Internet Use and the 2004 Korean Parliamentary Election

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This paper offers a new systematic analysis of the effects of the Internet on Korean voting behavior, employing a nation-wide post-election survey conducted in relation to the 2004 National Assembly election. Much previous research that appeared in the major Korean political science journals contends a positive impact of the Internet on election participation in Korea. However, it is suspected that these studies are mistakenly based on self-selected surveys. This essay, therefore, presents a brief review of the existing literature on the effects of the Internet on voting. Moreover, this paper will show that the global phenomenon of the digital divide is also omnipresent in Korea. With this background information, a statistical model is proposed and tested to determine the extent to which Internet use accounts for voting behavior in Korea. An analysis of statistical test results leads to the conclusion that the Internet affects neither voter participation nor vote choice in Korea, at least not to a statistically significant degree.

Keywords: Internet, Voter participation, Vote choice, Parliamentary election, digital Divide

Ever since the transition from authoritarianism in 1987, Koreans have witnessed increasingly meaningful national elections in their country. Especially, the more recent elections were conducted under considerably stricter rules than previously applied, after the 1994 "Election for Public Office and Election Malpractice Prevention Act," the 1997 "Political Reform Law," and finally the far more stringent 2004 "Political Fund Act" had been enacted. These laws, basically, outlawed traditional large-scale mass campaign

rallies mobilized by political parties and armored with astronomical campaign funds. Instead, the new laws promoted mass media campaigns. Generally speaking, media campaigning also costs a fortune, but it is easily monitored and regulated as compared to mass campaign rallies. As a result, the 1997 presidential race was the first to feature nationally televised debates, and the 2000 National Assembly election the first to go on-line, with candidate Webpages that allowed real-time two-way communication, which particularly attracted the younger population, i.e., so-called "netizens." In the 1997 and 2002 presidential races, Korea embraced an orderly transfer of power from the ruling party to an opposition party, which in 1997 was unprecedented in the country's history, and a generational change with the inauguration of relatively youthful Roh Moo Hyun, in his late 50s, after the 2002 election.

With respect to the new phenomenon of the Internet and its effect on voting behavior in Korea, the literature has exhibited quite different and sometimes even contradictory conclusions so far. In their analysis of the 2000 National Assembly election, Kim Y. and Yoon S. (2000, 2001) reported that Koreans tend not to use the Internet for political purposes while voters are likely to be influenced once they explore politicized Websites and candidate (and party) homepages. Kim Y. and Yoon S. (2004) came to similar conclusions on the basis of statistical analyses of the 2004 Assembly election. In his analysis of the 2002 presidential election, on the other hand, Yoon S. (2003) drew a bit different conclusions. He admitted that the positive impact of the Internet on voter participation and vote choices should be regarded with serious reservations. He found that the introduction of the Internet does not warrant its use for political purposes and the increase of political participation. Kim H (2004) is largely in line with Yoon S. (2003) in that television, rather than the Internet, is still the far more powerful mass medium to affect Korean voting behavior.

I suspect that Kim Y. and Yoon S's conclusions (2000, 2001, and 2004), among others, are mistakenly based on self-selected surveys.[1] Therefore, this paper offers a

1) See Bimber (1999) for more in-depth review of the self-selected survey analysis with respect to Internet use. In addition, systematic criticismas against email surveys will be found by Best and Krueger (2002). They argue that email surveys do not provide probability samples that enable

new analysis of the effects of the Internet on the Korean voting behavior, employing traditional nation-wide post-election survey data collected in relation to the 2004 National Assembly election. This essay first presents a brief review of the existing literature on the topic. Moreover, I show the global pattern of the digital divide is also evident in Korea. With this background information, I propose and test a statistical model to determine the extent to which the Internet accounts for voting behavior in Korea. An analysis of statistical test results will lead to the conclusion that the Internet effects on both voter participation and vote choices in Korea are not statistically significant.

A Brief Literature Review

According to Norris (2003), research on the political effect of the Internet has experienced two distinct waves during the short period after the new information technology began to dominate the world of mass communication in the mid-1990s. Following her notion, the first wave is characterized by a wide-spread optimism that the introduction of the Internet will revolutionize the ways of communication in general, and open a new window of opportunity to facilitate civic involvement and direct democracy in particular (Norris 2003; see also Budge 1996; Katz, Rice, and Aspden 2001). Internet users are expected to freely express their views to their friends and to those elected in the boundless cyber-world, and the Internet is seen as providing a virtually limitless amount of information to anyone who searches for it. This may lead to an increase in the number of informed citizens with detailed knowledge of politics, who are more likely to participate in the political process (Johnson and Kaye 2003).

This view comes as no surprise because the Internet differs in various ways from traditional forms of mass media such as newspaper, radio, and television, and the Internet is considered to bring about a revolution in political communication. People

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researchers to statistically infer the true population parameters.

who put information on the Internet usually have full control over their messages, which are not edited or censored by others. In addition, Internet users are able to communicate with each other in a real-time interactive setting wherever they may be on the globe. Moreover, the cost of Internet communication is relatively low as compared to traditional mass media even though a great volume of information is transmitted. Furthermore, people's communication over the Internet can develop many fancy forms using visual and sound effects thanks to the sophisticated computer technique (Carlson and Djupsund 2001). These very natures of the Internet are believed to newly draw the politically disengaged but Internet friendly younger population into the political process.

The second wave hinges upon a rather doubtful view about the positive effects of the Internet on political participation (Norris 2003). Contrary to what had been expected, the plethora of Webpages created by parties and candidates was neither accompanied by much anticipated, active real-time public debates nor by multi-way interactive political discussion, not to mention attractive devices and fascinating functions on political Webpages, which look more or less alike. As a matter of fact, the contents of political Websites is basically similar to that of traditional mass media, such as leaflets, posters, newspapers, and television advertisements. Furthermore, the Internet generally equips already politically active netizens with more elaborate knowledge about specified issues at best, but it falls short of engaging apolitical and inactive publics in political activities (Bimber 1998, 2000, 2001; Carlson and Djupsund 2001; Farnsworth and Owen 2004; Fuller 2004; Gibson, Margolis, Resnick, and Ward 2003).

On the other hand, the third view is related to a more eclectic interpretation of the Internet effect on political participation. This interpretation posits that on-line communication supplements traditional mass media without strengthening or replacing them (Norris 2003; Wellman, Haase, Witte, and Hampton 2001). According to this view, the Internet is integrated into the context of citizen's daily life, and on-line activities are thus considered an extension of the traditional off-line activities. The new medium of the Internet provides a venue of communication additional to old-fashioned face-to-face contact, telephone, newspaper, radio, and television. Therefore, Internet users are also likely to use television news and newspapers more than the average. In

this sense, Norris's (2003) famous catchwords of "preaching to the converted" succinctly portray the Internet effect on political participation. At the same time, she emphasizes that the effect of the Internet appears to be limited because, generally speaking, many still have rarely visited the Internet and very few ever log in to political party Websites. And with respect to access to and use of the Internet, there are sharp differences across age, gender, education, income, race, residence, and the like. And this digital divide is evident throughout the world. Internet users are more likely to be well-educated, more affluent younger males (Katz and Aspden 1997; Norris 2001).

The Characteristics of Internet Users

In exploring the characteristics of Internet users in Korea, I use a set of survey data collected after the 2004 National Assembly election by the Korean Social Science Data Center (KSDC), which is the only academic surveyor that has conducted nation-wide post-election surveys (except for Jeju Island) in Korea during the last decades. KSDC employed the face-to-face interview method by visiting every household drawn according to the multistage probability sampling method. The post-election survey was conducted for a week starting on the very next morning after election day. Unlike the previous post-election surveys, the 2004 survey (N=1500) systematically asked about Internet use. The survey questions, which serve as the independent and dependent variables of the present analysis, are listed in the Appendix.

Korean Internet users corroborate the world-wide pattern of the digital divide(Norris 2001). Table 1 displays the frequency of Internet use by seven socio-demographic and attitudinal variables. In general, two in five Koreans (39.2%) have rarely visited the Internet, while one in three Koreans (33.1%) are daily Internet users. Frequent Internet users, that is including those who log in once a week, take up 52.9 percent. Speaking of the digital divide, males are more likely than females to use the Internet. There are more females (45.3%) than males (33.0%) who have never been on-line, whereas there are more males (38.8%) than females (27.4%) who visit cyberspace more than once a day.

In addition, heavy Internet users are mostly found among the younger generations than their older counterparts. An absolute majority of voters in their 20s (70.6%) have built a daily habit of exploring the cyber-world, something that fewer people usually do as age groups among Korean voters get older (30 to 39 years: 39.1%, 40 to 49 years: 22.0%, and 50 and over: 5.8%). Correspondingly, it is senior citizens aged 50 and over who are not likely to ever go on-line. Over three quarters of elderly citizens (76.6%) have never been on-line, and the proportion clearly decreases as the age group becomes younger.

The phenomenon of the digital divide is more pronounced in the categories of educational attainment and perceived living status. Those with just elementary education are least likely to use the Internet (95.6% have never done it), whereas those with a college diploma and over are most likely to surf the cyber-world. Those who command higher levels of socio-economic resources tend to navigate cyberspace more frequently, while the opposite living status brackets tend not to do the same. Virtually all those who command the highest level of socio-economic resources go on-line at least once a month, but 65.7 percent of the lowest group has never explored the cyber-world. Moreover, daily Internet users tend to be found among urban more than among rural residents, and Internet non-users are more likely to be found among the latter than the former.

The digital divide is also observed along the ideological lines. Those who identify as leftists are more likely to be frequent Internet users. Only 23.5 percent of them have never used the Internet, while 7.3 percent log in to the Internet more than once a month, 20.2 percent more than once a week, and 49.1 percent more than once a day. Moderate voters are more evenly scattered across the frequency distribution as compared to other ideological groups. Conservative rightists tend not to use the newly invented high-tech device of the Internet. More than half of them (50.9%) have never been on-line, whereas only 23.9 percent visit cyberspace more than once a day. Results for party identification correspond to this. Those who prefer the reform-minded Uri Party tend to use the Internet more than their counterparts. More than two in five Uri Party supporters (44.0%) log in to the Internet every day, while only 26.6 have never been on-line. On the other hand, those who support the conservative GNP tend not to navigate cyberspace.

Table 1. The Frequency of Internet Use (N=1446)

Variable	Category	Never	Once a Month +	Once a Week +	Once a Day +
		39.2%	8.9%	18.8%	33.1%
Gender***	Male	33.0	8.4	19.8	38.8
	Female	45.3	9.4	17.9	27.4
Age***	20-29	6.8	4.7	17.9	70.6
	30-39	21.5	10.9	28.5	39.1
	40-49	45.1	14.2	18.7	22.0
	50 and over	76.6	6.3	11.2	5.8
Education***	Elementary	95.6	0	2.2	2.2
	Middle	82.1	9.7	4.8	3.4
	High	39.7	9.8	19.8	30.7
	College	13.8	9.3	24.1	52.8
Living Status***	Very Low	65.7	5.7	8.6	20.0
	Low	44.5	11.3	15.7	28.5
	Middle	37.7	7.1	21.0	34.2
	High	23.0	8.1	25.8	43.1
	Very High	0	14.3	28.6	57.1
Residence***	Small Rural	52.8	6.3	18.3	22.5
	Suburban	39.8	11.2	17.1	31.9
	Central	34.4	7.2	21.2	37.2
Ideology***	Left	23.5	7.3	20.2	49.1
	Moderate	36.9	10.2	21.1	31.8
	Right	50.9	9.3	15.9	23.9
PID***	Uri Party	26.6	7.8	21.6	44.0
	- Uri Party	46.0	9.4	20.9	23.7
	GNP	49.2	10.2	24.3	16.4
	- GNP	31.0	7.8	19.4	41.7

Note: "How often do you use the Internet including the World Wide Web and email?"

*** $p < .01$ (Chi-square test).

Nearly a half of them (49.2%) have never used the Internet, whereas only 16.4 percent visit cyberspace more than once a day.

Internet users' participatory behavior is, however, better captured by the survey item of Internet community membership than by sheer Internet use frequency. Table 2 illustrates the shape of the on-line community membership among the Korean population. It should be noted that the survey question asks whether or not a survey participant joins an Internet community. The community can be of any nature, for instance, hobby and friendship, entertainment, scholarly, regional community, journalistic, political etc.

Korean voters do not appear to be passionate participants in Internet activities. More than three in five respondents (64.0%) are not members of an Internet community regardless of its nature. The contour of cyber-community membership echoes the digital divide of Internet use. In other words, men (41.2%) are more likely than women (30.9%) to join an Internet community, and the latter (69.1%) are more likely than the former (58.8%) not to be a member of a cyber-community. Younger respondents in their 20s (71.9%) are far more likely to be members of an Internet community than any other age bracket, and the membership rates clearly drop parallel to the increase of age levels. In contrast, senior citizens aged 50 and over (90.5%) tend not to join an on-line community, and the proportion decreases by significant margins as the age groups get younger. Survey participant's educational attainment also significantly affects the probability of joining an Internet community. None of the elementary graduates participates in an Internet community, and the membership rates increase proportionate to respondents' educational levels. Those with a college diploma reach the highest membership rate (55.6%) and exhibit the lowest non-membership rate (44.4%) among the four educational brackets. Likewise, a respondent's perceived living status and residency clearly determine Internet community membership. Lower class citizens are less likely to engage in a cyber-community, whereas higher class citizens are more likely to do that. In addition, rural residents tend not to take part in on-line communities, while urban residents are more likely to be community members.

A respondent's ideological stance strongly affects whether or not he/she joins an

Table 2. The Internet Community Membership (N=1439)

Variable	Category	Member	No
		36.0%	64.0%
Gender***	Male	41.2	58.8
	Female	30.9	69.1
Age***	20-29	71.9	28.1
	30-39	45.3	54.7
	40-49	21.8	78.2
	50 and over	9.5	90.5
Education***	Elementary	0	100
	Middle	8.4	91.6
	High	33.1	66.9
	College	55.6	44.4
Living Status***	Very Low	19.9	80.1
	Low	30.6	69.4
	Middle	36.1	63.9
	High	47.6	52.4
	Very High	57.1	42.9
Residence***	Small Rural	22.1	77.9
	Suburban	33.1	66.9
	Central	43.2	56.8
Ideology***	Left	50.8	49.2
	Moderate	36.9	63.1
	Right	24.7	75.3
PID***	Uri Party	50.2	49.8
	- Uri Party	28.3	71.7
	GNP	23.5	76.5
	- GNP	46.2	53.8

Note: "Do you participate in an Internet community regardless of its nature (hobby and friendship, entertainment, scholarly, regional community, journalistic, political etc.)?"

*** $p < .01$ (Chi-square test).

Internet community. Self-reported leftists (50.8%) tend to belong to an on-line community a lot more than moderates (36.9%) and rightists (24.7%). On the other hand, self-reported rightists (75.3%) are more likely not to be a member of an Internet community than moderates (63.1%) and leftists (49.2%). Those who support the reform-oriented Uri Party (50.2%) are more likely than supporters of other parties (28.3%) to have joined an Internet community. In contrast, those who prefer the conservative GNP (23.5%) are less likely to belong to a community than their counterparts (46.2%).

Furthermore, when closely examining those who take part in an Internet community (36.0%), it is observed that they tend to engage in simple information-seeking activities rather than time-consuming multi-dimensional activities. So to speak, every one in three Internet community members (33.0%) visit their community homepages in order to check community news and other notices on the bulletin board, as Table 3 shows. Every two in five community members (40.8%) read all the necessary information thoroughly. One in five community members (20.8%) chat on-line one-to-one and leave messages on the community bulletin board. On the other hand, a meager 5.4 percent of the community members are willing to participate in every event that the community arranges. This pattern does hold for most categories of all the seven socio-demographic and attitudinal variables. Educational groups, however, seem to differ significantly in their on-line community activities. Those with lower educational backgrounds tend to be involved in easy activities more than any other group, and those with a college diploma tend to engage in interactive and time-consuming types of activities more than the rest.

The Internet Effect: Statistical Models

Having said that, this essay now proceeds to ascertain two types of impact of the Internet on the Korean election: on voter participation and on vote choice. First, voter turnout is chosen in this study as the dependent variable in order to identify the impact of the Internet on voter participation. The dichotomous variable is assigned a value of 1

Table 3. The Type of Participation in the Internet Community (N=409)

Variable	Category	Checking News	Reading Thoroughly	Chatting w/others	Active Participation
		33.0%	40.8%	20.8%	5.4%
Gender	Male	33.8	39.5	21.1	5.7
	Female	32.0	42.5	20.4	5.0
Age	20-29	32.6	38.5	22.5	6.4
	30-39	33.1	43.4	18.4	5.1
	40-49	33.9	42.9	23.2	0
	50 and over	33.3	40.0	16.7	10.0
Education**	Elementary	0	0	0	0
	Middle	50.0	37.5	12.5	0
	High	41.9	34.1	16.8	7.2
	College	26.5	46.0	23.9	3.5
Living Status	Very Low	13.6	54.5	22.7	9.1
	Low	33.8	36.6	26.8	2.8
	Middle	33.1	37.9	23.4	5.5
	High	25.7	51.4	20.3	2.7
	Very High	50.0	50.0	0	0
Residence	Small Rural	52.4	28.6	9.5	9.5
	Suburban	34.1	43.0	18.4	4.5
	Central	29.1	40.4	24.6	5.9
Ideology	Left	31.4	42.5	22.2	3.9
	Moderate	32.4	39.3	22.5	5.8
	Right	34.1	40.9	20.5	4.5
PID	Uri Party	29.8	38.3	25.5	6.4
	- Uri Party	30.6	43.1	25.0	1.4
	GNP	38.5	33.3	25.6	2.6
	- GNP	27.6	42.5	25.2	4.7

Note: "If you are a member of an Internet community, then how seriously do you participate in the Internet community?" Only 27.3 percent (409) the total interviewees (N=1500) answered this survey question, because there were more respondents who did not join an Internet community.

** $p<.05$ (Chi-square test)

if a respondent reported voting in the election; otherwise, it is assigned a value of 0. The independent variables include multiple indicators of demographic features, psychological factors, economic conditions, regionalism, and election issues, not to mention the Internet. Second, vote choice is chosen as the dependent variable to ascertain the impact of the Internet on the choice between the two major parties (Uri Party and GNP). The dichotomous variable is assigned a value of 1 if a respondent reported voting for the Uri Party; otherwise, it is assigned a value of 0. And the independent variables are the same as those in the voter turnout model with the sole exception of party identification. For the vote choice model, Uri Party identifier is employed to measure the impact of voters' party attachment on vote choices instead of the simple existence of voters' party affiliations that is appropriate for measuring the impact of party preferences on electoral participation. The former encourages voters' support for the Uri Party, whereas the latter tends to increase voter participation. Since the dependent variables of the statistical models are of a binary nature, I employ a probit analysis to estimate to what extent and in what manner the variables under investigation shape the voting behavior of Internet users among Koreans.

The effect of the Internet is assessed by using the question about the Internet community membership. This question is more likely than the simple Internet use frequency question to capture respondents' voluntary involvement in Internet activity. In addition, the statistical models include a set of demographic variables: gender (male), age (1=20-29, 2=30-39, 3=40-49, and 4=50 and older), the levels of educational attainment (1=elementary school, 2=middle school, 3=high school, and 4=college and over), the self-rated standard of living (1=very low, 2=low, 3=middle, 4=high, and 5=very high), and the type of residential community (1=small rural town, 2=suburban areas, and 3=central cities). The statistical models also include two attitudinal variables. These are party identification and political efficacy. In addition to these traditional voting determinants, I also consider economic voting by including retrospective evaluation of the incumbent government.

The Korea-specific variable of regionalism is measured by the respondent's current residential area: Cholla (the southwest area), Kyungsang (the southeast region), and

Choongchung (the central area).[2] By regionalism, I am referring to the unique electoral behavior that Korean voters are likely to cast their ballots for the party that is led by leaders from the province a voter comes from.[3]

Lastly, the statistical models estimate the impact of respondents' perceived salience of issues of the time during the most recent Korean election: the impeachment against the president, the sweeping generational change among the Assembly representatives, and the sarcastic remarks against elderly citizens by the Uri Party's Chairperson. He said, just ten days before the election, that senior citizens should remain at home on election day instead of casting their votes. The disparaging remarks were perceived as anti-impeachment and anti-GNP. After they were made, the soaring popularity of the Uri Party began to drop. This cost the Chairperson his candidacy for parliament, but the Uri Party still won the election.

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2) Previously, the surveyor KSDC has also asked about respondent's birth places, which is likely to capture the impact of regional sentiment on voting behavior better than respondent's current address. Regional sentiment is acquired by birth rather than living. In 2004, however, KSDC did not include the birth place questionnaire, and the current residential area can also well portray the impact of regionalism on voting behavior.

3) This regionalism is most significant between the southwest region (the Cholla province) and the southeast area (the Kyungsang province) on the Korean peninsula. A clear example for the electoral behavior based on regional conflicts may be observed in the 1997 presidential election. Kim Dae Jung who was originally from the South Cholla province received 94.6 percent of the vote from the South Cholla province and 92.3 percent from the North Cholla province, while he garnered meager 11.0 percent from the South Kyungsang province and 13.7 percent from the North Kyungsang province. His opponent Lee Hoi Chang based in the Kyungsang province picked up 55.1 percent of the vote from the South Kyungsang province and 61.9 percent from the North Kyungsang province, whereas he collected only 3.2 percent from South Cholla and 4.5 percent from North Cholla. Such regional voting behavior has greatly augmented as time passed even after the democratic transition in 1987. And this pattern of vote distribution did remain largely intact again in the 2002 presidential election, although the Cholla regional party chose a presidential nominee, Roh Moo Hyun, who was originally from the Kyungsang area in partial pursuit of, ironically, decreasing decade-old regional conflicts.

The Internet Effect on Voter Participation

Table 4 illustrates the probit estimates for voter participation in the 2004 National Assembly election. The first column shows the hypotheses and the respective independent variables. The plus (minus) sign of coefficient estimates in the second column is to be interpreted such that respondents are more (less) likely to vote. Standard errors are in the far right column. To delve into the conclusion, it turns out that the Internet, operationalized by on-line community membership, did not affect voter participation in 2004. The Internet community membership variable does not reach levels of statistical significance at all.

On the other hand, the variables of gender, age, perceived living status, and community size do achieve statistical significance. Older men with higher levels of socio-economic resources are more likely to vote, while urban residents tend not to go to the polling booths. This may reflect a recent pattern of voter participation among Koreans: Young people who reside in urban areas take a vacation on election day instead of taking extra efforts to go to the polling booths. The parliamentary election especially is held on the Thursday of the second week in warming and flowering April, which may well induce younger people to take the day off. The two psychological variables of party identification and political efficacy have a positive impact on voter turnout. To be sure, those who attach to a political party whichever it may be and feel efficacious tend to turn out at the polls. In addition, those who have a good evaluation of the current Roh government are more likely to go to the polling places. As was expected, the salience of the impeachment issue has a significant impact on voters' decisions to vote or not to vote in 2004. Surprisingly enough, however, those who believed the impeachment case to be important gave up their right to cast a vote.

Apparently, the Internet campaign was not effective to mobilize eligible voters to go to the polling places. This may be accounted for by the fact that, although the voters in their 20s actively engage in Internet activities, they tend not to turn out at the polls. Almost nine in ten voters aged 20 to 29 (88.5%) are reported to visit cyberspace more

Table 4. Probit Estimates for Voter Participation in 2004

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error
Internet Effect		
Internet Community Member (0=no, 1=yes)	-.18	.13
Demographic		
Gender (0=female, 1=male)	.24**	.10
Age (1=20-29, 2=30-39, 3=40-49, 4=50 and over)	.27***	.06
Education (1=elementary, 2=middle, 3=high, 4=college and over)	.09	.08
Living Status (1=very low, 2=low, 3=middle, 4=high, 5=very high)	.12*	.06
Residence (1=small rural town, 2=suburban, 3=central city)	-.17**	.09
Political Psychology		
PID (0=no, 1=yes)	.68***	.11
Political Efficacy	.15***	.04
Economic Voting		
Retrospective Evaluation	.14*	.08
Regionalism		
Cholla	.01	.16
Kyungsang	-.18	.13
Choongchung	-.27	.19
Issue		
Impeachment	-.23*	.13
Generational Change	.03	.13
Sarcastic Remarks against Elderly Citizens	-.24	.29
Intercept	-.96	.42
Log likelihood	-390.16	
Prob > chi2	0.0000	
Pseudo R2	0.1361	
N	912	

*** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10

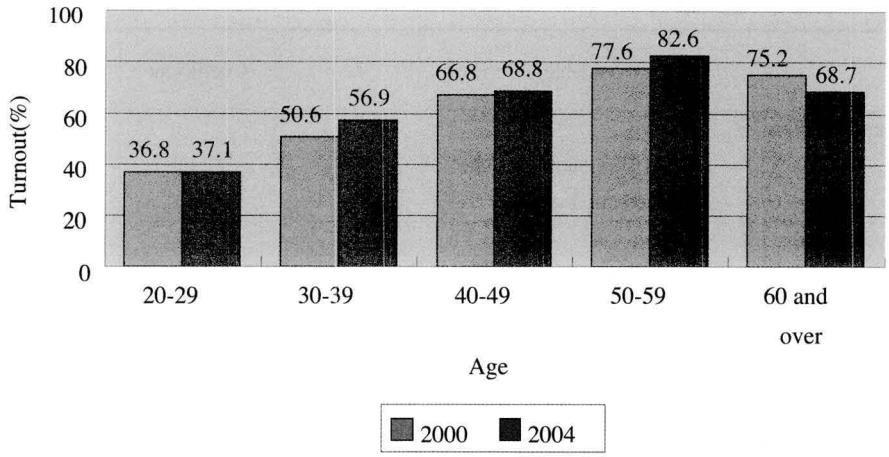

Figure 1. Voter Turnout by Age in the Recent National Assembly Elections

than once a week, but this does not make them go to the polling booths. Figure 1 illustrates that voter turnout has increased by meager 0.3 percentage points among the voters in their 20s between the two recent parliamentary elections. This is interesting because of the fact that Internet use has diffused widely among that age group over the past years. The margin of 0.3 percentage points is far lower than the total turnout difference between the two elections (3.4 percentage points). It increased from 57.2 percent in the 2000 National Assembly election to 60.6 percent four years later. In a nut shell, the heavy Internet users among the younger population are willing to navigate through the cyber-world night by night, but are hesitant to participate in the real-world of voting in daylight. Many more Koreans of older generations, who are less likely to surf the net, go to the polling booths, as compared with their younger compatriots.

Moreover, the increase in voter turnout in 2004 in general and among the younger population in particular (small as it was) may not be associated with the Internet campaign at all. Rather, the historical impeachment issue mobilized the voters to come to the polling places across the age groups, in addition to the introduction of the one-voter-two-ballots system. Speaking of the Internet campaign, the 2002 presidential race may have been the landmark. The election campaign via the Internet and television was

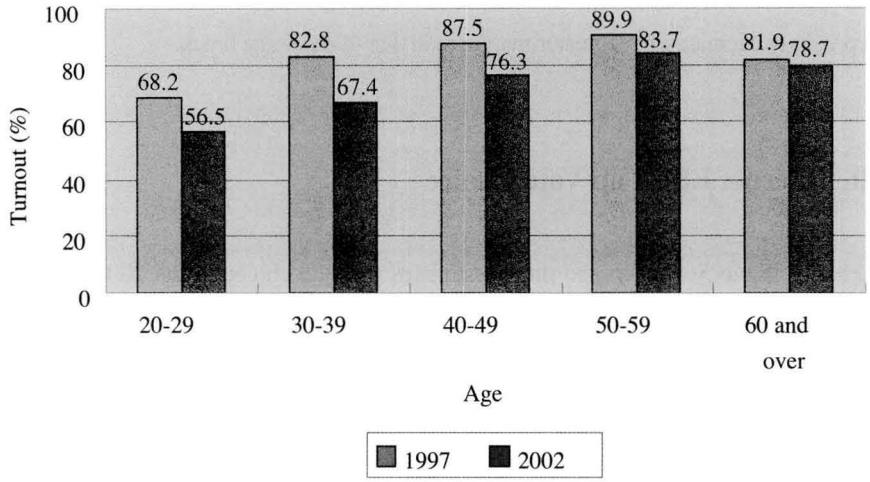

Figure 2. Voter Turnout by Age in the Recent Presidential Elections

launched by then MDP presidential nominee Roh Moo Hyun. The reform-minded younger generations applauded the high-tech campaign advertisements by the MDP. In addition, they volunteered to help the like-minded Roh Moo Hyun and enthusiastically launched a campaign drive organizing "Roh-Sa-Mo" (Citizen Group Who Loves Roh). This voluntary grass-root organization mainly consisted of Internet-friendly younger voters. Moreover, 2002 was the first presidential election in Korean history that launched an Internet campaign. Thus, it was expected that young netizens' activities and the Internet campaign would remarkably increase voter turnout in 2002, ceteris paribus. The contrary happened, however: The official turnout rates dropped notably from 80.6 percent in 1997 to 70.8 percent in 2002, that is to say, the introduction of the Internet campaign could not even stop the continuous downward movement of voter turnout in presidential elections.[4] Figure 2, furthermore, eloquently illustrates that many of the age group forming the backbone of the netizens and the "Roh-Sa-Mo" campaign did not

4) The turnout rates have continuously decreased ever since the transition to democracy. In the 1987 presidential race, it was recorded at 89.2 percent but began to drop to 81.9 in 1992, which was followed by 80.6 percent in 1997 and finally 70.8 percent in 2002.

show up at the polling places. The turnout rate among the voters in their 20s and 30s surprisingly decreased by a greater margin than that of other age brackets.

The Internet Effect on Vote Choice

Finally, Table 5 displays the probit estimates for vote choice in the 2004 National Assembly election. The format of the table is similar to the previous one. However, the plus (minus) sign of coefficient estimates in the second column is to be interpreted such that voters are more (less) likely to vote for the Uri Party. And Table 6 suggests a very similar conclusion as that of Table 4. So to speak, the Internet did not play a significant role in the decision of whom to vote for in 2004. The Internet community membership variable does not reach statistical significance for vote choice, either.

Among the five demographic variables, age, educational attainment, and residence have a significant impact on vote choice. To be sure, the younger generation voted for the reform-driven Uri Party, while those who live in central cities with higher educational background voted for the GNP. In addition, Uri Party identifiers and those who give a good score to the incumbent Roh government's performance, clearly tend to vote for the impeached president supporting Uri Party. Of course, the salience of the issues of the impeachment, of the generational change, and of the Uri Party Chairperson's disparaging remarks against elderly citizens, respectively, reaches statistical significance by drawing voters' support to the reform-oriented Uri Party.[5)]

Conclusions

This paper has ascertained Internet use among Korean voters and its impact on the

5) The probit test using STATA automatically took out the regionalism variable of Cholla from the statistical model to take care of a possible multicollinearity problem.

Table 5. Probit Estimates for Vote Choice in 2004

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error
Internet Effect		
Internet Community Membership (0=no, 1=yes)	.12	.29
Demographic		
Gender (0=female, 1=male)	.07	.25
Age (1=20-29, 2=30-39, 3=40-49, 4=50 and over)	.36**	.15
Education (1=elementary, 2=middle, 3=high, 4=college and over)	-.33*	.17
Living Status (1=very low, 2=low, 3=middle, 4=high, 5=very high)	.15	.14
Residence (1=small rural town, 2=suburban, 3=central city)	-.36*	.19
Political Psychology		
Uri Party Identification (0=no, 1=yes)	2.54***	.31
Political Efficacy	-.15	.10
Economic Voting		
Retrospective Evaluation	.74***	.21
Regionalism		
Kyungsang	-.33	.26
Choongchung	.34	.58
Issue		
Impeachment	.55*	.33
Generational Change	.98***	.30
Sarcastic Remarks against Elderly Citizens	1.13**	.54
Intercept	.36	1.02
Log likelihood	-71.72	
Prob > chi2	0.0000	
Pseudo R2	0.6150	
N	271	

***p<.01

voting behavior in 2004, employing a traditional nation-wide post-election survey. The picture of the digital divide in Korea drawn from my research reveals more or less a general pattern compatible with other research from different continents on the globe. Korean Internet users corroborate the world-wide phenomenon of the digital divide in that well-educated younger males who command the higher levels of socio-economic resources are more likely to enter cyberspace. Yet, we will have to wait and see whether or not the digital divide in Korea becomes smaller in the future as can be observed in the American context (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, and Robinson 2001; Katz, Ronald, and Aspden 2001) and in the European Union setting (Norris 2003).

In addition, the essay also suggests a peculiar and idiosyncratic side of the Korean digital divide that does not match a general pattern observed in other countries. The population located on the moderate or the moderate-right in terms of the ideological spectrum tends to exhibit the heaviest Internet use in the US and the EU (Norris 2003; The Pew Research Center 2005 http://people-press.org/reports/images/200-8.gif). In Korea, on the contrary, the most frequent Internet users are found among the leftists and the reform-oriented Uri Party supporters.

With respect to the actual impact of the Internet on voting behavior, the message is crystal clear. The Internet campaign did not affect voters' decisions of whether or not to vote and whom to vote for in the 2004 Korean National Assembly election. Especially, the Internet campaign neither played a significant role in boosting voter participation in 2004 as a whole, nor among the younger generations in particular. The increase in voter turnout in 2004 may be associated with the impeachment issue and the one-voter-two-ballots system that was employed for the first time in Korean history. Moreover, the 2004 election was more likely to be determined by the Korea-specific factors of regionalism, election issues, and the economic situation, rather than the Internet campaign.

Nonetheless, it is not my intention to argue that the Internet did nothing during the 2004 parliamentary election, but to point out that rapidly increasing Internet use does not necessarily mean that people use it for political ends. Too few use the Internet for political and social purposes, whereas many others engage in solitary recreations, simple

information seeking activities, and merchandise purchases. On the other hand, many who are already participating in politics off-line are likely to use the Internet to extend their political knowledge and participation. The Internet may also have an absorptive effect that dampens social interactions and keeps people at home, as television has done for many decades.

Furthermore, the utility of the Internet campaign may be highlighted when voters freely call for public attention to a specific issue, keep it alive and set it as a significant campaign agenda throughout the course of the election process, and thus influence the fates of candidates and parties. In Korea, netizens tenaciously launched the anti-impeachment drive and augmented the importance of political reform issues via the Internet throughout the 2004 parliamentary election process. Finally, an Internet effect on voter participation is expected when the Korean citizens will be able to vote via the Internet in the next parliamentary election. Internet voting may be a cure for the so-called "habitual non-voters" among young Koreans in their 20s and 30s, who are taking up an increasing share of eligible voters, as well as for a large lump of apolitical Korean teenagers, who will soon be added to the electorate as their age cohort grows older.

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2004년 총선과 인터넷 이용

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이 논문은 2004년 총선의 설문조사자료를 이용하여 인터넷이 한국의 투표행태에 미치는 영향을 체계적으로 분석한다. 선행연구들에 따르면 인터넷이 한국의 선거에 미치는 영향이 적지 않다. 그러나 이러한 결론들은 무작위 추출법이 아니라 응답자가 스스로 설문에 응하는(self-selected) 설문조사방법에 기초했다. 따라서 이 논문은 먼저 인터넷이 선거에 미치는 영향에 대한 선행연구를 고찰한다. 그리고 전 세계적인 정보격차 현상이 한국에도 만연한 사실을 확인한다. 이러한 정보들에 기초하여 이 논문은 응답자가 스스로 설문에 응하는(self-selected) 설문조사방법이 아닌 설문자료를 이용하여 한국선거에서 인터넷의 효과를 측정하기 위한 통계모델을 제시하고 검증한다. 그 결과 이 논문은 인터넷이 한국에서 투표참여나 후보자 선택에 적어도 통계적으로 유의미한 영향을 주지 않았다는 결론에 도달한다.

주제어: 인터넷, 투표참여, 후보자 선택, 총선, 정보격차