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# *Journal of Communication and Education*

## **Table of Contents**

### **Editorial**

Editorial 3(1)

*Allan YUEN*

Pages 3

### **Articles**

Exploring the Continued Intention in Playing Mobile Games

*Ying-Kit HO, Qian-Ning HUANG, Ming-Yin CHEUNG, Hoi-Lam LEE, Pages 4-16*

*Ying-Wai CHAN*

Rethinking the History and Defining Characteristics of Online Journalism

*Zhaoxun SONG*

Pages 17-26

An Exploration of the Relationships between Social Media, Online Civic Engagement, and Online Political Participation

*Yu-Ching KUENG and Will W. K. MA*

Pages 27-50



## Editorial

Educational technology was first formally defined by Donald Ely in 1963 as audiovisual communications. It spells out clearly that technology is about communication, and education is conceptualized as such accordingly. The audiovisual technology in the 1960s and 1970s refers to media such as photography, films, newspapers, radio, and television, all being labeled as “old media” in contrast to “new media” developed and flourished in the wake of digitalization from the 1980s onward. This issue focuses on the development of the new media. The paper “*Exploring the Continued Intention in Playing Mobile Games*” (Ho et al., 2016) presents a survey to explore the reasons why people keep on playing mobile games. “*An Exploration of the Relationships between Social Media, Online Civic Engagement, and Online Political Participation*” (Keung & Ma, 2016) aims to investigate online political participation through social media. The paper “*Rethinking the History and Defining Characteristics of Online Journalism*” (Song, 2016) identifies three major versions of online journalism history, and conceptualizes the development of online journalism as consisting of the current distinct phases: online journalism via television channels, online journalism via computers and online journalism via mobile devices.

Allan Yuen  
Editor

# Exploring the Continued Intention in Playing Mobile Games

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**Abstract:** Mobile games have become popular in recent years and people play mobile games during their spare time. This study explored the reasons why people keep on playing mobile games. The research question is: What drives people to continue to play mobile games. It was hypothesized that perceived enjoyment and subjective norms influenced people's continued intention on playing mobile games. A survey was distributed through Facebook and set up in GoogleDoc, with 200 completed valid questionnaires. The result showed that perceived enjoyment had a significant and positive relationship to continued intention of playing mobile games ( $\beta = 0.232, p < .001$ ), and subjective norms also had a positive relationship with continued intention ( $\beta = 0.462, p < .001$ ). The adjusted R-Squared value of perceived enjoyment and subjective norms to continued intention was 0.357. The implications of these findings were discussed.

**Keywords:** Mobile Games, Continued Intention, Perceived Enjoyment, Subjective Norm, Smartphone

## **1. Introduction**

In recent years, the functions of mobile phone become more diversified, and mobile game is one of the most popular functions for entertainment. Games like “Puzzle and Dragon” and “Candy Crash” could even spread as a hot issue among adults and kids, that’s why mobile game has already become a rapidly growing business. According to App Annie & IDC Portable Gaming Report, people’s expense on IOS App Store and Google Play Store are 4 times than that of gaming-optimized handhelds (Portable Gaming Spotlight, 2013). And another international full service market research and consulting firm named Newzoo released a report showing that, game revenues will increase to USD\$70.4 billion worldwide in 2013 and the market for Smartphone and Tablet games will grow 35% to USD\$12.3 billion (Global Games Market, 2013).

As the above mentioned, mobile games have shown a substantial growth in these years, players are spending more time and room on the entertaining content on Smartphones. However, we still know little about the underlying motives of the players - what factors drive people to play certain mobile games, and why they would continue to play. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the key factors that are highly related to the continued intention for players to play mobile games. The study could help to find out the reasons leading to mobile game addiction. Moreover, the developers of mobile games could also gain benefits from this study. We set the following research questions: (1) What are the factors influencing the continued intention of playing mobile games? And (2) What are the relationships between the factors?

The rest of the study was organized as follows. The next section summarized the factors affecting players’ continued intention towards playing mobile games from previous researches. Then, a model was proposed to explain how these factors affected continued intention. And the fourth section described the methodology used to collect data and its validation. The findings and testing results were reported in the fifth section, and the implication was discussed. The paper concluded by acknowledging the limitations of the study and suggesting the areas for further research.

## **2. Literature Review**

In order to answer the research question, we narrowed our focus on online game issues, their causes and effects. Therefore, we started a preliminary search on online database EBSCO Academic Search. We have reviewed over 50 journal papers by searching generic terms "online game" and "factor" or "consequence" in subject and abstract. We summarized the common factors and consequences in a table (see Appendix I). According to the above generic terms, we scanned the journals and narrowed down to those relevant to “continued intention”. As a result, we reviewed 13 journals as shown in References.

We used Continued Intention as dependent variable while Perceived Enjoyment and Subjective Norm were independent variables.

### *2.1 Continued Intention*

A study described that “game developers tried to increase the duration of online game playing time by making a new online game using new techniques” (Choi & Kim, 2004, p.12). The research studied the topic of continued intention to play online games. In fact, mobile phone has widely spread and linked the world up, greatly enhanced interaction between people. As the market of online game grows mature, players have to pay for certain games. So the new trend is that, more people start to use their mobile devices as tools for playing games instead of computers.

The previous study confirmed techniques or high quality image was a determinant to continued intention of a gamer to play games. However, some studies found that continued intention to play games was highly related to gamers’ personal characteristics and psychological factors. For instance, a study found that customers viewed online games as innovative IT services on the Internet (Ha, Yoon, & Choi,

2007). Another study described that “the IT use literature, based primarily on attitude theories from social psychology, is relevant to understanding people’s behavior related to online games” (Lee & Tsai, 2010, p.605).

This study examined the continued intention (dependent variable) to play mobile games, which is an example of innovative IT services connecting with social system and personal characteristics. We expect that continued intention is a necessary element to explain the cause of game addiction, and to create a new environment for game developers.

## *2.2 Perceived Enjoyment*

Mobile game players indulge in the games because they can perceive enjoyment and then lead to continued intention. Perceived enjoyment is a relatively important driving factor to online games (Shin, 2010). Therefore, we would try to find out if it could apply on mobile games as well. Providing enjoyment to players is the goal of every game. If players do not enjoy the game, they will not play the game (Sweetser & Wyeth, 2005).

According to Shin’s study (2010), “perceived enjoyment is similar to playability, which is used in popular games criticism to indicate the extent to which a certain game has the capability to provide enjoyment for a player over an extended period.” Perceiving enjoyment is a significant factor that positively affects the intention of players and it facilitates player’s attitude (Shin, 2010). The greater enjoyment the players received, the greater interests for them to continue to play (Smyth, 2007). People feel safe when things are under control and they try to avoid situations with the domination of other forces.

By playing games, people are able to achieve the goal all by themselves. They can perceive enjoyment from getting everything under control in games which makes them feel satisfy (Klimmt, Hartmann, & Frey, 2007). When people feel satisfied, they would probably play it more often.

## *2.3 Subjective Norm*

A study had pointed out that, teenagers’ personality and self-esteem factors significantly predicted the level of addictive tendency (Wilson, Fornasier, & White, 2010). Several researchers also found that the social influence of people was an important factor to continued intention (Brown & Venkatesh, 2005; Hsu & Lu, 2007; Lin & Chiang, 2013). According to previous researches, subjective norm is one of the significant factors affecting users’ intention (Shin, 2010).

Subjective norm refers to an influential person’s support or objection to behaviors that affect a person’s cognition (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p.16). A study by Shin (2010), investigated the perceived factors contributing to the adopted behaviors on playing Multiplayer Online Role-Playing games (MMORPG).

Shin modified the technology acceptance model with perceived experience on games and social norm. It is suggested that people desire to gain acceptance in peer groups and the Multiplayer game community. According to Shin’s hypothesis, subjective norm positively related to users’ behavioral intention and loyalty to play MMORPG. Results were analyzed from 312 web questionnaires, proving the positive relationship of subjective norm to MMORPG-playing intention and loyalty.

Subjective Norm is more significant than loyalty to the players’ intention. Findings also stated the stronger impact of subjective norm on MMORPG players than other online-application players. Recent studies (e.g., Shin, 2010; Lee & Tsai, 2010), mainly focused on the online games platform, so we considered the era of mobile phone games.

### 3. Hypotheses & Model Development

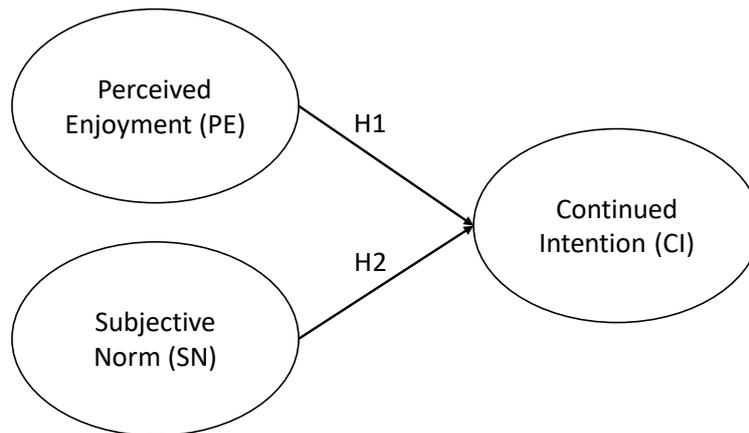


Figure 1. Model Framework

We proposed the above model about Continued Intention (CI) with two factors: Perceived Enjoyment (PE) and Subjective Norm (SN).

#### 3.1 Perceived Enjoyment and Continued Intention

Perceived enjoyment refers to an individual's judgment on whether the game is enjoyable or not. If they find it interesting, they would be more willing to play and tend to play the mobile game continuously, and vice versa.

Therefore, we would test whether perceived enjoyment has a positive effect on mobile game players' continued intention to play the game or not. This led to the following hypothesis:

H1: Perceived enjoyment is positively related to players' continued intention toward playing mobile games.

#### 3.2 Subjective Norm and Continued Intention

Previous findings showed that, the subjective norm is positively related to games playing intention (Hsu & Lu, 2007; Lin & Chiang, 2013; Shin, 2010). As mobile phones are now the common devices for people to communicate with others, we expected that social bonding was getting more significant to the factors affecting people's view on playing mobile games. The opinion of important people will project to their intention to play certain games continuously. Therefore, we proposed that:

H2: Subjective norm of a mobile game player is positively related to his/her continued intention toward mobile games.

### 4. Methodology

#### 4.1 Background

In this study, the subjects were people who play mobile games using their electronic devices, such as Smartphones and tablets. They answered a set of questions about their experiences on the mobile games they have played recently. We collected 217 questionnaires and analyzed 200 completed questionnaires. According to Comrey (1988), the sample size of 200 is adequate in most cases of ordinary factor analysis that involve no more than 40 items.

## 4.2 Subjects

A survey instrument was distributed to web users. We sent out 1348 invitation through Facebook and collected 217 questionnaires, with a response rate 16.10%. Removed with extreme cases and outliers, we analyzed 200 completed questionnaires. The questionnaire was distributed and collected in the second and third week of November 2013.

## 4.3 Measurement Items

This study measured two constructs: Perceived Enjoyment (PE) and Subjective Norm (SN). We adapted these measuring items from an exploratory research (Lee & Tsai, 2010) and modified it in the topic of mobile games. We also traced the source and adapted measuring items: three items for continued intentions (Hsu & Lu, 2004), five items for subjective norms (Hsu & Lu, 2004; Lin & Lu, 2011), and five items for perceived enjoyment (Heijden, 2004; Nysveen, Pedersen, Thorbjornsen, & Berthon, 2005).

We used GoogleDoc to deliver the online questionnaire (see Appendix II). Each item was measured on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

## 4.4 Data Collection

Questionnaires were collected through GoogleDoc which contained 3 web pages. Data were collected from November 11 to November 26 in 2013. All the data were inputted into SPSS for further analysis.

# 5. Findings

## 5.1 Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics of Respondents*

<b>Items</b>	<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>
Gender	Male: 106 (53%); Female: 94 (47%)
Age (13 – 51)	<i>M (SD)</i> : 22.09 (5.527)
Education Level	Secondary School: 25(12.5%); Higher Education: 175 (87.5%)

(*N*=200)

The sample included 106 male (53%) and 94 female (47%), comparable to the population ratio of gender. All of the respondents finished the whole questionnaire.

Most of the respondents were in their 20s: 25 respondents were between 13 and 19 (12.5%); 160 respondents were between 20 and 29 (80%); 15 respondents were 30 or above (7.5%). Furthermore, 175 of respondents (80%) received higher education, while 25 respondents received secondary school education (12.5%).

### 5.2 Descriptive Analysis of Variables

Table 2  
Descriptive Statistics of Constructs

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronbach's alpha
Continued Intention			0.904
CI1	4.46	1.507	
CI2	4.03	1.638	
CI3	3.64	1.608	
Subjective Norms			0.888
SN1	3.34	1.525	
SN2	3.61	1.750	
SN3	3.55	1.482	
SN4	3.51	1.595	
SN5	3.47	1.441	
Perceived Enjoyment			0.904
PE1	4.78	1.286	
PE2	4.96	1.204	
PE3	4.52	1.421	
PE4	4.65	1.256	
PE5	4.99	1.228	

CI had three items with means from 3.64 to 4.46 and SD from 1.507 to 1.638. SN had five items with means from 3.34 to 3.61 and SD from 1.441 to 1.750. And PE had five items with means from 4.52 to 4.99 and SD from 1.204 to 1.421.

### 5.3 Instrument Validation

Internal consistency was tested by reliability Cronbach's alpha value where values greater than 0.7 is considered reliable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1974). The alpha values for CI, SN and PE were 0.904, 0.888 and 0.904 respectively. It showed that all the constructs were reliable and internal consistent.

Table 3  
Factor Analysis

	Component		
	1	2	3
CI1	.351	.089	<b>.847</b>
CI2	.234	.217	<b>.878</b>
CI3	.243	.292	<b>.823</b>
SN1	.117	<b>.802</b>	.153
SN2	.141	<b>.770</b>	.161
SN3	.160	<b>.861</b>	.182
SN4	.143	<b>.858</b>	.118
SN5	.249	<b>.730</b>	.088
PE1	<b>.826</b>	.145	.215
PE2	<b>.844</b>	.108	.289
PE3	<b>.800</b>	.225	.135
PE4	<b>.789</b>	.186	.130
PE5	<b>.767</b>	.199	.314

Eigen Values	<b>6.248</b>	<b>2.163</b>	<b>1.292</b>
% of Variance	<b>48.07%</b>	<b>16.64%</b>	<b>9.94%</b>

Three components were extracted by principal components, Varimax rotation factor analysis. The Eigen Values were 6.248, 2.163 and 1.292 where the percentage of total variance explained was 74.65%.

The constructs exhibited convergent validity as all the factor loadings were significant (>0.7, Hair et al., 2010). The constructs were all distinct without any significant cross-loadings, exhibited discriminant validity.

Therefore, the instrument was both reliable and valid. Summed mean scores was computed for each construct and for regression analysis of their relationship test.

#### 5.4 Model & Hypotheses Testing

We used a linear multiple regression to analyze the model and to test the relationships of two hypotheses H1 and H2.

Table 4  
Regression Model Summary

Model Summary				ANOVA	
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
.598	.357	.351	1.17023	54.762	.000

The overall model was found significant ( $p < .001$ ) and the R-Squared values showed that Perceived Enjoyment (PE) and Subjective Norm (SN) explained 35.7% of the variance in Continued Intention (CI).

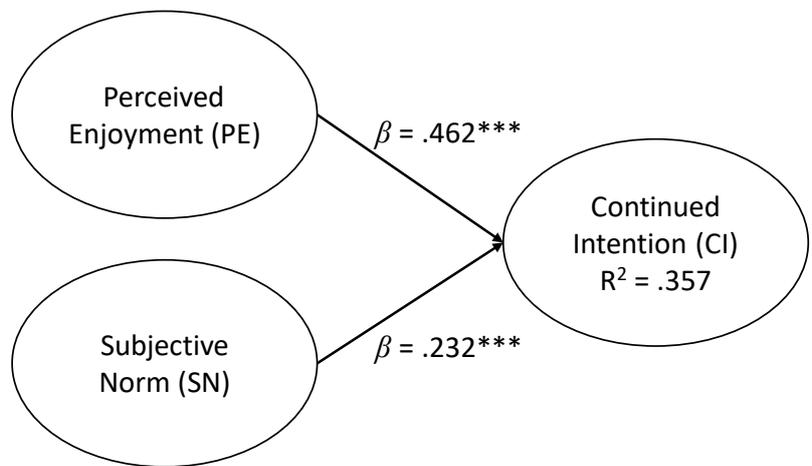
Table 5  
Hypotheses Testing Results

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.194	.381		0.511	.610
SN	.259	.070	.232	3.676	.000
PE	.616	.084	.462	7.337	.000

The coefficient table of the regression analysis showed that:

Subjective Norm was found to be significant and positively related to Continued Intention ( $\beta = 0.232, p < .001$ ). For every standardized unit of Subjective Norm increased, Continued Intention would increase by 0.232 standardized units.

Perceived Enjoyment was found to be significant and positively related to Continued Intention ( $\beta = 0.462, p < .001$ ). For every standardized unit of Perceived Enjoyment increased, Continued Intention would increase by 0.462 standardized units.



(\*\*\*  $p < .001$ )

Figure 2. Model of Test Results and Path Coefficients

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1 Perceived Enjoyment and Continued Intention

Perceived enjoyment had a direct and significant relationship with continued intention. This result supported hypothesis (H1). Consistent with previous studies (Smyth, 2007; Sweetser & Wyeth, 2005), people tend to continue playing games if they feel interested. Individuals will engage in a particular activity if they are feeling fun and enjoyable.

The enjoyable and memorable experience of a player gains from playing games or IT facilities will motivate him or her to continue to play next time. By playing mobile games, players feel satisfied through getting higher scores and passing levels. They feel challenging and are encouraged to perform better in the games.

Previous studies also had shown that perceived enjoyment was the significant factor of a player's continued intention of playing online games or video games (Klimmt, Hartmann, & Frey, 2007; Shin, 2010). Yet, due to the rapid development of mobile phones, we found that perceived enjoyment could be gained from mobile devices and perceived enjoyment had direct effect on facilitating players' intention to continue playing mobile games.

### 6.2 Subjective Norm and Continued Intention

Subjective Norm had a direct and significant relationship with Continued Intention, which supported hypothesis (H2). These subjective norms are influenced by players' social bonding and acceptance of peer groups, which means that individuals' behavior is affected by the people who they think are important to them. Previous research found that personal interaction between players and online games affects players' attitudes toward online games (Lin & Chiang, 2013). Our study found that this result could be applied to mobile games as well.

People are developing more connections through social media and mobile phones currently, which provide peer groups a platform. We also found that the peer's attitude was important and highly related to a player's willingness to continue playing a mobile game. A good feedback from a player's important people was a motivation for him or her to continue to play the games.

Previous studies found that subjective norm usually less significant than perceived enjoyment on continued intention on playing online games (Lee & Tsai, 2010; Shin, 2010), this study proved that

subjective norms (Beta =0.232,  $p < .001$ ) is still less significant than perceived enjoyment (Beta =0.462,  $p < .001$ ) on motivating the players continue to play mobile games.

### *6.3 Continued Intention*

There are many other factors affecting the Continued Intention of playing mobile games which have not been included in this study; for example, attitude towards playing games and flow experience. Previous study mentioned that, new techniques added in mobile games could prolong the duration of playing time (Choi & Kim, 2004).

Continued Intention of players should also be connected to the adoption of game developers. Further research could explore how the factors affect and benefit the industry of mobile games.

### *6.4 Theoretical Contribution*

As the previous studies mainly focused on the continued intention of playing online games, we extended the platform towards mobile games in this study, and the result proved that both factors (Perceived Enjoyment and Subjective Norm) are still applicable on mobile games.

### *6.5 Practical Contribution*

Mobile phone nowadays includes lots of functions, just like a tiny portable computer. It is convenient and it becomes more popular to play mobile games. Therefore, this study could benefit mobile game developers on the design strategies. As this study found a significant relationship between perceived enjoyment and continued intention to play mobile games, we suggest the game developers to focus the game design on enhancing players' enjoyment, for example, by rewards and missions.

Beside the perceived enjoyment of players, our study also found subjective norm significant to players' continued playing intention. People who are important to the players also affected the continued intention of playing mobile games. Game developers could consider the peer influence and games trend among players while promoting and designing games. The potential of developing cooperation and interaction games could be further studied in mobile game industry.

### *6.6 Limitations and Further Studies*

There were a few limitations in this study. First, our research results were mainly obtained from the people in Hong Kong. The results could not be generalized to a wider domain. Second, we used Facebook as a platform to send out our questionnaires and collected the results in the same way, which might miss some mobile game players who are inactive on social media. Third, the proposed model was based only on two constructs. There might be other key factors but not studied here.

We could further extend the method of data collection in order to reach respondents more comprehensively, including those inactive users on social platform. In addition, there are other factors or determinants that could be related to continued intention of playing mobile games. Further studies could extend our model to other constructs and examine the factors of attitude and flow experience.

At the same time, people connect with each other through social networking websites and instant message applications this day and age. Hence, many mobile games designers include friends interact function, such as giving lives and providing platforms for sharing tips, in order to make them enjoyable. We cannot ignore the interactivity between players and friends though we did not measure the effectiveness of interactivity in this study. To modify the study comprehensively, it should be included.

Another limitation refers to the cross-sectional nature of the study. The relationship between the variables is examined, but no causal relationship can be proved in this study. Further studies could

investigate any existence of causal relationship between perceived enjoyment, subjective norm and continued intention.

The other limitation is that this is a cross-sectional study and thus no causal relationship between the variables can be established.

This study was in initial stage. Though we found out that there was positive relationship between perceived enjoyment and continued intention of playing mobile games ( $\beta = 0.232, p < .001$ ), the beta value was lower than the standard coefficient. We will improve the limitations in further study.

## **7. Conclusion**

This study examined two constructs: Perceived Enjoyment (PE) and Subjective Norm (SN) to explain how the continued intention of playing mobile games can be motivated by the players' perceived enjoyment and their social interactions in the peer groups. The results showed that Perceived Enjoyment and Subjective Norm were key factors leading players to continue playing mobile games. This study provides a concrete model with empirical evidence to support further studies of this phenomenon.

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**Appendix**

Appendix I. Summary Table for Literature Review

<b>Arthur, Year</b>	<b>Factor</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Platform</b>
Brown & Venkatesh, 2005		Continued Intention of playing game	computer use in household
Choi & Kim, 2004	Experience of enjoyment		Korean online games
Klimmt, Hartmann, , & Frey, 2007		Enjoyment of playing game	a java applet video game programmed by Remi Faitout
Shin, 2010	Perceived enjoyment, Subjective norm enjoyment, Perceived security, Attitude, Flow, Subjective norm,	Continued Intention of playing game	Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games
Ha, Yoon, & Choi, 2007	Perceived enjoyment		Mobile Broadband Wireless Access technology-based (MBWA) games
Smyth, 2007	Enjoyment on playing	Continued Intention of playing game	MMORPG, Computer, Arcade, Console
Lin, & Chiang, 2013	Perceived playfulness, Subjective norm	Intention to use online games	Online game
Hsu, & Lu, 2007	Perceived enjoyment, Social norms		Online game
Lee, & Tsai, 2010	Perceived enjoyment, Subjective norm	Continued intention to play online games	Online games
Sweetser, & Wyeth, 2005	Player enjoyment		Computer games

Appendix II. Measurement Items Used in the Study

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**Constructs (Sources) – Measurement Items**

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**Continued intentions (CI): (Hsu & Lu, 2004)**

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- CI1: I intend to continue playing [X] in the future.  
CI2: I will keep playing [X] as regularly as I do now.  
CI3: I will continue playing [X] as much as possible in the future.

**Subjective norm (SN): (Hsu & Lu, 2004); (Lin & Lu, 2011)**

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- SN1: My friends think that I should play [X].  
SN2: I engage in a high level of interaction with other [X] players.  
SN3: People important to me supported my playing with [X]  
SN4: People who influence my behavior wanted me to play [X] instead of others  
SN5: Most people who are important to me would think that playing [X] is a wise idea.

**Perceived enjoyment (PE): (Heijden , 2004; Nysveen, Pedersen, Thorbjornsen, & Berthon, 2005)**

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- PE1: Playing [X] provide me with a lot of enjoyment.  
PE2: The process of playing [X] is enjoyable.  
PE3: I enjoyed using [X] because it makes me excited.  
PE4: While playing [X], I experience pleasure.  
PE5: Overall, I believe that [X] is playful
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*Note.* [X]: Refers to any mobile games that the respondents played most and listed

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# Rethinking the History and Defining Characteristics of Online Journalism

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**Abstract:** Literature on online journalism abounds but some very basic questions such as the history, the definition, and the defining characteristics of online journalism are underexplored. This paper identifies three major versions of online journalism history in the academia: the 1969 version, the 1993 version, and the 1952 version. It conceptualizes the development of online journalism as consisting of the current distinct phases: online journalism via television channels, online journalism via computers and online journalism via mobile devices. The definition of online journalism and its defining characteristics are addressed accordingly to distinguish online journalism from traditional journalism. It also documents and verifies a series of important historical events in the course of online journalism development, which enriches the pool of knowledge and informs online journalism education.

**Keywords:** Online journalism, History, Characteristics, Development phases

## 1. Introduction

Online journalism came into being only in the 20th century as the product of the technology of digitization and internet. But the development of various forms of online journalism is so fast and fascinating that the world pays more and more attention to its rich applications, great potentials and revolutionary impacts on our society. Many professionals and scholars have devoted a lot of their time and energy into the research of online journalism, as evidenced by the large number of books and papers published so far in this discipline. But some basic questions of online journalism are underexplored and need rethinking about. Online journalism is a very new but very fast-evolving branch of journalism, with academic research about the subject lagging far behind (Kopper et al., 2000). Take the historical starting point of online journalism as an example, a literature review finds very few journal papers and book chapters dealing with the history of online journalism. Even among the scholars who have touched the topic, some claim that online journalism was born in the 1950s; some claim in the 1960s, others say in the 1970s and still others insist the 1990s. There is only a short history of online journalism, but there is still no consensus on when the online journalism started.

As the history of a discipline is the most essential ingredients of the discipline's basic knowledge, this paper, based on a thorough literature review, attempts to identify the most rational version of online journalism history, to trace its historical development, to come up with a synthesized definition of the term, and to summarize its defining characteristics. This paper is, in nature, a literature review of the major versions of history, definitions, and distinguishing characteristics of online journalism but with necessary criticism of the data under review. The literature includes but not limited to academic journal papers, book chapters, articles and historical records in the professional websites. The method of review, interpretation, and analysis of the extant literature is, to some extent, flexible and open because

the purpose of this study is to examine the meaning and value of the literature on online journalism. However, such literature review requires the researcher to “enter into an in depth learning process, to become intimately involved in data collection, and to be a critical editor of texts” (Law et al., 1998).

## **2. The history of online journalism**

Literature on the history of online journalism has been found in very few academic journal papers, but a number of relevant book chapters and lots of journalism and communication websites do attempt to address the topic. However, different people raise different ideas about online journalism and no consensus has been reached on the historical starting point of online journalism.

Based on the thorough review, summary and synthesis of the existing literature concerning online journalism history, three major versions of the birth of online journalism are identified: the 1969 version, the 1993 version and the 1952 version.

### *2.1 The 1969 version*

The first version of online journalism history is the 1969 version. Scholars regard 1969 as the birth year of online journalism because of the two important events: the operation of Arpanet and the founding of CompuServe Information Service in Columbus, Ohio. Arpanet is the forerunner of today's Internet which was to have a revolutionary impact on traditional journalism later. CompuServe Information Service is one of the first consumer online services in the USA whose computer time-sharing service played an important role in the development of online communication.

There are three prominent figures in support of this version: David Shedden, David Carlson, and Christopher Harper.

David Shedden is Library Director of the Poynter Institute's Eugene Patterson Library. He compiled the *New Media Timeline* (<http://www.poynter.org/uncategorized/28684/new-media-timeline-1969/>), which looks at the history of new media and online journalism from 1969 to the present, presented in two parts with parallel sections on “Technology/Services/Social” and “The Media”. The timeline is authoritative and widely cited because it helps preserve the history of new media and online journalism as well as serves as a very useful reference tool for journalists, students, and researchers.

Professor Christopher Harper is author of *And That's the Way It Will Be News and Information in a Digital World* in which he includes *News and Information on the Internet: A Short History* as one of the appendixes at the end of the book, listing 1969 as the birth year of online journalism.

Professor David Carlson is author of the book chapter *The History of Online Journalism in Digital Journalism: Emerging Media and the Changing Horizons of Journalism* edited by Kawamoto. This book chapter documents a lot of important historical facts about online journalism history and is widely cited in academia. Although he clearly claims that “the roots of online journalism lie in 1970” (Carlson, 2003, p31) because he regards Teletext as the beginning of online journalism, Carlson later advanced the timeline of online journalism to the 1960s in *The Online Timeline: A capsule history of online news and information systems* (<http://iml.jou.ufl.edu/carlson/timeline.shtml>), which is also regarded as authoritative and featured in the *Nieman Reports* from Harvard University.

### *2.2 The 1993 Version*

Scholars in support of this version claim the year 1993 should be regarded as the real beginning of online journalism marked by two important events: the release of the beta version of web browser Mosaic and the first journalism website on the internet. The British journalism website (<http://www.journalism.co.uk>) makes the online journalism timeline (<http://www.journalism.co.uk/features/story1753.shtml>), listing the year 1993 as the beginning of

online journalism marked by the invention of Mosaic and the launch of what is believed to be the first journalism site on the internet by the University of Florida's journalism school (Meek, 2006).

Mark Glaser, Vincent Campbell and Mark Deuze are the 1993 version advocates and supporters. Mark Glaser, in his article *Online News Pioneers See Lots of Changes in the First 10 Years* on Online Journalism Review (ORJ), claims that news started being produced for the World Wide Web only in late 1993 with the release of Mosaic as the starting point (Glaser, 2003). Vincent Campbell declares that "it wasn't until the emergence of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s that online journalism was really viable" (Campbell, 2004, p250). In his research paper *Online Journalism: Modeling the First Generation of News Media on the World Wide Web on First Monday*, Professor Mark Deuze theorizes the impacts the global system of networked computers has had on journalism and regards the period starting from 1993 to 2001 as the first generation of news media on the World Wide Web (Deuze, 2001).

### 2.3 *The 1952 version*

Computer-assisted reporting (CAR) is the use of computer to gather and analyze the data necessary to write news stories. Reporters in the newsroom today are becoming more involved in computer-assisted reporting and online news research than ever before. But is computer-assisted reporting part of online journalism? The answer from most scholars and professors is yes.

In the article *Online Journalism: A Report on Current and Continuing Research and Major Questions in the International Discussion*, Gerd G. Kopper and other two scholars (2000) from The University of Dortmund, Germany, clearly claim that online journalism includes such elements as electronic databank research and computer assisted reporting, although its major emphasis is on the uses of the Internet as a means of communication, as a platform for journalistic endeavours and challenges and as a sea of information.

The online journalism majors in many schools of journalism and communication include Computer Assisted Reporting in their programme curriculum. For example, the E.W. Scripps School at Ohio University offers such specific courses as "Fundamentals of Online Journalism," "Legal Issues of Online Journalism," and "Computer Assisted Reporting" for online journalism major (see Undergraduate Catalog Archive, 2004-05). The module *Computer Assisted Reporting* offered by the Department of Journalism Studies at the University of Sheffield aims to give students the background knowledge and basic technical skills needed to work in online journalism (see JNL308 Web Journalism, 2013).

If computer-assisted reporting is considered as one essential skill or element in online journalism, the history of online journalism should date back to the first time that computers were introduced to the newsroom. Then we can find the very accurate record of the first actual instance of computer-assisting reporting:

*"On election night, November 4, CBS News borrowed a UNIVAC to make a scientific prediction of the outcome of the race for the presidency between Dwight D. Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson. The opinion polls predicted a landslide in favor of Stevenson, but the UNIVAC's analysis of early returns showed a clear victory for Eisenhower. Its sharp divergence from public opinion made newscasters Walter Cronkite and Charles Collingwood question the validity of the computer's forecast, so they postponed announcing UNIVAC's prediction until very late." (see Timeline of Computer History, Computer History Museum, 2013)*

We have synthesized the three versions of online journalism history: the 1969 version, the 1993 version and the 1952 version. Although each version has its own rationale, this paper holds that the historical starting point of online journalism is the time when computers were first introduced into newsrooms to assist journalists in their reporting. So November 4, 1952 should be considered the great day for online journalism because it signaled the start of a brand new era of journalism: online journalism.

### **3. The development phases of online journalism**

Some scholars have contributed to the studying of online journalism by tracing the different stages of its historical development (Carlson, 2003; Pavlik, 1997; Pryor, 2002, etc.). The development phases or stages are differentiated by the distinctive characteristics of online news contents, degree of audience participation, immediacy of news delivery, etc. This paper approaches this same issue from a different perspective: dividing the development of online journalism into different distinct phases according to its communication channels.

#### *3.1 The first phase: online journalism via television sets*

When the internet was born in 1969, few people had imagined that every member of our society would have computers. So the inventors of online journalism used computers to create and store the information but expected people to view the information on television sets, not computers. Teletext is the first type of online journalism that transmits text and numbers for display on a television screen (Carlson, 2003). The invention was patented by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 1971. The information was displayed on television sets through the use of special decoder boxes that either sat on top of the set or built-in chips in order to capture and display the teletext information. On 23 September, 1974, BBC started Ceefax, phonetic for "See Facts" with thirty pages of information (see BBC Archive, 2013). The system became the first teletext service in the world and still runs regularly filling BBC Two's overnight schedule as *Pages from Ceefax*. On 18 April 2012, Britons said farewell to Ceefax after analogue TV signals were switched off across almost the entire country and the world's first teletext service is now only fully available in two regions following latest big digital switchover (Gavaghan, 2012).

Teletext provides useful instant sources of news to customers but the news and information must be very brief to fit on teletext pages and the pages came up very slowly and changed very slowly, which made many people lose patience (Carlson, 2003). In spite of its limitations, teletext was a huge technical advance because it was one of the earliest deliveries of digital information to the home (see BBC Archive, 2013).

Very soon after the invention of teletext, another type of online journalism, Prestel, was created by the British Post Office, whose commercial launch was in early 1979 (Carlson, 2003). It is the world first videotex system: an interactive, computer-based system that electronically delivers text, numbers, and graphics for display on a television set hooked to a dedicated terminal to receive information from a remote database via a telephone line. British newspapers, such as *Financial Times* and *Post and Echo*, began to offer news stories online through Prestel.

Videotex was soon offered in many other countries, for example, France, the United States, Germany, etc. But the technology became "an expensive failure" (Carlson, 2003, p.37) because the services were not only too expensive to attract significant numbers of consumers but also tied up the television set and the telephone.

#### *3.2 The second phase: online journalism via computers*

The attempts at delivering online newspapers through television were unsatisfactory. American news media organizations began to focus their eyes on the first generation personal computer users in the early 1980s because there were more than 5 million office and home computers by then (Lin, 2005). Consumer online services were designed from the very beginning to be delivered to home computers, which ushered in another important phase of online journalism: online journalism via computers. The big three leaders in providing online services were Prodigy, CompuServe and America Online (AOL).

Columbus-based CompuServe drove the initial emergence of the online service industry in 1969. It is credited with publishing the first newspaper online in the United States. On July 1, 1980, the *Columbus Dispatch* began transmitting a twice-daily "newspaper" through the CompuServe service and the news

flew into home computers. By the next year, *The Dispatch* and 10 other newspapers and the Associated Press made their news stories available to about 10,000 home-computer subscribers of CompuServe (Feran, 2009).

The Tribune Company of Chicago offered Chicago Online in May 1992 and it was the first newspaper service on America Online (Carlson, 2003). Chicago Online included content from all of its Chicago media properties, including radio, television, and its flagship newspaper, the *Chicago Tribune*. The *San Jose Mercury News*, *Time Magazine*, the *New York Times* and others followed with AOL services.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution launched *Access Atlanta*, a local news and information service, on March 13, 1994 and became the first newspaper on the Prodigy Internet service. *Access Atlanta* concentrated on highly local information, allowing subscribers to check on recent home sales or access neighborhood crime reports and photos. Later, other newspapers including *Newsweek*, *Consumer Reports* and *Palm Beach Post* went with Prodigy.

However, some news organizations were not satisfied with providing news and information services through the online services. They were searching for ways to deliver their own online newspapers. The invention of Bulletin Board System in 1978 rushed in another wave of online journalism. A Bulletin Board System, or BBS, is a computer system that allows users to connect and log in to the system using a terminal program. Once logged in, a user can perform functions such as uploading and downloading software and data, reading news and bulletins, and exchanging messages with other users, either through email, public message boards, or sometimes via direct chatting.

The pioneer of BBSs run by newspapers was *The Electronic Trib (E-Trib)*, a service launched on December 13, 1990 by *The Albuquerque Tribune* in New Mexico. The most important features of *E-Trib* include providing free access for thirty minutes a day, offering online database of public records, holding chat sessions with newsmakers, public officials and editors, etc. At least thirty US newspapers launched computer BBSs between 1990 and 1994 (Carlson, 2003).

On 12 November 1990, a revolution took place that changed the way we communicate today: the World Wide Web, which was created when Tim Berners-Lee developed the computer language that enabled users to navigate by simply clicking on underlined words called links. But the Web remained in text-only form until February 16, 1993 when Mosaic, the first graphic web browser, was released by the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) at the University of Illinois. Online journalism then had many firsts: the first journalism site on the web was launched in November 1993 at the University of Florida; and on January 19, 1994, the *Palo Alto Weekly* in California became the first newspaper to publish regularly on the web (Carlson, 2006); and on March 1, 1994, *The News & Observer* created *NandO.net* and began publishing the *NandO Times* electronic newspaper, which “evolved into the first serious, professional news site on the World Wide Web” (Yelvington, 2005). Other newspapers were quick to notice and were moving to the web.

### *3.3 The third phase: online journalism via mobile devices*

Traditionally, a live broadcast at a breaking news scene involves a lot of time and money. A very expensive outside broadcast truck, a crew of at least two, tripods, broadcast cameras or cables are needed. But now, with a connected mobile phone, journalists can broadcast live video within seconds at a fraction of the cost. On 17 February 2004, *The New York Times* published a photograph taken with a mobile phone for the first time on page one, which marked a milestone in the use of the mobile phone for newsgathering (Quinn, 2009). On 20 August 2009, television reporter Jeremy Jojola used a mobile phone and free web-based software to file a live report for KOB-TV in Albuquerque, New Mexico (Quinn, 2009).

Smartphones today are, in fact, powerful mini-computers. Mobile users can send text, emails or instant messages, take pictures, record or watch video, listen to music, play games, look for directions and search for locations, etc, in addition to making voice phone calls. The news organizations came to realize the increasing importance and popularity of delivering the products of journalism via mobile

devices as more users have smartphones. As a result, mobile journalists came into being. A mobile journalist, often abbreviated as *mojo*, uses a mobile phone to gather and distribute news (Quinn 2009).

Mobile technology is becoming an essential part of the professional journalist's tool-kit and mobile devices such as smart-phones, iPad and other personal digital assistant (PDA) gadgets are changing the landscape of journalism. Innovative news organizations such as Reuters in London headquarters equip their journalists with a mobile journalism toolkit to deliver images, videos, and texts to the web.

### *3.4 The fourth phase: still on the way*

New information and communication technologies are emerging and changing the ecosystems of journalism. For example, robots have been crunching data and writing stories with a cold, metallic tone for the last few years (South China Morning Post, 2015). Chinese social media giant Tencent published its first business report written by a robot in September, 2015. The flawless 916-word article was completed in just one minute by Dreamwriter, a Tencent-designed robot journalist that apparently has few problems covering basic financial news. Robo-journalism attracts a lot of coverage nowadays. However, the robot can only write hard news but not in-depth or feature stories. Media professionals don't think that the robot can take place of human journalists.

Some news organizations are offering viewers a different kind of look at the places to which reporters travel – a 360-degree shot made possible through virtual reality (VR). Virtual reality news opens the door to boundless possibilities allowing viewers to be anywhere at any time and takes storytelling to the next level. For example, ABC News VR launched a 360 degree virtual reality video that transports viewers to the streets of Damascus, a city largely cut off from the outside world (Bernstein, 2015).

Online journalism based on data collected by sensors, cameras and drones also has the potential to reinvent local journalism in terms of weather, traffic and local events sourced from social media (Newman, 2016). However, no one can tell what the next distinct development phase of online journalism will be, although online news is being created and disseminated through innovative media (channels).

## **4. Definition and characteristics of online journalism**

Online journalism is also known as digital journalism, web journalism, cyber journalism, new media journalism, multimedia journalism, etc. Some scholars try to differentiate these terms but actually these terms are used interchangeably and mean the same thing. Among them, online journalism and digital journalism are the two most frequently used terms.

Quite a few scholars have made their contributions to the definition of online journalism. We find that the definition by Kawamoto (2003, p.4) is more detailed and specific:

*“the use of digital technologies to research, produce and deliver (or make accessible) news and information to an increasing computer-literate audience”.*

It is very advisable to adopt the important word “*research*” in this definition so as to include such essential elements as computer assisted reporting. But as we have illustrated earlier in the paper that online journalism is no longer confined to the use of computers, the attributive phrase “*computer-literate audience*” seems out of accord with the times. The online journalism technology today, such as digital TV programme, has benefited not only the informational technology literates but also traditional media users. Based on the definition by Kawamoto, this paper proposes to define the term as:

*the practice of using digital technologies to research, produce and deliver news to diverse audiences.*

One of the ways to distinguish online journalism from other types of journalism is to identify its

defining characteristics. Many professionals and scholars have tried to summarize the most distinctive characteristics of online journalism (Deuze, 2003; Dimitrova and Neznanski, 2006; Newhagen and Rafaeli, 1996; Singer, 1998; Pavlik, 1997 and 1999) and different versions of distinguishing characteristics of online journalism are suggested. But some characteristics, for example, “the unlimited capacity to store news stories” or “archival feature of information”, “hypertextuality” or “non-linearity in news storytelling”, are not defining characteristics but general characteristics of online journalism or, to be more exact, internet. Although “personalization” or “customization of content” is regarded by some scholars as an important characteristic of online journalism, it is, in fact, a form of user-to-system interactivity that uses a set of technological features to adapt the content, delivery, and arrangement of a communication to individual users’ preferences (Thurman & Schifferes, 2012).

This paper claims the following four defining characteristics of online journalism: digitality, multimodality, interactivity, and immediacy.

#### *4.1 Digitality*

Online journalism, in the first place, is digital. All the information or data in news media is encoded in numbers, which is in marked contrast to analogue media where all input data is converted into another corresponding physical object. Digital information is programmable, alterable, and subject to algorithmic manipulation (Manovich, 2001).

#### *4.2 Multimodality*

Multimodality in the context of online journalism refers to the convergence of traditional media formats - text, graphics, sound, voice, and (still and moving) images - into a common digital form (Dahlgren, 1996). The multimedia nature is an inherent characteristic of online journalism which makes it functionally different from traditional journalism.

#### *4.3 Interactivity*

Compared with traditional media’s unidirectional transmission of news and information with restricted feedback mechanism, online journalism provides users with greater levels of interactivity or user-control. Users are allowed to comment on stories and participate in discussion forums as well as contribute to the content production by submitting photos and videos.

#### *4.4 Immediacy*

Compared to traditional journalism, one most important feature of online journalism is immediacy: the news is being delivered faster than ever, often within minutes or even in real time. There is virtually no lag between online news delivery by the communicator and news consumption by the audience. Therefore, immediacy of online journalism can be simply defined as ‘live’ reporting in provision of news in a continuous pattern (Eriksen & Ihlström, 2000).

### **5. Implications of the findings on online journalism education**

According to some scholars, journalism studies show a limited interest in history and history is just a sort of detachable subfield in journalism research (Nerone, 2013). But history is not about the past but about the relationship between the past and the future. Elliot King (2011) believes that knowledge of journalism history is needed in order to understand the culture of journalism after the demise of traditional forms and institutions of journalism. Mitchelstein and Boczkowski (2009) argue that the research on online journalism lacks historical dimensions. Online Journalism programs at journalism schools should not only address such emerging concepts and forward-looking applications as media convergence, backpack journalism, blogging and tweeting, they should also equip journalism students

with professional consciousness and context, which is important for them to understand the evolution of the form and content of journalism and the impacts of new media on society.

It is more urgent to make a study of online journalism history today than ever before because one of the problems to research on the history of online journalism is the unavailability of the digital documents of the early years because of the obsolescence of the format that contains digital information and the obsolescence of programs, browsers, and operational systems (Higgs, 1998; Diaz Noci, 2013).

This paper, based on a detailed review of the literature, attempts to document the history from the very moment of its social transcendence of some early manifestations because they prepared the paths toward what would later be online journalism. It identifies three major versions of online journalism history in the academia and conceptualizes the development of online journalism as consisting of distinct phases. The findings not only inform online journalism education but also enrich the knowledge pool of the related discipline.

It is almost a mission impossible to summarize the defining characteristics of online journalism because different development phases or stages of online journalism are corresponded with different characteristics. For example, teletext, an electronic system that uses a modified television set to display computer-based information, is regarded as a forerunner of online news media. However, it is not interactive because the viewer cannot send messages directly back to the computer that stores and disseminates the information. The system doesn't have other characteristics of online journalism today, either, such as multimediality and immediacy. It should be made clear that the four defining characteristics of online journalism identified in this paper, namely, digitality, multimediality, interactivity, and immediacy, are characteristics of online journalism today. Online journalism is such a recent phenomenon that is in the ongoing process of evolution. It is not at all surprising that online journalism is to have other distinctive characteristics in the future.

The review of literature also provides an opportunity to rethink some of the fundamental concepts in the study of the characteristics of online journalism. The first online journalism researchers were driven by technological determinism (Boczkowski, 2004; Domingo, 2006) but the techno-approach lacks commonly accepted definitions of such important concepts as interactivity and multimedia, which creates confusion as to what these characteristics represent and how they differ from one another (Steensen, 2011). This paper defines the four distinctive characteristics (digitality, multimediality, interactivity, and immediacy) by examining the conceptualization processes and implications of these slippery terms from a broader contextualization and attempts to make these concepts better fit the current state of online journalism.

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# **An Exploration of the Relationships between Social Media, Online Civic Engagement, and Online Political Participation**

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**Abstract:** Social media have become very popular in recent years. They offer a new interactive format for communication and enhance social interaction among users. The aim of this study was to investigate online political participation through social media. Prior studies have shown that socioeconomic status, trust, norms, situational political involvement, and civic engagement are positively related to political participation. It was hypothesized that these variables are also positively related to online political participation. The study was conducted by distributing printed questionnaires to undergraduate students at two universities in Hong Kong. Two hundred questionnaires were completed and returned. Significant positive relationships were found among offline political participation, online civic engagement, social-media use and online political participation. The adjusted  $R^2$  values obtained for online political participation 0.59. The implications of these findings are discussed.

**Keywords:** Online political participation, online civic engagement, social media, situational political involvement, trust, norms

## **1. Introduction**

In the past, very few channels were available for political participation, and there was only limited dissemination of political views. Political parties and politicians played the most influential roles in mobilizing citizens. In recent years, however, social media have become very popular platforms for political participation. Social media enable users conveniently and easily to express their views. Many-to-many communication helps those who share political views to form groups and organize collective activities. According to a Pew Research report (Rainie, Smith, Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2012), 66% of social-media users in the US have engaged in at least one of eight types of political activity using social media. For example, posting their own thoughts or comments on political and social issues; encouraging other people to take action on political issues; or joining social-networking groups with a political focus.

The relationship between social-media use and political participation has received considerable attention from researchers in the past five years (e.g., Nam, 2011; Halpern & Gibbs, 2012; Veenstra,

Iyer, Hossain, & Park, 2013; Baek, 2014; Pendry & Salvatore, 2015; Abdulrauf, AbdulHamid, & Ishak, 2016).

These studies fall into three main categories: addressing the effects of online activities on offline political participation; addressing online political participation only; and addressing offline and/versus online political participation.

Studies in the first category investigated the influence of online activities/social-media use on offline civic engagement and political participation. For example, the relationships between the use of social networking sites (SNS) use and electoral participation (e.g., Baek, 2014); mobile-telephone use and citizens' public engagement (e.g., Lee, Kwak, Campbell, & Ling, 2014); online-forum interaction and political engagement (e.g., Pendry & Salvatore, 2015); and Twitter-based microblogging and protest behavior (e.g., Veenstra et al., 2013). All of these studies highlighted the positive influence of online discussion and online interaction on engagement in offline civic and political activities.

Researchers in the second category examined the effects on online political participation of social-media activities (e.g., Gainous, Marlowe, & Wagner, 2013). For example, SNS adoption (e.g., Xie, 2014); Facebook use (e.g., Pennington, Winfrey, Warner, & Kearney, 2014); Facebook and Twitter use (e.g., Yu, 2016); microblogging via Twitter/Weibo (e.g., Park, 2013; Smith, Men, & Al-Sinan, 2015; Song, Dai, & Wang, 2016), and blog reading (e.g., Lewis, 2011). Other studies in this category addressed the differences in the use of online platforms. For example, between Facebook and YouTube as forums for political discussion (e.g., Halpern & Gibbs, 2012); the goals of social-media use (e.g., Hoffman, Jones, & Young, 2013); the use of social media to access the news (e.g., Barnidge, 2015; Hyun & Kim, 2015; Macafee, 2013; Oeldorf-hirsch & Sundar, 2014) and political information (e.g., Abdulrauf et al., 2016); the dissemination of political information and political discussion and exchange on social media (e.g., Gainous et al., 2013; Lewis, 2011; Oeldorf-hirsch & Sundar, 2014); expressive participation on social media (e.g., Borrero, Yousafzai, Javed, & Page, 2013); the diversity of viewpoints expressed on social media (e.g., Bozdag, Gao, Houben, & Warnier, 2014); the personal and civic attitudes of social-media users (e.g., Chen, Ping, & Chen, 2015); and political interests, conflict avoidance, and political disagreement on social media (e.g., Vraga, Thorson, Kligler-Vilenchik, & Gee, 2015). In short, this literature provides rich insights into the characteristics of various social media and the relationship between social-media use and online political participation.

Studies in the third category investigated factors related to offline and online political participation and/or the differences between online and online political participation. For example, the transition from offline to online political participation (e.g., Bae, Kwak, & Campbell, 2013); the effects of news exposure on both offline and online political participation (e.g., Kim, Chen, & Gil de Zuniga, 2013); the role of online political participation in mediating offline political participation (e.g., Kim & Khang, 2014); the role of political discussion in mediating both offline and online political participation (e.g., Lu, Heatherly, & Lee, 2016); the relationship between level of campaign engagement on Facebook and offline political participation (e.g., Mackova & Macek, 2014; Stetka & Mazak, 2014); whether online political participation supplements rather than substitutes for offline political participation (Jensen, 2013); whether online political participation is intrinsically different from offline political participation (e.g., Anduiza, Cantijoch, Colombo, Gallego, & Salcedo, 2010); and the influence of online political participation, group membership, and engagement on offline political participation (e.g., Conroy, Feezell, & Guerrero, 2012). To conclude, this literature provides evidence of the effects of distinct features of online social media use on both offline and online political participation.

The above discussion may suggest that researchers have gained an in-depth understanding of the relationship between online and offline political engagement. However, findings are still mixed, indicating that more work is needed in areas such as the effects of social-media use on political behavior (e.g., Baek, 2014, p. 12; Pennington et al., 2014, p. 279) and the extent to which social media politically empower individuals (e.g., Smith et al., 2015, p. 499). Although the role of Facebook in enhancing youth engagement with politics is well documented, less is known about the factors determining young people' willingness to engage in political interaction on the site (e.g., Vraga et al., 2015, p. 281).

Therefore, although rich empirical findings have undoubtedly been obtained in the last few years, it is important to identify areas that require further exploration.

Researchers have focused on a number of areas. For example, the frequency and use of social media (e.g., Gainous et al., 2013; Macafee, 2013; Mackova & Macek, 2014; Stetka & Mazak, 2014; Yu, 2016); online group membership (e.g., Chen et al., 2015; Conroy et al., 2012); and the pursuit of, access to, and consumption, discussion, and dissemination of political information (e.g., Abdulrauf et al., 2016; Anduiza et al., 2010; Bae et al., 2013; Barnidge, 2015; Bozdog et al., 2014; Halpern & Gibbs, 2012; Hyun & Kim, 2015; Kim et al., 2013; Lewis, 2011; Lu et al., 2016; Oeldorf-hirsch & Sundar, 2014; Park, 2013; Smith et al., 2015; Song et al., 2016; Stetka & Mazak, 2014; Vraga et al., 2015). However, less attention has been paid to traditional predictors of political participation, such as socioeconomic status (SES) (e.g., Nam, 2011), trust (e.g., Brehm & Rahn, 1997), and norms (e.g., Dalton, 2008).

Therefore, the objective of this study was to explore the factors influencing online political participation via social media, especially the factors that are widely discussed in research on offline political participation. This study set the following research question: What factors are related to online political participation using social media?

The rest of this paper is organised as follows. The first part provides a review of the existing research on online political participation and the factors potentially related to online political participation. In the next section, a model of the factors related to online political participation is developed. In the third section, the research methodology is described. In the fourth section, the results of validating the instrument used to collect the data and testing the model are reported. In the final section, the factors found to influence political participation are outlined and the implications of these findings are discussed.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

### *2.1 Online Political Participation*

One of the distinguishing features of democracy is the active and meaningful political participation of citizens. As suggested by Barner and Rosenwein (1985), democratic values are essentially participatory values. Political participation refers to activities that affect or are intended to affect government actions—either directly, by influencing the development or implementation of public policies, or indirectly, by influencing the selection of people who make such policies (Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995a).

Political participation falls into two categories: conventional and unconventional (Barnes & Kaase, 1979). Conventional participation entails institutionalized political activities, such as reading about politics, discussing politics, contacting officials, working for a political party, and engaging in electoral activities. Unconventional political behaviors, such as petitions, demonstrations, boycotts, and the occupation of buildings, are regarded as a means of political redress (Marsh & Kaase, 1979). From a preliminary literature review, several factors were found to be related to individual citizens' political participation.

A number of researchers have examined factors that influence both offline political participation and online political participation. For example, one study investigated the transition from offline face-to-face political discussion to computer-mediated online political participation, and found that variation in political interest and age resulted in significant differences in transition patterns (Bae et al., 2013). The findings of another study indicated that incidental news exposure is related to both offline and online political participation (Kim et al., 2013). Both offline and online political participation have been shown to be significantly mediated by the use of SNS as forums for political discussion, and significantly moderated by news-related SNS activities (Lu et al., 2016). In addition, a significant

relationship has been documented between online political participation (such as respondents' level of campaign engagement on Facebook) and traditional offline participation (such as voting) (Stetka & Mazak, 2014). The findings of another study indicated that membership of online political groups is strongly correlated with offline political participation (Conroy et al., 2012). Interestingly, online political participation has also been identified as a functional bridge to "real" politics (Mackova & Macek, 2014).

However, whilst some researchers have documented factors with similar effects on offline and online political participation, others have highlighted the differences between the two types of participation. For example, online political participation using SNS has been found to mediate between civic-voluntarism predictors (such as resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment) and offline political participation (Kim & Khang, 2014). In addition, online political participation has been found to supplement rather than substitute for offline political participation (Jensen, 2013). The findings of another study indicated that online and offline activities represent distinct modes of political participation, although some features of online political engagement may complement offline participation (Anduiza et al., 2010).

In sum, in light of the above literature review, this study hypothesized that individuals' offline political participation is related to their online political participation. An individual who is interested in obtaining political information and engaging in political activities online will to a certain extent be interested in participating politically offline, and vice versa. Greater offline political participation is expected to correspond to greater online political participation at an individual level. This study thus tested the following hypothesis.

H1: Offline political participation is positively related to online political participation.

This study further examined the literature to identify factors potentially influencing online political participation, which are listed and described in the following paragraphs.

## *2.2 Online Civic Engagement*

Interestingly, the results of prior studies indicate an overlap between the concepts of civic engagement and political participation. Some researchers have treated the two concepts as identical. No consensus has been reached on their differences. Putnam (2000) offered a very broad definition of civic engagement, comprising both informal social activities, such as visiting friends and playing card games, and formal activities, such as serving on committees and engaging with community-related or political issues. Adler and Goggin (2005) pointed out that Putnam avoided defining civic engagement explicitly, and that no definition is widely agreed upon. Gibson (2000) also stated that there is a lack of consensus on the meaning of civic engagement. However, Amnå (2012) suggested that the concepts of political participation and civic engagement are significantly different. Berger (2009) also criticized broad definitions of civic engagement, but conceded that conceptual stretching is necessary to cover every aspect of civic engagement, from helping a neighbor to voting in an election.

In this study, it adopts the definition of civic engagement developed by Adler and Goggin (2005), i.e., the ways in which citizens participate in the life of a community to improve conditions for others or shape the community's future. This is consistent with Diller's (2001) definition of civic engagement as the process by which an individual voluntarily embraces the responsibilities of citizenship to strengthen his/her local community. As emphasized in these definitions, civic engagement is considered to relate to an individual's local community, whereas political participation has broader political objectives.

This study hypothesized that individual citizens' online civic engagement is correlated with their online political participation. People with a higher level of online civic engagement are more concerned about bettering their local communities, and are thus more likely to pay attention to government actions and strive to improve society via online political participation. Whereas individuals' offline and online political activities and participation differ, the logic of offline civic engagement was expected also to

apply online; this study hypothesized that offline civic engagement is closely related to online civic engagement. Therefore, this study proposed the following two-part hypothesis.

- H2a: Individuals' offline civic engagement is positively related to their online civic engagement.
- H2b: Individuals' online civic engagement is positively related to their online political participation.

### *2.3 Social Media*

Social media have become very popular in recent years. For instance, the SNS Facebook had 1.04 billion daily active users on average in December 2015. According to Steijn and Schouten (2013), social media such as Facebook and Twitter differ from conventional forms of communication in permitting one-to-many communication. This has promoted new forms of interpersonal interaction, as individuals are empowered to construct their own profiles and to create and share content in public posts with other users in their list of connections.

Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, and Valenzuela (2012) pointed out that the use of social media, which allow users to seek and exchange information, is a positive and significant predictor of people's political participation. Conroy et al. (2012) reported that membership of online political groups is strongly correlated with offline political participation, and that one of the potential functions of social media is to recruit members of online political groups. Tufekci and Wilson (2012) investigated the influence of social media, particularly Facebook, on participation in Egypt's Tahrir Square protests. They pointed out that social media constituted a new source of information that the regime was not easily able to control, and which shaped citizens' individual decisions about participating in the protests. Therefore, social media seem to have distinctive characteristics that promote both online and offline political participation. The use of social media is also related to civic engagement. Kim, Hsu, and Gil de Zúñiga (2013) proposed that individuals' level of civic engagement is affected by their use of social media. In particular, the role of social media in increasing civic engagement is greater for introverted and less open individuals.

In this study, it hypothesized that individuals' use of social media affects their level of online political participation. People who use social media more frequently receive more political information. Social media also provide a platform for individuals to discuss politics and coordinate political actions online. This study also expected individuals' use of social media to affect their level of online civic engagement. Those who use social media more frequently learn more about their local communities from online community groups and thus become more civically engaged online. Therefore, this study tested the following two-part hypothesis.

We have synthesized the three versions of online journalism history: the 1969 version, the 1993 version and the 1952 version. Although each version has its own rationale, this paper holds that the historical starting point of online journalism is the time when computers were first introduced into newsrooms to assist journalists in their reporting. So November 4, 1952 should be considered the great day for online journalism because it signaled the start of a brand new era of journalism: online journalism.

- H3a: Individuals' use of social media is positively related to their level of online civic engagement.
- H3b: Individuals' use of social media is positively related to their level of online political participation.

### *2.4 SES*

SES is an individual's or family's ranking on a hierarchy of access to or control over some combination of valued commodities or resources, such as wealth, power, and social status (Mueller & Parcel, 1981). Family background has a significant influence on individuals' growth and development. Therefore,

household income, maternal education, and maternal occupation are considered to be indicators of an individual's SES (e.g., Gottfried, 1985; Hauser, 1994).

The relationship between SES and political participation has frequently been examined, and many researchers have drawn the same conclusions. Verba and Nie (1972) proposed the "SES model," according to which SES is a major determinant of political participation. Citizens with a higher SES—those with more education, a higher income and a higher professional status—tend to be more active in political life. This argument was supported by later studies, as higher levels of political participation were observed among citizens with a higher SES (e.g., Dalton, 1988; Milbrath & Goel, 1977). Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995b) proposed a resource model to further explain the role of SES in predicting political participation. As citizens with a higher SES are usually richer in resources, such as time, money, and civic skills, it is much easier for them to commit time to political campaigning, donate money to political parties, and vote. SES has also been found to relate positively to civic engagement. Tucker and Santiago (2013) reported that socioeconomic factors, namely employment status, educational attainment, household income, and homeownership, predicted the level of civic engagement among Latino immigrants in the United States. Those with a lower SES may lack the language skills and knowledge to engage in civic activities.

This study expected individuals' SES to be related to their online civic engagement. People with a higher SES have more resources, knowledge, or skills related to community matters, and are thus more likely to engage with civic issues online. Using the same logic, this study hypothesized that SES is related to online political participation. Those with a higher SES are likely to be more educated and better equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources required to engage in politics. Therefore, this study tested the following two-part hypothesis.

H4a: Individuals' SES is positively related to their online civic engagement.

H4b: Individuals' SES status is positively related to their online political participation.

## *2.5 Trust*

Trust is the foundation for many types of relationship. If people are willing to trust each other, their relationships are more secure. Newton (2001) defined trust as an individual's belief that at worst, others will not deliberately do him/her harm, and that at best, others will act in his/her interests. Suh, Yee, and Chang (2013) further defined trust as the expectation of honesty and cooperation from others.

Trust, as the main element of social capital, encourages both civic engagement and political participation (Putnam, 2000). Brehm and Rahn (1997) found trust to be positively related to civic engagement, and Klesner (2007) found a positive relationship between interpersonal trust and political participation in Latin America. Stable social relationships are the basis for collective behavior and productive cooperation, and thus for civic engagement and political participation. Trust, as a means of maintaining stable social relations, reduces complexity: it encourages individuals to share the cost of providing public goods and coordinate their actions across space and time, which enables them to solve social or political problems with relative ease (e.g., Hardin, 1998; Suh et al., 2013). Trust, therefore, provides a foundation for individuals' civic engagement and political participation.

In this study, it hypothesized that trust is related to both online civic engagement and online political participation. A person who is more willing to trust others has a greater sense of security and is thus more likely to engage in activities that influence his/her community and government or policy makers. Therefore, this study tested the following two-part hypothesis.

H5a: Individuals' trust is related to their online civic engagement.

H5b: Individuals' trust is related to their online political participation.

## *2.6 Norms*

Norm refers to an accepted standard or a way of behaving or doing things that most people agree with or are expected for in society or a particular group or social unit (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2016). According to Hechter and Opp (2001), norms can prescribe or proscribe behavior and serve as important regulators of social behavior. They are a specific case of beliefs or attitudes that are directly linked to particular types of behavior and backed by sanctions (internal or external) that produce accountability (e.g., Horne, 2003; Knack, 1992; Liefbroer & Billari, 2010).

Dalton (2008) stated that the norms of citizenship help to shape Americans' political behavior. Norms not only indicate the qualities of good citizens but shape people's expectations of people's own role as participants in the political process and people's perceptions of the role of government and specific policy priorities. Van Deth (2007) also mentioned that people's engagement in politics and public affairs is consistent with their norms of citizenship. Therefore, norms are positively related to individuals' political participation (Bolzendahl & Coffé, 2013). Dalton (2006) suggested that citizenship norms are linked with various types of participation, such as active engagement in civil-society groups and general political activities. Individuals with a greater awareness of such norms are more willing to act on their principles, more politically independent, and more inclined to address social needs.

This study thus hypothesized that norms are positively related to both online civic engagement and online political participation. Individuals with a greater awareness of norms have more concrete expectations of their own roles in both community and political matters, and are thus more likely to participate in civic and political life. Therefore, this study proposed the following two-part hypothesis.

- H6a: The greater an individual's awareness of norms, the higher his/her level of online civic engagement.
- H6b: The greater an individual's awareness of norms, the higher his/her level of online political participation.

## *2.7 Situational Political Involvement*

An individual who is interested in a particular issue is more eager and more motivated to seek information about that issue, due to an increased sense of involvement. Involvement is defined as an individual's perception of issue relevance at a particular time or level of interest in a short-term outcome (e.g., Faber, Tims, & Schmitt, 1993; Kanihan & Chaffee, 1996; Salmon, 1986; Zaichkowsky, 1986). It can also be conceptualized as a personal cognitive characteristic (interest) and as a motivational state characterized by information-gathering behavior.

In a political context, situational involvement may be defined as voters' interest in and perceptions of the relevance of a political issue in a particular political climate, such as a major political election (e.g., Fu, Mou, Miller, & Jalette, 2011). Situational political involvement (SPI), when stimulated by a temporary social situation, results in a motivated search for political or public-affairs information, which in turn increases political activity (e.g., Atkin, 1972; Kanihan & Chaffee, 1996). This implies that situational political involvement motivates political participation. Andrews, Durvasula and Akhter (1990) also suggested that involvement correlates closely with perceived relevance and manifests as a high level of engagement with issues.

Based on these arguments, this study hypothesized that individuals' situational political involvement affects their online political participation. An individual who perceives a political issue as relevant is more motivated to gather political information on that issue, which in turn increases the individual's political knowledge and inclination to participate in politics. The same applies to online civic engagement. The more information about his/her community an individual collects, the more likely he/she will be to pursue civic engagement online. Therefore, this study proposed the following two-part hypothesis.

- H7a: Individuals' situational political involvement is positively related to their online civic engagement.

H7b: Individuals' situational political involvement is positively related to their online political participation.

The model framework is summarized in the below figure.

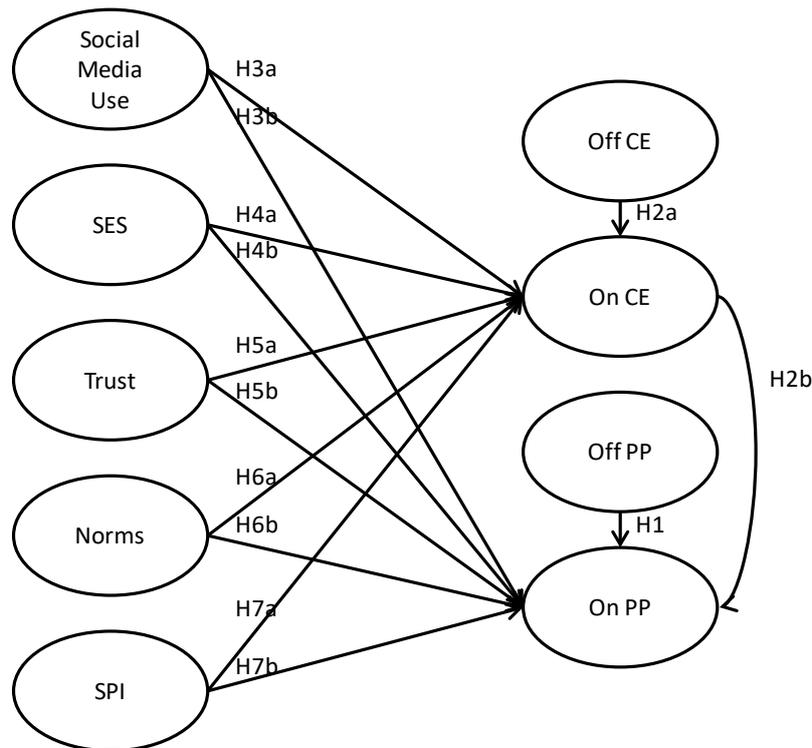


Fig. 1 Model for online political participation using social media

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Background

The use of social media such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram has recently become very popular. According to the Alexa Traffic Rank for February 2016, which provides a combined measure of pageviews and daily visitors for all websites, Facebook ranked 2nd, YouTube ranked 3rd, and Instagram ranked 24th (Alexa, 2016). Many people worldwide use these social-media platforms every day to connect with other users in various ways. Social media have become closely integrated with people's lives. They are free and open to everyone, allowing people to create and share content in public posts and to communicate with friends and others with similar interests. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationships between social-media use, civic engagement, and political participation.

#### 3.2 Subjects

The target topic, college students' online political participation, continues to attract considerable attention from researchers (e.g., Kim & Khang, 2014). The aim of the study was to explore the relationships between the use of social media, online civic engagement, and online political participation. The population was deemed appropriate because college students are both eligible voters and heavy social media users (e.g., Kim & Khang, 2014). As the participants were aged 18 or above, they met the minimum age requirement for voting. Individuals voting for the first time are expected to have greater motivation to exercise their electoral rights. In addition, college students make substantial use of social media to pursue their studies, communicate with their friends, and engage with communities of interest. Both of these characteristics helped to maximize the variance obtained. Future

researchers could expand the population to other groups of adults over 18 years old who are eligible to vote. Finally, there were 79 (39.5%) male and 121 (60.5%) female, with a mean age of 21.47.

### *3.3 Measures*

A survey questionnaire was used to obtain the data. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part elicited the respondents' demographic details, including family income, kind of housing, size of flat, etc. where four items were finally used to measure their SES, including type of housing, size of flat, number of rooms, maternal education.

The second part elicited the respondents' views on the constructs of the proposed model. The choice of response differed between the constructs. Three items were used to measure trust (Brehm & Rahn, 1997) and four items were used to measure situational political involvement (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010); in both cases, responses were given on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Five items were used to measure norms (Knack & Keefer, 1997), and responses were given on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (never justifiable) to 7 (always justifiable). General social media use and online political participation were measured using 3 and 13 items, respectively (Vitak et al., 2011), and responses were given on a 10-point scale from 1 (never) to 10 (always; many times a day). Five items were used to measure offline civic engagement (Kim et al., 2013) and online civic engagement (Jugert, Eckstein, Noack, Kuhn, & Benbow, 2013), respectively, and responses were given on a 7-point scale from 1 (never) to 7 (always). To measure offline political participation, nine items were adopted from Scheufele, Nisbet, Brossard, and Nisbet (2004). Another item was added to determine whether the subjects had voted in the general election on November 19, 2015. The respondents were asked to give yes/no responses to indicate whether they had participated in the corresponding activities. One point was given for a response of yes, and zero for no. The scores for the 10 items were then summed to give a total score, ranging from 0 to 10, as an indicator of the respondent's level of offline political participation.

Noted that the survey was conducted in Chinese as it would be more convenient for respondents to read. However, most of the measures were originally in English. Therefore, in preparing the questionnaire, a back-translation process was used to establish translation equivalence (e.g., Brislin, 1970; Mullen, 1995). The questionnaire items were first translated into Chinese by a senior undergraduate student. The Chinese translation was then back translated into English by another senior undergraduate student. A third senior undergraduate student compared the original English version and the translated English version to identify any significant difference in meaning of specific words. This helped revise the Chinese translation using another word in order to keep the original English meaning. This was back and forth to the final version of the questionnaire.

### *3.4 Data Collection*

To maximize the possible variance in political participation, data were collected in the week following a general election in Hong Kong, namely the District Council Election on November 19, 2015. The election had been publicized on all media channels throughout the territory since September 2015. Convenience sampling was used to administer a printed questionnaire survey to 300 undergraduate students at two local universities. Convenience sampling is regarded as an acceptable and efficient method of obtaining respondents for analytical surveys (Kim & Khang, 2014; Tewksbury & Althaus, 2000). Most of the questionnaires were completed within 10 minutes. The respondents had different majors and were sampled from different years of study. Two hundred questionnaires were completed and returned, and the responses were analyzed.

### *3.5 Data Analysis*

The objective of the study was to explore the factors underlying online political participation. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was conducted using the software package SmartPLS3.0 (e.g., Ringle et al., 2005; Wilden & Gudergan, 2015) to analyze the data. This study chose

PLS-SEM for the following reasons. First, the research objective was to identify factors related to online political participation, with the initial task of explaining the variance in online political participation (Hair et al., 2012, p. 420). Second, PLS-SEM is a soft-modeling approach to testing, which is less appropriate for use with well-established theories (Hair et al., 2012) but advantageous for examining predictive research models in the early stages of theoretical development (e.g., Fornell & Bookstein, 1982). It was thus considered suitable for this study, as the factors comprising the model of online political participation had yet to be confirmed. Third, PLS-SEM has greater statistical power than covariance-based SEM when used with complex models with limited sample sizes (Reinartz et al., 2009), as in the current study. Fourth, PLS-SEM is widely used to analyze non-normal data (Hair et al., 2012, p. 420). The use of PLS-SEM as a supplement to rather than a substitute for covariance-based SEM has gained increasing attention in the literature (e.g., Hair et al., 2012; Hair et al., 2013; Ringle et al., 2012), and has been empirically documented (e.g., Ng, 2016).

PLS-SEM is not based on an assumption of normal distribution. PLS regression is used to obtain standard errors for hypothesis testing by nonparametric bootstrapping: repeated random sampling with replacements from the original sample to create a bootstrap sample (Davison & Hinkley, 1997; Efron & Tibshirani, 1993). The assumption underlying this process is that the sample distribution is a reasonable representation of the intended population distribution. Bootstrap sampling enables the significance of coefficients estimated using PLS-SEM to be tested (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009). The recommended minimum number of bootstrap samples is 5,000 (Hair et al., 2011, p. 145). Therefore, PLS-SEM was used with bootstrapping to calculate the t-statistic and standard deviation for each parameter. This mitigated a key drawback of nonparametric bootstrapping: the lack of formal significance tests for the estimated parameters (Chin, 1998). Bootstrapping was used to draw 5,000 random bootstrap sets to obtain stable standard errors and reduce the differences between the entire sample estimates and the means of the subsamples (Léger, Politis, & Romano, 1992).

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Descriptive statistics of respondents

The details of the respondents were summarized below in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Descriptive statistics of respondents (N=200)*

<b>Items</b>	<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>
Gender	Male: 79 (39.5%) Female: 121 (60.5%)
Age (18-25)	<i>M / SD</i> : 21.47 / 1.905
Number of family members	<i>M / SD</i> : 3.87 / 1.045
Monthly household income	HK\$12,000 or below: 16 (8%) HK\$12,001-HK\$17,000: 22 (11%) HK\$17,001-HK\$22,000: 32 (16%) HK\$22,001-HK\$27,000: 23 (11.5%) HK\$27,001-HK\$37,000: 42 (21%) HK\$37,001-HK\$57,000: 35 (17.5%) HK\$57,001 or above: 30 (15%)
Type of housing	Temporary housing: 1 (0.5%) Public rental housing: 66 (33%) Subsidized sale flats: 30 (15%) Private housing: 103 (51.5%)
Floor area of accommodation (feet)	<i>M / SD</i> : 2.79 / 1.463
Number of rooms in the residence	<i>M / SD</i> : 2.19 / 1.080
Educational Attainment of Parents	Primary: 13 (6.5%) Secondary 1-3: 50 (25%)

	Secondary 4-7: 80 (40%)
	Post-secondary (Diploma/ Certificate/ Associate Degree): 20 (10%)
	Bachelor's Degree or higher: 37 (18.5%)
Voted in the 2015 District Council Election	Yes: 97 (48.5%) No: 103 (51.5%)
Most visited social networking sites	Facebook: 152 (76%) Instagram: 28 (14%) ThisAV.com: 2 (1%) Twitter: 2 (1%) HKGolden: 4 (2%) YouTube: 12 (6%)

#### 4.2 Instrument Validation

This study used multiple methods to assess the reliability and validity of the measures. To assess convergent validity, this study evaluated Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , average variance extracted (AVE), factor loadings, and composite reliability. For all of the constructs, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and the score for composite reliability were above the required threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). For all of the constructs, the AVE surpassed the threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2011), and all of the factor loadings approached or exceeded the required threshold of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). To confirm that the constructs were distinct, this study examined their discriminant validity using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion that a construct's AVE must be larger than the square of its largest correlation with any construct. As shown in the discriminant table, all of the constructs met this requirement. We also tested for multicollinearity by obtaining the variance inflation factor (VIF) (Diamantopoulos & Tinklhofer, 2001) and measuring the correlations between variables. Multicollinearity occurs when two independent variables are highly correlated, and can substantially affect the estimation of regression coefficients and their statistical significance (Hair et al., 2010). In particular, multicollinearity can increase the standard errors of coefficients, making them statistically non-significant (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Multicollinearity is indicated by correlation coefficients between independent variables that exceed .90. As shown in the table, none of the correlation coefficients were higher than .90, so multicollinearity was assumed not to exist. In addition, the VIF values were well below the cut-off value of 5. The correlations between the constructs raised no concerns. In sum, the results of these tests indicated that all of the constructs were both reliable and valid. Therefore, the measures were considered appropriate.

Table 2  
*Descriptive Statistics of the Variables*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Loadings</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i><math>\alpha</math></i>	<i>CR</i>
Socioeconomic Status (SES)				0.56	0.75	0.83
SES1	4.18	0.916	0.623			
SES2	2.79	1.463	0.919			
SES3	2.19	1.080	0.851			
SES4	3.09	1.161	0.546			
Trust				0.80	0.87	0.92
Trust1	3.78	1.401	0.897			
Trust2	4.17	1.392	0.897			
Trust3	4.01	1.309	0.884			
Norms				0.79	0.93	0.95
Norms1	5.67	1.501	0.848			
Norms2	5.97	1.537	0.874			
Norms3	5.88	1.582	0.918			
Norms4	5.40	1.613	0.890			
Norms5	5.54	1.533	0.908			
Situational Political Involvement				0.85	0.94	0.96

(SPI)										
SPI1	4.80	1.428	0.922							
SPI2	4.59	1.551	0.950							
SPI3	4.63	1.535	0.918							
SPI4	4.29	1.688	0.906							
Social Media (SM)							0.66	0.74	0.85	
SM1	2.71	2.342	0.824							
SM2	4.44	2.655	0.780							
SM3	2.68	2.093	0.825							
Online Civic Engagement (OnCE)							0.74	0.91	0.93	
OnCE1	3.10	1.650	0.859							
OnCE2	3.16	1.687	0.894							
OnCE3	2.95	1.672	0.866							
OnCE4	3.01	1.677	0.852							
OnCE5	3.30	1.734	0.820							
Offline Civic Engagement (OffCE)							0.53	0.70	0.81	
OffCE1	2.09	1.208	0.481							
OffCE2	3.11	1.624	0.701							
OffCE3	3.39	1.750	0.851							
OffCE3	3.39	1.750	0.822							
Online Political Participation (OnPP)							0.67	0.96	0.96	
OnPP1	2.26	2.185	0.802							
OnPP2	2.02	1.885	0.756							
OnPP3	2.08	1.941	0.842							
OnPP4	1.80	1.870	0.730							
OnPP5	2.18	2.194	0.742							
OnPP6	1.60	1.386	0.755							
OnPP7	2.13	2.023	0.893							
OnPP8	2.13	2.082	0.905							
OnPP9	2.03	2.033	0.900							
OnPP10	2.08	2.137	0.892							
OnPP11	2.07	2.029	0.892							
OnPP12	1.59	1.580	0.804							
OnPP13	1.51	1.349	0.675							
Offline Political Participation (OffPP)								1	1	
OffPP	1.54	1.625								

Table 3  
 Square root of AVE (diagonal elements) and inter-construct correlations

	VIF	Norm	Offline CE	Offline PP	Online CE	Online PP	SES	SM	SPI	Trust
Norm	1.147	0.888								
Offline CE	1.328	0.089	0.728							
Offline PP	1.671	0.16	0.408	1						
Online CE	1.859	0.12	0.698	0.511	0.858					
Online PP		0.132	0.442	0.516	0.634	0.818				
SES	1.042	0.174	-0.021	-0.086	-0.095	-0.05	0.751			
SM	1.216	0.038	0.398	0.333	0.507	0.669	-0.001	0.81		
SPI	1.407	0.286	0.391	0.563	0.522	0.386	0.106	0.276	0.924	

Trust	1.157	0.237	0.133	0.177	0.225	0.183	0.015	0.115	0.333	0.892
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### 4.3 Model-testing summary

To test the model’s explanatory power, this study examined the correlation of determination (R2). The adjusted R2 values obtained for online civic engagement and online political participation were 0.61 and 0.59, respectively.

Next, this study tested the hypotheses by examining the path coefficients and calculating their significance. This study used bootstrapping with 5,000 samples to evaluate the significance of the paths (Hair et al., 2011).

In support of H1, this study found a positive relationship between offline political participation and online political participation ( $\beta = .224, p < .05$ ). In support of H2, this study found positive relationships between offline civic engagement and online civic engagement (H2a,  $\beta = .495, p < .001$ ) and between online civic engagement and online political participation (H2b,  $\beta = .302, p < .001$ ). In support of H3, this study found positive relationships between social-media use and online civic engagement (H3a,  $\beta = .232, p < .001$ ) and between social-media use and online political participation (H3b,  $\beta = .448, p < .001$ ). Hypotheses H4, H5, and H6 were not supported, as political participation was not found to be significantly related to SES, trust, norms, or online civic engagement. In partial support of H7, this study found a positive relationship between situational political involvement and online civic engagement ( $\beta = .260, p < .001$ ); however, situational political involvement and online political participation were not significantly related.

Table 4  
Summary of model testing results and path coefficients

Hypotheses	Path coefficients	t-value	p-value	Hypotheses
H1: Offline Political Participation → Online Political Participation	0.224	2.433	0.015	Supported
H2a: Offline Civic Engagement → Online Civic Engagement	0.495	9.594	0.000	Supported
H2b: Online Civic Engagement → Online Political Participation	0.302	4.600	0.000	Supported
H3a: Social Media Use → Online Civic Engagement	0.232	4.477	0.000	Supported
H3b: Social Media Use → Online Political Participation	0.448	5.925	0.000	Supported
H4a: Socioeconomic status → Online civic engagement	-0.113	1.817	0.069	Not supported
H4b: Socioeconomic status → Online Political Participation	-0.006	0.084	0.933	Not supported
H5a: Trust → Online Civic Engagement	0.047	0.999	0.318	Not supported
H5b: Trust → Online Political Participation	0.027	0.505	0.614	Not supported
H6a: Norms → Online Civic Engagement	0.001	0.028	0.977	Not supported
H6b: Norms → Online Political Participation	0.049	1.065	0.287	Not supported
H7a: Situational political involvement → Online Civic Engagement	0.260	5.273	0.000	Supported
H7b: Situational political involvement → Online Political Participation	-0.044	0.675	0.500	Not supported
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted): Online political participation	0.59			
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted): Online civic engagement	0.61			

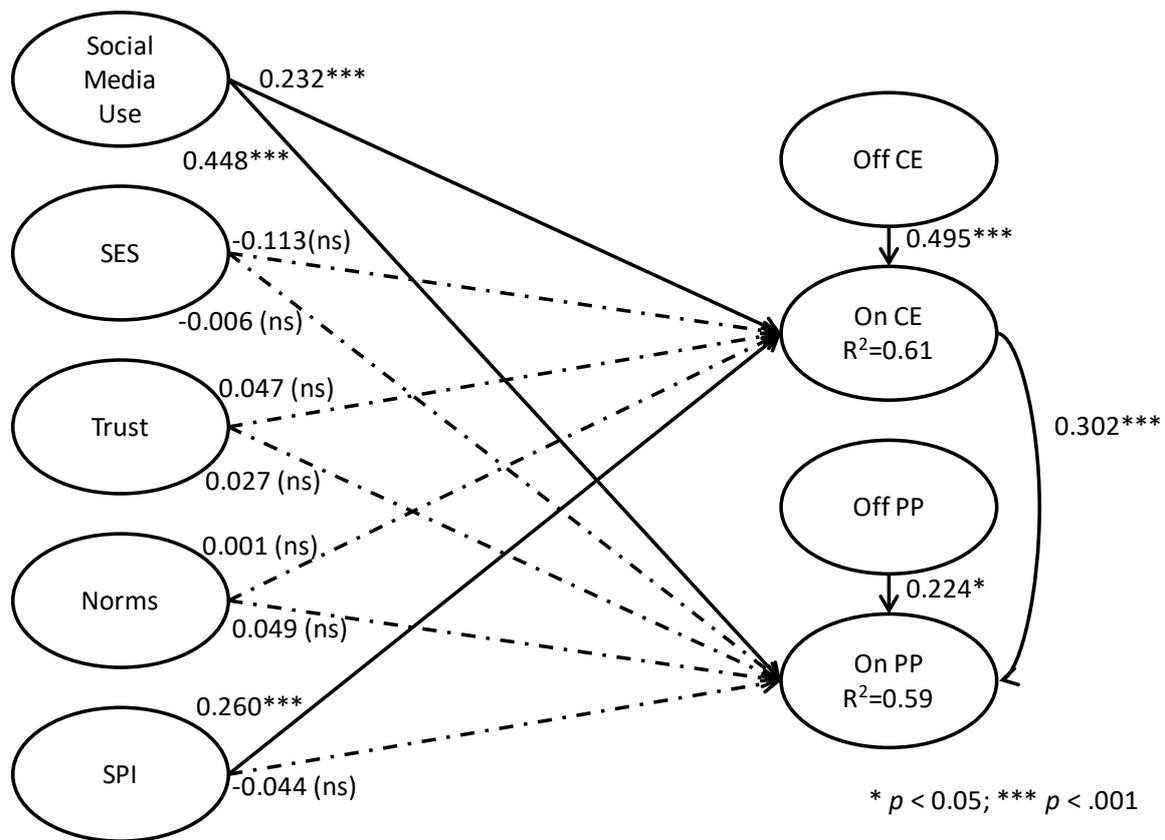


Fig. 2 Summary of Model Testing Results

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Offline Political Participation and Online Political Participation

The results showed that there is a positive relationship between offline political participation and online political participation, supported H1. The strength is from low to moderate ( $\beta=.224$ ,  $p < .05$ , supported H1). In this survey study, it may not identify the causal link. We could only know that the more the offline political participation, the more the online political participation, or vice versa. Previous evidence suggested that factors related to offline political participation would also be related to online political participation (e.g., Stetka & Mazak, 2014). Previous evidence also found that online political participation has a different mode as the offline political participation (e.g., Anduiza et al., 2010). Here in this study, it empirically found that the two are inter-related though only from a low to moderate effect.

The argument is that citizens who have interest in political issues and who participate in political activities would consistently behave similarly to both offline and online though at a different level. Citizens who are active to protests would also be leader online to discuss, to share, and to join political activities, including online political communities. On the other way round, if citizen who are active in joining political activities online would also at some points of time, joining offline political activities, such as, protests.

The above discussion is supported by prior studies that offline political participation will transit to online political participation (e.g., Bae et al., 2013); offline and online political participation would be related to the same factors (e.g., Kim et al., 2013); online political participation would be a supplement but not a replacement to offline political participation (e.g., Jensen, 2013).

## *5.2 Civic Engagement and Political Participation*

Results showed that there is a positive relationship between offline civic engagement and online civic engagement ( $\beta=.495, p < .001$ , supported H2a); online civic engagement and online political participation ( $\beta=.302, p < .001$ , supported H2b).

In the studies of online political participation, it is not obvious to distinguish civic engagement from political participation (e.g., Putnam, 2000) but there is always a call for a better definition to differentiate the two (e.g., Adler & Goggin, 2005; Amna, 2012; Gibson, 2000). In this study, it finds from prior literature to define civic engagement, "The ways in which citizens participate in the life of a community to improve conditions for others or shape the community's future (Adler & Goggin, 2005)." With this definition, it therefore differentiates civic engagement to relate to an individual's local community, whereas political participation to a broader political objectives. This study argues that offline civic engagement would be positively related to online civic engagement as a citizen who cares about his or her community would apply to both offline and online context. This study also argues that online civic engagement would be positively related to online political participation, for the same logic in the offline context. People with a higher level of online civic engagement are more concerned about bettering their local communities, and are thus more likely to pay attention to government policies and strategies. Hence, citizens strive to improve society or local community through greater participation in voting or other political activities to influence government policies.

The empirical results show that offline civic engagement is positively related to online civic engagement. It supports the hypothesis that if a citizen is concerned about his or her community and is engaged in local community services and activities, these characteristics will also apply to online context. Citizens who engage in community activities will also be active online members to discuss civic issues, to join community groups, to participate in community services, or vice versa.

Moreover, the results also show that online civic engagement is positively related to online political participation. For those people with high level of civic engagement, they have a will to develop a better community. In the process of participating civic activities, they will obtain more information about the local community and thus discover that the development of community is dependent on policies or government actions. It is impossible to neglect politics even though they only want to strengthen their neighborhoods. Therefore, civic engagement is highly related to political participation. This can particularly show in the online world. For those who have civic engagement in the virtual world, they may have their own specially formed networks and connections online and thus prefer to retain their political participation with those networks.

## *5.3 Social Media*

Social media has found to have a positive relationship with online civic engagement ( $\beta=.232, p < .001$ , supported H3a) and online political participation ( $\beta=.448, p < .001$ , supported H3b).

A number of distinctive features of social media has been studied, in order to promote community building, and political information seeking, dissemination, and discussion (e.g., (e.g., Abdulrauf et al., 2016; Anduiza et al., 2010; Bae et al., 2013; Barnidge, 2015; Bozdog et al., 2014; Halpern & Gibbs, 2012; Hyun & Kim, 2015; Kim et al., 2013; Lewis, 2011; Lu et al., 2016; Oeldorf-hirsch & Sundar, 2014; Park, 2013; Smith et al., 2015; Song et al., 2016; Stetka & Mazak, 2014; Vraga et al., 2015). Social media also help virtual group formation, bringing similar minds together, and interaction among group members and knowledge sharing (e.g., Conroy, Feezell, & Guerrero, 2012; M, 2012; Ma & Chan, 2014; Ma & Yuen, 2011). It is social media to help citizens transit from participating in offline civic activities and offline political activities to the online context (e.g., Bae, Kwak, & Campbell, 2013). Prior studies provide rich evidence to explain the communication processes via social media, including SNS (e.g., Xie, 2014), Facebook (e.g., Mackova & Macek, 2014; Stetka & Mazak, 2014), YouTube (e.g., Halpern & Gibbs, 2012), Twitter (e.g., Yu, 2016), Weibo (e.g., Park, 2013; Smith, Men, & Al-Sinan,

2015; Song, Dai, & Wang, 2016). Here in this study, it confirms social media's positive relationship with online civic engagement and with online political participation.

Social media is found to have positive relationship with online civic engagement. With the existence of social media, citizens can form some community groups which are open to everyone. It serves as an integral platform for citizens within the same neighborhood to share information, freely discuss district problems and coordinate actions if necessary. As communication among neighbors is facilitated by social networking sites, a sense of community and belongingness can be built and citizens will become more civically engaged with a view of strengthening their own communities.

The same logic applies to the relationship between social media and online political participation. Citizens with same political orientation can form groups on social media, which allow everyone to join. They can seek more political information on social media and exchange their views on different issues. When they are discontented with government policies or actions, corresponding actions can be coordinated on social media and people will become more easily to be motivated to participate. As social media is served as the channel of communication, people may tend to remain online and adopt online political actions rather than offline actions.

#### *5.4 SES*

No significant relationship was found between SES and online civic engagement; or between SES and online political participation. This result does not support hypothesis (H4). Contrary to prior studies on offline civic engagement and offline political participation (e.g., Dalton, 1988), this study could not find a direct link between SES and online political participation. SES does not work at the same way to offline civic engagement and offline political participation, for online context.

This study based on prior studies to propose a relationship between SES and online political participation. An individual with higher socioeconomic status has higher education, higher income and higher-status job. This probably creates unwillingness to participate in community or political actions, though that individual is equipped with better skills and knowledge. As society will turn unstable due to fierce civic or political actions, people with higher SES may fear of losing what they possess currently. They tend to maintain status quo as they already have a high living standard. Thus, they become less likely to participate in actions to improve the community or the policies. On the contrary, for those with lower SES, they are more discontented with the current living standard as it is more difficult for them to make a living. Thus, they are more easily to be motivated to participate in the actions to improve the community as well as to influence the government decisions with a view of benefiting their own living conditions from these changes. Other than that, the knowledge gap has narrowed down comparing to the past as all people are ensured to have a basic education level in developed countries. Also, with the advent of technology, there are more channels for citizens to learn about civic and political actions. Those with lower SES become more advantaged with the knowledge to participate in community and politics.

However, all these suggested reasons and arguments require further studies to explore and to proof as it could not find any significant relationships between SES and online political participation in this study.

#### *5.5 Trust*

No significant relationship was found between Trust and online civic engagement; or between Trust and online political participation. This result does not support hypothesis (H5). Contrary to prior studies on offline civic engagement and offline political participation (e.g., Klesner, 2007; Putnam, 2000), this study could not find a direct link between Trust and online political participation. Trust does not work at the same way to offline civic engagement and offline political participation, for online context.

Trust is regarded as an element of maintaining social relations, and thus citizens are more likely to cooperate in collective actions. However, civic engagement or political participation is not necessarily a collective behavior. If an individual is not satisfied with some community problems or government

policies, that individual can act upon those problems by individual actions, for example, writing letter to public officials. That means, trust is not indispensable for civic or political actions. Moreover, trust does not only act upon the social relations among citizens, but also between citizens and public officials. When trust is built up between citizens and government, citizens may become less likely to participate in any actions, as they believe that the public officials would not work against their interests. However, when citizens do not believe that the government officials, politicians or district organizations can fulfill their expectations on the community development or policies, they may find it necessary to participate in some actions to urge those relevant bodies on making better decisions.

Again, these suggested reasons need further examination, as it did not find any significant relationship between trust and online political participation in this study.

### *5.6 Norms*

No significant relationship was found between Norms and online civic engagement; or between Norms and online political participation. This result does not support hypothesis (H6). Contrary to prior studies on offline civic engagement and offline political participation (e.g., Dalton, 2006; van Deth, 2007), this study could not find a direct link between Norms and online political participation. Norms do not work at the same way to offline civic engagement and offline political participation, for online context.

Theoretically, citizens with higher level of norms are more likely to influence the community and government as they have an intrinsic moral value of responsibility. However, when the traditional actions are not effective enough to change the poor situation in society, citizens may adopt some abnormal actions to achieve their goals. That means, the boundary of norms is getting blurred. Citizens with low level of norms do not absolutely mean that they do not care about their community or the government actions. On the contrary, they treat those actions which violate the norms as a way of political participation, making a stand against the government.

Further studies should explore the process to have a better understanding of when and how norms would have effect in the online context.

### *5.7 Situational Political Involvement*

Situational political involvement has a positive relationship with online civic engagement ( $\beta=.260$ ,  $p < .001$ , supported H7a) but no significant relationship was found with online political participation (Not supported H7b). Situational political involvement refers to the interest in a particular political issue that triggers the citizen to seek information, due to the increased sense of involvement. Consistent and supported by prior studies in offline civic engagement (e.g., Atkin, 1972; Kanihan & Chaffee, 1996), this study found a positive relationship between situational political involvement and online civic engagement. This is also consistent to other studies in the use of social media to access the news (e.g., Barnidge, 2015; Hyun & Kim, 2015; Macafee, 2013; Oeldorf-hirsch & Sundar, 2014); access to political information (e.g., Abdulrauf et al., 2016); and political interests on social media (e.g., Vraga, Thorson, Kligler-Vilenchik, & Gee, 2015).

The sense of involvement is correlated with perceived relevance. Thus, it is much easier for citizens to perceive community issues as relevant since those issues are concerning about their own neighborhoods. They may have a higher chance of being affected. Citizens will therefore become more motivated to search for information about those community issues and act upon them when necessary. Hence, online civic engagement is encouraged by situational political involvement as people will easily get involved in those community problems.

However, positive relationship was found only to online civic engagement but not to online political participation. There maybe different reasons. For one suggested reason is that online civic engagement is a full mediator between situational political involvement and online political participation. The more the situational political involvement, the more the online civic engagement; which in turn, lead to more

online political participation though this indirect effect fully mediate any direct effect from situational political participation to online political participation.

### *5.8 Limitations and further studies*

There were a number of limitations in this study. First of all, although convenience sampling is deemed to be appropriate data collection in this kind of survey type study, it would be even better to use random sampling to select respondents. In the data analysis, due to the small sample size and normality limitation of the data, PLS-SEM is selected. Robust procedures to validate the measures instrument have adopted. However, if the study had a larger sample size, normality could be tested and assumed, covariance-based SEM could be considered. Moreover, the subjects of this study only focused on undergraduate students. Although college students are appropriate samples as they are eligible voters and heavy users of social media, further studies could extend the target respondents in age range, in different employment, in order to improve the generalizability of the results. The results of this study have its generality limitations. In addition, the current satisfaction level of each individual on his/her own community as well as the government was not considered in this study. It could be related to the level of civic engagement and political participation, and the ways of participation. For example, if that individual is unsatisfied with the government policies, he/she will be more likely to participate in political actions. Therefore, future research could also examine the satisfaction level of each individual on community and government so as to gain insights into the level of political participation and civic engagement in other contexts.

## **6. Conclusions**

This study examined factors related to online political participation. Literature review identified the research gap that less is paying attention to traditional offline political participation, such as: socioeconomic status, trust, norms explain online political participation. Therefore, this study explored the relationship between both traditional offline political participation factors, and social media use and online political participation. The results showed that offline civic engagement has a positive relationship with online civic engagement; offline political participation has a positive relationship with online political participation; social media use has a positive relationship with both online civic engagement and online political participation; situational political participation has a positive relationship with online civic engagement; other traditional offline factors do not find significant relationship with online civic engagement nor online political participation. The empirical results provide us a better understanding to the process of communication on online political participation.

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## **Appendix**

Measured items

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### **Construct (Sources) – Measurement Items**

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#### **Socioeconomic Status (SES)**

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- SES1: Type of Housing  
SES2: Floor area of accommodation  
SES3: Number of rooms in the residence (including living / dining rooms, bedrooms, other rooms, kitchens, bathrooms / toilets)  
SES4: Educational Attainment of Parents (Highest Level Attained)

#### **Trust (Brehm & Rahn, 1997)**

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- Trust1: Generally speaking, I think that most people can be trusted.  
Trust2: I think that most of the time people try to be helpful.  
Trust3: I think that most people would not try to take advantage of me even if they got the chance. They would try to be fair.

#### **Norms (Knack & Keefer, 1997)**

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- Norms1: Claiming government benefits which you are not entitled to  
Norms2: Avoiding a fare on public transport  
Norms3: Cheating on taxes if you have the chance  
Norms4: Keeping money that you have found  
Norms5: Failing to report damage you've done accidentally to a parked vehicle

#### **Situational Political Involvement (SPI) (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010)**

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- SPI1: I pay attention to election information.  
SPI2: I like to stay informed about the elections.  
SPI3: I like to stay informed about the elections.  
SPI4: I actively seek out information concerning the elections.

#### **Social Media (SM)**

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- SM1: How often did you share news on social media?  
SM2: How often did you like a page on social media?  
SM3: How often did you join a community/group on social media?

#### **Online Civic Engagement (OnCE) (Jugert et al., 2013)**

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- OnCE1: Link news, music or video with a social or political content to their contacts  
OnCE2: Discuss societal or political contents on the net  
OnCE3: Participate in an online-based petition, protest or boycott  
OnCE4: Connect to a group in an online social network dealing with social or political issues  
OnCE5: Visit a website of a political or civic organization

#### **Online Political Participation (OnPP) (Vitak et al., 2011)**

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- OnPP1: Added or deleted political information from your profile  
OnPP2: Added or deleted an application that deals with politics  
OnPP3: Became a "fan" of a political candidate or group  
OnPP4: Discussed political information in an Inbox message  
OnPP5: Discussed political information using social media's instant messaging system  
OnPP6: Joined or left a group about politics  
OnPP7: Posted a status update that mentions politics  
OnPP8: Posted a photo that has something to do with politics  
OnPP9: Posted a photo of someone at a political event  
OnPP10: Posted a comment about politics  
OnPP11: Posted a link about politics  
OnPP12: Posted a Note that has something to do with politics or political event  
OnPP13: Took a quiz that about politics
-

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