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Research Article

Covid-19 Social Media Trending and Hoaxes: Malaysian Perception Index (MPI) and How Does the Law Respond to Fake News and Hoaxes (Comparing Malaysia and Indonesia)

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Abstract: The Covid-19 pandemic hit another grim milestone on as worldwide deaths from the disease exceeded 100,000. Many countries have enforced social distancing rules and even lockdowns in an effort to contain the spread of the virus. Malaysian Government, in almost daily bases proposed initiatives and efforts to uphold Malaysia social, economic, and national stability. This article deliberates an analysis on social media sentiment index by topics mentions in Malaysian government Covid19 initiatives and phenomena. This analysis was conducted with 373K mentions documented with five trending topic, two trending topics on government initiatives, one trending topic Airline Industry and one telecommunication Industry. The social media platform mentions in this study include all mentions or discussion of the topic across all public social media, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Forums, and blogs.

Keywords: Covid-19, online social network, social media, perception, MPI index

Introduction

In 18 March 2020, the 1st phase of Malaysia Movement Control Order or MCO was implemented throughout the country. In Malaysia, MCO works as a barricade

sanitaire preventive measure of the federal government of Malaysia towards the coronavirus pandemic. With current situation, Malaysia Coronavirus record cases, namely 4,987, with number of deaths recorded, 82 people and recovered record

cases are 2,478, the 3rd phase (15 – 28 April 2020) of MCO is now being implemented.

are mandatory to undergo a health check and to do a quarantine (or self-quarantine) for 14



Figure 1: Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia | Situasi Semasa Jangkitan Penyakit Coronavirus 2019 (Covid-19) Di Malaysia

During the MCO from 18 March 2020 – 28 April 2020, Malaysian are prohibited of any form of mass movements and gatherings across the country including religious, sports, social and cultural activities. Meaning all houses of worship and business premises are closed, except for essential-industry and essential services such as supermarkets, public markets, grocery stores and convenience stores selling everyday necessities, also water, electricity, energy, telecommunications, postal, transportation, irrigation, oil, gas, fuel, lubricants, broadcasting, finance, banking, health, pharmacy, fire, prison, port, airport, safety, defence, cleaning, retail and food supply. Other closure includes all kindergartens, government and private schools, all public and private higher education institutions (IPTs) and skills training institutes nationwide. All travelling abroad are now being unauthorized. Meanwhile for those who have just returned from overseas, they

days. Plus, MCO in Malaysia practices a very restricted entry procedure to all tourists and foreign visitors.

It is believed that MCO action has contributed to the progress of the current, Malaysian fight against Covid-19, with 2,478 patients fully recovered and discharged from hospitals, or 49.7% of the cumulative total of positive cases (The Star, Wednesday, 15 Apr 2020). According to Malaysia Health Director-General Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, Phase 3 of the MCO, is the most important phase of all, not just because it signifies that Malaysia is in the recovery phase, but because it will allow Malaysia to recover.

"If we succeed in doing so, it is possible for us to reduce the case, not only to flatten the curve but also to end the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak in the country," (Malaysia Health Director-General Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, AstroAwani, 2020)

In line to the MCO, the number of Malaysian social media users have showing

sudden rapid escalation. Telekom Malaysia Berhad (TM) (The Star, April 3, 2020) said it is seeing more than a 30% increase in usage trending, and of this, the increase of international link traffic was 5%. Meanwhile, The Malaysian Reserve (Wednesday, April 15th, 2020) reported that the pressure on Internet infrastructure is currently being felt in countries facing high number of cases, including Malaysia, Italy and Spain. Within the period of MCO in Malaysia, uses for the Internet by different industries including entertainment, education and shopping has shown a rapid escalation including in home-based entertainment, video conference and online communication. Similarly, due to the decreasing options personal face to face communication, people are beginning to share and expressing their thought, emotion and idea online too. In 2017, 25.3 million people were accessing the internet in Malaysia and this figure is projected to grow to 29.4 million in 2023 (Statista, 2020 (a)). In 2023, it is estimated that there will be around 26.1 million social network users in the country, up from 22.7 million in 2017.

In 2011 a study done Daria J. Kuss and Mark D. Griffiths (2011) has shown that massive dependency on online social network leads to addictive behaviour and as a result, users may spend an increasing amount of time on these virtual sites without realizing the associated negative effects (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011 & 2017). In Malaysia, during MCO there's an alarming increasing number and percentage usage of online social network platform. According to Corporate News (the Star April 2020), there is a sequential traffic surged between 190% and 250% during the rolling seven-day period in the third week of March (MCO phase two) for online media platforms. This alarming progress worries many, for prior

research in psychology discipline have contently suggests that online media networking addiction can distorts one's perceptions (Thadani & Cheung, 2011).

This study aims to investigate the perception acceptance among netizens, on social media platform in regards to Malaysian government and industries initiatives and efforts in combating Covid19. This study objective is to share the findings of netizen emotional perception.

Method

This is a study on the social media sentiment index by topics mentions in Malaysia Covid19 phenomena. The Malaysians' Perception Index (MPI) is the social sentiment measurement used to analyse and indicate social media conversations. The measurement starts from 100% to 1% for positive, 0 for neutral and -1% to -100% for negative. Meanwhile, social media platform mentions in this study include all mentions or discussion of the topic across all public social media, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Forums, blogs, etc.

This analysis was conducted on the 13 April 2020 with 373K mentions documented with five trending topic, namely 1) Trending Topic 1: MCO extend until 28 April, 2) Selected businesses given greenlight to operate, 3) Local Higher Learning Institution (IPT) students are still not allowed to return home, 4) AirAsia Airline - Store credit vs Refund and, 5) Telcos working hard to boost connectivity.

The formula used in this analysis are:

$$\frac{(the\ no.\ of\ positives - no.\ of\ positives)}{(total\ no.\ of\ positives\ and\ negatives)}$$

Hence, if more positive mentions establish than negative mentions, then the MPI (sentiment) will be positive

Result and Discussion

Top 5 Trending Topic identify through this study is discuss below:

a) Trending Topic 1: MCO extend until 28 April

This is a government initiatives subject. Within this initiatives, Malaysian government's decision to extend the MCO for another two weeks (15 -28 April 2020) were supported. 72% mention states that even though the decision is difficult and hard, but it is acknowledged to be necessary and needed.

Nonetheless, 28% mention highlights their concern on the fate of Malaysian small businesses and SMEs. Some questioned the Malaysian government's ability to provide assistance if the MCO is extended in the future.

Within 373K mentions; 268,560 (72%) positive mentions and 104,440 (28%) negative mentions. Hence, since more positive mentions establish within this topic than negative mentions, then the MPI (sentiment) is positive, namely 44%.

b) Trending Topic 2: Selected businesses given greenlight to operate

This is a government initiatives subject. Within this initiatives, the Malaysia Minister of International Trade and Industry Ministry (MITI), Mohamed Azmin bin Ali, decision to allow several selector sectors such as barbershop to operate during MCO was rejected. 91% socmed negative mentions highlights disagreement with the decision for Malaysian netizen claimed that this decision will undermine the main objective

of the MCO and it will increase the risk of spreading the virus. In specific, netizens rejected the government's decision to allow barbershop to operate as it is not part of the essential-industry. Furthermore, netizens criticized MITI for making a decision without proper discussion with Ministry of Health (MOH).

However, a small percentage of mentions agreed with the initiatives namely 9%, for it is believe that this initiative will stimulates Malaysian economy. Nonetheless, netizens complained about not being able to access MITI's website to apply to reopen businesses.

Within 373K mentions; 33,570 (9%) positive mentions and 339,430 (91%) negative mentions. Hence, since more negative mentions establish within this topic than positive mentions, then the MPI (sentiment) is negative, namely -82%

c) Trending Topic 3: Local Higher Learning Institution (IPT) students are still not allowed to return home

This is a government initiatives subject. Within this subject, 69% agreed for government to run a study and come up with SOP on how local IPT students can be sent home safely back to their hometown. Many mention concern for any mishaps will create new risk and new chance of forming another cluster of COVID-19. Mentions on local IPT students current wellbeing effort is also being highlighted. They stated that the welfare and safety of students is better in universities where they have enough food supply as well as internet access for e-learning.

Conversely, 31% people felt unsatisfied with the governments' actions on bringing students from overseas back to their hometowns and considered unfair for the local students who are still stuck at their

campuses. Many students feel stressed because they are not allowed to return home.

Within 373K mentions; 257,370 (69%) positive mentions and 115,630 (31%) negative mentions. Hence, since more positive mentions establish within this topic than negative mentions, then the MPI (sentiment) is positive, namely 38%

d) Trending Topic 4 AirAsia Airline - Store credit vs Refund

This is an airline industry subject matter. Within this subject matter, Malaysian were furious at AirAsia Airline and Tan Sri Dr. Anthony Francis Fernandes (AirAsia's Group CEO) for encouraging customers to accept the credit offer on their cancelled flights. 94% mentions articulated others not to accept the store credit and demand for a full refund. Some even stated that AirAsia has been operating for many years, thus refused to believe that the company does not have any back up financial plans. Netizens also repeatedly highlighted AirAsia's profit in 2019 to further stress that they have sufficient financial liquidity to help the company. Netizens reminded others to not sympathize with AirAsia since many people were treated badly for their services previously and encouraged others to ask for full refund as credit would mean that the company would hold their money, and majority of citizens need to use money during this outbreak. Netizens also created a petition for a full cash refund that has been circulated on social media.

Then again, 6% netizens are sympathetic to AirAsia Airline and encouraged others to accept the credit offer since AirAsia could not afford for full cash refund to all. Some netizens stated that AirAsia has made cheap flights possible so Malaysians should provide support to ensure the company does not go into bankrupt.

Within 373K mentions; 22,380 (6%) positive mentions and 350,620 (94%) negative mentions. Hence, since more negative mentions establish within this topic than positive mentions, then the MPI (sentiment) is negative, namely -88%

e) Trending Topic 5: Telcos working hard to boost connectivity

This is telecommunication industry subject. Telcos is the telephone company, a provider of telecommunications services, such as telephone and data communications. Currently, there are 13 listing telco companies in Malaysia. Within this subject matter, 92% negative mention in social media about Malaysian telco company performance. Netizens stated that the initiative carried out by telecommunication companies is unsuccessful. Many claimed that consumers are still experiencing internet speed problems, even in urban areas. Worst for educational industry, where, netizens complained that the slow internet speed issue has made it difficult for students and teachers to implement e-learning.

Nonetheless, there are 8% positive mentions, where netizen is happy with telcos' efforts to boost internet connectivity.

Within 373K mentions; 29,840 (8%) positive mentions and 343,160 (92%) negative mentions. Hence, since more negative mentions establish within this topic than positive mentions, then the MPI (sentiment) is negative, namely -84%

In Summary, The Malaysian's Perception Index (MPI) has shown NEGATIVE -16% due to the negative feedback on Malaysian government's decision to allow several sectors to operate, AirAsia refund issues and objections about internet connectivity and speed.

Recommendation & Conclusion

Malaysian Social networks such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are now becoming the most popular method for netizen to communicate with each other, especially during our tough time dealing with MCO and pandemic war. According to statistic, as of January 2020, about 81 percent of the Malaysian population were active social media users (Statista, 2020 (b)). Many Malaysian turn to social networks for relevant information, to communicate, to work, to learn, to express our emotion even our frustration and currently we as a society are practically living in a virtual life on social media beside our real lives at home.

Hence, a little mishap such as fake information and fake news will create anxiety and panic among netizen. Therefore, it is stressed within this study for Malaysian Government to take a decisive action on all fake news anchor on COVID 19 under Section 233 of the Communications Act and Multimedia and Section 505 of the Penal Code.

As multicultural country, it is also important for the netizen to be provided with information and FAQs about government initiatives and its impact to all level of group beneficiaries in many languages on all media channels for reference and people's guidance. But most importantly, Malaysian must be guarded against all form of SMS texting, WhatsApp messaging and its links received on all form of government assistance initiatives to prevent fraud by a scammer.

But predominantly, online social network users aka netizen, must practice self-constrain (Bermúdez, 2016). We must exercise smart and humble usage of words.

Control emotion while expressing one feeling and frustration online. Take some time to review our postings and consider whether all the things we posted were necessary. We can also determine how much time we spend by tracking your usage. Take a break from your social media for time to time and assess how you feel.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors state that there is no potential conflict of interest in the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article

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QUOTE

Ultimately, the greatest lesson that COVID-19 can teach humanity is that we are all in this together.

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw

from <https://blog.vantagecircle.com/quotes-work-life-covid-19/>