

Factors Influencing New Media Exposure of Political News by Youths in Isan Society

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed at studying the factors that influence new media exposure of political news by youths in Isan society in Thailand. The target group comprised 1,200 individuals, obtained from multi-stage sampling from undergraduate students in Isan's autonomous universities, governmental universities, and private institutions. The data collection tool was a questionnaire, the content of which was validated by experts. The reliability of the tool was tested by the formula for Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded a reliability of 0.83. Multiple regression analysis was applied to analyze the data. The results, regarding factors influencing the channels for political news exposure, showed that channels for political news exposure were mostly influenced by inner drives, followed by importance in political news exposure, influence from social networks, and specific characteristics of the Internet. This could explain the variation of channels for political news exposure at 46.5%. In terms of factors influencing political news selection, it was found that political news selection was influenced mostly from social networks, followed by inner drives, benefits from political news exposure, specific characteristics of the Internet, and the field of study. The variation of the political news selection could be explained at 44.6%. These results elaborate on the current situation in Thailand, especially in Isan region, where youths in higher education are playing an increasing role in demonstrating their political stance through various political activities.

Keywords: factors, exposure to news, politics, youths, Isan

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, Internet technology and the distribution of news through online systems have changed the behavior of individuals to news exposure, and enable everyone to have access to the news via a wireless Internet connection and a portable communication device. Consequently, exposure to the news has become part of daily living far more so than in the past.

News or information is selected owing to several factors. Convenience, rapidity, and cost-free are the key factors enhancing receivers' new media exposure in the present world (Jun, 2012; Tasente, 2020). New media is defined as the interaction of integrated media with the use of a digital code, referred to as multimedia, interactive media, or digital media; such include online and social media (van Dijk, 2006). It has further been reported that the need for information, as well as personal interests, are the major motivations behind media exposure to news (Jun, 2012). Interest is the factor provoking in-depth news following, notwithstanding whether the receiver has or does not have the intention to open oneself to the information. The result is the receiver's cognizance and ability to keep up-to-date with various social happenings (Dahlgren, 2019). Moreover, due to individual interests, people have become more open to political heterogeneity (Garrett, 2009), as well as to the important news that may influence one's exposure. People have become more motivated to expose themselves to counter-attitudinal political information (Brundidge, 2010) because they are aware of the importance of the news to their lives, both in education and social interaction. It can thus be said that in addition to understanding, people also seek news to enhance their knowledge, guide their decisions, or address their interests. When an influence from media is involved, Parmelee and Perkins (2012) stated that friends and family members are important stimulators for receivers to open themselves to online political news. In addition, it has been found that the specific characteristics of media, such as interaction, links, anonymity, and unlimited space and time, affect the media exposure, perception of accuracy, credibility of the media, and individual characteristics of receivers, including education, income, sex, and hometown; all of which affect an individual's exposure to news, as well as their openness to different types of news.

Isan is in the northeast of Thailand. Covering 20 provinces, the north and east are adjacent to Lao PDR and the south is connected with Cambodia. This area is the heart of the national election, owing to the greatest population

number in the country compared to other regions, at 28.7% or 18 million people. The election rights of Isan's total population are the highest of all regions at 17 million, among Thailand's 51 million people with election rights. Thus, the region is home to important targets of election campaigns. Receiving the Isan people's votes means the chance to win in the national election (Sutthichaya, 2019), as politicians and political parties build their popularity from the people in the regions who have the right to vote. First-time voters in the region account for as much as 14% or 7.3 million votes (Thai Public Broadcasting Service, 2019). Meanwhile, relevant organizations, such as Parliament and the Office of the National Election Board have attempted to promote political news exposure among this group, to build informed citizens and promote political cognizance, which is the heart of democratic social development.

Nevertheless, no past research studies had been conducted on the factors influencing political news exposure of youths in Thailand's Isan society. There are, moreover, few studies on the factors affecting exposure to political news in international contexts. Thus, there is insufficient knowledge for analysis and understanding of the behavior related to political news exposure of these impressionable individuals. Furthermore, their behavior changes with the context of various media. Research has confirmed that youths are mostly exposed to online news, especially from social media (Jun, 2012; Tasente, 2020), but nothing is known about the factors that lead to such behavior in the Thai social context, especially in Isan, where the proportion of Internet use is the highest in Thailand (Electronic Transaction Development Agency (Public Organization), 2020). As a result, more youths in this region are alert to politics (Muakchim, 2021), as media has a major role in providing political information and news to people in a democratic society, to encourage informed citizens and broaden their political horizons.

This leads to research questions as to what factors influence new media exposure to political news and how much influence they have on political news exposure. This research was thus aimed to study the "factors influencing new media exposure to political news by youths in Isan society." The outcome would be guidelines for the development of youths to catch up with information and news and to take part in politics according to their rights and duty, leading eventually to democratic societal development.

This research not only completes the body of knowledge in this aspect but is also an important basis for

understanding the cause and motivation for the online political news exposure of the region's younger citizens. Benefits will further promote behavior toward news exposure in the required directions.

2. RELATED LITERATURE REVIEWS

2.1. Theories Related to Media Exposure

Nowadays, media landscapes have changed, bringing about the fragmentation of audiences or news receivers following various forms of behavior in news exposure depending on channels and sources of information. This leads to greater challenges of media exposure (Shi & Nagler, 2020).

Slater (2004) defined media exposure as the extent to which an audience is facing certain messages of media content in which news is being presented through one of several various media sources. Encountering a piece of news may occur by watching or listening. In addition, news exposure provides the opportunity for an audience to receive news via different channels. Various media have different roles in responding to the needs of receivers, such as generating participation or establishing a level of credibility (Qader & Zainuddin, 2011).

Media exposure includes the degree of intention in opening oneself to news through different channels, from no attention at all to the levels of connection to the news perceived (de Vreese & Neijens, 2016). The study of de Vreese and Neijens (2016) categorized five types of media exposure measures through self-reporting on several dimensions, namely 1) Type of recall – for instance, free recall, aided recall, or cued recall; 2) Timeframe – referring to a study of the past, the present, daily, weekly, or monthly; 3) Unit of observation – exposure to a medium type such as mass media and new media, including specific genres, such as advertisement and drama, and a specific vehicle, such as *The New York Times*, etc.; 4) Conceptualization of exposure – focusing on frequency, time spent, objectives or intention of the content, social diffusion (van Den Putte et al., 2011); and 5) Different situations/locations – in which situations or locations of news exposure are studied.

Researchers studied media exposure as a dependent variable based on the unit of observation, including the medium type. These include new media, the specific genre, such as news topics, and the specific vehicle, such as Thairat TV, Nation TV, etc. Additionally, the studies were based on the conceptualization of exposure, which involves the frequency and time spent, as well as the in-

attention or objective of exposure. This research limited the scope of political news exposure in three aspects: the behavior involved in the follow-up of political news, the channel of political news exposure, and the political news selected.

2.2. Factors Influencing Political News Media Exposure

People's media exposure is influenced by several factors, particularly their different backgrounds. Sex, income, age, education, and social condition are found to affect one's media exposure. Sex and education in this regard receive the greatest interest from academics, similar to the importance placed on media exposure, in people's studies, daily life, and social interactions, all of which have major roles in promoting an individual's media exposure (Benkler, 2006; Donohew & Tipson, 1973). The mechanisms of new media and the hyperlink system enhance the chances of exposure to counter-attitudinal perspectives, especially when it comes to political news. The news that people are exposed to may be useful for each individual in a different dimension. The benefit of news exposure, therefore, covers rapidity or immediateness (Sveningsson, 2015), while convenience and the low cost of exposure are considered structural benefits, owing to the property of new media (Jun, 2012). An individual also opens to news perception with expectations related to emotional management or diversion, for example, an escape from routines, lessening boredom, and killing time (Diddi & LaRose, 2006; Meijer & Kormelink, 2015). The psychological factor from the viewpoint of McCombs and Becker (1979) and DeFleur (1996) corresponds to a study by Benkler (2006) which stated that an "inner drive" motivates political news exposure, and is divided into the interest and need for political news (Brundidge, 2010; Jun, 2012; Merrill & Lowenstein, 1971; Schramm, 1973) that results in one's exposure to different views.

Parmelee and Perkins (2012) stated that family members, friends, or acquaintances act as a trigger for social utility. Thus, communication from social ties may direct people to seek political information online. Moreover, the different characteristics of media also correlate to the capabilities of news exposure via an individual's senses of perception. This agreed with Benkler (2006) which said that the functioning structure of a media that enhances the operations of websites and online social networks, which came to exist owing to the advancement of Web 2.0 technology, is the property that enhances political news exposure from new media (Choi, 2016; Jun, 2012). Addi-

Table 1. Conclusion of factors influencing media exposure

Factors influencing news exposure	Schramm (1973)	Merrill & Lowenstein (1971)	Donohew & Tipton (1973)	McCombs & Becker (1979)	DeFleur (1996)	Benkler (2006)	Brundidge (2010)	Jun (2012)	Parmelee & Perkins (2012)	Choi (2016)	Total (Frequency)
1. Different background	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	7
- Sex		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	6
- Age					✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	5
- Income					✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	5
- Education	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	7
- Social condition	✓	✓			✓		✓				4
2. Importance of news exposure			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		5
3. Benefits from news exposure	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	6
4. Inner drives	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9
- Interest in the news	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓		✓	5
- Needs for news	✓		✓	✓				✓		✓	5
- Increasing politics cognizance			✓	✓	✓					✓	3
- Catching up with news			✓	✓							2
- Reinforcing existing political viewpoints			✓				✓	✓			2
- Obtaining recommendations for practices related to politics			✓								1
5. Ability in news exposure	✓										1
6. Personality	✓				✓						2
7. Attitudes	✓				✓		✓				3
8. Experiences	✓										1
9. Traditional media influences									✓		1
10. Influences from groups/ social networks			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6
11. Specific characteristics of the media (the Internet)		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6

tionally, the perception of accuracy and credibility of media affect selective news exposure in different dimensions. Studies had reported that perception of online media credibility correlated with the use of online media (Johnson & Kaye, 2000), and that media credibility correlates with dependency on media. An individual relies more on online media if the media is more credible. Contrarily, an individual relies upon or utilizes online media less if he or she sees it as having less credibility (Weeks & Lane, 2020).

As presented in Table 1, the high-frequency factors that have attracted the attention of scholars from past to present were selected to be studied in this research as independent variables because they have a high influence on media exposure.

From the review of related literature, researchers developed a research conceptual framework by setting two independent variables: (1) personal characteristics consisting of sex and field of study (Brundidge, 2010; Choi, 2016; Jun, 2012; Parmelee & Perkins, 2012; Sarawanawong et al., 2017); and (2) the motivation behind online media exposure to political news, including the importance of political news, benefits from political news exposure, inner drive, influences from groups/networks, and specific media characteristics (Benkler, 2006; Choi, 2016; Jun, 2012; Parmelee & Perkins, 2012). Political news exposure of youths from new media remained the dependent variable. The study herein covers three issues: the behavior of Internet users in following political news, channels for political news exposure, and the political news issues selected for exposure (de Vreese & Neijens, 2016). The factors influencing media exposure of individuals are depicted in Table 1 and the conceptual framework of this study is presented in Fig. 1.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study applied the Quantitative Research method. The population under the study was students aged 18-22

years who were studying in one of the 30 tertiary educational institutions in the Isan region, which included three autonomous universities, 19 governmental universities, and eight private universities. The total population was 276,497. Reports were sent via the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation to each educational institution, as the Ministry is responsible for supervising institutions of higher education in Thailand. Student information can be accessed through the website of the Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (2021, <http://info.mhesi.go.th/newinfo>). The size of the student number in each group of universities was based on the formula of Taro Yamane (Yamane, 1973), which was 400 students, or a total of 1,200. The reliability level was 95%.

The Multi-Stage Sampling technique was used to obtain the sample group. The first step was simple random sampling, by drawing lots to obtain the institutions that represented each type of university. The students were then categorized into groups according to the programs offered at the universities, which were science and technology, health sciences, and humanities and social sciences, that agree with the educational principles of the Thailand Higher Education Institution (Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, 2018). The three groups covered all program fields open in the universities and reflected the different interests of students, according to their fields of study. The next step was systematic random sampling, conducted by assigning the cardinal order in the student rosters obtained from the universities' registration divisions. After the online questionnaires were returned, they were appropriately accounted for. Any questionnaire that appeared to be incomplete was removed. Systematic sampling had to be performed again for replacement, and more questionnaires were sent online to the students to obtain a total of 1,200 forms, which meant 100% of the respondents.

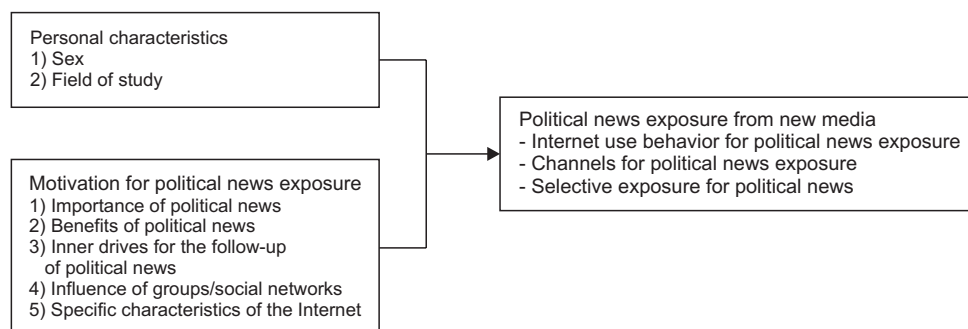


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

The research tool used for the collection of data was the questionnaire. The content validity of the questionnaire was checked using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), and five content experts gave recommendations for improved quality (the IOC of each question was 0.8-1.0). After improvement, the questionnaire was tested for reliability through the responses of 30 students of Khon Kaen University, Nong Khai Campus. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.83, demonstrating that the quality of the questionnaire was sufficient for subsequent data collection. The reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficient are presented in Table 2.

The collection of data was authorized by each of the universities. The registration division of each university and the lecturer of each program were approached before the questionnaire was sent online to students or through the program lecturer via e-mail after the request was made. Data collection was performed from July through November 2021.

The questionnaire was developed from concepts, theories, and research related to political news and exposure among youths, consisting of three parts:

- 1) Questions about the personal attributes of youths
- 2) Questions about motivation for political news exposure
- 3) Questions about political exposure consisting of the study of the three following issues:
 - Questions about behavior when using the Internet to keep up with political news
 - Questions about channels for youths' political news exposure
 - Questions about selected political news

Data analyses were performed by descriptive statistics including Frequency, Percentage, Mean, and Standard

Deviation (S.D.) to test the chi-square test of the independent variables that influenced one another: the youths' characteristics, and the motivation behind political news exposure from the Internet; and one dependent variable: political news exposure of the youths from new media. The study covered three aspects: Internet use behavior in following political news, channels for political news exposure, and the political news issues selected for exposure, using multiple regression analysis.

The research was approved for human research ethics by the Human Research Committee of Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen, Thailand on June 28, 2021, authorized under Registration Number HE 643096.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the research herein are presented in three issues: 1) characteristics of the youths/sample group; 2) news exposure; and 3) analysis of the factors influencing political news exposure, which are detailed as follows:

4.1. Characteristics of the Sample Group

One thousand two-hundred students answered the questionnaire (100%), divided into 400 from each of the three university groups: governmental universities, private universities, and autonomous universities (33.30% each), presented in Table 3. Of the total population (1,200), 630 students (52.50%) were males and 570 (47.50%) were females. There were 454 (37.90%) studying in the fields of science and technology, followed by the fields of humanities and social sciences (398 students, 33.10%), and the health science fields (348 students, 29.00%).

4.2. News Exposure

For Internet use behavior in tracking political news, it was found that most (48.50%) used a smartphone/iPhone

Table 2. Reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficient

Motivation for political news exposure	Scale mean if item deleted	Scale variance if item deleted	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
1. Importance of political news	130.27	110.96	0.526	0.814
2. Benefits of political news	130.70	119.67	0.052	0.830
3. Inner drives for follow up political news	130.23	117.63	0.329	0.822
4. Group/social network	131.53	119.78	0.003	0.836
5. Characteristics of the Internet	130.27	118.96	0.187	0.824
Motivation for political news exposure	Cronbach's alpha coefficient=0.825			

Table 3. Frequency and percentage of youth characteristics

Youth characteristics	% (Frequency)
1. University groups	
Autonomous universities	33.30 (400)
Governmental universities	33.30 (400)
Private universities	33.30 (400)
Total	100.0 (1,200)
2. Sex	
Male	52.50 (630)
Female	47.50 (570)
Total	100.0 (1,200)
3. Fields of study	
Sciences and Technologies	37.90 (454)
Humanities and Social Sciences	33.10 (398)
Health Sciences	29.00 (348)
Total	100.0 (1,200)

connected to the Internet to catch up with the news. The primary objective was for perception/cognizance of political news, at 41.40%. The percentage of youths using the Internet every day was 46.90% and the percentage of youths using the Internet for 1-3 hours a day, for the same purpose, was 69.10%. The analysis of the political news they were exposed to showed that they were mostly open to protest news/political demands, followed by news about the government’s operations and the operations of the opposition parties (Mean=4.33, S.D.=0.85, Mean=4.03, S.D.=1.03 and Mean=3.79, S.D.=1.11 respectively). The analytical results of the channels for political news exposure showed that most of the youths were least exposed to political news through different channels. It was noted that the youths were open to political news at a medium level through social media such as newsfeed, clubhouse, and politics pages (Mean=3.06, S.D.=1.17, Mean=2.88, S.D.=1.42 and Mean=2.67, S.D.=0.86 respectively).

4.3. Analysis of the Factors Influencing Political News Exposure

The variable analysis was carried out using multiple regression analysis, in which the independent variables and dependent variables must be measured at interval scales or proportions only. Any variable measured at the group level would be changed to ‘dummy’ and the reference

group determined. Within the multiple regression analysis, no pair of variables taken for analysis should correlate more than 0.75, to avoid the problem of multi-collinearity that would lessen the value of prediction (Prasitratasin, 1995). It was found in the research that all of the variables correlated each pair lower than 0.75; therefore, the multiple regression analysis could be applied.

4.3.1. Factors Associating Internet Use Behavior to Follow-Up Political News

It was found that (1) personal characteristics, i.e., sex and time spent on the Internet to follow up on political news, correlated significantly at the statistical level of 0.01 (Table 4). The contingency coefficient level was rather low at 0.092. The field of study and the frequency of Internet use for following up on political news correlated significantly at a level of 0.05, with a relatively low contingency coefficient level at 0.101 (Table 5); and (2) the motivation for exposure to political news from the Internet and the frequency of Internet use and time spent to follow-up political news correlated significantly at the statistical level of 0.01, with low levels of contingency coefficient at 0.244 and 0.274, respectively (Table 6).

4.3.2. Factors Influencing the Channels for Political News Exposure

The four factor groups of variables were analyzed by multiple regression analysis using the Enter method. The results showed that only some independent variables influenced the channels for political news exposure. The following are details.

- 1) The importance of political news showed a positive influence on the channels for political news exposure, with a multiple regression coefficient (b) of 0.391. It can be explained that a one unit increase of importance of political news means a 0.391 unit of the channels for political news exposure increase. Therefore, if youth are more motivated about the importance of political news, they will receive more channels for political news.
- 2) Inner drives for following up on political news had a positive influence on the channels for political news exposure, with a multiple regression coefficient (b) of 0.279. This means that when a youth has one unit higher of inner drives for following up on political news, channels for political news exposure increase at 0.279 units. Therefore, if youths have more inner drive for following up political news, they will re-

Table 4. Frequency, percentage and Chi-square of youths classified by sex and behavior in using the Internet to keep up with political news

Internet use behavior for political news exposure	Sex	
	Male % (Frequency)	Female % (Frequency)
1. Tools used for tracking political news on the Internet		
Personal computer (PC)	11.10 (70)	10.00 (57)
Notebook	20.70 (130)	19.90 (113)
iPad/Tablet	18.10 (114)	23.30 (133)
Smartphone/iPhone	50.10 (316)	46.80 (267)
Total	100.00 (630)	100.00 (570)
Chi-square=3.650, df=3, Sig.=0.233		
2. Objectives for tracking political news		
Perception/cognizance of political news	42.60 (269)	40.00 (229)
Diversity of news exposure	0.60 (155)	26.90 (153)
Social utility (social interaction)	22.60 (142)	23.90 (136)
Entertainment	10.20 (64)	9.20 (52)
Total	100.00 (630)	100.00 (570)
Chi-square=2.702, df=3, Sig.=0.412		
3. Frequency of Internet use to follow-up on political news		
1-3 days/week	15.60 (98)	19.80 (113)
4-6 days/week	36.20 (228)	34.70 (198)
Everyday	48.20 (304)	45.50 (259)
Total	100.00 (630)	100.00 (570)
Chi-square=3.781, df=2, Sig.=0.151		
4. Time spent on the Internet to follow-up on political news		
1-3 hours/day	72.80 (459)	64.90 (369)
4-10 hours/day	20.50 (129)	24.60 (140)
More than 10 hours	6.70 (42)	10.50 (60)
Total	100.00 (630)	100.00 (570)
Chi-square=10.332, df=2, Sig.=0.006, Contingency coefficient=0.092		

ceive more channels for political news.

- 3) Influence of group/social networks showed a positive influence on the channels for political news exposure, with a multiple regression coefficient (b) of 0.062. It can be explained that a one unit increase of influence of group/social networks means a 0.062 unit of channels for political news exposure increase.

Therefore, if youths are influenced by social groups/networks that have a greater effect on following political news, they will receive more channels for political news.

- 4) Specific characteristics of the Internet had a positive influence on the channels for political news exposure, with a multiple regression coefficient (b)

Table 5. Frequency, percentage and Chi-square of youths classified by field of study and behavior in using the Internet to track political news

Internet use behavior for political news exposure	Field of study		
	Sciences and Technologies % (Frequency)	Health Sciences % (Frequency)	Humanities and Social Sciences % (Frequency)
1. Tools used for tracking political news on the Internet			
Personal computer (PC)	13.60 (62)	9.20 (37)	8.30 (29)
Notebook	20.40 (93)	21.30 (85)	18.80 (65)
iPad/Tablet	19.80 (90)	22.00 (87)	20.10 (70)
Smartphone/iPhone	46.20 (210)	47.50 (189)	52.80 (184)
Total	100.00 (455)	100.00 (397)	100.00 (348)
Chi-square=10.854, df=3, Sig.=0.134			
2. Objectives for tracking political news			
Perception/cognizance of political news	41.60 (189)	40.20 (160)	42.20 (147)
Diversity of news exposure	24.60 (112)	26.50 (105)	26.20 (91)
Social utility (social interaction)	23.00 (105)	22.80 (91)	24.00 (84)
Entertainment	10.80 (49)	10.50 (42)	7.60 (26)
Total	100.00 (455)	100.00 (397)	100.00 (348)
Chi-square=9.961, df=3, Sig.=0.255			
3. Frequency of Internet use to follow-up political news			
1-3 days/week	16.00 (73)	20.70 (82)	16.10 (56)
4-6 days/week	36.70 (167)	38.30 (152)	30.70 (107)
Everyday	47.30 (215)	41.00 (163)	53.20 (185)
Total	100.00 (455)	100.00 (397)	100.00 (348)
Chi-square=12.260, df=4, Sig.=0.016, Contingency coefficient=0.101			
4. Time spent on the Internet to follow-up political news			
1-3 hours/day	65.10 (296)	74.30 (295)	68.30 (237)
4-10 hours/day	25.70 (117)	19.90 (79)	21.00 (73)
More than 10 hours	9.20 (42)	5.80 (23)	10.70 (37)
Total	100.00 (455)	100.00 (397)	100.00 (348)
Chi-square=11.902, df=4, Sig.=0.099			

of 0.084. It can be explained that a one unit increase of specific characteristics of the Internet means a 0.084 unit of channels for political news exposure increase. Therefore, if young people are more motivated about the characteristics of the Internet, they will receive more channels for political news.

It was found that the channels for political news exposure were mostly influenced by inner drives (Beta=0.270), followed by the importance in political news exposure (Beta=0.234), influence from groups/social networks (Beta=0.186), and specific characteristics of the Internet (Beta=0.139) at a significant level of 0.01. This could ex-

Table 6. Frequency, percentage and Chi-square of youths classified by motivation for exposure to political news from the Internet and behavior of Internet use behaviors for political news exposure

Internet use behaviors for political news exposure	Motivation for exposure to political news from the Internet				
	Very low % (Frequency)	Low % (Frequency)	Moderate % (Frequency)	More % (Frequency)	Most % (Frequency)
1. Tools used for tracking political news on the Internet					
Personal computer (PC)	20.00 (1)	2.00 (2)	0.50 (2)	1.30 (7)	1.10 (2)
Notebook	20.00 (1)	10.20 (10)	17.00 (67)	19.30 (101)	10.60 (19)
iPad/Tablet	20.00 (1)	6.10 (6)	11.20 (44)	21.00 (110)	23.90 (43)
Smartphone/iPhone	40.00 (2)	81.60 (80)	71.20 (280)	58.40 (306)	64.40 (116)
Total	100.00 (5)	100.00 (98)	100.00 (393)	100.00 (524)	100.00 (180)
Chi-square=39.623, df=10, Sig.=0.061					
2. Objectives for tracking political news					
Perception/cognizance of political news	20.00 (1)	66.30 (65)	63.90 (251)	47.10 (247)	51.10 (92)
Diversity of news exposure	40.00 (2)	20.40 (20)	20.40 (80)	28.80 (151)	20.60 (37)
Social utility (social interaction)	20.00 (1)	11.20 (11)	15.30 (60)	23.70 (124)	26.10 (47)
Entertainment	20.00 (1)	2.00 (2)	0.50 (2)	0.40 (2)	2.20 (4)
Total	100.00 (5)	100.00 (98)	100.00 (393)	100.00 (524)	100.00 (180)
Chi-square=40.114, df=10, Sig.=0.074					
3. Frequency of Internet use to follow up political news					
1-3 days/week	40.00 (2)	43.90 (43)	13.50 (53)	17.40 (91)	12.20 (22)
4-6 days/week	40.00 (2)	26.50 (26)	39.40 (155)	38.00 (199)	24.40 (44)
Everyday	20.00 (1)	29.60 (29)	47.10 (185)	44.70 (234)	63.30 (114)
Total	100.00 (5)	100.00 (98)	100.00 (393)	100.00 (524)	100.00 (180)
Chi-square=75.697, df=8, Sig.=0.000, Contingency coefficient=0.244					
4. Time spent on the Internet to follow up political news					
1-3 hours/day	80.00 (4)	91.80 (90)	79.10 (311)	65.10 (341)	45.80 (82)
4-10 hours/day	20.00 (1)	5.10 (5)	16.50 (65)	25.60 (134)	35.80 (64)
More than 10 hours	0.00 (0)	3.10 (3)	4.30 (17)	9.40 (49)	18.40 (33)
Total	100.00 (5)	100.00 (98)	100.00 (393)	100.00 (524)	100.00 (180)
Chi-square=97.219, df=8, Sig.=0.000, Contingency coefficient=0.274					

plain the variation of the channels for political news exposure at 46.5% ($R^2=0.465$), as shown in Table 7.

4.3.3. Factors Influencing Political News Selection

The five factor groups of variables were analyzed by multiple regression analysis using the Enter method. The results showed that only some independent variables

influenced political news selection. The following are details.

- 1) The field of humanities and social sciences showed a positive influence on political news selection, with a multiple regression coefficient (b) of 3.395. It can be explained that youth in the field of humanities and

Table 7. Factors influencing exposure to political news: channels for political news exposure

Independent variables	b	Standard error	Beta	t	Sig.	Variance influence factor	Order of influence
Characteristics of the youths							
1. Male ^{a)}	-0.147	0.175	-0.018	-0.814	0.401	1.047	
2. Field of humanities and social sciences ^{b)}	0.030	0.108	0.006	0.282	0.778	1.061	
Motivation behind political news exposure							
3. Importance of political news	0.391	0.056	0.234	6.981	0.000	2.500	2
4. Benefits from political news	-0.028	0.050	-0.017	-0.565	0.572	2.083	
5. Inner drive for political news	0.279	0.037	0.270	7.582	0.000	2.826	1
6. Influences of groups/social networks	0.062	0.009	0.186	6.622	0.000	1.757	3
7. Specific characteristics of the Internet	0.084	0.017	0.139	5.072	0.000	1.665	4
a	4.438						
$R^2=0.465$, Adjusted $R^2=0.462$, $F=148.222$, Sig. of $F=0.000$, $N=1,200$							

^{a)}Reference group: Female.

^{b)}Reference group: Health science and technology.

social sciences are exposed more to political news selection than youth in the fields of science and technology and health science (referenced group) by 3.395 times.

- 2) Benefits of political news had a positive influence on political news selection, with a multiple regression coefficient (b) of 3.818. This means that when a youth has one unit higher of benefits of political news, political news selection increases at 3.818 units. Therefore, if youths are more motivated about benefits of political news, they would be more open to political news selection.
- 3) Inner drives for the follow-up of political news showed a negative influence on political news selection, with a multiple regression coefficient (b) of -2.565. It can be explained that when a youth has an increase of 1 unit of inner drives for the follow-up of political news, he/she would experience a 2.565 unit decrease in political news selection. Therefore, if youths have more inner drives for the follow-up of political news, they would be open to less political news selection.
- 4) Influence of group/social networks showed a positive influence on political news selection, with a multiple regression coefficient (b) of 2.746. It can be explained that a one unit increase of influence of

group/social networks means a 2.746 unit of political news selection increase. Therefore, if youths are influenced by social groups/networks that have a greater effect on following political news, they would be more open to political news selection.

- 5) Specific characteristics of the Internet had a negative influence on political news selection, with a multiple regression coefficient (b) of -0.548. It can be explained that when a youth has one unit higher of specific characteristics of the Internet, political news selection decreases at 0.548 units. Therefore, if young people are more motivated about the characteristics of the Internet, they would be less open to political news selection.

It was found that political news selection was influenced mostly from groups/social networks (Beta=0.652), followed by inner drives (Beta=0.196), benefits from political news exposure (Beta=0.184), specific characteristics of the Internet (Beta=0.072), and the field of study (Beta=0.053) at the significant statistical level of 0.01. The variation of the political news selection could be explained at 44.6% ($R^2=0.446$), as shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Factors influencing exposure to political news: political news selection

Independent variables	b	Standard error	Beta	t	Sig.	Variance influence factor	Order of influence
Characteristics of the youths							
1. Male ^{a)}	3.004	2.339	0.029	1.285	0.199	1.038	
2. Field of humanities and social sciences ^{b)}	3.395	1.453	0.053	-2.336	0.020	1.046	5
Motivation behind political news exposure							
3. Importance of political news	1.291	0.749	0.061	1.724	0.085	2.524	
4. Benefits from political news	3.818	0.670	0.184	5.700	0.000	2.092	3
5. Inner drive for political news	-2.565	0.494	-0.196	-5.198	0.000	2.849	2
6. Influences of groups/social networks	2.746	0.124	0.652	22.118	0.000	1.743	1
7. Specific characteristics of the Internet	-0.548	0.221	-0.072	-2.485	0.013	1.664	4
a	51.000						
$R^2=0.446$, Adjusted $R^2=0.442$, $F=127.970$, Sig. of $F=0.000$, $N=1,200$							

^{a)}Reference group: Female.

^{b)}Reference group: Health science and technology.

5. DISCUSSION

The research results showed that *most of the youths were least exposed to political news through other channels, but were open to political news at a medium level through social media*. This is because it is a communication channel that promotes interaction between senders and the receivers, resulting in two-way communication. Social media has thus become an important channel for disseminating news today. One notable result of this research was that youths were moderately exposed to information via social media, which had the highest average compared to other channels. However, the news was received about protests/political demands at the highest level, reflecting that the youths did not intentionally seek political information through such channels, but were exposed to this news as a byproduct of other online activities. The diversity of news and information presented through social media's newsfeed may increase the chances of incidental exposure to political information for the audience, causing the phenomenon of 'news flows into the audience' or 'news finds me,' thus making the audience aware of various political movements and events happening in society and more alert in politics (Fletcher & Neilsen, 2018; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017; Muakchim, 2021; Sveningsson, 2015). It is for this reason that youths

in higher education, especially in the Isan region, are increasingly active in political drives to demonstrate their political stance through various political movements such as Free Youth, Doadin Mob, and Isan Bor Yan Der (the dialect meaning "Isan youths are not afraid"). All are symbolic political expressions of Isan youths proclaiming a stand against the coup in Thailand.

This study found that sex and the time spent on the Internet to follow up on political news were directly correlated, due to their different interests in media exposure as well as time spent on media, particularly the Internet. Regarding the use of social media, females were found to use social media for educational activities at levels higher than males, resulting in female youths being more exposed to a greater amount of political news. However, in terms of political news, social practices as well as beliefs and values were obstacles to promoting woman political participation. Also, in a society where men are dominant, women have fewer educational opportunities than men, thus affecting political news exposure and political participation (Jandaeng, 2016; Mlambo & Kapingura, 2019). Today, where Thai society values men and women equally in both education and politics, women still play a less political role than men.

It was also found that the program field and the frequency of Internet use for following up on political news

also correlated, as the field of learning affects the interests and expertise of the audience. Undergraduate students studying in the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, and the Faculty of Business Administration use social media in their daily lives more than those in the Faculty of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, Agro-Industry, and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. This is due to the increased level of studying required in scientific fields, providing less free time to surf the Internet. In terms of following up on political news, it was found that Humanities and Social Sciences students are connected to politics and governance. Hence, they were open to news to enhance learning and knowledge of political news more than any other field of study, exhibiting a greater frequency of exposure to political news (Jandaeng, 2016; Sarawanawong et al., 2017; Werakul, 2013). The study demonstrated that the motivation behind the exposure to political news from the Internet, the frequency in the use of the Internet, and time spent on the Internet to follow up on political news, was directly correlated due to the importance of news exposure, benefits from news exposure, inner drives, the influence of group/social networks, and specific characteristics of the Internet. The previous research dictates that each receiver is different in psychology, causing the individual to receive and interpret news in his or her unique way. The influence of group/social networks, including both close relationships and loose relationships, was determined to have different influences on a person's decisions. The primary group, which was closely related to the receivers, had a greater influence on news exposure behavior than that of the secondary group (Jintarak, 2016; Parmelee & Perkins, 2012). In addition, thanks to the advancement of Web 2.0 technology, interactive characteristics of the Internet are an important motivation for news exposure, as the communicative role has been expanded from passive receivers to active receivers (Choi, 2016). Such motivation resulted in youths spending more time keeping up with political news in terms of frequency and duration.

The results also demonstrated that *inner drives had the greatest influence on the channels for political news exposure*, because each news receiver differed psychologically, such as in attitudes and interests. Thus, the receiver selected different news channels and interpreted news differently. Inner or psychological drives can be divided into two categories: 1) interest in political news, and 2) the need for political news. As far as the need for political news was concerned, it was found that an open vision for political cognizance was the major objective of news exposure, for

people wanted to be informed of news and information to expand their experiences and world vision. Interest, therefore, describes an individual's inner drive to learn about politics and is the factor that influences exposure to political news through traditional media and new media, as they correlated positively with politics, including political knowledge, political efficacy, and political participation (Brundidge, 2010; Jun, 2012; Prior, 2007). This is similar to news exposure to social media where news receivers who are interested in politics have different behavior than those who are not interested in politics. The former would be more likely to stumble upon or engage with news on social media, snacking on message clues such as headlines or illustrations. This process shows selective perception and attention and is influential in the forming of thoughts, attitudes, and knowledge of an individual related to current events in society (Sülflow et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, today's younger individuals find themselves embedded in an ambient news environment. Interest is the major factor that drives an individual to search for news from media channels. News receivers, who perceive online media as their primary news source, will pay close attention to news perceived through those channels. However, people in general perceive these platforms as social spaces in which they frequently encounter news as a by-product of social interaction, resulting in incidental exposure generally caused by members of social networks. News is shared with the audience in the network through social media newsfeeds. An algorithm depicting news media selection has been created from the usage history and reactions of receivers (Hopmann et al., 2016; Weeks & Lane, 2020). This led to the perception that low-interested or motivated individuals may become well-informed without purposely following the news—the News Finds Me Perception (NFMP). At the same time, individuals rely more on less trustworthy sources of information on social media. Strong reliance on one's communication network, however, may lead to the 'bubble filter' (Pariser, 2011) and 'information cocoon' (Sunstein, 2018), where a person becomes enclosed in the circulation of news that reflects similar political perspectives. Thus, these individuals may easily become a victim of 'fake news' and algorithms controlled by influential technological conglomerates (Boczkowski et al., 2018; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017, 2018).

The research found that groups/social networks were the factors with the greatest influences on political news selection. It could be explained that interactions that connect in networks influence persuading someone's thoughts and behavior related to politics more than one-way com-

munication, as it is an important property of online social networks in real-time, as they may enhance communications of politics and motivate youths' political news exposure. The greatest external influence upon individuals at the undergraduate education level are friends and social networks, as the former become more distant from their parents, the primary group that had taken the major role in forming their thoughts, attitudes, and behavior related to politics (Chansilp, 2019). News sharing among friends and social networks is therefore important for their following-up on news via their respective newsfeeds. This finding agreed with Parmelee and Perkins (2012), who studied the influences of groups/social networks on the political news exposure of an individual. Moreover, the characteristics of social contacts and the content shared by social networks influence the political news that individuals are exposed to and what they believe. Opinion leaders in the communication networks act as gatekeepers, persuading receivers and controlling the news that the receivers are exposed to, especially for individuals who are less interested in politics (Bergström & Belfrage, 2018). Online social networks, therefore, have significant political influence on news receivers. Additionally, the influence of groups or social networks *covers the people who feel they belong to the same group owing to similar political viewpoints and the people who track similar media/channels for political news*. This reflects the influence of 'communitization' in political viewpoints and media exposure. Social utility determines selective exposure of social media. As a result, news sources are more important than the news issue one is exposed to, for the social network has influence in persuasion or drawing someone to view the news through different channels, especially new media (Ohme & Mothes, 2020). The results of this study thus support the concept that says *political discussions through online media are the communication among people holding similar political beliefs* (Periser, 2011; Sunstein, 2018). People with the same political viewpoint, therefore, influence a receiver's political news exposure.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study's findings indicate that most of the youths were exposed to political news through a single channel at a medium level through social media. They were mostly open to the protest news/political demands followed by the news about the government's operations and the operations of opposition parties. The channels for political news exposure were mostly influenced by inner drives,

followed by their relative importance, influence from groups/social networks, and specific characteristics of the Internet. Differing slightly, political news selection was influenced mostly by groups/social networks, followed by inner drives, etc. This study, therefore, contributes to the theoretical development of related research on media exposure to political news as it provides greater comprehension of the factors influencing new media exposure of political news by youths in Isan society. Educational institutions, therefore, may form a virtual community to enhance the understanding and advancement of political news among their youthful student body. This can be in the form of classroom activities or extracurricular activities. The activities will function as a venue for creative learning and the sharing of political news issues, thereby incubating the appropriate political behavior needed for the youths to become newly informed citizens who dare to think, do, and act. Such political participation will be based on their roles and duties. This research provides an important basis for the understanding of the fundamental motivation that enhances political news exposure through new media. It will be useful for media institutions, parliament, and the Office of National Election in terms of motivating and enhancing behavior toward political news exposure. Moreover, the results will contribute to the youths' cognizance of political news for the development of a democratic society.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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