

# Media and Voting Behavior in Surabaya City, Indonesia

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**Abstract.** Various types of media have experienced rapid development, along with the acceleration of the advancement of information technology and telecommunications. Internet-based and social media rapidly challenge conventional media such as newspapers, radio, and television. Considering that there is a shift of media usage by society, the influence of each media on people's lives, including politics, also undergoes changes. This study discusses the relationship between media and voting behavior in elections, both in legislative elections (Pileg), presidential elections (Pilpres), and mayoral election (Pilwali), in Surabaya. This study looked at how various media, either print media, electronic media, online media on the Internet, or social media, influence voter choice in elections. This study used a quantitative method by conducting surveys on respondents who had been selected from several existing populations. Respondents in this study were all voters registered in the final voter's list (DPT). The respondents were taken using the multistage random sampling method in Surabaya City. Besides being the largest city in Indonesia, Surabaya was chosen as the research location for having a diverse population and the largest media after Jakarta. This study also supports the previous studies that stated the media has a significant influence on voting behavior. Electronic media such as television gave the most dominant influence on the respondents their political attitude and behavior. A large amount of political news and content displayed on the television became the reason for such a dominating influence. In addition to political news, the television also featured talk shows related to political issues that were of concern to many parties and brought political figures or political candidates who were competing in regional head elections. When it comes down to voter segmentation, however, social media gave more significant influence, especially on beginner voters.

**Keywords:** media, influence, voting behavior

## 1 Introduction

This study aims to discuss the effect of media on voting behavior in general elections, including the legislative elections, presidential elections, and mayoral elections in Surabaya City. This study was specifically aimed at answering the questions of whether the variety of media influences voting behavior, whether voters' electoral experience also has an influence, and whether the influence of the recently popular social media more significant than the influence of other kinds of media. These questions arise from the existence of an array of media and from the fact that certain types of media are more preferred to the rest.

The undertaking of this study was driven by two main reasons. The first reason is that the inventions and rapid development of communications technologies have brought about the equally rapid development of media. Initially, during the tribal area, oral communications were prominent. Given that communication was conducted orally, communication processes took place directly without the use of media. The continuous industrial revolution then has resulted in the emergence of the advancement of information technology and telecommunications which brought about more varieties of media. If a classification is to be made of the media flourishing right now, there are at least three types of media that are—still—ubiquitous in society. The three media are (1) print media, such as newspapers and magazines, (2) electronic media, such as radio and television, and (3) social media, such as WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook.

Nonetheless, the intensity of use of the three groups of media has been undergoing shifts and dynamics. Social media development takes place like lightning and massively, in particular among youth. On the other side of the spectrum, users of print media are on a sharp decline. This is apparent in the reduction in total printed copies of newspapers and magazines, some of which even shut down their operations.

The second reason is concerned with the academic discourses on the effect of media on voting behavior. In general, as stated by Denis McQuail in his writing *Influence and Effects of Mass Media* (1979), media influence is still subject to heated debates. He went on saying, “Although much has been written by way of answer and a good deal of research carried out, it has to be admitted that the issue remains a disputed one—both in general about the significance of mass and in particular the likely effect of given instances of mass communication” (McQuail 1979: 7–8). Among the disputed is whether the media influence is direct or otherwise.

To what extent media affect voting behavior is also constantly contested. In a quote in Lazarsfeld et al.’s study (1944), RuiAntunes stressed, “The effect of the media in the electoral decision was minimal and that the decisive influence was the social groups to which they belonged” (2010: 146). At the same time, studies departing from political psychology approaches look into the importance of media in determining voting behavior, instead. On that matter, Sara BinzerHobolt stated, “Information affects the attitude-behavior relation because attitudes tend to be consistent with behavior to the extent that those attitudes are readily retrievable in behavioral situations” (2005: 79). The variety of information retrieved by the voters via media, such as one on the candidates, either as parties or individuals, becomes part of their considerations prior to making voting decisions.

Studies on the effect of media on voting behavior have been many [1]–[7]. Included are those regarding the effect of certain media like endorsements in newspapers[8], [9], television [10]–[14], and social media [15]–[17] on voting behavior. Yet, comprehensive research concerning media as a whole has been rare.

## **2 Method**

This research employed a survey method with the aim of examining which media were the most influential to the political attitude and behavior of the people of Surabaya City, especially in the presidential elections and the legislative elections of 2004, 2009, and 2014 and the mayoral elections of Surabaya of 2005, 2010, and 2015. The sample of this research was all people with voting right. The voters listed on the final voter's list (DPT) had equal opportunity to enroll as respondents. There were 384 of them, hired with the stratified random

sampling technique. In addition to primary data from direct interviews with the respondents, secondary data from relevant studies and other supporting data were also used in this research.

Questions on the respondents' characteristics, including the sub-districts they belonged to, gender, religion, education, occupation, and income, were asked through questionnaires. The respondents were also given questions of which media they believed to be the most credible, which information they most often access, the level of their knowledge of television-derived information, which media to have a strong influence on voter turnout, and which media to influence voter attitude and behavior in general and regional elections the most.

The respondents were proportionally distributed to each sub-district according to the area size and the number of voters. The data obtained from the field were entered into the computer using the SPSS ver. 17 programs and then subjected to cleaning for data errors. The analysis was undertaken by generalizing the data to the phenomena in society. A challenge was encountered in reaching all sample areas, which were under unequal developmental conditions.

### **3 Hypotheses**

Based on the phenomenon and the results of the existing research, the researchers developed the following hypotheses.

Ha : Media influence voting behavior in general/regional elections

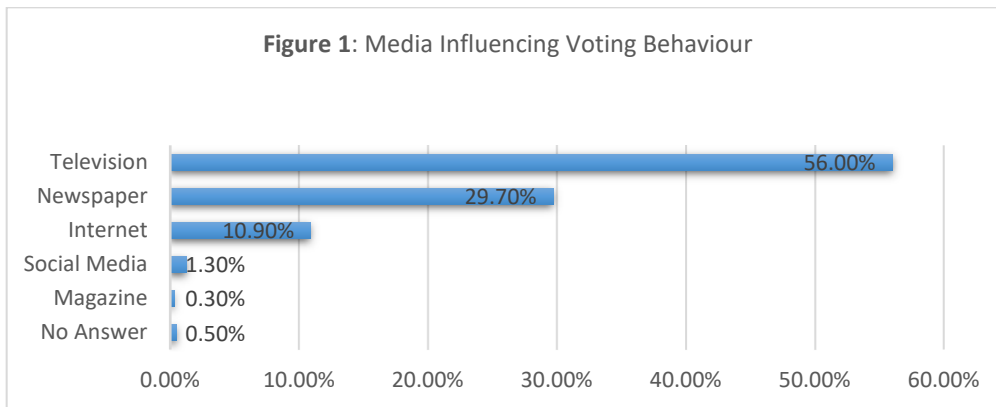
Ho : Media do not influence voting behavior in general/regional elections

### **4 Results and Discussion**

#### **Media Influence Voting Behavior**

The media act as an indispensable instrument for forwarding messages when a distance exists between the communicator and the communicant or when the communication is not conducted face to face. Recognizing the momentousness of media as an instrument for relaying the message, political parties, and candidates involved in the contest for political positions in general elections now turn to media. By these political parties and candidates, the media are used for campaigning their visions, missions, programs, and profiles. Media are also useful in image building and branding.

Nevertheless, how effective the media use in delivering the message will be inseparable from how widely the media are used by society and to which degree the message delivered through the media is used as a reference by each of the users. As is presented in Figure 1, the majority of the respondents (56%) chose TV as the medium they would most often refer to when making a choice. The second-most-influential media to their choice was newspapers (29.7%), followed by Internet-based media (10.9%). Radio and social media shared the fourth rank with 1.3% of the respondents choosing them. Meanwhile, magazines were the least favored by the respondents as influencing voter behavior (0.3%).



The Surabaya people were of the view that national TV channels were the most preferable. This had an implication for the higher number of national TV channels used as references by voters than that of local TV channels. The national TV channel most often used as a reference by the respondents was Tv One (19.5%), followed by KompasTV and MetroTV (9.1% each). As for the East Javanese TV channel, JTV was the leading channel (4.9%). Meanwhile, the most-read newspapers were the national newspaper published in Surabaya JawaPos (56.5%), followed by Kompas (19.3%) and local newspaper Surya (18%). The online media with the highest access rates via the Internet were [www.detik.com](http://www.detik.com) in the first (21.9%), [m.tempo.co](http://m.tempo.co) in the second (14.1%), and [www.kompas.com](http://www.kompas.com) in the third (10.4%). For radio, Suara Surabaya gained the most vote (46.1%), with Susana following behind (13.8%), while for social media, it was Facebook that was most popular among the respondents (42.4), with WhatsApp coming next (31.3). Magazines were the least preferred by the respondents as influencing voting behavior, but data revealed that the most popular magazine was read by 33.1% of the respondents.

That many respondents in Surabaya chose TV as a reference that influenced voting behavior confirms earlier studies. Gentzkow [10] argued that the political news quantity on a variety of media affected political attitude and behavior. Television came out as the most influential to voter attitude and behavior due to the immense amount of political news covered via this medium. Not only news reports, national television channels also held dialogs related to political issues. The inquiry by Lawson and McCann [12] into Mexican presidential elections revealed that television had a significant effect on voting behavior. This was inextricably tied to the electoral materials broadcast through television and the increased range for voters.

Television being a leading reference in electorate decision was inextricable from the fact that television offered plenty of content variations related to politics such as news reports and political dialogs. In respondents' estimation, the news reports, political dialogs, and talkshows on TvOne, MetroTV, and KompasTV were credible.

Every media coverage, if presented on a continuous basis, may construct public opinions. Established public opinions will in turn influence one's political attitude and behavior. On the one side, as stated by Kendall, K. E. and Paine, S. C. [18] in *A Basic Model of Candidate Image Formation*, media set agendas on particular political issues. Candidates' message and behavior are propagated via media and made a discourse among the wider public. From the discourse developing in wider community comes public opinion, which ultimately affects the community in their candidate selection and choice.

Viewed from the size of each medium's influence in general, it was television, newspapers, and the Internet that had the highest influence. Television came out as the most influential among the media with 54.5% of the respondents opting for it, while 20.5% and 18.2% of the respondents picked the Internet and newspapers as the second- and third-most-influential, respectively.

Media's powerful influence was noticeable in the 2010 and 2015 mayoral elections of Surabaya. Tri Rismaharini, who in the 2010 election of mayor was a former bureaucrat with a close intimacy with the media, was able to triumph over rival mandate coming from the internal of the media ArifAffandi (then a Jawa Post journalist). Despite being a senior journalist with JawaPos, he failed to dominate socialization media, especially print ones. The respondents were attracted more to Tri Rismaharini (Risma) who established an image of a person with a strong work ethic and high awareness of green spaces in high-temperature city Surabaya. Risma's image started to take form when she served as Head of City Park Service and amassed achievements in park development in Surabaya City.

The size of media influence on voting behavior can be seen in Table 1. The table above is a recapitulation of the size of the media effect on voting behavior in every election. During every legislative election, presidential election, and mayoral election, media affected the respondents' voting behavior. According to the table above, media significantly affected voting behavior in every election ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). Data showed that media influenced the respondents' choices in every election by providing information on political news, political party's programs, and candidate's programs, which could shape an image or public opinion, justifying why a certain party or candidate was worthy of being elected.

**Table 1. Media Influence and Voting Behavior**

	Pearson Chi-Square	df	Asymptotic Significance (2- sided)	C	P
Pileg 2004	92.749	48	0.000	0.441	0.000
Pileg2009	110.649	48	0.000	0.473	0.000
Pileg 2014	72.147	54	0.050	0.398	0.050
Pilpres2004	93.937	30	0.000	0.443	0.000
Pilpres 2009	110.649	48	0.000	0.421	0.000
Pilpres 2014	31.292	12	0.002	0.274	0.002
Pilwali 2010	62.958	30	0.000	0.375	0.000
Pilwali 2015	22.129	12	0.036	0.233	0.036

Political parties and candidates were aware that continuously carried out socialization would have an effect on respondents' choice. Socialization conducted in this way would raise awareness of the parties or candidates racing in the elections. This is because the majority of the electorates had not settle on any one of the parties or candidates prior to elections, and even if they did have a choice, there was always a possibility that they would change their minds. Incessant socialization would construct public opinions, which eventually would influence the political attitude and behavior of the community. This is in line with Czudnowski's statement that in the United States, there is an imperative variable that will

determine voters' choice, namely party identification (party ID). Party ID is a psychological bond formed by continual socialization that allows a voter to sympathize with a political party or candidate.

### **Voting Experience Influences the Media Accessed**

It became apparent that the respondents' media preference was influenced by their voting experience. The more the respondents' experiences in exercising their voting right in general elections or elections of the regional head, the more they were inclined to use media to retrieve political information such as the information on party's or candidate's programs. Older respondents had more experience in using a wide variety of media, such as print media, electronic media, Internet media, and social media.

As for first-time voters, political information was usually gained via contemporary media, such as Internet media and social media. The advent of the Internet of Things resulted from communications and information technologies that caused the Internet and social media use to escalate, especially in youth circles. It was the two-way communication feature offered to which youths took a liking. Youngsters also had considerable mastery of Internet media as their daily activities were inseparable from the Internet. As with other things, young people primarily relied on the Internet to access political news as it was faster, cheaper, and wider in range.

The respondents also followed political news they used as references in electing a political party, president, or head of the region. Respondents falling into the young category mostly accessed the Internet and social media for political news. Twenty percent of the respondents who voted for the first time accessed social media to gain information on political parties or candidate's programs and 4.8% gained political information from Internet media.

The data above confirmed earlier studies that social media like YouTube and Twitter had an effect on youth political participation, including in terms of voting behavior [16], [17] The majority of young people no longer used conventional media like newspapers, books, and the like as sources of political information, unlike older voters.

It was the increasingly significant influence of social media on voting behavior, especially of young people, that led political parties and politicians to begin adopting these media as a key instrument in communicating with and influencing voters. The fact that the number of Internet users is enormous makes it a must for political parties in an urban setting to use Internet technologies because social media development in the coming years may affect vote (Biswaset al, 2014).

For all that, respondents with four- to five-time-voting experience and those who had voted over five times in their lives were more varied in their way to find political information. They used conventional media such as TV, newspapers, and radio as well as the Internet to access political information and gain knowledge of a party's or candidate's programs. It was extremely rare for respondents with much voting experience, characterized by old age, to use social media to gain information on the political party's or candidate's programs. Table 2 indicates the relationship between voting experience and type of media used by the respondents to access political news or gain knowledge of the political party's or candidate's programs.

**Table 2.** Chi-Square Tests\* Voting Experience and Type of Media

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	95.857 <sup>a</sup>	24	.000
Likelihood Ratio	80.434	24	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	36.454	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	384		

a. 27 cells (77.1%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

The Pearson Chi-Square ( $X^2 = 95.857, df=24$ , and  $p=0.000$ ). Thus, it was concluded that there was a relationship between voting experience and the type of media used by the respondents to obtain political information. Because the contingency coefficient (C) was 0.447 and  $p = 0.000$ , it could be concluded that the relationship between the voting experience of the respondents and the media used was significant.

## 5 Conclusion

Media in modern society are not new, and the development at the present is quick as lightning. Such media development makes it easy for anyone to gain information in an instant. Technologically speaking, even conventional media like television can provide visualization highly attractive to the audience. Technological advancement also has an effect on the increasingly widespread access to the Internet. The Internet now has become a primary necessity for society, either for communication or for other purposes such as economic transactions.

The type of media most dominant in influencing the political attitude and behavior of the respondents in Surabaya City was television for the high quantity of political news content covered. Not only political news, but television also featured talk shows related to political issues that became a concern to many and brought in political figures or candidates running for head of regional elections. On the contrary, the national and local television channels in Indonesia often covered political news, even to the point that they raced to bring in and interview more political figures on their talk shows. It would increase their appeal if the talk shows could invite or interview political personalities that were in the midst of implications in cases like corruption or heads of region rising due to their achievements. It was thus not unusual that bad news turns into good news.

Voting experience also influenced the respondents' accessed media. Those who had voted for more than four times tended to use television, newspapers, radio, and the Internet to gain political information or news. They were inclined to use a range of media to access credible

and reliable news. Meanwhile, those who voted for the first or second time, or millennial voters, tended to heavily use the Internet and social media to gain political information.

Television was a dominant medium in influencing the vote. It was considered to be able to influence political attitude and behavior due to the large amount of news reporting and shows like talk shows that raised political issues or invite political figures is allowed. It also easily reminded the audience of their participation in every general election, as was stated by William A. Glaser. While social media influenced more on young voters.

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