Sensationalism in Media: Perspective of Non-Muslim Malaysians towards Reliability of Media Content

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Abstract: **Incessant reports on a particular issue leads the content of news towards sensationalism. Global media outlets tempt to sensationalize news stories aimed to gain more revenues and higher ratings for the sake of fame, viewership, reputation and completion with other news media agencies. The notable point is, with sensationalized report not only the integrity of the news agencies is under question, also the reliability of news content will be downgraded. Thus, this tendency has paved the way to the changes in the perception among people by making their judgments ambiguous and invalid. In particular, Malaysia is a place where people from various sects and religions live in harmony and peace. Small portion of negative beliefs or unreliable reports on any religions or group can endanger the peace process in the nation. Therefore, this paper investigated the perception of Malaysian non-Muslims towards media reliability coverage concerning Islam and Muslims. The result indicates that non-Muslims in Malaysia are well informed on the content quality and reliability of the news reports. Therefore, what have been reported by various international news agencies on Muslims and Islam is in contradiction with the perceptions of non-Muslims in Malaysia. Non-Muslims Malaysian perspective on Islam and Muslims reflects a positive image that shows Muslims as, cooperative, non-extremist, non-interfering and tolerance.**

Keywords: **Sensationalism, News, Islam representation, Reliability, Media reports.**

1.   INTRODUCTION

As a pluralistic state, Malaysia comprises of people from diverse ethnics, races, religions, tribes and cultures. Based on the latest report by Department of Statistics Malaysia (2016) total population of Malaysia reported as 31.7 million with Bumiputera recorded as the highest percentage with 68.6 per cent, followed by Chinese (23.4 %), Indians (7.0 %) and Others (1.0 %). The percentage of non-Malaysian citizen in 2016 was at 10.3 per cent out of total population in Malaysia.

In a report published by Population and Housing Census of Malaysia (2010) Malaysia is a Muslim state with Islam as its official religion with 61.3 per cent, Buddhism with 19.8 per cent, Christianity with 9.2 per cent and Hinduism with 6.3 per cent. Even though significant number of Chinese are Christians, traditionally their practice and believe is based on the Buddhism. On the other hand, Indians are primarily Hindus with a quite numbers of Muslims and Christians followed by a small number of Sikhs and Bahais.

Over the past years, people witnessed many unsettling changes that both Muslims and non-Muslims have become the victims of war and violence by some minor group pretending to act in the name of Islam. As Mesic (2012) points out ethnic disparities and prejudice seems to rise on both sides especially through highly sophisticated means of communication and information systems. Additionally, Nelson (2013) express it is comprehensibly important to note that, within the channel of communication, wars are initiated, continues and ends with the media. Therefore, it is the media that shapes public opinion and covers authenticities and realities of news by their censorship.

2.   SENSATIONALISM IN MEDIA

Nowadays, people have access to the immense number of media platforms offering diverse range of old, new and future trend of information. Many people with different mentality, different culture and different value observing these new movements and information as a new tendency, therefore this has paved the way to the changes in the perception and sometimes inconsistency among people by making their own judgment based on their scrutiny. According to a research by Frye in (2005) the author has express that journalism and mass media is littered with sensationalism. Stories are aimed to gain higher ratings and more money in despite of effects that this tendency could have or bring on ordinary readers and viewers. Therefore, in the age of high and sophisticated media influence available to the people, it is important to examine the perception of people. This is more significant within Malaysia where different religious and multi-cultural family living under one flag.

From the event of September 11 in the United State, wide range of media agencies campaign against Muslims and Islam throughout the world that marked a paradigm shift in religious thinking among people. Muslim leaders in predominantly non-Muslim regions like Europe and United States of America visited churches and synagogues to express their concerns and believes to the people that the tragedy has no relevancy with Islam and Muslims.

The tragic situations and tense moments were also felt by the Muslim countries particularly by Malaysians. In an article by Chin on January (2002) more than five hundred Malaysians regardless of their ethics and religious faith gathered at the Church of St Francis of Assisi in Kuala Lumpur to promote peace and convey their condolences to the September 11 tragic event. According to Ahmad (2007) such strong commitment and obligation was one of the first and the most tremendous move by the Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs and Bahais in Malaysia. Likewise, people with different religious and cultural values listened to the speeches and dialogues delivered by various religious beliefs regarding the same theme.

Furthermore, based on Ayoob (2011) paper on Islam and Muslim in the Media, numerous media outlets with substantial financial resources and multiple channels attempt to depict and sensationalize a rough image of Muslim and Islam to their public. Notwithstanding, at the same time Muslim groups through different channels and various media outlets strive to convey their voices and messages but as compare to the global supremacy of the Western media, their attempts were somehow ineffective. Ewing (2009) expresses some range of ideas and themes that Western media are exploiting the event of 9/11 as a tool to capitalize their own political gain. These media struggled to sensationalize their stories by depicting Islam as "extremism", "fundamentalism" and "radicalism". It is important to note that, the role of media is very central and can be used as a weapon against any group or a larger community.

Gallup's world poll in (2007) surveyed Muslims in 47-countries in connection with the 9/11 tragedy. The respondents throughout the world believed, the former's president Bush's war was not on "terror" instead they have perceived it as war on the Islam and Muslims. Following the 9/11 tragedy, there have been numerous public observation polls conducted on the perception of the West from predominantly Muslim countries that represents complex mix of judgments and opinion.

3.   CULTURE AND NEWS

As Malaysia is a multicultural state with rainbow of races and religious, it is highly important to define what is culture? When people think of culture, they generally tend to perceive it in a quite simple and monumental way. As the matter of fact, culture is not only limited to dance or music, it is also not only about costume or language. According to Arowolo (2010) culture is beyond decoration of social festivity, birth, rituals, marriage, cuisine or sport. Culture is mainly about people's total way of live, worship, life, eat, create and recreate. It is also a set of bequeathed norms, values and ideas that invents a common base in social action. Notably, culture can be regarded as general principle and a collective human activity that tends to guide perception of individuals and groups with shared traditions.

There is no doubt that mass media holds a tremendous power by transmitting information to the public and free to highlight certain news items and ignore others, setting the agenda of public life and creating agreement or disagreement on certain issues. Morse & Agopian (2012) argued information itself is not the only source to be measured rather access to the information and how ultimately it has been used is important. This is simply due to the fact that one can make

economic and political decisions or even can be engaged in any societal discussion form. Therefore, it is the right of public to be well equipped in order to judge the quality and credibility of information that is the most relevant to them.

News is set of information that enables public in shoveling their problems effectively. News is also distinguished as set of entertaining information that grabs public's attention towards an issue and paves their curiosity manner into a deeper body of knowledge. As it was mentioned by Curran and Gurevitch (2005) news is an institutional technique of making information available to consumers. Notwithstanding, Fuchs (2011) express that news and information together are crucial component in the life of individuals, minorities, groups, communities religious sect and even the nation. Citizens acquire information and news through many sources available as it shapes and informs their opinions and decisions. From one country to another, perceptions of the public towards media content are different simply because of divergence in cultural values. Logically, people receive information through categorized means of channels including foreign media and new media.

4. FOREIGN MEDIA

Tamam and Abas (2006) argued Malaysians have formed their perception of what foreign media particularly U.S. is and what it represents partly from their exposure to images in both local and social media. It is believed, U.S. is viewed as the power in economic and technological progress, while the main fact here is, much of the western cultural values are in contradiction with the Asian values. Therefore, this study tends to comprehend the perspective of Malaysian non-Muslims towards the reliability of media content.

5. NEW MEDIA

In Malaysia, the Internet was first introduced in 1996. However, the emergence of the Reformation (*Reformasi*) became remarkably linked with online media movements from 1998 onwards in which clutched government's awareness on the implication of the Internet. Likewise, global awareness and globalization have yielded and generated growth of the Internet. Along with this context, Rajaratnam (2009) states that the role of mass media and news information becomes importantly crucial as complex psychological conflict and escalating international tension raging everywhere in today's world. In contrast, according to Ludes (2012) technology has made the media an influential tool that constructs opining and power sharing among people. Dimensions of media have the capacity to promote global awareness and also promoting cross-cultural understanding, ethnical acceptance, religious, cultural and gender differences across the globe.

In a released article by the Agence France-Presse (2015) social networks such as Facebook and Twitter have decisively proven themselves as an essential part of the newsgathering process as well as a space where the news is shared and consumed. The management of such social networks has also encourages AFP journalists to use social networks as a tool to interact with the general public. One fact which should not be neglected is commitment of the journalists; hence, journalists should ensure the fair and balance of the news when commenting on the areas. Journalists should also refrain from any comments that could harm the agency's image. As the matter of fact, it is indispensable that journalists respect the agency's social media guidelines in order to practice better flow of information.

Professional news media practitioners are in search to use modern communications technologies with the newest applications to cover hot-spots in the events. This technique has mainly benefited the broadcasters on the ground, specifically in location where they are absent or it is inconvenience to be present at all. This trend has developed fast since the early 2000 and it is a western-based establishment that monitors this process worldwide.

The existence of Malaysian mainstream media rooted back in the British Colonial administration. In a research paper by Andrew and Marjoribanks in (2007) major newspaper were identified as two Malay language dailies, two Tamil dailies, three English languages dailies and five Chinese language dailies. The authors have also indicated that government is the major stakeholders as news media in Malaysia controls by 14 political parties that constitute the ruling National Front.

6. MALAYSIA

A closer look at Malaysia from the eyes of local media has exposes a country that stands at the geographical cross roads of major religions and cultures of the world. This perspective has given Malaysian people a role that makes them ready in promoting ethnic and religion understanding, tolerance and harmony. To further strengthening the formation of perception

and progression in building a national unity in Malaysia, Thaib (2013) states that the sixth Malaysia's Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has introduce a philosophy known as "1 Malaysia, People First, Performance Now" as a way to accelerate performance of the Malaysia in order to achieve a vision that transfers Malaysia into a developed nation by the 2020.

Within the context of local media, the '1Malaysia' campaign can be regarded as a vision that paves the perception of public towards restoration and rejuvenation of all the Malaysian people in a one harmonious and orchestrated relationship. In accompanying this move, local media outlets not only compel to take part in accomplishing their tasks, also they play a leading role in safeguarding and localizing the public's perceptions towards possible leverage of outsiders.

7.   LACK OF CONTENT RELIABILITY

Malaysia is a dynamic and an active advocate in incorporating the usage of ICT within the process of its development. Based on the latest report by the Internet World Stats (2016) the Internet penetration in Malaysia rose from 15% in the year 2000 to 65% in the year 2012. Based on IWS report, in a multicultural society, reaching a constructive and reliable source of information among different ethnic community is of paramount importance. Whereby, an unreliable media news exposure could contribute factors that leads in sparking racial, religious, ethnic tension and most importantly jeopardizes social harmony.

Therefore, the problem statement of this research is supported by Ibrahim, Mustaffa, Kee, and Ahmad (2011) which the authors stated that in Malaysia, local gatekeepers have no choice but to use foreign news items to supply their media content. For instance, local media in Malaysia have to subscribe to the international news agencies like Associated Press (AP), Agence France-Presse (AFP) and Reuters to get their major news. This issue has questioned the reliability of the news contents and reports by the media. This is because, local media, both print and online are handicapped because of minimal number of foreign bureaus and budget constrain. A notable question that lies ahead is the fact that reliability of these reports by local media is under threat. This is because; these reports are brought by the foreign news sources which in turn could pave the way for consequential effects on the perception of Malaysian readers.

Questions

- Does the reliability of media content help the perception of non-Muslims to understand issues concerning Islam and Muslims?

- What is the relationship between media reliability and formation of non-Muslim's perception?

Objectives

- To describe non-Muslims' perception in Malaysia towards media reliability coverage concerning Islam and Muslims.

- To understand the relationship between media reliability and formation of the non-Muslims perception.

8.   LITERATURES ON RELIABILITY OF MEDIA COVERAGE

In a comprehensive study by Wok, Tamam, Bolong, and Ahmad in (2011) authors found television as the most reliable and main source of news followed by the Internet and newspaper among young Malaysians. Within the peripheral of their findings, the authors have also specified that Indians are mainly depending on the newspaper as their main source of news. Interestingly, majority of the Indians discuss whatever news they read and share it with friends and family members.

Lecturers, scholars, literatures or even state's efforts are no longer effective in fully educating or informing the public, instead it is the mass media that has this leverage and ability. A research on media's affect analysis by Sommer and Allen (2009) shows that mass media is a significant source of learning and influential tool that manipulates the perception and the attitude of its user. Therefore, the reliability of news is of the paramount as unreliable news content could bring racial or religious disparities among societies. Notwithstanding, in another research study by Diamond and Plattner (2012) the reliability and power of social platforms such as new media and its penetrative effects on the perception of social believe

was found consequentially crucial. This is mainly due to the fact that, it constitutes huge amount of impact on the national ethos and on strengthening the intercultural, religious, ethnical or any other conflicts.

Contrary, another relevant study to this research was conducted by Tamam et al. (2005) in which the authors have found messages and information presented to the Malaysians by local gatekeepers and local news agencies as comprehensive, fostering the intercultural and religious perception among all types of group. Likewise, in Ahmad's (2007) study on determining the role of media and communication on user's perceptions, huge number of Muslims and non-Muslims believed in the power of media reliability in disseminating the information and its consequential effect on the society. Many believed, mainstream media in Malaysia does little in informing public regarding inter-religion content.

A past research study by Zevi in (2003) showed that the stereotypical perception of ethnic group is mostly related to the unreliable exposure of mass media. As international news media tend to subscribe to a one-side ideology in order to turn the attention and shape the perception towards their own value, local media exclusively journalist and editors are playing a crucial role in shaping the Malaysia views. In addition, Tamam et al. (2005) study also indicated that journalists, editors and all Malaysian news outlets should be aware of potential tendency in the media and work towards the national ethos and stronger mainstream media. This is because, vast majority of Malaysians especially Chinese and Indians are attached to both local and international news media. In fact, their study has found that, non-Muslim group; mostly Chinese and Indians are holding positive views based on Malaysian values. Significantly, such as building their own national identities and national ethos for better development.

As it was mentioned by Rehman and Ghosh (2008) the impact of 9/11 which was entirely blamed on the Muslims had added insult on top of injury. Therefore, credibility and reliability of the media outlets were seen deeper. Almost everyone from different race or religion was subject to news story. As part of this tragedy, Western media constantly propagating the idea of Muslims are terrorists, fundamentals, extremists and violent-prone. At the same time, non-Muslims looked at the deviant behavior of Islam and Muslims and frequently express negative comments and feelings towards Muslims and Islam. Amid major international news agencies, the Cable News Network (CNN) and the New York Times have exerted their unreliable report by framing and agenda-setting manner in their messages about issues regarding Islam.

9. METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted in Serdang district where big number of Chinese and Indians living together in Malaysia. A sample size of 380 non-Muslim Malaysians over the population of 40,070 people within the Seri Kembangan district was selected. The structure of the research design and questionnaire has been used by previous studies where the authors have surveyed a large number of non-Muslims in Malaysia. Within the peripheral of their findings, the research has indicated the fact that vast number of Chinese and Indians are relatively active consumers of the news and media reports. Contrary, an advantage to the subjects of this study is that multiracial populations reside in the Seri Kembangan district. Notwithstanding, it is vital to take into the consideration that these factors can help the quality of the questionnaire as well as a good contribution to the research problem.

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 was used for analyzing all statistical procedures. The statistical data preceded through two parts, descriptive statists and inferential statistic. For descriptive data analysis, frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to understand how non-Muslims form their perception towards media contents. Likewise, for inferential statistic, the Pearson correlation test was conducted to identify the relationship between variables.

As the objective of the study is to describe non-Muslims' perception in Malaysia towards media reliability coverage concerning Islam and Muslims, a quantitative method was adopted in order to collect all the primary data. In addition, it is tempted to assume that everyone in Malaysia is somehow exposed to the media and news contents, therefore convenient sampling has been selected for further process. This research study is designed based on non-probability sampling. All data gathered through self-administrative questionnaire. In addition, convenient sampling was selected to collect all data due to the fact that everyone is somehow exposing to the mass media contents in general. The question types are close-ended question followed by tunnel format in which straight questions are organized throughout.

Table 1: sections in the questionnaire

Section	Topics	No. of Questions
Section A	Demographic data Gender Race Religion Age Education Level Preferred type of news	6
Section C (5 Likert Scale)	Perception of non-Muslims towards media reliability Content reliability Convenience	**10**

The pattern in which questionnaire are arranged, should be in consistence and reflects the main objectives of the research study. Questionnaire is one of the most effective method in order to get various types of information from respondents. It is also important to comprehend that questionnaire is an essential tool for the researcher as it brings quality, integrity and balance to the overall image of the research. Therefore, a set of questions has been designed for this study to understand the non-Muslims' perception in Malaysia towards media reliability coverage concerning Islam and Muslims.

The questionnaire was administered to several social setting including, residential areas, universities/colleges and professionals. The questionnaire was provided only to the respondents upon their voluntary participations. For residential area, the researcher with the help of few enumerators went to the houses where non-Muslims mostly live, then approached them and asked their willingness for participation in filling in the questionnaire. For university/college, the researcher visited faculty by faculty within the university to get students as volunteer in filling the questionnaire.

Table 2: Operationalization of the variables

Variables	Types	Level of Measurement	Statistical Analysis
Media reliability	Likert Scale	Ordinal	Descriptive (percentage, mean and S. D)
Relation between media reliability and formation of non-Muslims perception			Pearson Correlation

This research study measures its objectives based on categorized segment from the questionnaire. Precisely, The Section C of the questionnaire consist of keywords such as news reliability Western media, local media and Internet to understand the reliability of news reports concerning Islam and Muslims from non-Muslims perspective in Malaysia.

Formation of non-Muslims perception has been selected as an independent variable that indicates how non-Muslims can form their mindset towards media contents. This is very crucial platform as many scholars and literatures have discussed the power of media in changing the mindset of the people. Even though, various dependent variables could fit into this study, many scholars and literatures focused and summarized the importance of reliability of the media news contents. Therefore, based on these various scholars and literatures, this research has selected media reliability as the dependent variable of the study. For this variable, ten items were written in the form of close-ended questions for further understanding and interpretation. Similarly, respondents had to answer each item based on the five-point Likert Scale which was 1 – Strongly Disagree. 2 –Disagree. 3 –Somewhat Agree. 4 –Agree. 5 – Strongly Agree.

A very crucial part of constructing the questionnaire is the piloting or rather better known as pretesting. This is an important stage where it gives the researcher a chance to see the flow of questions ordering, wording and clarity of the questions. Therefore, to run a reliability test for further distribution of the survey questionnaire, this research has used the common measurement of internal consistency which is Cronbach's Alpha by using SPSS. A total number of 30 participants were surveyed by in order to conduct the pilot the test. Which the result is as below:

Table 3: part C Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.910	.909	10

Table 3 shows the Cronbach's Alpha test for part C of the questionnaire. The total number of ten questions placed in this part. The aim was to understand the fact that does the reliability of media content help the perception of non-Muslims to understand issues concerning Islam and Muslims?

This study, however, looks at the Content validity of the topic for further understanding validity and reliability of the instrument. Therefore, it is tempted to assume that the content of this study is valid and reliable as many scholars and researchers have measured perception towards media such as Western media, new media and local media. Importantly, it is vital to note that assessments of the measures are close to goals and objectives of the study.

10. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are highly in support with the agenda-setting and framing theory that shows news media consumption as an influential tool on individual's interpersonal perception. Significantly, this study is in line with previous research that majority of Malaysians, in particular Chinese and Indians believe in credibility of media by giving substantial attention to the reports and news by the media.

Non-Muslims in Malaysia are not passively using social media or online news websites. In fact, Non-Muslims perceive new media or rather internet as a convenience tool to obtain relevant information but not reliable source of platform. The reliability of news is of the paramount due to its sensitive contents. Notwithstanding, unreliable news contents or reports could bring racial or religious disparities among ethnic or religious group. Similarly, an issue on the social media could bring consequential effects on the perception and penetrates into the larger scale. This would have huge amount of impact on the national ethos and on strengthening the intercultural, religious, ethnical or any other conflicts.

As people have access to the various number of media platforms, news agencies have a tendency to sensational their stories more and more. Likewise, many people with different mentalities, different cultures or different values are observing this information by the news agencies without even knowing the true piece. This is due to the fact that, it has been testified by researchers that media leverages the mindset of audiences by exerting their powerful tools such as HD visual, perfect audio, clarity in image and other similar technologies to showcase their stories that deceives the perception of the viewers and turns their attention towards different direction.

Table 4: Descriptive analysis of independent variables: describing non-Muslims' perception in Malaysia towards media reliability coverage concerning Islam and Muslims (n=380)

Describing non-Muslims' perception in Malaysia towards media reliability coverage on Islam and Muslims	Frequency					M	S.D
	1	2	3	4	5		
I mostly view Western media (Example: *New York Times, Guardian, CNN, BBC, Fox news, etc.*)	118	75	52	87	38	2.63	1.40
I mostly view local media (Example: *RTM, TV3, Media Prima, The Star, New Straits Times, Utusan Malaysia, etc.*)	78	24	86	84	108	3.31	1.46
I mostly read news through the Internet (Example: *Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.*)	117	37	81	116	29	2.74	1.37
News stories by the Western media are more reliable compare to the local media	177	67	26	73	37	2.27	1.45
News stories which are shared through the Internet are more reliable	140	64	50	33	93	2.67	1.61
Watching and reading news through Western media is more of convenience than reliable	114	31	108	86	41	2.76	1.37
Watching and reading news through Local media is more of convenience than reliable	78	45	105	56	96	3.12	1.44
Internet news are more convenience to me, but not reliable.	5	10	40	183	142	4.17	0.82
Mass media aims to publish reports based on truth to avoid misunderstanding	193	33	61	10	84	2.36	1.62
Mass media in general are reliable in their news stories on Muslims and Islam	143	75	99	54	9	2.23	1.16
Total						2.82	

Note: 1 – Strongly Disagree. 2 –Disagree. 3 –Somewhat Agree. 4 –Agree. 5 – Strongly Agree

Table 4 indicates the descriptive analysis of independent variables which is describing non-Muslims' perception in Malaysia towards media reliability coverage concerning Islam and Muslims. According to the table the highest score of the mean value is 4.17 goes to the item number 8 concerning the reliability of the new media. In which, respondents were required to answer the question in a way to understand the fact that whether Internet news are more convenience, but not reliable. On the other hand, the lowest score for the mean value has been also indicated in the table as 2.23 where the respondents perceived the fact that mass media in general are reliable in their news stories on Muslims and Islam.

After observing the mean and SD of item number 8 in the table, vast number of respondents perceived the fact that new media or rather Internet news are more convenience, but not reliable. These respondents chose to rate attribute 4 and 5 as their answer to the question. Contrary to this explanation, the mean and SD value of the item number 10 has indicated the fact that majority of respondents did not believe in the fact that mass media in general are reliable in their news stories on Muslims and Islam. Indeed, respondents illustrated their answers by rating the attribute number 1 as their response.

For further understanding of the table's description, SD of each item has been also observed to see how spread the data are around the mean. As a result, table 4 shows item number 8 with the SD of 0.82 and the 4.17 as mean. This indicates that the individual responses are clustered and not diverge from the mean. Whereby, the lowest mean which is 2.23 with the SD of 1.16 is an indication that data points are far from the mean. It is tempted to assume that a higher SD in item number 10 which concern reliability of mass media defines responses concern over the reliability issue as many of them rated the attribute 1 as their response.

For further understanding of the non-Muslims' perception in Malaysia towards media reliability coverage concerning Islam and Muslims, the second highest mean value in the table has drawn significant point. Majority of respondents in the item number 2 has been showing more interest in the local media news reports. As the matter of fact, the mean value for this item is 3.31 with a SD of 1.46 that is an indication of data points are been far from the mean. According to the table, quite remarkable numbers of respondents mostly view local media (Example: *RTM, TV3, Media Prima, The Star, New Straits Times, Utusan Malaysia, etc.)*. Precisely, respondents chose to rate attribute 5 as their answer to the question.

Table 5: Correlation test between media reliability and formation of the non-Muslims perception

Dependent variable	Coefficients	
	R	Sig. (2-tailed)
Media reliability	-0.055	0.284

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table number 5 illustrates the fact that as one variable increases in value, the second variable decreases in value. Therefore, there is no significance relationship between media reliability and formation of the non-Muslims perception.

11. RELATED THEORY

The agenda-setting of the mass media describes phenomenal issues out there by presenting it to the people such as what to talk about? And what to think about? The framing and agenda-setting of the media works in an indirect manner that effects perception of the audiences. Even, early studies by Lazarsfeld and Menzel (1963) have indicated that news diffusion works as part of the media's strategy to influence readers' mentality towards one direction. To be more specific, a direction that prepares readers' mind for unconstructiveness and condemnatory assumptions.

Along with previous past research, this research has various significant findings that are in contradiction with what mass media has propagating in long run. Majority of non-Muslims population which is a combination of Chinese and Indians perceive Islam as a religion that inspires people to do good actions. Likewise, in term of issues such as extremists and terrorists which has been created mainly by foreign and international media outlets, non-Muslims' views are in opposite. This implies that, numerous numbers of Chinese and Indians does not agree with news reports that represents and portrays image of Muslims as extremists and terrorists. This perception is an indication of the togetherness and closeness of the non-Muslims' mindset with their fellow Malaysian Muslims. Apart from this, this could be a message to the foreign media outlets that framing and agenda-setting is not an influential tool on the perception of non-Muslims.

Within this context, numerous numbers of social media commentators and literatures questioned the confidentially, privacy, reliability and convenience of the Internet. As it has been argued by Kovacic, Erjavec, and Stular (2010) mass

media and journalism are highly built on credibility and reliability matter. With the appearance of online social media news and other various news websites, journalism and mainstream media entered into the game of competition. Without a doubt, online news platforms and social media news are plying the front role in being convenience to their users.

Non-Muslims in Malaysia are not passively using social media or online news websites. In fact, Non-Muslims perceive new media or rather internet as a convenience tool to obtain relevant information but not reliable source of platform. The reliability of news is of the paramount due to its sensitive contents. Notwithstanding, unreliable news contents or reports could bring racial or religious disparities among ethnic or religious group. Similarly, an issue on the social media could bring consequential effects on the perception and penetrates into the larger scale. This would have huge amount of impact on the national ethos and on strengthening the intercultural, religious, ethnical or any other conflicts.

12.   CONCLUSION

In many comprehensive studies, mass media hardly described as reliable and main source of news among young people. While, other side of fact explains that lecturers, literatures or even state efforts are no longer effective in fully educating or informing the public, instead it is the mass media that has the ability to do so. Within this interpretation one important question that lies ahead is the reliability of the news content. The news reliability is of the paramount as unreliable news content brings racial and religious disparities among societies.

The objective of this study has discovered, as compare to the Western media, local media has done a better job in balancing both content and reliability of the news report. With this, messages and information which are presented to the non-Muslim Malaysians by local gatekeepers contains comprehensive contents. This helps in fostering various aspects of intercultural and religious perceptions of other type of groups.

Vast numbers of non-Muslims in Malaysia are well aware of power of media's reliability in disseminating information and its consequential effect on their perception. This is due to the fact that mass media has breached the respect on issues concerning Islam and Muslims. Consequently, this has been more notorious through new media or rather Internet. Despite the fact that Internet has been a good alternative platform for receiving information, non-Muslims perceive this platform as a convenience tool not as a reliable network to rely on. It is tempted to assume that Malaysian non-Muslims have scrutinized   the presence of numerous media agencies with multiple channels that attempted to depict a rough image of Muslims and Islam to public through Internet.

Generally, the existence of stereotypical perception among ethnic groups is somehow could be related to the unreliable exposure of mass media. This is mainly due to the fact that international news media tend to subscribe to a one-side ideology in order to turn the attention and shape the perception towards their own value. It can be seen that, once a person is open to the foreign news reports, it is also open and importantly is exposes to the unreliability. Therefore, in every angle, the concept of reliability plays a crucial role in shaping the Malaysians non-Muslim's views. As the non-Muslims in particular Chinese and Indians are holding a positive standpoint on Malaysian Muslims, local media as well as all Malaysian news outlets should work on the national ethos and stronger mainstream media. This would pave the way for building national identities, national ethos and also better developments.

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Page | 555

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