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정치학 석사학위 논문

**Political Sophistication, Media Usage, and
Candidate Evaluation:
The 18th Presidential Election in Korea**

2014 년 8 월

서울대학교 대학원
정치학과
서민희

Political Sophistication, Media Usage, and
Candidate Evaluation:
The 18th Presidential Election in Korea

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Abstract

Political Sophistication, Media Usage, and Candidate Evaluation: The 18th Presidential Election in Korea

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This paper focuses on the relationship between candidate evaluations and information consumption with an emphasis on media types. In election studies, candidate character and traits have been one of the important factors that have an influence on voting decisions. Because voters' evaluations toward a candidate is based on their candidate preference, political interest, and rational judgement of candidate traits, candidate evaluations represent a significant part of public opinion formation as it directly connects to the electorates' vote choice. Thus, how voters make a summary judgement toward a candidate has been

studied as a critical independent variable that predicts voting decisions. Despite this fact, not many studies analyze candidate evaluations as dependent variables and examine how they are constructed and varied. Therefore, in this thesis, candidate evaluations are analyzed as the subject of study. This thesis focuses on how candidate evaluations are shaped as well as which independent variable carries the most power in explaining variations in candidate evaluations.

Most voters shape their opinions toward a candidate based on the political information they receive through various types of media. In this context, I focus on the “information” as the critical independent variable to explain candidate evaluations. However, there are not enough studies on how voters receive information, and how those information shape voters’ opinion toward a candidate and, ultimately, vote choices. In this respect, Zaller presents the “political sophistication” variable in the voters’ information processing procedure. Political sophistication refers to the extent to which an individual has an interest and understanding in politics. According to Zaller, voters have different information processing procedures with regard to their political sophistication, and the difference in this procedure generates varying formations of opinion toward a candidate.

Thus, it can be hypothesized that the media's influence on conveying political information affects voters' opinion toward the candidate, and an individual's different information processing procedures affects candidate evaluations when a voter faces additional information. Considering other important factors that have an impact on candidate evaluations and voting choices, I empirically test the hypotheses using online panel survey data collected for the 18th presidential election in Korea.

Results show that media usage and salience of issues have an influence on candidate evaluation. Also, as expected from Zaller's Receive-Accept-Sample model, it turns out that political sophistication is the critical factor that varies the information processing procedure of individuals, and it consequently affects voters' opinion toward a candidate by accepting or rejecting additional information they receive. Ultimately, it shows that positive evaluations of the candidate have a strong relationship with the vote decision.

This research has important implications in that it empirically tests Zaller's RAS model on Korean voters and suggests a new approach on judging the influence of information and its medium media on candidate evaluations. Thus, it provides the linkage between information,

voters' candidate evaluations, and vote choice.

Key words: candidate evaluations, political sophistication, media usage, receive-accept-sample model

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I. Introduction

Following the funnel of causality model from the Michigan school of thought that explains voting behavior for the last 50 years, previous election studies explained voting behavior with partisanship, stance of issue and policy, social context, and candidate traits. As media and election campaigning continues to develop in recent elections, voters are able to see candidates more often and closely through television and the Internet. Because the very meaning of an election is for citizens to select the representatives who are delegated the rights of the citizens, citizens choose the candidate who is the most suitable for the position that is needed. Being able to examine candidates easily through media, people are able to pay more attention to candidate character and his or her traits compared to other factors when selecting the candidates.

The importance of candidate character is apparent especially in high profile elections such as the presidential election. Since the president represents the nation, related scandals or wrong leadership guidance might bring a fatal blow to the nation. On the other hand, other factors

such as election pledges, issues, and party have a greater influence than the effect candidate character has on low-profile elections where candidate traits or images may not necessarily reflect the voters' best interest (Lee and Lee 2000).

Surely, candidate traits, issues, and party factors all contribute to explain political behavior of the voters; they have a trade-off relationship with respect to each other and are not mutually exclusive. However, many previous studies on presidential elections have empirically shown that voters' preference toward candidates is the most influential factor that determines vote choices (Muts 2010; Wattenberg 1994). For example, research results from the 2008 presidential election in the U.S. agree that president Obama's victory lies in the fact that his personality and individual traits, such as charisma and leadership, successfully mobilized young voters, democrats, and minorities to vote (Kenski, Hardy & Jamieson 2010; Bligh and Kohles 2009). Acknowledging the importance of candidates themselves in elections, recent studies specifically focus on candidate character and traits when studying voting behavior.

Especially in the Korean election, parties seem to be more responsive and unstable compared to parties in the U.S (Kim 2008). Moreover, ideological stance and policy position of parties seem to

converge to the middle ground, or at least overlap in large parts. According to the “attitude survey about politics and democracy” carried out at the Institute of Korean Political Science, the candidate’s party affiliation was the least important factor that had an influence on the vote decision in the 2012 presidential election. Thus, it seems like the candidate himself obviously has a significant influence on electorates’ vote decision (Lee and Lee 2000; Lee 1998). In addition, as regional antagonism fades as each party appoints candidates from opposite regional influences as of late, the importance of candidate character and his or her traits is magnified. In actuality, in the 18th Korean presidential election, candidate character was one of the most influential factors that determined the election result. This meant that for the first time, chronic regionalism and party competition was less influential in the election as all two candidates – Park Geun-hye, and Moon Jae-in – were from the neighboring regions, and each party’s policy stance seems to share a common ground in areas such as economic democratization, which was one of the most salient issues. Moreover, each election campaign presented slogans such as “Candidate Ahn phenomenon” and “Candidate Park effect” that show candidates’ traits well.

Thus, when citizens exercise the right to vote in elections like the 18th Korean presidential election, they must equip themselves with accurate political knowledge and learn related political information in order to vote for the candidate who reflects their best interests (Downs 1957). Based on the information provided, a voter shapes one's opinion by considering one's interests and determining the stance of candidates, and subsequently decides for whom to vote for. In this context, information shapes voters' evaluations of a candidate and is a critical factor that determines an election result. Thus, this study focuses on the "information" as the critical independent variable.

However, previous studies rarely examined how candidate evaluations are constructed and how an individual processes information he or she receives, and how additional information affects one's opinion formation, especially candidate evaluations. "How do voters evaluate the candidates when they face new information?" To answer this question, this thesis expands upon previous studies on the relationship between information and opinion formation (Jacoby 1986; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Zaller 1992). In this respect, Zaller presents the role of "political sophistication" in the voters' information processing procedure. Political sophistication refers to the extent to which an individual has an interest

and understanding in politics (Zaller 1992). According to Zaller, voters have different information processing procedures with regard to their political sophistication, and the difference in this procedure generates variations in opinion formation toward candidates.

In this context, it can be hypothesized that the media's influence on conveying political information affects voters' opinion toward a candidate, and an individual's different information processing procedures affects candidate evaluations. Thus, the variation in candidate evaluation differs depending on a voter's individual information processing procedure when a voter receives new information. Considering other important factors that have an impact on candidate evaluations and voting choices, I empirically test the hypotheses using online panel survey data collected for the 18th presidential election in Korea.

Candidate evaluations have been studied as an independent variable but rarely have been studied as an outcome in and of itself. Thus, this thesis provides the linkage between information, voters' candidate evaluations, and vote choice in the Korean election by analyzing candidate evaluation as a subject of the study and by examining the causal relationship it has with information and media usage.

The remaining parts of this thesis are organized as follows. Chapter 2 reviews the existing literature on the dependent variables, candidate evaluations, and key independent variables, such as the role of information, media usage, and media types. Here, I highlight the limits of the related previous studies that used limited methodology and trends by overlooking the importance of candidate evaluations in election studies. Afterwards, I clarify its importance as the subject of the study. Moreover, I analyze how information is related with media, the role of media as a medium of information, and its effects – priming, framing, and agenda setting – and types – traditional and new. After that, I clarify the limitation of previous studies that did not acknowledge individual information processing procedures in their analysis, and I clarify its importance. Chapter 3, 4, and 5 are the main parts of this thesis. Chapter 3 proposes a research design, hypotheses, and analysis models based on the Zaller’s individual information processing procedure model as a theoretical foundation. To test the suggested models, I introduce the data and demonstrate operationalization of variables in chapter 4. Chapter 5 shows and interprets the results of the analysis models that chapter 3 suggested using online panel survey data. In the last chapter, I summarize

the findings, clarify the limitations of this thesis, and suggest future research directions.

II. Theoretical Review

1. Candidate Evaluations

According to the funnel of causality model from the Michigan school of thought, it is generally accepted that party identification, issue, and candidate traits are the key factors that determine the vote choices (Campbell et al. 1960). Apart from other factors, candidate traits receive more attention recently because of the exceptional development in media and education in the societies. The information flow have been changed as technology develops, and now voters are more exposed to candidates' appearance, image, personality, and traits, especially through television. Moreover, as voters receive advanced education and attain a higher quality of political knowledge, they are able to choose the most suitable candidate for the position that is needed (Lee 2011). Thus, as voters have a better understanding and more information of the candidate's profile, ideological stance, and policy position due to easy accessibility of information, their choices depend on the candidate him or herself. Especially in the Korean presidential election, as chronic regionalism

fades (Kang 2010), strong party identification becomes absent due to its unstableness (Kim 2008), and ideological stance as well as policy position of each party seem to overlap in a large part. The candidate him or herself ends up having more explanatory power on the electorates' vote decision.

As candidates matter more in the election, they appeal more to the mass and draw more votes if they have appropriate characters and traits as a representative. Previous studies also empirically show that a candidate's traits such as personality, appearance, image, and experience have an impact on vote decision (Miller and Shanks 1996; Page 1978). Thus, as there are many factors that influence vote choices, perceived candidates traits seem to have a greater impact on vote choices as of late. Because it is empirically shown that the candidate him or herself is the key factor that determines the election result, the candidate evaluation process that reflects voters' subjective opinion in the candidate also has the power of explaining voting behavior. As vote choices can be seen as picking the best evaluation among candidates, the voters' opinion in candidate traits and qualification is surely the critical factor that influence vote choices. In effect, the most common survey question in regards to

candidate evaluations, the candidate feeling thermometer¹, is empirically proven to be the best predictor of vote choice (Muts 2010; Wattenberg 1994). Other dimensions of candidate evaluations, such as a leadership, are also proven to have a significant influence on vote choices or political predisposition (Kwon 1988; Lee 2003; Rhee 1998). Thus, candidate evaluations are the key subject of study since it has an important influence on vote choices and enables the ability to predict the election result as well as to form the public opinion (Wattenberg 1991). Nonetheless, the subtle point here is that candidate evaluation and vote decision do not act in the same process because choosing one amongst substitutable options and evaluating every option accompany different psychological processes (Johnson and Russo 1984), so it is also important to analyze the linkage between candidate evaluation and vote choice.

Candidate evaluations are commonly defined as the summary judgement of a candidate by voters based on the opinion they have on his or her individual traits, ability, integrity, and reliability, from negative to positive (McGraw 2011). Thus, the important point is that candidate evaluation is the voters' opinion on the candidate, which can be formed in multi-dimensions and is not limited to one dimension (Zaller 1992).

¹ An imaginary scale ranges from 0 to 100. 0 indicates that a respondent's evaluation is very pessimistic to a given person, group, or issue, and 100 indicates that the respondent's evaluation is very optimistic (Nelson 2008).

Previous research has shown that candidate evaluations are generally formed in five dimensions: competence as a leader, reliability, integrity, charisma, and personal ability (Miller et al. 1986). Typically, these five dimensions are divided into two traits: personal traits and candidate qualification (Druckman, Jacobs & Ostermeier 2004). For example, competence, reliability, and charisma belong to the candidate qualification category, and integrity as well as personal ability belongs to the personal traits category. Previous studies have empirically shown that among the various candidate traits, competence as a leader (or leadership) has more influence on vote choices than other factors (Markus 1982; Kinder 1986). Although there are multiple dimensions of candidate evaluations, most existing studies examine the application of only one dimension of candidate evaluation, in particular preference toward a candidate. Thus, this study expands upon previous studies and examines the two representative traits of a candidate, candidate qualification and personal traits.

Both observational and experimental studies have shown the determinants that shape candidate evaluation and the significant influence of candidate evaluations on voting behavior. McGraw (1993) shows how candidate evaluation varied by the salience of the issue and the level of

political sophistication of the voter. Rosenberg's experiment (Rosenberg et al 1986) has shown that voters infer candidates other qualities based only on the physical appearance of candidate and its impact on vote choices is strong. Lenz and Lawson's experiment (Lenz and Lawson 2011) has also shown that less informed voters evaluate the candidate based on candidate image through television. Other findings in experimental research shows that voters make stereotypical evaluations of candidates based on the information they received; for example, policy position, gender, race, and party (Hayes 2005; Williams 1990). Especially research in communication has shown that the media's framing effect, priming effect, and agenda setting effect strongly impacts voters' political attitude and vote choices (Park, Ahn & Hahn 2013; Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007).

From these studies, it can be inferred that voters evaluate the candidate based on the information they receive. Existing studies explain this candidate evaluation process in two ways: memory-based and online process evaluations. The online process model describes how voters continuously update their evaluations of a candidate every time they face new information (Lodge, Steenbergen & Brau 1995). It has been empirically tested that candidate evaluations can be formed from the

immediate impression of the candidate or the first piece of information related to the candidate; and the evaluations can be updated with new information about the candidate (Lodge, Steenberge & Brau 1995). On the other hand, the memory based-model describes how voters make a summary judgement of a candidate based on their memory of all related information (Lau and Redlawsk 2006). However, the limitation of both processes is that voters cannot remember every detail of the information they received. Follow-up studies show that voters use online process and memory-based processes depending on their individual traits; politically sophisticated groups are prone to use the online process while the other groups tend to use memory-based (McGraw, Lodge, and Stroh 1990; McGraw & Dolan 2007). Thus, most existing studies agree on assuming a hybrid model of the two in explaining the formation of candidate evaluations (Just et al. 1996; Zaller 1992; McGraw 2011). Thus, it can also be inferred from this that evaluations formed before election campaigning are not fixed but flexible with additional information.

However, as a lot of previous studies have shown how much a candidate's individual traits have influence on voters' vote choices (Funk 1999; Pierce 1993), it seems to be overlooked how those individual traits are shaped and evaluated. This is because candidate evaluations have

been studied mostly as independent variables rather than dependent variables. Experimental studies are limited in reflecting the real world since they put too much control on the election environment; thus, this thesis is an observational study which focuses on candidate evaluations as dependent variables, explores the causal relationship they have with other independent variables, and examines the influence that each independent variable has on candidate evaluations.

2. Information in Election Studies

In an ideal democratic society, citizens make rational decisions based on their political knowledge and information (Lau and Redlawsk 1997, 2001). They equip themselves with accurate political knowledge and learn related political information to vote for the candidate who reflects their best interests (Downs 1957). Based on the information provided, a voter shapes his or her interests, determines the stance of candidates, and decides for whom they vote. Thus, information shapes voters' evaluation of the candidate and is a critical factor that determines an election result.

Previous studies on candidate evaluations have empirically shown that voters shape their opinion on candidates based on the information they receive (Lodge 1995). However, these studies are not taking into account individual information processes. Examining whether there is an individual difference in reaction when one receives additional information is a necessary fact to consider when analyzing the relationship between information and opinion formation of individual. According to previous literature, an individual's information process

depends on two dimensions. First is the institutional environment of provided information (Popkin 1991) and second is the political sophistication of voters (Converse 1964; Luskin 1987; Zaller 1991). In resonance to the institutional environment of provided information and the level of political sophistication of individuals, the ways and tone of the information changes and the information can be accepted or rejected by an individual.

1) Traditional Media and New Media

As I mentioned before, people receive information mostly through the media. Consequently, it is as important to consider the medium of information delivery as the information itself and the ground of its discussion (Hyuk-nam Kwon 2014). As a medium of information delivery, the institutional environment of information depends on the media. Generally, media is categorized into two types, traditional media and new media. Existing traditional media such as newspaper, radio, and television is characterized as one-sided and focus on information delivery while new media is characterized as digital, sharable, and two-sided in information delivery.

The radical transition in media lies in the development of technology and its advancement. Traditional media sources, including television, radio, and newspapers are in decline, even though television is still the most frequently used medium. In contrast, new media, such as the Internet and social media have undergone radical development and gained immense influence in the last ten years (Rainie 2012). The fundamental advantage that social media, the most popular medium among new media, has over more traditional forms is its interactivity and the informational independence among users. Compared to traditional mass media, such as newspapers and television, online environments permit people to discuss and express opinions on various topics in real time. In particular, social media and its SNS (Social Networking Services), such as Facebook, Myspace, and Twitter, have become very important in disseminating news among friends or the general public. Publicity on SNS is also distinct from that of traditional media, since it is also spread in real-time to millions of recipients. Old media also broadcasts information to everyone in the world, but they are limited in real-time broadcasting since newspapers need to be printed and television news need to be prepared and reported. Therefore, new media is considered as an effective political media source for political parties,

interest groups, and candidates because of its low cost and easy audience reach.

Due to the advantage of new media, Korean election campaigns have actively used the Internet for campaigning since 2006. Moreover, election campaigns using social networking services, such as Twitter and Facebook, have intensified in the U.S. since 2008. Following this pattern, the 18th Korean presidential election became the first election that allowed campaigning with social media. Now, social media is used as both campaigning and a news source.

Based on these two types of media (Dutta-Bergman 2010), preceding studies focused on how the media conveys political information to electorates and how the political behavior changes as they receive information. So far, many studies empirically prove that the relationship between media usage as an information source and political behavior of voters is strong (Kim, Kim, & Jin 2008). The research in communications and political communications also shows the framing effect, priming effect, and the agenda setting effect that the media have through both observational and experimental studies (Park, Ahn, & Hahn 2013; Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007). From existing research in political science, most studies agree that television has a greater candidate image

appeal to voters (Druckman 2003), in particular candidate debates (Schrott 1990).

Even though many studies have empirically shown the findings above, most of the causal relationship in these previous findings is not directly connected to the vote choices. Expanding from previous literature, this thesis also examines the variations in candidate evaluation generated from the difference in information delivery due to the types of media that electorates use as an information source. Because electorates shape their opinion toward candidates based on the information they receive, it can be hypothesized that there is a difference in candidate evaluations with regard to the types of media that voters use as an information source.

2) Political Sophistication

In an ideal democratic country, voters have an interest in politics and have a clear idea of political ideology, so that they are able to vote for the right candidate, which continues the virtuous cycle of democracy. However, starting from Converse (1964), most previous studies agreed

that interest in politics and the political sophistication² level of electorates are not sufficient enough to maintain or develop democracy (Campbell et al. 1960). Especially, Schumpeter maintains that citizens cannot evaluate the government because their level of political information is below the right level of making a correct political judgement (Schumpeter 1942). Also, the following studies tried to explain the reason why democracy is still undisturbed despite low political interest and sophistication of the masses.

Starting with the Downsian theory (Downs 1957), follow-up studies argue that voters who have low political sophistication can also make the same political decision as voters who have high political sophistication using the information shortcut, which they call the heuristics method (Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Lupia 1994). However, soon, the following studies empirically test that it is difficult for voters who have a low level of political sophistication to obtain information like how people who have a high level of political sophistication obtain information in the first place (Kuklinski and Quirk 2000). Because these studies suggest that people with low political sophistication requires

² There is slim difference between the terms “political sophistication”, “political awareness”, and “political knowledge”. Even though each definition has a unique definition, they are measured the same in most of the studies. Following previous studies, this thesis also assumes that political sophistication is commonly exchangeable with the other two (Zaller 1992).

significant political interest and political sophistication to obtain information in the first place, the argument of scholars who maintained the heuristic method is gaining more criticism than support.

On the contrary to Converse, Berelson maintain that citizens themselves can solve the deficiency of information, and thus, can make a political judgement (Berelson 1954). Subsequently, following studies show that not all citizens have the same level of political sophistication or political information and those differences in individual traits and information generate different political behaviors. Mazusky and Jacoby research shows that the difference in information distribution among voters results in differences in the political behavior of voters (Mazursky and Jacoby 1986). Similarly, Fishikin and Luskin empirically show that the difference in individual political knowledge changes individuals' information consumption and political behavior through political deliberation (Fishkin and Luskin 1999). Furthermore, the following studies empirically test that the more the voters consume information, the more constant their opinion and vote choices become (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996) and that voters' opinions are shaped by the information they consume, and the consistency of their opinion depends on their political sophistication (Zaller 1992).

As Schattschneider said, every citizen cannot be a representative in real world (Schattschneider 1960). Individuals might not always politically intelligent. However, they still can make a judgement based on their level of political sophistication. From the literature mentioned above, it can be inferred that individuals process information differently, and political sophistication is closely related to information processing. Especially in Korean election studies, only a few studies examined the political sophistication of Korean voters (Jae-Sung Ryu 2010) and relationship between information and political sophistication (Soyoung Lee 2011). However, those few studies about the relationship between information and political attitude (Song, Park & Han 2005; Seol 2008; Kim 2014) are limited in examining political attitude and do not make full connections to vote choices.

III. Information Process of Individuals

1. Theoretical Foundation: Zaller's receive-accept-sample model

Most previous studies overlook that individuals have different information processing procedures when analyzing the relationship between information and political behavior. Few studies analyze individual information processing procedures from a political point of view; these studies focus on voters' political sophistication by their information processing (Fishkin and Luskin 1999; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Here, political sophistication refers to the extent to which an individual has an interest and understanding in politics and the ability to judge politics with one's political predisposition. "Political sophistication", "political knowledge", and "political awareness" are measured the same in most of the studies even though each definition has a unique definition. Following the method of previous studies, this thesis also assumes that political sophistication is commonly exchangeable with the other two (Zaller 1992).

The findings from previous studies (Pierce 1993; Rhan 1993) on political sophistication and candidate evaluations show that if voters' political sophistication is low, they tend to make stereotypical evaluations based on candidate traits or party identification (McGraw 2011). On the contrary, when voters' political sophistication is high, they tend to have a consistent political preference in accordance with their existing political predisposition (Delli Carpinin and Keeter 1989; Zaller 1990; Luskin 1989).

Zaller's research distinguishes the ways of receiving information while also considering existing political predisposition and political sophistication. Zaller proposes the receive-accept-sample model (Zaller 1992) that explains individuals have different information processing procedures in regards to their political sophistication, and he empirically tests the hypotheses using NES (National Election Study) data in 1987. Zaller's model seems to be the most suitable to examine the linkage between the information, candidate evaluation, and vote choice. Therefore, this thesis uses Zaller's model as a theoretical foundation and examines how information influences candidate evaluation.

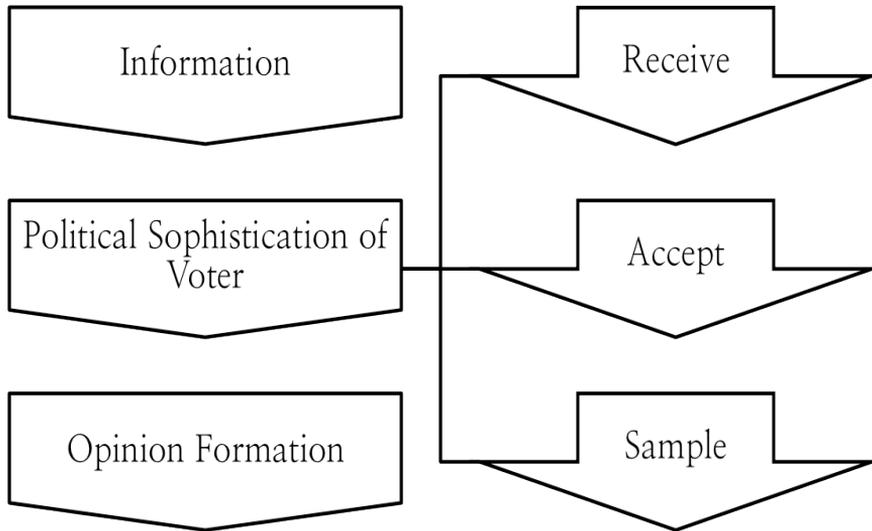
According to the RAS model, there are two ways of consuming information. The first is to "receive" it. By receiving the information,

people perceive it but do not feel the need to agree or disagree with it. The second is to “accept” it. By accepting the information, people accept it and thus strengthen their original predisposition. After receiving or accepting the information, they indicate which portion of it they think is the most important at the time. Then the “sampling” of information accompanies. People sample information from their memory, which is the most salient and recent. Thus, the RAS model predicts the likelihood of receiving additional information or accepting it as an opinion based on the level of individual political sophistication, and explains how individuals respond to the political information that they may encounter.

According to Zaller, the RAS model consists of four axioms:

- a. *Reception Axiom: If a person’s engagement and interest with an issue is greater, he or she receives the related information more.*
- b. *Resistance Axiom: A person tends to resist information or an argument that is inconsistent with his or her political predispositions.*
- c. *Accessibility Axiom: The more recent the consideration, the more easier to retrieve from the memory and use it.*
- d. *Response Axiom: Individuals answer survey questions that are closer to them.*

Figure 1. Schematized Zaller's Receive-Accept-Sample model



In addition, Zaller's RAS model assumes a) that political sophistication determines the consistency and the salience of opinion and b) that voters have multiple political preferences and attitudes. Inferred from reception axiom, Zaller shows that persons who are more politically sophisticated will be exposed to more political information; thus, they "receive" more information. However, these people are more selective in "accepting" information because of the resistance axiom; they will not accept the information unless the information is consistent with their original stance. Thus, in deep reflection and with distinct predispositions, they are very selective in accepting the information, and they will accept

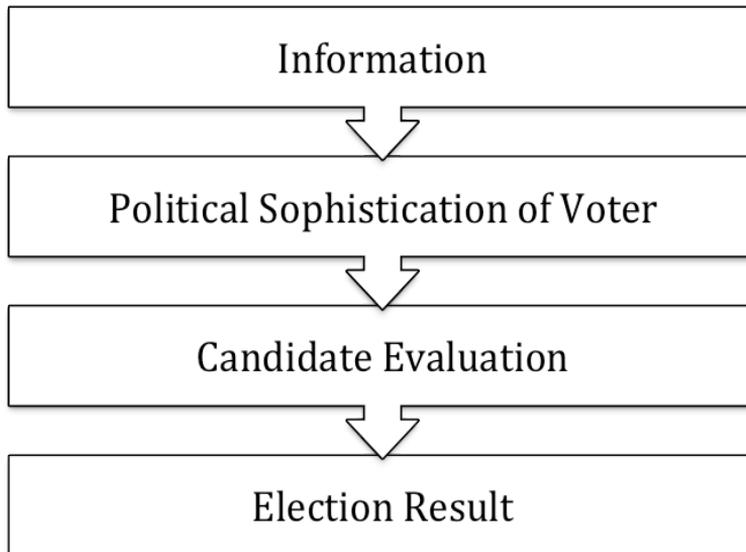
less. Moreover, people who are less politically sophisticated will accept less of the information that they receive because they receive less information (reception axiom). As a result, people who are less politically sophisticated are also more likely to be able to state their opinions since they are less influenced by information as they receive less. However, people who have medium level of political sophistication, the group between the two groups above, are affected by information effect the most. These people receive information at mediocre level, yet they are not as selective as people who have a high level of political sophistication.

While applying Zaller's RAS model to empirically test the Korean election, context is meaningful. It is possible to analyze how Korean voters receive-accept-sample the information based on their political sophistication through diverse types of media they use as an information source. The RAS model also predicts public opinion since voters form their opinions through the information processing procedure by receiving, accepting, and sampling information as the RAS model suggests. By testing the RAS model, it is possible to understand the public opinion and individual information process of Korean voters.

2. Political Sophistication and Media Usage on Candidate Evaluation

This study considers Zaller's RAS model as a theoretical foundation, and it empirically tests Zaller's RAS model on Korean voters and suggests a new approach on judging the influence of information and its medium, the media, on candidate evaluations. This study goes even further, and explores the linkage between candidate evaluation and vote decision. Here, I propose a hypotheses and an analysis model to test how much information has an explanatory power on candidate evaluations and the impact of each dimension of candidate evaluations on vote decision. This study overcomes the limitations of the previous studies by considering candidate evaluations as dependent variables and taking into account the difference in individual information processing procedures. Based on Zaller's information processing procedure model (RAS model) as a theoretical foundation, I suggest the following analysis model in this thesis.

Figure 2. Analysis model of the thesis



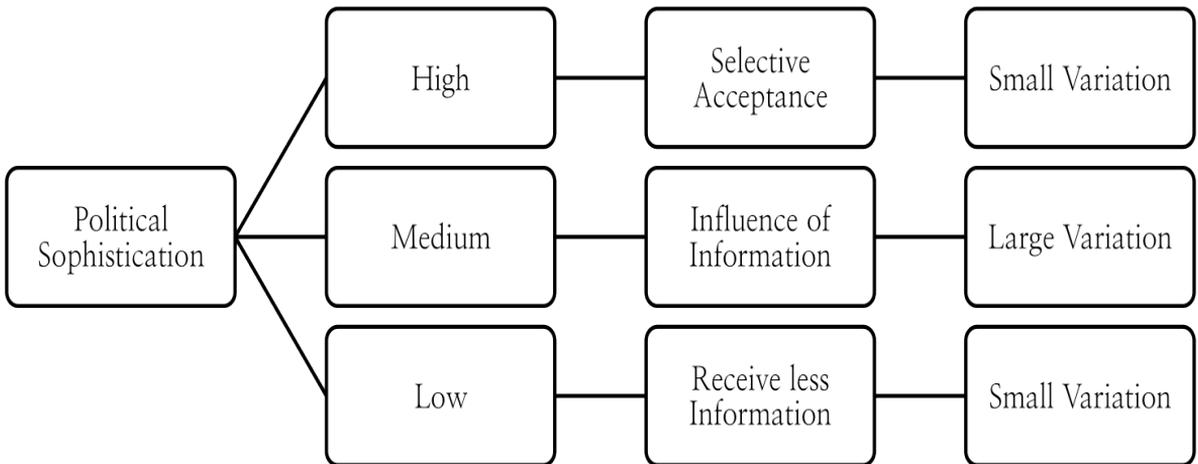
First, before examining how the political sophistication of a voter affects one's opinion toward a candidate during the reception of new information, it is necessary to know how the candidate evaluations are constructed in the first place. Following the previous studies on candidate evaluation, this thesis assumes that evaluations of candidates are memory-based and via online processing. Thus, the voters evaluate the candidate first, even before election campaigning, and the evaluations are continuously updated until the election night.

Next, this study tries to examine how voters evaluate the candidate when they receive additional information. The first hypothesis proposed here is that individuals process information differently based on

the Zaller's RAS model, and this generates a difference in evaluations of candidates. By dividing voters into three groups based on the level of political sophistication, Zaller's model shows that the level of political sophistication determines whether the voter will only receive or will accept the information they perceived. People who have a high level of political sophistication will be very selective in accepting information, and thus, their predisposition will not change easily. People who have a low level of political sophistication receive information less compared to the other two groups (according to the reception axiom), so the influence of information on this group is small. Yet, people who have a medium level of political sophistication receive a fair amount of information and flexibly accept it. Thus, the information influence is the largest in this group. Inferring from this, voters who have a medium level of political sophistication would be influenced by the information the greatest; their evaluations are likely to vary the greatest as they receive new information. Figure 3 is schematizing the flow above, and the main hypothesis is as follows.

Hypothesis 1. Variation of candidate evaluation will be greater for people who have a medium level of political sophistication compared to others.

Figure 3. Schematized first hypothesis



Generally, voters receive election information through media, and thus, as the medium of information, media's influence on voters' political behavior is significant. As described above, previous studies empirically tested and showed media's priming effect, framing effect, and agenda setting function with both observational data and experiment. As a primary source of obtaining political information in the recent election, the media have an influence on the methods of information delivery, and

this ultimately affects vote decision. Thus, because the focus of this study is to examine the relationship between information and candidate evaluations, it is important to take account of media types into the study model.

Media is divided into two types in large: traditional media and new media (Dutta-Bergman 2010). Even though voters use television the most for obtaining election information, there has been a radical development in new media, especially social media and social networking services. For example, in the presidential election of 2008, Obama motivated young and liberal voters by campaigning with Twitter, and studies show that it was an effective way to ‘Get Out The Vote’ (Pew Research Journalism Project 2009). As described above, it is empirically evident that the types of media affect voters’ political attitude and behavior. Most studies agree that television has a greater candidate image appeal to voters (Druckman 2003), especially through candidate debates (Schrott 1990). Because television provides the image, character, appearance, and persona of a candidate, which are strategically made to appeal to the mass by the party and by campaigning, it can be inferred that television is likely to show the positive side of the candidate. For example, Obama appeared in entertainment shows like *Late Night with*

Jimmy Fallon, The Ellen DeGeneres Show during campaigning, which eventually helped the people better understand his personal character. Will the types of media that voters use matter and have an influence on the evaluations of the candidate? From here, the second hypothesis can be inferred.

Hypothesis 2. Voters who use television as a news source more frequently would evaluate the candidate more positively than the voters who use other sources of media.

Next in explaining the voting behavior, candidate, issue, and party are the key factors that have an influence on vote choice. Because these are not mutually exclusive but interrelated factors, the role of the issue and the party on candidate evaluation should be considered. Following the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger 1957), individuals tend to avoid the paradox and seek consistency. Applying this, it can be hypothesized that voters who are affiliated with a certain party are likely to evaluate the candidate who belongs to their party more positively. Also, previous studies found the importance of an issue's influence on candidate evaluation (Rabinowitz, Prothro and Jacoby 1982; McGraw,

Lodege & Stroh 1990); if the issue is salient to a voter, one's candidate evaluations are deeply dependent on the candidate's issue stance. From here, the following hypotheses can be inferred.

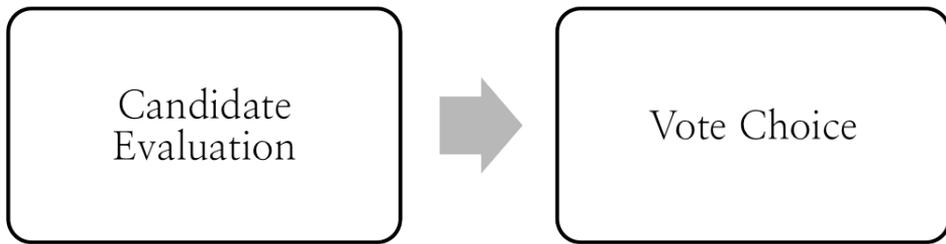
Hypothesis 3. Voters would positively evaluate a candidate who belongs to the party they are affiliated with.

Hypothesis 4. Voters would evaluate the candidate more positively as they agree with the candidate's stance on the issue that is an important than that of an unimportant issue.

Lastly, this thesis examines the relationship between candidate evaluations and vote decision. According to the previous studies, preference – which is commonly measured with a feeling thermometer scale in the surveys – has been the most powerful explanatory variable to vote choices (Muts 2010; Wattenberg 1994). Since voters have a multi-dimensional evaluation towards a candidate, existing studies focus mainly on candidate preference. This study extends and examines two representative traits of a candidate, candidate qualification and personal trait. As for candidate qualification, some studies show that competence and the leadership character of candidates have a mobilization effect of

voters' participation (Markus 1982; Kinder 1986). Thus, this thesis will test how two candidate evaluations have an influence on vote participation and choice in 2012 Korean presidential election. Figure 4 is schematized with the fifth and sixth hypothesis.

Figure 4. Schematized fifth and sixth hypotheses



Hypothesis 5. The more positive the candidate evaluation is, the more voters would participate in voting

Hypothesis 6. Voters would vote for the candidate whom they evaluate to be more positive.

Hypothesis 6-1. Between the two, the evaluation of the candidate qualification would have a greater influence on vote choice than personal trait.

In summary, this study examines the formation of candidate evaluations, how they vary according to information received, and how they are linked to the vote decision.

IV. Data and Methods

1. Data

I used the online panel survey data that was collected by the Center for Political Communication at Seoul National University on the 18th Korean presidential election. The survey was conducted online twice in the pre-election period (first from October 31 to November 26 and then from December 7 to 18) and once again after the election (from December 20 to 27). The data follow those of traditional panel surveys of election studies. The survey participants were recruited by the Macromillembain data collecting company in September and October of 2012.³ A quota sampling of around 2,251 people was employed by region, age, and gender for the first survey. In the second survey, 1,921 participants again took part. In all, 1,843 people answered all three online

³ For more information about Macromillembain:
http://embrain.com/business/or_intro_01.asp (accessed 2013.11.11).

surveys, and the final panel persistency rate was 91.9%. Participants received incentives each time they participated.⁴

Table 1 shows the distribution of participants. Because of panel study traits, it is hard to consider this sample as realistically representing the Korean electorate. Moreover, it contained some socioeconomic differences in age and gender compared to the 2010 census data; there were more women and more of the younger generation among participants. However, this study focuses on a comparison of media and the effect of certain media on changes in voters' predispositions based on their information processing. Considering the small differences between the census data and online panel survey data, I believe that our sample is not at a disadvantage.

⁴ Participants received five dollars every time they participated in the survey. Thus, when they joined all three surveys, they received fifteen dollars.

Table 1. Comparison of Participants and Real Voters by Age, Gender, and Region

		First round	Second round	Third round	Census (2010)
		Online Panel	Online Panel	Online Panel	
Age	20-29	264 (19.9)	233 (20.4)	223 (20.3)	13.7%
	30-39	348 (26.2)	297 (26.0)	282 (25.6)	16.2%
	40-49	355 (26.7)	306 (26.8)	295 (26.8)	17.1%
	50-59	278 (20.9)	236 (20.6)	229 (20.8)	13.7%
	60~	84 (6.3)	72 (6.3)	71 (6.5)	15.9%
Gender	Male	790 (59.4)	682 (59.6)	657 (59.7)	49.9%
	Female	539 (40.6)	462 (40.4)	443 (40.3)	50.1%
Region	Busan/ Kyungnam	195 (14.7)	166 (14.5)	157 (14.3)	13.6%
	Daegu/ Kyungbuk	150 (11.3)	131 (11.5)	123 (11.2)	10.4%
	Honam	75 (5.6)	57 (5.0)	56 (5.1)	7.2%
Total		1,329	1,144	1,100	

This thesis is going to test six hypotheses with this data. The survey questions that ask about candidate evaluations appear in most of the public opinion poll. However, rather than analyzing one-shot survey data, the use of this online panel data helps to examine the variations in voters' opinion more accurately by exploring the causal relationship over time. Also, because this data contains both pre- and post- data, there is an advantage in connecting voter participation and vote choices with candidate evaluations.

2. Methods

To examine the first, second, third, and fourth hypotheses using the data presented above, this thesis takes into account candidate evaluations and variations in candidate evaluations as dependent variables and estimates multiple linear regression analysis at an individual level using the online panel data presented above. Next, to examine the fifth and sixth hypotheses, this thesis takes voting participation and vote choice as dependent variables and estimates logistic regression analysis on an individual level.

1) Operationalization of Candidate Evaluation

According to Zaller, voters have multidimensional opinions rather than a one-dimensional opinion (Zaller 1992). In this context, voters have more than one opinion toward the candidate, and their evaluations toward candidate will be also multidimensional. Also, voters' opinion toward the candidate is not fixed (McGraw 2011). Thus, when voters form their evaluations toward a candidate even before the start of the election campaign, those evaluations are very flexible and can be updated

continuously. For example, in the 18th presidential election in Korea, Korean voters already evaluated Park Geun-hye, a daughter of former dictator Park, for her unique family background. Both the evaluations of Park Geun-hye's father and the evaluations of herself were controversial. Since she was the winner of the election, it can be inferred that the majority of Korean voters would have positively evaluated her. For another example, president Obama's approval rating was unprecedentedly high when he first stepped into the White House. However, his current rating records the worst in the last 70 years (Noonan, 2014). To sum, candidate evaluations are multi-dimensional, flexible, and updateable, and these features of candidate evaluations should be reflected.

Candidate evaluations are typically shaped in five dimensions – competence, reliability, integrity, charisma, and personal ability (Miller et al. 1986). However, this study examines two typical dimensions of candidate evaluations – candidate qualification and personal trait. From the CPC data, voters' evaluation of a candidate's competency is measured with a 11-point scale in response to the following statement: "How do you evaluate the governance capacity of each candidate." Here, 0 indicates "very bad" and 10, "very good." The second dimension,

personal ability, is measured with the question: “How do you evaluate the communication skill of each candidate”.

The first dependent variables are two evaluations toward Park Geun-hye, and the second are variations in evaluations toward Park Geun-hye⁵. Before analyzing how the candidate evaluations vary with new information, I examine how evaluations of Park Geun-hye are constructed. Thus, the first dependent variables are Park Geun-hye’s competency and communication skills evaluations. The second dependent variables are the variations of candidate evaluations because this thesis examines how the voters’ evaluations change when they receive additional information. Having the benefit of third round panel data, it is possible to measure how a participant’s evaluation of Park Geun-hye changes. The variations of Park Geun-hye’s evaluations are operationalized as each evaluation in the first round (time t) subtracted from each evaluation in the second round (*time $t+a$*). With this equation, it is possible to know how much the evaluations change and what direction they take. Here, I used second round data in order to compare the changes of evaluation in the first round to avoid the bandwagon effect. Also, the evaluation scores in the second round data are suitable because

⁵ Park Geun-hye is the winner of the election 2012. This thesis only analyzes evaluation of Park Geun-hye to examine the influence of her evaluations on a victory.

they measure how voters exactly felt for Park Geun-hye when they were voting; it is not the evaluation of Park Geun-hye after they voted and found out the result.

Variation in candidate evaluation =

Candidate evaluations in time $t+\alpha$ – candidate evaluations in time t

2) Operationalization of independent variables

In this study, the key independent variable is information. However, it is difficult to measure information as data in an observational study. As it was shown in previous studies, media is the typical information medium, and people use it as a main source of information. Thus, most research commonly measures information with media usage, and this study will as well. This thesis considers the types of media that have an influence on information delivery. Again, media is typically divided into two types, traditional media and new media. Among different kinds of traditional media, television is the most popular news source, and Internet is the most adopted news source. I operationalized these two variables to binary variables.

Education level does not necessarily correlate with interest in politics, understanding political and social issues, and making a political judgement. Thus, this study presents the political sophistication variable, or in other words the level of an individual's political cognition (Luskin 1987), to examine how it changes the individual information process. Political sophistication was operationalized as three binary variables from a self-placement measure with a 3-point scale in response to the following statement: "I am aware of important political issues in Korean politics." Here, for the low political sophistication variable, 1 indicates "low political sophistication" and 0 otherwise. Medium political sophistication and high political sophistication binary variables were operationalized using the same method. Instead of using one 3-point scale, using three binary variables in the model can clearly show the influence of each political sophistication level on candidate evaluation and the variations of it. Again, while education level does not always indicate whether each individual understands politics, political sophistication variable supplements this gap. Because the original purpose of this particular survey question is to measure inner political efficacy, it cannot ideally and precisely measure the political sophistication of each individual. Nevertheless, it captures the range of the political

understanding of individuals that education level alone cannot accurately measure. Also, following the existing studies, this thesis examines three groups depending on the level of political sophistication in order to observe the influence in detail. This adds dynamics, accurately reflects the real world, and allows the ability to examine the difference of opinion between the levels of political sophistication in people.

To test the fourth hypothesis, the stance of the important and unimportant issue was operationalized as 4-point agree/disagree scale of specific issue. Here, 0 indicates “entirely disagree” and 3, “entirely agree.” Considering that the most important and controversial issue in 2012 presidential election in Korea was economic democratization, the important issue was operationalized from the question asking, “Government should focus on economic growth than welfare policy.” The unimportant issue was operationalized from the question asking, “Recognize and ensure the rights of homosexuals legally and institutionally.” This specific question was chosen because homosexual issues are quite neutral and are not party-owned issues like the U.S. Also, considering important issues in Korean election so far were economic growth, corruption exposing, employment rate, balanced development of regions, education, welfare policy, policy of North Korea, and political

reform, the homosexual issue is not an influential or controversial issue in the Korean election.

The rest of the variables were added to the model because it is impossible to see the pure influence of information and political sophistication variables without a control. Following the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger 1957), it needs to consider out-group antagonism and an in-group favoritism psychology process in regards to the ideology, partisanship, and regionalism (Sherif 1961). I included ideology, partisanship, and region variables to the analysis because I assume that respondents would generously evaluate the candidate if he or she is in the same stance or region of the party or ideology they supported. I included a self-placement ideology variable on an 11-point scale, with 0 indicating very liberal and 10, very conservative. Only for the third study model, the ideology variable is included as binary variables to examine how either ideologist participates in voting. Partisanship was operationalized as a binary variable from the question “To which party do you feel closer?” For those who answered “none” were coded 0, and for those who chose the parties were coded 1. Party identification was operationalized as binary variables for each party from the same question that measured partisanship. For the Saenuri party identification variable,

those who answered “Saenuri party” were coded 1, and for those who chose the other parties and independents were coded 0. For the Minjoo party identification variable, those who answered “Minjoo party” were coded 1, and the others were coded 0.

In addition, I added socioeconomic variables as control variables to the analysis model, which includes income, gender, education, region (Busan/Kyungnam, Daegu/Kyungbuk, Honam), and age. Income is measured with a 12-point scale in response to the question asking family income per month.⁶ Gender is operationalized as a binary variable, 0 indicate that respondents are female and 1 indicates they are male. Education is operationalized with a 3-point scale in response to the question asking the last school which respondents received a degree from. 1 indicates that respondents graduated only from high school, 2 indicates that respondents graduated from college, and 3 indicates that respondents have higher degree than college degree. The three regions are the critical regions that affect vote choice because of the country’s salient regionalism. Especially in the Korean 18th presidential election, the

⁶ Correspondent question has following options. 1) less than 1,000,000 won 2) 1,000,000 – 1,990,000 won 3) 2,000,000 – 2,990,000 won 4) 3,000,000 – 3,990,000 won 5) 4,000,000 – 4,990,000 won 6) 5,000,000 – 5,990,000 won 7) 6,000,000 – 6,990,000 won 8) 7,000,000 – 7,990,000 won 9) 8,000,000 – 8,990,000 won 10) 9,000,000 – 9,990,000 won 11) above 10,000,000 won

boundaries between these regions weakened since Moon Jae-in⁷ represents the liberal party yet he is from where the conservative party has influence. Three regions were operationalized as binary variables, 1 indicates that pertained respondents are from the region and 0 indicate they aren't. Also, age is included as a continuous variable.

The fifth and sixth hypothesis examines how each candidate evaluation has an influence on vote participation and vote choices. Vote participation is operationalized as a binary variable, 0 indicates respondents did not vote and 1 indicates that respondents voted. Vote choice is also operationalized as binary variable, 0 indicates that respondents voted for Candidate Moon Jae-in and 1 indicates that respondents voted for Candidate Park Geun-hye. This thesis did not take into account the individuals who voted for other candidates. Having the same independent variables and controlled variables from previous model except the partisan variable, the fourth analysis model includes two dimensions of evaluations toward Park Geun-hye, which are competency and communication skill. Here, party identification of each party was included like the first model instead of the partisan variable to test each party's effect on vote choice. This thesis constructs the following four models with variables operationalized above.

⁷ Candidate from the Minjoo party

Table 2. Information Consumption and Candidate Evaluations (OLS regression)

Category	Content
Hypotheses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypothesis 2, 3, and 4
Dependent Variable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park Geun-hye Evaluations Competency: 0 very bad, 10 very good Communication Skill: 0 very bad, 10 very good
Independent Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media Usage TV: 0 don't use, 1 use Internet: 0 don't use, 1 use • Issue stance Important issue (economy): 0 entirely disagree 3 entirely agree Unimportant issue (homosexual rights): 0 entirely disagree 3 entirely agree
Control Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party identification Saenuri party identification: Saenuri party = 1, other =0 Minjoo party identification: Minjoo party=1, other =0 • Ideology: 0 very liberal, 10 very conservative • Region Honam, Busan/Kyungnam, Daegu/Kyungbuk: binary variables • Gender: 1 male 0 female • Income: 13-point scale • Age: continuous variable • Education level: 0 high school graduates, 1 college graduates, 2 above college

Table 3. Information Consumption and Changes in Candidate Evaluations (OLS regression)

Category	Content
Hypotheses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypothesis 1 and 2
Dependent Variable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in Park Geun-hye Evaluations Competency: 0 very bad, 10 very good Communication Skill: 0 very bad, 10 very good
Independent Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media Usage TV: 0 don't use, 1 use Internet: 0 don't use, 1 use • Political Sophistication Low: 0 otherwise 1 low Medium: 0 otherwise 1 medium High: 0 otherwise 1 high
Control Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partisanship: 0 not exist, 1 favors particular parties • Ideology: 0 very liberal, 10 very conservative • Region Honam, Busan/Kyungnam, Daegu/Kyungbuk: binary variables • Gender: 1 male 0 female • Income: 13-point scale • Age: continuous variable • Education level: 0 high school graduates, 1 college graduates, 2 above college

Table 4. Candidate Evaluations and Vote Participation (Logistic regression)

Category	Content
Hypothesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypothesis 5
Dependent Variable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote participation: 1 vote, 0 did not vote
Independent Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media Usage TV: 0 don't use, 1 use Internet: 0 don't use, 1 use • Park Geun-hye's competency evaluation: 0 very bad, 10 very good/Park Geun-hye's communication skill evaluation: 0 very bad, 10 very good
Control Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partisanship: 0 not exist, 1 favors particular parties • Ideology Liberals: 0 otherwise, 1 liberal Conservatives: 0 otherwise, 1 Conservative • Region Honam, Busan/Kyungnam, Daegu/Kyungbuk: binary variables • Gender: 1 male 0 female • Age: continuous variable

Table 5. Candidate Evaluations and Vote Choices (Logistic regression)

Category	Content
Hypothesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypothesis 6
Dependent Variable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote Choice: 1 vote for Park Geun-hye, 0 vote for Moon Jaein
Independent Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media Usage TV: 0 don't use, 1 use Internet: 0 don't use, 1 use • Park Geun-hye's competency evaluation: 0 very bad, 10 very good • Park Geun-hye's communication skill evaluation: 0 very bad, 10 very good
Control Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party identification Saenuri party identification: Saenuri party = 1, other =0 Minjoo party identification: Minjoo party=1, other =0 • Ideology: 0 very liberal, 10 very conservative • Region Honam, Busan/Kyungnam, Daegu/Kyungbuk: binary variables • Gender: 1 male 0 female • Income: 13-point scale • Age: continuous variable • Education level: 0 high school graduates, 1 college graduates, 2 above college

V. Results

1. Importance of Candidate Evaluation

In the 18th Korean presidential election, candidates' character and traits had a large influence on vote choices as expected. Figure 5 shows determinants of a respondents' vote decision in the presidential election of 2012. Approximately, 50 percent of respondents answered candidates' traits such as experience, competency, and morality were the most influential factor on their vote choice. Ideology was the next influential factor followed by party, winning probability, and et cetera. Also, as predicted, regionalism had the least influence on vote choices. However, statistics need to be cautious because these are self-reported, and surely, these factors are not mutually exclusive. Yet it is clear that the most influential determinant of vote choice is the candidate himself in the 2012 election.

Figure 5. Determinants of Vote Choices in 18th Korean Presidential Election

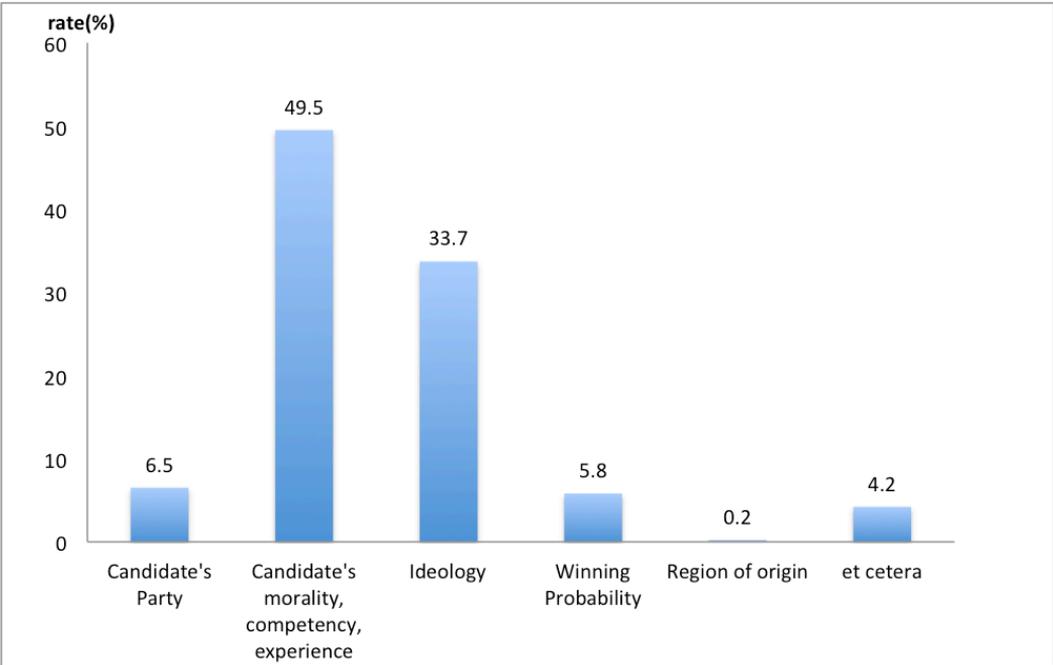


Table 6 shows that approximately 80~90% of respondents who positively evaluated one candidate over the other ultimately vote for the former candidate. Here, the dimension of candidate evaluations is competency, and the numbers do not add up to 100 because it did not count the people who evaluated both candidates the same. This supports the importance of candidates' character and traits in the election and shows that voters' opinions toward each candidate is directly linked to their vote choice. Again, these are self-reported by voters, so statistics need to be cautious.

Table 6. The relationship between Vote Choices and Candidate Evaluation

	Evaluation Comparison	
	Evaluation of Park < Evaluation of Moon	Evaluation of Park > Evaluation of Moon
Vote for Moon Jae-in	82.17%	8.68%
Vote for Park Geun-hye	17.83%	91.32%

Pearson $\chi^2 = 662.0912$; $p < 0.0001$

Learning about the candidate shapes evaluations and opinions toward candidates. Voters obtain information related to the candidate and election through media. Thus, the role of media is important as a medium of information. Figure 6 shows candidate evaluation of respondents who use television and newspaper as a new source respectively. Again, the dimension of candidate evaluations is competency. When respondents use each media source more, the evaluation of each candidate seems to converge. The frequent usage of both television and the newspaper had a positive effect on the evaluation of Moon Jae-in, and had a negative effect on the evaluation of Park Geun-hye. However, Figure 7 shows that candidate evaluation of respondents who use social media as a news source are portrayed differently. In contrast, as respondents use social media more, their evaluation of each candidate seems to diverge. Since television and newspaper fall under the category of traditional media and

social media under new media, the patterns seem to show the varying effect of the types of media. With the exclusion of other factors that might have an effect on this pattern, Figure 7 shows how the usage of traditional media, television and newspapers, and new media, Internet and social media, have a different influence on voters opinion.

Figure 6. Average Candidate Evaluation Scores by Traditional Media Usage

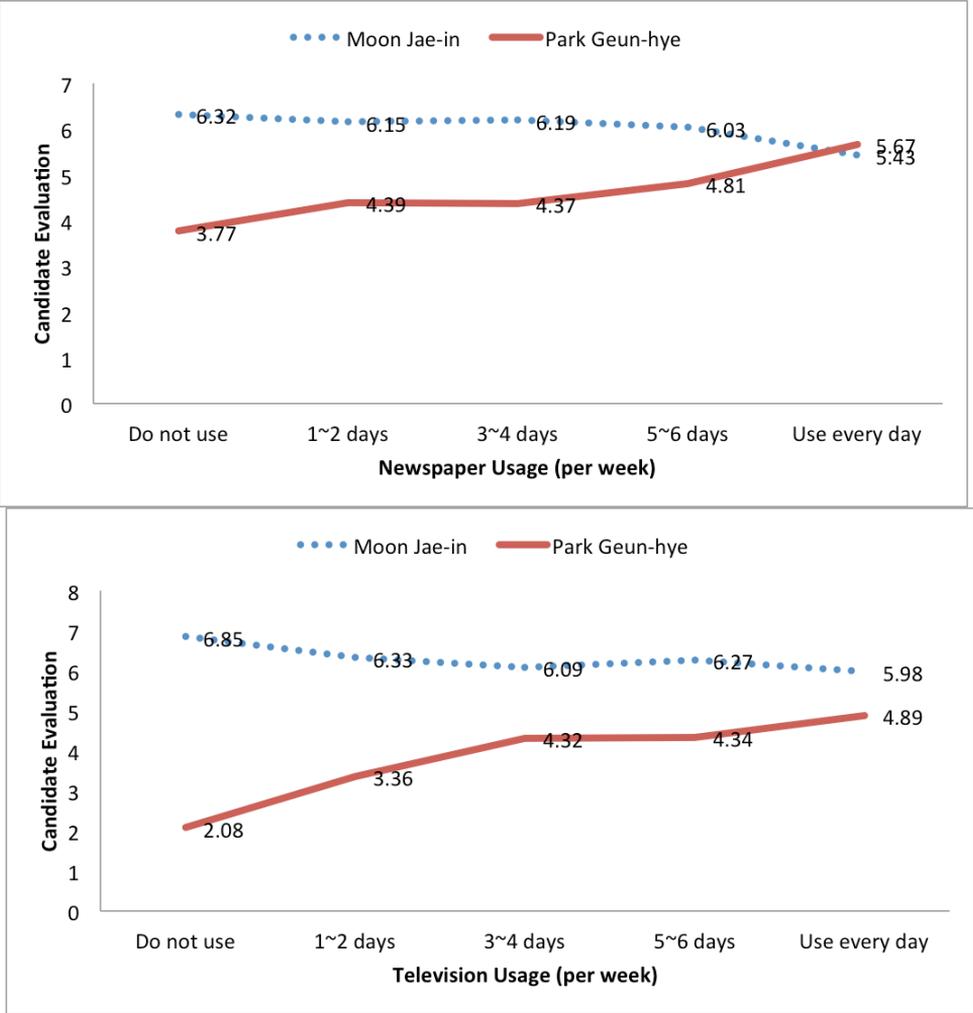


Figure 7. Average Candidate Evaluation Scores by Social Media Usage

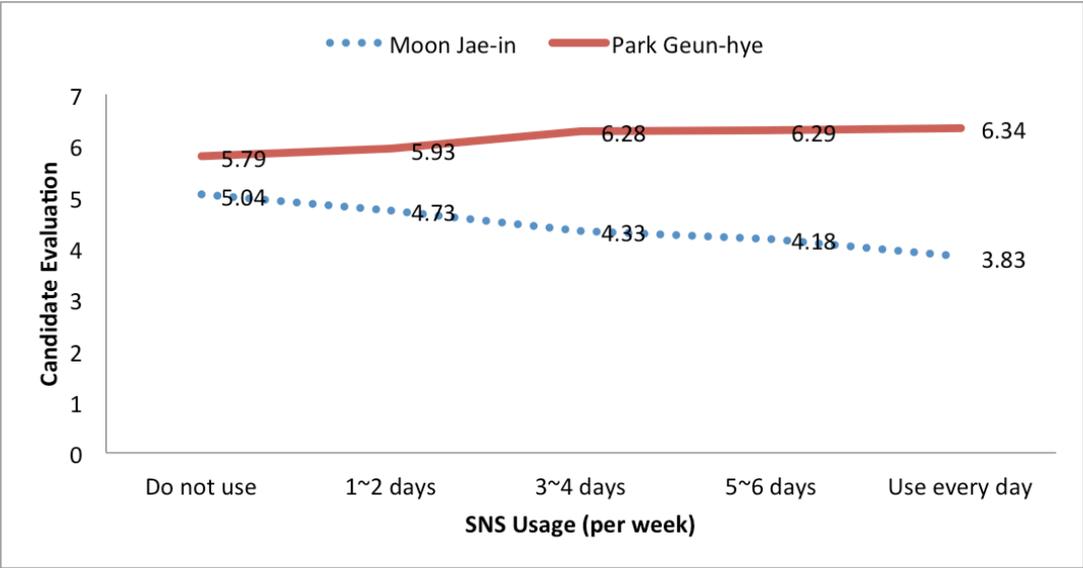
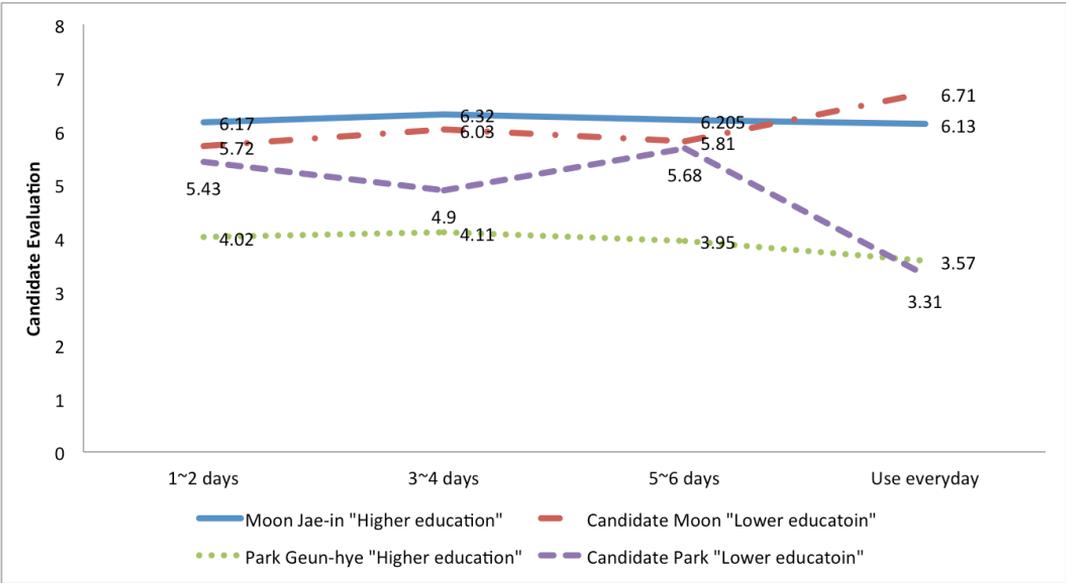


Figure 8. Average Candidate Evaluation Scores by Media Usage and Education

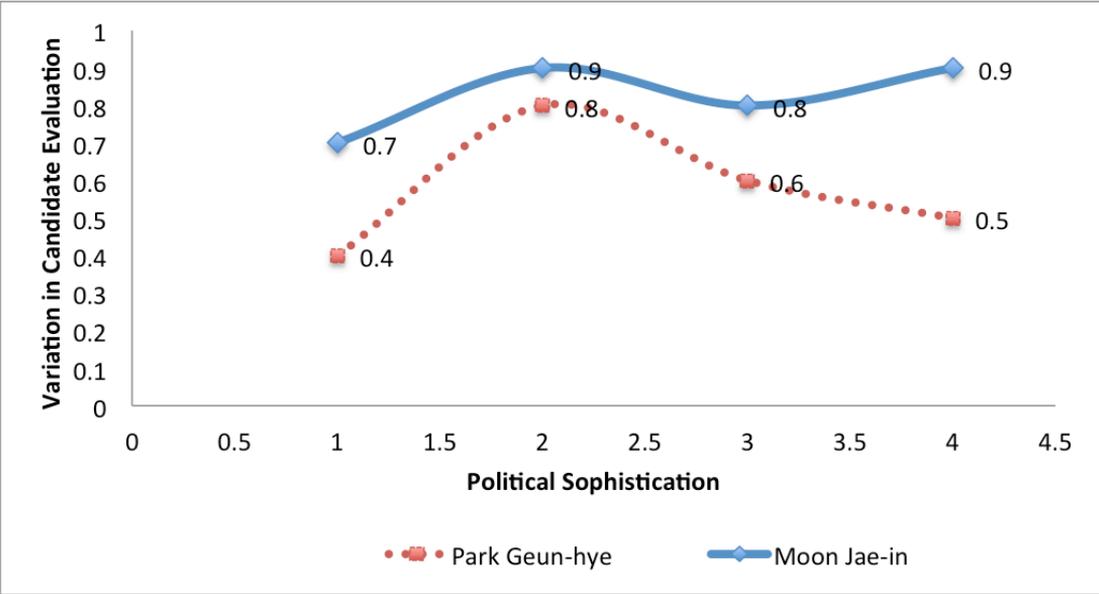


An interesting pattern was shown when dividing the same graph from Figure 7 into education level of respondents. Those who have a higher level of education graduated above college, and those who have a lower education are below college graduates. Respondents who received an education higher than college evaluated each candidate stably while those of respondents who received less than college education were uncertain. This partially supports the first hypothesis that knowledge has an influence on the evaluation of candidates, and the second hypothesis that the influence of media is different in regard to the media types. Figure 6, 7, and 8 show a lower evaluation of candidate Park overall, and this is due to the fact that the survey oversampled young generations who tend to be more liberal.

In Figure 9, to examine the individual information processing procedure in detail, I used the political sophistication variable and examined how candidate evaluation changes according to its group respectively. Figure 9 shows the median value of variations in candidate evaluation score by the level of political sophistication. Again, the dimension of evaluation is competency. Here, the political sophistication variable was divided into 4 groups (ranges from 1 to 4) to observe the pattern in detail – the low political sophistication group was divided into

two groups – and the median value was used instead of the mean value because the mean value is malleable to the outliers while the median value is not; especially, variations in candidate evaluations are small, below 1. This upside down skewed-right parabola pattern supports the first hypothesis again that changes in candidate evaluations differ with the level of political sophistication, and the changes are the greatest in the middle for candidate Park.

Figure 9. Changes in Candidate Evaluation by Political Sophistication level



Subsequently, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of political sophistication on Park Geun-

hye’s evaluation in low, medium, and high groups. Evaluation scores of Park Geun-hye for each trait are used. There was a significant effect of political sophistication on candidate evaluation at the $p < 0.05$ level for those three groups. Thus, Table 7 partially supports the first hypothesis and reassures the patterns shown in Figure 9. Yet, this ANOVA test does not perfectly confirm hypothesis 1 because the null hypothesis here would be “evaluations of the groups in political sophistication groups are the same.” This does not test which group has the largest variation. From Figure 6 to 9 and Table 7, these findings show that candidate evaluation is shaped differently in regards to the types of media used and the political sophistication level of voters.

Table 7. Evaluations of Park Geun-hye by Political Sophistication Group (ANOVA)

Variation in Evaluation Score	Candidate Park
Communication Skill	F=25.64 p < 0.001 N = 1,920
Governance Capacity	F=19.09 p < 0.001 N = 1,920

2. Understanding candidate evaluation and its variation

The rest of this chapter interprets the results of the research models that I proposed in chapter 4 to test the hypotheses that I proposed in chapter 3. First, Table 8 is the result of the ordinary least square regression of the Table 2 study model, the second, third, and fourth hypotheses. Table 8 tested how greatly the types of media, the stance of important and unimportant issues, and other control variables have an influence on the competency evaluation of Park Geun-hye, Model 1, and the communication skill evaluation of Park Geun-hye, Model 2.

As predicted, Model 1 and 2 support the second, third, and fourth hypotheses. Television and Internet usage, issue stance, party identification, ideology, and age have a statistically significant influence on both evaluations of Park Geun-hye. Income and the Daegu/Kyungbuk region only have a statistically significant influence on the competency evaluation of Park Geun-hye, and education and the Busan/Kyungnam region only have a statistically significant influence on the communication skill evaluation of Park Geun-hye.

Table 8. Evaluations of Park Geun-hye in 18th Korean Presidential Election

	Model 1 (Competency)		Model 2 (Communication Skill)	
	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
Television User	0.61***	0.13	0.65***	0.13
Internet User	-0.90***	0.17	-0.70***	0.16
Issue (Economy)	0.59***	0.08	0.59***	0.08
Issue (Homosexuality)	-0.17**	0.71	-0.15*	0.07
Saenuri Party Id	2.49***	0.22	2.44***	0.21
Minjoo Party Id	-0.51**	0.18	-0.60**	0.17
Ideology	0.17***	0.03	0.18***	0.03
Age	0.30***	0.06	0.02**	0.01
Male	0.07	0.13	-0.14	0.12
Income	0.07*	0.03	0.01	0.03
Education	-0.14	0.09	-0.20*	0.09
Daegu/Kyungbuk	0.43*	0.20	0.17	0.19
Honam	0.31	0.28	0.18	0.27
Busan/Kyungnam	0.23	0.18	0.40*	0.18
Const.	0.90	0.45	0.96	0.44
N	1,525		1,525	
R-Squared	0.4908		0.4924	
Adjusted R-Squared	0.4861		0.4877	

(*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001)

In particular, television usage has a very strong and positive influence on evaluation while Internet usage has a very strong and negative influence on evaluation, which rejects the null hypothesis of

hypothesis 2. The statistical significance of party identification, ideology, and regional variables reject the null hypothesis of hypothesis 3. Respondents, who have Saenuri party identification, are conservative, and live in Daegu/Kyungbuk and Busan/Kyungnam positively evaluate Park Geun-hye while respondents who have Minjoo party identification and are liberal do not. The null hypothesis of hypothesis 4 is rejected, and the importance issue has a greater influence (0.59) on evaluation than the impact of unimportant issues (-0.17). Also, respondents who agree with focusing on economic policy instead of welfare policy evaluated Park Geun-hye positively, and respondents who agree with ensuring the rights of homosexuals evaluated Park Geun-hye negatively. Moreover, one higher level of education shows a negative evaluation of Park Geun-hye by 0.2 point while a higher level of income shows a positive evaluation of Park Geun-hye.

Table 9 is the result of the ordinary least squares regression of the Table 3 model, the first and second hypotheses. Table 9 tested how greatly the types of media, the level of political sophistication, and other control variables have an influence on the competency evaluation of Park Geun-hye, Model 3, and the communication skill evaluation of Park Geun-hye, Model 4.

Table 9. Variation in Evaluation of Park Geun-hye in 18th Korean Presidential Election

	Model 3 (Competency)		Model 4 (Communication Skill)	
	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
Television User	0.07	0.09	-0.07	0.09
Internet User	0.07	0.11	-0.04	0.11
Low Political Sophistication	-0.16	0.15	-0.31	0.15
Medium Political Sophistication	-0.28*	0.14	-0.38**	0.14
Ideology	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.02
Age	0.01*	0.01	0.01	0.01
Male	0.10	0.09	0.11	0.08
Income	0.01	0.02	-0.01	0.02
Partisan	0.15	0.09	0.10	0.08
Education	0.02	0.06	0.06	0.06
Daegu/Kyungbuk	0.13	0.13	0.17	0.13
Honam	-0.16	0.20	-0.15	0.19
Busan/Kyungnam	0.19	0.12	0.29*	0.12
Const.	-0.94	0.26	-0.23	0.25
N	1,899		1,899	
R-Squared	0.0157		0.0158	
Adjusted R-Squared	0.0089		0.0091	

(*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001)

The Model 3 and 4 reject the null hypothesis of hypothesis 1 but could not reject the second one. Only a medium level of political sophistication has a statistically significant influence on both evaluation

of Park Geun-hye, and the Busan/Kyungnam region only has a statistically significant influence on the communication skill evaluation of Park Geun-hye. Considering respondents who have a high level of political sophistication are the standard group, those who have a low level of political sophistication show a lesser variation by 0.16 points compared to the standard group; those who have a medium level of political sophistication show a lesser variation by 0.28 point compare to standard group. It shows that respondents who have a medium level of political sophistication have the most variation in the evaluation of candidate Park Geun-hye, and their variation heads to a negative direction.

3. Candidate Evaluations on Vote Choice

Next, this thesis tests the fifth hypothesis that the positive evaluations of the candidate would generate more vote participation. As table 10 shows, the influence of the competency evaluation and the communication skill evaluation of candidate Park is statistically significant. The partisanship variable is also statistically significant on both models. Yet, the types of media variables and the rest of the independent variables are not statistically significant, and the result could not reject the null hypothesis of hypothesis 1.

Even though the evaluation variables were statistically significant, the result cannot reject the null hypothesis of hypothesis 5 because negative evaluations of Park Geun-hye have an influence on vote participation: the higher point of the competency evaluation lessens the vote participation by 0.3%p and the higher point of the communication skill evaluation lessens vote participation by 0.4%p. It seems like the result is affected by the oversampling of young and liberal voters. Thus, this result needs further analyzing in the future.

Table 10. Evaluation of Park Geun-hye and the Vote Participation

	Model 5		Model 6	
	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
Television User	-0.28	0.24	-.26	0.24
Internet User	0.42	0.38	0.42	0.38
Communication Skill Evaluation	-0.08*	0.04		
Competency Evaluation			-0.10*	0.4
Liberals	-0.20	0.26	-0.25	0.27
Conservatives	0.04	0.30	0.04	0.30
Age	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Male	0.09	0.23	0.08	0.23
Partisan	0.57*	0.23	0.59*	0.23
Daegu/Kyungbuk	-0.03	0.35	-0.03	0.35
Honam	-0.36	0.49	-0.36	0.49
Busan/Kyungnam	0.07	0.33	0.08	0.33
Const.	2.80	0.49	2.81	0.49
N	1,842		1,842	
Chi square	17.30		19.04	
Pseudo R squared	0.0241		0.0265	

(*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001)

Lastly, this thesis tests the sixth hypothesis that the voters would vote for the candidate whom they evaluated more positively. This logistic model tests how much each evaluation of Park Geun-hye has an influence on vote choice even when other variables are controlled. The results

indicate that, with other variables controlled, candidate evaluations do have a significant influence on vote choice. As table 11 shows, the impacts of the competency evaluation of Park Geun-hye and the communication skill evaluation of Park Geun-hye are strongly statistically significant. These variables are strongly positively related to vote choice in the 2012 Korean election; this result supports hypothesis 6-1. Also, the influence of competency evaluation is larger than the impact of communication skill evaluation by approximately 3%p, which supports hypothesis 6-2. Moreover, the result shows that the influence of the ideology, Saenuri party identification and Minjoo party identification variables are statistically significant on vote choice, which supports the hypothesis 3. However, the result cannot reject the null hypothesis of hypothesis 2 since the impact of the media types are not statistically significant.

Table 11. Evaluations of Park Geun –hye and the Vote Choice

	Coefficient	S.E.
Competency Evaluation	0.41***	0.07
Communication Evaluation	0.31***	0.06
Television User	0.06	0.22
Internet User	0.31	0.31
Ideology	0.24***	0.06
Age	-0.01	0.01
Male	-0.17	0.21
Income	-0.09	0.05
Saenuri Party ID	1.59***	0.30
Minjoo Party ID	-0.86***	0.27
Education	0.09	0.15
Daegu/Kyungbuk	0.46	0.33
Honam	0.10	0.41
Busan/Kyungnam	0.24	0.30
Const.	-4.95	0.60
N	1,397	
Chi Square	1325.87***	
Pseudo R squared	0.6189	

(*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001)

VI. Conclusion

The thesis's goal is to examine the relationship between information and candidate evaluation by focusing on the types of media and the individual information processing procedure. This thesis examines the construction of candidate evaluations and analyzes their variations when voters receive new information. Ultimately, this thesis examines the linkage between the candidate evaluations and turnout and vote choice. By using the online panel survey data that was collected by the Center for Political Communication for the 18th Korean presidential election, this thesis analyzed the causality and the interrelationship between information, candidate evaluations, and the vote decision.

First, this thesis shows that the level of political sophistication affects individual information processing, and those who have a medium-low level of political sophistication are affected by information the most. Having a theoretical foundation on Zaller's RAS model, this thesis shows that those who have a high level of political sophistication received more information than others, but they are very selective in accepting it. Those with a low level of political sophistication receive less information than

others, so the influence of information on them was little, as well. To be more concise, the variation of candidate evaluation generated by the people who have a high level of political sophistication was larger than the variation of candidate evaluation generated by the people who have a low level of political sophistication, while variation of candidate evaluation generated by the people who have a middle level of political sophistication was the largest. This can be interpreted to show that, as people who do stereotypical evaluations of candidates are more reluctant to change their opinion than people who have a strong political predisposition when they receive new information. The findings imply that the role of political sophistication is critical for individual information processing and opinion formation.

Next, The findings also yield an influence of candidate evaluations on turnout and vote choice. Along with previous studies, competence and communication skill – candidate qualification and personal trait – have a strong influence on turnout and the vote choice. Among these two, the positive evaluation of a candidate's competency leads to the vote choice greater than the evaluation of a candidate's communication skill. This finding supports the results from previous studies of the positive influence of candidate evaluation on vote decision.

Third, the influence of media on the variation of candidate evaluation, vote participation, and vote choice are not statistically significant. The types of media only have an impact on the formation of candidate evaluation, and the television users evaluate the candidate more positively than other media users. This supports the findings from existing studies on the television effect on candidate personality, image, and evaluation.

This thesis contains a few limitations. Candidate evaluation, information, and political sophistication are abstract concepts. The definition and the measurement vary in previous studies while some share a common methodology. This thesis attempts to apply the methodology that is generally accepted in previous literature, yet those measurements still do not reflect the real world precisely. It is still difficult to measure an individual's understanding and interest on politics, how an individual processes the information they receive, and how they evaluate the candidate. Also, the content of information is unknown in this thesis., yet this can be only complimented with experimental studies which can control the content of the information. Since opinion formation is generated from memory, the future research should also consider how

voters shape evaluations toward each candidate with long-term, short-term memories, or online-processing.

Despite these limitations, the findings and their implications of this thesis still contribute in understanding the candidate evaluation and information in election studies. It empirically tests Zaller's RAS model on Korean electorates by using the 2012 Korean presidential election online panel data, and examines how voters process information they receive based on individual traits, how the types of media have different influences on individual's opinion formation, how information and media influence the variations of candidate evaluation, and ultimately, how each candidate evaluation affects turnout and vote choices.

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국문초록

정치적 세련도, 미디어 이용과 후보자 평가: 제 18 대 대통령 선거를 중심으로

본 연구는 정보에 기반하여 형성되는 유권자의 후보자에 대한 평가를 정치학적 관점에서 분석하려고 한다. 그 동안의 한국 대통령 선거에서 후보자 인물과 그의 특성은 유권자들의 투표 선택에 중요한 결정 요인들 중 하나였다. 유권자는 각 후보자에 대한 선호, 관심, 이성을 바탕으로 평가를 하는데, 이러한 평가는 유권자의 투표 선택에 중요한 영향을 끼치며, 선거 결과를 예측하게 한다. 따라서 후보자에 대한 평가는 유권자 개인의 투표 결정을 알기 위한, 더 나아가서, 여론의 구성을 알기 위한 중요한 연구 대상이 된다.

그러나 기존 연구에서 후보자에 대한 평가는 투표 선택을 설명하는 독립변수로서 분석의 대상이 되었을 뿐, 종속변수로서 많은 주목을 받지 못했다. 따라서 본 연구는 이러한 문제의식에 착안하여, 종속변수로서의 ‘후보자에 대한 평가’에 영향을 미치는 독립변수들이 무엇이며, 그 영향력은 얼마나 큰지 검토하고자 한다. 본 연구가 특히 주목하고자 하는 독립변수는 ‘정보’이다. 언론학과 정치심리학에서 선거광고, 미디어의 유형과 보도 방식, 그리고 후보자의 개별 이미지로 유권자의 후보자에 대한 평가를 설명해왔고, 한국의 선거연구에서는 특정한 정보(의제 설정)와 그 보도 방식(프라이밍 효과, 프레임 효과)을 유권자의 정치태도와 연결시켜 단순한 상관관계의 검증에 그치는 경우가 많았다. 즉, 실제로 유권자가 습득하는 정보가 어떠한 과정과 인과관계의 고리를 통해 유권자의 후보자에 평가와 선택에 영향을 미치는지에 대해서는 정치학적인 관점에서 거의 연구된 바가 없다. 잘러(Zaller)는 유권자의

정보습득과정에서 정치적 세련도(political sophistication)라는 변수를 제시한다. 여기서 정치적 세련도란 정치를 이해하며, 개인의 정치적 정향을 기저로 정치에 대해 지속적인 태도로 판단하는 능력인데, 잘리에 따르면, 유권자들은 그들의 정치적 세련도에 따라 정보를 습득하는 과정이 다르고, 이러한 과정의 차이가 유권자들의 의견 형성, 나아가 여론의 형성에 영향을 끼친다고 한다. 즉 유권자의 정치적 세련도가 '후보자 개인에 대한 평가'와 밀접한 연관을 가지며, 궁극적으로 투표 참여 여부와 투표 선택에도 영향을 미친다는 것이다.

본 연구는 위와 같은 문제의식과 이론을 바탕으로 먼저 후보자 평가에 영향을 미치는 독립변수들과 그 영향력에 대해서 살펴본다. 이후, 개인 수준의 정보습득과정을 고려했을 때, 유권자의 정보습득에 따른 후보자에 대한 평가의 변화를 분석한다. 잘리의 논의의 연장선 상에서 정치적 세련도가 낮은 유권자들은 정보를 접할 기회가 적으며, 접하더라도 무비판적으로 수용하는 경향이 크기 때문에 후보자 평가의 변화가 적을 것이라고 생각해볼 수 있다. 또 정치적 세련도가 높은 유권자들은 기존의 정치적 정향과 맞물리는 정보만을 선택적으로 수용하기 때문에 후보자 평가의 변화가 적을 것이라고 가설적으로 생각해볼 수 있다. 그러나 이 두 그룹의 중간에 위치한 유권자들은 상대적으로 그들에게 주어진 정보의 영향을 더 받기 때문에 후보자 평가의 변화가 가장 클 것이라는 가설을 제시한다. 궁극적으로 본 연구는 후보자 평가가 유권자의 투표 선택에 미치는 영향과 그 크기를 분석할 것이다. 본 연구는 2012 년도에 서울대학교 정치커뮤니케이션 센터에서 실시한 패널 조사 자료를 사용하여 위의 가설들을 바탕으로 유권자의 정보습득에 따른 후보자 평가의 변화에 과연 어떤 차이가 있는지 경험적으로 검토할 것이다.

주요어: 후보자 평가, 정치적 세련도, 미디어 이용, RAS 모델

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