Department of Social and Policy Sciences

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Thesis

The relationship between internet behavior and political participation

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**1. Introduction**

Comparing to the media invented in the past, the pace of the Internet is faster. Users can get information immediately. Constant update of smart phone breaks the restriction that users need to stay in front of their computers. Users can get information anytime, anywhere and keep in touch with information that comes one after another. Online high-speed information naturally directly affects the speed of mass movement, which commonly uses software including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and so on.

In recent years, the promotion of civic engagement by the Internet has taken into account by academia. Convenience and interactivity of the Internet can enhance public discussion and citizens’ participation in public issues to promote their democratic practice. Since Internet users are mostly young people, scholars are in particular interested about whether the Internet can raise young people’s interest and enhance their participation in politics.

For example, on March 18, 2014, in order to oppose the "Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement" promoted by the Legislature, a group of university students formed “The Black Island Nation Youth Front” to occupy the Legislative Yuan in order to protest the legislative procedure. Later, the "Sunflower Movement" was launched. During the period of the movement, Internet users who concerned about this political movement acted highly online (Chen, Ping&Chen, 2015). The emergence of Internet has enabled people to gather with others sharing similar political viewpoints and stay away from those who disagree with their view. For teenagers, it is easy for them to interpret that the Internet can connect people whose opinions were ignored by the mainstream opinion. These teenagers’ conception is turned into fact, which causes mass movement. Some people participating in mass movement definitely have expectation to change the current situation, but others are blind people, influenced by internet hyped emotion. The past political studies have focused on whether voters '"political attitudes" or "political awareness" affect voters' political participation (Abramson & Aldrich, 1982), and generally agreed that political awareness and political participation will be a positive correlation (Almond & Verba, 1989).

To sum up, researchers began to think how the internet using affected political participation of citizen? How is the phenomenon in Taiwan? Concerned about the political or public affairs in the social networking site to discuss and to search recognition, and then bring a real participation of citizen action. Whether the phenomenon that Internet greatly affect the political participation benefit to Taiwan? The following is the study purpose which researcher wants to know. First, the social networking site whether enhances the user's political participation. Second, the frequency and time of using Internet whether improve the user's political participation.

**2. Literature Review**

For many, as American citizens, one of the aspects of our culture that many are most proud of is the extent to which they can take part in the political system. Whether they are voting for a new congressman, serving on a jury, or participating in a public protest, they can be fairly certain that their actions are going to have an influence on American politics in some way. For them, this is important because it is one of the ways in which Americans can contribute to their communities and be active members of society(David White2010).

**2.1 The types of Political Participation**

These civic activities are what are known as political participation, and they are a critical part of any democracy. As the name suggests, political participation simply means that a person is participating in the political process by making his or her opinions and beliefs known. In the social sciences, the term 'political participation' is often used to describe an action taken by a citizen to influence the outcome of a political issue.

There are many different forms of political participation, and whether you know it or not, you've probably taken part in some of them at different points in your life. Some of the most common forms of political participation are.

Voting: In a democracy, voting is the single most important form of political participation that a person can take part in because it ensures that politicians are elected by the people, rather than being assigned to their position of power by someone else.

Protest: Whether or not it is a constitutional right, as it is in the U.S., public protests are another important form of political participation because you are making your opinions known in a very obvious way, with the hope that your actions will influence or initiate change in a particular area of politics.

Public consultations: Like voting, public consultations (which are more commonly known as town hall meetings) offer ordinary citizens the chance to get together in a group with a politician or elected official in order to make their opinions and feelings known.

Jury duty: Although most people shudder at the thought of having to attend jury duty, it is an important type of political participation because it ensures that people who are charged with a crime are judged by people like them, rather than allowing the outcome to depend entirely on a single person, such as a judge(David White2010).

Political participation can be loosely defined as citizens’ activities affecting politics. Ever since the famous funeral speech of Pericles (431 BC) politicians and scholars have stressed the unique character of democracy by emphasizing the role of ordinary citizens in political affairs. By now, the list of participatory activities has become virtually infinite and includes actions such as voting, demonstrating, contacting public officials, boycotting, attending party rallies, guerrilla gardening, posting blogs, volunteering, joining flash mobs, signing petitions, buying fair-trade products, and even suicide protests. Political participation is relevant for any political system, but it is an indispensable feature of democracy: “Where few take part in decisions there is little democracy; the more participation there is in decisions, the more democracy there is” (Verba & Nie, 1972). Thus, the extent and scope of political participation are important—perhaps even decisive—criteria for assessing the quality of democracy.

The growing salience of government and politics for everyday life, the blurring of distinctions between private and public spheres, the increasing competences and resources (especially education) of citizens, and the availability of an abundance of political information resulted in a continuous expansion of available forms of participation. While the political nature of the activities is immediately clear for elections, demonstrations, or letters-to-the-editor, this is much more ambiguous if we are dealing with the purchase of sneakers manufactured under specific conditions, the secret planting of public green spaces, or clicking “like” on the site of a group advocating the protection of whales in the north Atlantic. The list of these last examples can be extended simply—and with each additional form the problems of demarcating political participation become more evident.

**2.2 The data of network use**

A new analysis of 15 years-worth of data highlights several key trends: For some groups, especially young adults, those with high levels of education, and those in more affluent households, internet penetration is at full saturation levels. For other groups, such as older adults, those with less educational attainment, and those living in lower-income households, adoption has historically been lower but rising steadily, especially in recent years. At the same time, digital gaps still persist.

In this report, we cover some of the major demographic trends that lie beneath the topline adoption numbers and highlight:

Age differences: Older adults have lagged behind younger adults in their adoption, but now a clear majority (58%) of senior citizens uses the internet.

Class differences: Those with college educations are more likely than those who do not have high school diplomas to use the internet. Similarly, those who live in households earning more than $75,000 are more likely to be internet users than those living in households earning less than $30,000. Still, the class-related gaps have shrunk dramatically in 15 years as the most pronounced growth has come among those in lower-income households and those with lower levels of educational attainment.

Racial and ethnic differences: African-Americans and Hispanics have been somewhat less likely than whites or English-speaking Asian-Americans to be internet users, but the gaps have narrowed. Today, 78% of blacks and 81% of Hispanics use the internet, compared with 85% of whites and 97% of English-speaking Asian Americans.

Community differences: Those who live in rural areas are less likely than those in the suburbs and urban areas to use the internet. Still, 78% of rural residents are online(Andrew Perrin2015).

**2.3 The Internet**

The rise of the Internet in the last ten years has been a major booster for the English language worldwide. As Graddol (1997) states, the Internet is regarded as the flagship of global English. Knowing this, it is easy to draw the conclusion that people today are exposed to English more than earlier. According to Tilastokeskus (2008), ninety-nine percent of all Finnish students had used the Internet during the last three months at the end of the year 2007. It is rather safe to say that students in Finland are very reliant on the Internet. As for 8 people in working life, the figure was ninety percent, and finally the group of senior citizens in which thirty-six percent of the population had been engaged in an Internet-related activity during the past three months. Unfortunately, the study by Tilastokeskus did not show how the three groups had spent their time on the Internet. In other words, we do not know which web pages they had been browsing and in which language. Nevertheless, the article mentions a couple of web sites that are popular among Internet users. YouTube and Facebook, for example, create certain Internet communities where everyone can participate in. Weblogs are also an inherent part of today's web communities. What is positive, from the point of view of a future language teacher, is that all those three web communities are mostly English-based, and thus it is likely that people engaged in them are exposed, and even forced, to learn English to some extent. However, it must be noted that Facebook and blogs can also be available in Finnish, and, thus, it is not always obvious that Finnish users absorb English when using them.

Improvements in technology such as the Internet are seen as beneficial when it comes to language learning. The Internet makes it easy to access lots of information and keep contact with people in a foreign language. As Coniam and Wong (2008) point out, “From a motivational point of view, the benefits which IRC chat programs such as ICQ afford are substantial”. They go on saying that in their study of Hong Kong secondary school students, the learners showed positive attitudes towards chat programs as a medium for learning English. In more general terms, the relationship between language learning and the Internet is an interesting one, and I hope that more research will be done in this area in the future. It is highly likely that the young learners of today are relying more and more on the Internet, and it should be taken advantage of in language teaching, especially in English-based classrooms.

**2.4 The relationship between motivation and the Internet**

Voter participation in elections has been on a steady decline since the 1960’s. If the argument that greater political participation makes for stronger democracy is taken as true, a correlation between Internet use and political participation can have important policy implications. This study finds that a correlation does exist. Individuals with access to the Internet are significantly more likely to vote and donate to a campaign than those who do not have access. The predicted probability of voting increased by nearly 15 percentage points, and the predicted probability of donating more than doubled when Internet users were compared to non-users. These findings support the Mobilization Theory that asserts the Internet empowers citizens and strengthens their social capital by reducing the divide between the government and the governed thereby encouraging greater participation rates. Further support of the mobilization theory can be found in the psychological variables used in the model. Interest in the campaign was highly statistically significant while efficacy was not. One way of sparking interest in the political process is to provide more information to the public. In this regard, the Internet can be considered a new tool to counter declining civic engagement in the United States (Karen Geneva Larson2004).

Given these results, policies and programs to open access to and increase Internet use should be encouraged because they can contribute to greater political awareness and participation by the public. In this regard, the Internet can be considered a public good, and much like free education and public library systems, citizens should have free Internet access. There are currently many rural and poor communities that do not have 29 Web access even in their public libraries and schools. Increased civic and political participation is a strong argument in favor of government investment in providing Web access for all. In addition, programs that focus on information technology expansion should be promoted. Internet is constantly improving and changing methods of information exchange and communication. Policymakers should be aware of the ways in which new technology can update and streamline political institutions. Such developments can improve citizens’ perceptions and trust in government. For example, technology proponents look for a day when instead of physically going to a polling place, individuals can use the Internet for voting purposes. Although it is currently not practically, legally, or fiscally possible to develop a comprehensive Internet voting system, this technology is not entirely remote and could possibly significantly alter not only the number of voters but also the demographic makeup of the voting public(Bimber, 2003). Policymakers should make a point of keeping government services and institutions up to date with the latest technology.

**3. Research Method**

**3.1 Population and sample**

To research The Relationship between Internet Use and Political Participation, the study used Taiwan Social Change Survey (Round 4, Year 1) general questionnaire, Ying-Hwa Chang and Yang-Chih Fu (2000). The study use over twenty years old of Republic of China citizens as survey population, use the way that stratified random sampling in three steps (level, village, personal); the study aim to finish 2000 cases, and sampling 3526 samples after expanding.

**3.2 Questionnaire**

This study consists of two levels dimensions, one is Internet usage behavior the other is political participation options. Using Internet to search for what kind of information is including political related、entertainment、life information and others.

According to the chart (Ⅰ), we assume the Internet usage behavior is independent variables, political participation is dependent variable, we want to explore whether the behavior of using Internet will impact people participate political activities or not. Internet using has four items; political participation take eighteen options to count on the grade of political participation and divide to four level, 4 point ,5 point ,6 point and up 7 point.

**3.3 Relationship between behaviors of using Internet**

In the prevalence of the Internet generation, people use the Internet in many projects; even so there are many modes of election, for example: E-voting. Peoples are going to elect in network, whether it will affect people's active participation in the political level, Researchers will analyze the relevance. Internet use is associated with political participation, Researchers are curious about whether the search for information in the Internet category will affect the level of political participation, therefore Researchers take the network to use the questionnaire is divided into four parts, Politics Related, Entertainment, Life Information and others. About political participation, Researchers questionnaire rating indicates the degree of people's involvement; the more active political participation will get higher points. Here researchers define the more actively, it is to participate in political activities including those who vote more frequently, then use the web to do this with the chi-square analysis.

Due to the complexity of the elections, Researchers want to know a few of the recent elections; candidates have used the Internet to capture votes in the group. However, such conduct is consistent with benefits, whether it can achieve the purpose of raising the number of votes, and whether Internet users are in search of the Internet will affect the sensitivity of the categories of information for politics. Many candidates use the Internet to promote its election political philosophy, whether such behavior can be attained, that is why researchers are curious and want to study. Because of recent election results show that the advent of e-generation, candidate is operation of the network in the world, will get more votes. The samples taken of 1960, and the level of political participation of four points from the beginning, were divided into four groups 5, 6, 7 or more points. For the part of political participation, people usually go online searching for category information, 146 were related to politics, entertainment 160 people, 190 people living information, others are 1464 people. Active participation of political score of four have 137 people, five points have 1482 people, 204 people have six points, seven points above (including 7 points) in 137 people. Therefore, this study assumed that Internet use and political participation correlated. This research calculates the relationship between the information of using internet and political participation. Researchers used cross table to inspect the hypothesis.

Frist, researchers used the answer of 31 into four categories. The first is Political related, including policy, society, China and local coverage. The second is Entertainment related, including movie and television, physical education and sightseeing. The third is Life information related, including consumer finance, health care、technology and advertising. The fourth is others related, including domesticity, art culture, fiction, academic thought, religion, geomancy and others. Give the point from three to zero to the above-mentioned categories respectively, then added the number to get the total score 1.The higher score you get, represent the higher degree of correlation. The total score assort into four levels, which are “four point”, “five point”, “six point” and “seven and more than seven” respectively. Second, researchers assort the answer of 66a to 66c and 66h 67 to quantitative analysis the data. Give the point from three to zero to “Repeatedly”, “There had been”, “Never” and “Do not want to answer” respectively then added the number to get the total score2. The higher score you get represent the higher degree of correlation. Cross compare the total score1 and 2, to find out the relationship strength of the two variables. The significance of the two variables is 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05. It means it’s in the rejection area therefore we can reject the null hypothesis.

Three hypotheses:

1. More time spend on network, higher political participation.

2. More time spend on network, higher political participation of the Internet.

3. Higher frequency of using network, higher political participation of the Internet.

The degree of political participation

Political participation

1 .Reality (offline)

2 .Internet (online)

The time of using network

The frequency of using network

**3.4 Diagram: The correlation between Internet and politic.**

Chart (Ⅰ) Research structure table (H1 is independent variable)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Grade | Political participation | |
| Frequency | Percent |
| 4  5  6  Up 7 | 137  1428  204  137 | 7.0  75.6  10.4  7.0 |
| Total | 1960 | 100.0 |
| Category | Internet usage behavior | |
| Frequency | Percent |
| Political related  Entertainment  Life information  Others | 146  160  190  1464 | 7.4  8.2  9.7  74.4 |
| Total | 1960 | 100.0 |

Chart (I) Frequency table of Internet using behavior and political participation

According to the chart (I), on political participation aspect, we can see the 1428 person get the 5 point is most, and 4 point 137 person、6 point 204 person、up 7 point 137 person. The Internet usage behavior, political related is 146 person、Entertainment 160 person、Life information 190 person and others 1464 person. So we will use the crossable to fine the association between the political participation and internet usage behavior, and count on its strength.

**4. Data Analysis**

**4.1 Relationship between behaviors of using Internet1.Introduction and political participation**

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**4.2 Measurement Method** This research calculates the relationship between the information of using internet and political participation. Researchers used cross table to inspect the hypothesis.First of all, researchers used the answer of 31 into four categories. The first is Political related, including policy, society, China and local coverage. The second is Entertainment related, including movie and television、physical education and sightseeing. The third is Life information related, including consumer finance, health care, technology and advertising. The fourth is others related, including domesticity, art culture, fiction, academic thought, religion, geomancy and others. Give the point from three to zero to the above-mentioned categories respectively, then added the number to get the total score 1.The higher score you get, represent the higher degree of correlation. The total score assort into four levels, which are “four point”, “five point”, “six point” and “seven and more than seven” respectively. Second, researchers assort the answer of 66a to 66c and 66h 67 to quantitative analysis the data. Give the point from three to zero to “Repeatedly”, “There had been”, “Never” and “Do not want to answer” respectively then added the number to get the total score2. The higher score you get represent the higher degree of correlation. Cross compare the total score1 and 2, to find out the relationship strength of the two variables. The significance of the two variables is 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05. It means it’s in the rejection area therefore we can reject the null hypothesis.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| N | | | | | | |
|  | | Internet usage | | | | total |
| other | political related | Entertainment | life information |
| political participation | 4 point | 104 | 7 | 11 | 15 | 137 |
| 5 point | 1139 | 91 | 120 | 132 | 1482 |
| 6 point | 132 | 23 | 18 | 31 | 204 |
| up7 point | 89 | 25 | 11 | 12 | 137 |
| total | | 1464 | 146 | 160 | 190 | 1960 |

**4.3Analyzing** Analyzing this questionnaire we can find out that there has relationship between behaviors of using Internet1.Introduction, and political participation. In this study, is using chi-square test to probe the relationship between behavior of using Internet and political participation. From chart 1 we can see that chi-square is 43.073, and significance is smaller than 0.05. So, we can reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, we can almost sure that there has relationship between behavior of using Internet and political participation. From chart 2 can be found that if behavior of using Internet is concern political then political participation will also relatively positive. So it can determine the behavior of using Internet will affect the degree of political participation.

Summarize the above analysis, chi-square test shows that in terms of behavior of using Interne as an indicator of political participation, we can say that if behavior of using Internet is related to political, the level of political participation will be higher. In other words, the more often received the political message, political participation will be higher.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | value | Degree of freedom | Sig. |
| Pearson | 43.073a | 9 | .000 |

(Ⅰ) Internet usage and the political participation crosstabs

(Ⅱ) Internet usage and the political participation chi-square

**5. Conclusion**

In recent years, political scientists have been discussing the impact of the internet media on political communication and its main focus is on the relationship between the use of internet and "political participation". According to studies, it points out that with the increase of Internet use, the reading time such as reading newspaper will be therefore reduced due to the limited time resources. That may indirectly reduce the "political participation" because of the reduction of interpersonal interaction. However, on the other hand, some researchers argue that the prevalence of Internet may reduce the cost of knowledge acquisition, that indirectly encourages "citizen participation" and "political participation" (Bimber, 2000). Despite of these factors such as the incohensive results and the differences of cultural background, this study takes Taiwan as an example to explore the positive or negative relationship between internet use and "political participation". The researchers used the Chi-square test to exmaine the correlation and motivation between the use of network and political participation. It means that the link between the use of network message and politics is relatively high compared to actual political participation. The more time you spend online, the more you cannot actually spend the time on political participation in the real life. In the perspective of limited time resources, the popularity and convenience of network provides various ways and information, however, it’s actually negative to the political participation.

Such as discoveries, like the Inference of Bimber (2000) and Delli Carpirni (2000), provides a political participation network, making it easier to search for information, reducing the cost of acquiring knowledge and indirectly encouraging "citizen participation" and "political participation" in the network. Furthermore, the motivations such as "entertainment group" is not related with the political network directly, it is worrying that the online "entertainment " not frequent contact with various network politics, therefore, how to increase the political participation will be an important topic. Overall, the results of this study show that the relationship between Internet use and "political participation" is based on the motivation of users to use the Internet. The impact of the internet is not entirely positive or negative but depends on the personal situations and motivations. While the time of the network use is critical as the network motivation. This study uses SPSS to measure the Chi-square analysis, we’re releasing several options divided into four categories: political related, Life News, entertainment and other categories to promote the presentation efficiently. In order to achieve a more complete internet for political participation may lead to different from traditional media, network media not only provide film information, e-mail and social networking software and other functions are widely used in society. Although this analysis shows no relationship in practice, it will still be helpful if future political candidates or government policies can be used to promote the network explicitly.

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