

Complementary and Competitive Logics of Mediatization in India

OR

Complementary and Competitive Logics of Mediatization: Theory and Evidence from India

The concept of mediatization has received considerable scholarly attention in recent years in communication research aimed at analyzing the extent to which media influence politics or the political process (Esser 2013; Landerer 2013; Lilleker 2006; Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999; Stromback 2008). Mediatization has intensified alongside technological innovation since the 1990s that has afforded new types of mediatized political experience beyond newspapers, radio and television. During the same timescale, traditional media have become the most important source of political information in many less developed countries where television, for example, now with a mass audience is considered ‘new’ to many, soon to be followed by the growth of the internet. Mediatization is not confined to politics, but has permeated all aspects of human lives, which has led Deuze (2011: 138) to proclaim that “our life is lived *in*, rather than *with*, media” although the spatial, class and gendered limits of our media immersion remain to be seen. Despite the importance of the process of mediatization in a large number of societies and the growing literature on the topic, the study of mediatization in developing countries such as India has been almost non-existent.

The purpose of this article, however, is not merely to contribute to the de-Westernization of media studies by extending the use of the concept of mediatization to a developing country, India, as we first need to undertake some conceptual repair work. Our intention, therefore, is to contribute to the mediatization debate both theoretically, empirically, and politically. By drawing upon the work of Stromback

(2008) and Landerer (2013), we develop a coherent conceptual framework for the analysis of the mediatization of politics in India. We reject the idea that media logic and political logic are involved in a zero-sum game (where less of one necessarily means more of the other) and instead develop a framework that investigates how commercial, political and professional logics interact in competitive and complementary ways dependent upon prevailing circumstances and configurations (see also Downey 2012). We then use this framework to investigate an important and hitherto unexplored case of mediatization namely the growing importance of media in Indian politics. The Indian media landscape has undergone a massive transformation in recent years with the growth of mainstream media such as newspapers and television, as well as the increasing diffusion of the Internet. Growth has been accompanied, and to an extent caused, by media commercialization. This raises the question of the extent to which politics has been transformed as a consequence of media change. The link between the rapid transformation of Indian media and changes in politics is complex and nuanced because of the linguistic as well as cultural diversity of the country. Not only that, despite the tremendous growth of media, interpersonal face-to-face communication still occupies an important place in Indian society, and so political parties prefer to combine face-to-face interactions with their mediatized campaigns whether targeted at mass or niche audiences depending on the medium in question. This repertoire of campaign strategies is certainly not unique to India, and is also found in advanced democracies. However, the degree of mediatization varies in different societies similar to the process of variations in industrialization, individualization, and globalization. It must be noted that media have certainly become important institutions of mediation in Indian society and

provide an institutionalized arena of interactions to different social and political actors.

The framework we develop that seeks to capture the complex and dynamic relationship between three logics – the political, the professional, and the commercial – has broader applicability beyond the Indian case. In applying our framework to the Indian context we have drawn primarily upon secondary literature and data to illustrate our argument that the three logics may exist in complementarity or competitive relationships depending on context and circumstance. While drawing primarily on secondary data we also present new data on the use of social media in the capital city during the 2013 Delhi assembly elections, as this is an important new ingredient of mediatization.

Media Logic, Political Logic and Mediatization: Towards a complex, dynamic conceptual framework

We primarily develop our arguments by critically analyzing Stromback's (2008) four-dimensional or four phase model of mediatization and work by Landerer (2013) who builds on the work of Stromback to develop his own position. We examine how well this framework captures the complex interactions between political actors and mass media actors and develop concepts that can also be employed to analyze politicians' use of 'social' media (Facebook, Twitter, websites and so on) as part of their political activities. The uses of social media by politicians are simultaneously acts of disintermediation that by-pass mass media actors to communicate with the electorate directly as well as acts of mediatization but have not as yet been adequately conceptualized within a framework of the mediatization of politics.

The first dimension or phase of Stromback's thesis of mediatization of politics, which he also refers to as "mediation", is the extent to which mass media are the most important source of information about political events for the people of a particular territory. How are people informed about elections? Is this through attending meetings and rallies, through word-of-mouth, through reading party literature, and newspapers, or through watching television? In principle the degree of mediatization of politics in this dimension should be relatively easy to discern and track over time since mediatization is a process concept, of course, with the thesis being that mediatization is becoming more prevalent. Surveys that track how people source their political information over time should give a clear indication of whether mediatization on this dimension at least is increasing although assessing increasing intensity, which Stromback argues is key, is a more difficult proposition. Other indicators such as the number of people reading newspapers and households with television sets are also relevant here. For Stromback "mediated politics should be ... understood as something different from politics experienced through interpersonal communication or something experienced directly by the people" (2008:231). This definition is problematic because interpersonal communication is often mediated (or mediatized) whether it is a telephone call on election day from a political party to supporters to encourage them to vote or the use of social media such as Facebook or Twitter which appear to have characteristics of both mass and interpersonal media. There is also the question of people discussing politics using social media. To say that this is not mediated politics is rather dubious and uses a very narrow definition of both the political and mediation.

The second dimension of mediatization for Stromback is the degree of independence that media institutions exhibit from political institutions which falls along a

continuum. At one end are authoritarian media systems, where those with political power often directly control media institutions. In democratic media systems, however, political parties seek to exercise control either directly or indirectly. In some cases we may speak of media clientelism or party-media parallelism where parties effectively determine the agenda of media institutions (which is prominent in the case of India). Moving along the continuum of independence we may find media institutions that are more independent in terms of editorial decisions and finance and yet tend to support one political party rather than another; these are partisan media institutions (again prominent in India). Further along the continuum, there are media systems based on professional values of “objectivity”, but even here the influence of political institutions is profound. Political elites will seek to discipline media institutions through a system of incentives and sanctions in terms of providing information. In these systems media institutions may not be clearly supportive of a particular party at least in terms of news coverage but “objectivity” tends to mean that major, established political parties are covered more thoroughly than minor, emergent ones and so media institutions may often serve to stabilize political systems by providing negative feedback or by dampening (though this is not to argue that media institutions do on occasion provide positive feedback and serve to amplify, for example, crises in economic and political systems). At the end of the continuum are media institutions that are purely commercial i.e. they base their coverage on the criterion of profit-maximization. Whether a party receives media attention or not depends not on political influence over the media or the beliefs of journalists about whether they should be advocates or impartial observers but on a calculation about which coverage is the most profitable. This is what is often meant by “media logic” in the literature. This relates to what audiences are prepared to pay for and/or what

advertisers are prepared to pay for access to audiences as well as the costs associated with producing news.

Stromback defines media logic with reference to the dominance in societal processes of news values, formats, and the storytelling techniques used by the media “to take advantage of their own medium and its format, and to be competitive in the ongoing struggle to capture people’s attention” (2008: 233). These techniques include simplification, polarization, intensification, personalization, visualization, stereotypization and framing politics as a strategic game. All of these, no doubt, go on within “the media” but to claim that all of “the media” possess the same logic is to take characteristics within a particular type of media institution and to project them onto the rest. The argument also is in danger of implying that all of these processes are caused exclusively by “the media”. An examination of politics and political rhetoric before the advent of the mass media would find plentiful examples of all of these processes as part of political discourse. The supposed “golden era” of critical-rational political debate before the advent of mass media is a myth (see Schudson, 1998). This is crucial as once the dichotomy between media and political logics falls one must envisage a much more complicated relationship between politics and the media than a simple zero sum game of political logic versus media logic.

The third and fourth dimensions for Stromback refer to the extent to which media content is governed by political or media logic and the extent to which political actors are governed by a political logic or a media logic. Again the root of the problem are the definitions of and distinctions between political and media logic.

For Landerer (2013), the problem with approaches such as Stromback’s is that they lack sufficiently specified accounts of what political logic and media logic are.

Landerer discusses how the development of the concept of media logic was tied very much to the idea of media formats i.e. the media categorise and select political information and decide how to present it (or not) more or less independently from political institutions (see Altheide and Snow 1979). If politicians ignored this media logic then because citizens receive most of their information about politics via the mass media they would lose elections. When politicians accept media logic this signals the mediatization of politics. The problem is, of course, as we have pointed to above that the media are not governed by a single logic – there are different types of media institution and there is variation within types. It is much more accurate to think of media institutions as sites of coexisting sometimes competing, sometimes coterminous political, professional and economic interests. To speak of “a” media logic is far too simplistic.

Landerer’s solution to this is to see instead of an essentially commercially driven media logic two competing logics: an audience-oriented commercial logic and a normatively oriented public logic. While sympathetic to Landerer’s attempt to differentiate between competing logics within media institutions, the question is: why stop at two? Normative logic contains two radically different conceptions of how journalists best serve the public. Journalists may, for example, see themselves as passionate advocates of a particular cause or ideology. They may also see themselves as impartial arbiters pursuing their profession. A second problem with Landerer’s conception is that it essentially replaces a zero sum trade-off between political logic and media logic with a zero sum game between commercial and normative logic. The less commercial media is the more it can serve the public. This ignores the historical role of commercial media institutions in the development of public spheres. The rise

of commercial newspapers was accompanied by the rise of the idea of the public. It is not an either/or situation but can be both/and although that is not necessarily the case.

Landerer rightly argues that discussions of political logic have been rather thin in accounts of mediatization. Political logic is seen as being replaced by a media logic, and so extensive discussion of political logic appears to be beside the point or redundant. Landerer attempts to specify what political logic is. He divides it, in a similar manner to his discussion of media logic into two, namely normative and electoral logic. The normative dimension refers to how political decision-making should ideally occur in democratic societies (actually in all societies as this is a universalist normative theory of politics) and electoral logic is a more egotistic and audience-oriented perspective that refers to how politicians seek to win elections (213: 247). The normative is concerned with substance and policy and finding solutions to societal problems through critical-rational debate in parliament whereas electoral logic is about politicians self-interested market behavior as they do anything necessary to persuade voters. Landerer presents these extremes as ideal types and suggests that no behaviour is likely to be as selfless as the normative ideal and that egotistical behavior is often justified through reference to the public good (although this would be an act of deception and so does not show deviation from electoral logic).

In light of our critique of Stromback and Landerer we suggest instead the following definition.

Mediatization of politics is a process with complex mediated relationships between three sets of actors:

1. Mediatized publics: The first is a heterogeneous set of people who are neither political actors (defined broadly as representatives of parties, pressure or lobby groups in civil society) nor media actors (defined as paid employees of media institutions). For analytical purposes, this group can be subdivided by class, gender, region, educational background and so on. Mediatization occurs when this group(s) in a given territory over a defined period of time (whether living in democracies or in authoritarian societies) consume an increasing amount of mediated content about politics produced either by political actors or media actors. They may be heavy or light consumers of political news, they may or may not engage themselves in mediated or non-mediated political discourse, they may or may not engage in political activities (voting, attending protests and so on). With the rise of social media, media publics may engage in political debate either with media or political actors or with other members of their media public.
2. Political actors: Political actors (representatives of political parties, pressure and lobby groups), recognizing the increasing importance of mediatized political information, seek to form public opinion and engage in electoral/political logic with the purpose of winning votes (most intensely during election periods but also more generally) either through the use of media institutions and/or media content that they control a. more directly (political advertising, social media use, party-controlled newspapers, TV channels) or b. seek to influence how their parties and policies are presented to the public by, more or less autonomous, media institutions (for example, by how they tailor the presentations of their policies for media institutions, by links with media professionals). A more sophisticated version would be where

political parties consider how well policies will play directly with media institutions and indirectly with the public during policy-formation i.e. the issue of public opinion formation is built into policy design. Political actors may also use media (email, social media) to mobilise supporters, ask for donations, and so on.

3. Media actors: Media actors are owners or employees of media institutions.

Media actors respond to attempts to manage their production of political news depending on a variety of factors (for example, the degree of independence of media institutions from political power; professional norms of journalists; the extent to which media professionals support the ideology and/or policies of the parties; the importance of commercial imperatives and the views of advertisers and audiences; the wishes of media owners to support certain policies and/or parties for commercial reasons). This is complex. Media owners may seek to use the media institution as a mouthpiece for their views. They may attempt to profit maximize by maximizing revenue and minimizing costs. They may enter into official and unofficial alliances with political actors perhaps forgoing profits in the short run in order to maximize profits in the longer run. Journalists may be placed under greater or lesser pressure by media owners to promote a particular political line or to profit maximize but they may also be influenced by professional norms of serving the public interest (this may be through advocacy or campaigning journalism or through more 'objective' styles).

In the following sections we will illustrate these complex relationships between three sets of actors with reference to the mediatization of politics in India.

Mediatized Publics

Mediatization of politics in India is highly complex. This complexity results from the nature of the news media market, which is occupied by multiple vernacular Indian languages and English. The linguistic diversity of the Indian mass mediated public sphere facilitates a highly complex space of sub-national deliberation among a variety of publics, which is very different from most European states, which largely have relatively homogenous linguistic groups. The news media for each linguistic group and public though creates its own unique vernacular universe in the diverse Indian public sphere and they are, in turn, mediated and held together by a common market place and the state. The political actors, who need to reach to diverse Indian publics, often need to negotiate with the media actors, who have their own agenda, format and logics as well as to non-media actors operating at the grassroots using interpersonal channels of communication. The mediatization of political process, events and discourses in India, have been facilitated by the rise of the vernacular newspapers since the 1980s. This process of mediatization has intensified after the spread of television in the 1990s and 2000s. Of particular interest here is the rise of the 24-hours news channels that has also created a kind of “media complex”, affecting democratic process. Critics argue that the rise of the 24-hours news channels has also been accompanied by media increasingly prioritizing commercial interests/logics and operating as ‘show biz’, abandoning ideals, issues and public concerns. However, instead of treating this as a zero-sum game, we argue that there is a complex interaction between political, professional and commercial logics. This is reflected in the ways the Indian media market has transformed over the years. What is important in this transformation is the mediatization of publics in the regional and the vernacular languages.

In newspaper industry, it is the Hindi dailies that have seen extraordinary growth both in readership and circulation. According to the Indian Readership Survey (2013), of the top 10 daily newspapers, only one is an English newspaper, and it is ranked sixth in readership. The *Times of India*, the largest English-language newspaper has a readership of 7.6 million, while *Dainik Jagran* and *Dainik Bhaskar*, the top two Hindi newspapers have a readership base of 16.5 and 14.5 million respectively.

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Similarly, Television Audience Measurement (TAM), which measures viewership for different programmes, found that there was not a single English news channel in the top 20 news channels in India out of 122 channels; moreover, 8 of the top 10 news channels are in Hindi (TAM Report for 2010). If we look at the viewership shares of different news channels in English, Hindi and other vernacular languages, in 2013, Hindi and other regional language news channels had a share of 3.18 and 2.78 percent, respectively, while it is 0.23 percent for English news channels (TAM Report for 2013). This shows the mediatization of Indian publics in regional languages. Yet the discussion of mediatization would be incomplete in today's political communication networks without analyzing the Internet as it has emerged an important channel of communication bridging the divide between the interpersonal and mediatized politics.

Starting from a very low base, the Internet has been growing rapidly in India. A report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India shows that as of October 2013, there were 205 million claimed Internet users: 137 million in urban cities and 68 million in rural villages. This is nearly 16.9% of India's population. In terms of usage, more than 50 percent of urban internet users access the internet daily. To encourage internet

usage in India several software providers including Google have now started providing content in Indian languages. The simultaneous growth of print, television and the internet has not only mediatized politics, but has enabled the diverse publics to participate more actively in this process of mediatization. This participation, in turn, is challenging both media actors and political actors. Here we first look at the media actors and how they have come to occupy a unique place in the ever-expanding space of socio-political negotiations and interactions among the multiplicity of vernacular and the universality of the publics.

Media Actors: political, professional and economic logics

Media actors are media owners and the paid employees of media institutions. Media actors are a heterogenous group subdivided by class, gender, region, educational background and so on. Another important division unique to India is along linguistic lines, between the English language and the vernacular media. From Independence until the 1970s, the Indian news landscape was dominated by the English media; politicians and bureaucrats at the national level hardly bothered about news published in Hindi or other Indian language newspapers. Several social, political, and economic transformations during the late 1970s and 1980s enabled Hindi newspapers to challenge the dominance of English newspapers (see Neyazi 2014). In addition, with the decline of the Congress system after the 1967 general election, there was a parallel rise of regional consciousness in which the regional and vernacular press played an important role.¹ The regional press began to align with regional political classes to provide support to the regional cause. Here we can notice the development of partisan media system where the media supported one political ideology over another. Yet not all regional media had supported regional political actors, which would have brought

them an easy access to political power and government advertising. Many media groups operated independently of the political class despite being financially weak. There thus operate diverse types of media systems across different regions of India, making it difficult to analyze the Indian media system.

Chakravarty and Roy (2013) use a tripartite model to analyze the intra-national differences in the relationship between media and politics in India. Exclusively or largely directly partisan media systems can be found in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal where the strong tradition of a partisan press has been transferred into cable news provision. Media institutions are either owned by political parties or by individuals who are explicitly committed to a political party and electoral gain is usually privileged over commercial gain. Indirect partisan media systems exist in Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. Here political parties exert control or influence over media institutions through control of state-funded advertising, formal and informal control over distribution, and paid news (where parties and corporations pay for news that is presented as news and not as advertising). This is politicization of television news media essentially through media institutions that follow a commercial logic. This shows how political logic and commercial logic can be complementary as well as competitive depending on circumstance. Political control over the media system is here more indirect than in the direct partisan system. The third and most prevalent type of media system in India is the networked system, which is seen in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, and Orissa. In this system it is not clear who owns and controls the media and some of the capital comes from dubious or illegal sources. Entrepreneurs who invest their surpluses from other sectors, often real estate or private education, are seeking to win political influence through their ownership of channels presumably ultimately for economic advantage

again showing the complementarity of political and commercial logics. Paid news is common in networked systems and these systems tend to be opaque, polyvalent and pragmatic because they are often not driven by ideology but by pragmatic considerations of short and long-term profit maximization. As Chakravartty and Roy argue, here we have an “interweaving of these at once profit-seeking and power-seeking interests (2013: 363)”. Their analysis tends to emphasise the dominance of political and commercial interests that are sometimes at odds but are often allies.

The compelling analysis offered by Chakravartty and Roy, however, needs to be supplemented by another factor that needs to be considered if we are to develop a complex and dynamic understanding of mediatization in India – that of professionalization where journalists perceive that they are acting in the public interest. Are journalists merely serving political and/or their economic masters or do they have a sense of their profession that means that they have a relative autonomy from political and commercial pressures?

We find strong evidence of the diversity of professional logic when we look at the history of the growth of Indian newspapers. The first major challenge for Indian media came during the Emergency of 1975-1977, when censorship and several repressive laws were imposed on press freedom.ⁱⁱ The Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, held the press responsible for the declaration of the Emergency since “it was the newspapers which were inciting the people and creating a terrible situation” and that “the agitation was only in the newspapers and once the newspapers were placed under censorship there was no agitation” (Shah Commission Report 1978: p. 33). The government categorized all newspapers based on their response to the Emergency: A denoted friendly, B meant hostile, while C signified neutral reporting by newspapers.

The response by the media was sharply differentiated along linguistic lines. In the English press, noted national dailies such as *The Hindu*, *Times of India* and *Hindustan Times*, were categorized as friendly. In contrast, there were only two Hindi newspapers in the friendly category: one was *Hindustan*, which is published by the Hindustan Times group, and the other was *Naveen Duniya*, a small newspaper from Madhya Pradesh. Three important Hindi newspapers at that time—*Swadesh*, *Vir Prataap*, and *Pradeep*—three important Hindi newspapers at that time, were placed in the hostile category. Another important Hindi daily of that time, *Nai Duniya*, published from Madhya Pradesh, used to leave its front page blank to register its protest against the government. In short, Hindi newspapers challenged the authority of the government, whereas major English dailies fell in line with or even supported the government's *diktates*. Despite knowing that going against the government can affect the flow of government advertising, most important source of revenue for the newspapers at that time, many Hindi newspapers took on the authoritarian regime of Indira Gandhi. The professional logic seems to inform the functioning of the Hindi newspapers.

Until the 1980s, the press depended on government advertising since private advertising was almost negligible, but the liberalization of Indian economy from the 1990s and the growth of market economy has freed the press to some extent from the government control exercising political influence through economic power although several scholars argue that the market has eroded the substance of politics. In contrast, we argue that the development of the Indian media landscape shows that the market can help create more democratic debates among multiple stakeholders. Jeffrey (2000) argues that advertising in India has presented a “tantalizing paradox” that has not only created consumerism but it has also contributed to the expansion of the public sphere

by taking newspapers into ever more remote corners. While acknowledging the power of advertising in generating consumerism, Jeffrey also recognizes the positive impact of advertising in increasing the circulation of newspapers, thus making it possible for the hitherto marginalized classes to participate to a certain degree in the public sphere.

The increasing circulation of newspapers and diffusion of television has been accompanied by new technologies and practices of journalism that have to some degree enlivened the public sphere. Rao (2009) argues that there has been a glocalization of Indian journalism. Technological advances, particularly the availability of small digital video camcorders, have allowed the development of a contested hidden camera journalism that has uncovered corruption in the public, if not the private sector. Interactive technologies have also increased audience feedback and encouraged the idea that despite the presence of commercial and political party interests journalism should be for the people and should serve the public interest (Rao 2009: 481). Since the 1990s the demand for journalists has increased, which has led to the proliferation of journalism schools that are skill-based. Rao, does not argue that the “development journalism” of the 1970s has been completely annihilated by what she sees as essentially Western models of commercial journalism based on entertainment, profits and ratings. Rather, many journalists see the public interest as being of paramount importance: “it is the abstract notion of ‘public good’ that impels decision-making about content” (Rao 2009: 482). Rao concludes: “the new media landscape, despite having been made possible by globalization and configured by pro-market logic, has created the opportunity for a journalism of janapakshi (pro-people) to evolve. It has fundamentally reconfigured the relationship between the journalist and the reader/viewer as a democratic and equitable one” (2009: 486). She argues that the regionalization of both politics and the media gives added impetus to this process

of democratization. It may well be that Rao paints too rosy a picture of trends in journalism in India but it is clear that Indian media is not merely subservient to the interests of political and economic elites but is encouraged through both professionalization and commercialization to consider the public interest.

In stark contrast to this narrative of new media permitting a ‘pro-people’ journalism to emerge, there is a competing narrative of the emergence of ‘paid news’ in Indian press and broadcasting over the last decade. ‘Paid news’ is the production by media companies of promotional content on behalf of politicians, celebrities and companies that is passed off as news not advertising in return for payment. This is a clandestine practice that contravenes journalistic ethics codes in India. Most of the evidence that paid news is occurring is circumstantial and is difficult to assess how widespread it is. There are grounds for suspecting it to be widespread and also to doubt the degree to which the Press Council of India or the Indian government are either able or willing to deal with the issue.

The rise of ‘paid news’ as an issue in the public sphere dates to the 2009 General and subsequent state elections. The Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists (APUWJ) organized a seminar on the issue on the final date of the 2009 General Election in Hyderabad to highlight the issue. The APUWJ claim to have invented the term ‘paid news’ in 2009 bringing the issue to broader attention through conducting research into paid news and holding a seminar.ⁱⁱⁱ Such activities contributed towards precipitating a Press Council of India (PCI) report in 2010.

The damning PCI report, which argued that paid news is widespread, was initially suppressed by the PCI itself. At the meeting to decide whether to publish the report 9 out of a membership of 30 voted to publish the report, a decision that casts doubt on

the efficacy of self-regulation. The report was subsequently leaked and then made available through legal recourse via the Right to Information Act.

An equally damning 2013 report to Parliament by the Standing Committee on Information Technology that heavily criticized the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for its inaction in dealing with paid news received very little media attention on publication. When the phenomenon is mentioned by mainstream news organizations it is either deemed to be an infrequent occurrence or something that has been satisfactorily dealt with through self-regulation.

For the 2014 General Election the Election Commission established Media Certification and Monitoring Committees claiming almost 800 cases of paid news.^{iv} It does not have the ability to take any action in these cases, however. It can act though in cases where electoral law appears to have been broken, for example, when candidates do not issue accurate accounts of electoral spending as in the high profile cases of former Chief Ministers Ashok Chavan and Madhu Koda of the state of Maharashtra and Jharkhand respectively.

While much of the evidence for paid news is circumstantial, there is enough to suggest that the practice could be widespread and that there is a certain amount of collusion between media institutions and government. Media companies tend either to deny its existence except as isolated cases or insist that their houses are now in order. The PCI appears to be unwilling to act as does the Ministry for Information and Broadcasting. The phenomenon of paid news, therefore, highlights the complementarity of, rather than competition between, political and commercial logics in certain circumstances. While politicians would, of course, prefer not to have to pay for positive coverage they also do not wish to admit having paid in front of either the

electorate or the Electoral Commission. However, this complementarity between business and political interests is not the full story by any means. Indeed we only have a story because of the activities of journalist unions, senior independent journalists, some members of the PCI (albeit a minority), a Standing Committee of Parliament, and a small number of newspapers and websites determined to bring the issue to the light of day. It is only because of the presence of a professional logic advocating journalistic independence that the issue is being raised. During the 2014 General Elections the issue, for example, received coverage on the BBC and Al Jazeera. The paid news phenomenon, therefore, shows not only the complementarity of political and commercial logics but also on this occasion the competitive and adversarial relationship of professional logic to both commercial and political logics. To understand the development of Indian media we need to consider the complex and dynamic relationship between all three logics. There are clearly democratic as well as anti-democratic forces at play.

Political actors: political logic in a mediatizing society

The decade of the 1980s also saw the development of a convoluted relationship between commercial and political logics that was played out in the emerging public arena and that subsequently affected the outcome in the electoral arena. Along with the rise of vernacular newspapers, there was significant growth in the number of households with television sets that had different ramifications for the mediatization of politics. Rajagopal (2001) has analyzed very well how the advent of television provided fertile ground for the rise of the “Hindutva” or the right wing politics that has long-term repercussions on the nature and the course of Indian politics. The serialization of Ramayana, a Hindu epic, on state-run television (Doordarshan) was

exploited by the right-wing Bhartaya Janata Party (BJP) to mobilize Hindu upper caste voters, particularly in north India. The Ram-Janmabhumi-Babri mosque controversy received greater national attention because of the popularity of the serialization of Ramayana (Rajagopal 2001).^v The controversy also empowered the “Hindutuva” forces to gain national significance. From just two seats in the Parliament in 1984, the BJP got 88 seats in the 1989 Lok Sabha elections. There were multiple factors that facilitated the rise of the BJP in the late 1980s, but television helped in reaching and appealing to large sections of diverse publics with its powerful visual imageries. Hindi newspapers, at the same time, by misreporting and misrepresenting the incident played a leading role in this mobilization. This also led several scholars to view the rise of Hindi newspapers as part of the rise of communal and identity politics in India and hence doubt its role as a vehicle of democratization (Rajagopal 2001).^{vi} Viewing news media as providers of information and creating an informed citizenry is only one way of thinking about their political role. News media can also play the role of mobilizer of social groups, or at times as a vehicle for political intervention by elites. McCargo (2002) in his work on Thai media has demonstrated the very different role often played by media in developing countries from the standard Western assumption about providing information to citizens. Hallin and Mancini (2004) show that even in the West, newspapers play many different roles, often serving more to represent organized social groups or as tools for elite intervention than just the “liberal” function of providing neutral information.

Political developments during the 1980s and the ways television and newspapers were used by an emerging political party for the first time made the politicians realize the potential inherent in the mass media for mobilization. This realization also led to the development of increasing contestation between commercial logic and political logic

in the decades that followed. The development of the market economy from the 1991 that freed media outlets to some extent from dependence on government advertising also created a more autonomous sphere for media operation in the public sphere. Many media outlets, motivated by ideological viewpoints, supported one political party or another. Yet, Indian media also learnt to assert its autonomy in the face of the emergence of a multitude of political actors along with the regionalization of Indian politics. The central government since 1989 has always been a coalition government of one or two national parties and numerous regional parties. This also means more power and influence for regional and local media as against national and English language press. This is evident from the ways the transformation has taken place in the satellite news channels market. When satellite channels entered in the early 1990s, the programming was mainly entertainment-oriented and predominantly in English. However, from the late 1990s onwards, most of the expansion in the satellite channels market has taken place in Hindi and regional languages with the massive expansion of the 24x7 news channel market.

From just one government-controlled television channel until 1990, India now has more than 800 channels, of which at least 386 broadcast daily news in 14 regional languages (MIB 2013). The staggering growth of 24-hours news channels in the late 1990s and 2000s has opened up new possibilities for politics and changed how the business of politics is conducted. Political parties and leaders are adapting to the coming of satellite channels to gain the support of television-mediated publics. Political parties have started providing training to their members in the art of dealing with 24-hour news channels; this has also created the new television politicians, who are better in front of camera, and are sought by news channels for soundbites.

Television has been held responsible for public disenchantment with the political process that has led the crises of political communication in developed countries (see Norris 2000). Is India witnessing a similar trend? The rise of television news and its increased focus on scams and corruption has been accompanied by a decline in public trust in both the “news” as well as political leaders. Yet, this has not led to a decline in institutional participation, which is evident from the increasing voter turnout both in the assembly and national elections. At the same time, there has been a rise in alternative politics beyond party politics as seen in the Anna Hazare movement, discussed later.

However, there are several questions about whether television news is becoming more independent of politics. In the classic argument of mediatization, growing commercial logic sees a consequent falling away of political (or electoral) logic. Our argument is that it is not an either/or but rather a both/and scenario where mediatization and politization of television can go hand in hand.

The enormous growth of news channels and newspapers in the 2000s was utilized by politicians to reach out to potential voters. In the 2004 national election, the BJP launched a massive campaign with the slogan “India Shining” to promote the image of India internationally. However, it was soon incorporated into the election campaign strategies to win voters, at least in urban India. It is estimated that the government spent nearly US \$20 million on the advertisements. The use of taxpayer’s money for personal campaigns was criticized by the opposition.

Indian voters are known for casting their vote based on caste, religion and regional identities, though there has been a shift in the voting behaviour of Indian voters in the recent time (Kumar 2013). By making the economy the central agenda of their

election campaign, the BJP, known for Hindutva ideology, was ostensibly trying to present them as development oriented party so as to appeal beyond its core constituencies of voters, without any success. However, it must be noted that the economy has also been made the central campaign strategy in the past. Indira Gandhi, the former prime minister of India, used the slogan “garibi hatao” (remove poverty) in the 1971 general election and the result was the massive win for her party in that election.

Both these slogans, though informed by electoral logic, are not only separated by more than three decades but also produced contrasting results. The BJP’s use of marketing slogans failed to attract voters and they lost the election. The failure can also be attributed to their inability to translate the slogan to the rural and the vernacular world, where the large mass of people live. The crucial difference between Indira Gandhi’s *garibi hatao* and the BJP’s *India Shining* was the nature of popular appeal. No doubt, the rhetoric of *garibi hatao* was more populist as it appealed to the vernacular mass directly, while the *India Shining* slogan was “lost in translation” for the vast majority of the non-English speaking population. The intensification of mediatized politics provides space to convert substantial problems to symbolic issues in order to gain electoral mileage.

The coming of the internet has further transformed political communication in India by expanding the scope of participation as anyone with an access to the internet can in principle raise an issue in the public arena even if it may not resonate with a substantial audience. It would not be possible for new media alone to influence wider sections of society unless they collaborate with traditional media. Similarly, for traditional media to reach transnational audiences, they need to use new media.

Such connectivity and convergence between traditional and new media was quite evident in the Anna Hazare campaign against corruption. Anna Hazare, in his agitation over the issue of the Jan Lokpal Bill, effectively used social media to mobilize the youth and the middle classes. The effective use of social media not only brought the issue into cyber space and made it more global, but also garnered huge support for the anti-corruption campaign. Although the movement lost its vitality due to several factors including internal dissent among its core members, it showed the effectiveness of social media for political mobilization. In a statement, the then Law Minister, Salman Khurshid said, “We were caught unawares because Anna’s movement was a remarkable combination of traditional politics and unconventional modern practices. We were at a disadvantage because we did not use the social media as effectively as Anna’s movement did”.^{vii} Such a perception is not without reason, as a report released by Facebook revealed that Anna Hazare and the Jan Lokpal Bill were mentioned the most in status updates in 2011 in India. The general perception that people use the social media largely for entertainment does not hold true in this case. At the same time, using social media for entertainment does not stop one from using it for political activities. Politics has certainly entered social networking sites, which has opened up new avenues for conducting politics. The Anna Hazare movement was not necessarily informed by electoral logic, but wanted to influence policy outcomes.

The recent success of the Aam Adami Party (AAP), an offshoot of the Anna Hazare movement, in the 2013 Delhi assembly election also shows how social media can be used to reach first-time voters. AAP went online to declare their list of candidates along with their backgrounds including education, income, past history and so on. They were very active on social media interacting with online citizens and responding

to their queries. But the use of social media was supplemented by door-to-door campaigns, political rallies, and pamphlet distribution. A post election survey during the Delhi assembly election 2013 conducted by the Centre for Culture, Media and Governance at Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi, found that nearly 87% of social media users voted either for AAP (51.7%) or BJP (35.4%), and both of these parties had a higher online presence than the Congress or others parties. What is important to recognize in Anna Hazare and AAP's success is the capacity of the social media to influence traditional media. All newspapers and television now have reporters who continuously monitor Facebook and Twitter for breaking news. The way traditional and social media connect and converge has a profound impact on modern day political communication. This connectivity and convergence between traditional and social media becomes imperative in the case of India and other developing countries where the reach of the internet is still limited.

The Anna Hazare movement, which began through social media, gained momentum after news channels started providing relentless coverage. Similarly, AAP would not have been successful if they had depended exclusively on social media for political communication. It is important, therefore, to understand the different roles played by traditional and social media in reaching to different segments of the population.

However, a presence in social media has become imperative for politicians who want to connect with the youth and the middle classes and want to play a larger role in the national political arena.

Despite the low level of the internet penetration in India, social media has been able to reach beyond its core audience. This is because of the new hybrid media space created by the interface between print, television and the internet that can change the

way the business of politics is conducted in India (Chadwick, 2013). All political parties now have their presence on social media, and maintain a party website that details their activities and programs. The majority of politicians have a Twitter account or Facebook pages. During major events such as budget sessions or parliamentary debates, politicians post breaking news on Twitter. Political parties now tailor their content for multiple forms of consumption that can be reappropriated and reassembled in different platforms to suit the requirements of a particular medium. Howard (2006) refers this as a hypermedia campaign where communication is relayed simultaneously across a wide range of outlets. This helps reach not only journalists, but also their supporters and web browsers. Chadwick (2011) has highlighted the emergence of “hybrid” media systems where political elites and non-elites together contribute in constituting political events. What we are witnessing in India is a politicization of social media where political parties adopt the formats of social media to reach the electorate with mediation by more independent media institutions. There is no competition here between political and commercial logics as parties use the formats of Facebook and Twitter in pursuit of votes while these corporations benefit in terms of profit; the logics are complementary.

Conclusion

In this article we have sought to develop a theoretical framework for understanding the mediatization of politics that is of general applicability while seeking to apply that framework to India thereby extending the reach of the concept geographically beyond the West. Politics becomes mediatized when increasing numbers of people rely on the mass media and new media as their primary source of political information. Previous work on the mediatization of politics essentially sees a zero sum game

between political logic and media (or commercial) logic, with media logic winning and politics becoming subservient to media demands, which ultimately it is argued has baleful effects on the quality of democracy. Instead, we argue that we should investigate three groups of actors – mediatized publics, media actors, and political actors and see three logics at play simultaneously – a political logic (driven by the goal of electoral success), a commercial logic (driven by the goal of profit maximization), and a professional logic (driven by the goal of serving the public interest). These logics interact in a complex fashion; at times they are complementary, at other time they are competitive. We have demonstrated this through analysis of the mediatization of Indian politics. In the rapid development of Indian media, media has become commercialized, regionalized, and vernacularized. Political elites still attempt to maintain control in direct and indirect partisan and indeed in networked media systems. New pragmatic entrepreneurs have emerged with decidedly dubious records and with twin goals of maximizing their economic and political power. At the same time, there is a trend towards journalism that works in the public interest rather than those of narrow regional and/or national elites. This has led scholars such as Rao to see a democratization of Indian media and of course the rise of the Internet holds out the promise of greater participation in the public sphere. This stands in contrast to the idea that the mediatization of politics is ‘bad’ for democracy. It is too early to decide whether India is moving towards a “democratization” of media and whether mediatization of politics is good for democracy in India, but if we wish to understand present and future developments, then we should attempt to understand the dynamic, complex, at times complementary, at times competitive, relationships between political, commercial and professional logics.

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Table 1

Penetration of Television in India, 1984-2013 (in million)

Years	Total TV Homes	C&S Homes
1984	3.6	NA
1989	22.5	NA
1991	30.8	NA
1996	57.7	18
2001	79	40
2006	112	68
2011	142	126
2013	153	140

C&S = Cable and Satellite

Source: Cited in Vanita Kohli. (2006), p. 62. Figure for 2011 and 2013 are from TAM Media Research.

ⁱ Rajni Kothari has termed the one-party domination of Indian politics from 1951 to 1967 led by the Congress as the “Congress system”. Opposition parties, who were sharply divided among themselves, were unable to create a viable alternative to the ruling party and acted instead as pressure groups outside it. Further, the Congress was quick to co-opt the programs of the opposition and absorb their leadership into its fold, which limited the growth of opposition parties. For a detailed discussion on the Congress system, see Kothari (1964).

ⁱⁱ For a detailed analysis of the repression of the press during the Emergency, see Shah Commission of Inquiry, Interim Report I (March 11, 1978: pp.33-47) & and Interim Report II (April 26, 1978: pp. 1-9).

ⁱⁱⁱ APUWJ (2010). Memorandum submitted to the press council of India on paid news. Hyderabad, available at <http://www.apuwj.org/Magzine/report%20on%20paid%20news2.pdf>

^{iv} Rao, R. (2014). Paid news: EC issues 3,100 notices, confirms 787 cases, *the Indian Express*, 24 May, available at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/paid-news-ec-issues-3100-notices-confirms-787-cases/>

^v The Ram Janmabhumi-Babri mosque controversy is arguably the most important political event of Independent India in the 20th century. According to the Hindu holy book, the *Ramayana*, Lord Ram was born in Ayodhya. Advocates of Ayodhya movement claim that the first Mogul emperor Babar built Babri mosque on the same site in 1528 by destroying the temple. Some radical Hindu groups have demanded that the temple be rebuilt at the original site. The Ram Janmabhumi movement to rebuild the temple accelerated in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which ultimately led to the destruction of the Babri mosque on December 6, 1992. In this entire controversy, the Hindi press played a leading role by misreporting events during the movement which increased the circulation of Hindi newspapers. For a detailed study of the leading role of Hindi newspapers in the controversy see Nandy et al. (1995), and Rajagopal (2001).

^{vi} For a critique of this view, see Neyazi (2010)

^{vii} Express News Service. (2011). Team Anna’s use of social media caught us unawares, says Khurshid. *The Indian Express*, October 19, accessed on 21 January 2012, <http://indianexpress.com/article/news-archive/web/team-annas-use-of-social-media-caught-us-unawares-says-khurshid/>