

# Media consumption and Asian values as predictors of attitudes towards media freedom in East and South East Asia

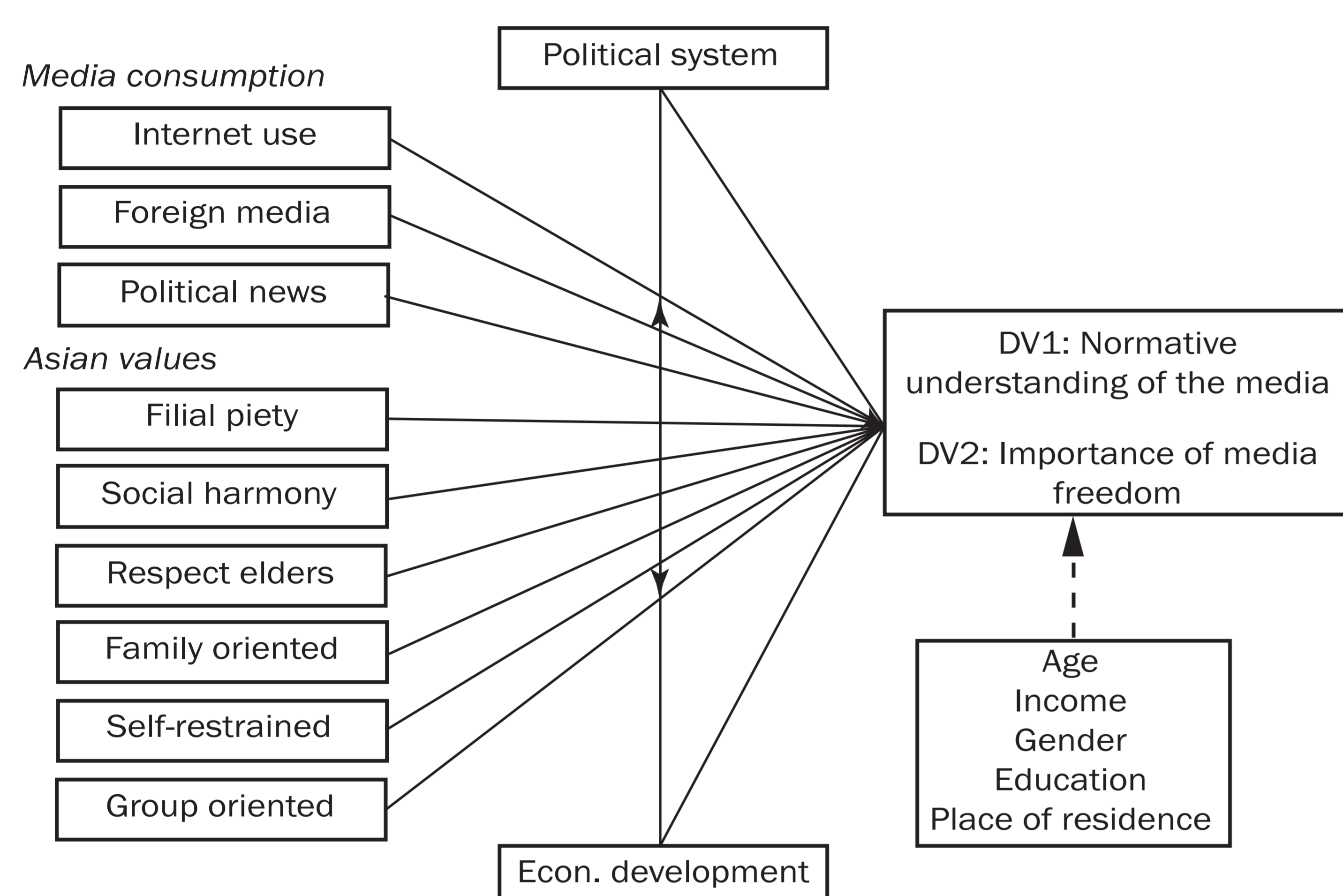
Dani Madrid-Morales, PhD Fellow, City University of Hong Kong  
dani.madrid@my.cityu.edu.hk



## Introduction

- **Liberal democracy** is the prevailing form of political organization in the world. In adopting the principles of democracy, different countries have followed different paths, leading to the advent of multiple forms of democracy. Nowhere this is more evident than in Asia.
- **Media freedom** is seen as a core component of democracy in Europe and the US. However, contrary to other features, media freedom is absent from many political systems that see themselves as democratic.
- This paper explores the predicting power of Asian values and media consumption in individuals' attitudes towards media-related democratic values in different political, economic, social systems in twelve East and South East Asian nations and territories.

## Model



## Findings

### H1: Heavier media consumption has a positive impact on attitudes towards the normative understanding of the media -- PARTIALLY SUPPORTED

- Internet use and political news consumption have a positive impact on the likelihood of respondents saying media should be free over saying it should be controlled. The direct effect of foreign media exposure was not significant.
- A combination of more exposure to foreign media and higher levels of economic development leads to more people considering that media should be free. However, the opposite is found when taken democracy levels into account.

### H2: Heavier media consumption has a significant impact on the perceived importance of media freedom in democracy -- PARTIALLY SUPPORTED

- Respondents could choose from four possible answers to the question: "What is an essential feature of democracy": law and order; media freedom; multiparty elections; jobs for everyone. See Table 1 "Multinomial Logistic Regression Coefficients for Model Predicting Perceived Importance of Media."
- Those reporting heavier internet use, foreign media consumption and exposure to political news are more likely to say that media freedom is a must, rather than choosing maintenance of law and order as an essential element of democracy.

### H3: Adherence to Asian values has a significant impact on attitudes towards the normative understanding and perceived importance of the media -- PARTIALLY SUPPORTED

- Asian values linked to respect, order and conflict avoidance have a negative impact on the likelihood of people saying that media should be free.
- Blurry picture in the model measuring the predicting power over perceived importance of the media, with some values negatively linked, and other being non-significant.

## Background

### Democracy

- **Democracy is an elusive and contested object of study.** Some definitions stress procedural elements, like elections, (Schumpeter, 1947); while others focus on listing its core elements. Dahl (1971) named six, including freedom of expression and access to alternative sources of information.
- Some argue democratic values are place-specific and not universal (Parekh, 1992). This **culturalist approach** has been prominent in East and South East Asia.

### Asian values

- Politicians like Lee Kuan Yew and Mahatir Mohammad posited that some Asian societies possess a set of distinct values (**Asian values**) which preclude the adoption of a liberal democratic model.
- Do these values--which have been found to exist in parts of Asia--have an effect on the way people assess media freedom?

### Technological determinism

- There are inconclusive findings in the literature regarding the impact of new media technologies (satellites, mobile phones, internet...) on democratic values. They range from **technological euphoria to skepticism**.
- What effect does media consumption have in attitudes towards media freedom in East and South East Asia?

## Data and Methods

- Data for this paper belongs to the 3rd wave of the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) released at the end of 2013. Data from 12 countries/territories is used (N = 17,940, n = 1,495 per country). Country level data comes from World Bank (GDP per capita) and the Economist's Intelligence Unit (Democracy Index) as of 2012. All variables were standardized before the analysis to their SD.
- This study uses multinomial logistic regression. For the two dependent variables hierarchical analyses were performed.

Table 1

	Media freedom vs. Law and Order (=0)			Media freedom vs. Social justice (=0)			Media freedom vs. Multiparty elections (=0)		
	B	SE	Exp (B)	B	SE	Exp (B)	B	SE	Exp (B)
<b>Predictor variables</b>									
Internet use	.171***	.034	1.186	-.034	.035	.967	.079*	.040	1.082
Foreign media exposure	.098***	.029	1.102	.061*	.030	1.063	-.005	.033	.996
Political news consumption	.085***	.028	1.089	.012	.029	1.012	.024	.032	1.024
Family oriented	-.048	.027	.953	-.079**	.028	.924	-.098**	.031	.906
Group oriented	-.014	.028	.987	-.054	.029	.947	-.042	.032	.958
Self-restrain	-.019	.028	.981	-.066*	.030	.936	-.101**	.034	.904
Filial piety	.002	.026	1.002	.032	.028	1.033	-.070**	.030	.932
Obedience	-.058**	.029	.944	-.053	.030	.949	.030	.033	1.031
Social harmony	-.099**	.030	.906	-.057	.031	.945	-.079**	.035	.924
<b>Country level factors</b>									
GDP	-.336***	.035	.714	-.515***	.035	.597	-.272***	.040	.762
Democratic Index	.074*	.037	1.077	.295***	.037	1.343	.074	.043	1.077
<b>Interaction terms</b>									
Political news x GDP	-.123***	.030	.884	-.141***	.031	.868	-.111**	.035	.895
Group oriented x GDP	-.070*	.029	.933	-.099**	.030	.906	-.018	.033	.982
Obedience x GDP	-.096**	.033	.909	-.070*	.034	.932	.072	.038	1.074
Social harmony x GDP	-.031	.035	.969	-.099**	.036	.906	-.020	.040	.981
Foreign media x Democracy Index	-.093**	.031	.911	-.029	.031	.972	.070	.036	1.072
Political news x Democracy Index	.116**	.037	1.123	.137***	.038	1.147	-.007	.043	.994
Self-restrain x Democracy Index	.114***	.032	1.121	.059	.032	1.061	.009	.038	1.009
Filial piety x Democracy Index	-.019	.034	.982	.002	.035	1.002	.120***	.040	1.127
Obedience x Democracy Index	.153***	.038	1.165	.153***	.038	1.165	-.024	.044	.976
Social harmony x Democracy Index	-.112**	.039	.894	-.004	.039	.996	-.036	.046	.965
<b>Control variables</b>									
Age	.045	.030	1.046	-.082**	.031	.922	-.027	.034	.973
Gender (Male = 0)	-.220***	.049	.803	-.153**	.051	.858	-.113*	.056	.893
Education (Below secondary = 0)	-.281***	.060	.755	.107	.063	1.113	-.375***	.069	.687
Income (Lower level = 0)									
Income Mid Level	.177**	.065	1.193	.248***	.066	1.282	.276***	.074	1.318
Income Higher Level	.007	.072	1.007	.144*	.073	1.155	.105	.082	1.111
Place of residence (Urban = 0)	-.546***	.065	.579	-.510***	.068	.600	-.558***	.073	.573
Intercept	-.584***	.062		-.658***	.063		.106	.071	
N of Cases				16,314					
Cox & Snell R <sup>2</sup>				.210					
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>				.220					
2LL				47,018.09					

Note: \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001

## Conclusion

- Media consumption does indeed play a role in the attitudes people have towards media-related democratic values, such as media freedom.
- The analysis of the impact of Asian values on media-related democratic values seems to hint that there is a negative association, although further research is needed, requiring a more accurate scale.
- More research is also needed in discerning the regional specificity of Asian values, by studying whether these norms/values are also present in other regions (Latin America, Arab world, Sub-Saharan Africa...).

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