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D Barredo Ibáñez, D J de la Garza Montemayor, DL Días (2018): The relationship between the consumption of digital media, participation and political efficacy. A study about young university students in Colombia”. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 73, pp. 945 to 960  
<http://www.revistalatinacs.org/073paper/1290/49en.html>  
DOI: [10.4185/RLCS-2018-1290en](https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2018-1290en)

## The relationship between the consumption of digital media, participation and political efficacy. A study about young university students in Colombia

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** The political participation is essential for the democratic consolidation, considering that through social engagement, citizens are able to achieve consensus and develop public deliberations. This is especially important in Colombia, a society surrounded by an armed conflict for more than five decades, as well as devastated by drug trafficking mafias, economic breach and the lack of presence of the State in some regions, among some of them. **Methodology:** Using a survey to 581 Colombian young university students, we evaluated the relationship between four categories that can be determinant for democratic quality, such as the consumption of digital media, online and offline participation and political efficacy. **Results and conclusions:** In our findings, besides a link between aforementioned variables, we observe a low consumption of traditional media in respondents, as well as a lack of participation -online and offline-.

### Keywords

Political participation; cybersphere; young university students; Colombia.

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## 1. Introduction. Political participation and its potential effects in Colombian democracy

Political participation is often identified as an essential factor for evidencing the quality of the democratic functioning (Barnidge *et al.*, 2014). This is explained because, from the encouragement of social networking, representative institutions can involve electors un government tasks. And this is vital in Colombia, to avoid future conflicts, when generating a greater discussion between the different political actors of the country (Taylor, Nilsson & Amezquita, 2016); to erode the gap between urban and rural environments (Parra & Pinzón, 2015) and promote a greater decentralization, something foreseen in the Art. 1 of the Constitution of 1991; to avoid the self censure in some local contexts (Puig & Rojas, 2015); and, also, for encouraging a greater deliberation and, with it, favor a higher empathy between communities, organizations and individuals (Orozco & Ortiz, 2014); and, globally, to help suppress some problems straining the country, such as the murder of progressist leaders (Saldarriaga & Gómez, 2015).

Although the States have a relevant role in triggering citizens (Escobar, Arana & McCann, 2015), the truth is that Latin America is characterized by the lack of political participation (Gaviria, Panizza & Seddon, 2015), explained through historical and cultural causes, such as mistrust of citizens towards institutions and democratic representatives; oscillating persistence of authoritarianism; and also through socioeconomic reasons, since it is a region with broad population layers under poverty or extreme poverty situation and still, with access problems to higher education, among some of them.

In the following pages, we set as objective to evaluate the relationship existing between media consumption, political efficacy and offline and online political participation in a strategical population – young Colombian university students- who, through phenomena such as generational replacement, can perform a key role to innovate a democratic system such as Colombian's.

### 1.1. Political participation: some keys about the Colombian context

Political participation, which identifies the individual's possibilities of interaction with his or her environment, is usually affected by issues such as gender, educational level and trust in others (Gaviria, Panizza & Seddon). Likewise, as these authors state, per capita income is essential in the level, as well

as in the types of participation, because for instance citizens with lower income levels, tend to prefer other participative routines, besides vote. García & Salcedo (2015) also agree with this same statement, ensuring that the political indifference – the opposite of participation-, is linked to citizens' income and educational level.

Political participation varies depending on the social context the individual is immersed in, since he depends on the management performed by States, as Escobar, Arana & McCann (2015) explained when analyzing the electoral preferences of migrants.

In the Colombian case, many authors state that the Constitution of 1991, as main innovation, brought the implementation of a greater citizen participation (Giraldo, 2006), by decentralizing many State functions (Parra & Pinzón, 2015), and by achieving the public discussion of wide traditionally excluded sectors (Guzmán, González & Eversley, 2017). But despite the proposals of the new *Magna Carta*, the integration of plurality and ethnic, political and cultural diversity is still a process under development. There are many unfinished tasks; thus, for instance, while Constitution promotes a decentralization of resources, authors such as Asela (2014: 70) ensure an opposite expression is being generalized, called “re-centralization”, from which the State looks to actively intervene in the sharing and management of regional budgets. Formally speaking, Colombia has all features of a democracy (García, Sánchez & Salcedo, 2017), but it is a system deeply affected by the armed conflict described by Gutiérrez Coba *et al.* (2010), and where the Colombian society has suffered the confrontation between FARC guerrilla, military and paramilitary forces for more than five decades, without considering the intervention of drug trafficking agents and other violent groups such as ELN. In 2017, while writing these lines, there were still sectors with still a great polemic about the possibility that a former combatant –within the context of the Peace Agreements signed by the government led by Juan Manuel Santos and FARC--, presents himself as candidate: such as the case of the concurrence of Rodrigo Londoño, alias “Timochenko”, former leader of the guerrilla group and potential presidential candidate for 2018 elections (Colprensa, 2017, November 1), an indicator that outlines the problems that persist in a democracy more used to solving conflicts through weapons, before using social dialog and political participation.

There are still Colombian regions where the “no-place” mentioned by Pécaut (1999: 19) persist, that is to say, environments where the presence of the State dissolves in favor, for instance, of mafias mainly associated to drug trafficking, which are in charge of stablishing game rules of coexistence. Only from that approach the presumed connivance of governments in the profitable business of drug trafficking (Gutiérrez Coba *et al.*, 2010); the murder of leaders from the left-wing (Saldarriaga & Gómez, 2015); threats to journalists (Barredo, De la Garza & Díaz, 2016); inter-regional breach, from which it is more feasible to express opinions depending on the residues attached to every geographical context, as Puig & Rojas (2015) explain; and, additional to all these, the high level of indifference of the country, even higher in contexts impacted by the armed conflict or drug trafficking (García & Salcedo, 2015).

The interrelation of phenomena mentioned generates a “structural violence” (Aguilar & Muñoz, 2015: 1023); and it is structural because, as these authors remind, violence impacts from different fields, especially strategical groups that – like the youth-, have been traditionally excluded from participation in the Colombian public sphere (Patiño, Alvarado & Ospina, 2014).

Furthermore, political participation is affected, likewise, by the fact that Colombia is still one of the most unequal countries in the world: in 2013 about four of every ten individuals were homeless or had a poverty situation (CEPAL, 2015: 61), with more accentuated statistics in rural compared to urban environments.

Before this landscape, the indifference we mentioned previously is translated into high abstention levels in Colombian electoral routines, which constitutes a social response to the lack of incentives for participation we have been talking about. The situation gets worse in the case of young individuals, who tend to be displaced considering they are under training conditions, unable to generate meaning, as the following authors state:

“Within this economic and political system, young individuals are assumed as passive, dependent beings, lacking meaning and awareness, shapeless beings, beings that are worth what they represent for the nations’ future and not because what they already are; they are perceived as potentially adult beings under maturation process that must be trained to compete in compliance with needs and regulations imposed by the market as maximum governing agent of existences.” (Patiño, Alvarado & Ospina, 2014: 261)

That is to say, young individuals are usually invisibilized, expelled by institutions from the cocreation of consensus and even, unfairly associated with criminal episodes. There are also other issues that impact the establishment of relationships towards young individuals by the Colombian society, such as “economic precariousness” (Aguilar & Muñoz, 2015: 1023), which summarizes both the lack of work opportunities, as well as the lack of job offers with insufficient resources. We must also add the lack of information and the biased agenda of certain media (Cárdenas, 2016), which topics are usually configured from above, without greater contrast or deepness.

## **1.2. Consumption of digital media among young university students**

But political participation, in a context as complex as the Colombian, cannot be understood without first describing the country’s mediatic system, in the sense that said system encourages (or discourages) citizen empowerment, together with the auditing of institutional representatives, among other circumstances. Thus, most part of incomes and impact, in Colombia, are concentrated in large groups or corporations; for instance, in 2010, 92.6% of income in the audiovisual field were destined to two television channels –*RCN Televisión* and *Caracol Televisión*–, which at the same time both hoarded most of audiences’ attention (Narvárez, 2013). Nevertheless, works such as Barredo & Díaz (2017) ensure that conventional media, in this country, have an irregular adaptation to the digital ecosystem, restricting the involvement of their audiences to a great extent.

As happens globally, social media are displacing conventional journalistic platforms as monopolizing agents of symbolic management (Casero, 2012; Cassany, 2013), and they erect on the main spaces of participation and public deliberation for large population groups, such as young university students (De la Garza & Barredo, 2017; De la Garza, Barredo & Arcila, 2017). Therefore, individuals’ age is a variable to be considered, mostly regarding information mechanisms –which impact the general view of the world and, with it, the conceptualization about participation–, since authors such as Holt *et al.* (2013) ensure there exists a society that is more and more polarized from the generational aspect, that is, among those groups that tend to consume traditional media and, at the same time, among those that, on their part, consult digital sources to build their political point of view.

It is true that this phenomenon is tempered in Colombia by aspects such as the technological gap: in 2017, barely about six out of ten Colombians had a broad band Internet connection (MINTIC, 2017: 5), while a 20.66% of individuals had post-payment contracts in their mobile phones (p. 13). But despite the fact that the access to these media is still uneven, the impact they might cause is worth mentioning, since they facilitate the Colombian society a greater information and possibility of interaction, and when establishing as alternative providers of the official truth, something happening in other countries as well (Barredo, 2013). About the latter, it is convenient to remind about some symptomatic episodes of the strategic use of CIT with political purposes, as happened during peasant mobilizations in the so-called National Agrarian Strike of 2013 (Aguilera, 2017). Through technologies, mobilized farmers –as the cited author explains–, could become visible before Colombia’s public opinion, through the spreading of videos of police aggression, the comparison of information that delegitimized national media –due to their disagreement–, and in short, the orchestration of an effective campaign that “moved from an online to an offline scenario” (p. 26). This interaction between conventional and digital is usual, because in the end online media promote “new ways of browsing and sharing information” (Barnidge *et al.*, 2014: 1833), therefore helping to amplify the collective deliberation produced within protests.

In the case of young individuals, the mobilization of 2011 against the Law 30 promoted by President Santos is usually cited as an example of youth protest particularly mediated by technology (Parra & Pinzón, 2015) [1]. In that protest, young individuals activated against the proposal of reforming a regulation of access to higher education marked by the service’s privatization (Galindo, 2016), a hint of the increasing relevance of the strategical use of online platforms among the studied population. And this relevance is due to the fact that from digital media, young individuals –that, as explained in the aforementioned section, tend to be excluded from socialization and decision making spaces in Colombia–, may find a liberating “emancipation” from traditional political practices (Patiño, Alvarado & Ospina (2014: 274), while empowering through the recognition of the other, and while having the possibility to express their points of view. Then, from those social media it is possible to go to other sources –beyond biased and superficial stories that flood mainstream media (Aguilar & Muñoz, 2015)–, incorporating other voices, that later become providers amplifying collective experience.

According to Taylor, Nilsson & Amezquita (2016), those who played an active role of the armed conflict, demand in their majority, a “reconstruction of the truth” (p. 9), in such a way that social media can constitute relevant scenarios of citizen participation, in the search of that dialog about causes and, also, to establish a constant intermediation about those disruptor protagonists. Moreover, from the cybersphere, a collective “deliberation” can occur (Orozco & Ortiz, 2014: 92), when triggering participation from numerous mechanisms, such as forums, chats, informative websites, social networks, among some of them.

## 2. Objectives

The following pages were written around a general objective:

- To analyze the relationship between political participation, consumption of digital media and political efficacy, in a strategic population – like young Colombian university students.

We also determined the following specific objectives:

1. To identify the political participation mechanisms depending on basics users' profiles in which the chosen population can be classified.
2. To compare the consumption of online and offline media in mentioned profiles.
3. To examine the existing interaction between political efficacy and online political participation depending on sample profiling.

Hence, in compliance with the aforementioned objectives, we propose to study the interaction between four categories we detail as follows: online and offline political participation, consumption of traditional and digital media and political efficacy. Regarding the first category, we deemed necessary to clarify whether there is, indeed, a relationship between political participation of Colombian youth on social media, just as it has been observed in other contexts (Park, Kee & Valenzuela, 2009; Bode *et al.*, 2014); likewise, it is also pertinent to observe how said online participation influences offline political participation as second category, an interaction that has been managed by previous literature (Verba, 1962; Brady, Verba & Lehman, 1995; Estrada, 1995; De la Garza & Barredo, 2017), however, we haven't found a study about Colombia's case analysing this phenomenon so far. Likewise, we deem relevant to consider the third category, which indicates to what extent the consumption of traditional media has changed in the population group chosen, and in what way the emergence of digital media coexists or has initially replaced the traditional way of getting informed (Delarbre, 2011; Arellano, 2013; Villamil, 2017). It is also important to establish whether media (conventional or digital) have any influence in the political participation of young Colombian university students, and to what extent (Conroy, Feezell & Guerrero, 2012; Ikeda, Richey & Teresi 2013). And, lastly, we also introduce the category of political efficacy, helpful to determine to a good extent the empowerment of Internet users, whenever they consider their actions are headed to help establishing any changes in politics (Zittel, 2007; Moreno, 2012).

## 2. Methodology

The study, of correlational reach, looks to examine the relationship existing between media consumption, online and offline political participation, as well as the concept of political efficacy. In order to do this, we designed a survey, that was partially validated by a prior study, focused in Mexico's case (De la Garza & Barredo, 2017). The variables constituting the instrument were broadened regarding media consumption, through the reproduction of items suggested by Gómez, Tejera & Aguilar (2013); within online political participation, we also adapted some indicators introduced by Gil de Zúñiga *et al.* (2010) and Vesnic-Alujevic (2012), while in offline political participation, we followed the findings evidenced by Oser, Hooghe & Marien (2013). In the case of political efficacy, we used the studies of Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) and Moeller *et al.* (2014). Once the survey of 20 variables was designed, on May 2017 it was issued for validation by the following experts: María Bella Palomo Torres (Universidad de Málaga, Spain); Elba Díaz Cerveró (Universidad Panamericana, México); Carlos Gustavo Patarroyo and Eduar Barbosa Caro (Universidad del Rosario, Colombia). These researchers' feedback was of great interest, when evaluating the general quality of this instrument.

Said survey was administered to the strategic population: young university students. Despite that studies such as Gaviria, Panizza & Seddon (2015) suggest that political participation increases with age, we have chosen said group following that trail of studies that consider this collective as one of the

most dissatisfied (Aguilar & Muñoz, 2015), that digital media use to consult information about politics (Holt *et al.*, 2013), and that have a high relevance for the consolidation of participative democracy in Colombia (Patiño, Alvarado & Ospina, 2014). Therefore, youth constitutes one of the most active communities of online participation (Vázquez & Cuervo, 2014), even though we have focused specifically in university students in our study, who were –in 2013–, about 48.3% (CEPAL, 2015: 47) of online users, but that showed the largest population access to Internet: 95% of Colombians with third and fourth level studies access the network (Ortiz & Orozco, 2015: 90).

Following the validation of the instrument, on June we performed the questionnaire's pretest with two student groups from Universidad del Rosario (Colombia). Then, we selected the sample through a non-probabilistic convenience sampling: after initially inviting 32 Colombian universities to participate in the study; lastly, the following institutions agreed to take part in the study, which helped us to reproduce the survey among their students' community: Universidad del Rosario; Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia; Universidad Santo Tomás; Universidad Panamericana; Corporación Universitaria del Meta; Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano; and Escuela Superior de Administración Pública.

The survey was administered through the *Google Forms* platform between August 15 and September 30, 2017. Finally, we got 581 responses, belonging to young university students of the aforementioned institutions. Results were evaluated using the statistical analysis program SPSS (version 25). Regarding the reliability of the instrument used, we found a great stability in the 97 elements of the questionnaire, since Cronbach Alpha test showed a coefficient of  $\alpha=.814$ , which can be considered as highly acceptable (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

### 3. Results

#### 2.1. From the Factor analysis performed

When creating the definitive instrument, we first performed a factor analysis that evidenced highly acceptable coefficients, in that sense, for Cronbach Alpha, and based on criteria exposed by Tavakol & Dennick (2011), we deemed values between 0.70 up to 0.95 as acceptable. Regarding Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test (KMO), values are also acceptable, considering they are close to 1, which is the maximum quality indicator to proceed to the factor analysis of a group of variables. (Carmona, 2014). In the case of political participation in social media, we obtained a KMO of .861 in this analysis, and a  $\alpha=.903$ . It is worth mentioning that once the factor analysis ended, we obtained three factors belonging to different types of social media users. In the first case, we have a factor we named 'passive user' ( $\alpha=.841$ ), which is the one who only receives information. In the second and third case, users who respond to others about politics opinions ( $\alpha=.725$ ) and those who share contents with their contacts ( $\alpha=.755$ ).

In the case of the political efficacy concept, when performing the factor analysis through KMO we got a result of .805. On the other hand, when calculating Cronbach Alpha of all items it showed a result of  $\alpha=.809$ . In this concept's case, there are two factors organized in the following manner: Internal and External Political Efficacy. The aforementioned index maintains a Cronbach Alpha of  $\alpha=.848$ . On the other hand, regarding the concept of External Political Efficacy -which is the ability individuals grant about having an influence in awareness (Balch, 1974), making a difference and be able to make others change their opinion -, is  $\alpha=.732$ . However, in the linear regression test we used the concept as a

whole in order to know how it impacted political participation on social media.

### 2.1. From the linear regression

Secondly, we performed a stepwise linear regression that was carried out to clearly establish the variables explaining online political participation that, based on our analysis, were the quantitative variables of offline participation, political efficacy and media consumption. None of these elements was left out from the model; on the contrary, all of them influenced in the concept of online political participation of consulted students. Within the mentioned model we identified that the explanatory variables were offline political participation ( $\beta = 1.290$   $p < .01$ ), political efficacy ( $\beta = .239$   $p < .01$ ) and consumption of digital media ( $\beta = .348$   $p < .01$ ). In this case,  $R^2 = .339$  indicates there is a high predictive value of these variables altogether that, however, are not conclusive either. It is worth mentioning that in this test we obtained a Durbin-Watson of 1.898.

**Table 1. Explanatory variables of online political participation of consulted students in Colombia (2017)**

<b>Model 1</b>	
<b>Variables</b>	1
<b>Offline participation</b>	1.290**
<b>Political efficacy</b>	.239**
<b>Consumption of digital media</b>	.348**
<b>R</b>	.627
<b>R squared</b>	.393
<b>Adjusted R squared</b>	.390

Source: authors' own creation. **Note:** Results were statistically significant at a level of +  $p \leq 0.1$ ; \*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$

After performing a factor analysis of questions related to offline political participation and considering that there is no prototype or way of participating among citizens –as Barnidge *et al.* (2014); and Parra & Pinzón (2015) explain-, we suggested three basic users' profiles based on their online routines: the first one of them is the passive user, which mainly turns into a consumer of information about politics through social media; the second, on the other hand, is the user that responds to others, keeping a greater level of interaction with other users. Finally, we have the case of those users who share contents, in an attempt to convince others about causes and specific political positions.

Then, we present a correlation between these three profiles described and all those that constitute actions of political participation outside social networks. As evidenced, in most cases we get positive correlations, even though one of the most positive correlations found was also in one of the actions that had a more positive response from users. It is the case of attending a conference, which has a positive correlation with the three types of users ( $r = .428$   $p < .01$ ), ( $r = .397$   $p < .01$ ) and ( $r = .294$   $p < .01$ ). Despite it is an activity that in general manifested few adhesions from respondents, to influence in public policies also shows a positive correlation with offline political participation ( $r = .277$   $p < .01$ ), ( $r = .301$   $p < .01$ ) and ( $r = .247$   $p < .01$ ).



Another one of the most solid correlations was signing in a public consultation ( $r = .292$   $p < .01$ ), ( $r = .443$   $p < .01$ ) and ( $r = .268$   $p < .01$ ). On the other hand, in vote's case, a relevant correlation in the first case was not obtained (Passive user), while in the remaining two, we found said correlation ( $r = .108$   $p < .05$ ) and ( $r = .110$   $p < .01$ ).

As mentioned before, in most cases there is a clear correlation between political participation actions outside social networks with those actions produced inside these media. We must consider that in descriptive data we have a low participation in this group, something that was also noticed by other authors, like Saldierna, Marañón & Mendoza (2017), who ensured based on official statistics that, in 2015, about four of every ten Colombians ignored what a referendum was (p. 92) which, by the way, was the most known participation instrument:

**Table 2. Relationship between online and offline political participation in consulted students in Colombia (2017)**

	Passive user	Respond others	Share contents
<b>To vote</b>	.068	.108*	.110**
<b>Electoral public meetings</b>	.201**	.240**	.170**
<b>Support a campaign</b>	.239**	.271**	.225**
<b>Sign a public consultation</b>	.292**	.443*	.268**
<b>Participate in student organizations</b>	.173**	.160**	.136**
<b>Attend a conference</b>	.428**	.397**	.294**
<b>Contact a politician</b>	.237**	.220**	.203**
<b>Influence in public policies</b>	.277**	.301**	.247**
<b>Collaborate in an NGO</b>	.178**	.199**	.149**

Source: authors' own creation. **Note:** \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Pearson's coefficient in bold indicate strongest associations.

**Table 3. Relationship between online political participation and media consumption of consulted students in Colombia (2017)**

	Passive user	Respond others	Share contents
<b>Television consumption</b>	-.018	-.031	.009
<b>Written press consumption</b>	.239**	.194**	.149**
<b>Digital press consumption</b>	.480**	.454**	.302**
<b>Radio consumption</b>	.231**	.208**	.168**
<b>Printed magazine consumption</b>	.243**	.204**	.165**
<b>Blogs consumption</b>	.180**	.098*	.211**

Source: authors' own creation. **Note:** \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Pearson's coefficient in bold indicate strongest associations.

In this case, we performed a correlation between media consumption (traditional and digital) with online political participation actions. In this case, it is worth mentioning that the consumption of digital

press shows one of the most positive correlations with the different type of users ( $r = .480 p < .01$ ), ( $r = .454 p < .01$ ) and ( $r = .302 p < .01$ ). On the other hand, also the consumption of printed magazines' case shows a strong correlation ( $r = .443 p < .01$ ), ( $r = .204 p < .01$ ) and ( $r = .165 p < .01$ ). In this case, it is possible that being interested and informed about national events constitutes a pre-requisite to politically participate on social media.

In this case, we may notice that practically all questions included in the survey regarding political efficacy, correlated with the three ways of participating politically on social media. Specially the statement "I can make a difference if I participate" maintains a positive correlation ( $r = .363 p < .01$ ), ( $r = .357 p < .01$ ) and ( $r = .275 p < .01$ ). It is also important to notice that the idea that what is published by users might contribute to the fact that others change their opinion, also has a positive correlation with the three ways of online participation: ( $r = .348 p < .01$ ), ( $r = .323 p < .01$ ) and ( $r = .331 p < .01$ ).

We must differentiate that the feeling of political efficacy, understood as the conviction of youth about the relevance of their individual contribution, is important when it comes to express comments with others or share contents through social media.

**Table 4. Relationship between online political participation and political efficacy of consulted students in Colombia (2017)**

	Passive user	Respond others	Share contents
My vote makes a difference	.162**	.119**	.050
I share quality information	.276**	.241**	.221**
The information I share can create coincidences	.301**	.295**	.293**
I can make a difference if I participate	.363**	.357**	.275**
I can influence in what the government does	.233**	.220**	.185**
I can influence in political parties	.193**	.183*	.167**
I can influence in what candidates do	.241**	.225**	.214**
Comments I publish can change opinions	.348**	.323**	.331**

Source: authors' own creation. **Note:** \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Pearson's coefficient in bold indicate strongest associations.

#### 4. Conclusions

In general terms, among one of the specific objectives – in which we aimed to contrast online and offline consumption-, we find that, just like the previous study performed by De la Garza & Barredo (2017) about young Ecuadorian University students, Colombians maintain a low consumption of traditional media (television as the most remarkable), which also involves a confidence we may catalog as low. Nevertheless, as mentioned in said study, the low confidence manifested in conventional media, is not automatically transferred to social media, something that has been verified in the Colombian context, as shown on previous pages.

Regarding another one of objectives proposed, where we established our interest in studying the relationship between political participation, digital media consumption and political efficacy, it is

possible to argue that the positive correlation between digital media consumption with traditional political participation can demonstrate that, the more contact students have with information circulating on these media, the greater their propensity to share contents on social media. Therefore, the positive correlation between political participation and political efficacy indicates there is a relationship with the capacity the individual considers about changing the status of things he or she faces.

Regarding the objective of identifying participation mechanisms, is still remarkable that offline political participation is rather scarce; outside the vote, we find a lack of involvement in this strategic group of Colombian democracy. And here we should ask ourselves to what extent the reformist efforts of the Constitution of 1991 were efficacious, with the purpose of stimulating a participative democracy (Guzmán, González & Eversley, 2017). And this is especially important, mainly because in this work we have demonstrated the existing link between online and offline political participation and political efficacy, that is, the feeling the individual has of being able to improve social problems surrounding him or her.

But the lack of participation observed –online and offline –, induces an interesting scenario for those political forces willing to channel dissatisfaction, and to vehicle the ways of participation not mediated by institutions, whereas the lack of integration of youth in the Colombian system is not equivalent to their demobilization, as Patiño, Alvarado & Ospina (2014) explain and as observed, for instance, in the students' manifestations against the Law 30 proposed by the president Juan Manuel Santos (Sánchez González, 2012).

One of the challenges Colombia faces then, is the transformation of the contra-hegemonic discourse into a dissident discourse, that is, in the need of introducing dissension as a way of achieving social agreements or consensus. Mostly among youth because, as Ortiz & Orozco (2015) describe, even though their routines are not characteristic of the whole society, as the generational change occurs, said discourses will generalize as well.

Based on the analysis presented in foregoing pages, about online political participation, we identified among young university students, a passive user that receives information, but that not necessarily spreads it or interacts with it. This way, it is perceived as a scenario integrated by youth that denote a low level of political efficacy, uninterested, in conclusion, towards public affairs and that is, on its part, a symptom in a country where the demands of social organizations and management plans of political representatives are usually disconnected (Parra & Pinzón, 2015).

Altogether, previous results have some limitations regarding information collection (since it is a non-probabilistic sample), such as the fact that young university students do not represent, in general, all Colombian youth.

But just like the case reported by De la Garza & Barredo (2017), the relationship between online and offline political participation is closely related, even though it is rather scarce in the case of Colombian youth participating in the study. Despite the aforesaid and even considering this factor, it is a fact that the relationship and complementarity between these categories is a clear evidence that online political participation has become a way of political participation by itself, that can potentiate conventional ways of participation (De la Garza, Barredo & Arcila, 2017) and citizenship (Barnidge *et al.*, 2014).

The linear regression enabled establishing to what extent one becomes the explanatory factor of the other.

\* **Funded research.** This paper is product of the R+D project titled “Public Sphere and Citizen participation: an approach of the interaction construction in the main Colombian cybermedia (2016)”, conducted by Professor Daniel Barredo and funded by the Fund of Large Amounts Projects of Universidad del Rosario (2017 – 2019). Likewise, it is also comprised among the research activities of the R+D project “Influence of audience in the journalistic innovation and participation management: risks and opportunities”, reference CSO2015-64955-C4-3-R, under the management of professor María Bella Palomo Torres and funded by the Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness of Spain.

## 5. Notes

[1] Through this legislative reform, president Santos aimed to introduce “profitability in education” (Sánchez González, 2012: 117), in such a way that it caused rejection among the different student organizations.

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#### How to cite this article in bibliographies / References

D Barredo Ibáñez, DJ de la Garza Montemayor, DL Días (2018): The relationship between the consumption of digital media, participation and political efficacy. A study about young university students in Colombia”. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 73, pp. 945 to 960  
<http://www.revistalatinacs.org/073paper/1290/49en.html>  
DOI: [10.4185/RLCS-2018-1290en](https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2018-1290en)

Article received on 10 December 2017. Accepted on 11 May.  
Published on 19 May 2018.