

Television a vital tool in political enlightenment

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we see television as a vital tool in political enlightenment and communication. The invention of the television has had an impact on all aspects of our lives. It has affected how we work; interact with others, and our foreign relations. One part of our society that it has especially affected is presidential elections. Researchers in mass communication were interested in knowing how specific message; channels and sources could produce changes in attitude of behaviours. The main objectives of this study is to stress the role or importance of television in political enlightenment and outline its effectiveness in political mobilization and the importance television in the society and the effect and acceptability of television messages in the society in relation to other media of mass communication. The Significant of television to the society cannot be overemphasized. They include; Information, Education, Entertainment, Enlightenment, watchdog, Surveillance, Mobilization / persuasion, In conclusion, television has established itself as a potent, dominant and most vibrant media of mass communication.

Keywords: Television, political, enlightenment, communication.

INTRODUCTION

Mass communication is defined as message directed towards a large group people using a mass medium. It involves disseminating information to a large and widely dispersed audience mass communication is made possible through the help of mass media. That is to say mass media makes mass communication a reality mass media include television, radio newspaper magazines etc

The invention of the television has had an impact on all aspects of our lives. It has affected how we work; interact with others, and our foreign relations. One part of our society that it has especially affected is presidential elections. Television has impacted who is elected and why they were elected. Since the 1960's television has served as a link between the public and presidential elections that allows the candidate to appear more human and accountable for their actions; consequently this has made television a positive influence on presidential elections. But it has also had a negative effect on elections, making

presidential candidates seem like celebrities at times and making it easier to publicize mistakes.

Television arrived in the American home in the 1950s, and immediately became the main campaign medium. Party loyalties had weakened and there was a rapid growth in the number of independents. As a result candidates Paid less attention to rallying diehard supporters and instead appealed to independent-minded voters. They adopted television advertising techniques as their primary campaign device. At first the parties paid for long-winded half-hour or hour long speeches. By the 1960s, they discovered that the 30-second or one-minute commercial, repeated over and over again, was the most effective technique. It was expensive, however, so fund-raising became more and more important in winning campaigns

In August 1999, Vladimir Putin, whose popularity rating was below 2% at that time, was appointed prime minister of Russia by the first president Boris Yeltsin.

Eight months later, he won the March 2000 Presidential elections in the first round with 52.9% of the vote. Just before that, during the December 1999 Russia's Parliamentary elections, the new pro-government party, "Unity," which was created less than two months prior to the election, scored second with 23.3% of the total vote. Scholars and journalists hypothesized that the massive and well-organized media campaign by state-owned television played a crucial role in these successes [1], [2]. Can mass media have such a substantial effect on political outcomes; and if yes, in what circumstances? A large body of evidence (surveyed below) suggests that media has an important but - in terms of magnitude - rather small effect on political outcomes in established democracies with stable party systems, ideological platforms of parties, which are well known to voters, and competitive media. However, one should expect a larger effect of media on political outcomes in a country characterized by weak democratic institutions. For instance, in the 1990s, Russia's party system was very unstable with many short-lived parties coming and going. Voters had little prior information about these parties and, therefore, had to put substantial weight on any new information about the parties, which, in turn, was provided mostly by mass media. Parties also ran on platforms with vague ideology; so that their differences were unclear to voters. As a result, issues not related to policy such as candidate's valence became important elements in voting decisions. Finally, competition in Russia's media market was imperfect: in many regions all major media outlets were controlled by the government, and voters only had access to one-sided political coverage. Despite the overall success of the new pro-government party "Unity" in the 1999 Russian parliamentary elections, the success was far from uniform across the country. For example, the party received less than 14% of the vote in the city of Perm and more than 32% in the city of Voronezh.

In countries like the U.S. with relatively free and competitive media, persuasion

effects of media are mitigated by consumers' ability to self-select or to choose the most preferred media outlet [3].

Kennedy was said to have won because his image on television during the debates was "crisp". The televised debates between Gore and Bush most likely won the election for Bush. In both cases, a candidate with no national experience overcame a vice-president. Before the invention of Television, most people could not possibly be completely cognizant of events going on overseas or even on the other side of the country and therefore had to rely on the Presidents' word. In 1968, the Vietnam War was at its peak. President Johnson held fast to his belief that we would be able to win so the American people continued to support him. However CBS's Walter Cronkite decided to make a trip to the war-torn country of Vietnam to see the current situation with his own eyes. When he returned he announced to the American public that the war was hopeless and there was no way that military victory was possible. Johnson knew that the American people greatly respected Cronkite and that they would all believe the war was hopeless. So the only thing for him to do was to pull troops out of Vietnam and call the war "an honorable attempt to defend democracy."

People in countries with controlled media market do not have such options. Therefore, they are likely to discount the information received from the biased media to a larger extent than consumers in the competitive media market. Such a discount, however, is unlikely to undo the persuasion effect completely [4]. Independent medias outlet in different parts of the country. Indeed, if the governing party controls a vast majority of media sources, access to an alternative source of information can be important in helping people to make informative choices. In particular, we estimate the impact of the only independent national TV channel, NTV, on voting behavior during the Russian 1999 Parliamentary elections. We use the idiosyncratic geographical variation in the availability

of the NTV signal to identify the effect. Using both the official statistics on election results and individual survey data, we show that access to an independent TV channel significantly increased vote for opposition parties and decreased vote for the pro-government party, "Unity." We investigate two types of effects. First, we analyze the aggregate effects of having NTV transmission at the sub regional level (analogous to U.S. counties), using the official electoral results. Second, we use data from a large-scale representative panel survey to investigate the media effects on the individual level, using access to NTV as an instrument for NTV exposure. We find large and significant effects of NTV on the voting outcomes. Due to the NTV broadcast, the pro-government party lost 2.5 percentage points of votes (9% of the aggregate vote for the party), while the main opposition parties, in sum, got an additional 2.1 percentage points of the total vote (10% of the aggregate vote for these parties). Using individual level data, we find that exposure to NTV had a significant effect on individual votes in favor of the main opposition party [5], even controlling for voting intentions measured one month prior to the elections. NTV had a particularly large negative effect on the vote for the pro-government party among voters who were undecided a month before elections. We also find that the effect of NTV was weaker for people who used newspapers as an alternative source of political information as well as for people who had a high level of political knowledge before the elections.

The positive effect of NTV on the support of the main opposition party was stronger for less educated, older and retired people. An important step in our analysis is to show that the availability of the NTV signal was idiosyncratic, i.e. that there were no unobserved characteristics of sub regions with and without the NTV signal that could drive the observed differences in voting behavior. First, we show that the presence of NTV in the 1999 elections does not correlate with voting choice in previous parliamentary elections held in

1995, once observable economic characteristics of regions are controlled for. Second, and most importantly, we conducted placebo regressions for the effects of NTV on voting behavior in 1995 and 2003, two elections in which there were no significant differences between the political coverage of different national TV channels. We find that though the availability of NTV in 1999 had a large effect on voting behavior in 1999, it did not [6], [7] show that the existence of a single independent TV channel can threaten the stability of a corrupt regime. Their findings suggest that the presence of an independent media channel could, potentially, help to keep the government accountable and the elections competitive. have any effect on the vote in 1995 and 2003. The results of this placebo experiment suggest that some unobservable characteristics of sub regions, which could be correlated with voting choice, cannot explain our main findings. In the analysis of aggregate media effects, our approach is similar to that of [8] in their investigation of the impact of Fox News on the voting behavior of Americans, using idiosyncratic diffusion of Fox News before the 2000 U.S. election. With respect to the availability of Fox News, they find a positive effect of 0.5 percentage point on the vote for Republicans, whereas we find a 2.5 percentage point negative effect of the NTV signal on the vote for the pro-government party. Such a large difference in the magnitude of the effects is consistent with the hypothesis that the weakness of democratic institutions leads to greater media persuasion effect. The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Researchers in mass communication were interested in knowing how specific message; channels and sources could produce changes in attitude of behaviours. This was the natural outgrowth of the way mass communication research have developed from the 1920s fueled by public fear of the media, along with anxious politicians, eager advertiser, crusading social engineers and others watching to see the massive reach of the media; "to get their

message across" quickly and efficiently. Government, military and corporate funding sources played an important role in the decision of those working within the field to take the direction. The goal was to determine what kind of persuasive message could be used most effectively in mobilizations of various kind political, advertising, public health, economic, educational, and military and so on.

Recent changes to the technologies of both the print and electronic media, and in particular the medium of television have already begun to fragment media audience and transform the relationship between media and the nation (masses)

Therefore the utilization of the media in mobilization and persuasion is very crucial because the broadcast media, particularly the television has become the major sources of information dissemination over the years, and also the major means and most effective tools for politics.

The ability of television to mobilize and persuade the people to behave in a given manner and to perform certain actions has merit an effective tool for political enlightenment because it can send sound and picture simultaneously to a large and widely disposal audience, and it is captivating and dramatic in nature. Television appeals to the sense of sight and sound; it is comprehensive technique

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature on the effects of media on voting behavior is expanding rapidly. Early classic studies [9], [10] find no effect of media on voting once political predispositions of survey respondents are taken into account and argue that media does not persuade voters but only reinforces their existing preferences.

The explanation of the communication process by Joseph R. Dominick is that the senders of information encode his message, which is sent through channel to the receiver who decodes the message, and react according to the message.

Major technological innovations transformed the mass media. Radio, already overwhelmed by television, transformed itself into a niche service. It developed an important political

and the combination of audio and visual colours and motion. It has the ability to capture the interest of most viewers. That is why government and other private bodies give much attention to it. The media (television) serves as an intermediary between the government and the people because it assists the government in getting its plans and policies across to the people and the people in return gets their response, feeling and plight back to the government.

Television serves as a major tool through which the people were fully information education, enlightened, mobilized and persuaded to activity participate in the decision making in the country during transition period.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study is to stress the role or importance of television in political enlightenment and outline its effectiveness in political mobilization and the importance television in the society and the effect and acceptability of television messages in the society in relation to other media of mass communication.

This study is finally designed to make government and other private bodies know the importance of the media and particularly the television, in political awareness, mobilization and persuasion.

dimension based on Talk radio. Television survived with a much reduced audience, but remained the number one advertising medium for election campaigns. Newspapers were in desperate trouble; most afternoon papers closed, and most morning papers barely survived, as the Internet undermined both their advertising and their news reporting.

There cannot be information without a message. Message makes communications possible and a reality, and it is the king on the center of information. Before communication takes place, there had to be a message, which serves as the cake of content of information, gets to the people through a medium of communication. There has to be a message before communication takes place. And as far as

the media is concerned, information dissemination, which has message as its content, is the Hallmark of all its activities.

These studies, however, suffer from severe endogeneity problem: survey respondents prefer media sources which reflect their political views. More recent contributions to the literature employ experimental and quasi-experimental approaches to deal with inherent endogeneity of survey based studies and show that media does affect voting behavior. Most of the evidence comes from established democracies and points to the effect of media on voting outcomes through its effect on turnout. For instance, [11] finds that an increase in the penetration of local radio stations in the United States in the 1930s increased turnout. [12] finds that the introduction of television in 1940s-1950s in the United States significantly decreased turnout, as people read fewer newspapers and received less political information. [13] use penetration of the New York Times resource curse and low incentives for bureaucracy [14], low level of social spending [15], and high corruption [16]. In 1990s to show that it decreased turnout in local elections because of a “distraction” of college educated voters from local media and local affairs. [17] show that local news channels in Spanish in the United States increase turnout of Spanish-speaking electorate.

[18] use idiosyncratic diffusion of Fox News to show that it affected the vote for Republicans in the 2000 elections, mainly through increased turnout among Republican supporters. In contrast to other studies, [8] find a substantial effect of the access to the Washington Post on the voting behavior in a Washington D.C. gubernatorial election directly (rather than through turnout). They conducted a randomized experiment by providing individuals with a free subscription to the Washington Times or the Washington Post and show that those who received either paper were 8% more likely to vote for Democrats. [3] use variation in overlap of congressional districts and local media markets resulting from redistricting to

show that coverage by local media affects behavior of the politicians and, as a result, public policies.

The broadcast media particularly television has become the major source of information dissemination. According to Mac Bride, the rise of television as a communication medium is obvious more striking since started from a zero base only a few decade ago, there has been tremendous and rapid improvement in television production since, its inception few years back. The first practical television system began operating in the 1940's.

The picture television produced during its adolescent stage was black and white. Today television viewers watch programmes on television in their natural colours. This occurred as a result of the improvement in technology, which paved way for the production of coloured television [5], [6]. A television message, which appears in audio and visual, appeals to the sense of sight and sound. This further authenticates the messages sent across through it by giving the right picture and sound of the event or object for easy, comprehension and clearer identification.

Finally, there cannot be information without a message. The television message, which appears in audio and visual has a wide reach. That is why the government and private bodies gives much attention to it. Television has a wider appeal and acceptability than other media of mass communication, and its nature, which send messages across through audio (natural voices) and visual (real pictures) makes most people inclined to believe in television message most people inclined to believe in television to report more accurately than the other media of mass communication. This is a survey carried out by zenaty in 1999.

The mass media and the society are two fundamental field of study for any who wants to influence opinions in the society. It is a key to understanding the different political, socio - economic and socio - cultural happening in the society.

It is believed that communication at any given time reflect the value pattern of a society because it determines where and when information flows, as well as who shares it with who [17]. It can therefore be said that communication reflects the homogeneity of cultures. It is essential for communication to fit organically into the political and socio - economic structures of a society and be consistent with the society's cultural values, because communication has been established as the bedrock of any society.

Through communication system in the society is just like any other system, yet it is assumed to be the life wire of the society, because where there is no information flow, misinformation will rule and that can lead to confusion while it is believed that without the society, there is no communication there cannot be society. This shows the reason while government strives to have the media under their control. The Nigeria government over the years has been able to control a reasonable chunk of the media, this they have done to uphold and advance their policies.

Right from traditional times to present day society, communication has been a vital part of the society. It has gone through revolutionary and evolutionary changes, underlining activities in the society activities as economy, health, politics, education etc.

It significance is that it has becomes a nerve linking societies and their activities together. From the time man became aware of his environment and took his first step on the sand of civilization, man began to invent various ways of communication and the media is the result of this invention.

The audience role is also worthy of attention Michael Gurrenvitch and Jay .G. Blumer (Mass communication and society) explained that different receivers of political information are motivated by different expectation of it, developed different orientation toward it and many therefore be perceived as playing different roles in political communication system.

As political freedom downed on societies in Nigeria, television has been an important means of socio - economic and political development.

Television as a mass medium serves as an effective means for political and socio - cultural mobilization and persuasion in the society. According to Medinick Sornaff "A serious political and socio cultural issue involving attitude is the effect of the mass media especially television." [19].

Significant of Television to the Society

The Significant of television to the society cannot be overemphasized. They include; Information, Education, Entertainment, Enlightenment, watchdog, Surveillance, Mobilization / persuasion etc.

- i. **Information:** The media (Television) helps the society to acquire useful information on what affect it. There is a need for information in the society and television is dedicated to the provision of such information.
- ii. **Education:** Television educates people on a whole number of things, be it on health, politics, driving, cooking etc. television particularly educates the people on how to go about certain issues that the people are completely ignorant of.
- iii. **Entertainment:** Television entertains the people through the various musical programmes, drama and comedies it usually aired.
- iv. **Enlightenment:** Television help to increase our awareness. This means that the television adds to our knowledge and gives more understanding into issues that is known, but not deeply known.
- v. **Watchdog Role:** The Media (Television) from inception has taken up the untiring job of monitoring the government and its policies to ensure it does not run foul to the laws of the land. In spite of government constant harassment. The media has not relented in action as checks and

- balance between government and the society.
- vi. **Surveillance:** The television has enormous task of examine what is happening in the society, compiling and interpreting to give the public a better understanding of events and issues it keep tabs on events, investigate how it affects the society and ensures that disasters or infringement of right are avoided.
- vii. **Mobilization/Persuasion:** The television through its various programmes persuades the people to behave in a given manner and to perform certain actions. For instance Nigerian Television Authority Kaduna has being airing certain political programmes that is mobilizing and persuading the people to take part in the 2007 General Election.

Importance of Television in political enlightenment

For any political organization or programmes to succeed, the people must be carried along and their support must be appreciated. This can be achieved by passing a message across to the public through the media and by enlightening and educating them on the reason why they should actively participate and support the political system or process in the country.

[1] gave his opinion on the functional uses of mass media messages in periods of critical political events as follows.

“The mass media system especially television has always performed significant function each time a critical political event occur in Nigeria.”

In a democratic country, the media (television) is very dynamic and powerful in the sense that it performs protective, integrative, educational and linkage functions. Thus, it defends and protects the genuine aspiration to the people.

This protective role is very commendable in the sense that it helps sustain democracy, which is an essential ingredient of political and economic development. The leading scholars of comparative politics such as Karl

Deutsch, Brian Weinstein and Samuel Huntington Opined Correctly that the existence of stable democracy contributed immensely towards the political, technologies and economic advancement of a nation state. This is because business activities thrive in a peaceful atmosphere. In a multi - partly political system like Nigeria. The media (television) performs a mobilization and educational function.

Given that there many political parties with different and various political manifestoes it means that some of the voters will find it very difficult if not impossible to study critically the similarities and differences of the manifestoes of all the parties. In this aspect, the media (Television) helps to explain and analyze the issue raised by each political party. Besides, the media (television) informs the voters the solutions offered by each political party regard to any issue confronting the nation.

[9] stated that developing strategies should incorporate communication (television Inclusive) policies as an integral part in the diagnosis of needs and in the design and implementation of selected priorities in this respect television should be considered a major development resource, a vehicle to ensure real political participation in decision-making.

The positive roles played in that direction by some programmes produced and aired by the television are too important to be ignored. Television is a medium with immense power. It reaches out to the audience through the language of programming. Programming is considered as the heart and soul of the medium. Through programming. The medium articulates the nation's development - oriented. programming is a veritable catalyst towards speedy socio - economic and political growth. It strives to bring about change in the lives of individual and groups especially those that are down - trodden illiterate and ravaged by poverty and disease.

Broadcasting has become a way of life replacing various forms of interpersonal social communication and taking up the

largest part of people's leisure in developing countries like Nigeria. According to [3], "there is almost a consensus acceptance of the view that the effectiveness of television broadcasting anchors on its capacity to re orientate, educate, entertain, enlighten, and mobilize the psyche of a people in addition to becoming a channel for exchange of information, knowledge and values."

It is in the area of mass communication that television stands out as one of the most effective means of pursuing political awareness. The power of television in beating physical barriers made Richard Aspinall, UNESCO Expert in broadcasting to say: everywhere there is a television,

provided you have a set to capture its broadcast.

Television has appealed to individuals and group because it is a medium that directs all attention to each listener. To a large extent therefore, television commands the attention of people as individuals and as a group.

Television has an obligation and responsibility to the society. It is the responsibility of the television to provide information, discussion and debate in public affairs. It is also the duty of the television to instruct and inform the public on issues that affects it, and also to create a conducive atmosphere for self-government as well as protesting the right of individuals against the government through its watchdog functions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we see that television is the most effective media in enlightening and influencing people's votes in the build up to General Election. The impact of television has been enormous. It has affected nearly all aspects of our social

life. Television has established itself as a potent, dominant and most vibrant media of mass communication. Portability, accessibility and acceptability render it as the media that establishes quick rapport with the people.

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