

Article

Media Portrayal of Donald Trump in the Post-2024 United States Presidential Election: A Content Analysis of News Reports and Opinion Columns in *The Star Online*, Malaysia

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Abstract: The way the media constructs events and personalities often have a significant impact on how the public perceives political figures. When President Donald Trump took the limelight in international politics during the 2024 U.S. presidential election and once again became a polarising figure, it turned out to be a significant topic of scholarly inquiry. Donald Trump's post-election actions and statements have attracted momentous attention of global media outlets, including *The Star Online*, a prominent Malaysian English-language mainstream news outlet. By using the Framing Theory, this study examined Donald Trump's portrayal in the aftermath of the 2024 U.S. presidential election to determine the themes, tones, and sources in that coverage. News reports and opinion columns published in the first 100 days were content analysed to probe into how *The Star Online* presents and contextualises news and opinions on Trump for Malaysian audiences. The findings suggested that *The Star Online* primarily portrayed Trump in a negative light. The reports focused on Trump's policies, authoritarian leadership style, nationalism, and controversial statements after the election. *The Star Online* primarily framed dominant themes as criticism, including Trump's economic policies, immigration stance, and foreign relations. *The Star Online* relied predominantly on international wire agencies as news sources, which indicates that the local media outlets may correspond with international media viewpoints, offering a homogeneous portrayal of Donald Trump.

Keywords: Donald Trump; media portrayal; presidential election; content analysis; news framing

Introduction

Donald Trump once again appeared in the centre of the spotlight when he won the 2024 United States presidential election. The media, which often plays a pivotal role in shaping public opinion and perception, especially in political discourse, made Donald Trump a controversial figure for global audiences. Given Trump's continuing influence on U.S. politics, the media representation of Donald Trump always attracts considerable interest from scholars all over the world, especially in the aftermath of the US presidential election, where his controversial actions and statements are under scrutiny (Sedláková et al., 2019; McNair, 2018; Kellner, 2020).

A substantial study has examined how international media portray U.S. presidents, revealing a diverse aspect influenced by ideological leaning and editorial policies. Western media outlets often depict Trump through polarised lenses that highlight his populist rhetoric, controversial policies, and extraordinary leadership style (Ott & Dickinson, 2019; Abbas & Zahra, 2021; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Shenina, 2020). Besides, the media's representation of Trump could be diverse and shaped by broader political narratives,

including authoritarian tendencies, threats to democratic institutions, and a strong nationalist spirit (Wodak, 2021; Wijaya & Tanto, 2023; Ivana & Suprayogi, 2020).

However, studies on Trump's media portrayal of Asian media, particularly Malaysian media, remained scarce despite extensive research found in Western and U.S. contexts. Recently, significant changes have been observed in Malaysian media in this digital age, where the online media discourse has been increasingly influencing the public sphere (Tapsell, 2018). Malaysia's coverage of the newly elected US President may reflect unique regional considerations, varying from economic interest, foreign policy implications, and public sentiment towards American hegemony. Nevertheless, the current studies have widely overlooked how Malaysian new media platforms engage with the world's political narrations.

Therefore, by integrating quantitative and qualitative content analysis methods, this study seeks to fill in the existing gap in media portrayal of Donald Trump post-2024 US Presidential Election. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: How does *The Star Online* report Donald Trump's post-election actions and statements?

RQ2: What themes are prominent in *The Star Online*'s coverage of Donald Trump after the 2024 U.S. presidential election?

RQ3: What tone characterises *The Star Online*'s portrayal of Donald Trump during the post-election period?

RQ4: What are the sources cited in *The Star Online*'s articles about Donald Trump?

By addressing these questions, this study contributes to broader discussions on media framing, international politics, and the role of online news in constructing world political perceptions. Investigating how *The Star Online*, a leading Malaysian news portal, reports on Trump's actions and statements after the 2024 U.S. presidential election helps to provide valuable insights into the intersection of media influence, cross-border political coverage, and public discourse in the Malaysian digital media landscape.

Literature Review

The media's portrayal of controversial political figures on the world stage, such as the new U.S. President Donald Trump, who is serving his second term in 2025, has attracted extensive scholarly attention (Kuypers 2020; Thompson, 2021). The studies extensively cover how media represent Donald Trump, especially his communication style and ideological messages, by applying Framing Theory to understand the extent media narratives influence public opinion of a political leader (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Stroud, 2011).

Studies found that Trump's speeches and Tweets employed distinct discursive strategies to create a positive in-group (Americans) and a negative out-group (media, opponents, foreign entities, etc), using strategies like comparison, competition, repetition and metaphors. The negative representations of Trump are frequently linked to his polarising statements and controversial policies. Trump's media representation of his speech and public discourse highlights the strategic framing used by different outlets where Trump's post-election rhetoric was defined by themes of election fraud, victimisation, and political resistance (Luo, He, & Yu, 2021; Fernández, 2022; Hassan Khan, Ali & Siddiqui, 2019; Wijaya & Tanto, 2023). His use of Twitter and other social media influenced how traditional news media depicted his image, which is either a divine figure or a populist leader. Trump's action impacts the media institutions as they face an unprecedented crisis of legitimacy because populists seek to drive distrust between the media elites and "the people" in general. A few key themes are found in the media framing of Trump post-election, such as populism, media distrust, electoral legitimacy, racial unrest, climate change policy and economic recovery. Trump's repeated challenge of election outcomes was also a frequent focus (Abbas & Zahra, 2021; Jutel, 2018; Thompson, 2021). He is also depicted as a leader who propagates ideologies via discourse, through the language of fear, be it political, social, or personal, to achieve certain goals (Ali, Hayder & Tan, 2021).

International media's portrayal of Trump varies based on geopolitical interests and regional political contexts. Some emphasise his economic policies, and some highlight his disputable statements on migrations, global affairs and race. His rhetoric includes repetition, capitalisation, and metaphors to reinforce his ideological stance (Hassan Khan, Ali & Siddiqui, 2019; Ophir et al., 2021; Luo, He, & Yu, 2021; Lynch,

2017). Mainstream media outlets, especially in Western democracies, tend to report on Trump in a negative tone. *The New York Times*, for example, tend to frame Trump negatively in the reporting, highlighting his perceived authoritarian inclination and as a cold person lacking sympathy. *The Washington Post* was critical towards the potential implications of Trump's policies on human rights, immigration, and the economy. However, *Fox News* was more supportive of Trump, emphasising his good capability to perform his duties as a president (Setiawan & Kartika, 2025; Shenina, 2020; Sedláková et al., 2019; Cahyaningsih & Pranoto, 2021). Studies indicated that the credibility and diversity of sources in media reports shape public opinion of political figures. When covering Trump, American mainstream media often rely on expert opinions, government officials, and anonymous sources while alternative and right-leaning media outlets tend to cite Trump's direct statements and social media posts to construct counter-narratives (Entman & Usher, 2018; Yochai, Faris & Roberts, 2018; Pew Research Centre, 2017).

This study employed Framing Theory to analyse how Trump is represented in the media after the 2024 U.S. presidential election, and to explore how media narratives, tone, and sources shape political narration and influence audience understanding. Entman (1993) articulated that Framing theory suggests media emphasise certain aspects of a perceived reality to construct a specific message. This selection process shapes the audience's decoding ability by drawing the audience's attention to merely a particular piece of reality in the news (van Gorp, 2010; Tuchman, 1978; Entman, 1993). News framing is the selective presentation of information that influences public attitude, public opinion, belief, decisions and behaviour (D'Angelo, 2018; van Gorp, 2010; Chong and Druckman, 2007; Reese, 2007). In this study, framing is a methodological tool rather than a theoretical lens used to examine the coverage of Trump's post-election actions and statements. It is conducted by carefully content analysing the text and scrutinising the source selection. Ultimately, framing plays a vital role in influencing the audience's understanding of Donald Trump's leadership and international role.

Methodology

This study is carried out through descriptive quantitative and qualitative content analysis where the portrayal of Donald Trump on *The Star Online* coverage after the 2024 U.S. presidential election is examined. From 6 November 2024 to 16 February 2025, purposive sampling with keywords such as "Donald Trump", "US presidential election", "Donald Trump" and "Trump post-election" is used to detect news and opinion pieces on the topic under study. The search is conducted manually by using the search tool on *The Star Online* website. All the items retrieved are filtered for relevance to ensure that Donald Trump is the main focus of the content. In general, only articles that aligned with the keyword criteria and centred on Donald Trump are included for analysis. Opinion pieces are crucial to media framing analysis because they shape public perception through explicit interpretation of events and contribute to thematic analysis. Thus, including them ensures a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how *The Star Online* portrays Trump in the post-2024 election period. The coding process was conducted manually by the researcher alone, without the involvement of other coders.

A total of 78 news articles and columns are scrutinised. Since this study aims to examine the actions taken by Donald Trump, the sources cited, and the main theme covered in the first 100 days of the reporting aftermath of Donald Trump winning the U.S. presidential election in 2024, both news and opinion columns from local reporting and international media outlets are selected. Story headlines and the entire story are investigated to find the themes, tones and sources cited. Pictures and videos are excluded as the focus of this study is on the words reporting.

Therefore, the unit of analysis covers headlines and paragraphs of the story. Paragraph by paragraph is content analysed to look for the sources and the protruding topics covered in the story. Each of the articles is manually coded to reveal the themes and tones. The quantitative approach plays a role in indicating the quantity of the highest and lowest numbers of actions taken by Donald Trump. It helps in paving the way for identifying the dominant themes and tone orientation in the reporting. From the qualitative perspective, Framing Theory is used to guide the study where the themes, main actions, and tone are found through the way Donald Trump is presented in the textual reporting.

This research employed Framing Theory to analyse how Trump is represented in the media post-U.S. presidential election, and to explore how media narratives, tone, and sources shape political communication and influence audience perception. News framing, which is prominent in news corpora, is the selective presentation of information that influences public attitude, public opinion, belief, decisions and behaviour (D'Angelo, 2018; van Gorp, 2010; Chong and Druckman, 2007). It is central in journalistic work where it plays a pivotal role as the window of reality on various social issues and events. While it highlights the specific part of an event and omits the other parts, this selection process influences the audience's decoding ability and their interpretation of a message. The selection process entails the salience to draw the attention of the audience to merely a particular reality in the news (van Gorp, 2010; Tuchman, 1978; Entman, 1993; Wang, Shahrul & Shamsiah, 2024).

Different types of framing may be involved in this study, namely narrative framing, valence framing, credibility framing, issue and strategic framing. Narrative framing is used to examine how Trump's actions or statements are being constructed into a storytelling format, where it involves the plot setting and character building in a way that certain parts or outcomes are highlighted, whereas the other parts are omitted. This could eventually affect the audience's perception. Valence framing, on the other hand, depicts Donald Trump's image in either a positive or negative light and presents similar information about Donald Trump, which gives implications for the audience's understanding of the political figure. A source's trustworthiness and reliability, depending on who *The Star Online* cites, could influence how people perceive credibility in media framing. Trump's actions are either framed as policy discussion or political manoeuvring, which could be categorised under issue framing or strategic framing. Issue framing predominantly highlights the broader societal impact of a topic by focusing on the policy content, which is fact-based, whereas strategic framing does not directly discuss the actual substance of the issue, instead, it emphasises motives and competition of the issue (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974; Lyengar, 1991).

The Findings

1. Donald Trump's Main Actions/Statements in Post-Election Reporting

A total of 78 news articles and opinion columns that covered the portrayal of Donald Trump's post-presidential stories were analysed. The finding, as shown in *Table 1*, revealed that there were 41 of Trump's main actions or statements highlighted in *The Star Online*. Among the 41 actions/statements made, there were 16.67% (N=13) related to economic tariffs imposed by Trump on the countries worldwide. Trump made statements such as 'if it is a little inflationary, but it is good for the nation, get over it'. This is followed by 7.69% (N=6) reports that covered his action on the mass deportation of migrants in the U.S. His stand on the Gaza issue is also widely reported, where he insisted that the U.S. should take over and redevelop the Gaza Strip (5.13%, N=4). Trump is also determined to unite Americans and make America great again (5.13%, N=4). Trump perceived China as the greatest strategic threat. He made a statement that the Chinese leader respects him because he knows Trump is crazy (3.85%, N=3). Trump wanted to end the war in Ukraine in 24 hours. He had a deal with the respective authorities where Israel and Hamas agreed to a ceasefire (3.85%, N=3). Also, Trump encouraged Palestine to leave Gaza (3.85%, N=3). There were 3.85% (N=3) of the coverage reported that Trump is expected to work closely with ASEAN. There were 2.56% (N=2) of reports respectively on the 5 main actions of Trump, namely Americans and the world kneeling to him / World is brought to heel by Trump, Trump's foreign policy of not helping Imran & Pakistan / Trump could help or hurt Korea deeply, Trump wanted to buy territory / expand territory, Trump won Presidency, Trump withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement and Trump is unpredictable.

The remaining 27 main actions/statements by Trump each comprised 1.28% (N=1) of the entire report. The actions included Trump grabs U.S. democracy, Trump is an eloquent speaker, focusing on the interest of the U.S., Trump favours popularists, Pete Hegseth is obedient to Trump, Trump acquitted Chinese companies to minimise U.S. economic fallout, Africans keen to engage Trump, "Either the deep state destroys America, or we destroy the deep state", Trump is women's protector, Trump is crazy and fascistic, Trump is lonely and dangerous to Europe countries, legal levers of government to Trump's perceived enemy, Trump slew of executive order, Trump broke the promise made on the campaign, Trump destroy international cooperation

with world leaders, Trump opposed Biden's support of Israel and Ukraine, Trump is a unifying force for activists, Trump is against subsidies for clear energy, Melania distanced from Trump in his 1st term of presidency, American carnage, Trump wanted to bring religion back, Trump introduced American First Trade policy, Trump has limited knowledge on ASEAN, world leaders, media outlet to engage Trump, Trump pushed Zuckerberg for lax content, North Korea as a nuclear power, Trump is pragmatic in handling matters, and Trump is a peacemaker.

The data features prominently on Trump's economic policies, particularly on his global tariff impositions and economic disruption, which appear to be detrimental to global cooperation. Additionally, Trump's mass deportation stance, which is given substantial attention in the coverage, reveals a strong emphasis on his immigration policy. His confrontational remark to China, controversial approach on Gaza, and unconventional diplomacy with ASEAN and Europe reinforce the exclusive image of Trump, portraying him as an unpredictable political figure. Evidenced by his leadership themes like "Make America Great Again", Trump is framed as a destabilising figure in global politics who serves dominantly his political self-interest. Overall, the trend suggests that *The Star Online* framed Trump's actions as disruptive and aggressive, both in his ideological and political stance. This aligns with broader critiques of Trump as a controversial political figure in the international arena.

Table 1. Donald Trump's main action/statement in *The Star Online*

| Main Action / Statement | Frequency | % |
|--|-----------|-------|
| Imposed economic tariff / "If it is a little inflationary, but it is good for the nation, get over it" | 13 | 16.67 |
| Mass deportation of migrants in the U.S. | 6 | 7.69 |
| "U.S. should take over and redevelop the Gaza Strip" | 4 | 5.14 |
| "Make America great again" / "Time to unite" | 4 | 5.14 |
| Beijing as the greatest strategic threat / "Chinese leader respects me because he knows I'm crazy" | 3 | 3.86 |
| "We have a deal - Israel & Hamas agreed to a ceasefire" / War in Ukraine - We will end in 24 hours" | 3 | 3.86 |
| Palestinians are encouraged to leave Gaza | 3 | 3.86 |
| Will work closely with ASEAN | 3 | 3.86 |
| Americans and the world kneel to Trump / The world is brought to heel | 2 | 2.56 |
| The foreign policy of not helping Imran & Pakistan / Trump could help or hurt Korea in a powerful way | 2 | 2.56 |
| Trump wanted to buy territory / expand territory | 2 | 2.56 |
| Trump won the presidency | 2 | 2.56 |
| Withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement | 2 | 2.56 |
| Trump is unpredictable | 2 | 2.56 |
| The richest man grabs U.S. democracy | 1 | 1.28 |
| Trump is an eloquent speaker, focusing on the interests of the U.S. | 1 | 1.28 |
| Trump favours popularity | 1 | 1.28 |
| Pete Hegseth is obedient to Trump | 1 | 1.28 |
| Acquit Chinese companies to minimise U.S. economic fallout | 1 | 1.28 |
| Africans keen to engage Trump | 1 | 1.28 |
| "Either the deep state destroys America, or we destroy the deep state" | 1 | 1.28 |
| Women's protector | 1 | 1.28 |
| Crazy & fascistic | 1 | 1.28 |
| Lonely and dangerous to European countries | 1 | 1.28 |
| Legal levers of government to Trump's perceived enemy | 1 | 1.28 |
| A slew of executive orders | 1 | 1.28 |
| Broke the promise made on the campaign | 1 | 1.28 |

| | | |
|--|-----------|---------------|
| Destroy international cooperation with world leaders | 1 | 1.28 |
| opposed Biden's support of Israel & Ukraine | 1 | 1.28 |
| Unifying force for activists | 1 | 1.28 |
| Against subsidies for clean energy | 1 | 1.28 |
| Melania distanced herself from Trump in his 1 st term | 1 | 1.28 |
| American carnage | 1 | 1.28 |
| "We have to bring religion back" | 1 | 1.28 |
| American First Trade Policy | 1 | 1.28 |
| Limited knowledge of ASEAN | 1 | 1.28 |
| World Leaders, media outlets to engage Trump | 1 | 1.28 |
| Trump pushed Zuckerberg for lax content | 1 | 1.28 |
| North Korea as a nuclear power | 1 | 1.28 |
| Trump is pragmatic in handling matters | 1 | 1.28 |
| Trump is a peacemaker | 1 | 1.28 |
| TOTAL | 78 | 100.00 |

2. Dominant Themes in *The Star Online*

Table 2 shows the dominant themes in the reporting of Donald Trump covered by *The Star Online*. There are three categories of dominant themes revealed in the coverage of Donald Trump's portrayal, namely positive, negative and neutral. Most of the themes fall into the negative category (66.67%, N=52), whereas positive themes take up 30.77% (N=24) of the coverage. The remaining is the neutral theme (2.56%, N=2).

For the negative category, the first three highest coverage fall to the following themes: Donald Trump's policies had adverse economic effects on countries worldwide (15.38%, N=12), Donald Trump is a crazy/offensive /colossus leader (6.41%, N=5) and Donald Trump is a deporter of immigrant (5.14%, N=4). These were followed by the themes of Donald Trump is a disruptor to other countries sovereignty (3.85%, N=3) and Donald Trump aims to make America Great again (3.85%, N=3), Donald Trump imposed inflammatory foreign policy (2.56%, N=2), Donald Trump is revengeful (2.56%, N=2), Donald Trump is a threat to European countries (2.56%, N=2), Donald Trump is a dictator ruler / fascistic (2.56%, N=2), Donald Trump is a common enemy of ASEAN & EU, and Donald Trump is against China (2.56%, N=2). The remaining themes which respectively take up 1.28% (N=1) include Donald Trump as an opposer to Biden's policy, Donald Trump being dominant & bureaucratic, Donald Trump rupturing digital communication, doubt about Donald Trump's policy/decision, Donald Trump being a democracy destroyer, Donald Trump is mercuric and hostile towards "the deep state", Donald Trump set his restoration's macho tone, Donald Trump is distanced from global climate action, Donald Trump has a conservative religious focus, Donald Trump has limited knowledge of ASEAN, Donald Trump is against Muslims, Donald Trump's campaign is boastful and Donald Trump is a dogmatic policymaker.

On the other hand, the positive themes include some countries are optimists/support of Donald Trump's policy (6.41%, N=5), Donald Trump is a peace creator and lifesaver/the ceasefire of Gaza (5.13%, N=4), Donald Trump is a success (3.85%, N=3), Donald Trump is well aware of the interdependence of countries (2.25%, N=2), Donald Trump is powerful/rich (2.25%, N=2), Donald Trump is pragmatic and is strongly pro-business (2.25%, N=2), Donald Trump is American protector (2.25%, N=2). Another four positive themes (1.28%, N=1) respectively are Donald Trump as a unifying force and environmental activist, Donald Trump bringing good economic growth, Donald Trump's fast act beating opponents, and Donald Trump as an ASEAN supporter. There are only 2 themes that fall under neutral (1.28%, N=1), which are Donald Trump's first family life and that Donald Trump won the US election.

Table 2 overall shows that most themes were negative. Trump is framed as an authoritarian leader, and his polarising actions left an adverse impact on the global economy. The majority of the themes carry Trump's disruptive role in international relations, a mass deporter of immigrants. Even though there are positive

portrayals of Trump, particularly as a peace broker and pro-business leader, these numbers are significantly outnumbered. With only 2.56% of the neutral themes, it is notable that most of the reporting was not neutral, but had a clear evaluative tone, either positive or negative, suggesting a tendency towards valence in the reporting.

Table 2: Dominant themes in *The Star Online*

| Theme | Frequency | % |
|---|-----------|--------------|
| Positive | | |
| Optimist/support of Donald Trump's policy | 5 | 6.41 |
| Donald Trump as a peace creator and lifesaver/the ceasefire of Gaza | 4 | 5.13 |
| Donald Trump is a success | 3 | 3.85 |
| Donald Trump is well aware of the interdependence of countries | 2 | 2.56 |
| Donald Trump is powerful/rich | 2 | 2.56 |
| Donald Trump is pragmatic & is strongly pro-business | 2 | 2.56 |
| Donald Trump is the American protector | 2 | 2.56 |
| Donald Trump as a unifying force and environmental activist | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump brings good economic growth | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump's fast act beats opponents | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump as an ASEAN supporter | 1 | 1.28 |
| Subtotal | 24 | 30.77 |
| Negative | | |
| Donald Trump's policies had adverse economic effects on countries worldwide | 12 | 15.38 |
| Donald Trump is a crazy/offensive/colossus leader | 5 | 6.41 |
| Donald Trump is a deporter of Immigrants | 4 | 5.13 |
| Donald Trump is a disruptor of other countries' sovereignty | 3 | 3.85 |
| Donald Trump aims to make America Great again | 3 | 3.85 |
| Donald Trump imposed an inflammatory foreign policy | 2 | 2.56 |
| Donald Trump is vengeful | 2 | 2.56 |
| Donald Trump is a threat to European countries | 2 | 2.56 |
| Donald Trump is a dictatorial ruler/fascist | 2 | 2.56 |
| Donald Trump is a common enemy of ASEAN & EU | 2 | 2.56 |
| Donald Trump is against China | 2 | 2.56 |
| Donald Trump is an opponent of Biden's policy | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump is dominant & bureaucratic | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump ruptures digital communication | 1 | 1.28 |
| Doubt on Donald Trump's policy/decision | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump is a democracy destroyer | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump is mercurial & hostile towards 'the deep state' | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump set his restoration's macho tone | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump is distanced from global climate action | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump has a conservative religious focus | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump has limited knowledge of ASEAN | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump is against Muslims | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump's campaign is boastful | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump is a dogmatic policymaker | 1 | 1.28 |

| | Subtotal | 52 | 66.67 |
|------------------------------------|----------|----|-------|
| Neutral | | | |
| Donald Trump's first family life | | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump won the U.S. election | | 1 | 1.28 |
| | Subtotal | 2 | 2.56 |
| | TOTAL | 78 | 100 |

3. Tone and Sources covered in *The Star Online*

A total of 78 news and opinions were drawn from the following sections under *The Star Online*, namely Focus (53.85%, N=42), Nation (34.62%, N=27), Insight (10.25%, N=8), and News (1.28%, N=1). The tone which characterises *The Star Online*'s portrayal of Donald Trump during the post-election period was primarily negative (66.67%, N=52), whereas a positive tone takes up 30.77% (N=24) of the overall coverage. Only 2.56% (N=2) is neutral in tone. For the sources cited, the highest number of sources cited in international media outlets (37.18%, N=29), followed by the columnist (16.67%, N=13), Malaysian Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim (11.57%, N=9), Malaysian Ministers and Members of Parliament (8.97%, N=7). Politicians, experts and foreign countries' Prime Minister respectively take up 3.85% (N=3) for the coverage. Following these, NGOs, Industry leaders and diplomats are the sources that carry 2.56% (N=2) of the reporting, respectively. The least reporting sources are U.S. immigrants, U.S. ex-president Joe Biden, Donald Trump's son, academicians and Donald Trump's supporters, which covered 1.28% (N=1) respectively in the total coverage.

Table 3. Tone and sources covered in *The Star Online*

| Tone | | |
|--|-----------|---------------|
| | N | % |
| Negative | 52 | 66.67 |
| Positive | 24 | 30.77 |
| Neutral | 2 | 2.56 |
| TOTAL | 78 | 100.00 |
| Source | | |
| | N | % |
| International media outlets | 29 | 37.18 |
| Columnists | 13 | 16.67 |
| Malaysian Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim | 9 | 11.54 |
| Malaysia Ministers and Members of Parliament | 7 | 8.97 |
| Politicians | 3 | 3.85 |
| Expert | 3 | 3.85 |
| Prime Ministers (Other than Malaysia) | 3 | 3.85 |
| NGOs | 2 | 2.56 |
| Industry leaders | 2 | 2.56 |
| Diplomats | 2 | 2.56 |
| U.S. immigrants | 1 | 1.28 |
| U.S. ex-president Joe Biden | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump's son | 1 | 1.28 |
| Academicians | 1 | 1.28 |
| Donald Trump's supporters | 1 | 1.28 |
| TOTAL | 78 | 100.00 |

Discussion

Scholars have long highlighted Trump's portrayal as a populist leader with controversial rhetoric and policies (Luo, He, & Yu, 2021; Fernández, 2022; Hassan Khan, Ali & Siddiqui, 2019; Wijaya & Tanto, 2023; Abbas & Zahra, 2021; Kuypers, 2020; Thompson, 2021; Cahyaningsih & Pranoto, 2021). The findings of this study are consistent with existing literature on media framing and political communication, especially the portrayal of Donald Trump in the international media. His post-election conduct was often framed through narrative rhetoric, which marked his unpredictable leadership style and political manoeuvring, thus fortifying his image as a divisive political figure. *The Star Online* emphasised Trump's economic policies, foreign relations, and governance decisions. It focuses on Trump's confrontations with China, ASEAN, and the European Union reflects this framing. The representation of his leadership as challenging established international norms is further enhanced. His policy is often framed as disruptive and aggressive in the international arena, constantly portraying him as a destabilising figure in global politics. This corresponds with the broader scholarship on the media representation of Trump.

The findings have widely seen the application of narrative framing in *The Star Online*'s reports on how media organise political figures' actions into structured storylines that influence audience perceptions. The prevalence of strategic framing in *The Star Online*'s coverage further supports media bias in political reporting. It indicated Trump's leadership is mainly driven by personal and electoral circumstances, instead of pragmatic policymaking, and predominantly aimed at solidifying his hegemony rather than addressing important governance issues. Opposite to Western mainstream media which tends to portray him negatively, emphasising his authoritarian leadership, litigious government style, and strong nationalism (Jutel, 2018; Abbas & Zahra, 2021; Luo, He, & Yu, 2021; Fernández, 2022; Hassan Khan, Ali & Siddiqui, 2019; Wijaya & Tanto, 2023;), *The Star Online* was more focused on his controversial economic policies and immigration stance.

The Star Online's use of strategic and valence framing emphasises how media influence political discourse. Even though the negative coverage was dominant in the reporting, positive themes such as economic pragmatism, peace negotiation and pro-business stance were present. However, the positive aspects of his leadership are underscored since the positive themes were significantly outnumbered by the negative themes. Another important aspect is the framing of Trump's economic policies. Among the cited sources, there was a lack of economic experts. This implies that when covering the media construction of economic narratives around political figures, in-depth scrutiny was absent.

This study revealed that *The Star Online* relies heavily on international media outlets and statements from government officials. Trump was often being invigorated through a critical lens from a world perspective. The finding revealed that Malaysian mainstream media, within a specific ideological perspective, often cite elite sources, such as government officials, to frame Trump's actions and statements. This eventually narrows the scope of public discourse and strengthens specific portrayals of political figures.

In *The Star Online*'s coverage, Trump's supporters have limited inclusion, which further indicates that viewpoints are represented selectively. A possible replication of Western narratives may happen, and the Malaysian independent perspective may be absent if the coverage is overwhelmingly reliant on international media sources. This is alarming as the local media outlets could just homogeneously produce the global political discourse from elite sources over the grassroots perspectives (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). In other words, the reporting helps to reinforce the existing biases about Donald Trump rather than providing a contextual adaptation. It is also important to note that *The Star Online*'s editorial positioning is shaped by both global influences and domestic political alignments, cultural sensitivities, and national interests within the political culture of Malaysia political culture. This portrayal of Donald Trump uncovers the interplay between local and international framing in Malaysia's news context. It suggests potential implications for audience reception where the audience may interpret the portrayal of Trump as a reflection of the world's political concerns through local socio-political lenses. Besides, the audience may also perceive the portrayal as a comparison with the local leadership styles. These may reinforce, influence or change the public opinion and political discourse towards Western political figures, foreign political systems and ideology.

Conclusion

The Star Online's portrayal of Donald Trump in post-2024 U.S. presidential election underscores the media's impact in shaping public perceptions of global political figures, especially those who are controversial. It reveals that Trump's actions and statements were reported through strategic and narrative framing, where his confrontational foreign policy and controversial leadership are highlighted. Though minimal positive coverage, such as economic pragmatism and peace efforts exists, dominant themes are the adverse economic impact of Donald Trump's policies on other countries, rigid immigration stance, disruption of international norms, his unpredictability, and political self-interest.

Additionally, this study revealed that *The Star Online*'s coverage preponderantly adopted a negative tone that highlighted Trump's policies, authoritarian leadership style, nationalism and controversial statements. Trump is portrayed as a destabilising figure with personal motives rather than governance. A few dominant themes, which were framed mainly as criticism, included economic policies, immigration stance, and foreign relations. Besides, the news portal relied heavily on international media and elite sources. The reporting gives limited representation to Trump supporters or economic experts and thus brings a narrow scope of public discourse. *The Star Online*'s coverage of Trump aligns with global media narratives and reveals its editorial choices are shaped by Malaysia's political and media landscape.

This study contributes to the encompassing discourse on media framing and a local media role in constructing global political narratives. The Framing Theory highlighted the strategic choices made by media outlets in constructing public perceptions of political figures. The negative framing, which is predominant in the reporting, indicated that Malaysian media, aligned with other international media outlets, made selective reporting in covering global discourse in a broader scope in Trump's actions and statements. This trend is likely accentuated by the presence of opinion columns which consistently portray Trump through a critical lens.

Given that most of the sources cited in *The Star Online* are international wire agencies, it indicates that the local media outlets may correspond with international media viewpoints. The reliance of Malaysian media on international news agencies plays a pivotal role in framing the news stories and may influence journalistic objectivity. This study is limited in its scope as it does not account for visual elements such as images or videos, which could contribute to the audience's interpretation of the message. Covering only 100 days after the election, the time frame of analysis may not be able to examine the longer-term transformation in media portrayal of Trump.

Future research could look into the expansion of the dataset that includes multiple Malaysian news sources and a longer period of coverage for more comprehensive coverage. Comparative analysis of Trump's image and portrayal in different regional contexts could also be conducted to complement the existing literature. Additionally, to have a better understanding of how ownership and sourcing have an impact on media framing, Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model could be employed and explored in future studies. This broader examination of global and local narratives would give further enhancement to understanding how media influence public opinion on political figures.

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