

Najib's GE13 tweets lacked impact, bounced between cybertroopers, research shows

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Datuk Seri Najib Razak's (pic) election tweets and retweets between nomination day and polling day to woo voters failed to produce the desired effect in the May 5 general elections, according to a local researcher.

Dr Surinderpal Kaur, who ran a study on the impact of the Twitter microblogging service before and after the election, said the prime minister's tweets had a high volume but lacked impact as it bounced only between his followers and likely cybertroopers or paid social media practitioners.

The study was based on about 900,000 tweets on the election. Tweeting became popular for GE13, a change from the 2008 general elections when the social network scene was dominated by bloggers.

"His tweets were mainly circulated among those who followed him. His followers in turn were only tweeting and retweeting to those within their network," she told a seminar on post 13th general election in Kuala Lumpur today.

The seminar was organised by Universiti Malaya's Centre for Democracy and Election (UMCEDEL), which had conducted several survey before, during and after Election 2013.

Najib's ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) won the general elections with 133 federal seats, down seven from the 140 gained in Election 2008 when Tun Abdullah Badawi was the prime minister.

Surinderpal said to have an impact, Najib's followers should have been linked to those outside their own network. (Retweet is a process of repeating of the original tweet.)

"This did not happen. One of the reasons could be that some of the followers may be cybertroopers," said the senior lecturer at UM and a fellow of UMCEDEL.

To put it simply, she said the Twitter exercise reflected limited communication that was confined to Najib and those within his network.

"This is one of the reasons why BN lost the cyberwar against the opposition because tweets must generate chain reaction," she added.

According to socialbakers.com which measures social network statistics, Najib has 1.67 million followers on Twitter since he began the account four years and 10 months ago. The prime minister has only tweeted some 4,500 times

But his main political foe, opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, has only 359,007 followers although his account started six years and four months ago. Anwar has tweeted nearly 30,000 times.

Surinderpal said in comparison the network of pro-Pakatan Rakyat (PR) and impartial Malaysians may not have high volume but the impact was present because they were linked

to other networks.

She noted that PR's Black 505 rallies after the election were widely known due to information from Twitter despite lack of coverage about the event in the mainstream media.

She also said Anwar had gained more currency as a household name after the election due to the microblogging service. - July 24, 2013

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