Choosing the Right Media for Mobilization:
Understanding Issue Advocacy Groups’ Media Choice Strategies

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Issue advocacy groups and media:

Communicating for political mobilization

Abstract

Issue advocacy groups play a central role in today’s political system, but their media and communication use has seldom been examined to date. Grounded in the uses and gratifications approach and the niche theory, this study surveyed media and communication technology usage of 209 issue advocacy groups in the United State. The findings suggest that a variety of media are used for citizen mobilization purposes and, in particular, new communication technologies such as email and websites are more widely used and competitively superior to traditional media such as television and radio advertising.
Issue advocacy groups and media:

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The study of issue advocacy groups such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), public or private pressure groups, and labor unions is one of the core research areas of the social sciences including political science, economics, and social movement. The operations of issue advocacy groups in contemporary society are relatively well-documented in social science research as many studies have dealt with the role of issue advocacy groups in politics (e.g., Cigler & Loomis, 1998; Salisbury, 1984; Schlozman & Tierney, 1986; Truman, 1951; Walker, 1991) and their collective behaviors (e.g., Moe; 1980; Olson, 1965). These studies address questions on how issue advocacy groups came into being, how and why the groups expand, whom they represent, and what tactics are employed to influence policy-making. Doing so, they typically focus on how the legal, financial, and organizational factors determine the origins and maintenance of the groups.

Regrettably, however, almost no research has probed issue advocacy groups’ media use patterns and communication strategies in depth. Media choice and use indeed are an essential part of issue advocacy groups’ activities because the groups use a variety of media tools to communicate with citizens and policy makers. Media choice and use become even more important today for the study of issue advocacy groups as we observe the increasing application of new information and communication technologies that had been previously unavailable (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005). Facing a vast array of media and communication technologies, issue advocacy groups must choose the right communication tools and plan out media outlets in order to effectively mobilize citizens. By exploring issue advocacy groups’ media and communication technology usage patterns, this study attempts to explain what types of media and communication technologies are chosen for specific advocacy activities and why some are
considered to be more effective and beneficial relative to others for the success of advocacy groups’ goals.

**Media as a resource of issue advocacy groups: The resource mobilization theory**

The resource mobilization theory (McCarthy & Zald, 1973; Zald & McCarthy, 1987) attributes the success of mobilization in social movements to various resources including organizational structure and political opportunities (Jenkins, 1983). According to the theory, every mobilization organization has a set of goals and strategies. To achieve the goals, organizations need to possess and control the resources they have. Financial resources, knowledge, group solidarity, and legitimacy are deemed as the resources that help strengthen organizations. The amount of activities directed toward goal achievement is a function of the resources organizations possess and control. Here the success of organizations is largely determined by how organizations allocate resources for different mobilization strategies and how organizations translate the resources into action. But organizations vary in the efficiency with which they translate resources into action. An important corollary from this perspective, if not oversimplified, is that large groups that have formal organizational structures and a great deal of resources would have a relative privilege in collective action. On the other hand, most public advocacy groups unfortunately have quite limited resources in mobilization. Whereas established large groups tend to have routine, low-cost access to mobilization, small public advocacy groups need to pay higher costs in gaining a comparable degree of influence.

Under the resource mobilization theory, the access and use of mass media and communication technologies are understood as important mobilization resources. For example, media and communication technologies affect organizations’ costs for resource allocation and serve as constraints on or facilitators of the use of resources for mobilization tactics. The greater
the range of media and communication technologies organizations access and control, the greater
the range of mobilizing activities are available. Just as with other types of resources,
organizations must select appropriate media outlets that effectively translate their strategies into
action to achieve their goals. Specific media strategies must be developed in accordance with
specific goals and actions.

Issue advocacy groups as gratification seekers: The uses and gratifications perspective

The choice of media and communication technologies is not as simple as one could suppose. While the resource mobilization theory provides a general overview on how organizations coordinate their mobilization efforts, we need to examine more closely how and why issue advocacy groups choose certain media from the array of media outlets available in order to better understand the complexity of issue advocacy groups’ choice of media and communication technologies in mobilization processes. To this aim, the uses and gratifications approach (Blumler & Katz 1974) can provide a useful theoretical framework. That is, issue advocacy groups’ choice of media is likely to be based on the gratifications they obtain from each medium.

Traditionally, the uses and gratifications approach treats individual media consumers as the unit of analysis. But the unit of analysis can be expanded to include groups and organizations. In the present study, media consumers are conceptualized as issue advocacy groups that use media and communication technologies to communicate with citizens and the government. The fundamental assumptions of the uses and gratifications approach then can be applied to the group level as well. According to Rubin (2002), the uses and gratifications approach assumes that people’s communication behavior, including the selection and use of media, is not passive but goal-directed and motivated. Likewise, issue advocacy groups’ media
choice and communication behavior is strategic and purposive. This is because issue advocacy groups’ media use is vital to achieve their organizational goals. The media is used to serve following organizational goals of issue advocacy groups. First, they use media to pressure the government. This is a type of traditional lobbying (Schlozman & Tierney, 1986) popular for the early days of issue advocacy groups. Second, issue advocacy groups try to mobilize the public on specific issues. This includes recruiting members, organizing public campaigns and protests, facilitating discussion, encouraging donation, and the like. This latter dimension is more conspicuous for issue advocacy groups of today. Traditional theories of political mobilization often explain citizens’ political action based on the existence of the collective good (e.g., Olson, 1965). But as Johnson (1998) argues, it is more of issue advocacy group’s mobilization efforts, rather than the collective good itself, that explain citizens’ political engagements. For those active mobilization efforts of today, a variety of media ranging from direct mail to web-blogging and to television and radio advertising is used. For example, issue advocacy groups frequently reach citizens by direct mail and advertising to recruit new members. They advance their cause by public campaigns through television and radio ads. They plant news stories in traditional media through press releases to obtain publicity. Some groups conduct and release opinion polls to capture the attention of the news media and wireless services. Ultimately, the messages that issue advocacy groups and grassroots organizations disseminate through media are delivered to policy makers and may influence public policies. Following the uses and gratifications perspective, here the media consumers – issue advocacy groups – are posited as active communicators that seek to realize their goals of citizen mobilization through diverse media and communication technology use.

*Understanding issue advocacy groups’ media use: The niche theory*
Another important assumption of the uses and gratifications perspective is that media and communication technologies compete with one another as functional alternatives (Rubin, 2002). In the context of issue advocacy groups, this implies that the groups must weigh benefits of different media and communication technologies for effective resource coordination and allocation. By understanding competitions and survivals of certain media and communication technologies in certain usage patterns, we can explain why some media and communication technologies are chosen for issue advocacy groups’ specific activities. Moving beyond the general uses and gratifications “approach”, the niche theory (Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984; Dimmick, 2003) offers a useful theoretical framework to understand issue advocacy groups’ media and communication technology choice and use.

The niche theory, originally developed from biology and evolution, has been used in many media economics studies to examine the competition between mass media (e.g., Dimmick, Kline, & Stafford, 2000; Dimmick, Chen, & Li, 2004; Randle, 2003). In the theory, the concept of the niche does not necessarily denote a focused portion of the population as used in such phrases as “niche market.” Instead, the concept describes a population’s (or individual’s) relationship to its environment. The term is used in biology and evolution to denote how a population or individual responds to the distribution of resources and competitors in an ecosystem. In the niche theory used in media economics, the basic idea of biology and evolution is retained. Here the niche is about how mass media or media organizations make a living in the social system. That is, mass media compete with each other for limited resources in a community and doing so some survive, some die out, and some change their attributes. The interaction between the media population and the social environment, and ensuing competition and coexistence of media is what the niche theory attempts to explain. In this sense, it can be said
that the niche theory started with a macro-economic focus. To explain the survival and coexistence of media organizations, the niche theory focused on how media organizations use such resources as advertising money to weather changes in the market environment. For example, the niche theory maintains that the radio industry survived environmental changes by adaptation: Faced with strong competition with other new media for limited advertising resources, the radio industry in the early-mid 20th century appeared to be on the brink of extinction. However, the radio industry transformed its operation by such strategies as increasing its use of local advertising and playing recorded music supported by advertisers. It also changed its strategy and chose to become a specialized medium, trying to connect with the audience in a more intimate setting. All this suggests that the radio industry underwent socio-cultural evolution in a rapid-changing environment.

Advertising money is an important resource dimension that the niche theory has emphasized. In recent years, however, the niche theory started focusing on a more micro-oriented, another important resource dimension: Consumers’ utilities and gratifications. As shown in the uses and gratifications approach, gratifications have a well-established tradition in media and communication research and have been translated for niche analysis recent years. In typical gratifications niche analysis, mass media are conceptualized as competing to satisfy the gratifications of their media patrons. For example, Dimmick, Chen, and Li (2004) show that Internet news and traditional news provided overlapping gratifications to users and thus the two media competed over the gratifications resource, which resulted in some degree of displacement of traditional news media by the Internet.

In the present study, media will be viewed as competing for satisfying issue advocacy groups’ goals or gratifications. Gratifications niche analysis has well-developed formulae to
measure media patrons’ gratifications. The gratifications niche of a medium is defined by the breadth of gratifications obtained, the degree of overlapping gratifications with other media, and its relative superiority in gratifications compared to other media (Dimmick, 2003). Formulate to measure the gratifications were developed by Dimmick (1985) and they will be used as a methodological tool in this research. Like previous gratifications niche analyses, each medium’s niche will be measured using three indices: Niche breaths, niche overlap, and competitive niche superiority. These measures compare media along the gratifications resource dimension and will inform us which medium better serves the issue advocacy groups’ goals. Here the niche of media refers to its position in the space defined by the gratifications resource dimension. Niche breadth is the distance through a niche along the gratifications resource dimension and it measures the degree to which a medium is capable of gratifying a relatively broad or narrow spectrum of gratifications. In other words, niche breadth measures how generalized or specialized a medium is. Niche overlap measures the degree to which two media overlap on the same gratifications resource dimension. The greater the overlap, the stronger is the competition. Finally, competitive superiority measure is used to see whether one or the other of a pair of media provides greater gratifications. Detailed niche measures will be discussed in the method section.

Research questions and hypotheses

A core question addressed in this study is to probe what media are most frequently used to each mobilization goal of issue advocacy groups. Each medium will provide different gratifications to the groups and this will result in differential media use in the groups. If there are overlaps in gratifications, a superior medium will be more frequently used outcompeting others. In this study, traditional media such as direct mail and radio advertising and new media such as the web and e-mail will be analyzed for issue advocacy group contexts. Each medium’s niche
breadth and overlap will be measured and pairs of media will be compared for superiority.

It is hypothesized that new media will be superior to traditional media for issue advocacy groups’ mobilization goals and gratifications. This is because new media like the Internet has several desirable features for the groups. First, the Internet allows issue advocacy groups to disseminate information without having it filtered (Bennett, 2003). As a consequence, the groups present specialized and tailored information to the general public and provide strong dialogic features on the Web not for journalists, but for the general public (Reber & Kim, 2006). Second, the Internet is a cost-efficient medium that dramatically reduces the cost of political activism. The Internet perhaps provides the cheapest publishing outlets and lowest transaction costs for any political organization or individuals when it comes to mobilizing citizens (Hill & Hughes, 1998). Peckham (1998) points out that using computerized forms of communication like the Internet offers advantages for resource-poor groups. Issue advocacy groups and grassroots organizations—especially those that lack financial resources—can use the Internet for a variety of activities at a minimal cost. The Internet is expected to benefit small fringe groups by significantly reducing the cost for political mobilization and participation (Lupia & Sin, 2003). Third, the Internet is also a highly interactive medium that allows for instant feedback, as well as enhancing organizations’ and individuals’ ability to organize demonstrations, join public forums, volunteer for political activities, donate money, sign petitions, and contact public officials, and the like. With this high level of interactivity, issue advocacy groups and grassroots organizations can practice novel ways of mobilizing citizens and indeed encourage solidarity among the members (Brainard & Siplon, 2002). After all, as Dimmick (2003) argues, new media like the Internet will offer greater choices, more control over content, and convenience in time and space and therefore will provide media patrons with more gratifications, which will result in more
frequent use. If this is true, new media may have wider niche breadths and are competitively superior to traditional media. Based on the rationale so far, the following research questions and hypotheses are presented:

**RQ1**: What is the magnitude of niche-breadth on the gratifications dimension of the media used in issue advocacy groups?

**RQ2**: What is the magnitude of niche-overlap on the gratifications dimension of the media used in issue advocacy groups?

**RQ3**: What is the magnitude of competitive superiority on the gratifications dimension of the media used in issue advocacy groups?

**H1**: New media (e-mail and website) will be competitively superior to traditional media in terms of mobilization gratifications.

It might be of further interest to look at how the issue advocacy groups’ media usage differs by the groups’ size. While it is expected that new media will be more widely used and competitively superior to traditional media across issue advocacy groups, the degree of new media superiority may differ depending on the group size. It is possible that large groups that have more resources and formal organizational structures make better use of new media than small groups do, as the resource mobilization theory suggests. On the other hand, it is also possible that new media are more effective for small groups as the cost of new media adoption and use is usually not great. To explore this issue, the niche measures will be calculated separately for small and large issue advocacy groups.

**RQ4**: What are the magnitudes of the niche measures on the gratifications dimension of media used in issue advocacy groups broken down by the groups’ size?

**Method**
The present study employed a unique data set combining telephone interviews of 209 U.S. issue advocacy groups and grassroots organizations with the group profile data organized by the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS). Based on the 2004 NCCS data, a total of 1,176 public advocacy groups and labor unions were initially selected. A screening procedure excluding non-existing groups and groups with non-existing numbers yielded a total of 587 telephone interview-eligible groups. Telephone interviews of selected organizations were conducted between October 13 and December 12, 2006. Six trained interviewers conducted telephone interviews using the Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) system. Several screening questions were adopted for interviewing executive directors or staff members equivalent to the position (those who oversee groups’ activities). Ultimately, a total of 242 interviews were obtained (including 31 partially completed interviews), yielding a response rate of 35.9% (based on the RR1 formula suggested by the American Association for Public Opinion Research, AAPOR). With partial interviews counted (based on the RR2 formula by the AAPOR), the response rate reached 43.5%. A total of 209 cases were used for the final analysis, excluding the 31 partially completed interviews and two interviews that were conducted incorrectly.

A vast majority (87.6%) of the 209 groups said their mission is either advocating specific social issues or engaging in general public interest and social welfare. Other groups have such missions as addressing occupational concerns and aiding political campaign. In terms of policy issue areas, civil rights groups made up the highest portion (36.4%), followed by education (14.8%), Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender (12.9%), abortion (11.5%), women’s issues (8.6%), labor (5.7%), economy (4.8%) and environment (1.9%). On average, the 209 groups were 18 years old, had an annual revenue of $1,002,312, and were slightly liberal (M =
4.65 on a 7-point ideological scale. 1 is very conservative and 7 is very liberal.). In general, the
groups were evenly distributed across the nation, but 11% of the groups were located in
Washington, DC alone.

The issue advocacy group representatives were asked on an 8-point scale how often they
use each medium to realize their specific goals. 1 meant they used the medium very rarely, 7
meant they used it very frequently, and 0 indicated no use at all. The media examined here
included direct mail, email, the website, television ads and radio ads. Web and newspaper ads
and instant messaging use were also asked during the survey, but due to the very limited use of
such media, they were not included in the final analysis. Each medium use was asked for the
following 10 gratification areas. These are 1) recruiting members, 2) facilitating donation, 3)
providing information about the group and group activities, 4) providing information about
policy issues including legislation processes, 5) conducting and organizing public campaigns, 6)
encouraging citizens to contact, write letters or petition to the government, 7) organizing and
engaging in demonstrations and protests, 8) receiving feedback from citizens, 9) facilitating
discussion among citizens, and 10) presenting the group’s view to government. Based on these
gratification areas, each medium’s niche breadth, overlap, and competitive superiority were
calculated.

*Niche measures*

The three niche measures of breadth, overlap, and superiority are employed here as the
key indices that demonstrate the degree of gratifications issue advocacy groups receive from
their media use. Dimmick (1985, 2003) developed formulae for the three niche measures.¹ First,
niche breadth is measured by the following equation:
\[
B = \sum_{n=1}^{N} \frac{\left(\sum_{k=1}^{K} GO_n\right) - Kl}{K(u-1)N}
\]

\(u, l\) = the upper and lower bounds of a scale

\(GO\) = a gratification obtained rating on a scale

\(N\) = the number of respondents using a medium

\(n\) = the first respondent

\(K\) = the number of scales on a dimension

\(k\) = the first gratification scale

The upper bound of \(B\) equals unity and is attained when all respondents rate a medium at the upper bound on all gratification statements on a dimension. The lower bound is zero and indicates that respondents are rating a medium at the lower bound of all gratifications scales. Hence, a high score indicates that the medium has a larger breadth or a generalist, and a lower score indicates that the medium is a specialist.

Second, niche overlap is measured by the following equation:

\[
O_{i,j} = \frac{\sum_{n=1}^{N} \sqrt{\sum_{k=1}^{K} (GO_i - GO_j)^2}}{NK}
\]

\(i, j\) = medium \(i\) and medium \(j\)

\(GO\) = a gratification obtained rating on a scale for \(i\) and \(j\)

\(N\) = the number of respondents who use both \(i\) and \(j\)

\(n\) = the first respondent

\(K\) = the number of scales on a dimension

\(k\) = the first gratification scale
Since the niche overlap measure is a spatial measure, a low value indicates closer distance between two populations and hence a larger overlap. In other words, a low overlap value indicates high similarity in gratifications obtained from given two media whereas a high value denotes dissimilarity.

Third, superiority measure is designed to answer whether one or the other of a pair of media provides greater gratifications. A medium that obtains a significantly higher superiority score than another medium is superior in providing gratifications. The measure is identified by the following equation:

Superiority \[ S_{i>j} = \frac{\sum_{n=1}^{N} \sum_{k=1}^{K} (m_{i>j})}{N} \]

\[ S_{j>i} = \frac{\sum_{n=1}^{N} \sum_{k=1}^{K} (m_{j>i})}{N} \]

\( i, j = \) medium i and medium j

\( m_{i>j} = \) the value of a respondent’s rating for those scale items on which i is rated greater than j (the sum of the actual values)

\( m_{j>i} = \) the value of a respondent’s rating for those scale items on which j is rated greater than i (the sum of the actual values)

\( N = \) the number of respondents who use both i and j

\( n = \) the first respondent

\( K = \) the number of scales on a dimension

\( k = \) the first gratification scale

The indices of superiority are defined as arithmetic means. As a result, the differences in superiority between two means on a gratification utility dimension may be tested for significance.
using a $t$ test. If the test yields a significant result, that is interpreted as superiority of one medium over another on that dimension.

**Results**

The first task in data analysis was identifying a dimension underlying the gratification survey items. This was needed because the formulae for niche breadth, overlap, and superiority require the gratification dimension be identified first via factor analysis. In niche analysis, principal axis factor analysis with the oblique rotation method is recommended because it is reasonable to assume that media gratification factors may be correlated with each other (Dimmick & Dobos, 1988). An exploratory factor analysis was conducted with the gratification items above. The responses to the 10 items were run for each medium. Initial results suggested that there were 2 factors (dimensions) for each medium. However, for each medium, the second factor only explained 7% to 8% of total variance whereas the first factor explained most of the variance. Whereas the eigenvalues of the first factor were very high (above 4 across all media), the eigenvalues of the second factor did not reach or were slightly above 1, the recommended criterion for extracting a factor. This suggested the second factor was very weak, if any. Furthermore, many response items were double-loaded on the two factors and the two factors’ correlations were moderately high ($r = .4 \text{ to } .6$). All these evidence suggested there actually was a single factor. Therefore, a single factor solution was specified. All loadings were higher than .3, a minimum criterion used for an item to be considered as part of a factor (Gorsuch, 1983). The reliability values (Cronbach’s $\alpha$) were high, supporting the single factor solution. Factor analysis information is presented in the appendix.

After the gratifications dimension was identified as the single factor, niche breadth measures were calculated for each medium using the niche breadth formula. As shown in Table
1, email and website had clearly larger breadths compared to other media. The breadth value for both website and email was .47. These new media’s breadths were much higher than those of traditional media, suggesting that they are more widely used and hence generalist media for issue advocacy groups.

The second research question concerned the media’s niche overlap. For all media pairs, niche overlap measures were calculated using the overlap formula. The result is shown in Table 2. The lower limit of the overlap measure is zero and indicates the two media completely overlap on the gratifications dimension. The upper limit is the largest value in the scales minus one and is reached when respondent rate one medium at the upper bound on all scales and the other medium at the lower bound of all scales. High value means that the two media overlap less. In the present study, the lower limit was 1 and the higher limit was 7.

A smaller niche overlap value indicates close distance between each media pair and hence higher overlap. As shown in Table 2, the overlap between television advertising and radio advertising was the largest (.74), suggesting that the two media’s similarity in serving the issue advocacy groups’ needs. With the overlap value of 1.56, the web and email media pair’s overlap was relatively high as well. The lowest overlap occurred between the web and TV ads (3.26), followed by the web and radio ads (3.16), and email and TV ads (3.13). This suggests that these
media pairs do not overlap much and therefore less substitutable with each other.

Next, competitive superiority was calculated for each media pair. Table 3 shows the superiority values (S) computed for issue advocacy groups that used both media in each pairwise comparison. The superiority values were defined as arithmetic means for all gratification items. For each pair, a pair wise sample $t$-test was conducted to test the difference in superiority values. The results suggest that new media are superior to traditional media. As shown in the table, both email and website were superior to direct mail, radio, and television. Direct mail was superior only to radio and TV. The superiority values of radio and TV appeared to be about equal.

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Table 3 about here

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Research Question 4 asked how the niche measures might be different depending on the groups’ size. To answer this question, the groups were divided into two categories according to their size. Group size was measured by the groups’ total revenue in 2006. The median revenue for the groups were $255,000 and those below the median were categorized as smaller organizations and those over the median were categorized as larger organizations. Niche breadth and competitive superiority measures were then calculated for each category. Table 4 below presents niche breadth for each medium broken down by the issue advocacy groups’ size. Since niche breadth is essentially a “mean” measure, the two groups’ means were compared using $t$-tests for each medium. As shown in the table, the breadth difference between smaller groups and larger groups were statistically significant for e-mail and website. Larger groups’ niche breadth values for e-mail and website were higher than those of smaller groups, meaning that e-mail and
websites were more widely used for larger groups than smaller groups.

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Table 4 about here

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Pair-wise competitive superiority was also calculated after the sample was divided into two categories of smaller and larger groups. Table 5 suggests that in general new media’s superiority values were higher compared to traditional media for both smaller and larger groups. This time, however, slight changes were observed: Website’s superiority over TV was statistically significant only for larger groups. Also, it was found that TV is superior to radio for smaller groups.

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Table 5 about here

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**Discussion & Conclusion**

The findings of this study indicate clear advantage of new media use among issue advocacy groups. As shown in the result section, new media such as the web and e-mail had very high superiority and breath values compared to traditional media, meaning that new media provided more gratifications to issue advocacy groups and thus were superior to traditional media. This is probably because new media provide many benefits to issue advocacy groups. That is, with their cost effectiveness and easiness in mobilizing citizens, new communication technologies must have made a significant contribution to the groups. For example, new media may have reduced issue advocacy groups’ communication costs of locating and organizing members and supporters. The groups can use the Internet to motivate potential supporters and
organize political actions in spatially dispersed places. On the part of individual citizens, the cost of joining and participating in issue advocacy groups must have become minimal thanks to the new media. According to traditional collective action theory (e.g., Olson, 1965), rational individuals choose not to participate in collective action because the costs of participation such as time and membership are usually larger than the personal benefit from participating in collective action. But as Lupia and Sin (2003) argue, new media greatly changed those assumptions of the rational choice paradigm because new media allow group members to participate and communicate instantly at minimal cost.

Despite the wide adoption of new communication technologies across almost all sampled organizations, the findings of this study also indicate that larger groups—groups that have financial advantages—may better utilize new communication technologies than smaller organizations. This was evidenced by larger groups’ higher breadth values of email and website use when compared to smaller groups. Supporting the resource mobilization theory, it appears that larger groups make more frequent use of these new technologies because they have more resources and strategic efficiency. Larger groups may have the right resources to stay competitive with the complex and fast evolving new technologies. For instance, groups with greater resources may be able to create more professional and efficient websites. For groups that have more resources, furthermore, the cost of acquiring additional new communication technologies for a variety of mobilizing activities can be almost negligible.

However, it should be also noted that the findings do not necessarily deemphasize the benefits of new communication technologies for small groups. Consistent with the resource mobilization theory, the findings highlight that the access, use, and control of issue advocacy groups’ media and communication technologies should be understood in terms of groups’
strategic efficiency of resource allocation in general, not as an isolated piece of strategic activity. New media technologies are currently very widespread – almost universal - across all issue advocacy groups. What matters now is not a simple adoption of new media technologies but how efficiently they are used. As suggested by Bennett (2003), in the context of general resource allocation strategies, different types of issue advocacy groups use new communication technologies differently. Whereas large groups are still supplementing their traditional activities such as large scale, mass-oriented mobilizations (e.g., public service campaigns) with new communication technologies, small groups may use new communication technologies for completely new types of mobilization activities (e.g., virtual rallies, forming online coalitions) that had not been possible with traditional media. Unfortunately, however, the lack of data on more detailed associations between media and technology usage patterns and specific mobilization strategies in this study provided only partial understanding of issue advocacy groups’ media use. Further investigation should be accomplished in this area.

Considering the overall superiority of new media, it may be argued that new media are displacing traditional media in issue advocacy groups. One such evidence in the present study is that new media are more widely used among issue advocacy groups. Out of the 209 groups surveyed, as many as 208 groups were using email and 204 groups were using the website. On the contrary, television ads were used only for 92 groups, radio ads for 124 groups, and direct mail for 194 groups. However, the study did not directly probe this issue of displacement and therefore it cannot presents direct causal evidence that new media are displacing traditional media. The issue of displacement or extinction of media, popular in niche analysis, will be worth studying in future research.
Note

1. Niche measures for communication media, products, and services are copyrighted by Dimmick. © 1985 by John W. Dimmick.
References


Table 1

*Niche Breadth Values for Each Medium*

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<td>.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radio Advertising (RA)</td>
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Table 2

*Niche Overlap Values for Each Media Pair*

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<th>RA</th>
<th>TV</th>
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Table 3  *Pair-wise Comparison of Media Superiority*

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<td>12.94</td>
<td>***</td>
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Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; # p<.10

Table 4  *Niche Breadth Values for Each Medium by Group Size*
### Issue advocacy groups and media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Smaller Groups</th>
<th>Larger Groups</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N = 97)</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Mail</td>
<td>Larger Groups</td>
<td>(N = 97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Smaller Groups</td>
<td>(N = 104)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Larger Groups</td>
<td>(N = 104)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Smaller Groups</td>
<td>(N = 100)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Larger Groups</td>
<td>(N = 104)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Smaller Groups</td>
<td>(N = 44)</td>
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<td>Advertising</td>
<td>Larger Groups</td>
<td>(N = 48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
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<td>(N = 59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>Larger Groups</td>
<td>(N = 65)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05; # p < .10

Table 5  *Pair-wise Comparison of Media Superiority by Group Size*

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<th>Media</th>
<th>Smaller Groups</th>
<th>Larger Groups</th>
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<td>Email</td>
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<td>97</td>
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<td>Items</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting citizens</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating donation</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
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Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; # p<.10

Appendix I

Factor Loadings on Gratification Dimension for Each Medium
Appendix II

Major Questions Used in the Telephone Interview

I. Introduction

This is ___YOUR NAME____ a research fellow from the Ohio State University. First of all, thank you for agreeing to participate in our research. Our research team is conducting a study about issue advocacy groups, civic organizations, or grassroots organizations. We did some preliminary research about your group. From what we’ve learned, we believe that __GROUP NAME____ would be able to help us better understand issue interest groups, civic organizations, or grassroots organizations.

I would like to learn a bit more about your group such as your group’s activities and media and technology usage. This interview will take about 30 minutes at maximum.

II. Organization Purposes and Policy Concerns

1. What is the official name of your group? ___________________

2. There are a number of different types of non-profit organizations by main goal. Which of the following category best describes your group’s main goal?
   [Choose one]
1) Advocating specific social issues and values [NARAL, NRA]
2) Consolidating voting and empowering citizens [Common Cause, League of Women Voters]
3) Aiding campaigns to elect certain political leaders [MoveOn]
4) Engaging in general public interest and social welfare [ACLU]
5) Addressing occupational concerns [labor and agricultural unions]
6) Other?: Specify _______________

3. Groups may engage in a variety of activities in order to achieve their goals. Some of the activities may be the most important for your group while others may be the least important. Still others may be not engage in at all. I will read the list of activities. For each of the following, please tell me how important each activity for your group is on a 7-point scale---1 indicates the least important and 7 indicates the most important. If your group is not engaged in the activity, please say “Not engaged in” [Interviewer check this on “0”]

1) Working with Congress or government agencies on the formation and implementation of legislation and policies
2) Pursuing issues through litigation in the courts
3) Monitoring government activities and legislation processes
4) Providing information about legislation, political leaders, and policies with the public
5) Conducting or organizing public campaigns
6) Mobilizing citizens to contact or petition government agencies or Congress
7) Organizing citizen participation such as demonstrations, protests, and other participatory events
8) Recruiting and sustaining group members
9) Working to aid the election of political leaders
10) Other: Specify__________________________

4. Many groups are concerned with some public policy areas. I will read the list of some policy areas. Please tell me which of the following areas reflects your group’s major policy concern. If your group is concerned with multiple policy areas, please rank the top three policy areas of your group’s concerns from the most to the least.

1) Abortion
2) Education
3) Economy/Unemployment
4) Environment/Energy
5) Foreign policy/National security
6) Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues
7) Government reform (including election reform)
8) Women
9) Labor
10) Civil rights and civil liberties
11) Other: Specify__________________________

5. For each of the public policy areas your group is concerned with, please tell me where
your group stands on a 7-point ideology scale: 1 indicates “extremely conservative” and 7 indicates “extremely liberal”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely Conservative</th>
<th>Extremely Liberal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[ROTATE public policy areas if multiple areas are mentioned]

So, where does your group stand on _________________

III. Media and Technology Usage Patterns

Now I’d like to ask you about how your group uses a variety of media and technologies. Some of the media and technologies may be used frequently while others may be used rarely. Still others may not be used at all. Thinking of your media use in realizing your goals, please tell me how often your group uses it on a 7-point scale. 1 indicates “very rarely” and 7 indicates “very often” If your group does not use the medium or technology, please say “Not use” [Interviewer check this on “0”]

[ROTATE:
  a) Direct-mail
  b) Email/Listserv
  c) The website (text and visual presentations)
  d) Bulletin boards or chat room
  e) Blogs
  f) Instant messaging/Mobile media
  g) Web ads
  h) TV ads
  i) Radio ads
  j) Newspaper ads
  k) Press conference

5. Overall, how often does your group use ___ROTATE_______ to achieve your goals in general?
6. How often does your group use ___ROTATE_______ for recruiting members?
7. How often does your group use ___ROTATE_______ for facilitating donation?
8. How often does your group use ___ROTATE_______ for providing information about what your group and group’s activities?
9. How often does your group use ___ROTATE_______ for providing information about policy issues of concern including legislation processes?
10. How often does your group use ___ROTATE_______ for conducting and organizing public campaigns?
11. How often does your group use ___ROTATE_______ for inspiring citizens to contact, write letters or petition to government agencies or Congress members?
12. How often does your group use ______ for organizing and engaging in demonstrations, protest, and other participatory events?
13. How often does your group use ______ for receiving feedback from citizens?
14. How often does your group use ______ for facilitating discussion among citizens?
15. How often does your group use ______ for presenting your group’s views to government agencies or Congress?

16. Has your group ever hired a public relations firm over the past years?
   * How long has your group hired the public relations firm?