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

Yu-Ching KEUNG

Online Communication Research Centre, Department of Journalism and Communication, Hong Kong Shue Yan University
jollykeung93@gmail.com

Will W. K. MA

Online Communication Research Centre, Department of Journalism and Communication, Hong Kong Shue Yan University
wkma@hksyu.edu

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, Abdul Hamid, & 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; Bozdag 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 particiation 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, Schlozman, & 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.

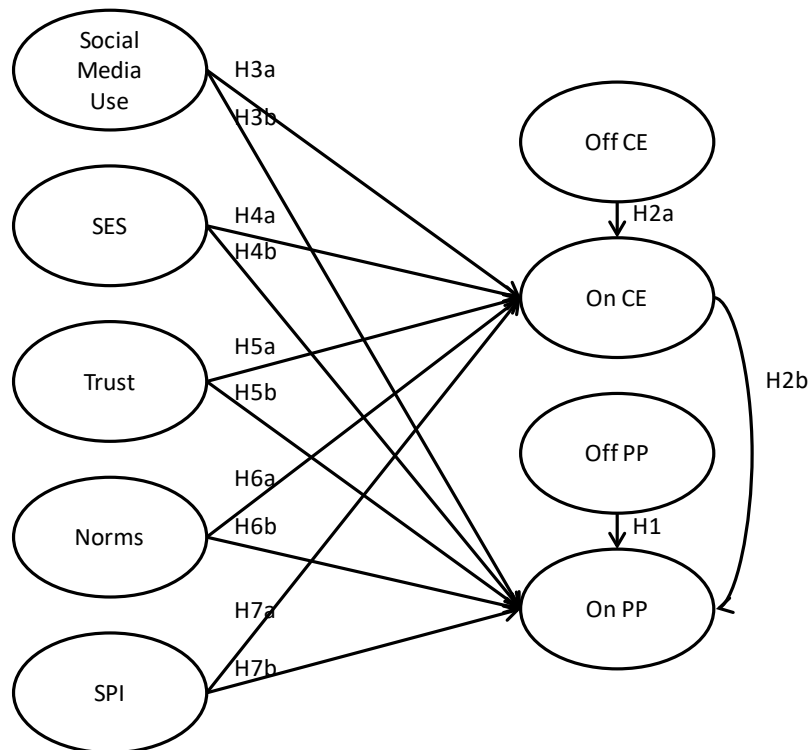The model framework is summarized in the below figure.

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)

Items	Descriptive Statistics
Gender	Male: 79 (39.5%)
	Female: 121 (60.5%)
Age (18-25)	*M / SD*: 21.47 / 1.905
Number of family members	*M / SD*: 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)	*M / SD*: 2.79 / 1.463
Number of rooms in the residence	*M / SD*: 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 α, average variance extracted (AVE), factor loadings, and composite reliability. For all of the constructs, Cronbach's α 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

	M	*SD*	**Loadings**	**AVE**	*α*	*CR*
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 Politcal 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 |

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 (β = .224, p < .05). In support of H2, this study found positive relationships between offline civic engagement and online civic engagement (H2a, β = .495, p < .001) and between online civic engagement and online political participation (H2b, β = .302, p < .001). In support of H3, this study found positive relationships between social-media use and online civic engagement (H3a, β = .232, p < .001) and between social-media use and online political participation (H3b, β = .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 (β = .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^2 (adjusted): Online political participation	0.59			
R^2 (adjusted): Online civic engagement	0.61			
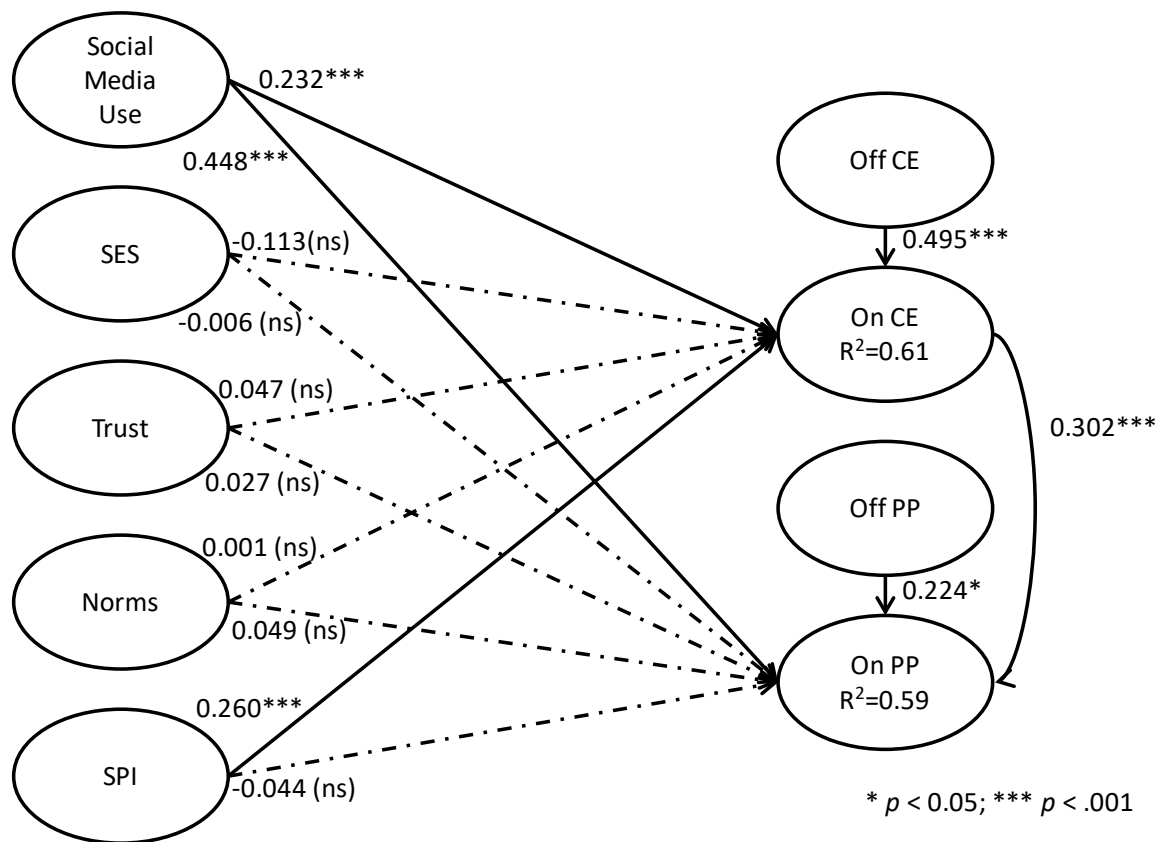
Fig. 2 Summary of Model Testing Results

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 (β=.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 (β=.495, p < .001, supported H2a); online civic engagement and online political participation (β=.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 (β=.232, p < .001, supported H3a) and online political participation (β=.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; Bozdag 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, brining 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 (β=.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 engagemetn 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.

References

Abdulrauf, A. A., Abdul Hamid, N. B., & Ishak, M. S. B. (2016). An exploratory data analysis on social media and youth online political participation in Nigeria and Malaysia. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Approach and Studies, 3*(1), 47-59.

Adler, R. P., Goggin, J. (2005). What do we mean by "civic engagement"?. *Journal of Transformative Education*, *3*(3), 236-253.

Alexa (2016). *The top 500 sites on the web*. Retrieved from http://www.alexa.com/topsites

Amnå, E. (2012). How is civic engagement developed over time? Emerging answers from a multidisciplinary field. *Journal of Adolescence*, *35*(3), 611-627.

Andrews, J. C., Durvasula, S., & Akhter, S. H. (1990). A framework for conceptualizing and measuring the involvement construct in advertising research. *Journal of Advertising, 19*, 27-40.

Anduiza, E., Cantijoch, M., Colombo, C., Gallego, A., Salcedo, J. (2010). The political uses of the Internet in Spain. *Reis, 129*, 133-146.

Atkin, C. K. (1972). Anticipated communication and mass media information seeking. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *36*, 188-199.

Bae, S. Y., Kwak, N., & Campbell, S. W. (2013). Who will cross the border? – The transition of political discussion into the newly emerged venues. *Computers in Human Behavior, 29*, 2081-2089.

Baek, Y. M. (2014). Political mobilization through social network sites: The mobilizing power of political

messages received from SNS friends. *Computers in Human Behavior, 44*, 12-19.

Barner, C., & Rosenwein, F. E. (1985). *Psychological perspectives on politics.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Barnes, S. H., & Kaase, M. (1979). *Political action: Mass participation in five Western democracies.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Barnidge, M. (2015). The role of news in promoting political disagreement on social media. *Computers in Human Behavior, 52*, 211-218.

Berger, B. (2009). Political Theory, Political Science, and the End of Civic Engagement. *Perspectives on Politics, 7*(2), 335-350.

Bolzendahl, C., & Coffé, H. (2013). Are 'good' citizens 'good' participants? Testing citizenship norms and political participation across 25 nations. *Political Studies, 61*, 63-83.

Borrero, J. D., Yousafzai, S. Y., Javed, U., & Page, K. L. (2013). Expressive participation in Internet social movements: Testing the moderating effect of technology readiness and sex on student SNS. *Computers in Human Behavior, 30*, 39-49.

Bozdag, E., Gao, Q., Houben, G.-J., & Warnier, M. (2014). Does offline political segregation affect the filter bubble? An empirical analysis of information diversity for Dutch and Turkish Twitter users. *Computers in Human Behavior, 41*, 405-415.

Brehm, J., & Rahn, W. (1997). Individual-level evidence for the causes and consequences of social capital. *American Journal of Political Science, 41*(3), 999-1023.

Brislin, R. W. (1970). Back-translation for cross-cultural research. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 1*(3), 185-216.

Cambridge English Dictionary (2016). Norm. Retrieved from http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/norm

Chen, H.-T., Ping, S., & Chen, G. (2015). Far from reach but near at hand: The role of social media for cross-national mobilization. *Computers in Human Behavior, 53*, 443-451.

Chin, W. W. (1998). The partial least squares approach to structural equation modeling. In G. A. Marcoulides (Ed.), *Modern methods for business research* (pp. 295-358). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Conroy, M., Feezell, J. T., & Guerrero, M. (2012). Facebook and political engagement: A study of online political group membership and offline political engagement. *Computers in Human Behavior, 28*(5), 1535-1546.

Dalton, R. J. (1988). *Citizen politics in western democracies: Public opinion and political parties in the United States, Great Britain, West Germany, and France. Chatham*, N.J: Chatham House Publishers.

Dalton, R. J. (2006). Citizenship norms and political participation in America: The good news is ... the bad news is wrong (CDACS occasional paper). Washington DC: Center for Democracy and Civil Society, Georgetown University.

Dalton, R. J. (2008). Citizenship norms and the expansion of political participation. *Political Studies, 56*(1), 76-98.

Davison, A. C., & Hinkley, D. V. (1997). *Bootstrap methods and their application.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Diamantopoulos, A., & Winklhofer, H. M. (2001). Index construction with formative indicators: an alternative to scale development. *Journal of Marketing Research, 38*, 269-277.

Diller, E. C. (2001). *Citizens in service: The challenge of delivering civic engagement training to national service programs.* Washington, DC: Corporation for National and Community Service.

Faber, R. J., Tims, A. R., & Schmitt, K. G. (1993). Negative political advertising and voting intent: The role of involvement and alternative information sources. *Journal of Advertising, 22*, 67-76.

Efron, B., & Tibshirani, R. J. (1993). *An introduction to the bootstrap.* New York: Chapman Hall.

Fornell, C., & Bookstein, F. L. (1982). Two Structural Equation Models: LISREL and PLS applied to consumer Exit-Voice Theory. *Journal of Marketing Research, 19*(4), 440-452.

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research, 18*(1), 39-50.

Fu, H., Mou, Y., Miller, M. J., & Jalette, G. (2011). Reconsidering political cynicism and political involvement: A test of antecedents. *American Communication Journal, 13*(2), 44-61.

Gainous, J., Marlowe, A. D., & Wagner, K. M. (2013). Traditional cleavages or a new world: Does online social networking bridge the political participation divide? *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society, 26*, 145-158.

Gibson, C. (2000). *From inspiration to participation: A review of perspectives on youth civic engagement.* New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Gil de Zúñiga, H., Jung, N., & Valenzuela, S. (2012). Social media use for news and individuals' social capital, civic engagement and political participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 17*(3), 319-336.

Gottfried, A. (1985). Measures of socioeconomic status in child development research: Data and recommendations. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 31*(1). 85-92.

Hair, J., Black, B., Babin, B., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis: A global perspective.* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education.

Hair, J. F., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2011). PLS-SEM: Indeed a silver bullet. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 19*(2), 139-151.

Hair, J. F., Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., Mena, J. A. (2012). An Assessment of the use of partial least squares structural equation modeling in marketing research. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 40*(3), 414-433.

Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., Sarstedt, M. (2013). *A primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Halpern, D., & Gibbs, J. (2012). Social media as a catalyst for online deliberation? Exploring the affordances of Facebook and YouTube for political expression. *Computers in Human Behavior, 29*, 1159-1168.

Hardin, R. (1998). Trust in government. In V. Braithwaite & M. Levi (Eds.), *Trust and Governance* (pp. 9-27). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Hauser, R. M. (1994). Measuring socioeconomic status in studies of child development. *Child Development, 65*(6), 1541-1545.

Hawi, N. S. (2012). Internet addiction among adolescents in Lebanon. *Computers in Human Behavior, 28*, 1044-1053.

Hechter, M., & Opp, K. D. (Eds.). (2001). *Social norms*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sinkovics, R. R. (2009). The use of Partial Least Squares Path Modeling in international marketing. In Rudolf R. Sinkovics and Pervez N. Ghauri (Eds.), *Advances in International Marketing* (Vol. 20, pp. 277-320).

Hoffman, L. H., Jones, P. E., & Young, D. G. (2013). Does my comment count? Perceptions of political participation in an online environment. *Computers in Human Behavior, 29*, 2248-2256.

Horne, C. (2003). The internal enforcement of norms. *European Sociological Review*, *19*(4), 335-43.

Hyun, K. D., & Kim, J. (2015). Differential and interactive influences on political participation by different types of news activities and political conversation through social media. *Computers in Human Behavior, 45*, 328-334.

Jensen, J. L. (2013). Political participation online: The replacement and the mobilization hypotheses revisited. *Scandinavian Political Studies, 26*(4), 347-364.

Jugert, P., Eckstein, K., Noack, P., Kuhn, A., & Benbow, A. (2013). Offline and Online Civic Engagement Among Adolescents and Young Adults from Three Ethnic Groups. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, *42*(1), 123-135.

Kanihan, S. F., & Chaffee, S. H. (1996, August). *Situational influence of political involvement on information seeking: A field experiment*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Anaheim, CA.

Kim, Y., Chen, H.-T. & Gil de Zuniga, H. (2013). Stumbling upon news on the Internet: Effects of incidental news exposure and relative entertainment use on political engagement. *Computers in Human Behavior, 29*, 2607-2614.

Kim, Y., Hsu, S., & Gil de Zúñiga, H. (2013). Influence of social media use on discussion network heterogeneity and civic engagement: The moderating role of personality traits. *Journal of Communication*, *63*(3), 498-516.

Kim, Y., & Khang, H. (2014). Revisiting civic voluntarism predictors of college students' political participation in the context of social media. *Computers in Human Behavior, 36*, 114-121.

Klesner, J. L. (2007). Social capital and political participation in Latin America. *Latin American Research Review*, *42*(2), 1-32.

Knack, S. (1992). Civic norms, social sanctions, and voter turnout. *Rationality and Society*, *4*(2), 133-56.

Knack, S., & Keefer, P. (1997). Does social capital have an economic payoff? A cross-country investigation. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 1251-1288.

Kushin, M. J., & Yamamoto, M. (2010). Did social media really matter? College students' use of online media and political decision making in the 2008 election. *Mass Communication and Society*, *13*(5), 608-630.

Lee, H., Kwak, N., Campbell, S. W., & Ling, R. (2014). Mobile communication and political participation in South Korea: Examining the intersections between informational and relational uses. *Computers in Human Behavior, 39*, 85-92.

Léger, C., Politis, D. N., & Romano, J. P. (1992). Bootstrap technology and applications. *Technometrics, 34*(4), 378-398.

Lewis, M. (2011). An analysis of the relationship between political blog reading, online political activity, and voting during the 2008 presidential campaign. The *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences, 6*(3), 11-28

Liefbroer, A. C. & Billari, F. C. (2010). Bringing norms back in: A theoretical and empirical discussion of their importance for understanding demographic behaviour, *Population, Space and Place*, *16*(4), 287-305.

Lu, Y., Heatherly, K. A., & Lee, J. K. (2016). Cross-cutting exposure on social networking sites: The effects of SNS discussion disagreement on political participation. *Computers in Human Behavior, 59*, 74-81.

Ma, W. W. K. (2012). Online Knowledge Sharing. In Z. Yan (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Cyber Behavior* (pp.394-402).

Hershey, PA: Information Science Publishing.

Ma, W. W. K., & Chan, A. (2014). Knowledge sharing and social media: Altruism, perceived online attachment motivation, and perceived online relationship commitment. *Computers in Human Behavior, 39*, 51-58

Ma, W. W. K., & Yuen, A. H. K. (2011). Understanding Online Knowledge Sharing: An Interpersonal Relationship Perspective. *Computers & Education, 56*(1), 210-219.

Macafee, T. (2013). Some of these things are not like the others: Examining motivations and political predispositions among political Facebook activity. *Computers in Human Behavior, 29*, 2766-2775.

Mackova, A., & Macek, J. (2014). 'Zit Brno': Czech online political activism from jokes and tactics to politics and strategies. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychological Research on Cyberspace, 8*(3), article 5. doi: 10.5817/CP2014-3-5

Marsh, A., & Kaase, M. (1979), Measuring political action. In S. H. Barnes and M. Kaase (Eds.), *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies* (pp. 57-97). Beverly Hills: Sage

Milbrath, L. W., & Goel, M. L. (1977). *Political participation: How and why do people get involved in politics?* (2nd ed.). Chicago: Rand McNally.

Mullen, M. R. (1995). Diagnosing measurement equivalence in cross-national research. *Journal of International Business Studies, 26*(3), 573-596.

Mueller, C.W., & Parcel, T.L. (1981). Measures of socioeconomic status: Alternatives and recommendations. *Child Development, 52,* 13-30.

Nam, T. (2011). Whose e-democracy? The democratic divide in American electoral campaigns. *Information Polity, 16*(2), 131-150.

Newton, K. (2001). Trust, Social Capital, Civil Society, and Democracy. *International Political Science Review*, *22*(2), 201-214.

Ng, M. (2016). Factors influencing the consumer adoption of Facebook: A two-country study of youth markets. *Computers in Human Behavior, 54*, 491-500.

Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Oeldorf-hirsch, A., & Sundar, S. S. (2014). Posting, commenting, and tagging: Effects of sharing news stories on Facebook. *Computers in Human Behavior, 44*, 240-249.

Park, C. S. (2013). Does Twitter motivate involvement in politics? Tweeting, opinion leadership, and political engagement. *Computers in Human Behavior, 29*, 1641-1648.

Pendry, L. F., & Salvatore, J. (2015). Individual and social benefits of online discussion forums. *Computers in Human Behavior, 50*, 211-220.

Pennington, N., Winfrey, K. L., Warner, B. R., & Kearney, M. W. (2014). Liking Obama and Romney (on Facebook): An experimental evaluation of political engagement and efficacy during the 2012 general election. *Computers in Human Behavior, 44*, 279-283.

Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Rainie, L., Smith, A., Schlozman, K., Brady, H., & Verba, S. (2012). *Social Media and Political Engagement.* Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/2012/10/19/social-media-and-political-engagement/

Reinartz,W., Haenlein, M., & Henseler, J. (2009). An empirical comparison of the efficacy of covariance-based and variance-based SEM. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 26*, 332-344.

Ringle, C., Wende, S., & Will, A. (2005). Customer segmentation with FIMIX-PLS. In T. Aluja, J. Casanovas, V. Esposito Vinzi, A. Morineau, & M. Tenenhaus (Eds.), *PLS and related methods: Proceedings of the PLS'05 international symposium* (pp. 507–514). Paris: Decisia.

Ringle, C., Sarstedt, M., & Straub, D. W. (2012). A critical look at the use of PLS-SEM in MIS Quarterly. *MIS Quarterly*, 36, iiv–8.

Salmon, C. T. (1986). Perspectives on involvement in consumer and communication research. In B. Dervin & M. J. Voigt (Eds.), *Progress in communication sciences* (Vol. 7, pp. 243-268).

Scheufele, D. A., Nisbet, M. C., Brossard, D., & Nisbet, E. C. (2004). Social structure and citizenship: Examining the impacts of social setting, network heterogeneity, and informational variables on political participation. *Political Communication, 21*(3), 315-338.

Smith, B. G., Men, R. L., & Al-Sinan, R. (2015). Tweeting Taksim communication power and social media advocacy in the Taksim square protests. *Computers in Human Behavior, 50*, 499-507.

Song, Y., Dai, X.-Y., & Wang, J. (2016). Not all emotions are created equal: Expressive behavior of the networked public on China's social media site. *Computers in Human Behavior, 60*, 525-533.

Steijn, W. P., & Schouten, A. P. (2013). Information sharing and relationships on social networking sites. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior & Social Networking*, *16*(8), 582-587.

Stetka, V., & Mazak, J. (2014). Whither slacktivism? Political engagement and social media use in the 2013 Czech Parliamentary elections. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace, 8*(3), article 7. doi: 10.5817/CP2014-3-7

Suh, H., Yee, J., & Chang, D. (2013). Type of trust and political participation in five countries: Results of social quality survey. *Development and Society*, *42*(1), 1-28.

Tabachnick, B.G. & Fidell, L.S. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics* (5th ed.). Boston, Massachusettes: Alllyn and Bacon/Pearson Education.

Tewksbury, D., & Althaus, S. L. (2000). Differences in knowledge acquisition among readers of the paper and online versions of a national newspaper. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 77*(3), 457-479.

Tucker, C. M., & Santiago, A. M. (2013). The role of acculturation in the civic engagement of Latino immigrants. *Advances in Social Work, 14*(1), 178-205.

Tufekci, Z., & Wilson, C. (2012). Social media and the decision to participate in political protest: Observations from Tahrir Square. *Journal of Communication, 62*(2), 363-379.

Van Deth, J. (2007). Norms of citizenship. In R. J. Dalton and H.-D. Klingemann (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behaviour* (pp.402-417).

Veenstra, A. S., Iyer, N., Hossain, M. D., & Park, J. (2013). Time, place, technology: Twitter as an information source in the Wisconsin labor protests. *Computers in Human Behavior, 31*, 65-72.

Verba, S., & Nie, N. H. (1972). *Participation in America: Political democracy and social equality*. New York: Harper & Row.

Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995a). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics* (Vol. 4). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995b). Beyond SES: A resource model of political participation. *American Political Science Review, 89*(02), 271-294.

Vitak, J., Zube, P., Smock, A., Carr, C. T., Ellison, N., & Lampe, C. (2011). It's complicated: Facebook users' political participation in the 2008 election. *CyberPsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 14*(3), 107-114.

Vraga, E. K., Thorson, K., Kligler-Vilenchik, N., & Gee, E. (2015). How individual sensitivities to disagreement shape youth political expression on Facebook. *Computers in Human Behavior, 45*, 281-289.

Wilden, R., & Gudergan, S. P. (2015). The impact of dynamic capabilities on operational marketing and technological capabilities: Investigating the role of environmental turbulence. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 43*(2), 181-199.

Xie, W. (2014). Social network site use, mobile personal talk and social capital among teenagers. *Computers in Human Behavior, 41*, 228-235.

Yu, R. P. (2016). The relationship between passive and active non-political social media use and political expression on Facebook and Twitter. *Computers in Human Behavior, 58*, 413-420.

Zaichkowsky, J. L. (1986). Conceptualizing involvement. *Journal of Advertising, 15*, 4-34.

Appendix

Measured items

Construct (Sources) – Measurement Items
Socioeconomic Status (SES)
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)
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)
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
Situaional Political Involvement (SPI) (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010)
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)
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)
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 Politcal Participation (OnPP) (Vitak et al., 2011)
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

About the Authors

Yu-Ching KEUNG. Ms Keung is currently an MSSc student studying Public Policy at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. She graduated from Hong Kong Shue Yan University in 2016 with a BA in Journalism and Mass Communication. She plans to work in the field of public affairs in the future. She is interested in conducting research on media and various social issues.

Will W. K. MA. Dr. Ma is an Associate Professor of the Department of Journalism and Communication at the Hong Kong Shue Yan University. He is the CEO of Online Communication Research Centre of the Department. He got a BA at City University of Hong Kong, a MSc and a MPhil at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. He received his PhD at the University of Hong Kong. His research focuses on the use of information systems for communication, online knowledge sharing and interpersonal relationship.