

# Altruism vs. Transactional Politics: New Political Marketing Reality in the Post 14th General Election Malaysia

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## **Abstract**

With a resultant change in government occurring for the first time ever in Malaysia post 14<sup>th</sup> General Election, this review paper explores the issues of the emergent of a new political marketing reality within its electorate market. This paper purports to critically examine how altruistic approach taken by the eventual victors, the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition, enabled them to win the hearts and minds of voters over the overtly transactional approach taken by the incumbent Barisan Nasional (BN) pact. Altruism within political marketing is defined as putting the concerns of voters ahead of a party's consigned interest while transactional politics refers to a reciprocal approach of offering reward to win votes. Here, the paper highlights the degree in which the coalitions dabbled in both approaches and how altruism

finally emerged as the voters' choice. It also focuses on how altruism fits into the whole milieu of political marketing and how this could change the political landscape of Malaysia. Moving forward, this paper hopes the factors highlighted here can be empirically examined by researchers and other stakeholders in order to test the efficacies of altruism and transactional approaches as a political marketing construct, in light with the expected competitive elections coming in the near future for Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Political Marketing, Marketing, Altruism, Transactional Politics, Contemporary Political Marketing Approaches

### **Introduction**

Globally, the political arena within functioning egalitarianisms had seen a heightened degree of contestation between the forces of populism against that of liberal democracies (Palaver, 2019). From a political marketing point of view, the battle for the hearts and minds of voters went beyond ideological fault lines, and include the abilities of political parties and candidates to discover the right political persona or marketing construct to adopt (Giugni & Grasso, 2019). There were many facades a politician could choose to project and increasingly, the choice seemed to boil down to either a value-laden approach or an approach that favours mass clientelism; the notion of trading material benefits from political entities in exchange for support from citizens who saw themselves clients (Müller, 2017).

In Malaysia, history was made on 9 May 2018 as voters ushered in a new government after a stunning victory by the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition over the 61-year-old incumbent Barisan Nasional (BN) pact (Hooi, 2018) in the 14<sup>th</sup> General Election (GE 14). Within days of the result, many scholars and commentators were scrambling to make sense of what had occurred, with discussions focusing mostly on the epoch-making nature of the result (Moniruzzaman & Farzana, 2018). This paper purported to explore the resultant impact from the point-of-view of political marketing, focusing on the effect of the altruistic approach taken by the winning PH versus the transactional tract favoured by BN.

The paper would begin by looking at the theoretical discussion behind key concepts of the paper; political marketing, altruism and transactional politics. To provide further context and to discuss the background of the paper, a critical examination of recent election results will be conducted. Next, an investigation on the implications of both concepts within the political marketing reality is offered. Finally, the paper would explore what all of this might mean for political parties moving forward within the dynamics of an effervescent political and electoral market in Malaysia (Rahim et al, 2017).

### **Insight & Concepts**

The three main concepts of the paper, altruism, transactional politics and political marketing, would be extrapolated and discussed from the viewpoints of marketing and politics. This distinction provides a unique point-of-view where political marketing would serve as the overarching concept or worldview in which altruism and transactional approach would be discussed; requiring an exploration that considered the meanings as being derived from the knowledge sphere of marketing and political science.

The paper would start the theoretical discussion with the overarching concept of political marketing. Political marketing could be understood as a social process enabling the

management of political exchange between the stakeholders within a democratic process (Henneberg, 2004). The social process in question was often framed as the method of approaching the competitive sphere of politics through the strategic impetus of marketing and marketing management (Speed et al, 2015). As a social process, political marketing could act as a strategic tool to be used by political parties vying for success within the political arena. As with other strategic tools, the application of political marketing does not conform to a generic “one-size-fits-all” approach but instead correspond to different strategic archetypes, seen as the dominant approach or logic that guides the overall strategic movement. For this conceptual paper, two archetypes would be examined vis-à-vis political marketing which are altruism and transactional politics.

The altruism approach is defined as a value-based approach within politics that emphasized selfless devotion to a cause that is socially acceptable (Eikenberry & Mirabella, 2018). This approach stood opposite to the politics of self-interest and appealed more towards a set of electoral that vies for society’s upliftment and social welfare. Altruistic political engagement is rooted in societal interaction rather than individualism and is grounded in social exchange of ideas and grassroots democracy. Transactional politics is defined as a reciprocal brand of politics in which power is consolidated through the act of one political party seeking to curry votes or trust by promising to reward such support with some form of benefits (Leftwich & Lyne De Ver 2018). This sort of *quid pro quo* arrangement was seen as more pragmatic in nature and was often associated with what is known as “politics of development”; an orientation that consolidates power via the assumption that political parties would only be given a mandate if it could provide for some form of structural and infrastructural development in return (Törnquist, 2018).

The two main political coalitions that were being discussed are *Pakatan Harapan* (PH) and *Barisan Nasional* (BN). PH is a coalition of four parties, formerly of the Opposition and is now the governing pact with a simple majority in the Lower House of Parliament. The four parties within PH are the *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (People’s Justice Party), the Democratic Action Party, *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia* (Malaysian United Indigenous Party) and *Parti Amanah Negara* (National Trust Party). Apart from the four, there are two more allied party which are *Parti Warisan Sabah* (Sabah Heritage Party) and *Pertubuhan Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Bersatu* (United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation), as well as two more strategic partners which are *Barisan Bertindak Hak-Hak Hindu* (Hindu Rights Action Force) and *Parti Tindakan Hak Minoriti* (Minority Rights Action Party). Pre GE 14, BN was the ruling coalition who managed to hold to power for nearly 61 years since Malaysia’s independence from the British. It used to consist of 13 different political parties, but the number had dwindled to only three in the aftermath of its defeat in the latest general election. The three parties currently in BN right now are the United Malays National Organisation, the Malaysian Indian Congress and the Malaysian Chinese Association. The future of BN is quite uncertain as Malaysian Chinese Association decided to stand in a by-election recently under their own banner instead of BN’s, the first time it has happened since the pre-independence national election.

In this paper, these two approaches were competing forces adopted by different political coalitions competing to be accepted by the electorate. The altruism approach represented the politics of PH, the eventual winner of the 14<sup>th</sup> Malaysian General Election, while

transactional politics represented the approach taken by BN, the long-standing incumbent who tasted defeat for the first time in 61 years. The paper would present the theoretical concepts behind the worth of altruistic politics while exploring the question on the future of transactional politics here in Malaysia. It is hoped that the notions discussed in this paper would be empirically tested later to prove its efficacy.

### **The Evolution of Altruism and Transactional Approaches in Malaysia**

To gain context on the reliance of transactional politics and the progress of the altruism approach in Malaysia, the paper would like to examine the evolution of the country's approach towards political marketing by looking at the history and results of previous general elections.

In 1998, the sacking of then Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, sparked a political crisis the likes of which the country had not witnessed before. The ensuing struggle was projected onto several arenas including street protests, intellectual discourses and townhall-style speeches summarily known as *ceramah*; culminating in 1999's 10<sup>TH</sup> General Election (GE 10) in which BN came out triumphant over the *Barisan Alternatif* (Alternative Front) opposition pact (Teik, 2000). While victorious, the result showed a diminishing return for BN as they only managed to garner 148 out of 193 seats available in the Lower House compared to 162 seats in the previous general election. Many observers pointed to the fact that the *reformasi* (reform) movement had brought a new dynamic onto Malaysian politics, one that is partly based on the personal struggle of the embattled Anwar and a more value-laden approach that was at once anti-establishment. Scholars and commentators described this new political "brand" as *politik baharu*, new politics. BN felt that the victory is a continuation of past support for the coalition and felt the best approach was to entrench itself onto the same old order and initiated a move where "*the party must dominate the government*" (Case, 2001). This grafted an overtly pragmatic brand of politics onto the ruling coalition where loyalty was the most important criteria and rewarding such loyalty became the dominant political outcome.

Five years on from GE 10, several key events transpired that helped shape the outcome of the coming 11<sup>th</sup> General Election (GE 11). The first incident was the incarceration of Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim over charges of sodomy and corruption, seen by some as a political ploy by then Prime Minister and Anwar's mentor-turned-foe Mahathir Mohamad designed to derail Anwar's burgeoning influence as an opposition figurehead (Aman, 2009). Secondly, after 22 years premiership, the incumbent Prime Minister and president of UMNO, Mahathir Mohamad, was set to retire from politics. This seemed to rejuvenate the spirit of not only BN members and supporters but also the population of Malaysia eager to embrace a new political paradigm. The heir apparent to the vacant seat of power was Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. Imbedding his approach onto the rallying cry of *Islam Hadhari*, Civilizational Islam, Abdullah managed to solidify his image as a moderate Islamist willing to embrace cosmopolitanism while maintaining a solid foundation within the confines of nativist nationalism, UMNO and BN's erstwhile political concern (Lim and Har, 2008). All of this led to a swaggering victory for BN; returning to power with 198 seats out of 219 contested, the largest majority ever recorded in the Lower House.

Come the 12<sup>th</sup> General Election (GE 12), the positive impetus that came with BN's historic victory from the previous election is fast fading away. On one hand, there were constant streams of criticisms coming from Mahathir accusing the Abdullah administration as being weak, indecisive and not in line with the aspirations of UMNO (Rajaratnam, 2009). While Abdullah was hand-picked by Mahathir as his successor, the relationship between the two soured when Abdullah cancelled a few development projects said to be aligned with interests close to Mahathir. From another side, a civil movement by the name of *Bersih*, meaning clean, was demanding a more just electorate process free from gerrymandering. Another factor was the freeing of Opposition figurehead Anwar Ibrahim in September 2004 after the courts overturned his sentencing; reaffirming his struggle and commitment towards socio-political reform (Sani & Zengeni, 2010). These events came to head during GE12 and the eventual result saw a complete reversal of GE 11. BN lost its two-third majority for the first time since 1969, and for the first time ever lost the popular vote. However, the ruling party retained the reins of government by the virtue of the first-past-the-post system used; returning 140 seats with a reduction of 58 seats from the previous election. It was the worst ever performance by BN and the situation had become untenable for Abdullah and he quit as Prime Minister which paved the way for his Deputy, Najib Abdul Razak, to be the sixth Premier of Malaysia (Sani & Zengeni, 2010). If GE 10 sow the seeds for the clash between transactional and altruistic approaches, GE 12 became the moment where the battle line was redrawn.

With new hands on the rudder, the journey towards the 13<sup>th</sup> General Election was always going to be perilous. Najib, the Prime Minister designate, was the scion of a political dynasty and carried the hope of an UMNO and BN long bereft of elitist politics (Moten, 2009). The run up was quite a hopeful one, with Najib setting the right tone and seemingly taking the high road in continuing Abdullah's pragmatic policies by abolishing the Internal Security Act which allowed for detention without trial. The auspicious start failed to gain traction, and soon the administration was besotted with scandals (Noh, 2014). There were the extravagant lifestyles associated with Najib's wife and children and ethical issues with Felda Global Ventures, a subsidiary of Felda, a plantation-based organization seen as the lynchpin of UMNO's continuous rural support. There was also the 1MDB scandal, the global spanning financial scandal that would factor much more in the next election. All of this was happening alongside the wrenching-up of pressure by *Bersih* through massive street protests in Kuala Lumpur (Ong, 2018). This prompted Najib to abandon any flirtation with altruism and embraced full-on transactional politics (Ahmad & Othman, 2014). For the city folks, he dangled the carrot of improved infrastructures, especially public transportation by initiating a 51-km Mass Rapid Transport system within and around parts of Kuala Lumpur while promising an extension of the lines in the future. For the rural folks and low-income earners, Najib initiated a national cash subsidy disbursement programme called BR1M. The Opposition, now calling itself the *Pakatan Rakyat* (Pakatan), the People's Coalition, stayed true to its strength and initiated two value-based approaches; one was the policy referendum cum manifesto "Purple Book" outlining its vision for the country post-election while the second one was a broad-based concept of *Negara Berkeadilan*, the Welfare State. When the result came, BN was still in power but with an even bigger reduction in both seats' majority and popular votes (Saabar, 2014). Najib quickly contextualized the result as a rejection from the Chinese community, describing it as a "Chinese Tsunami". Pakatan claimed that the Government stole the election result and losing the popular vote twice in a row meant that the Government lacked credibility (Noh, 2014).

Just like GE 13, the road towards the 14<sup>th</sup> General Election (GE 14) was rife with scandals and inflexion points that would influence the outcome. The scandal that dominated the headlines not only in Malaysia but all over the world was the 1MDB, described by the United States' Justice Department as the biggest kleptocratic case in the world and became Najib's greatest undoing (Case, 2017). Next, the Opposition figurehead Anwar was reincarcerated with fresh charges of sodomy, again thought of by many from his camp as a politically motivated move to kill-off his political career (Berman, 2008). Pressure from *Bersih* continued with two massive rallies that drew an unprecedented number of participants (Gomez, 2016). Perhaps the most significant event was the unexpected return of former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad into active politics as the Opposition leader and Prime Minister candidate to challenge Najib (Kassim, 2018a). This time, Mahathir took his action to another level by first quitting UMNO, Najib's party and the party Mahathir himself led for 22 years. He then formed a new party alongside other UMNO stalwarts, including former vice president and ousted Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin. Bersatu joined the Opposition pact and a new name was chosen, *Pakatan Harapan* (PH), the Coalition of Hope (Gomez, 2016). PH, as with previous elections, concentrated its effort through a value-based campaigning while using the 1MDB scandal as the example on how corrupt the incumbent administration was. With all these serving as the backdrop for GE 14, Najib started doubling down on his transactional policies, expanding the BR1M handouts and embarking on ambitious infrastructure projects such as the Malaysian-Singapore High Speed rail to entice voters. When Malaysians went to the polling stations on 9 May 2018, they made history by voting in a new government and ousted the 61-year incumbent in the most spectacular fashion (Kassim, 2018b).

Thus, the last 20 years had seen a gradual shift in terms of values that resonated the most with voters. This paper reasoned that one of the factors that contributed to the change was a paradigm shift from a politics of mutual benefit to one that emphasised voters' concerns and values. Next, the paper would examine the implications of altruism and transactional politics on Malaysia's electorate market.

### **Altruism vs. Transactional Politics: Implications for Malaysian Politics Post Ge 14**

In the aftermath of the watershed GE 14 that saw a change in the political stewardship in Malaysia, the paper will now offer a critical examination on how altruism and transactional politics played a role in determining the outcome. Firstly, the paper will examine the role of altruism within this context.

Altruistic politics can be seen as an approach that *emphasized the politics of moral benefits* (Purdon, 2017). What is meant by the politics of moral benefits is the idea that politics and politicians ought to be willing to make sacrifices in order to generate some form of gains meant for societal members who are worse off (Church, 2017). This spoke of selflessness and the desire to make changes that went beyond the ideological call of political gamesmanship and survival. Lab based experiments by Charness & Rabin (2002), Fehr & Schmidt (2006) and DellaVigna (2009) showed that participants responded positively to the idea that leaders whose policies and actions that were construed as self-sacrificial even when compared to a competing policies that were seen only to be beneficial to the general public sans the inclusion of self-abnegation elements. Within the Malaysian context, this could be personified through the return of Mahathir Mohamad, a 92-year old former prime minister coming back to the scene to help galvanise the then Opposition and help "save" Malaysia (Ong, 2018). This



narrative gave out a sense of urgency to Mahathir's and his coalition's cause and lent a heroic slant to the endeavour (Kassim, 2018). It became a rallying call that not only brought the coalition together but gave them an added advantage over a competing narrative that was painted as being bogged down by the inertia of an incumbent that was tired, corrupt from holding power too long and only interested in consolidating authority rather than serving the people (Moniruzzaman & Farzana, 2018).

Another key factor was the inculcation of *in-group altruism*, defined as the explicatory effort to foster shared values by expounding a common cause within a social existence (Rueda, 2018). This was done by advocating a notion of shared responsibilities between the leaders and the followers where both parties understood that meaningful change could only come from a common struggle in which a meeting point exist between the parties (Habyarimana et al., 2007). This stood dialectic to a transactional approach in politics in which the leaders would be in a dominant position, being the beholder of "paybacks" sought by the followers who then offer some form of legitimacy such as votes or support to reciprocate (Olver, 2018). From the context of GE 14, the effect of in-group altruism could be seen from two situations. The first was PH decision to elect Mahathir as the de facto Opposition leader and candidate for Prime Minister even though his party is the most junior among all the coalition members. The decision was made because PH believed Mahathir was key in wooing the Malay electorate, especially the rural voters crucial in winning the election (Oliver & Ostwald, 2018). Next, PH took the unprecedented decision to contest the election under one symbol in all states except for the Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak. Both decisions showcased a willingness to sacrifice for the general good and the desire to put the common interest above a single party's interest. For the public, these were seen as a signifier for a united political front willing to act selflessly in order to achieve an aim that was good for the general electorate (Juego, 2018).

Altruistic politics could also *enhance electoral conviction* towards a political movement (Garzia, et al, 2017). Electoral conviction could be defined as a measure of social involvement of the public in a political struggle (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2008). This was different from election participation where the social involvement is limited to only in participating in elections and not in other manifestations of a political struggle (Matanock, 2017). Pertaining to Malaysia's last General election, electoral conviction played out in how closely tied PH was with political civil society movements. This closeness fostered a heightened sense of political empathy towards civil struggle, enabled the party to identify itself with issues that were close to the heart of voters and made them more sensitive towards the societal concerns (Jarrett, 2016). Whereby BN defined their politics almost exclusively through its party platform and ideology that is grounded on race-based nationalism (Noh, 2014), the struggles of PH were multipronged and covered a range of concerns which include the fight against institutional corruption, gender equality, national unity, development and minority rights (Kassim, 2018b).

Altruistic politics also helped to *reduce self-indulgent behaviour among politicians* as it helps them to focus their effort on expounding values and sharing struggles rather than just concentrating on trying to capture and retain power (Denton & Voth, 2017). Decadence among politicians has always been a perennial issue and was seen as the main cause for the general decline in popularity of politicians and political party worldwide (Paster, 2015). Altruistic politics was antithetical to the elitist approach that was often associated with

transactional politics. This could be observed in terms of how altruism positively impact the sense of politicians' self-belief, behaviour, attitude and personality (Caprara & Silvester, 2018). Within Malaysia, the contrasting public image between PH and BN politicians served to symbolise the behavioural impact of altruism. While BN component parties' politicians often portrayed themselves as "saviours" of the different races that they represent (this was because most of the parties within BN are race-based), their lifestyles were often extravagant and seemed way beyond the means of career politicians. On the other hand, PH politicians were often seen to be more in tune with the people and less prone to project decadence and was perceived by many segments of the electorate to be a more authentic representation of their political struggle (Caprara & Silvester, 2018; Kassim, 2018c; Moniruzzaman & Farzana, 2018; Rajaratnam, 2009).

The adoption of altruistic politics is said to help *enhanced the social visibility of political parties*. This referred to the condition in which political brands' standing within the electorate were elevated further than that of its competitors (Marder et al., 2018). Here, the notion of shared values and political struggles became a rallying points enabling even disparate groups to come together and worked towards a common political goals (Kruikemeier et al, 2018). More often, having kindred spirits among both political allies and supporters would create a greater indelible bond and empowered political parties to break through communicative barriers such as partisanship within mass media and negative propaganda by political opponents (Kulshrestha et al., 2017). Within the Malaysian context such a heightened perceptibility could be witnessed in how PH's campaign managed to break BN's hold over the public communicative landscape by effectively portraying its campaign through social media rather than state-owned entities controlled by the then incumbent BN. PH's usage of social media campaigning was papered with images of its leaders joining hands with supporters in street rallies and the campaign trails which ultimately created a sense of co-ownership between its supporters and the coalition (Jaidka et al., 2018) of the struggle that ultimately brought them the mandate to govern.

Apart from expounding on the positives of altruism, a more complete ideation and discussion on the clash between altruistic and transactional politics required a critical examination of the other side of the political marketing divide as well. Here, the paper would be making a case on the relevancies of the transactional approach within the Malaysian context.

The first line of argument would be how *transactional politics helped improve public interactions*, particularly within the context of the politics of development (Leftwich & Lyne De Ver, 2018). By and large, politics had always been about the art and science of managing the electorate's expectation (Halpin et al., 2018). From this standpoint, a reliance on transactional politics would allow political parties and personnel to cater to the needs of the voters in more focused and systematic way while enabling voters to judge their performance based on more tangible metrics rather than relying too much on abstract notions such as "political struggle" and "championing reforms" (Rwamigisa et al., 2017). This would in turn create a tangible common ground between the political bodies with its supporters, especially core ones. Within the Malaysian scenario, transactional policies of BN have served as the bedrock of their policies and manifestoes through the years and while they lost the last election, the coalition still managed to haul in a significant number of seats within the Lower House of the Parliament, especially seats from rural areas where developmental promises



were still considered as important policy statements (Aman, 2009; Lim & Har, 2008; Tan & Ibrahim, 2008).

Transactional politics could also *induce social preferences of voters, especially when viewed through the lens of identity politics*. Identity politics could be defined as the propensity of political parties and its supporters to form exclusive associations based on race, faith and social class that ran contrary to broad-based ideological parties (Yúdice, 2018). More often than not, political parties would justify the parochialism of identity politics by including a lot of protectionist policies and infrastructural reform as “sweeteners” (Börzel & Risse, 2018). This enabled those parties to maintain support while keeping the electorate, especially their core supporters happy with such an arrangement. While no denying that some might view this as the very anti-thesis of a liberal democracy, this arrangement had found a strong following in emerging electoral markets such as Malaysia (Carlson, 2018).

Transactional politics could help *shape the behaviour of voters and their choice for political leadership* (Dassonneville et al, 2017). A *quid pro quo* prearrangement within politics could easily be understood by voters and in turn easily communicable by political parties or coalitions (Otjes & Krouwel, 2018). This direct cause-and-effect relationship create a strong and tangible political economy connexion and when harnessed properly, could still play a role as strategic bedrock for political success (Krammer et al, 2018). Hence, confronted with a choice of either political surety of developmental promise or the congruency of political ideology there are voters who would still opt for political leadership that would provide them with infrastructure or other as a party of developmental policies and would often expound promises of future development as a voting inducement and while they did not manage to form the government in the last GE, the most dominant party within the coalition, UMNO, still managed to capture the biggest single-party haul in Parliament before the recent defection of five MPs post GE 14 (Hooi, 2018; Kassim, 2018b; Moniruzzaman & Farzana, 2018).

Thus, both altruism and transactional politics not only played a role but in the case of PH, became one of the main instigators towards an election victory. Having said that, the political realities of an emerging electorate like Malaysia meant one could not fully discount the transactional approach as wholly out of touch. While GE 14 was already in the books, the interplay between altruism and transactional politics is set to continue and is expected to play an important role in the future.

Another important takeaway was the realization that while altruistic politics won the day based on recent election’s result, one should not dismiss the veracity of transactional approach in politics, especially with regards to an emerging electorate market like Malaysia. The idea that transactional politics had a close relationship with the politics of development and the political economic exchange could still favour coalitions that traded in the politics of mutual benefits (Carlson, 2018; Yúdice, 2018). No doubt, the value-based approach of altruism seemed to resonate more with a growing populace of voters in the country, but one victory did not make a trend and one lost was not a signifier of future results (Chin, 2023). Perhaps, a middle ground between these two approaches could represent an opportunity to discover an innovative political strategic approach. Combining the ability to relate with contemporary political struggles with a technocratic slant towards infrastructural

development could lead to continued political success in the future (Kassim, 2018a; Lee, 2014; Moniruzzaman & Farzana, 2018; Oh, 2018; Rashid Moten, 2009; Tan & Ibrahim, 2008). This is relevant to both BN and PH; and could be the impetus for other coalition or parties looking to join the fray of Malaysian politics.

### **Conclusion**

The article explores the role of altruistic politics in shaping Malaysia's political landscape following the 14th General Election. Altruistic politics emphasizes moral benefits and the cultivation of shared values through in-group altruism, promoting a common cause within society. This approach not only strengthens electoral conviction towards political movements but also encourages politicians to prioritize value-driven governance over self-serving behaviour. By focusing on shared struggles and moral objectives rather than the pursuit of power, altruistic politics presents a contrast to transactional politics, where political support is often exchanged for material or short-term gains. The article highlights how adopting altruistic politics could foster trust, reduce political cynicism, and enhance democratic practices in Malaysia. The discussion on the clash between altruistic and transactional politics requires a critical examination of transactional politics and its role in shaping Malaysia's political dynamics. Transactional politics can enhance public interactions, particularly within the framework of development-focused politics, by delivering tangible benefits to communities. It also influences voters' social preferences, especially when analysed through the lens of identity politics, where group identity and affiliations play a significant role in political decision-making. Furthermore, transactional politics has the capacity to shape voter behaviour and guide their choices in selecting political leadership by offering direct incentives or outcomes, thereby creating a pragmatic relationship between politicians and the electorate.

To conclude, this paper discussed the reasons how the altruistic approach adopted by PH became one of the key elements behind their success in wresting power from the 61-year incumbent BN. The implication to be drawn is that an exciting interplay between two political marketing domains, altruism and transactional politics could be an exciting venue for future researches as well as means to explore innovative political strategies that could further develop the milieu of competitive political marketing in this country. In the future, the paper believed that more empirical research, both qualitative and quantitative, could help shed light in terms of the and the behaviour of the two main coalitions, the paper had identified a clash of values that could play out in other elections in the future. What is needed right now is to use quantitative research to showcase the interrelatedness between concomitants of both altruism and transactional politics to fully understand their roles within political paradigm. Another opportunity is to use qualitative research to further flesh out details in terms of how these approaches are defining political interplay within different electoral market.

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