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Expanding affective intelligence theory through social viewing: Focusing on the South Korea's 2017 presidential election

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A B S T R A C T

Based on the affective intelligence theory (AIT), the current research examines how social viewing on presidential debates influences emotions (anger, fear and enthusiasm) and moreover, how these linkages affect cognitive elaboration and tolerance for opposing views. A national survey conducted in the 2017 presidential election shows that social viewing on presidential debates elicited fear and enthusiasm but only enthusiasm was related to cognitive elaboration. Moreover, cognitive elaboration showed a positive relationship with tolerance for opposing views. Enthusiasm mediated the relationship between social viewing on presidential debates and cognitive elaboration as well as tolerance for opposing views. This research contributes to expanding the AIT in the social viewing context, particularly focusing on the presidential debates.

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Social viewing, which refers to having critical viewpoints on television program content by talking with other co-viewers through online media, has been taken a renewed interest by media scholars because it takes a vital role in forming an online mediated community (Lee & Choi, 2017). Indeed, most social viewing research has been conducted in the cognitive terrain while little is known about how social viewing affects emotions. Understanding the linkage between social viewing and emotions is crucial given that emotions are viewed as "part of a dynamic social process" (Parkinson, 1996, p. 8), which suggests the social role of emotions. In particular, the current research aims to expand the extant discussions on social viewing by examining the influences of emotions on cognitive elaboration, which can eventually lead to tolerance for political opponents in the context of the presidential debates in the 2017 presidential election in South Korea.

There is little question that emotions are crucial to social interaction and forming political thoughts. One of the representative theories that explain the linkage between emotions and cognitions is the Affective Intelligence Theory (AIT), which argues that voters' emotions are important to be examined in understanding cognitive processes. Interestingly, scholars have recognized the distinct emotions such as fear, anger, and enthusiasm function in

different ways (Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2000;; Marcus, MacKuen, Wolak, & Keele, 2006;; Stolwijk, Schuck, & de Vreese, 2016). Although inconsistent results about the effects of these emotions on political thinking have been continuously found, the AIT literature has traditionally concluded that anger and enthusiasm tend to result in heuristic information processing (i.e., relying on partisan cues), while fear is likely to bring out systematic and deliberative information processing, as a way to reduce uncertainty (MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, & Marcus, 2010; Marcus et al., 2000; Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, & Davis, 2008).

Applying the AIT on social viewing research, this study establishes a theoretical model of social viewing, emotions (specifically, anger, fear, and enthusiasm), and how their linkages will ultimately influence on cognitive elaboration and tolerance for opponents. Since social viewing networks can be comprised of a heterogeneous network with diverse political orientations, social viewers can engage in debate with opponents who support other candidates or people who support their own candidates. Discussions in such environment can elicit diverse emotions including positive and negative feelings. In fact, many discussions made by social viewers are emotional remarks about programs and characters who appear on the show (Selva, 2016; Wohn & Na, 2011). As emotion plays an important role in making political decisions even for those who intentionally endeavor to be rational (Marcus, 2002), understanding the role of emotion in social viewing of political debates is an

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important matter. By integrating social viewing research with the AIT in the context of the presidential election, this research could pave the way to better understand the social viewing effects.

1. Theoretical background

1.1. Social viewing on presidential debates

Social viewing refers to a "combination of television viewing and social discussion [of television content] using online media on a second screen during air time or after" (Lee & Choi, 2017, p. 302). There are other concepts that have been interchangeably used with social viewing including co-viewing (Doughty, Rowland, & Lawson, 2012), dual screening (Vaccari, Chadwick, & O'Loughlin, 2015), social TV (Selva, 2016), and second screening (Doughty et al., 2012); but the term social viewing put more emphasis on forming an engaged virtual community by watching a television program and simultaneously using online media to talk with others (see Lee & Choi, 2017; for review). This study conceptualized social viewing as a viewing context that encompasses not only having discussions of program content during television watching but also pre-, and post-discussions with others through online media, especially social media (e.g., Twitter, YouTube, Facebook). It will limit our understanding if we only take people's discussions through online media while watching television programs as social viewing because a virtual viewing community could be also built up before or after television viewing by thinking back on the program content.

Although social viewing has been raised as a relatively new term in the communication and media field, recent research on social viewing and other related concepts has opened a room for numerous research opportunities, providing ideas to establish and further explore a theoretical model of social viewing. With the advent of online media, people are no longer passive audiences that merely accept media content. They can expand their viewpoints by being exposed other co-viewers' opinions and actively participating in discussions while simultaneously viewing television programs (Buschow, Schneider, & Ueberheide, 2014). In this sense, the linkage between watching television and using online media suggests the possibility of a formation of informed citizen. Focusing on the vital role of social viewing in the online media era, this study particularly examines social viewing on presidential debates.

Presidential debate viewing, which is broadcast before the presidential election, has been considered as a type of "persuasion-oriented political source" (Holbert, Hansen, Caplan, & Mortensen, 2007, pp. 688–689) because voters, especially undecided voters, tend to make up their minds after watching presidential debates than before (Pazzanese, 2016). The preponderance of past studies on debate viewing have devoted to its cognitive effects such as issue knowledge or perceived issue salience (e.g., Benoit & Hansen, 2004; Benoit, McKinney, & Stephenson, 2002; Holbert, Benoit, Hansen, & Wen, 2002; Hwang, Gotlieb, Nah, & McLeod, 2007) or behavioral outcomes such as voting choice (e.g., Benoit, Hansen, & Verser, 2003; Holbert, 2005). Yet, its emotional effects have been largely ignored (Holbert et al., 2007; Hullett, Louden, & Mitra, 2003; for exception). Such limitation of the past literature has surprised us, given the vital role of emotion in persuasive communication (DeSteno, Petty, Rucker, Wegener, & Braverman, 2004). Moreover, little attention has been paid to specific genres of television program in the extant literature on social viewing, which highlights the importance of this study that centers its goal on the relationship between social viewing and emotion in regard to presidential debates.

1.2. Social viewing and affective intelligence: Anger, fear, enthusiasm

It has been well-known that individuals tend to use emotion as an information source, and therefore, emotion can ultimately have an impact on one's decision and judgments (Loewenstein, Weber, Hsee, & Welch, 2001). The notable point in emotion-focused communication research is that such the feeling-as-information mechanism or "affect heuristic" (Slovic, Finucane, Peters, & MacGregor, 2003), which follows the "How do I feel about it?" heuristic (Schwarz & Clore, 1988), could function as democratic processes. According to Marcus and MacKuen (1993), "emotionality aids, rather than disrupts, political reasoning and enhances, rather than diminishes, the quality of democratic life" (p.672).

Parkinson (1996) contends that emotions are "essentially communicative rather than internal and reactive phenomena" (p.2). This argument emphasizes the social role of emotions, which suggests that emotions are caused by social interactions with other people (Parkinson, 1996). According to a relation-alignment approach, emotional experiences are not separable essences or cores, but rather have certain meanings because of the linkage with inter-individual processes (Parkinson, 2008). Kappas (2013) specifically summarized the ways where emotions take their social roles: "(1) the situations in which emotions are elicited are frequently social," "(2) the contents of the events eliciting emotions are frequently social," "(3) the acquisition, and shaping of rules and norms are largely social," "(4) sharing of emotions is driven by social needs and serves a variety of social functions," and "(5) deficits in emotion expression or interpretation lead to social problems" (p.4). These discussions centering on emotions on intra-individual processes provide an integrative lens through which to examine the linkage between having discussions with others during television viewing and emotions.

The role of emotions in political decision-making is well conceptualized in the AIT, which posits that emotions, especially anxiety, play critical roles in political attitude formation because they could produce more attention to political issues, and elicit people to think elaborately about their political views (Marcus et al., 2000). Marcus et al. (2000) even maintain that "emotions enhance citizen rationality" (p. 124), which is against the conventional idea that emotions blur rational judgment and induce irrational behavior. The AIT contrasts with popular notions that divide "reason" from "passion" by suggesting that emotion is an integral part of human judgment (Marcus, 2002). The AIT suggests three discrete emotions—anger, fear, and enthusiasm—as the key emotions that determine the strategies citizens use to construct their political judgments (Marcus et al., 2000). Scholars have concluded that people who experience fear or anxiety are likely to be more attentive to politics while less relying on their partisan cues under circumstances of uncertainty (Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007; Marcus et al., 2000; Rudolph, Gangl, & Stevens, 2000). Anger, on the other hand, is caused by affronts to one's beliefs under situations of certainty, which eventually results in holding disapproval of the opposition (Marcus et al., 2000, 2006).

Huddy et al. (2007), for example, found that anger resulted in a reduced perception of the risk of the Iraq war and an increased support for military intervention whereas anxiety (or fear) increased risk perception of the war and decreased support for the war. Supportive evidence was also found in Lerner and Keltner (2001) seminal study that fearful individuals tend to have heightened level of risk perception; but angry people tend to have optimism toward risks, which was similar to people who felt happiness. Meanwhile, enthusiasm has been discussed in the AIT as a dimension of the disposition system, which is linked to reinforcement of existing partisan cues (Brader, 2006). The AIT posits that