

Vlogging and the Malaysian Citizenship Experience

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Abstract: *This study is about examining and understanding the relationship between media and citizenship through the experiences the Malaysian vloggers. The theoretical ideas of Citizen's Media is used to delineate and make sense of this relationship. The areas of focus are: (1) characteristics of the vloggers (2) the types of vlog, and (3) representation of citizenship. A purposive sample of 22 Malaysian vloggers was collected through a systematic process on YouTube during a three-months period. Results from the study revealed that the vloggers were young, multiracial and mostly male. While all of them talks about Malaysia or being Malaysian, there are differences in the vlogging style and stance that indicate unique representations of citizenship.*

Keywords: *Citizen's Media; Youtube; Politics; Citizenship; Malaysia; Participatory Culture; Vlogs*

I. Introduction

This study is about examining and understanding the relationship between media and citizenship in Malaysia. Despite being confined to strict legal restrictions, Malaysians are now taking their discourses online and are challenging the government's control on freedom of speech and expression. Social media in particular, enables everyday Malaysians to become interactive social activists and political actors. More specifically, this study investigates the relationship between video blogging (vlogging) and citizenship through the experiences of the Malaysian vloggers who are not directly involved in state politics.

1.1 Mapping the Malaysian Media

Malaysia has a history of media control. Through media laws and concentrated media ownership, the Malaysian Government oversees all the information circulating in the mass media. Media laws such as the Printing Press Act (1984) and Broadcasting Act (1987) limit political discussions in that news or stories deemed derogatory or overly critical of the government cannot be published. Freedom of speech and expression are also limited by laws that stipulate what can and cannot be discussed in public. Sedition and defamation laws restrict freedom of speech and protect political figures from being scrutinized; and laws such as the Internal Security Act (ISA)³ and the Official Secrets Act (OSA) enable the authorities to detain without trial anyone accused of disrupting the country's harmony. The University and College Act (AUKU) prohibit students from being involved in any form of political activity. Hence, Malaysians have been inculcated to accept a culture of political apathy and fear of expression (Loh, 2009; Anuar, 2005). The ownership of media by the government and organizations close to the government also limits media freedom largely through management self-censorship. Thus, the media in Malaysia offers limited space for citizens to engage in political discourse. While some forums for political discussions are available in the alternative media produced by opposition parties or non-government organizations, they are often hampered by the media laws (George, 2006).

Opposition and dissenting voices do not have access to the mainstream media. These conditions have served the government well in terms of securing support from the people. Due to the lack of open access to the mainstream media, the opposition parties in Malaysia have resorted to creating their own alternative media. Malaysia's alternative media includes "politically contentious" (George 2005; 2006) professional online newspapers, NGO websites, and journalistic blogs. The primary objective of these alternative forms of communication is to challenge "the consensus that powerful interests try to shape and sustain through the mainstream media" (George, 2006, p. 3). Thus, the alternative media in Malaysia mostly adopts political, oppositional and radical inclinations. The alternative media often finds it difficult to survive due to the lack of

finances and barriers to license renewals.

Because of the continuous confrontation between the mainstream media and the alternative media, it is generally accepted that when it comes to political coverage, Malaysians are often left with an 'either-or option' (Sani, 2005; Anuar, 2005; Steele, 2009). The mainstream media is accepted as the state's mouthpiece, while the alternative media is seen as the opposition's media outlet. Because of this contrast, the alternative media in Malaysia is often reduced to its oppositional nature and radical inclinations (Sani, 2005; George, 2006).

The availability of the Internet has further reinvigorated the Malaysian alternative media (Gong, 2011). In the early years of the Internet, it was the opposition parties and NGOs that were fully utilizing the potential of online media. If they had previously been restricted from accessing the public, their presence online had enabled them to reach the Malaysian citizenry in larger numbers. As such they were very much maximizing the benefits of the online media to accommodate their lack of presence in the traditional mass media (George, 2005; Smeltzer, 2008). However, while the opposition's use of online media indicates that the Internet has opened a new frontier for the Malaysian alternative media, it has yet to overcome the dichotomized political news media where the alternative is still thought to promote anti- government sentiments (Brown, 2005; George, 2006).

The rise of the social media in the mid-2000 allowed average Malaysians to produce their own media content. The lack of barriers and regulation made it possible for Malaysians to write and express about whatever and this includes issues and politics. Blogging and facebook for example was heavily credited for changing the way Malaysians vote (Mohamed, 2014). In the 2008 and 2013 national elections, both the government and the opposition faced major challenges because voters had more access to information. They were no longer confined to the government controlled mainstream media nor the opposition-influenced alternative media. They were also exposed to citizen produced information that were less partisan and more demanding of the politicians. This new source of information were not tied to institutional structures but were ideas coming from everyday individuals.

1.2 Youtube, Vlogging and Citizen's Media

The development of internet technologies have pushed for the easy streaming of videos. As such it has become so much easier for users to produce videos. the advantage of videos over other media form lies in its ability to provide visual, audio, textual and emotional content (Burgess and Green, 2009). Since 2008, Youtube, the world's largest video sharing site has become the world's 2nd largest search engine trailing only behind google. This shows that users are looking for videos as the main source of information for almost everything. Among this voluminous videos are the video logs or logs. Vlogs have been described as user-generated videos of short duration that are distributed online where others may view, subscribe, or comment on them (Burgess and Green, 2009). According to Snelson (2013) seemingly endless supply of vlogs can be retrieved after entering the search phrase 'vlog' in the YouTube search box. Many of the vlogs at the top of the search results list show an individual speaking to the camera in the monologue style sometimes associated with vlogging. Among the more popular kinds of vlogs are the 'beauty' 'gaming' and 'travel' vlogs. As such vlogging has brought with it an increase in public documentation of personal lives and experiences.

Malaysians are also actively documenting their experiences via vlogging on youtube. Among them are vlogs that focuses on Malaysia and being Malaysian. These vlogs discuss about Malaysia in a wide array of ideas, settings and contexts. Some take a humorous approach while others are more serious and even explicitly political. Regardless of the vlogs' nature, when discussing Malaysia, these vloggers are creating their own media and offering their own interpretation about Malaysia. They are very much moving away from the dichotomized Malaysian media. They are not part of the politically-influenced mainstream and alternative media. Instead, they offer unique ways of talking and discussing about Malaysia. Hence vlogging about Malaysia can be an act of citizen participation when analyzed through a more receptive lense; one where the ideas of media and citizenship are accepted to be more fluid and encompassing.

Rodriguez (2001) offers this fluid interpretation in her notion of the Citizen's Media. Rodriguez's (2001), citizens' media emerges from the need to overcome the oppositional frameworks and binary categories traditionally used to theorise alternative media. Rodriguez argues that the "alternative" in alternative media suggests it is an alternative to something, which traps scholars in binary thinking. This binary thinking fails to capture people's multiple identities and the transformations happening as a result of participating in what Rodriguez called citizens' media, rather than alternative media. Rodriguez claims that citizens' media represents the use of media to achieve empowerment, community cohesion, and express social and cultural identities.

Thus Citizens' media defines alternative media practice in terms of their role in promoting active citizenship and expression; not in terms of resisting or contesting the mainstream institutions. Citizens' media is driven by notions of democracy, community and equality, and is created and driven by citizen participation (Rodriguez, 2001). To make sense of the many ways citizens' media can develop and challenge social and cultural meanings in media practice, such practices must be defined exclusively and not as a response or comparison to mainstream practice. More importantly, citizens' media highlights alternative media practices that focus on citizens' creative expression and democratic participation. Citizens' media offers a framework for

understanding alternative media practices that may not be intended to resist or challenge established powers and structures. This removal of radical resistance explains the Malaysian vlogging experience, and overcomes the dichotomized stereotype of the Malaysian media.

Citizen's media can become an important site for the creation of citizenship, enabling personal as well as collective participation in the negotiation of social definitions, their identities, cultures and lifestyles. Rodriguez argues that "citizens have to enact their citizenship on a day-to-day basis, through their participation in everyday political practices" (p. 19). Her fluid interpretation of citizenship allows participatory media practices to incorporate social, political and cultural phenomena, something very much related to the Malaysian experience of vlogging and citizenship. The ability to understand and analyse the alternative media as more than just oppositional and radical can illuminate the unique complexities of everyday media experiences and their implications on the wider socio-political environment.

When it comes to understanding media use as a form of citizen practice, Rodriguez's (2001) citizens' media was inspired by Chantal Mouffe's theory of radical democracy and citizenship wherein citizenship is defined as the ability to gather forces to shape one's symbolic and material world; not merely on the basis of the liberal tradition. In this sense, the term "radical" refers to the application of democracy to all realms of human life and expression, which contests and renegotiates traditional and classical definitions of democracy. Part of Rodriguez's interpretation of democracy hinges on the idea that democracy involves a constant struggle. She advocates that, "instead of thinking of democracy as an ultimate goal, a final state- of-things to reach, we should look at how democratic and non-democratic practices are being renegotiated constantly, and how citizens' media can strengthen the former, thus contributing to the- although sometimes ephemeral - swelling of the democratic" (Rodriguez, 2001, p. 22). Rodriguez builds on this idea of radical democracy to extend her own understanding of political participation to include traditional forms like voting and protesting, as well as other forms of social and cultural production. Media can be a vital component in this dynamic by providing citizens the opportunity to express themselves and use the media in ways that transform their own understanding and practice of citizenship. The link between identity and narrative, and between citizenship and action, led Rodriguez to explore citizens' media as the promotion of symbolic processes that allow people to name the world in their own words. It is through this continual shifting of identities and active participation that citizens both challenge and emanate power.

This explains how vlogging offers Malaysians more than democratic participation and freedom from institutional and commercial control; rather, it has also become an important site for the creation of citizenship that enables personal as well as collective participation in the negotiation of social definitions, identities, cultures and lifestyles. The fluidity of power as suggested by Rodriguez (2001) is also apparent when Malaysian vloggers are able to defy the authoritative system they live in and recreate their identity from a mere citizen to an active political actor.

Therefore Citizen's Media carefully captures the relationship between media and citizenship as it is experienced by the Malaysian vloggers. To support this contention, this study then asks: Who are the Malaysian vloggers? What do they Vlog about? and most importantly, where is the connection between vlogging and citizenship?

II. Methodology

A mixed-methods approach of web research, online observation and descriptive statistics was applied due to the nature of the research questions and the virtual setting. Online observations were carried out for two purposes. It provided information for sampling and to analyse the vloggers' online behaviour. In her study on the motivation behind the use of blogs, Kaye (2005) used the non-participant method by "lurking around" as many blogs as she could to gather basic ideas on the bloggers' backgrounds and motivations. Similarly, by playing the role of non-participating observer, the vloggers' online activities were observed on two levels. On the first level, basic insights into the vloggers' general patterns of expression and online behaviours were identified. According to Hine (2000), lurking can be considered a form of covert ethnography. Some virtual ethnographers choose to lurk in online sites (Mann & Stewart, 2004; Kaye, 2005); claiming that this enables an undisturbed picture of the phenomenon they are interested in. Lurking can bypass a major limitation of traditional ethnographic research, namely, the impact the researcher's presence has on people's actions and behaviours. Although there may be ethical considerations in that participants might feel that their privacy has been violated, Nielsen (2006) contend that lurking is essentially a common online habit where up to 90% of people in online forums were simply reading and not supplying content of their own; thus, researchers who lurk are mimicking this type of participation.

On the second level of observation, a specific sample group was identified and closely monitored to collect detailed information about the vloggers' online behaviour. For instance, to look at the vloggers' style,

specific areas were observed such as the number of times a particular channel was updated, the length of the usual vlog post and the approach to content. To identify notions of participation and citizenship, the vloggers' video styles and the way they present and talk about Malaysia and national issues were analyzed.

2.1 Sampling and Data Collection

Based on her review, Snelson (2013) found that the majority of the research on vloggers employed purposeful sampling technique because it provides the most effective way to sample a large number of vloggers. However, she also suggested that to guide the sampling process, it is important for the researcher to specify the criteria of the population of interest. As such, criteria were defined for the vlog sample to ensure that vlogs sampled match the problems of the study and the stated research questions. Vlogs were eligible for inclusion if they (1) owned and showcased a Malaysian vlogger, (2) were non-entrepreneurial (not selling something), (3) presented a personal commentary or depiction of Malaysian life, (4) active (having uploaded at least a video a month up to this study's cutoff date) and, (5) have significant number of subscribers and viewerships. To identify the samples, I used a social media analytics site called socialblade (www.socialblade.com). Via socialblade I was able to identify the top 100 YouTube channels in Malaysia. Unfortunately, the list did not include many vloggers that were showcasing Malaysian life. It mostly included channels owned by companies and special-interest vlogs that focused on other topics such as beauty, gaming and automotive. Through the list, I only managed to identify 5 relevant vloggers which are Namewee, Ling Big Yong, Jinnyboy, Matluthfi and Dan Khoo. To find more vloggers, I then searched for related video suggestions provided by YouTube on the already selected vloggers' channels. I also searched for popular vloggers mentioned on Google search.

The unit of analysis and criteria for what would be sampled as part of the data set was defined prior to the onset of sampling. The selection of a unit of analysis was fairly straightforward given that vlogs form natural units that can be individually sampled. However, a vlog on YouTube also includes a constellation of related information that can be valuable in developing a richer understanding of the vloggers. Therefore, the unit of analysis was defined to include the following collection of information for each vlog sampled: (1) the vlog video; (2) text comments posted on the vlog page; (3) vlog information (e.g., title, description, video length, views, upload date); (4) vlogger information (e.g., age, ethnicity,)

The qualitative approach is not to generalise the sample but to provide a detailed understanding of a few people. Thus, many qualitative researchers do not like to put constraints on the research by giving a definitive number of the sample size. Creswell (2007) suggested that sample size usually differs according to the particular research traditions and depends also on the research objectives and constraints. Based on this belief, the sampling size was set to 22 because I find that these 22 vlogs were enough to provide me with the variation I need to help answer the research questions. In addition, saturation was reached in the sense that if more vloggers were added, it would not add to the data.

In order to capture the essence of Malaysian citizenship, the sample group must also represent the variations that exist in the Malaysian society. As such the vloggers sampled represented the different demographic groups that exist in Malaysia. Ethnicity for example is a significant characteristic of the Malaysian society. To capture this dimension, the vloggers selected came from different ethnic backgrounds. Background data about the vloggers were collected through web search as well as from details shared by the vloggers on in their videos. Data collection was done from June to August 2017.

III. Result and Discussion

The findings answer the research questions by identifying 1) the characteristics of the vloggers, 2) the types of vlogs and 3) essence of citizenship.

3.1 Characteristics of the vloggers

Gender, ethnicity, language, age and locale are the three demographic components that were identified in order to characterize the vloggers.

Gender

From the 22 vloggers sampled for the study 18 are male and only four are female. The small number of female vloggers sampled is not because there is a lack of Malaysian female vloggers, instead there are many. Maybe even more than male vloggers. However, most of the female vloggers are focused on beauty, fashion and lifestyle content. While vlogging about beauty and fashion is an interesting area on its own and may even have some ideas of citizenship, this study has limited its focus to vloggers that specifically talk about Malaysian life in their videos. As such, 82% of the vloggers that literally and explicitly talk about Malaysia and the Malaysian life are male. This could mean that there is a gender factor when identifying how citizenship is experienced. This indicates that where media use is concerned, male vloggers are more interested to share about citizenship experiences.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is an important factor in understanding the Malaysian citizenship experience. Being a multiracial country, ethnicity is the unique but sometimes dividing factor in the Malaysian citizenship. The 'Ketuanan Melayu' (*Malay supremacy*) affirmative rule privileges the Malays and the aborigines (referred to as 'bumiputera') over the other ethnic groups. These privileges which include better access to education and property resulted in a contested citizenship where different ethnic groups having a different interpretation about being Malaysian (Mohamed, 2014). Fortunately, this contestation did not deter the different ethnic groups to share their experience of being Malaysian on youtube. On the other hand, ethnicity is often the main idea used in their videos. this study managed to identified a varied group of vloggers. Ethnic-wise, the vloggers are: Malay (8), Chinese (6), Indian (4) and Bumiputera (4). All of the 4 *bumiputeravloggers* (Adamtembakau, adamshamil, daphneiking and ohheymissing) are from Sabah and 2 identified themselves as 'Kadazans' which is the main culture/ethnic group in Sabah.

Language

Language is another unique characteristic that defines Malaysians. While Bahasa Malaysia or the Malay language is the official language, English is also prominent and widely used. In fact, most Malaysian speak 'Manglish' which actually means Malaysian English. Manglish is a diffusion of all the main languages spoken in Malaysia which includes Malay, Mandarin, Hokkien, Tamil and Cantonese (Dodds, 2003). When speaking Manglish, grammar is unfortunately not a factor. What is interesting is that Malaysians from all walks of life has a common understanding about what certain words or sentences means. For example, the sentence 'Yo Macha! You want to makan or tapau (la)?' combines English, Malay, Tamil and Hokkien. The word 'tapau' which means 'pack' in Hokkien is commonly used by the Malays and the Indians. As such the language used by the vloggers in their videos is an important indication of their citizenship experience. All of the 8 Malay vloggers mostly used Bahasa Malaysia in their videos. English and Manglish is sparringly used. Anwar Hadi is the only vlogger who has some videos in proper English. Accept for Grace Teo and Jinnyboy who spoke English in their videos, the other Chinese vloggers mostly spoke Hokkien. Namewee has some videos in English and Malay but majority of his videos are in Hokkien. All the 4 Indian vloggers spoke Manglish. Only Arwind Kumar spoke Bahasa Malaysia in some of his videos. As for the 4 bumiputera vloggers, English is the main language used in their videos. They largely speak *Sabahan*(Bahasa Malaysia in the Sabahan slang) as well.

Age

Although the specific age of all the vloggers sampled could not be identified. Through google search and analysis of the video content, it can be established that majority if not almost all of the vloggers are at the age of 20 to 30. Only Namewee and Daphne Iking are a little older. Each being 34 and 39 respectively. While both Namewee and Daphne Iking are the more prominent vloggers since they have the bigger number of subscribers, the rest of the vloggers are young urban millenials. These young vloggers are growing in number and video vlogging is a common media use to them. As such it would be an interesting to identify how vlogging is a form of everyday citizenship experience for young millennials.

Locale

Where the vloggers are located is also an important identification of the citizenship experience. While most of the vloggers are located in the capital city Kuala Lumpur, some are in different states and even overseas. Namewee for example used to vlog from Taiwan where he used to study. He has also vlogged from his hometown Johor. Both MatLuthfi and Anwar Hadi has vlogged from Australia where they study. Grace Teo vlogs from Germany where she now resides while Adam Shamil vlogs from the United States where he is currently studying. Vlogging in different localities indicate that being Malaysian and sharing the Malaysian experience does not necessarily requires being in Malaysia. These vloggers show that youtube is a significant medium where citizenship can be practiced and shared despite temporal and geographical barriers.

3.2 Types of vlogs

Analysis of the video contents showed that when it comes to vlogging about Malaysia, there are generally three ways of doing it. To construct this typology of three different types of vlogs, a cross-classification of the vloggers style and stance were done. Vlogging style included the way the video content is presented, whether it includes full on video production or just a simple one-on-one; vlogger to screen presentation. On the other hand, stance indicates the vloggers approach when talking or portraying Malaysia. For instance, some vloggers are deliberately political while others have a subtle way of expressing their thoughts and opinions.

Type	Video style	Vlogger's stance
story-teller -11 Males - 4 Indians, 4 Chinese, 3 Malays	-comedic / dramatized -Manglish/vernacular	-Malaysia as experienced by others -focuses on everyday experiences
Diarist -1 Male, 3 Female - 2 Malays, 1 Chinese, 1 Bumi	-a day in the life approach -Proper Malay/English	-How Malaysia is experienced by self -focuses on specific issues/experiences
Preacher -7 Male, 1 Female - 3 Malays, 3 Bumis, 1 Chinese	-one camera focus/expression -Proper Malay/English	-How Malaysia should be experienced/ideals -discusses national issues/politics

The storyteller

11 vloggers are categorized as the storytellers. All of them are Male. Ethnically, 4 are Indians, 4 are Chinese and another 3, Malays. Style-wise, these vloggers take the extra effort to present their content. There are storylines and scripts. Plots and characters. In short, the storytellers produce short movies. In these short movies, they present Malaysian life as experienced by different characters. Characters that are not necessarily related to them. These stories are dramatized, often in a comedy. Ling Bing Yong, Aman Wan, Vikar's World and Dan Khoo are among the vloggers who put on different comedic roles in their different videos. Arwind Kumar for example is famous for being 'MakcikRosmah' in his videos. By putting on a completely different persona, one that is a female Malay gossip, Arwind, a young Indian vlogger did not only manage to entertain his viewers but also insert some social critic on Malaysian life. MakcikRosmah is a character familiar to most Malaysians. The know-it-all aunty who has the penchant of telling others on how to behave. Arwind presents Malaysia through MakcikRosmah and produces videos of different situations as experienced by MakcikRosmah. In one prominent video titled 'Rape Victim can Marry Rapists?!' (see: <https://youtu.be/2NK71cz2Yk>) MakcikRosmah goes on a rant on how she could not tolerate such argument. The 3:17 minutes video was really a response to a politician who claims that rape victims are safer when they marry their rapists¹. The video had 65,470 views, 3000 likes and 427 comments that mostly support makcikRosmah's/Arwind Kumar's stand.

The Preacher

7 vloggers are categorized as 'preachers'. these preachers consists of 6 male vloggers and 1 female vlogger. 3 of them are Malays, another 3 are bumis and there is 1 Chinese. These vloggers are considered preachers because it is clear that their vlogs are political and they deliberately discuss and champion certain national issues. In terms of the style of their videos, the preachers often use a speech like presentation involving some form of dramatization to get their messages across. In these dramatizations, the preachers play themselves. They do not adopt a different persona. The dramatization is simply used to support their argument. the preachers inform their viewers about certain issues and will conclude by telling the viewers the right way to approach or resolve the issue. In this sense, the preacher pushes his or her own views onto their respective viewers.

Namewee, Malaysia's most popular and controversial vlogger with over 1 million subscribers is an example of a preacher. His youtube channel has 322 videos. Since he is also an aspiring musician, half of the videos are music while the rest are his politically-charged commentaries, parodies, songs and short dramas. Despite offering many styles of videos, he will still be the central focus of each video. He is the main actor in all his parodies and short dramas. He is the main singer in the music videos. In the more serious videos where he gives commentaries and criticism, he will be seen alone on the camera giving long expressions. For example on

¹<http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2017/04/04/tasek-gelugor-mp-not-impossible-for-12-year-old-girls-to-be-married/>

one video, he commented about the racial issue surrounding the 2015 'lowyat' incident ² (see: <https://youtu.be/KUNdmpc5mvw>). In the video, he educates his viewers to not look at the incident from racial perspective. Rather, he suggests that Malaysians should look at it as issues of gangsterism and lack of security enforcement.

Anwar Hadi, another preacher vlogger discusses various issue on his vlogs. He has more 60,000 channel subscribers. He sometimes features guests to discuss on certain issues. There are three main contents in his channel, book reviews, commentaries on social issues and simple tutorials like how to invest in property (see: <https://youtu.be/DEf0SGORpoU>). In all these different types of content, Anwar Hadi is the central speaker. He does not offer any dramatization. He speaks directly to the camera and informs the viewers about whatever topic he feels important.

The diarist

The diarist type consists of 3 female and 1 male vloggers. Ethnically, 2 of them are Malays, 1 Chinese and 1 Bumi. The diarist documents their daily experiences via youtube. Through this personal video diary, they show how being Malaysian is experienced in the intricacies of daily lives. Although the diarist are hardly political in their videos, certain experiences that they share vividly shows citizenship as it is lived. Daphne Iking is the most popular of all the diarist vlogger in this study. With 27K channel subscribers, Daphne vlogs quite frequently, almost weekly. Daphne is a public figure; she is a well-known TV personality. But her youtube channel is focused on her daily life activities. Viewers are given insights to how she deals with family, friends and career. Being a 'Kadazan', Daphne often feature her cultural roots by having videos that shows her celebrating the Kadazan festivals like "Kamaatan" and "Gawai". There are also videos of her eating local food like snakes and talking in the Sabahan dialect. Daphne is married to a Muslim, as such she also appreciates and practices the Malay Muslim cultures. As such in her videos, she portrays how Malaysians come from different background and they do not necessarily fit into a single racial or cultural dimension. She not only displays this; she comments on them too. In her video 'A Malaysian trapped in a Malay body' (see: <https://youtu.be/r7a6SKWTByM>), Daphne and her husband express their frustration in having to 'racialize' their son who is from a Malay, Chinese and Kadazan heritage. This frustration occurred when they wanted to register their newborn son and had to decide their son's 'race'. To Daphne and her husband, their son is a Malaysian and should not be forced to be into any particular racial categories. In this instance a simple video diary can be a valid political argument and a powerful citizen discourse.

3.3 Essence of citizenship

V-logging has offered these selected Malaysian vloggers an avenue to talk, deliberate, comment, criticize and eventually form a citizen discourse on their own. They have manage to create their own Citizen's media wherein they are still able to participate in a sociopolitical culture that is strictly institutionalized. These vloggers have gone beyond the Mainstream/Alternative media dichotomy that defines the Malaysian political media. by creating their own media and managing their own content, these vloggers are able to experience politics and participation in unique ways, creating their own citizen experiences that are directly based on and are beneficial to their lived everyday experience.

The vloggers' ability to dictate what they vlogged about and their creativity in building their own vlogging persona allows them to realise their citizen potential. For the vloggers categorized as Preachers, the ability to share their opinions and encourage others to support and participate in socio-political movements allowed them to expand their activism and create discourses that were beneficial to their cause without having to depend on the partisan mass media. Similarly, for the diarist vloggers who were able to vlog about lived experiences and everyday concerns, the ability to share and make significant their personal stories and interests were changing the way these citizens made sense of their own lives and their ability to become active citizens. Vlogging allowed the diarist vloggers to share and put into good use personal experiences and private interests, allowing them to connect the everyday with public issues that were closely related and even material in their own lives. Hence, the satisfaction and optimism that these vloggers experienced came from the expression of specific thoughts of ideas, and in the ability to take control of a media form where they had become the authority. These vloggers found in vlogging a democratic space for community sharing and discourses that they had been deprived of in the established mass media. Thus, vlogging offered a helpful space for these vloggers to extend their activism and everyday experiences that had previously been kept private.

In this process of making personal thoughts and experiences public, the vloggers in this study were able to make better sense of their citizenship experience by sharing, magnifying and signifying unique experiences. In short, vlogging is not 'revolutionising' Malaysian politics; rather, it is enhancing existing experiences. For the Preacher vloggers, socio-political issues had always been their interest; and vlogging enabled them to put their interests and activism in perspective. By vlogging, they could better plan, analyse and disseminate their own

²<http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2015/07/12/melee-low-yat-not-racial/>

political ideals, vlogging did not make the diarist vloggers become strictly political; rather, it allowed these less-involved citizens to remain comfortable participating in issues that to them were more personal than political. This resonates with Rodriguez's (2001) claim that citizen's media "adopts a concept of political subject as one who expresses his/her citizenship in multiple forms, including for example, the collective transformation of symbolic codes, historically legitimized identities, and traditionally established social relations" (p. 19). Breaking away from the conventional understanding of citizenship as expressed by voting and protesting, the media is then considered as the everyday site where meaning is contested and cultural codes are negotiated (Rodriguez, 2001). By sharing and making significant everyday experiences, and relating them to wider circles such as the community, the diarist vloggers were in their own terms finding a way to situate the impact of politically abstract laws and policies within their own everyday.

IV. Conclusion

In sum, Rodriguez's (2001) theorisation of citizens' media allows for a flexible understanding of the relationship between media and citizenship. Her insistence that political participation and citizenship experience should be understood less in institutional terms but more through the media users' contextual lived experience allows for a more inclusive approach to studying the relationship between media and citizenship. Within the Malaysian context where participation in institutional and electoral politics can be much contested, V-logging offers a framework for analysing new forms of political ideas and expression that can be vital in explaining how citizens negotiate and challenge the socio-political culture that shapes their everyday lives.

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