



# YOUTHS MEDIA and POLITICS

A New Identity



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## THE YOUNG MALAYSIAN VOTER

*Syed Arabi Idid*

People express interest in the young, either as consumers of products and services or as voters. Interest in the young is focused on due to their numerical presence, at least on paper. Their number makes marketers and political parties keen to know them better. Marketers and political parties have tried their best to win the young over through various means so that they would consume their products or services or cast their votes in favour of the political party concerned.

Marketers extensively study the young to know their income, their preference, or to have a socio-demographic or socio-psychological profile of them. It is the same with the political parties who need to know the socio-demographic profile of young voters. On 7 June, 2012, *Utusan Malaysia* had an article that incorporated a photograph of a banner whose headline said, 'Pengundi Muda Penentu PRU-13?' When translated to English, it says, 'The Young will determine the outcome of the 13th General Election?'). Scholars and political analysts have statistics on the effects of the young on the outcome of elections and by-elections.

This paper addresses the concerns of the young in the electoral process, by first acknowledging their numerical presence as voters during elections. The young voters have played their role during the previous elections and would continue to do so in the coming elections. But over the years the role that the young has been playing has changed. How do the young make their presence felt? Among others, they make their presence felt by articulating contemporary issues through new technology and new communication gadgets. The young voters have been able to communicate on issues that are attractive and meaningful to the general public. How do the young or adolescents gain their political or party identification? Party identification is the essence of understanding how citizens and the young interpret public affairs and make political decisions (Wolak, 2009). The young are able to articulate