POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: THE EFFECT OF THE NEW MEDIA AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA ON VOTER TURNOUTS IN LAS PIÑAS CITY

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the influence of attention to specific forms of traditional and online media on young adults' online and offline political participation as well as voter turnout during the 2016 Philippine Presidential Election. A quantitative approach was used in order to get the relationship between the use of the New Media and the Traditional Media in the voter mobilization of the young adults in Las Piñas. The results show that newspaper reading has the strongest effects among traditional news sources. However, actively participating in the communication process was the effect of the New Media.

INTRODUCTION

Most of the research on minority and politics shows growing disinterest of younger generations to participate in politics (Putnam, 2000). Although there is an assumption that political participation among the youth has been decreasing, the role of the media in affecting non-participatory behavior has become mainly interesting with the continuing popularity of the Internet among younger people and the possible effects of the new medium.

For instance, in the US, during the 2008 election, the Pew Internet & American Life Project found that, for the first time, the majority of US adults (55%) used the Internet to stay informed or get involved in the political process (Smith, 2009). Two years later, the Pew Internet & American Life Project reported that, in the 2010 midterm elections, 73% of adult Internet users (54% of US adults) received political news or information, or got involved online, and 35% of social networking site (SNS) users (about 22% of online adults) visited these sites for political information or getting involved in the campaign (Smith, 2011a, 2011b). A more recent Pew survey found that, on SNS, 66% of social media users (39% of US adults) engaged in one of eight civic or political activities (Rainie, Smith, Schlozman, Brady, &Verba, 2012).

DelliCarpini (2000) has pointed out that, compared to older generations of young adults from previous eras, the young adults of the year 2000 were less likely to: trust fellow citizens, be interested in politics, feel obligation in association with citizenship, be knowledgeable about the substance of politics, read newspapers or watch the news, register to vote, or to engage in any civic or political cause beyond voting.

On the other hand, the declining of the public involvement is also a widespread concern in Europe. According to Franklin (2004) & Van Biazen et al. (2012) Europeans vote less and are much less likely to be members of political parties than was the case 30 or 40 years ago. However, young adults in Europe are not apathetic for the reason that even though their participation in electoral politics has declined, their political participation as a whole is relatively healthy (Dalton, 2009; Norris, 2002). Dalton (2007) suggested that for young people, the act of voting should no longer be considered the quintessential element of the concept of good citizenship. Also, Wattenberg (2007) wondered if being able to vote is something to be done by young adults. Correspondingly, in most Western European countries there seems high potential for the Internet, considering the high usage levels over the last few years (Eurostat, 2009).

As we could see, there are countless discussions in the decline of political participation in young adults. With the emergence of the technological advancements, the internet is shown to have had reinforcing effects on information-seeking and sociability (Zúñiga et al., 2009).

Furthermore, the internet also helps in maintaining opportunities in geographically diverse networks (Franzen, 2002) due to the absence of physical cues and simplified communication (Coget et al., 2002) in online settings. Therefore, users may build new links and communities of interest and emotion far beyond the limits of their local environment (Kiesler et al., 2000). Traditional media may have differential consequences for younger and older citizens concerns their different media use habits (Holt, 2013). According to Meraz (2011) The majority of media theories assume that traditional media has singular power to disseminate information and thus, impact public opinion; however, in this age of net- worked media, citizens can bypass traditional media to engage with other, like-minded citizens.

A survey on Good Local Governance was also conducted in the Philippines last 2012 by the Social Weather Station (SWS) and it shows that the social media (14 percent) and conventional media such as TV, newspaper, and radio (13 percent) influenced the young adults in choosing their respective candidates. Nevertheless, their political participation is also relatively low. Therefore, a key difference between younger and older generations seems to be how active they are in their actively participating in public and how they analyze the content online.

Political participation of the young adults are very hard to predict, this paper aims to look at the relationship of Traditional Media and New Media on voter mobilization in Las Piñas City to determine which is more effective as a tool in encouraging electoral participation among young adults.

One of the major conclusions from the other studies is that there are no universal effects of media use on political participation across all citizen groups. Furthermore, the relationship between political participation and media use is also contingent upon the specific form of engagement considered. Knowing that there is a vast decline of political participation in the younger generation, this paper will study how the traditional media and new media help to mobilize the young adults to participate in the electoral processes. It will also help the future researchers on political participation.

Theoretical Framework

The Media Choice Theory was proposed by Alexander F. Boerboom (2015) to relative political information supply by media environments. People constantly have to choose between entertainment or news contents when using media and these media choices relate to political knowledge and participation differently (Prior, 2005). The choice of media users to consume either entertainment or news is inextricably linked to the supply of media content. People can only choose to watch the evening news if their media environment provides them with evening news. Media choice is affected by media supply and therefore a relative supply measure that takes the entertainment/news ratio into account is desirable.

Conformance to the literature, the Traditional Media (Television & Newspaper) and the New Media (Official Government Site & Social Networking Sites) will serve as a voting preference of young adults in choosing their president in the upcoming election. If the voter is more exposed to a certain media, there no assurance if that person will vote for the candidate he/she was exposed to. Hence, the media use of the voters will still depend on their central focus (e.g. agenda-setting).

In order to study the relationship of Traditional Media (TV news and Newspaper) & New Media (Social Networking Sites and Official Government Sites) in mobilizing the first-time voters in the electoral process, it is important to take into account all aspects relevant to the process.

Political Participation

The early empirical work on participation tended to focus mostly on voting and election-related behaviors in a homogenized fashion (Berelson, et al, 1954; Campbell et al. 1960; Lazarsfeld et al, 1948). Nevertheless, there is still an inaccurate link between media usage and levels of participation.

Historically, the very fundamental element for a healthy and functioning democracy is the participation of citizens in the political process. It is well accepted that mass media use is a positive predictor of political participation (Bybee, et al, 1981; McLeod et al, 1999; Scheufele et al, 2003). The Internet has played an ever-increasing role in politics as the setting of media has changed. Regardless of the various changes in the social and political landscape on both international and national levels during the last decades, the significance of participatory behavior of citizens is at the core in several key works on democracy (e.g., Held, 2006). This is largely because most of the "classic" or widely accepted definitions of participation were formulated in the pre-Internet era (Parry et al, 1992; Verba and Nie, 1972; Verba et al, 1995).

As Downs (1957) pointed out, whereas political information is costly to obtain and process, the perceived benefits of its consumption depend on individuals' motivations, especially their interest in politics. Scholars in political communication generally agree that both traditional and online media affect how people learn about and engage in the political process.

However, research on the effects of traditional media sources, primarily television, on political participation has produced different conclusions. Some scholars (e.g., Dalton, 2002; de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Norris, 2000; Pinkleton et al, 1998) have found that traditional media sources inform and mobilize voters.

Political Participation and the use of New Media

Early studies in this area examined the effects of Internet use in general and online news use in particular. There is a newer stream of ''e-participation'' wherein studies had started from the assumption that online activities form a new type of participatory engagement and proceeded to testing their mobilizing effects at the individual level (Bimber 2001; Marien et al, 2010; Stolleet al,2005; Whiteley 2010). According to Shah et al (2001), the internet use for information seeking was confidently related to civic engagement and trust.

Tolbert and McNeal (2003) documented that both Internet access and online news use for political purposes had a positive effect on the likelihood of voting in the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections. Also, reading online news and online political discussion had a positive effect on vote likelihood in the 2004 election (Mossberger et al, 2008).

Hypothesis 1: Frequent usage of Social Networking Sites and Official Government Sites lead to higher voter mobilization.

The relationship between the internet use and the vote likelihood has been already established. However, the question is, does attention to political information on social media influence political participation? Kenski and Stroud (2006) showed that Internet access and contact to information about the presidential campaign online were significantly associated with political participation. In general, prior work seems to suggest that social media usage may increase political engagement. Much of this research, however, builds on cross-sectional surveys and has failed to establish causality. Furthermore, there are limited numbers of studies examining the effects of specific forms of social media and online sources on political participation as much of the literature focuses on usage of one form of online media (e.g., blogs) or combines online media usage into one latent variable.

The use of the new media, specifically the social networking sites, in engaging to Philippine politics was witnessed in the 1st and 2nd Philippine Presidential debates wherein the 40% of Facebook users who were engaged in the discussion were aged 18-24 years old (Rappler, 2016).

Scholars who have studied the media over time generally conclude that the media reinforces political interest and voting intentions, because political interest, voting and learning from the media reinforce each other (Weaver, 1996). The agenda setting literature (McCombs and Shaw 1972; Iyenger and Kinder 1987; Weaver et al. 1981) has shown that voters use the media to learn what issues are important. There is also evidence that voters acquire information with regard to candidate traits (Weaver et al. 1981) and candidate issue positions (Chaffee and Kanihan 1997; Weaver and Drew 1993).

Political Participation and the use of Traditional Media

Previous research in traditional media is relatively consistent in terms of the negative impacts on political participation (Davis, 1994; Graber, 1989; Kerbel, 1998; Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Crotty and Jacobson, 1980). The television media has been found to focus on the "horserace" aspect of election races—who is winning, howclose the race is, and what strategies are being used to increase a candidate's chances of winning instead of candidate qualifications and substantive political information.

Hypothesis 2: Frequent usage of TV news and Newspaper lead to higher voter mobilization.

The press has been blamed for the disengagement of citizens in the political process; interested individuals cannot find substantive information on which to base their votes and are turning away from the political process (Crotty and Jacobson, 1980; Entman, 1989). While some of the researchers attribute lower voter turnout in media coverage, others (McLeod and McDonald, 1985) find that using television and newspaper increases political knowledge, efficacy and even voter turnout. Tewksbury et al. (2008) examined the association between basic news consumption style, information browsing, and political efficacy.

They found that newspaper browsers appear to be interested in a wide variety of topics, both political and nonpolitical, and thus these individuals believe they have a better understanding of society as a whole.

Hypothesis 3: Frequent usage of New Media leads to an effective tool in encouraging the young voters to participate in electoral process than in Traditional Media

As a result, newspaper browsers are more politically efficacious than those who rely on television and the internet to obtain information. The media (both traditional and the Internet) can help increase voter participation by not only providing citizens with information to make informed voting decisions, but by stimulating interest in elections.

While critics argue that media coverage is increasing superficial, there is a substantial body of literature that suggests voters learn from a variety of media sources including newspaper, television, and televised debates (Weaver 1996).
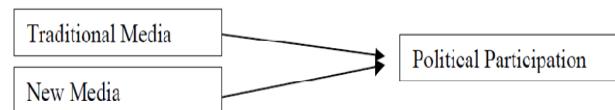

Fig. 1. Analytical Framework

METHOD

The study design that is used in this study is Quantitative Approach in order to look at the relationship of Traditional Media and New Media on voter mobilization in Las Piñas City to determine which is more effective as a tool in encouraging electoral participation among young adults.

Instrumentation

To further understand the aim of the study; the researcher will conduct a survey within the boundaries of the City of Las Piñas focusing on young adults' political participation using Traditional Media and New Media as a tool in electoral mobilization.

Data

Because of the fact that the literature on political participation focuses attention on voting, the researcher will be examining the relationship between voting and using the New and Traditional media for voter mobilization with a correlation and linear regression model. The data were collected in September from the students of Las Piñas Manpower Training Center. The institution selected the respondents from their list of students 18 years old to 35 years old who are registered voters. The researcher also used SPSS in analyzing the data

that was gathered in Las Piñas City. The method used in analyzing the data was chi-square to measure the relationship between the variables.

Respondents and Locale

The reason in choosing the locale is because the researcher considered the accessibility and the respondents should be within reach. In order to get the corresponding answers, it will be asked to the first time voters specifically the college students who are currently in Las Piñas City. The researcher will focus on the universities in Las Piñas. To further verify that the respondents are first time voters, the researcher will include a profile list providing their name, address and their age.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Media Choice and Political Participation

The Hypothesis 1 proposes that there is a relationship between political participation and traditional media. This hypothesis was supported by a data gathered in Las Piñas City as can be seen in the first model (table 1a). The researcher used the questions *"Did the media influence you to vote?"," Do you read news article in newspaper" "How often do you spend time in reading newspaper?" "Do you watch TV news programs (e.g. Such as but not limited to CNN, local news, etc.)?", "How often do you spend time on watching news?"* in order to get the statistics. The independent variable tested in hypothesis 1 was the political participation, the mediating variables were the hours dedicated to news consumption particularly using the traditional media.

Table 1a. The relationship between the political participation and watching television

		If voted in 2016 National Elections	Times spent in reading newspaper	Time spent on watching news
If voted in 2016 National Elections	Pearson Correlation	1	.050	-.038
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.389	.513
	N	300	300	300
Times spent in reading newspaper	Pearson Correlation	.050	1	.139
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.389		.016
	N	300	300	300
Time spent on watching news	Pearson Correlation	-.038	.139	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.513	0.16	
	N	300	300	300

Table 1a shows a significant model with political participation predicting a Pearson correlation of 1, in the times spent in reading newspaper (.050), and times spent on watching news (-.038). In that sense, while the traditional media has a significant positive impact on political participation, the researcher could conclude that it could be a better tool in terms of voter mobilization.

Table 1b. Chi-square

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.038	.053	-.655	.513[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	-.025	.056	-.432	.666[c]
N of Valid Cases		300			

On the other hand, the times spent on watching news and if voted in the 2016 National Elections differ. There are 172 respondents who watched TV news also voted in the recent elections. Those who did not watch TV daily resulted to not participating in the national elections. Looking at the Pearson's R value of -.038 (absolute value), there is a relationship between the traditional media in relation to voter mobilization but then the result shows that even if you are engaging in traditional media, there is no assurance that you will vote for the 2016 national elections.

The hypothesis 2 predicted that the higher the frequency of use of digital media, such as official Government sites and social networking sites would lead to increased political participation. This hypothesis is supported by the results presented in Table 2a.

Table 2a. The relationship between new media and political participation.

		If voted in 2016 National Elections	Reading online news articles about political candidates
If voted in 2016 National Elections	Pearson Correlation	1	.053
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.356
	N	300	300
Reading online news articles about political candidates	Pearson Correlation	.053	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.356	
	N	300	300

The researcher used the questions "Do you read online news articles about political candidates?" and "Did you vote during the 2016 National Elections?" The result is clear that the political participation having a predicted pearson correlation of 1 and reading online news articles of .053 shows that they have a significant relationship. Whereas, it shows that either traditional or new media could be a better tool in voter mobilization.

Finally, Hypothesis 3 stated that the use of new media such as official government sites and social networking sites have a strong effect on political participation and the weakest was the traditional media. This hypothesis is also supported by the data.

Table 3a. If voted in 2016 National Elections

		If voted in 2016 National Elections	Reading online news articles about political candidates
If voted in 2016 National Elections	Pearson Correlation	1	.053
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.356
	N	300	300
Reading online news articles about political candidates	Pearson Correlation	.053	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.356	
	N	300	300

Table 4a. Age of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	247	82.1	82.3	82.3
	No	53	17.6	17.7	100.0
	Total	300	99.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.3		
Total		301	100.0		

Looking back at the table 1a, it shows that the traditional media has a relationship with voter mobilization; this result is further argued that those who vote in the 2016 national elections in Las Piñas City have a frequency of age raging 18-25 engage more in traditional media rather than those aged 25-30. The age that use the new media, specifically the social media has a frequency of age raging 25-30 as shown in table 6a.

DISSCUSION

These results suggest some very important differences between exposures to political campaign information through traditional media and the new technology offered by the Internet. First, the results lend new significance to the study of channel variables for the new technology involved in the Internet. As with earlier research, studies of political participation of the general population have paid little attention to the young adults in Las Piñas City. This research, it is hoped, fills some of empirical and conceptual voids in the uncharted political life of the young adults. There is, however, a question mark concerning the nature of the driving forces behind this degree of political participation by the youth. It seems that the influence and manipulation of the media have much to do with it as rational decision by the youth in Las Piñas City themselves. Therefore, political mobilization plays too high a part in the voting decisions of the youth.

This research also assessed the significance of the traditional media and new media to the political participation of the youth: Radio, Television, Newspapers, Official Government Sites and Social networking sites. Television and newspaper and social networking sites were identified as the most influential factors. Mobilization has a strong effect on the political participation of the youth especially with the use of Traditional media.

When speculating about the political implications of new media, pundits and scholars tend to either praise the likely benefits for democracy in the digital age or dwell on the dangers. The optimists claim that the greater availability of political information will lead more people to learn more about politics and increase their involvement in the political process. The pessimists fear that new media will make people apolitical and provide mind-numbing entertainment that keeps citizens from fulfilling their democratic responsibilities. These two predictions are often presented as mutually exclusive. The analyses presented here show that both are true. New media do indeed increase the involvement in the electoral process among young adults, just as the optimists predict. Yet, the evidence

supports the pessimists' scenario as well. Other people take advantage of greater choice and tune out of politics completely. Those with a preference for entertainment, once they gain access to new media, become less knowledgeable about politics and less likely to vote. People's media content preferences become the key to understanding the political implications of new media.

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