

Did Japanese voters change their passive attitude toward Internet election campaigns? The 2017 Japanese Lower House election

Morihiro Ogasahara and Shoko Kiyohara

Introduction

Internet election campaigns are nowadays an exceedingly important aspect of campaign strategies in many countries. In the United States, Barack Obama's wins in the 2008 and 2012 presidential election campaigns are partially attributed to his use of social networking services (SNS), which enabled him to collect overwhelming campaign funds through small donations from numerous voters as well as mobilize his supporters via their social networks. Similarly, in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Donald Trump's election has been attributed to his use of Twitter as a main campaign tool to bring his controversial messages directly to his supporters, despite being criticized by the majority of the U.S. mainstream media. In East Asia, Roh Moo-hyun has been called 'the world's first Internet president' (Guardian, 24 February, 2003) due to the considerable support he received from online communities of young voters in the 2002 Korean presidential election. Later on, in the 2012 Korean presidential election, Park Geun-Hye mobilized senior voters via Kakao-Talk, which was the most popular messenger app in South Korea at the time (Lee, 2013).

Unlike in these other countries, the effects of Internet election campaigning have been largely underestimated in Japan. Election campaigns in Japan are strictly regulated through the electoral law, which prohibits canvassing and paid TV advertisements as well as limits the number of posters or flyers that candidates may distribute to voters. Since the Ministry of Home Affairs has considered websites or emails as types of poster or flyer, Internet election campaigning was all but illegitimate in Japan until 2013. At that time, the law was amended and the ban on Internet election campaigning was lifted. The Japanese mainstream media presumed that people's political interest would increase as a result of these changes, and that debates and decision making concerning voting would be more active, all of which would increase voter turnout in the national elections. However, the apparent effects of Internet election campaigns were disappointing: the exposure rate to Internet election campaigns was only 10.2% (Association for Promoting Fair Elections, 2014) and the voter turnout was only about 52.61% in the 2013 Upper House election—the third lowest turnout since World War II. Voter turnouts in the 2014 Lower House election and the 2016 Upper House election were also low, at 52.66% (the lowest) and 54.70% (the fourth lowest), respectively. As a result, both the news media and researchers have commented that Internet election campaigns have little effect on the election results in Japan (e.g. Murayama, 18, October 2017).

However, the 2017 Japanese Lower House election indicated that this pattern may be changing: The Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ), a tech-savvy party newly launched prior to the election, implemented social media campaigns in cooperation with its young supporters; the party's subsequent win of 55 seats—making it the second largest party in the Lower House—has been attributed to its social media campaigns (not everyone ascribes to this—some claim that the reason for the CDPJ's advancement is their policy of supporting the current Japanese Constitution, whereas the LDP is geared towards amending the Constitution). If the 2017 Lower House election was a turning point for Internet election campaigns in Japan, analysing the relation between voters' perception about Internet election campaigns and voting behaviour for the CDPJ, we might be able to identify important factors promoting the use of Internet election campaigns in a society.

The 2017 Japanese Lower House election potentially had another unique feature compared to previous elections: fake news, or fabricated news stories. The 2016 U.S. presidential election was marked by specific concerns about 'fake news' circulating on social media. According to the Pew Research Center (2016), about 64% of U.S. adults felt that 'fake news' has caused confusion about basic facts. Since the 2016 U.S. presidential election, 'fake news' during elections has been considered to be undermining democratic systems in the United Kingdoms, France, and Germany, among other countries. Thus, it may be necessary to examine the degree of the dissemination of 'fake news', its contents, and how voters perceive it during Japanese elections.

In this study, we conducted a quantitative analysis of the exposure to Internet election campaigns, the relationship between voting for the CDPJ and exposure to Internet election campaigns, and the exposure to and contents of fake news in the 2017 Japanese Lower House election.

Related studies and research questions

The 2013 Upper House election is regarded as the first time that the Internet was employed for election campaign purposes in Japan after the ban on Internet election campaigns was lifted. It is widely known that the Japanese media was disappointed in the low voter turnout after expecting that the Internet would increase it. Subsequently, there have been some studies exploring whether the Internet actually did have an affect on the 2013 Upper House election or not. For example, Ogasahara (2014) examined the correlation between exposure to Internet election campaigns and voting behaviour and political attitudes during the 2013 Upper House election. He found weak but statistically significant correlations between exposure to Internet election campaign and changes in political interest, nominal agenda diversity (Allen & Izcaray, 1988), and political party support surrounding the election. Kobayashi (2017) also studied this election, testing the causal effect of the

use of social media on political efficacy and voting with propensity score matching. He discovered that respondents who used social media for political communication during the election campaign had an 11% increased likelihood of voting compared with similar counterparts who did not use social media for political purposes.

However, it is also important to discuss *why* the Internet election campaign did not have a robust effect in Japan even after the ban was lifted. Several studies have done so by examining contextual factors such as media environments and institutional factors. Ogasahara (2017) analysed the media environments, in comparison with the U.S., South Korea, and Taiwan, and mentioned that the social media penetration rate was low in Japan. Furthermore, Japanese people rarely obtained or engaged with the news on social media. Thus, he emphasized that a major factor was voters' passive attitude towards Internet election campaigns. The passive attitude likely hampered the sharing of candidates' messages on social media and diminished the efficacy of Internet election campaigns. Additionally, Kiyohara (2017) examined various institutional factors such as election regulations and systems to compare the development of Internet election campaigns in Japan, the U.S., South Korea, and Taiwan. She pointed out several significant factors such as the lack of a primary election, the short campaign period, and the strict restrictions on practices were considered as obstructive factors to develop the Internet election campaigns in Japan.

Summary of the 2017 Lower House election

Prime Minister Abe dissolved the Lower House on 28 September 2017, leading to the organization of a snap election for that house to be held on 22 October 2017. At the time, Prime Minister Abe was being accused by news media and opposition parties for the Kake Gakuen and Moritomo Gakuen scandals, which related to suspicions of favouritism in the government's decision-making processes over school operators with ties to Abe or his wife. However, the opposition parties were experiencing far worse turmoil than the ruling party (i.e. the Liberal Democratic Party [LDP]). One opposition party, the Democratic Party (DP), had formed a united front against the LDP with three other opposition parties (including the Japanese Communist Party), which led to a backlash that resulted in many members defecting from the party. The DP separated into two groups—conservatives and liberals—just before the national election. The former united with Tokyo Governor Koike and the newly formed Party of Hope on 28 September, whereas the latter formed the CDPJ on 3 October 2017. The national election campaign period began on 10 October and lasted for 12 days, until the day before election day (22 October). On election day, the LDP maintained their overwhelming majority of seats (284 seats), whereas the CDPJ won more than three times the number of seats it had before the election (increasing from 15 to 55 seats), thus becoming the second largest party in the Lower House.

The Internet election campaign of the CDPJ captured the interest of the mainstream media during the election. One cause of the birth of the CDPJ was the grassroots effort on Twitter—led by Edano, a former liberal member of the DP and the CDPJ’s current leader—to launch a new liberal party (CDPJ, 2018). The CDPJ’s official Twitter account garnered over 140,000 followers in just three days (nearly 30,000 more than the number of LDP followers, at 110,000). The CDPJ disseminated various political messages and videos through social media and mobilized thousands of voters through public speeches (e.g., in front of stations). At that time, Edano mentioned that the effect of Twitter on the election ‘exceeds expectation’ (Asahi Shimbun, 2017). If the activities of the CDPJ enhanced the diffusion of the Internet election campaign in Japan, we may be able to identify at which point an Internet election campaign changes from passive to active in a society.

Was it the effects of the Internet election campaign or mainstream media?

Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 U.S. presidential election has been attributed to his Internet election campaign, typified by his offensive Twitter posts (i.e., ‘tweets’). On the other hand, some researchers have suggested that it was due to the excessive news coverage of Trump by the mainstream media. For example, cable news regularly covered Trump’s appearances at rallies, and Trump has been cited as taking advantage of his salience on mainstream media (Owen, 2017). Television is the most popular source of electoral information in Japan, just as in the United States. While it is true that the CDPJ actively conducted an Internet election campaign and were successful in acquiring more seats in the Lower House, the CDPJ’s social media campaign also drew considerable mainstream media coverage. Thus, it is necessary to clarify whether the Internet election campaign or mainstream media coverage had a greater impact on voting for the CDPJ.

RQ1 To what extent were Japanese voters exposed to Internet election campaigns and communicating with their friends on social media during the 2017 election?

RQ2. Which had a stronger relation to support of the CDPJ: exposure to their Internet election campaign or exposure to mainstream media coverage of this campaign?

Fake news and the media environment in Japan

Since the 2016 U.S. presidential election, fake news during elections has been considered a critical threat to democratic participation worldwide. Hundreds of fake news stories defaming Hillary Clinton disseminated on Twitter or Facebook during the 2016 election; one story, known commonly as ‘Pizzagate’, even instigated a shooting incident. During the 2017 French presidential election, Emmanuel Macron was the subject of various fake news stories, such as his having an

account in a tax haven, and he promised an outright ban on fake news during elections (Guardian, 3 January, 2018). In Germany, the Network Enforcement Act was passed in June 2017, and went into effect in January 2018. This act aimed to eliminate fake news on the Internet and fined violators up to five million euros (Guardian, 5 January, 2018)

The 2017 Lower House election was the first Japanese national election to take place in the wake of this crisis of fake news. If fake news was widely circulated on social media during the election, then Japan might share the problems of other democracies. However, as was mentioned earlier, the media environment in Japan differs considerably from that in other countries: it is politically unpolarized, the penetration of social media is low, and people are generally inactive in obtaining or engaging with news online. Such characteristics might limit the spread of fake news. Nevertheless, it is necessary to clarify if these characteristics of Japan are fact related to exposure to fake news, and to examine the actual content of fake news in the 2017 Lower House election. Thus, we propose the following two research questions.

RQ3. To what extent were Japanese voters exposed to fake news, and to what extent did they disseminate it, in the 2017 election?

RQ4. What was the content of Japanese fake news in the 2017 election?

Methods

Data collection

We conducted an online questionnaire survey after the election day of the 2017 Lower House election (from 23 to 27 October 2017). Respondents were aged 18–69 years, and totalled 1,000 (500 males and 500 females). We sought to survey a roughly equal number of participants in terms of sex and age (100 from those aged 18–19 years and 180 from all other age groups), and stopped the survey when we obtained responses from the specified number of respondents. More specifically, 10.0% of respondents were 18 or 19 and 18.0% were in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, and 60s. Notably, the proportions of each sex and age group among the respondents differ from the demographic structure of Japanese voters in October 2017, where 50.3% were male and 49.7% were female, and 3.0%, 15.2%, 18.2%, 23.0%, 19.1%, 21.5% were 18 or 19 or in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, and 60s, respectively.

Measures

Exposure to electoral information sources

Respondents were asked to report their frequency of exposure to various electoral information sources from 10 to 22 October 2017, including public TV news (i.e. Japan Broadcasting Corporation), commercial TV news, newspapers, portal/news sites, news apps, communication with friends/family members, communication with social media friends, and Internet election campaign material (i.e. emails, websites, social media, online videos). They used a 5-point Likert scale to report this information (1 = ‘almost every day’, 2 = ‘a few times a week’, 3 = ‘a few times during the election’, 4 = ‘once during the election’, 5 = ‘never’). Responses were converted into rough estimates of the numbers of exposures to each electoral information source during the election: responses of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were converted to 13, 4.6, 2.5, 1, and 0, respectively. Similar variables were integrated into a single variable for analyses. Exposure to public TV news (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) and commercial TV news were integrated into ‘exposure to TV news’, where the maximum exposure to either information source was used as the value of the variable. Similarly, exposure to portal/news sites and news apps were integrated into ‘exposure to news sites/apps’, while exposure to the different types of online communication channel employed by political parties or candidates (i.e. emails, websites, social media, online videos) was integrated into ‘exposure to Internet election campaign’.

A unique information source in Japan was included in the analysis of fake news: *matome* sites. *Matome* sites are a form of news aggregator that report news on various topics from other news sites, blogs, Twitter, or 2channel (the largest anonymous Bulletin Board System in Japan). Some *matome* sites see millions of visitors and occasionally disseminate rumors or lead to internet lynching (Japan Broadcasting Corporation, 2017). The frequency of exposure to *matome* sites was measured using the same method as other electoral information sources.

Vote/support for political parties

Respondents who voted in the 2017 Japanese Lower House election (n = 750) were asked to report which political party they voted for. A vote for each political party was coded as a binary variable (vote = 1, did not vote = 0). All respondents also answered their degree of support for each political party on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = ‘support’ to 5 = ‘do not support’, or 6 = ‘I do not know the name of the party’). Their responses for the degree of party support were recoded into a binary variable, where 1 = ‘support’ and 2 = ‘support in some extent’ were recoded into 1 = ‘support’, while all other responses (including 6) were recoded into 0 = ‘not support’.

Political attitudes

Four political attitudes were measured: political interest, political efficacy, political distrust, and conservatism–liberalism. To measure political interest, respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statement ‘I am interested in politics’ on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = ‘disagree’ to 5 = ‘agree’). Political alienation has been considered as an important predictor of disinterest and lack of participation in politics in modern society. Empirical studies have shown that political alienation comprises several dimensions, with the main dimensions being political efficacy and political disinterest (e.g. Finifter, 1970; Yamada, 1994). Respondents answered 10 items relating to political efficacy and distrust employed in previous studies (e.g., Craig, Niemi, & Silver, 1990b; Yamada, 1994; Kenski & Stroud, 2006), such as ‘Politicians do not care about voters’, on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = ‘agree’ to 5 = ‘disagree’). A confirmatory factor analysis with the maximum likelihood estimation method and a promax rotation was conducted on their responses, which yielded two factors of 5 items each (see the Appendix). These items were used as subscales of a political distrust/efficacy scale. The Cronbach’s alpha of the subscales of political distrust and political efficacy are .853 and .773, respectively. We used the mean score of each subscale as measure of political distrust/efficacy. Conservatism–liberalism was measured using a single question ‘Are you politically conservative or liberal?’. Respondents were asked to answer on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = ‘very conservative’ to 7 = ‘very liberal’.

General believability of mainstream media

A number of persuasive studies have suggested that media credibility can influence information receivers’ judgments and behaviours. The scale of media credibility is usually composed of multiple subscales, with the most important being ‘believability’ (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000; Johnson & Kaye 2004). Kioussis (2001) found strong correlations between the media credibility of different information sources (i.e. TV, newspapers, and the Internet), and Ogasahara (2008) suggested that these correlations are underpinned by the concept of ‘general believability of media’, or the default level of trust in the media that correlates with the credibility of all types of media. Respondents rated the believability of public and commercial TV news as well as newspapers on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = ‘not believe’ to 5 = ‘believe’). The mean score of these three types of mainstream media was used as an indicator of their general believability of mainstream media in the analyses.

Exposure to fake news and its contents

Fake news in this study is operationally defined as ‘fake or suspicious information relating

to candidates or political parties’. Respondents were asked to answer the frequency of exposure to fake news on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = ‘never’, 2 = ‘once’, 3 = ‘twice’, 4 = ‘third’ and 5 = ‘four times or more’). Their responses for the frequency of the exposure to fake news were then recoded into a binary variable, where 1 = ‘never’ was recoded into 0 = ‘not exposed’, and all other responses were recoded into 1 = ‘exposed’. Respondents who were exposed to fake news were asked to explain its contents in a free answer format. We then coded their answers according to the subject of the fake news (e.g. LDP, opponent parties, mainstream media) and respondents’ evaluation (e.g. positive, negative, unclear). When the coding results differed among the authors, we discussed them and made adjustments.

Results

Exposure to Internet election campaigns

The exposure rate to Internet election campaigns was 21.8% in the 2017 Lower House election. This was substantially lower than their exposure to TV news (87.6%) or newspapers (51.7%). In terms of online news sources, the exposure rate for news sites/apps was 67.1%, while that for social media friends was 13.8%.

Table 1. Rates of exposure to electoral information source

Type of information source	Exposure rate
TV news	87.6%
Newspaper	51.7%
News site/apps	67.1%
Communication with friends/family	57.4%
Communication with social media friends	13.8%
Internet election campaigns	21.8%

Relationship between CDPJ support and exposure to the party’s campaign/mainstream media

Logistic regression analyses were performed to examine RQ2, using voting for the LDP or CDPJ as dependent variables (Table 2). The independent variables included exposure to electoral information sources (i.e. TV news, newspaper, news sites/apps, Internet election campaigns, communication with social media friends, and communication with friends/family), political attitudes (i.e. political interest, political distrust, political efficacy, conservatism–liberalism), and

demographics (sex, age, education).

For the voting for the LDP, we found that exposure to newspapers, political interest, and political efficacy were positively related, while sex, political distrust, and conservatism–liberalism were negatively related. As for voting for the CDPJ, age, exposure to newspapers, political interest, political distrust, and conservatism–liberalism were positively related, whereas political efficacy was negatively related. Exposure to Internet election campaign material was not significantly related to voting for either the LDP or CDPJ. Notably, political attitudes had opposite valence coefficients depending on the party voted for—LDP voters tended to have lower political distrust and higher political efficacy, and were more conservative, compared to other respondents, whereas CDPJ voters had higher political distrust and lower political efficacy, as well as were more liberal.

Table 2. Logistic regression models for predicting voting for LDP/CDPJ

	LDP	CDPJ
	Coef. (B)	Coef. (B)
Sex	-.451**	.274
Age	-.010	.019**
Education	.032	.003
TV news	-.020	-.007
Newspaper	.032†	.065***
News sites/apps	.014	.008
Internet election campaigns	.057	.055
Communication with social media friends	-.021	.015
Communication with friends/family	-.005	.009
Political interest	.228**	.172†
Political distrust	-.522***	.400**
Political efficacy	.221†	-.392**
Conservatism–liberalism	-.444***	.386***
Intercept	1.505	-5.619***
Nagelkerke’s R ²	.194	.204
N	988	988

***P < 0.001, **P < 0.01, *P < 0.05, †P < 0.1.

Exposure to fake news

The rate of exposure to fake news was 29.5%, with about 3.7% of these respondents disseminating it on social media. Interestingly, more than half the respondents exposed to fake news

had been exposed to it on TV (50.8%), while one fifth were exposed to it on Twitter (20.3%).

A logistic regression analysis was performed to answer RQ3 Exposure to fake news was set as the dependent variable (Table 3), while electoral information sources, political attitudes, and demographics were set as independent variables. We also included two additional variables compared to the model in Table 2: we included *matome* sites as a source of electoral information and general believability of mainstream media. Exposure to Internet election campaign, exposure to *matome* sites, and political interest were positive related to exposure to fake news. In contrast, age, political efficacy, and general believability of mainstream media were negatively related.

Table 3. Logistic regression model predicting exposure to fake news

	Exposure to fake news
	Coef. (B)
Sex	.035
Age	-.023***
Education	-.050
TV news	-.003
Newspaper	.006
News sites/apps	.009
Internet election campaigns	.164***
Communication with social media friends.	.041
Communication with friends/family	-.012
Video sharing sites	-.008
<i>Matome</i> sites	.129**
Political interest	.168*
Political distrust	.076
Political efficacy	-.220 [†]
Conservatism–liberalism	.007
General believability on mainstream media	-.361***
Intercept	1.458
Nagelkerke's R ²	.158
N	988

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05, [†]p < 0.1.

Fake news contents in Japan

We collected data on 198 items of fake news; only around 67.1% of the respondents who reported being exposed to fake news answered the free answer question about its content. The breakdown of the subject of the fake news was as follows: LDP, 27.8%; CDPJ, 37.4%; mainstream media, 6.6%; and unclear, 3.5%. Table 4 shows the proportion of LDP supporters and non-LDP supporters according to the subject of the fake news and respondents' evaluation of its content. Around 52.3% of the fake news items were negative (27.3% were negative to LDP [nLDP] and 25.0% were negative to the opposition parties [nOP]). LDP supporters had a significantly stronger tendency ($p < .01$) to recognize nLDP content or positive content for opposition parties [pOP] as 'fake' compared to non-LDP supporters. Conversely, non-LDP supporters had a significant stronger tendency ($p < .01$) to recognize positive content for the LDP [pLDP] or nOP content as 'fake'. Thus, respondents seemed to have tendencies to perceive content considered disadvantageous to their political preferences as 'fake'.

Table 4. Exposure to positive/negative/unclear fake news by LDP support

	pLDP	nLDP	uLDP	pOP	nOP	uOP	Total
LDP supporters	0% (-2.1)	40.0% (3.8)	8.0% (-2.1)	16.0% (2.6)	14.7% (-3.2)	21.3% (-0.2)	100% n=85
Non-LDP supporters	5.7% (2.1)	9.4% (-3.8)	20.8% (2.1)	1.9% (-2.6)	39.6% (3.2)	21.4% (0.2)	100% n=56
Total	2.3% n=3	27.3% n=35	13.3% n=17	10.2% n=13	25.0% n=32	21.9% n=28	100% n=128

pLDP (OP): positive content for LDP (opposition parties); nLDP (OP): negative content for LDP (opposition parties), uLDP (OP): unclear content for LDP (opposition parties)

Notes: Numbers in parenthesis are adjusted standardized residuals.

Discussion

This study analysed exposure to Internet election campaigns (RQ1), the relationship between voting for the CDPJ and exposure to Internet election campaigns (RQ2), exposure to fake news (RQ3), and the contents of fake news (RQ4) in the 2017 Japanese Lower House election.

The overall exposure rate to the Internet election campaign was low, and was comparable to that found in the 2013 national election (after the ban on Internet election campaigns was lifted). Popular electoral information sources in this study were TV news, newspapers, and news sites/apps. In the Japanese media environment, Yahoo! News and LINE News (LINE is a messaging service for the smartphone, similar to WhatsApp, and LINE News is a news aggregation service for LINE) are the dominant news aggregators, which primarily distribute news provided by the mainstream media.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the passiveness of Japanese voters towards Internet election campaigns and their dependence on mainstream media as an electoral information source remained prominent in the 2017 election, as in earlier elections. Thus, a ‘temporal boom’ (i.e. a single dramatic instance of a prominent Internet election campaign coupled with extensive media coverage) has a low likelihood of diffusing Internet election campaigns until several media environmental factors (e.g. low penetration rate of social media and passive attitude toward Internet election campaigns) are changed.

The electoral information source with the strongest association with voting for the CDPJ was not the Internet election campaign, or even other online information sources (e.g. news sites/apps, friends on social media), but rather offline newspapers. The 2017 election ‘success’ of the CDPJ thus might not be a result of their campaign, but a consequence of the mainstream media’s active coverage of it—the increased coverage effectively worked as a free campaign ad. A similar relationship between Internet election campaigns and active mainstream media reporting was considered in the 2016 U.S. presidential election (Owen, 2017). Additionally, we observed opposite tendencies for political distrust, political efficacy, and conservatism–liberalism between LDP and CDPJ voters. These findings suggest that voting for the CDPJ was more strongly correlated with an antipathy for LDP government than with exposure to the Internet election campaign.

The exposure rate for fake news was less than 30% among all participants, and over half of respondents who were exposed to fake news reported seeing it on television, while in the U.S., fake news was widely circulated on social media, as mentioned earlier. This implies that the importance of social media as a source of electoral information remains rather low in Japan. The reason that such a large proportion of respondents were exposed to fake news on mainstream media is perhaps because there are two patterns of exposure to such fake news. The first is when respondents were exposed to incorrect news on mainstream media. The another is when respondents label news disadvantageous to their political preferences as ‘fake news’. Indeed, over half the fake news items expressed negative content for the LDP or opposition parties, and both the LDP and non-LDP supporters had a tendency to perceive content disadvantageous to their own political preferences as ‘fake’. These partisan features of the content of fake news were also common in the 2016 U.S. presidential election (Knight Foundation, 2018). If the importance of social media as an electoral information source increased, fake news might lead to increased turmoil in Japan as well. The partisan features of the recognition of fake news suggest that there is a possibility for greater political polarization in Japanese society, even though the LDP has kept the overwhelming majority of seats in both Houses since the 2014 Lower House election and there is no workable alternative to LDP for voters.

This study has several limitations. First, there might have been a sampling bias because of the online questionnaire survey. Second, numerous fake news items were difficult to classify, and

thus were coded as ‘unclear’. This is potentially because the free answer format of the question made respondents answer in a lukewarm, cavalier fashion (e.g. only "Prime Minister Abe" or "the CDPJ"). Thus, the method of surveying fake news items should be improved. Finally, the analysis of the fake news content could be refined—we might, for instance, assess the correlation between fake news content and where the respondent was exposed to the fake news.

Our findings imply both the limitation of temporal boom and the significance of media environment factors in diffusing Internet election campaigns in a society, as well as identifies some of the predictors of fake news. Future studies should clarify the reasons that people adopt passive attitudes towards news consumption and engagement on the Internet.

Morihiro Ogasahara, M.A., Associate Professor, Faculty of Sociology, Kansai University, Osaka, Japan.

Shoko Kiyohara, Ph.D., Associate Professor, School of Information and Communication, Meiji University, Tokyo, Japan.

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Appendix

Table 5. Maximum likelihood factor analysis with Promax rotations for political alienation

	Political distrust	Political efficacy
Politicians do not care about voters.	.866	-.109
I cannot trust the words of politicians at all.	.818	-.078
Politics is driven by powers that voters like me have no control.	.691	.155
Politicians are more interested in power struggles between parties than policies.	.659	-.054
It is difficult for citizens to make politics reflect their opinions.	.637	.083
Politics should be left to politicians.	-.294	.797
It is better for us to mind our own work than to care about politics	.041	.725
Politics will not be better even though voters say something.	.304	.570

Politics is too difficult to understand.	.005	.522
It is bothersome that politics come into daily life.	.184	.497
Interfactor correlation		.426

Notes: Factor loadings of subscales of political distrust/efficacy scale are listed in boldface.

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