THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL SATIRE SHOW ON PEOPLE'S POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE, POLITICAL EFFICACY, AND POLITICAL CYNICISM—VIEWERS VS. NON-VIEWERS IN THE 2014 TAIPEI MAYOR ELECTION

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Abstract-Political satire show has gained its flourishing popularity this decade no matter in the east or the west. Many studies pointed out that through viewing political satire show, just like some other political involvement, people will thereby gain some knowledge of political issues. Political knowledge thus increases naturally. In addition, some other research found that the viewing frequency of political satire show is highly correlated with citizen's political efficacy. The more they watch, the more they will believe they are capable of understanding politics. Nevertheless, some scholars argued that watching political satire show might lead to people's political cynicism. The disagreement of the research findings proposes a question about whether those who watch political satire show will have higher or lower political knowledge, political efficacy or political cynicism when compared with that of the non-viewers. Crazy Pot is the most famous political satire show in Taiwan. Formerly known as Everybody Speak Nonsense, Crazy Pot is known to everybody. However, the show has never been studied if its viewing is correlated with people's political knowledge, political efficacy or political cynicism. Based on this reason, this study applied telephone survey to interview 839 citizens collected by random sampling during the 2014 Taipei Mayor election, and compared the political knowledge, efficacy and cynicism between the viewer and the non-viewer of the Crazy Pot. The results showed that the viewers tended to have higher political knowledge about the campaigning issues, no matter they watched the show via TV or via Internet. However, in comparing the political efficacy and political cynicism between the two groups, there is no significant difference between the viewer and the non-viewer.

I. INTRODUCTION

What is political satire show? 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.

In the United States, political satire shows have been very popular in the last decade (Brinson& Winn, 2007). Among them, the most indicative political satire show is The Daily Show with Jon Stewart (Jones & Thompson, 2009). According to the finding of Brewer & Marquardt (2007), more than half of the story plots in the show were about political themes and international affairs, which are very similar to Crazy Pot, the most popular satire show in Taiwan when both programs were talking about current events or mocking political phenomenon.

Crazy Pot, which was first broadcasted on April 12, 2014 and aired every weekend, focused on the current and significant events. It was a new form of politicalcomedy show based on four former Taiwanese satire shows-- 2100 Everybody Talks Nonsense, Everybody Talks Nonsense II–Hot Pot, Largest Political Party and Largest Political Party II–Big News. These five TV shows all belong to the Everybody Talks Nonsense series, which is the greatest political satire TV series in Taiwan and had also caught attention of the international community including Japan and the United States. Every week, the "most depressed guest of the week" was invited to the show, expressing their opinions and feelings in a way of mocking or imitating to relief the disappointment to the government or the society. By criticizing the politics sarcastically, the show provided people a platform to release the resentment and anger against politics, which can moderate the political conflict and confrontation in Taiwan (Wu, 2006 ; Kuang, 2006 ; Wang, 2010). In view of that the political satire show is so welcomed; this study

tries to explore what kind of impact will be brought to the audience. Fox, Koloen & Sahin (2007) pointed out that during election, The Daily Show was much closed to the real substantial coverage of campaign, it covered similar messages broadcasted by radio or television news, and the messages provided a lot of political and foreign affairs knowledge, which might bring some influences on democracy (Brewer & Cao, 2005; Holbert, Lambe, Dudo & Carlton, 2007; Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2005). For instance, Lyttle (2001) and Young（2004）found that viewing frequency was positively correlated with people's internal political efficacy. The above studies presented the positive effects of political satire shows, but some other scholars also found negative impacts of the related shows. Baum (2002, 2003) and Patterson (2000) found that soft news that overemphasized some trivial, insignificant events played down the importance of public affairs issues and even more simplified these issues, which might have some influences on citizen's attitude and behavior toward political issues. In addition, Baumgartner & Morris (2006) also found that viewing The Daily Show might have some negative impacts on citizen's political trust and political participation.

Since no scholar in Taiwan has explored the related impacts found by the above studies, this study will try to figure out if the viewers of political satire show will have higher or lower political knowledge, political efficacy and political cynicism compared with that of the non-viewers.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method of this study was telephone survey by which 839 Taipei citizens aged 20 and above were interviewed from November 1, 2014 (3 weeks before the polling day of Taipei Mayor Election) to November 27, 2014. In order to know if the viewer's political knowledge, political cynicism and political efficacy are significantly different from the non-viewers', 363 samples collected for this study are viewers and 476 samples are non-viewers. Using random stratified sampling, the sample satisfied quotas for age and gender according to the 2013 population census. The Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) was conducted in Chinese and Taiwanese each lasting about 20 minutes.

III. MEASUREMENT

Political knowledge

Political knowledge was measured by the following indexies:

1. Which Taipei mayoral candidate had fallen into the controversy of female discrimination that eventually decreased his/her approval rating?
2. Which Taipei mayoral candidate planned to build 50,000 rent-only units in the city, provide rental subsidies, and work on the program of government-initiated urban renewal to solve the housing problem?
3. Which Taipei mayoral candidate's campaign commercial of "Food safety" was accused to copy a lottery TV commercial in America?
4. Which event made the team of Sean Lien spend 1.5 million NT dollars to buy the front page advertisement of four top newspapers in Taiwan to accuse the team of Ko Wen-je of blackening Sean Lien's name?
5. 5. There was a scandal exploded when Legislator Lo Shu-lei accused Ko Wen-je of corruption, tax evasion and money laundering through his use of the shared account set up for the hospital's Surgical Intensive Care Unit team while he headed the unit. What was the scandal called? (1)MJ 149 (2) MG 149 (3) MG129 (4) MJ 129
6. Which Taipei mayoral candidate, when proposing a public housing project, planned to relocate the Taipei City Mortuary Services First Funeral Parlor, with the vacated land to host public housing, and generate urban renewal in its surrounding area?

For each of the answers of the above questions, it will be coded as "1" if the answer is correct, and coded as "0" if the answer is incorrect. Therefore 0-6 points represents the degree of political knowledge of the respondents.

Internal political efficacy

According to the suggestion of Niemi, Craig and Mattei (1991), internal political efficacy were measured by the two following questions:

1. I feel that I have pretty good understanding of the important political issues;
2. I think that I am better informed about politics and government than most people (Cronbach's alpha= .82).

A 5-point Likert scale where 1 was "strongly disagree" and 5 was "strongly agree." Political cynicism The items used to measure the variable of political cynicism were developed according to Pinkleton and Austin, Peng and Lee. 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= .78). A 5-point Likert scale where 1 was "strongly disagree" and 5 was "strongly agree"

IV. RESULTS

According to Table 1, we know that the political knowledge about the election campaign of both the viewers and the non-viewers are low. For the viewers, the average number of the questions answered correctly is 2.8; for the non-viewers, the average number is 1.84.

In addition, the number of the viewers and the non-viewers are much closed when agreeing to that they have pretty good understanding of the important political issues and distrust the government or politicians.

Table 1 Mean for political knowledge, political cynicism and political efficacy

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Political knowledge			
Viewer	2.80 (1.62)	0	6
Non-viewer	1.84 (1.45)	0	6
Political efficacy			
Viewer	3.34 (1.00)	1	5
Non-viewer	3.24 (0.99)	1	5
Political cynicism			
Viewer	3.84 (0.82)	1	5
Non-viewer	3.74 (0.90)	1	5

Note: The number in the parentheses is standard deviation.

In order to know if the viewer's political knowledge, political cynicism and political efficacy are significantly different from the non-viewers', paired t-test analysis was applied. Based on the results of the Table 2, we know that the viewers tend to have higher political knowledge than the non-viewers ($t=8.99$, $p<.001$). However, the viewers' political cynicism ($t=1.61$, $p>.05$) and political efficacy ($t=1.52$, $p>.05$) are not significantly different from the non-viewers'.

Table 2 Mean difference for political knowledge, political cynicism and political efficacy (viewer vs. non-viewer)

	Mean Difference	*t*	Significance
Political knowledge (Viewer vs. Non-viewer)	.96	8.99***	<.001
Political cynicism (Viewer vs. Non-viewer)	.10	1.61	>.05
Political efficacy (Viewer vs. Non-viewer)	.11	1.52	>.05

Note: Mean differences were tested through paired-sample t tests.

CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

A lot of studies proved that political satire shows with discussions of political related issues will thus provide rich political information and increase audience's political knowledge. For instance, Cao (2008) believed that watching this kind of programs might increase voter's political knowledge. Graber（2003）also pointed out that video footage was important for people's political learning and he believed that watching these kinds of entertainment news with political message just like another kind of political involvement. The results of this study also show that the viewers of the Crazy Pot are more likely to have higher political knowledge than the non-viewers in Taiwan. The results are consistent with what the prior scholars had found. The more they watch the related shows, the higher understanding they will have about the political issues.

In other dimensions, some scholars worried about the viewing of political satire show might be correlated with people's political cynicism. The phenomenon of political distrust, also referred to as "political cynicism," is an aversion toward the political system, including the officials and institutions (Perloff & Kinsey, 1992). In the words of Pinkleton and Austin (2002), political cynicism is voters' disgust of the government and politicians. Nevertheless, based on the results of this study, the viewers of the political satire show are not more likely to have higher political cynicism. The reason could be the audiences were able to distinguish the mock from the truth. Since the performances were to mimic the politicians, the show might be viewed as a drama program rather than a political news program, all the critics to the politicians became some kinds of entertainment news. The impact of the viewing on people's political attitude is naturally not so significant.

Based on the above findings, we know that the viewers of political satire shows did not have higher political cynicism than the non-viewers. But will the viewers have higher political efficacy? The results also showed that viewers don't tend to have higher internal political efficacy than the non-viewers. The reason could be they treated the satire show as a kind of entertainment show, the motivation of watching the show could be just for fun. If it is for the reason of having fun, they of course won't treat the knowledge they obtained from the shows to be serious and can even help them to understand the complicated politics. Of course, the speculation needs further studies.

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