



TRUST IN MEDIA: *A MALAYSIAN PERSPECTIVE*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Malaysian has been gone through a hard time in term of the political landscape that forever will be the highlight in the news nowadays. In this 'roller coaster' situations, the media really play a critical role to ensure people get the right information regarding their government and country. The media is also one of the important components in ensuring that democracy can be upheld. Hence, a survey was conducted between 11th December to 20th December 2020 to discover the Malaysian's perceptions towards the professionalism of media in Malaysia. A total of 1203 respondents aged 18 and above across Malaysia were interviewed via phone.

The survey open ups to the following takeaways about the baseline of public sentiment on interest, perceptions, sustainability, diversity of media.

Public Perception of Media

- Overall, surveys shows that only 15% of the media in Malaysia play a good role. Meanwhile, 45% of respondents has a negative perception with the media. Almost half of the Malays, Indians and non-Muslim Bumiputeras indicated that they were unhappy with the media at this time. This sentiment appears to be uniform in all segments of respondents. 38% neutral with the media in Malaysia.

Interest in News and Current Affairs

- Television stations, direct communication in local area and websites are the most popular medium for people to use to get the up-to-date news. While, magazines seem not relevant nowadays when majority (63%) of respondents never used the magazines as sources of information.
- All ethnic except Chinese shows that they rely on daily up-to-date news on television stations. Chinese more relied on web or apps to get the up-to-date news.
- Findings also shows that people are not interested about the political (only 40% follow) and international affairs (only 43% follow) when more than half respondents not follow these topics closely compared to news about state government and news about local community. 65% of respondents follow news on their local community and 55% follow news about state government.
- Moving on to the media social, WhatsApp (67%), Facebook (63%) and Google (47%) been the most important platform for people to get information or news. Majority of all ethnic often used Facebook as source of information. While, Malay (74%) and Indian (79%) show a high usage of WhatsApp to get information.

Transparency of Information

- Unsurprisingly, majority of respondents feels that media have a very important role in many aspects. Respondents only need the information that have quality so media needs to focus on their role to ensure the media provide the best yet accurate information.
- Media have to play their important role start from the newsroom to provide the accurate and fair news, holding the leaders in politics until bring the society together.
- When asked about the bias in the news sources they used often, more than half (62%) not confidents with the transparency of the news source. Only 30% says that there are no bias at all or not much bias in the news source.
- 40% of respondents are more worried they will get the biased news compared to worried that news that other people getting are biased.

Trust in Various Media Outlets

- Majority of respondents which 72% says that television and radio are the most reliable source of news and information, followed by newspaper which is 56% of respondents feels that newspaper and magazine are reliable sources after newspaper.
- People seems to say that the traditional media are more trusted compared to the new media and people they know through the internet. For the new media such as social media and online news, people tend to not believe the news from these platforms.
- Meanwhile, 74% thinks that people that they know only through the internet are the most unreliable sources compared to other.
- Unsurprisingly, the traditional media still gained a high level of trust even compared to the past 5 years. For television and radio, 41% more trust it now, 38% state that their level of trust has not changed and only 19% trust less now. Newspaper and magazine also show the same pattern where 33% more trust to it now, 36% have not change their trust towards this platform and only 25% trust lesser now.
- Again, people from the internet are the most untrusted sources of news and information. The booming of various social media and online websites may contribute to the declination in level of trust compared to the past 5 years which 44% feel so. Only 12% feels they trust more now to the people they know through internet

Media Ownership and Diversity of Ownership

- More than half, 54% agree that political party owned media outlet in Malaysia. Malay and Chinese showed the same sentiments which more than half agree to the issue.
- Respondents seems not sure when being asked about investment in the media outlet. 39% respondents were unable to access about the single investor can owned less than 25% of the media outlet, 37% agree for the situations while 23% disagree with this.

Impact of Social Media

- Majority of 72% respondents feels that social media does changed their way in consuming the media. Facebook remain the most popular platform as source of information when more than half (52%) choose Facebook as main source. Followed by WhatsApp (12%) and YouTube with 5%. Meanwhile, 17% says that there is none of the social media as their main sources of news.
- The findings show that the three main problems with news coverage are disseminating inaccurate information on the internet (93%), News organizations reporting incorrect information (88%), and followed by Journalists are not enough to investigate to unravel important facts (84%).

Sustainability of Media

- Majority of respondents does not subscribe to newspaper and magazine (in any form) and the online news. Only 20% does subscribe to newspaper and magazine, while only 25% subscribe to online news such as Malaysiakini.
- For paid TV such as Astro, almost 49% are subscriber
- Unsurprisingly, based on the low subscription rate, more than half of respondents (56%) are not willing to pay at all for quality and professional produce news content in Malaysia. 27% of people who are willing, they willing to pay less than RM30 per month, 9% willing to pay RM30-RM60 and only 3% willing to pay more than RM60 per month.

Perception of Political Influence or Bias on Media Reporting

- The data shows that 73% of respondents see that the political biases in news coverage are at the moderate to a great deal of amount (Moderate 28%, A fair amount-A great deal (45%).

- People tend to put the blame on the media for the political divisions when 72% says that news media deserve to get a moderate to great deal of amount of blame. Only 5% don't think that media deserve any blame.
- People seems unsure on who should have the main responsibility for making sure Malaysians receive an accurate and fair picture of the news when 37% choose news organization, 31% choose government and 25% feels that Malaysians need to have that sense of responsibility by themselves. There are no clear divisions to show which party should hold the responsibility.
- Since media have a big role in many aspects, people do think media can do something to heal the political scenes in Malaysia. More than half (56%) have faith in media to heal the political division happened in Malaysia.

Fake News and Censorship

- In line with previous findings, people do have bad perceptions towards online news websites and platform. 33% of respondents choose this media as sources that have the most fake new and disinformation. 29% choose people they know from internet as medium that have most fake news and disinformation. People still put their trust in the traditional media when newspaper and television are the least mentioned by respondents to be the media that contains many fake news.
- 34% thinks that the news that they think might inaccurate are cause by the reporter who is misrepresenting them. While 24% thinks that the facts are made up by the reporters.
- When asked about the authorities, 56% agree that authorities will abuse the 'anti-fake news' to cramp down on media freedom in Malaysia. All ethnic show the same sentiments but not for Chinese. The Chinese seems to be in the middle between agree and disagree.
- More than half respondents (65%) do agree that big companies like Google, Facebook etc need to put more emphasis to exclude false information instead of giving more space or freedom to people to express themselves freely. This is due to the too many disinformation in the online medium.

Press Freedom and Right to Speech

- News media does important to the democracy when majority of 91% says that. Only 6% don't think that media is important to the democracy. In the same way, 67% of respondents do think media is doing a good job in supporting the democracy today.

- Even the media are important to the democracy, 60% of respondents feels that the government still need to control the media in order to prevent the political destabilizing.
- Living in the world full of technologies, the technological advances does give a great amount to the 75% of respondents who feels overwhelmed by information. Also, the pace or speed of news reporting and news and non-news items mixed together on social media and internet does make people overwhelmed.

Laws and Regulations / Legal Reform

- When asked specifically about laws and regulations, majority of the respondents (71%) agree with Media laws and regulations like the sedition law are necessary.
- A huge majority (82%) of respondents felt that legal reforms would create a better environment for journalists to do their work and also large majority supports that the “Anti-fake news” law in Malaysia exists to curb disinformation (84% agree).
- Meanwhile respondents provided split perception on current media laws and regulations restrict news coverage (Agree 53%).

Diversity of Voices: Ethnic, Language, Youth Representation

- More than half of respondents (54%) realize that news organizations should try to hired journalist of reporting staff from different background and characteristics. Most of the respondents think that diversity in political views should be more emphasize in hiring the reporting staffs.

Ethics of Media

- 74% of respondents confident with the media in Malaysia in terms of ethics. Only 21% disagree that media in Malaysia is ethical when comes to report of news without jeopardizing the victims or slander the suspect.

Gender Balance- Sources, By-Lines, Representation

- The majority of respondents (72%) felt the importance of gender balance in the types of stories reported. Nearly one-half of respondents say male and female journalists report issues in different ways (49% agree)
- Women also should get a strong representation in newsroom when 56% agree that women should be strongly represented in newsroom.

Views on National Union of Journalist Malaysia (NUJ)

- Majority of respondents (86%) not aware of the National Union of Journalist Peninsular Malaysia (NUJ).
- All segments of backgrounds show a uniform pattern which most of them unaware of this organization. 17% of Malay aware of this organizations which the highest awareness compared to other ethnics.
- Among people who know about this union, 71% have a positive feeling towards NUJ. Hence, 79% agree that NUJ protect their members by upright the benefit and right of the members.

