Media Framing of The Free Malaysia Today and The Star English Language Online News Portal: The Case Studies of Malaysia's 15th General Election 2022

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Abstract
This study examines the framing techniques employed by the English language online news portals, namely Free Malaysia Today and The Star, in their coverage of the Malaysia 15th General Election (GE-15). The objective is to conduct a comparative content analysis of how these news portals framed the news during the GE-15. The study employs a quantitative research approach, utilizing content analysis as the primary method of data collection and analysis. A total of 418 news (N=418) articles related to the GE-15 from both Free Malaysia Today and The Star have systematically selected and analysed within a specific timeframe (5/11/2022-19/5/2022) to identify the framing strategies utilized in their coverage. The findings of this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge on news framing and media representation of elections in Malaysia. Through the comparative content analysis, findings reveal that two different news portals have dominant frames and present political news differently, having problems on potential biases, perspectives, and their impact on public opinion. The frequency of occurrence of these framing strategies in the news articles have assessed their similarities and differences. Particularly during the GE-15, the articles in both media platforms primarily aimed at reinforcing their respective ideological stances rather than offering alternative explanations or dissenting views.
Keywords: News Framing, GE-15, Malaysian Online News Portals, Comparative Analysis, Content Analysis

Introduction
       An online news portal is an internet connection to a news source, which can include newspapers, magazines, and other news access points (Tewksbury & Rittenberg, 2012). In this modern era, online news portals have become the primary source of information for the public (Majó-Vázquez et al., 2020). With the advancements in technology and the internet, individuals can access news from any location, at any time (Levy, 2021). The internet is

increasingly a source of alternative news for Malaysians (Daud & Zulhuda, 2020). Scholars argue that online news portals' credibility and reliability play a vital role in shaping the public's opinion during significant events such as general elections (Tiung et al., 2018). However, researchers have found that online news portals lack transparency and impartiality, which could lead to biased reporting (Bhuiyan et al., 2021). Nowadays, people look for accurate news by recognizing some news portal because of the information explosion. Thus, the news has a greater impact on people. News production includes political, economic, and cultural factors.

Scholars point out that news production is a sequential process. News is a method of productizing the information that is available to audiences (Young & Hasim, 2009). News media have unequal rights to communicate, especially mainstream and alternative, with ordinary audiences and prominent figures enjoying different rights to communicate (Arguedas et al., 2023). News is discovered, collected, and transmitted by reporters working in organized institutions. In this way, news inevitably becomes the product of journalists who depend on institutionalized information and can follow institutionalized operations (Xia & Wang, 2020). Undeniably, news is the portal that connects people to the general election.

In Malaysian news, it is not difficult to observe that general election news has caused many debates, both mainstream and alternative (Sani, 2014). Political parties have been gearing up for the upcoming elections, with politicians and analysts discussing the potential outcomes of the polls (Dalton, 2013). One of the main debates surrounding the general election news is the issue of vote-rigging and election fraud (Norris, 2020). There has also been debate around the issue of political campaigning, with some criticizing certain parties for resorting to negative campaigning tactics (Nai, 2020). However, others argue that such tactics are a necessary part of the electoral process and that they help inform voters about the strengths and weaknesses of different parties (Landa & Pevnick, 2021).

With the basic features of framing theory, the central issue of framing theory is the production of the medium—how the medium reflects reality and regulates people's understanding of it (Reese et al., 2001). Thus, news can reflect reality on how to construct meaning and regulate people's understanding, ultimately reflected through the text or discourse of the news media (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Furthermore, framing focuses on news media but does not see them as a closed and isolated news producer; news media may compete in different ways (Paterson et al., 2008). With that, the news media and its stories can be presented in a specific context but in various ways, such as by quoting different people and different texts.

Without any doubt, news reporting is still a commercial product, the result of a news that involves "framing" certain facts, "selecting" others, and subjectively "reorganizing" these social realities (Zheng, 2019). The general election process focuses on the news creation process. The journalists establish a news frame that gives the general election news content a certain meaning and consequently has a specific influence on the audience (Kalsnes & Larsson, 2021). However, general election trends impact the framing choices of news items; the journalist must follow the trend to influence the audience. Journalists are also impacted by news conventions, the symbolic processes of news organizations, and the policy perspectives of various sources throughout the framing process, and their personal cognitive guidelines play an important role (Ryfe, 2023).

But above all, online news plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing voters' decisions in Malaysia. Online news portals such as Free Malaysia Today (FMT) and The Star are among the most popular sources of information for Malaysians, especially during the

election season. The two news portals have different political affiliations, with FMT known for its independent and critical coverage of political events, while The Star is perceived to be more pro-government (Venkiteswaran, 2020). Therefore, the news media is critical to the effective functioning of a democracy (Jungherr et al., 2020). The evolution of the media industry has shifted the dominance of conventional media as the exclusive platform for news channels to the introduction of numerous platforms with the integration of digital versions of newspapers (Nielsen & Ganter, 2022). Thus, the influence of internet information on political discourse is clear from the standpoint of political society. As a result, the rapid growth of online news has had numerous unexpected effects on the General Election Day (GE-15) in Malaysia. The objective of this study is to examines the framing techniques employed by the English language online news portals, namely Free Malaysia Today and The Star, in their coverage of the Malaysia 15th General Election (GE-15).

Literature Review

According to Malik (2022), almost 50 nations and regions will have election plays in 2024. 2024 may be the year with the most elections in history, involving about half of the world's population, making it a true election year. The news, which disseminate information to the public and drive political change, are crucial in each election (Bennett, 2016). Much scholarly attention has been paid to the representation and representativeness of political leaders in electoral politics (Soren & Chakraborty, 2024). Similarly, in every democratic society, the news is responsible for informing the people about government acts and providing information to assist them in making informed decisions (Foreman et al., 2022).

People seldom have time to listen to the news on TV or read a newspaper because of the fast speed of advancement. As a result, individuals typically follow news websites or social media straight on their mobile phones to receive the most recent news via push feeds (Oeldorf-Hirsch & Srinivasan, 2022). In Malaysia, because of the multi-racial nature of the country, there is trilingual news - Malay, English and Chinese. As a result, the English language newspaper is the language that is read by different races in Malaysia.

Malaysia's news portal environment is a vibrant and competitive field with a variety of online news portals catering to varied audiences around the country (Weiss, 2014). Malaysiakini, The Star Online, The Malaysian Insight, Free Malaysia Today, and The New Straits Times are among the most popular portals (Ding et al., 2013). Politics, current events, business, sports, entertainment, and lifestyle are all covered in these news sites. They frequently include breaking news stories, investigative reports, and opinion pieces from a diverse range of journalists, commentators, and experts (Laursen & Trapp, 2021). The increasing relevance of multimedia content in the Malaysian news site ecosystem is one prominent feature. In addition to traditional text-based reporting, many portals also provide video and audio information. Malaysia, like many other countries, is concerned about the quality of news reporting. Various news websites have been chastised for biased reporting.

Malaysia's 15th general election, in 2022, one of the most important political events in the country's history. The election will define Malaysia's and its people's future path, making it a critical event for academics and scholars researching Malaysian politics. Media coverage is one of the most important aspects in the success of any political campaign (Meyer, Haselmayer, & Wagner, 2020). With their accessibility, speed, and scope, internet news portals have developed as a prominent medium of election coverage in recent years (Anderson et al., 2016).

Undeniably, the 15th general election is a highly contested and important political event that will shape the future of the country. The election will be the first since the political turmoil in 2018, which saw the unexpected collapse of the ruling party Barisan Nasional, and the establishment of a new government led by Pakatan Harapan (Ostwald, 2020). The upcoming election is expected to be a fierce competition between the established and new political parties, which makes it an interesting subject for academic research (Adnan & Ramly, 2021) .

Ideally, political personalities and organisations use the media platform to communicate with the public on a constant basis, especially during election seasons, because the widespread use of mass media as providers keeps the people informed and aware of their duty as citizens. It has been shown that the news media had a significant effect on Malaysia's previous election.

Therefore, this study will look at two news portals: The Star and Free Malaysia Today (FMT) that might provide diverse meanings to different voters in Malaysia by content analysis (Manaf & Sedu, 2015). It is better to give some insight on these two online news portals before swallowing deeper into the topic. The Star Malaysia is a daily newspaper published in Malaysia, and it was first published on September 9, 1971, as an evening daily. Its founder was the late Datuk (Dr) Wong Kee Tat, who was a lawyer and a local businessman. He aimed to create a newspaper that would provide readers with accurate and unbiased news coverage that would reflect the diverse views and opinions of the Malaysian community. In the early years, The Star Malaysia focused on regional news and was particularly popular in the northern states of Peninsular Malaysia. Over time, it expanded its coverage to include national and international news, as well as features on business, lifestyle, and sports. In 1987, The Star Malaysia became a morning daily, and in 1995, it launched its first website. Today, it is one of the country's leading newspapers, with a daily circulation of over 200,000 copies and a strong digital presence with millions of online readers (Govindaraju et al., 2019). Despite facing competition from other newspapers and digital media, The Star Malaysia has maintained its position as a trusted and reliable source of news and information for Malaysian readers. It has received numerous awards for its journalism, including the Malaysian Press Institute's Journalist of the Year award, and has won recognition for its coverage of major events such as the Malaysian General Elections and the Southeast Asian Games.

Free Malaysia Today (FMT) is a Malaysian news portal that was launched in 2009. It was created as an independent news outlet that aimed to provide Malaysians with unbiased and accurate news and information (Ahmad, 2022). FMT initially started as a blog by a group of journalists who were frustrated with the state-controlled media and the limited freedom of the press in Malaysia. They wanted to provide an alternative platform for news that was not influenced by political interests or corporate gain. The blog quickly gained popularity, and in 2010, FMT was designated as an official news portal. Over the years, FMT has grown to become one of the most widely read news portals in Malaysia, with a reputation for breaking exclusive stories and providing in-depth analysis and commentary on current events. FMT covers a wide range of topics, including politics, business, sports, entertainment, and lifestyle. It is known for its fearless reporting and strong stance against corruption, abuse of power, and human rights violations. In recent years, FMT has expanded its coverage to include more international news and has also launched a mobile app to cater to the changing media landscape. Today, FMT is recognized as a leading news source in Malaysia, providing Malaysians with a platform for open and honest debate on important issues.

Based on previous research on general elections, The framing of news in Malaysia's general election may differ depending on the political connections, interests, and ideals of the media company (Baharin et al., 2020). Some studies may depict the election as a contest between the government and opposition parties, while others may focus on themes such as corruption, the economy, and social welfare (Ufen, 2020). It is the gap that previous studies haven't identified the news framing on these two online news portals on general election. This study is set to fulfil this gap.

Media Framing

According to Gitlin (1980), framing theory plays a significant role in how journalists perceive and report news, as well as in our understanding of the news as consumers. Gamson and Modigliani (1987) also noted that media framing serves as the main idea or narrative that provides insight into what the news is about and offers a perspective on the event. Framing theories are influenced by the motivations of the sender, although they can sometimes be subconscious (Gamson, 1989). Entman (1991) distinguished between individual frames, which are the mental schemata used by individuals to process information, and media frames, which are attributes inherent to the news itself.

Previous studies indicate that reporters may be influenced to frame the news based on social norms, organizational requirements, the importance of interest groups, journalistic practices, and their own personal political views and beliefs (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978). Nabi's (2002) study on how media framing affects human emotions revealed that different styles of news stories focused on domestic terrorism can elicit anger, fear, or other emotions. Additionally, Nabi (2003) found that emotions play a role in framing, as repeated associations of emotions with specific ideas or events shape how people interpret and respond to those events.

James Tankard described framing as the central organizing idea in news content, shaping the context and emphasizing certain issues through selection, emphasis, and elaboration. This suggests that the news media determines what issues are important and prioritizes them over others (Griffin, 2012). Salma Ghanem's study supervised by McCombs (2001) revealed a strong influence of the news media on public perception. Even when crime rates were low in Texas from 1992 to 1995, the media's emphasis on crime made the public perceive it as a major concern. Framing played a role in this perception, as the media highlighted crimes that occurred during the day and in the vicinity of the audience, causing greater alarm (Griffin, 2012).

Research for the general election has been mainly on dominant frames. Scholarly literature has extensively investigated dominant frames in media discourse. Entman's work (1993) clarifies the concept of framing and emphasizes the influential role of dominant frames in shaping public perceptions and understanding of issues. Iyengar's book (1991) explores how television frames political issues, with dominant frames significantly influencing public opinion. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) discuss the dominance of specific frames within media discourse on nuclear power and their impact on public perceptions. Tankard et al (1991) provides insights into the conceptualization and measurement of media frames, including those that are dominant. Entman's book (2004) examines the dominance of specific frames in news coverage of US foreign policy and their influence on public opinion. Zhong and Liu's meta-analysis (2018) analyzes the relationship between news frames and public opinion, highlighting the prevalence of dominant frames across various topics. Collectively, these

studies contribute to our understanding of dominant frames in media discourse and their impact on public perceptions and attitudes.

The researcher seeks to determine the dominant frames employed by the two news sites and how the stories were contextualised to depict the GE-15 using the Framing Theory. Following the approach of De Vreese (2005), the study used "pull quotes" as a topic and integrated them into themes. Meaningful expressions, opinions, ideologies, and angles were considered topics that contributed to themes and facilitated the identification of specific frames. Each frame was treated as a unit, and the analysis of units formed the central phenomenon of the content analysis study. The study employed eight frames, as predetermined by the defined definition. These frames encompass the following aspects:

Horse-Racing frame: this frame refers to a unique manner of framing news coverage that depicts the election as a competitive race or contest, focusing on the political campaign's strategy, tactics, and dynamics rather than the real policy concerns at stake (Kozina, 2017).

Natural Disasters frame: This frame is a particular way of framing news stories that focuses on events or incidents caused by natural phenomena, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, wildfires, or tsunamis. This framework highlights the impact of these events on human lives, infrastructure, and the environment (Campbell, 2014).

Political frame: This frame focuses on the actions associated with the governance of a country or region, particularly the discussions and interactions among influential individuals in power (Hertog & McLeod, 2001).

Conflict frame: This frame highlights the disagreements and conflicts between individuals or groups, aiming to capture the attention and interest of the audience (Valenzuela, Piña, & Ramírez, 2017).

Human interest frame: This frame presents a problem or issue from an emotional perspective by focusing on the personal story of an individual, evoking empathy and engagement (NDIDI, 2021).

Economic consequences frame: This frame explores the impact of an event or issue on the economy of an individual, group, institution, region, or country, examining factors such as blame, success, and overall effects (Iyengar, 1994).

Morality frame: This frame contextualizes news within the framework of moral values or religious beliefs, providing a perspective on the ethical implications of the reported information (Mokhberian et al., 2020).

Responsibility frame: This frame emphasizes the identification of individuals or entities responsible for causing or resolving the issue at hand, often assigning blame, or assessing the government's capacity to address it (Reinecke & Ansari, 2016).

Methodology

In this study, content analysis was employed as the research methodology. Content analysis is a research method used to analyse the messages conveyed in media content. It involves systematically analysing and categorizing a large amount of text or other forms of media to identify patterns and trends. Riffe et al (2019) definition of content analysis involves objectively and systematically identifying specific message characteristics to make inferences. Similarly, (Shapiro & Markoff, 2020) defines it as a technique used to create valid and replicable conclusions from significant data to their contextual usage. Thus, content analysis of this study encompasses several stages, which are as follows:

1. Making the decision to employ content analysis
2. Identifying the specific materials to be included in the analysis

3. Selecting the unit of analysis

4. Creating coding categories, and monitoring it into coding sheet

5. Coding the materials according to the established categories into SPSS

6. Analysing and interpreting the obtained results

Comparative content analysis is a research method that aims to compare the content of two or more bodies of text (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). The process involves examining multiple texts for similarities and differences in terms of themes, language use, tone, style, or other content characteristics (White & Marsh, 2006). Comparative content analysis can be used to explore how different texts represent a particular issue or topic and to analyse changes over time, across geographic regions, or across different media. It can be used to investigate a wide range of phenomena, such as media coverage of events, political speeches, advertising strategies, or online discourse (Krippendorff, 1989).

The results of the comparative content analysis will provide insights into how Free Malaysia Today and The Star are framing the 15th general election in Malaysia. The analysis will identify the dominant narratives, themes, and frames used by the two news portals. Additionally, the content analysis will provide insights into the types of sources used, the tone of the reporting, and the prominence of stories. The comparison of the results from both methods will allow for a more in-depth analysis of the differences in reporting between the two news portals by using SPSS.

This study chose these portals because they are one of the most popular and influential news sources in Malaysia and represent different perspectives across the political spectrum. The rationale behind choosing this research design for the study is that it allows for an in-depth analysis of the way in which the two news portals frame the election and the issues surrounding it. By comparing the frames used by these two portals, it is possible to identify differences in their political affiliations and biases, as well as similarities in the way they cover certain issues.

The frame used in the coverage of the Malaysian general election by the two news portals, Free Malaysia Today and The Star, could be identified by their coverage. For example, the frame could be focused on issues such as corruption, economic policy, or social justice. Additionally, the frame could be influenced by the political affiliations or biases of the news organizations. Overall, the Pan and Kosicki framing model could be a useful tool in analysing and comparing the coverage of the Malaysian general election by different news portals, and identifying the dominant frames used in their reporting.

To apply content analysis of news articles from two different news portals, this study collected data from 5/11/2022 to 19/11/2022. It should be noted that the limitation of the study may not have captured all news from each day but rather all news available on our devices within the specified time frame. The content of these news stories was analysed for language use, themes, and frames. Language use analysis focused on tone, vocabulary, and syntax of the news stories. Themes were identified by examining the topics, issues, and events covered in the news stories. Finally, the frames used in the news stories were identified. Researchers have coded all frames into the coding sheet, which was designed to measure concepts such as frames, sources, and themes. Each article was coded accordingly.

Once the content analysis has been completed, the results can be compared between the two news portals. This will allow this study to identify similarities and differences in the way that news stories are covered, framed, and presented. The findings can then be used to draw conclusions about the way in which different news portals shape the public's understanding of current events.

Findings

Table 1

Frequency of News article for the Star and Free Malaysia today

Date	The Star Online	Free Malaysia Today
5.11.2022	36	15
6.11.2022	13	8
7.11.2022	12	7
8.11.2022	12	8
9.11.2022	13	9
10.11.2022	11	10
11.11.2022	13	8
12.11.2022	10	7
13.11.2022	12	8
14.11.2022	13	8
15.11.2022	23	13
16.11.2022	18	11
17.11.2022	22	11
18.11.2022	21	12
19.11.2022	37	16
Total	**267**	**151**

According to the provided table, the total of 418 (N=418) news articles related to GE-15 on two news articles has been collected on two news portals within the timeframe. Malaysia's 15th general election has scheduled Nomination Day for November 5, 2022, Voting Day for November 19, 2022, and Early Voting Day for November 15, 2022. The data indicates that

news frequency from Free Malaysia Today and The Star is based on important election-related dates.

The highest number of news articles from two news portals was recorded on June 19, 2022, coinciding with Election Day. This suggests extensive coverage of voter turnout, polling station reports, and initial analysis of election results, highlighting key wins, losses, and potential implications for the country's political landscape. The second highest news frequency occurred on June 5, 2022, which was the nomination day, characterized by increased news coverage as political parties and candidates made formal announcements and submitted their nomination papers. The third highest frequency was on the early voting day, emphasizing its growing significance as a convenient voting option. Both news portals focused on informing the public about early voting procedures and locations, analysing early voting data, and promoting civic engagement. Additionally, the days leading up to the elections showed significant news frequency due to factors such as voters returning to their hometowns, politicians making final appeals for votes, and coverage of polling centres and the actual polling day. In short, the star has an average number of 10-13 news during the election campaign time, whereas Free Malaysia has a normal frequency of 7-10 news during the campaign period on 6 to 14 June.

Table 2
Number of frames identified from the codebook.

Names Of Media	Number Of Articles	Number Of Frames	Average Of Frames
The Star	267	540	2.02
Free Malaysia Today	151	327	2.10
Total	418	867	2.05
Mean	209	433.5	2.06
Std. Deviation	82.024	150.614	.056

Table shows that multiple frames were found in the news articles. However, a single frame was taken once from a news article. As a result, 540 total number of frames were found in the Star, 317 number of frames found in the Free Malaysia Today, were previously divided into eight categories. Research question 5 identified the news frames used by the star and Free Malaysia today in their stories about Malaysia 15th general election.

The Star, categorized as a mainstream media outlet, published 267 articles, and utilized 540 frames, while Free Malaysia Today, representing an alternative media source, released 151 articles accompanied by 327 frames. In total, the combined data reflects 418 articles and

867 frames. On average, The Star exhibited approximately 2.02 frames per article, whereas Free Malaysia Today demonstrated a slightly higher average of around 2.10 frames per article. These findings suggest a similar average utilization of frames per article between the two sources, with Free Malaysia Today exhibiting a marginally higher count. The analysis also indicates that The Star, as a mainstream media outlet, displayed a greater quantity of articles and frames compared to Free Malaysia Today, an alternative media source. This implies that The Star provided broader coverage and potentially employed a more diverse range of framing techniques. In short, the overall average frame of two news portals was 2.05, indicating that two news portals at least used a news frame in their reporting.

In terms of the frames themselves, the dataset contains a range of 327 to 867 frames across the three articles. The mean frame count is 578.00, with a standard deviation of 271.998, indicating a considerable amount of variability in the number of frames across the articles.

Table 3

Types and percentage of frames between two news portals during Malaysia 15th general elections

Frames	The Star (n=267)	Percentage (%)	Free Malaysia today (n=151)	Percentage (%)
Conflict	76	14	48	11.99
Natural Disaster	41	7.60	12	3.78
Attribution of Responsibility	63	11.67	65	20.50
Economic consequence	79	14.63	53	16.71
Morality	45	8.33	24	7.57
Human Interest	24	4.44	37	11.68
Horse Race	92	17.04	45	14.20
Game	120	22.22	43	13.57
Total	**540**	**100**	**267**	**100**

Table 3 presents a comparative analysis of different frames covered in two online news portals, The Star and Free Malaysia Today. The frames represent various aspects of news coverage, including Conflict, Natural Disaster, Responsibility, Economic Consequence, Morality, Human Interest, Horse Race, and Game.

The Star reported a total of 540 frames, while Free Malaysia Today reported 317 frames. By examining the percentages, it is evident that Conflict, Responsibility, Economic

Consequence, Horse Race, and Game received substantial coverage in both sources. Conflict accounted for 14.07% and 11.99% of the frames in The Star and Free Malaysia Today, respectively, indicating its significance in news reporting.

Natural Disasters received comparatively lesser attention in both sources, constituting 7.59% of The Star's frames and 3.79% of Free Malaysia Today's frames. Similarly, Morality and Human Interest were relatively less emphasized topics, with The Star covering them at 8.33% and 4.44% and Free Malaysia Today covering them at 7.57% and 11.68%, respectively.

Responsibility received a considerable percentage of coverage in both sources, with The Star reporting 11.67% frames and Free Malaysia Today reporting 20.50% frames. This suggests a shared focus on examining issues of accountability and responsibility.

Economic Consequence also garnered significant attention, accounting for 14.63% of The Star's frames and 16.71% of Free Malaysia Today's frames. This indicates the importance placed on economic factors and their implications in news reporting.

Horse Race and Game frames were prominently featured, particularly in The Star, with 17 % and 22.22% coverage, respectively. Free Malaysia Today allocated comparatively lower coverage to these frames, with Horse Race accounting for 14.20% and Game accounting for 13.57% of the frames.

Table 4
Ratio of dominant frames

Dominant Frames	The Star (%)	Free Malaysia Today (%)
Responsibility	11.67	20.50
Conflict	14.07	11.99
Game	22.22	13.57
Horse race	17.04	14.20
Economic consequence	14.63	16.71
Sum	**79.63**	**76.97**
Mean	**15.926**	**15.39**
Std. Deviation	**4.00292**	**3.32201**

(Note: N=418)

The table presents the ratio of dominant frames in two distinct news sources, namely The Star and Free Malaysia Today. These dominant frames encompass the themes of Responsibility, Conflict, Game, Horse race, and Economic consequence.

Regarding the dominant frame of Responsibility, it comprises 11.67% of the total frames reported by The Star, while Free Malaysia Today allocates a higher proportion of 20.50% to this theme. This indicates that Free Malaysia Today places a greater emphasis on reporting matters related to responsibility compared to The Star.

The dominant frame of Conflict represents 14.07% and 11.99% of the frames in The Star and Free Malaysia Today, respectively. Although both sources acknowledge the significance of Conflict, The Star appears to allocate a slightly higher level of attention to this theme.

The dominant frame of Game receives substantial coverage in both The Star and Free Malaysia Today, constituting 22.22% and 13.57% of the frames, respectively. This suggests that The Star accords more prominence to reporting on Game-related topics compared to Free Malaysia Today.

Horse racing, another dominant frame, is significantly covered in both sources, with The Star accounting for 17.04% of the frames and Free Malaysia Today accounting for 14.20%. Both sources dedicate a substantial portion of their coverage to Horse race-related content.

The dominant frame of Economic consequence represents 14.63% and 16.71% of the frames in The Star and Free Malaysia Today, respectively. This indicates that both sources extensively cover the economic impact and consequences of various events and decisions.

Considering the overall distribution of dominant frames, The Star exhibits a ratio of 79.63%, whereas Free Malaysia Today demonstrates a slightly lower ratio of 76.97%. This implies that The Star places relatively greater emphasis on the dominant frames analyzed in this table compared to Free Malaysia Today.

The ratio of dominant frames in these two news sources provide valuable insights that can be gained into their distinct reporting agendas and thematic priorities will be further discussed in discussion later. This analysis contributes to an enhanced understanding of the news coverage strategies employed by The Star and Free Malaysia Today.

Table 5
Themes found in the Two online news portal for GE-15

Themes	The Star (n=267)	Percentage (%)	Free Malaysia Today (n=151)	Percentage
Electoral Controversies or Irregularities	67	25.1	41	15.36
Voter Turnout and Participation	25	9.5	15	9.9
Political Alliances and Coalitions	83	31.1	33	21.86
Key Campaign Issues	71	26.6	51	33.77
Election Results	21	7.9	11	7.284

Note: (N=418)

The table presents a comparison of the themes covered by two prominent news portals, namely The Star and Free Malaysia Today, during Malaysia's 15th General Election (GE-15). The data provides the number of news articles related to each theme and the corresponding percentage for each news outlet. The analysis demonstrates that the news portals focused on different themes in their election coverage. The Star prioritized reporting on electoral controversies, political alliances, and key campaign issues, while Free Malaysia Today gave more attention to key campaign issues and electoral controversies. Both news outlets allocated a similar level of importance to themes such as voter turnout, participation, and election results. The variations in coverage between the news portals underscore their distinct priorities and perspectives during the GE-15 election period. Understanding these differences can help readers gain a more comprehensive and nuanced insight into the election proceedings and their implications on the nation's political landscape, considering the significant role that media plays in influencing public opinion.

Similarity and Differences

The study found several differences and similarities in the framing used by Free Malaysia Today and The Star. The most significant difference was the focus of the framing. Free Malaysia Today's framing was more critical of the government and political parties, highlighting political corruption and challenges faced by political alliances. The Star, on the other hand, was more supportive of the government, emphasising political stability and economic progress. However, both news portals covered responsibility and framed them as important issues in the election.

Another difference was the tone of the framing. Free Malaysia Today's framing was more negative, emphasising the challenges and issues faced by the government. The Star's framing, on the other hand, was more positive, highlighting the achievements of the government and the progress made in the country. However, both news portals used neutral framing when covering social issues.

A similarity in the framing used by both news portals was the focus on social issues. Both news portals highlighted social issues, such as poverty, inequality, and human rights, and framed them as important issues in the election. However, the framing used by Free Malaysia Today was more critical of the government's policies and programs, while The Star emphasized the progress made in addressing social issues.

The study's identification of different dominant frames used by Free Malaysia Today and The Star in their coverage of the 15th general election highlights the differences in how these news portals approached the election campaign. Free Malaysia Today's emphasis on human interest and morality frames related to political corruption, political issues and challenges, political alliances and partnerships, and social issues suggests a focus on the shortcomings and challenges facing the political landscape in Malaysia.

The morality frame may have been used to draw attention to the prevalence of corruption in Malaysian politics, a persistent problem that has long plagued the country. The horse race and game frame may have been used to highlight the many issues and challenges that political parties and candidates faced during the election campaign. This frame may have included topics such as political polarization, declining voter turnout, and concerns about election integrity.

The horse race and game frame may have been used to explore the various political alliances and coalitions that emerged during the election campaign, including any controversies surrounding these partnerships. The human-interest frame may have been

used to focus on issues such as inequality, poverty, and social injustice, which were key issues during the election campaign.

In contrast, The Star's emphasis on frames related to political stability, economic progress, government policies and programmes, and social harmony suggests a more positive and optimistic approach to the election campaign. The responsibility frame may have been used to highlight Malaysia's stability as a democracy and the peaceful transfer of power during the election.

The economic consequences frame may have been used to highlight Malaysia's economic achievements and the various economic policies proposed by the political parties during the election campaign. The government policies and programmes frame may have been used to explore the various policies and programmes proposed by the government during the campaign. Finally, the social harmony frame may have been used to highlight Malaysia's multi-ethnic and multi religious diversity and the importance of social harmony in the country.

Moreover, the news stories presented by Free Malaysia Today and The Star exhibit similar syntactic structures, indicating a common approach to organizing information. Both news reports also fulfil the completeness aspect of news by incorporating the 5W+1H framework, addressing the crucial questions of Who, What, When, Where, why, and how. However, when it comes to the thematic structure, the two online media platforms differ in their approaches. The Star online media frames the news based on the title and supports it with statements from various sources. On the other hand, Free Malaysia Today online media maintains a neutral stance in framing the news of GE-15. This highlights a divergence in how the two media outlets shape the news narrative. Finally, in rhetoric structure, two news portals use various catchphrases and metaphors to draw audience attention.

Overall, the differences in the dominant frames used by Free Malaysia Today and The Star suggest that these news portals had different priorities and perspectives on the election campaign. Free Malaysia Today's focus on frames related to challenges and issues may have provided a more critical and nuanced analysis of the election campaign, while The Star's focus on frames related to progress and stability may have provided a more optimistic and positive analysis.

Discussions

This study revolves around the framing theories and models developed and utilized by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) in their research on news framing. Building on previous investigations Iyengar (1991); Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), this study further corroborates the prominence of the "attribution of responsibility" frame in news framing.

The primary objective of this study was to examine how mainstream media and alternative media framed news during the 15th general election in Malaysia. Another aim was to identify any existing news framing structures in the election-related coverage across different media outlets. The study utilized content analysis as the research method and focused on eight predetermined frames: game, conflict, responsibility, horserace, natural disaster, economic consequences, morality, and human interest. Eighty significant codes were defined for these frames, and relevant framing structures were identified and categorized accordingly. Each news article was assigned a single frame if it contained multiple paragraphs or quotes pertaining to the same frame.

The results indicated that the dominant frames observed were game, responsibility, conflict, horserace, and economic consequences by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) and (De

Vreese, 2005) . Conversely, the frames of natural disaster, morality, and human interest were less commonly represented. The game frame was particularly prevalent in The Star, comprising 22.2% of their coverage and featuring topics such as vote-rigging, voting fraud, and the biased role of the police and election administration in manipulating the election. Free Malaysia Today, on the other hand, predominantly employed the responsibility frame, accounting for 20.5% of their coverage. The horse race, economic consequences, and conflict frames were also discussed in the media, with each outlet presenting frames aligned with their own policies and strategies.

The data highlighted significant disparities in the media coverage of the 15th general election. For example, The Star focused more on the game frame, often projecting a favourable image of the ruling party, while Free Malaysia Today paid greater attention to voters and the situation in the constituencies, resulting in a higher representation of the human-interest frame. Framing theory posits that journalists and mass media strategically select words and news to influence public opinion, often aligning with the interests of elites (McCombs, 2002). In the context of this study, both mainstream and alternative media showcased the concerns of national elites in their coverage of the 15th general election in Malaysia. Conflict framing was prominent in two news portals, representing 14% of the conflict-related news. However, Free Malaysia Today emphasized economic frames and criticized the incumbent BN government for its large budget in 2022. The Star covered economic frames in 15% of their election-related coverage, suggesting their support for their parent company, MCA, and the BN government. Free Malaysia Today consistently expressed deep concerns about the GE-15 situation and raised issues such as credible, free, and fair elections, equal opportunities for all parties, the non-partisan role of the Election Commission, acceptable law and order, and electoral institutions. Interestingly, The Star focused heavily on conflict framing in its coverage of the GE-15, which aligned with the concerns of BN and MCA in shaping their election strategy. Framing theory also explains how media contextualizes information according to its policy, creating its own frames to shape the audience's perception (Aalberg et al., 2016). The study results indicated that certain issues were emphasized while others were neglected. Corruption, for example, is a significant challenge in Malaysia, consistently ranking low on Transparency International's perception index. However, the low representation of the morality frame in the GE-15 coverage suggested that corruption was not a prominent issue during the election, as both incumbent and opposition parties paid little attention to it.

The media devoted considerable significance to voter turnout, political strategies, election predictions, and intimidation tactics against the opposition, overshadowing the issue of corruption throughout the election coverage. The overall pattern of coverage demonstrated a focus on dominant frames such as conflict, horserace, economic consequences, game, and responsibility, indicating a prevalence of negative issues. The coverage also revealed a bias in The Star, favouring its parent company, BN-MCA, and the incumbent government. Conversely, alternative media outlets like Free Malaysia Today heavily criticized the ruling party for its illicit activities, irregularities, and conspiracies involving government institutions, including the Election Commission, while promoting the activities of opposition parties.

Conclusion

The news is a window into the world. People know who they are and who others are, their institutions, leaders, lifestyles, and the same things that happen outside their nation,

thanks to the frame's representation. The framing of the news, like other framings, might be suspect. According to Tuchman (2013) , the view via the window depends on whether it is large or small, has windows, is opaque or clear, and faces the road or the house's rear. In this scenario, the media has been used to become a battleground for the 15th general election.

Macroscopically speaking, analysis shows that both Free Malaysia Today and The Star used a mix of topical and character frames in their coverage of the news of the 15th general election. However, there was a difference in the frequency of these frames. Free Malaysia Today used more output frames and The Star used more character frames. This shows that the two news portals have different tastes in the design of election news.

The analysis revealed that both Free Malaysia Today and The Star described the 15th general election as a highly competitive and contentious event. They portrayed the election as a struggle between two large political coalitions, each with their own vision and plans for the country. This framework suggests that elections were seen as very important to the future of the country. Third, analysis showed that both Free Malaysia Today and The Star paid relatively little attention to political issues and more attention to political strategy and election tactics. This framework suggests that news portals were more interested in playing political games than informing the public about the major political issues at stake in the general election.

Finally, analysis showed that Free Malaysia Today and The Star used slightly different frames to portray their political rivalries. The Star used a more negative frame to describe the ruling coalition, Free Malaysia Today while used a more neutral frame to describe the opposition coalition. This framing indicates that the two news portals had different party positions regarding his two coalitions. Overall, the results suggest some differences in how Free Malaysia Today and The Star presented news of the 15th general election. However, both outlets portrayed the election as a highly competitive and contentious event, with more emphasis on political strategy and election tactics than on substantive political issues.

This study makes an excellent theoretical and contextual contribution through reading the media framing of two prominent English-language online news portals, Free Malaysia Today and The Star, within the course of Malaysia's fifteenth General Election in 2022. The look at enriches the theoretical know-how media framing through using installed frameworks to the Malaysian media landscape, which is regularly underrepresented in worldwide media research. By doing so, it highlights the nuanced tactics in which media stores with great editorial stances frame political sports, thereby shaping public notion and discourse. Contextually, this study provides valuable insights into the position of media in rising democracies, mainly in Southeast Asia, wherein media dynamics are triggered with the aid of a completely unique combo of political, cultural, and social factors. The findings underscore the importance of media literacy and crucial consumption of news, because the framing strategies diagnosed can appreciably have an impact on voter behavior and democratic outcomes. This has a look at subsequently plays a vital role in bridging the gap amongst media idea and realistic implications inside the context of Malaysian electoral politics, imparting a blueprint for future studies in comparable contexts.

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