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## VIDEOMALAISE AND VIRTUOUS CIRCLE: HOW MEDIA USE FACILITATES CITIZENS' POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

*One of the core assumptions in recent studies on the role of media in democratic societies is that media use increases the range of connections between citizens and political activities. However, researches examining the effects of media on political participation have put forth conflicting explanations: media use diminishes political participation and civic engagement and contributes to declining voter turnout and political disinterest (video-malaise hypothesis); media use generates political interest and thus draws the politically unsophisticated into political deliberations that affect them (virtuous circle theory). We address these explanations with the measures gathered by the fifth wave of the World Value Survey (WVS Fifth Wave, 2005). The Dual Effects hypothesis states that media use has a positive association with political interest, political action, and conventional participation—whereas the other way round is also right --political interest and non-conventional participation can trigger media use. The difference in the magnitude of effect between print and television/radio use is statistically significant but shows wide variations concerning the non-conventional political action. The relationship persists even after controlling for demographic and socio-economic factors. The Multiple Regression models show that overall media use can account for about 19% of the variance in political participation. On the other hand, political interest and action, with educational qualification and class status can account for about 50% of the variance in media use.*

**Keywords:** *Media, Videomalaise, Virtuous Circle, Political Participation, World Value Survey.*

### INTRODUCTION

The growth in news media in India has belied the global trend towards falling newspaper circulation and shrinking television audience and market fragmentation by the new media of the web and mobile (Kholi, 2006). People today have a new means to engage in politics that was unavailable to a generation before. They also have greater access to personal, social and economic resources to engage actively in the emerging public sphere both as consumers and as citizens (Ninan, 2007; Singhal and Rogers, 2001).

Recent scholarships in the field of communication have sought to examine the significance of news media for pluralistic culture and deliberative democracy as it is mass mediated in the Indian society (Rai and Cottle, 2007; Sonwalker, 2001; Chattarji, 2008). Most of these studies are based on the assumptions that news media, especially television, plays a

critical role in 'enabling and enacting democratic processes - a role with added significance-- given the continued presence of low literacy levels that impede access to the print media' (**Cottle and Rai, 2008, 2006**). **Cottle and Rai, 2008**) are emphatic in their assessment of the role of media when they argue, "there can be no doubting its (the media's) important, perhaps pivotal role in facilitating civil society and political intercourse in contemporary mediatized societies."

Much of these critical works are dedicated to documenting the changes in the political culture and media strategies and to discussing normative implications for the public sphere in India (**Ninan, 2007**). The guiding principle in these studies is that a diverse culture, fractional polity shape the contemporary Indian society, and internal inequity combined with market-driven development and recognition as an 'emerging super-power' in global geopolitics. The media operates within this force-field, both as a disseminator of information and a political actor in its own right. However, the nature and extent of influence that the news media has on politics cannot be presumed. Does politically active audience become 'political news junkies'? Do the media socialize the audience into taking more active parts in the polity? If so, what kind of political participation does the media encourage (or discourage)?

This study revisits the above assumptions, in the context of the emergence of two other seemingly conflicting positions: the videomalaise and the virtuous circle theories. These approaches promise to provide additional empirical content to the on-going debate on the role of media in political participation. We contend that these questions are of direct relevance to any attempt to theorize the linkages between the deepening democracy and the potential role of news media. Claims and counter-claims about the essential or superfluous nature of media influence on political participation are common, but much less frequent are systematic data to support any position. So far, there has been little attempt to empirically test the linkages between media use and political participation in the Indian context.

This study is premised on the belief that a probabilistic assessment of the linkages between political participation and news media would complement and extend our understanding of the relative merits of several factors that explain the changes in political participation across the diverse strata of the Indian society. The approach is in line with the more recent calls for adopting 'mixed methodological' strategies to study a social phenomenon (**Creswell, 2003**). Linking the use of mass media to political participation is a complex concept, with several dimensions commonly emerging from literature. We draw on previous research to understand the patterns of relationship between the use of news media and political participation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions of political participation typically involve four essential components: activities or actions, ordinary citizens, politics, and influence (**Brady, 1993**). **Nagil (1987)** defines political participation as "actions through which ordinary members of a political system influence or attempt to influence outcomes." Questions regarding people's involvement in traditional political processes have been the subject of numerous studies under the rubric of social movement theory and subaltern studies (Shah, 2002; Guha, 1982-85). However, studies on political communication and the role of media in political participation in the Indian context are few and far between.

There has been a long-running debate about the relationship between news media and political participation from a political communication perspective, and the scholarship has expanded considerably in the recent years (**Lippman 1922; Graber, 1994; Blumer and Mcquail, 1968; Kaid, 2004**). Studies on the nature and extent of the relationship between media power and political action are drawn from the agenda-setting theory, frame analysis and a more substantial body of research on public opinion, political campaigns and elections studies (**Semetko, 2004**). The recognition that journalists are political actors and news media a political institution is at the core of the debate over the normative standards to which media's role should be compared and the proper ways to assess media performance (**Schudson, 2002; McQuail, 2007**).

Most recent works on media use and political participation are drawn from the works of Putnam (1994, 2000) who argues that regional differences exist in social capital and civic tradition, with implications on the norms of individuality and trust, which in turn, can have an effect on the citizens' perception of the media and its importance, and their civic role. **Sen** (2001) draws attention to the deep-rooted argumentative civic traditions in India, and **Mehta** (2008) extends this concept to explain the success of television news channels and its 'effect' on the political culture of the region.

Researches linking media use and political participation have looked at several factors as key to explaining the effects: media exposure, differential effects of media, and media content and format (**Hooghe, 2002; McLeod and McDonald, 1985**). The long tradition of scholarship fashioned on the classic work of Personal Influence by Katz and **Lazarsfeld** (1955) has tried to show the direct effect of the media on politics, for example, on the political attitudes and behavior of mass electorates. However, this effort foundered, leading to 'limited effects' conclusion that challenged the conventional wisdom about media power that led to several sophisticated theoretical formulations to explain political communication and its implications to society (**Kaid, 2004; Klapper, 1960**). More recent debates have offered competing for hypotheses about the role of media in political participation-Video-malaise and Virtuous Circle theory are examined in more detail in this paper.

### **VIDEOMALAISE HYPOTHESIS**

Researches in the field of political communication are still divided about the effects of the news media on political participation, reporting both a negative and positive influence. Some writings denounce the negativity and corrosive ideas present in the news content (**Patterson, 2000; Bennett, 2003**), which can contribute to the 'Videomalaise' phenomenon, a term coined by political scientist Michael Robinson in 1975. Video malaise refers to the dual phenomenon of a loss of trust in political institutions and individuals' increasing reliance on television as a means of obtaining political information (**Holtz-Bacha, 1990**). The main hypothesis states that 'viewership of televised public affairs programming results in an increased sense of malaise, or vague cynicism or detachment regarding political institutions, processes, and actors' (**O'Keefe, 2008**).

The media is accused of transforming citizens into simple spectators of political happenings. **Putnam** (1995) blames the decline in social capital on time spent in front of the television. He argues that increased television exposure is the primary driver behind a range of civic ills identified in western societies, including decreased social trust and declining party

membership and low voter turnout, especially amongst youth. On a more general level, Putnam argues that the primary means through which media decreases political participation is by displacing the time available for engaging in civic activities. **Putnam (2000)** also finds negative relationships between reliance on and heavy use of television on the one hand and a series of civic engagement and political participation indicators on the other hand.

Reliance on television has been shown to be negatively related with civic engagement, although topic-specific exposure can contribute to teach (**Patterson, 2000**). Other scholars have found similar negative relationships (**Newton, 1999**). **Milner (2002)** believes that television viewing, by replacing newspaper reading, leads to a decline in civic literacy. **Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli (1994)** argue that the media's flow of bad news creates a fearful and untrusting public. Studies of the effects of news on political participation include predictions about the adverse effects on political participation and democratic processes in general (e.g., **Cappella and Hall-Jamieson, 1997**). A growing number of studies show that media use is positively related to higher levels of political dissatisfaction, and voting behavior (**Pinkleton, Austin, Fortman and Kristine, 1998**).

**McLeod and McDonald (1985)** found television-reliant respondents to be less participatory than those who relied on newspapers as their primary source. **Shah, McLeod, and Yoo (2001)** found few relationships between political participation and either news use or total viewing time. However, they also found that reliance on the media for information purposes is positively related to the production of social capital, whereas entertainment uses of the media are negatively related to civic participation. They report a negative relationship between political engagement and television use and a smaller positive relationship with newspaper use. The study of **Scheufele, Nisbet, Brossard, and Nisbet (2004)** suggested a small positive relationship between news viewing and civic engagement but mediated through political conversation and social settings.

**McLeod, Scheufele, and Moy (1999)** have looked at the use of local media in supporting political discussions and a willingness to participate in a deliberative forum, while other researchers have found that civic engagement is linked to the news media and personality strength (**Scheufele and Shah, 2000**). Newspaper-dependent individuals are more knowledgeable about local and national affairs and more likely to think they understand local and national political affairs than are television-dependent persons (**Scheufele, 2002**). Research shows that there is a difference between unsophisticated and sophisticated television viewers in coping with messages that require complex processing at both verbal and audiovisual levels such as assessing the image of a political party. (**Rahn and Cramer, 1996**).

Cross-national studies have found that variables such as media ownership (public or commercial) and news culture influence the relationship between media use and political participation (**Aarts and Semetko, 2001; Semetko, 1996**). **Sotirovic and McLeod (2001)** showed that exposure to the newspaper has an indirect relationship with political participation that is mediated through Inglehart's "post-material" values construct. Their study showed that the use of television news had no direct impact, though it did have a modest indirect impact on institutionalized, conventional participation. Arguing that the extent of community integration is a key factor accounting for political participation, they conclude that political participation has to be considered a 'dynamic process rather than a static system outcome since it is not

evenly distributed within a given society or across societies. Instead, individual citizens, under certain circumstances, engage in certain acts of participation".

**Norris (1996)** embarked on a comprehensive study of the role of the news media in the United States and Europe, suggesting that such variables as modernization, the characteristics of the media system, and the patterns of political coverage impact the relationship between media use and political participation. In response to Putnam's thesis, Norris demonstrated that, while total television exposure is negatively correlated with participation, television news and other public affairs television exposure is positively related to political and community participation. She concludes by saying, "evidence insufficient for the claim that attention to the news media in general, and television news in particular, contributes to deep-rooted indicators of civic malaise and erosion of diffuse support for the political system" (**Norris 2000b**). Norris' research, which uses both micro-level and macro-level variables, is consistent with a large number of other studies that look at the relationships between media use and various civic measures. For example, **Hooghe (2002)** finds that some programs like news and current affairs could strengthen civic engagement and political participation.

The videomalaise hypothesis has found modest support in US samples, but studies using European samples find little evidence of widespread videomalaise. **Jeffrey, (2004)** based on his study of print media in the Indian state of Kerala, argues that "mass-consumption capitalism when joined to print, chains print to popularity. Thus, held in bondage, print as a mass medium loses much of its potential to generate public action as it had done in its ideology-driven days as an elite medium." Such conclusions, which suggest negative fallout for a political culture in India, put forth the need to probe the linkages between political participation and media use.

The relationship between news media consumption and political participation is not straightforward; reading newspapers, listening to radio broadcasted news, or exposure to television news does not automatically and directly affect the political behavior of citizens. The process through which media consumption causally affects citizens' political participation goes through an individual level shift in understanding the political and policy choices as suggested by the agenda-setting theory (**McCombs, 2005**). **Ninan (2007)**, based on her study of Hindi language newspaper, observed that in India, political consciousness preceded both literacy and mass media diffusion. Print media expanded the scope for local political participation but had a negative fall out because of excessive localization of news.

An unsettling aspect of the literature has to do with what it is about the media that produces an effect on political participation. How do the media work to encourage or discourage political participation?

### **VIRTUOUS CIRCLE THEORY**

The review so far is based on the media effects paradigm, which assumes that the use of media has a causal relationship with political participation. Points of contention revolve around the direction of the effect and the trigger for the effects (media format or media content). Stronger positive association between media use and political participation does not imply a causal relationship.

Uses and gratification approach (**Blumer and Katz, 1974**), on the other hand, assumes that audiences are active media consumers, who are driven to satisfy their needs through several sources including media. The uses and gratification perspective suggests that we

reverse our understanding of the direction of the effect-- audience needs and prior experiences drive media use. In terms of the present study, the question would be: do political interest, action, and commitment influence media use?

**Norris** (2000a) avoided a causal argument about the media-participation relationship by suggesting the existence of a "virtuous" circle between civic engagement and attention to the news. The present study assumes a "dual-effects" hypothesis based on the 'virtuous circle' theory by Norris (2000b). The theory suggests that there is a process of mutually reinforcing interaction between media use and political participation. Prior interest and political involvement affect media use such as reading newspapers or watching in-depth programs on television. In the long run, as a result of accumulated experience, this process positively reinforces political engagement. The more the use of news media, the more the interest in politics and drive to engage in political actions that facilitates conventional participation. The repeated use of news media by the politically engaged will reinforce conventional participation, leading to a difference between politically involved and uninvolved.

**Norris** (2000a and 2000b) argues that there is no conclusive evidence of a negative relationship between media use and political participation, let alone a clear causal link between them. On the contrary, she finds evidence to support her virtuous theory, which argues that active, involved people use the news media and are more likely to be affected by the media than others.

Several hypotheses consistent with the literature review and theory of virtuous circle was developed. The central inquiry of the current study is reflected in the first hypothesis, which expects that there will be a positive association between media use and political participation (H1).

Three dimensions of political participation: interest in politics, political action (referring to non-conventional participation) and conventional participation (referring to voting and party membership) are considered here. It is expected that a) (H2) there is a positive association between media use and political interest b) (H3) there is a positive association between media use and political action c) (H4) there is a positive relationship between media use and conventional participation. These hypotheses would be tested controlling for demographic and socio-economic variables.

It is proposed that there is a differential influence of print media and television/radio use on political participation. It is argued that print media use is more strongly associated with all dimensions of political participation than television/radio use--Political Interest (H5a), Political Action (H5b) Conventional Participation (H5c) and Overall Participation (H5e).

Empirical models of turnout in political participation have tried to explain the variations in political participation using numerous covariates inspired by vast literature such as gender, age (youth), education, income, and social class. These studies suggest that while media consumption increases the resources available to citizens to understand public affairs, one has to be cautious in assuming that this process will lead directly to actual political participation. So, it was examined if the relationship between media use and political participation persists if controlled for gender, age, education, income, and class.

This research proposes a series of sub-hypotheses based on the expectation that the association between media use and political participation will be positive when controlled for demographic and socio-economic factors (H6a for gender, H6b for age, H6c for education, H6d

for income and H6e for class). However, this research did not have any specific predictions for differences in media use and dimensions of political participation, when controlled for demographic and socio-economic variables. Hence, the research proposes to compare the magnitude of change in associations to make some preliminary claims about the effects of control variables on media use and political participation associations.

Finally, the research reverses the argument for causality and examines the determinant of media use, in keeping with the virtuous circle hypothesis. It is proposed that audience selectively pay attention to information and that prior interest and orientation would drive the attention. Hence, it is expected that political participation has a positive association with overall media use: Political Interest (H7a), Political Action (H7b) and Conventional Participation (H7c).

#### Method

The bulk of the research on the relationship between media exposure and engagement uses American data or European samples/data which has limited the scope of generalizability to other countries. The data for this study is taken from the Indian segment of the fifth wave of the World Values Survey (**World Value Survey 2005, Official Data File**). Inglehart and Welzel (2005) stress the importance of cross-cultural surveys such as WVS to our understanding of political culture and civic engagement.

The survey was conducted between December 2006 and January 2007 by the International Academy for Creative Teaching along with Lokniti Network and Department of Political Science, University of Michigan. The questionnaire was translated into ten Indian languages with four pre-tests for each language. The survey was conducted through personal face-to-face interviews.

The sample size was 2000, with an estimated error of two per cent. The survey universe represented people above 18-yrs, spread over 160 clusters. The sample was drawn using four multi-stage stratified random sampling. The sample was drawn from the electoral rolls of the selected polling stations, and weights were provided to ensure that the sample reflected the demographic profile of the country.

## MEASUREMENTS

### *Media Use*

In studying the effects of television and newspaper dependency on various aspects of the political process, McLeod and McDonald (1985) argued that media effects should not be estimated solely by exposure. They found that exposure to media accounts for less than the other dimensions of media consumption behavior: reliance, content use, attention, and gratifications. For the study, we examine the informational dimension of media use.

Media use was assessed through asking respondents to report if they had obtained information about 'what is going on in the country and the world' through newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, in-depth reports on TV/radio. The two print media items showed a standardized alpha of .6295 and were added to form a scale (print media use). The two television/radio items had a standardized alpha of .6452 and were added to form the TV/radio use scale. Unlike the previous WVS data (e.g., 2001, 1995), WVS 2005 wave data did not include questions on the entertainment television use, and hence we were not able to test more commonly predicted relationship proposed by Putnam and others. Having a more precise set of media measures might provide additional insight, but it seems reasonable to proceed based on

the current data. One wishes for additional indicators of media use, but these are all that are available in WVS (2005).

### ***Political Interest***

People possess qualitative differences in their political interest. Some internalize their interest to a higher degree than others, leading to more and higher quality participation. The questionnaire used in the WVS 2006 has three questions related to the respondent's political Interest: How important is politics to your life (measured using a four-point scale from very important to not at all important? How interested would you say you are in politics (measured on a four-point scale ranging from very interested to not at all interested?). 15.4% of the respondents said that politics is very important in their life, while 26.9% said that politics is not at all critical. 11.9 % reported that they are very interested in politics, while 26.7% said that politics is not very important. Political information seeking was assessed through asking respondents to report if they had obtained information about 'what is going on in the country and the world' through talking to friends or colleagues on the previous day' (with dichotomous response choice). 60.5% of the respondents reported that they spoke to friends or colleagues about current affairs. Reliability test revealed that standardized Cronbach Alpha for political importance, interest and 'talking to friends about current affairs' was .6439. Hence a simple additive index was created using these three items.

### ***Conventional Participation***

Political participation as a measure of people's political performance within the formal democratic process has been the kernel of research in political sciences (**Robinson Shaver and Wrightsman, 1993**). Political scientists distinguish between conventional and unconventional forms of political participation. Conventional forms include voting behavior, party membership and involvement in partisan political processes. **McLeod, Jack, Glynn, and McDonald, (2001)** distinguish between two types of local political participation-- more conventional, "institutionalized" acts of participation and less traditional acts of participating and speaking out in a forum.

Much research on political involvement has used voting as the standard. WVS 2005 had two questions relating to conventional participation. The first asked the respondent if they voted in the recent general elections (with yes/no response) and the second question asked if the respondent is an active member, an inactive member, or not a member of any political party. 17.6% reported being active members, 48.8% reported being inactive members, and 33.6% were not members of any political party. The direct action dimension of political participation was measured using voting behavior (yes/no). 91.6% of those sampled reported voting in the recent general elections, with only 8.4% answering in the negative. A measure of conventional participation was derived from the sum of the scores of these two questions.

### ***Political Action***

Political participation beyond voting such as participating in peaceful boycott or demonstrations or joining a rally requires a much higher level of involvement and investment of time. These activities require absorbing more information than the average public may seek. Individuals with the highest levels of political information are the most engaged in campaign activities beyond voting, which is referred to here as the political action



Political action, which deals with non-conventional forms of participation, was measured through two sets of questions with the same response category. The first question asked the respondent if they have 'done, might do, or would never do' any of the following activities: signing a petition, joining boycotts, attending peaceful demonstrations (with 'any other' option). The second question asked if the respondents have done (or not done) the same set of activities in the last five years. For the study, the values of both the measures were summed to create a composite index of political action scale which had a standardized alpha of .8416.

**RESULTS**

Data analysis was done using partial correlations and multiple regression techniques. We compared zero-order and partial correlations of print media and television/radio use, controlling for sex, age, education, subjective income and subjective class in order to examine if the control variables had any moderating influence on media use and political participation coefficients. Measures used for demographic and socio-economic indicators are presented along with the results for each test.

**Table - 1: Correlation PP -Political Participation**

		PI	PA	CP
Political Interest	R	1.000	.513	.274
	Sig.	.	.000	.000
	N	1706	723	1685
Political Action	R	.513	1.000	.376
	Sig.	.000	.	.000
	N	723	780	776
Conventional participation	R	.274	.376	1.000
	Sig	.000	.000	.000
	N	1685	776	1975

In line with the expectation of political theories, political interest is positively correlated with political action ( $r=.513$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed)  $<.001$ ) and conventional participation ( $r=.274$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed)  $<.001$ ). Political action is positively associated with conventional participation ( $r=.376$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed)  $<.001$ ). The correlations matrix is presented in Table 1. Reliability test showed a standardized alpha for PI, PA and CP .6433 ( $n=721$ ) and hence an overall political participation scale was developed by summing the scores on political interest, political action, and political commitment. The measure would enable us to examine the cumulative effect of media use on political participation that includes informational, conventional and non-conventional modes of participation.

**MEDIA USE AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

Table - 2 (see row 1) displays the zero-order correlations matrix for media use variables and political participation measures. Overall, there was a significant relationship between print media use, television use, and political participation dimensions. The results are in the predicted lines, and hence hypothesis H1 is supported.

Print media use was significantly correlated with political interest ( $r=.349$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed)  $<.01$ ), political action ( $r=.393$   $p$  (one-tailed)  $<.01$ ), and conventional participation ( $r=.232$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed)  $<.01$ ). Overall print media use was positively associated with political participation ( $r=.387$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed)  $<.01$ ). Television/radio use was positively correlated with political interest ( $r=.365$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed)  $<.01$ ), political action ( $r=.287$   $p$  (one-tailed)  $<.01$ ), and conventional participation ( $r=.204$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed)  $<.01$ ). Overall television/radio media use was positively associated with political participation ( $r=.384$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed)  $<.01$ ). These data support hypothesis H2, H3 and H4 for both type of media use.

When we compared the correlation coefficients of print and TV/radio use, we found that there was only a small difference in  $r$  values for political interest, conventional participation, and political participation. Television use registered a slightly higher correlation coefficient for political interest ( $r=.365$ , compared to print media use  $r=.349$ ). However, the correlation coefficient for print media use is higher for political action, conventional participation, and overall participation. However, the  $r$  values of political action drop by nearly ten percentage point differences. This suggests that even though both print and TV/radio use are significantly correlated with political participation, print media use has a stronger influence on political action than TV/radio use.

Political Interest (Table - 3): Both print and TV/radio use accounted for 17% of the variations in political interest (Adjusted  $R^2=16.8$ ,  $F=173.755$ ,  $p<.000$ ). Hence H2 is supported. Standardized beta shows that for every unit increase in print media use, political interest increased by 22%, whereas TV/radio use contributed for an increase of 25.5%. Hence hypothesis H5a is not supported. TV/radio users show a slightly higher interest in politics than print media users.

**Table - 2: Zero-Order and Partial Correlation, controlled for demographics and socio-economic Variables**

Controlled For	Print Media Use				Television Radio Use			
	PI	PA	CP	PP	PI	PA	CP	PP
Zero-Order	.349	.393	.232	.387	.365	.287	.204	.384
Gender	.321	.344	.121	.352	.353	.246	.105	.339
Age	.357	.393	.178	.405	.382	.289	.153	.384
Education	.280	.307	.0942	.3073	.3202	.2008	.0843	.2991
Relative Income	.364	.373	.148	.393	.389	.271	.128	.375
Subjective Class	.321	.351	.148	.361	.350	.252	.130	.346
All Control Variables (n=685)	.264	.2969	.1002	.2981	.3063	.1933	.0955	.2940

Legend: PI=Political Interest, PA=Political Action, CP=Conventional participation and PP=Political Participation

Political Action (Table-3): Both print and TV/radio contributed positively to political action and accounted for 16% of the variance in political action (Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>=.159, F=73.321., df=2, p<.000). The standardized beta for print media use is .342 whereas it is only .087 for TV/radio use. This means that the probability of association between print media use and political actions is about 3.5 times more than that of TV/radio use. Thus hypotheses H3 and H5b are supported. We find both positive association and significant differences between print, television/radio use, and political action, even though the questions on both these media tapped only informational uses.

Conventional Participation (Table -3): Both media accounted for only 6.2% of the variance in the dependent variable and conventional participation (Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>=.062, 16.8, F=.66.351, df=2, p<.000). Print media use accounted for 17.3% of the variance in the conventional participation score while TV/radio use contributed to about 11.2%. These findings are consistent with the expected relationship as stated by hypothesis H3 and H5c.

**Table - 3: Multiple Regression Media Use and Political Participation**

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Stand. Beta	Std. Error	T	P Value
<b>Political Interest</b>					
	Print Media Use	0.219	0.034	8.545	.000
	TV/Radio Use	0.255	.032	9.964	.000
	Constant	2.378	.038	62.402	.000
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =16.8, F=.173.785, df=2, p<.000					
<b>Political Action</b>					
	Print Media Use	.342	.045	8.417	.000
	TV/Radio Use	.087	.043	2.135	.000
	Constant	2.342	.041	56.689	.033
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =.159, F=73.321.,df=2, p<.000					
<b>Conventional Participation</b>					
	Print Media Use	.173	.025	6.679	.000
	TV/Radio Use	.112	.024	4.335	.000
	Constant	1.529	.026	58.257	.000
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =.062, 16.8, F=.66.351 ,df=2, p<.000					
<b>Overall Political Participation</b>					
	Print Media Use	.249	.097	6.241	.000
	TV/Radio Use	.240	.092	6.030	.000

	Constant	5.246	.092	56.891	.000
Adjusted R2=.187, F=88.631 ,df=2, p<.000					

Overall Participation (Table - 3): Both print media and TV/radio use were positively associated with overall participation and accounted for about 19% of the variance (Adjusted R2=.187, F=88.631, df=2, p<.000).Hence H1, the kernel of this study is also supported. The standardized beta for print use was .249 and for TV/radio use was .240, supporting H5c, which expects a difference in print and TV/radio use for overall political participation. However, the difference is very marginal.

In sum, even amongst media users, television users are less likely to engage in political actions than print media users, partly supporting the videomalaise thesis that television use is associated with lower civic engagement. However, the results show little difference in conventional participation, suggesting that videomalaise might affect non-conventional political action but not voting or party membership.

**Does Political participation affect media use?**

In line with the dual-effect hypothesis, we reverse the argument for causality to examine the extent to which political participation measures affect the likelihood of media use. For the analysis, we created a composite measure of media use, by combining the print media and television/radio use scores (standardized alpha=.6974, N=1995). We ran a stepwise multiple regression analysis with Age, Highest Education, Subjective Income, Subjective Class and the three dimensions of political participation: Political Interest, Political Action, and Conventional Participation. The aim was to identify the key factors that best predict media use.

The results presented in Table 4 show that education, subjective class, political interest, and political actions are reliable predictors of media use accounting for about 50% of the variance in overall media use (Adjusted R2=.187, F=88.631, df=2, p<.000). Age, subjective income, and conventional participation measures did not show a significant effect on media use. Standardized beta scores for significant variables showed that education contributes to 50% of the change in media use followed by political interest, which accounts for about 21%. Political action and subjective class contribute about 12% and 14% respectively. This shows that political interest and political action drive media use for information, but this effect is the result of educational qualification and class status. We found support for hypothesis H7a (political interest) and H7b (political action), but not for H7c (Conventional participation).

**Table - 4: Determinant of Media Use**

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Std. Beta	Std. Error	T	P Value
Media Use					
	Highest Educational Level Attained	.497	.014	16.191	.000
	Subjective Class	.141	.036	4.680	.000
	Political Interest	.212	.042	6.719	.000

	Political Action	.122	.051	3.841	.000
	Constant	-.193	.204	-.983	.344
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> (Male)=.500, F=177.878, df=4, p<.000					

### Demographic and Socioeconomic Influences

Gender: Previous research has suggested gender gaps in political knowledge and participation (**Kenski and Jamieson, 2000**). In the total sample (N=1998, 56.9% male), 26.3% of the male and 14.3% of the female reported to be using newspaper and magazine as information sources. Amongst non-users, we find that 63% are female and 34.4% are male. Thus, men reported greater print media use than women. Similar pattern was found for TV/radio use with 37% of men and 25% of women reporting high use (broadcast news on television and radio, in-depth coverage) in contrast with a predictable reversal for non-users--48% of women and 28% of the men report not using the broadcast medium for information.

Partial correlation between media use and political participation reveals (Table - 2, row 2) that gender does not affect the overall significance of the relationship. When controlled for gender, the r values slightly drop for political interest, political action, and overall political participation, but the drop is sharp for print media use and conventional participation. Print media use drops from  $r=.232$  to  $r(\text{gender})=.1213$ , and for TV/radio  $r=.204$  to  $r(\text{gender})=.105$ . In terms of variance, the R<sup>2</sup> value for zero-order correlation is 5.3%, but when controlled for gender, the R<sup>2</sup> drops to 1.3%, suggesting that gender moderates the influence of print media on conventional participation (by 2.8%). Hence hypothesis H6 (gender) is supported.

Age: The relationship between age and political participation has typically focused on the political engagement of young voters, or lack of it (Bennett, 2003). We crossed tabulated media use and age, which was categorized into youth (18-30 years, 27.9%) middle (31-45 years, 38.1%) and old age group (46-years and above, 34.1%). It was seen that 28.6 % of youth reported high media use in comparison to 18.8% of middle age group and 17.5% of older age group. 58% of the older age group report not using print media as a source of information compared to 46% of the middle age group and 35% of younger people. This suggests a negative association between age and print media use. TV/radio use showed a similar pattern, with 37% of the youth reporting high TV/radio use and 46.5% of the older people not using broadcast news.

When controlled for age (Table 2 row 3), partial correlations show a significant relationship between the exploratory variables. There was only a marginal drop (<10%) in the r values of political interest, action, and political participation for both media use variables. The r value drops from .204 to .1534 for TV/radio use and from .232 to .177 for print media use indicating that the magnitude of media influence on conventional participation (voting and party membership) drops by 5% point when controlled for age.

Regarding variance, the R<sup>2</sup> value for zero-order correlation is 5.3%, but when controlled for age, the R<sup>2</sup> drops to about 3% for both the media, suggesting that age has a small effect on the association between media use and conventional participation, producing about 3% change.

Education: Dozens of studies have found educational attainment to be among the strongest predictors of participation in a wide range of political activities (Serra, 2004). The wealth of studies detailing the association between education and participation has spawned

smaller literature that seeks to identify the causal mechanism(s) driving the relationship. Higher levels of education are closely related to higher political participation as well as more civic engagement (**Serra, 2004**).

WVS2005 asked respondents to indicate their highest level of education that they have attained on a 9-point scale ranging from 'no formal education' to 'university-level education, with a degree.' The variable was recorded into three categories representing 'No formal education and incomplete primary education' (38.4%), 'Primary completed to secondary incomplete' (25.1%) and 'University/Higher Education' (36.5%). About 5% of respondents with no formal education or incomplete primary education used print media in contrast to 39.6% of people with university-level education who used print media sources. For TV/radio, we found that 52.1% of high users have a university-level degree in contrast with 12.5% with no formal education. Amongst non-users, 65.7% had no formal education and 12.8% had a university-level education.

A significant correlation was found between media use and political participation variables when controlled for education (Table - 2 row 4). There was a less than 10% point drop in political interest, political action, and political participation. However, when conventional participation was considered, we found that the  $r$  value decreased substantially for both media use. Print media correlation on conventional participation was reduced by 13.78% and TV/radio effect by 11.97% when controlled for education. Regarding variance, the  $R^2$  value drops for conventional participation from 5.3% (zero-order  $r$ ) to .89% (education), a drop of about 5.5%, suggesting that education reduces the overall media influence on conventional participation slightly.

Subjective Income: One question in WVS 2005 wave captured the relative household income of the respondent on 'a scale of incomes on which 1 indicates the "lowest income decile" and then the "highest income decile." The scale resembles an income ladder which has become a popular measure of relative, subjective income in many development research (**Narayanan, 2005**). The data were categorized into a low-income group (1-2 decile lower rung, 32.9%), middle-income group (3, 4, 5, middle rung, 36.8%) and high-income group (6-10 decile upper rung, 30.3%). Amongst high print media users, we found that 30% belonged to the upper rung of the income ladder and 14% to lower rungs. 67% of lower rung respondents and 33% of upper rung respondents reported not using print media. The difference was narrower for TV/radio use, but in the same general direction, 44.5% of upper rung respondents reported using broadcast news sources in contrast with 18% of lower rung users. 53% of lower rung respondents did not use broadcast media in comparison with 24% of upper rung people.

To examine if subjective income has any effect on media influence on political participation, partial correlation was performed controlling for subjective income (see Table - 2 row 5). The results showed that the relationship between print media use and TV/radio use was significant even after controlling for relative income. For print media use, there was a marginal increase (<5%) in the  $r$  values of political interest and political participation action and a slight decrease in the political action and conventional participation. For TV/radio use, there was a marginal increase in political interest, a slight decrease in political action and commitment. Regarding variance, when controlled for relative income  $R^2$  for conventional participation, the score drops by about 3% for print use and 3.75% for TV/radio use, suggesting that income has only a small influence on the association between media use and conventional participation.

**Subjective Class:** Respondents were asked to describe their class status on a 5-point scale comprising of the upper class, upper middle class, lower middle class, working class, and lower class. The scale was re-categorized to represent the lower class (27.2%), lower middle/working class (52.7%) and upper middle/upper class (20.1%). 40.5% of upper and upper middle class reported high use of print sources and only 9.5% of those describing themselves as lower class reported high use of print media sources. 67% of the lower class group and 24.4% of the upper and upper-middle-class group reported as not using print media as a source of information. For TV, the comparable figures are: 49.9% of the upper/upper middle class, 16.6% of the lower class are high users, in contrast with 53% of lower income group and 19.5% of upper-income group reporting non-use.

To examine if media influence on political participation persisted when controlled for subjective class, we performed partial correlation between the exploratory variables and compared the correlation coefficient  $r$  with zero-order correlation (see Table 2 row 6). For print media, the  $r$  values dropped slightly (<5%) for political interest, action, and overall political participation. However, the  $r$ -value for conventional participation dropped by about 8 % for both print media and TV/radio use, even though both were significant at  $p < .05$ . Regarding variance, the  $R^2$  value for zero-order correlation is .0538, but when controlled for social class, the  $R^2$  drops to .022. Social class reduces the influence of print media by 3.18% and TV/Radio by 2.5%.

The overall impact of control variables on the strength of association between media use and political participation were examined, using the same procedure as above but controlling for all the variables--gender, age, education, relative income and subjective social class (Table - 2 row 7). A comparison with the zero-order correlation for print media use shows that the  $r$  value diminishes slightly for political interest.

Concerning variance, the  $R^2$  value for zero-order correlation for political action was 15.44%, but when controlled for all the demographic variables the  $R^2$  dropped to 8.81%, suggesting that in general, the demographic indicators had the impact of reducing the association between print media use and political action by 6.63%. For TV/radio, the drop resulting from controlling for all demographic variables was about 4.5%.

The results presented evidence that indicates that there is a positive association between media use and political participation and its three dimensions of political interest, political action, and conventional participation. Even when controlled for demographic and socio-economic status, the relationship persists, diminishing the variance explained by less than 8%. The magnitude of the change is relatively small.

## **DISCUSSION**

The study results are consistent with previous research findings on media use and political participation. Given that the present results are similar to those of Norris (2000a and 2000b), as well as the broader body of political communication research, the discussion below provides general assessments of relative importance that can be attached to different media use and political participation.

Overall media use is positively associated with political participation and its sub-dimensions under consideration in this study--political interest, action, and conventional participation. We found that the relationship remained significant even when controlled for

demographic and socio-economic. This suggests that the relationship is robust and stable. The data reveals that the use of print media and TV/radio can account for (19%) of the variance in overall political participation.

The results of the study lend support to the core assumption of the Virtuous Circle theory. Use of media as a source of information increases the probability of political participation. Even though the use of both media is significantly related to all three dimensions of political participation, print and TV/radio use exhibit differential impact on political participation and its sub-scales of political interest, political action, and conventional participation.

A somewhat surprising result is that the probability of respondents showing interest in politics is slightly higher for TV/radio users than for print media users. However, on political action score, the probability of print media users engaging in non-conventional political activities is 3.5 times more than TV/radio users. Further, the use of both the media can explain only 6.2% of the variance in conventional voting and party membership measures. One probable explanation is that TV/radio use generates interest in politics, but is far less likely to trigger political action and conventional participation when compared to print media use. The small difference (24-25%) in relative weights (standardized beta) for media use suggests that the use of both the media contributes to the same small extent to increasing probability of overall participation.

If the claim causality runs from prior political orientation to media use, we find that political interest and non-conventional models of political action affect the use of media, facilitated by higher education and class status. Thus, we find support for the dual-effect hypothesis: People who are politically conscious and active turn to media for information, which in turn reinforces and positively affects further involvement in politics.

The results of the study should not be interpreted as suggesting a causal connection between media use and dimensions of political participation. Consistent with the Virtuous Circle theory, we examined only the correlation coefficient and variance that can be accounted for by media use. Norris's work has already demonstrated that western cultures have similar predictors of political engagement. While the size of the relationships reported above is small, the results lay a firm ground for examining the causal relationship with experimental, longitudinal or panel data sets. It seems worthwhile to examine the relationship between media use and political participation with a more extensive and more detailed data set.

News media do not act in isolation. Transformation in the attitudes of the people is the result of an ensemble of forces, such as globalization, the presence of trust, interpersonal networks, shared beliefs and other attributes of social capital, and the pace of economic growth. Political participation also depends on the local opportunity structure, traditional patterns of political engagement, and family socialization. Caste, religious affiliation and regionalism actively shape political identity and engagement. This study was limited to examining the relationship between just one dimension of media use and three dimensions of political participation. Hence, the result should encourage the virtuous circle hypothesis, but on a cautious note. More detailed operationalization of non-conventional political actions, specific to the Indian context, is required for future studies.



## CONCLUSION

Why should there be a consistent relationship between political engagement and media use? To the extent that democracy is linked with the mechanisms of public discussion and debate, popular forms of mediated communication that target people cannot be dismissed. The notion of deliberative democracy hinges on institutional mechanisms that foster communicative action (**Hebermas, 1996**). News media acts as an interface between democratic traditions and argumentative culture in India, sustaining and shaping the nature of political discourse (**Mehta, 2008**).

Though theorists of deliberative democracy have, with few exceptions, ignored the potential of the media to facilitate public communion and deliberation, the ramifications of growing media use for political processes need to be systematically and periodically assessed. While the claims of the news media's effects on democracy, narrowly defined as voting decision, might be far-fetched, it can be argued that the news media creates a space in which citizens can engage in the political process. Media is the primary connection between an individual and the society. The results of the study can have two broader implications:

Firstly, the study opens the possibility of studying news audiences from a political marketing perspective, which suggests that politics is an attempt to sell ideological positions to citizen-consumers through mass marketing strategies. **Mehta** (2008) observes that the television news medium taps into the indigenous argumentative culture and relatively freer media regulations, 'combining it with market calculus and commercial interests.' Are audiences for hard news segmented along political faultiness in India?

Secondly, news media is steadily becoming an integral part of political dynamics as witnessed during the May 2009 general elections in India. **Schudson** (1995) argues that "the most significant media effect may not be measurable influences on attitudes or beliefs produced by media slant, but the range of information that the media makes available to individual human minds, the range of connections they bring to light, and the particular social practices and collective rituals by which they organize our days and ways" (quoted in Mehta, 2008). However, this study worked from the premise that through a positive correlation between media use and political participation is a minimum necessity, it is, by no means, sufficient condition for establishing the range of 'connections' that Schudson talks. The study finds indirect support for the Virtuous Circle theory, which states that such connection represents a dual effect between media use and political participation.

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