

Digital Communication Between Councilors and Users on Twitter. Failed Opportunity to Strengthen Image and Validity in the Public Sphere*

[English Version]

Comunicación digital entre ediles y usuarios en Twitter. Oportunidad fallida en el fortalecimiento de imagen y vigencia en la esfera pública

Comunicação digital entre ediles e usuários no Twitter. Oportunidade falhada no fortalecimento da imagem e validade na esfera pública

Received June 15, 2019. Accepted April 29, 2020.

› Para citar este artículo:

Bohórquez-Pereira, Giovanni;
Flórez-Quintero, Juan-Diego;
Alguero-Montaño, Miguel-
Orlando (2021). Digital
Communication Between
Councilors and Users on Twitter.
Failed Opportunity to Strengthen
Image and Validity in the Public
Sphere. *Ánfora*, 28(50). 183-214.
<https://doi.org/10.30854/anfv.28.n50.2021.786>
Universidad Autónoma de
Manizales. ISSN 0121-6538 /
e-ISSN 2248-6941.
CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Giovanni Bohórquez-Pereira**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7752-2008>

Colombia

Juan-Diego Flórez-Quintero***

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0977-5120>

Colombia

Miguel-Orlando Alguero-Montaño****

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0550-6783>

Colombia

* This article arises from the research project "Twitter as a means of local political interaction. Case study in Council of Bucaramanga", conducted at Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana - Bucaramanga headquarter (UPB) that sponsors the research. It started in August 2017 and was completed in April 2019. Research stated there was no conflict of interest in conducting a research project.

** Master's Candidate in Political Science, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Cali headquarter. Ph.D. Candidate. Political Science, University of Zulia, Venezuela, Associate Professor and Coordinator of the Research Hotbed U'wa Werjayá, School of Social Communication-Journalism, School of Social Sciences, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana - Bucaramanga headquarter. Member of the *TIC y Ciudadanía* research group. e-mail: giovanni.bohorquez@upb.edu.co

*** Student of the X semester of Social Communication-Journalism of the Pontificia Bolivariana - Bucaramanga headquarter. Active member of the Research Group U'wa Werjayá of the Faculty of Social Communication-Journalism of the UPB, Bucaramanga headquarters. e-mail: juan.florez.2016@upb.edu.co

**** Social Communicator of the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, UPB, Bucaramanga headquarters. Journalist of the newspaper La Patria of Manizales. Master in Political Studies from the University of Caldas. E-mail: miguel.alguero@lapatria.com

Abstract

Objective: to determine the use of the social network Twitter by the councilors of Bucaramanga as public servants and leaders of local opinion, through hypertextuality, popularity, interactivity, participation, multimediality and interaction. **Methodology:** Netnography was used with mixed techniques: semi-structured interview and application of Twitter's Global index of Potential Persuasive. **Results:** it was found that the Council in its public dissemination process uses a website, with updated information about its activities. Facebook, Twitter and Youtube are used, but interaction and use of them are low. Fourteen of the nineteen councilors have a Twitter account, three of them are users, and the content disseminated about their legislative exercise is limited; the published media content is limited, as well as responses and interactions with users. **Conclusions:** it is concluded that the immersion in public communication of digital platforms and social networks is advancing to guide and disseminate politics, and more from the legislative field. This aspect has been already understood by local and global rulers. The councilors, who participated in this research, felt resistant towards the use of Twitter to focus on issues unrelated to their role as councilors and as such, miss a great opportunity in the use of microblogging, to make proposals related to social affairs, and to contribute from their Twitter account to consolidate their image and validity within the public and electoral sphere.

Keywords: Mobile communication; Political Communication; Twitter; Virtual communities; Virtual Ethnography; Political Leaders.

Resumen

Objetivo: determinar el uso de la red social Twitter por los concejales de Bucaramanga en su ejercicio como servidores públicos y líderes de opinión local, mediante la hipertextualidad, popularidad, interactividad, participación, multimedialidad e interacción. **Metodología:** se acude a la Netnografía con el uso de técnicas mixtas: entrevista semiestructurada y aplicación del Índice Global Potencial Persuasivo de Twitter. **Resultados:** se encontró que el Concejo en su proceso de divulgación pública utiliza un portal web, con información actualizada sobre sus actividades. Usa Facebook, Twitter y Youtube, pero sus registros de interacción y uso de multimedia son reducidos. Catorce de los diecinueve concejales tienen Twitter, tres de ellos marcan actividad y los contenidos difundidos sobre su ejercicio legislativo son limitados; el contenido multimedia publicado es bajo, igual que las respuestas e interacciones con usuarios. **Conclusiones:** se concluye que avanza la inmersión en

la comunicación pública de las plataformas digitales y redes sociales para orientar y difundir el ejercicio político y más desde el campo legislativo, punto que ya los gobernantes locales y globales han entendido. Los concejales que participaron en esta investigación decepcionan al centrar el uso de Twitter en hablar de temas desligados de su función y pierden una gran oportunidad desde su microblogging para hacer propuestas relacionadas con las problemáticas sociales y contribuir desde su cuenta Twitter a consolidar su imagen y vigencia en la esfera pública y electoral.

Palabras clave: Comunicación móvil; Comunicación política; Twitter; Comunidades virtuales; Etnografía virtual; Líderes políticos.

Resumo

Objetivo: determinar a utilização da rede social Twitter pelos vereadores de Bucaramanga em seu exercício como servidores públicos e formadores de opinião locais, através da hipertextualidade, popularidade, interatividade, participação, multimídia e interação. **Metodologia:** a etnografia é utilizada com o uso de técnicas mistas: entrevista semiestruturada e aplicação do Índice de Potencial Persuasivo Global do Twitter. **Resultados:** apurou-se que o Conselho em seu processo de divulgação pública utiliza um portal na web, com informações atualizadas sobre suas atividades. Se usa Facebook, Twitter e YouTube, mas seus registros de interação e uso de multimídia são baixos. Quatorze dos dezenove vereadores possuem Twitter, três deles marcam atividade e o conteúdo divulgado sobre o seu exercício legislativo é limitado; o conteúdo multimídia publicado é baixo, assim como as respostas e interações com os usuários. **Conclusões:** conclui-se que a imersão na comunicação pública das plataformas digitais e redes sociais avança para orientar e divulgar o exercício político e mais do campo legislativo, ponto que os governos locais e globais já entenderam. Os vereadores que participaram desta investigação decepcionam ao focar o uso do Twitter na conversa sobre assuntos alheios à sua função e perdem uma grande oportunidade desde o seu microblogging de fazer propostas relacionadas a problemas sociais e contribuir a partir de sua conta do Twitter para consolidar sua imagem e validade na esfera pública e eleitoral.

Palavras-chave: Comunicação móvel; Comunicação política; Twitter; Comunidades virtuais; Etnografía virtual; líderes políticos.

Introduction

Since the 1990s, the ways in which local government in Colombia work have had a process of transformation affected by several factors, such as new forms of citizen participation established by the Political Constitution of 1991, decentralization of public administration, political reforms of participation in parties, incorporation of elements to model a new public management in inspection scenarios, and the intervention of citizens in debates of general interest. However, along with these transformations and dynamics at the national, regional and local political action, the information and communication technologies have also contributed to political participation becoming part of daily dynamics of users, whether this is an issue of interest or priority or not.

Ciberpolitics, bigdata and government 2.0 are topics that have caught the attention of scholars of Political and Public Communication in the new century. The so-called digital ecosystems generate societies that seek spaces to exercise their right to participate in politics through the Internet; online platforms and social networks contribute to the creation and promotion of interactive meetings that guarantee, direct and multidirectional communication, between members of the same platform or online community.

Through the new digital agora (Cotarelo, 2013), Cyberpolitics, for example, offers an opportunity of equality between citizens and government. These ideas allow for a communication with far higher levels of interactivity than those reached in previous decades, where the personal, or *face to face* was limited, and the mass media were the mediators for excellence and for the circulation of ideas and unidirectional opinions. Practicality and comfort legitimize what for Maia, Gomes and Marques (2011) cited by Almeida, Alves and Miola (2014) are called contemporary democratic practices.

These are the basis for this article that aims at showing some of the results of the research on Twitter as a means of local political interaction, a case study in the Council of Bucaramanga, in order to answer the question: how do councilors of an important city in Colombia establish and interact with their followers on Twitter? And also, to find out what is the improvement of these local political leaders in the use of resources offered by digital social networks, SNSs?

To achieve the goal, firstly, a communicative process within the Building Corporation, both private and public, was explored. Secondly, the use of Social Networks by councilors from Bucaramanga from the concepts of popularity, participation and virality, was studied. Then, the interactivity of local corporations based on messages issued on their accounts and sought to verify the mana-

gement and transparency of the activities they carry out, the content posted on their Twitter profiles were analyzed.

According to Gutiérrez-Rubí (2015) SNs function as a way to lead interaction between users, where ideological debates are constant, and the intensity and depth of participation will partially depend on those who lead or encourage the discussion. Hence, for today's political leader, virtuality is an auspicious scenario for action and visibility.

However, not everyone involved in a political field faces these challenges in the same way, or with the same attitude. For some, especially those who live in areas where connectivity and digital training is minimal, virtuality is considered ineffective and with low-credibility, while in places of higher connection and dominance, the effects are present in trends and replicated by other means.

This situation has guided political leaders, both global and local, to rely on digital platforms to inform and disseminate their ideas, while making them visible to current and potential voters, who can access directly to request or demand certain actions, to state their position on a particular situation, and also to criticize them for their performance or behavior.

In this sense, Castells (2012) called this issue the new democracy, because within hopelessness, the internet allows "... people to collectively manage their lives according to shared democratic principles that are often forgotten in everyday experience" (Castells, 2012, p. 807).

From another perspective, Cavadas-Gormaz (2016) stated that the political leader must know how to communicate and connect words, and make the citizen consider them "as one of us". Erizalde and Riorda (2013), referring to Mizrahi (1999), to remember that the leader or ruler must demonstrate all the time that they do things in the correct way and much better than the opposition" (p. 8).

This can be understood as the *Duty to Be* of a country constituted and supported in participatory and representative democracy; but, in the face of social and political adversity, as is the case in Colombia, it is essential to notice both sides of the coin. On the one hand, to expose from the theoretical approach the importance of virtuality in public communication processes and, on the other, to show how the councilors of a Colombian important city, use ICT in their public activity.

In their research Izureta, Arterton and Perina (2009), Zamora (2011), Peña, Pacheco and Martínez (2012), Erizalde and Riorda (2013) and Vega (2009) pointed out the importance of communication in public activity by political rulers and leaders, which contributes to legitimizing their performance:

Public communication is not concerned with everything that is made visible in the public sphere, but, essentially, with what will contribute to the construction of

public opinion and in any government and state decisions and actions (Habermas, 1978; quoted by Demers and Lavigne, (2007, p. 73). [Own translation]

Representatives of the Department of Information and Communication, DIC, of the University of Quebec, Canada, defined Public Communication, PC as "all the phenomena of production, treatment, dissemination and retroaction of information that creates, guides and transforms public debates and issues" (Demers and Lavigne, 2007, p. 67).

And although the authors do not expand on the relationship between ICT and PC, they state that these new means motivate the interrelationships of rulers and citizens, because the web allows "to introduce individuals into the public debate" (Demers and Lavigne, 2007, p. 71). [Own translation]

Vega (2009) expands the concept and calls it the Government Political Communication, GPC, "-the set of technical and human resources organized and intended to perform informative and journalistic functions, able to contribute to a correct transparency and advertisement in public policy" (Vega, 2009, p.138). [Own translation]

With what has been previously stated, it is clear that the relationship between rulers and citizens went from distant and arrogant, (on the part of the former), and a high disconnection of the public service (on the part of the latter), to areas of horizontality and permanent interaction of both (rulers-citizens) by the use of ICT, in particular by the Internet and its several platforms to achieve "active listening" (Noguera-Vivo, 2013, p. 105). [Own translation]

This has been built and guided towards the governor, but does a councilor also experience this? It is stated since the Constitution of Colombia 1991 (Corte Constitucional, 2015) since the corporate performs "as co-administrator of the Municipal Administration, with functions of political control, formed by councilors directly elected by the population residing in the jurisdiction of each municipality" (Manrique, 1995, p. 97). [Own translation]

In addition, research such as the one conducted by Ramírez and Tabares (2011) establish and confirm four types of relationships between councilors and community: cooperation, intermediation, competition and absence.

Bohórquez-Pereira and Alguero-Montaño (2018) showed the presence of two types: cooperation and absence. For councilors, there is feedback through their communication channels, and they ensure cooperation. In addition, communal leaders are unaware of these contacts and "perceive the councilors as mere political leaders who represent their particular ideals and interests and do not strengthen governance or networked governance" (Bohórquez-Pereira and Alguero-Montaño, 2018, p. 57). [Own translation]

Meanwhile, the introduction of the internet and other technological components into the world of politics led to the massification of ideas and, at the same time, to a blurred relationship between them, thoughts and image. Bonelly (2011) points out that from marketing it is important to know what type of user you want to reach and this includes the world of politics, particularly in electoral processes. After the MyBO or "Obama President" phenomenon in 2008, it was understood "that each individual is able to impact on a social footprint that can generate the viral growth of a message, a joke, a business and why not, an election campaign" (Bonelly, 2011, p. 24). [Own translation]

The potential of these virtual platforms is exploited by everyone who has access. Large connections and equipment are no longer required, nor age, nor a minimum level of education. A simple click on mobile, tablet or PC, allows you to enter and surf the virtual world. The increasing use of these platforms has originated digital phenomena such as virality in social networks. It is understood as digital hyperactivity by users in accelerating flows and content, overflowing traditional paradigms on sender-channel-receiver (Gutiérrez-Rubí, 2015).

It is complex to accurately establish figures related to the virtual world. We are Social and Hootsuite (2019), states that the increase in active users of social media increased between January 2018 and January 2019 by 9%. In figures, it means that it went from 3,196 million users to 3,484 million. 3,260 million use a mobile device as a means to connect to social networks.

The report indicates that in January 2019 in the Americas, the use of social media activity was reported at 66% representing 673 million users, 3.8% more than in the previous year.

Regarding the social network Twitter, the report confirms data already stated by Kit (2016), Morrison (2015) and Kamps (2015). One of them is the uncertainty of the official number of Twitter accounts. In 2016, Smith Kit claimed that Twitter had a billion accounts and estimated that 310 million users joined or visited the social media platform. In December 2018, the report by We are Social and Hootsuite (2019) showed that 670 million of users visited Twitter.com, for more than 9 minutes on each visit, and Omnicore Agency (2019) stated that Twitter can handle 18 quintillion of user accounts, 80% of activity on this network is carried out through mobile devices, 74% of users reported the use of network to check news, and 79% of accounts are not registered in United States.

Another similarity between the reports is related to usability. Twitter is called an influential platform by people who participate in it. Singers, sportsmen, presidents and prime ministers catch the attention and surf the network turning the virtual space into a stage for supporting or confronting ideas and concepts. For Morrison (2015) verified or prominent accounts belong to journalists

and political leaders with high interactivity, since they use it as a communication tool, while other social groups use it as mean of information.

Professional profile, virality of messages, feedback, possibility to monitor followers and to analyze information from retweets, likes and response, are characteristics that Cotarelo (2013) pertain to this network which makes it possible to disseminate political approaches and ideology.

In addition, the personalization of information within this network contributes to the creation of "groups to form a set of alliances and conquering voters" (Maia et al.,2011, p. 181) or the development of virtual communities, defined by Castells (1999) as self-defined electronic networks of interactive communication organized around a shared interest or purpose from activism to online militancy.

With regard to the communicative model of this network, Orihuela (2013) states that Twitter is asymmetric and hence features such as shortness, hyper textuality, interactivity and virality make it different from other networks. Moya (2014) adds that *La Mención (@)*; *El Retuit y el Hastags (#)* are their own issues and make this network the best choice for dissemination of ideas and political participation.

In Colombia, the report We are Social and Hootsuite (2019) indicates that 34 million Colombians are active users of social networks. It represents 68% of use, 9.7% more than in 2018. The average time spent in this activity is 9 hours a day, 3 hours and 31 minutes on social networks, 3 hours and 12 minutes on watching TV via streaming, and 1 hour listening to music. Regarding the connection to the network, this is mainly by mobile, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu (2019) states that 57% of responders (982) use their phone to check social networks, 46% to post photos on networks and 18% in "live broadcast" on social networks.

In the ranking of Alexa Top Websites, Twitter in Colombia ranks 19th in visits with 3.2 daily pages in which they spend an average of 6 minutes, and 60% of internet users in this country access to this social network. It also notes that 69% of Twitter users are men, and 31% women (We are Social and Hootsuite, 2019).

The Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies, MinTic Colombia (2019) reports on its website that although there are no official data about Twitter, "the industry estimates that about 6 million Colombians use the popular service, which has become the preferred way by media, political campaigns, sportsmen, people of government, among others".

With regard to the city of Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia, the data on the number of accounts and use of Twitter is not precise. Durán (2015, p. 57) [Own translation] reports that by 2014, the region ranked the fourth in the generation of publications with 4.69%, during research conducted by Meridean

Group. The region was below Cundinamarca, 20%, Valle del Cauca, 13.39%, and Antioquia, 11.76%. In the sample studied (920,968 publications) generated by 259,620 authors, the messages with political content were in 1.8% on Twitter and 80% of these were texts.

It is then necessary to review the new political agora (Castells, 2000), this time from the Corporation form by councilors and its members, when Twitter is noticed as a tool for visibility before the public sphere, and as a mean of interactivity with users.

Methodology

The research was developed from a qualitative approach, mainly descriptive and it used mixed applied techniques.

According to the goal on searching communicative processes generated from virtuality with components such as: subjects (real or created), labels (linguistic and paralinguistic messages), diverse global network, and instant interaction or response. The methodological model of Virtual Ethnography (Kozinets, 1997,1998), Hine (2004), Del Fresno (2011), Ruiz and Aguirre, (2015) or Netnography (Turpo, 2008), Kozinets (2006) was used as it is considered the most appropriate one to establish how councilors (subjects) show themselves in virtuality to followers and users (real or labels, messages, multimedia resources and interactions they cause, as it shows the "experiences of network" (Turpo, 2008, p. 84), own object of that methodological approach.

In addition, the review and analysis of findings in this type of inquiry process do not interfere with the cultural variations of subjects. As Del Fresno (2011) states "The social world must be studied in its natural state" (p. 67). However, in virtual ethnography the construction of meanings, objects and identities given by spaces, fields, connections and interactions between technology and users takes relevance (Hine, 2004, p. 9). [Own translation]

Likewise, the model allows the researcher to be immersed in the process without losing the impartiality in what is searched:

The ethnographer [may inhabit] a kind of middle world, simultaneously being a stranger and a native... [so] have to get close enough to the culture under study to understand how it works, while maintaining the distance necessary to account for it (Hine, 2004, p. 13). [Own translation]

In this regard Laaksonen *et al.* (2017) state levels of researcher participation within ethnography:

The role of the researcher in an ethnographic setting ranges from that of outside observer to full participant (Madden, 2010). Regardless of the level of participation, the researcher commonly writes detailed field notes, which provide a so-called thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the events and practices observed. Field notes focus on documenting highly detailed and specific descriptions of the behavior and the environment, often with analysis or interpretation kept to a minimum (p. 12). [Own translation]

It was then proposed, that as they were interested in studying the interactivity of councilors on their social networks, particularly on Twitter, and accepting that this process first demands a descriptive look, and then to analyze and interpret what was found, it was right to turn to the Netnography model, "to gauge the role of technologies as instruments and resources, and also as mediators in the cybercultural practices performed by their users" (Ruiz and Aguirre, 2015, p. 81). [Own translation]

In relation to the techniques, instruments and support tools for Virtual Ethnography, Meneses-Cabrera and Cardozo-Cardona (2014) define them as e-science practices (Cuadra, 2009), since they are mediated by a computer that makes it possible to apply a variety of scientific practices that are supported in the digital infrastructure.

Thus, through mixed data collection and analysis techniques, a Netnography of character or observational type was developed, in which "the researcher is not revealed to the online community (Kozinets, 2006, p. 9) [Own translation] since this remote and concrete form allows one to describe the interactions of users within the virtual community.

While Netnography extends its forms of study from multiple methods, approaches and analysis techniques, this research used non-participating observation in its implementation phases, along with field logs, structured interviews and documentary analysis, with each corresponding instrument in order to keep methodological rigor.

In this sense, this study established three phases. The first one focused on the characterization of the Municipal Corporation in its internal and external communication processes, for such purpose, a structured Interview format was applied to the administrative staff and community manager of the Corporation's Press Office. In addition, a non-Participant Observation was carried out to identify and register the media and social networks that the Council of

Bucaramanga uses. Observation forms, data analysis grids and an open-ended questionnaire were used as instruments in this first stage.

On this basis and as a second part of this first phase, we proceeded to search for the published information of the 19 councilors with an emphasis on the social network Twitter on its activity and interactivity, and the use of tools during the first and third sessions of meetings of the Council of the year 2017. After, we sought to establish the activity of users on Twitter and its possible scope within the digital ecosystem of the network with the Global Persuasive Power Index of Twitter created by Moya and Herrera (2016):

The persuasive processes underlying the messages that political leaders broadcast on Twitter - and that they receive without intermediation - reveal keys to the success of a tactic aimed at gaining support for a certain program or political action. In this environment, the political leaders have the opportunity to display their persuasive skills by reinforcing their presence in the traditional ones, while presenting a personalized and differentiated public image from the collective image of the party to which they belong (Moya and Herrera, 2016, p. 845). [Own translation]

Therefore, it is necessary to find the Follow-up Coefficient related to the flow of messages that must exist between two or more accounts and the Communication Coefficient, which is defined as “the effort that an account makes to generate conversation” (Moya and Herrera, 2016, p. 848). [Own translation]. Through the features and tools provided by *microblogging*, such as retweets, mentions and responses.

To calculate the Follow-up Coefficient, the product of the sum of unique followers plus reciprocal followers over the total followers were taken into account. While to find the Communication coefficient, the equation of the Follow-up coefficient multiplied by responses plus mentions was necessary, plus the constant 1.66 (Retweets) on basic tweets which do not generate interactions, more responses, more retweets.

The range of rating of the Follow-up Coefficient should range between 1 and 3, the latter percentage shows the total reciprocal followers of an account. In other words, there is a direct and horizontal communication between the account holder and its followers. To register the data, which was ranked from the highest to the lowest, the paid software www.Twitonomy.com was used.

A second phase of the process was oriented to review the resources and their use. Hence, the concepts of Scolari (2013) on multimedia were assumed. This is understood as the different formats and platforms that the internet allows users to publish information and hypertextuality which is interpreted

as the number of links and connections of the web; and the interactivity that is defined as communication mediated by computers. For its registration and subsequent analysis, an Excel matrix grid was prepared with the data from the three (3) most active councilors.

In relation to the texts published in the account of the selected councilors, these were contrasted with the contents of the Acts of the Council of Bucaramanga in order to establish what topics of public interest were discussed in the sessions of the corporation and were replicated in their accounts and whether they generated some reaction from the followers. Analysis grids were used as an instrument applied for this last stage.

Results

The first part of the results addressed to the corporate and digital communication of Bucaramanga's Council, then the behavior of the councilors on social networks and Twitter is shown.

It was found that the Council of Bucaramanga in the field of digital communication has the portal www.concejodebucaramanga.gov.co. In the main page of the site, there are nine tabs where you can see: Home, Council, Councilors, Commissions, Downloads, Participation, Hiring, Offices and Projects.

When the "Home" window is displayed, you can see the most recent informative records and events. In the "Council" tab, you have all the aspects related to the entity's corporate culture, while in "Councilors" tab you have the main information of each one of the councilors that, when displaying individually, you find their personal data. The page also features multimedia resources. It offers a live signal of the plenary sessions and the date of the next deliberation session. There is also access to the institutional mail, telephone directory, community responses, frequently asked questions, accountability, complaints and claims, transparency and access to public information.

Update is evident, its interface is visually pleasing and its layout makes it easy to browse. It has a direct link to the social networks in which the page is registered. In this regard, the Council of Bucaramanga is registered in three social networks, namely, Twitter with the account @concejodebucaramanga, Facebook with Concejo.debucaramanga and YouTube with Unconcejoparatodos.

As of September 30th, 2017, the Facebook account registered 7,248 followers, Twitter 1,905 and Youtube 53. The Corporation's Twitter account follows 695 accounts and 3,450 tweets, 319 likes, and 1,571 videos and photos were

issued, with neither record interaction (retweet), or links, or hypertextuality (Table 1).

Table 1. Social Media Data Council of Bucaramanga, 09-30-2017

Social networks of the Council of Bucaramanga					
Twitter	@concejobucara	Facebook	@concejo.de-bucaramanga	Youtube	CONCEJO DE BUCARAMANGA
Followers	1.905	Followers	7.248	Subscribers	53
Followed	695	Amount of "likes" on the page	7.272	Videos	132
Tweets	3450	Videos	107	Views	11.222
Likes	319	Photos	2.561		
Multimedia	1,571 photos and videos	Maximum range of reproductions	3.070		

Source: Author's

The Facebook page has 7,272 followers, 107 videos, 2,561 photos and a maximum range of views of 3,070.

The YouTube channel registers 53 subscribers, a low number in contrast to the 11,222 visits and 132 reported videos. When playing the videos it is evident that they are of short duration (2 minutes), the content is directly related to the activities of the Council and the number of comments is limited.

Regarding the interaction variable, the Facebook account is the one that registers the most activity with limited feedback. This might be because of its content, which is based on the same information.

When reviewing the profiles of the councilors from the website, the registration of email and social networks was evident: Facebook, Youtube and Twitter; of the latter, 14 out of the 19 members had an account (April, 2017).

To date, the councilors of the Liberal Party, Jaime Andrés Beltrán Martínez, @jbeltranconcejo and Uriel Ortiz Ruíz, @UrielOrtizRuiz along with the councilor of the Polo Democrático Party, Jorge Hernán Flórez Herrera, @JorgeFlorezSi are the ones who have the highest number of followers on Twitter: 2412, 2084 and 2050, respectively. Contrary to councilors Dionicio Carrero Correa, @DionicioCC1, of the Liberal Party, Cleomedes Bello Villabona @CleomedesBello,

of the Unidad Nacional Party and Jhon Marcell Pinzón Rincón, @Jhonmpinzon, also of the Unidad Nacional Party, who register a number of followers less than 150. The lowest number is for @ DionicioCC1 with 58, @CleomedesBello 96 and @Jhonmpinzon with 131.

The remaining accounts, @Nancyrueda03 has 339 followers and Arturo Zambrano Avellaneda @ArturoZambranoA of the Centro Democrático Party has 1044 followers.

As an additional contribution to this study, a comparative table was made between the number of votes obtained by the councilors when they were elected (October, 2018) and their followers. The limited relationship among them is evident. The exception is shown by Jorge Édgar Flórez Herrera, @JorgeFlorezSi, with 50 as a difference of votes and followers. It is noted that social media accounts sometimes cannot be identified with people (Table 2).

Table 2. Number of Votes and Number of Twitter Followers of Councilors from Bucaramanga

Councilor	Political Party	Number of votes	Twitter Followers	Username
Jaime Andrés Beltrán Martínez	Liberal	12.837	2.412	@jbeltranconcejo
Uriel Ortiz Ruiz	Liberal	7.590	2.084	@UrielOrtizRuiz
Nancy Elvira Lora	Liberal	7.965	339	@Nancyrueda03

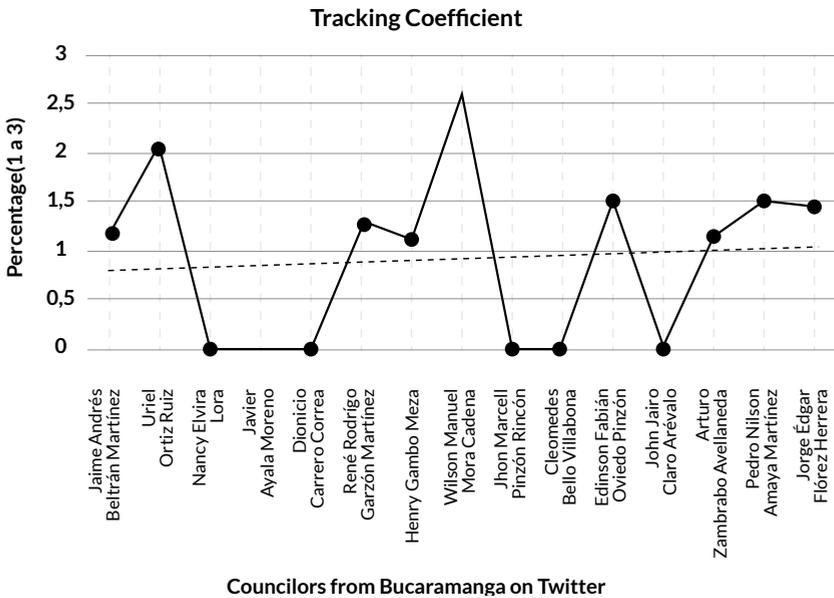
Councilor	Political Party	Number of votes	Twitter Followers	Username
Dionicio Carrero Correa	Liberal	6.117	58	@DionicioCC1
René Rodrigo Garzón Martínez	Liberal	6.117	679	@ReneGarzonM
Henry Gamboa Meza	Liberal	7.623	393	@henrygamboameza
Wilson Manuel Mora Cadena	Liberal	8.867	921	@WilsonMora8890
Jhon Marcell Pinzón Rincón	Unidad Nacional	4.361	131	@Jhonmpinzon
Cleomedes Bello Villabona	Unidad Nacional	3.698	96	@CleomedesBello

Councilor	Political Party	Number of votes	Twitter Followers	Username
Edinson Fabián Oviedo Pinzón	Cambio Radical	5.224	499	@FabianOviedoP
John Jairo Claro Arevalo	Alianza Social Indígena	3.446	729	@johnclaro
Arturo Zambrano Avellaneda	Centro Democrático	3.645	1.044	@ArturoZambranoA
Pedro Nilson Amya Martínez	Opción Ciudadana	3.398	698	@PedroNilsonConc
Jorge Édgar Flórez Herrera	Polo Democrático	2.099	2.050	@JorgeFlorezSi

Source: Author's

On the other hand, the equations of the Global Persuasive Potential Index of Moya and Herrera (2016) to the 14 councilors actively involved in the network show that Wilson Manuel Mora @ WilsonMora8890 was the councilor with the highest Monitoring Coefficient with 2.57, followed by Uriel Ortiz Ruiz @UrielOrtizRuiz with 2.09% and then Jorge Édgar Flórez @JorgeFlorezSi with 1.46%. The lowest involvement was shown by Arturo Zambrano @ArturoZambranoA with 1.11%; followed by Jaime Andrés Beltrán @jbeltranconcejo with 1.15% and, finally, René Rodrigo Garzón @ReneGarzonM with 1.27%. It is to be clarified that the councilors who appear with zero (0) in their graphs are because they did not meet all the data to calculate the equations (Figure 1).

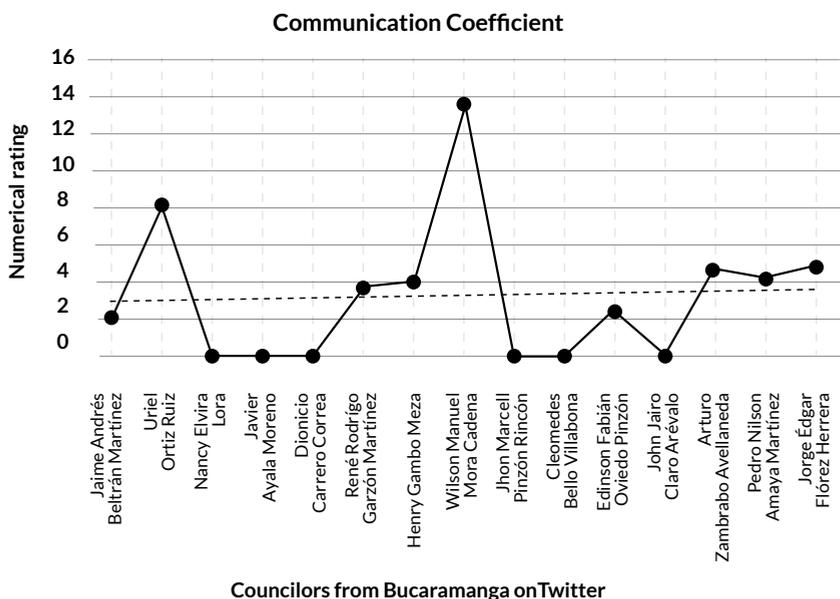
Figure 1. Tracking Coefficient



Source: Author's

Regarding the Communication Coefficient, the results favored Wilson Manuel Mora (@WilsonMora8890) with 13.38% and Uriel Ortiz Ruiz (@UrielOrtizRuiz) with 7.99% who are members of the Liberal party, and Jorge Édgar Flórez (@JorgeFlorezSi) of Polo Democrático with 4.73% and they also have the highest amount of activity on Twitter. The lowest results were for Jaime Andrés Beltrán, @jbeltranconcejo, with 2.26%; followed by Edinson Fabián Oviedo, @FabianOviedoP, with 2.41%; and finally, René Rodrigo Garzón, @ReneGarzonM, with 3.73% (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Communication Coefficient

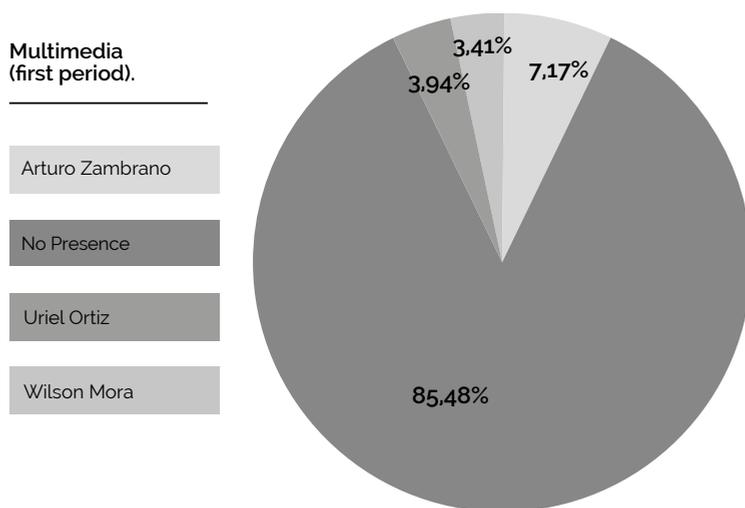


Source: Author's

As indicated in the methodology, the topics Multimediality, Hypertextuality and Interactivity were applied only to the three councilors with the highest Coefficient of Followers and Communication.

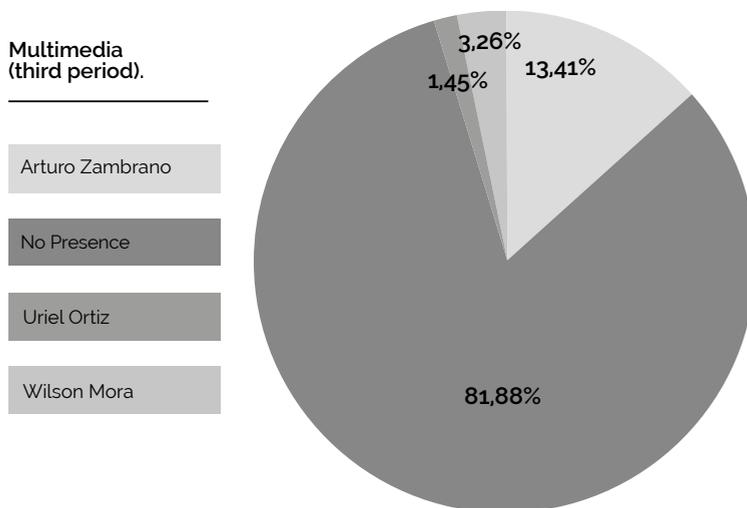
In that order, what refers to Multimedia was found under the use of digital resources such as images, videos, audios, and documentary formats in the tweets for the first and third regular sessions of 2017. For both the first (85.48%) and the third period (81.88%) of sessions, the Multimedia is limited. Arturo Zambrano (@ArturoZambranoA was the councilor who obtained the highest percentage in both periods), since after crossing the data and generating Figures 3 and 4 scores with 7.17% and 13.41% respectively. While Uriel Ortiz (3.94% and 1.45%) and Wilson Mora (3.41% and 3.26%), on the other hand, respectively exhibit the mentioned figures.

Figure 3. Multimedia (first period).



Source: Author's

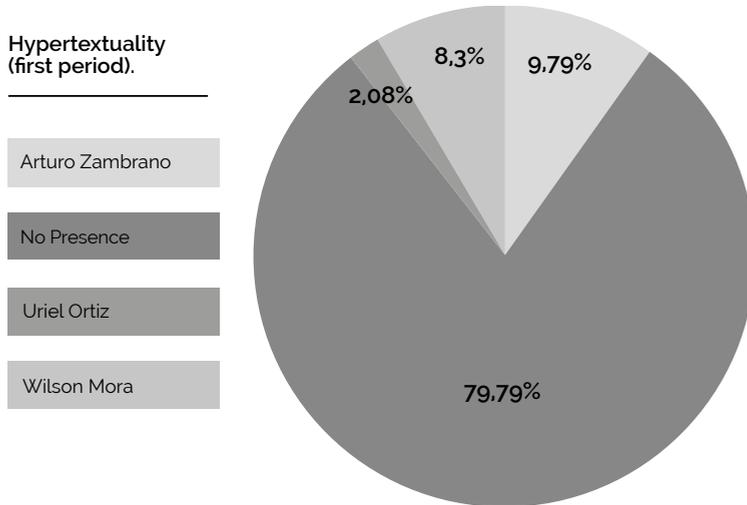
Figure 4. Multimedia (third period).



Source: Author's

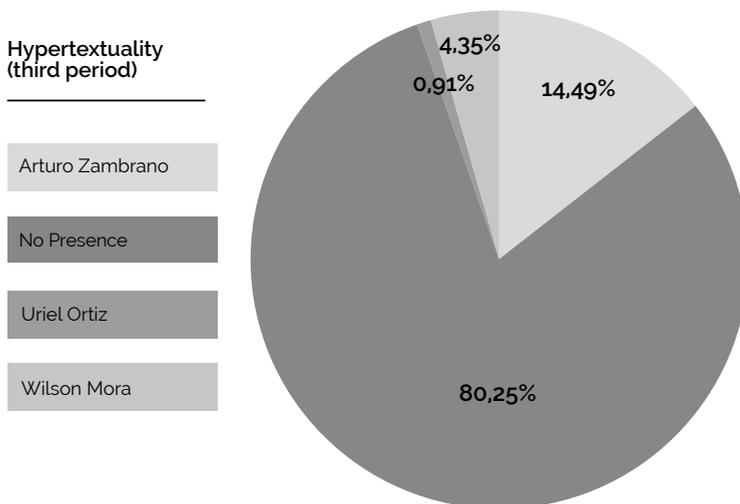
Now, hypertextuality that is understood as the use of links to increase information in the tweets to the generation and use of hashtags (#), mentions (@) and retweets that are either or commented by the councilor, Wilson Manuel Mora (@WilsonMora8890) obtained a higher percentage in the first period (8.33%). However, Arturo Zambrano (@ArturoZambranoA) (9.79%) is the one who heads the range for the third period. Compared to the third period, Uriel Ortiz (@UrielOrtizRuiz) obtained 0.91%, being the lowest compared to Arturo Zambrano (14.49%).

Figure 5. Hypertextuality (first period).



Source: Author's

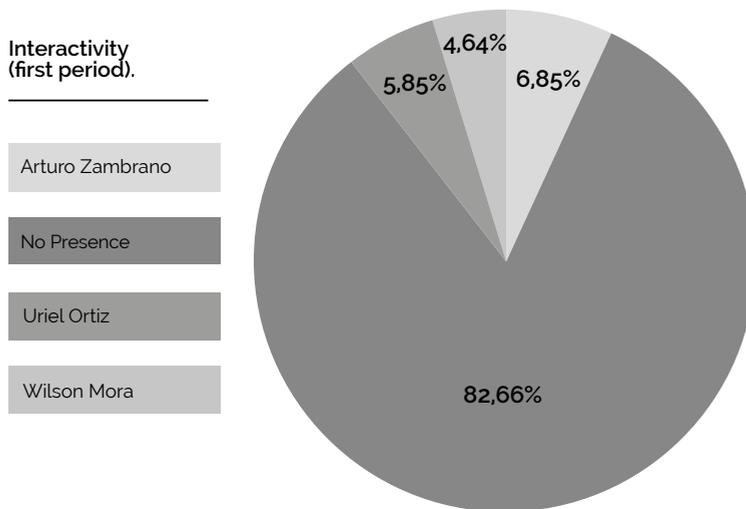
Figure 6. Hypertextuality (third period)



Source: Author's

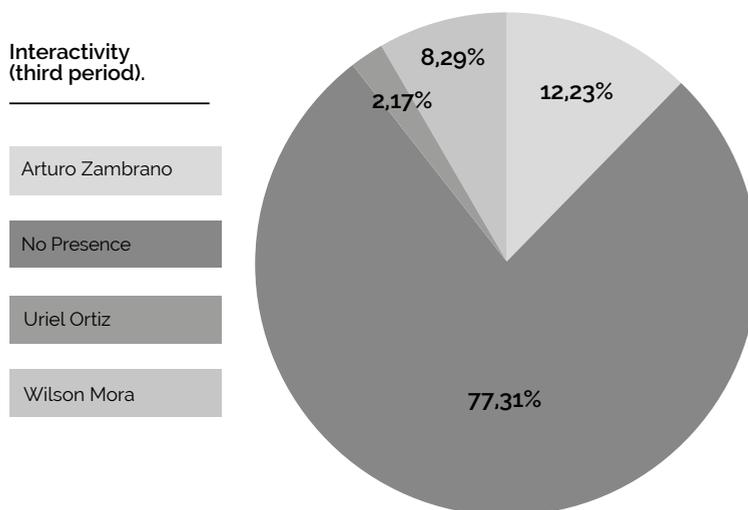
For the Interactivity category, the types of mentions, retweets and responses were searched. They can be collective and unique to entities or digital citizens. In this sense, Arturo Zambrano (@ArturoZambranoA), of the Centro Democrático party, is the most interactive councilor with 6.58% and 12.23%, in each said period. Uriel Ortiz obtained 5.85 and 2.17% and Wilson Mora 4.64% and 8.29%, respectively.

Figure 7. Interactivity (first period).



Source: Author's

Figure 8. Interactivity (third period).



Source: Author's

Finally, a comparative matrix was made that included tweets and Minutes of the Council of Bucaramanga¹. This data crossing was made according to the dates of the published tweets and the topics covered in said tweets regarding the topic of the day in the corporate plenary sessions.

As it can be seen in Table 3, less than half of the publications made by the councilors in those periods of 2017 on their Twitter accounts feature topics related to the Council of Bucaramanga.

Arturo Zambrano is the closest councilor to 50% with 46% in the first period and 50% in the third. Uriel Ortiz with 21% for the first period and 8% for the third period and finally, Wilson Mora with 19% for the first period and 5% for the third.

Councilor Wilson Mora (@WilsonMora8890) obtained the highest score in the communication coefficient, followed by Arturo Zambrano (@ArturoZambranoA).

1. Taken from the website www.concejodebucaramanga.gov.co

Table 3. Verification of Content Published on Twitter by the Councilors

Councilors	Verification	First period	Average	Third period	Average
Wilson Mora	It matches	11	19%	2	5%
	It does not match	47	81%	35	95%
Uriel Ortiz	It matches	14	21%	1	8%
	It does not match	52	79%	12	92%
Arturo Zambrano	It matches	22	46%	19	50%
	It does not match	26	54%	19	50%

Source: Author's

Conclusions

Due to its typology, these research results do not intend to generalize, but to confirm the irrefutable presence of virtual media and, in particular, social networks, as a strategic means of Public and Political Communication.

This was asserted in studies of the executive branch conducted by García, López de Ayala and Fernández-Fernández (2015), Del Ruiz-Olmo and Bustos (2016), in which they confirm the real incidence the virtual world has on the texts, images, and other content that circulate about the political leaders, their successful and unsuccessful actions and the approval of the decisions they make. This indicates that both the political leaders of today, both the local and world political leaders must daily face what they say and how they say it, in addition to being prepared to receive from virtual media all the comments, insults, ridicule and criticism from those who react to the content received, whether it is total or fractional.

In terms of the saved proportions, the results presented in this short study coincide with Túñez and Sixto (2011) who warned at their time that “the low level of usage of social networks means their potential as a form of direct contact, as a platform for visibility of their users and management, as a tool for cyber-activity, as an alert to possible conflicts or as a forum for debate is not

yet trusted” (p. 22) [Own translation]. When reviewing and analyzing the data collected, it is clear that the councilors from Bucaramanga are failing in the management of social networks and must be offered training opportunities to reduce the evident digital gap. This invitation must be extended to those in charge of the information offices and press offices of public, local, departmental and national corporations.

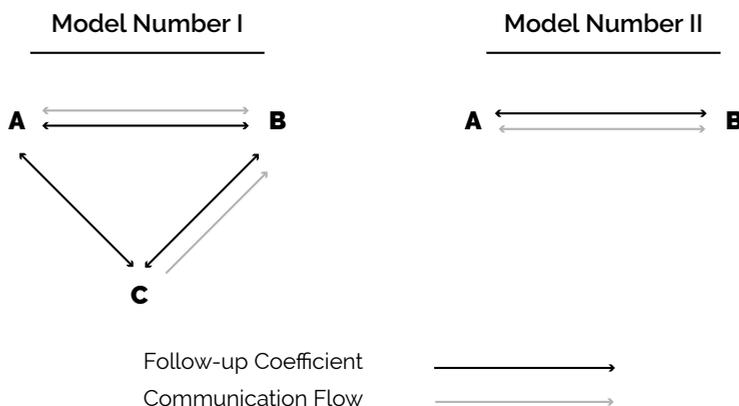
Now, in relation to the Monitoring and Communication Coefficient, these two indicators aided at finding veracity when determining the degree of usage of the councilors. In addition, the communicative function that the councilor exercises as a political leader is confirmed (Moya, 2014). Despite not having the version of the content generator (councilor), it was observed that the receiving users (the citizens) feel that they have the possibility of direct communication and, besides, they can, if they wish, achieve the feedback (feedback) fostered for the content of the messages that the councilors publish.

On the other hand, persuasive purposes are a fundamental characteristic of political communication and, therefore, the Global Persuasive Potential Index proposed by Moya and Herrera (2016) showed that retweets involve much more than a retransmission of the message, since these waterfalls broadcasting promote and enhance communication. Thus, when measuring the persuasion of the messages issued by the councilors we verify the degree of their activity with the effectiveness of their communication when supported by a number of users.

Nonetheless, it is important to clarify that in order to expand the network's scope of users on Twitter, it is necessary for communications between cyber-citizens and political leaders to be direct (Moya and Herrera, 2016), because councilors do not have a Real communication aimed at users, since within the publication of their messages they only seek to disseminate information and foster propaganda, and do not create virtual communities with clear the evidence of multimodal communication. (Castells, 1999).

Similarly, the councilors concentrate the broadcast of their messages and the debates of public affairs with opinion leaders within the network and do not democratize their broadcasts to all users. Therefore, according to Moya and Herrera (2016), under model number I led to identify that A are the councilors, B are the opinion leaders and C are the cyber-citizens. A and B maintain a constant debate relationship, while C are only spectators of the debate. In addition, B are the ones who mostly respond to the messages emitted by C, since A's interests are to disseminate information by mistakenly using digital social networks.

Figure 9. Relationship Models in Twitter Followers



Source: Author's

To clarify, the communicative action of the councilors on Twitter as a means of citizen interaction and the determined usage by the members of the corporation to use their personal networks as a complement of their roles as political leaders is not being fully complied with, since it emphasizes on the relevance of their image, ideologies, and opposition to local administrations, and not in communicating the public affairs that the Council of Bucaramanga deals with in its daily actions, therefore, leading to the disinformation to the digital citizen.

The proof is the results of the use of digital resources and the verification of the agendas they publish on their Twitter accounts with respect to the topics of the plenary sessions. Out of the 19 councilors, only Arturo Zambrano (@ArturoZambranoA) takes advantage of the digital tools provided by Twitter and fosters the debate on public affairs through virtual communities.

Likewise, councilors Wilson Mora (@WilsonMora8890) and Uriel Ortiz Ruiz (@UrielOrtizRuiz) raised more conversations with different users than Arturo Zambrano (@ArturoZambranoA). However, these did not refer to the political control carried out by the Bucaramanga councilors instead they focused their content on Rodolfo Hernández government who is the Mayor of Bucaramanga and their fierce opponent.

Like any investigation process in which virtual media is involved, it is required to deepen and expand both participants, as well as data collection techniques that lead to the expressions of those called users and, also, of those who call content generators or tweeters. Both citizens and members of a society are the

ones who must say whether this exercise of virtual interaction is really contributing to the construction of public policies aimed at social strengthening and the reduction of inequality or is one more way of dominating and subjecting the electorate.

References

- Almeida, J. A.; Alves, J. A.; Miola, E. (2014). Parlamentares, representação política e redes sociais digitais: perfis de uso do Twitter na Câmara dos Deputados. *Opinião Pública, Campinas*, 20(2), 178-203. <https://www.scielo.br/pdf/op/v20n2/0104-6276-op-20-02-00178.pdf>
- Bohórquez-Pereira, G.; Alguero-Montaña. M. O. (2018). Concejales y líderes comunitarios de Bucaramanga. Percepciones encontradas en sus relaciones comunicativas. *Revista Escribanía*, 16(2), 45-57. <http://revistasum.umanizales.edu.co/ojs/index.php/escribania/article/view/3112>
- Bonelly, R. (2011). *La Huella social. Cómo los usuarios tomaron control de internet*. Editorial CEC, S. A.
- Castells, M. (1999). *La era de la información*. Alianza Editorial, S.A.S.
- Castells, M. (2000). *Lección inaugural del programa de doctorado sobre la sociedad de la información y el conocimiento. Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, España*. https://www.uoc.edu/portal/_resources/ES/documents/la_universitat/leccion-inaugural/leccion-inaugural-manuel-castells-2017.pdf
- Castells, M. (2012). *Redes de indignación y esperanza: los movimientos sociales en la era de Internet*. Alianza Editorial.
- Cavadas-Gormaz, M. (2016). La comunicación al servicio del líder. El caso del Ayuntamiento de Madrid. In Asociación Española Investigación de la Comunicación (Ed.). In *Memorias V Congreso Iberoamericano de Comunicación Cultura y Cooperación* (pp. 131-144). http://www.madrid2016.org/wp-content/uploads/aeic2016madrid_comunicaciones_vdef_ok.pdf

- Corte Constitucional de Colombia (2015). *Constitución Política Colombia*. <https://www.corteconstitucional.gov.co/inicio/Constitucion%20politica%20de%20Colombia%20-%20202015.pdf>
- Cotarelo, R. (2013). *Ciberpolítica. Las nuevas formas de acción y comunicación política*. Tirant Humanidades.
- Cuadra, A. (2009). Epistemocrítica de la e-Comunicación. Elementos para una etnografía virtual de las prácticas científicas en la era digital. *Revista teórica del Departamento de Ciencias de la Comunicación*, 13, 59-71. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=4159233>
- Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited (2019). *Consumo móvil en Colombia. Los cambios importantes generalmente no ocurren de la noche a la mañana*. Deloitte, Ed.
- Del Fresno, M. (2011). Netnografía. Investigación, análisis e intervención social online. Reseña. *Revista Teknokultura*, 12(1), 203-210. <https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/TEKN/article/view/48898/45624>
- Del Ruiz-Olmo, F. J.; Bustos, D. J. (2016). Del tweet a la fotografía, la evolución de la comunicación política en Twitter hacia la imagen. El caso del debate del estado de la nación en España (2015). *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 71, 108-123. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=5346069>
- Demers, F.; Lavigne, A. (2007). La comunicación pública: una prioridad contemporánea de investigación. *Comunicación y Sociedad*, 8, 65-87. <http://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/comso/n8/0188-252X-comso-08-65.pdf>
- Durán, C. A. (2015). Aspectos interventores en la participación política y electoral de jóvenes. Una reflexión sobre la información, interacción y difusión de contenidos en redes sociales para futuras investigaciones en Santander. *Desafíos*, 27(1), 47-81. <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=359638976003>
- Erizalde, L.; Riorda, M. (2013). *Comunicación Gubernamental*. Editores La Crujía.

- García, C. B.; López de Ayala, M. C.; Fernández-Fernández, J. G. (2015). Twitter como plataforma de los alcaldes para la comunicación pública. *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, 21(2), 757772. <https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/ESMP/article/view/50884>
- Gutiérrez-Rubí, A. (2015). *La transformación digital y móvil de la comunicación política*. Editorial Ariel S. A.
- Hine, C. (2004). *Etnografía virtual*. Editorial UOC.
- Izureta, R.; Arterton., C.; Perina., R. (2009). *Estrategias de comunicación para gobiernos*. Ediciones La Crujía.
- Kamps, H. J. (2015). Who Are Twitter's Verified Users? *Medium*, 1-15.
<https://medium.com/@Haje/who-are-twitter-s-verified-users-af976fc1b032>
- Kit, S. (2016). *44 estadísticas de Twitter para 2016*. [blog]. <https://www.brandwatch.com/es/2016/06/44-estadisticas-twitter-2016/>
- Kozinets, R. (1997). I Want to Believe. A Netnography of the X-Philes' Subculture of Consumption. In M. Brucks & D. J. Maclnnis (Eds.). *Advances in Consumer Research* (pp. 470-475). Assoc Consumer Research.
- Kozinets, R. (1998). On netnography. Initial Reflections on Consumer Research Investigations of Cyberculture. In J. W. Alba & J. W. Hutchinson (Eds.). *Advances in Consumer Research*. (pp. 366-371). : Association for Consumer Research.
- Kozinets, R. (2006). Netnography 2.0. In W. Russell (Ed.). *Manual de métodos de investigación cualitativa en Marketing* (pp. 129-142). Edward Elgar Editorial y ONU.
- Laaksonen, S. M.; Nelimarkka, M.; Tuokko, M.; Marttila, M.; Kekkonen, A.; Villi, M. (2017). Working the Fields of Big Data: Using Big-data-augmented online ethnography to study candidate-candidate interaction at election time. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 14(2), 110-131. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19331681.2016.1266981>

- Maia, C. M.; Gomes, W.; Marques, J. A. (Eds.). (2011). *Internet e Participação Política no Brasil*. Editora Sulina.
- Manrique, R. A. (1995). *El municipio después de la Constitución de 1991*. Empresa Editorial de Cundinamarca Antonio Nariño.
- Meneses-Cabrera, T.; Cardozo Cardona, J. (2014). La Etnografía: una posibilidad metodológica para la investigación en cibercultura. *Revista Encuentros*, 12(2), 93-103. <http://www.scielo.org.co/pdf/encu/v12n2/v12n2a07.pdf>
- Ministerio de las Tecnologías de Información y Comunicación de Colombia (2019). *Colombia es uno de los países con más usuarios en redes sociales en la región*. https://mintic.gov.co/portal/604/w3-article-2713.html?_noredirect=1
- Mizrahi, Y. (1999). *Voto retrospectivo y desempeño gubernamental: las elecciones en el Estado de Chihuahua, México*. Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas/División de Estudios Políticos.
- Mullin, B. (2015). *Report: Journalists Make Up a Quarter of All Verified Twitter Accounts Adweek*. <https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2015/report-journalists-are-largest-most-active-group-on-twitter/>
- Moya, M. (2014). *Análisis comunicacional del uso que los diputados españoles hacen de Twitter: evaluación e implicaciones prácticas* (Doctoral Dissertation). Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. <https://e-archivo.uc3m.es/handle/10016/20431> [Accessed September 29, 2019].
- Moya, M.; Herrera-Damas, S. (2016). Cómo medir el potencial persuasivo en Twitter: propuesta metodológica. *Palabra Clave*, 19(3), 838-867. <https://palabraclave.unisabana.edu.co/index.php/palabraclave/article/view/6075/html>
- Noguera-Vivo, J. M. (2013). How Open are Journalists on Twitter? Trends Towards the End-user Journalism. *Communication&Society/Comunicación y Sociedad*, 26(1), 93-114. <https://revistas.unav.edu/index.php/communication-and-society/article/view/36156>
- Omnicores Agency (2019). *Twitter por números: estadísticas, datos demográficos y datos curiosos*. <https://www.omnicoreagency.com/twitter-statistics/>

- Orihuela, J. L. (2013). *Mundo Twitter: una guía para comprender y dominar la plataforma que cambió la red*. Alienta Editorial.
- Peña, P.; Pacheco, M.; Martínez, P. (2012). *Comunicación institucional y política*. Editorial Fragua, Biblioteca de Ciencias de la comunicación.
- Ramírez, M. F.; Tabares, J. (2011). Las relaciones entre los actores del gobierno local en el marco de la gobernanza. Una mirada desde los concejales de Medellín. *Participación Política*, 16(1), 213-239. <http://www.scielo.org.co/pdf/papel/v16n1/v16n1a09.pdf>
- Ruiz, M. R.; Aguirre, A. G. (2015). Etnografía virtual, un acercamiento al método y a sus aplicaciones. *Estudios sobre las Culturas Contemporáneas*, 41, 67-96. <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/316/31639397004.pdf>
- Scolari, C. (2013). *Hipermediaciones: elementos para la teoría de una comunicación digital interactiva*. GEDISA.
- Túñez, M.; Sixto, J. (2011). Redes sociales, política y Compromiso 2.0: La comunicación de los diputados españoles en Facebook. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 66, 1-25. <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=81921340015>
- Turpo, O. (2008). La netnografía: un método de investigación en Internet. *Revista Iberoamericana de la Educación*, 42, 81-93. <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=342130831006>
- Vega, H. (2009). La comunicación de gobierno e Internet. En R. Izureta, C. Arterton & R. Perina. (Eds.). *Estrategias de comunicación para gobiernos* (pp. 131-184). Ediciones La Crujía.
- We Are Social y Hootsuite (2019). *Global digital 2019. Global digital yearbook*. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2019-colombia>
- Zamora, R. (2011). *Claves para gestionar la comunicación local*. Comunicación Social, ediciones y publicaciones.

