

BAJET2020 ON TWITTER: ISSUES, PERSONALITIES AND SENTIMENT

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INTRODUCTION

- ❑ Before the 2018 general election, Pakatan Harapan (PH) brought a handful of issues to the Rakyat's attention. The issues mostly revolved around economic-related issues. Along with PH's victory in the 14th General Election (GE14) came a huge responsibility to fulfil the manifesto that was marketed during the campaign.
- ❑ Winning the election was only the beginning for the new coalition in power. The yearly budget is a reflection of the government's commitment in delivering their promises. However, the budget was not only a testament of PH's commitment in managing the country's economy but also a "report card" for the public to assess the government's will in keeping their promises as stipulated in the manifesto.
- ❑ On 11th October 2019, Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng tabled the 2020 budget themed "Driving Growth and Equitable Outcomes towards Shared Prosperity" (Bernama, 2019). Discussions expanded to the social media sphere with social media users commenting, critiquing, sharing, and debating.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

- Presently, the society is experiencing an expansion of political discussion through the use of hashtag such as #bajet2020. Certain aspects of an issue are emphasised on Twitter by its users which can shape and influence public opinion and sentiment. In relation to this, yearly budgets are also political marketing by the government, thus, making political institutions and its leaders subject of online political discussion. In the manifesto, PH offered numerous promises which can be seen as a part of political marketing as it is aimed to attract voters and win their hearts. Naturally, voters expect that the promises are fulfilled and delivered.
- A couple of months after PH's victory, Tun Mahathir stated that, "Manifesto is not a Bible. Sometimes we can do things, sometimes we find that we cannot, so we have to be practical minded" (Sun Daily, 2018). This has caused an uproar among the public who felt that they were tricked and manipulated for PH's political gain. Despite that, the Finance Minister announced that PH has delivered 60 per cent of its manifesto (Malaysia Kini, 2019) which caused a mixed reaction among the public.
- Having those numbers might make PH feel good about themselves, however, is the same sentiment shared on social media? Hence, the question revolves around what are the issues discussed by netizens on Twitter? Are the feedbacks delivered to the relevant political institutions and their leaders? What is the overall sentiment towards the issues? Therefore, this study is to identify the issues discussed on Twitter and explore the current sentiment towards the issues, and the personalities mentioned in the discussion of 2020 Budget on Twitter.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

□ The research is conducted to achieve three main objectives as follows:

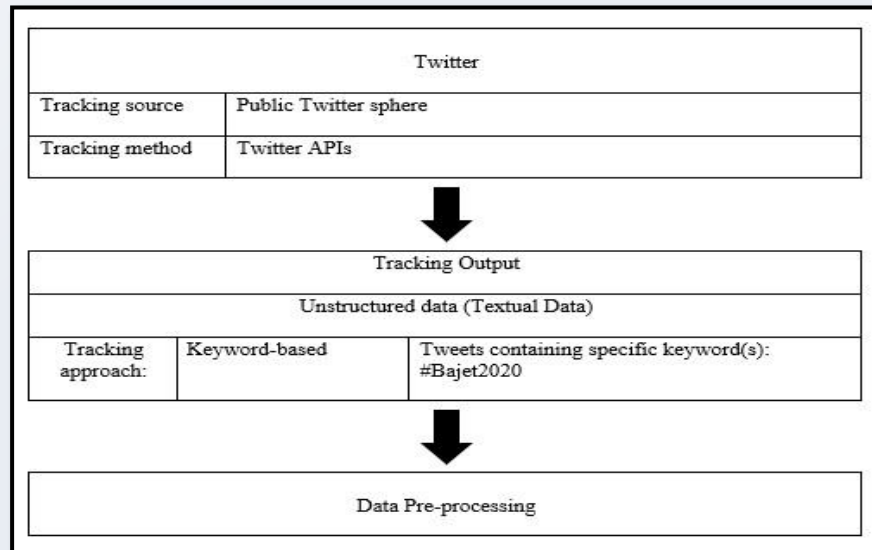
RO1: To identify the issues in 2020 Budget on Twitter.

RO2: To identify personalities associated with the 2020 Budget discussion on Twitter.

RO3: To examine the sentiment of the issues discussed.

METHODOLOGY

- The data gathered for the study focused on Twitter posts under the hashtag #bajet2020. Since Twitter does not allow automated software tools to collect tweets that are more than two weeks old, Twitter's advanced search option was used to collect the tweets manually. Using advanced search options, only tweets using the hashtag were retrieved to comprise the corpora for this study.



METHODOLOGY

- The researchers were able to extract a total number of 217 tweets from the hashtag. The researchers then selected 20% sample of the total number of tweets from each day. 20% of the sample was selected based on the keywords they represent in 8 category labels namely: affordable housing, burdens faced by young people, abolish tolls, petrol subsidy, quality health services, tax system, enhancing income of the majority, and long-term prosperity of the Rakyat. The data set was narrowed down to 44 tweets which were chosen as they fit the categories determined by the researchers.

Date	No of Tweets	Sampling (20%)
11th October 2019	113	23
12th October 2019	58	12
13th October 2019	32	6
14th October 2019	14	3
Total No. of Tweets	217	44

FINDINGS: ISSUES

Table 4.1
Summary of topic and its issues

Topic	Summary of issue
Affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Threshold on high rise property prices for foreign ownership lowered from RM1 million to RM 600, 000
Burdens faced by young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PTPTN• Unemployment among graduates
Abolish tolls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 18% discount instead of abolishment
Petrol subsidy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Targeted petrol subsidy for eligible recipients of BSH
Quality health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• RM 60 million allocated for pneumococcal vaccination• Pneumococcal vaccination included in the National Immunisation Schedule
Enhance income of the majority	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rising income inequality• Minimum wage
Tax system	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Likelihood of implementation of new tax system to cover expenditure

Long-term prosperity of the Rakyat

- Investments are expenditure
- Money spent for short-term gains
- Deficit budget
- Increase in country's debt level

FINDINGS: PERSONALITIES

Table 4.2

Summary of personalities mentioned in a topic

Personality	Topic
Lim Guan Eng (@guanenglim)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Petrol subsidy• PTPTN
Najib Razak (@NajibRazak)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long-term prosperity of the Rakyat
Mohamad Hasan (@tokmatn9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Petrol subsidy
Zahid Hamidi (@Zahid_Hamidi)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Petrol subsidy
Ahmad Maslan (@ahmadmaslan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Petrol subsidy
Dr Dzulkefly (@DrDzul)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality health services
Syed Saddiq (@SyedSaddiq)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Affordable housing

FINDINGS: SENTIMENT

Table 4.3
Summary of sentiment towards the issue

Issue	Keyword	Orientation
Burdens faced by young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “ramai orang tak kerja” • “peluang kerja tak ada” • “graduan menganggur” • “afraid with the sustainability” 	Negative
Abolish tolls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Diskaun 18% je” • “Tol yg sbml ini janji dihapuskan, tidak akan dihapus rupanya” 	Negative
Petrol subsidy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “bajet menyindir rakyat” • “liking the targeted subsidy” 	Neutral
Affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “orang asing dah boleh beli hartanah” • “selesaikan isu penjualan rumah bukan pemilikan rumah” • “paling tidak boleh diterima” 	Negative
Quality health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “what I love about #Bajet2020 is vaksin pneumococcal” • “glad to know that pneumococcal vaccine dah bagi free” • “Antara paling power” 	Positive

Enhancing income of the majority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Janji gaji minimum ni memang antara ‘kencing’ paling power” • “Increasing the minimum wage is a good news” 	Neutral
Tax system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “menimbulkan kecurigaan trhdp kemampuan kerajaan merealisasikan semua peruntukan berdasarkan sumber lain termasuk kenaikan cukai atau mewujudkan cukai baharu” 	Negative
Long-term prosperity of the Rakyat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Investment and investment and more investment. Kemonn give me something...” • “Aset dijual, tetapi hutang masih tak turun-turun” 	Negative

CONCLUSION

- The findings from this study have implications in the development of the third phase of political communication. Due to the many political voices present on the Internet, politicians and political institutions need to compete for the attention of potential voters. To do so, politicians need a leverage which is gained by learning prominent issues among public. With that knowledge, politicians can start focusing on issue-based interaction to gain attention of the public. From the perspective of political institutions, this study implicates that there is a need for management of reputation in the sphere of social media. Findings of this study will direct the government towards prevalent critical issues.
- The core discussion about the 2020 Budget was organised around #Bajet2020. However, other debates regarding the 2020 Budget may have taken place through non-hashtagged messages on Twitter which resulted in less visibility for those posts. Therefore, this study only offers an analysis of how members of the public utilised the #bajet2020. Another limitation of the study is that it was also conducted at semantic level. This means that the data is coded at face value, i.e. at the explicit or surface meaning. The study was not intended to look for anything beyond what has been said or written.

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