

## **TPPA: The News Framing Pattern of Alternative Media and the Effect towards Public in Malaysia**

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*Received Date: 1/4/2016 Accepted Date: 16/6/2016 Published Date: 30/6/2016*

### **ABSTRACT**

*News reporting can be viewed from various perspectives and can be interpreted with different deliberations by the public. For example Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) issue has been highlighted positively and negatively in the Malaysian news media and was being used by the opposition parties as an element to condemn the Government initiative. The resistances to the TPPA include some of the largest numbers of people converging in protests and at rallies. Besides the TPPA issue was not reported and published thoroughly in Malaysia's news medium. This study outlines the general idea of the study of the news framing pattern in online news portal of alternative media; Malaysiakini and The*

*Malaysian Insider (TMI) and determining how their presence in providing news effect the public opinion through the comments section. The objectives of the research are to identify the news framing pattern used, to analyse the effect of framing and to illustrate the relationship between framing pattern and public opinion in Malaysiakini and TMI online news portal in shaping public opinions. Malaysiakini and TMI online news report are shaped in such a way that conforms to frame pattern, as news agencies and portals are essentially mechanisms of informing the public and shaping public opinion. The qualitative content analysis approach was the methodology used in order to observe this phenomenon. Malaysiakini's and TMI articles and coverage regarding Trans-Pacific Trade Agreement (TPPA), was chosen as a base for this study that was carried out from 29th September 2015 until 3rd October 2015. By using framing as the theoretical framework and content analysis as the research methods, this study found that both media outlets framed the issue differently, affecting and influencing the public opinion the most when the frame introduced in the article is dominant. Frames can be used to emphasis the societal perspectives of any issue that could help distinguish public understanding and outline priorities as they are influential shaping elements.*

**Keywords:** *News Framing, Effect of Framing, Alternative Media, TPPA.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Malaysia has been a longstanding player in international investment treaty-making. In 2006, the Malaysian government announced that it would begin negotiations for an FTA with the United States (US). The potential scale and implications of this negotiation changed significantly in 2010, when the Malaysian

government announced that it would enter negotiations for a new FTA, the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA), which in addition to the US now includes a total of twelve states around the Pacific Rim [1].

The TPPA has its own advantages and disadvantages towards the government. An analysis by UNDP showed that if Malaysia does not join the TPPA, Malaysia would be at a disadvantage in terms of seeking bigger and better market access for Malaysian products and services elsewhere. Nonetheless, if Malaysia signs the TPPA, it will have an impact on the cost of medicines and health matters. Thus, the government has to be very careful in dealing with TPPA to ensure the advantages in favour of Malaysia. Every action needs to be refined and addressed with care otherwise Malaysia has to bear all the cost in health sectors) [2].

The mainstream media supported the government by claiming that TPPA is not a threat and benefiting Malaysia's economy. While the alternative media claimed that it gives a negative effect to health, environmental and economic impacts once it is implemented.

Each media outlet highlights certain issues, persons, debates and disputes differently from others. These outlets respond to nation and media interest as well as obliging the expression of the public interest at the same time [3]. The construction of frame is the process of perceiving a social agenda and political (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) that emerges out of the public imagination. Boenker [4] cited that framing patterns is the key in information interpretation and engagement, holding the power to modify and control information as it streams through society [5]. Media uses framing as resources to influence the way public interpret information. When the audience is exposed to a news, every aspect of the news has mostly designed as to what stories to print, how much to print, and the weightage of the story.

On the other hand, understanding public opinion has been constant need of those who want to govern or involve in a communicative action. There are underlying reasons, or variables, that influence on the making of public opinion by referring to a common conceptual representation that perceives information as a network of intentions (Collins and Loftus, 1975; Moscovici, 2000; Baden, 2010). It is important to review back how significant the news framing influence the public opinion.

In Malaysia, the TPPA has become an issue firmly planted on the political agenda of the country, and widespread in the minds of Malaysian via the medium of news. Mass utilisation around an assortment of resistances to the TPPA includes some of the largest number of people converging in protests and at rallies. Initial investigation shows that there is lacking in understanding public opinion based on framing pattern and frame setting process. The research trajectory mainly in the TPPA issue as it was not reported and published thoroughly in Malaysia's news medium. McBride [6] highlighted that news frames influence public opinion because of "the limited cognitive capacity of citizens to attend and process relevant policy information" (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2001, p. 522).

The TPPA discussions have been going on for a number of years and have been cloaked in secrecy by the government with insignificant of information being released. Boenker [4] identified a frame can potentially magnify or constricted an understanding of possible options surrounding an issue. Malaysian former Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad claimed that the debateable TPPA is a "New World Order" (NWO) manoeuvre that would lead to the world's most powerful countries dominating the global economy as reported by The Malay Mail on 9 March 2015. Entman [7] defined that frames surround events, serving to highlight details that direct attention to specific causes, ideas, problems, solutions, and responsible actors. Such an impactful view addressed from a

non-aligned individual, a supreme leader who made bold decisions throughout his presidencies, and declining the government of today's decision of implementing TPPA, has sparked vagueness among public opinion. The standpoint that frames present can be used to translate and elaborate new meaning for a subject, parallel inspire rapid and efficient thinking [8]. Cohen [9] described that when media outlets use framing they cannot tell an audience what to think however they build the foundation for how the public could think about an issue.

The research argues that if the government continues to neglect the importance of relationship between news framing and public concern regarding this issue, this will later give impact towards the public faith to the government which leads to losing the support from the public pertaining to new initiatives introduced in the future.

The news media is understood to play an important role in shaping public understanding and opinion towards complex scientific issues. In the studies done within the context of news framing, scholars highlighted significant impact of media frames on public opinion and perception. The public are also influenced by how the issues are framed. In addition, the studies make a contribution to global mass communication and in areas in which there have been gaps in the literature regarding the study of news framing.

The Malaysian government has appointed experts to review the beneficial aspects of the TPPA and insists that it will definitely bring advantages to Malaysian economy. The disadvantages of the agreement, that worry the citizens of the country. The people are concerned on the consequences and aware of the far-reaching implications that these treaty negotiations can face. This issue has been highlighted positively and negatively in the news media and was being used by the opposition parties as an element to condemn the Government initiative. The researcher aims to highlight the

roles of news media, and to determine the pattern use in disseminating information and how the process of frame setting effect the public. Nonetheless, the researcher proposed to study the news framing pattern by the alternative media, through content analysis of *Malaysiakini*'s and The Malaysian Insider (TMI) online news portal. The result will provide insights to public opinion on how it affected the public and the framing pattern that could become a reference in the development of strategies related to any government commitment.

## **2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This chapter presents a review of the theoretical foundations of framing theory as it is approached in the current study. First defining the concept of frames and framing conscript the previous literatures and researches that have been done in regards to the news framing. The chapter will venture into the frame setting process by which they work to shape public opinion, perception and attitudes.

### *2.1 News Framing*

Kuypers [10] explained how the public is shaped by media news presentation by stating that certain keywords, metaphors, concepts and symbols are used to compose the media framing. The media will project a certain issue, event, or person and can influence what the audience thinks and how the audience thinks about a certain incident or individual. Entman (2003) defined other characteristics of news frames using the cultural congruence model which means that each component of the social system, or the social system as a whole can reach an agreement regarding a specific issue. It is an organizing principles that are socially shared through discourse and work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world [11].

Pan and Kosicki [12] encompassed that framing can be studied as a strategy both of constructing and processing news discourse. Scholars interested in frame setting typically explore how news frames shape the public's interpretation of given issues (Y. Zhou and P. Moy, 2007). In [12] theoretical arguments, they conceptualize media frames as having impacts on individuals' opinions and attitudes.

### *2.1.1 Alternative Media in Malaysia*

Public information was always controlled by those in whose interest it was to remain in the good books of the state for its part, depended on mainstream media to build its identity and kept a close watch on its various activities [13]. Those who produced the news identified themselves as citizens outsiders who offered alternative channels of content in familiar media such as newspaper and the radio shows by which the content was not only critical but created using a different set of procedures. The new journalism, on the other hand, drew upon a much wider ranges of sources, defined news according to the impact of events upon individuals, and considered itself successful when it represented the news as a comprehensible story embedded in a social context with a history and a future [14].

Scholars emphasized that media freedom in Malaysia is heavily condensed by legislation and ownership (Netto, 2002; Randhawa et al., 2005; Rodan, 2005; Wang, 2001; Zaharom, 2000). Various laws such as the Printing Presses and Publication Act, Internal Security Act, Official Secret Act, Sedition Act and Multimedia and Broadcasting Act allow the Government to impose prior restraints on publication, post-publication punishments and penalties for the acquisition of official information. The structure of media ownership in Malaysia is indirectly and directly controlled by the Government or government-linked individuals in which mainstream news organizations are linked to the ruling government. For

instance, Media Prima is an investment arm of UMNO and it owns News Straits Times, Business Times, Malay Mail, Berita Haria, etc. As for Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) has been owned and controlled by the Government since its inception [15].

Mustafa (2005) stated that the public sphere in Malaysian society has been constrained so that ordinary citizens and concerned civil society groups have not been able to fully express their views and to directly participate in the country's democratic processes. He also contended that the mainstream press is instrumental in helping to promote the state's hegemonic influence over the society.

The Internet and online journalism have been much celebrated in Malaysia by those who crave for alternative perspectives (Wilson et al., 2003). Furthermore, it is clear that the Internet has had a discernible impact on Malaysian politics (Abbott, 2001; Brown, 2005; George, 2003; McDaniel, 2002; Rodan, 2001). Malaysiakini is the country's first commercial online newspaper launched by Steven Gan can best be considered an online newspaper (Chin, 2003). The alternative newspaper began with only three journalists producing two or three stories per day. However, Malaysiakini expanded its content dramatically has won warm praise from around the world as well as a number of international awards for journalism (Chandran, 2006; Steele, 2009; Tong, 2004).

The alternative media has grown in Malaysia are creating a space where citizens are free to express their opinions. Other alternative media available currently are The Malaysian Insider, Free Malaysia Today and The Rakyat Post, which are platform to provide opinion in contrast to the Government.

### *2.1.2 Types of Frames*

The literature to date has identified a handful of frames that occur commonly in the news, although not necessarily simultaneously. Most studies focus on the existence of one or another frame in the news and its consequences for public opinion.



The conflict frame, for instance, has been the subject of much discussion (Patterson, 1993; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997), as well as the attribution of responsibility in the news [16]. Semetko and Valkenburg's study of European politics [17] suggested five generic frames: conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility. Iyengar [16] argued that television news as study case for instances, by covering an issue or problem in terms of an event, instance, or individual (episodically) rather than in terms of the larger historical social context (thematically) - encourages people to offer individual level explanations for social problems. Ibrahim [18] indicated that episodic frames implied individual responsibility, whereas thematic frames point to systemic causes for the social problem.

Nnanyelugo Okoro and Chinedu Christian Odoemelam in their journal *Print Media Framing of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria*, described response frame as a frame that put government's response on the spotlight while political frame emphasized on the escalation of political tension and points at conflict of interest for power and scarce means among geo-political regions, party and groups [19].

As stated in a case study of the government transformation programme (GTP) in *The Star* from 2010-2013.), information frame is defined as the frame was used to explain about the process of something or how something works and focus on exploring the government policy and its impact. While affirmation frame refers to the need to re-affirm and assure the audience on the information which was first introduced. This is a reinforcement of existing attitudes.

## *2.2 Effect of Framing in Shaping Opinion*

Frames are considered a foundational element in a society-wide dialogue, transcending public, private, and mediated spaces [20]. A frame describes reality through an explicit perceptive lens that may help individuals assess new information and identify agreement on

solutions among peer groups and society at large [21]. Boenker [4] specified that a focus on framing highlights a stage in news creation that occurs before expressions of opinion are built into a news story. De Vreese [22] claimed that the processes underlying news stories are essential for understanding patterns and conventions found in the content, not only during elections, but also in relation to everyday coverage of political and economic issues. One of the way frames are understood to shape attitudes and opinions of individuals is through cognitive processes.

### *2.2.1 Frame Setting Process*

Frame setting processes remain, subject to a certain amount of scholarly debate, are still at an early stage of development based on the current understandings of the importance of various factors affecting opinion and attitude formation [23, 24, 25]. De Vreese [22] pointed out that the relative contribution of news to the formation of public opinion is dependent on other media coverage and available information as well as a variety of audiences' characteristics. Framing can be construed in both positive and negative terms which can be viewed as a strategy to manipulate and deceive individuals [23]. Nonetheless, recent efforts to integrate current insights suggest that frames can shape frames through a combination of applicability and accessibility effects, and by affecting the importance attributed to certain considerations over others.

Framing works at each level of applicability effect and accessibility effect. Firstly, frames serve as cognitive constructs or schemas in that they suggest a connection between two concepts [25, 26]. In offering issue definitions and through processes of selection and emphasis, frames suggest what the issue is essentially about, and what broader considerations are relevant or applicable to the issue at hand (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989).

Secondly, it is understood that people form attitudes or opinions based on the deliberations or beliefs that are most salient or accessible in memory at a given time [25, 27]. A particular frame might highlight or make accessible a particular consideration or existing schema in the individual, increasing the likely hood that they evaluate the issue using that schema [23, 25]. The argument follows that the more often audiences are exposed to a particular frame, the more salient or accessible the associated considerations become when thinking about the issue [23, 28]. Price & Tewksbury [26] suggest that an applicable construct is far more likely to be activated when it is accessible.

In addition to both accessibility and applicability effects, frames are understood to shape opinion by affecting the importance attached to certain issue-related beliefs [24, 29, 30]. These studies suggest that individuals might hold multiple beliefs and considerations about an issue, however the relative weight or importance given to those considerations in opinion formation significantly influences the outcome. By emphasising certain considerations over others, frames can affect the relative weight or importance attached to those considerations by the reader, and therefore potentially shape their opinions towards, or perceptions of the issue in a particular way [23, 24].

### *2.2.2 Framing Effects*

There are factors apprehended to limit effects by which frames can shape attitudes and opinions. According to [31], models of framing effects have to pay more attention to the individual orientations and attitudes of media users that exist prior to the exposure to certain news frames. In the information process, news media is a source of individuals' attitudes and opinions [32].

In 1959 [33], stated that the effects found depended on the method of measurement grounded on investigations of the persuasive effects of media. He demonstrated how differently

collected data (in that case survey versus experimentation) could be used as evidence of exact opposite hypotheses about the effects of media. He concluded that a test of media effects would need to balance and integrate the strengths of measurement precision and validity offered by each methodological approach [33, 34].

Most of communication literatures focused on the process of how frames in the communications of elites (e.g., politicians, media outlets, interest groups) influence citizens' frames and attitudes is known as framing effect. According to [23], framing effects are a liability only if individuals never develop a basis for discriminating among frames and remain constantly vulnerable to changing representations of issues. Individuals who hold strong attitudes are least susceptible to new information, most likely to counter argue against contrary information, and most likely to recognize information consistent with their prior beliefs. Individuals who are motivated to find information that is consistent with their prior positions may be more immune to framing effects but at the price of being rigid, prone to rationalization, and impervious to information [23]. The quality of public opinion depends on whether citizens are able to learn over time. Learning refers to the ability to process and retain information and to use that information in developing a stable preference on an issue. People should be more susceptible to framing in the early stages of exposure to an issue, when they are less knowledgeable about the consequences of the issue.

Boenker [4] explained that representations of ideas, thoughts, images, and knowledge framed between members of a collectively lead to the construction of social realities, where opinions and context for understanding a problem and its solutions become hardened [35]. Journalists take part in this exchange of information when they publish framing patterns that emerge in social dialogues. Thus, mediated information reflects public discussions and related processes of thought [27,36]. Popular news sources may reveal

patterns of information that are transferred to a large audience in Malaysia.

### *2.3 Frames Influence Public Opinion*

Valkenburg et al. [37] tested how news frames affect readers' thoughts and ability to recall information. Using four framing conditions: conflict, human interest, attribution of responsibility, and economic consequences, the researchers presented the participants with two newspaper stories that dealt with two socially and politically pertinent issues. The study found that news frames can have significant effect on readers' thoughts about and recall of issues. The authors conclude that news media has the capability of informing the public about what issues to think about and also how to think about them [38].

Public opinion has always been an important and often indispensable piece of information in decision-making processes. For instance, in political province, voters are seeking and influenced by other's opinion about political campaigns, elections, and government [39]. It was found that there is known linkage between public opinion and the action of political policy and decision makers (Key, 1964). The researcher was interested in the relationship between frames and public opinion; hence the effect of frames towards the public was examined.

#### *2.3.1 Internet as Public Sphere*

Although the internet does not represent all of the frames that affect the policy salience of an issue such as legal documents, institutional processes, and governmental views of an issue, it certainly plays a vital role in the epoch of new media [40]. The internet can contribute to positive or negative effect on perceptions of certain issue in keeping policy decisions within collective decision makers' jurisdiction [40]. Traditional approaches to study

of media discourse are now obliged to include the ‘minimal politics’ of blogs and alternative Internet dialogue [41]. Beck (2005) stated that social movements depend on new media to get their concern out. It is the most relevant platform for formal and informal communication for its accessibility, interactivity and diversity [42] and seemly approach for daily responses to the changing political conditions of a subject.

The internet is still in its embryonic stage, and efforts by the governments to control access and monitor content are predictable. In the case of China and Singapore, suggests that any country which intends to play a full role in the global economy is unlikely to be able to maintain absolute control over the Internet [43]. The new media have change the way people in this era acquire and interpret the news due to the accessibility of online news from the Internet [43]. Papacharissi [44] investigated whether or not the Internet might be a new kind of public sphere [45]. Public has access to the information and can write opinions or reports on a news event (Lee, Dolen, and Kolk, 2013) (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2009).

Through the professional media outlets or online news portal, it can be an interactive medium through readers’ comments on certain news reports (Stephen & Galak, 2012; Lee, Dolen, & Kolk, 2013). The commenter have been identified as empowered internet users that can potentially become online pressured groups (Ker et al. 2012). They are generally categorised as positive and negative (Kim and Hovy, 2004; Ku et al. 2006) with regard to topics discussed. In this study, the researcher will use online news portal comments by the readers to assess numbers and types of responses. Hence, it is used not only as data but also to identify the sentiments expressed by the public and interactions between readers in relation to the framed reports on TPPA issue.

### *2.3.2 Opinion Detection through Sentiment Analysis*

Opinions are vital in our everyday lives by which an individual able to analyse a situation from many angles and take a suitable decision. The opinion of an individual may influence another individual's opinion and as the process endures it constructs public opinion. In democratic societies, governments keep public opinions on top while planning their policies. In the digital world, readers can post comments through online media as the platform to express their opinions. It is an important element where from the comments, opinions can be produced pertaining to issues debated which consists sentiment of positive or negative towards the issues.

Sentiment analysis is the process of extracting opinions from text documents (Liu, 2007). In the literature, this process is also known by expression like “sentiment analysis”, or and/or “subjectivity analysis” (Pang and Lee, 2008). The definitions of opinion mining, sentiment analysis, and subjectivity analysis, indicate the same field of study. The term sentiment analysis made its appearance in articles like (Nasukawa and Yo, 2003; Yi et al. 2003) in categorising given text into positive or negative classes. It can also classify words/senses, texts, documents according to opinion, emotion, or sentiment they express in determining critics’ opinion of products or tracking attitudes toward political candidates [46].

This study enthralled on scholars Esuli and Sebastiani (2006) work by which they have categorised the related work in three classes according to the nature of tasks associated with sentiment detection. Firstly, determining text subjective-objective polarity, the type of approaches belonging to this class focuses on the task of deciding whether a given text is factual or contains opinions on a topic (i.e., a binary text organization with classes subjective and objective). Secondly, determining text positive-negative polarity, the type of approaches focused on is to evaluate the polarity of a subjective text (i.e., whether given subjective text contain positive or negative opinion about the target). Thirdly, determining the

strength of text positive-negative polarity, after the given text was decided whether positive or negative, then the task of determining the degree of its positivity or negativity becomes active. The method in this third class calculate the degree of positivity or negativity.

The researcher scrutinized and further concentrated on determining orientation or polarity of words, whether the word or sentence is positive or negative in the opinion detection process. Using number of polar words Hu and Liu (2004) proposed a very simple method for detection of sentences polarity orientation. According to the scholar, if a sentence contains more number of positive words than negative words, it is considered as a positive sentence; otherwise negative. In the case where there are equal numbers of positive and negative opinion words in the sentence, they predict the orientation using the average orientation of effective opinions or the orientation of the previous opinion sentence. Their approach performed well by giving an average accuracy of 84 percent in predicting the sentence sentimental orientation.

### **3.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Based on the review of literature, the researcher formulated the following research questions:

- RQ1: What type of news framing was mobilized in *Malaysiakini's* and TMI online news portal in shaping public opinion?
- RQ2: What is the effect of framing in public opinion within *Malaysiakini's* and TMI online news portal?
- RQ3: What is the relationship between framing pattern and public opinion in Malaysia alternative news media?



## **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

### *4.1 Research Process*

The research process consists of the five basic stages to carry out this study. The research process included Research Planning, Initial Investigation, Data Collection, Findings and Discussions and Recommendation and Conclusion.

### *4.2 Research Design*

The research design consists of specific method and procedure for data collection, the measurement and analysis of the data. The processes underlying news stories are essential for understanding patterns and conventions found in the content, not only during elections, but also in relation to everyday coverage of environment, economic and political issues. Media frames can be measured using quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches [18]. Maher [47] explained that framing is an elusive concept to measure. In order to uncover how frames build meaning, there are several techniques that can be used and they are considered as tools. A more accurate measurement is done quantitatively through counting the appearance of certain subject in media text while analysing the use of visual indications, linguistic selections and descriptive structure by elaborating on connotation of text structure [18]. Hall (1975) likewise described that quantitative approaches transpire when content analysis emphasizes repetition as the main measurement of significance, while qualitative approaches like literary, rhetorical and textual analyses report patterns that indicate latent meaning.

In linguistic studies, frames are identified by analyzing the selection, placement and structure of specific words and sentences in a text (Esser & D'Angelo, 2003). Usually, the unit of analysis is

the paragraph, not the article. Researchers have to construct a data matrix for each individual news text. In this matrix the signifying elements for each individual proposition are analysed. The basic idea is that specific words are the building blocks of frames [48]. Pan and Kosicki [12] distinguish structural dimensions of frames: metaphors, examples, key sentences, and pictures (Entman, Matthes, & Pellicano, 2009).

De Vreese [34] explained that to reliably analyse and compare findings in certain periods, the content analysis is systematic and deductive in nature by which the features of the content analysis were formulated in advance of the analysis on the basis of the existing literature and consequently applied in the analysis. This approach is different from an inductive approach where content is used to illustrate latent meaning that emerges during the research and is not based on a priori expectations (McQuail, 2000).

The content analysis identifies general and specific characteristics of the news framing used by *Malaysiakini* and TMI to influence public opinion and attitudes on top of the visibility of themes presence in the news. To qualify, the news framing pattern were qualitatively compared to explore similarities and differences between both alternative media; *Malaysiakini's* and TMI online news portal. Researcher using this method becomes 'coder' as she is trained to use a model for qualifying moderate amounts of content which translate into a coding sheet with specific set of classifications. Each article was individually analysed for the presence of eleven types of frames.

Therefore, qualitative content analysis as a research method has represented an approach adopted by scholars for data processing and analyzing to create themes and to illustrate and examine relevant news frames and profound analysis of framing patterns and the framing effect of media presentation of news in influencing public opinion and attitudes. Data gathered from the past literatures especially on the types of frames and effect of framing used by the

media to frame their stories would be used as a guideline for the researcher in conducting the study.

#### 4.3 *Research Sampling*

*Malaysiakini's* and TMI online news reports on the TPPA issue between 29th September 2015 until 3rd October 2015 was used as the sample for this study, where the period identified was the peak of the debate on the TPPA issue as Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed joined the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Ministers' Meeting from 30 September to October 1 in Atlanta, Georgia, United States. *Malaysiakini's* and TMI reports were selected for this study as both media outlets have the reputation of being the premier alternative online news portal that is not aligned to the ruling government compared to the mainstream media. The articles were identified by using the "Search" function in *Malaysiakini's* and TMI main page, where the search results would return searches up to a maximum of three months. In this study, the data was collected concurrently as the news coverage developed on the TPPA issue.

Every article on the TPPA issue was evaluated through direct content analysis. The content of each article used in this study was analysed to determine the framing pattern revolving Conflict frame, Human Interest frame, Economic Consequences frame, Morality frame, Responsibility frame, Response frame, Thematic frame, Episodic frame, Affirmation frame, Information frame and Political frame using analytical tools that consists of thematic and schematic structures and styles while determining the effect existed in the form of negative and positive opinions.

#### 4.4 *Research Procedure*

The research procedure for this study follows the qualitative content analysis method. This study of frames in *Malaysiakini* and

TMI online news portal online as well as public opinions' sentiment, regarding the TPPA issue on 29th September 2015 until 3rd October 2015 was executed through content analysis by which all online news portal reportage of *Malaysiakini* and TMI on the TPPA issue within that period was analysed.

#### *4.4.1 Identify the Pattern of Frames and Public Opinion*

This study adapted [49] method to identify frames by which the scholar reformed that a study can be facilitated by the systematic application of a set of basic analytical tools adapted from [50] designed to help deconstruct and highlight elements of meaning construction implicit in the text. Employing an instrument designed originally by McComas & Shanahan (1999) [51], and utilised since in similar studies by [52, 53], frames were coded as either absent (0), present (1), or dominant (2) if it was prominent in the headline and leading sentences or represented the central organising idea for the article as a whole. Whilst multiple frames could be coded as "present" in the text, only one could be coded as "dominant".

This instrument was chosen as it offers a systematic, quantitative approach to the coding of articles which is sensitive to fact that there may be multiple frames present in a given text, and that certain frames may be more prominent than others. That it allows for the measurement of the strength of their relative presence is useful also if we consider that more salient frames in news discourse. For instance, those which are employed frequently or are dominant across discourse, they are more likely to influence audience evaluations of a given issue or event.

Analytical tools adapted from [49, 50] consist of two categories which are thematic and schematic structure and style. Firstly, thematic and schematic structure showed which themes and topics (e.g. statements, discussions, questions and arguments) are granted prominence in the article as a whole and in each paragraph. Special attention is paid to headlines and introductions where the

overarching theme of the article is expressed. Categories which are granted prominence in the article are determined.

Secondly, style indicated choice of quotations by which source of person is quoted, choice of words and rhetoric by what means does the news item try to convince the reader of the credibility of the information given for instance, the use of authoritative sources are made overt by the authorisations of experts/politicians.

To test framing effects, the present study determined opinion expressed by the public in the selected Malaysian news media; *Malaysiakini* and TMI online news portal specifically in the comment section. Therefore, the temporal order allowed for a possible causal link between framing and public opinion. The opinion were coded as either positive or negative if the public articulated agree or disagree towards the news report of the TPPA issue in each articles.

Therefore, if the public's opinions towards the TPPA were influenced by frames used by the *Malaysiakini* and TMI, their opinions were likely to reflect such changes in the magnitude of the certain types of frame through the effect of framing. The dependent variable was the public's specific opinion toward TPPA issue, which were measured as the magnitudes of readers who favored TPPA implementation and opposed TPPA implementation. If the proportions were significantly high, they were likely to be reliable with predictions made in the research objectives by which to illustrate relationship between public opinion with framing pattern and the effect of framing in Malaysian news outlets.

Theme A was defined for pattern of frames, in which the frames types are defined as "Conflict Frame" – Type F1, "Human Interest Frame" – Type F2, "Economic Consequences Frame" – Type F3, "Morality Frame" – Type F4, "Responsibility Frame" – Type F5, "Information Frame" – Type F6, "Response Frame" – Type F7, "Episodic Frame" – Type F8, "Thematic Frame" – Type

F9, “Affirmation Frame” – Type F10 and “Political Frame” – Type F11.

The final category, Theme B, defines the type of opinion detected in the comments section for each article. They are “Positive” – Type P1 and “Negative” – Type P2.

#### *4.4.2 Data Analysis*

The headlines and introductions were attentively emphasized where the primary theme of the article is expressed using content analysis and thematic analysis. Basic descriptive statistics were employed to measure and compare the frequency or “prominence” of frames [49]. The overall prominence of each frame was measured as the percentage of articles out of the total (n=21) in which a given frame was coded as either Present (1) or Dominant (2). These frequencies are presented in a bar graph in Chapter 4: Findings & Discussions which also shows the relative “strength” of each frame (Dominant to Present). The publication frequency or “coverage” was calculated as the total number of articles published per day. Finally, the effect of framing are detected from the public opinion in the comment section whether it is positive or negative towards the TPPA issue.

## **5.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This particular chapter will discuss the findings of the content analysis of TPPA reportage in *Malaysiakini*'s and TMI online news portal article between 29th September 2015 and 3rd October 2015. It will discuss the findings on frames and the differences between news outlets which later the discussion focused on findings of the effect of framing to the public. There were a sum of 21 articles published combined in *Malaysiakini* and TMI.

### 5.1 Framing Pattern Coverage

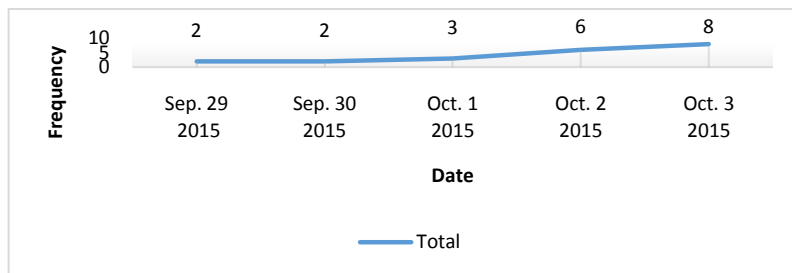


Figure 5.1: Overall Article Frequency 29th Sept 2015 - 3rd Oct 2015

Results in Figure 5.1 indicated the total amount of articles per day that was reported by *Malaysiakini* and TMI with the term “TPPA” between 29th Sept 2015 and 3rd Oct 2015. Each online news portal published an article a day on 29th – 30th September 2015. However, *Malaysiakini* updated two stories on TPPA instead of one that was reported by TMI on 1st October 2015. Yet again on 2nd October 2015 *Malaysiakini* and TMI reported the issue of TPPA with similar number of articles, i.e. three. Nevertheless, on the final day of the timeframe, *Malaysiakini* decreased their publication to one article while TMI publication rose up to seven articles pertaining to trade agreement issues.

#### 5.1.1 Framing Pattern Coverage in *Malaysiakini*

There were eight stories altogether that had been published by *Malaysiakini* during the period that the Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed joined the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Ministers' Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, United States in year of 2015. Table 4.2 shown that Information frame is one of the frames which was used most by the writers where six frames were seen in the articles. The second highest was shared by Human Interest frame, Economic Consequences frame and Thematic frame with a total of three

frames each. While third were Conflict frame, Response frame, Episodic frame and Affirmation frame with score of two frames each. Only one Morality frame and one Responsibility frame were used in *Malaysiakini* in its report. Conversely, no political frame was applied by *Malaysiakini* in the chosen articles.

As mentioned above, Information frame was the most significant news frame used by the *Malaysiakini*'s writers. Most of the articles described and further explained about what TPPA is all about. In an article published on September 29, 2015, before the ministries' meeting, by which the headlines *TPPA Text May Be Made Public in a Month*. This is to revitalize the public after a few months under the radar. The frame grasp public's attention and notified the public on the scheduled long before ministries' trade agreement meeting in which Malaysia was involved together with other 12 countries. The following excerpts were extracted from the news report.

*"The content of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) will be made public a month from now, if the talks in the United States starting tomorrow end in Malaysia's favour."* (Para. 1)

*"Mustapa said the cost benefit study on the TPPA's effect on Malaysia by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) will also be updated to reflect the outcome of the two days talks."*, (Para. 2)

These were all the information which gave the public a more comprehensive understanding over the status and the process of the issue. The public was informed about the possibility for them to deliberate on the issue themselves. The subsequent article *Save Our Seeds from Corporate Control* that was published on October



2, 2015 indicated the used of Information frame. The following excerpts were extracted from the news report.

*“Seed are farmer’s most essential input. For thousands of years farm communities have been observing, selecting, nurturing, breeding and saving seeds. et, in the last century there has been a dramatic decrease in global seed diversity, of which the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reported in 2010 that 75 percent of the world’s crop diversity had already been lost.” (Para. 1)*

*“However the advent of industrial agriculture and its push for commercial seeds has not only eroded seed diversity but also farmers’ seed systems. Seed laws and plant variety rights are constantly revised to adapt to demands of seed and biotechnology industries. (Para. 5)*

The article explained the importance of seeds in the agricultural industry and to the local farmers. The writer provided evidence about the essential of food security in each country and as for Malaysia the agricultural industries are the backbones for the local market especially the small and medium enterprise (SME). This agricultural diversity was supported by the policies by which made them survived with the existing system until today. Information frame was used to clarify about the process of how seed and plants prices are correlated with laws and regulations. In contrast, Malaysian farmers may be affected with the trade agreement that strive for commercialize seeds.

### *5.1.2 Framing Pattern Coverage in TMI*

Since 29th September 2015, there were 13 stories that had been published by TMI during the duration of five days of the research

when the TPPA ministers' meeting was held within the time frame. However, the Malay version of the articles was taken into consideration and count as frames because each versions attracted different people with various background. This could be proven in the comments section through comparison of number of comments and the commenters by which dissimilar people were identified.

Economic Consequences frame was found as the most used frame with nine frames applied in the articles. Conflict frame was second, followed by the Affirmation frame with eight and six frames applied respectively. Human Interest frame was in forth with a number of five frames, tailed by Responsibility frame and Information frame both with four frames in total. Next was Response frame, Thematic frame and Political frame with each similarly applied two frames and last but not least were Morality frame and Episodic frame by which each had one frame involved. The following excerpts were extracted from TPP Trade Talks Narrow on Tough Auto, Drug Dairy Issues published on October 1, 2015 which categorized under Economic Consequences frame.

*“Activist groups say the secretiveness of the discussions masks an effort that will benefit business while costing the people of the countries involved.” (Para. 17)*

The article reported the activists' group fear on the potential economic consequences on an individual, group or country encountered in the future. Below are the texts extracted from another examples of Economic Consequences frame detected from news report Don't let TPP Jeopardize Malaysia's Future dated October 2, 2015.

*“... TPP, a new international economic agreement that would lock in unequal trading relationships between advanced economy countries, such as the*

*United States, Japan, Canada, and Australia, and developing economies like Malaysia.” (Para. 1)*

The writer conveyed inadequate profit gain between the developed economy countries and developing economy countries which could not be disputed once unsigned. In another news report, *MTEM Gesa Malaysia tarik diri daripada TPPA* [*MTEM urged the government of Malaysia to withdraw from TPPA*] published on October 2, 2015. Various organizations were in the same boat as to not support Malaysia signing the TPPA because a number of economists and experts have foreseen that the trade agreement may gave depraved implication to Malaysian economy which will worsen the current situation.

Based on the comparison on pattern of frames gathered from both online news portal, the results of the content analysis of frames showed that the Economic Consequences frame was the most frequently used across coverage, making up to 17.39 percent of the total frames identified, followed by the Conflict frame and Information frame which made up 14.49 percent (see Figure 5.2). Both of these frames were less likely to be Dominant in the articles in which they appeared. The Affirmation frame was equally most recurrently used frame as Human Interest frame making up 11.59 percent of the total, and the Affirmation frame was much less likely to be Dominant in articles in which it appeared while null present of dominant in Human Interest frame. Thematic and Responsibility frames made up roughly 7.26 percent and 7.25 percent of the total respectively. Although Responsibility frame making up just-under 7.25 percent of the total however this frame was more likely to be Dominant in the articles appeared.

The Response frame had made up to 5.8 percent with less likely to be dominant and the Episodic frame had made up 4.35 percent from the total frames recognized. The Political frame was the second least frequency of frame identified, consisting 2.9

percent of frames identified, followed by the Morality frame which made up 2.89 percent of the total and both were not dominant in the articles in which it appeared.

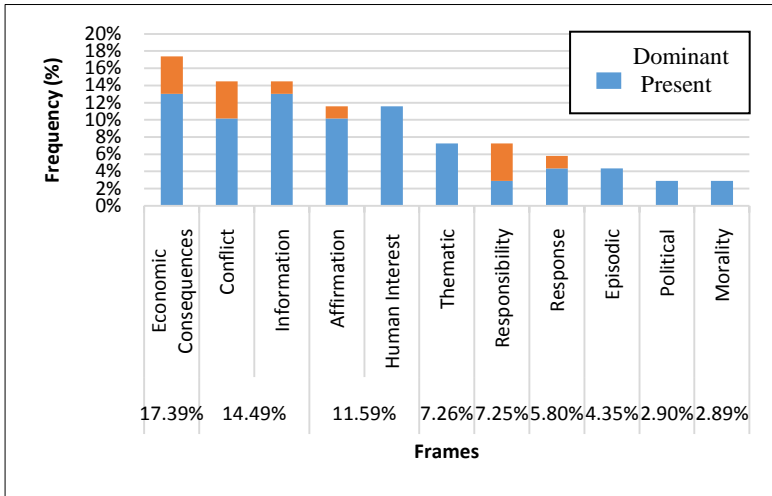


Figure 5.2: Graph Frequency (%) versus Frames

Result in Figure 5.2 showed bar graph of overall percentage frequency of each frame, and the proportion of instances in which the frame was Dominant or Present, in coverage of TPPA in the *Malaysiakini* and TMI online news portal between 29th 2015 and 3rd October 2015 (n = 21).

Articles employing the Economic Consequences frame emphasised economic-based perspectives for debating the TPPA issue. In the research the frame was less likely to be dominant. This reflects the finding that whilst considerations of economic impacts and costs were common in reports and commonly related to the main topics of news reports. In general, the Economic Competitiveness frame was evoked through an emphasis on the potential opportunities and/or costs to economies presented by policy measures to signing the trade agreement.

The Conflict frame and Information frame were overall the second most frequently identified in the research sample, and both were less likely to be dominant. There were other issues transpired concurrently relating to the top government officials which conflicted and highlighted along with the TPPA matters.

As for the Information frame, public is unaware of the TPPA dispute because of lack of information released by the authorised officers involved in TPPA negotiation that made difficulties to determine the effectiveness. The ongoing meetings and discussions was held secretly, thus displayed apprehensiveness towards the overall objectives.

The third most frequently discovered frames were Affirmation frame and Information frame. The government was supporting TPPA hence Affirmation frame was used concurrently by the local and international government officials in propagating the issue to reaffirm that the trade agreement provide benefits to the country in the long term. It is less likely to be dominant in most of articles reported by both media. People was nourished with information concerning TPPA as it is slightly technical to the public and required public knowledge in economic perspectives to be clarified further. This frame is less likely to be dominant.

Thematic frame and Responsibility frame were the fourth most frequently used based on the research findings. The element of thematic frame was identified in covering the TPPA issue based on broader and societal perspective. The next frame in line was Response frame. This frame was utilised and had put government's response on the spotlight.

Episodic frame was the second least frequent frame discovered in the research. Some sources involved in the negotiations during the meetings informed and circulated that the period of patented next-generation has been prolong in order to limit the competition from generic drugs. This would benefited the corporate as the price would rise up. Although the information provide stories from the

perspective of an individual person, it certainly help the public to acquire more data about TPPA.

The Political and Morality frames appeared the least frequent in the study. Both Political and Morality frame can be grasped when the opposition parties questioning Najib Razak, the Prime Minister on his credibility in performing his words and promised in the context of moral prescription. Various organisations demanded the government to execute in depth studies to ensure that Malaysia benefited from the trade agreement comparable to the developed countries participated.

In the study, the researcher had decided to use frame identified from the gathered past literature studies as a guideline to conduct content analysis on 21 stories, 8 from *Malaysiakini*, 13 from The Malaysian Insider which relate to the signing of TPP agreement. Both news report in *Malaysiakini* and TMI used more than one frame in one article. Information frame is the most frequently used by *Malaysiakini* to present the TPPA issue. In contrary, TMI tend to use the Economic Consequences frame more often than the other ten frames recognised.

The above explanations answered the first main objective of this study which is to identify the pattern of framing used by alternative media on TPPA issue. Data gathered from content analysis conducted on selected stories from *Malaysiakini* and TMI which represented the alternative media proved that both medium use certain frame to deliver their stories. There are similarities and differences pattern of frames introduced however it vary in terms of prominent usage within each news reports published to influence their readers which lead to public opinion form of expression.

5.2 Distribution of Comments

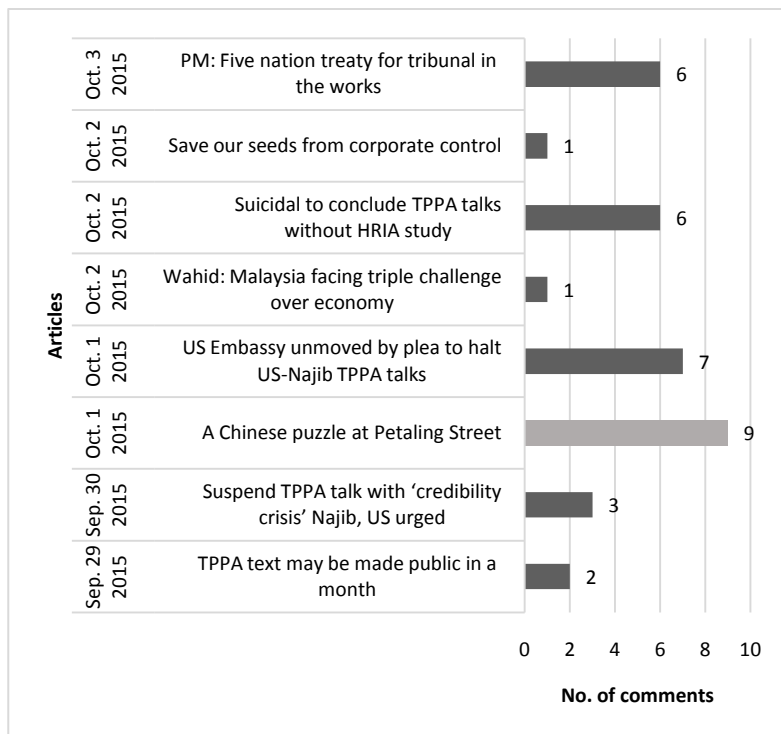


Figure 5.3: Distribution of Comments over the Period of Coverage in *Malaysiakini*.

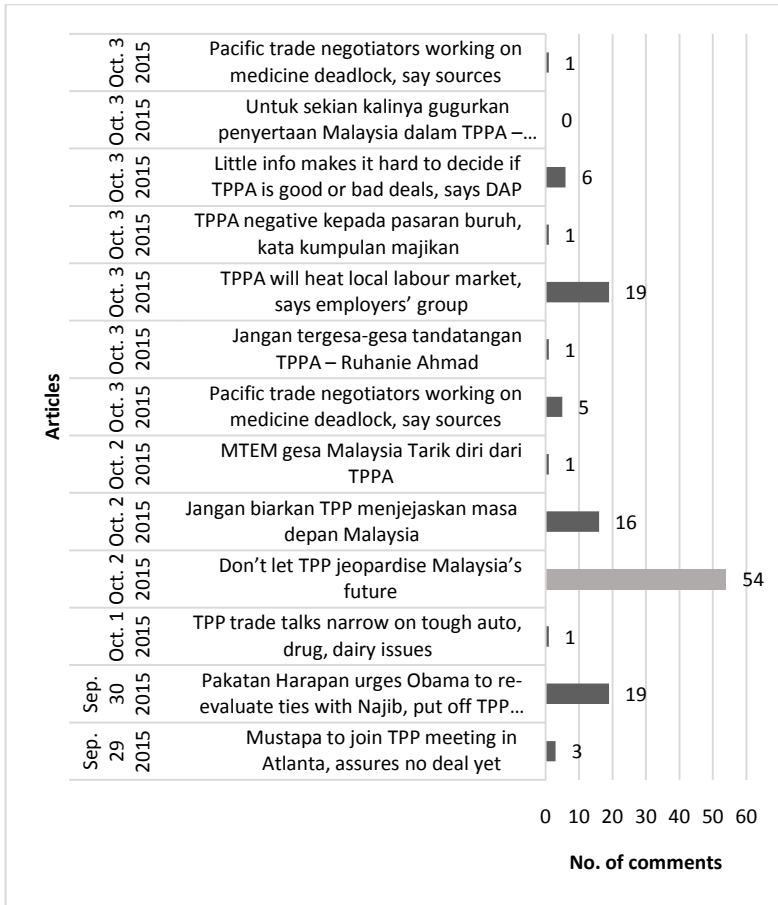


Figure 5.4: Distribution of Comments over the Period of Coverage in TMI

The next part of the findings focuses on the comments section of the *Malaysiakini* and TMI articles, where each of the comments section for all the articles was read and analysed for public opinion detection. The distribution of the articles in terms of the number of comments are as listed in Figure 5.3 and Figure 5.4, where the graph was composed from 21 articles covering the TPPA issue over a period of five days, from 29th September – 3rd October 2015,



where the comments section had a total of 162 comments. As observed, the number of comments depending on the nature of article posted by *Malaysiakini* and TMI.

In terms of the distribution of comments, it was found that the highest of users' comments in *Malaysiakini's* articles was on 1st October 2015 with nine comments whilst a number of 54 comments occurred in TMI's articles on 2nd October 2015. The significance of this was that in one of those reports, the writer quoted a distinguished economic expert and what made it more intense was that they are US citizen but much unbiased in judging the issue, leading to much public concern. The headlines was framed in a way that should Malaysia signed the trade agreement, there was no turning back and hazard is ahead.

### *5.3 Public Opinion in Comments*

All of the 21 articles and 162 public opinion in comments was detected and analysed. Public opinion is categorized as positive or negative as defined in the previous chapter. The results showed that it was determined that most of the public opinion comments fell under the negative form, with a total of 77 and in contrast there was 29 form of positive comments in total.

#### *5.3.1 Public Opinion in Malaysiakini*

The examples below illustrate how positive and negative opinion were used, which refers to examples when the *Malaysiakini* article used various frames within the articles.

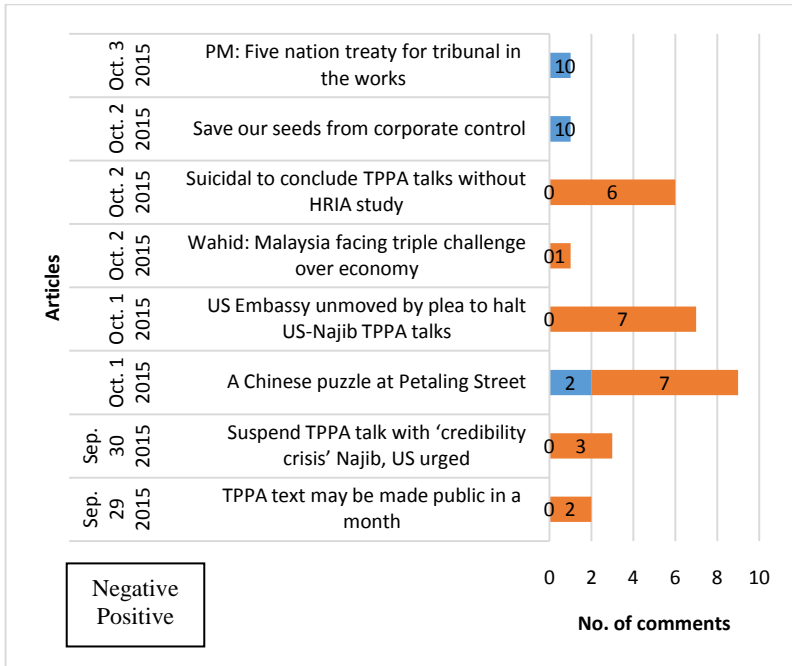


Figure 5.5: Distribution of All Comments

The positive form of public opinion was the least commonly occurring category for all articles in *Malaysiakini* under the specific time frame of this study as demonstrated by the graph in Figure 5.5. It can be summarized from the graph that least or none positive comments appeared in all *Malaysiakini's* article. The number of positive comments was found to be around zero to two comments in between issues, especially when the content of article consisted of information regarding TPPA. The negative form of public opinion was the most commonly occurring category for all articles in *Malaysiakini* under the specific duration of this research as verified by the graph in Figure 5.5. It can be summarized from the graph that most comments appeared in all *Malaysiakini's* article were negative. Six out of eight articles had negative comments more than positive comments. The public expressed

their anger and disappointed with the current government decision in supporting TPPA and still involved in the recent TPPA meeting.

### 5.3.2 Public Opinion in TMI

The examples below illustrate how positive and negative opinion were used, where it refers to examples when the TMI article used various frames within the articles.

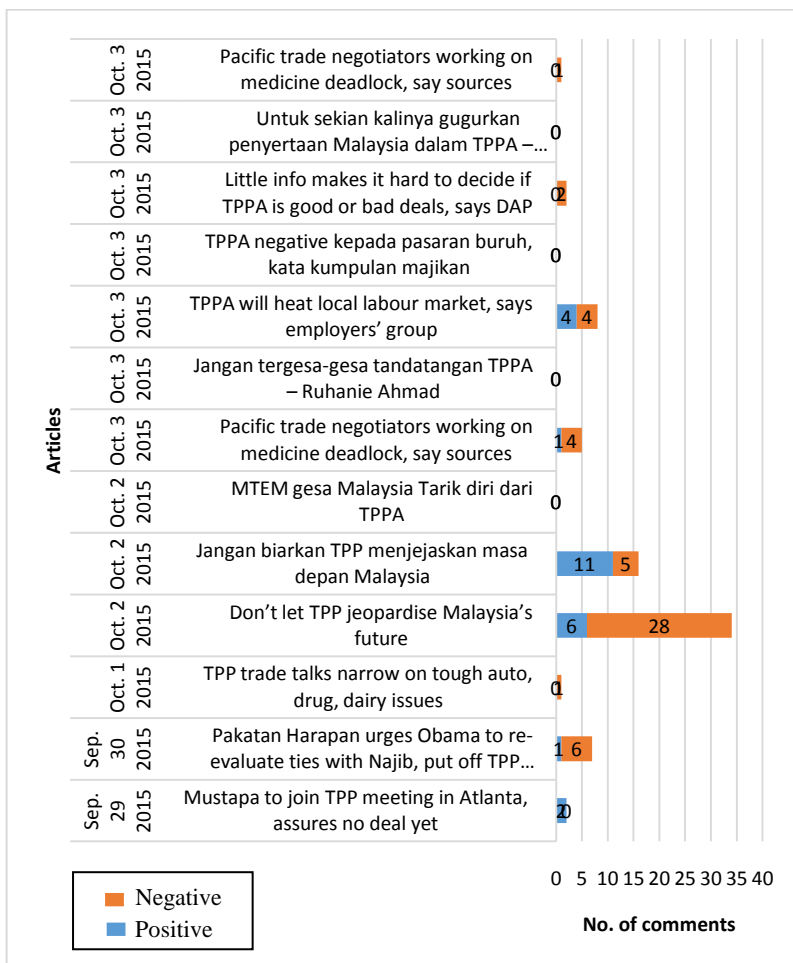


Figure 5.6: Distribution of All Comments in TMI

As shown by the graph in Figure 5.6, all articles in TMI provided least positive form of public opinion during the five days of study period. From the graph, there were six out of 13 articles identified that contributed to positive opinion in all TMI's articles. Some of the positive comments mainly because the commenters believed that the government has yet to decide on TPPA and the government was offering the best solution to benefit all parties.

The negative form of public opinion was the most commonly occurring category for all articles in TMI under the research time frame as verified by the graph in Figure 5.6. It can be summarized from the graph that most comments appeared in all TMI's article were negative. Eight out of 13 articles had negative comments compared to positive comments. The public discussed and explained further as more information received through the article and among commenters in the comment section. External issues for instances 1MDB and MH17 tragic loss were mentioned as part of the opinion. US interest behind the actual agreement had heated and trigger the debate. Potential consequences and challenges had entice public attention about the issue and public look forward to the final decision that will be made by the government.

#### *5.4 The Effect of Framing towards the Public*

The third objectives of the study is to propose strategies to increase nationalism among Malaysian youth. Every person playing their crucial part to strategize the Malaysian youth in order to increase the spirit of nationalism.

TPPA: THE NEWS FRAMING PATTERN OF ALTERNATIVE MEDIA  
AND THE EFFECT TOWARDS PUBLIC IN MALAYSIA

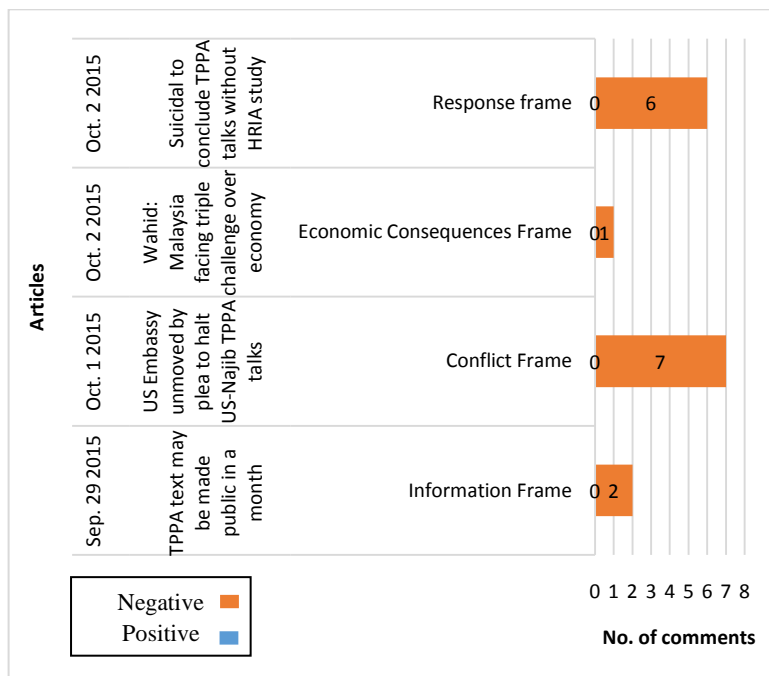


Figure 5.7: Distribution of Comments against Articles Contained Dominant Frame in Malaysiakini

There were four articles of *Malaysiakini* by which the frames were detected to be dominant. In article dated September 29, 2015, an Information frame was seen to be dominant. As for the second article entitled *US Embassy unmoved by plea to halt US-Najib TPPA talks* Conflict frame was identified to be dominant compared to other frames used by the writer. The third article that was dominant is Economic Consequences frame. Response frame was dominant in the fourth *Malaysiakini*'s news report dated October 2, 2015 with headline *Suicidal to Conclude TPPA Talks without HRIA Study*.

All four articles produced negative public opinion without any positive comments presents (Figure 5.7). This showed that when the news was framed in such ways, the audience will be influenced by

the frames applied. Even though news report is basically reporting about facts, the writer has the ability to use frames depending on the objectives established earlier.

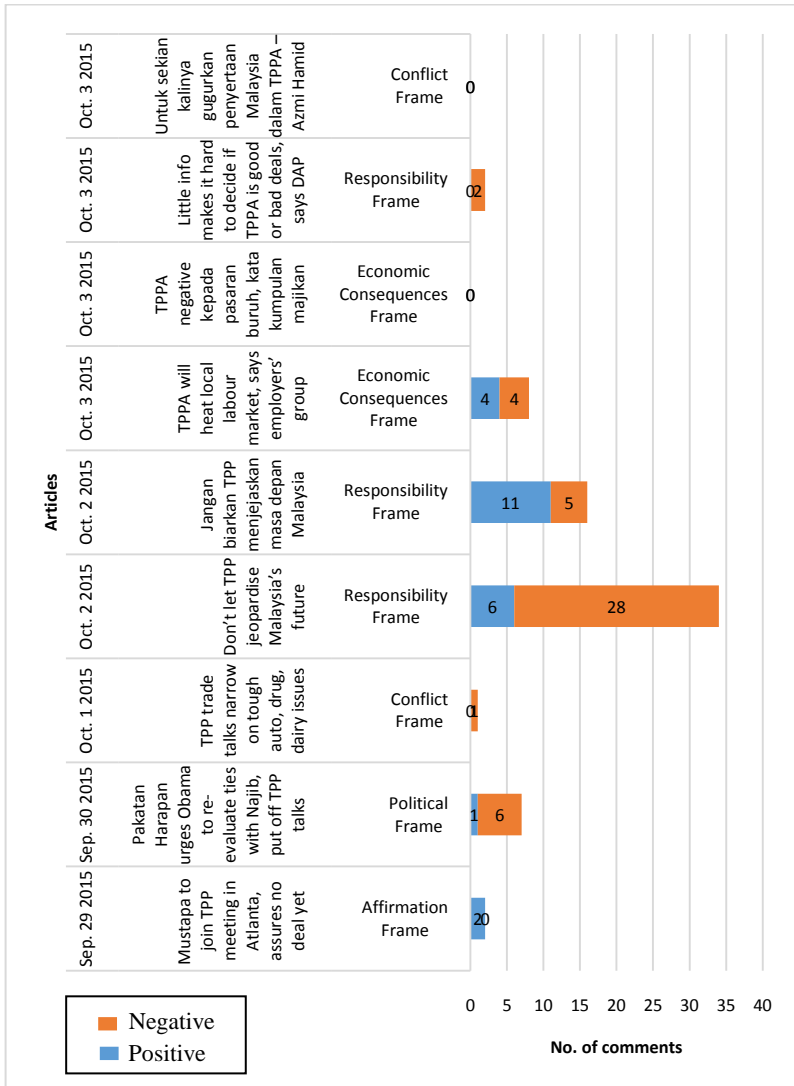


Figure 5.8: Distribution of Comments against Articles Contained Dominant Frame in TMI

Figure 5.8 showed that most of articles discovered to have more negative public opinion as compared to positive opinions. Results indicated that frames applied in nine TMI's news reports appeared to be dominant. Affirmation frame was dominant in news report entitled *Mustapa to Join TPP Meeting in Atlanta, Assures No Deal Yet* published on September 29, 2015. Another article dated September 30, 2015 indicated that Political frame was dominant. Conflict frame was dominant in two headlines of different days entitled *TPP Trade Talks Narrow on Tough Auto, Drug, Dairy Issues* dated October 1, 2015 and *Untuk sekian kalinya gugurkan penyertaan Malaysia dalam TPPA – Azmi Hamid [For Umpteen Times Drop Malaysia's Participation in TPPA]* dated October 3, 2015. Responsibility frame and Economic Consequences frame were dominant in two articles respectively within the time frame of the study. Figure 4.8 showed that most of articles discovered to have more negative public opinion as compared to positive opinions.

Altogether 13 articles were dominant in the usage of frames with four articles in *Malayskini* online news report and a number of nine articles in TMI news articles. Overall there were seven dominant type of frames identified mostly in TMI which were Responsibility frame, Economic Consequences frame, Responsibility frame, Conflict frame, Political frame and Affirmation frame. Whereas four types of frames perceived dominant which were Information frame, Conflict frame, Economic Consequences frame and Response frame. Most of the articles shaped negative opinion by the commentators where ten out of 13 article discovered to have more negative form of comments. Public opinion does not expressed liberally without a prior knowledge established before it. Higgin (1996) stated that individuals based their opinions on available and accessible thoughts without conscious deliberation. The frame presented had shaped the opinion made by the public specifically when the frame is dominant.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

This research and methodology guides the researcher to achieve the whole research. Qualitative Research was the best way to study the framing pattern, the effect of framing and its relationship. The research method comprised of content analysis of *Malaysiakini*'s and TMI online news reports and thematic analysis for collected data resulting in identification of frames used and effect towards the public through its corresponding comments by the readers. Results were verified and detailed out in the following chapter. The result of the study will become a reference and can be used as a guide. On the other hand, this study able to assist the future researcher.

Altogether 61.9 percent out of 21 articles were dominant in the usage of frames with four articles in Malayskini online news report and a number of nine articles in TMI news articles. Overall there were seven dominant type of frames identified which were Affirmation frame, Political frame, Conflict frame, Responsibility frame and Economic Consequences frame, Information frame and Response frame. Most of the articles shaped negative opinion by the commentators where 76.92 percent out of 13 article discovered to have more negative form of comments compared to positive comments from the public. Consequently, those articles which are employed frequently or are dominant across discourse, are more likely to influence audience evaluations of a given issue or event. Their opinions were likely to reflect such changes in the magnitude of the certain types of frame through the effect of framing. The proportions were significantly high, thus, they were likely to illustrate relationship between public opinion with framing pattern and the effect of framing in Malaysian news outlets. Therefore, public opinion was influenced by frame introduced, particularly when the frame is dominant.

Based on qualitative media content analysis conducted, news framing were used by both alternative news medias; *Malaysiakini* and The Malaysian Insider in order to present news regarding



TTPA issue during Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Ministers' Meeting from 30 September to October 1 in Atlanta, Georgia, United States. The most significant and frequently news frames that were used was Information frame via *Malaysiakini* and Economic Consequences by TMI. These frames repeatedly identified as TTPA issue needs a critical understanding and knowledge of economics so that the consequences behind the ultimate goal is legitimately analysed.

The research showed that a number of organisations shared their concerned in the implementation of these secretive policies and urged the government to further evaluate the hindrances and compensations in the long term. The implementation of TTPA was opposed by many which mostly expressed negatively via comments made by the public. The public substantially conveyed their views after taking into consideration of the reports published by the media outlets.

This indicates that the news framing pattern identified in the research support the framing pattern theory based on definitions of frames [54] that frames are “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse”. This research illustrate the relationship between news framing pattern and public opinion as the issue was shaped in a certain ways resulting the forms of interpretations towards the subject.

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