

How Partisan Media Influences Political Attitudes of Polarized Audience: The Role of Presumed Media Influence

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Abstract

This study explores the consumption of political information, differing perceptions among conservatives and liberals of susceptibility to effects of pro- and counter-attitudinal media and their influence on political attitudes with a focus on the presumed media influence framework. The study draws on an online survey of presumed media influence and political attitudes, carried out in January 2019 when confrontations between conservatives and liberals were increasing in Korea. The results highlighted politically divided information consumption and perceptions of pro- and counter-attitudinal media effects among conservatives and liberals. As a consequence of presumed media influence in the context of pro- and counter-attitudinal media, liberals who perceive that in-group members are susceptible to conservative media showed a higher level of political inefficacy, while the presumed influence of conservative media on out-group members among liberals produced less political inefficacy.

Keywords: presumed media influence, political inefficacy, partisan media, pro-attitudinal media, counter-attitudinal media

Introduction

In the past number of years it was expected that a changing media environment would expand political communication channels and offer opportunities to acquire diverse political opinions and views. However, search engines and social media have created the so-called filter bubble, where people only encounter political information that is congruent with their political orientation and that reinforces their political beliefs and attitudes (Prior, 2013; Stroud, 2010). The Pew Research Center (2014) revealed drastic differences between conservatives and liberals in terms of how they consume political news and how they interact with each other on political topics in

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the US. According to the Pew Research Center, conservatives were likely to turn to one main news source for political information whereas liberals relied on more diverse news sources. People also tended to interact with like-minded people when discussing politics online or with friends. In democracies, concerns are growing that such selective exposure might cause political polarization (Stroud, 2010) and pose a serious threat to our society.

Since 2016, after a series of political scandals and the impeachment of then President of South Korea Park Geun-hye, Korean society has been dealing with rising tensions and confrontations among conservatives and liberals. Additionally, conservative and liberal media, including podcasts and YouTube channels, have increased over the last few years. According to Reuters Institute Digital News Data 2019, Korean users are more attracted to online news than traditional media. YouTube use is ahead of most other countries and podcasts are growing in popularity. Notably, trust in traditional media in Korea is consistently low. There are higher levels of trust in individual news brands including JTBC and YTN and less trust in other major and traditional mass media. Considering the changing political and media landscape in Korea, this study explores the influence of perceptions of susceptibility to the effects of pro- and counter-attitudinal media, with a particular focus on the presumed media influence approach.

Perceptions of Susceptibility to Effects: Third-Person Perception and Presumed Media Influence

As Gunther & Storey (2003) noted, media research has been centered on direct influences of media, but indirect effects must also be examined in order to understand the process of media influence. Presumed media influence (hereafter PMI) refers to perceived influence of media message on others that can change the perceivers' own attitudes and behaviors (Gunther & Storey, 2003). PMI was originally derived from third-person effect research. Since Davison (1983) first pointed out the third-person effect of media – the hypothesis that people tend to believe that others are more influenced by media than they are – it has been widely examined in media research. According to Davison (1983), “people will tend to overestimate the influence that mass communications have on the attitudes and behavior of others” (p.3). There are two components of the third-person effect hypothesis: perceptual and behavioral (Perloff, 1999). The perceptual component, which is called third-person perception, proposes that people tend to underestimate media effects on themselves while overestimating media effects on others. The behavioral component predicts that such biased third-person perception will prompt people to take action such as supporting the restriction of media content that might have undesirable effects. With regard to the type of the media, media content – including persuasive and biased content – tends to increase third-person perception

(Peter, 2007).

Instead of depending on the magnitude of self-other difference, PMI considers the link between the perceived effect on others and the perceiver's own attitudes (Gunther & Storey, 2003). PMI is a broader model of indirect media effects and third-person effect is a type of PMI. This study focuses on social distance (Gunther, 1991; Perloff, 1999) which might influence the perceptions of susceptibility to effects. Previous researches on third-person effect often compare media influence on self and others. However, it is needed to divide the comparison group into subgroups categorized by social distance to better understand the perceptions of susceptibility to effects. Researches have shown that third-person perception is reduced when people identify themselves with the comparison group (Lambe & McLeod, 2005; Idid & Wok, 2010). Additionally, the third-person perception of media that is regarded as undesirable is higher in out-groups than in in-groups due to self-enhancement bias (Lambe & McLeod, 2005).

Given pervasive news framing of politics as strategy and game, the perception that others are more vulnerable to political news may increase negative political attitudes which in turn may diminish active media use for acquiring political information concerning voters' political behavior (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). Lee (2009) revealed that people with higher third-person perception of political news produce more negative political attitudes. Pinkleton, Austin & Fortman (1998) also showed that negativism toward media campaign coverage decreases media use and that cynicism toward the political system reduces political efficacy. Taken together, these suggest that perceptions of susceptibility to effects of political communication could affect voters' political attitudes.

This study aims to explore the perceptions of susceptibility to effects of conservative and liberal media on in-group and out-group members based on the concept of PMI, considering political situations in Korea and comparison groups based on social and political distance. Furthermore, this study seeks to examine how PMI of pro- and counter attitudinal media on in- and out-group members are related to perceiver's own political attitudes.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Taking the changing media landscape of Korea into account, this study examines how respondents with conservative and liberal political orientation differ in political information behavior (R1) and whether there are any differences in how conservatives and liberals interact with people (R2).

R1: How do conservatives and liberals differ in political information consumption?

R2: Are there any differences between conservatives and liberals in how they interact with people?

Hypothesis 1-1, 1-2 and Research Question 3 focus on PMI of conservative and liberal media on the comparison groups. The comparison groups include supporters of the liberal ruling party, supporters of the conservative opposition party, and political centrists. This study predicts that respondents will perceive higher PMI of pro-attitudinal media on in-group (H1-1) and that respondents will perceive higher PMI of counter-attitudinal media on out-group (H1-2). Additionally, the research attempts to explore whether there are any differences between conservatives and liberals in PMI of pro- and counter-attitudinal media on political centrists (R3).

H1-1: Respondents will perceive higher PMI of pro-attitudinal media on in-group.

H1-2: Respondents will perceive higher PMI of counter-attitudinal media on out-group.

R3: Are there any differences between conservatives and liberals in PMI of pro- and counter-attitudinal media on political centrists?

As a consequence of perceptions of susceptibility to effects, this study examines as to whether PMI of conservative and liberal media on out-group members leads to political attitudes such as political inefficacy. Political inefficacy or a lack of political efficacy refers to “citizens' perceived lack of ability to produce a desired outcome or effect” (Pinkleton, Austin & Fortman, 1998, p.36). This study posed that PMI of counter-attitudinal media on out-group and political centrists is associated with political inefficacy (H2-1, H2-2).

H2-1: PMI of counter-attitudinal media on out-group members will be positively associated with political inefficacy.

H2-2: PMI of counter-attitudinal media on political centrists will be positively associated with political inefficacy.

Methods

Sample

The data were collected from an online survey between January 25th and 31st, 2019, when confrontations between conservatives and liberals were increasing. A total of 1,075 Internet users residing in the metropolitan area of Seoul, Incheon and Kyunggi-do participated in the online survey.

Measurement

Respondents were asked about their sources of political information, their political interests and knowledge, their political orientation and attitudes, and their perceptions about the effects of conservative and liberal media.

Media use. Media use was measured by a series of questions with a five-point scale including 1 (mostly not at all), 2 (once or twice a month), 3 (once or twice a week), 4 (once a day) and 5 (several times a day). Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they acquire political information from media. This included watching television news and related programs on the Internet, using newspaper and news agency coverage on the Internet, radio news and related programs including podcasts, YouTube political channels, political podcasts, political information and opinions on social media, and comments about political news on the Internet. In addition, respondents were asked about specific political information sources that they use more than once a week including television news, newspapers, news agencies, news magazines, radio news and related programs including podcasts and YouTube political channels. Multiple answers were allowed.

Interpersonal relationships. Respondents were asked about their interpersonal relationships on SNS and in real life with questions including, “What is the political orientation of people you interact with on SNS (or on a face-to-face basis)?”. The study asked respondents to select a rating on a five-point scale including mostly conservative, more conservative than liberal, half conservative and half liberal, more conservative than liberal and mostly liberal.

Political interest. Respondents were asked to rate their level of interest in politics by using a five-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very interested).

Political knowledge. Respondents were asked about their knowledge of politics with a five-point scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very knowledgeable).

Interest in political news. Respondents indicated their level of interest in political news using a five-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very interested).

Voting behavior. Voting behavior was measured with the question “I usually go to vote” using a five-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (absolutely).

Political orientation. Respondents indicated their self-designated political orientation based on a five-point scale including 1 (extremely conservative), 2 (moderately conservative), 3 (centrist), 4 (moderately liberal), and 5 (extremely liberal).

Hostile media perception (HMP). Hostile media perception (hereafter HMP) is the perception that reports from news media are biased against the perceivers’ own attitudes or beliefs (Vallone, Ross & Mark, 1985). Partisans tend to perceive media content as biased against their viewpoint (Schmitt, Gunther & Liebhart, 2004). Lee (2019) found HMP based on political orientation, which caused media cynicism and a deep distrust of media system. In this study, HMP was measured as a predictor of variables. On a four-point scale that went from none, to little, some and substantial, respondents rated the amount of hostility they felt towards media.

Presumed media influence (PMI). Perceived effects of media on self and others

were measured by questions with a five-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (absolutely). Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent the pro- and counter-attitudinal media influence them, supporters of pro-attitudinal party, supporters of counter-attitudinal party and political centrists respectively.

Political inefficacy. Political inefficacy was measured by the following three items with a five-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (absolutely): “I cannot affect what government is engaging in” (Association for Promoting Fair Elections, 2008), “It is difficult for citizens to influence politics” (Yamada, 1990), and “It is difficult to reflect public opinion in politics” (Yamada, 1990). Two items based on Yamada (1990) was slightly altered to suit the study context. The alpha coefficient for the political inefficacy scale was .754.

Characteristics of the Sample

In the sample, 49.9% of the respondents were male (n=536) and 50.1% were female (n=539), with an average age of 44.5 (SD=13.4). The percentage of respondents resident in Seoul was 52.1%, 39.2% in Kyungi-do and 8.7% in Incheon. The age range includes the following (see Table 1): with regard to conservatives, 13.8% were between the ages of 20 and 29, 15.4% between 30 and 39 years, 14.4% between 40 and 49 years, 19.0% between 50 and 59 years, and 37.4% between 60 and 69 years. Among liberals, 21.3% were between the ages of 20 and 29, 22.9% between 30 and 39, 24.2% between 40 and 49, 19.5% between 50 and 59 years, and 12.2% between 60 and 69 years.

Findings

For the purpose of analysis, respondents who answered extremely conservative and moderately conservative were categorized as conservatives (n=195, 18.1%), and respondents who called themselves moderately liberal and extremely liberal were categorized as liberals (n=385, 35.8%). The percentage of respondents who identified as centrist was 46.0% (n= 495, 46.0%). As shown in Table 1, 62.1% of men account for the conservatives while the ratio of men to women is roughly half and half for liberals and centrists. Almost 40% (37.4%) of the respondents with conservative political orientation were in the age range of 60 to 69 whereas the percentage of a whole age of range was around 20% among political liberals and centrists.

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents by political orientation

	Conservatives	Centrists	Liberals	
Gender				
Male	121 (62.1)	231 (46.7)	184 (47.8)	
Female	74 (37.9)	264 (53.3)	201 (52.2)	$\chi^2=14.271$ $df=2$ $p< .01$
Age				
20s	27 (13.8)	98 (19.8)	82 (21.3)	
30s	30 (15.4)	93 (18.8)	88 (22.9)	
40s	28 (14.4)	98 (19.8)	93 (24.2)	
50s	37 (19.0)	107 (21.6)	75 (19.5)	
60s	73 (37.4)	99 (20.0)	47 (12.2)	$\chi^2=90.026$ $df=8$ $p< .001$
Total	195 (100.0)	495 (100.0)	385 (100.0)	

Table 2: Political interest, knowledge and attitudes by political orientation

	Conservatives	Centrists	Liberals	F	Bonferroni
	(a)	(b)	(c)	($df=2,1072$)	
Political interest	3.78 (0.93)	3.40 (0.98)	3.91 (0.86)	34.761*	a>b, c>a
Political knowledge	3.63 (0.95)	3.32 (0.93)	3.69 (0.88)	20.192*	a>b, c>a
Interest in political news	3.75 (0.97)	3.48 (0.97)	3.82 (0.95)	14.901*	a>b, c>a
Voting behavior	4.58 (0.72)	4.43 (0.83)	4.68 (0.65)	12.075*	c>b
Political inefficacy	3.32 (0.91)	3.29 (0.87)	2.95 (0.93)	18.936*	a>c, b>c

* $p< .001$

Table 2 indicates interest and knowledge in politics and political attitudes by political orientation. Both conservatives and liberals showed high levels of interest and knowledge in politics and interest in political news. Respondents tended to vote regardless of their political orientation, but liberals were more likely to vote than political centrists. Regarding political attitudes, conservatives and political centrists showed stronger political inefficacy than liberals.

R1 asked how conservatives and liberals differ in political information behavior and results revealed significant differences between the two when it comes to acquiring political information. As presented in Table 3, conservatives tend to rely than the liberals on traditional media – such as television news and related programs, and newspaper and news agency coverage – for political information. This might be due to the fact that more than half of the conservatives were 50 years or older. On the other hand, liberals turned to political podcasts and comments about political news on the Internet more so than conservatives did.

Table 3: Political information source by political orientation

	Conservatives	Centrists	Liberals
<u>Television news and related programs</u> ^a			
Mostly not at all	10 (5.1)	32 (6.5)	13 (3.4)
Once or twice a month	17 (8.7)	59 (11.9)	45 (11.7)
Once or twice a week	42 (21.5)	149 (30.1)	89 (23.1)
Once a day	85 (43.6)	184 (37.2)	173 (44.9)
Several times a day	41 (21.0)	71 (14.3)	65 (16.9)
<u>Newspaper and news agency coverage</u> ^b			
Mostly not at all	12 (6.2)	46 (9.3)	22 (5.7)
Once or twice a month	12 (6.2)	55 (11.1)	30 (7.8)
Once or twice a week	38 (19.5)	139 (28.1)	94 (24.4)
Once a day	93 (47.7)	183 (37.0)	168 (43.6)
Several times a day	40 (20.5)	72 (14.5)	71 (18.4)
<u>Podcast political programs</u> ^c			
Mostly not at all	111 (56.9)	285 (57.6)	175 (45.5)
Once or twice a month	26 (13.3)	65 (13.1)	63 (16.4)
Once or twice a week	36 (18.5)	88 (17.8)	85 (22.1)
Once a day	20 (10.3)	44 (8.9)	42 (10.9)
Several times a day	2 (1.0)	13 (2.6)	20 (5.2)
<u>Comments about political news on the Internet</u> ^d			
Mostly not at all	63 (32.3)	153 (30.9)	81 (21.0)
Once or twice a month	22 (11.3)	84 (17.0)	58 (15.1)
Once or twice a week	47 (24.1)	117 (23.6)	113 (29.4)
Once a day	45 (23.1)	108 (21.8)	93 (24.2)
Several times a day	18 (9.2)	33 (6.7)	40 (10.4)
Total	195 (100.0)	495 (100.0)	385 (100.0)

a: $\chi^2=18.710$ $df=8$ $p<.05$, b: $\chi^2=21.644$ $df=8$ $p<.01$

c: $\chi^2=19.522$ $df=8$ $p<.05$, d: $\chi^2=19.738$ $df=8$ $p<.05$

Figure 1: Comparison of news outlets between conservatives and liberals, TV news (Over 10% in either conservatives or liberals)

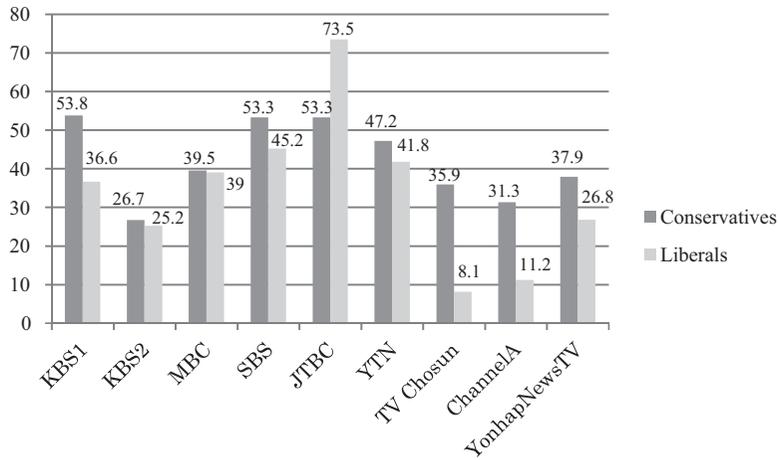


Figure 2: Comparison of news outlets between conservatives and liberals, newspapers (Over 10% in either conservatives or liberals)

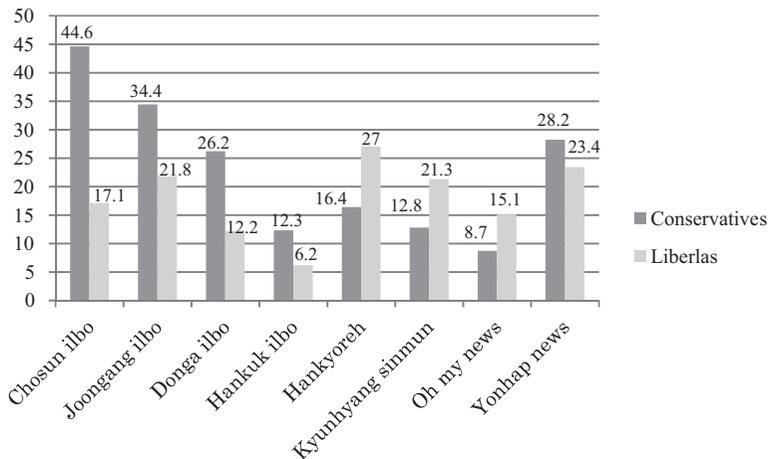
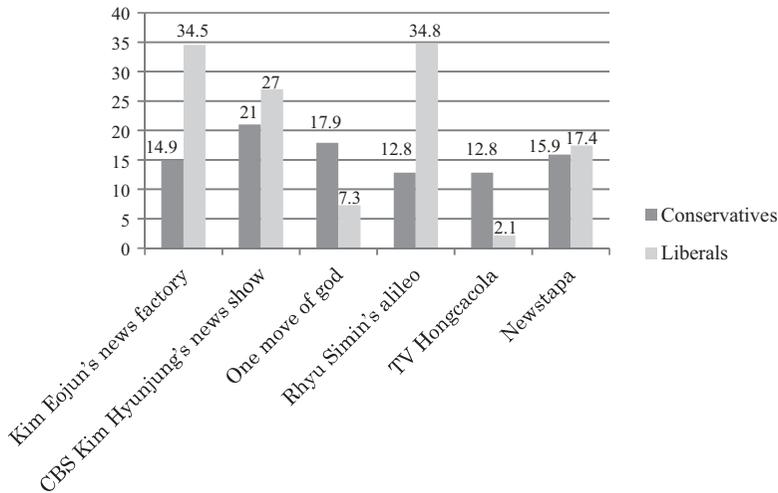


Figure 1, 2 and 3 compare news outlets that respondents, grouped by political orientation, use more than once a week. As shown in Figure 1 and 2, conservatives accessed conservative TV channels – such as TV Chosun and Channel A, and conservative newspapers including Chosunilbo and Joogangilbo – more than liberals. On the other hand, liberals relied on major liberal news media including JTBC (TV news), Hankyoreh (newspaper) and Kyunhyangsinmun (newspaper). JTBC – one of Korea’s most trusted news outlets at the time of survey (Reuters

Figure 3: Comparison of news outlets between conservatives and liberals, YouTube (Over 10% in either conservatives or liberals)



Institute, 2019) – played a significant role in news coverage of the political scandals that led to the then President’s impeachment in March 2017. It is worth noting that there are no differences in traditional TV news channels such as KBS2, MBC and SBS, showing that they gained support from both conservatives and liberals after the regime change. Online, conservatives relied on conservative YouTube channels including One move of god and TV Honkacola, while liberals turned to the liberal Kim Eojun’s news factory and Yousimin’s alileo YouTube channels, showing a sharp divide between conservatives and liberals when it comes to accessing political information (see Figure 3).

R2 asked if there are any differences between conservatives and liberals in their interactions with people. As seen in Table 4, there were significant differences between them when interacting with people on SNS and on a face-to-face basis, showing respondents were more likely to interact with individuals who are consistent with their political views both on SNS and in real life situations. It is interesting to note that liberals tend to interact with like-minded people more than conservatives both on SNS (54.2%>31.3%) and face-to-face (46.5%>37.5%).

Table 4: Political orientation and interpersonal relationships

	Conservatives	Liberals
<u>SNS</u> ^a		
Mostly conservatives	7 (3.6)	0 (0.0)
More conservatives than liberals	54 (27.7)	15 (3.9)
Half conservatives and half liberals	88 (45.1)	161 (41.8)
More liberals than conservatives	43 (22.1)	195 (50.6)
Mostly liberals	3 (1.5)	14 (3.6)
<u>Face-to-Face basis</u> ^b		
Mostly conservatives	6 (3.1)	5 (1.3)
More conservatives than liberals	67 (34.4)	38 (9.9)
Half conservatives and half liberals	88 (45.1)	163 (42.3)
More liberals than conservatives	30 (15.4)	172 (44.7)
Mostly liberals	4 (2.1)	7 (1.8)
Total	195 (100.0)	385 (100.0)

a: $\chi^2=103.504$ $df=4$ $p<.001$, b: $\chi^2=77.193$ $df=4$ $p<.001$

H1-1 and H1-2 are related to the PMI in the context of conservative and liberal media. H1-1 predicted that respondents will perceive higher PMI of pro-attitudinal media on in-group members, and H1-2 suggested that respondents will perceive greater PMI of counter-attitudinal media on out-group members. Table 5 shows general support for PMI. Both conservatives and liberals perceived higher PMI of pro-attitudinal media on in-group members (Conservatives: 3.64>2.56; Liberals: 3.40>2.82), while both conservatives and liberals perceived higher PMI of counter-attitudinal media on out-group members (Conservatives: 3.84>2.47; Liberals: 3.68>2.78).

R3 asked if there are any differences between conservatives and liberals in PMI of pro- and counter-attitudinal media on political centrists. The results indicate that conservatives showed higher PMI of counter-attitudinal media on political centrists (3.33>2.80). In contrast, liberals perceived higher PMI of pro-attitudinal media on political centrists (3.31>3.05).

Table 5: Paired t-test for PMI on self and in- and out-group members, and political centrists

	Conservative Media	Liberal Media	<i>t</i> (<i>df</i>)
<u>Conservatives</u>			
Self	3.16 (1.04)	2.36 (.97)	<i>t</i> (194) = 7.073*
Supporters of conservative opposition party	3.64 (1.03)	2.56 (1.00)	<i>t</i> (194) = 10.079*
Supporters of liberal ruling party	2.47 (1.14)	3.84 (1.12)	<i>t</i> (194) = -10.666*
Political centrists	2.80 (.88)	3.33 (.93)	<i>t</i> (194) = - 5.556*
<u>Liberals</u>			
Self	2.24 (1.03)	3.45 (.80)	<i>t</i> (384) = -19.001*
Supporters of liberal ruling party	2.82 (.99)	3.40 (.85)	<i>t</i> (384) = -9.534*
Supporters of conservative opposition party	3.68 (1.13)	2.78 (.96)	<i>t</i> (384) = 11.642*
Political centrists	3.05 (.89)	3.31 (.79)	<i>t</i> (384) = -4.794*

* $p < .001$

PMI: Presumed media influence

Table 6: Correlations among variables

PMI of	<u>Conservatives</u>			<u>Liberals</u>		
	Gender	Age	HMP	Gender	Age	HMP
<i>Pro-attitudinal media</i>						
Supporters of pro-attitudinal party	.207**	.083	.093	-.025	.052	.049
Supporters of counter-attitudinal party	-.047	-.152*	-.160*	-.024	-.128*	-.118*
Political centrists	.135	.010	-.075	-.134**	.023	-.001
<i>Counter-attitudinal media</i>						
Supporter of pro-attitudinal party	.110	-.005	-.175*	-.076	-.163**	-.073
Supporters of counter-attitudinal party	.134	.199**	.110	.059	.058	.228**
Political centrists	.053	.060	.176*	-.027	-.019	-.004

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

^a Gender was coded male=1, female=0.

PMI: Presumed media influence, HMP: Hostile media perception

This study also explored to what extent gender, age and HMP are related to PMI. Table 6 shows correlation among variables. Among conservatives, men were more likely to perceive conservatives (in-group members) as susceptible to conservative media ($r = .207$ $p < .01$). Young conservative respondents were slightly more likely to perceive that liberals (out-group members) are susceptible to conservative media ($r = -.152$ $p < .05$). In addition, with increasing age, conservatives perceive that liberals (out-group members) tended to be influenced by liberal media ($r = .199$ $p < .01$).

For liberals, younger respondents were slightly more likely to perceive that conservatives (out-group members) are susceptible to liberal media ($r = -.128$ $p < .05$), and that liberals (in-group members) are susceptible to conservative media ($r = -.163$ $p < .01$). The results show that, with increasing age, both conservatives and liberals tend to think that pro-attitudinal media does not influence out-group members.

In regard to HMP, it was linked to the notion that liberal media can influence political centrists among conservatives ($r = .176$ $p < .05$). Additionally, among liberals, HMP was associated with the perception that conservatives (out-group members) are susceptible to conservative media ($r = .228$ $p < .01$). Conservatives with a higher HMP care about the influence of liberal media on political centrists while liberals with a higher HMP are more likely to perceive that conservative media can influence conservatives.

Table 7: Regression analysis predicting political inefficacy

	Conservatives	Liberals
Gender	.053	.096†
Age	.117	.143*
Political knowledge	-.339**	-.274**
HMP	.025	-.045
PMI of		
<i>Pro-attitudinal media</i>		
Supporters of pro-attitudinal party (In-group)	-.048	.036
Supporters of counter-attitudinal party (Out-group)	.027	.008
Political centrists	.040	.018
<i>Counter-attitudinal media</i>		
Supporters of pro-attitudinal party (In-group)	-.095	.165*
Supporters of counter-attitudinal party (Out-group)	.135	-.096†
Political centrists	-.072	.050
Adjusted R ²	.073*	.099**

† $p < .1$ * $p < .01$ ** $p < .001$

^a Gender was coded male=1, female=0.

PMI: Presumed media influence, HMP: Hostile media perception

H2, predicting positive relations between PMI of counter-attitudinal media on out-groups (H2-1) and political centrists (H2-2) and political inefficacy respectively, was tested for both conservatives and liberals. Table 7 summarizes the results of the multiple regression analysis for political inefficacy as the dependent variable. Both conservatives and liberals who have higher political knowledge were less likely to perceive political inefficacy (conservatives: $\beta = -.339$ $p = .000$, liberals: $\beta = -.274$ $p = .000$). There were no significant effects of PMI and HMP on political inefficacy

among conservatives. As for liberals, male respondents tended to show a higher level of political inefficacy than female respondents, which was a certain trend toward significance ($\beta = .096$ $p = .056$). Additionally, with increasing age, liberals were more likely to perceive political inefficacy ($\beta = .143$ $p = .004$).

H2-1 and H2-2 are related to the relationship between PMI of counter-attitudinal media on out-group members and political centrists and political inefficacy. H2-1 was not supported for either conservatives or liberals. PMI of counter-attitudinal media on in-group members had a significant effect on political inefficacy among liberals ($\beta = .165$ $p = .006$): liberals with a higher level of PMI of conservative media on in-group members were more likely to perceive political inefficacy. By comparison, liberals, with higher PMI of counter-attitudinal media on out-group members, were less likely to perceive political inefficacy ($\beta = -.096$ $p = .093$). It is interesting to note that the likelihood of out-group members' susceptibility to the influence of counter-attitudinal media does not matter to liberals who showed higher political efficacy after the regime change (see Table 2). In relation to H2-2, there was no significant effect of PMI on political centrists for either conservatives or liberals.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the influence of perceptions of susceptibility to effects of pro- and counter-attitudinal media, with an emphasis on the difference between individuals with conservative and liberal political orientation. The findings of this study highlighted significant differences between conservatives and liberals in how they consume political news and in their human interactions. Findings confirmed quite similar patterns of media use between conservatives and liberals with regard to major and traditional TV news. Those TV news channels were considered quite close to the conservative ruling government before political scandals and the Presidential impeachment, but it seems substantial changes have occurred in news coverage by the main TV news channels since then, which might explain why those TV news channels gain support from both conservative and liberal respondents in this study.

The study also analyzed the perceptions of in- and out-group members' susceptibility to effects of conservative and liberal media based on PMI. The findings indicated general support for PMI in the context of both conservative and liberal media. Both conservatives and liberals perceived high PMI of counter-attitudinal media on out-group members. Scharrer (2002) pointed out that negative stereotypes of out-groups might affect perceptions of susceptibility of negative media effects. Further studies of this topic might investigate the impact of stereotypes in the process of PMI, considering that representation of conservatives and liberals in partisan media tends to be biased. In regard to political centrists,

conservatives perceived higher PMI of counter-attitudinal media on political centrists, whereas liberals perceived higher PMI of pro-attitudinal media on political centrists, indicating that liberal respondents might have lower social distance feelings towards political centrists than conservative respondents.

The comparison of conservatives and liberals showed higher levels of political interest and knowledge among both groups. Respondents with a liberal political orientation had stronger feelings of political efficacy than conservatives did, which is natural given that the current ruling government is the liberal party. It was analyzed if perceptions of susceptibility to effects of conservative and liberal media are related to negative political attitudes such as political inefficacy. The findings showed that liberals with higher PMI of counter-attitudinal media on in-group members perceived a higher level of political inefficacy. The PMI of counter-attitudinal media on out-group members produced lower levels of political inefficacy among liberals contrary to the hypothesis, showing that out-group members' susceptibility to the influence of counter-attitudinal media made no difference to liberals who showed higher political efficacy.

Overall, the study highlighted that PMI is one of important variables to influence political attitudes of polarized audience in the context of partisan media. The results imply that politically-divided information behavior and perception of conservative and liberal media influence between conservatives and liberals could bring about a decrease in political tolerance (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2012) and threaten to destabilize our democratic society. However, this study also shed light on the similarities between conservatives and liberals in terms of their use of major media sources. Although selective exposure and polarization are growing concerns in democratic society, as Stroud (2010) noted, it is expected that "increasing opportunities for selectivity" (p.571) in the media landscape and "shared experiences" (p.571) of major media sources might bolster political participation and civic engagement in Korean society.

NOTE

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