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The Use Motivation of Political Satire Show and the Impacts of Viewing Frequency on Voters' Political Efficacy and Political Cynicism

—Taking *Mr. Brown Show* as an Example

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Abstract

Political satire show, distinguished from other forms of political protests, specialize in gaining entertainment from politics. Its popularity leads to the academic researches of audience's viewing motivation. In Singapore, even though the government has strictly controlled the traditional media, a well known political satire show *Mr. Brown Show* has found its way to survive. As a Singaporean-made pod cast program, *Mr. Brown Show* satirizes Singapore's policy and current affairs via the Internet so that people can always download the program content. According to the research findings in the western culture, watching political satire shows could be information-motivated or entertainment-motivated. Based on the fact that no study had ever detected the motivation of people's viewing political satire shows in Singapore, this study tried to explore the motivation of viewing *Mr. Brown Show* and also to figure out the casual relationship between viewing frequency and citizen's political efficacy and political cynicism. The Nielsen Company (Singapore) Pte Ltd. was commissioned to conduct a formal online survey by using the Nielsen's online panel which consists of Singaporean adults spanning a wide range of demographic segments. Respondent quotas were set on key demographic variables (gender and age) to ensure that the sample represents Singapore Internet users. Finally, 503 samples were collected. The results show that the motivations of the viewing include search for identity/surveillance/discontent, entertainment value/social rituals and peer influence. In addition, viewing frequency can successfully predict people's political efficacy and political cynicism. Yet, people tend to have higher political cynicism than political efficacy after viewing the show. Moreover, internet use can also predict political

efficacy and cynicism, but traditional media use is not a significant factor for the above dependent variables.

Keywords

1. Introduction

Political satire show has been very popular for more than a decade. According to Colletta (2009), political satire show applies comedy as an approach to represent the ugliness of politics and politicians and to ridicule their follies through mimic, exaggeration, and comical representation. More than half of the story plots in the show were about political themes and international affairs (Brewer & Marquardt, 2007).

Many studies pointed out political satire shows might lead to people's political cynicism; however other scholars argued that, on the contrary, political efficacy may be raised by viewing such shows. The authors think the results of viewing political satire shows may be varied due to different national conditions. This study will look at Singapore to see how its people react to political satire. In particular, Singapore is a country whose media environment is obviously different from that of other western countries, and the related research on its satirical shows is quite rare. The authors believe the results of this study should have certain research contributions.

Mr. Brown Show is a Singaporean political satire show podcasted in a country where media is rigidly controlled. Through network platform, it pays close attention to current events and public affairs, mostly by commenting mainstream media coverage. The production team would mock current events and policies made by the government of Singapore in a way of designing dramas and podcasts. As for the people, they can watch the show online or download it. The viewpoints are based on the people, so that audiences can be provided with different perspectives from the mainstream media. Instead of making comments on music, movies, or small talk, they discuss big issues in their country with the perspective of the people (Tang, 2008).

According to Hong's observations on political websites and blogs in Singapore, *Mr. Brown Show* is so far the most popular political and social podcast. More than 20 percent of internet users often listen to or watch the *Mr. Brown Show* (Hong, 2010). Featured in criticisms and ridicules, *Mr. Brown Show* is a distinctive media when comparing to mainstream media. In fact, mainstream media itself is the target of their satire. No direct common benefits exist between it and the government, so there's no need to serve the government. Moreover, by using internet as its platform, it's still accepted to comment in non-mainstream space under the acquiescence of the government. As a result, by humorous skits,

this show makes every effort to grab each chance to present topics that no mainstream media dare to report (Tang, 2008).

Many scholars found that the reasons for people to watch the political satire shows could be information-motivated or entertainment-motivated. Base on the fact that, in Singapore, no study had detected the motivation of people's viewing political satire shows, this study tried to explore the motivation of the viewing and also to figure out if the viewing frequency has significant impact on citizen's political efficacy and political cynicism.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Political Satire Show

The political satire show is a kind of media program which is a consequence of political infotainment. In the past, it was common to see political satire shows being confused with nouns such as political entertainment programs, political humor, satire comedies, political comedies and political talk shows in literature reviews. However, generally speaking, these programs can be similar, with their contents all containing two main elements, "political information" and "entertainment".

Political satire shows also can be seen as one kind of soft news program, Compared with traditional hard-news programs, soft news programs emphasize more on drama, emotion, sensationalism, and themes and characters which people are interested in (Baum, 2002). And exposure to soft news will increase attentiveness to political issues (Baum, 2003). Even though some political socialization researchers conceptualized television news as a "bridge" for youth and other political novices to learn about the political affairs (Chaffee & Yang, 1988), Feldman and Young (2008) pointed out that it is talk shows and late-night comedy that may now serve as segues to television news.

The development of such programs can be traced back to western talk shows, in which the hosts suddenly have impromptu imitations. Instead of rehearsing in advance, the hosts, guests, and audience who call in immediately comment on current events on the telecast. Hence, there will be humorous or ironic imitations blurted out sometimes. This is commonly known as the "talk show" (Kuo, 2002).

Still, conversations are the main parts of talk shows. The forms of comedy and humor were not obvious until the broadcast of the show *Saturday Night Live* in 1975, in which the imitations of politicians started to become the tradition of the show. Popular politicians and hot issues were imitated in exaggerated or comical ways (Lu, 1995).

In the United States, *The Daily Show* is a well-known late night talk show. It is a fake news program and is usually arranged into a night news scene at the beginning of the show. The program often presents sharp criticism of imitations, mocking on mainstream news producers—especially politicians. During political campaign period, *The Daily Show* even hosts candidate interviews and also satirizes the campaign process, discussing policies and issues that are at the core of

the campaign (Feldman & Young, 2008).

With all the characters featured by comedians, *The Daily Show* has attracted a large number of young audiences due to the humorous and satire elements that lie in the messages. The number of American viewers would reach 1.3 million every night (Associated Press, 2006).

Colletta (2009) stated that the political TV satire is "a form that holds up human vices and follies to ridicule and scorn." In addition, according to Feldman & Young (2008), by using monologues, headlines, and other show segments into which both *The Late Show* and *The Daily Show* delicately place political humor and satire. Meanwhile, being interviewed by the late-night show hosts, political figures and candidates can also gain wider exposure to the diverse viewing audience.

And Wang (2004) defined such program as a political parody, the actors perform in an exaggerated and comical mimicry style, with sounds, speeches, expressions and body movements; the simulation of real news scenes and various types of political codes may be used at the same time as props and background setting, in order to mock on politicians and different political issues in the shows. Warner (2007) further pointed out that although such imitation program seems like simply a copy of the mainstream news media by mimicking the aesthetics of the program setting, it has been strategically modified to accentuate those "factual errors, logical contradictions, and incongruities" that the campaign messages and the media usually annunciate.

Through reviewing the concept explication in the past literatures, we can conclude that such programs are generally called as political parodies and political satire shows. However, one of the main objects of study in this paper, *Mr. Brown Show*, which its main purpose is to "mock on" politicians or current events, instead of merely "imitate" (Tang, 2008). Based on this, the author classified *Mr. Brown Show* into "political satire show". Its conceptual definition adopts the definition that Colletta (2009) gave for political satire, "a form that holds up human vices and follies to ridicule and scorn."And it uses comedic devices such as parody, exaggeration, slapstick, etc. to get its laughs.

2.2. *Mr. Brown Show*

On September 24, 1997, Mr. Brown, who is also well known as a blogger called Li Jian Min, published a satire work about education issue in Singapore on internet forum (soc.culture. Singapore). His work mocked the new policy enacted by The Ministry of Education in Singapore. Before long, his work, like a virus, spread through E-mail all around people. With this unexpected welcome, Mr. Brown continued to work on the series of the education of Singapore. The series last for eight years (Ended in July 25, 2005), contained almost a hundred chapters (Leow, 2012). Most importantly, this series of work made Mr. Brown a household name. With a sensitive perception, he tried to explore social issues, such as political socialization, education system, and economic issues. He made comments in a humorous and ironic way, caught the eye of people in Singapore.

Due to his increasing fame, many people started to ask for the articles he wrote, which caused some inconvenience to him. Therefore, he set up a website called "mrbrown.com". On this website, people can browse and get access to all his comments. After blogs arose, he turned his personal website to a blog platform. Offering not only critical comments, but also diverse access such as lots of photos, videos, and podcast for people to watch or download (Singapore Management University, 2012).

March 2005, *Mr. Brown Show* officially broadcasted. He cooperated with another blogger named Mr. Miyagi (Benjamin Lee), titled as "Singapore's Favorite Podcast". They invite people from all works of life as special guests in their programs, mock some funny things the host discovers. Sometimes, they also design different kinds of imitations (Tang, 2008).

After the Singapore General Election, Mr. Brown published a comment on the column of *Today*. It was about the increasing cost of living in Singapore: "Singaporeans are fed, up with progress!" As soon as the newspaper published, the secretary of Singapore MICA wrote a stern letter in response to this:

"It is not the role of journalists or newspapers in Singapore to champion issues, or campaign for or against the Government. If a columnist presents himself as a non-political observer, while exploiting his access to the mass media to undermine the Government's standing with the electorate, then he is no longer a constructive critic, but a partisan player in politics."

Consequently, Mr. Brown's column on *Today* was forced to put over; his name was also removed from their visiting writers list (Lee & Kan, 2008). After MICA's denounce and his degradation, many supporters gathered to protest. These people wore in brown, some even had "I am fed up with progress" on their clothes. Some people gathered at the train station for flash mobs. All these demonstrations were never seen in Singapore, these were certainly illegal behaviors, but caught many people's attention (Hu, 2007).

In addition to this, *Mr. Brown Show* is not afraid of challenging the government of Singapore by discussing all kinds of issues and offering sharp criticisms. In 2006, they even create an episode to mock their Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong with pop music, since he embarrassed himself on the National Day Rally Speech. That podcast has been downloaded more than 500,000 times (the number is excluded unauthorized downloads). Mr. Brown gradually became the symbol of "out-of-bounds", his humorous satire style made it loved by many people (Giam, 2006). More importantly, he made a breakthrough between blog and mainstream media. Through the access of the mainstream media (*Today*, for example), more people can be influenced by his words.

Why is *Mr. Brown Show* welcomed by the people in Singapore? What is their motivation to watch or to listen to it? Some scholars have proposed two possible reasons. First, through humorous and ironic ways, *Mr. Brown Show* let the audience be exposed to tough information and issues with a more relaxed state of mind. Most Singaporeans feel antipathy for scholars and intellectuals' writings. In this case, the host (Mr. Brown) would use Hokkien sometimes, the rustic style

makes people feel much easier to relate to the show. Second, the issues that *Mr. Brown Show* discusses and concerns about, is important to civic life, such as housing, making living, complaining about the government. Also, he shares his interest in video games and electronic parts with the audience, which stimulates their resonance, can further generate audience's empathy to like his podcast (Ringisei, 2006).

2.3. Use Motivation of Political Satire Show

The production form of political satire shows contains elements including comedy and imitation, and characteristics of talk shows. After the 90's, these programs have become a popular genre among cable television channels in the United States. Due to multiple channels in domestic, political satire shows have being transferred from wireless channels to cable channels, and have attracted the attention of audience who hold different opinions toward politics (Peng, 2005).

Why do people watch political satire shows? According to the empirical findings of the scholars abroad, the reasons why audience favor political satire shows such as *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* are related to political knowledge (Cao, 2008; Kim & Vishak, 2008; Young & Hoffman, 2012), attentiveness to politics, information searching (Feldman, Leiserowitz & Maibach, 2011; Cao, 2010; Feldman & Young, 2008), participation in politics (Young, 2011), and the ability to discuss with others (Cao & Brewer, 2008; Hoffman & Young, 2011).

According to the literature review, the motivations of watching political satire shows are influenced by audience's political knowledge, interest in politics, political efficacy, party identification, political ideology, and gender. Some scholars even pointed out that men were more likely to watch political satire shows than women (Cohen, 1957). Besides, when Young was studying for the reason that people avoid watching political satire shows, he discovered that people who have high political efficacy do not watch political satire shows. These people find it tedious to watch. They consider themselves capable of understanding politics and participating in the political process, which keeps them away from political satire shows. Moreover, feeling no appreciation for this kind of shows is also a reason not to watch any (Young, 2012).

When Smith (2001) were engaging in the research about the "comedification" of politics, she suggested that audience would choose non-traditional media sources—such as talk show or phone-in show—to obtain political information. Motivations can be divided into three categories: surveillance, entertainment, and time killing. On the other hand, Young (2012) engaged in the report about "The Daily Show" and "The Colbert Report" watched by American teenagers. She found that the teenagers watched these shows for entertainment, information obtaining, and it is helpful for gaining political knowledge and knowing news in an interesting way.

The literatures mentioned above had sorted out the motivations of people watching political satire shows and political entertaining shows in the western society. However, few domestic studies had concerned about the same issue in

Asia. Some scholars studied the *Everybody Talks Nonsense* series in Taiwan, but most of them emphasize on the humor and rhetorical criticism of the show and its influence in cultivation (Wang, 2004; Chiang, 2008; Wang, 2010). Only Hong, Lee, & Tsai (2015) studied people's motivation of viewing the *Crazy Pot* and the results show that the motivations of the viewing include surveillance/social rituals, soothe discontent/release pressure, peer influence and entertainment value.

In Singapore, what makes *Mr. Brown Show* welcomed by the people? What are the motivations of watching or to listening to it? Some scholars have proposed two possible reasons. First, through humorous and ironic ways, *Mr. Brown Show* let the audience be exposed to tough information and issues in a more relaxed state of mind. Most Singaporeans feel antipathy for scholars and intellectuals' writing style. As for the host of the show (Mr. Brown), he uses Hokkien sometimes. The rustic style makes people much easier to relate to the show. Second, the issues that *Mr. Brown Show* discusses and concerns about are important to civic life, such as housing, issues of livelihood, complaint against the government. Also, he shares about his interest in video games and electronic parts with the audience, which stimulates their resonance, can further connect with his audience emotionally to drive more love to his podcast (Ringisei, 2006).

To sum up, "seeking for identification" and "looking for an emotional outlet" obviously became the motivations of watching *Mr. Brown Show.* Other scholars even believe that the supporters of Mr. Brown could build a united virtual community through blog chains. In this community, members can share with others about their common concerns and opinions (Ringisei, 2006). In this case, their use motivation is one kind of political participation. On the other hand, *Mr. Brown Show* usually conveys information which is ignored by the mainstream media, and offers audience a different point of view (Tang, 2008). Therefore, pursuing knowledge could be the other reason for people to watch the show.

In sum, watching political satire shows is information-motivated or entertainment-motivated? This study tries to explore the reasons for Singaporean to watch the political satire show.

Q1: What are the use motivations for Singaporean to watch the *Mr. Brown Show*?"

2.4. Political Satire Show and Political Efficacy

Although a lot of studies have proved that watching political satire shows would enhance people's political knowledge, many scholars still discovered that this kind of show would influence audience's evaluation of politics. For example, Wang (2003) suggest that lacking of political maturity and political knowledge, young audience would be unable to interpret the message from the show. Plus, programs often present politician and political issues in an irony and exaggerated way through negative and fragmented performance. This resulted in one's tendency of negative evaluation to politician, and lacking of confidence in the political system. It can even affect political participation.

Lacking of confidence and stopping getting involved in politics might lead to people's low political efficacy. In general, political efficacy can be divided into two dimensions—internal efficacy and external efficacy. Internal efficacy refers to whether one has a feeling of being able to understand political affairs or current political surrounding, and if one is capable of participating in the political process and influence government decisions. As for external efficacy, it depends on whether one believes that the government would listen and response to people's demands. When people have doubts about the political environment, have no trust in it, or become cynical, they would get a feeling of hopelessness, and result in political alienation (Chen, 2003).

Research continues to show that criticism of politics and government in the television programs have impacts on people, which causes doubt, distrust, and low political efficacy (Hong, 2009). Besides, excessive political strife as well as negative coverages, would make people's passion for politics begin to subside. Political apathy, even political antipathy, would emerge (Su, 2004). Since television entertainment often use negative approaches to describe politician and political issues, the discussion carried out would influence public political awareness, and reduce people's confidence in the government. When the content of political satire show tend to be negative, it will reinforce audience's tendency to escape from the real world. Audience might begin to understand political affairs through the show, instead of pursuing the truth. Political issues will be simplified and trivialized, the nature of democracy, which is popular sovereignty, would be gone without a trace in the end (Hu, 2011; Wang, 2003; Lichter & Noyes, 1995).

Taken together, we can discover that political satire shows may change people's political attitude in a negative way. Conversely, some studies support that political satire shows would not cause those results we mentioned above. For instance, when the audience exposed to soft news, such as political comedy and political satire show, their opinions about the politics would be influenced (Baum, 2005; Young, 2004). While other traditional way to participate in politics has faded, satire became a new fashion to keep people maintaining interest in politics and understanding related issues effectively. In Europe, the two main activities for people to take part in politics, voting and joining in parties, has been declining in the frequencies. However, we couldn't assert that people have no interest about politics anymore. Instead, new ways for people to follow and participate in politics has emerged. People can obtain political knowledge through political satire show or blogs (Katerina-Eva Matsa, 2010; Sweetser & Kaid, 2008). In Tang's (2008) study about *Mr. Brown Show* in Singapore, she indicated that although different reporting provided by the show might lead to more political cynicism, it could elevate young people's political efficacy. For the show comment on political affairs from the perspective of the people, it encourages people to pay more attention to politics. Sweetser and Kaid (2008) also discovered that when compared to blogs without political issues, readers of blogs with political satire are more cynical, but they also own higher political efficacy.

Compared to traditional news report, political talk show offers people a platform to communicate with each other. There are potential abilities for these shows to become important vehicle of public discourse (Livingstone & Lunt, 1994). And political satire shows convey political information with entertainment in the current rotten political society. Politics itself is a serious theme, in a humorous and ironic way, political satire shows allow their audience be closer to politics and feeling less unapproachable (Hu, 2011).

Beyond that, Lyttle (2001) and Young (2004) found that there is a positive correlation between the viewing frequency of T*he Daily Show* and people's internal efficacy. Even though *The Daily Show* comments on the electoral process and political issues in an ironic way, it makes young audience believe that they own the ability to understand politics. In other words, because of *The Daily Show*, young audience may be convinced that politics is not so complicate anymore, it is something they could grasp the handle. *The Daily Show* simplifies politics which is often incomprehensible, help its audience to understand political issues and public affairs in a humorous way. In addition, in Baumgartner and Morris' (2006) research about how *The Daily Show* influences American teenagers, it has proved that soft news, such as political satire show, could increase public knowledge about the political system (Baum, 2003). Audience who have been exposed to the show for a longer period of time, have higher political efficacy than those who have been exposed to it for a short time. Because of humorous politics, the reality looks clear and simple. It makes the audience believe that the complexity of politics could be understood. In Becker's (2011) research, the result also indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between the degree of exposure of political satire show and the internal efficacy. And there is no significant negative correlation between the show's viewing and people's trust in politics.

The humor and imitation factors of political satire shows makes stiff and monotonous political information accepted by audience and even enhance their political efficacy. Once the political efficacy has been elevated, audience would believe that the political system is not complicated at all. Political efficacy is an influential factor for participation in politics (Chen & Keng, 2008), as Hariman (2008) said, imitation or any kind of political humor, plays a crucial role in the sustaining of the democratic political culture.

In conclusion, we can know that the audience's political efficacy is significantly affected by political satire shows. Yet both positive influence and negative influence are supported by evidences. Therefore, here is the second hypothesis in this research:

H2: Viewing frequency of political satire show is able to significantly predict viewers' political efficacy.

2.5. Political Satire Show and Political Cynicism

Recently, some research pointed out that political satire shows are related to political cynicism. This is how Eisinger (2000) defined political cynicism: "A cynic

has a sense of the political; she is not politically indifferent, but rather keenly aware of her politics and her political environment by self-consciously distancing herself from it." And Dekker et al. (2006) believe that political cynicism is one kind of negative attitude toward politic, while people have political cynicism, they tend to believe that politicians and political systems are immoral and not enough qualified. The other related terms be used could be alienation, powerlessness, distrust, skepiticism, these terms are all parallel and often used together. Political cynicism is harmful to political stability. But roughly speaking, those terms mentioned above are concepts against political trust, which means lacking of confidence (Cappella & Jameison, 1997).

By studying *The Daily Show* in the United States, Bratslavsky (2009) managed to figure out the connection between satire shows and political cynicism. Some people approve the behavior of using ironic ways to examine politics and the media. Still, some people criticize the cynic characteristic in this kind of show, they believe that it leads to the decline in young people's participate in the democratic society. Though the causality between satire shows and cynicism is yet ambiguous in the research, it has discovered that there was a correlation between political cynicism and the viewing of *The Daily Show*. Comparing with non-viewers of the show, the viewers tended to have higher political cynicism. Besides, in Guggenheim, Kwak, & Campbell's (2011) study result, it has been shown that watching satire shows is positively correlated to cynicism. The same result could be discovered between the extent of exposure to the show and the distrust of politician. Also, Tsfati, Tukachinsky, & Peri (2009) found that the more the audience expose to political satire show, the less they would trust the government.

David Broder (1994), a columnist for Washington Post, once said, Cynicism is epidemic right now. It saps people's confidence in politics and public officials. "Political cynicism is an indicator of low external political efficacy (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Hoffman & Thompson, 2009). Both political cynicism and low external political efficacy would reduce people's interest for political activities, especially teenagers" (Kaid, McKinney, & Tedesco, 2007).

The topic of distrust or alienation to politics, has been discussed not only in Western countries, many research pointed out the same result in Asia (Hong, 2009). While studying the causal relationship between TV news in Japan and political cynicism, Saito (2008) discovered that the audiences have tendencies to be cynical when they are highly dependent on television for political information.

In Taiwan, *Everybody Talks Nonsense* series were set up to imitate and mock the real political talk shows. In the show, we could see settings similar to the real commentary programs. The way of phone-in, the way the host interact with guests, are all alike. In Taiwan, it's hardly hear people's voice in political commentary programs. Conflicts on the TV screen, the host lacks of related background, and the whole show is about giving tit for tat on all topics by the same guests. So far, public forum turned into some kind of platform filled with emotional speeches, it has become a disaster for political cynicism (Chang, 2004).

When political satire show became popular, some research indicated that un-

der the political chaos in Taiwan, these shows criticized politics through humorous performances, may offer a temporary emotional outlet. More than just funny jokes, it helped the audience get to know about serious national policy and social Issues. More people were urged to understand political affairs, more participation in politics took place. Still, Wang (2003) discovered that though the "comedification" of politics would not cause political alienation, it would exacerbate the confusion between the "real" politics and the "imitative" one. This may led to the result that the audiences get used to facing the politician and political issues in a playful way. When people approve the "humorous politics" shaped by political satire shows, may simplify political issues. It would be much more difficult to focus on the core of an issue.

Though many research suggested that political satire show might make audience become more cynic, other literatures indicated whether or not there will be negative evaluations towards politicians after viewing the shows depends on the individual differences of the viewers. For instance, in Young's (2004) research on 2000 United States Presidential election, compared to the audience with higher levels of political knowledge, those with little political knowledge would have similar comments on the presidential candidates to those appeared in the political satire shows. Nevertheless, Matthes & Rauchfleisch (2013) found only those who with higher understanding of current affaires will get the jokes in political satire shows which in turn influence their evaluation of the politicians' capabilities.

Accordingly, while this research will try to explore whether *Mr. Brown Show* in Singapore known for its humorous and sarcastic comments on current events would elevate audience's political distrust and political alienation, it will also take into consideration individual differences inpolitical interest and media use and use them as control variables. Based on this, here is the third hypothesis:

H3: Viewing frequency of political satire show is able to significantly predict viewers' political cynicism.

3. Research Method

Nielsen in Singapore was commissioned to conduct a formal online survey. The sample was drawn from AIP Research and Consulting Online Panel database, which contained detailed data on more than 40,000 Internet users and covers the whole spectrum of professions and age groups. An invitation email was sent to the target respondents aged 21 years and above, and with the right to vote in 2015 Singapore elections, inviting them to participate via the direct URL link to the survey. In Singapore, the voting age is 21 years old and only those have voting right would start to pay attention to political affairs, thus they would be able to answer the questionnaire. In addition, Quotas were set on key demographic variables (gender and age) to ensure that the sample was representative of Singapore Internet users.

The email described the objective of the study, the study length and the incen-

tive (if any) to be provided for participation. Those who chose to participate would click on a unique URL embedded in the message to access the survey website. The unique URL would prevent unauthorized access and stop any person from completing the survey more than once to ensure the reliability of the data.

The online survey targeting Internet users aged 21 and above was conducted from October 14 to November 5. More than 27,182 email invites were sent out in total.

3.1. Measurement

3.1.1. Use Motivation

The indices used to measure the variable of use motivation were developed according to Young (2012) and Hong, Lin, & Ang (2010). The respondents were asked:

Here are some of the reasons that people gave when asked about why they listen or watch the *Mr Brown Show*. Based on a 5 point scale, please indicate how much you agree or disagree to each of the following statements:

1) The show helps me to understand the political events and public issues in Singapore.

2) The show is able to provide different information from the main stream media and serves as an extra point of view for me.

3) What has been said on the show is a reflection of what I want to say.

4) The arguments proposed by the show resonated with my opinions.

5) The show provides good topics for people to chat about.

6) The show provides good arguments on some of the issues that will be useful for me to discuss with other people.

7) The show is funny and interesting.

8) The show has entertainment values.

9) My relatives, friends or classmates recommended the show.

10) My relatives, friends or classmates also watched the show.

11) The show helps me to soothe my discontentment about politics and current issues.

12) The show helps me to release stress from my job or daily life.

3.1.2. Internal Political Efficacy

According to the suggestion of Niemi, Craig, & Mattei (1991), internal political efficacy were measured by the two following questions: 1) I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues.; 2) I think that I am better informed about politics and government than most people; 3) I think I have the ability to participate in politics (Cronbach's alpha = .79). A 5-point Likert scale where 1 was "strongly disagree" and 5 was "strongly agree."

3.1.3. Political Cynicism

The items used to measure the variable of political cynicism were developed according to Pinkleton & Austin (2002). Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree," the four statements: 1) Most politicians cannot be trusted; 2) Candidates say things that

voters like to hear, but are unable to make them come true; 3) Politicians only care about their own interests, but never care about the thoughts of people like me; 4) Politicians are out of touch with life in the real world. (Cronbach's alpha = .85). A 5-point Likert scale where 1 was "strongly disagree" and 5 was "strongly agree".

4. Results

In order to figure out why people watch the political satire show—*Mr. Brown show,* factor analysis was applied using Principle Components Factoring with Varimax Rotation to explore the results (see Table 1). Three factors are generated with Eigen values that are larger than one (Zaltman & Burger, 1975). The first factor is labeled search for identity/surveillance/discontent, the second factor is labeled entertainment value/social rituals, the third factor is labeled peer influence. The above three factors can explain the 64% variability.

To explore whether viewing frequency of *Mr. Brown Show* is significantly correlated with people's political efficacy, hierarchical regression was applied. In Table 2, Block 1 shows that among the demographic variables, gender and education is positively related to political efficacy. Male respondents tend to have higher political efficacy (Beta = −.220, $p < .001$) and higher educated people are more likely to have higher efficacy (Beta = .117, $p < .05$).

Table 1. Factor analysis for use motivation.

Variables	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Surveillance			
Understand public issues	.608		
Provide extra points	.511		
Search for identity			
Reflection of what I want to say	.773		
Resonated with my opinion	.734		
Discotent			
Soothe discontent	.691		
Release the pressure	.436		
Entertainment value			
For fun		.761	
Entertainment function		.746	
Social rituals			
Good topic for chat		.645	
Good point for discussion		.571	
Peer influence			
Peer recommend			.821
Peer also watch			.806

Note: N = 503, the factor loading is larger than .4 is accepted.

Table 2. Demographic variables, political interest, media use, interpersonal communication and viewing frequency on political efficacy.

		B	$SE\ B$	β	R^2	R^2	F
Block 1	Demographics				.065	.065	11.563***
	Gender	−.317	.064	−.220***			
	Age	−.004	.026	−.007			
	Education	.108	.040	.117**			
Block 2	Political Interest	.532	042	.488***	.289	.224	157.250***
Block 3	Media Use				.298	.009	2.018
	TV	−.038	.044	−.047			
	NP	−.012	.039	−.015			
	Internet	.097	.040	.117*			
Block 4	Interpersonal Communication	.114	.043	.139*	.308	.010	6.990**
Block 5	Viewing frequency	.039	.015	.102*	.317	.009	6.632*

Note: 1. N = 503. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

In Block 2, we can see that political interest is positively related to political efficacy (Beta = .488, $p < .001$), as people with higher political interest tended to have higher political efficacy. In addition, Block 3 shows that among the various media-use, only internet use can significantly predict political efficacy (Beta = 117, $p < .05$). The more often did the respondents reach election related news from the internet channel, the higher political efficacy they will have.

From Block 4, the result shows that interpersonal communication is significantly correlated with political efficacy (Beta = .139, $p < .01$), the more often did the respondents discuss the public issues or political events with their friends, relatives or classmates, they were more likely to have higher political efficacy.

Finally, the result in Blocks5 shows that viewing frequency is able to predict the dependent variable of political efficacy (Beta = .102, $p < .05$).

In order to explore if viewing frequency of *Mr. Brown Show* is able to predict people's political cynicism significantly, hierarchical regression was also applied. Block 1 in Table 3 shows that only gender is positively related to political cynicism. Male respondents are more likely to have higher political cynicism (Beta = −.092, $p < .05$).

In Block 2, the result shows that political interest can significantly predict political cynicism (Beta = .283, $p < .001$), the higher political interest, the higher political cynicism. In addition, Block 3 shows that only internet use is able to predict political cynicism (Beta = .180, $p < .01$). People are more likely to have higher political cynicism while they reach election news more often from the internet.

Table 3. Demographic variables, political interest, media use, interpersonal communication and viewing frequency on political cynicism.

		B	$SE\ B$	β	R^2	R^2	F
Block 1	Demographics				.009	.009	1.44
	Gender	−.137	.068	−.092*			
	Age	.002	.027	.004			
	Education	−.007	.043	−.008			
Block 2	Political Interest	.319	.050	.283***	.084	.075	40.957***
Block 3	Media Use				.113	.029	5.426**
	TV	−.071	.051	−.086			
	NP	−.084	.045	−.106			
	Internet	.155	.046	.180**			
Block 4	Interpersonal Communication	.105	.051	.123*	.121	.008	4.307*
Block 5	Viewing frequency	.055	.018	.138**	.137	.017	9.561**

Note: 1. N = 503. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

From Block 4, we can see that interpersonal communication is significantly correlated with political cynicism (Beta = .123, p < .05), people tend to have higher political cynicism while they discuss more about political issues with the people they know.

At last, the result in Blocks 5 shows that viewing frequency is positively related to the dependent variable of political cynicism (Beta = .138, p < .01).

5. Conclusion & Discussion

The results show that the motivations of the viewing *Mr. Brown Show* include search for identity/surveillance/discontent, entertainment value/social rituals and peer influence. The above results are consistent with the findings of Smith (2001): the use motivation for people to watch the related shows are surveillance and entertainment, and also support the thinking of Wang (2004): watch these kinds of shows can help people to release pressure and soothe discontent. Besides, peer influence is one of the reasons for people to watch the political satire show. People watch certain satire show because their friends watch it or recommend it.

In addition, viewing frequency can successfully predict people's internal political efficacy and political cynicism. This finding coincide the prior findings of Sweetser and Kaid (2008) that readers of blogs with political satire are more cynical and also own higher political efficacy. The reasons could be that people obtain political knowledge through political satire show or blogs (Katerina-Eva, 2010; Sweetser & Kaid, 2008), and by so doing their internal efficacy about politics is increased. And the higher frequency the audiences have viewed political

satire shows, the less they would trust the government (Tsfati, Tukachinsky, & Peri, 2009), watching satire shows is thus positively correlated to cynicism (Kwak & Campbell, 2011).

Yet, the results also show that people tend to have higher political cynicism than political efficacy after viewing *Mr. Brown Show*. What are the possible reasons that lead to the above outcome? We believe it is because even though the *Mr. Brown Show* is able to provide different points of view from that of the mainstream media, the program tends to make comments in an ironic way, offers sharp criticisms about the government's policies, and on the other hand tends not to detail about the political issues, thus leads to people's higher political cynicism than political efficacy.

Moreover, the results appear that internet use can predict political efficacy and cynicism, but traditional media use is not significantly correlated with the above dependent variables. It's not too surprising when considering traditional media are under government's strictly regulation in Singapore, the political messages shown on these kinds of platform are impossible to be cynical. In addition, people tend to have stereotyped thinking about traditional media's reporting, one-sided reports are hard to get people's interest and of course won't lead to people's higher political knowledge or let them feel better informed about politics and government than other channels do. On the other hand, Internet with its alternative perspectives and freedom for online political discussions attracts Singaporeans seeking online political information not available in the mainstream media, and thus leads to their internal efficacy. However, the above rich information shown on the new platform tends to be critical toward the government, thus might also lead to people's political cynicism.

Below we would like to acknowledge the limitation of this study. Although our sample was drawn from Nielsen's Singapore Cyber Panel database, a credible database in Singapore that covers a wide spectrum of professions and age groups; it is not a probability sample of all Internet users. It raises the issue of the representative sampling and generalization. Although this is a common problem with web surveys (Schillewaert, Langerak, & Duhamel, 1998), future studies might have to figure out a better way to solve this problem.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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