.php/2009/03/webserver-compromises-umno-site)  

**Figure 4.17: Security breach in blogs**

What was more a feature of the political blogs in Malaysia was the development of social networking and communities of bloggers interested in their own issues and promoting specific discourse both social and political.
4.7 The Clubs of Political Blog Supporters (Clubs of political bloggers)

In order to increase the number of bloggers who participate in blogs, there are bloggers who form groups of people in their blogs to create a more organised structure by electing committees and leaders for this group. The group is then opened to membership for bloggers who share the same political interest. In this research, an analysis was performed in detail on three groups of supporters of political blogs which support the incumbent government and their associated political discourse for Malaysia, comprising supporters of *Blogger Pembela Negara* (BPN), the ProKj blog Fan Club and *Gabungan Graduan Melayu Muda* (GGMM). These bloggers have their own group members who share the same interest and uphold the same political agenda. In each of their blogs, they have a unique logo to show their identity as a group supporter.

4.7.1 The blog of *Blogger Pembela Negara* (BPN)

The blog of *Blogger Pembela Negara* (BPN) was established on 20th November 2008, being the first virtual conference on Yahoo! Messenger. It was a successful initiative in gathering the Malaysian bloggers who understood the need to uphold the traditions of the Malays and the Muslim communities as the majority citizenship in Malaysia. In their first conference, the bloggers agreed to develop BPN under the weblog of http://parlimenbpn.blogspot.com/ with the formation of an organizational structure, which used their blog’s address, as shown in Table 4.4.
The organizational chart is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Blog URL Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td><a href="http://panglimaperangcyber.blogspot.com/">http://panglimaperangcyber.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td><a href="http://cheguman.blogspot.com/">http://cheguman.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td><a href="http://novandi.blogspot.com">http://novandi.blogspot.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary 1</td>
<td><a href="http://chemoq.blogspot.com/">http://chemoq.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary 2</td>
<td><a href="http://selendangdelima.blogspot.com/">http://selendangdelima.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Bureau</td>
<td><a href="http://fazrulls.blogspot.com/">http://fazrulls.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Bureau</td>
<td><a href="http://farid.blogspot.com/">http://farid.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia Bureau</td>
<td><a href="http://desperado.blogspot.com/">http://desperado.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etiquette Bureau</td>
<td><a href="http://abangluah.blogspot.com/">http://abangluah.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog Monitor Bureau</td>
<td><a href="http://empayarmaleya.blogspot.com/">http://empayarmaleya.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club Senator</td>
<td><a href="http://zealforce.blogspot.com/">http://zealforce.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exco in Selangor</td>
<td><a href="http://melayusepang.blogspot.com/">http://melayusepang.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exco in Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td><a href="http://brojinggo.blogspot.com/">http://brojinggo.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exco in Melaka</td>
<td><a href="http://shahrezad.blogspot.com/">http://shahrezad.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exco in Pulau Pinang</td>
<td><a href="http://pejuangbangsa.blogspot.com/">http://pejuangbangsa.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exco in Johor</td>
<td><a href="http://jebat.blogspot.com/">http://jebat.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exco in Negeri Sembilan</td>
<td><a href="http://farid.blogspot.com/">http://farid.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exco in Sabah</td>
<td><a href="http://sumandak.blogspot.com/">http://sumandak.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exco in Sarawak</td>
<td><a href="http://apai.blogspot.com/">http://apai.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exco in Overseas</td>
<td><a href="http://azzuhrie.blogspot.com/">http://azzuhrie.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The BPN meeting decided to impose rules and regulations on the readers of blogs whereby those who are interested in joining the group club need to register with the moderator and introduce themselves within the blog. Members are not allowed to use any inappropriate words or language, which would be uncomfortable to other bloggers in their articles and communications. These rules were drafted by the committees in order to secure harmony and a good relationship amongst members. Those who join this club are bound to these rules; therefore, breaking these rules results in the member being expelled from the club. The members are encouraged to attend weekly meetings every Wednesday and Friday to discuss any issues arising in blogs or from the club members.
The Main Objectives of BPN are:

1. to provide a place of gathering for the members of the BPN bloggers;
2. to promote the blogs of BPN members;
3. to give comments on the articles written and published by the club members
4. to counter false accusations from the opposition parties towards the Government in their blogs
5. to give comments to UMNO and the Government concerning any unacceptable action by citizens
6. to build close communication among the bloggers for information exchange; and
7. to uphold the nation and religion through the communications in blogs.

In this blogger club, the role of BPN is to answer any political issues and comments written in opposition blogs that are not based on ‘truth’. Since the active use of blogs for political information in late 2007, there have been many false and wild accusations posted on the opposition party blogs on the Internet. This situation, in their opinion, has led to misinformation given to citizens, giving UMNO a bad reputation. Therefore, members of BPN have taken the responsibility to report to the committee any blogs writing misleading articles about UMNO and the Government. The committee then discusses the issues in the weekly meeting and appropriate action is taken. For example, a statement from one of the Members of Parliament from the Democratic Action Party (DAP), Mr. Karpal Singh, accused a member of UMNO Youth, who later sent him bullets as a warning for his statement to bring the Sultan of Perak to court. BPN took action on this issue in a meeting and made a resolution by asking Mr. Karpal Singh to apologise for the incident. Another resolution made by BPN concerns the issue of Malaysian blogs publishing articles that offended Muslims. Articles posted on blogs, such as http://surind.blogspot.com/, http://pedestrianinfidel.blogspot.com/ and http://adibahahmad.blogspot.com/, have been found to write articles that have touched on sensitive issues of Muslims, who represent the majority community in Malaysia. BPN made the resolution below to ask the Ministry of Home Affairs to take action
against these blog writers that have caused a situation of disharmony amongst the multiracial community in Malaysia as shown in Figure 4.18.

![Image of a resolution made by BPN](image.png)

**Figure 4.18: A resolution made by BPN**

BPN is open to any blogger who would like to be involved in discussions and to contribute ideas concerning political issues. The following shows the criteria (drawn up by the committee) for those who may be interested in joining BPN:

1. Bloggers who support UMNO whether from Malaysia or outside of Malaysia
2. Neutral bloggers who would like to protect the special privileges of the Malays from being disrupted by political leaders from the opposition parties
3. Bloggers from opposition parties who are frustrated with the wrongdoings of their political leaders
The bloggers are encouraged to visit the blogs of colleagues and give suggestions about political issues. Thus, a strong relationship can be created that benefits members in BPN. In addition, the close relationship can be seen as being the best way to attract other people to join BPN and thus work towards increasing political activism in Malaysia. At the same time, the BPN members who have violated the rules need to account for their actions. This initiative is in the hope of providing motivation to BPN members in order to avoid any spirit of individualism and to bring members towards unity in defending UMNO and the Government. The list of bloggers in BPN is shown in Figure 4.19.

The site for the list of bloggers in BPN is the reference for members to get information about the other members. It provides the profile of each member and links to members’ blogs. The bloggers who are active online can communicate in the Chatroll (a chat room) provided. As shown in the Chatroll site in Figure 4.20, any recent news and
issues can be openly discussed. The members who visit Chatroll can update issues through comments and an exchange of ideas. The moderators are able to monitor issues, as well as discuss and provide suggestions themselves. The numbers of active online members are visible and can be viewed by visitors. The other applications that are provided in the Chatroll site are videos and pictures related to the discussion topic, which provide an attractive medium. The video can be posted in the form of flash media or linked to YouTube. The related blog communities who share the same interest as BPN are shown in the site for members to have discussion and to exchange opinions.

During the first BPN conference (Figure 4.21), the president of BPN highlighted the need for BPN members to communicate effectively with other bloggers in their blog. They are encouraged to use any resources and sites offered to them in BPN in posting
their blog. At the same time, members are encouraged to exchange ideas in writing articles and issues in making it more informative and relevant. They are encouraged to use Yahoo! messenger for discussion with other bloggers. This is an initiative to communicate and participate in discussion in blogs as an effective channel. By joining BPN, they will receive guidance for effective communication in blogs.

Another important resolution achieved in the conference was when BPN urged the club members to condemn and reject the political stand made by the leaders from the opposition parties who showed disrespect for the special privilege of Malays, as stated in the Federal Constitution. Certain political programmes and press statements made by the opposition political leaders have aroused anger and caused public disorder. These incidents, in their opinion, have affected the country politically and economically,
since the country was already suffering from an economic downturn in 2008, and it affected UMNO inasmuch as government in 5 out of the 13 states in Malaysia fell to the opposition party. This evidence, they claim, shows how information from irresponsible political bloggers can affect the perception of the public about the Government.

4.7.2 The ProKj blog Fan Club

The ProKJ Fan Club was officially established on 1st February 2009 and the official weblog is http://prokjfanclub.blogspot.com/ (Figure 4.22). This club aims to discover and to gather together the virtual writers and bloggers who support Mr. Khairy Jamaluddin, the UMNO youth political leader. At the same time, this fan club can be a
platform for the bloggers to build a strong relationship amongst themselves with positive thinking. The number of members of this club totals 109 blog members. They can share knowledge, experiences and resources under the same political interest. The ProKJ Fan Club has planned to organize programmes for the members of the blog community in order to benefit them intellectually. The club members have the opportunity to explore the development of the latest technology. The members will be provided with courses and seminars in ICT to benefit their blogs. The organizational chart is shown in Table 4.5 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Blog URL Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td><a href="http://Jinggo.blogspot.com/">http://Jinggo.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice chairman 1</td>
<td><a href="http://LeftFlank.blogspot.com/">http://LeftFlank.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice chairman 2</td>
<td><a href="http://Kallakucha.blogspot.com">http://Kallakucha.blogspot.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td><a href="http://MonsieurSob.blogspot.com/">http://MonsieurSob.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance Secretary</td>
<td><a href="http://noorasikhin.blogspot.com/">http://noorasikhin.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Information</td>
<td><a href="http://MonsieurSob.blogspot.com/">http://MonsieurSob.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureau of Etiquette</td>
<td><a href="http://Kamal.blogspot.com/">http://Kamal.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureau of Multimedia</td>
<td><a href="http://leftFlank.blogspot.com/">http://leftFlank.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureau of Promotion</td>
<td><a href="http://payakumbuh.blogspot.com/">http://payakumbuh.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration Committee</td>
<td>Jinggo, LeftFlank, Kallakucha, Senapang Patah, Pejuang Bangsa, Ahlang, Sensei, Kamal, Monsieur Sob</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This ProKJ Fan Club post their articles on political information. At the same time, the members have to promote Khairy in their blog, by providing discussion and related articles. The members in this blog can have discussions in the chat box provided and they can post any comments on the articles posted in the blog.

The application of chat box is used in this blog as shown in Figure 4.23. It provides a place for discussion in the Chatroll site where the members can post videos and pictures related to the topic discussed. Video online can be posted in the form of flash media or be linked to YouTube. The members can also use the chat box to communicate and discuss issues about politics in Malaysia. These multimedia applications have made members’ discussions more interactive. The related blog communities, who are also supporters of UMNO, are shown in this site. Since this blog
focuses on young voters, the Chatroll application is the most visited for political discussions.

4.7.3 Gabungan Graduan Melayu Muda (GGMM)

This blog was developed by university students to show their support for UMNO. *Gabungan Graduan Melayu Muda* (GGMM) means the collaboration amongst young Malay graduate students. The blog writers are the result of the collaboration of university students in Malaysia that aim to provide information in support of the Government. The blog targets readers who study in higher education institutions, inside and outside Malaysia. Compared to other groups of blogs, GGMM does not focus on the articles posted but focuses on discussions amongst the blog readers. GGMM
provides links to bloggers to perform online polls to get opinions regarding political issues in Malaysia, as shown in Figure 4.24:

Figure 4.24: Blog of GGMM

4.7.4 Analysis of BPN, ProKJ and GGMM

The analysis from the blogs of BPN, ProKJ and GGMM, show the following concerning the applications and activities performed by these bloggers and blog readers:

a) The supporters' club blogs have similar agendas in developing blogs, which aim to promote UMNO and the Government in the articles and discussions.

b) The blog club supporters have created a social network amongst readers through discussions and the exchange of information.

c) The blogs focus on the different age groups of the community
d) The blogs use features in Web 2.0 applications such as online discussion and exchanging information among the members (online video/TV, Chat box, YouTube, Chatroll).

e) Blogs have the potential to be important tools in political activism because they have strong influence in promoting readers to participate in political activities.

f) The use of applications in Web 2.0 has made the process of acquiring and exchanging political information more attractive and interactive to readers, thus it has the potential to attract new readers to be involved in political activities.

4.8 Groups of bloggers from opposition parties and other groups

In the content analysis of political blogs, this study had also discovered groups and networks of bloggers from opposition parties and from other groups who represent specific beliefs to political or social positions.

4.8.1 The blog of Anuar Ibrahim Dot Com (AIDC)

There is another group of bloggers called Anuar Ibrahim Dot Com (AIDC). AIDC was developed in May 2008 after the 12th Malaysian General Election. The title of this blog is taken from the name of the current leader of the opposition party in the parliament, Mr Anuar Ibrahim. This blog looks into the issues raised by Anuar Ibrahim and any other related political issues created by the opposition parties concerning UMNO and the Government (Figure 4.25). The members of this blog comprise 148 bloggers who are actively using this blog to communicate and to discuss issues raised by Anuar Ibrahim. The opposition party, which united under the People’s Coalition or Pakatan Rakyat (PKR), comprises three groups of opposition parties in Malaysia – Parti Islam
Mr. Anuar Ibrahim was the Deputy Prime Minister at the time of the Government led by Dr Mahathir Mohammad from Disember 1993 until September 1998. He was expelled from the second highest position in Malaysia’s Government because he was charged with being involving in sex scandals and corruption. He was sent to prison from 1998 until 2006. After he was released, he actively involved himself in PKR and won the parliamentary seat that was vacated by his wife, in the 12th General Election 2008. Since then, he has been elected as the opposition party leader in parliament and is a strong critic of the government and UMNO.

The founder of this blog is Nora who initially only posted a few videos regarding Anuar Ibrahim on YouTube. A group of volunteers then suggested to her to develop a blog as
a place to post videos and to discuss the issues regarding Anuar Ibrahim and the opposition parties. It then formed a group of bloggers to develop AIDC to make the blog more interactive. The organizational structure is shown in Table 4.6 (http://anuaribrahindotcom.blogspot.com/faqaidc/).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Blog URL Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President of AIDC, Article writers, video director, moderator</td>
<td><a href="http://aidc.blogspot.com/">http://aidc.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog webmaster and video editing</td>
<td><a href="http://hokage.blogspot.com/">http://hokage.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video editor</td>
<td><a href="http://cikkiah.blogspot.com">http://cikkiah.blogspot.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article translator</td>
<td><a href="http://orca.blogspot.com">http://orca.blogspot.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td><a href="http://puteri.blogspot.com">http://puteri.blogspot.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of AIDC club, Moderator of Chat box, Special Assistance 1</td>
<td><a href="http://joyah.blogspot.com">http://joyah.blogspot.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of AIDC Forum Club, Special Assistance 2, Blog Moderator &amp; Chat box</td>
<td><a href="http://atasbawah.blogspot.com/">http://atasbawah.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Yahoo! Group AIDC, Blog Moderator &amp; Chat box</td>
<td><a href="http://ladybird.blogspot.com">http://ladybird.blogspot.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance to Head of Chat box, Blog Moderator &amp; Chat box</td>
<td><a href="http://mamathensem.blogspot.com/">http://mamathensem.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog Moderator &amp; Chat box</td>
<td><a href="http://NoWadayS.blogspot.com/">http://NoWadayS.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AIDC is not being sponsored by any political organization or NGO. The site offers to the readers political articles related to Anuar Ibrahim and other opposition parties. The members of AIDC and readers can post any comments and be involved in discussion in the chat box provided in the blog. The political articles written in AIDC are based on the Internet, political magazines, political books, and newspapers. The members and readers of AIDC can access writing materials in the form of translated articles, blog commentaries, e-mails from readers, quotations from selected books, and selected articles from other blogs and websites. The readers can also watch video links from YouTube and videos using flash player. Amongst the most watched video links are Siapa Anuar (who is Anuar), Soalan untuk Anuar (Questions for Anuar), Neo Anuar and AnuarGate.

The applications in the AIDC Chatroll contain different features to those offered in other blog communities. As shown in Figure 4.26, the applications provided in the Chatroll
site enable members to have discussions in a chat box. The site offers links to videos and pictures related to the topic being discussed. Online videos can be posted in the format of flash media or be linked to YouTube. The related blog communities who share the same interest as AIDC are shown on the site for the use of AIDC members to have discussions and an exchange of opinions. These multimedia applications have made members’ discussions more attractive to members, thus attracting more bloggers to join the group.

One of the applications in the AIDC blog is the link to AIDC Translate as shown in Figure 4.27. This link provides collections of articles that were originally published in the English language and have been translated into the Malay language. These articles are taken from various sources for international blogs, international political magazines, political books and newspapers.
Collections of articles from selected conferences are also provided in the link to be viewed by the blogger. For example, the articles from Indonesia regarding the analysis of political activism of Anuar Ibrahim are also available. The translation site of AIDC makes it different from other political blogs. This feature can be a source of attraction to bloggers in Malaysia. The bloggers and blog readers use this blog as a source of information and discussion on political matters. The AIDC members can post their comments and give suggestions on this blog to make the article more meaningful. For example, in Figure 4.28, the moderators and editors of AIDC look into the information given by the members and the edited articles will be posted in AIDC and related blogs.
In the AIDC blog, there is a link to the AIDC forum club where the members can use this site to discuss specific matters regarding the issues in the AIDC blog. As shown in Figure 4.29, the link called Forumotion.com is the place for the members of AIDC to have a discussion concerning current political matters occurring in Malaysia and around the world. Forumotion.com also has a site for members to discuss any topic beyond political matters. This forum is used as a platform for the members to discuss and organize activities for AIDC members. Here, the forumers give suggestions and comments in improving AIDC blogs.
The multimedia Web 2.0 features in the AIDC blog include YouTube and online TV, and can attract blog readers to participate in blog discussions. In the AIDC blog, readers are able to watch online TV, video and documentaries about Anuar Ibrahim’s political issues, as shown in Figure 4.30.
The video referred to above explores conspiracies associating him with America, the IMF, and other controversial organizations overseas. Some videos highlight Anuar Ibrahim’s attitudes when he was in UMNO and after he joined the opposition party. Interestingly, these exclusive videos and documentaries cannot be found in published mainstream mass media in Malaysia. Visitor’s of blogs can sit in front of a PC and watch video clips without having to read each of the articles posted on blogs. Through online TV, the discussion in parliament can be viewed by a site visitor, as shown in Figure 4.31. The links in this site are organized according to issues and the date of posting for easy retrieval of the information.
Figure 4.31: The Debate Session in Parliament in AIDC online TV

Figure 4.32 illustrates another application linked to and embedded in the AIDC blog. It is called Word Press page.
AIDC Wordpress is a link where members can edit the contents of any sources concerning any political issues related to Anuar Ibrahim. They have to put information about them so readers know where the blogger is coming from. The members of AIDC can create as many pages as they want and manage all of their contents in Wordpress. The moderators will evaluate the information posted and give suggestions to make the content more meaningful. The benefit for those who post materials in this site is that they can use this to train as a blog writer through constantly producing informative material in their blogs.

4.8.2 Bloggers Networks Malaysia

The Bloggers Network Malaysia (BNM) is an informal group of independent bloggers who support Pakatan Rakyat in disseminating political information to citizens. The members of this network voluntarily formed a group, which has no formal organizational structure, compared to the supporters of UMNO. Unlike the other blogger groups, which have their own logo in their blog, BNM do not use it to represent their group. The members of BNM are listed in the blog owned by the BNM members for the reference of other bloggers, as shown in Figure 4.33. Interestingly, the network of this group exists within the bloggers in each of the states in Malaysia. Each of the states in Malaysia has their own BNM members who work voluntarily for Pakatan Rakyat in disseminating information and articles for opposition parties. They are working together in answering any issues and distribute that information, which is posted in the blogs of BNM members.
The by-election in Bukit Gantang Perak on 7th April 2009 was an example of the work done by this BNM group. They have their own volunteer group that organize and update information within their blog network. Their work includes preparing the media room, the cameraman, the preparation of hardware and software to be used in updating blogs, the preparation of food and accommodation to bloggers and the coordinator of BNM. The news, which they receive from BNM bloggers, is immediately acted upon by the moderators. Recent articles with photographs and videos are posted immediately in the BNM blogs.

The visitors to BNM blogs have an advantage of receiving recent news and developments about Malaysian political issues. This is considered by them to be one of the key factors of Pakatan Rakyat’s victory in the 12th general election in 2008. As shown in Figures 4.34, 4.35 and 4.36, the BNM bloggers actively update information for the by-election in Bukit Gantang, such as perakexpress (http://perakexpress.com).

Figure 4.34: Blog of Perakexpress (http://perakexpress.com)
Figure 4.35: Blog of Politikbanjar (http://politikbanjar.blogspot.com)

Figure 4.36: Blog of Syaomel85 (http://syaomel85.blogspot.com)
4.8.3 Bloggers against the Internal Security Act (ISA)

This is the group of bloggers who have formed a club to protest against one specific law imposed by government. Consequently the bloggers from the opposition parties support the political agenda of \textit{Pakatan Rakyat} to abolish the Internal Security Act (ISA)(1957), which is implemented in Malaysia. This is a preventive detention law in force in Malaysia. The legislation was enacted by Malaysian politicians after the country gained independence from Britain in 1957. In essence, it allows for the arrest of any person without the need for trial in certain defined circumstances. Malaysia is one of the few countries in the world whose Constitution allows for preventive detention during peacetime without safeguards that elsewhere are understood to be basic requirements for protecting fundamental human rights.

The opposition parties under \textit{Pakatan Rakyat}, such as PAS, DAP and PKR, have spoken out against the ISA. Many of them have leaders or prominent members who were held under the ISA at various times. The opposition parties have spoken against the Government for using this act on the public. This action by this group has gained strong support from the public since many of them, who oppose the Government, have been caught under ISA. Meanwhile, the opposition parties have begun a campaign to stop the ISA from being used on the public and many articles have been posted in their blogs. The blog from the opposition parties has the logo of ‘Bloggers Against ISA’ showing their support for their work which is done by the party. The logo can be seen in the first page of the blogs, as shown in Figure 4.37.
4.8.4 The Bloggers’ Directory Blog

The Bloggers’ directory was developed to group active Malaysian bloggers who support opposition parties. The blog is managed by the Youth PAS Wilayah Persekutuan Division. This directory is open to bloggers who are Chinese, Indian or any race that supports the ideologies of the opposition parties to include their name in the lists. The blog is very user friendly and the visitors who visit this directory can be linked to the blogs needed via a mouse click. The number of bloggers who have registered in this directory numbers around 102 blogs. The blog of the Members of Parliament from PAS, DAP and PKR are listed in alphabetical order for easy retrieval by bloggers and visitors, as shown in Figure 4.38. They can post their ideas and articles for the reference of other bloggers.
Instructions are given in the blog for joining the directory. They have to go to the pages that have been categorized in alphabetical order and fill up the reply form provided on the page. A blogger has to give their name or nick name, email address, the name of their blog, blog URL address, the description or tag for their blog. An email address is needed for the moderator to inform members of any new activities or related news. Basically, this blog does not have an organisational chart but it is organized by a moderator. The moderator of this blog can be contacted through email pemudawilayah@gmail.com or by visiting the directory blog at http://dppwp.wordpress.com. An example of the members of this directory can be seen in Figure 4.39, whereby those who have registered their name are arranged in alphabetical order.
One blog community is slightly different in that its basis lies in the Malaysian Constitution, but its purpose is cultural and religious. In one sense it is politically neutral party wise but does support the dominant political discourse of Malaysia as an Islamic country.

4.8.5 The Muslim Bloggers Alliance

The Muslim Bloggers Alliance (MBA) is organized for the purpose of uniting Muslim Bloggers and improving the relationships between fellow Muslims whilst building a model community of dedicated Muslims that aspire to uphold the principles and tenets of Islam and those of the Federal Constitution. It was first developed in July 2008 with Mahaguru58 (http://mahaguru58.blogspot.com/) (as shown in Figure 4.40), as the president of the group, with a few other bloggers as the group committees. The URL
The address of MBA is http://themuslimbloggersalliance.org, and, until now, this group already has 106 registered members who are among the Muslim bloggers in Malaysia.

The MBA organizes and establishes a network of like-minded Muslim bloggers to help clear the misconceptions about Islam and Muslims by enjoining the call for Islam through positive articles and disseminating true information about Islam and the Muslim Way of Life to all blog visitors. The articles and discussions in MBA are posted to counter any malicious material blaspheming Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta’ala, the Prophet Muhammad Sallalahu Alaihi Wassallam and the Muslim community by propagating articles and reports based on the actual teachings of the Holy Al-Qur’an Al Kareem and authentic Hadiths of the Prophet Sallalahu Alaihi Wassallam.
There are many plans being drawn up to facilitate the activities of the MBA members. There are plans for the MBA to be registered as a Mutual Benefits Society and to create business opportunities for its members. In addition, it will provide many benefits to those who are proactive in making the MBA a dynamic and vibrant alliance of positive minded true Muslim Bloggers. Muslim bloggers in Malaysia are encouraged to join the MBA in order to establish their network of like minded Muslim Bloggers, and to learn of the latest happenings in the nation, the Asian region, and around the world.

Membership of the MBA is voluntary and is open to Muslims aged 18 and above, residing in Malaysia and the rest of the world. Membership is issued to Muslim Bloggers upon payment of monthly fees and acceptance by the MBA Executive Committee. The MBA Executive Committee reserves the right to decide upon each application and their decision is based upon qualifying aspects of the applicant with regard to the character and integrity of the blogger as a true Muslim, who writes rationally and reasonably in his or her blog discussing or explaining about Islam or anything related to Muslim affairs. The context and contents of the applicant’s blog are assessed and evaluated to determine the approval for membership in the MBA. Applicants are to furnish to the MBA the following details:

1. full name as in their identity cards or passport
2. full blog address
3. email address
4. contact mobile number
5. gender
6. age
7. profession
The objectives of MBA are:

i. To bring about a closer relationship between the various Islamic organizations and NGO’s by hosting or organizing regular events and functions to raise the awareness about true Islam;

ii. To maintain and increase the standards and values of Muslim Bloggers Alliance members by holding regular classes and activities that include language classes, literary know-how and also other beneficial activities to add to and increase the knowledge of Islam and relevant fields of Islamic knowledge;

iii. To work with the Islamic Development Department and other Islamic authorities in carrying out the call for Islamic activities throughout Malaysia through its members nationwide and eventually worldwide;

iv. To provide support and mutual benefits to all registered and active members of the Muslim Bloggers Alliance by carrying out permissible activities in raising funds to help run the alliance and to improve society in all aspects of self development and education in keeping with the affordability to do so; and

v. To promote religious awareness and civic consciousness in the lives of the Muslim community, especially of those who are registered with the MBA.

As the MBA is only open for registration to Muslim bloggers in Malaysia, the objectives and the rules are restricted to the opinions and teaching of Islam. Thus, most of the list of members of the MBA is bloggers who support the Islamic political party of PAS. An example of MBAs’ members is shown in Figure 4.41.
One additional blog concerns a registry of all blogs of all political and social interests.

4.8.6 Sopo Sentral Directory of Malaysia Bloggers

This is another blog that provides access to a large directory of bloggers in Malaysia. Sopo Sentral Directory of Malaysia (SSDM) is considered to be the most comprehensive directory, which lists the collection of blogs in Malaysia. The URL address of this directory is http://sopo-sentral.blogspot.com/, as referred to in Figure 4.42. SSDM is a very useful reference to bloggers searching for blogs that have the same writing interests.
SSDM is not developed for bloggers to post articles on political issues. However, bloggers have a wide access to specific blogs of their own interest (Figure 4.43). SSDM has been arranged according to their own categories in alphabetical order. This Directory on Society, Politics, and Economy is divided into SoPo bloggers list, politicians & political parties; and categorized SoPo blogs. There is a list of SoPo bloggers, most of who discuss about political issues. In the section of political parties and politicians (Figure 4.44), the bloggers can have access to the lists of blogs that belong to this group. Besides the list of political blogs, SSDM has a list of government offices, ministries offices and NGOs’ offices that are involved in political activities. Thus, this blog can be used as a one-stop reference for bloggers to get access to related blogs for the political information.
Figure 4.43: The list of blogs and bloggers

Figure 4.44: Political parties and Politicians blog list
4.8.7 The Malaysian Indian Bloggers Club

The MIB Club, also known as Malaysian Indian Bloggers Club, was opened in July 2007 by a group of active Indian bloggers. The URL address for this blog group is http://mibclub.blogspot.com (Figure 4.45). Specifically, the MIBC focuses on blogs developed by Indian bloggers in Malaysia. Most of the articles posted in this blog discuss matters relating to the Indian community in Malaysia. The MIBC has posted events, such as invitations, programmes, entertainment, technology, news and issues to inform Malaysian Indians about what is happening around them. The objective is to be in the right place to voice issues concerning the Indian community and to help create a society for the future.

The MIBC also provides an opportunity to create better plans for the society in the upcoming years. This is also a place for the Indian community to have an open discussion related to problems faced daily. It provides comments from the readers of articles and chats, links to related blogs, announcements of special events and pictures. The MIBC is simply a media to transfer news to other bloggers and readers. Not only that, the mission of MIBC aims to create an Internet social networking among the community of Indians’ bloggers in Malaysia.
The MIBC has a team of young bloggers, new themes, new things, and many more activities to attract more members. The MIBC opens registration for other Indian bloggers to join with this blogger group. Particularly, the MIBC does not have complicated rules for new members. The most important rule for those who are interested in joining is that the member is an Indian who has a blog. It is simple to join the Malaysian Indian Bloggers Club by just signing into the column provided in this blog. However, the response from the Indian bloggers towards this club is quite low with only a small number having participated as a member of the MIBC.

4.8.8 Malaysian Chinese Bloggers Directory

In recent years, due to the wide spread adoption of information technology in the major cities in Malaysia, and the strict control posed by the Government of Malaysia over the mainstream media, many Malaysians have started to utilize weblogs as their personal
platform to express and discuss their concerns and criticisms regarding various views on politics, social, and economic and educational affairs in Malaysia. However, information technology literate communities in Malaysia are still lacking a unified effort in compiling a Malaysian Bloggers Directory as a quick reference for the communities to surf for different kinds of thinking and opinions in the borderless World Wide Web particularly with the use of Web 2.0 technologies.

In conjunction with the above, the Chinese bloggers have made a directory of blogs called the Malaysian Chinese Bloggers Directory (MCBD). The URL address for MCBD is http://malaysian-blogger.blogspot.com (Figure 4.46). The MCBD has multiple categories of bloggers who are registered in the directory. Most of the blogs listed are those that discuss political issues in Malaysia, particularly DAP. The MCBD has received a good response from the Chinese bloggers with more than 1,000 bloggers having registered. Besides the directory of bloggers, this blog also provides applications whereby the visitors can have links to related blogs. They can also post comments on certain issues posted by the bloggers. The discourse is Chinese and is reflected in the Chinese language (Figures 4.47, 4.48) and issues related to the Chinese language being used, excluding the other race groups in Malaysia.
Figure 4.46: Malaysian Chinese Bloggers Directory (http://malaysian-blogger.blogspot.com/)

Figure 4.47: Malaysian Weblogs written in Chinese
4.8.9 Analysis of Blogs developed by supporters of the opposition parties

The analysis of blogs developed by the supporters of opposition parties, and specific interest groups involved in Malaysian politics has shown that:

i. The contents of these blogs are organized into the categories of latest news, special reports, the most active blog, the most posted articles in blogs, alerts for by-elections and newspaper cuttings for the latest political news. This can be seen in the blog of Malaysia Today (Figure 4.49)
ii. The schedule for the latest political campaign rallies is posted in these blogs for the reference of the party supporters. There is a perception that these blogs will encourage political participation.

iii. The links to the blogs of political leaders is provided for the bloggers to receive the current activities and news related to their representatives in the house of parliament.

iv. The blogs from these groups are updated regularly.

v. The blogs use features in Web 2.0 applications such as online discussion and exchanging information among the members (online video / TV, Chat box, YouTube, Chatroll).
vi. Blogs have directories of bloggers to which they can refer to get related information concerning political issues. For example, the blogs from the Youth Pas blogger directory, SoPo central Directory and MBA show that they have organized the sources and information for easy retrieval of the bloggers.

vii. The supporters of these political parties and special interest groups have a clear explanation of political issues, which can result in strong support for the party of for the goals of the special interest group.

There are the elements of difference and similarities in the two groups of blogs – pro government and anti-government / special interest blogs. These are shown in Table 4.7.
Table 4.7 presents a summary of the content analysis of the political blogs evaluated in detail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pro Government Blogs</th>
<th>Anti-government/special interest blogs</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blogs have the potential to be important tools in political activism because they have strong influence in promoting readers to participate in political activities.</td>
<td>The schedule for the latest political campaign rallies is posted in these blogs for the reference of the party supporters. There is a perception that these blogs will encourage political participation.</td>
<td>Both groups perceive blogs as a mean to promote their own discourse through activism and that requires the citizens to know where meetings and rallies are being held.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The blog club supporters have created a social network amongst readers through discussions and the exchange of information.</td>
<td>The links to the blogs of political leaders is provided for the bloggers to receive the current activities and news related to their representatives in the house of parliament.</td>
<td>Both groups see the blogs are conduits of information and news. In both cases they focus on arguing for their point of view. In the case of government supporters it is about maintaining the discourse of the status quo. The opposition parties and special interest groups like the Chinese and Indian are contesting that discourse. The Malay and Muslim group want to ensure that whatever happens, the discourse of Islam prevails.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs are regularly updated</td>
<td>The blogs from these groups are updated regularly.</td>
<td>All groups perceive the value in timely information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs have directories of bloggers to which they can refer to get related information concerning political issues. For example, the blogs from the Youth Pas blogger directory, SoPo central Directory and MBA show that they have organized the sources and information for easy retrieval of the bloggers.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This was not an obvious issue for the pro government blogs who were more concerned about the ‘general’ message rather than specific which were the focus of the other blogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The supporters’ club blogs have similar agendas in developing blogs, which aim to promote UMNO and the Government in the articles and discussions.</td>
<td>The supporters of these political parties and special interest groups have a clear explanation of political issues, which can result in strong support for the party of for the goals of the special interest group.</td>
<td>The intent is all of the blogs analysed was clear and directed. Each had a view that was paramount and supported with evidence, with data and with visualisations designed to attract people to that point of view.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The blogs use features in Web 2.0 applications such as online discussion and exchanging information among the members (online video / TV, Chat box, YouTube, Chatroll).

The blogs use features in Web 2.0 applications such as online discussion and exchanging information among the members (online video / TV, Chat box, YouTube, Chatroll).

All groups see the value in Web 2.0 applications and all enhanced their blogs with material presented in all sorts of ways to make them more attractive to readers and to hold their interest.

### 4.9 Summary

This analysis of a large number Malaysian political blogs has demonstrated they are differentiated by content, structure and intent. The analysis has also discovered various and consistent use of Web 2.0 applications across all type of political blogs and bloggers in Malaysia. The use of Web 2.0 applications in blogs as the tools of discussion and exchanging information have attracted readers to join the group and participating in blog activities. Bloggers in Malaysia are offered the latest information and issues on political activities in these blogs. At the same time, bloggers encourage their readers to participate in political discourse and exchange of political ideas through giving comments on the blogs.

The study found that many blogs link to others blogs which are creating social networks politically, beside binding readers into the same political ideology, the bloggers clubs formed encourage feelings of social presence in exchange and writing issues in politics through news articles, sending messages, forum discussions, video and pictures, and chatroll. The bloggers clubs are providing a place to answer political issues thus making political information more informative and relevant. Importantly, political bloggers have created social network amongst readers through discussions and the exchange of information, organizing programmes and gathering the bloggers that have potential to increase political activism in Malaysia.
The characteristics of political blogs provide an organised medium of references on specific political issues, political parties and politicians activities, and easy retrieval, providing up-to-date and credible information. Blogs also provide access on all current political issues thus serve as catalysts in stimulating critical thought. Blogs are used sometimes to persuade readers to reject leaders and provides proposals to restructure the top positions within political parties.

The outcomes of this analysis are summarised below:

| • Political blogs have blogger groups, sending messages, forum discussion, video and pictures, chatroll to Political Blogs in Malaysia provides the freedom of the press that contain current issues in politics through online that serve as catalysts in stimulating critical thought |
|---|---|
| • Blogs links to blogs, online newspapers, online TV news, articles, for information seekers will bind readers into same political ideology, provide a system of checks-and-balances, from bloggers of different ideological that ensure a balance of views is given |
| • Blogs archives provide an organised medium of references on specific political issues, political parties and politicians activities, easy retrieval, providing up-to-date, credible answer any political issues and comments, exchange ideas in writing articles and issues in making it more informative and relevant, encourages feelings of social presence in readers of a news article. |
| • The blogs use Web 2.0 applications as the tools of discussion and exchanging information among the members (online video / TV, Chat box, YouTube, Chatroll) attract readers towards participating in blog activities, more bloggers to join the group |
| • Blog aimed to persuade readers to reject the leaders and provides proposals to restructure the top positions within the political party. |
| • Political bloggers have created social network amongst readers through discussions and the exchange of information, organizing programmes and gathering the bloggers that potential to increase political activism in Malaysia |
However such a summary is generally indicative of process only. It does not always make clear the motivation for such political activity. In Chapter 2 in this thesis a conceptual framework was developed which focused on 4 major elements that play were proposed to a significant role in the motivation for and use of political blogs. An analysis of the outcomes of the blog content analysis within the context of that framework is presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Blog Content Analysis and the Conceptual Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements in the framework</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Outcomes of the Blog Analysis</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online information seeking</td>
<td>Research shows that online information seeking acts positively for political engagement, community involvement (Delli Carpini, 2000, Kwak et al., 2006; Taveesin and Brown, 2006) and has been linked to an increase in online interactive civic messaging that, ultimately, and results in higher levels of civic participation (Shah et al., 2005). This study focuses on the use of political blogs by citizens as online information seeking political information.</td>
<td>Malaysian Political Blogs provide an organised medium of information on specific political issues, political parties and politicians activities, provide easy retrieval, and provide up-to-date and credible information. There are significant numbers of members in each blog, all citizens active in political discussion. The result is an appearance of increased political activity and civil participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive civic messaging</td>
<td>The Internet obviously allows people to “post, at minimal cost, messages and images that can be viewed instantly by global audiences” (Lupia &amp; Sin, 2003: 316). Habermas argued that the political public sphere needs input from citizens who give voice to society’s problems and who respond to the issues articulated in elite discourse. Habermas used discourse to argue that citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion; thus with the guarantee that they may assemble and unite freely, and express and publicize their opinions freely (Habermas, The use of Web 2.0 applications as the tools of discussion and exchanging information attracted readers to participating in blog activities. The bloggers clubs encourages feelings of social presence in exchange and writing issues in politics through news article, sending messages, forum discussion, video and pictures, and chatroll. These clubs and the special interest groups identified in the blogs are creating social networks using web applications and social media to foster political activism. These groups are creating the ‘public sphere’ Habermas refers to as essential for challenging the ‘elite’ discourse. The Malaysian blogs allow citizens to debate and be critical of plus support government policies and the existing discourse. The blogs described show that multiple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The study refers to the activities engaged in by the active bloggers and citizens that use the Internet, i.e., political blogs.

**Interpersonal political discussion**

Webster's dictionary states that discourse has two meanings:

(a) Formal communication of thoughts about a serious subject through words (spoken or written) and (b) rationality or the ability to reason.

Habermas (1989) emphasis in defining community has shifted from social interaction as an embodied set of relationships to social interaction as communication, on the speech-act which linked people.

Interpersonal political discussion refers to the communication that occurs between the bloggers and users in political blogs to promote public participation and sharing information, through public dialogue on political issues.

Blogs provides freedom of press on current political issues thus serve as catalysts in stimulating critical thought. Blogs are used to persuade readers to reject the leaders and provides proposals to restructure the top positions within the political party.

The incumbent political discourse in Malaysia is supported and promoted in some blogs and contested in others. Special interest groups contest not just the political discourse per se but add to the complexity of the discourse through adding religious (Islam) discourse or discourse based on race.

**Civic participation**

Evidence is accumulating that political messaging and sharing political information contributes directly to civic and political participation (Gil De Zúñiga et al., 2007). Blogs have bottom-up participation, as individuals can be more open and freely express their opinions. Communication and participation online has amplified conventional expressive and political participation.

The internet was seen to have a role in promoting civic participation and linked with Habermas’s public sphere, a space ‘where people act as citizens by discussing the issues that concern them’ (Rheingold 2000)

Citizen participation in political activities has derived from participation and political activism.

Blogs have created social networks amongst readers through discussions and the exchange of information, organizing programmes and gathering the bloggers that have potential to increase political activism.

These blogs are driven both by bottom-up activism promoting alternative discourse or represent activism imposed top down to maintain the existing political discourse.
The blog content analysis provides a preliminary stage in understanding the development and use of political blogs in Malaysia. The next chapter uses the conclusions of this analysis as a basis to interview active bloggers and discusses the findings from these interviews with bloggers.
Chapter 5
The Effects of Political Blogs on Political Activism
– the Bloggers Perspective

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the findings of a set of interviews with bloggers on the effects of political blogs concerning citizens’ participation in political activities in Malaysia. The data was collected in semi-structured interviews with 15 political bloggers and blog managers. The outcomes of the blog content analysis reported in Chapter 4 were used in formulating the interview questions. The interviews were conducted in order to better understand the work done by, and experiences of, political bloggers and how Web 2.0 applications help promote citizens’ participation in political activism through blogs.

The criteria of selecting the 15 bloggers for the interviews derived from political blogs reviewed in blogs content analysis in the first phase of research methodology. Out of 168 blogs reviewed, only 40 blogs provided contact information through email and telephone number. Consequently, only 15 of those 40 bloggers were willing to be interviewed. The blogger was been approached with email informing the objective of the study and inviting them to be as a respondent for interview.
Table 5.1 summarizes information about each of the bloggers who were interviewed.

Table 5.1: List of Political Bloggers and Blog Managers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Blogger Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Blog Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Independent blogger</td>
<td>MPBI 1</td>
<td><a href="http://perisik-rakyat.com/">http://perisik-rakyat.com/</a></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Politician</td>
<td>MPBI 2</td>
<td><a href="http://pkmdunbota.blogspot.com/">http://pkmdunbota.blogspot.com/</a></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Blog manager to politician</td>
<td>MPBI 3</td>
<td><a href="http://pkmdunbota.blogspot.com/">http://pkmdunbota.blogspot.com/</a></td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Supporter of politicians</td>
<td>MPBI 4</td>
<td><a href="http://politikbanjar.blogspot.com/">http://politikbanjar.blogspot.com/</a></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Supporter of politicians</td>
<td>MPBI 5</td>
<td><a href="http://www.telokbakong.com/">http://www.telokbakong.com/</a></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Supporter of politicians</td>
<td>MPBI 6</td>
<td><a href="http://cenangau.blogspot.com/">http://cenangau.blogspot.com/</a></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Supporter of politicians</td>
<td>MPBI 7</td>
<td><a href="http://zorro-unmasked.blogspot.com/">http://zorro-unmasked.blogspot.com/</a></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Supporter of politicians</td>
<td>MPBI 8</td>
<td><a href="http://pkrpasdap.blogspot.com/">http://pkrpasdap.blogspot.com/</a></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Member of a political party</td>
<td>MPBI 9</td>
<td><a href="http://jiwokelate.wordpress.com/">http://jiwokelate.wordpress.com/</a></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Politician</td>
<td>MPBI 10</td>
<td><a href="http://pemuda-parit.blogspot.com/">http://pemuda-parit.blogspot.com/</a></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Blog manager to politician</td>
<td>MPBI 11</td>
<td><a href="http://pemuda-parit.blogspot.com/">http://pemuda-parit.blogspot.com/</a></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Supporter of politicians</td>
<td>MPBI 12</td>
<td><a href="http://politiksa">http://politiksa</a> ya.blogspot.com/</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Freelance journalist</td>
<td>MPBI 13</td>
<td><a href="http://aranganakmelayu.blogspot.com/">http://aranganakmelayu.blogspot.com/</a></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Freelance journalist</td>
<td>MPBI 14</td>
<td><a href="http://aranganakmelayu.blogspot.com/">http://aranganakmelayu.blogspot.com/</a></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Supporter of politicians</td>
<td>MPBI 15</td>
<td><a href="http://jantantuya.blogspot.com/">http://jantantuya.blogspot.com/</a></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this research, the third phase of data collection was a survey questionnaire which distributed to Malaysian citizens to find out their view on the effects of political blogs towards political participations. This has been explained in chapter 6 on the effects of political blogs on political activism in Malaysia from citizens’ perspectives. The citizens selected as respondents were the readers of political blogs and they were familiar with the contents and applications used in blogs. The bloggers themselves are considered as blogs’ readers since the nature of a blogger who has to read and analyse blogs related to them in order to have information and ideas to be written in blogs.

An independent blogger is a blogger having no official ties with any established organizational entities. A member of a political party is a blogger has official connection to party organization. A supporter of a politician is a blogger who has official connections to politicians. A politician blogger is a politician who actively uses political blog to give information on politics. They also use blogs as a mean of communication with people in their constituency. Freelance journalist is a blogger and as freelance journalist having no official relationship with any mass media organization.
A blog manager is the blog developer who organizes and manages blogs that belong to politicians. Due to the time constraint of politicians, his or her blogs were managed by a blog manager for the contents, replying to comments and updating information. A blog manager is also responsible to identify the best blogging software, supervising a portal where different blogs converge and have the authority to edit or delete a post. In addition, a blog manager has the capacity of scanning the blog post for inaccuracies, inconsistencies, inappropriate and personal disgrace (Yuan & Meszaros, 2006).

According to Polit and Beck (2008), the purpose of data analysis is to organize, provide structure to, and elicit meaning from research data. In this study, the analysis of the interviews done with the fifteen political bloggers reveals five main themes on the roles blogs play in promoting citizens’ participation in politics in Malaysia. The first theme relates to their need for updated content on information about Malaysian politics.

5.2 Updated content on political information

The bloggers who participated in this study believed that political information posted in blogs does impact on political engagement. Citizens are making more demands for information on political issues. This was clear in the Malaysian General election in 2008. The Prime Minister concurred on this issue in that he mentioned in one of his speeches after the election that the use of new media caused BN to lose seats in five states, and now, he said, people’s thinking is more critical (Berita Harian online, Monday 29th June 2009).

However, the motivation for participation depends on the blog content. Bloggers mentioned that content should bring forward current issues in politics in a non-confrontational way. One such way is to attach videos of political leaders’ speeches on certain issues. The citizens require alternative sources of political information other than news published in mainstream newspapers. The advantage of blogging is that it
provides information on issues, often attached with video of speeches. Citizens were more encouraged to participate in politics when politicians explained their position on issues in the form of a video. According to one blogger:

*The opposition parties have won many seats in the main cities where they have large number of political blog readers. Whereby small town shows less seats belong to them due to political information being only read through daily newspapers. (MPBI 1(14))*

*The development in internet usage has promoted the publics’ participation in politics. The Internet and blogs have encouraged participation of the public in politics. Nevertheless, it depends on the contents and on a pleasant presentation. There are readers who give responses when they realize the ‘true’ story of political issues after watching political leaders’ speeches attached in blogs. (MPBI 4 (14))*

Another blogger gave the same opinion, particularly with reference to the effect on younger generations that have had more exposure to the Internet. In Malaysia’s electoral system, the voting ballots for youngsters are categorised as from Channel 3 and 4 (Ghazali, et. al, 2010). This categorization results from the Electoral Act (1958) where it is required that separation by age occurs at each polling station. One blogger stated that the results from the last general election showed there were more ballots from voters in Channel 3, which resulted, he believes, from the effects of blogs on voting intentions from younger Malaysian in the election. More importantly, the voting outcomes showed that there were also many younger people participating in political activities. Two of the bloggers noted:

*The blog participation's effect can be viewed during the general election in urban area through the increase in channel 3 votes. (MPBI 6(13))*

*Articles in blogs give an opportunity for the public to think about the facts on political issues. Blogs have created political thinking in the public based on the analysis written in articles. By putting it up, i.e the political news in blogs, we have played a very significant role in the last general election which affects what bans BN put on us. (MPBI 3(13))*
The 2008 Malaysian General Election results indicated that citizens in urban areas who received better Internet services voted increasingly for the opposition party. Since urban residents are more exposed to political information through alternative media in blogs, this advantages the political party that is able to disseminate information that is not biased against the government. In contrast, people who live in rural areas receive limited sources of political information. The only information media that is provided to them is in the daily newspapers and on television news.

Government control of the mainstream media in Malaysia is seen as a major factor leading to the emergence of political blogs, even in the rural areas. Since blogs serve as an alternative media for political information, bloggers believe it encourages both urban and rural citizens, especially the more educated urban citizens, to engage in political activity. Another blogger stated that blogging has made the public more aware of politics and local issues. This was also recognised by the Prime Minister (Berita Harian online, Monday 29th June 2009). Two of the bloggers also said:

*There is no particular indicator for effect, but there were changes on awareness of the public about politics and local issues. (MPBI 6(13))*

*There are groups who are updating news made by bloggers. Blogs can affect the public since they can influence both the news and pictures posted in articles. It represents a shift in the political beliefs and thinking of the young generations, when blogs offer more facts and figures on political issues. Thus it makes people have more concern and affects them to react to political issues (MPBI (13))*

According to another blogger, blogs encourage online readers to participate in political activities. Blog have played a role in delivering political information to citizens and linking them to political parties’ websites that contain political and ideological information:
Blogs can encourage the public to participate in political activities. Public who read blogs can have an understanding of political ideology and political movements, given that blogs can deepen understanding while delivering information. The public have been attracted to blogs because of the speedy delivery of information, straightforward discussion of issues and responsibility. In my blog, I write based on unexplained facts and I let readers think themselves. Blogs that do not make critique have less reader. (MPBI 7(11))

One blogger’s statement concerned blog readers who themselves become political bloggers, after reading a blog commentator’s opinions. Some bloggers reply to constructive comments made by their blog readers. Bloggers create chat roll groups that generate issues and discussions. After reading articles and political issues posted on a blog, the readers become interested in politics and engage in political activities. As one blogger stated:

There are a few of my blog readers who are interested to become bloggers after reading responses from commentators. They also had gained their interest joining political activities in their area. (MPBI 1(13))

Another blogger reflected a view that many blog readers have become interested in politics. The blogger claims that more than twenty of his blog readers have become political bloggers after reading his online articles:

There are blog’s commentators who are interested to be a blogger after they have received good responses from other bloggers. A part of that, they become interested to read political articles and news. As far as I am concerned, there are more than 20 people who have visited my blog and become political bloggers (MPBI 1(3)).

Political blogs, according to the bloggers themselves, have made more readers more interested in politics. At the beginning, the readers only read the blog entries for leisure, but now they participate in many political activities in their neighbourhoods. Thus, reading of political blogs appears to have widened citizen participation in and to be actively involved in Malaysian politics.
A blogger also claimed that he has received positive responses from readers. They have provided comments on the articles and others have sent SMSs and phone calls to bloggers on various issues of the day. At the same time, one blogger stated that his blog has received many readers who had been referred to his blog and significantly increased the blog ‘hits’. He said:

*I received good responses from readers as I (my blog) was referred to in the blog hits, comments, emails, SMSs, phone calls and feedback from other bloggers. Some readers responded by arguing the facts posted in articles especially on sensitive issues. (MPBI 3(11))*

A blogger also claimed that he frequently received reminder messages from supporters asking for the latest political news and updating the articles posted online. There is then some evidence that supporters have a keen interest in politics gained from the information posted online. Supporters are also looking forward to reading the latest information on politics through a person’s blog, for example one blogger said:

*There was feedback on the information given in the blog. The readers are always asking for the latest news and remind us to do updating. (MPBI 2(11))*

A second issue also emerged in the interviews that was possibly expected, based on previous research. The blogs were a source of creation of social networking, in this case politically motivated, socially constructed and within a context of widespread public participation, of sharing information with the public, through public dialogue, rather than through the exercise of power as argued by Habermas (1996).

5.3 Blogs create social networking on political issues

One of the unique aspects of blogging is that it can unite people where they can exchange ideas on political issues in the communal form argued by Dahlberg, (2001) and Shah et al (2005). Blog readers also post information through blogs informing other
readers about a particular issue. Indeed, anecdotal research by others (Maznah, 2008; Koh, 2008; Lee, 2008; Wong, 2008; Tang, 2008; Sani and Zengeni, 2010) and general political wisdom in Malaysia is that the Internet played a big role in influencing the outcome of the general election in 2008. The interviews with bloggers in this research points training for groups of people getting together to discuss politics, both on and offline, and developing out of blogging. In Bukit Gantang, one political journalist came across a group of young bloggers who had stayed in the same constituency to ensure victory for one candidate, Nizar (Amin Iskandar, Malaysiakini Online, “Secret why young people support alliances”, 15 May 2009).

One blogger interviewed here claimed that he has a group of active followers. Not only do they chat with other bloggers and send or receive messages, they also develop close relationships with their followers by organizing meetings and annual gatherings which allow them to discuss current issues that are posted on blogs. These activities have promoted open communication among blog readers and they can now discuss in more detail many political and social issues. In this way bloggers can exchange ideas on the articles posted and receive direct replies from readers on how to make a certain blog better.

Blogging has made it possible to communicate in a wide variety of ways on important environmental and governmental issues (Oravec, 2003). This research has shown that, in Malaysia too, rich social relationships and communities develop in even the simplest text-based environment (Baym, 1995; Jones, 1995). Alternatively, meetings with supporters have given the participants in Malaysia a feeling of belonging and are giving them the courage to participate in other programs associated with political activities. As one blogger said:

*These blogs have their own active followers and we have organized meetings once in every two or three months. We are able to gather about 50 members for the meetings. (MPBI 1(3))*. 
Blogs contain mobilizing information which permits bloggers to update information directly from one location. One blogger revealed that he received assistance from his blog followers during election times in certain areas. The followers provided the equipment and necessary services needed where poor or low Internet access was a major concern. Bloggers have in fact being going deeper into remote areas for their news and they are able to be up-dated with the assistance of other bloggers. They are creating larger social networks. They can post current information by sending short message services (SMS) to other bloggers to update a blog. Interestingly, the followers are voluntarily helping other bloggers in Malaysia in updated information on politics, publishing that new information online almost immediately. Political supporters do this in order to bring more information to supporters during a political campaign or an election. As one blogger explained:

*There were people waiting for us at the location where the news for the blog is made. Sometimes the volunteers for the political parties have provided us with internet access at the place where the by election is made. Bloggers who did not have any access to the Internet have contacted the other bloggers in town using mobile phones to report the latest political news in their blog. (MPBI 1(3))*

Another important matter that was emphasized by this blogger (MPBI 1(3)) is the effort made by blog readers to disseminate information to the wider public. The influence of political blogs not only takes place in urban areas, but has extended to rural areas as well. The spread of political information is not only focused in areas that have access to the Internet, but is now spreading to remote regions that do not have enough online facilities. The effort to spread political information to villagers with no Internet access is being undertaken voluntarily by political supporters and blog readers.

Some readers have made the effort to link articles in blogs to others so that political information can be spread. They have photocopied articles containing current issues from blogs. They also distributed pamphlets at strategic places such as at the coffee
shops, where many people were gathered. During the election period, the flyers and pamphlets were sent to houses in the constituencies. The same blogger also claimed that there were readers who stayed online for twenty-four hours and read his blog to get the latest information:

Some of my blog readers have printed articles and distributed to public. Other blogs linked articles from this blog thus make it known to readers. There were readers who have 24 hours access to this blog when there were controversial issues. They got updated news in blogs and spread it to public. The networks between bloggers have reduced the problem of internet access in rural areas. (MPBI 3(3))

Political information from the blogs has been printed out for distribution to the villagers who do not have Internet services. The bloggers believe that this situation will become more frequent, especially during elections, when many political issues are being discussed or debated in public but not being published in the mainstream media. Increasingly, villagers who work in the city are making this possible by relaying the latest political information back to their family members and friends.

This sort of activity has also been noted by Yeoh (2008) on how political supporters with Internet access can voluntarily channel information to other people. They copy the updated information from blogs to be disseminated to remote areas. In the rural areas of Malaysia the village (Kampong) is the fundamental social network. Blogs appear to be adding an additional layer to that social network through increased political information.

Young people and women are among the other important groups affected by political blogs and who in turn can also spread political information through their existing social networks and through new ones created out of the blogging process. Young people have formed networked communities which have the same political ideology. These
groups have organised programs such as motivational talks, educational visits, camping and sports for young people and women in the Kampong and larger towns.

They also have organised programs at schools and higher educational institutions to get closer to youngsters. During these programs, the organizers make slots for political talks by politicians. The programs were focused to attract the same group of citizens to know each other and demonstrate the important roles of young people and women in getting involved in political activities. They are encouraged to participate in blogger network groups to have information on political programs and for the latest political news.

Bloggers also have stressed the effects of blogs on women in Malaysia. Involvements of women in socio economic issues and politics in Malaysia have changed after the implementation of the National Economic Programme (NEP) by the government by increasing more employment opportunities for women (Chin, 2000). Women have also been involved in programs that encourage them to participate in political activities (Crouch, 1996; Maznah, 2008). In the early 1970’s Malaysia had been considered a ‘lower middle income economy’ (World Bank, 1990), which caused girls generally to receive less education than boys (Manderson, 1979).

According to Wang (1980), the different socialization of the sexes, combined with perceived unequal returns to schooling for boys versus girls, has affected the post-secondary educational aspirations of male and female children and their actual enrolment patterns. Therefore, women had not had the same educational and employment opportunities as men, which resulted in that they were more confined to home or to family-based activity (Kee, 2007).

However, there were initiatives taken by government where Malaysia’s development plans have been guided by the New Economic Policy (1970-1990), National
Development Policy (1990-2000) and the National Vision Policy (Vision 2020). These policies were aimed at restructuring society, eradicating poverty and ensuring redistribution of income. Great emphasis has also been placed on human resource development and the improved status of women. The study shows the female labour force participation rate has increased from 37.2 per cent in 1970 to 45.7 per cent in 2008 (Mahari et al., 2011). The impact of urbanization on women has brought greater opportunities including better education, social structure and employment, thus empowered them with economic independence (Mahari et al., 2011; Kee, 2007.101).

For woman who is a housewife, blogging is seen as an appropriate medium of political information for since most of them live and work in the home and do not socialize outside as much as men do. If they have Internet access at home they can read political information on blogs:

*Blogging is a social network to political activities. It can generate a network community among the young generation and in local societies from one political ideology. At the beginning it focuses in the local community, but then it has developed as a medium for political information to women. (MPBI 4(3))

Women are not open for politics, since they are staying at home and only read news from TV and mainstream newspapers, except for those who are exposed to friendster, or yahoo messenger and get news from the internet. (MPBI 8 (14))

The third issue that emerged out of the analysis of the interviews related to the impacts of the various Web 2.0 applications and their effects on blogs and blog use in Malaysian Politics.

5.4 The uses of Web 2.0 applications

Bloggers have described that one of the main advantages of using blogs as a source of political information is because Web 2.0 applications are proving to be so effective.
They are user-friendly and permit readers to participate in discussions by giving comments and engaging in online chatrooms with other bloggers. Readers can obtain feedback on any issues being discussed with blog writers, and thus provide their own answer to a discussion. They can be presented in multiple formats and include visual, audio as well as print-based materials.

5.4.1 Applications in blogs affect readers

The existence of a reporter’s photograph on a news website will act as a non-verbal social cue that encourages feelings of social presence in readers of a news article. LaRose and Whitten (2000) identified photographs as an immediate cue that communicates “social approval” and “social interest” online. One Web 2.0 application that has a great impact on readers is attaching pictures to news. A blogger mentioned pictures attached to an online new story has a great impact on readers since it is perceived as indicating evidence.

The materials attached in the blog can be quite interesting. The news published complete with pictures, graphs and facts are quite impressive which is the mainstream media often fails. Readers are more convinced about a news story that shows pictures taken at the scene. One blogger received many comments from readers about the pictures attached to news stories:

*I attached pictures in every news or articles posted in blog to avoid any criticism from the readers. Sometimes I only put the title and the pictures and asked the readers to give comments. Surprisingly, I received a lot of comments from them compared to only writing in article. (MPBI 1(10)*

Another blogger claimed that pictures attached to a blog have increased the number of readers’ hits. He claims that pictures posted show different perspectives compared
with the news received in mainstream newspapers. In other words, readers have a more clear understanding of the story published with a picture in a blog:

In blogs, bloggers have their own method of article's writing. Some bloggers only focus on writing articles, and another blogger insert pictures together with little writing. This is because blog readers would like to view pictures on issues posted in blogs. In my personal view, posting articles together with pictures give more effects to readers. Those pictures posted in blog shows different perspectives compared with what readers have in mainstream newspapers. This has been proven with blog's hits were increasing in the last by-election when pictures have been attached in blog articles. Simply to say that pictures attached with the story in articles give more effects to blog readers. (MPBI 6(10))

Another blogger has used blogs to provide information based on pictures to make a story more interesting, and this attracts readers:

As a member of political party, I tried to convey information in my blog. Blogs are very interesting because we can give explanation with pictures that make a story interesting to readers. (MPBI 8(2))

One blogger uploaded videos about a political programme onto a blog. By doing this, readers have the opportunity to watch the video together with reading the political text in a blog. The videos have generated much impact on readers and helped them to understand political issues. According to one blogger:

The blog received more readers on particular issues. To attract readers, we have uploaded political campaign videos with broad political issues. (MPBI 4(10))

The features in blogs linked to applications which use animations, online video, and YouTube have encouraged readers to participate in blog activities. Some researchers have even extended that work to study how the Internet can increase civic dialogue (Dahlgren, 2005). The Internet allows its audience to talk back and interact with both content creators and other content consumers, which could be an important aspect of
its influence on voting behaviour (Perlmutter, 2008). This was because the applications allowed blog readers to instantly voice and share their opinions.

One blogger confirms that the applications in Web 2.0 can encourage people to engage in politics via YouTube, pictures, slides and audio. These Web 2.0 applications are user-friendly and allow readers to easily understand the political issues and read blog articles. One blogger noted:

**Web 2.0 can encourage people to politics because it uses the applications of YouTube, pictures attachment, slides and audio. Web 2.0 is easier to use and have a lot of applications. Blog can be used to give more explanations to the news posted. In addition, we can attach pictures that can give clear view to our stories and readers enjoy reading the articles. Previously, it was difficult for the opposition party to defeat the government since they have controlled sources of political information. But now with the blog, people can voice their own opinions with using Youtube, animations, audio and at the same time, they can give comments through online. There are strong influences of web 2.0 to users due to applications used. Even political leaders use Facebook to interact with public. (MPBI 8(13))**

Another blogger also mentioned the important factor of accessibility and speed of information that are inherent in Web 2.0 applications. Readers have the opportunity to communicate by giving and receiving comments from writers and also other readers on the issues discussed. One blogger claims this application made readers give their thoughts on certain issues and get the attention of politicians as well. Since Malaysian politicians are increasingly becoming blog writers themselves, their direct comments to readers constitute a unique form of communication and brings them closer to their community leaders. Some of the bloggers noted this, stating:

**Blogs give effect to political participation because applications make it interesting, accessible and speedy. It gives 60% to 70% of outcomes to participation because of attractiveness to applications provided in web 2.0. (MPBI 7(13))**
I attached pictures in every news or articles posted in blog to avoid any received criticism from the readers. Sometimes I only put the title and the pictures and asked the readers to give comments. Surprisingly, I received a lot of comments from them compared to only writing an article. (MPBI 1(10))

The replied comments in blogs can make people think and they are given an opportunity to evaluate information posted in blogs. (MPBI 2(14))

I wrote articles on the current issues drawn from relevant news from Internet. I avoid taking materials in books that give focus on specific issues. The blog is updating daily and I spent 8 hours for writing in blogs. Blogs are updated daily. (MPBI 3(9))

Following the use of blogs as social networking mechanisms and for the dissemination of content, the analysis of the data showed that blogs are especially significant for communication of political information. Achieving what Habermas (1996) noted was the need for places where competing visions of the future can be expressed and subjected to debate without skewing or censorship to fit the agendas of dominating parties, it is paramount to have a means of communications that enables this. Blogs appear to suit that purpose.

5.5 Blogs as a medium for communication

One political campaign strategy used by political parties in Malaysia is through social media campaigns. Political parties choose blogs as an alternative in conveying political information. Political blogs have emerged as a platform for politicians and political supporters to distribute information and to speak more freely and more critically about Malaysian issues. Blogs are increasingly used as a method of political communication because of the speed of publishing, the ease in using hyperlink as in-text references and the current independence of thought that most bloggers have (Woodly, 2008).

Today the political blog is a relatively new phenomenon for citizens of Malaysia but it is fast taking on an important everyday fact of life, and can be used to develop and
spread social and political propaganda. One blogger has stated the key factors supporting choosing blogs as the medium of political information is because delivery is cheap and speedy:

*The blog is phenomenal. It is cheap, free of charge and a most famous medium. It is also very effective and speedy to deliver information.* (MPBI 4(2))

*Writing and posting articles in blog is free and more open. Blog have speedy of access of information and up to date. Blogs are open in delivery of information and contexts. My blog contains humour, some religious knowledge, and political issues with reference to religion. Generally it covers aspect of social, political and economy.*

Another blogger agrees with this view that information in blog is always recent, speedy and comprehensive. For that reason, political news posted in blogs has more influence than news published in a daily newspaper:

*A Blog has more influence than the daily newspaper. The news in blogs is comprehensive, recent and speedy.* (MPBI 2(2))

One blogger believes that a blog can impact on 60-70% of readers and get them to participate in politics. Beside speedy access, Web 2.0 applications within blogs have the ability to attract readers to read and better understand political issues:

*Blogs give effect to political participation because applications make it interesting, accessible and speedy. It gives 60% to 70% of outcomes to participation because of attractiveness to applications provided in Web 2.0.* (MPBI 7(13))

Another blogger agreed on the issue of blog popularity in the context of political media. He mentioned that citizens are attracted to blogs because they provide information rapidly. Another reason is that political issues discussed in blogs are straight forward and bloggers have the responsibility of providing the news:
Public are attracted to blogs because speedy of information, straightforward issues and responsibility. (MPBI 7(13))

As Kellner (2005) states, "democracy, however, requires informed citizens and access to information and thus the viability of democracy is dependent on citizens seeking out crucial information, having the ability to access and appraise it, and to engage in public conversation about issues of importance". The Internet certainly represents an important medium for political information and communication in civic engagement (Tolberg & McNeal, 2003).

Blogs are a very effective political medium in Malaysia because Web 2.0 applications have made communication become specifically targeted to certain groups or types of people. As one blogger said, a blog email sent to readers conveys information about politics directly to people on certain issues. This blogger claims it is the fastest and easiest way for political information to be received by people in his community:

*Blog can generate a social network of members and it is effective. Now I use blogmail to send information on politics. The emails were sent to 1000 to 2000 receivers and my intention is at least 10% of them have read and understand our message. It is convenient to use and free of charge. (MPBI 6(3))*

Importantly this blogger interviewee highlights the way that blogs open up communication enabling open discussion and challenges to prevailing political discourse in the Malaysian political context. In this way political information can be disseminated.
5.5.1 Blog as a source of political information

Blogging is seen as an effective election campaign channel. Information on political issues is now immediately and readily available and in recent years, political blogs have become important tools for political mobilization, specifically in providing information. Blogs are referenced by political supporters in Malaysia because they contain news articles that normally are never published in the mainstream newspapers. As one blogger said:

"Blog is a channel to get political information. Readers choose blogs for political information because they want to develop ideas taken from daily newspapers. (MPBI 5(13))"

This blogger also claims that the main reasons for citizens choosing online political information is because they have doubts about the information published in daily newspapers. They want to see other points of view, analytically they challenge the prevailing discourse. The citizens have distrust in the political news published in mainstream newspapers. This is because the government has been restricting the rights of free speech on political matters for some decades (Smeltzer, 2008; "Freedom of the press", 2008). The Malaysian public is increasingly convinced that these sources have published false claims and fabricated stories. For that reason, blogs are perceived as a more trustworthy and alternative source of political information. Readers in Malaysian too use blogs because they believe online articles are more credible compared to other sources of news information (Johnson & Kaye, 2004).

Blog readers use blogs because of their perceived credibility compared to other sources of news information (Johnson and Kaye, 2004). The emergence of blogs has provided a new space for Malaysian society to voice their opinions about politics. The existence of this technology provides a new opportunity for the Malaysian public to
participate in the democratic process and in information sharing. One blogger mentioned that the applications in blogs provide two-way communication that allows readers to post comments on certain political issues. This provides an alternative platform for readers to do their own analysis of certain issues. The other advantage of blogging is the huge network of readers that is created:

_A Blog has two ways communication where readers can post comments to articles. It is alternative information to news posted in mainstream newspapers, TV and radio. Public argued that these sources has published false and fabricated stories. Blog is an alternative medium of information where the public can read and to do their own research on issues. It has advantage of huge networking of readers since public have less trust on mainstream media. (MPBI 6(13))_

_Blogging is the ultimate source for political information because the television and other source of information are being controlled by the government and with blogs we can control of our time for information (MPBI 3(19))._

_I am writing about 60% of the articles in this blog. It also has linked to other blogs. The articles posted in this blog were edited. This blog gives explanation on the false issues in politic by providing open discussion and comments from readers. (2,7-8)_

Another blogger shares this opinion on the opportunities provided to readers to make their judgements on political issues. He also pointed out the importance of applications in blogs that support democratic elements of free speech:

_Blogs give an opportunity to the target viewer to make their own judgement about politics in this country. The replied comments in blogs can make people to think and they are given an opportunity to evaluate information posting in blogs. (MPBI 2(14))_

This view has been verified by another blogger who stressed that readers would like to read blogged information with a writer’s own view about a certain topic. At the same time, readers would like to give their own comments on the issues written in a blog.
One blogger is convinced that blogs will remain a major source of political information in Malaysia:

*Blog will remain sources for politics in Malaysia as long as the information is not copied from other blogs. Most of the readers would like to read about the writers’ view on particular issues where they want to comment on it. (MPBI 1(13))*

The information posted is recent and taken from sources such as the political parties’ programmes and government sources. In certain cases, information provided in blogs could be influenced by current political issues debated at that time. The issues posted in the Malaysian blogs relate to political events there such as party general assembly meetings or the preparations for by-elections. The interviewees noted that hits on political blogs have increased ‘tremendously’ with bloggers updating their posts frequently for their readers.

Blogs have enabled readers to understand and have an interest in political activities through the articles published online. Interestingly, this process is continuing with discussions of political issues among friends. Readers would suggest to them to read articles in certain writers’ blogs for further information. Consequently, political information is also being spread verbally from blog readers. As one blogger claims:

*The readers of political blogs have brought them to interest in political activities. Most of them discussed political issues among friends and they read articles in blogs for further political information. After a while they have become interested in political activities. (MPBI 7(14))*

Political blog readers constitute many types of people and students are typical bloggers. Students form groups that follow a blog writer on various political issues posted online. Those who live outside the country have used blogs to keep up-to-date
about current political issues in Malaysia. This was especially the case in the Bersih movement. One blogger remarked on the categories of readers:

*There were students and those who work outside visited this blog for current information on political issues. (MPBI 6(11))*

Political blogs in Malaysia have been identified as real sources of new and debated sources of political information. The bloggers interviewed are obviously biased about their perceptions of the effects of blogs but their continuity and growth is still indicative of increasing participation. In the next chapter confirmation from participants in blogs showed that participation is significant. In essence then blogs are now accepted in Malaysia as a political tool.

### 5.5.2 Blogging is accepted as a political tool

The birth of new media in the form of blogs and personal websites in Malaysia is a recent phenomenon that took off following the elections in 2008. By looking at the political situation in Malaysia today, the emergence of the blog cannot be ignored in the role of delivering political messages. With the change in the current political situation in Malaysia, blogs have emerged as a new way for citizens to participate in the information exchange process. One blogger claims the major impetus has been the government’s initiative in developing the IT infrastructure. The government wanted the Internet as an important tool in developing the country:

*Among the factors for growth of blog in 2007 and 2008 is spreading out of internet access and government started talking about internet. (MPBI 1(14))*

This blogger believes that political blogs played a very significant role in the 2008 general election. The effects of the opposition’s attacks caused the BN to suffer
substantial defeats in that year and the BN failed to take the opportunity to influence voters through blogging. Citizens’ opinions of the UMNO government and BN leaders were shaped by political blogs. For those who could not be reached through cyberspace, the materials from the political blogs were printed and distributed to many towns and villages.

The information written in political blogs is derived from their authors’ opinions about certain political issues or events. In some cases, bloggers have analysed certain issues from mainstream newspapers and provided more expert or informed opinion. The blog articles can be used to assist the political parties in staving off the pressure and attacks from opposition party members. At the same time, opposition parties are also using cyber warfare that is consistent, structured and systematic (Bimber & Davis, 2003; Brown, 2008). The information posted in critical bloggers’ political analysis has initiated much political thinking on the nature and future of Malaysia’s politics. The government has reacted to political bloggers because of what they have been writing. One blogger commented:

*Blogs have created political thinking in the public based on the analysis written in articles. By putting up the political news in blogs, we have played a very significant role in the last general election which affects what the BN government banned us on. (MPBI 3(13))*

*The opposition parties have won many seats in the main cities where they have large numbers of political blog readers. Whereby the small towns show less seats belonging to them due to the political information being only able to be read through daily newspapers. (MPBI 1(14))*

Having a personal blog has allowed politicians and citizens to access two-way communication between each other and it can occur more quickly and without the usual formal protocols. Through the technology of Web 2.0, a small local problem can be solved more quickly. At the same time it shows the success of communication between political leaders and the people. On this theme, if people offer interesting
ideas online, any problem can be addressed immediately and effectively. Politicians are using blogs to distribute information on their political programmes, to promote their political platforms and agendas, and to organize political campaign events (Trammell et al., 2004; Graf and Darr, 2004; Jackson, 2006). One of the examples for blogs of politicians in Malaysia is the blog of the current Prime Minister (PM) of Malaysia, Dato’ Seri Najib Tun Razak, as shown in Figure 5.1.

This blog uses ‘1 Malaysia’ as the blog’s name, which means the unity of the citizens of Malaysia. This blog has applications of online videos, links, polls on current issues, and links for interactive communication with him personally through Twitter, Facebook and political messages. With these applications, citizens have the opportunity to communicate with their political leaders interactively. The politician’s supporters can
obtain information on politics from this blog and can give comments, ask questions, and leave messages. These types of blogs are very useful for politicians to convey messages to their supporters and are effective as tools for communication. The readers can also access speeches delivered by the PM during his administration with pictures.

Politicians use blogs to reply to readers’ comments that raise important issues and questions in local constituencies. Some people do comment online because it is the only available platform they have to reach their political leaders. Furthermore politician bloggers use blogs for communication between party offices and designated local community leaders. For example in the PM’s blog, citizens have an opportunity to meet him in their area. What the readers have to do is to submit particulars through the form in the PM’s blogs as shown in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2: A form to meet PM in ‘1 Malaysia’ blog.
The blogs’ readers might be contacted about having a meeting with the PM when he visits around the country and takes him near where readers live. Readers will also receive email updates of political programmes and events of the PM’s in ‘1 Malaysia’ blog.

Therefore, blogging means that activities can be organized by a political party at the local community level. Blogs also act as a reference for contact numbers required by and for politicians, heads of villages and local political or community leaders. Readers are allowed to make reports or write any complaint regarding local community issues. Various comments by bloggers illustrate this:

Blogs act as a tool for communication between the main office and community leaders. (MPBI 2(3))

Blogs show activities done by the community centre and daily activities of state assembly. The public can view pictures of activities organized in local community. The public can refer to this blog to get the contact numbers for the Head of village and local leaders. Any complain regarding local issues can be done online through this blog. (MPBI 2(6))

Blogger clubs provide publicity for political party’s activities. They can function as the party’s media for information. (MPBI 2,16))

I am using blogs to post articles because it is secure and has many widgets to be used. It is straightforward to broaden political information since my job as political secretary to a statesman assembly. I use my blog to show political activities that we have organized. (3,2)

The contents of this blog are more to inform activities in youth BN Parit. It is as the face of reference to public. Secondly it contains cyberwar information with the latest political news. I have linked this blog to the blog writer of the Chief Ministry (CM) of Perak to have more news from CM internal officers. (6,4)

Political bloggers most often support political parties and support their inherent ideology. For the bloggers who support a political party, they fend off wild allegations against their party and its party leaders:
Blogs can psychologically influence public involvement in politics. But I think not all people choose the internet for political information. It is as an alternative source. That’s why the Government has taken seriously the role of blog as sources of political information. Blogs are used to defend accusations made by the opposition party. (MPBI 5(14))

I choose blogs to counter false accusations posted by the opposition party on their blog. So the public can read this blog to have answers to statements made by the opposition party. The opposition party uses blogs since articles posted do not have to be proven with facts and it has been fabricated. (6,2)

The public’s ability to obtain and provide answers in response to false statements made by the opposition party is part of the freedom offered by the Internet, where defamation can easily be disseminated by any party or person since the government cannot restrict what is published online. However, the attacks can be repelled by the emergence of blogs as a platform to answer the accusations addressed to the parties and certain politicians in the party. In this case, blogs serve to provide information to readers that are usually not published in mainstream newspapers and when they do, their reports normally support the ruling party.

Blogs also function to inform people about political activities planned in constituencies by politicians or senior officials and they are effective where people do not have access to newspapers, and therefore are much more effective alternatives as media for political information:

I choose blogs to counter false accusations posted by the opposition party on their blog. So the public can read this blog to have answers to statements made by the opposition party. The opposition party uses blogs since articles posted do not have to be proven with facts and it has been fabricated. (6,2)

I wrote articles on the unpublished news in daily newspapers. I reported the latest news from various locations in blogs. My intention is correcting untrue news delivered from political parties. (1,6)

I studied other blogs, referred to by politicians and have informal chitchat with them to get political news. If I found out untrue issues said by the public, then I write the issues and it will be posted in the blog. Sometimes I went to the places to get the news and take pictures as proof. (8,9)
Niche bloggers are experts on various topics and when public interest turns to a particular area or topic, hits will increase on those niche blogger's web sites. Consequently, ideas that would only be read by a small number of people are pushed to the forefront and read by thousands (MacKinnon & Zuckerman, 2006).

Blogs provide a space for citizens to obtain political information in a transparent manner without being influenced by any party, especially the government. People think that political information being published in the mainstream media basically favours the government. News stories concerning the political opposition has generally been denied publication in mainstream newspapers. Some bloggers claimed that political information in mainstream newspapers are not genuine when reporting on political issues and bloggers also contend that nearly 60% of the news published is basically a denial of the truth, a position that Habermas would cite as undemocratic as it denies contestation of the prevailing discourse. For this reason, citizens have shifted to blogs for their political information and other people’s opinions:

*The political information from daily newspaper is not genuine and biased to government.* (MPBI 2(14))

*60% of the news published in TV and mass media cannot be trusted. For that reason, public shifted to blog for more reliable information. Public need news article in blog that report differently compared to information provided in daily newspaper. The public choose blog since government has restricted mass media freedom in reported news. The public will ignore political news in blog when there is media freedom, but at the same time a dominant blog will keep on being relevant in politics.* (MPBI 4(13))

*I was commenting on blogs most of the time and used to write a lot to the newspaper and found that the editor of newspaper had been massacring and violating my comment and writing, so I gave up and went to blogs and using an undercover name.* (MPBI 3(2))

*Today we have an open and informative society, but the mainstream newspapers have made the public narrow minded, by which they only published news on government. Readers want open information that not attack to any political party and neutral in giving opinions. By doing this, it can influence more young readers to get involved in politics.* (MPBI 8(13))
One blogger noted that readers want a free channel of information that is not biased in favour of any particular political group:

*Blog as a channel for current information in rural area. The readers want free channels that give explanation on issues without bias to any groups.* (MPBI 4(11))

There are differences between multi-racial communities in Malaysia when it comes to understanding politics (Khoo, 1997; Hwang, 2003 p.11). These differences are influenced by the cultures in the various states of the country. In general, differences in location means a difference in having Internet facilities, and in urban areas there are far more opportunities for online communication. For example the Chinese and Indian communities have more opportunity to access the Internet because they mainly live in urban areas and earn incomes that support online connection. Compared to the ethnic Malays, the Chinese and Indians are much more exposed to different types of political information and have more access to reading materials and alternative media such as blogs. As one blogger commented, this factor enables the Chinese and Indians to understand political issues better than the Malays:

*PKR has not lost in election before blogs were widely use by public because the government have full control over the mass media. Government has banned all political campaign and mass gatherings. It’s only after 2007 that the public has access to internet. Blog readers have given explanations to friends and office mates of information gathered from the internet. Chinese and Indian in urban area are more open and better understand politics. PR received many votes from the Chinese and Indians the majority of who stay in urban area and get access to internet. It has made them understand political issues better than the Malays.* (MPBI 4(14))

Part of the development of political blogs in Malaysia has been not only increase use and increased participation in politics but also a realization by politicians of their value to them.
5.5.3 Blog content is acceptable as an information medium to politicians and their supporters

Posting information on blogs is very different from what is available in the mainstream media. Content in the traditional media is limited in that it is biased in favour of the elite, the necessity of attention-grabbing presentations, the professional ethics of objectivity and the conglomeration of corporate ownership (Woodly, 2008). Politicians and politically interested citizens have become increasingly disappointed with the quality and the kind of information offered in traditional media.

The news published in mainstream newspapers is believed to be very much biased towards the government and there is disquiet over the issue of ownership of media outlets, because it means that diversity of news content that is produced is being diminished (McChesney, 1997; 2004). In the case of Malaysia’s mainstream media, most outlets serve as a mouthpiece for the BN, which as has previously been stated, directly and indirectly owns printed newspapers, television and radio stations (Zaharom, 2002).

Woodly (2008) has stated that the ability to convey contextual facts in the news media is debated by many media scholars and journalists. The fact is that ‘newsroom bias’ can shape what is acceptable content and presentation of the news can potentially compromise, if not destroy, the concept of news accuracy. Woodly also remarked that political elites generally aim to protect their control of popular political epistemologies, including the ideological range of political information that is produced and validated, thereby shaping and directing public debate in a way that serves the current distribution of power:
Blogs can openly discuss issues which are restricted from being published in mainstream newspapers. It gives additional information from what we read from mainstream newspapers. Some of the unpublished information in mainstream newspaper was posted in blogs. It makes the public see blogs as sincere and open in delivering political information. There are readers who agreed with issues in blogs and some of them disagree. The public read articles in blogs that are not published in mainstream newspaper. As a result, bloggers are excited to read the latest issues which will make them feel great from the others. (MPBI 7.11))

Bloggers have suggested that the government should encourage the latest political news to be published in the mainstream media that is of genuine interest to the people. However, the current situation of the media industry in Malaysia today, is that the news published in mainstream newspapers is heavily edited or filtered through a long process, which is very slow compared to how bloggers publish news stories. Thus, the news published in newspapers is delayed compared to news in blogs. Various bloggers commented saying:

*The information in blogs can be published at that particular location as compared to the daily newspaper. Thus, original and accurate news can be published. As compared to the daily newspaper, the news has gone through an editing process before it can be published in the newspaper. (MPBI 1(2))*

*Daily newspapers have delayed news published compared to blogs which published the latest news. The news in daily newspaper has been edited according to their interest before published. (MPBI 1,13)*

*I wrote articles on current issues drawn from relevant news from the Internet. I avoid taking materials from books that give focus on specific issues. The blog is updating daily and I spend 8 hours writing in blogs. Blogs are updated daily. (MPBI 3,9)*

One political support worker, who is also the manager of a political party blog, noted:

*I made reference to other blogs. I made personal calls to related individuals asking about issues. I answered the comments given by readers. I referred to the Perak Blogger network. I choose the news from blogs and made a study of their articles to ensure its accuracy. The articles will be posted after being referred to the Statesman Assembly. I am updating the contents every hour and daily (MPBI 2,9)*
This need to checking was supported by another party driven blog manager:

*I make sure the contents of my writing are factual by having contact with friends who have relations with politicians. I contacted a few of Statesman Assemblies to ask view on issues. It is very important to have true evidence on writing and at the end it can attract readers to blogs. Articles posted in blogs with false evidence will be critiqued by readers. I wrote with etiquette and I know the limits in political writing. The writing in blogs is not only to express our own dissatisfaction with government and politics. (MPBI 7(9))*

One blogger has stressed that the government should encourage citizens to participate in political activities when articles are posted online. Readers demand that political news is conveyed in a convenient way and one that includes some humour and enjoyment for people while they are reading. Blog stories have a different style of presentation where formality in writing is not as important. The readers are more attracted to the language used in blogs that makes them more relaxed and enjoy what they are reading. Bloggers noted for example:

*The Government has to give concern to political issues which can attract the public to join political activities. One of the way is bringing out the latest issues in politics. The political information should be conveyed in a convenient way (not too serious). (MPBI 1(19)).*

*Bloggers have to determine issues to be posted in blogs. Bloggers must understand that the language used can attract readers. Bloggers must give elaborations on issues written in blog because it is what readers want to read. At the same time, the contents in blogs shouldn’t be too serious and have to give benefits to readers. (MPBI 5,10)*

The materials referenced in blogs do not necessarily cite primary sources. Most bloggers make summaries of features or stories, or editorial comments that are published by traditional media sources, or report parallel conversations taking place in other blogs. In most cases, the story in an online article is created and published at the same location where an event has happened, such as an election.
Most blog posts simply could not consist of original quotes from "both" official sides. For this reason, bloggers tend to ask questions and make arguments by examining public facts or engaging with non-elite viewpoints that have been left out of traditional coverage in favour of political elites’ comments. In the end the bloggers argue that they and theirs and others blogs do influence the national political agenda in Malaysia.

5.6 Blogs have shaped national political issues and discussions in Malaysia

Studies have shown that blogs do help to mobilize opinions and set the agenda for politicians (Kerbel & Bloom, 2005; Wallsten, 2005; Lawson-Borders & Kirk, 2005). Blogs are increasingly being employed by political parties and politicians to strategise political mobilization (Mercado-Kierkegaard, 2006; Ulicny, et al., 2010). Various groups of authors and young people and members of political parties in Malaysia are taking advantage of the opportunity to express their opinions and campaign under their own political ‘flags’ in their respective blogs. The analysis of political issues is made with reference to sources of the latest information, whether from politicians, the press, people’s own opinions, expressed in the blog space and through the applications of Web 2.0 in blogs, making visual and print material more interesting.

In many cases the media has played an important role in shaping people’s thinking about issues affecting the country. Since the emergence of political blogs in Malaysia, many of the issues highlighted in the local media are comments already discussed on people’s online blogs. Scholars have claimed that the mass media may not be successful much of time in telling people what to think but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about (Cohen, 1963). The media has the ability to influence the thinking of people or at least encourage them to actively think about certain subjects or agendas (Cohen, 1963, p.13).
In recent years, blogs have played an important role in creating news about political events that are reported in the mainstream media (Farrell & Drezner, 2008). There were issues in Malaysia that are reported in newspapers which are based on articles published in blogs. For example the articles written in a prominent political blogger known as ‘Kickdefella’, as referred to Figures 5.4 and 5.5. This blog has revealed controversial political issues, where he has written the articles about a case of corruption by a politician that paid him RM 4 million as payment to create news articles that condemned UMNO and the ruling government. This issue has been a main issue in mainstream newspapers, as shown in Figures 5.3, 5.4, 5.5 and 5.7.

Figure 5.3: Articles in a political blog, retrieved from Kincdefella.blogspot.com on 01 May 2010
Figure 5.4: Articles in political blog, retrieved from kickdefella.blogspot on 03 May 2010

Figure 5.5: News on newspaper on article from blog kickdefella, retrieved from utusan.com.my/utusanonline, on 01/05/2010
Figure 5.6: News on newspaper on article from blog kickdefella, retrieved from utusan.com.my/utusanonline, 01/05/2010.

Figure 5.7: News on newspaper on article from blog kickdefella, retrieved from utusan.com.my/utusanonline, 06/05/2010.
Some information was not published in major newspapers, but was published in the blog and it has become an important political issue in the country (Blood, 2002; Drezner & Farrell, 2004; Scott, 2004). Many citizens welcomed this new development and cyberspace has freed people’s voices and ideas and this is another reason supporting the claim that traditional newspapers’ readership is declining. Political news headlines published into the mainstream newspaper are being ‘outgunned’ by the number of news items written by bloggers, and these include a few controversial political issues (Utusan Malaysia, 1st May 2010). On a positive note it means that the government has given its recognition to the content of political blogs as sources for political events and the subsequent online articles commenting on them.

The issues being exposed in the media have mainly centred on national ones where the government has taken action. Various bloggers noted:

*Most blog readers know the issues posted in blogs. Information in blogs has opened the mind of the public to know about politics. This is because the same issues were published in mainstream newspapers and blogs have discussed issues from different perspectives. (MPBI 7(14)).

The articles posted in blogs can construct public thinking about political situations in this country. It helps the public to make judgments on political issues based on information received. (MPBI 3(2))

Blogs are a channel to get political information. Readers choose blogs for political information because they want to develop ideas taken from daily newspapers. People go to blogs for political information due to government control over daily newspapers. (MPBI 5(13))

While many political issues in Malaysia made reference to blogs, the bloggers have posted their analyses of them online. For example in the case of the sexual misconduct of an ex-deputy prime minister the issue was first mentioned by a political blogger called “Papagomo”. The first video clip was posted in his blog and then the story was published in mainstream newspapers (see Figure 5.8). This was a controversial issue in Malaysia’s politics and has made the government take action. This issue also has
resulted in significant political discussion in the public and blogs received many comments and discussion from readers.

A blogger did explain that online articles about certain issues open further discussion and comments from readers. The Internet has provided the ability for audiences to communicate with bloggers and this influences readers’ political behaviour (Perlmutter, 2008):

*Political blog gives explanation on the false issues in politics by providing open discussion and comments from readers. (MPBI 2(8))*

In this case, a blogger claims that online articles can construct public thinking on political issues. People can exchange their opinions and give feedback on certain subjects through posting their comments in chat rolls. The writing in blogs has helped citizens to make judgements on political issues based on information received. Thus bloggers believe that bloggers and readers have developed deep connections with
each other and read each other’s content regularly. This in turn encourages participation in political discussions and gets people interested in political activism. In essence they are supporting Shah et al.’s. (2005) argument that sharing political perspectives electronically and contacting political elites online contribute directly to engagement. As a result bloggers are now revealing their identities.

5.6.1 Bloggers in more recent years are revealing their identities

Bloggers in Malaysian politics have had to overcome a number of obstacles in their efforts to disseminate information. Not only financial difficulties but also in revealing their identities has been fraught with risk due to the threat of intimidation as they challenge the existing political discourse. Bloggers have been threatened by supporters of political parties due to articles that criticize them or accuse politicians of corruption. Due to the risk of being intimidated or worse, most bloggers have used fictitious names and refused to reveal their identities for fear that their actions will lead to a court case. Some have been subject to legal action and have had to pay a huge amount of money just for the legal costs.

Several incidents have occurred where bloggers were detained under the Internal Security Act 1960 (ISA), and Seduction Act 1948, because of their blog publications. For that reason, many bloggers from the opposition party do not expose their biographical details online and it is only in recent years that bloggers are comfortably providing their actual names, contact numbers and photos to their readers. Some bloggers identify themselves with the word “Unmasked” in their blogs and some who remain invisible were known as “ZorroUnmasked” and “TopengPerak Unmasked”.

According to one blogger:

I am using ‘Topeng Perak’ in my blog. I was using this name for a long time in a yahoo group and feels confortable with it. It has been used as undercover but now I feel safe to write in blogs. In 2008, I started showing my face and name in blogs during the by election in Bukit Gantang. Even now I'm using “Topeng Perak Unmasked” as my nickname in blogs. (MPBI 1(5))

Some other bloggers interviewed here have stated:

I use a nick name because I want to hide my identity from readers. I do not want anybody to know that I developed my blog. (MPBI 8,5))

I have been followed by police and officers from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. My blog has always been spied on by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. I have been called to the police station for the true story posted in my blog but not for the BN blog. (MPBI 1,17))

Police always observe party activities. My hand phone has been tagged by police. I have received blackmail from party supporters. Someone has scratched my car. (MPBI 2,17))

I feel insecure to attend political gathering since there are people who know what I wrote in my blog. I also have faced court charges. I have been given warnings from BN supporters of what I have written in blogs about their party. (MPBI 4,17))

I use a nick name for blogging since using my real name make me feel insecure. Most political bloggers use nick names for security reasons. In some cases, bloggers feel anxious of been charged in court for their writing and have to pay high lawyer’s fees. Some readers have written bad words in comments that make me avoid using my real name. (MPBI 5,4))

I have been threatened with having my car burnt by political supporters. Since they can know my identity, I have received many insults from readers given in articles responding to mine. I have to bear high costs for a lawyer if I am sued by politicians (MPBI 5,17))

I feel more comfortable to be behind the scene by not exposing my identity as there are people outside who feel mad with articles published (MPBI 6,5))

It’s the police who always follow the movement and writing because a lot of stories disclose about the truth. I faced a few challenges by writing a true story because it was taken from the scene. The authorities have found out the source from which these stories developed. I am writing in a state of conscious and I am not attacking any individuals. But besides I am using other sources to write about individuals or politicians. (MPBI 8,17))
However, in recent years, this has changed somewhat as readers are more used to bloggers revealing their identities and who are now more widely known to the public. In comparison to previous years when bloggers were mostly anonymous and hid their identities due to the fear of being convicted, the government no longer tries to halt the influence of opposition blogs and their spread of information because the costs outweigh the benefits and it can never be contained or censored due to the nature of the Internet.

Bloggers Network clubs are playing a key role in protecting the rights of political bloggers in Malaysia. These include the National Alliance of Bloggers (NAB), Malaysia News Network (MNN), Blogger Patriot (BP) and Blogger Pembela Negara (PBN). In the event of a lawsuit against a blogger, a blogger club is able to provide support in terms of legal advice and of upholding the rights of plaintiffs to seek redress. Blogger clubs champion the right to freedom of expression, self-regulation and there is the need to balance freedom of expression and a certain standard of responsibility when blogging. Such bloggers’ clubs equip online authors with the necessary knowledge of legal implications of what they write, and a general code of ethics to abide by.

5.7 Summary

The analysis of the interviews with political bloggers has highlighted five main themes:

- Blogs are used in Malaysian politics to provide updated content on political information
- The use of blogs also is creating social networks among the bloggers and readers, that focus on politics
- Blogs have been used as political information sources and a medium of communication between politicians and their political supporters.
• The political information and discussion in blogs have and are shaping national political issues and discussions.

• One of the key reasons for bloggers to use political blogs in Malaysia is due to effectiveness of using and the impact of Web 2.0 applications in blogs;

The analysis from interviews with political bloggers shows the activities of bloggers through the information in blogs has, in their opinion, and from the admitted reactions of politicians, changed the political landscape in Malaysia. Blogs there provide updated information on politics which the population can sometime not access from mainstream newspapers. The analysis also found that blogs are both sources of new and/or enhanced political information and an additional medium for political communication. The analysis of the blogger interviews shows that blogs appear to play some role in shaping national political issues and discussion in Malaysia. Habermas described democracy as best served by a public sphere where competing visions of the future can be expressed and subjected to debate without skewing or censorship to fit the agendas of dominating parties.

The interviewees have revealed the opportunities given by blogs to address those competing visions, albeit in the beginning under threats from the legal structures which Habermas could see as restrictive. The acceptance of blogs as a political tool in Malaysia has gone some way to affect the threats. However the situation is certainly not completely open and the political discourse of the government is still pervasive in the print media. Habermas argued that the political public sphere needs input from citizens who give voice to society’s problems and who respond to the issues articulated in elite discourse. Malaysian political blogs, it can be argued then, appear to be offering a means of articulation and a forum for competing visions which has previously been restricted.
In addition, information in political blogs has led to the creating of social networking among readers and activists. An interactive communication and interaction is occurring between bloggers and readers and these have strengthened social networking. The blogger network clubs is an example of this social network where programs, political talks and seminars are organised to improve understanding about politics. The blogs appear to help mobilize political activities. These social networks have emerged from blogs as technology, confirming the communitarian model (Dahlberg, 2001) which argues that the power of technology can reinforce existing community ties as well as establish new ones.

The new online political forums in Malaysia have initiated in-group interaction and collective political identity construction, leading, in the view of the political bloggers interviewed, to increased community integration and civic participation. Table 5.2, presents the summary of the outcomes of interviews with bloggers in the context of the conceptual framework adapted for the analysis of data in this study.
### Table 5.2: Elements in the Conceptual Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements in the framework</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Outcomes of interviews with Bloggers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online information seeking (Political blogs)</td>
<td>Research shows that online information seeking acts positively for political engagement, community involvement (Delli Carpini, 2000; Kwak et al., 2006; Taveesin and Brown, 2006) and has been linked to an increase in online interactive civic messaging that, ultimately, and results in higher levels of civic participation (Shah et al., 2005). This study focuses on the use of political blogs by citizens as online information seeking political information.</td>
<td>Blogs provide updated information on politics which is shaping national political issues and discussion in Malaysia. The bloggers believe that their blogs are increasing civic participation in Malaysian politics, resulting from the use of a number of messaging systems embedded in the ways the blogs are structured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive civic messaging (Active bloggers, Internet uses)</td>
<td>The Internet obviously allows people to “post, at minimal cost, messages and images that can be viewed instantly by global audiences” (Lupia &amp; Sin, 2003: 316). Habermas argued that the political public sphere needs input from citizens who give voice to society’s problems and who respond to the issues articulated in elite discourse. Habermas used discourse to argue that citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion; thus with the guarantee that they may assemble and unite freely, and express and publicize their opinions freely (Habermas, 1974). The study refers to the activities engaged in by the active bloggers and citizens that use the Internet, i.e., political blogs.</td>
<td>Blogs have been used as political information sources and a medium of communication between politicians and their political supporters. The blogs in Malaysia have also become forums where people can challenge the existing political discourse of UMNO. Alternative perspectives on many issues are discussed openly in blogs challenging the status quo. The ‘public sphere’ Habermas argued was needed for a civil society and for democracy is emerging. Initially there was evidence of coercion that resulted from the early blogs but this has been decreasing. Leaders who are contesting the current discourse are now open about who they are and what they say and their effect has been one that has successfully challenged the incumbent government politically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal political discussion</td>
<td>Webster's dictionary states that discourse has two meanings: (a) formal communication of thoughts about a serious subject through words (spoken or written) and (b) rationality or the ability to reason. Habermas argued that the political public sphere needs input from citizens who give voice to society’s problems and who respond to the issues articulated in elite discourse. Interpersonal political discussion refers to the communication that occurs between the bloggers and users in political blogs to promote public participation and sharing information, through public dialogue on political issues.</td>
<td>Blogs is used for articulation of political information. Forum in blog chatroll is also used to discuss political issues that competing visions which has previously been restricted. Each of the blogs studied in detail shows how substantial interpersonal communication is developing. The numbers of blogs is growing and they have moved from single stand-alone blogs to those where there are now communities of blogs and bloggers, differentiated by their political ideology and purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic participation</td>
<td>Evidence is accumulating that political messaging and sharing political information contributes directly to civic and political participation (Gil De Zúñiga et al., 2007). Blogs have bottom-up participation, as individuals can be more open and freely express their opinions. Communication and participation online has amplified conventional expressive and political participation. Communitarian model (Dahlberg, 2001) argues that the power of technology can reinforce existing community ties as well as establish new ones The internet was seen to have a role in promoting civic participation and linked with Habermas's public sphere, a space ‘where people act as citizens by discussing the issues that concern them’ (Rheingold 2000). Citizen participation in political activities has derived from participation and political activism.</td>
<td>Online political forums in blogs have initiated in-group interaction and collective political identity construction, leading to increased community integration and civic participation. Using Web 2.0 applications has truly amplified expressive and political participation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the next chapter these findings are used as a basis to collect information from Malaysian citizens and their attitude towards and use of blogs in a survey.
6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses an analysis of data collected from a survey on the effects of political blogs distributed to Malaysian citizens. Political activism is both pushed by the political side and pulled by those affected citizens. In the previous chapter, the effects of blogs and their roles were analyzed from the perspective of the bloggers themselves. They represent both the government, some represent the opposition and some are politically neutral. The focus in this part of the study is on citizens and what their perspectives were.

The survey was designed to understand citizens’ perspectives of the effects of political blogs on participation in Malaysia’s politics through the use of blogs. At the same time, the questionnaire attempts to identify the social networks in blog activities among Malaysians as a platform of political activism, particularly, the effect of communication and exchange of information that induces them to participate in political activities. The survey questions to Malaysian citizens were designed based on the information gathered from interviews with political bloggers to test the conclusions from the analysis of the interviews.

A total of three hundred questionnaires (Appendix C) were distributed to Malaysian citizens’ ages twenty one years old and above as described in Chapter 3. Twenty-one is the minimum age of citizens who are eligible to vote in general elections under the Federal Constitution of Malaysia. The minimum age of twenty-one years is set as a
basis for eligibility to vote because at this stage they are considered to have matured to know and be involved in politics (Baharuddin, 2001).

The survey questionnaires were randomly distributed to citizens of 5 states (Perak, Selangor, Wilayah Persekutuan, Penang and Terengganu) in Malaysia. Out of 300, 180 sets of questionnaires were successfully returned and were used for this study. The data collection strategy for this study aims to represent all ethnic communities in Malaysia blogosphere. The questions have been divided into two main categories. In part A, the question asked demographic information of respondents. While in Part B there were questions on information about political bloggers and political weblog readers. The questions covered issues on attitudes of readers towards blogs for political information, the applications used in political blogs, ways of using blogs as a form of political media for political information, and the ways political blogs promote political participation.

6.2 Section A: Demographics Background

Section A presents background information about the basic demographics of respondents such as gender, age, race, religion, education vs job, residence vs member, reading as favorite hobby and reading hours and reading material.

a) Gender

The profiles of the survey respondents' gender is shown in Table 6.1. The responses involved quite balanced numbers between male and female. The total number of male respondents was 97 or 53.9% of the entire sample, and the female respondents contributed 83 or 46.1% of the whole research sample.
b) Age

The distribution of the respondents' ages are shown in Table 6.2. The main participants were younger people aged between 21 to 25 years old, at 46.7% out of a total of 180 samples (Figure 6.2).
The groups aged 31 to 35 years old and 26 to 30 years old represented 19.4% and 15.0% respectively of the returns (Table 6.2). The remaining age groups are 9.4%, 6.7% and 2.8%, representing citizens aged 36 to 40, 41 to 45 and above 45 years old. This result parallels the increasing number of younger voters which were recorded in Channel 3 which is the vote recorded by the young voters in the general election. (Retrieved Malaysia Kini: Amin Iskandar, May 15, 2009 Rahsia anak muda sokong pakatan). According to Section 7 (3) Election Act 1958, voting center have 6 channels for the voters, and channel 3 refers to the young voters.

Table 6.2: Respondents Ages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>81.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>90.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABOVE 45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c) Race

Figure 6.3: Respondents Race
The largest participation in this study was contributed by ethnic Malays with 84.4% out of 180 samples. Whereas, 6.7% are Indians and 3.9% are Chinese. In addition, another 5.0% of respondents in this study are from Other races which include Dusun and Kadazan. The people of Dusun and Kadazan are categorized as ethnic minorities from East Malaysia. These figures do not reflect the general structure of the population of Malaysia which is 63.1% Malays, 24.6% Chinese, 7.3% Indians and 0.7% others, based on the data of Population and Housing Census 2010, published by Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2010. (Retrieved from http://www.statistic.gov.my/portal/download_population/files/census2010/). The national data shows Malays form the majority of citizens in Malaysia as compared to others. The distribution of the survey respondents shows that Malays are the largest group respondents. The proportions are not exact but do represent each of the major races.

\[ \text{d) Religion} \]

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figures/figure64.png}
\caption{Religions of Respondents}
\end{figure}

Since Malaysians ethnic groups are also predominantly aligned to one specific religion or follow minority religions in Malaysia, 84.4% of the respondents were Muslims of Malay ethnicity. The rest are Buddhist (15.6%), Hindu, Christian and some others,
which represent the religions for the Chinese, Indians and other ethnic minorities both in Peninsular and East Malaysia.

e) Education vs Job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of education levels of respondents, as shown in Table 6.3, the majority of the respondents are graduated citizens, 96 are Bachelor’s degree holders (53.3%) followed by 34 respondents with Master’s degrees (18.9%) and another 2 respondents with PhD’s (1.1%). 22 respondents (12.2%) are categorized as Other having Diploma’s or other professional certificates. The remaining 26 respondents (14.5%) have lower education levels. This result indicates those who are interested in reading political blogs generally have a good educational background. Consequently, those readers of political blogs are knowledgeable and have the capacity to evaluate and understand the contents in political blogs.

f) Occupations

Occupation often indicates interest in politics as there is often interest in how political decisions affect the economy and thus job prospects.
Table 6.4: Respondents’ Jobs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOB</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIVATE</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELF</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERS</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 6.4 presents respondents’ job sector distribution. Out of the 180 samples in this study, 74 respondents work in the private sector (41.1%), while 55 respondents are government’s public servants (30.6%). The balance of 28.3% is classified as Self Employed and Others, which includes students studying in higher education institutions. Considering more than 73% of respondents are graduated citizens (Table 6.5), it indicates the majority of blog readers in this study in Malaysia are from Executive and Managerial staff levels in each sector.

Table 6.5: Respondents’ Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid PRIMARY</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECONDARY</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACHELOR</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASTER</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>86.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>87.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIPLOMA</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
g) Residence

The previous chapter highlighted the differences in Malaysia between urban and rural areas in terms of access to the Internet. It was therefore important to understand where the respondents to the surveys were from. Table 6.6 presents residential status of respondents in this study. The majority of respondents (86.7%) are living in urban areas, the rest of respondents (13.3%) live in rural areas. Considering the disclosure from the bloggers reported in Chapter 5, this is not a surprising outcome and suggests that much of the material in the survey will be biased to an urban perspective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESIDENCE</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>URBAN</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>86.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RURAL</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

h) Members vs Residence

The respondents were asked about their political membership because this like location of residence can represent a bias in the data. The results are shown in Table 6.7 and Figure 6.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEMBERS</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most of the respondents (75.6%) are not registered as a member in any political parties in Malaysia. Out of 156 respondents which reside in urban areas, only 36 of them have registered as political party members. While 33.3% of respondents who staying in rural area, has registered as one of political party member in Malaysia.

In terms of which political party respondents are members of, 44 respondents are registered party’s members, 52.3% are registered as a member of Barisan Nasional (BN) – the government party and 36.4% are members of Pakatan Rakyat (PR) – the main opposition party. The other 4.5% of respondents refused to declare their political party membership (Figure 6.6).
i) The role of Reading in the survey population

One of the key indicators for interest in blogs seemingly is related to people having an interest in reading. This can come from newspapers or some other outlet related to print. Those whose political interests are served best by visual media such as television may not have the desire to read and thus potentially might not be willing to read blogs which are essentially print based digitally, albeit supported by visual material.

The respondents were asked whether reading is a favorite hobby. These two charts (Figure 6.7 and 6.8), show that 75% of the survey respondents claim they like reading with 68.9% of blog readers spending from one to three hours per day only for reading, and 17.0% who spend around four to six hours daily on reading. Obviously, the reading habit among respondents has made them interested to read articles posted on a political blog, if their interests include politics.

![Reading as Favourite Hobby](image1)

*Figure 6.7: Reading as Respondents’ Favourite Hobby*

![Reading Hours per Day](image2)

*Figure 6.8: Profiles of Respondents’ Reading Hours*
j) Reading Materials

As part of the issue of reading, the survey tried to uncover what was read. Table 6.8 and Figure 6.9 present the variation and frequency of reading materials among respondents.

Table 6.8: Reading Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Popular magazines</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Periodicals</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Printed newspaper</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Online alternatives news</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Online newspaper</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Scholastic Journal</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Scholastic Books</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When looking to the types of reading material used by respondents, 57.8% respondents choose printed newspaper as the most common reading material for the participants in this survey (104). Next are popular magazines which represent 47.8%, 44.4% read blogs and 39.4% read online alternative news with 86, 80 and 71 respectively. In addition there were 66 who read online mainstream news (36.7%), 57 (30.7%) for news periodicals, 55 (30.6%) for scholastic books and 22.8% (41) read scholastic journals or articles.
A majority of respondents claimed they used the internet as a daily activity. The result (Table 6.9) show that 87.2% of survey respondents use the Internet daily, while another 12.8% did not use Internet every day. The result is significant to this study since readers of blogs read blogs every day. If that reading is focused on political blogs they are doing this to update information on politics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>87.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The demographic analysis has shown that the survey respondents approximate the race and gender compositions of the Malaysian population but is skewed somewhat by the interests of young citizens’ age between 21 to 25 years old. The majority of respondents are well educated and come mostly from occupations in the private sector and are more urban in location than rural. Significantly only a relatively small group, mostly urban residents, are not members of political parties. In this study, the survey addressed what factors influenced how blogs effect political participation from the perspective of citizens. The argument on whether blog give effect to citizens’ participation depends on many factors. This forms the basis of the analysis in the next section of this chapter.

In this study, there are also other factors which influence how blogs can effect political participation. The argument on whether blog give effect to citizens’ participation depends on many factors. This has forms the basis of the analysis in the next section.
6.3 Section B: Blog Self Analysis

This next part of the survey results analysis was a examines Blog Self Analysis to understand the extent of the knowledge of Malaysian citizens of Blogs; whether they have knowledge to develop a blog; if they own a blog; and how frequently they use blogs for political information.

a) Knowledge to develop a Blog

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they know about using political blogs (Figure 6.10).

![Self Assessment on Blog](image_url)

**Table 6.10: Expertise about political Blogs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPERTISE</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOTHING</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITTLE</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENOUGH</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>83.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALOT</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>96.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPERT</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.10 shows result of the self-assessment done by respondents in the survey on their expertise of blogs. The result indicates 41.7% of respondents agreed that they have enough knowledge to use blogs and 37.2% of respondents claimed they only know a little about blog. Another 12.8% respondents stated they have a lot of expertise on blogs, 5% assert they know nothing, and only 3.3% claims that they are experts in using blogs. This result shows that most respondents have knowledge about how to use and access political blogs since they are not the blog owner or blog writer. They access blogs as readers of posted political information. The small number of experts in this result belongs to blog owners or writers who have knowledge in developing blogs.

b) Have own Blog

Only 20.6% respondents have developed their own blog, while 79.4% don’t have personal blogs. Obviously, the result explains the majority of respondents in this study have a preference to be a reader of political blogs rather than have their own blog. With reference to Figure 6.11, we need to see is there any significance difference in the level of expertise between persons who own blogs and person who do not own blogs. To test if there is significant difference, the researcher used a Mann Whitney U test.
According to Sekaran, (2003: 404) “the Mann-Whitney U test is a non parametric test for examining significant difference when the dependent variable is measured on an ordinal scale and the independent variable on a nominal scale”. Therefore, the researcher developed a null hypothesis as follows:

\[ H_0: \text{There are no significant difference in expertise level between person who own blog and who doesn't own blog} \]

\[ H_1: \text{There are significant difference in expertise level between person who own blog and who doesn't own blog} \]

Using Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS), a Mann-Whitney U test was done and the results are shown in Table 6.11:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPERTISE</th>
<th>OWNBLOG</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Sum of Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>OWNBLOG</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>131.39</td>
<td>4861.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>OWNBLOG</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>79.92</td>
<td>11428.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>OWNBLOG</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Statistics(^a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mann-Whitney U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilcoxon W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Grouping Variable: OWNBLOG

The results of the Wilcoxon test with the null hypothesis is that two independent samples come from the same population. The Wilcoxon W statistic and Mann Whitney U test output, have a p-value is 0.000 which is less than \(\alpha\) at 0.05. Therefore, we conclude that there is a significant difference between variables. Therefore we reject the null hypothesis \((H_0)\). We can conclude that there are significant differences in the expertise level between persons who own a blog and those who do not. In other words, it can be concluded that the level of expertise among respondents will be affected by their expertise of blogs. The result shows that those who have developed their own blog may have extra expertise in blogs compared those who are only blog readers.
c) Blogs as Political Information

Reading blogs alone is insufficient to understand the results. The survey was interested to know who used blogs for political information. Figure 6.12 shows that 51.1% of the total respondents hardly ever used blogs to get political information. About 21.7% respondents like to use blogs for daily political information and news. Another 10.0% used blog for 3 to 4 times weekly and 17.2% of respondents spend 1 to 2 times weekly on political blogs for political information.

![Figure 6.12: Using a Blog for Political Information](image)

This result (Table 6.12) shows then that a significant proportion of respondents are frequently visiting blogs when they want to get information on political issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blog for Political Information</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EVERYDAY</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 WEEKLY</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 WEEKLY</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HARDLY</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further analysis was also done on use of blogs. It was considered important to see whether the frequency of getting political information from blogs is different if the respondents own or do not own a blog. A further null hypothesis was then developed as follows:

\[ H_0: \text{There are no significant difference in the frequency of getting political information from blogs between person who own blog and who doesn't own blog} \]

\[ H_1: \text{There are significant difference in the frequency of getting political information from blogs between person who own blog and who doesn't own blog} \]

In testing for differences in relationships among nominally scaled variables, the Chi-Square statistic is more appropriate and so is used here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OWNBLOG * FREQUENT Crosstabulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OWNBLOG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>10.030a</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>9.142</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>5.994</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 1 cells (12.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.70.

From this Chi Square test output, the result of p-value is 0.018 which is less than \( \alpha = 0.05 \). Therefore, from the result we reject the null hypothesis (\( H_0 \)). Thus we conclude that there is a significant difference in the frequency of getting political information from
blogs between persons who own blogs and those who do not. In other words, the frequency of browsing blogs for political information among respondents will be affected by their ownership of blogs. This is confirmed in application of cross tabulation, (42.78%). However the complexity of the variables needs to be tested.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) helps to examine the significance of mean differences among more than two groups on an interval or ratio scaled dependent variable (Fidel, L.S & Tabachnick, B.G., 2007). ANOVA has been used here to test whether there is a significance difference between average attitudes towards frequency use of a blog for political information in this study. This study would like to see whether the attitudes towards political information are equal among respondents who use a blog for political information everyday, 3 to 4 times a week, 1 to 2 times a week and hardly ever. The result is shown in Table 6.14.

**Table 6.14: ANOVA Test for Average Attitude vs. Frequency of Use of a Blog for Political Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AVG_ATTITUDE</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>12.547</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.182</td>
<td>19.279</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>38.181</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>.217</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50.729</td>
<td>179</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The null hypothesis developed for this analysis is as follows:

\[ H_0: \text{All population means are equal} \]
\[ H_1: \text{At least one mean is different} \]

From this Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test output, the p-value is 0.000 which is less than \( \alpha \); 0.05. Therefore we reject \( H_0 \). This analysis shows that at least one mean is different. In other words, the average attitudes towards political information are different among these 4 groups of respondents.
This study would also like to see whether the average ways of using blogs as a medium for political information are equal among respondents who use a blog for political information everyday, 3 to 4 times a week, 1 to 2 times a week and hardly ever. Another test was done through using ANOVA for average medium for getting political information vs Frequency use of a blog for political information. It can be hypothesized then that:

\[ H_0: \text{All population means are equal} \]
\[ H_1: \text{At least one mean is different} \]

**Table 6.15: ANOVA: Average Medium vs. Frequency of Use of a Blog for Political Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>8.853</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.951</td>
<td>11.410</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>45.521</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>.259</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54.374</td>
<td>179</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test output (Table 6.15), the p-value is 0.000 which is less than \( \alpha; 0.05 \). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis, \( H_0 \). From the result, it can be concluded that at least one mean is different. In other words, the average ways of using blogs as a medium for political information are different among these 4 groups of respondents. There are multiple comparison procedure used in analysis of variance after obtaining a significant ANOVA Test, in order to determine which means differ. One way of doing it is to use a Duncan Analysis. (Duncan, D. B., 1955). By using a Duncan analysis, it can be seen which one of the groups is different (Table 6.16):
Table 6.16: Duncan Analysis for Average Medium

The results from Duncan analysis shows that there are three combinations of these four groups which have equal means. The first group is of respondents who are hardly using a blog for political information (1 to 2 times weekly) show means with mean scores of 3.1650 and 3.3578 respectively. The other combinations are 1 to 2 times weekly and 3 to 4 times weekly as well as 3 to 4 times weekly and every day. According to this output table, the highest mean score is for respondent who are using a blog daily with 3.7156, again confirming the role of expertise and frequent use of blogs with active participation in blogs.

d) Blog Visit

Part of the analysis must also refer to the number of visits to the various blogs. Fig 6.13 and Table 6.17 show the number of political blogs visited by respondents in a normal week. From the result, this study shows that most of respondents visited less than 3 blogs per week, approximately 60.0%.
About 23.3% of respondents visit 3 to 6 blog per week and only 7.8% browsed more than 20 political blogs per week. Both respondents who visit 11 to 13 blogs per week and 14 to 16 blogs per week are at (1.1%).

Table 6.17: Political Blog Visit per Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Visited Political Blogs per Week</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MORE 20 Blogs</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-14 PRWEEK</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-11 PRWEEK</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-7 PRWEEK</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-3 PRWEEK</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LESS 3</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

e) Member of Political Party vs. Blog Visit

However, the numbers of visits alone is insufficient to develop a clear understanding of access to and use of political blogs. The extent to which this frequency is influenced by party membership is needed. For membership of a political party vs Blog visit, an analysis in cross tabulation shows that respondents who are visiting more than 20 blogs per week are those who are registered as a political party member (64.3%).
Nevertheless, 84.3% of respondents who are visiting less than 3 blogs per week are not members of any political party. As a consequence, further analysis was done to see if there is significant difference in the frequency of visiting political blogs per week between persons who own blogs and those who don’t. The following hypothesis was developed as follows:

\[ H_0: \text{There are no significant difference in the frequency of visiting political blogs per week between persons who own blogs and those that do not own blog} \]

\[ H_1: \text{There is a significant difference in the frequency of visiting political blogs per week between persons who own blogs and those who do not} \]

The data was cross tabulated (Table 6.18) and analysed using a Chi Square test. The output table (Table 6.19) shows that there is a significant difference in the frequency of visiting political blogs per week between persons who own blogs and those who do not. The result illustrates that the frequency of respondents visiting political blogs per week will depend on the status of their political party membership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.18 Cross-tab for members vs Blog Visit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEMBERS * BlogVisit Crosstabulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BlogVisit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 blogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMBERS YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMBERS NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Table 6.19: Chi-Square Test for members vs Blog Visit |
Therefore, the survey results show that those who are members of a political party visit blogs more frequently, as suggested in Chapter 5, in order to get updated information on politics. Consequently, they have more interest to know about political issues and information either on their political party or the opposition party.

\textbf{g) Reason of Visiting Political Blogs}

However there are also other reasons why people are visiting blogs in Malaysia.

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & Value & df & Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) \\
\hline
Pearson Chi-Square & 17.826 & 2 & .000 \\
Likelihood Ratio & 16.082 & 2 & .000 \\
Linear-by-Linear Association & 16.567 & 1 & .000 \\
N of Valid Cases & 180 & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textit{a. 1 cells (16.7\%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.42.}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{reasons.png}
\caption{Reasons for Visiting Political Blogs}
\end{figure}
Table 6.20 and Figure 6.14 summarize the reasons for respondents visiting political blogs. The majority of the respondents (67.8%) (122) have visited political blogs in order to know about political issues. Another 88 respondents (48.9%) visit blogs to get updated information related to politics, the other 47 (26.1%) visit just to fulfill their leisure time and 45 respondents (25%) visit to get know about politicians. The remainder of respondents (21) (11.7%) agree that they visit political blogs only to read political newspaper cuttings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Freq</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Issues</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Read</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Update</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Politician info</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**g) Political information in Mainstream Media**

In the survey the respondents were asked for their views on the political information published in mainstream media. The results (Table 6.21) show that 56.1% agreed that mainstream media were unreliable for political information. The other 43.1% respondents claimed mainstream media is reliable. Therefore, this result is relatively significant for the citizens who choose blogs as an alternative medium for political information.
Respondents were asked on the political party’s blog they always visited.

Table 6.21: Mainstream Media Unreliable for Political Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid YES</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results (Figure 6.15) demonstrate that the blogs most visited by the 180 respondents were biased towards Pakatan Rakyat’s (PR) with 63% with only 37% browsed for Barisan Nasional’s blogs (BN). The respondents appear to choose blogs for political information, particularly the supporters of opposition party.
h) **Blog Party vs. Blog Visit**

The relationship between visiting political blogs and which political party sites are visited is significant to understand. In order to test if there any significance difference in the frequency of visiting political blogs per week between respondents who choose blogs related to UMNO and those related to Pakatan Rakyat, a Chi-Square test has been used testing the following null hypothesis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H_0</th>
<th>There are no significant difference in the frequency of visiting political blogs per week between person who choose blogs related to UMNO and Pakatan Rakyat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H_1</td>
<td>There are significant difference in the frequency of visiting political blogs per week between person who choose blogs related to UMNO and Pakatan Rakyat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the cross tab and the Chi Square test are shown in Tables 6.22 and 6.23

**Table 6.22: CrossTabs Blog Party-Blog Visits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BLOG_PARTY * BlogVisit Crosstabulation</th>
<th>More than 20 blogs</th>
<th>3 - 16 blogs</th>
<th>Less than 3 blogs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UMNO</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>% within BlogVisit</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>% within BlogVisit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakatan Rakyat</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.23: Chi Square Test for Blog Party vs Blog Visit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>7.760a</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>7.856</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>7.717</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.53.

The results indicate that respondents who choose blogs related to UMNO shows the highest frequency for visiting blogs, more than 20 blogs per week which is 71.4%, while only 28.6% of respondents choose blogs related to PR with the same frequency per week. For frequency of visiting less than 3 blogs per week, the result for PR shows the highest frequency with 61.1% as compared to UMNO with 38.9%. The Chi Square test shows that there is significant difference in the frequency of visiting political blogs per week between persons who choose blogs related to UMNO and those that choose Pakatan Rakyat. From the analysis, it can be said that the frequency of visiting political blogs per week depends on on the choices of blogs related ot either to UMNO or to Pakatan Rakyat.
i) How They Find Out about Political Blogs

The respondents were also asked about where they found out about political blogs.

The results show that 129 respondents came to know about political blogs through the internet, whilst 68 respondents have discovered blogs from their friends (Figure 6.16). The remainder (16) found the information about political blogs from other sources such as newspapers. This result indicates that the Internet is the most favorite source used by Malaysian citizens to search out information on politics. This reflects the urban nature of the cohort of respondents as they are the most educated and have easiest access to the Internet.

j) Opinions about information in political blogs

Having access to information is only one element of the blog. It was also considered important to understand the opinions of the blog readers about the information in the political blogs they were reading.
In terms of information in political blogs, the survey provided responses with nine segments regarding the opinion of respondents on information posted in Political blog. The highest score from respondents is about 120 (66.7%) for informative and the other 92 votes (51.1%) for interesting. The other result shows moderate response level are for provocative, interactive and user friendly with 45 (25%), 44 (24.4%) and 40 (22.2%) respectively.

Around 36 respondents (20%) agree that political blogs are biased and 32 (17.8%) claims that these blogs are persuasive. A small group responded blog as bored and nonsense with 21 (11.7%) and 19 (10.6%) respectively, as shown in Figure 6.18. In this study, the results from informative and interesting receive the highest responses for the information in political blogs. The result shows that citizens have accepted political blogs to be the main source for political information. Blogs are also relevant as source of political information that can draw attention of citizens to politics.
k) Average Attitude Towards political Information in Blog

In an attempt to understand the attitude of the respondents to political information in the blogs, their scores were averaged and the positive and negative plotted.

72.2% respondents have positive attitudes towards information in political blogs. This is a high percentage as compared to only 15.6% respondents who have negative attitudes on this matter. Meanwhile, 12.2% are neutral. Therefore, it seems that the respondents are convinced about the reliability of political issues posted in blogs. At the
same time, they have trusted blogs to be as a medium of information to get updated information on issues about Malaysian politics.

Further analysis was done on the trust in the information in political blogs by the respondents. In this study, the researcher would like to see whether the average attitudes towards political information are equal among three groups of respondents ie those who have trust, those that do not trust and those that are unsure with the political contents posted in blogs. A null hypothesis was formed:

\[ H_0: \text{All population means are equal} \]
\[ H_1: \text{At least one mean is different} \]

From this Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test output, the p-value is 0.000 which is less than \( \alpha; 0.05 \). Therefore, the result suggests we reject the \( H_0 \). It can then be concluded that at least one mean is different (Table 6.24).

**Table 6.24: ANOVA Test for Average Attitude vs Trust with the Political Content**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AVG_ATTITUDE</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>9.824</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.912</td>
<td>21.254</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>40.905</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>.231</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50.729</td>
<td>179</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the result from this analysis has concluded that at least one mean is different, it was important to see which one of the groups is different. Therefore, further analysis was done by using Duncan analysis. The result shows that respondents who did ‘Not Trust’ and who were ‘Unsure’ have no difference in their attitude towards political information. Consequently, the only difference in attitude towards political information was shown by the respondent who ‘Trust’ the contents posted in blogs. The means for ‘Not Trust’ and ‘Unsure’ are almost similar at 3.1984 and 3.3689 respectively. Whereas, respondents who ‘Trust’ in the political content posted in blogs have the highest mean at 3.9286. This result indicates that the respondents feel that the contents in blogs is reliable and therefore that blogs can be used to promote political activities that give effects to citizens’ participation in politics.

I) The Most Favourite Web 2.0 Applications in Blog

One of the key elements of this research was to also investigate the use of Web 2.0 applications within blogs and their impact. Figure 6.21 presents the outcomes of asking the respondents about which of the Web 2.0 applications used in Malaysian blogs most interested them. There were the Web 2.0 applications that used by respondents in Malaysia’s political blog.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRUST</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.1984</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSURE</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>3.3689</td>
<td>3.9286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

- Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 39.189.
- The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.
From this output, it can be concluded that the four Web 2.0 applications of most interest to the respondents were reading articles with 147, reading comments with 113, reading online newspapers with 100 and watching YouTube with 98. Respondents claim that reading articles in blogs is the most used application (81.7%) followed by reading article’s comments (62.8%), reading online newspapers linked in a blog (55.6%) and watching YouTube (54.4%).

The other Web 2.0 applications used in the Malaysian political blogs were to write and send comments (49.4%), downloading files (46.1%), sending e-mails (42.2%), links to other blogs (35%), chatting with other bloggers in the chat roll (32.2%), watching online television (31.1%), forwarding an e-mail (26.1%), posting articles (25.6%), bookmarks/favourites (23.9%), prayer time alerts (22.9%), posting announcements (15.6%), posting advertisements and getting information about foreign currency (12.8%), time alerts (10.6%) and using Really Simple Syndication (RSS) (9.4%). This is illustrated in Figure 6.21.
In addition the survey asked respondents to make a general appraisal of the Web 2.0 applications.

Figure 6.21: Web 2.0 Applications Used in Political Blog

Figure 6.22: Appraisal of Web 2.0 Application in Blog

Figure 6.22 presents respondents view on Web 2.0 applications in political blog. The majority of the respondents claim that they like Web 2.0 applications used in the blogs (73.3%). While others responded that they (26.7%) disliked the Web 2.0 applications.
m) Mainstream Media reporting political issues.

The survey also addressed the issue of respondents' attitudes towards mainstream reporting of political news in Malaysia.

Figure 6.23: Mainstream Media are Less Reliable in Reporting Political Issues

The chart (Figure 6.23) shows that 56.1% of the respondents believed that mainstream media are less reliable in reporting political issues. Clearly, this result indicates that Malaysian citizens see blogs as a better medium for political information compared to mainstream media.

n) Ways of Using Blogs as Political Media

Figure 6.24: Ways of Using Blogs as Political Media
In addition 68.3% of respondents agreed that blogs are a good medium for political information (Figure 6.24). The result demonstrates a big difference as compared to only 16.1% of respondents who have negative attitudes to blogs as political media. This analysis shows that respondents appear to have trust in blogs as a medium to get political information. At the same time, blogs can be the key source for political information to citizens. The reliability of these conclusions was tested using Cronbach’s Alpha. Cronbach’s Alpha is a common statistics that reflects the items to “hang together” (Grimm. L. G & Yarnold, P.R, 2006). Table 6.25, shows the Cronbach’s Alpha value for using blogs as political media / information is 0.867 which, being above a common level of 0.7 for acceptance, (Grimm. L. G & Yarnold, P.R, 2006). It means blogs are reliable to be as media for political information. Similarly their attitude towards blogs for political information (Table 6.26) has a Cronbach’s Alpha value is 0.739.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.25: Reliability of Using Blogs as Political Media/Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reliability Statistics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cronbach’s Alpha</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.867</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.26: Reliability of Attitudes to Blogs for Political Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reliability Statistics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cronbach’s Alpha</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.707</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

o) **Political Blogs Promotes Political Participation**

This research aimed to understand not only what was happening in political blogs in Malaysia, but also if those blogs played a role in promoting political participation.
60.6% of respondents have a positive perception that political blogs promote political participation in Malaysia (Figure 6.25). Only 21.1% did not agree that political blogs can promote political participation. 18.3% of respondents were neutral. This analysis indicates that the majority of respondents believe that political blogs can promote political participation to those who are blog readers. The application of Cronbach’s Alpha for reliability is 0.822 (Table 6.27) which shows political blogs are reliable in predicting that blogs can promote political participation, and can give affect to citizens’ participation in political activism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha Based on Standardized Items</th>
<th>No. of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.618</td>
<td>0.822</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p) **Member of Political Party vs. Web 2.0 Application**

The survey allowed analysis of various cross tabulations which could form important relationships. One these relates to the large gap between the frequency of using specific Web 2.0 applications and political party membership. Members of political parties have a vested interest in reading materials and using the applications. Knowing
the use of those applications by non party members will indicate that blogs are useful to them and that the web applications can assist them in initiating and maintaining their interest in the political content. Figure 6.27 shows a visual representation of use of Web 2.0 applications for both party member and non-party users of blogs.

![Member of Political Party vs. Web 2.0 Application](image)

**Figure 6.26: Member of Political Party vs. Web 2.0 Application**

The difference is possibly due to the number of respondent who are involved in a political party being small at only 24.4% out of 180 respondents. However, from the table, the respondents who are not involved in political parties show a high number in reading articles and reading blog comments, and reading online newspapers. Relatively the same pattern applies for respondents who are involved in a political party, but with a small number of votes. Therefore, this analysis demonstrates that political blogs have attracted citizens to read information posted even though they do not belong to any political party. Furthermore, the respondents who are not involved with a political party have showed high interest in reading political blogs which indicates, it can be argued, that they would like to understand more on issues in Malaysian politics. Thus, it can also be argued that this indicates that political blogs give effect to citizens political information seeking.
q) Member of Political Party vs. Frequency of Visiting Political Blogs vs. Number of Visited Political Blogs

More complex relationships can be assessed from the data to develop some meaningful understanding of relationships of activity and party membership.

Table 6.28: Member of Political Party vs. Frequency of Visiting Political Blogs vs. Number of Visited Political Blogs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Every day</th>
<th>3 - 4 Times</th>
<th>1 - 2 Times</th>
<th>Hardly</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-16 per Week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-13 per Week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-10 per Week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6 per Week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.28 illustrates that most of the respondents are in the category of hardly visiting political blogs to get political information with less than 3 political blogs visited in a normal week, where the result is 84 respondents. In addition, the above result shows that visiting less than 3 political blogs in a normal week is sufficient enough for them to get the political information they want (108 respondents) (60% out of total respondents). Only 39 respondents used blogs to get their political information by visiting the political blogs daily.
Out of the 39 respondents, there are 13 who are dependent on political blogs as their daily activity with more than 20 blogs visited in a normal week. This group of citizens wanted to get more information or to have personal evaluation of issue developed from multiple sources for them to gain their trust on certain issues. 12 respondents who are a member of a political party (27.3%\(^1\) out of total political party membership) do not used political blogs as their main source of information. This result may be due to them having faith in other sources of political information.

Further analysis was undertaken on this. The researcher wanted to understand whether the frequency of getting political information from blogs is different if they are a member of a political party or not. So the following Null Hypothesis was established:

\[
\begin{align*}
H_0: & \text{ There are no significant difference in the frequency of getting political information from blogs between member and non member of political party} \\
H_1: & \text{ There are significant difference in the frequency of getting political information from blogs between member and non member of political party}
\end{align*}
\]

**Table 6.29: Chi-Square Tests for Getting Information from Blogs between Member and Non-member**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>14.360a</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>13.522</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>13.712</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 1 cells (12.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.40.

From this Chi Square test output (Table 6.29), the p-value is 0.002 which is less than \(\alpha; 0.05\). Therefore we reject \(H_0\). We can conclude that there are significant differences in the frequency of getting political information from blogs between members and non

---

\(^1\) **Note: 27.3% = (12/44) \times 100\%**
members of a political party. In other words, the frequency of browsing blogs for political information among respondents will be affected by their membership of a political party.

It was also necessary to see whether the frequency of getting political information from blogs are different if they are member of political party or not. Another Null hypothesis was formed:

| H₀: | There are no significant difference in the number of political blogs visited in a week between member and non member of political party |
| H₁: | There are significant difference in the number of political blogs visited in a week between member and non member of political party |

Table 6.30: Chi-Square Test for Significant Difference in the Number of Political Blogs Visited in a Week between Member and Non-member of Political Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>24.256a</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>22.461</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>18.221</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .49.

From this Chi Square test output, p-value is 0.000 which is less than α; 0.05 (Table 6.30). Therefore we reject the H₀. It can be concluded that there are significant differences in the number of political blogs visited in a normal week between members and non members of a political party. In other words, the number of political blogs visited in a normal week among respondents will be affected by their membership of a political party.
The outcomes from the analysis of the raw survey data and some of the relationship between elements in that data show that:

- 41.7% of the respondents claim they have enough knowledge to develop a Blog.
- Majority of the respondents do not have their own Blog.
- The use of Blog for political information show equal number of users and non users.
- There is no significance different of getting political information for those who own. Blog and who do not own Blog.
- Majority of respondents have visited about three Blogs per week.
- Majority of respondents have visited Political Blogs to know about political issues.
- Half of the respondents agreed that mainstream media were unrealiable for political information.
- Blogs from the opposition party are the most visited by the respondents.
- Most of the respondents claim that information in Political Blogs is informative.
- Most favourite Web 2.0 application in Blogs used by respondents are reading articles and reading comments in Political Blogs.
- The most active blogs readers were those who own blog
- The blogs readers who are members of political parties are more likely to visit blogs to get information on political issues, than those who are not.
- Blogs related to UMNO received the highest visits by active blog readers
- The information accessed by the blog readers was affected by their membership of a political party.

6.4 Factors explaining use of Blogs

The analysis presented so far represents only simple relationships and doesn't enable any clear ability to make conclusions about what might explain the use of blogs and the relationships between those explanations. The survey asked a set of 18 questions relating to 4 constructs that previous research indicated could be significant as factors that could explain why people use blogs. According to Coakes and Steed (2003), a
factor analysis is a data reduction technique used to reduce a large number of variables to a similar set of underlying factors that summarize the essential information contained in the variables. According to De Vaus (2002), using factor analysis shows how the correlations between a set of selected variables occur because all the variables are caused by an underlying factor that is not directly measured. The analysis undertaken is simply exploratory. The model was derived from the survey question which asked a set of 18 questions relating to 4 constructs that were analysed using factor analysis.

The factors in section 6.4 in this study were derived from the factor analysis of the survey questions which explained the use of blogs. The survey asked a set of 18 questions relating to 4 constructs that previous research indicated could be significant as factors that could explain why people use blogs. The result from the analysis has developed the factor model as factors that could explain why people use political blogs as the result which shown in Table 6.23. The result shows that the 18 items can be factorized into 4 groups. Each one of the items was classified accordingly into suitable factors as referred to table 6.34 i.e; Usability, Information availability, Information relevance and currency and Information sharing. These four factors derived from the analysis which showed dominant factors of the decision made by the citizens in Malaysia to use blogs for political information (Usability 44.216%, Information availability 8.045%, Information relevance and currency 7.39%, and information sharing 5.74%). These factors show the important role of Web 2.0 applications that effect citizens’ decision, to use and be involved in political blogs in Malaysia.

The result from the analysis has developed the factor model using significant factors that could explain why people use political blogs. The model created hypothesis that the use of blogs is affected by the four constructs and thus is essentially simple. What such a factors analysis will do is firstly confirm in these 4 factors do impact significantly on decisions to use blogs and to what extent each has an impact.
The simple relationship model of the 4 constructs and the 18 items used to measure those constructs shown in Figure 6.27.

![Figure 6.27: Factor model for decisions to use political blogs](image)

In order to determine whether the factor analysis was appropriate for the data set, the study checked the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Barlett’s test of sphericity. The analysis shows the KMO value is 0.885 which is good enough to continue with factor analysis, as shown in Table 6.31.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KMO and Bartlett's Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moreover, applications of the Bartlett's test resulted in a significant Chi Square statistic of ($\chi^2=1807.369$), with the significance level of ($p$-value- 0.000), indicating adequate correlation among the variables.

Using a rotated factor analysis, the results (Table 6.32) show that the 18 items can be factorized into 4 groups. Each one of the items was classified accordingly into suitable factors. There are 7 items grouped in Factor 1, 5 items in Factor 2, 4 items in Factor 3 and 2 items in Factor 4.

**Table 6.32: Rotated Factor Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATE_VOTING</td>
<td>.721</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATE_ENCOURAGE</td>
<td>.640</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATE_DECISION</td>
<td>.639</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM_CANDIDATE</td>
<td>.573</td>
<td>.462</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATE_CONVINC</td>
<td>.567</td>
<td>.403</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATE_MOTIVAT</td>
<td>.532</td>
<td>.496</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM_WEB2</td>
<td>.473</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM_DISCUSS</td>
<td>.715</td>
<td>.303</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM_INFORMATION</td>
<td>.655</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATE_PROMOTE</td>
<td>.534</td>
<td>.534</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM_EXPLAIN</td>
<td>.518</td>
<td>.457</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM_PICTURE</td>
<td>.365</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM_UNDERSTAND</td>
<td>.391</td>
<td>.728</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM_ACTIVITIES</td>
<td>.423</td>
<td>.640</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATE_MEDIUM</td>
<td>.453</td>
<td>.598</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM_LINKS</td>
<td>.304</td>
<td>.533</td>
<td>.316</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM_POSTING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.691</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM_RELIABLE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.568</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.
This factor analysis indicates that the 4 factors identified can explain 65.391% of the total variance (Table 6.33).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Initial Eigenvectors</th>
<th>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
<th>Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% of Variance</td>
<td>Cumulative %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.959</td>
<td>44.216</td>
<td>44.216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.448</td>
<td>8.045</td>
<td>52.261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.330</td>
<td>7.390</td>
<td>59.651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.033</td>
<td>5.740</td>
<td>65.391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>.886</td>
<td>4.917</td>
<td>70.306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>.790</td>
<td>4.404</td>
<td>74.713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>.759</td>
<td>4.218</td>
<td>78.930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>.541</td>
<td>3.063</td>
<td>81.933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>.509</td>
<td>2.827</td>
<td>84.751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>.474</td>
<td>2.633</td>
<td>87.384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>.416</td>
<td>2.310</td>
<td>89.704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>.407</td>
<td>2.262</td>
<td>91.965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>.328</td>
<td>1.821</td>
<td>93.786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>.300</td>
<td>1.666</td>
<td>95.452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>.279</td>
<td>1.549</td>
<td>97.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>.237</td>
<td>1.315</td>
<td>98.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>.922</td>
<td>99.218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>.762</td>
<td>100.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Table 6.33: Total Variance Explained

Factor 1, usability explains 44.216% of the variance and is the most dominant factors explaining the decision to use blogs by citizens in Malaysia. Of the three other factors information availability explains 8.045% of variance, Information relevance and currency 7.39% of the variance and information sharing 5.74% of the variance.

Having identified that these constructs together do explain a significant amount of the variance, it is essential to confirm the internal validity of each of those constructs. Table 6.33 shows that the Cronbach’s Alphas for three construct value are above 0.70 which is acceptable; except for one construct which is 0.585 and below the accepted benchmark of 0.7. This variable is therefore not considered important.
Table 6.34: Cronbach Alpha Score for constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alphas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td>0.871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information availability</td>
<td>0.793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information relevance and currency</td>
<td>0.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information sharing</td>
<td>0.585</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This factor analysis highlights the usability aspect as the most important factor in deciding to use blogs. Usability comes from the nature of blogs and the Web 2.0 applications used in them. It can be argued then that the citizen’s surveys emphasize the importance of the role of Web 2.0 applications in their decisions to be involved in political blogs. The applications make the blogs easier to use and more interesting, confirming the findings of the blog content analysis and the outcomes from the interviews with bloggers who also highlighted the importance of the Web 2.0 applications.

6.5 Summary

The analysis of the survey has reported the opinions of Malaysian citizens about the effects of political blogs on their participation in Malaysia’s politics and explored their opinions of the impact of Web 2.0 technologies in those blogs.

The result from the analysis shows that citizens have accepted political blogs to be a key source for political information. Furthermore, the respondents explained that they believe that the contents in blogs are reliable. In their opinion, blogs can be used to promote political activities that increase their participation in politics. Those citizens surveyed are convinced that using blogs motivates citizens’ involvements in politics; and that blogs promote citizens’ political activities.
The analysis showed that those surveyed believed that political blogs are an effective medium of communication between politicians and supporters, and thus believe that political blogs can promote political participation from citizens. This analysis is consistent with Habermas (1989) views where the political public sphere needs input from a citizen who gives voice, opinion and responds to the issues articulated in elite discourse. He added the social interaction act is needed as a communication to link people on the speech act. This result also confirms Shah et. al, (2005) claims the acceptance and use of online interactive civic messaging results in high levels of civic participation.

The analysis in this study reveals that political blogs have attracted citizens who are non-members of political party to read information on politics. In addition, those who are not involved with a political party have showed high interest in reading political blogs which indicates they would like to know more about issues in Malaysian politics. Thus, it can further show that political blogs give effect to citizens political information seeking.

The results of the analysis show that respondents have positive attitudes towards information in political blogs. They responded that political blogs are informative and interesting and accepted political blogs to be a key source for their political information. The respondents are convinced about the reliability of political issues posted in blogs. At the same time, they trust blogs to be a reliable medium of information to get updated issues on politics. Another important finding from the analysis revealed that these blogs are often visited everyday.

Blogs are also relevant as a source of political information that can draw attention of citizens to politics through increase awareness towards understanding current political situations. This result indicates that the content in blogs is reliable to the blogs readers in their opinion since they mistrust information from mainstream newspaper.
Habermas (1974) used discourse to argue that citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion; thus with the guarantee that they may assemble and unite freely, and express and publicize their opinions freely, which they cannot make it through other mainstream media such as newspaper. Respondents have trust that blogs be a good medium for political information since blogs are effective as an alternative media for politics.

The analysis has revealed the five most favorite web 2.0 applications in blogs used by readers. The Web 2.0 application that is mostly used by readers in political blogs was reading articles about current Malaysian politics. The articles posted in blogs are often news on politics derived from mainstream newspapers. The survey showed that reading added comments and chat type commentary in political blogs was another favorite Web 2.0 application in blogs for citizens. The comments section is the platform for blogs readers to read, reply to and ask bloggers and other readers about political issues that might also include politicians who own blogs. The link to online newspapers is also important to the readers.

The interviews reported in Chapter 5 and the comments analysed in the blogs reported in Chapter 4 show that there is a serious level of mistrust with mainstream newspapers. Therefore, this result is relatively significant for the citizens who choose blogs as an alternative medium for political information. Lastly, the analysis shows that links to YouTube are an important application used by readers of political blogs.

The factor analysis confirmed that the usability of blogs was the most influential factor in the citizen decision to use blogs, being more influential than information availability, information relevance and currency, and information sharing.
The survey results show that:

- The Internet is often used daily by citizen
- Citizens frequently visit blogs for information on political issues
- Mainstream media were considered to be unreliable for political information
- Blogs from Pakatan Rakyat’s (PR) were always visited by respondents
- Political blogs are informative and interesting due to the applications used
- Information in political blog is provocative, interactive and user friendly.
- The Web 2.0 applications used by readers in blogs are mostly for reading articles, reading comments, reading online newspaper, downloading files, sending e-mails and watching YouTube.
- Web 2.0 applications have increased interest in reading political blogs
- Political blogs have attracted citizens to read information posted even though they do not belong to any political party
- Blogs are considered to be a good medium for political information.
- Blogs are an effective medium for social networking and communication between politicians and supporters.
- Political blogs promote political participation
These conclusions can also be analysed in the context of the research conceptual model developed in Chapter 2.

### Table 6.35: Elements in the Conceptual Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements in the framework</th>
<th>Outcomes of the Survey Analysis</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online information seeking (Political blogs)</td>
<td>Blogs are often used daily by citizen as a medium to get information on politics. Citizens believe that political blogs are informative and interesting and accept political blog to be a good and reliable source for political information. The survey showed that the citizens believed that blogs as a tool for online information seeking do act positively for increasing political engagement and community involvement.</td>
<td>Research shows that online information seeking acts positively for political engagement, community involvement (Delli Carpini, 2000, Kwak et al., 2006; Taveesin and Brown, 2006) and has been linked to an increase in online interactive civic messaging that, ultimately, and results in higher levels of civic participation (Shah et al., 2005). This study focuses on the use of political blogs by citizens as online information seeking political information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive civic messaging (Active bloggers, Internet uses)</td>
<td>The survey showed that political blogs are an effective medium to be used for communication between politicians and supporters. Communication can exist with the applications in blogs such as comments, chatpolls, sending messages and direct communications to politicians. The survey showed that Web 2.0 applications provided in blogs make direct communication with politicians easier. The survey highlighted that the citizens saw blogs as a means to improve their participation in and knowledge of Malaysian politics. In this way it can be argued that they are fostering the ‘public sphere’ Habermas argued for. The survey showed that they believed that they were more involved.</td>
<td>The Internet obviously allows people to “post, at minimal cost, messages and images that can be viewed instantly by global audiences” (Lupia &amp; Sin, 2003: 316). Habermas argued that the political public sphere needs input from citizens who give voice to society’s problems and who respond to the issues articulated in elite discourse. Habermas used discourse to argue that citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion; thus with the guarantee that they may assemble and unite freely, and express and publicize their opinions freely (Habermas, 1974). The study refers to the activities engaged in by the active bloggers and citizens that use the Internet, i.e.,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

256
| **Interpersonal political discussion (Communication)** | The survey showed that blogs are a good medium for political information and an effective medium for social networking and communication between politicians and supporters. The survey highlighted that there was more interaction between people about politics as a result of use of blogs. | Webster’s dictionary states that discourse has two meanings: (a) formal communication of thoughts about a serious subject through words (spoken or written) and (b) rationality or the ability to reason. Habermas (1989) emphasis in defining community has shifted from social interaction as an embodied set of relationships to social interaction as communication, on the speech-act which linked people. Interpersonal political discussion refers to the communication that occurs between the bloggers and users in political blogs to promote public participation and sharing information, through public dialogue on political issues. |
| **Civic participation (Participatory, Political Activism)** | The survey confirmed that blogs motivate citizens’ involvements in politics because they believed the information posted is reliable. The use of blogs raises the citizens’ understanding in politics | Evidence is accumulating that political messaging and sharing political information contributes directly to civic and political participation (Gil De Zúñiga et al., 2007). Blogs have bottom-up participation, as individuals can be more open and freely express their opinions. Communication and participation online has amplified conventional expressive and political participation. The internet was seen to have a role in promoting civic participation and linked with Habermas’s public sphere, a space ‘where people act as citizens by discussing the issues that concern them’ (Rheingold 2000) Citizen participation in political activities has derived from participation and political activism. |
In the next chapter, there is a discussion of the implications of the data analyses from the blog content analysis, from the blogger interviews and from the survey data of Malaysian citizens. This discussion is then used to modify the framework established in Chapter 2.
Chapter 7
Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter links the conclusions from the analysis of data collected from the blog content analysis, from the interviews with blog owners and from the survey of Malaysian citizens to show the effects of political blogs on participation in political activities in Malaysia. The study aimed to answer two research questions: (i) “Do political blogs affect citizens’ participation in Malaysia’s politics?”, and (ii) “How do the social networks that emerge in blogs serve as a platform of political activism?”. Previous research has argued that there is still a lack of studies on the impact of the Internet on politics (Hachigian 2002; Kalathil & Boas 2003; Norris 2003). This study goes some way to address that gap. In this chapter, information from interview sessions with political bloggers in Malaysia has been recorded. These themes were the main point repeatedly stressed by the political bloggers. The sub-themes were the information given by the citizens that received the higher percentage of answers from survey questions.

7.2 The research context and findings – a discussion

Malaysia has experienced significant change in political communication in the past 4 years. People are now using blogs as an alternative to the traditional print media to disseminate political information and to interact politically. This study has identified a number of significant and recurring themes throughout. Blogs are used in Malaysia to provide updated content on political information. These blogs are being made more attractive and easier to use for users with more and more embedding of Web 2.0 applications. Blogs also have been found to have influenced the creation of social
networking in Malaysia politics, and that these social networks have had the effect of increasing political activism in Malaysia. Table 7.1 reveals the key findings of themes and sub-themes identified in the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| i. | Blog provide updated content on political information | a. Citizen demand the latest political information on blogs  
b. Explanations on political issues by politicians in blogs have brought awareness and changed political thinking of Malaysian citizens  
c. Citizens have a better understanding of political issues and have become more interested in politics  
d. Blogs readers are interested to join in political activities  
e. There were blogs readers who have themselves become political bloggers  
f. Blogs have catalysed current political issues and initiated more political thinking |
| ii. | The impact of the use of Web 2.0 applications in blogs | a. Bloggers and readers receive feedback on political issues discussed from in the comments sections in blogs  
b. The pictures attached in news sections in blogs have made significant impacts on readers use of blogs  
c. Readers use chat roll to communicate on political issues in blogs  
d. Blogs use applications that attract more readers including animations, audio video, and YouTube |
| iii. | Political usability of blogs | a. Political activists can give opinions freely and critically in blogs  
b. Blogs contain greater transparency of political information  
c. Citizens use blogs because they represent speed and are at the cheapest cost for political information  
d. Blogs are having more influence than mainstream newspapers for political information in Malaysia  
e. Blogs contain informative and interesting political information |
| iv. | Blogs influenced the creation of social networking in Malaysia politics | a. Bloggers and blog readers have joined blogger groups  
b. Many blog readers have become active blogs followers  
c. Bloggers and readers have organised meetings and annual gatherings to discuss current issues in Malaysian politics  
d. Communications occurred between bloggers and readers through giving comments, chatting and sending or receiving political messages  
e. Bloggers have supporting groups that help disseminate political information  
f. Blogs readers give assistance at election locations for updating information in blogs  
g. Blogs readers printed articles from blogs and distributed them to the public  
h. Blogs influenced women and youngsters to become more involved in political programmes |
| v. | Factors affecting the use of blogs. | a. There increasing number of Internet usage and blogs readers among citizens.  
b. Blogs publish current and update information on politics  
c. Blogs bring awareness on politics and local issues  
d. Blogs as alternative sources of political information other than news published in mainstream newspapers |
e. Political news in blogs can influence readers with pictures attached.

f. Blogs deliver speedy of information to readers.

g. Bloggers received positive responses and feedback from readers through blog hits, comments, email, SMS and phone calls.

h. Blogs offers accessibility of delivering of information

i. The effectiveness of Web 2.0 applications

j. Blogs categorised the contents according to topic for easy retrieval.

k. Blogs creates critical thinking amongst readers.

vi. Barriers to the use of political blogs in Malaysia

   a. Blogs that use native languages, which may not be understood by some readers.
   
   b. The credibility of the information provided by authors of blogs.
   
   c. Information may be built around the same source (newspaper or article) taken by other bloggers.
   
   d. The digital divide and the imperfections in access to the Internet.
   
   e. Poor infrastructure including the lack of electricity exists in many parts of rural Malaysia Bloggers who did not update information in blogs where issues discussed were obsolete.

i) Blogs provide updated content on political information.

This study shows there are increasingly demands from Malaysian citizens to have more information on political issues. The study affirms that 60.6% of the respondents have a positive perception that political blogs promote political participation. Political blogs have changed people’s view in politics and they think more critically. The information posted in blogs, through critical bloggers’ political analysis, has initiated political thinking to citizens by providing an analysis of political issues posted in a perceived biased way in mainstream newspapers. The information on political issues posted in blogs was hardly published in the mainstream media. Although the motivation for political participation depends on the blog contents, bloggers mentioned it should include current issues in politics which are presented in pleasant ways. This is because the readers of political blogs mentioned that the political news posted in blogs is current and attractive to read, the language used is easy to understand and the issues are clearly explained with the pictures and videos attached. These are not normally presented in mainstream newspapers.
In Malaysia, political blogs are a good medium for political information. Political blogs in Malaysia post informative and interesting information. Blogs are used to promote political activities that increase citizens' participation in politics. This occurs because the information is current and updated regularly. Because the political information is current and kept up to date in the various blogs, there is increased awareness and a deepened understanding by the public about Malaysian politics and about local issues. The currency of blogs in Malaysia has, it can be argued, catalysed current political issues, especially through reporting of front pages in mainstream newspapers on a daily basis.

The effect is that after reading articles and political issues posted in blogs, the readers became more interested in politics and often joined in political activities, including joining political campaigns programs, involvement in local community programs organized by politicians, and willingness to vote in elections. One blogger claimed that more than twenty of his blog readers have also become political bloggers after reading articles posted in the blog, and after reading responses from other blog commentators in his blog. All of these postings and their effects came from the information being kept current. This activity of keeping information current applied to all types of political blogs and to the various groups, politician, students and party supporters who were running them.

The bloggers stressed that one important role of political blogs in Malaysia, was as a catalyst for current political issues, especially through posting front page news in mainstream newspapers. Blogging is a new technology that began in Malaysia to be used by traditional media, by politicians and by politically interested citizens as tools for agenda setting, based on current news and commentary. Articles published in blogs help to mobilize opinions and set the agenda for politicians. In addition, this study has discovered the information posted in blogs through critical bloggers' political analysis,
has initiated political thinking in citizens. On a daily basis, most often, bloggers used resources from mass media and made references from other current sources that are relevant. The information produced has been reviewed and written in a language can be understood by using Web 2.0 applications that make the story more interesting. These writings in blogs have helped Malaysians to make judgments on political issues based on current information received.

One significant result from the research is the important role of current information and commentary in political blogs as an effective medium for political information mainly for the ruling government as well as for other political parties. This finding is consistent with other studies which state that blogs are an influential source for news and information (Drezner & Farrell, 2004; Dutton & Shepherd, 2006; Pew Internet & American Life, 2005; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005). The matter of currency of information and having a blog is so significant in Malaysia that the ruling party, UMNO, required their candidate for a by-election in 2008 to have their own blog (The Straits Times, 12 April 2008). This study shows that blogs are now considered essential to Malaysian politicians because they allow them to deliver new ideas and agendas through online forums, and to increase citizen engagement through access to current information. This finding is consistent with other research which argues that the increase in political knowledge in the public consequently brings more political participation (McLeod et al., 1999; Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002; Scheufele et. al., 2003).

ii) The impact of the use of Web 2.0 applications in blogs

Previous research has shown that social groups created from using of Web 2.0 in blogs, chat rooms and in the social media can promote democratic participation (O’Reilly 2005; Preece, 2001; Preece & Maloney-Krichmar, 2005; Boyd 2006). The analysis of the survey data from citizens revealed that the majority 73.3% claimed that they like Web 2.0 applications in blogs. The material and content in the Malaysian
blogs are linked to other applications which use animations, online video, and YouTube, and the research shows that these have attracted more readers to participate in blogging activities in Malaysia. One blogger mentioned that pictures attached in the news section in a blog had had a great impact on he and other readers since it showed evidence of the actual situation or incident related to political issues or political programs that were of interest at the time. The research shows that readers were more convinced with news that features pictures taken on particular scenes, for example the chaotic situations which arose in Malaysia during the BERSIH 2.0 rally demonstrations (news can be referred to BERSIH blog at http://bersih.org/). The news, like this, published on blogs, complete with pictures, graphs and facts, were shown to be quite impressive, impressions that had failed to be so in the mainstream media. This result is that Malaysian blogs now use photographs as an immediate behaviour to show protest, supporting research that blogs can communicate both “social approval” and “social interest” online (LaRose & Whitten, 2000).

Web 2.0 applications used in the Malaysian blogs have provided platforms for dissemination and sharing of political information as the users producing and interacting with political information. They offer a place and the tools to contest the status quo in Malaysian politics and contest the existing discourse. Opposition groups and parties in Malaysia use the forums in blogs and the opportunities of Web 2.0 applications to foster their ideas as well. As for politicians, the tools in blogs are used to promote their political agendas and briefing political ideas confirm previous work by Bichard, (2006). This finding is also consistent with research which claims that online forums encourage citizens to participate in the democratic process (Dahlgren, 2005; Dell & Carpini, Cook & Jacobs, 2004; 2006) either supporting or contesting. This research shows that one of the main attractions to readers of political blogs is the effectiveness of the applications of Web 2.0 in the blogs where readers can have better information through pictures, audio video, and animation from the articles published and can use that information to be better informed.
This research also discovered that blog readers get more detailed information in blogs than from the news published in daily newspapers that normally do not display photographs on certain issues. This view is consistent with a blogger who mentioned that “Blogs give effect to the public since they can influence with the news and pictures posted in articles. This has shifted the political beliefs and thinking of young generations, when blog offers facts and figures on political issues. Thus it makes people have more concern and react to political issues” (3,13). Another blogger shared the same view on this point; “In my personal view, posting articles together with pictures gives more effects to readers. Those pictures posted in blogs show different perspectives compared with what readers have in mainstream newspapers. This has been proven with blog’s hits increasing in the last by-election when pictures have been attached in blog articles. Simply to say that pictures attached with the story in articles give more effects to blog readers.” (MPBI 6(10).)

The ‘Comments’ section in the Malaysian blogs allows readers to instantly share and voices their opinions. At the same time, readers received feedback on the issues discussed with other blog writers, and providing answers in the discussion. This finding is consistent with a study by Perlmutter (2008) which argued that the Internet allows interaction between audience, content creators and other content consumers, which could be an important aspect of its influence on voting behaviour.

Furthermore, blogs are being used by political parties and politicians in Malaysia to strategize for political mobilization. The various groups of authors of young people and members of political parties have express opinions and campaigned under its own political analysis in their respective blogs. As for that reason, blogs’ readers can exchange opinions and give feedback over issues through posting comments in blogs. The effectiveness of this motivation for blogging in Malaysia has both affected and been affected by the possible sets of applications available to be used to improve the level of interaction and the perceived attractiveness of each blog. As such, the effect
from political discussions and the political news consumption, enhanced by the web 2.0 applications, have encouraged participation in Malaysia’s politics. Thus bloggers and users of blog have developed connections among themselves and makes them read the contents in blogs regularly. Blogs and their inbuilt applications have positively affected participation in political discussions that make people more interested in political activism, confirming the community forum model concept of Dahlberg (2001) which argues that community ties are reinforced by technology use.

This study highlights the role blogs provide through embedded applications which enable more interaction and participation among users, supporting the findings of previous research by Carty, (2008); and Harrison & Barthel, (2009). This study has shown that political discussion has a direct impact on political participation in Malaysia as it has been shown in other research elsewhere (McLeod et al., 1999; Kim et al., 1999; Price & Cappella, 2002). Interestingly, the research also demonstrates that people who are not involved in any political party in Malaysia show high readership of articles in political blogs than party members, suggesting a desire to discover more points of view before becoming involved politically or before making a political commitment.

iii) Usability of blogs

This research has shown that the political usefulness and ease of use of blogs is a significant factor in their use and adoption by Malaysian citizens and by politicians and other interest groups. Numerous of the bloggers interviews mentioned that the use of the blogs for political information and political campaign is seen as low cost and cheap to produce but effective. This conclusion supports previous studies that show the advantages of using new media and blogs as low cost, as being interactive but lacking in of control of the message delivered (Kamarack, 1999; Park & Choi, 2002; Bimber & Davis, 2003; Cone 2004). According to bloggers, this is an important element for
political work as they are volunteers as a part-timer blog’s writer. Moreover, the analysis on bloggers’ reasons for using blogs showed that most of bloggers would prefer blogs compared to other social media because it is free while providing speedy delivery of information and the ability to receive updated political information. This research supports the view that blogs can be accessed and edited at time that is convenient, thus making communication and collaboration reach further than geographical barriers (Hinchcliffe, 2007). They are useful. The summary analysis highlights how important usability was in the decision of people to use blogs.

This research asserts that blogs are easy to use and therefore are a good medium for political information, and for forming trust with the political content posted in blogs. Political blogs emerged as a platform for politicians and political supporters to more easily and more effectively distribute information and to speak more freely and more critically about Malaysian politics. The findings in this study affirm that blogs are, in Malaysia, a medium for finding and spreading political information. For that reason, political news posted in blogs is becoming more influential than news in daily newspapers. They have become very useful politically.

Malaysia citizens chose blogs for political information because they have doubts about information published in Malaysian daily newspapers. The general public believed that these mass media sources often publish false and fabricated stories. This is consistent with the Johnson & Kaye (2004) study which argues that readers use blogs because of their credibility compared to other sources of news information, is higher. In this study, 56.1% Malaysian citizens who responded mentioned the main reason for using political blogs is associated with their perception that mainstream media were unreliable for political information. The study also shows that 72.2% of the respondents have positive attitudes towards information in political blogs. Political blogs were also considered to be more informative and interesting (66.7% of respondents). This level of interaction with the blogs in Malaysia is because the suppliers of information see blogs are
politically useful and the users of blogs demand information and are attracted to the blogs because they are easy to use.

Another important finding from the research was that blogs are a significant medium for politics with most respondents visiting political blogs everyday. The usability of blogs and the applications in them make this possible.

iv) Social Networking in blogs as political mobilization

This research shows that blogs have been responsible for the creation of more expansive and more differentiated social networking in politics in Malaysia. Blogs appears to unite the bloggers into groups where they can exchange ideas on an issue. There are groups of active followers in blogs that communicate through giving comments, chatting and sending or receiving messages. Some of the social networks is associated directly with political parties, both government and opposition. Some of the networks have formed for the purpose of maintaining the predominance of Islam or to protect the rights of minorities like the Chinese and Indians. Figure 7.1 show an example of a blogger group website.
Blogs readers also post information through blogs informing other readers about particular issues. In the rural areas in Malaysia without internet services, other blog readers made the effort to print and disseminate information in blogs in hard copy to villagers. Through the blogs readers groups, politicians and political bloggers in Malaysia have developed close relations with their followers by organizing meetings and annual gatherings which allow them to get together and discuss current issues in articles posted in blogs. Bloggers in Malaysia are, what Trippi (2004) has noted elsewhere, connectors. They act to catalyse connectors between people, often forming new social networks. In Figure 7.2, the image shows an example of the programs organised amongst the followers of telokbakong.blogspot.com.
The impact of social networking was confirmed through bloggers receiving assistance from their blog followers during the election periods. The followers provided the equipment and necessary services needed for locations where low access of internet is the main problem. 59% of respondents agreed that political blogs are an effective medium for social networking and communication between politicians and political supporters. The finding is consistent with what has been observed in the Yeoh (2008) study that mentioned that political activists and political supporters who have wide access of internet voluntarily channel the information gathered from blogs to those who do not have the facilities.

This study is consistent with other research that suggests it is possible to engage people in politics if they do not have access to the internet (Krueger, 2002). The readers of blogs who are not actively involved in politics will still come across some political dialogue when they are using the web (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2007). In addition,
the social networking activity in blogs such as online forums has impact on the
democratic process in Malaysia through greater citizen discussion similar to that
reported in other research (Dahlgren, 2005; Delli Carpini, Cook & Jacobs, 2004;
Nichols et al., 2006).

Previous research shows that political bloggers engage in activities such as informing,
checking the media, political advocacy, gathering money for charity, investigating,
collating and compilers of information, and revisers and extenders of political
information (Perlmutter, 2008, McKenna & Pole, 2008). This study confirms this
conclusion and also suggests that blogs have a strong influence on meeting offline that
creates collectives of like minded people politically. Some bloggers noted that they
were able to gather huge numbers of members for meetings to have discussion on
political issues (MPBI 1,3). These were the formation of new social
networks in
Malaysia, built with many people who previously had been politically inactive or
disinterested.

The research shows that social networking between bloggers and blog readers gives
effects to increased participation in political activism. Mancini (2009) cites the 2008 US
presidential election victory the Obama political campaign’s use of Web 2.0 through
blogs in his political campaign. In the Malaysian 12th General Election in 2008 political
change was effected by the content and impact of political blogs (Maznah, 2008).

This research shows that political blogs influence citizens in their engagement in
politics and shows how political participation can be increased through the building of
social networks through blogs. The main factor that promotes citizens participation in
blog activities is growth in Internet usage. Young people and women are among
important groups affected by political blogs resulting from more widespread availability
of political information. Women can play their role in family to spread political
information in their family since those who talk about politics within family members and
friends have shown potential to engage in political activities, confirming previous studies which show the political role of women in families (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995; Kim, Wyatt, & Katz, 1999; Pan et. al., 2006). The difference in Malaysia is that the information is reaching the women via blogs.

Blogs are seen as an appropriate medium for political information dissemination to women because most of them spend most of their time at home in Malaysia as housewives. With the internet services at home, they can access political information via blogs without difficulty. The information in blogs positively impacts on women’s involvement in politics in Malaysia, where they have joined political programmes organised by local communities. One blogger noted that blog can influences men and women, young and old, with the news and with pictures posted in articles to have more concern and to react to political issues. Sani & Zengeni, (2010:8,14).argue that except for those who are exposed to social media like Friendster, yahoo messenger and get news from internet, women in Malaysia are not as open for politics, since they stay at home and only read news from TV and mainstream newspapers. Blogs are changing that and the bloggers interviewed noted that blogs has developed as a medium for political information to women in Malaysia.

Another finding in this study shows that political blogs can generate network communities among the young generation and in local society fostering one political ideology or another. Young Malaysians people have formed into networks of communities that have similar political ideology to political parties. They both contest and support various political positions in Malaysia. It represents the shift of political beliefs and thinking of younger generations, with blogs offering new facts and figures and commentaries on political issues (Sani & Zengeni, 2010:3, 13).

This study also revealed that the readers of political blogs become active politically, usually in new social networks and groups after reading information in blogs. The study
shows the social networks encourage more participation and it is not unusual for people to use blogs for political information everyday. This finding echoed other research which emphasized that political blogs are among the most visited blogs by readers (Haas, 2005; John & Kaye, 2004).

This study also has found that blogs and the social networks that emerged and are emerging have affected the development of politics in Malaysia. The analysis of the study revealed that political blogs have had impacts on the voting in elections. The 12th General Election results show significant indications of the effects of political blogs on citizen political activism and social networking, resulting in losses to the incumbent government in five states in the 2008 General Election in Malaysia (Maznah, 2008). The General Election in 2008 has shown votes for the government party dropping to 51.4%, which denied the ruling party a two-thirds majority in the Malaysian Parliament (Gomez & Rasyidah, 2010). The study has confirmed other research then which shows that the internet and political information accessed on it impacts on voting in elections (Wang, 2007).

This research shows that blogs have had an impact on Malaysia citizens to the extent that more voted in the general election, especially younger Malaysians. “The opposition parties have won many seats in the main cities where they have large numbers of political blog readers. Whereby in small towns shows less seats belong to them due to the political information can only be read through daily newspapers “.(MPBI 1(14)). Another blogger mentions that articles in blogs give the public an opportunity to think about political issues. “By putting up the political news in blogs, we have played a very significance role in the last general election the effect of which was that the BN government banned us”. (MPBI 3(13)). Political blogs are an effective medium of communication between politicians and supporters, and the social networks they create and form, and thus they believe that political blogs can promote more political participation from citizens. This study shows that political blogs promote political
participation supporting research elsewhere (Johnson & Kaye, 2004; Chambers 2005). Therefore, this study has challenged the view that claims that political blogs do not give effects to political participation (Davis 1999; Bimber 2001). However, there are barriers which the research shows affects and is affecting the levels of participation in Malaysian politics as a result of blogs.

7.2.1 Barriers in Political Blogs in Malaysia

This study has identified barriers regarding political blog in Malaysia as follows:

i) Language

The language barriers and the credibility of information were seen as important issues affecting participation in political blogs. There are blogs that use specific languages, which may not be understood by some readers. Apart from using the Malay and English languages, other native languages such as Mandarin, Tamil, Dayaks, Iban and Kadazandusun, were also used in some blogs. Languages are based around the geographical area, type of ethnicity, and political parties in Malaysia. Therefore, the information can only be read and understood by a set group of people. This has the potential to hinder the process of using blogs to disseminate information instead of allowing blogs to be open and acceptable to all readers. In a multi-cultural context like in Malaysia, it can be argued that the blogs are not always inclusive and therefore contest any view that there is a real public space’ in the view of Habermas as being necessary for real participatory politics.

ii) Content credibility

Other issues discovered in this study that limit the use and adoption of blogs include the level of accuracy and the credibility of the information provided by authors of blogs.
There is scepticism concerning the accuracy of contents in blogs. Since information is written from the writers’ perspective and a worldview, the material may be biased towards a specific opinion and beliefs. The common arguments concerning blog credibility are that anyone can create a blog. There is no responsibility or accountability for content, and information can be posted anonymously, and posters may not be bound by journalistic ethics (Johnson & Kaye, 2004). In addition, articles can be based around the personal opinions of the author and sometimes these articles may be built around the same source (newspaper or article) taken by other bloggers and treated as their content. In Malaysia, there was certainly evidence that also supports this view but also strong evidence that, politically, people understand different viewpoints and the variation in of blogs established in Malaysia range from political party driven blogs to those who vehemently support the government, to blogs contesting government policy, to blogs supporting religious idealism in politics, to those arguing for racial equality.

iii) Digital divide

Issue arose in the research related to the digital divide and the imperfections in access for all people to the Internet, an issue which is critical for most people who live in rural Malaysia. There is a lot of contrast between the Internet connections amongst cities in Malaysia. Despite governmental initiatives and strong emphasis put on multimedia, broadband usage level has remained relatively low (Yong, 2003). Poor infrastructure including the lack of electricity exists in many parts of rural Malaysia and this creates challenges to Internet and blog usability. Internet facility is not widely accessible in all parts of the country especially in geographically isolated regions due to inadequate ICT infrastructure (Siddiquee, 2008). The matter is worst for the people in Sabah and Sarawak where large numbers of villagers stay in remote areas.

This discussion so far provides a systematic set of conclusions that have emerged out of the research on blogs in Malaysian politics. There are broader aspects, which also
result, and this concern some generalisation of these findings based on theoretical lenses developed to make more sense of the research findings.

7.2.2 Contribution to theory

In this study, a conceptual model was developed based on the existing literature and on the modified Communication and Civic Participation model of Shah et al. (2005), as shown in Figure 7.3. Shah (2005) argues that sharing political perspectives electronically and contacting political elites through the use of online media may contribute directly to engagement. As shown in Figure 7.3, this model argues that media effects will be related to two important forms of citizen communication: (i) Interpersonal political talk, and (ii) Interactive civic messaging.

![Figure 7.3: The Conceptual Model adopted from Communication and Civic Participation (Shah et al., 2005)](image)

This model predicts that media effects will be related to two important factors in citizen communication, interpersonal political talk and interactive messaging, and therefore has positive effects on civic participation. The model suggested three main methods through online information seeking, newspaper hard news use and television hard news use, as the act of citizen in getting information. However this study uses a mode
of analysis and focuses only on online information seeking through political blogs to promote political participation and activities.

In model of Communication and Civic Participation, Shah (2005) suggested three main methods through online information seeking, newspaper hard news use and television hard news use, as the act of citizen in getting information. However, in this study only one variable relates to research objective that is the use of online information seeking through blogs for political information. As researches suggested that informational uses of the Internet encourage citizen involvement and increase participation (Shah, McLeod et al., 2001). Therefore, in this study concentrates the element on online information seeking through blogs as variables of study as source of seeking information on Malaysia politics.

In Chapter 2, a Table of the elements of this model was constructed (Table 2.1) and has been used throughout the thesis as a framework to show the impacts of blogs in Malaysian politics. A full table with all elements discussed based on the threes modes of analysis used in this research is offered and a summary commentary provided Table 7.2. The analysis represented in the final column in the Table 7.2, commentary, shows the complexity of the findings but also illustrates the relevance of the authencity of the research to the original elements in the research model.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements in the framework</th>
<th>References (Literature)</th>
<th>Chapter 4: Blogs contents analysis</th>
<th>Chapter 5: Bloggers interview</th>
<th>Chapter 6: Surveys</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online information seeking (Political blogs)</td>
<td>Research shows that online information seeking acts positively for political engagement, community involvement (Delli Carpini, 2000; Kwak et al., 2006; Taveesin and Brown, 2006) and has been linked to an increase in online interactive civic messaging that, ultimately, and results in higher levels of civic participation (Shah et al., 2005). This study focuses on the use of political blogs by citizens as online information seeking political information.</td>
<td>Malaysian Political Blogs provide an organised medium of information on specific political issues, political parties and politicians activities, provide easy retrieval, and provide up-to-date and credible information. There are significant numbers of members in each blog, all citizens active in political discussion. The result is an appearance of increased political activity and civil participation.</td>
<td>Blogs provide updated information on politics which is shaping national political issues and discussion in Malaysia. The bloggers believe that their blogs are increasing civic participation in Malaysian politics, resulting from the use of a number of messaging systems embedded in the ways the blogs are structured.</td>
<td>Blogs are often used daily by citizen as a medium to get information on politics. Citizens believe that political blogs are informative and interesting and accept political blog to be a good and reliable source for political information. The survey showed that the citizens believed that blogs as a tool for online information seeking do act positively for increasing political engagement and community involvement.</td>
<td>This study discovers political blogs in Malaysia is accepted by citizens as a medium where they can retrieve information on politics. Political blogs also have been chosen by citizen in Malaysia as a platform to discuss political issues. Blogs are used as medium of information and communication because it provides updated and organised information, thus has promoted the shaping national issues and discussion in Malaysia. Therefore political blogs are relevant to be medium for political information that is able to promote political participation. Consequently, politicians and political parties’ benefits from political blogs as a place to communicate and publish political information that is able to increase participation in political activities. Malaysian political blogs act as focal points for information seeking.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interactive civic messaging
(Active bloggers, Internet uses)

The Internet obviously allows people to “post, at minimal cost, messages and images that can be viewed instantly by global audiences” (Lupia & Sin, 2003: 316).

Habermas argued that the political public sphere needs input from citizens who give voice to society’s problems and who respond to the issues articulated in elite discourse.

Habermas used discourse to argue that citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion; thus with the guarantee that they may assemble and unite freely, and express and publicize their

The use of Web 2.0 applications as the tools of discussion and exchanging information attracted readers to participating in blog activities. The bloggers clubs encourages feelings of social presence in exchange and writing issues in politics through news article, sending messages, forum discussion, video and pictures, and chatroll. These clubs and the special interest groups identified in the blogs are creating social networks using web applications and social media to foster political activism. These groups are creating the ‘public sphere’ Habermas refers to as essential for challenging the ‘elite’ discourse. The Malaysian blogs allow citizens to debate and be critical of plus support government policies and the

Blogs have been used as political information sources and a medium of communication between politicians and their political supporters.

The blogs in Malaysia have also become forums where people can challenge the existing political discourse of UMNO. Alternative perspectives on many issues are discussed openly in blogs challenging the status quo. The ‘public sphere’ Habermas argued was needed for a civil society and for democracy is emerging.

Initially there was evidence of coercion that resulted from the early blogs but this has been decreasing. Leaders who are contesting the current discourse are now open about who they are and what they say

The survey showed that political blogs are an effective medium to be used for communication between politicians and supporters. Communication can exist with the applications in blogs such as comments, chatpolls, sending messages and direct communications to politicians.

The survey showed that Web 2.0 applications provided in blogs make direct communication with politicians easier.

The survey highlighted that the citizens saw blogs as a means to improve their participation in and knowledge of Malaysian politics. In this way it can be argued that they are fostering the ‘public sphere’ Habermas argued for. The survey showed that they believed that they were more involved.

Web 2.0 applications use in Malaysian political blogs has created an effective means of communications and delivery of political information between bloggers, readers and politicians in Malaysia. The applications provided are very attractive and encourage citizens to utilize information and the issues raised in political blogs. The applications of Web 2.0 in blogs have made communications become more useful and interactive. The advantages for politicians through these applications are they can have open interaction and feedback from citizens, and thus can attract citizen for political programmes and activism. As a result, the functionality of political blogs has catalysed for political activity among citizen in Malaysia that increased their interest in politics and promotes political participation.

The research shows that alternative perspectives on many issues are discussed openly in blogs both supporting and challenging the existing discourse. The ‘public sphere’ Habermas argued was needed for a civil society and for democracy is emerging. There is development through these blogs in Malaysia for citizens to be openly active and openly context the status quo.
opinions freely (Habermas, 1974). The study refers to the activities engaged in by the active bloggers and citizens that use the Internet, i.e., political blogs.

| Interpersonal political discussion | Webster's dictionary states that discourse has two meanings: (a) Formal communication of thoughts about a serious subject through words (spoken or written) and (b) rationality or the ability to reason. Habermas (1989) emphasis in defining community has shifted from social interaction as an embodied set of relationships to social interaction as communication, on the speech-act which linked people. Blogs provides freedom of press on current political issues thus serve as catalysts in stimulating critical thought. Blogs are used to persuade readers to reject the leaders and provides proposals to restructure the top positions within the political party.

Blogs is used for articulation of political information. Forum in blog chatroll is also used to discuss political issues that competing visions which has previously been restricted.

Each of the blogs studied in detail shows how substantial interpersonal communication is developing. The numbers of blogs is growing and they have moved from single stand alone blogs to those where there are now communities of blogs and bloggers, differentiated by their

The survey showed that blogs are a good medium for political information and an effective medium for social networking and communication between politicians and supporters.

The survey highlighted that they was more interaction between people about politics as a result of use of blogs

The study shows that the political blogs in Malaysia are being used as tools for interpersonal communication between politicians and citizen due to the restriction imposed by government. In the political blogs studied, the communication becomes effective especially in doing propaganda to change the ruling government, which has been said as main factor for the worst record of UMNO in the 12th General Election.

Political contestation in the blogs has encouraged the creation of social networks and networking for citizens and bloggers through dialogue, political discussion and communication that make them cooperate for the same political agenda. This has increased political participation and promoted political activism across many issues and incorporating numerous forms of discourse, from the completely political,
| Interpersonal political discussion refers to the communication that occurs between the bloggers and users in political blogs to promote public participation and sharing information, through public dialogue on political issues. discourse through adding religious (Islam) discourse or discourse based on race. political ideology and purpose. to religion and culture to the issues of race. This study has also revealed that political knowledge of citizens in Malaysia has increased through discussion and communication through political blogs. |

| Civic participation (Participatory, Political Activism) Evidence is accumulating that political messaging and sharing political information contributes directly to civic and political participation (Gil De Zúñiga et al., 2007). Blogs have bottom-up participation, as individuals can be more open and freely express their opinions. Communication and participation online has amplified conventional expressive and political. Bloggers have created social networks amongst readers through discussions and the exchange of information, organizing programmes and gathering the bloggers that have potential to increase political activism. These blogs are driven both by bottom-up activism promoting alternative discourse or represent activism imposed top down to maintain the existing. Online political forums in blogs have initiated in-group interaction and collective political identity construction, leading to increased community integration and civic participation. Using Web 2.0 applications has truly amplified expressive and political participation. The use of blogs raises the citizens' understanding in politics. Political blogs in Malaysia impacted on Malaysia politics in recent years with the creation many of groups' movement for political bloggers. Bloggers have formed their own clubs and in each of political blogs they are developing identity with their own logos. Therefore, blogs are effectively a medium that encourages civic participation among blogs readers in Malaysia, and have initiated many political events with large crowds. The movement of 'Bersih' for example has succeeded in getting Malaysia citizens to voice out issues on politics in Malaysia and blogs are used as the tool to generate supporters. The Internet has played the role Habermas ascribed to it in playing the role of promoting civic participation and thus enabling real participatory. |
participation.
The internet was seen to have a role in promoting civic participation and linked with Habermas’s public sphere, a space ‘where people act as citizens by discussing the issues that concern them’ (Rheingold 2000).

Citizen participation in political activities has derived from participation and political activism.
The analysis identifies that there is more than what Shah et al.,(2005) identified happens in the use of blogs. There are two additional variables to add to the original model - Communication and Citizen Participation (Figure 7.3 above). These two elements which are use of blogs increasing activism and the creation of social networking both contribute to participatory political activism from citizens in Malaysia based on the use of blogs and the process of blogging. The outcomes of this research suggest that the original Shah model needs to contain other elements such as giving comments, chat rolls, attached pictures and animations, and that these also collectively as social networking play an important role in citizens participation, in addition to interactive civic messages and interpersonal political discussion. The findings provided new knowledge about politics and participation and enhance the Shah model. This modified model adopts a view that online interactions about public issues have the capability to encourage citizen participation. The online information seeking through blogs is used as a source for readers to find information about politics. The modified model highlights the effects from political blogs of the uses of Web 2.0 applications and activities in social networks.

The research showed that there are key barriers to the use of blogs and other online applications in Malaysian politics. These were content credibility, the digital divide and language barriers. Languages used in some blogs are based around the geographical area, type of ethnicity, and political parties. Poor infrastructure for the Internet users many creates challenges to information seeking and the blog usability. This study also has included the level of accuracy and the credibility of the information provided by authors of blogs, as among a barrier to the model. There is skepticism concerning the accuracy of contents in blogs.

These barriers were described as important issues in political blogs. The barriers have potential to hinder the process of seeking and disseminate of information instead of allowing blogs to be open and acceptable to all readers. The new additional variables
and the barriers derived from this research contribute for a better understanding of participatory activism. In the development of the area of this study, these additional factors and barriers will give guidance to further explore the potential of blogs and Web 2.0 applications.

The proposed new model of the Communication and Civic Participation provides evidence that the use of news media affects participation through increasing political knowledge which leads to political efficiency and consequently, in political participation. These new elements have been added to the original Shah model because they offer an understanding of extraneous factors that influence political participation and political activism in the same way as interpersonal political talk, and interactive civic messaging. The further modified form of the model is shown in Figure 7.4. The application of this model to other political contexts beyond Malaysia will need to be tested at a later stage.

With reference to Figure 7.4, it shows a modified model of Communication and Civic Participation which is derived from the analysis. The findings provided new knowledge about politics and participation and enhance the Shah model. This modified model adopts a view that online interactions about public issues have the capability to encourage citizen participation. The online information seeking through blogs is used as a source for readers to find information about politics. This study has discovered from the communication of citizen bring awareness on political and local issues. Most importantly, interactions from political information have created critical thinking amongst readers of political blogs.

The modified model highlights the effects from political blogs of the uses of Web 2.0 applications and activities in social networks. The study identifies that there are two additional variables derived from the finding of this research as contribution to original model Communication and Citizen Participation. These two elements, which are use of blogs increasing activism and the creation of social networking, have contributed to
influence participatory political activism from citizens. This study also has revealed the original Shah model needs to contain other elements, such as giving comments, chat rolls, attached pictures and animations, and that these do play an important part for citizens' participation, beside interactive civic messages and interpersonal political discussion. These additional elements derived from Web 2.0 applications in political blogs, have gained interest of readers in seeking political information. Furthermore, the pictures attached, feedback and comments section in blogs have made significant impact to citizens' participation in politics.

Figure 7.4: A proposed new Model of Communication and Civic Participation
7.2.3 Contribution to practice

i) Government

The findings in this study could be a reference of how political activism can be strengthened from citizens’ activities through the use of web 2.0 applications and social networking in blogs. The other contribution of this research is to better understand the roles of political information in Malaysia. This study shows the impact of alternative sources of political information for citizens, political parties and government.

ii) Citizens

This study shows that blogs have the ability to change political thinking of citizens and increase their interest in political activities in Malaysia. This has implications for the work of political parties.

iii) Political Party

This study reveals the potential of blogs as democratizing tools for Malaysian politics. Blogs are able to strengthen the democracy of the country by offering a medium for citizens to understand politics. As the findings show, blogs initiated more political thinking and participation by citizens. It can be argued then that political parties will benefit with increasing numbers of people become active party members by attending political programs. Political blogs have created a sense of community within bloggers and readers. This has implications for Government policy making.

The politicians will benefit by aggressively utilising blogs to promote themself to voters in constituencies. Politicians will be increasingly motivated to use blogs as means of dissemination of policies and information in political campaigns, in other media for party
information, in updates of political information for their electorates, getting feedback from supporters and for fundraising.

7.3 Limitations of study

The findings from this study have benefits for political information roles in Malaysia in understanding alternative sources for political information. This exploratory study also showed benefits of blogs to political parties in terms of how to strengthen their party by increasing participation of citizens and increasing political activism. However, this study has its own limitations that also need to be highlighted. The locations for the survey would have been better if they had had been distributed to all states in Peninsular and East Malaysia. This would give a good representative sample of each state in Malaysia. Since the researcher faced time constraints for the data collection, this was not feasible. Therefore, further research that integrates a similar design but includes a larger sample would be of value.

In addition, the long distance between each state limited the number of states the survey could be distributed in. Due to this reason, the researcher instead chose five states; Perak, Selangor, Wilayah Persekutuan, Penang and Terengganu as a strategy for survey distribution to represent the south, north, west and east Peninsular of Malaysia. In addition to this sample, the researcher was able to obtain respondents from East Malaysia who stayed in Selangor.

The researcher also faced difficulties in communication with bloggers to obtain interviews. The process for interviews started by sending emails to bloggers selected from a list of bloggers. The researcher faced problems sending an invitation to these bloggers since only small numbers of bloggers provide an email address in their blogs. Even though an invitation was sent to the email addresses, obtained through their
blogs, the response from bloggers who replied and agreed to participate in interview was small. Security reason was the main concerned for their refusal of participation.

In Malaysian politics, bloggers from opposition parties feel anxious about exposing their identities to the public. They are particularly concerned about political sensitivity in blog writing that may result in legal action being taken against them, as what happened to bloggers who were charged under the Internal Security Act (ISA) 1960 and Sedition Act 1948 for their political writings in 2006 and 2007 (SUARAM, 2007: 9). Hence, most bloggers are more comfortable working “behind the scenes” and are only renowned from their writing. The bloggers interviewed have requested that their information is to remain anonymous before they agreed to participate in this study. Consequently, the researcher supplied the respondents with the consent forms to fill in. The respondents were reassured that by signing a consent form their information and data collected will only be used for academic purposes.

Initially the responses received in the beginning of interview process were rather less than encouraging. Bloggers from the government showed a lack of response to the invitations sent via email, as compared to bloggers from the opposition party. Bloggers from the opposition parties have showed more interest in helping and contributing to this study. They volunteered to give assistance without the expectation of any remuneration. However, the researcher managed to include bloggers from both the ruling and opposition parties for this study. Overall, the bloggers were positive and agreed to be interviewed.

The other difficulty faced by researcher was to have an equal number of respondents from other races such the Chinese and Indians ethnicities. Even though there are participants in this study from multiple races in Malaysia, the number of them is small. This is because they are reluctant to discuss openly with Malays, issues that may cause political sensitivity among the multi-racial community in Malaysia in politics.
openly with Malays. These communities feel it more appropriate to discuss issues in politics among their own people. Consequently, a balanced number from other ethnicities would add more diversity to this research.

The time allocated for doing interviews was another constraint that the researcher faced. This is because the researcher encountered difficulties in setting up interview appointments with bloggers. A majority of Malaysian bloggers do blogging as their part-time job, and they have permanent careers. Thus, the time used for other commitments has been the main reason bloggers were not been able to give their cooperation for this study. The researcher rescheduled interview appointments several times to suit them. Coincidentally, during the interviews, bloggers were busy doing preparations for news coverage at two by-elections, which were held in Kelantan and Penang. In addition, travel to two states at different locations relatively far, resulted in some bloggers being unable to give their cooperation in this study.

7.4 Future research direction

This study has shed some light on the effects of political blogs on citizens’ participation on political activism in Malaysia. The findings in this study could be a reference of how political activism can be strengthens from citizens’ activities through the use of Web 2.0 applications and social networking in blogs.

There is one area of further research that could be considered and that is to measure the effectiveness of blogs to local politicians. Although this study has included a few politician bloggers, it would be very important to specifically do research on specific politicians and their own constituents to find out whether both parties at the same location can benefit from blogs and their applications. Other possible outcomes of this study would be the effects of personal belonging with leaders and within communities.
through social media, adding aspects of culture and religious factors that may affect political blogs.

Another area of research in this field would need to study the aspect of law enforcement from government on social media practitioners. There are responses from political bloggers who mentioned the need to control the quality, credibility and authenticity of information that is published in political blogs. In Malaysian politics, blogs have significant influence on the political issues discussed in the mainstream media and amongst the public. Therefore, there is a need to extensively study the control the quality, credibility and authenticity of information that is published in political blogs.

7.5 Conclusion

This study reveals blogs are used and accepted as medium of information and communication about politics in Malaysia. Political blogs in Malaysia have been chosen by citizens as a platform to discuss political issues. This study has revealed that the political knowledge of citizens in Malaysia has increased through discussion and communication through political blogs. Furthermore, the use of Web 2.0 applications in Malaysian political blogs has created an effective means of communications and delivery of political information between bloggers, readers and politicians in Malaysia. The Web 2.0 applications have made communications become more useful and interactive. The usability of blogs was shown to be the most significant function encouraging their use. The advantages for politicians through these applications are they can have open interaction and feedback from citizens, and thus can attract citizen for political programmes and activism. The study shows that the political blogs in Malaysia are being used as tools for interpersonal communication between politicians and citizen due to the restrictions in other media imposed by government.
The research shows that alternative perspectives on many issues are discussed openly in blogs both supporting and challenging the existing discourse. The ‘public sphere’ Habermas argued was needed for a civil society and for democracy is emerging. The Internet has played the role Habermas ascribed to it in playing the role of promoting civic participation and thus enabling real participatory interaction in politics in Malaysia. In relation to this study, there is development in political blogs in Malaysia for citizens to be openly active and openly contest the status quo. As a result, the functionality of political blogs has catalysed for political activity among citizens in Malaysia that has increased their interest in politics and promoted increased political participation. Consequently, politicians and political parties can benefits from political blogs as a place to communicate and publish political information that is able to increase participation in political activities. Political contestation in the blogs has encouraged the creation of social networks and networking for citizens and bloggers through dialogue, political discussion and communication that make them cooperate for the same political agenda. This has increased political participation and promoted political activism across many issues and incorporating numerous forms of discourse, from the completely political, to religion and culture to the issues of race. Therefore, blogs are effectively a medium that encourages civic participation among blogs readers in Malaysia, and have initiated many political events driven out of social networks.
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# APPENDIX A: Web Analysis

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APPENDIX B: Semi-structured Interview Questions in Bahasa Melayu and English

Plain Language Statement

Project Title:
An Exploratory Study on the Effects of Political Blogs on Citizens’ Participation

Investigators:

Researcher: Azma Asnawishah Abd. Hakim (School of Business IT, RMIT University, Melbourne, Vic 3001
Tel: (+613) 9925 5452, s3191456@student.rmit.edu.au

Supervisor: Professor Brian Corbitt (School of Business IT, RMIT University, Melbourne, Vic 3001
Tel: (+613) 9925 5808, brian.corbitt@rmit.edu.au

Supervisor: Dr. Leslie Young (School of Business IT, RMIT University, Melbourne, Vic 3001
Tel: (+613) 9925 1459, leslie.young@rmit.edu.au

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted for my PhD research program in the School of Business Information Technology, RMIT University.

Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please ask one of the investigators above.

My name is Azma Asnawishah and I am a PhD student in the School of Business Technology at RMIT University. My research topic is An Exploratory Study on the Effects of Political Blogs on Citizens’ Participation. My supervisors are Professor Brian Corbitt and Dr. Leslie Young. This study is funded by the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia.

You have been selected randomly to participate in this study. Your support is much appreciated, and participation is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time, and request that any unprocessed data concerning your information be withdrawn. My ethics project number is 771.

The aim of this project is to explore the effects of political blogs on citizens’ participation in Malaysian politics through the use of Web 2.0 technology. It will investigate the social networks in blog activities among Malaysians as a platform of
political activism, particularly, the effect of communication and exchange of information that brings them to participate in political activities. An outcome of this research will include new knowledge in this field. At the same time, it will promote participation of citizens in political activities through the use of Web 2.0 technology in web blogs. The study is also expected to improve the use of web blogs as a medium of communication and exchange of information in political activism between politicians and citizens.

My research involves interviewing political bloggers, blogs writers and blog managers. The interviews will take approximately 30 minutes and will be tape recorded. About 15 political bloggers, blog writers and blog managers will be participated in this study. I, personally, will conduct the sessions. Results from the sessions will be reported as group results only and the participant will not be identified by name.

The data collected, including interviews record and transcripts will be stored according to RMIT University guidelines for the five years required. All interviews and analyses will be treated with utmost confidentially. Any publications or writing will not be reported in a form that identifies the participants. Only my supervisors and I will have access to the data. Notification of the outcomes of the research will be offered to participants. The research will be published in professional academic journals and conferences.

If you have any queries concerning your participation, please do not hesitate to contact me (details above) and I am happy to answer them for you. If you agree, I would appreciate you completing the attached consent form. Ethics approval for the research was initially sought at, and granted by RMIT, Human Research Ethics Committee University.

Yours Sincerely,

Azma Asnawishah Abd. Hakim
PhD Candidate,
School of Business IT
RMIT University
Melbourne, Vic 3001
Tel: (+613) 9925 5452
s3191456@student.rmit.edu.au

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, Portfolio Human Research Ethics Sub Committee, Business Portfolio, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001. The telephone number is (+613) 9925 5594 or email address rdu@rmit.edu.au. Details of the complaints procedure are available from the above address or http://www.rmit.edu.au/council/hrec
Prescribed Consent Form for Persons Participating in Research Projects Involving Interviews, Questionnaires or Disclosure of Personal Information

School of: Business of Information Technology

Name of participant:

Project Title: An Exploratory Study on the Effects of Political Blogs on Citizens’ Participation

Name(s) of investigators:
(1) Azma Asnawishah Abd. Hakim Phone: (+613) 9925 5452
(2) Professor Brian Corbitt Phone: (+613) 9925 5808
(3) Dr. Leslie Young Phone: (+613) 9925 1459

1. I have received a statement explaining the interview/questionnaire involved in this project.

2. I consent to participate in the above project, the particulars of which - including details of the interviews or questionnaires - have been explained to me.

3. I authorise the investigator or his or her assistant to interview me or administer a questionnaire.

4. I acknowledge that:

   (a) Having read Plain Language Statement, I agree to the general purpose, methods and demands of the study.

   (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.

   (c) The project is for the purpose of research and/or teaching. It may not be of direct benefit to me.

   (d) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.

   (e) The security of the research data is assured during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to Business of Information Technology School, RMIT University. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

Participant's Consent

Participant: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

(Signature)

Participants should be given a photocopy of this consent form after it has been signed.

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Executive Officer, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, Research & Innovation, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001. The telephone number is (03) 9925 2251.

Details of the complaints procedure are available from the above address.
Interviews Questions (Bahasa Melayu, English)

1. Bilakah anda mula membina blog
   When do you start to build a blog?

2. Kenapa anda berminat untuk membina atau menulis blog politik, kenapa tidak menggunakan teknologi Web 2 yang lain (facebook, myspace, twitter etc).
   Why are you interested in building or writing a political blog, why not use another technology, Web 2

3. Bagaimana peranan blog sebagai social network kepada aktiviti-aktiviti politik
   How does the role of blogs as a social network for political activities

4. Apakah aplikasi yang dimuatkan dalam blog anda
   What applications are included in your blog

5. Adakah nama sebenar digunakan untuk blog anda, jika 'Tidak', apakah nama samaran yang digunakan
   Is your real name used for the blog, if 'No', what other names used

6. Apakah kandungan utama yang dimuatkan dalam blog anda
   What is the main content loaded in your blog

7. Berapa peratuskah penulisan blog itu dari anda sendiri dan adakah anda menerima penulisan daripada pembaca blog untuk dipostkan dalam blog anda
   What percentage of blog writing from your own and did you accept the writing of the blog readers to be posted in your blog
8. Pernahkah anda menapis kandungan blog supaya tidak menyinggung perasaan orang lain

Have you ever censor blogs content so that it do not offend other people

9. Bagaimanakah anda memastikan kebenaran fakta-fakta yang ditulis dalam blog, adakah anda membuat rujukan, berapa kerapkah anda mengemaskini kandungan blog

How do you ensure that the truth of the facts written in the blog, if you make a referral, how often do you update the blog content

10. Bagaimana anda memastikan blog anda dapat menarik perhatian pengunjung (dari segi teks, links, youtube, animasi etc)

How do you ensure your blog can attract readers

11. Bagaimanakah respon pembaca blog saudara, ada maklumbalas (feedback), berapa jumlah pengunjung blog anda

How is the response of readers, do you receive feedback from readers, how is the average number of daily visitors to your blog

12. Adakah anda juga mengikuti blog politik lain, sila nyatakan blog apa dan kenapa anda mengemarinya

Do you also follow the blogs of other political parties, please state what and why you blog interest in carrying

13. Bagaimana penulisan dalam blog boleh mempengaruhi masyarakat didalam aktiviti politik berbanding saluran media cetak dan media massa yang lain

How does writing in blog can influence people in political activities against the print media channels and other mass media

   i) Sejauh mana teknologi Web 2.0 dapat menarik perhatian masyarakat untuk melawat blog

   To what extent that Web 2.0 technologies can attract the attention of the public to visit blog

   ii) Isi kandungan dalam blog yang bagaimana dapat menarik perhatian masyarakat
What is the content of blogs that attract people

14. Perbezaan penyertaan masyarakat dalam politik sebelum dan selepas blog diperkenalkan

What is the difference in mass participation in politics before and after the introduction blog

15. Adakah/pernahkah mendapat pembiayaan daripada mana-mana parti politik untuk menyalurkan maklumat politik mereka

Have you received funding from any political party to channel their political information

16. Bagaimana dan melihat peranan yang dimainkan oleh club blogger di Malaysia (BPN, Blogger network)

How do you see the role played by the blogger club in Malaysia

17. Apakah cabaran-cabararan yang dihadapi sebagai penulis blog politik

What are the challenges you faced as a political blogger

18. Perlukah diadakan undang-undang bagi mengawal aktiviti blogger supaya maklumat yang disampaikan tidak menjatuhkan imej Negara

Whether there should be laws to regulate the activities of bloggers so that the information posted does not pass the country's image

19. Pada pandangan peribadi, apakah langkah-langkah yang boleh diambil bagi mengalakkan penglibatan rakyat dalam aktiviti-aktiviti politik

In your personal opinion, what steps can be taken to encourage public participation in political activities
APPENDIX C: Survey Questionnaires

Questionnaire

An Exploratory Study on the Effects of Political Blogs on Citizens’ Participation

My name is Azma Asnawishah and I am currently conducting a research project designed to study on the effects of political blogs on citizens’ participation.

This research project is for my PhD research program in the School of Business Information Technology, RMIT University. The title of my study is, An Exploratory Study on the Effects of Political Blogs on Citizens’ Participation. The research will be conducted in Malaysia. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. Part A is the questions on demographic and part B is the questions for web bloggers. Remember to read the questions carefully and answer to the best of your knowledge.

If you have any queries that I have not been able to answer to your satisfaction, please contact my supervisors, Professor Brian Corbitt, School of Business IT, RMIT University, Melbourne, Vic 3001, phone (+613) 9925 5808 or email brian.corbitt@rmit.edu.au, and Dr. Leslie Young, School of Business IT, RMIT University, Melbourne, Vic 3001, phone (+613) 9925 1459 or email leslie.young@rmit.edu.au, or you may contact the Research Development Unit, RMIT Business, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne 3000 Victoria, phone (+613) 9925 5888 or Fax (+613) 9925 1313 or RMIT ETHICS committees, phone (+613) 9925 2251, (+613) 9925 7958.
Part A (Demographic data)
Please (✓) the appropriate box

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If yes, please tick which political party you support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UMNO</th>
<th>Pakatan Rakyat</th>
<th>Bebas</th>
<th>Others (Please specify)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political party</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Is reading your favorite hobby?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is reading your favorite hobby?</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If yes, how many hours per day do you spend reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>More than 6 hours a day</th>
<th>6 – 4 hours a day</th>
<th>3 – 1 hours a day</th>
<th>Less than 1 hour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading time</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Tick any 3 of your favorite reading materials

- Popular magazines
- News periodicals
- Printed newspapers
- Online alternative news (e.g. Malaysiakini)
- Online mainstream news (e.g. The Star Online)
- Scholastic journals/ articles
- Scholastic books
- Blogs

Part B: For Web Blogger
Please (√) the appropriate box

1. Do you always use the Internet on a daily basis?
   - Yes
   - No

   If 'No', how often do you use the Internet?
   - Weekly
   - Monthly
   - Less often

2. State your self-assessment of expertise of blogs
   - I know nothing at all
   - I know a little
   - I know enough to get by
   - I know a lot
   - I am an expert

3. Have you visited any political blog recently?
   - Yes
   - No

   If yes, please name 5 political blogs that you have most visited:
   i. ______________________________
   ii. ______________________________
   iii. ______________________________
   iv. ______________________________
   v. ______________________________

4. Do you have your own blog?
   - Yes
   - No

   If yes, please state your URL blog address_______________________________________

5. Where did you learn about blogs?
   - School
   - Friends
   - Internet
   - Book

   Others________________________________
6. How frequently do you use a blog for political information?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 4 times a week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 times a week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly ever</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. How many political blogs do you visit in a normal week?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 blogs per week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 17 blogs per week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 14 blogs per week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 – 11 blogs per week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 7 blogs per week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 3 blogs per week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 3 blogs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. What is the reason for you visiting political blogs?
(You can tick more than one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To know about political issues</td>
<td>To read the political newspaper cutting</td>
<td>To update information related to politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just to fulfill your leisure time</td>
<td>To get know about politicians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If others, please state:______________________________________________________________

9. Which political parties' blog do you like to visit the most?.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UMNO</th>
<th>Pakatan Rakyat</th>
<th>Others (Please states)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Please state why you like that blog:
______________________________________________________________________________

10. How did you find out about this political blog?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If others, please specify __________________________________________________________

11. How do you find the information in political blogs that you have visited? Was it......
(You can tick more than one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informative</td>
<td>User friendly</td>
<td>Interesting</td>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>Persuasive</td>
<td>Provocative</td>
<td>Nonsense</td>
<td>Bored</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. Do you trust the political content posted in blogs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Attitudes towards blogs for political information

(Tick one box only for each statement)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Political blogs can help me understand the issues about politics easily</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I believe that I can acquire a lot of information about politics from blogs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. I like reading the political articles posted on blogs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. All citizen should learn to utilize blogs to know more about politics in Malaysia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. I want to know a lot about political blogs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Political blogs do not interest me very much</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. I like to read comments posted on political blogs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. If you can use blogs, you will get latest information about politics in the future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. I want to use blog to know about politics more often</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. The articles posted in blogs are reliable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. I find it difficult to understand political issues posted on the blogs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. The blogs explains political issues better than the mass media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. The articles in blogs do not always explain political issues as much as I expected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n. The Web 2.0 applications provided in blogs make direct communication with politicians easier</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. Please tick the Web 2.0 applications used by blogs that you usually use:
   (You can tick more than one)

   | Reading articles | Posting articles | Links to other blogs | Give comments | Read comments | Chatting | Sending an e-mail | Answering an e-mail | Forwarding an e-mail | Downloading files from the Internet | Bookmarks/favourites | Watching Youtube | Reading online newspaper | Watching online television | Getting information about oil price | Getting information about foreign currency | Prayer time alert | Posting advertisement | Posting announcement | Time alert | Really Simple Syndication (RSS) |

15. I like Web 2.0 applications in blogs

   | Yes | No |

Please state the reason:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

16. Do you feel that the mainstream media (TV, Newspaper) are less reliable in
    reporting political issues?

   | Yes | No |

If yes, can you highlight the reason?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

17. Have you posted any article in a blog?

   | Yes | No |

If yes, why did you post the article?
______________________________________________________________________________
18. Way of using blogs as political media / information: Please respond to each statement. (Tick one box only for each statement)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>I prefer to obtain political information from blogs rather than mass media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>I prefer blogs articles which discuss about political issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>When I can understand political issues well on the blogs, I enjoy explaining it to others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>I prefer posting articles in blogs in which people could receive reliable political information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>I prefer explanations on the blogs to be in pictures rather than words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>Web 2.0 applications in blogs should tell you whether you are supporting the right politician / political party</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>I prefer to post political articles in others blogs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>I like articles and links that help you understand many political issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>I know more about the political activities through blogs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j.</td>
<td>Political blogs have gives exposure on how to choose right candidate in election</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k.</td>
<td>The use of blogs raises the citizens’ understanding in politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. Way of political blogs promotes political participation: Please respond to each statement. (Tick one box only for each statement)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>I prefer reading blogs articles which help me how to decide to vote in an election</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>I prefer using blogs articles in which I can convince citizen to participate in political activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>I prefer using blogs applications in which you can encourage citizen to participate in politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>I will go to vote after I have read information in political blogs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>I believe political blogs can promote political participation from citizens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>Using blogs motivates citizens’ involvement in politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>Political blogs is an effective medium of communication between politicians and supporters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20. List the positive impacts of political blogs that you have experienced:
   i. __________________________________________________________
   ii. __________________________________________________________
   iii. __________________________________________________________
   iv. __________________________________________________________

21. List the negative impacts of political blogs that you have experienced:
   i. __________________________________________________________
   ii. __________________________________________________________
   iii. __________________________________________________________
   iv. __________________________________________________________

End of questionnaire