Evolving a model of media use and public participation in digital: Testing in the Chinese context

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Abstract

Integrating the Cognitive Mediation Model, the Communication Mediation Model, and the Communication Mediation Model, this research developed a model of media use and public participation in the digital era. The relationship of this model, i.e., the Orientations (motivations and demographic)- Stimuli (social media use)- Outcome orientations (political knowledge and efficacy)- Response (online mobilization and offline participation), was tested in the Chinese context. Conducting a Pearson correlation and linear regression analysis, this model did yield some general findings, e.g., motivations influence the public participation through the social media use; and some specific findings relating to the China society, e.g., political knowledge is a negative predictor of participation while external efficacy is a positive one. The reasons behind these findings were also discussed.

Keyword: Cognitive Mediation Model, Communication Mediation Model, motivation, social media, public participation

Introduction

Civic and political engagement has attracted much attention from scholars for a long time. Traditionally, these two concepts have been defined slightly differently: civic engagement involves behaviors aimed at resolving problems of the community (Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli-Carpini, 2006) while political participation indicates behavior seeking to influence government actions and policymaking (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). But there is much overlap between the two concepts so that many studies have used the two concepts flexibly: Coburn and Espinoza (2011) investigated civic engagement and political participation in Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, and Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, and Valenzuela (2012) measured the relationship between social capital, civic engagement, and political participation. This research integrated them, using the concept of public participation, which aims at influencing decision-making of the government for wise management of public resources, drawn from previous research (Hansen & Prosperi, 2005; Kingston, Carver, Evans, & Turton, 2000).

As data shows, the trend of public participation has moved from offline to online. Examples include Occupy Wall Street, Occupy London Stock Exchange, Occupy Scotland, etc. (Hannah, 2011). Among all of these phenomena, social media, which is a group of internet-based applications that build on the technological foundations of Web 2.0 to allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (O'Reilly, 2007), has become more and more important to all kinds of online public participation. For example, in the US, 66% of social media users have used the platforms to post their thoughts about civic and political issues; the use of social

media is becoming a feature of political and civic engagement (Rainie, Smith, Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2012). On a worldwide scale, it has shaped social movement organizations in varied ways (Van De Donk, Loader, Nixon, & Rucht, 2004).

In response to this trend, a large body of research has drawn attention to how new media influences public participation. This research aims at explaining the comprehensive process from media use to public participation in the digital era. As China is developing so fast in Internet and students constitute for 23.8%, the largest proportion of netizens (CNNIC, 2015), this research specified in studying the social media use of Chinese students. In addition, concerning the public participation, which requires mature mental development, this research selected the university student as research targets.

Literature Review

Communication and Public Participation

Actually, research into the relationship between media use and public participation is not novel, in both fields of communication and political science, scholars have investigated the media effect on participation for long and come out with rich findings, e.g., the impact of media on the decision-making (Sotirovic, 2001), learning politics (Graber, 1998), and participation (McLeod & McDonald, 1985). However, the findings of the media effect were somewhat controversial, e.g., some found newspaper and television have different impact on public participation

(Viswanath et al., 1990) while some insisted that the effect was not significant (Schudson, 1995).

Scholars tend to notice that the relationship between media use and public participation is not that simple and direct, and many potential factors, including structural and cultural conditions (like demographic, interest, and knowledge, see McLeod, Moy, Scheufele & Patrica, 1999; Eveland, Shah, & Kwak, 2003) and psychological factors (e.g., efficacy, motivations, and value, see Lee, Shah, & McLeod, 2013; McLeod, & Sotirovic, 2001), have been added as the predictors of issues relating to public participation. In the whole picture, media has been taken as an important force that mediates the influence of these factors on public participation or issues relating to it; in other words, media effect on public participation is, to a large extent, indirect (Eveland, Shah, & Kwak, 2003; McLeod, & Sotirovic, 2001; McLeod, Moy, Scheufele & Patrica, 1999; Shah, Cho, Eveland, & Kwak, 2005).

This logic of indirect effect is in part following the so-called O-S-O-R model developed by Markus and Zajonc (1985), which goes beyond the traditional S-R, i.e., stimuli (media use)—response (direct results). The first O (orientations) represents the predetermining factors, including structural, cultural, and motivational forces that may influence media behavior (S, standing for stimuli) while the second O representing what happens between the stimuli and the response (R), i.e., the factors directing the media effect on responding actions.

Following this logic, many models have been built. For example, the Cognitive Mediation Model (Eveland, 2001), arguing that motivations influence the acquisition

of political knowledge indirectly by driving the news information processing behavior, is an early exploration of the relationship between the first O, S and R; the Communication Mediation Model (McLeod et al., 2001), regards communication, including interactive messaging and interpersonal discussion, as stimuli that can mediate the effect of media use on civic engagement; the Citizen Communication Mediation Model (Shah et al., 2005), proposes that communication, in both online and offline ways, mediates the impact of media behaviors on participatory behaviors. And recently, a new model—Campaign Mediation Model (Cho et al., 2009), has argued that conversation and reflection can't be situated in the traditional O-S-O-R model since they are not just the results of exposure to mass media but also the consequents and mediators of surveillance motivations, campaign exposure, and news consumption. Thus, they constructed a new dimension called reasoning, referring to mental elaboration (more intrapersonal communication) and collective consideration (both interpersonal and intrapersonal phenomenon) and argued that the whole model should develop to an O-S-R (reasoning)-O-R model.

Theoretical Framework of the Model

We can see some consensuses in the models above, though with many differences as well. First of all, the overall logic is coherent, i.e., the media effect is indirect. And the clarification of the "S" and "R" is quite clear that they refer to media use and participatory behavior respectively (except for the campaign mediation model).

However, there are diverse opinions regarding two "O".

As for the first O, the cognitive mediation model focuses on demographic and motivational factors while the communication mediation model emphasizes on the values, norms etc. This is normal since there are many influential factors in reality. However, it does not mean that we can apply these factors flexibly. This research argues that all the structural and cultural factors should be selected according to the research context. In this research, the research context is social media use, apparently different from conventional media processing. Thus, the motivational factors show an important role, as Internet users are more active and goal-directed than the traditional audiences. Furthermore, like Cho et al. (2009, p.670) suggested, "the flexibility (of online media) makes…more able to achieve the gratifications they set out to gain". It is essential to examine the influence of motivations in this digital era.

Therefore, this research selected motivations as well as demographics as orientation factors.

The more complicated consideration is the second "O", the outcome orientations. As for the Cognitive Mediation Model, the response (i.e., the action) is not included so the knowledge is considered as a result of media use. In the meanwhile, knowledge is traditionally regarded as the major mediator between information reception and participation (McLeod, 2001). But McLeod argued that media use will not lead to knowledge, instead, it constructs understanding of the political world by communication; and it is the understanding that mediates the media effect on participation. However, in the Communication Mediation Model and the Campaign Mediation Model, it is the discussion (including political messaging and interpersonal

discussion) that serves as the outcome orientations, mediating the media use effect on participation (Lee et al., 2013; Shah et al., 2007). Though advancing different orientations, the scholars still have some mutual consistent arguments. For example, understanding is more important than knowledge of the political world in directing the media effect on participation. Moreover, no matter conversation or discussion, they all serve to facilitate the flow of information and help users interpret media information and construct meaning (Kim & Kim, 2008). In other words, different kinds of outcome orientations (knowledge, understanding, conversation, discussion or reasoning) are doing the same thing, i.e., constructing understanding and meaning among the individuals, ultimately. So why don't we directly use concepts of how individuals interpret the real world as outcome orientations? As an exploration, this research chose political knowledge and efficacy since they are both traditional outcome orientations factors (McLeod et al., 1985). Furthermore, efficacy emphasizes on how individuals perceive the ability of their own and the government (internal efficacy and external efficacy, e.g., see Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 2001), which is conceptually consistent with the emphasis of intrapersonal and interpersonal communication as mediators to understand the political world (Cho et al., 2009).

In sum (see Figure 1), this research tried to figure out the relationship between O (demographic and motivations)-S (media use)-O (political knowledge and efficacy)-R (public participation).

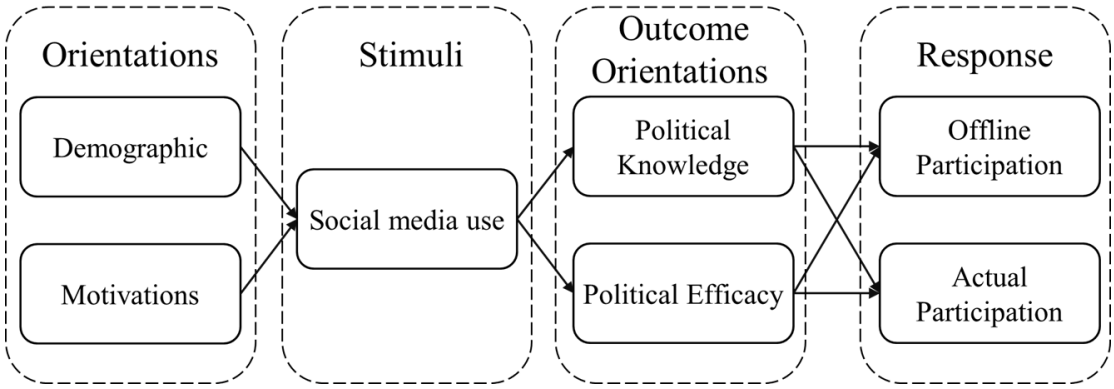

Figure 1. The basic logic structure

Motivations and Media Use

Motivations. "One appropriate approach of examining media behavior is to analyze the objectives, the underlying assumptions, and the perspectives of the uses and gratifications (U&G) of its users" (Leung, 2013, p.997).

Basically, U&G was developed to study the gratifications that attract audiences and satisfy their social and psychological needs (Cantril, 1942). Nowadays, U&G generally assumes that the media behavior of audiences is active and that the audiences are goal-directed and motives-driven. For instance, "a chief tenet of U&G theory of audience behavior is that media use is selective and motivated by rational self-awareness of the individual's own needs" (Ruggiero, 2000, p.18). "The general theoretical conclusion of many uses and gratifications studies is that the gratifications sought from an audience motivate the use of a particular medium" (Leung, 2013, p.998). As the Internet has grown in influence, Ruggiero (2000) emphasized that the concept of an active audience is gaining more credibility. Thus, "U&G in media use can be conceptually applicable to people's motives associated with use in social media" (Leung, 2014, p.426).

Traditionally, researches have frequently used surveillance motivation as a positive predictor of political informational media use (Eveland, 2002; Eveland, 2001) and entertainment as a negative predictor (McLeod et al., 1999). But for the online environment, in which users have unprecedented freedom to achieve their goals, it is necessary to fully examine the influence of all related motivations. Thus, this research included four relating motivations, proposed by Kaye and Johnson (2002), i.e., guidance, surveillance, entertainment, and social utility.

Media use. As for the media use, the traditional information processing or informational media use (Eveland, 2003; McLeod, &McDonald, 1985), is included. However, regarding social media use, it is not enough to contain single usage since users using social media in a more active way rather than just reading or watching. According to the characteristic of social media, the behavior of online political discussion (De Zúñiga, Puig-I-Abril, & Rojas, 2009) is added.

Though there are many researches finding the positive influence of surveillance on political information processing as stated above, few researches have examined the influence of other motivations (Kaye, &Johnson, 2002). Thus, this research explored two questions in order to understand the comprehensive relationship between motivations and social media use in the political field.

RQ1: To what extent can the motivations influence the political information processing?

RQ2: To what extent can the motivations influence the online political discussion?

Media Use, Political Knowledge, Political Efficacy and Public Participation

Political knowledge. Political knowledge is traditionally viewed as the base of political and civic participation (Carpini, 1996), which has drawn much attention. It has been found that knowledge is an important factor in may models above. Thus, it needs further investigation in this model as well.

As previous study pointed out, usually information processing would lead to the increase of political knowledge (Eveland, Shah, & Kwak, 2003). Similarly, online communication about politics may also help individuals gain knowledge (Norris, 1998). Accordingly, the following hypotheses were contended.

H1: Political information processing is positively related to political knowledge.

H2: Online political discussion is positively related to political knowledge.

Political efficacy. Another important variable is political efficacy, which is a multi-dimensional variable. Usually, it is divided into two dimensions—internal and external. The internal efficacy refers to ‘‘beliefs about one’s own competence to understand and participate effectively in politics’’ (Craig et al., 1990, p. 290). And the external efficacy is the concern about the responsiveness and effectiveness of the government (Craig et al., 1990). In addition, there is another dimension called collective efficacy, which is “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments’ (Bandura, 1997, p. 477), attracting scholars’ attention. And scholars (e.g., Lee, 2005) have proved its distinct value in predicting political participation in collectivist society. Since this research is based on a Chinese context, which is more

collectivism-oriented, the collective efficacy may be meaningful. Thus, this researched included three dimensions of political efficacy, i.e., internal, external, and collective.

According to previous study, informational use of media and interpersonal conversation usually promote the awareness of civil chances and objectives (Eveland et al., 2003), provide citizens with opportunities for connecting to the opinions of their social network (Mutz, 2006), and help individuals engage in collective thinking (Cho et al., 2009). Meanwhile, they also raise the awareness of collective problem (Walsh, 2004). This situation may be amplified in China since Internet is regarded as the other opinion field different from the mainstream official field. Integrating the previous arguments, we can know that information processing and discussion are usually positively related to perceived ability of individuals and their groups, but may be negative to the governing impression, especially in China. Thus, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H3a: Political information processing is positively related to internal efficacy.

H3b: Online political discussion is positively related to internal efficacy.

H4a: Political information processing is negatively related to external efficacy.

H4b: Online political discussion is negatively related to external efficacy.

H5a: Political information processing is positively related to collective efficacy.

H5b: Online political discussion is positively related to collective efficacy.

Public participation. As for public participation, scholars have argued that there are two categories, i.e., formal and informal. Formal participation refers to

voting and contacting government official while informal one focusing on attending a community or civic forum to communicate among citizens (McLeod et al., 1999; Steinberger, 1984).

Apart from conventional offline participation, this research argued that the online mobilization, which refers to mobilizing online (De Zúñiga, Puig-I-Abril, & Rojas, 2009), is essential as a representative of informal participation in the digital era. Thus, this concept was included as one kind of participation.

As scholars argued, knowledge is not sufficient for acting in the political events since people sort and reorganize information in personally meaningful ways (Graber, 1998), and knowledge does not provide any explanation of political world (Almond & Verba, 1965). Similarly, this research argued that it is how we understand the political world that matters instead of knowing it. Thus, the following hypotheses were proposed.

H6a: Political knowledge has no significant relationship with offline participation.

H6b: Political knowledge has no significant relationship with online mobilization.

Furthermore, previous researches have found that internal efficacy is positively related to democratic participation while the impact of external efficacy is usually reversed (Verba, 1987), and the influence of collective efficacy has been observed to be similar to that of internal efficacy (Lee, 2006). As a result, the following hypotheses have been proposed.

H7a: Internal efficacy is positively related to offline participation.

H7b: External efficacy is negatively related to offline participation.

H7c: Collective efficacy is positively related to offline participation.

H8a: Internal efficacy is positively related to online mobilization.

H8b: External efficacy is negatively related to online mobilization.

H8c: Collective efficacy is positively related to online mobilization.

Eventually, the ultimate purpose of the whole research is to understand the process of how the media use influences public participation. Thus, the overall research question is about the predicting power of all variables in a comprehensive model.

RQ3: To what extent can the demographics, motivations, social media use, political knowledge, and political efficacy predict public participation?

Methodology

Sampling and samples

The data of this research derived from an online convenient sampling, distributing online survey on the researcher's WeChat, Facebook, Weibo, and Twitter account. Since the target sample of this research is the Chinese university student, it is reasonable to collect data through the online social network of the researcher. In order to further randomize the sampling design, one university in Hong Kong, the Chinese University in Hong Kong, and one in Guangzhou, the Sun Yat-sen University, were selected randomly to distribute offline questionnaires.

The data collection process was conducted from April to May 2015; the overall number of samples is 322.

Measurement

Demographics. Demographics is measured by 5 items: age, gender, income, education, and hometown (Mainland China and Hong Kong).

Motivations. The measurement of each motivation was drawn from the research of Kaye and Johnson (2002) and some items had been modified in order to fit the Chinese context, e.g., motives like to help me decide how to vote were eliminated since election is far away from most people's ordinary life. The respondents were asked by "I use social media to process or participate in public issues is because".

Guidance (4 items in total): to help me decide about important issues; to help me know more about the officers; the help me know opinions of the others; and to help me gain more confidence about public issues.

Surveillance (4 items in total): information is easy to obtain; to find specific political information I'm interested in; to keep up with main affairs; to improve my understanding.

Entertainment (3 items in total): it is interesting; it is exciting; it is relaxing.

Social utility (4 items in total): to communicate with others; to have something to talk about with others; to show my attitude; to provide help or support for others.

A 5-point Likert Scale was used with 1 to 5 represented "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" respectively.

Social media use. This variable was divided into online information processing and online political discussion.

As for online information processing, the measurement was adjusted from De Zúñiga, Puig-I-Abril, and Rojas (2009), asking frequency of getting news online, looking for news or information about politics and the campaign etc. Thus, respondents were asked about how often do they engage in activities below.

Online information processing (4 items in total): read news related to public issues; get information from central or local government accounts; get information from others' accounts; pay attention to the progress of specific public issues or campaigns.

Regarding online political discussion, based on the discussion item of De Zúñiga, Puig-I-Abril, and Rojas (2009) and interactive messaging of Shah et al.(2005), this research developed 5 items to measure.

Online political discussion (5 items in total): send message of political campaigns; criticize the government policy or action; make fun of the government policy or action; discuss the government policy or action; interact with the government official accounts.

A 5-point Likert Scale was introduced with 1 to 5 represented "never" to "very frequently" respectively.

Political knowledge. This variable was measured by completion questions, asking the respondents to write the answer of the questions below: who is the chairman of China; who is the chief executive of Hong Kong; how long does the

National People's Congress (NPC) have an election in China; how long does legislative council have an election in Hong Kong; how many committee members in the NPC in China; and how many committee members in the nominating committee in Hong Kong.

All the right answers are coded as 1 while the wrong or missing answers are coded as 0.

Political efficacy. According previous research of internal efficacy (Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991) and of external and collective efficacy (Lee, 2006), the measurement of three dimensions of efficacy was proposed.

Internal efficacy (2 items in total): I have enough ability to understand political matters; I have enough ability to talk about and participate in public affairs.

External efficacy (2 items in total): the current government responds to public opinion effectively; the current government cares about opinions of people like me.

Collective efficacy (2 items in total): citizens' collective action has a great impact on public issues; citizens' collective action can improve the society.

Public participation. As stated above, this variable contains two categories, traditional offline participation and online mobilization. Talking about participation, since election is far away from most ordinary people in China, it is unrealistic to examine some behavior, like voting or campaigns in election (De Zúñiga, Puig-I-Abril, & Rojas, 2009). Thus, this research adjusted the measurement in the Chinese context.

Offline participation, measured by how often do you participate in activity below (2 items in total): community or civic affairs in the past 3 months; how often do you engage in political campaigns in the past 3 months.

Online mobilization, measured by how often do you conduct acts below (3 items in total): launch a collective campaign online (e.g., protest); participate in a collective activity online; associate with people sharing same opinion in some public issues.

Result

A Pearson correlation and linear regression were conducted. Table 1 shows the description of the key variables. We can found that the samples are young, relatively more females, and well educated. Most of them come from Mainland China.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of key variables (N=322)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Demographics		
Age	1.02	.166
Sex	1.40	.417
Hometown	1.08	.319
Education	2.26	.412
Revenue	1.24	.681
Motivations		
Guidance	3.0858	.50974
Surveillance	3.7017	.55155
Entertainment	3.2303	.59528
Social utility	3.2912	.63281
Social media use		
Information processing	2.6845	.67887
Political discussion	2.0292	.63981
Political knowledge	.3204	.26164
Political efficacy		
Internal	1.9917	.62116
External	2.7940	1.02555
Collective	3.2237	.57996
Public participation		
Online mobilization	1.6552	.58115

Offline participation	1.5528	.57781

Note. Age, 1-20 was coded as 1, 21-30 was coded as 2, above 30 was coded as 3; Gender, female was coded as 1 while male as 2; Hometown, Mainland China was coded as 1 while Hong Kong as 2 and others as 3. All the missing data is replaced by the series mean.

Table 2 summarized that relationship between the key variables. To answer RQ1 and RQ2, we can see that all the 4 kinds of motivations are positively and significantly related to information processing and political discussion. This is a support for what this research argues, i.e., motivation is an important O (orientation) factor in the Internet environment and different kinds of motivations, instead of solely focusing on surveillance, are important.

And information processing is positively related to political knowledge (.461**), which is consistent with previous researches and H1. Therefore, H1 is supported. But the relationship between knowledge and discussion is not significant (.089), so H2 is not supported. As Eveland (2001) argued, apart from exposure and motivation, attention is also a key predictor of knowledge, so this may be due to the reason that people engaging in discussion pay attention to other aspects (like socializing) instead of information.

As data shows, both information processing and political discussion are positively related to internal efficacy (.306** and .308** respectively). Hence, H3a and H3b are both supported. But the two media behaviors have nothing to do with external efficacy, so H4a and H4b are both rejected. As for collective efficacy, only political discussion has positive relationship with it (.213**). As a result, H5b is supported while H5a is not.

As for political knowledge, this research found that it has no explicit relationship with both online and offline public participation. Thus, H6a and H6b are all supported. This finding does confirm the early argument of some early researches (Almod, &Verba, 1965; Graber, 1998) as well as of this research, i.e., no matter it is online or offline environment, knowing the information is not enough to trigger the actions.

Regarding efficacy, the findings showed that internal external, and collective efficacy are all positively related to both kinds of participation. Thus, H7a, H7c, H8a, and H8c are all supported. However, H7b and H8b are both rejected.

Table 2

Pearson correlations of key variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Guidance	-										
2 Surveillance	.477**	-									
3 Entertainment	.479**	.458**	-								
4 Social utility	.550**	.484**	.657**	-							
5 Information processing	.267**	.304**	.229**	.341**	-						
6 Political discussion	.226**	.154**	.144**	.269**	.461**	-					
7 Political knowledge	.064	.060	.020	.032	.237**	.089	-				
8 Internal efficacy	.183**	.043	.084	.085	.306**	.308**	.544**	-			
9 External efficacy	.133*	-.043	.070	.033	.070	.044	.088	.177**	-		
10 Collective efficacy	.236**	.183**	.241**	.125*	.093	.213**	-.026	.178**	.153**	-	
11 Offline participation	.123*	-.131*	.029	.048	.261**	.397**	.073	.585**	.206**	.125*	-

12 Online mobilization	.230**	.009	.122*	.192**	.324**	.625**	.040	.354**	.207**	.218**	.492**

**, correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *, correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As for the last research question, we can find the answer from Table 3 and 4.

In offline participation, if we put all the variables in one model, the influence of demographics on public participation can almost be ignored. Similarly, only one kind of motivations, the surveillance, has significant influence on participation. The first set of orientation factors, consistent with previous models (e.g., communication mediation model and campaign mediation model), merely has direct impact on the final action. Instead, stimuli factors (information processing and political discussion) all have great power to predict the traditional participation. Knowledge, internal efficacy, and external efficacy all show their significant influence. In all, the predicting power of the models is evolving, i.e., R square meets its peak in Model 3.

Table 3

Predictors of offline participation

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Demographics			
Age	-.056	-.012	-.018
Sex	.066	.091#	.020
Hometown	.120*	.052	.056
Education	-.038	-.106*	-.032
Revenue	.094#	.076	.070#
Motivations			
Guidance	2.78**	.139*	.047
Surveillance	-3.49**	-.268***	-.198***
Entertainment	.262	.052	.021
Social utility	.620	-.088	-.023
Media use			

Information processing		.186***	.100**
Political discussion		.330***	.198***
Political knowledge			-.330***
Political efficacy			
Internal			.655***
External			.090**
Collective			-.051
R^2	.093	.258	.526
N	322	322	322

All betas are standardized coefficients

#=p＜.10; *=p＜.05; **=p＜.01; ***=p＜.001

In online mobilization, similarly to offline participation, the influence of first set of orientations is relatively weak in the whole model (see Table 4). The other aspects are similar to Table 3 except for the information processing, which diminishes its influence in online mobilization. And the power of prediction is also strengthening alongside with the completion of the model.

Table 4

Predictors of online mobilization

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Demographics			
Age	.009	.076#	.074#
Sex	.024	.061	.032
Hometown	.130*	.014	.024
Education	-.063	-.134**	-.087#
Revenue	.119*	.102*	.099*
Motivations			
Guidance	.211**	.131*	.081
Surveillance	-.142*	-.164**	-.134**
Entertainment	-.013	.029	-.001
Social utility	.153*	-.023	.014
Media use			
Information processing		.087	.063
Political discussion		.586***	.533***
Political knowledge			-.140**
Political efficacy			
Internal			.199***
External			.112**

Collective			.038
R^2	.117	.457	.500
N	322	322	322

All betas are standardized coefficients

#=p＜.10; *=p＜.05; **=p＜.01; ***=p＜.001

The overall framework can be seen in Figure 2.

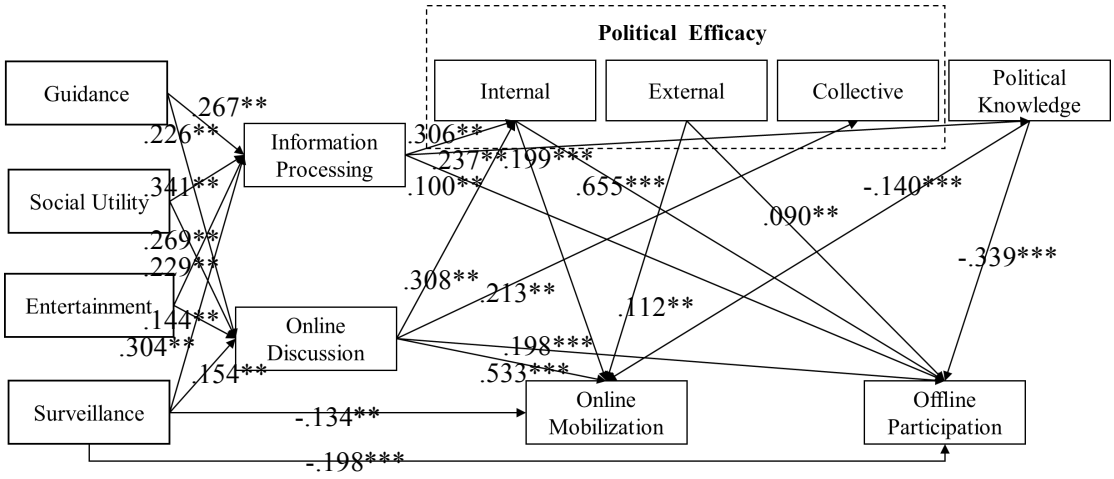

Figure 2. The framework

Discussion and Conclusion

Drawing on the previous models, this research tests the model of media use and public participation in the digital era. The importance of motivations, social media use, and both online and offline participation is highlighted and integrated in this model, which is relatively rare in the past.

Decades ago, scholars have devoted their effort to integrate the motivations into the first set of orientation factors (Eveland et al., 2003) to study the political issues. However, coming to the digital era, it is weird that this dimension seems to be forgotten. Previous researches into new media and public participation majorly focus on the direct media effect on certain behavior (De Zúñiga, Puig-I-Abril, & Rojas, 2009; Kwak, Campbell, Choi, & Bae, 2011; Mou, Atkin, Fu, Lin, & Lau, 2013). Thus, it is time to bring motivations back to the stage. Though only surveillance can

predict the participation in the whole model, it is noticeable that all four kinds of motivations are positively and significantly related to the social media use (both information processing and online discussion), which is strong predictor of the participation. Thus, many kinds of motivation, instead of just surveillance stated by many scholars, have strong, but indirect, effect on both online and offline participation. In addition, there is an interesting point that surveillance is a negative predictor of offline and online participation (-.198*** and -.134*** respectively), which is quite novel since previous researches only found out the mediating role of it (Cho et al., 2009; Eveland et al., 2003). This may due to the characteristic of China society. In China, most news and information has been censored before presenting in front of the public. As a result, people tend to be skeptical about the news. And the skeptics usually have less motivation to seek information while more passion to stand in the opposite of the government.

Regarding political knowledge, it is surprising that knowledge is a negative predictor of both kinds of public participation. Though knowledge, as stated above, may not be a sufficient condition for participation, scholars also have agreed that it is at least the base of participation (Carpini, 1997). But the finding of this research even takes one step further,i.e., it is a negative predictor. To explain this finding, it is difficult to extract it from the China context. Because of the stringent online speech control, maybe knowledgeable people in China tend to avoid getting involved into public issues for the sake of safety. A proof of this assumption is the phenomenon of the online forums in China. The total environment of Chinese forums become tricky:

gossip, celebrity scandals, or conjectures on legal issues, usually become sensational topics (Li, 2010). And the forum has become the aggregate of entertainment information instead of being a platform for sending dissidence, which is considered as normal in previous researches (Leung, 2013).

Talking about efficacy, it is even more interesting that internal and external efficacy all serve as positive predictors of participation, which reverses the findings of most efficacy researches. This situation means that Chinese youth who consider the government as more responsive are more likely to engage in public affairs. It is, again, the spectacle of the China society. China has long been an authoritarian society, in which "people go to jail when the powers-that-be decide they are too much of a threat – and there's nothing anybody can do about it" (MacKinnon, 2010, p.4). But the Chinese government also adjusts itself to the inevitable digital change, which is called "networked authoritarianism" by MacKinnon (2010). In this sense, though still remaining authoritarian, the government also follows the online chatter and provides greater chance for citizens to post social problems. As a result, Chinese people become skillful in weighing and considering what the government wants. And, of course, they will prefer to raise problems to a government they perceive as more responsive, which means less chance to get punished.

All in all, the model proposed by this research has shown its unique value in integrating motivations, social media use, efficacy and knowledge, and participation. Especially applying it in the Chinese context, it produces some interesting findings.

Further studies are required, but not restricted to all the specific variables above, to examine this model according to different contexts flexibly.

Limitations

Sampling drawback. The sampling design is not random enough. The irrelevant influence of demographics may be a consequence of convenient sampling. If a more randomized sampling could be conducted and larger data volume could be collected, the influence of demographics maybe more significant.

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