

# FRAMING OF HIV/AIDS AND SOCIAL MARKETING PROGRAMME: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MALAYSIAN MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS IN THE YEAR 2006 AND 2011

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## ABSTRACT

Inexpensiveness and accessibility of the newspaper have become the decisive factors for health practitioners and departments to impart information on health issues to the general population. The advancement of science and technology permeating every nook and cranny of our society has arisen our awareness in keeping up with the role of the health sector especially in tackling epidemics. In the interest of alerting the public on the epidemic and its prevention, media practitioners “make up” the related news in a different way in order to make it salient among the public. The principle objective of this paper was interested in framing analysis on HIV/AIDS epidemic in the three selected Malaysian mainstream newspapers namely *Utusan Malaysia*, *The Star* and *Sin Chew Daily*. This study also seeks to find out at which level our AIDS reporting can be described. Furthermore, this bulk of paper also identifies the dominant social marketing programme that has been covered by all three newspapers in the study period

**Keywords:** *HIV/AIDS, Framing, Social Marketing, Newspapers*

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The December 2011 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of HIV/AIDS outbreak in Malaysia since the first case of the epidemic was recorded in December 1986. For the past 25 years, there were 12 943 people were dead due to the epidemic per se. As of today, there is still no any vaccination to cure this epidemic. In accordance with the statistic from the Ministry of Health, to date there were 91,362 HIV cases that have been recorded in this region since 1986. Based on the premise, if no prudent strategies are being implemented in tackling the uniform growth of HIV infection by the respective parties, this figure is prone to increase to 300,000 cases in 2015 (*Utusan Malaysia* 2011).

Most agree that the media is an essential inevitable vehicle in interpreting epidemics and shaping people’s opinion, behaviour, and notion on an issue or event. Consequently, in regards to giving a better notion on HIV/AIDS-related issues to the general population, the media has been instrumental in creating public awareness about HIV/AIDS by “dressing

up” the related news in a specific theme in order to shape people’s sense on the social phenomenon. In fact, putting media obligation beyond solely reporting an issue or event towards its audiences is imperative in terms of responsibility in educating and circulating accurate yet adequate information on HIV/AIDS to the public (Naga Mallika & Rakesh S. Katara 2004: 232–233).

There is indeed a possibility that people whom are standing next to us might have HIV/AIDS, and it is difficult for us to identify it merely through our eyes. Hence, sufficient information provided through media vehicles is helping the public to have more sense in terms of HIV/AIDS and social marketing programmes. True, the notion of social marketing is fairly new among the general population, yet it is at the threshold of a new era in health domain. Most of the people might have a vague idea on commercial marketing, but they might not know much about the social marketing concept especially in addressing HIV/AIDS-related issues. In a manner of speaking, social marketing is explicitly different from the traditional marketing as it “sells” behaviour rather than tangible products to the target consumers (Philip Kotler et al. 2002: 7). Thus, examining media framing in terms of HIV/AIDS news and social marketing programmes is sort of quintessential, notably on reigning in the epidemic per se.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of framing is abundantly explained by saying that the process of framing involves selection and salience. This process, in short, means to select some aspects, events, or issues that are perceived vital to the community and making them salient in a communicating text. In doing so, the issue or event can promote and unravel, for instance a prominent problem can be defined and/or treatment recommendation (Entman 1993: 52). Actually, framing is not a fairly new concept for media practitioners. They use the function commonly whenever they need to get their views across to the audiences. As abovementioned, framing is a process and this process has several locations in communication process (Entman 1993: 52; de Vreese 2005: 51–52). These consist of *communicator*, the *text*, the *receiver*, and the *culture*.

It is plausible that *communicator* selects certain issues in accordance to their needs and considered essential to the community. The issue, further, will be framed in a specific theme in addition to making it more salient to the public. That issue will indeed be covered in the communicating *text* which will indicate certain keywords, sentences, images, sources of information, etc, thereby presenting the issue with more salient. Framing in the text, however, will induce the *receiver* to think the issue over and give an impact to the *culture* ultimately (Entman 1993: 52-3). In short, no matter what it is, framing in all four locations has the same functions and objectives—selection and highlighting.

Regardless, agenda setting scholars intend to integrate agenda setting and framing into the fund of knowledge because they deem it is an extension of agenda setting. In the discipline of agenda setting, we do often hear the old adage of *media do not tell people what to think, but what to think about* (Baran & Davis 2006: 316) Against this background, this has come up conflicting ideas in agenda setting and framing (Amira Sariyati 2004: 12). True, agenda setting can be divided into two levels. The first level of agenda setting, it just involves the selection of an issue or event for public viewing, in particular for saliency purposes. However, it does not consider media’s influence on the public’s opinion. Hence, over the years, more researches have concentrated on second level agenda setting effects such as framing.

In the nature of agenda setting, media agenda, public agenda and policy/government agenda are always intertwined in a peculiar relationship. Amira Sariyati Firdaus (2004) has well-described in her paper that for media agenda to influence other agendas, news coverage on certain issues must have high visibility, high audience salience and distinct valence. Wherefore, keeping an issue or event (in this context HIV/AIDS-related news) at the top of the news agenda is another key obligation to ascertain it. By achieving such responsibilities, framing is the key concept for the bulk of this paper. Nevertheless, Kim et al. (2002) argued that framing should be separated from agenda setting because it does not seem applicable to public opinion (Quoted in Amira Sariyati 2004: 18). Instead, framing influences how audiences think about issues, whereas agenda setting makes certain issues more salient (Tong 2006).

In sum, the effects of framing are unpredictable and might have a durable impact to an issue or event per se in any case. It is plausible that “packaging” an issue or event in terms of HIV/AIDS-related news to focus on certain themes or attributes is prone to have an impact on the public’s opinion in perceiving the epidemic.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the above theoretical framework, this study is going to answer the following research questions:

- What is the dominant frame of HIV/AIDS that has been covered by each selected newspaper?
- Is there a significant difference of the frames in reporting HIV/AIDS news and social marketing programmes among all three newspapers?
- What is the dominant social marketing programme that has been covered by all three newspapers?
- Is there a significant difference on covering the social marketing programmes in all three newspapers?

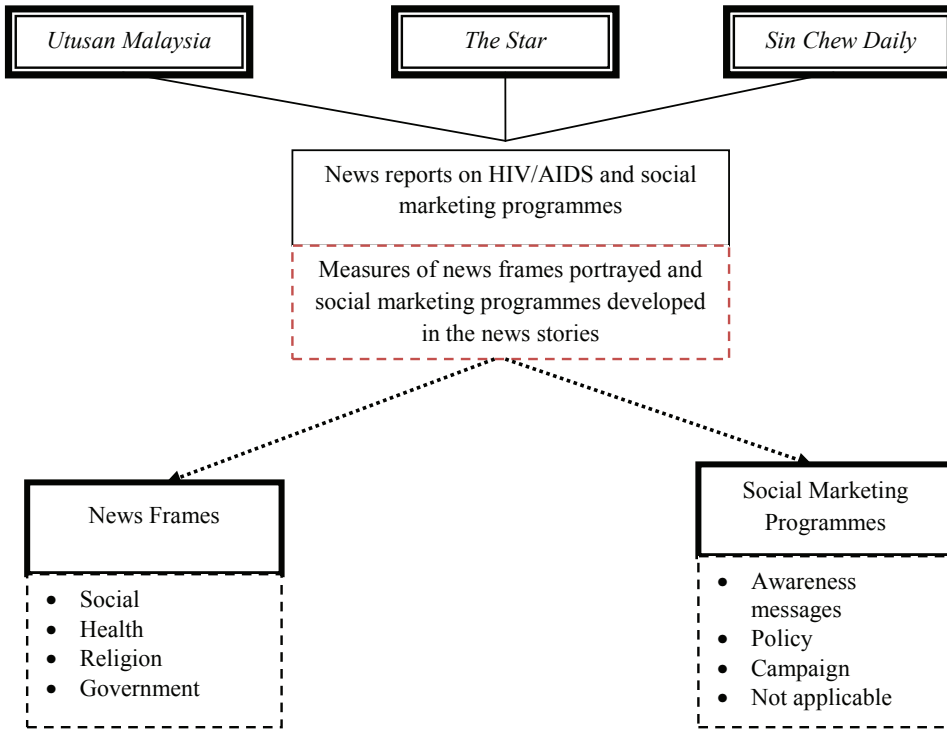
## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper applied quantitative content analysis in identifying the frames that portrayed HIV/AIDS news stories and scrutinizing the type of social marketing programmes in accordance with HIV/AIDS in Malaysian mainstream newspapers. Three mainstream daily newspapers were selected based on their circulation and readership acquired from the Audit Bureau of Circulations Malaysia and the readership adopted from Media Planning Guide Malaysia 2011 (Table 1). In terms of newspaper representation, *Utusan Malaysia* represents the Malay sector; *The Star* serves the English sector while *Sin Chew Daily* represents Mandarin Chinese readers. Both *Utusan Malaysia* and *Sin Chew Daily* are broadsheet newspapers, whereas *The Star* is a “serious” newspaper. In order to have a greater understanding on the background of this research work, Figure 1 projects the work carried out in analyzing the content of the reports on the HIV/AIDS issue under study.

**Table 1:** Circulation and readership of selected mainstream newspapers under study

Daily Newspapers	Media Owner	Circulation (As of 30 June 2010) (per year)	2010 Readership (per year)
<i>Utusan Malaysia</i>	Utusan Melayu Bhd.	170, 558	557, 000
<i>The Star</i>	Star Publication (M) Bhd.	286, 409	1006, 000
<i>Sin Chew Daily</i>	Sin Chew Media Corp. Bhd.	382, 578	1271, 000

**Figure 1:** Research framework



The National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS 2006-2010 was announced by the Malaysian government in the early year of 2006. In the interest to investigate the frames evoked in the stories on HIV/AIDS and its social marketing programmes in the respective newspapers, the sampling for study duration of content analyzing daily newspapers was selected from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006 until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2006 and 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

The unit of analysis in this study is the news story. All the articles that contain the keywords “HIV”, “AIDS” or “Red ribbon icon” in full text in the three selected newspapers during the study period were being analyzed by the coder (researcher). Standardized coding sheets were prepared and a coding book was generated for the purpose of categorizing and inter-coder reliability test. The coding book melds detailed instructions on how to codify the elements or the variables to be analyzed.

The coding categories were developed based on Tong (2006) for news framing categories. For this study, four categories of news frames were categorised into four categories as shown in Table 2 below:

**Table 2:** Explanation of news frames

News Frame	Explanation
Social frame	A frame that identifies the stories involving cultural issues, human rights, public responsibility, fundraising and charity issues, or social event that most of the people are concerned about.
Health Frame	A frame that includes the stories aimed at enforcing education of the public for prevention, self protection from the virus, new drugs development or informing public about new treatments and the availability of the treatment.
Religious Frame	A frame that includes the stories involving religious perspective in dealing with the issues or opinion from religious leaders.
Government Frame	A frame that concerns new strategy or policy regarding the epidemic or patients, political or diplomatic concerns in a national or global context.

In addition to avoiding subjectivity while categorizing and measuring the context units, inter-coder reliability test was conducted to ensure a high quality research outcome. Holsti CR (1969) percent agreement index was applied in this statistical procedure. The inter-coder reliability coefficient, ultimately, both 0.79 on average, with 0.79 for the *Utusan Malaysia*, 0.82 for *The Star*, and 0.76 for the *Sin Chew Daily* respectively, which indicates a satisfactory level of agreement being reached by two coders.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

Throughout this study, a total of 185 news articles were identified. Of that entire amount, a total of 127 news articles were contributed in year 2006, while year 2011 accounted 58 news articles in total. This elicits that the year 2006 contributed the most coverage on HIV/AIDS stories and social marketing programmes compared to year 2011.

In terms of monthly distribution, January 2006 and March 2011 showed a peak with the most number of HIV/AIDS news articles and social marketing programmes coverage with 24.4 percent or 31 units and 25.9 percent or 15 units respectively as illustrated in the Table 3.

**Table 3:** News articles distribution according to month

Year	2006		2011	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
January	31	24.4	9	15.5
February	16	12.6	4	6.9
March	13	10.2	15	25.9
April	14	11.0	6	10.3
May	27	21.3	11	19.0
June	26	20.5	13	22.4
Overall	127	100	58	100

In respect to the three selected mainstream newspapers, *The Star* contributed the most news articles related to HIV/AIDS and social marketing programmes for the both examined years (see Table 4). Comparing both the years, it abundantly shows that there was a reduction of 69 units from 127 units in 2006 to 58 units in 2011 (54.3% decrease) in terms of news related to HIV/AIDS and social marketing programmes in all examined newspapers.

**Table 4:** News articles distribution according to newspapers

Year Newspaper	2006		2011	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Utusan Malaysia</i>	36	28.3	21	36.2
<i>The Star</i>	51	40.2	22	37.9
<i>Sin Chew Daily</i>	40	31.5	15	25.9
Overall	127	100	58	100

A cross-tabulation of newspaper and months by the news volume is displayed in Table 5. Based on the table, all newspapers mostly reported the news of HIV/AIDS and its social marketing programmes in every month. Out of 185 news articles, 73 articles were reported mostly by *The Star*, followed by *Utusan Malaysia* and *Sin Chew Daily* with 57 articles and 55 articles respectively. In terms of scrutinizing monthly distribution in accordance with each newspaper, January was the month with most of the articles contributed by all newspapers. *Utusan Malaysia* contributed the most articles with 33.3 percent or 19 units, followed by *Sin Chew Daily* with 23.6 percent or 13 units and *The Star* with 11 percent or eight units.

**Table 5:** Cross-tabulation of daily newspapers and month

Month	<i>Utusan Malaysia</i>	<i>The Star</i>	<i>Sin Chew Daily</i>	Whole Sample
January	19 (33.3%)	8 (11.0%)	13 (23.6%)	40 (21.6%)
February	6 (10.5%)	12 (16.4%)	2 (3.6%)	20 (10.8%)
March	8 (14.0%)	9 (12.3%)	11 (20.0%)	28 (15.1%)
April	5 (8.8%)	9 (12.3%)	6 (10.9%)	20 (10.8%)
May	6 (10.5%)	19 (26%)	13 (23.6%)	38 (20.5%)
June	13 (22.8%)	16 (21.9%)	10 (18.2%)	39 (21.1%)
Total	57 (100%)	73 (100%)	55 (100%)	185 (100%)

Note: Values in parentheses indicate percentages within newspapers.

Answering the first research question of identifying dominant frame of HIV/AIDS that has been covered by each selected newspaper, Table 6 indicates that social frame which focuses

on public responsibility and people's concern about an issue, turned out to be a dominant frame in covering HIV/AIDS-related issues in all newspapers with 65.9 percent or 122 units of news. In terms of the newspaper, 71.9 percent or 41 units of the news stories were contributed by *Utusan Malaysia*, followed by 63.6 percent or 35 units attributed by *Sin Chew Daily* and 63 percent or 46 units of news projected by *The Star* in the period of study.

**Table 6:** Cross-tabulation of daily newspapers and frames

Frame	<i>Utusan Malaysia</i>	<i>The Star</i>	<i>Sin Chew Daily</i>	Whole Sample
Social	41 (71.9%)	46 (63%)	35 (63.6%)	122 (65.9%)
Health	10 (17.5%)	12 (16.4%)	11 (20.0%)	33 (17.8%)
Religious	1 (1.8%)	2 (2.7%)	0 (0%)	3 (1.6%)
Government	5 (8.8%)	13 (17.8%)	9 (16.4%)	27 (14.6%)
Total	57 (100%)	73 (100%)	55 (100%)	185 (100%)

Note: Values in parentheses indicate percentages within newspapers.

A Chi-square test was conducted to answer the second research question of ascertaining whether or not there is a significant difference in the frames in reporting HIV/AIDS news and social marketing programmes among all three newspapers. The test statistics of  $\chi^2$  ( $df = 4$ ,  $N = 182$ ) = 2.616 with  $P > .05$  has depicted there is no significant difference of framing the HIV/AIDS and social marketing programmes among the three selected newspapers (see Table 7).

**Table 7:** Chi-square table of difference of frames among all three newspapers

	Taken	Not Taken	$\chi^2$	$df$	$P$
Frames	182	3	2.616	4	0.624

Note:  $\chi^2$  = Chi-square test,  $df$  = Degree of freedom,  $P$  = Probability value.

The third research question is to attest the dominant social marketing programme that has been covered by all examined newspapers. The descriptive analysis illustrated in Table 8 portrays that awareness messages on HIV/AIDS and social marketing programmes was given the prominence by all newspapers (47.6 percent). In terms of the newspaper, *Utusan Malaysia* contributed to the most awareness messages on HIV/AIDS with 56.1 percent or 32 units compared 52.1 percent or 38 units and 32.7 percent or 18 units in *The Star* and *Sin Chew Daily*, respectively.

**Table 8:** Cross-tabulation of daily newspapers and types of social marketing programmes

Social Marketing Programme	<i>Utusan Malaysia</i>	<i>The Star</i>	<i>Sin Chew Daily</i>	Whole Sample
Awareness messages	32 (56.1%)	38 (52.1%)	18 (32.7%)	88 (47.6%)
Policy	4 (7.0%)	12 (16.4%)	11 (20.0%)	27 (14.6%)
Campaign	11 (19.3%)	10 (13.7%)	9 (16.4%)	30 (16.2%)
Not applicable	10 (17.5%)	13 (17.8%)	17 (30.9%)	40 (21.6%)
Total	57 (100%)	73 (100%)	55 (100%)	185 (100%)

Note: Values in parentheses indicate percentages within newspapers.

With regards to undressing the research question 4 on whether or not there is significant difference of social marketing programmes among all newspapers in the study period, the test statistics of  $\chi^2$  ( $df=4$ ,  $N=140$ ) = 7.223 with  $P > .05$  has depicted there is no significant difference of reporting social marketing programmes among the three newspapers at a confidence level of 95 percent (see Table 9). This proves all of the social marketing programmes were given the prominence to the coverage of HIV/AIDS.

**Table 9:** Chi-square table of difference of social marketing programmes among all three newspapers

	Taken	Not Taken	$\chi^2$	$df$	$P$
SMP	140	40	7.223	4	0.125

Note: SMP = Social Marketing Programmes,  $\chi^2$  = Chi-square test,  $df$  = Degree of freedom,  $P$  = Probability value.

## DISCUSSION

This study tried to examine degree of framing on the HIV/AIDS-related issues and its social marketing programme that was done by the Malaysian mainstream newspapers. The quantitative content analysis provided answers to all of the research questions. The framing used in Tong JingJing (2006)'s research provided insight into explaining to what extend the newspapers were playing the role as a critical purveyor of information in distributing pertinent information regarding HIV/AIDS and social marketing programmes to the dwellers. This study also sought to find out at which level our AIDS reporting can be described.

Findings from the study indicated that the three selected newspapers namely *Utusan Malaysia*, *The Star*, and *Sin Chew Daily* placed the issue of HIV/AIDS and social marketing programmes differently in both examined years. *The Star* led the peak in both years, whereas *Utusan Malaysia*, held the lesser end in 2006, and *Sin Chew Daily* held the lesser end in 2011. The descriptive analysis of the distribution in Table 4 illustrates this concern. Apparently, coverage on HIV/AIDS and social marketing programmes in 2006 showed a significant



difference compared to the year 2011. The notable message here is more coverage on HIV/AIDS took place in the year where the National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS 2006–2010 was announced and yet, the volume showed a significant decline a year after the programme was terminated in 2010.

Pertaining to which frame is given the prominence in all three newspapers, social frame, led a peak in all selected newspapers while addressing HIV/AIDS-related issues. This attests that HIV/AIDS is still an important issue in which media practitioners think that the issue should be of concern by the community at large. With the classification from WHO that Malaysia is now “a concentrated epidemic” due to the growth of HIV/AIDS cases contributed by Injecting Drug Users (UNGASS 2010), this proves that putting media obligation in imparting ample information that is pertinent to social responsibility on the epidemic is imperative and relevant with the claim made by Naga Mallika and Rakesh S. Katare (2004).

In the respect of whether or not there is significant difference of framing the issue of the epidemic in all three newspapers, the statistical result showed in Table 7 portrayed that there is no significant difference of the frames in reporting HIV/AIDS news and social marketing programmes among all three newspapers. This revealed that the pattern of HIV/AIDS news and social marketing programmes coverage in all newspapers are given emphasis on each frame, with social frame, at the dominant place. True, HIV/AIDS is no longer an issue just related to life or death, but it is most related to a country’s development. It is plausible that with the constant growth of HIV/AIDS cases in a region, the nation’s economy could collapse due to sluggish response in tackling the issue. Therefore, media reporting on the epidemic is rather in line with the old byword of *media do not tell people what to think, but what to think about* (Baran & Davis 2006: 316).

To which social marketing programme has been covered dominantly by all three newspapers? Findings from Table 8 showed awareness messages in terms of HIV/AIDS are the most dominant social marketing programme covered by all three newspapers in the study period. Based on the results, this could be concluded that our community is still under the awareness level—awareness on the modes of transmission, awareness on the treatment availability, awareness on advocating positive behaviour change towards AIDS people and so on. This is rather relevant with the study revealed by Netter (1992) in which the international AIDS reporting can be divided into three phases: initial reactions of fear and ignorance, development of experience and understanding, and finally a concentration on precise scientific and policy development (quoted in Tong 2006).

In accordance to identifying the significant difference on covering the social marketing programmes in all three newspapers, the Chi-square statistics test showed that there is no significant difference on covering the programme in the examined newspapers. This illuminated that all newspapers, notably, gave the prominence to the coverage of social marketing programmes, with awareness messages on HIV/AIDS and social marketing programmes, at the most. In reality, focusing on generating keener awareness on the epidemic is somewhat insufficient to reverse the prevalence comprehensively. Instead, introducing sustainable public policies and circulating its importance to the ground could confer striking benefits among the masses.

## CONCLUSION

HIV/AIDS is a hyperendemic. This study looks into only a small piece of the whole picture. Identifying the way of three mainstream newspapers frame the HIV/AIDS-related issues and

social marketing programmes are rather insufficient to address the effort on stemming the epidemic through and through. Notwithstanding, in so far as some efforts have been taken by researchers to give a glance background of how media practitioners frame the HIV/AIDS news and its social marketing programmes in the sense of increasing the public awareness on preventing the epidemic as whole.

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