

# Theory Showcase: Institutional Theory

## Media systems, digital media and politics

The author talk about how digital media have changed politics in four countries. He compares traditional media systems and digital media in Sweden and the United States. Then author make comparison India's and China's pre-digital media systems and then looking at how they have been transformed.

### *Media systems in Sweden and America*

Political gridlock in a two-party system shapes the role of the media in American politics. Prior (2007) has made the case, which seems paradoxical at first, that increased media choice results in less political knowledge. Greater choice leads to parts of the population becoming less politically interested. However, in Sweden has a public broadcast system and the state has also subsidized newspapers, policies that aim to enhance diversity and promote the public interest. The introduction of competition by commercial TV in Sweden in the 1980s motivates an important change nevertheless took place in this media system. there has been growing competition among commercial media in Sweden, as in the United States. Westlund and Weibull's research shows that although the earlier generations stick to public-service media, the younger generations move away from public service to commercial TV and radio. So while newspapers and public-service media still dominate the population as a whole, this is not the case among the younger generation.

**The conculsion:** despite similar changes towards more market competition and more diversity, the two media systems thus remain distinct: Sweden is a more newspaper-centric society, the United States a more television-centric one[1].

### *Digital media and politics in Sweden and American*

With development of digital media, there is an increase in the mediation of politics, such as disseminating news events via Twitter, sharing content on Facebook, commenting on politics in blogs, and accessing online-only news websites. Political elites and media professionals therefore increasingly, more so than in the broadcast era, actively manage political and media messages. They found that both of these digital media are used more by politicians rather than prominent insiders. Gustafsson found that Facebook was

seen as a useful tool for political engagement in terms of coordinating action, recruiting new members and communication among members. Larsson found that although Facebook use was limited, it nevertheless favoured the smaller parties that might otherwise not receive as much media attention as the major parties.

For the United States, one of the major debates in relation to digital media is whether they contribute to political polarization. Yet Schlozman et al. found that higher socioeconomic status groups are more likely to use the internet for various kinds of political participation than lower ones. In terms of the internet, young people use the internet more for political participation than do older people.

## *Media System in China and India & Digital Media System In China and India*

Discussion of the internet in these two countries focus on how information and communication technologies lead to economic development. For example, The Chinese government has the so-called 'Internet Plus' policy to promote uptake of digital services, just as the Indian prime minister has embarked on a 'Digital India' programme. Both aim to 'leapfrog' more advanced parts of the world[1]. Digital media have created an environment for social protest and expression, which have pushed the boundaries of control.

For China, the main point to begin with is that, despite common perceptions in the West that China's regime suppresses online activity, in fact, the use of digital media for political engagement is extensive and highly complex, even if it is ultimately kept within bounds. 7 kinds of Weibo content:

1. thematic discussion of issues, such as environmental issues, which is continuous;
2. event-focused discussion, as with natural disasters;
3. 'encoded', whereby certain techniques are used to evade censorship, such as the use of undetectable homonyms or images containing censored words;
4. discussions pertaining to local issues, such as contention over building regulations;
5. debates about world affairs;
6. content that has been censored online but is stored on mobile devices for sharing;
7. discussion about censorship, a 'meta' discussion.

The internet is changing politics, but it extends inputs from civil society only within the confines of the workings of different media systems, and includes forces that demand more responsiveness from government in the direction of greater pluralism and accountability – but also, as we shall see, calls for a stronger, less tolerant state and a more exclusive nationalism[1].

## Reference:

[1] Schroeder, Ralph. *Social theory after the internet*. UCL Press, 2018.