Symposium on Media and Internet Use During General Election 2015

Wednesday, 27 January 2016
Conference Room, Level 1, Oei Tiong Ham Building
Posted and Shared: Personalised Communication and Knowledge Gap in Singapore’s General Election 2015

Dr Debbie Goh
Assistant Professor
Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information
Nanyang Technological University
Posted and Shared: Personalised Communication and Knowledge Gap in Singapore General Election 2015

Debbie Goh
Nanyang Technological University
Media use during GE2015...

• Intensified coverage by legacy and alternative media, start-ups and individuals
• Smartphones, social media, IM apps
• Greater diversity of content
• Voters access, share and post election information on numerous social media apps
Is there a knowledge gap?

• As mass media information increases, there will be an increasing knowledge gap between higher and lower social economic status segments of the population (Donahue, Tichenore & Olien, 1973)

• Better educated can acquire information faster
  – mass media caters to their interests and needs
  – better access to media and information resources
  – more media literate and greater prior knowledge
  – have higher literacy in processing complex topics such as politics
Internet & knowledge gap

• Internet reduced access barriers
• GE2011...
  – Alternative online media filled information gaps and narrowed knowledge gap between social status groups
  – Lower educated voters gained knowledge more rapidly from increased alternative media use than more highly educated voters
  – Greater relevance and authenticity of citizen-generated political information
Can personalised communication reduce knowledge gap?

• Production and sharing of political content based on personal values through various personal communication technologies (Bennett & Sergerberg, 2012)

• Information co-produced and co-distributed will be more relevant, based on personal interests
Survey Measures

Questions on production and distribution on social media (IM, SNS, online forums, blogs or YouTube sites):

• Started a thread discussing a candidate, political party, the election, and/or issue
• Wrote a post or made a video expressing my opinions on a candidate, political
• Commented on a post or video on a candidate, political party, the election, and/or issue
• Shared relevant information and/or political commentary related to the post/video or discussion
• Liked a page or a post about a candidate, political party, the election and/or issue
• Used social network sites to connect to people related to my interests in the election
• Sought/asked for information about a candidate, political party, election news and/or issue
Survey Measures

• Political interest
• Internal and external political efficacy
• Political and civic engagement
• Political and campaign knowledge
Most Singaporeans were engaging in personalised communication.
PC by Age

- At least 60% across age groups engage in PC
- Young voters in their 20s are most active users
- Highest percentage of non-users are in the 50 and above groups
PC by Gender

- Highest percentage of men were in the above average use group
- Highest percentage of women were in the non-user group
PC by Race

- Chinese were almost equal across the three categories of use
- Malays and Indians had the largest groups of below average use
- Other races had the largest group of non-users
• Secondary and below had the largest group of non-users
• Diploma holders had almost equal users across groups
• University degree holders were equally distributed in the above and below average use group
PC by Income

- Low and lower middle income had the largest non-user groups
- Upper middle and high income had largest groups of active users
PC and Political Knowledge

- How knowledgeable were voters?
- Strong awareness of candidates, less on issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>% correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify which party the candidate is from:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teo Chee Hean</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee Li Lian</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chee Soon Juan</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenneth Jeyaretnam</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of the following political parties used the election campaign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slogan &quot;Your Voice in Parliament&quot;?</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the 2011 election, what percentage of the votes cast did the PAP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>win?</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>According to the law, what do you think &quot;your vote is secret&quot; means?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Personalised communication decreased knowledge
Regression analysis, $R^2=.22$, $p<.001$

Significant predictors
- Political interest .314**
- Age 162**
- Media consumption .153**
- Personalised communication -.107*
- Education .098**
- Gender -.057*
- Income .051*

Non-significant predictors
- Political efficacy
- Political engagement
- Personalise communication $\times$ Education
PC, Age & Knowledge

- Hi (5.49): 60 and above below average user
- Lo (3.64): 20 year-old non-user
- Older users (50 and above) have the highest knowledge score. Personalized communication increased knowledge only up to a certain point, after which knowledge decreased
PC, Gender & Knowledge

- Hi (5.17): Male, above average user
- Lo (3.93): Female, non-user
- PC increased knowledge only for non-users
PC, Race & Knowledge

- **Hi (5.08):** Tie between Chinese and Others above average user
- **Lo (2.92):** Malay non-user
- Malay and Others non-users had the lowest score
- Others narrowed the knowledge gap with increased use
- Increased use by Indian voters caused their knowledge to fall

**Personalised Communication**
Hi (5.24): University above average user
Lo (3.87): Secondary non-user
Fall in knowledge with high intensity use among the lowest educated group.
The other two groups were able to control this and used PC to enhance their knowledge.
PC, Income & Knowledge

- Hi (5.39): High income, below average user
- Lo (3.81): Low income, non user
- High and low income groups increased knowledge with below average use
- Knowledge plunged as use intensity increased
- Middle income groups were able to use PC for knowledge gain
Summary

• Hi: 60 and above, below average user, 5.49
• Hi: High income, below average user, 5.39
• Hi: University degree, above average user, 5.24
• Hi: Male, above average user, 5.17
• Hi: Chinese and Others, above average user, 5.08
• Lo: Female, non user, 3.93
• Lo: Secondary, non user 3.87
• Lo: Low income, non user, 3.81
• Lo: 20 year-olds, non user, 3.64
• Lo: Malay, non user, 2.92
Conclusion

• PC is popular and may carry election information of greater relevance
• It helped enhance knowledge for only certain groups
• Traditional internet digital inequalities persist
• Excessive use by some groups had negative influence on knowledge
Symposium on Media and Internet Use During General Election 2015

Wednesday, 27 January 2016
Conference Room, Level 1, Oei Tiong Ham Building