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SELECTIVE EXPOSURE IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Abstract: *People exhibit preferences, or seek out information that is consistent with their political beliefs and opinions, when they engage in selective exposure in politics. The theory of motivated reasoning states that people's pursuit of knowledge is driven by two distinct goals: accuracy goals (which promotes drawing accurate inferences) and directed goals (which encourage the making of conclusions that people want to make, and which corresponds to their attitude). In general, people rarely have complete or adequate political knowledge, but even in these situations, they often shape their political opinions using informational shortcuts such as partisan cues. Today's political media messages are so persuasive, particularly with the growth of the Internet, that the audience is powerless to ignore them. Partisan selectivity is a concept that holds that people tend to prefer news and political content that supports their political beliefs. People may be inspired to seek out more information if they are exposed to a variety of political beliefs. On the other hand, those who tend to avoid political information that challenges their beliefs cause the community to become more politically divided. Studies have shown that social norms and community expectations affect selective exposure, which differs depending on the country's cultural environment.*

Keywords: *Selective exposure, Politics, Partisan selectivity, Political media messages, Cultural environment.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Selective exposure lessens the likelihood that people will talk about politics with individuals who don't share their views.[1] Using consistent political information can reduce political tolerance and increase citizens' reluctance to make concessions,[2] and causes the political agenda to become more focused on the current, contentious topics.[3] Because of the dominance of information technologies as parameters that govern our lives, modern man is experiencing a radical shift in his attitude toward time.[4] The media play a particularly important role in shaping political attitudes. In particular, the power of political persuasion has increased with the development of the Internet. To reach the younger generation, political marketing experts are growing using social media influencers and utilizing the advantages of electronic word-of-mouth marketing (eWOM).[5] According to Garrett, choosing material that supports one's opinions is more likely when using the Internet as opposed to offline media.[6] Barnidge believes that compared to face-to-face communication, using social networking sites was associated with more regular exposure to political dissent.[7]

In the near future, political candidates might be able to engage with voters in virtual environments and tailor their messages to each voter individually.[8] According to widely accepted accounts, technology may make the current media environment more biased against certain viewpoints through two primary mechanisms: choice and algorithmic filtering.[9] Choice prompts selective exposure by allowing people to select the viewpoint that most closely aligns with their preexisting views from a variety of opposing viewpoints, presuming

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that people have a preference for information that supports their way of thinking.[10] Therefore, selective exposure is anticipated to be the result of voluntary action when people have an option. Contrarily, algorithmic selection methods allude to automated, unaccountable systems of information selection.[11] The filter bubble argument is a common term used in the literature to refer to selective exposure caused by algorithmic filtration.[12]

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Selective exposure, a phenomenon whose effects on democracy have been well-documented in the literature, is generally understood as the propensity to choose information that is supportive of one's own individual views and social identities.[13] Selective exposure has been used to describe the absorbing and/or avoiding of (political) communications, which is believed to support established attitudes and beliefs.[14] Users of opinion-congruent media sources are more likely to believe that public opinion is on their side, so selective exposure has real effects on how people view their environment.[15]

Recent studies have revealed that selective exposure varies based on the country setting.[16] In political information environments that are more tightly allied with the political system, cross-cutting exposure, the opposite of selective exposure, is more likely to take place.[17] According to McGuire, exposure to the message is the first stage in the persuasion process, which is then followed by attention, liking/maintaining interest in the argument, and comprehension.[18] However, organizations frequently utilize misleading advertising statements

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because they are aware that many people have a conformist tendency.[19] Social expectations and norms in collectivist cultures may cause people to act in conformist ways in order to avoid social exclusion.[20] Like other types of media content, political advertising exposure is influenced by (a) people's preexisting attitudes and predispositions as well as (b) the characteristics of the message itself.[21] People's accessibility to partisanship may rise as a result of exposure to attitude-consistent messages, which will reinforce their political self-concept.[22] Due to selective attention, previous research has consistently shown that people have very little understanding of politics.[23] However, this does not inevitably result in an ignorant citizenry and thus issues with democratic processes. First, citizens can develop reasonable political attitudes even when depending on incomplete information by using informational shortcuts like partisan cues.[24] Many voters are thus likely to choose the components of the issue in question that their favored party or politician emphasizes when it comes to complex policy questions. Therefore, in order to form informed opinions and cast votes without taking into account the full complexity of the issue, these voters extrapolate information on politically pertinent matters from parties or candidates.[25] However, some individuals have thought more about politics than others, and one aspect of this thinking is how many political cognitions they have and how broad a substantive range they cover.[26] More thorough consideration of a political issue improves a person's ability to develop preferences and make decisions later on. Compared to concentrating on multiple aspects, focusing on a single aspect is less mentally taxing and emotionally stressful.[27]

Dissonance has always been prevented. Dissonance is a state or circumstance where there is a discrepancy or disagreement between one attitude and another, or between behavior and attitude. For an individual psychologically, the situation is inconvenient or uncomforta-

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ble. Such individuals will make efforts to lessen or even get rid of that discomfort. Searching for knowledge to reduce attitude and behavior inequality is one of the selective exposure initiatives. People will also choose evidence carefully and look for sources that will confirm their attitudes or beliefs.[28]

In politics, Bennet and Iyengar applied the idea of selective exposure. They proposed a notion known as "partisan selectivity." The underlying idea behind this concept is that people tend to select news that aligns with their political views and attitudes.[29] A person's perspective and attitude are justified by using the news as a means to reinforce those perspectives and attitudes. When individuals choose news material, partisan cues can be overcome with the support of social endorsements,[30] other research suggests that the act of sharing and consuming content online may exacerbate inclinations toward selective exposure to news and information that supports one's attitude.[31] Selective exposure is another finding of a research on the Iraq War. The media that promotes the idea that there are weapons of mass destruction in Iraq tends to attract viewers who share this belief. The audience, however, disregards media that promotes the opposite.[32]

The polarization of a group can be examined using three main methods: network, content, and hybridity methods. The network approach concentrates on the network's structure to identify the individuals and relationships that each network member has. The content method makes the assumption that group members frequently discuss and share the same information. The hybridity strategy, on the other hand, combines a network and content approach.[33]

Regarding the impact of media messages on the public, Klapper offered some guidelines. According to his research, media messages alone do not significantly affect the audience; rather, a number of other variables do. These elements are: Selective exposure: This clarifies how individuals can expose themselves to topics in the media that they believe to be consistent with their attitudes and interests. Because people may choose to only be exposed to political messages that are consistent with their cognitions, this strategy may also be applied to political messages that are computer-mediated. Selective Perception: This explains how it is conceivable for people to interpret signals from mass media in accordance

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with their preexisting views. Selective Retention: This explains why some information can be retained while other information is ignored by an individual. Psychological variables like culture, religion, ego, etc. commonly influence this issue. Selective attention: This describes how viewers of mass media may choose to focus on certain types of information while ignoring others. People may choose to pay attention to political messages while also considering their political interests.[34]

It was widely held during this time that media messages were so compelling that viewers could not ignore them. The way that media researchers think about the influence of the media has also changed as a result of social changes. Such an opinion was historically and culturally relevant in this context given the development of industrialized mass media, particularly radio and subsequently television, as well as the apparent success of totalitarian propaganda in Europe.[35] Only two factors are acknowledged in media consumer psychology that cause an individual to seek pure information - obsession and guilt.[36] According to research, when given the option, people tend to favor agreeable information, including political news,[37] however, the majority of these studies concentrate on how ideological bias influences what people choose to consume; little is known about how selective exposure extends to false or deceptive factual claims. Political identities and predispositions are frequently systematically linked to people's views, according to research in political science and psychology.[38]

Avoiding information that challenges one's opinions is especially harmful, despite the fact that both seeking reinforcement and avoiding challenges have significant effects on attitude formation and opinion strength. The capacity of people to accept disagreement and look for political solutions is greatly affected by their exposure to political difference, which is a key component of effective deliberation. Exposure to opposing viewpoints also improves familiarity with the justifications for those opinions, which can promote political tolerance.[39] The exposure to different political perspectives encourages more comprehensive information searches and more careful examination of alternatives.[40] On the other hand, if people successfully avoid information that challenges their opinions, the community they belong to is

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likely to become more politically polarized.[41] Individuals favor being exposed to arguments that support their viewpoint over those that support opposing positions, according to the selective exposure theory. As a result, people are more likely to study, listen to, or watch a piece of information if it confirms their viewpoint and less likely to pay attention if it contradicts it.[42] However, many members of society share their political views with other members, while others choose to keep their views to themselves and remain silent. Communication often involves silence. Silence can either be viewed as desirable or undesirable depending on the cultural setting.[43]

In one research, the impact of political discord on the brain was examined.[44] The false consensus effect, which refers to people's propensity to overestimate the number of people who share their views and behavioral preferences, was found to be lessened when political disagreement was encountered.[45] This effect was replicated by Wojcieszak and Price with respect to the perception of agreement among participants on three divisive socio-political issues. The propensity for people to attribute their opinions to the general population appeared to be reduced by exposure to disagreement, which attenuated the false consensus effect.[46] The false consensus effect proposed a false sense of consensus and an egocentrically biased projection, accordingly, if people who supported an attitude or behavior also believed that the latter was more typical in a particular community.[47]

Motivated reasoning theory has gained popularity among political communication scholars in recent years as a paradigm for comprehending selective exposure. This theory holds that when seeking knowledge, people are driven by two different types of goals: accuracy goals, which encourage people to draw the right conclusions, and directional goals, which drive people to draw the conclusions they want to draw.[48] People in the first group are driven by a desire for the truth, which motivates them to look for accurate information from various media sources that aids in drawing accurate conclusions. As an alternative, di-

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rectional goals encourage people to pay attention to political cues or heuristics, such as party identification and their own predispositions, when choosing information in order to reach specific conclusions that make them feel validated. As a result, people who are motivated by directional goals look for knowledge that matches their attitude.[49]

The rightwing populism clearly distinguishes between those who share its ideology and those who do not, reserving the right to belong—and thus entry to the ingroup—only for those who do.[50] Therefore, it has been discovered that populist supporters are especially interested in political information that actively bridges the gaps between the "innocent" ingroup and the "culprit" outgroup.[51] Unsurprisingly, this anti-pluralism fosters an especially strong sense of a "politicized self," which in turn causes a general increase in the stigmatization of mainstream parties, their supporters, and the media as well as actual skepticism toward them.[52]

3. CONCLUSION

Today, the media has become a powerful weapon in the hands of experts in the field of politics, which can influence the political attitudes of individuals and society. The development of the Internet and digital technologies has enabled this influence on voters to be even stronger. People are generally looking for accurate information, in order to make unbiased political conclusions, however, one group of society (mainly those who do not possess enviable political knowledge and understanding) tends to choose political information from their environment that matches their beliefs, ignoring all those arguments that would confront them with a situation to realize that they may not be right, this phenomenon is known as selective exposure. Also, such members of society, who are aligned with media sources, whose political content suits them, will most likely be mistaken that public opinion is on their side. Selective exposure varies from country to country and depends on the cultural environment.

People can develop certain political attitudes even when they do not have complete information about certain political issues, using informational shortcuts. This phenomenon is recognized in the literature as partisan selectivity. Due to the inability to comprehensively understand the complexity of a political issue, voters will most likely choose only those components that the political candidate or party emphasizes, and will not take into account additional information that would shed light on the complexity of the political issue. The psycho-

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logical condition of dissonance can be extremely uncomfortable for a person when it occurs. However, the pursuit of new information can help to lessen the discomfort. However, when given the opportunity to choose, people tend to prefer pleasant information, which certainly includes political news. The main component of effective reflection is exposure to political differences that can have an effect on people to accept disagreement and seek political solutions, which ultimately can lead to a higher level of political tolerance. But in the opposite cases, when people do not want to refute their opinion and to face or seek alternative political information, this situation can create a social environment that is politically polarized.

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SELEKTIVNA IZLOŽENOST U POLITIČKOJ KOMUNIKACIJI

Sažetak: *Ljudi pokazuju preferencije ili traže informacije koje su u skladu sa njihovim političkim uverenjima i mišljenjima kada se selektivno izlažu u politici. Teorija motivisanog rasuđivanja tvrdi da je potraga ljudi za znanjem vođena sa dva različita cilja: ciljevima tačnosti (koji promovišu izvođenje tačnih zaključaka) i usmerenim ciljevima (koji podstiču donošenje zaključaka koje ljudi žele da donesu i koji odgovaraju njihovom stavu). Uopšteno govoreći, ljudi retko imaju potpuno ili adekvatno političko znanje, ali čak i u ovim situacijama često oblikuju svoja politička mišljenja koristeći informativne prečice kao što su partizanski signali. Današnje političke medijske poruke su toliko ubedljive, posebno sa razvojem interneta, da je publika nemoćna da ih ignoriše. Partizanska selektivnost je koncept koji smatra da ljudi preferiraju vesti i politički sadržaj koji podržava njihova politička uverenja. Ljudi mogu biti inspirisani da traže više informacija ako su izloženi različitim političkim stavovima. S druge strane, oni koji izbegavaju političke informacije koje osporavaju njihova uverenja dovode do toga da zajednica postane politički podeljenija. Studije su pokazale da društvene norme i očekivanja zajednice utiču na selektivnu izloženost, koja se razlikuje u zavisnosti od kulturnog okruženja zemlje.*

Ključne reči: *Selektivno izlaganje, Politika, Partizanska selektivnost, Političke medijske poruke, Kulturno okruženje.*