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Disposition to vote and media consumption patterns among Chilean youth

Jóvenes, disposición a votar y consumo de medios en Chile

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ABSTRACT: This article discusses the relation between Chilean youth media consumption patterns and their disposition to vote. In this context, to what extent does news consumption and entertainment by Chilean youth influence their political participation patterns? Based on data from a national survey (N=1.000) of young individuals between 18 and 29 years old in the three major urban cities in Chile, we conclude that individuals' news consumption and Facebook use are positively related to their disposition to vote. However, the consumption of entertainment news has a negative effect on individuals' political participation practices.

Keywords: Chilean youth, political participation, media consumption, disposition to vote, *online* social networks..

RESUMEN: Este artículo aborda la relación entre el consumo de medios de comunicación y la participación política de los jóvenes chilenos. ¿De qué forma el consumo de noticias y entretenimiento influyen en la participación política? Utilizando datos de una encuesta nacional –cara a cara– a 1.000 jóvenes entre 18 y 29 años de los tres principales centros urbanos de Chile, se concluye que el consumo de noticias en medios de comunicación y el uso de redes sociales están positivamente relacionados con la disposición a votar de los jóvenes. En tanto, el consumo de información de entretenimiento tiene el efecto inverso y se vincula negativamente con la participación política.

Palabras clave: jóvenes en Chile, participación política, consumo de medios, disposición a votar, redes sociales online.

After 17 years of dictatorship, Chile has successfully overcome its political transition processes. Good economic indicators, better material conditions for many Chileans as well as improved institutional functioning are some of its achievements. However, electoral participation –especially among Chilean youth– is a pending task. If, in 1988 –the year in which electoral lists opened again after closing down in 1973– registered voters between 18 and 29 years old represented 35% of the electorate, at present this figure only reaches 9,2%. Of the 3.322.551 people comprising the 18-29 year old population range, only 22,9% are registered in the electoral roll¹. Evidence shows a disconnection between Chilean youth and formal political processes that sustain democratic representation.

This disconnection not only affects political quality; young people without political identification neither are interested in collective references such as religion or the nation². However, other research shows that even though young people do not identify with political parties, they do have political positions (right-left) similar to that of the adult population³. This worldwide phenomenon is understood to be part of a process of transforming citizen practices, especially among younger citizens. Bennett⁴ defines “current” citizens as those who prefer to participate in public affairs by creating networks where they share values, whereas “obedient” citizens, belonging to more adult generations, see the vote as the main instrument of political participation.

The disconnection of young people with electoral processes cannot be automatically interpreted as a lack of interest in public affairs. Participation is seen as a multidimensional phenomenon that goes beyond concurring to the urns and includes other activities and expressions. Participation has at least three dimensions. First of all, there is political participation (which includes electoral participation as its main expression); secondly, participation in social organi-

¹ Cfr. INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE ESTADÍSTICAS, INE, *Estadísticas Demográficas y Vitales*, 2009. www.ine.cl; Servicio Electoral de la República de Chile, Servel. *Estadísticas del padrón*. 2009. Available on: www.servel.cl, September 2011.

² Cfr. GONZÁLEZ, Roberto, MANZI, Jorge, CORTÉS, Flavio, DE TEZANOS, Pablo, ALDUNATE, Nerea, ARAVENA, María Teresa and SAÍZ, José, “Identidad y actitudes políticas en jóvenes universitarios: el desencanto de los que no se identifican políticamente”, *Revista de Ciencia Política*, vol. 25, n° 2, 2005, pp. 65-90.

³ Cfr. SCHUSTER, Martín, “¿Qué tan diferentes son los jóvenes de los adultos? Identificación con partidos, coaliciones e intención de voto”, in Patricio NAVIA, Patricio, MORALES, Mauricio and BRICEÑO, Renato (eds.), *El Genoma Electoral Chileno*, Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, Santiago, 2009, pp. 211-234.

⁴ Cfr. BENNETT, Lance, “Changing Citizenship in the Digital Age”, in BENNETT, L. (ed.), *Civic Life Online*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 21-24.

zations that focuses on issues of common interest; and thirdly, participation as the expression of ideas on issues of common interest in the public arena⁵.

Over the last few years, new research on the phenomenon of youth participation has taken a less reductionist view, and not only related to political interest. It has gone from studying political participation to researching civic commitment⁶. Along with studying the phenomenon of youth participation, or lack of it, research has sought to investigate the main factors related to this conduct. In the context of the “mediatisation of everyday life”⁷, the relationship between mass media consumption –especially the search for information as a bridge connecting individuals with public affairs– and the practices of political participation or disaffection of individuals has turned into a relevant area to be studied for disciplines such as political communication. Two opposing hypotheses have been put to the test with regard to the relation between political participation and mass media consumption. The first hypothesis is part of the so-called “cognitive commitment model” and suggests that there is a positive causal relationship between media consumption, consisting mainly of news, and political participation⁸. However, the second hypothesis is in line with the Critical Theory tradition and what is currently known as “media malaise”, suggesting that mass media consumption discourages civic commitment and political participation in people⁹.

Additionally, over the last few years, emphasis has been placed on the relationship between new technologies, especially social networks such as Facebook, and political participation¹⁰. Young people value the features of these technological platforms, mainly because it allows them to create new

⁵ Cfr. PUTNAM, Robert, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of the American Community*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2000; COULDRY, Nick, LIVINGSTONE, Sonia and MARKHAM, Tim, *Media Consumption and Public Engagement*, Palgrave, London, 2010; VALENZUELA, Sebastián, PARK, Namsu and KEE, Kerk, “Is There Social Capital in a Social Network Site?: Facebook Use and College Students’ Life Satisfaction, Trust, and Participation”, in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 14 (4), 2009, pp. 875-901; VERBA, Sidney, KAY, Lehman and BRADY, Henry, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1995.

⁶ Cfr. COULDRY, Nick, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

⁷ Cfr. LIVINGSTONE, Sonia, MARKHAM, Tim. “The contribution of media consumption to civic participation”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 59, 2008, Issue 2, pp. 351-371.

⁸ Cfr. NORRIS, Pippa, CURTICE, John, SANDERS, David, SCAMELL, Margaret and SEMETKO, Holli, A., *On Message: Communicating the Campaign*, Sage Publications, London, 1999; LIVINGSTONE, Sonia, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

⁹ Cfr. SARTORI, Giovanni, *Homovidens, la sociedad teledirigida*, Taurus, Buenos Aires, 2000; PUTNAM, Robert, *op. cit.*

¹⁰ Cfr. VALENZUELA, Sebastián, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

content and its many possibilities for interaction. To this extent, the use of Internet by young people –and their various ways of *online* political participation– seems to be re-configuring certain civic practices and the traditional concept of representative democracy¹¹. Likewise, the consumption of *online* information can complement and reinforce institutional mechanisms of participation such as the vote¹².

This is the context in which this article explores the relationship between the media consumption of information –both political and entertainment– and the disposition to vote among Chilean youth. At the same time, we will be discussing the impact of the use of social networks on the Internet –mainly Facebook– and its consequences on the interest shown by youth to participate in political processes. Up to now, Chilean studies have only described the issue¹³. This study will discuss the different theoretical perspectives of political participation and its practical angles. We will then analyze the evolution of electoral participation among Chile youth. Likewise, we will discuss the theoretical aspects and empirical evidence related to media consumption and political participation, as well as media consumption practices among Chilean youth. Finally, based on information from a 2009 national survey on youth, we will analyze the relationship between mass media consumption and political participation among Chilean youth.

1. *Political participation as a dependent variable*

Political participation is understood to be a dependent variable, which can be affected by media consumption in the case of Chilean youth. Traditionally, political participation is associated with casting one's vote in elections but if we think that political processes involve a collective deliberation of public affairs, then political participation involves other, more or less effective motivations and actions than voting in an election¹⁴. Verba *et. al.*¹⁵ built a model

¹¹ Cfr. COULDRY, NICK, *et al.*, *op. cit.*; COLEMAN, Stephan, "How democracies have disengaged from young people", in LOADER, B. Ed., *Young Citizens in the Digital Age*, Routledge, London, 20058, pp. 166-186.

¹² Cfr. NORRIS, Pippa, *A Virtuous Circle*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000.

¹³ Cfr. ARRIAGADA, Arturo, SCHUSTER, Martín, "Consumo de Medios y Participación Ciudadana de los Jóvenes Chilenos", *Cuadernos de Información UC*, 22, 2008, n° I, pp. 34-46.

¹⁴ Cfr. HAY, Colin, *Why We Hate Politics*, Polity, London, 2007; DALTON, Russell, *Citizen Politics*, Chatham House Publishers, New Jersey, 1996.

¹⁵ VERBA, Sidney, NIE, Norman and KIM, Jae-On, *Participation and Political Equality*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1978.

that attempts to explain political participation and its multiple perspectives. According to their model, people become involved in activities that coincide with their motivations and objectives, and to this end, they use different platforms that make up the “modes of democratic participation”¹⁶.

Political participation can be explained through different “modes of activity” and the motivations and objectives of those who carry them out. In order to discriminate between types of participation, according to the model of Verba *et. al.*¹⁷, it has to be determined whether the activity requires different levels of information regarding individual political preferences and whether it requires pressure to be exerted. At the same time, it has to be discriminated whether the action is directed at a social result or one of private interest as well as the potential degree of conflict entailed by the activity. Lastly, the authors suggest that the participation has to be analyzed in terms of the effort required and cooperation with others in a particular act. That being said, the forms in which the participation would take place are: voting in elections, participating in campaigns and community activities, contacting politicians and protesting.

Other attempts to analyze political participation are based on investigating short, medium, and long-term variables¹⁸. Short-term variables presume that voters are rational beings that punish their leaders according to the variables of economic performance (Lewis-beck and Stegmeier, 2007)¹⁹. These variables include rates on inflation, economic growth and unemployment, just to mention a few. Along this same line, Downs suggests an economic theory of political action sustained on a rational election model, where each agent pursues his objectives by using as little as possible the few resources available to him. According to this author, voters support candidates they believe will become more useful and only turn up to vote when they perceive the benefits of doing so are higher than the costs²⁰.

¹⁶ Cfr. *Ibid.*; DALTON Russell, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Cfr. *Ibid.*

¹⁸ For an extensive discussion on these variables, see ARRIAGADA, ARTURO *et. al.*, “¿Consumo luego pienso, o pienso y luego Consumo? Consumo de medios, predisposición política, percepción económica y aprobación presidencial en Chile”, *Revista de Ciencia Política*, XXX (3), 2010, pp. 669-695.

¹⁹ Cfr. LEWIS-BECK, Michael, STEGMAIER, Mary, “Economic models of voting”, in DALTON, Russell, KLINGEMANN, Hans-dieter (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007, pp. 518-537.

²⁰ Cfr. DOWNS, Anthony, “Teoría Económica de la Acción Política en una democracia”, in *Diez Textos Básicos de Ciencia Política*, Ariel, Barcelona, 2002, pp. 93-111.

Meanwhile, medium-term variables –of the Michigan model– are related to processes of socialization of individuals or to important events in their lives that influence their forms of political participation (Lau and Redlawsk, 2006)²¹. Lastly, long-term variables –known as the Columbia model– suggest that political participation is associated with gender, race, religion, ethnicity and class (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967, 1990)²². According to this model, the political participation of a person in a presidential election will depend on whether any one of the candidates is closer to his or her ideology and social position.

In Chile, citizens 18 years of age and older have the right to vote in elections. Up to now, the Chilean electoral system stipulates mandatory voting and voluntary registration in electoral lists. This allows for two kinds of citizens to coexist in Chile –those who are registered and under the obligation to vote and those who, because they are not registered, do not have the right to vote²³. Of all the people not registered to vote, a large majority are young citizens. According to a poll we used for this study, only 22% of people between the ages of 18 and 29 are registered in the electoral rolls. This figure agrees with 22,9% of the national population between 18 and 29 years old who are not registered. Meanwhile, 43% say they have no disposition to vote in the future²⁴. Campaign participation, however, is an extension of electoral participation. This type of participation includes getting involved in political acts such as working for a candidate, belonging to a political party or attending campaign meetings²⁵. Nevertheless, this type of participation demands time and energy, and few citizens are willing to do so. In fact, in Chile, 68% of young people are not interested in participating in a political campaign, while only 4% affirm to be “Very Willing”²⁶.

Traditionally, predictors of political participation can be classified into 1) individual characteristics of those who get involved in these processes, 2)

²¹ Cfr. LAU, Richard, REDLAWSK, David, *How Voters Decide. Information Processing During Election Campaigns*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006.

²² Cfr. LIPSET, Martin, ROKKAN, Stein, *Cleavage structures, party systems and voter alignments: An introduction*, Free Press, New York, 1967; LIPSET, Martin, ROKKAN, Stein, “Cleavage structures, party systems and voter alignments”, in MEIR, Peter (ed.), *The West European Party System*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1990, pp. 91-111.

²³ NAVIA, Patricio, “Participación Electoral en Chile, 1998-2001”, *Revista de Ciencia Política*, XXIV (1), 2004, pp. 81-103.

²⁴ PERIODISMO UDP-FEEDBACK, *Encuesta de Jóvenes y Participación 2009*, Available on: <http://bit.ly/9nHhDc>. 2009.

²⁵ Cfr. DALTON, Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

²⁶ PERIODISMO UDP-FEEDBACK, *op. cit.*

social aspects, and 3) political attitudes of individuals²⁷. Thus, an individual's characteristics leads to investigating the significance of his or her political participation²⁸. One of the individual characteristics in the group is social class which translates into the higher the social status of people, the more time they have to become involved in politics and to have access to information. Age and gender variables also form part of this group. Previous research shows that the older the person, the greater the levels of political participation²⁹. Additionally, it is relevant to see how social capital –defined as actions such as forming part of volunteer groups and neighbourhood organizations– can impact people's political participation³⁰. Lastly, another group of political attitudes are associated with individuals evaluating the impact of their political actions. The people's perception of the consequences that their actions can have on society is known as political efficacy³¹. Moreover, the decrease in trust in political actors can be translated into lower levels of participation, especially in electoral matters³².

2. Political participation of Chilean youth

The 1988 plebiscite –in terms of electoral participation– constitutes one of the most relevant moments in Chilean political history. At the time, 96,6% of all voting-age Chileans registered in the electoral rolls, while 89,1% cast their vote to decide whether Augusto Pinochet should continue in power³³. But, from 1988 onwards, political participation of young individuals has consistently decreased. According to figure 2, 35% of all those who registered in electoral rolls in 1988 were aged 18 to 29. However, for the last presidential election, held in December 2009, young individuals only represented 8,8% of total

²⁷ Cfr. VERBA, Sidney, NIE, Norman, *Participation in America*, Harper & Row, New York, 1972; VERBA, Sidney, *et al.*, 1978, *op. cit.*

²⁸ Cfr. DALTON, Russell, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Cfr. VERBA, Sidney, *et al.*, 1978, *op. cit.*

³⁰ Cfr. PUTNAM, Robert, *op. cit.*; VERBA, Sidney, *et al.*, 1995, *op. cit.*

³¹ Cfr. NIE, Norman, VERBA, Sidney and PETROCİK, John, *The Changing American Voter*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1979.

³² Cfr. BROMLEY, Catherine, CURTICE, John and SEYD, Ben, *Is Britain Facing a Crisis of Democracy?* UCL Constitution Unit, London, 2004.

³³ Cfr. TORO, Sergio, "De lo épico a lo cotidiano: Jóvenes y generaciones políticas en Chile", *Revista de Ciencia Política*, 28, 2008, n° 2, pp. 143-160.

voters registered in electoral rolls. That being said, young people who register in electoral rolls mainly do so between 25 and 29 years old³⁴ (Toro, 2007).

Figure 1. “Voter registration list of young individuals 18-29 years old, 1988-2009 (%)”
Source: Servel, 2009

Plebiscite 1988	34,77%
Presidential/ congressional 1989	32,16%
Presidential/ congressional 1993	27,25%
Presidential 1999	14,67%
Presidential/ congressional 2005	8,93%
Presidential/ congressional 2009	8,77%

Political disaffection among Chilean youth can be explained through many reasons, ranging from a disinterest of politics, a discontentment with the political system, to exercising the protest vote (Joignant, 1999; Toro, 2008). Other authors believe there is no convergence between the personal projects of young individuals and that of politicians and that they have little knowledge of political processes³⁵. Explanations also exist regarding the political socialization of young people and their mistrust of institutions. In the first case, Toro³⁶ concluded that the more youngsters speak about politics with their parents and/or peers, the higher the probability that they register in electoral rolls. However, the lack of trust that young individuals have of institutions is related to their political disaffection³⁷. From the standpoint of institutional

³⁴ Cfr. TORO, Sergio, “La inscripción electoral de los jóvenes en Chile: Factores de incidencia y aproximaciones al debate”, in *Modernización del régimen electoral chileno*, FONTAINE, Arturo *et al.* (eds.), PNUD, Santiago, 2007, pp. 101-122.

³⁵ Cfr. MADRID, Sebastián, “¿Políticos de ayer, apáticos de hoy? Generaciones, juventud y política en Chile”, in *Voto ciudadano: Debate sobre la inscripción electoral* FUENTES, Claudio, VILLAR, Andrés (eds.), Flacso, Santiago, 2005, pp. 45-84; DELLI, M, “Gen.com: Youth, civic engagement, and the new information environment”, *Political Communication* 17, 2000, pp. 341-349.

³⁶ Cfr. TORO, Sergio, 2007, *op. cit.*

³⁷ Cfr. TORO, Sergio, 2007, *op. cit.*; MORALES, Mauricio, *¿Qué explica la confianza en las instituciones? Chile y los resultados LAPOP*, Working paper, 2008.

design, Navia³⁸ and Saldaña³⁹ believe that the Chilean electoral system does not motivate citizen participation because of its voluntary registration and mandatory vote logic. And lastly, there are those who have also referred to the difficulties associated with the registration process in the electoral list that discourages electoral participation⁴⁰.

3. *Media consumption and political participation*

Representative democracies need the existence of a mass media system that makes public affairs, citizen demands and their opinions, known. In this context, the role of the media is to supervise the actions of governments and public institutions in order to inform citizens. This exchange of information between media and citizenry allows people to get organized and mobilized and participate in political processes⁴¹. This is how the civic commitment of citizens with public affairs is built, in other words, the interest to be a part of political and social processes that uphold the existence of modern democracies (Norris, 2000).

There are three dimensions that make up civic commitment. “Political knowledge” is the information that people have of public affairs. “Political trust” is based on what individuals believe about the role and functioning of the political system. And “political participation” refers to the activities aimed at influencing government actions and decision-making processes⁴². Mass media, by putting people into touch with public affairs, disseminate information that citizens use to understand the political scenario in which they are inserted. This way, citizens can exercise the three forms of civic commitment—simultaneously and separately—through these flows of information supplied

³⁸ Cfr. NAVIA, Patricio, *op. cit.*

³⁹ Cfr. SALDAÑA, Jorge, “Crisis en la participación electoral y debate sobre la obligatoriedad del voto en Chile”, in *El Genoma Electoral Chileno*, NAVIA, Patricio, MORALES, Mauricio, BRICEÑO, Renato (eds.), Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, Santiago, 2009, pp. 55-76.

⁴⁰ Cfr. FUENTES, Claudio, VILLAR, Andrés, *Voto ciudadano: Debate sobre la inscripción electoral*, Flasco, Santiago, 2005, pp. 45-84.

⁴¹ Cfr. KEUM, Heejo, DEVANATHAN, Narayan, DESHPANDE, Sameer, NELSON, Michelle and SHAH, Dhavan, “The Citizen-Consumer: Media Effects at the Intersection of Consumer and Civic Culture”, *Political Communication*, 21 (3), 2004, p. 369; NORRIS, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

⁴² Cfr. ALMOND, Gabriel, VERBA, Sydney, *The civic culture: political attitudes and democracy in five nations*, Sage Publications, London, 1989; NORRIS, Pippa, *op. cit.*; NORRIS, Pippa, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

by the media⁴³. For example, people usually seek information in the media on public affairs of interest to them⁴⁴.

Along with family conversations, mass media constitutes the primary source of information⁴⁵. This is how people build their political knowledge. Available evidence shows a relationship between people's political knowledge and their levels of trust in politics. However, the differences between media systems –public or private– and their resulting information flows affect people's political knowledge. Curran *et. al.*,⁴⁶ found that private media systems disseminate more information related to entertainment which means that citizens have less knowledge of national and international public affairs.

Several authors consider political disaffection to be largely due to the role of the mass media. This is known as “media malaise” or discontentment with the media. Putnam⁴⁷ believes the media –particularly television– generates negative consequences on people's social capital levels. In his opinion, the more television people watch, the less connected they are with public affairs and the less social activities they share with their peers. Likewise, but in relation to political processes, Sartori⁴⁸ also argues that the central role that the mass media acquires in politics weakens the quality of democracy and the debate of current affairs.

On the other hand, there is empiric evidence that assesses citizen's use of mass media positively. Norris⁴⁹ believes that by using media information, people reinforce their political positions. At the same time, people who turn to the media for news are those who are most interested in public affairs. The problem for democracy and the participation of citizens in associated processes is that only a few are interested in being informed⁵⁰. In this context, some authors believe that Internet has the potential to broaden the discussion on public affairs and at the same time motivate the information and participation

⁴³ ZALLER, John, *The Nature and Origin of Mass Opinion*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1992.

⁴⁴ Cfr. NORRIS, Pippa, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵ Cfr. DELLI CARPINI, Michael, KEETER, Scott, *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters?*, Yale University Press, New Heaven, 1996.

⁴⁶ Cfr. CURRAN, James, IYENGAR, Shanto, BRINK LUND, Anker and SALOVAARA-MORING, Inka, “Media System, Public Knowledge and Democracy: A Comparative Study”, *European Journal of Communication*, 24(1), 2009, pp. 5-26.

⁴⁷ Cfr. PUTNAM, Robert, *op. cit.*

⁴⁸ Cfr. SARTORI, Giovanni, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ Cfr. NORRIS, Pippa, *op. cit.*

⁵⁰ Cfr. IYENGAR, Shanto, BENNETT, Lance, “A New Era of Minimal Effects? The Changing Foundations of Political Communication”, *Journal of Communication*, 2008, 58 (4), pp. 597-789.

processes—both active and passive—of citizens in the public realm⁵¹. For example, Valenzuela, *et. al.*⁵² found that young individuals who used social network sites such as Facebook, showed higher civic commitment; in other words, they had more trust in institutions and higher rates of political participation.

Few studies analyze the multidimensionality of the concept of participation and its association with media consumption. Couldry, *et. al.*⁵³ combined the use of quantitative (national survey) and qualitative methodologies (informers' reports through the use of diaries) in the UK and found that the consumption of media—traditional and modern—contributes to stimulating civic commitment among people. Specifically, the use of mass media by youth and adults explains the interest citizens have in politics. Livingstone and Markham⁵⁴ found that the use of mass media explains the differences in civic participation in people. Media consumption has a bearing on people who vote and on their interest in politics. However, people who decide to publicly express their opinions in demonstrations show a greater consumption of television. In the case of Internet, Mesch and Coleman (2007) concluded that young individuals using this technology are not disconnected from current affairs, regardless of whether they vote or not in elections. Having said that, in Chile, previous studies show that the political predispositions of people would explain their media consumption. Regardless of the media they use to obtain information, people with more defined political positions, that identify with political parties and are registered in the electoral roll, consume more information in different media⁵⁵.

⁵¹ Cfr. DAHLGREN, Peter, *Media and Political Engagement. Citizens, Communication and Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009.

⁵² Cfr. VALENZUELA, Sebastián, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

⁵³ Cfr. COULDRY, NICK, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁴ Cfr. LIVINGSTONE, Sonia, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵ Cfr. ARRIAGADA, Arturo, SCHUSTER, Martín, "Consumo de medios, identificación con partidos políticos e ideologías y participación electoral en Chile en 2009", *Chile, 2009: percepciones y actitudes sociales*, ICSO, Universidad Diego Portales, 2010, pp. 133-143.

4. Methods and hypothesis

This study analyzes media consumption and the use of social networks in Chilean youth (as the independent variable) and their effects on political participation (dependant variable). We used data from the poll on “Participation and Youth 2009” carried out by the School of Journalism of the Universidad Diego Portales and Feedback, a public opinion and market studies agency in charge of field work. The sample was composed of 1,000 people between 18 and 29 years old, all living in the three major urban centers of Chile (Greater Santiago, Greater Concepción and Greater Valparaíso). The selection of the sample participants was probabilistic and the maximum error of estimate –with a confidence level of 95%, maximum variance and under the supposition of simple random sampling– is 3,1%. The questionnaire was applied in person, on September 10-26, 2009.

The survey questionnaire included a series of variables on political participation, media consumption, and use of social networks and social capital, which were used individually or grouped into indexes in order to answer the research questions. These variables were incorporated by taking into account the principal theoretical approaches to explain political participation and media consumption⁵⁶ (Livingstone and Markham, 2008; Valenzuela *et al.*, 2009). The indicator used to study political participation was the predisposition to vote in future elections, a variable considered as central in most studies that analyze political participation. Along with the use of variables directly extracted from the questionnaire, it was also necessary to construct indexes to measure the levels of associativity, trust in political actors, trust in all other people and the usage level of Facebook⁵⁷.

⁵⁶ Cfr. LIVINGSTONE, Sonia, *et al.*, *op. cit.*; VALENZUELA, Sebastián, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ These indices were drawn up according to the method put forth by Baranguer (BARANGUER, Denis, *Construcción y Análisis de Datos. Introducción al uso de técnicas cuantitativas en la investigación social*, Posadas, 2009, pp. 89-90), who proposes that once the items comprising an index have been chosen, the scores obtained by each respondent of the poll (of total items chosen) must be added up, and the respondents must be placed in the order of their score, from higher to lower. Then, the central 50% of this distribution is discarded and quartiles 1 and 4 are extracted (25% with the highest score and 25% with the lowest score). Once this has been done, the average score of quartiles 1 and 4 of each item is calculated and the difference between the medians of the quartiles is analyzed. If the medians of quartiles 1 and 4 have a statistically significant difference, this item can form part of the index since it has discriminatory potential.

Additionally, once the items were selected, the reliability of each one of the indices was checked by calculating Cronbach’s Alpha, a tool that measures the correlation between the items of each index (all analyses resulted in a Cronbach’s Alpha higher than 0,6).

The hypotheses we want to analyze are:

H1: News consumption through mass media –press, radio, television and Internet– is positively related with the disposition to vote among Chilean youth.

H2: Non-news consumption (entertainment) through mass media –press, radio, television and Internet– is negatively related with the disposition to vote among Chilean youth.

H3: The use of social networks (Facebook) is positively related with the disposition to vote among Chilean youth.

5. Results

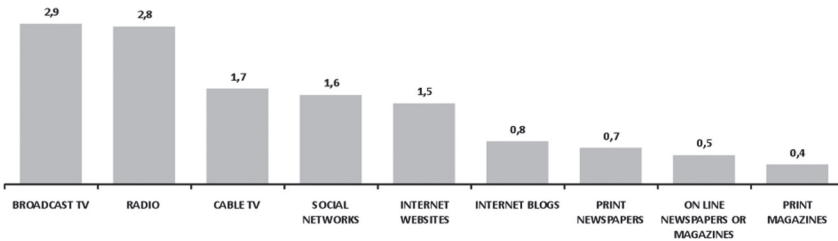
The survey shows that there is a low disposition to vote among Chilean youth in future elections. On a scale from 1 (“not willing”) to 5 (“very willing”), 43,6% answered to be “not willing” to vote in upcoming elections, while 19,4% stated to be “very willing”. Data also shows that the disposition to vote is related to the socioeconomic level of the people polled, showing that members of upper and middle-upper socioeconomic groups are most willing to go to the urns. However, significant differences between men and women are not observed, and in ethereal terms, the 25-29 year old segment shows the highest interest to vote in the future.

The interest to talk about politics with family and friends showed similar results as for the disposition to vote in the future. 40,3% stated “not willing” to exchange political opinions with their inner circle while 13,9% stated they were “very willing”. As in the case of the disposition to vote, the interest in talking about political subjects is related with socioeconomic levels (significantly higher in upper and middle-upper groups), not presenting differences between men and women and higher for the 25-29 year old segment.

With regard to mass media consumption, the survey showed that consumption of broadcast television leads preferences with 2,9 hours daily, reaching 4,6 hours if broadcast and cable television are jointly considered. This is followed by radio consumption (2,8 hours), Internet websites (1,5 hours), Internet blogs (0,8 hours) print newspapers (0,7 hours), *online* newspapers and magazines (0,5 hours).

Graph 1. Daily media consumption

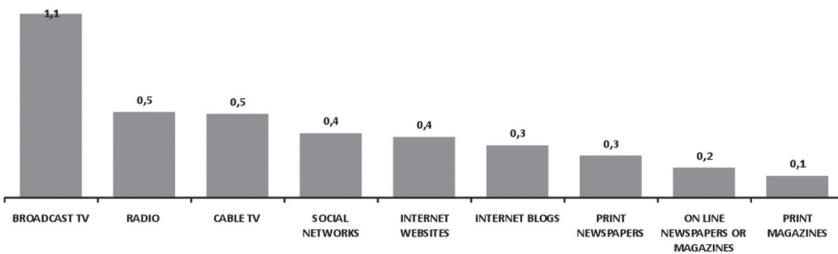
ON ANY GIVEN DAY, HOW MANY HOURS, IN AVERAGE, DO YOU DEVOTE TO THE FOLLOWING MASS MEDIA?



News consumption is also led by broadcast TV news with 1,1 hours per day (this figure increases to 1,4 hours if cable TV news is also considered). This is followed by print newspapers (0,5 hours), radio (0,5 hours), Internet websites (0,4 hours), *online* newspapers and magazines (0,4 hours) and Internet blogs (0,2 hours)

Graph 2. Daily news consumption

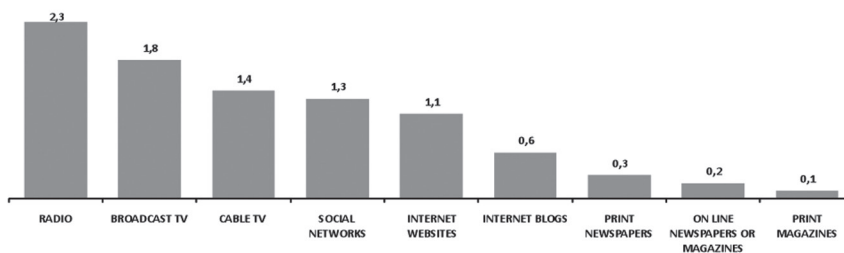
ON ANY GIVEN DAY, HOW MANY HOURS, IN AVERAGE, DO YOU WATCH OR LISTEN TO NEWS ON THE FOLLOWING MASS MEDIA?



With regard to daily consumption of entertainment, this is led by radio (2,3 hours), broadcast TV (1,8 hours) and cable TV (1,4 hours). The least consumed media for this purpose are print newspapers, *online* newspapers and magazines.

Graph 3. Daily entertainment consumption

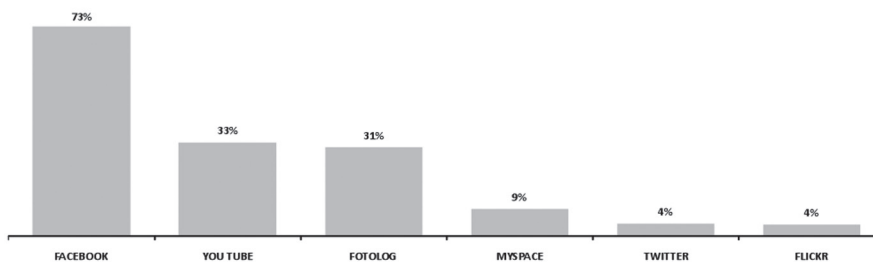
DAILY HOURS OF ENTERTAINMENT CONSUMPTION FOR EACH MASS MEDIA



The survey also measured the use of social networks. Facebook is clearly the most used network among Chilean youth where 73% of the respondents are registered, followed by YouTube (33%), Fotolog (31), My Space (9%), Twitter (4%) and Flickr (4%). Moreover, 48% of the total sample logs onto Facebook every day, with an average daily use of 2,3 hours. Because of the widespread use of Facebook among Chilean youth, it was decided to use the access to this platform to study whether there is a relationship between its use and political participation among Chilean youth.

Graph 4. Social networks use

WITH WHICH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING NETWORKS ARE YOU REGISTERED?



5.1. Analysis strategy

The three hypotheses of this study were tested through an ordinal multiple regression analysis. This regression method was selected instead of lineal regression because the dependent variables of the two models (disposition to vote and interest to talk about politics with family and friends) are ordinal qualitative variables and do not meet normal distribution requirements needed for lineal regressions.

In order to clearly identify the impact of the different types of variables under consideration, and according to the strategy of Livingstone and Markham⁵⁸, it was decided to introduce, in consecutive order, different blocks that group the explanatory factors. First of all, only demographic variables were included (gender, age, SEG –Socioeconomic Group– and area). Then social and political variables were introduced which the previous study associated with political participation (levels of associativity, trust in political actors, efficacy of individual political action and trust in other people). The use of mass media was added last.

When media consumption was added, first of all, a variable was constructed consisting of the sum of daily news consumed as reported by poll respondents through broadcast TV, cable TV, radio, newspapers, Internet websites and blogs. Secondly, a similar variable was constructed which added the daily consumption of entertainment as reported by poll respondents for the same mass media.

Finally, the use of social networks (Facebook) was included. The characteristics of the variables included in the different models used to explain the two dependent variables are shown in Table 3. The descriptive analysis of the variables and the explanation of the form in which the indexes were constructed are shown in the Appendix.

⁵⁸ LIVINGSTONE. Sonia, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

Table 1. Regression models used

Model 1: Block 1 (demographic variables)
Model 2: Block 1 (demographic variables) + Block 2 (political and social variables)
Model 3: Block 1 (demographic variables) + Block 2 (political and social variables) + + Block 3 (media consumption)
Model 4: Block 1 (demographic variables) + Block 2 (political and social variables) + + Block 3 (media consumption) + Block 4 (social network usage)

5.2. Results

H1: News consumption through mass media –press, radio, television and Internet– is positively related with the disposition to vote among Chilean youth.

The results of the ordinal regression analysis confirm this first hypothesis. As shown in Table 2, a greater number of hours of news consumption through mass media is related with an increase in the probable disposition to vote in future elections. Therefore, the analysis seems to initially validate the more optimistic positions with regard to the impact of media consumption on political participation⁵⁹.

Table 2. Ordinal regression analysis to predict disposition to vote⁶⁰

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Block 1				
Gender (Female) Male	-0,150	-0,154	-0,250	0,265
Age	0,020	0,015	0,001	0,014
City (Santiago) Valparaiso	0,107	-0,030	0,075	-0,006
Concepcion	0,294*	0,137	0,205	0,205

⁵⁹ Cfr. NORRIS, Pippa, *op. cit.*

⁶⁰ The negative coefficients of this ordinal regression model diminish the chance of an increase in the disposition to vote, while positive coefficients increase it.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
SEG (Low)	0,956***	0,731**	0,638**	0,518**
Upper				
Middle	0,548***	0,470**	0,426**	0,448**
Block 2				
Associativity		0,068	0,042	0,054
Trust in political authorities		0,949**	0,916**	0,849**
Political efficacy		0,191**	0,182**	0,179**
Trust in other people		0,523**	0,591**	0,499**
Block 3				
News consumption in media			0,076*	0,064*
Entertainment consumption in media			-0,023	-0,038*
Block 4				
Facebook use				0,971***
N	997	936	826	821
Nagelkerke Pseudo R ²	0,052	0,235	0,246	0,258

*p<0,05; **p<0,01; ***p<0,001

H2: Non-news consumption (entertainment) through mass media –press, radio, television and Internet– is negatively related with the disposition to vote among Chilean youth.

This second hypothesis is also confirmed according to the results shown by the regression model. An increase in entertainment consumption through mass media is related to a negative increase in the predisposition to vote in future elections. Unlike hypothesis 1 (H1), this result is in agreement with more critical views on the impact of mass media on political interest and participation. As entertainment consumption among youth increases, their disposition to vote in future elections decreases.

H3: The use of social networks (Facebook) is positively related with the disposition to vote among Chilean youth.

The third hypothesis is also empirically upheld. A greater frequency of Facebook use is linked to an increase in the level of political participation. In fact, the relationship between this variable and the disposition to vote in future elections is higher than the one obtained with news consumption (which has a positive relationship) and entertainment consumption (negative relationship). This becomes clear after reviewing the greater explanatory capacity of the model when the use of Facebook is incorporated, which is higher than the

increase obtained from jointly introducing the two variables of mass media consumption.

The social and political variables identified in the theoretical discussion as explanations of political participation (*Trust in Political Actors, Efficacy of Individual Political Actions, and Trust in Other People*) strongly influenced the regression models that were drawn up. In fact, this set of variables has, without any doubt, the greatest explanatory capacity on the disposition to vote. By introducing this group of variables, the explanatory power of the regression model—expressed through Nagelkerke Pseudo R^2 —moves from 0,052 to 0,235, a much higher figure than the impacts obtained by the other blocks of introduced variables (Table 2).

Finally, on analyzing sociodemographic variables, it is remarkable to see how belonging to a specific socioeconomic segment influences the disposition to vote. Forming part of the higher-income groups increases the disposition to vote in upcoming elections. Meanwhile, age and gender did not show any incidence.

6. Conclusions

The impact of media consumption on the disposition to vote and political participation has been the source of lengthy debate in the academic community, where two important positions have emerged on the subject: 1) one line of thought values the role of the mass media and suggests that, in modern democracies, these institutions help to construct civic commitment of citizenry and allows it to connect with affairs of public interest⁶¹; 2) a second, more pessimistic position states that the media has a negative impact on the social capital of the population, which finally translates into citizens who are uncommitted and far removed from the public arena⁶².

With regard to these two theoretical lines in connection with Chilean youth, this investigation shows mixed results. On the one hand, news consumption through mass media is positively related to political participation, supporting the more optimistic views on this matter. On the other hand, entertainment consumption of media is negatively linked with participation practices.

⁶¹ Cfr. NORRIS, Pippa, *op. cit.*

⁶² Cfr. PUTNAM, Robert, *op. cit.*

These results reveal the importance of separating the type of news consumption in different mass media, in order to be able to investigate the existing relationships between these practices and those related to political participation. The use of one single media –presenting both entertainment and political news– may have different consequences depending on the content that people look for, consume and exchange. Moreover, the effect of the information is probably related to its subsequent type of use and socialization by individuals.

Along with analyzing the impact of the media, the second objective of this survey was to investigate the role played by social networks in the disposition to vote and talk about politics among Chilean youth. The results show that social networks –namely the use of Facebook– are a factor to keep in mind when determining the predisposition to vote in the future. In fact, in the case of this dependent variable, this factor is more influential than any other traditional mass media available on the Internet (such as news websites or blogs). Due to the high penetration of social networks in Chile –and particularly among young people– its future potential as a form of political participation is interesting. Whether as a means of information, an area for expressing political ideas or as a tool to organize political actions, the use of Facebook is being integrated into the repertoire of political activities among young Chileans. This trend could expand with the recent approval of an automatic registration system that will incorporate 2,5 million young individuals, who are not currently registered, into the voters' registration list. The intention is not to idealize or overestimate the role of *online* social networks in political participation practices of individuals as occurred in some of the first approximations that emerged on these new technologies⁶³. This includes investigating cultural differences –in both the uses and appropriations of these technologies by youth– and their linkage with the repertoire of political activities that can be carried out. Whether as an arena for expressing political ideas or as a tool to link to public affairs, social networks such as Facebook are technologies that are somehow contributing to the formation of civic commitment among Chilean youth.

On reviewing the remainder of the variables included in the analysis, the main conclusion we can make is the great importance of political and social variables. Namely, Trust in Political Actors (Political Trust), Efficacy of Individual Political Actions (Political Efficacy) and Trust in Other People are, by far, the most important factors and have the greatest explanatory capacity of

⁶³ DEBATIN, Bernhard. "The Internet as a New Platform for Expressing Opinions and as a New Public Sphere" in DONSBACH, W. & TRAUGOTT, M. (Eds). *The Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research*. London: Sage Publications. 2008, pp. 64-73.

the model. The weight of these political and social variables in the explanation of political participation coincides with the results of Livingstone and Markham⁶⁴ (2008) for young individuals in the UK.

With regard to demographic variables, the only one that showed a relevant role was belonging to different socioeconomic groups. Among Chilean youth, belonging to the higher-income segment significantly increased the probability of casting their vote. To this we must add that lower-income youth register themselves in the electoral roll with less frequency than those from wealthier sectors. While 48,3% of ABC1-segment youth are registered in the voters' registration list, in comparison, this figure for segment D youth reaches 15,2% (UDP Journalism-Feedback, 2009).

Some of the limitations of this investigation should be explained. It must be kept in mind that, because these reports are submitted by the respondents, the consumption levels declared of media and social networks may be biased. Additionally, in the future, it may be necessary to include other forms of political participation to the measure that go beyond voting in future elections, in order to have a more accurate indicator. On the other hand, the results presented here do not attempt to establish relations of causality between media consumption and political participation levels in Chilean youth. Instead, they try to contribute in establishing differences between the role played by news –political or entertainment– as a bridge that links youth with public affairs and the possible vote in future elections.

Lastly, it is recommended that future research combine data obtained from qualitative public opinion polls to understand the motivations and political practices that young individual stimulate through media consumption and social network use. Specifically in relation to political information that is presented in an entertaining format (as for example, TV programs such as CQC or talk shows), which are subsequently disseminated through *online* social media. Furthermore, we also believe it necessary to investigate on how youth uses this information when defining their political positions and the role of *online* social media in expressing these positions.

⁶⁴ Cfr. LIVINGSTONE, Sonia, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

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APPENDIX

1. *Dependent variable:*

Disposition to vote

Using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means “Not Willing” and 5 “Very Willing”, How do you define your disposition to vote in future political elections?

(Median: 2,51; S.D.: 1,57).

2. *Independent variables:*2.1. *Demographic variables: Gender, Age, SEG and City*2.2. *Political and social variables:*

Associativity level

A counter was used to add the affirmative answers to having performed, over the last 12 months, activities in relation with the following areas: 1) social volunteer work; 2) environmental protection; 3) neighbourhood organizations; 4) student organizations; 5) unions; 6) consumer protection; 7) preservation of public areas; 8) religious groups; 9) defending sexual minorities; 10) sexual and reproduction rights.

The minimum and maximum values of the counter were 0 and 10, respectively.

Median: 1,47

S.D.: 1,74

Efficacy of individual political actions (Political Efficacy)

Using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means “Nothing” and 10 “Very Much”, How much do your actions influence the decisions taken by authorities?

Median: 3,21.

S.D.: 2,50.

Trust in Political Actors (Political Trust)

Scale considering three variables: 1) Trust in government, 2) Trust in your district’s congressmen, 3) Trust in political parties. The minimum and maximum values of the counter were 1 and 4, respectively.

Cronbach’s Alpha: 0,69.

Median: 1,76.

S.D.: 0,57.

Trust in other people

Scale considering five variables: 1) Trust in parents; 2) Trust in friends; 3) Trust in relatives; 4) Trust in work or classmates; 5) Trust in neighbours. The minimum and maximum values of the counter were 1 and 5, respectively.

Cronbach's Alpha: 0,671

Median: 2,83

S.D.: 0,53

2.3. *Variables associated to mass media:*

Daily news consumption through media

A counter was constructed that added the daily time devoted to news consumption through the following media: 1) Broadcast TV; 2) Cable TV; 3) Radio; 4) Internet websites; 5) Internet blogs; 6) Print newspapers; 7) *Online* newspapers or magazines.

Median: 3,45

S.D.: 2,42

Daily entertainment consumption through media

A counter was constructed that added the daily time devoted to entertainment consumption through the following media: 1) Broadcast TV; 2) Cable TV; 3) Radio; 4) Internet websites; 5) Internet blogs; 6) Print newspapers; 7) *Online* newspapers or magazines.

Median: 7,15

S.D.: 4,56

2.4. *Variables associated to social network use*⁶⁵:

An index was constructed taking into account three aspects connected to Facebook use: a) number of friends; 2) frequency of use; 3) number of tools used.

⁶⁵ The reference used to construct this index was the index on frequency of Facebook use suggested by Valenzuela et al (Valenzuela et al, 2008).

a) Number of friends

Number	Percentage	Number of cases
Don't have Facebook	26.9%	296
1-50	15.5%	155
51-100	13.9%	139
101-150	10.4%	104
151-200	11.6%	116
200-250	5.5%	55
251-300	7.2%	72
301-350	1.8%	18
351-400	2.3%	23
401-450	0.5%	5
451-500	2.1%	21
501 or more	2.4%	24

b) Frequency of Use

Frequency	Percentage	Number of cases
Never	24.4%	244
Once a month or less	4.2%	42
Two or three times per month	1.9%	19
Once a week	7.3%	73
At least three times per week	14.5%	145
Every day, once a day	17.1%	171
Every day, more than once a day	30.5%	305

c) Weekly use of Facebook tools (this index was constructed by adding up the tools that people state they used, with minimum and maximum values of 0 and 16, respectively)

Activity	Percentage	Number of cases
Contact friends or acquaintances	64.7%	647
Answer tests or questionnaires	40.3%	403
Create groups	15.9%	159
Join groups	44.1%	441
Upload photos	59.4%	594
Upload videos	27.4%	274
Upload links or share content	37%	370

Activity	Percentage	Number of cases
Comment on issues of your interest	50%	500
Plan parties	37.5%	375
Create or invite to events	24.1%	241
Confirm your attendance to events	40.9%	409
Organize work with classmates	29.6%	296
Chat	63.1%	631
Job search	19.7%	197
Buy or sell a product or service	9%	90
Use games	35.5%	355
Cronbach Alpha	0.60	

Facebook Use Index

Three variables described above were used to construct this indicator (number of friends, frequency of use, use of tools), which were valued between 0 and 1, and then averaged. Minimum and maximum index values were 0 and 1, respectively.

Cronbach's Alpha: 0,86

Median: 0,41

S.D.: 0,28