

## Social Media: The Major Trigger of Online and Offline Political Activism

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**Abstract :** With the viral factor on social media, the sense of persuasion is generated by repetition and popularity. When users' interest is captured, political awareness increases to spark political enthusiasm, but, the level of users' political participation and political attitude of those active users is still questionable. An online survey on 250 youth and in-depth interview on two politicians are conducted to answer the main question in this paper. The result shows that Facebook significantly increases political awareness among youths. Social media may not be the major trigger to political activism among youths as most respondents opined that they would still vote without Facebook. Other factors could be political campaigning, political climate, age, peer pressure or others. Finding also shows that majority of respondents did not participate in online political debates or political groups. Many also wondered if the social media was the main power switch that triggers the political influx among young voters. The research finding is significant to understand how the new media, Facebook, has reshaped the political landscape in Malaysia, creating the Social Media Election that changed the rules of the political game. However, research finding does not support the ideal notion that the social media is the major trigger to youths' political activism. This research outcome has exposed the flaws of the Social Media Election. It has revealed the less optimistic side of youth political activism. Unfortunately, results fall short of the idealistic belief that the social media have given rise to political activism among youths in the 13<sup>th</sup> General Election in Malaysia. The research outcome also highlights an important lesson for the democratic discourse of Malaysia which is making informed and educated decisions takes more commitment, proactive and objective attitude.

**Keywords :** social media, political participation, political activism, democracy, political communication

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