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# **NEWS MEDIA USAGE, POLITICAL INTEREST AND POLITICAL PARTICIAPTION**

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# Abstract

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Purpose: The purpose of the research is to examine (a) the age differences in news media usage and, (b) the effects of using different media for political news on different political participation and, (c) whether the political interest plays as a mediator between different media for political news usage on different forms of political participation.

Theory: Political Participation Theory, Users and gratification Theory, Mobilization Theory

Method: Multiple regression analysis, Simply mediation analysis

Result: The findings show that 1) in Australia, both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation have increased over time, and the non-institutionalized forms of political participation increased even more. 2) Young citizens use the internet for political news more often than older citizens and on the contrary, old citizens are more likely to use traditional media for political news than younger citizens. Furthermore, the results of multiple regression analyses indicate that 3) using traditional media and the internet for political news have positive effects on both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. Besides, the study finds that using traditional media for political news is a stronger predictor for institutionalized forms of political participation compared to the non-institutionalized forms of political participation. And a similar pattern is found in the effects of using the internet for political news on political participation. Moreover, the study also shows that using media for political news increases citizens' political interest, in other words, 4) political interest mediates the relationship between different news media usage and political participation.

# ***Stort Tack!***

*To Department of Journalism, Media and Communication.*

*To my supervisor Annika Bergström for guidance and patience during the work,  
encouragement and concern through this special crisis time.*

*To Adam Shehata, Mats Ekström for generous help with my paper.*

*To my family who is always supporting me.*

# Executive Summary

The discussion in this thesis focus on the relationship between news media usage and political participation. During the last several decades, many researchers have been worried about the decline of political participation, however, more and more opinions believe that political participation has not declined, but just transformed from traditional forms to new forms. Although there are facts that participation rates for traditional forms of political participation like voting and being party members are dropping, the emergence and application of the internet have also brought many new forms of political participation like online protests and expressing political views online. These new forms of political activities should also be included in the scope of political participation. Under the magnificent transition of technology, media, especially the internet has attracted attention from many researchers. Abundant research results show that the use of internet is generally beneficial for promoting political participation. Young citizens are more intensive internet users and joining more non-institutionalized forms of political participation. Although more and more researchers are investigating the relationship between internet usage and political participation, there is still a gap in comparing the effects of different media on different forms of political participation. As a mature democratic country, Australia is one of the few places requiring compulsory voting and having relatively stable voting rates. Thus, it is interesting to think about the question: does media, especially internet usage have different effects on various political participation in Australia than that in other democratic countries? Besides, in contemporary society, people use various devices with internet to acquire news and information, and research assume that using media for news and political information is good to increase political knowledge learning and political interest, and in further step to motivate people for political engagement. Then could news media usage for political participation indeed enhance political participation in the background of Australia? At last, political interest is also being assumed to have a mediation effect on the relationship between news media usage and political participation. Then does it also work with that mediation effect in Australia? Based on the questions above, this thesis will focus on the effects of different forms of news media usage on different forms of political participation in Australia, and further study the role of political interest in the relationship between news media usage and political participation.

The thesis conducts multiple regression analyses and mediation analyses to investigate the proposed research questions. The research could be split into the following aspects to examine: (a) the age differences in news media usage and political participation; (b) the effects of using different media for political news on different forms of political participation; and (c) the mediation effect of the political interest between different media for political news usage on different forms of political participation. According to relevant theories, the political participation forms are separated into two major categories: institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. The analyses utilize on two data sets: ISSP Citizenship 2004 and 2014. A quantitative method has been developed to perform the analyses. With the multiple regression analyses and mediation analyses, a deeper understanding of the relationship between news media usage and political participation could be found.

The findings show several implications: 1) in Australia, both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation have increased over time, but the non-institutionalized forms of political participation increased even more. 2) Young citizens are more frequently using the internet to acquire political news than older citizens, and they also prefer to engage in non-institutionalized forms of political participation. On the contrary, old citizens are more likely to use traditional mass media for political news than younger citizens, and they engaged in more institutionalized forms of political participation. 3) The results of multiple regression analyses indicate that using traditional mass media and the internet for political news have positive effects on both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. In addition, the study finds that using the internet for political news is a stronger predictor of non-institutionalized forms of political participation compared to the institutionalized forms of political participation. A similar pattern is also found in the effect of using traditional mass media for political news on political participation. 4) Moreover, the study finds that using media for political news increases citizens' political interest, and political interest mediates the relationship between different news media usage and political participation of both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms.

The results of this study complement and contribute to the complex picture of political participation. By comparing the media effects on political participation over time, an interesting finding is that the effects of traditional mass media usage for political news are relatively weak but quite stable for both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation, while using the internet for political news has stronger effects on both of

the two forms of political participation. However, it is still worth bearing in mind that even though the internet has penetrated in people's daily life and affected individuals' political behavior, but traditional media has not been replaced by the internet. Both traditional media and the internet are positively associated with citizen's political participation. In general, the wide-spread application of the internet yields more influence on political participation. Given younger citizens are intensive internet users and use the internet to obtain political news and engage in public affairs more often, the society and politicians should think about how to use digital tools to inspire, empower, and motivate young people to engage in more political activities. This is the more meaningful significance and indication of the research.

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# Abbreviations

ISSP - International Social Survey Program

AEC - Australian Electoral Commission

ACMA- Australian Communications and Media Authority

UGT - Users and Gratification Theory



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# 1. Introduction

Political participation has always been regarded as an important indicator of a well-functioning democracy (Lijphart 1997; Bhatti & Hansen 2012). While many researchers have been worried that more and more citizens are deviating away from political participation and civic engagement, especially the citizens of the younger generation, and this declining trend has threatened the health of democracy (Putnam, 2000; Mindich, 2005). Putnam (2000) cited a simple sign to describe the fact that the political participation had been declining: In the 1960 presidential election, 62.8% of Americans with voting rights went to the polls and voted. Then 36 years later in 1996, only 48.9% of Americans with voting rights voted. He attributed the reason causing the turnout drop to generation replacement, where the generation prior-WWII had been gradually replaced by a new generation born after the war. Same in line, Mindich (2005) agreed with the decline of participation in the U.S., and he extended the trend of decline towards political news digestion, stating the fact that 70% of older Americans read news every day, but less than 20% of young people do that. A similar decline trend was also found in European democracies (Franklin, 2001; Mattila, 2003; Whiteley, 2009). Delli Carpini (2000) augured that more and more citizens, especially young citizens were drifting away from civic engagements: less trust, less interest in politics or public affairs, less political knowledge, less information collection on news, less voting, less participation to public or community activities, etc. He explained the reasons for the low political or civic engagement as: lack of motivation, opportunity, and ability.

It seems not possible to overwrite the verdict that political participation, which is crucial for the democratic system and the whole society, has been declining from the late twentieth century to the early twenty-first century. However, new voices are emerging during recent years. The emerging opinions have been challenging the former understanding and asking: is political participation really declining? Coincidentally, or predestinated, the decline is happening in the same period when the internet emerges and grows fast. The main reason for the new trend of “declining political participation” is largely associated with the fast rise of new technologies and applications in almost every aspect of society. Over the last three decades, the advent of digital technology has dramatically changed the world. The internet covers all the information

propagation via digital tools like laptops, tablets, mobiles, etc., and enables people to customize their own needs to acquire information, interact with others, and spread out their views. All the people's life has been fundamentally changed by the internet, especially during the last two decades, and the change certainly includes political participation.

Therefore, researchers began to review the political participation, and argued that people's political participation has not declined, but just shifted to new forms of participation. That is mainly reflected among the youth. First of all, the young generation has an obvious different media usage behavior than the older generation. Loader (2007) and Norris (2002) addressed that young citizens prefer to use digital media for political news and political expressions than older citizens. Some researchers addressed that young people are depending "on internet for all purposes, but specially for news gathering" (Quintelier & Vissers, 2008, p.415; Lee, 2006). Holt et al. (2013) further examined age differences in news media usage and proposed that young people use less traditional media for news than older people but more frequently using social media for news, and the frequency of social media use "functions as a leveler in terms of motivating political participation"(p. 32). The different media usage favors then linked with different political participation. For instance, young citizens demonstrated less political interests and less intention to vote but showed interests in some new forms of political participation like online protest and online communities.

As expected towards direction for deeper investigation, research on the relationship between media usage and political participation has been the key interest among multiple disciplines. Boulianne (2009) concluded that there are two main views about the relationship between internet usage and political participation. The first view is that media usage has a negative effect on political and civic participation. Based on time replacement hypothesis, some researchers, for example, Putnam (1996, 2000) addressed that the time spends on watching television displaces their civic engagement outside, and so for the internet. He argued that citizens spend more time on the internet instead of going outside for social or civic activities. Moy et al. (1999) tested Putnam's time displacement hypothesis and concluded that time spent with television has a negative impact on civic engagement while "time spent on reading newspapers enhances engagement" (p.27). The second view is that internet usage positively predicts political participation. In general, the internet is easy to access and disseminate information. It also has a low threshold for people to join political activities and taking low-cost to organize activities. Therefore, it is capable to empower citizens to engage in more

political activities. Under this category, Boulianne (2009) summarized two groups holding slightly different opinions. One group argues that internet usage can mobilize citizen to participate in political activities, even among those who have little political interest (Delli Carpini, 2000; Barber, 2001; Krueger, 2002; Ward, Gibson, & Lusoli, 2003; Boulianne, 2009). While the other group addresses that internet usage only reinforces citizens who are already interested in politics to engage in more political activities (Norris, 2001; DiMaggio, Hargittai, Celeste, & Shafer, 2004; Saglie & Vabo, 2009; Baumgartner & Morris, 2010; Oser, Hooghe & Marien, 2013). No matter which point of view, political interest is an important factor for the relationship between news media usage and political participation.

Although numerous studies have investigated the relationship between media and political participation, it seems there is no inclusive and unified conclusion about the effects of media usage on political participation. Different studies have different approaches and measurements. Some of studies focused on one specific single political activity (such as voting); some of studies just investigated the effects of different internet usage on single political activities or single forms of political participation; some of studies focused only on internet usage but neglected the comparison between traditional media usage and internet usage. Thus, it turns out that there are limited amount of studies taking various forms of media usage and various forms of political participation into consideration in one study. The different effects of various mediums on political participation are not fully explored. As Boulianne (2009) pointed out in his meta-analysis, different measurements of media usage lead to inconsistent results. The results of the meta-analysis of 38 studies demonstrated that internet usage is positively associated with political participation, and the news media usage has a larger effect on political participation.

Under this background, the main purpose of this study is to investigate different media effects on different forms of political participation. More specifically, it aims to explore the traditional mass media news usage prediction on institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation, and internet news usage prediction on institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation, in the Australia context. This will bring more comprehensive understanding on the relationship between media usage effects and political participation. Before the analysis on the relationship, this study first examines the age differences in news media usage in Australia, since it is a precursor arousing attention to political participation characteristics. After the analysis on the relationship between news

media usage and political participation, the mediation effect of political interest will also be investigated. According to the research intentions, the following research questions are addressed:

RQ1: How do different age groups behave on news media usage and political participation in Australia?

RQ2: How does different news media usage affect institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation in Australia?

RQ3: Whether political interest mediate the relationship between different news media usage and institutionalized and non-institutionalized political participation?

This study is organized as follows: The coming second section is an overview of the theoretical and previous empirical studies, which consists of five episodes. The first episode instructs the conceptual framework of political participation, and then the second episode describes the relationship between media and politics. The third episode discusses media usage, which refers to the changes in media and age effect on media usage. In the fourth episode, the empirical research review about the effects of media usage on political participation is presented. And then the role of political interest in the relationship between news media usage and political participation is reviewed. In the meanwhile, a series of hypotheses are proposed along with the review. Based on the theories and prior empirical research, a hypothesized model of this study is formulated in the third section. This is followed by the methodology of this study where I depict the data, operationalization of variables, and the method reflections in the fourth section. The statistical analyses and results are presented in the fifth section. Thereafter, the conclusion about the findings, study limitations, and suggestions for future research are presented in the last section.

## **2. Theoretical and empirical overview**

### **2.1 Theoretical framework of political participation**

Although the fact that the wide-spreading usage of the internet has boomed new patterns of participatory activities, the debate on political participation still exists. Some researchers defined political participation with a narrow scope and limited it to some traditional political activities like voting, donating, working for parties. Whereas others claimed that the internet facilitates many new forms of political participation, such as signing an online petition, online community discussion, etc. Even sharing news on mobiles should also be regarded as some kind of political participation. They adopted a broad concept of political participation and argued that people are not drifting away from politics, but just drifting from traditional political participation to new forms of political participation.

To further investigate political participation, an agreement on the definition or the scope of the political participation must be clarified first, otherwise, there would be no way to conduct the research which could be discussed with common understanding. The consensus on political participation is the basis for further analysis and discussion, therefore, the concept and classification of political participation are reviewed below:

#### **2.1.1 Conceptualization of political participation**

The early known definition of political participation was brought up by Verba and Nie in 1972: “Political participation refers to those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take” (Verba & Nie, 1972, P.2). The opinions on political participation evolved. Twenty years later in 1995, Verba et al. (1995) described political participation as activities “have intent or effect of influencing government actions - either directly by affecting public policy-making or indirectly by influencing the selection of policymakers” (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995, 38). The updated definition considered the intentions of political participants and activities indirect to public politics. During that time, political participation still mainly referred to traditional political activities, such as joining a party, voting, donating money, contacting politicians, etc. However, soon in the 1990s along with the development of internet, the forms

of political participation became more and more diversified and complicated. The original definition of political participation got out of fit gradually. Researchers began to re-evaluate the concept and definition of political participation.

Van Deth (2014) in Germany presented a conceptual map of political participation. Under the background of more and more new forms of political participation, it was necessary to get a more inclusive conception of political participation. He firstly pointed out four elements for defining political participation: the participation should be an activity done volunteered by a citizen for dealing with government or politics. He then mapped four variants of political participations inside three operational concepts of political participation definition: minimalist definition, targeted definition, and motivational definition. For minimalist definition, it is the political participation variant I, referring to conventional, formal, and elite-directed participation like voting, being party members, etc. For targeted definition, it covers two variants. The first variant refers to unconventional actions targeting government or politics, such as signing a petition, demonstration, etc. The second variant refers to unconventional actions targeting at problems or community, such as volunteering, which is more regarded as civic engagement or social participation. The motivational definition is the political participation variant IV, referring to individualized collective actions such as boycotts, political consumerism, etc.

Ekman and Amnå (2012) also presented a new typology for a full image of political participation, which regards civic participation as latent political participation (pre-political). It means activities participations out of the scope of manifest political participations. For manifest political participation, they are mainly referring to “serious” activities, including formal political participation like election or political contacts, and activism participation like signing petition. For civic participation, they are more referring to involvement as attention, as well as civic engagement like charity or voluntary work for community. They also classified the participation forms into individual forms and collective forms.

Based on these conceptual works on political participation, Theocharis (2015) performed more emphasized research on digitally networked participation. With the examination criteria proposed by Jan W.van Deth, Theocharis (2015) argued that digitally networked participation, which obviously can be regarded as online participation, is no doubt a recognized form of political participation. However, he developed the conceptualization on digitally networked



participation by avoiding the consideration of motivations (Theocharis, 2015). Many behaviors that people themselves do not even regard as politically intended could be defined as political participation. This reduces the complication for identifying if an activity is political participation, such as simply adding a tag to a Facebook post. Theocharis also advocated that society should raise attention to online participation.

In general, as digital media is reforming politics and political participation, the scope of political participation has expanded, and the concept of participation has been evolved accordingly. It covers not only activities directly associated with politics, but also indirect or even unconscious activities or opinions which might be indirectly associated with public matters.

### **2.1.2 Classification of political participation**

Although there are abundant conceptual research about definitions of political participation and the scope of political participation, it is still complicated when the research comes to the influence of media on political participation, due to the evolution of internet with many new forms of political participation emerging. A lot of political participation typologies and classifications are proposed to facilitate the analysis for media effects on political participation.

Verba and Nie (1972) proposed a four dimensions typology of political participation: voting; campaign activity; contacting politicians and communal activity. Being a party member, donating money, and working for political parties are under the category of campaign activity (Ekman & Amnå, 2012, p. 287).

Another commonly used classification is conventional and unconventional participation. Generally, voting, campaign activity, communal activity, contacting a politician are under the category of conventional participation; supporting boycotts, staging demonstrations, signing petitions are categorized under unconventional participation.

However, with the expanded scope of political participation, these two classifications could not contain all patterns of political activities. Considering the media effects on political participation, researchers proposed more classifications to clarify political participation.

Dalton (2008) used the norms of citizenship to clarify the concept and classification of political participation. He cited the theory from Almond and Verba about definition on citizenship

norms, describing the norms as a “*shared set of expectations about the citizen’s role in politics*” (Almond & Verba, 1963). In other words, citizenship norms describe how citizens in a country or nation expect from the country, and how the country is expecting from citizens. The norms of citizenship correspond to the behavior or performance of citizens participating in politics. Naturally, the perception of the norms of citizenship reflects or determine the understanding and definition of political participation.

Based on the past definition of citizenship, Dalton (2008) identified four broad principles intertwined with citizenship definition: public participation, autonomy, acceptance to state authority, and relation to others in the polity. He measured the interrelationship of these four categories and brought up the two faces of citizenship: duty-based citizenship and engaged citizenship. In his theory, political participation can be classified according to the two different types of citizenship. Duty-based citizenship and political participation emphasize the duties of citizens towards countries, politics, and democracy. This participation could be more regarded as direct participation. Engaged citizenship and political participation encourage citizen’s individual opinions, values, and proactive engagement with personal incentives.

Basing on the classification of duty-based and engaged citizenship and political participation, Dalton (2008) discussed the general situation of political involvement, claiming that the whole political participation is not shrinking, but maybe just shifting from duty-based political participation forms towards engaged political participation. Bennett (2008) used a similar method as Dalton to investigate the declining political participation in politics. He classified citizenship into two types: actualizing citizen (AC) and dutiful citizen (DC). The dutiful citizen corresponds to the duty-based citizenship in Dalton’s theory. It emphasizes the obligation of citizens to participate in governmental activities, respect elections and votes, proactively tracking public news, and get engaged in party-based communications. On the contrary, the actualizing citizen, which corresponds to the engaged citizenship in Dalton’s theory, also encourage citizens’ independent views. It does not value the obligation to government and authorities and does not take voting seriously. Actualizing citizen prefers volunteering activities and online communities more than political organizations in realities. His definition or concept of actualizing citizen is considering more from the perspective of new media or digital media than that of Dalton’s engaged citizenship.

In Bennett's theory, he admitted that the youth generation is losing interest in traditional politics and dutiful citizenship, but he strongly emphasized that political participation with actualizing citizenship is expanding, for example, youth people are less willing to join party meetings, but more willing to join online discussions.

He ascribed the reason for the facts mainly to the trends of digital media. The fast development of digital media gave the young people an emerging space to gain new political citizenship in a virtual world. In the past, young people were already a vulnerable group in politics compared with middle-aged people. Young people had a less economical basis, worse living conditions, a weaker voice in public, and a lower position in political organizations. The factors put young people in status with physical difficulty and subjective resistance to participate in politics. When the digital media times come, young people have an easier way to express personal opinions, and online communities to share similar views with other mates. The necessity of participating in politics in reality gets even smaller, no mention that online communication is more vivid and interesting than formal serious politics. Bennett (2008) claimed that politicians, government officials, educators, and policymakers should realize the trend and the young generation's intention on political participation as actualizing citizens, and provide a better environment for young people to have a better way to merge new participation methods with traditional participation methods, like voting. Young people should also realize the importance of pushing online campaigns into real policies, and the push needs more participation in serious politics (Bennett, 2008).

The AC-DC theory and subsequent classification of actualized/dutiful political participation give researchers the possibility to discuss and judge political participation more objectively, since it cannot be arbitrarily concluded that new media is promoting or hindering political participation. There should not be such absolute judgment.

Regarding utilizing the AC-DC theory for political participation research, Vromen and her co-workers (2015) investigated the social media use of youth in Australia, UK, and USA. At the beginning of their research, they directly pointed the different citizenship and different political participation forms are the preconditions to start the investigation. In their research based on focus group method, they found twelve in-person focus groups within four types of citizenship: party political group, issue-based group, identity-based group, and social group (Vromen,

Xenos, & Loader, 2015). Through the group classification, it shows a better way to study social media influence on youth political participation more accurately.

As active and outstanding researchers in political participation field, Vromen, Loader, and Xenos also specifically paid attention to another concept further of the AC-DC citizenship theory: networked individuals (Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014). In this study, they mainly performed state-of-art research and tried to get a general view on networked young people and their political inclination. The article emphasized that young people are holding skeptical view towards politicians and future politics, but it also highlighted that social media gives possibilities and space to young people to speak out, and interact with each other, and then exert their own political influence. Recognition on the new networked citizenship might be good for maintaining the future political and democratic system.

Beyond the method of using citizenship to classify political participation, another common method is the distinction of political participation into institutionalized and non-institutionalized participation. The method depends on the criteria of who defines, organizes, and leads the corresponding political participation activities (Barnes & Kasse, 1979). For the activities led by or related to political elites, they could be classified as institutionalized forms of political participation, such as being party members, contacting politicians, donating to parties, working for elections and campaigns, etc.; for the activities led by or related to common people, they could be classified as non-institutionalized forms of political participation, such as boycotting, demonstrations, sharing online political news, joining online communities, etc.

The direct and easy classification of political participation as institutionalized and non-institutionalized leaves the abstract concept of citizenship aside, avoids ambiguous zones, and gives researchers a more efficient and practical way to perform analysis related to various forms of political participation. Following this classification, Marien et al. (2010) examined the equalities in non-institutionalized forms of political participation and found that the increased the inequality due to educations background differences, but strongly reduced the inequality caused by gender and age (P.187).

In this thesis, the analysis will also refer to the classification of political participation into institutionalized and non-institutionalized. For example, Electoral participation is direct to governments and authorities, thus it is classified into the scope of institutionalized forms of

political participation. Other unconventional participations that highlight personal values and views in loose and free communities, especially online communities, are classified into non-institutionalized forms of political participation. As claimed by many researchers, the voting turnout is declining, but the new forms of political participation are increasing, especially those issue-based participation, online participation, or protest activities. Thus, I expect that non-institutionalized forms of political participation increase over time in Australia. The first hypothesis in this study is:

***H1:** The non-institutionalized forms of political participation have increased in 2014 compared to 2004.*

## **2.2. Media and politics**

Before reviewing the media effects on political participation, it is necessary to discuss the relationship between media and politics firstly. Only after understanding how the media is influencing politics, we can have the foundation to understand how media usage is influencing political participation. Besides, the media landscape is dynamic and still evolving which supplies citizens more choices and resources to involve in politics. With the advent of internet, people's habits of using media are also changing. That brings up stronger request for understanding the transition of media and how it influences politics.

### **2.2.1 The relationship between media and politics**

Media, including traditional mass media (such as Television, newspaper, radio) and digital media (such as the internet) is a tool or platform for communication. Chadwick (2017) suggested that the old media (traditional mass media) and new media (digital media) co-exist in a hybrid system and these two forms of media have an impact on politics. Nowadays, the influence of internet on politics and political communication is especially important and cannot be ignored.

Firstly, the internet has supplied citizens with a new public sphere where common people can discuss, share, and even produce news. It is so convenient to post what we see and what we think about via the internet, especially via mobile internet. The internet also becomes the source of news production (Skogerbø & Krumsvik, 2014). Secondly, according to Semetko and

Scammell (2012), the model of media system shifted from “one to many” to “many to many” model (p.4). They argued that the traditional mass media, such as television, newspaper, has always been the key tool for political organizations that take the dominant discourse in the political communication process. Therefore, the dissemination of information is from top to bottom, in a hierarchical path. While on the internet, political communication is the horizontal and consumer-centric process. Scammell (2007) also portrays this process as "a consumer model of political communication"(p.611). Riaz takes the election campaign of Obama as an example and argued that digital media not only provided publicity materials but also provided a platform for the political debate and discussion (Riaz, 2010). Thirdly, the emergence and widespread use of the internet has also made people's contacts no longer limited to time and space. Citizens from different countries and different backgrounds are connected via internet and form many new online communities. Many researchers mentioned these unlimited potentials of internet result in the easy accessibility to obtain news information and low threshold to take part in online interactions. Ekström and Frimstone (2018) analyzed the levels and development of online political engagement from four aspects: political information, interaction, production, and collective action. In their findings, most people’s social interactions on internet are associated with political information and political interactions, while few are related to production and collective actions. They also pointed out that in addition to being influenced by factors of political socialization and motivation, people’s online political engagement is largely influenced by their own social interaction with others on social media (Ekström & Firmstone, 2018). Riaz (2010) addressed that due to the extensive use of social media and mobile phone in the internet world, no one is isolated in the digital time. From the developed countries, such as US, Germany, to the African developing countries, such as Ghana and Zimbabwe, and to some developing countries of Asia, such as China, citizens in the different national contexts are able to follow and share political information via internet, participate in political activities, and moreover, influence the political process (Riaz, 2010). Generally, there are no explicit boundaries between the public and private sphere, no distinct line between the online and offline engagement. These characteristics and possibility of internet make it easier for public citizens to cross the lower threshold and engage in political participation (Ekström & Shehata, 2018).

In general, the internet has provided citizens a new and vast public sphere to acquire, to share, and to discuss political information and public issues. The internet also provides various means

and possibilities for people to interact with each other or with the open world. The accesses to politics are not limited to a small circle of elites anymore, but more equal and convenient to common citizens. People have more choices and opportunities to learn and engage in politics (Dimitrova, Shehata, Strömbäck & Nord, 2011). The internet provides the physical possibilities for emerging political participation, then what is the theoretical mechanism and psychological incentive behind these encouraging people being engaged in politics? An answer to this question is the mobilization theory.

### **2.2.2 The mobilization theory**

Mobilization theory, also named resource mobilization theory, claims that social movements are largely depending on the resources and emphasizes the sociological factors of movements and mobilization rather than the psychological factors. The theory includes resources of materials like money, place, physical suppliers; human resources organizing and participating; social networks; cultural recognition, and common understanding; moral influence that leads the movement (Crossman, 2019). The internet has facilitated most of the resource problems here: it provides much less-cost for people to communicate and organize, unlimited online communication space. It easily gets many people sharing the same value, same opinions, and same views to gather together online, and people are even volunteering to organize movements together. The internet itself is having the function to gather these people into a community and unite them, and people can have social interactions conveniently and even more closely. The opinion leaders are also easy to find or just be formed inside these online communities. The mobilization theory vividly explains how internet reforms political participation.

One perfect example is Greta Thunberg. In August 2018, she decided to demonstrate outside Swedish Parliament on every Friday, instead of going to school. The sign and slogan she held was “School strike for climate”. She put her first batch of strike photos on Instagram and Twitter, then someone helped her to make videos and put videos on Youtube. She got several thousands of thousands of followers very soon and inspired other students to strike in several hundreds of cities in December 2018, just two months after her first movement. One year later, the activities have attracted more than four million participants. She did not spend money on organizing the movements, she does not have a big team to operate, but the movements just spread like a miracle. It is due to the internet providing tools, platforms, possibilities for people in the world, especially young people, to join this movement, and these young people might not have the resources, time, money, or access for joining traditional political activities. The

internet lowers the political participation threshold and brings many more possibilities to political participation activities.

In addition, A number of studies have supported that media, especial internet, is a key role in mobilizing citizens in political communication (Lemert, Mitzman, Seither, Cook, & Hackett, 1977; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Wilkins, 2000; Chang, 2007; Boulianne, 2009; Strömbäck& Shehata, 2010). Compelling evidence for mobilization shows that media not only informs citizens, but also “arouses citizen's political interests, and further motivate them to participate in political activities”(Chang, 2007, p. 363).

## **2.3 Media usage**

As introduced above, the development of media has brought tremendous change to politics, simultaneously and naturally, the ways that people using media also change. This episode will briefly introduce the theoretical basis explaining the psychology on people's media usage, the change of people’s utilization of media, especially the changes between different aged groups.

### **2.3.1 Users and gratification (UGT) theory**

The UGT theory can be regarded as a psychological theory used in the communication field. The UGT theory focuses mainly on the audience of news communication, more specifically, on the psychological needs of common citizens receiving news information. This UGT theory answers the questions of why do people use media, how do they use it, and what do people use it for? Before this theory, the communication research regard audience as passive receivers; after this theory was brought up, researchers begin to pay attention to audience’s psychological needs, and in our review, to common people’s needs (McQuil, 2010; Ruggiero; 2000)

Normally what do people do when they use media? We can list some activities: reading newspapers, watching TV, viewing news websites, watching Youtube or Twitter, wandering on forums, checking friends’ Facebook or Instagram, chatting with friends, following some coming offline activities, and so on. According to UGT theory, these activities reflect the needs of people to acquire new information, interact with peer people, maintaining social relationship, expressing personal expectation, and motivation to change (if they are approaching political activities online or offline). Ruggiero (2000) pointed out that when people facing more and more media choices, their motivation and satisfaction became more important. Internet



enlarged the possible activities people can do compared with traditional mass media. After specifying these different needs with UGT theory, researchers could analyze the influence of corresponding media usage methods on further political participation actions, and also be able to explain based on what psychological needs they are engaged to perform the political participation.

In Vromen and his colleagues' research, they performed the analysis on media usage in such ways: broadcasting information, acquiring new information, everyday political talk, and new political actions like doing politics online. By using this in-depth approach, they explored the differences in political participation among dutiful and self-actualizing citizenship groups. (Vromen, Xenos, & Loader, 2015). More deeply involving the UGT theory, Onyechi (2018) performed research on the influence of social media of youth people towards political participation in the 2015 Nigeria Election. The method he used in the research is focus group analysis. From feedbacks from focus group members, it was confirmed that the motivations of youth people to use social media were actually reflecting the needs of youth people: cognitive needs (to get information), social integration needs (to maintain relationships with friends), tension release needs, or even the “needs” just because social media is easy to use and to access. In the main body of the research, he investigated how these needs and the uses of social media to gratify those needs were influencing young people’s political participation in Nigeria. The study verified the validity of the UGT theory.

### **2.3.2 Changes in media usage**

The rise and fast spread of internet have drawn vast users, especially young users. It is a fact that the time people spending on radio, newspaper and TV is much less, and the time and user size of internet are expanding exponentially. Fletcher and Young (2012) pointed out that the internet is taking away the audience from the traditional mass media. Fisher (2019) reported the time spent with media in the UK in 2019, and he concluded that UK citizens are shifting their habits of consuming media, from traditional mass media to digital media, and most of their media consumption is via mobile phones. The survey results show that the time spent on watching TV, radio, and newspaper are declining, and time spent on Smartphone is increasing (Fisher B. , 2019). In Australia, the number of internet user was 18.13 million in 2014, accounting for 81% of the total population (We are social, 2014). In 2019, the number of internet users was 21.74 million, which constituted 87% of the total population in Australia.

Moreover, 93% of internet users use the internet every day (Watt, 2019). The widespread usage of internet has penetrated people's daily life, but what do people do most via internet? According to the annual report of Australians' internet usage released by the Australian Communications and Media Authority in 2014, sending e-mail is the most popular activity via internet for adults Australians. The second common usage of internet is searching for information and news (ACMA, 2014; Heber, 2014). The official survey data indicates that more and more adults Australia obtain information and news via internet. While, on the other hand, according to Digital News Report: Australia 2018, although the internet and social media usage have dramatically increased, "two thirds (66%) continue to watch TV news"(Fisher, Digital News Report of Australia, 2019). A similar pattern is found in the United States. By comparing the data of 2016 and 2018, the reports from Pew Research Center shows that American adults most preferred to get news via television. Internet is the second preferred platform for news and getting news by print is the last platform that American adults choose to get news in 2018 (Mitchell, 2018). There is no doubt that people obtain information or news, especially political news and political issues by media, either by traditional mass media or by internet. Well-informed citizens get engaged in political participation and participation contributes to a healthy and sound democracy.

### **2.3.3 Age differences in media usage**

People have different preferences for media consumption and the way for getting news, and these differences in preferences also reflected in different age groups. From the survey of Eurostat, in 2016, 94% of the 16-24 years old citizens in EU countries surfed internet via mobile phone, while among the age group of 25-54 years old, there were 56% internet users. The number of internet users continued going down with age. Among the 55-74 years old citizens, 54% use the internet (Eurostat, 2016). The statistics from Statista Research Department shows a similar situation in Australia. In 2016, 99% of internet users under 25 years old accessed internet every day, and the percentage of internet users in 25 and 34 age group was 95%. 85% of internet users over 65 years old used the internet every day (Statista, 2016). Many articles have confirmed that the younger generation uses digital media more than the older generation; on the contrary, the older generation uses traditional media more often than the young citizen. Smart (2018) investigated the digital media use in child, youth, and family. She mentioned that according to Australian Bureau of Statistics research, 80% of Australians are internet users in 2015. The 15-17 age group took the highest proportion, and the

age group over 65 had the lowest proportion. In the United States, Bakker and de Vreese (2011) stated that young people intensively used the internet and all other online applications. The results of the data from Pew Internet & American Life Project (2008) showed that 90% of internet users among American adults were in the 18 to 29 age group. He also agreed that the internet "offers a wide scope of possibilities to engage in political activities" (p. 3). Holt et al. (2013) also provide evidence that younger citizens more frequently use social media for political purposes than older citizens and proposed that social media plays as a leveler among younger citizens to motivate more political participation. Therefore, I advance the following hypotheses:

*H2: Young citizens use the internet for political purpose more often than older citizens.*

*H3: Old citizens use traditional media for political news more often than younger citizens.*

## **2.4. Media usage and political participation**

The concepts and theories have been clarified for media and political participation. Based on these previous theoretical and empirical studies, we could have a more comprehensive understanding of media usage and political participation. There have been abundant studies focusing on the effects of internet on political participation. This section will review the former research results in this field. It will begin with the review on the effect of traditional mass media on political participation, and then followed by the effect of internet on political participation.

### **2.4.1 Traditional mass media and political participation**

The research for analyzing the influence of traditional media on political participation is limited compared with the research for analyzing the influence of new media. The ratio of available journal articles about new media's influence on political participation is hundred times more than that those about traditional media's influence.

Newton (1999) examined the traditional mass media effects, whether it will mobilize people politically or cause media malaise. The results of statistical analysis indicate that reading newspapers generally mobilizes people, and so does watching Television for news. On the opposite, reading tabloid newspapers and watching television generally show more media malaise effects. Therefore, he concluded that it is not the form of media, but the media content

is the key factor influencing people's political behavior.

Nor, Gapor and their colleagues in Malaysia performed some correlation study among internet use, traditional media use, and political participation. The research only validated that people using the internet for political information collection also utilize traditional media like newspapers and television. (Nor, Gapor, Bakar, & Harun, 2011). In Malaysia's neighborhood country Singapore, Skoric and Poor did a qualitative analysis on a student post. The research proves that attention to traditional media significantly supports both traditional and online political participation. The interaction between traditional media and new media is also positively associated with traditional political participation, but not with online political activities (Skoric & Poor, 2013).

Bakker and Vreese also performed tests on questionnaire data in the Netherlands to check the relationship between media use and political participation. They classified participation into passive and active participation. For example, traditional passive participations like retrieving information about politics, signing petitions, following traditional media during election, etc.; traditional active participation like sending letters to media, protesting, demonstrating, and actively engaged in debates. The test results show that quality newspaper reading is positive for traditional participation but reading popular or free newspapers is not. Watching public TV is only positive for passive participation (Bakker & Vreese, 2011).

Among the limited research, Holt and his colleagues conducted four waves panel study on the 2010 Swedish election campaign. His test results confirmed that young citizens are more frequently using new media than older citizens, and less frequently using traditional media. When people use traditional media for political news, their interests in politics would be increased, and there would be a positive effect on offline political participation (Holt, Shehata, & Strömböck, 2013). Boyle and Schmierbach investigated data from a digital survey to seek the relationship between news media use and political participation (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2009). Their results also show that traditional mainstream media is so important for institutionalized political participation that it is even more or less constraining people's intention for non-institutionalized political participation.

McLeod (1999) performed analysis on data from a survey in Wisconsin, investigating the relationship between news usage with traditional media and local institutionalized political participation. The analysis shows a strong effect of news usage with newspaper on institutionalized political participation, but no direct effect of news usage with TV on that

participation. Mcleod mentioned some researchers' view why TV is not having the same function as newspaper, and the reason might be that TV's characteristics make citizens losing trust. Norris did not fully agree on this and performed an analysis of survey data. His results confirmed that news use with newspaper strongly predict institutionalized political participation, but indeed, the TV's effect on political participation is not as obvious. He argued that TV's effect should be considered specifically based on watched contents, channels, audience education background, social-economic background, age, and other factors. After controlling those variables, the news usage with TV shows effects on institutionalized political participation, although in an indirect way (Norris, 1996). Weaver and Drew (2001) also investigated the survey towards the U.S. 2000 election. Their results confirmed again that news usage with newspaper is significantly associated with political interest and voting as institutionalized political participation, but news use with TV is just facilitating issue learning and must take political interest as a mediator towards political participation.

In general, the limited research shows news media use with traditional media is facilitating institutionalized political participation, but its effect on non-institutionalized political participation seems not as strong as that on institutionalized political participation. Among various medium, newspaper has the most significant effect on political participation compared with others. Political interest is normally an important mediator between media usage and political participation. The overall hypotheses on the relationship between media use and political participation will be brought up after reviewing the influence of the new media part.

#### **2.4.2 Internet usage and political participation**

As mentioned above, there has been abundant research focusing on the impact of internet usage on political participation, especially on the participation of young people. However, opinions and conclusions are considerably ambiguous. The slightly dominant party advocates that internet is generally supporting or benefiting political participation; a small portion of researchers present the view that internet less positive, or not remarkably benefiting or improving political participation; and in the end, there are also unneglectable opinions claiming internet is not relevant to political participation. After these viewpoints, the attention to a specific use of internet, such as news usage is turning to be more and more important. In the coming context, the review details will be presented and discussed according to different assertions.

In Vromen's research on focus groups with different political participation types, both the groups of institutionalized type and the groups of non-institutionalized type show that most of the groups are using digital platforms for organizing and group mobilization (Vromen, Xenos, & Loader, 2015). Although some institutionalized group (party group) in the research implies that using internet for broadcasting is not increasing their influence in public, but in general, it can be concluded that internet is helping people to exert influence and acquire new information. The feedback from the focus group reflects that traditional media is indeed not the first choice for young people to get daily news. It seems the internet not only make political coordination and communication easier, but also reshape political networks and promotes new forms of "digital" engaged political participation (Vromen, Xenos, & Loader, 2015). Generally, the article supports the opinion that the internet is good and beneficial for any type of political participation.

Xenos, Vromen, and Loader (2014) also led research to study the relationship between Internet-based social media use patterns and youth political engagement in the three democracy-well-developed countries: Australia, UK, and the US. The results clearly demonstrate the positive direct relationship between social media use and political engagement.

Hattani also used a statistic method to study the relationship between new media and civic participation among youth. The statistics result proves it is dominantly believed that online usage is having a strong relationship with civic or institutionalized participation. Young people feedback that the new media, especially social media, is making them aware and motivated to communicate, to interact, to share, and to aim for change in life. Besides, the analysis points out that young students are the most active people who get engaged and move on to turn online civic actions to off-line civic activities. In general, the analysis concludes that the new media is undeniably enhancing young people's engagement in politics and civic affairs (Hattani, 2017).

Onyechi examined the relationship between social media uses and political participation in Nigeria 2015 election. The study shows that the use of social media for information purposes was more related to civic and political participation than the relaxation purpose (Onyechi, 2018). This is actually a good indication that young people are lean to civic and political participation, no matter offline or online. The investigation shows the participation activities in the electoral political campaigns were proportional to the amount of time they spent on social media. Those findings also correspond to the UGT theory, since the needs of youth were met,

and they would move towards the direction from where they were motivated. It is important that internet gave the platform and opportunities to young people to get information, interact with peer groups, and get motivated to participate in the election campaigns. The effect of internet use in this election is promising and cheering.

As mentioned in the beginning, there are also less positive views with the influence of online media usage on political participation. Leyva studied the social media usage patterns by UK millennials and the relationship between the patterns and the millennials' participation in the 2015 election (Leyva, 2017). The analysis results indicate that using social media online can only make a small increase in offline political participation. It is also found that people go for online and offline participation more when they have better socio-economic status, better childhood and formal political socialization.

More specifically, Ternes et al. did survey in Berlin and Cairo, trying to investigate the influence of using Facebook on youth political participation (Ternes, Mittelstadt, & Towers, 2015). The results prove the internet is indeed the prioritized method for young people to get political information, but it is not the only way. It helps to increase some new forms of online political activities, but online activities cannot replace offline ones. The whole analysis confirms social media like Facebook is well assisting political information sharing, but not effectively supporting either online or offline political participation yet.

Nor, Gapor and their colleagues performed correlation study on statistic data in Malaysia in 2011, and found the internet is widely used for political information collection, but it is not stimulating people to participate more online political activities, or influencing people's political opinions (Nor, Gapor, Bakar, & Harun, 2011). Even several years later when internet is much more ordinary in citizen life, Salman and Saad studied the use of social media by youth in Malaysia and their political participation activities (Salman & Saad, 2015). The statistical analysis shows information search is the main purpose of online use among the youth people in Malaysia. Among the offline political activities, the most ordinary one is communicating with others about current hot issues. Disappointingly, most of the extents of online or offline political participation activities are not even on average level. Salman and Saad attribute the reasons for the situation that a lot of young people in Malaysia mainly use social media for social networking and entertainment, not for motivating political purposes.

Moreover, Keating and Melis in the UK believe some young people are engaged with political activities by using social media, but a lot of other young people are not interested in this (Keating & Melis, 2017). They argued that when young people behave more engaged in online and offline political participation that is because they are already interested in politics, maybe due to adolescence experience at home or with friends. Social media is not exaggerating the already existing engagement extent. The socio-economic status and education level also have some influence on political participation, but the effect is not obvious when personal political interest is put as an analysis variable, in other words, personal interest is the dominant factor influencing youth political participation from any perspective, not the social media. The writer suggested that although social media is not amplifying youth political participation or turning non-engaged youth into politically engaged, social media can still be tools for engaged young people to participate in politics. Afterwards, it is the tasks for politicians and the whole society to use social media better to mobilize youth people for more political participation.

Bimber and Copeland tested American National Election Studies (ANES) data from 1996 to 2008 for analyzing the influence of digital media on six traditional political participation activities, and found the general internet use for political information is not consistently related to the institutionalized political participation (Bimber & Copeland, 2013).

One reason that various researches have different conclusions on the influence of internet usage and political participation might be the different measurement of media use and political participation. Boulianne (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of 38 studies to investigate the impact of internet on political engagement. He concluded that there is little evidence to support the theory of time replacement and instead, confirmed that the internet use positively affected political participation and "the average positive effect is small in size" (p.205). On the meanwhile, he highlighted that using internet for news displays substantial and larger positive effects on political participation. Therefore, the key point is the "specific ways in which individual use media" (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012). Some researchers also investigated the effect of news media usage on political participation.

Bode performed investigation on how the internet is providing and spreading political information to web users (Bode, 2016). The results emphasize that the internet and social media are crucial for citizens to get political information, to learn political knowledge, and then get involved in political activities. Short-term recall facilitates the potential for people to get



political knowledge as learning. The effect does not only exist when people are actively seeking political information, but also exist when people are incidentally exposed to political information. The theory gives an important hint to study political news usage on internet and the subsequent effect on political participation.

Although any media usage can provide political information and encourage political knowledge learning, Dimitrova et al. (2014) pointed out that there are many forms of using internet, and the effect of the usage on political knowledge political participation should eventually be different. There is a need to distinguish the different effects of various media use forms. They tested the data from the 2010 Swedish election campaign. The online media usage focused on forms of using online news sites, political party web sites, and social media. The results claim that the general use of online media has limited influence on political knowledge learning and political participation. Among the media usage forms, the effect of using online news websites have more obvious positive effects on political knowledge learning than viewing party websites and social media. For the effect on political participation, viewing political websites and using social media have a much stronger influence than using online news websites. However, the whole study emphasizes that the political interest is a much more important mediator than political knowledge and political attention to traditional news.

At the same time, Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2014) analyzed the U.S. 2-wave panel data to investigate the relationship between news use with social media and political participation. The research regards political expression as a prerequisite or at least important factor associated with political participation. The characteristics of social media on internet provide both the physical conditions and the spiritual space to people to express themselves, communicate and interact with others, and the political news gathers people and inspires political expression. The results show that news use with social media directly facilitate offline political participation, and indirectly assist both online and offline political participation with political expression as a mediator. These effects also work across countries. The results are very important for figuring out how to encourage young people to have more political interests, express themselves, and get motivated into political participation. In this field, Gil de Zúñiga and his team have put a lot of effort and cultivated considerate achievements.

Adegbola and Gearhart investigated Pew Research data across the United States, Kenya, and Nigeria to see how the influence of online news media use on political participation varies in

different countries. The United States is a well-development country with mature democratic political system, and African countries are less developed with fewer resources and infrastructures and internet facilities. The new media in Africa is also not as prominent or influential as that in the U.S. First, they found online news usage with accessing blogs and websites have positive effects on political participation in both U.S. and Nigerian. Similarly, using news via social media is having the same effect for the U.S. and Kenyan. No matter how the internet using forms and the internet infrastructure vary, the importance of internet and websites on internet are no doubt significant for motivating political participation across different countries (Adegbola & Gearhart, 2019).

Ekström and Östman performed data analysis for two-wave panel survey results from adolescence in Sweden. They also investigated the relationships between information use of internet and political participation. The investigation supports that informational internet use is benefiting the online political participation with online political interaction as a mediator. In other words, informational internet use is positive for interactional internet use, which is promoting online political participation. Various participation forms like signing a petition, protest, and boycotts are increased. Besides, informational internet use also positively facilitates offline political participation indirectly (Ekström & Östman, 2015). Another research mentioned for the news usage with traditional media performed by Boyle and Schmierbach, they also investigated the relationship between news media use with Internet and political participation, and confirms that using internet for news is importantly promoting non-institutionalized political participation, especially the form of protests (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2009). A similar pattern was found in the Hong Kong context. Chan (2017) argued that news usage through online social media is conveying information and providing psychological antecedents for people to be engaged in political participation, especially the protests.

Since there are eventually people in the internet world who are not very interested in news, it is worth and meaningful to investigate what would be the effect of incidental news exposure on political participation when people are using internet for other purposes but incidentally encounter news. Kim and his colleagues analyzed the US national survey data and found incidental news exposure is positively influencing both online and offline political participation. The effect is naturally stronger for the people who pay less attention to online entertainment content and pay more attention to online news (Kim, Chen & Gil de Zúñiga, 2013). However, it is out of expectation that even for the relative entertainment use, it is having a mediating

effect to enhance the relationship between incidental news usage and online political participation. In general, online news usage is positively supporting people's political participation no matter people prefer news or entertainment more.

As can be seen, although there are different kinds of opinions on the impact of the media on political participation, no consensus or one-for-all conclusion for the complicated relationship of media use and political participation, no matter the traditional media or digital media. During the last two decades, there are extensive empirical studies about the media use and political participation, but still lack empirical evidence on the whole picture of media use on political participation. For example, much research only focuses on internet and social media, or just focus on one single political outcome, like voting turnout or a few forms of political participation. Thus, the thesis here would like to hold a detailed but comprehensive comparison between news media usage effects of traditional media and the internet, considering the internet is the core utilization carrier and spirit of new media. The dependent research objects would also be comprehensive but specific: the institutionalized political participation and non-institutionalized political participation. The following four hypotheses could be brought up:

***H4:** Using traditional mass media for political news has a positive effect on both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation.*

***H5:** Using internet for political news has a positive effect on both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation.*

***H6:** Using traditional mass media for political news is a stronger predictor of institutionalized forms of participation compared to the non-institutionalized forms of political participation.*

***H7:** Using internet for political news is a stronger predictor of non-institutionalized forms of participation compared to the institutionalized forms of political participation.*

## **2.5 Political interest as a mediator**

Political interest mainly refers to people's interests in politics related issues, from political news to political events, organizations, and many more aspects. Numerous studies have proved that individual's political interest positively affects political participation. Vedlitz and Veblen

(1980) analyzed the relationship between political interest and political participation, and found they are positively related in a proportional way. Prior (2010) also addressed that political interest is "typically the most powerful predictor of political behaviors that make democracy work" (p.747).

As for media effect on political interest, general media usage has little impact on political interest, while using media for news is an important approach for common citizens getting more political knowledge and arousing more political interest, and then motivating them to participate in political activities. Strömbäck and Shehata (2010) investigated the relationship between news media use and political interest, and found the relationship is both casual and reciprocal. Salzman (2015) tested survey data from Latin American and investigated the relationship between news media usage and political interest and also found it is obviously positive (Salzman, 2015). The only exception is the effect of watching TV news, which is not effective for increasing political interest.

Most studies on media usage and political participation, political interest was conducted as a control variable or dependent variable. Little study investigates the role of political interest, as a mediator, in the relationship between news media usage and political participation. But there are some exceptions.

Chang (2007) investigated the mediation effect of political interest on media use on political participation. He separated the mobilizing media use and demobilizing media use with five media: TV, newspapers, magazines, radio, and the internet. Mobilizing media use refers to the purpose of usage towards political issues and other mobilizing information collection. Demobilizing media use refers to entertainment. His results show that mobilizing media use is positively associated with political interest, and then further linked to political participation. Demobilizing media use is associated with political cynicism and not beneficial for active political participation. Moeller focused on a specific angle of the relationship between online media usage and long-term development of political interest of youth. The results prove the relationship is a reinforcing spiral, demonstrating that online media usage for political information can facilitate the interest in politics. These relevant researches also support the mobilization theory that how media usage mobilize people's political interest, and then facilitate political participation further. Thus, the thesis brings out the following two hypotheses:

**H8:** *Political interest plays as a mediator on the relationships between the traditional mass media for political news usage and institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation.*

**H9:** *Political interest plays as a mediator on the relationship between internet for political news usage and institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation.*

# 3. Hypothesized Model

## 3.1 Hypothesized model

Based on the theories and prior empirical findings, the news media usage is positively associated with political participation. In addition, there are many other factors that could affect the estimate of the focal relationship. To rule out the spuriousness, some variables will be controlled for the model. The control variables consist of social-demographic characteristics, political efficacy in the model.

According to the life cycle and previous studies, age is an important factor affecting political participation. And evidence reveals that older citizens are willing to opt for institutionalized forms of political participation, such as voting (Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, Delli, & Michael, 2006; Kiisel, Leppik, & Seppel, 2015; Marien, Hooghe, & Quintelier, 2010).

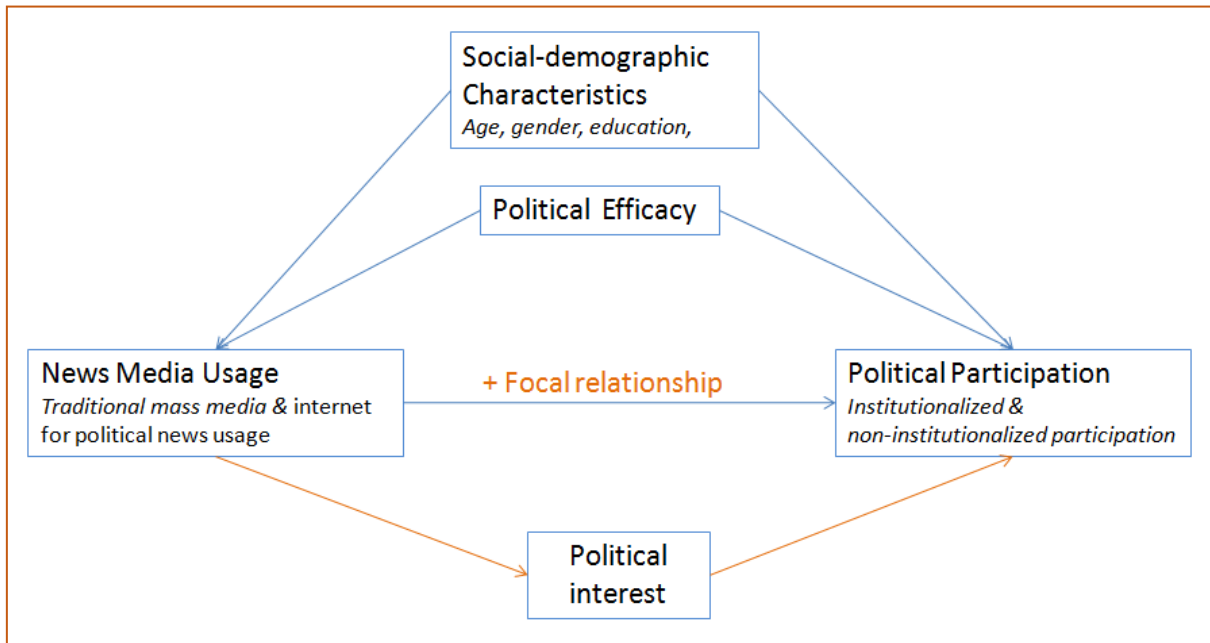
A number of research has pointed out that there is a gender gap in political participation, male are generally more interested in politics and engaged in more political activities (Stolle, Hooghe, & Micheletti, 2005; Marien, Hooghe, & Quintelier, 2010; Kiisel, Leppik, & Seppel, 2015). Williams (2005) and Stevens (2007) argued that female, especially young female vote less than male. Gender equality has always been an important issue in political participation.

In terms of education, many prior studies have concluded that education level has an impact on various forms of political participation (Teorell, Sum & Tobiasen, 2007a; Dalton, 2008; Marien, Hooghe & Quintelier, 2010), and they argued that education has a stronger effect on non-institutionalized forms of political participation predication. Tenn (2007) and Sloam (2012) found that the higher education level of the citizens, the more electoral participation. Marien et al. (2010) argued that comparing to other demographic characteristics, "education is the single most important determinant of political participation (P.192)".

Political efficacy refers to the "feeling that political and social change is possible and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change" (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954, p. 187). Numerous prior studies have proved that political efficacy is a crucial predictor of political participation (Verba, Schlotzman, & Brady, 1995; Sullivan & Riedel, 2001; Verba, Schlotzman & Brady 1995; Sullivan & Riedel 2001; Olsson 2014).

Taken these potential confounding variables into consideration, the hypothesized model about the effects of news media usage and political participation is formulated as follows:

**Figure1:** Hypothesized model of the effects of news media usage and political participation



The primary interest of this paper is to examine the focal relationship between news media usage and political participation. More specifically, the relationship between different news media usage (traditional mass media and internet for political news usage) and institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. The positive relationship was expected after controlling for some key social demographics and mediator variable. In the meanwhile, the framework of expected outcomes framework is summarized as follows:

**Table 1: Expected effects of news media usage on political participation**

	Institutionalized forms of political participation	Non-institutionalized forms of political participation
Traditional mass media for political news usage	Positive effect	Positive effect
	Stronger predictor	Weak predictor
Internet for political news usage	Positive effect	Positive effect
	Weak predictor	Stronger predictor

### **3.2 Case Context: Australia**

The context of this paper is based on Australia. Australia is a well-developed country that has implemented the representative democracy. Among 166 electoral democracies, 19 countries require compulsory voting, and Australia is one of the 19. Moreover, Australia is one of the only nine that enforced it (Alcorn, 2019). However, Australians have shown their political apathy for a long time. Burns (1961) argued that the majority of voters were "oppressive lack of interest" (P.62). Wilson and Western (1969) confirmed that statement and proposed that most Australians did not get engaged in politics meaningfully. Harrington (2016) admitted that "it has become accepted wisdom in public discourse that Australians are disengaged with politics", but he also mentioned this phenomenon was a "complex picture". In terms of consuming news, similar patterns were proved in Australia. According to News Digital Report: Australia 2019, "Australia has the lowest number of "heavy" news consumers, who access news more than once a day, at 52%". The average number of the other thirty countries is 66%. Furthermore, the report also showed that people were losing their interest in political news and over 60% of Australians have lower interest in politics (Fisher, Fuller, Lee, Park, & Sang, 2019). Under this context, it would be very interesting and meaningful to explore how and to what extent political news exposure affects the different forms of political participation in Australia.

Based on the hypothesized model, this thesis conducted multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses above. In the next section, the data, variables, measures, and manipulations will be depicted.



## 4. Research Method

This paper estimates the effect of internet and traditional mass media for political news and information on institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation, controlling for the socio-demographic characteristics, political efficacy, and political interest. Moreover, this paper examines the mediation role of political interest between news media usage and political participation as well.

### 4.1 Data

To explore the research questions and test the hypotheses above, the data sets of International Social Survey Program (ISSP) module on citizenship have been adopted in this paper. The ISSP is a cross-national collaboration data with academic orientation. Two ISSP citizenship modules have been conducted in 2004 and 2014 with representative or random samples of the population from the participating countries. By using face-to-face interviews and/or postal mail surveys, the ISSP citizenship modules focus on citizens' rights and obligations in a democracy, as well as political participation, trust, and media consumptions. These attributes suit well for the introduced hypotheses of this study. Furthermore, two ISSP citizenship modules provide a great chance for this study because two-thirds of the successive survey's items are replications from the 2004 survey (Scholz, Jutz, Pammett, & Hadler, 2017). Although this does not sufficiently support longitudinal analysis, it enables me to compare the social changes during this decade, for instance, changes in media consumptions of political news, political interest and political participation among different age groups, and changes in the impacts of media consumption of political news on political participation.

Since the purpose of this study is to examine the impacts of news media usage on political participation in Australia, the case of Australia was specially selected for analysis. The sample was stratified by Australian states and territories using population counts based on Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) Statistics. It is compulsory in Australia for all citizens aged 18 years or older to be enrolled to vote. According to the AEC, approximately 96.3% of eligible Australians are enrolled to vote (Australia Electoral Commission, 2020). The representative

samples of the Australia population aged from 18 to 93 (the age range is 19-95 in the 2014 survey). The net sample size in 2004 is 1914 and 1432 in 2014.

## 4.2 Operationalization

### Dependent Variables

This thesis estimates the impacts of the news media use on different forms of political participation - institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation, therefore, two dependent variables are formulated in this study.

*Non-institutionalized forms of political participation.* In ISSP 2004 and 2014 questionnaires, a series of different forms of activities were asked to measure political participation: *sign a petition; take part in demonstration; attend political meeting or rally; contact a politician; donate money or raise funds; buy or boycott goods for political/ethical/environmental reasons; contact media; join an internet political forum or discussing group/express political views on internet.* These 8 forms of political activities are quite common for empirical tests in participation. The action of joining an internet political forum was asked in 2004 and this action has been revised into expressing political views on internet in the 2014 questionnaire. Every political participation survey question was presented to respondents with four alternatives: (1) have not done it and would never do it; (2) have not done it but might do it; (3) have done it in the more distant past; (4) have done it in the past year. This thesis focuses on whether the respondents have participated in the past year, therefore, every item was recorded into two value: have done it in the last year(=1), have not done in the last year(=2).

Based on the theoretical and previous empirical studies, five forms of actions were added into an index of the non-institutionalized forms of political participation: sign a petition, take part in demonstration, buy or boycott goods for political/ethical/environmental reasons, contact media; join an internet political forum or discussing group/express political views on internet. The values of the non-institutionalized forms of political participation range from 5 to 10. In order to make the values of the independent variable correspond to other variables, the recoded scales range from 1(taken part in five non-institutionalized forms of political activities) to 6(taken part in no non-institutionalized forms of political activities during the last year) (Cronbach's alpha=0.73, M=4.93, SD=1.13). The similar operation for non-institutionalized forms of

political participation were conducted in 2004 survey data (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.70$ ,  $M=5.08$ ,  $SD=0.96$ ).

***Institutionalized forms of political participation.*** For this series of political survey questions, attending political meeting or rally, contacting a politician and donating money or raise funds belong to institutionalized forms of political participation. However, since voting and being a party member are the two most representative forms of institutionalized forms of political participation, these two variables with the other three variables were added into institutionalized forms of political participation with the range from 5 to 10. Similarly, the scale of institutionalized forms of political participation was recoded from 1 (taking part in five institutionalized forms of political activities during last year) to 6 (taking part in no institutionalized forms of political activities during the last year) (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.63$ ,  $M=4.53$ ,  $SD=0.83$ ). In 2004 survey data set, the institutionalized forms of political participation were also conducted based on the same operation (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.58$ ,  $M=4.55$ ,  $SD=0.78$ ).

### **Independent Variables**

News media use is the main interest of the independent variables in this study. More specifically, two forms of news media use - traditional mass media news use and internet news use, were taken into account. Four survey items about the news media use were designed both in the 2004 and 2014 questionnaires. News media use was measured by a series of survey questions: *'On average, how often do you read the political content of a newspaper, watch political news on television, listen to the political news on the radio, use internet to get political news or information?'* The survey items are the same in 2004 and 2014 questionnaires, but the value scales are slightly different. In 2004 survey, five alternatives were presented to respondents: (1) every day; (2) 3-4 days a week; (3) 1-2 days a week; (4) fewer than 1 day a week; (5) never. With the widespread use of internet, more detailed alternatives were presented to respondents in 2014 questionnaire: (1) several times a day; (2) once a day; (3) 5-6 days a week; (4) 3-4 days a week; (5) 1-2 days a week; (6) less than 1 day a week; (7) never. To make the frequency of political news media use of the two data sets more comparable, each item about news media use in 2014 will be recoded into a 5-point scale (that is, scores 1 and 2 were recoded to 1, 3 and 4 to 2, 5 to 3, 6 to 4 and 7 to 5).

***Traditional mass media for political news usage.*** Three items were summed up into an index of the traditional mass media news usage: read the political content of a newspaper; watch political news on TV and listen to the political news on the radio. The value of traditional mass media news use (2014) ranges from 3 to 15. In order to make the value of the independent variable correspond to other variables, the recoded scale ranges from 1 (being active in political news exposure in three forms of traditional mass media) to 13 (no activity for political news exposure in three traditional mass media) (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.71$ ,  $M=6.56$ ,  $SD=3.52$ ). In 2004 data set, the reliability analysis of these three traditional mass media for political news use is 0.78 which indicates the internal consistency reliability of these three survey items is good. The index variable of traditional mass media for political news usage was conducted similarly in 2004 data set with value scale from 1 (being active in political news exposure in three forms of traditional mass media) to 13 (no activity for political news exposure in three traditional mass media) (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.78$ ,  $M=6.96$ ,  $SD=3.51$ ).

***Internet for political news usage.*** This variable was measured by the survey item: '*On average, how often do you use the Internet to get political news or information?*'. Similar to the operation of traditional mass media for political news, the frequency of internet use for political news in 2014 data set was recoded into a 5-point scale from daily and more (=1) to never(=5) ( $M=3.61$ ,  $SD=1.57$ ). In 2004 data set, the variable of internet use for political news was measured by the same question as 2014 with a 5-point scale from daily (=1) to never (=5) ( $M=4.51$ ,  $SD=0.99$ ).

### **Control Variables**

The control variables consist of social-demographic characteristics, political efficacy in the model. For social demographic characteristics, gender, age, and education were taken into consideration. These variables have been used as controls in numerous empirical studies, so are the political efficacy variables. Some socioeconomic characteristics also affect our focal dependent variables, for instance, household income, but the ISSP citizenship 2004 and 2014 did not contain this variable. Therefore, household income will not be included in this model. However, with age, gender, education, and political efficacy included in the model, the lack of household income variable will not be a big issue for the aim of this thesis.

***Age.*** The age variable is a continuous variable which is calculated from 18 to 93 in ISSP citizenship model 2004 and from 19 to 95 in 2014 model. To compare the age differences more

effectively, the common age component of the two models will be used in this analysis, that is, the age scale is from 19 to 93. Due to one of the purposes of this paper is to examine the differences in news media use and political participation among different age groups, *age* variable in ISSP 2014 database is recoded into five categories and its value ranging from 1 to 5: (1) respondents aged 19-35 (14%), (2) 36-45 (14%), (3) 46-65 (42%), (4) 66-75 (20%), (5) 76-93 (11%). Same measurement was conducted in ISSP 2004 database, the value of age group ranges from 1 to 5: (1) respondents aged 19-35 (19%), (2) 36-45 (19%), (3) 46-65 (42%), (4) 66-75 (12%), (5) 76-93 (8%). Through the proportion of age groups, we can see all that the age ratios of the 2004 and 2014 data sets are similar and stable.

**Gender.** The gender variable contains two categories: male (=1) and female (=2). I recoded gender into two dummy variables where 1 refers to male respondents and female as the category of reference.

**Education.** The education variable of this analysis was measured by the highest level of education completed by respondents. There are seven categories of education variables in ISSP 2004 database and six categories in ISSP 2014 database. I recoded the education variables into 6 categories ranging from 1 to 6. In ISSP 2004, the proportions of these six categories are: (1) uncompleted high school to year 10 (16%), (2) completed high school to year 10 (17%), (3) completed high school to year 12 (10%), (4) certificate or diploma (30%), (5) bachelor degree (16%), (6) postgraduate degree or postgraduate diploma (11%). And in ISSP 2014, the proportions of education categories are: (1) uncompleted high school to year 10 (4%), (2) completed high school to year 10 (20%), (3) completed high school to year 12 (8%), (4) certificate or diploma (35%), (5) bachelor degree (16%), (6) postgraduate degree or postgraduate diploma (17%). Comparing the highest education level of the participants in 2004 and 2014, it indicates that the proportion of the higher education level is increasing. The variable uncompleted high school to year 10 is the category of reference and include the other five in the regression analysis. Since the value of other variables are tapped from the negative to positive, for example, from agreement to disagreement, from active participation to never participation, to facilitate the analysis, the scale was reversed coded from high education (=1) to low education (=6).

**Political efficacy.** Political efficacy can usually be classified into internal and external efficacy. According to Morrell (2003), external efficacy is about the feeling that political institutions or

politicians are responsible for citizen's demands which are close to the responsiveness. While internal efficacy refers to the sense of personal competence to participate politically. Amnå et al. (2004) argued that "internal efficacy generally has a direct positive effect on political participation" (P.17), and many researchers have supported this argument (Fraillon, Kerr & Losito, 2010; Condon & Holleque, 2013). Since this paper will examine two different classifications of political participation, both external and internal political efficacy will be taken into consideration. With regard to measuring political efficacy, some researchers didn't distinguish the external efficacy from the internal efficacy, and some adopted a single item to represent internal efficacy (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung & Valenzuela, 2014). But the majority of the studies in recent years measured internal efficacy by summed two items that related to individual's assessment of his/her political capability. This paper stayed in line with the common measure. In ISSP data sets, four survey items are used to measure political efficacy. The respondents were asked about the extent to which they agree or disagree with the following statements: (1) People like me don't have any say about what the government does, (2) I don't think the government cares much what people like me think, (3) I feel I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing Australia, (4) I think most people in Australia are better informed about politics and government than I am. Each item has five values ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

**External efficacy.** Based on the previous studies and empirical test, the statements: 'people have no say about what government does' and 'government does not care about people's ideas' were summed up into the index of external political efficacy ranging from 2 to 10. To corresponding the measurement of other variables, the scale and value were reversed and recorded into a 9-point scale with ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree), and the higher number means less efficacy (ISSP 2004: Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.80$ ,  $M=3.99$ ,  $SD=2.14$ ; ISSP 2014: Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.74$ ,  $M=4.46$ ,  $SD=2.19$ ).

**Internal efficacy.** Internal efficacy was measured by two statements: 'respondent has good understanding of political issues' and 'most people better politically informed than the respondent'. The value of the second statement was reversed to keep corresponding with the first statement. Similar to the operation of the external political efficacy variable, an index of internal political variable also recoded into a 9-point scale, and the higher number indicates less efficacy (ISSP 2004: Cronbach's  $\alpha=.59$ ,  $M=4.77$ ,  $SD=1.09$ ; ISSP 2014: Cronbach's  $\alpha=.53$ ,  $M=4.84$ ,  $SD=1.04$ ).

## **Mediate Variable**

**Political interest.** As noted earlier, political interest is a crucial factor that affects citizen's political behavior. A lot of scholars believe that the decrease in the turnout of the younger generation is largely due to the loss of interest and distrust of the government among the younger citizens. Political interest can motivate citizen's political engagement (Holt, Shehata, & Strömböck, 2013; Prior, 2010). Most studies control for political interest when examining the effect of media use on political participation. There are some exceptions. Some studies have proved that the casual mechanism exists between the news media use and political interest. Strömbäck and Shehata (2010) suggested that "the causal and reciprocal relationships between political interest and attention to political news" (p.575). Holt et al. (2013) examined the effects of news media attention on political interest and political participation. They argued that the patterns of media use affect political interest and political participation. And more specifically, "the social media for political purposes may function as a leveler of political interest and participation (p.29). The political interest variable is measured by the survey question which both asked in ISSP 2004 and 2014 questionnaires: '*How interested would you say you personally are in politics?*' The value has a 4-point scale from very interested (=1) to not at all interested (=4).

## **4.3 Data analysis**

The paper aims to investigate the news media use on political participation. More specifically, how and to what extent that traditional mass media for political news use and internet for political news use affect two forms of political participation--institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. In order to test the hypotheses, multiple regression analyses were conducted in the following analysis.

As mentioned earlier, many empirical studies have supported that there are differences in media use and political participation between young and old citizens. To take a closer look at the changes in news media usage and political participation among age groups, first of all, I investigated the news media use, political interest, and political participation of Australian respondents among different age groups and how these variables have changed in 2004 and 2014.

Secondly, the focus is the effects of news media usage on political participation. Since news

media usage and political participation were operationalized as two variables respectively, each independent variable and dependent variables were examined in 2004 and 2014 separately. Therefore, eight separate multiple regressions were conducted. All the predictors were grouped into three blocks and entered regression consecutively. The variable in the first block was the focal independent variable. First and foremost, the focal relationship was examined in the first model. The respondents' social-demographic characteristics, consisting of age, gender, education, and political efficacy were entered as controls in the second block. The second model would detect the effects of the focal independent variable--news media usage, that is, traditional mass media for political news usage and internet for political news usage on both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation when holding the potential confounding variables constant. The mediating variable, political interest variable was entered into the last block, and the third model would provide the evidence for the mediating hypothesis since if the mediating variable really mediating between the independent variable and dependent variable, the focal relationship should be somewhat weakened when the mediator was included.

Last but not least, since we hypothesized that political interest plays as a mediator between news media usage and political participation, mediation analyses were conducted by using PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013). PROCESS is an observed variable OLS and logistic regression path analysis modeling tool which was written by Andrew F. Hayes (Hayes, 2019). The total effects, total direct effects and indirect effects of political interest were detected basing on the mediation analyses. All analyses of this paper were conducted by using SPSS 26 and PROCESS v3.4.1.

## **4.4 Method reflection**

This thesis adopts the statistical analysis method to investigate the relationship between different news media usage and different forms of political participation. Before analyzing, it is important to discuss the limitation, reliability, and validity of the methodology.

### **4.4.1 Limitations**

There are some limitations about the methodology of this thesis. First, this thesis relies on ISSP Citizenship 2004 and 2014 datasets. The net sample sizes were 1914 and 1432 respectively and the response rates were 42% and 33% which are a bit low. There also lacked the information



about the people who did not answer the survey making the background analysis impossible. This is probably adding bias to the results. Second, relying on secondary survey data, there are also some measurement limitations. For instance, only one item can be used to measure news media usage, that is, the frequency of using Television/ radio/ newspaper/ internet for political news. This item is suitable for the purpose of this study since it is not aiming at general news usage but specifically focusing on political news. But we could not tell if this is incidental media exposure or intentionally searching for news. These different intentions or occasions of political news usage might cause different directions to political interest and political participation. Chaffee and Schleuder (1986) proposed that media exposure and media attention are two different concepts. Media exposure refers to "the use of different media or media content", while media attention means "increased mental effort" (Strömbäck & Shehata, 2010, p.580). By examining both news media exposure and political news attention, Strömbäck and Shehata (2010) pointed out that the effect of news media exposure on political interest is not as strong and consistent as political news attention. Although this study focuses on the effect of new media usage on political interest and political participation, it will be more comprehensive to conclude both media exposure and media attention and make a distinction between them in future research. In addition, for measuring political interest, most studies including this survey use the single question: "*How interested would you say you are in politics?*". When people are asked about political interest, most of them might intuitively understand it as being interested in traditional political activities, such as voting, being a party member. However, younger citizens show more issue-based political interests ((Pickard, 2019). It would be more accurate to contain more items about elaborate political interest. Anyway, although this question might be biased, it is still the common use for measuring individuals' political interest.

#### **4.4.2 Reliability and validity**

To ensure the research quality, the reliability and validity of the research methodology also need to be considered. Dros (2011) addressed that "reliability is consistency of measurement" (P.106). In this study, I did reliability tests when adding several items into an index variable. The items for measuring dependent and independent variables show a relatively high internal consistency. In terms of validity, on one hand, ISSP citizenship data sets are focused on citizens' rights and obligations in a democracy, as well as political participation and media consumptions. These attributes suit well for the introduced hypotheses of this study. On the other hand, the numbers of the sample are relatively large and the sample are stratified by

Australian states and territories using population counts based on Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) Statistics, which is helpful to draw inferences of general population. Furthermore, the assumption of this study and all the operationalization of data are based on established theories and previous research, which ensures the validity of this study as well.

With the guaranteed validity and reliability, as well as the awareness of the limitations, the next section performs the data analysis and results discussion.

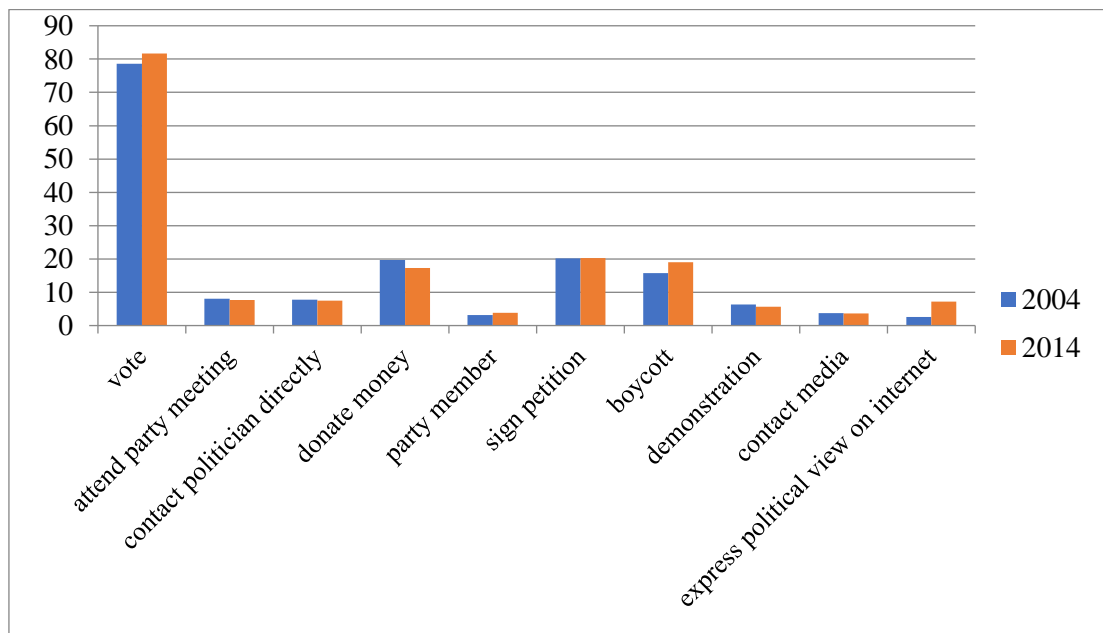
# 5. Results and analysis

According to the main objectives of this study, the findings would be roughly presented into three steps. First, by using the descriptive chart and crosstabs, the overall landscape of political participation and the age differences in media use and political participation have been displayed. Second, the results of a series of multiple regression are presented, which shed light on the relationship of different news media usage and different forms of political participation. Thirdly, four simple mediation analyses explain political interest, as one mediator, mediates the relationship between news media usage and political participation.

## 5.1 Results and analysis related to H1

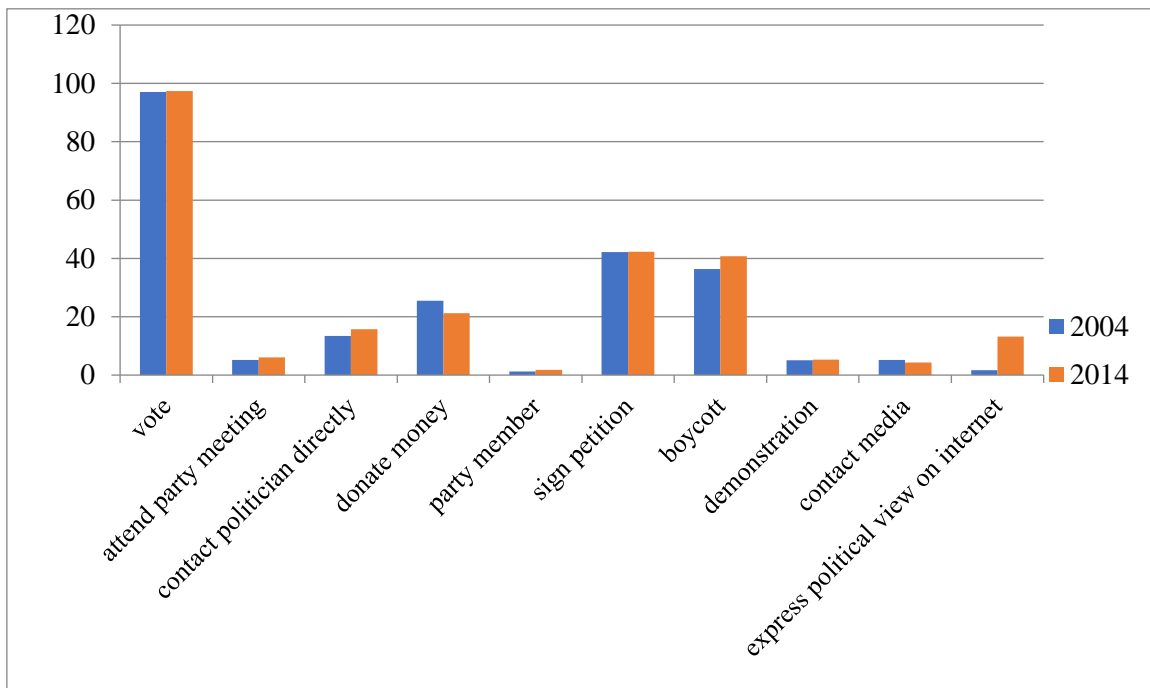
Hypothesis 1 predicted that non-institutionalized forms of political participation have increased over time. Figure 2 displays the average level of different patterns of political activities for all participating countries in 2004 and 2014 ISSP surveys, and Figure 3 shows the specific situation of Australia. The percentage number indicates the percentage of respondents who have done the activity in the last year.

**Figure 2: All political participation in 2004 and 2014**



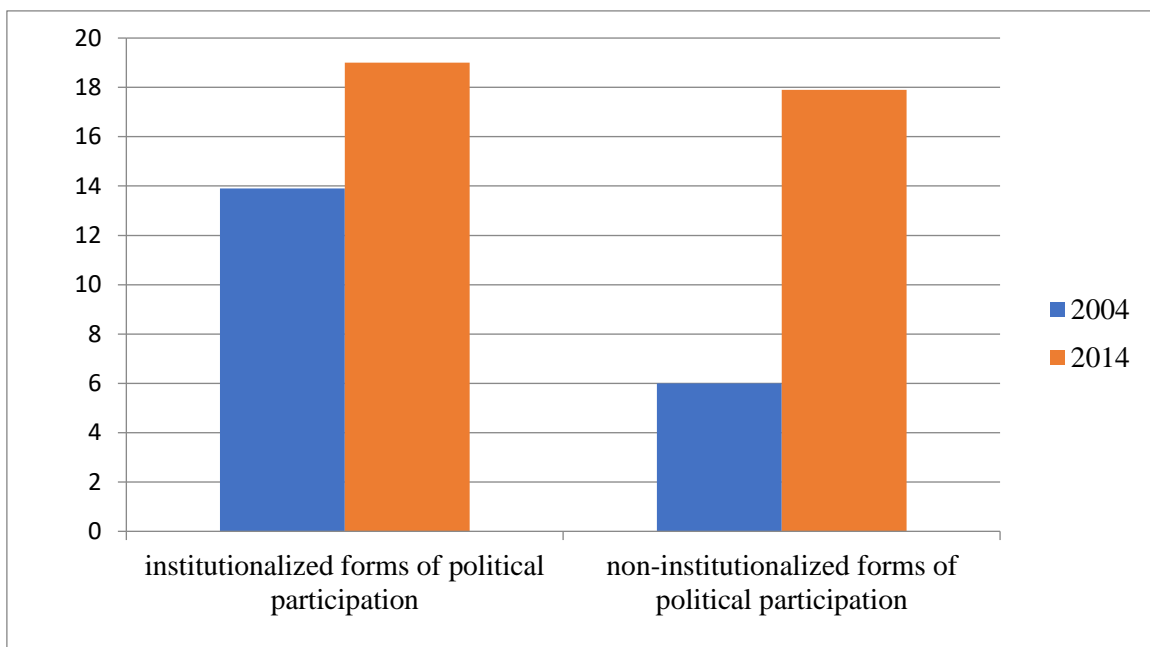
Notes: Figure entries are percentages of respondents who participated in all patterns of political activities last year. All participated countries are included. There number of participated countries in 2004 survey is 37 and 34 democracies have participated in 2014 survey. Source: ISSP Citizenship 2004 and 2014 for all participated countries.

**Figure 3: All political participation in 2004 and 2014 (Australia)**



Note: Figure entries are percentages all of respondents who participated in all patterns of political activities last year.  
 Source: ISSP Citizenship 2004 and 2014, Australia

**Figure 4: Political Participation in 2004 and 2014 (in percentage)**



Notes: The value of the index variable- institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation ranges from 1 to 6, and the larger the number indicates the respondent took part in less political activities last year. The figures present the percentage of the active participation (value 1 to 3).  
 Source: ISSP Citizenship 2004 and 2014, Australia

As can be seen in Figure 2, the institutionalized forms of political participation, such as voting, attending the meeting, being a party member, contacting a politician directly, has not declined as some scholars worried about (Putnam, 2000; Macedo, 2005). In general, for most patterns of political activities, the percentages of participation are quite stable and increase slightly over time. Two patterns--boycott and expressing political views on internet increase significantly over time comparing with other patterns of political activities. Figure 3 displayed a similar pattern in Australia. Since voting is mandatory in Australia, the voter turnout didn't show many changes in 2004 and 2014. One of the interesting findings is that regardless of all countries participating in surveys or the single case of Australia, the activity, donating money showed the decline tendency over time. It is also worth noting that expressing political views on internet increased significantly over time in Australia. The result is consistent with the prior reviewed literature. Figure 2 and Figure 3 display the overall landscape of political participation in participating democracies and Australia. Furthermore, Figure 4 examined the percentage of active participation of institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation using the additive variables. The additive variable indicates that both forms of political participation have increased over time, but the growth of the non-institutionalized forms of political participation is more conspicuous, from 6% in 2004 to 18% in 2014. Consequently, hypothesis 1: The non-institutionalized forms of political participation have increased in 2014 compared to 2004, is supported.

## **5.2 Results and analysis related to H2 and H3**

Figure 2 provides a comprehensive picture of participating in political activities by all involved countries in 2004 and 2014 ISSP surveys. Figure 3 and Figure 4 displays a specific picture of political participation in Australia. In order to take a closer look at the situation of political participation and political interest among the different age groups in Australia, by using crosstabs, the results are presented in the following Table:

**Table 2: Political interest and political participation by age (in percentage)**

	19—35 years		36—45 years		46—65 years		66—75 years		76—93 years	
	2004	2014	2004	2014	2004	2014	2004	2014	2004	2014
<b>Political interest</b>	7.2	9.2	8.4	9.0	12.8	14.5	15.1	23.8	26.8	25.8
<i>--percentage of very interested</i>										
<b>Institutionalized forms of political participation</b>										
<i>-- at least once during last year</i>										
Vote	95.3	92.3	98.1	98.4	98.5	97.7	99.0	99.0	97.1	98.9
Attend political meeting	5.0	8.2	6.6	5.5	5.3	5.7	3.5	5.7	1.4	8.0
Contact a politician	7.6	15.9	14.4	11.4	16.4	15.9	13.8	19.7	8.8	15.3
Donate money	34.4	29.9	26.7	28.1	25.3	19.3	16.3	16.3	11.8	9.2
Party member	2.6	3.8	2.0	3.9	4.8	4.1	9.5	7.3	16.4	9.5
<b>Non-institutionalized forms of political participation</b>										
<i>-- at least once during last year</i>										
Sign a petition	45.7	54.8	47.6	41.3	42.4	44.0	32.7	35.4	24.3	35.2
Take part in demonstration	5.9	9.2	7.3	5.1	5.5	5.0	1.4	4.0	0	1.1
Boycott	40.8	48.4	43.7	49	38.1	41.5	22.7	33.3	7.4	19.0
Contact media	5.8	2.7	6.4	3.1	5.0	5.7	4.3	4.3	1.5	2.3
Express political views on internet	4.4	26.4	1.6	16.3	0.8	13.3	0	7.0	1.6	2.4
N (unweighted)	348	189	520	263	627	485	304	317	73	97

Notes: Total N= 1351 in ISSP 2004 and Total N=1872 in ISSP 2014  
Source: ISSP Citizenship 2004 and 2014, Australia

Holt et al. (2013) examined the age differences in attention to political news in traditional mass media and social media in Sweden, and argued that "younger generation are more frequently use social media for political purpose while older citizens turn their attention to traditional media for political news" (p.27). Followed this approach, this paper examined a similar topic in Australia, and the findings of this paper are consistent with their conclusions.

Before looking into the news media usage among different age groups, Table 2 summarized the age differences in political interest and political participation, which gave more pieces for the

whole picture of political participation in Australia. The statistical data of Table 2 presents a similar patterns as previous literature. For example, political interest -- measurement focus on the percentage of respondents who are very interested in politics -- generally increases with age. This trend is consistent in 2004 and 2014, except in 2014, the age group 36-45 is slightly lower than the age group 19-35, merely 0.2%.

As for institutionalized forms of political participation, there is no consistent trend cross all age groups, but in general, except donating money, other political activities are more common during the older groups, especially in the age group 46-65. It is worth noting that, voting turnout and being a party member are two most representative patterns of institutionalized participation. Even the voting turnout is relatively stable in Australia, it still can be seen that the turnout of the middle-aged group is a little bit higher than the younger citizens. As for being a party member, although in 2004, the younger age group (19-35) is slightly higher than the age group 35-45, but the data of 2014 shows that being a party member increases with age. Comparing the data over time, donating money is the only political activity that the 2014 data for each age group is lower than the 2004 data, which indicates that this pattern of political activity has declined overall. And this is consistent with what it's shown in Figure 3. But the interesting finding is that the percentage of engaging in donating money is higher among younger citizens than among the older citizens. Regarding the non-institutionalized forms of political participation, the percentage of signing a petition, taking part in demonstration, expressing political views on internet decline from the youngest group to the oldest group in 2014. This indicates that these three political activities are most common among the younger citizens compared to the older citizens in Australia. Compared to the 2004 and 2014 data, the percentage of expressing political views on internet has increased by 22% in younger citizens (19-35 years). This is also the largest increase in the proportion of all the political activities that young citizens participated in.

Table 2 indicates that there is no linear relationship between the age and political interest and most political activities, but curve relationship. It is important to mention that most studies focused on the age scale between 18 and 75 to avoid the declining trend in respondents' late seventies and more. In order to show more comprehensive views of political interest, political participation, and news media usage among age groups, this study takes the age group 76-93 into consideration. Based on Table 2, we can say that in general, younger citizens prefer to

engage in non-institutionalized forms of political participation compared to the older citizens, and vice versa.

Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3 predicted that younger citizens use internet for political news more often than older citizens, while old citizens use traditional mass media for political news more often than younger citizens. To verify these two Hypotheses, Table 3 displays using different media for political news usage among different age groups in Australia.

**Table 3: Traditional mass media for news and internet news use by age (in percentage)**

	19—35 years		36—45 years		46—65 years		66—75 years		76—93 years	
	2004	2014	2004	2014	2004	2014	2004	2014	2004	2014
<b>Traditional mass media for political news usage</b>										
<i>--percentage of daily and more often</i>										
Television political news use	18.6	20.8	28.7	31.3	40.6	40.9	45.2	52.6	61.8	56.3
Newspaper political news use	6.8	13.0	11.2	16.4	17.5	24.4	22.6	30.0	28.6	31.8
Radio political news use	9.4	11.5	17.1	23.6	25.9	27.2	24.3	30.6	30.9	31.8
<b>Internet political news usage</b>										
<i>-- percentage of daily and more often</i>										
	4.5	27.7	4.7	24.8	2.7	19.3	2.2	10.6	0	8.6
N (unweighted)	348	189	520	263	627	485	304	317	73	97

Note: Total N= 1351 in ISSP 2004 and Total N=1872 in ISSP 2014.

Source: ISSP Citizenship 2004 and 2014, Australia

As can be seen in Table 3, unlike the age differences in political participation, every medium for political news usage shows a clear and consistent trend. That is, watching television for political news, reading newspaper for political news and listening radio for political news, all these three traditional mass media for political news usage displays an increasing trend with age, whether in 2004 or 2014. On the contrary, the percentage of using internet for political news shows a decline with age. Furthermore, among the youngest group, using the different mediums for political news shows different increases over time, such as, 23.2% on internet for political news usage, 2.2% in TV political news usage, 6.2% in newspaper political news usage,



and 2.1% in radio political news usage. It is an obvious conclusion that using the different mediums for political news in the youngest group, the internet for political news usage increases the most over time. As expected, younger citizens use the internet for political news usage more often than older citizens, and on the other hand, old citizens are more willing to use traditional mass media for political news than younger citizens. Therefore, hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 3 are supported.

### **5.3 Results and analysis related to H4 to H7**

After obtaining the overall picture of the relationship between news media usage and political participation in Australia, the next step is to examine the effect of traditional mass media and internet for political news usage on institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. To test Hypothesis 4 to Hypothesis 7, several multiple regression analyses were conducted, and the relevant results were presented in this section.

First, the descriptive statistics of all variables based on ISSP Citizenship 2014 data set are presented in Table 4. A similar table about all variables' descriptive statistics from ISSP Citizenship 2004 was summarized in Appendix B. The mean value expresses the average of the original unit, and it is the measure of the center while the standard deviation is the measure of the spread. For instance, the mean value of institutionalized forms of political participation is 4.53 (SD=0.83), which means that on average, the respondents have taken part in two institutionalized forms of political activities in the last year. The mean value of the age indicates that the average age of the sample is 56. The sample's average level of education is certificate or diploma. As for the frequency of internet usage for political news, the mean value indicates that on average, the frequency of respondents using internet for political news is one or two days a week.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics**

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dependent variables		
Institutionalized forms of political participation (ordinal: 1-6)	4.53	0.83
Non-institutionalized forms of political participation (ordinal: 1-6)	4.93	1.13
Independent variables		
Traditional media for political news usage (ordinal: 1-13)	6.56	3.52
Internet for political news usage (ordinal: 1-5)	3.61	1.57
Control variables		
Age (continuous: 19-93)	56.00	16.50
Gender (nominal: male, 46%; female, 54%)	1.54	0.50
Level of education (ordinal: 1-6)	3.10	1.45
External efficacy (ordinal:1-9)	5.54	2.19
Internal efficacy (ordinal:1-9)	3.56	1.53
Mediating variable		
Political interest (ordinal: 1-4)	2.32	0.85

Source: ISSP Citizenship 2014, Australia

The correlation analysis is the premise of regression analysis and it helps to predict the association between variables. Generally, Pearson's correlation coefficients are used to measure the direction and strength of the linear relationship. Table 5 displays the correlation between the variables. Through the correlation matrix, we can tell that traditional mass media for political news has a positive relationship with institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation (Pearson's  $r= 0.227$  and  $=0.187$  respectively). As expected, the internet for political news usage also positively correlates with the institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation (Pearson's  $r= 0.258$  and  $=0.365$  respectively). In sum then, the focal relationship is supported. Furthermore, political interest displays positive relationship with two forms of political participation and two types of news media

usage as well. A similar pattern was found based on ISSP Citizenship 2004 data set, detailed information sees Appendix C.

**Table 5: Correlation Matrix**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Institutionalized participation	1									
2 Non-institutionalized participation	.501**	1								
3 Traditional news media usage	.227**	.187**	1							
4 Internet news usage	.258**	.365**	.391**	1						
5 Political interest	.283**	.240**	.570**	.315**	1					
6 Age	.005	.178**	-.209**	.294**	-.226**	1				
7 Gender	.066*	-.051	.130**	.052	.123**	-.070**	1			
8 Education level	.174**	.219**	.160**	.330**	.073**	.271**	-.046	1		
9 External efficacy	.107**	.067*	.230**	.184**	.188**	-.023	.002	.187**	1	
10 Internal efficacy	.222**	.223**	.421**	.291**	.546**	-.159**	.121**	.102**	.129**	1

Comments: Bivariate Correlation, \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \* p<0.05

Source: ISSP Citizenship 2014

To further investigate the relationship of news media usage and political participation, a series of multiple regression analyses were conducted. Each multiple regression contains three models. The first model exhibits the relationship between the focal independent variable and the focal dependent variable. In model 2, the control variables (social demographics and political efficacy) are entered to rule out spuriousness. The mediating variable, political interest variable is entered into the last model, and the third model not only further tests the focal relationship, but also provides the evidence for the following mediating hypothesis of this

study. Furthermore, to examine the development of the relationship between news media usage and political participation, the data sets of 2004 and 2014 will be tested and compared.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that using traditional mass media for political news would have positive effects on both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. Therefore, Table 6 and Table 7 display the effects of using traditional media for political news on two forms of political participation. The analyses are based on two data sets: ISSP Citizenship 2004 and 2014.

**Table 6: Effects of traditional mass media for political news on two forms of political participation (2014)**

	Institutionalized forms of political participation			Non-institutionalized forms of political participation		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Traditional mass media for political news usage</b>	.055*** (.007)	.031*** (.008)	.013*** (.009)	.057*** (.010)	.041*** (.011)	.019*** (.012)
Age		.000 (.002)	.001 (.002)		.013*** (.002)	.014*** (.002)
Gender (ref=female)		-.011 (.050)	-.013 (.050)		.203** (.066)	.198** (.065)
Education level		.087*** (.019)	.089*** (.019)		.098*** (.025)	.101*** (.024)
External efficacy		.013 (.009)	.009 (.012)		-.004 (.015)	-.009 (.015)
Internal efficacy		.085*** (.018)	.042* (.020)		.148*** (.024)	.099*** (.026)
Political interest			.207*** (.039)			.242*** (.051)
<b>Intercept</b>	4.171	3.692	3.457	4.533	3.037	2.755
<b>N</b>			1038			1038
<b>R<sup>2</sup>change</b>		.040	.023		.092	.017
<b>AdjustedR<sup>2</sup></b>	.053	.093	.116	.030	.122	.139

Note: Estimates are unstandardized coefficients and standard errors. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \* p<0.05

Source: ISSP Citizenship 2014, Australia

**Table 7: Effects of traditional mass media for political news on two forms of political participation (2004)**

	Institutionalized forms of political participation			Non-institutionalized forms of political participation		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Traditional mass media for political news usage</b>	.051*** (.006)	.041*** (.007)	.031*** (.008)	.051*** (.008)	.051*** (.008)	.039*** (.009)
Age		.002 (.001)	.002 (.001)		.011*** (.002)	.011*** (.002)
Gender (ref=female)		.134** (.042)	.135*** (.042)		.154** (.051)	.155** (.051)
Education level		.063*** (.015)	.063*** (.015)		.080*** (.018)	.080*** (.018)
External efficacy		.005 (.010)	.003 (.010)		-.013 (.012)	-.016 (.012)
Internal efficacy		.048** (.016)	.033 (.017)		.040* (.020)	.020 (.021)
Political interest			.106** (.033)			.136*** (.041)
<b>Intercept</b>	4.163	3.670	3.531	4.701	3.749	3.570
<b>Number</b>			1327			1327
<b>R<sup>2</sup>chang</b>		.031	.006		.070	.007
<b>AdjstedR<sup>2</sup></b>	.050	.081	.087	.032	.102	.109

Note: Estimates are unstandardized coefficients and standard errors. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \* p<0.05

Source: ISSP Citizenship 2004, Australia

***Effects of traditional mass media for political news usage on institutionalized forms of political participation***

As seen in Table 6, model 1 under the category of institutionalized forms of political participation, the b-coefficient is 0.055, which means, for every one-unit increases in the frequency of traditional mass media for political news usage, individual's participation in institutionalized forms of political participation increases 0.055 on the 1-6 scale. This b value indicates that there are positive but relatively weak effects of traditional mass media for

political news usage on the institutionalized forms of political participation. After adding the control variables and mediating variable, the coefficient of focal independent variable--traditional mass media for political news usage gradually decreases. On the contrary, the R-square increases as the controls and mediator are added. R-square is the percentage of variation in dependent variable explained by the model. As seen in model 1, the R-squared is 0.053, which means 5% of the variation in individual's participation in institutionalized political activities is explained by the frequency of traditional mass media for political news usage. In prediction of institutionalized forms of political participation, control variables included in this study (social demographics and political efficacy) explained 4% ( $\Delta R^2=.04$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Some controls exerted significant effects on institutionalized forms of political participation, such as the level of education and internal efficacy, while others, such as age and external efficacy, are not statistically significant in both data sets 2004 and 2014. 12% of the variation in institutionalized forms of political participation is explained by the model and the political interest explains 2.3% of the total variance ( $\Delta R^2=.04$ ,  $p < .001$ ). As adding more variables in the regression analysis, the coefficient of determination is increasing which reflects an increasing substantial effect and indicates these added variables help to explain the variables. A similar pattern of results was found in 2004 ISSP Citizenship data set. The effects of traditional mass media for political news usage on the institutionalized forms of political participation are quite stable from 2004 to 2014 by the data sets. An interesting finding is that compared with the results of 2004, the effects of political interest has a greater impact on institutionalized forms of political participation in 2014.

### ***Effects of traditional mass media for political news usage on non-institutionalized forms of political participation***

In general, the impact of traditional mass media for political news usage on non-institutionalized forms of political participation is quite similar to its impact on institutionalized forms of political participation. With the entry of controls and mediator, the regression coefficient of traditional mass media for political news usage has decreased ( from .057 to .019 in 2014 and from .051 to .039 in 2004,  $p < .001$ ), but the  $R^2$  has increased ( from .03 to .139 in 2014 and from .032 to .109 in 2004,  $p < .001$ ). This indicated that when controlling for the other variables, the effects of traditional mass media for political news usage on non-institutionalized

forms of political participation still exist and are statistically significant. As can be seen, education and political interest show consistent positive association with non-institutionalized form of political participation. No significant effects are found for external efficacy, which is in line with its effects on institutionalized forms of political participation. However, although age and gender are not statistically significant in predicting institutionalized forms of political participation (except for age in 2004), they are positively associated with non-institutionalized forms of political participation. In other words, male respondents tend to engage in more non-institutionalized forms of political participation than female respondents. And the younger people are more likely to take part in non-institutionalized forms of political participation, which also in line with the results of Table 2. In sum then, Hypothesis 4, stating that using traditional mass media for political news has a positive effect on both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation, is confirmed.

After testing the effects of traditional mass media for political news, Tables 8 and 9 summarized the effects of using internet for political news on both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. The analyses are also based on two data sets: ISSP Citizenship 2004 and 2014.

**Table 8: Effects of internet for political news on two forms of political participation (2014)**

	Institutionalized forms of political participation			Non-institutionalized forms of political participation		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Internet for political news usage</b>	.133*** (.016)	.099*** (.018)	.076*** (.018)	.252*** (.020)	.185*** (.023)	.161*** (.023)
Age		-.004* (.002)	-.002 (.002)		.006** (.002)	.008*** (.002)
Gender (ref=female)		-.020 (.049)	-.016 (.049)		.203** (.063)	.205*** (.063)
Education level		.074*** (.019)	.074*** (.019)		.071** (.024)	.072** (.024)
External efficacy		.014 (.011)	.008 (.011)		-.008 (.015)	-.014 (.015)
Internal efficacy		.075*** (.018)	.031 (.020)		.118*** (.023)	.073** (.025)
Political interest			.182*** (.037)			.190*** (.047)
<b>Intercept</b>	4.060	3.850	3.5833	4.015	3.250	2.960
<b>Number</b>			1052			1052
<b>R<sup>2</sup>change</b>		.040	.020		.035	.012
<b>AdjustedR<sup>2</sup></b>	.064	.104	.124	.124	.159	.171

Note: Estimates are unstandardized coefficients and standard errors. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \* p<0.05

Source: ISSP Citizenship 2014, Australia



**Table 9: Effects of internet for political news on two forms of political participation (2004)**

	Institutionalized forms of political participation			Non-institutionalized forms of political participation		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Internet for political news usage</b>	.125*** (.021)	.082*** (.022)	.062*** (.022)	.150*** (.025)	.078** (.026)	.051*** (.026)
Age		-.001 (.001)	.001 (.001)		.008*** (.002)	.010*** (.002)
Gender (ref=female)		.135** (.043)	.137*** (.042)		.150** (.052)	.152** (.052)
Education level		.072*** (.015)	.069*** (.015)		.093*** (.019)	.090*** (.018)
External efficacy		.006 (.010)	.002 (.010)		-.009 (.012)	-.014 (.012)
Internal efficacy		.074*** (.015)	.043** (.017)		.077*** (.019)	.037 (.020)
Political interest			.144*** (.031)			.194*** (.038)
<b>Intercept</b>	3.960	3.573	3.391	4.389	3.699	3.456
<b>Number</b>			1333			1333
<b>R<sup>2</sup>change</b>		.043	.015		.061	.017
<b>AdjustedR<sup>2</sup></b>	.026	.069	.084	.025	.086	.103

Note: Estimates are unstandardized coefficients and standard errors. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \* p<0.05

Source: ISSP Citizenship 2004, Australia

***Effects of internet for political news usage on institutionalized forms of political participation***

Hypothesis 5 predicted that using internet for political news has a positive effect on both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. Regression analyses summarized in Table 8 and Table 9 supported Hypothesis 5. As can be seen in Table 8, model 1 indicates that using internet for political news positively predicts for the institutionalized

forms of political participation. Every increase of one unit in the frequency of internet for political news usage leads to an increase of 0.133 in respondents' participation in institutionalized forms of political activities. After adding the control and mediating variables, in model 3, the coefficient of internet for political news usage decreases to 0.76. It shows that there is still a significant positive relationship between the internet for political news usage and institutionalized forms of political participation. Moreover, with regard to R-square, without other factors, the frequency of internet for political news usage accounts for approximately 6% of the variance in institutionalized forms of political participation. As for all controls in model 2, only explains 4% of the total variance ( $\Delta R^2=.04$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Model 3 accounts for approximately 12% of the variance in institutionalized forms of political participation and political interest explains 2% of the total variance. A similar pattern is presented based on the 2004 data set. When looking at Table 9, the model 3 under the category of institutionalized forms of political participation indicates that, when controlling for other variables, the coefficient of internet for political usage decreases to .062, and 5% of the variation in institutionalized political activities is explained by model 3. Comparing the results of the 2004 data and 2014 data, we find that age and external efficacy are not statistically significant, which is completely the same as they displayed in Table 6 and Table 7. Similarly, education and political interest demonstrate a significantly positive association with institutionalized forms of political participation.

### ***Effects of internet for political news usage on non-institutionalized forms of political participation***

As expected, the results of regression analyses by 2004 and 2014 data sets confirmed that the frequency of using internet for political news positively predicts for the non-institutionalized forms of political participation as well. When examining the regression analysis by the 2014 data, Table 8 displays that in model 1, every one unite increases in the frequency of using internet for political news, the participation in non-institutionalized forms of political participation increases in .252 on the 1 to 6 scale. And the frequency of using internet for political news explains about 12% of the variance in non-institutionalized forms of political participation. In model two, after adding control variables, the coefficient of internet for political news usage decreases to .185. Moreover, all the control variables in this study account

for 3.5% of the variance in participating in non-institutionalized political activities ( $\Delta R^2=.035$ ,  $p < .001$ ). And model 3 explains approximately 17% of the variance in non-institutionalized forms of political participation, of which political interest accounts for only 1% of the total variance ( $\Delta R^2=.012$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The result of 2004 in Table 9 is similar to that of Table 8. The frequency of internet for political news usage is also positively associated with participation in non-institutionalized political activities. Among the controls, age, gender, education, and political interest indicate consistently positive associations with non-institutionalized forms of political participation, both in 2004 and 2014 data set analyses. In other words, the younger the respondents, the more they are likely to engage in non-institutionalized forms of political participation. And this phenomenon was not found in institutionalized forms of political participation. As for gender, it indicates that men are more often engaged in non-institutionalized forms of political participation than women. Like prior studies have concluded, the higher the education level, the more participation in political activities. The same is true of political interest.

In sum, based on the summarized results of regression analyses by the 2004 and 2014 data sets, Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 5, stating that using traditional mass media and internet for political news have positive effects on both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation, are confirmed.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that using traditional mass media for political news is a stronger predictor of institutionalized forms of participation compared to the non-institutionalized forms of political participation. As can be seen in Table 6, when holding all the controls in constant, the coefficients are .013 and .019 respectively, which indicates that the traditional mass media for political news usage is associated slightly stronger with non-institutionalized forms of political participation. Comparing the predictive power of two model 3 in Table 6, 14% of variance of non-institutionalized forms of political participation can be explained while approximately 12% of variance of institutionalized forms of political participation can be explained. As can be seen in Table 7, comparing the predicting power of traditional mass media for political news usage by the data 2004, the results are in line with the results of 2014 data analyses. That is, higher amounts of explained variance are shown for non-institutionalized forms of political participation (11% for the variance in non-institutionalized political participation and 9% for the variance in institutionalized political participation). Take

as a whole, the results of regression analyses by the data 2004 and 2014 indicates that using traditional mass media for political news is a stronger predictor of non-institutionalized forms of political participation comparing with the institutionalized forms of political participation. The result is out of expectation, and Hypothesis 6 is not supported.

Hypothesis 7, stating that using internet for political news is a stronger predictor of non-institutionalized forms of participation compared to the institutionalized forms of political participation, is supported by the results of the test. Take the results of analyses by the data 2014 as an example, when there is no other potential confounding, using internet for political news accounts for 6% of variance in institutionalized forms of political participation and 12% of variance in non-institutionalized forms of political participation. When all the controls in this study are included, comparing the predictive power of internet for political news usage, higher amounts of explained variance are shown for non-institutionalized forms of political participation (17% for the variance in non-institutionalized political participation and 12% for the variance in institutionalized political participation). A similar pattern can be found in Table 8, the results of analyses by the data 2004. Therefore, we can get the conclusion that using internet for political news is a stronger predictor of non-institutionalized forms of political participation comparing with the institutionalized forms of political participation, and Hypothesis 7 is confirmed.

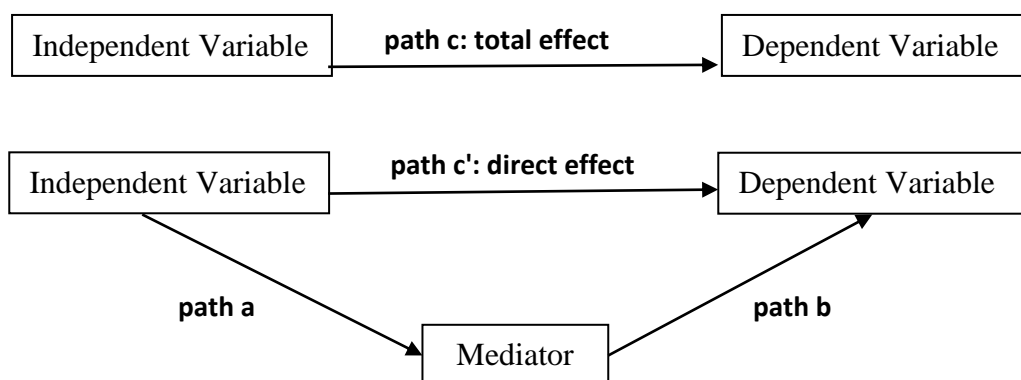
Furthermore, by analyzing two data sets (ISSP Citizenship 2004 and 2014), it is helpful for exploring and understanding the social changes during this decade and comparing these changes. It is worth noting that, the effects of traditional mass media for political news usage on both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation are relatively stable over time. Using internet for political news yields more weight on both forms of political participation in general, and more increasing effects on non-institutionalized forms of political participation particularly. There are some interesting findings as well. For instance, education level is still an important predictor of political participation, both in 2004 and in 2014 in Australia. While age is only significantly related to non-institutionalized forms of political participation. As for gender, it was found to be significantly and positively related to institutionalized forms of political participation by the data 2004, which indicates that men took part in more institutionalized political activities than women did. However, in the results of 2014 data analyses, gender is not statistically significant, which means, in 2014, gender does not significantly predict the institutionalized forms of political participation.

### 5.3 Results and analysis related to H8 and H9

#### Simple Mediation Analyses

At last, the results of mediation analyses were presented. In this section, this paper focuses on the ISSP 2014 data set. As discussed previously, research have supported that there is a causal mechanism from news media usage to political interest. Based on the theoretical and empirical findings, H8 and H9 were proposed. To test the hypotheses, four simple mediation analyses using PROCESS were conducted. The total effect, direct effect, and indirect effect of political interest were detected from the mediation analyses. As Figure 5: conceptual diagram displays, *path a* examines the effect of independent variable on the mediator. The *path b* measures the effects of the mediator on the dependent variable. And the direct relationship which is characterized as *path c'*, measures the effects of the independent variable on dependent variable when included the mediator. The total effect which is characterized as *path c* measures the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable without the mediator (Kenny, 2018). The indirect effect is estimated as the product of *a times b*, and also equals to *c minus c'*. MacKinnon et al. (2007) argued that the significance of the indirect effect indicates a successful mediation. If the coefficient for *path c'* is not significant, we claimed that the mediator fully mediates the independent variable and dependent variable. Most time in practice, the direct effect gets weaker than total effect but not disappear, which is called partial mediation. Moreover, to confirm the significance of the indirect effect, all the following mediation analyses have conducted the bootstrap test. The number of the bootstrap sample is 5,000 and we could assume that the larger number of bootstraps, the more accurate the confidence interval would be.

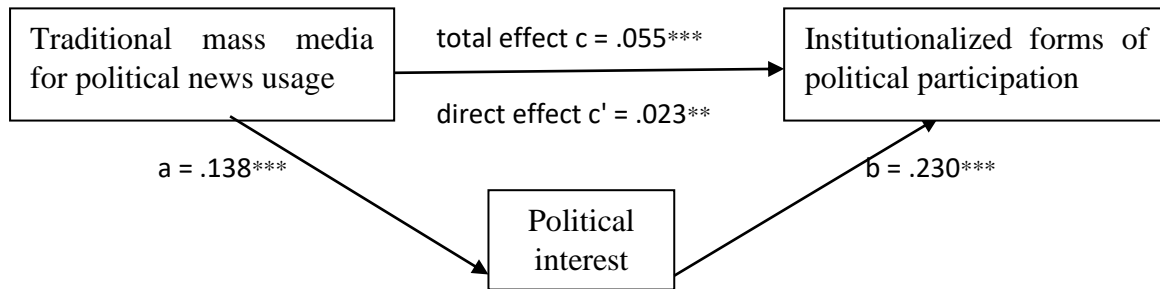
**Figure 5: Conceptual diagram**



Source: Adopted from David Kenny's website at <http://davidakenny.net/cm/mediate.htm>.

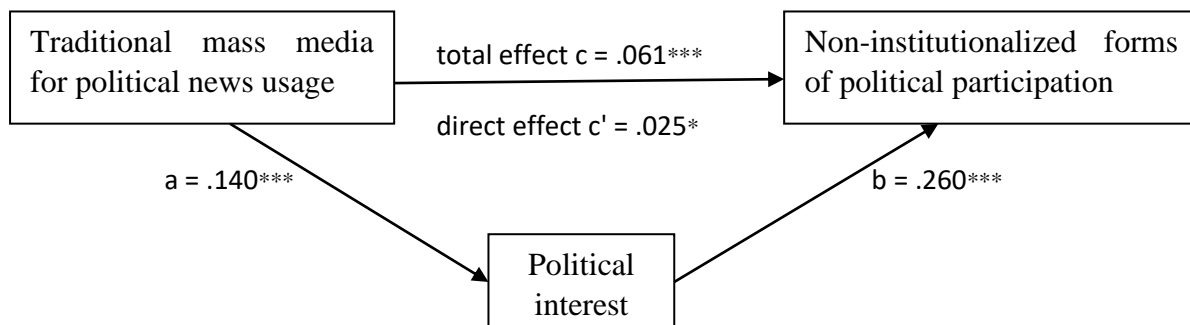
*Mediation analysis of effects of political interest on the relationship between using traditional mass media for political news and two patterns of political participation*

**Figure 6: Mediation analysis 1**



Note: Mediation analysis of the effects of political interest on the relationship between traditional mass media for political news usage and institutionalized forms of political participation.  
 \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \* p<0.05

**Figure 7: Mediation analysis 2**



Note: Mediation analysis of the effects of political interest on the relationship between traditional mass media for political news usage and non-institutionalized forms of political participation.  
 \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \* p<0.05

Figure 6 and Figure 7 displayed the mediation analyses of the effects of political interest on the relationship between the traditional mass media for political news usage and institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. As Figure 6 demonstrated, the coefficient for the *path a* is 0.138 ( $p < .001$ ), which indicates that traditional mass media for

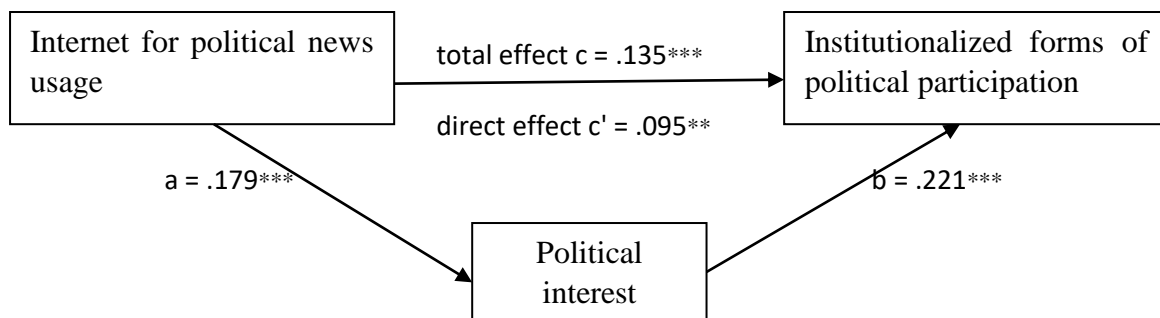
political news usage is significantly and positively related to political interest. The effect of political interest on institutionalized forms of political participation -- *path b*, is 0.230 ( $p < .001$ ), which is significant as well. The direct effects, that is, the coefficient for *path c'* is 0.023 ( $P < .01$ ). The total effects of traditional mass media for political news usage on institutionalized forms of political participation is 0.055 ( $p < .001$ ). Comparing with the total effect, the direct effect is weakened. The results confirmed political interest partially mediated the relationship between traditional mass media for political news usage and institutionalized forms of political participation. The indirect effects of traditional mass media for political news usage is 0.032. None of the Bootstrap intervals include zero (LL: Lower Limit=0.021 and UL: Upper Limit=0.043), therefore, the indirect effect is significant as well. Furthermore, indirect effect divided total effect and multiple with 100 equals to 58 ( $0.032/0.055*100 = 58.1$ ), which indicates that the traditional mass media for political news usage accounts for 42% of the outcome of the institutionalized forms of political participation and 58% is managed through the mediator - political interest.

As Figure 7 displayed, the coefficient for *path a* is 0.14 ( $p < .001$ ), which is significant. The *path b* is significant as well with the coefficient 0.26 ( $p < .001$ ). The *path c'*, that is, the direct effect is 0.025 and the indirect effect is 0.036. Moreover, the bootstrapping indicates that the confidence interval did not include zero (from 0.0227 to 0.0602), which indicates the indirect effect was significant. Under these circumstances, the direct effect (0.036) is weaker than the total effect (0.061), which indicates partial mediation exists between the traditional mass media for political news usage and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. To express the effect in percentage, the indirect effect of traditional mass media for political usage through political interest on non-institutionalized forms of political participation is 59% ( $0.036/0.061*100=59.0$ ), whereas the direct effect represents 41%.

When looking at the results of these two simple mediation analyses (Figure 6 and Figure 7), hypothesis 8 is supported: political interest plays as a mediator on the relationship between the traditional mass media for political news usage and institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation.

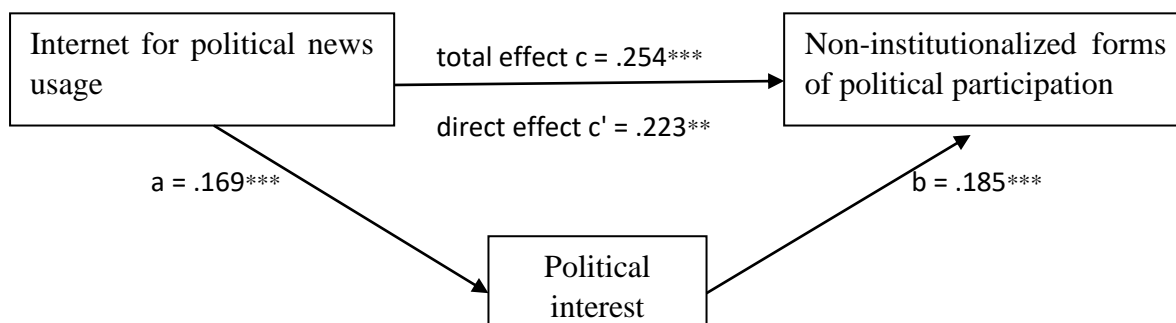
*Mediation analyses of the effects of political interest on the relationship between using internet for political news and two patterns of political participation*

**Figure 8: Mediation analysis 3**



Note: Mediation analysis of the effects of political interest on the relationship between internet for political news usage and institutionalized forms of political participation.  
 \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \* p<0.05

**Figure 9: Mediation analysis 4**



Note: Mediation analysis of the effects of political interest on the relationship between internet for political news usage and non-institutionalized forms of political participation.  
 \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \* p<0.05

Figure 8 and Figure 9 displayed the simple mediation analyses of the effects of political interest on the relationship between the internet for political news usage and institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. As can be seen in Figure 8, the coefficients for



*path a* and *path b* are 0.179 and 0.221, both of them are statistically significant. The *path c* is significant and the coefficient for total effect is 0.135. The direct effect is 0.095 and the *path c'* is significant as well. The *path c'* gets weakened comparing with path c. Moreover, the indirect effect is 0.04. Based on 5,000 bootstrap samples, the confidence interval is entirely above the zero (from 0.283 to 0.524), which indicates that the indirect effect is statistically significant. Therefore, Figure 8 indicates that internet for political news usage is indirectly related to institutionalized forms of political participation through its relationship with political interest. Furthermore, the direct effect of internet for political news usage represents 30% of the total effect, whereas the indirect effect via political interest is 70% ( $0.04/0.135*100=29.6$ ).

As Figure 9 demonstrated, the effect of internet for political news usage on political interest is 0.169, and the *path a* is statistically significant. The *path b* is significant, and the coefficient is 0.185. The total effect and direct effect are 0.254 and 0.223 respectively and both are statistically significant. As for the indirect effect, none of the confidence interval includes zero (from 0.0187 to 0.0443), and the mediation effect was 0.031, which indicated that the mediation effect is claimed and is statistically significant. This mediation analyses indicated that internet for political news usage is indirectly related to non-institutionalized forms of political participation through the mediating variable - political interest. To express in percentage ( $0.031/0.254*100 = 12.2$ ), using internet for political news usage accounts for the majority of the outcome of the non-institutionalized forms of political participation (88%) and 12% is managed through the mediator - political interest. The results of these two mediation analyses are in line with hypothesis 9, that is, the political interest mediated the relationship of internet for political news usage and non-institutionalized form of political participation.

In sum then, these four simple mediation analyses examined the process that underlying the relationship between different news media usage and different forms of political participation through the mediator, political interest. Furthermore, the direct and indirect effect are identified and explained as well. The findings supported Hypothesis 8 and Hypothesis 9.

## 6. Conclusion and Discussion

The final section of this study will conclude the findings, discuss the limitation of this study, and thereafter, propose suggestions for future research on this topic.

### 6.1 Summary of the findings

To reiterate, the objectives of this study are to investigate (a) the age differences in news media usage and (b) the effects of using different media for political news on different political participation and (c) whether the political interest plays as a mediator between different media for political news usage on different forms of political participation. Nine hypotheses are proposed based on established research. By adopting multiple regression analyses and simple mediation analyses, all the hypotheses are supported except H6.

As mentioned in the introduction: Some researchers are concerned about the decline of political participation while others argue that the wide-spreading use of internet has boomed many new forms of political participation which contribute to expanding the scope of political participation. Before examining the main objectives of this study, an overall picture of political participation is presented first, and the results indicated that political participation did not decline in Australian. Both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation increased in 2014 in general, and non-institutionalized forms of political participation have increased more in particular. These findings confirmed the first hypothesis that non-institutionalized forms of political participation increased in 2014 compared to 2004 in Australia, which is in line with other democracies. It is worth noting that even in Australia, as a country with mandatory voting and relatively stable turnout rate, the percentage of voting and being a party membership in 2014 are still lower than that in 2004. However, the overall performance of institutionalized forms of political participation is still getting increased.

Hypothesis 2 and 3 were proposed based on the UGT theory and prior research. Following a similar approach as Holt et al. (2013), I examine the age differences in traditional mass media and the internet. The results answered the first research question and supported hypotheses 2 and 3. Young citizens are more inclined to use internet for political news and old citizens use

traditional mass media for political news more often. Media is a crucial information source, especially for acquiring political news and public affairs. Young people are intensive internet users because it is more convenient to get news via internet, and more importantly, the internet provides an interactive public sphere where they can express, discuss, and share political views. In addition, the results also indicate that younger citizens engage more in non-institutionalized political activities while older citizens engage more in institutionalized political activities.

After confirming the age differences in news media usage and political participation, the thesis conducted multiple regression analyses to answer the second research question: *To what extent does different news media usage affect institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation in Australia?* Hypotheses 4 to 7 are formulated to examine this research question. The results supported hypotheses 4 and 5, which means, using both traditional media and internet for political news positively affect institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. This makes sense: most people obtain information, especially political information through media, no matter if it is traditional media or the internet. Although the internet has penetrated people's daily life and affected individuals' political behavior, the traditional media has not been replaced by the internet, they co-exist in a hybrid system (Chadwick, 2007). Especially when people need news and information, traditional media complement the internet (Nguyen & Western, 2006). The results also demonstrate that the effects of news media usage on political participation are relatively little, which indicates that there are many other factors also influence political participation, such as religion, political trust, etc.

The findings of this study further compared the predictive effects of political news media usage for both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. As hypothesized, using internet for political news is a stronger predictor of non-institutionalized forms of political participation than that of institutionalized forms of political participation. Furthermore, using traditional mass media for political news also behaves as a slightly stronger predictor of non-institutionalized forms of political participation, which is out of expectation. Hypothesis 6 was rejected. Bakker and Vreese (2011) found that traditional media use is "a better predictor of traditional forms of participation than digital forms", but they also emphasized it is just "slightly better" (p.15). In addition, the predictive effects of political news usage via traditional media is weak but very stable over time for both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. One plausible reason might be voting is added

into the index of institutionalized forms of political participation variable in this study. Since voting is compulsory in Australia, the voting item might yield little effects on the outcomes. In short, using traditional media and the internet for political news in the Australia context have positive impact on both institutionalized and institutionalized forms of political participation. The effects are summarized in the following table:

**Table 10: Summary of the effects of news media usage on political participation in Australia**

	Institutionalized forms of political participation	Non-institutionalized forms of political participation
Traditional mass media for political news usage	Positive effect Weak predictor	Positive effect Stronger predictor
Internet for political news usage	Positive effect Weak predictor	Positive effect Stronger predictor

Aside from the conclusion above, the results also display some interesting findings worth to discuss. In the results of regression analyses by ISSP Citizenship 2004 and 2014, age is only positively associated with non-institutionalized forms of political participation, which indicates that younger citizens are engaged (slightly) more in non-institutionalized political activities. This result is in line with some previous studies: young people prefer to get engage in protest activities (Norris, 2002; Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, Delli, & Michael, 2006) and "non-institutionalized forms of political participation are important to mobilize young citizens" (Marien, Hooghe, & Quintelier, 2010, p. 193) Gender displays a mixed picture. In 2004 regression analyses, gender is a positive predictor for institutionalized forms of political participation, which indicates that men are more engaged in institutionalized political activities than women in 2004. On the contrary, gender displays a negative association and does not significantly predict the institutionalized participation in 2014 regression analyses. The mixed picture of gender, to some extent, provide some evidence for gender equality over time. Education is a consistent determination of political participation. As concluded in numerous studies, the higher the education level, the more engagement in political activities (Milbrath and Goel, 1977; Teorell, Sum & Tobiasen, 2007a; Marien, Hooghe, & Quintelier, 2010).

As mentioned in the literature review, some scholars believe that news media usage has the potential to mobilize citizen to participate political activities, and even among those who have less political interest (Norris, 2001; Chang, 2007; Shriky, 2008; Bond, Fariss, Jones, Kramer, Marlow, Settle, & Howler, 2012). While other scholars argue that news media usage only reinforcing citizens who are already interested in politics to engage in more political activities (Saglie&Vabo, 2009; Baumgartner& Morris, 2010; Oser, Hooghe & Marien, 2013).No matter which point of view, political interest is an important factor in the relationship between news media usage and political participation. This study hypothesized political interest mediating the effects of news media usage on political participation. The results of mediation analyses demonstrate that different media for political news have significantly positive effects on individual's political interest, and political interest, in turn, affects their political participation. Moreover, by using Bootstrapping test, the mediation effects are tested to be statistically significant. The results confirmed hypotheses 8 and 9, and displayed there is an underlying causal mechanism where political interest work as a mediator.

## **6.2 Limitations of the study and future consideration for research**

Like any research, this study has a few limitations as well. First, as mentioned earlier, due to the limitation of secondary data, one single item is used to measure news media usage which is unable to distinguish media attention from media exposure. Chaffee and Schleuder (1986) proposed that media exposure and media attention are two different concepts. Strömbäck and Shehata (2010) also pointed out that the effect of news media exposure on political interest is not as strong and consistent as political news attention. Although this study contributes to the effect of new media usage on political interest and political participation, for future research, it will be more fruitful concluded both media exposure and media attention and make a distinction between them. Second, this study conducts simple mediation analyses without covariate to test whether political interest plays as a mediator between news media usage and political participation. Since a covariate is able to affect the relationship between the dependent variable and independent variable, including the covariates in the model will provide more accurate path coefficients. I would like to suggest structural equation modelling to capture the whole structural relationships.

Another limitation is that this study examines the effects of news media usage on political participation in Australia and the results might not be generalized to all democracies. However, I believe the results of this study are significant and replicable, since the results are consistent with established studies. For example, Boulianne (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of 38 studies to investigate the impact of internet on political engagement. The results confirmed that internet usage has positively affected political participation. Bakker and de Vreese (2011) found that most media usage are positively associated with political participation in the Netherlands. Quintelier and Vissers (2008) also addressed that following internet news affects political participation in a positive direction among the young generation in Belgium, where the government implements compulsory voting as well. But For a better understanding of the relationship between news media usage and political participation, I would suggest future research to investigate this topic from perspectives on individuals and countries. Taking different political context and different media system into consideration, it would provide more pieces to the panoramic picture of political participation.

Another recommendation for future research is to examine the reciprocal effects between news media usage and political participation. Slater (2007) and Kruikemeier and Shehata (2017) argued that based on the Virtuous Circle Thesis (Norris, 2000), reinforcing spirals exist between media usage and political participation. It would be very interesting to explore the dynamics of this relationship.

As the ending conclusion and suggestion, the research on media and political participation is extremely important for modern democracies in such a fast-transforming and complicated world. Political participation is the foundation to secure the healthy development of the society, and youth are protagonists of the future. It is never excessive to think more about how to use media especially digital media to arouse citizens' political interest, motivate citizens, especially younger citizens to engage in more political activities. This is the more meaningful significance and indication of the research.

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# Appendix

## Appendix A: Questions and measurement

### *Institutionalized forms of political participation (5 items)*

Question	Answer alternatives
Here are some different forms of political and social action that people can take. Please indicate, for each one, whether you have done any of these things in the past year, whether you have done it in the more distant past, whether you have not done it but might do it or have not done it and would never, under any circumstances, do it. ...Attended a political meeting or rally? ... Contacted, or attempted to contact, a politician or a civil servant? ... Donated money or raised funds for a social or political activity?	1.have done it in the past year 2. have done it in the more distant past 3. have not done it but might do it 4. have not done it and would never do it
Belonging to a political party, please indicate whether you	1.belong and actively participate 2.belong but don't actively participate 3.used to belong but do not any more 4.have never belonged to it
In the last election, did you vote	1.yes 2. no

### *non-institutionalized forms of political participation (5items)*

Question	Answer alternatives
Here are some different forms of political and social action that people can take. Please indicate, for each one, whether you have done any of these things in the past year, whether you have done it in the more distant past, whether you have not done it but might do it or have not done it and would never, under any circumstances, do it. ...Signed a petition? ... Boycotted, or deliberately bought, certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons? ... Took part in a demonstration? ... Contacted or appeared in the media to express your views? ... Expressed political views on the internet?	1. Have done it in the past year 2. Have done it in the more distant past 3. Have not done it but might do it 4. Have not done it and would never do it

***Traditional mass media for political news usage (3 items)***

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Question	Answer alternatives
On average, how often do you: ... Read the political content of a newspaper ... Watch political news on television ... Listen to political news on the radio	1. Several times a day 7. never

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***Internet for political news usage (1 item)***

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Question	Answer alternatives
On average, how often do you: ... Use the Internet to get political news or information	1. Several times a day 7. never

---

***External efficacy (2 items)***

---

Question	Answer alternatives
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? ... People like me don't have any say about what the government does ... I don't think the government cares much what people like me think	1. Strongly agree 7. Strongly disagree

---

***Internal efficacy (2 items)***

---

Question	Answer alternatives
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? ... I feel I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing (COUNTRY). ... I think most people in (COUNTRY) are better informed about politics and government than I am.	1. Strongly agree 7. Strongly disagree

---

***Political interest (1 item)***

---

Question	Answer alternatives
How interested would you say you personally are in politics?	1. Very interested 4. Not at all interested

---

## Appendix B: Descriptive statistics

**Table B1: Descriptive statistics, source ISSP Citizenship (2004)**

Variables	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dependent variables				
Institutionalized forms of political participation	1	6	4.55	.078
Non-institutionalized forms of political participation	1	6	5.08	0.96
Independent variables				
Traditional media for political news usage	1	13	6.96	3.51
Internet for political news usage	1	5	4.51	0.99
Control variables				
Age	19	93	51	16.12
Gender (nominal: male, 48%; female, 52%)			1.52	0,50
Level of education	1	6	3.57	1.59
External efficacy	1	9	6.01	2.14
Internal efficacy	1	9	3.84	1.39
Mediating variable				
Political interest	1	4	2.39	0.80

**Table B2: Descriptive statistics, source ISSP Citizenship (2014)**

Variables	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dependent variables				
Institutionalized forms of political participation	1	6	4.53	0.83
Non-institutionalized forms of political participation	1	6	4.93	1.13
Independent variables				
Traditional media for political news usage	1	13	6.56	3.52
Internet for political news usage	1	5	3.61	1.57
Control variables				
Age	19	93	56	16.50
Gender (nominal: male, 48%; female, 52%)			1.54	0.50
Level of education	1	6	3.10	1.45
External efficacy	1	9	5.54	2.19
Internal efficacy	1	9	3.56	1.53
Mediating variable				
Political interest	1	4	2.32	0.85

## Appendix C: Correlation Matrix

**Table C1: Correlation Matrix, source ISSP Citizenship (2004)**

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Institutionalized participation	1										
2	Non-institutionalized participation	.432**	1									
3	Traditional news media use	.231**	.216**	1								
4	Internet news use	.174**	.183**	.285**	1							
5	Political interest	.206**	.171**	.554**	.202**	1						
6	Age	.033	.186**	-.217**	.190**	-.225**	1					
7	Gender	-.052*	-.053*	.111**	.065**	.102**	-.093**	1				
8	Education level	.186**	.231**	.203**	.318**	.107**	.345**	-.011	1			
9	External efficacy	.074**	.038	.169**	.124**	.133**	.044	.011	.268**	1		
10	Internal efficacy	.153**	.134**	.405**	.153**	.432**	-.113**	.125**	.148**	.115**	1	

\*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \* p<0.05

**Table C2: Correlation Matrix, source ISSP Citizenship (2014)**

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Institutionalized participation	1										
2	Non-institutionalized participation	.501**	1									
3	Traditional news media usage	.227**	.187**	1								
4	Internet news usage	.258**	.365**	.391**	1							
5	Political interest	.283**	.240**	.570**	.315**	1						
6	Age	.005	.178**	-.209**	.294**	-.226**	1					
7	Gender	.066*	-.051	.130**	.052	.123**	-.070**	1				
8	Education level	.174**	.219**	.160**	.330**	.073**	.271**	-.046	1			
9	External efficacy	.107**	.067*	.230**	.184**	.188**	-.023	.002	.187**	1		
10	Internal efficacy	.222**	.223**	.421**	.291**	.546**	-.159**	.121**	.102**	.129**	1	

\*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \* p<0.05

## Appendix D: Multiple regression results

**Table D1: Effects of traditional media for political news on political participation (2004)**

	Institutionalized forms of political participation			Non-institutionalized forms of political participation		
	Model 1	Model 2		Model 1	Model 2	
<b>Traditional media for political news</b>	.051*** (.006)	.041*** (.007)	.031*** (.008)	.051*** (.008)	.051*** (.008)	.039*** (.009)
Age		.002 (.001)	.002 (.001)		.011*** (.002)	.011*** (.002)
Gender (ref=female)		.134** (.042)	.135*** (.042)		.154** (.051)	.155** (.051)
Education level		.063*** (.015)	.063*** (.015)		.080*** (.018)	.080*** (.018)
External efficacy		.005 (.010)	.003 (.010)		-.013 (.012)	-.016 (.012)
Internal efficacy		.048** (.016)	.033 (.017)		.040* (.020)	.020 (.021)
Political interest			.106** (.033)			.136*** (.041)
<b>Intercept</b>	4.163	3.670	3.531	4.701	3.749	3.570
<b>Number</b>			1327			1327
<b>R<sup>2</sup>chang</b>		.031	.006		.070	.007
<b>AdjustedR<sup>2</sup></b>	.050	.081	.087	.032	.102	.109

Note: Estimates are unstandardized coefficients and standard errors. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \* p<0.05  
Source: ISSP Citizenship 2004, Australia

**Table D2: Effects of traditional media for political news on political participation (2014)**

	Institutionalized forms of political participation			Non-institutionalized forms of political participation		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Traditional media for political news</b>	.055*** (.007)	.031*** (.008)	.013*** (.009)	.057*** (.010)	.041*** (.011)	.019*** (.012)
Age		.000 (.002)	.001 (.002)		.013*** (.002)	.014*** (.002)
Gender (ref=female)		-.011 (.050)	-.013 (.050)		.203** (.066)	.198** (.065)
Education level		.087*** (.019)	.089*** (.019)		.098*** (.025)	.101*** (.024)
External efficacy		.013 (.009)	.009 (.012)		-.004 (.015)	-.009 (.015)
Internal efficacy		.085*** (.018)	.042* (.020)		.148*** (.024)	.099*** (.026)
Political interest			.207*** (.039)			.242*** (.051)
<b>Intercept</b>	4.171	3.692	3.457	4.533	3.037	2.755
<b>N</b>			1038			1038
<b>R<sup>2</sup>change</b>		.040	.023		.092	.017
<b>AdjustedR<sup>2</sup></b>	.053	.093	.116	.030	.122	.139

Note: Estimates are unstandardized coefficients and standard errors. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \* p<0.05  
Source: ISSP Citizenship 2014, Australia

**Table D3: Effects of internet for political news usage on political participation (2004)**

	Institutionalized forms of political participation			Non-institutionalized forms of political participation		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Internet for political news usage</b>	.125*** (.021)	.082*** (.022)	.062*** (.022)	.150*** (.025)	.078** (.026)	.051*** (.026)
Age		-.001 (.001)	.001 (.001)		.008*** (.002)	.010*** (.002)
Gender (ref=female)		.135** (.043)	.137*** (.042)		.150** (.052)	.152** (.052)
Education level		.072*** (.015)	.069*** (.015)		.093*** (.019)	.090*** (.018)
External efficacy		.006 (.010)	.002 (.010)		-.009 (.012)	-.014 (.012)
Internal efficacy		.074*** (.015)	.043** (.017)		.077*** (.019)	.037 (.020)
Political interest			.144*** (.031)			.194*** (.038)
<b>Intercept</b>	3.960	3.573	3.391	4.389	3.699	3.456
<b>Number</b>			1333			1333
<b>R<sup>2</sup>change</b>		.043	.015		.061	.017
<b>AdjustedR<sup>2</sup></b>	.026	.069	.084	.025	.086	.103

Note: Estimates are unstandardized coefficients and standard errors. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \* p<0.05  
Source: ISSP Citizenship 2004, Australia



**Table D4: Effects of internet for political news usage on political participation (2014)**

	Institutionalized forms of political participation			Non-institutionalized forms of political participation		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Internet for political news usage</b>	.133*** (.016)	.099*** (.018)	.076*** (.018)	.252*** (.020)	.185*** (.023)	.161*** (.023)
Age		-.004* (.002)	-.002 (.002)		.006** (.002)	.008*** (.002)
Gender (ref=female)		-.020 (.049)	-.016 (.049)		.203** (.063)	.205*** (.063)
Education level		.074*** (.019)	.074*** (.019)		.071** (.024)	.072** (.024)
External efficacy		.014 (.011)	.008 (.011)		-.008 (.015)	-.014 (.015)
Internal efficacy		.075*** (.018)	.031 (.020)		.118*** (.023)	.073** (.025)
Political interest			.182*** (.037)			.190*** (.047)
<b>Intercept</b>	4.060	3.850	3.5833	4.015	3.250	2.960
<b>Number</b>			1052			1052
<b>R<sup>2</sup>change</b>		.040	.020		.035	.012
<b>AdjustedR<sup>2</sup></b>	.064	.104	.124	.124	.159	.171

Note: Estimates are unstandardized coefficients and standard errors. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \* p<0.05  
Source: ISSP Citizenship 2014, Australia