

**Influence of media groups in electoral elections and the right to social communication****Influencia de los grupos de medios de comunicación en los comicios electorales y el derecho a la comunicación social**

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**Abstract**

The present article took as principal objective determine the influence of the Communication Media in Sucre about the judge and the valuation that the population understood between the 18 and 25 years could have respect to the electoral polls, and like that release the rate of influence of the groups of communication media in politic aspects. For such reason it recurred to different researches related with the topic and facts of first source, because surveys were made. Contextualizing also the right of Social communication in Bolivia.

**Influence, Communication media, Electoral polls****Resumen**

El presente artículo tuvo como objetivo principal determinar la influencia de los Medios de Comunicación en Sucre sobre el juicio y la valoración que la población comprendida entre los 18 y 25 años pudiera tener respecto a las encuestas electorales, y así dar a conocer el índice de influencia de los grupos de medios de comunicación en aspectos políticos. Por tal motivo se recurrió a diferentes investigaciones relacionadas con el tema y hechos de primera fuente, pues se realizaron encuestas. Contextualizando también el derecho de Comunicación Social en Bolivia.

**Influencia, Medios de comunicación, Encuestas electorales**

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## Introduction

The article shows the influence exerted by the media groups in the city of Sucre on the judgement and evaluation that the population between 18 and 25 years of age may have with respect to the electoral elections, the media group they follow most and the role of the media.

As the mass media have a massive reach, they have highlighted a notable polarisation in the population of the city of Sucre, in relation to aesthetic and philosophical positions that have to do with the socio-political, economic and cultural aspects that mark the Bolivian daily dynamics. This is due to the fact that the citizens of Sucre have different media outlets as a source of information, where these media clearly mediatise certain events that take place in the country. Even more so now that we have entered an electoral stage that will end with the general elections on 12 October 2014 [TSE call].

The article is divided into four sections the first one refers to the media groups in Bolivia that are connected to the city of Sucre; the second section contextualises the legal economy related to the fundamental right to social communication in Bolivia; the third section makes an analysis of the role of the media and finally the fourth section makes a cross-check of data with reference to the influence of media groups in the electoral elections on the population between 18 and 25 years of age in the city of Sucre.

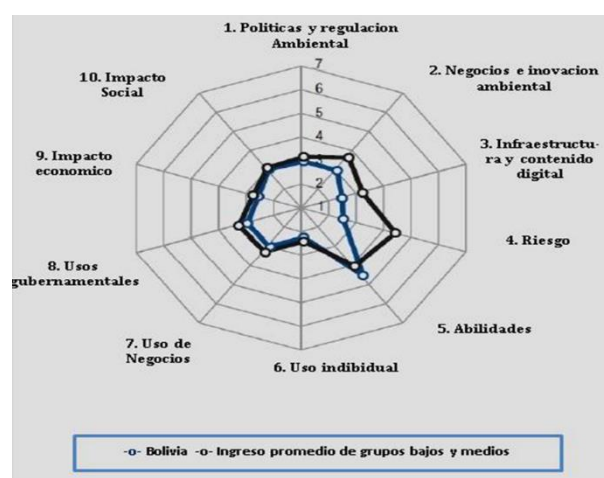
## Media groups in Bolivia that connect with the city of Sucre

Let us begin by defining what a media is: To avoid reductionism about the media, we propose to understand them as three-dimensional entities: they are, at the same time, an organisation (commercial, social or state), a professional community and a political actor. These three dimensions make up a unique mix of pressures, ideals and interests, which in each specific media, under different circumstances, combine in different ways.

Each specific media outlet should be analysed in detail to see which of these three dimensions is the most influential on its final product. Some are run almost entirely as political actors, subordinating their economic performance and giving no professional autonomy to their editorial staff; others are run purely as profit-making animals; and still others have an editorial staff of journalists who make their decisions on professional criteria. Of course, in most cases, mixed influence is most common. The media that actually exist in the region have a complex combination of these three elements, even changing that combination according to circumstances. [Ruiz, 2010]

Over time, the different media groups have become the main information providers, an evolution supported by technological advances, which have had an impact on their growth, forming large chains at a global or regional level.

Although the 2012 world report on information technology reports that Bolivia ranks 127th out of 147 countries in terms of information technology development. Its strengths are its capacity and its weaknesses are its affordability, infrastructure and content:



**Figure 1** Environmental policy and regulation  
Source: World Information Technology Report 2012

Already in Bolivia, the General Telecommunications Law makes a differentiation between media outlets by allowing for an equal distribution of frequencies: 33% for private media, 33% for state media, and 33% for community and indigenous media. [LGT, 2011].

Bolivia's media have come to be known as groups of media outlets according to their origin. The first group is the state media, which has undergone a restructuring since the beginning of this government (the government of the socialist movement). Secondly, there are the private media, which are privately owned; among the owners of these media groups are mostly businessmen, especially the large chains, there are also small private media owners, and there are even community media that are privately owned, but the large percentage is owned by the big media businessmen.

The third group is made up of alternative media, which, regardless of where they come from, the ownership or who they belong to is not so important; they can be private, they can respond to an institution, even to some churches, some unions, (but) these have the characteristic of responding to the community very directly, they are local media and are not large chains. [La Migraña, 2012]

In Bolivia, however, there is also a theoretical division within a group of media. The group of private media is subdivided into "parastatal" and "independent" media, defining parastatal as those media that, despite being private, coordinate with state power to define the editorial and informative line of the media, thus giving the government control over these media. Independent media, according to the author, are those that have no relationship with the government's interests and develop the independent press. [Peñaranda, 2014]

Most of the media, in addition to having a website, have also taken up the space of social networks, as they currently have official accounts for the station and its journalists, where they also disseminate the news on their agenda. In Bolivia, there are television channels that are connected at the departmental level; in Sucre there are also channels at the departmental level, whose broadcasts allow interaction between the city of Sucre and its provinces.

### **Contextualisation of the legal economy related to the fundamental right to social communication in Bolivia**

The Right to Information and Communication (RIC) enables all parties to express themselves individually and collectively through all media in order to improve their lives.

The RIC is vital for full participation in society and is therefore a universal human right that belongs to all men, women and children. ICD includes democratisation of the media, protection of traditional means of communication, linguistic rights, and the right to enjoy the fruits of human creativity. These are issues of inclusion and exclusion, mutual respect and human dignity. [Van, 2012]

In the new constitutional text there is a qualitative advance by recognising not only the right to freedom of expression, but also the right to information. At the same time, it regulates journalistic activity when it recognises freedom of the press framed within the principles of truthfulness and responsibility and grants the profession the capacity to self-regulate its activities. [Chasqui, 2010]

In Bolivia, the DIC has been recognised in the constitution as the right to communication and the right to information.

The current political constitution of the Bolivian state in its first part, title II, chapter seven, article 106, paragraph I, guarantees the right to communication and the right to information. At the same time, in the same article, the Bolivian state recognises and guarantees Bolivians the right to freedom of expression, opinion and information, to rectification and reply, and the right to freely broadcast ideas by any means of dissemination, without prior censorship. It also guarantees press workers freedom of expression, the right to communication and information.

Article 107 of this fundamental charter of Bolivia stipulates that information and opinions issued through the media must respect the principles of truthfulness and responsibility and that these principles shall be exercised through the ethical and self-regulatory rules of journalists' and media organisations and their law. [CPE, 2009]

### **Analysis of the role of the media**

After the contextualisation of the media in Bolivia in both legal and group aspects, we move on to the role of the media in Bolivia, which is logically reflected in the context of the city of Sucre.

Certain events that have to do with socio-politics, the economy, culture in the spheres of power, such as the divisions of the legislative, executive, judicial and electoral bodies, or within the Bolivian state's own departmental or municipal governments, are widely covered by some media groups, others not, and others relatively, depending on the event in question. "Each media outlet has its own editorial policy, so when one has been through several media outlets, one knows perfectly well which issues are on the agenda and which are not. Therefore, media discourse is important for what it says, but also for what it does not say" [La Época, 2012].

The media groups have highlighted in the population of Sucre a notable polarisation in relation to aesthetic and philosophical positions that have to do with the socio-political, economic and cultural aspects that mark the Bolivian daily dynamics (e.g. the case of the new FANCESA line), and one can normally observe opposing positions among citizens regarding public issues, as a result of the fact that the citizens of Sucre have different media outlets as a source, where these outlets clearly mediatise certain events that take place in the country.

In this respect, some investigations in the country, together with some debates undertaken by groups closely linked to the subject, such as the National Press Association and others, have questioned the role of the media in providing information and giving their opinion on the subject. As well as the appropriateness and ethics of the judgements they might make.

These debates reveal positions that expose corporate, business and governmental interests that influence the media when providing information and especially when issuing an opinion; these interests have an impact on the judgement and evaluation that the population makes in this regard.

In Bolivia, since 12 April 2006, the UNIR foundation, which was created with the aim of generating spaces for information, negotiation, deliberation and dialogue among Bolivians, has been operating in Bolivia. The idea is that the observatory will contribute to raising the quality of journalistic performance in the country and fostering a greater critical awareness among journalists in favour of ethics and the improvement of the quality of information.

Its composition is mixed and includes professors and students from the universities affiliated to the Bolivian Association of Social Communication Careers (ABOCCS) as well as representatives of business, trade union and academic journalism organisations.

Its main activity is to critically and proactively monitor the professional work of the media, to learn about the conditions of production and supply of media content, and to study citizens' perceptions in this regard. [Herrera and Christofolletti, 2006].

But beyond the media observatory, Claudia Espinoza Iturri, a communicator with a postgraduate degree in gender and interculturalism and current vice-minister of communication policies of the Bolivian state, maintains that the media are political actors that respond to specific interests, not only economic ones, an element that was corroborated in the survey carried out in this study when respondents were asked whether the media responded to political and economic interests. Espinoza argues that there is neither impartiality nor objectivity, it is impossible, not only because of the interests that may be pursued, but also because of the human impossibility of reflecting something in an integral way, you cannot necessarily cut out reality, and you construct it from your point of view, your subjectivity, so what is reported or the discourse that is emitted responds to the interests of certain sectors of society, so to the extent that they respond to certain interests, others are denied.

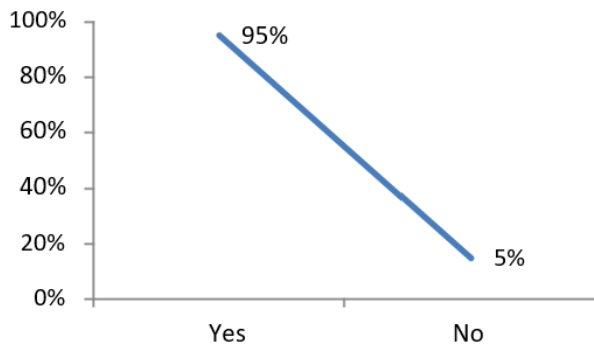
### **Results obtained on the influence of media groups in the electoral elections on the population between the ages of 18 and 25 in the city of Sucre**

Now that the city of Sucre and the entire Bolivian state have entered an electoral stage that will end with the general elections on 12 October 2014, it is important to foresee the role that the media will play in terms of the media coverage they have on the citizens of the city of Sucre, specifically those aged between 18 and 25, beyond the electoral campaign spots that the different political factions in contention will request in the media. In other words, the issues that the different media will take as an agenda will necessarily influence the citizens of the city of Sucre at the moment of exercising their right to vote.

Thus, for this study, a survey was carried out specifically to measure the influence of the media groups on the population of Sucre between the ages of 18 and 25.

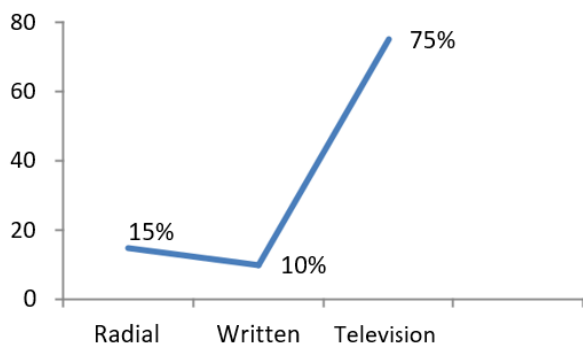
Community media groups were not included in the survey because it is evident to the entire population of the city of Sucre that these community media groups are concentrated in rural areas and not in the cities.

Sixty citizens of both sexes were surveyed in certain areas of the city: Villa Margarita area (Parada CBBA), Airport area (Av. 6 de Agosto), Petrolero neighbourhood area (Av. Las Américas), Mercado Campesino area (Plazuela San Juanillo) and the central area (Plaza 25 de Mayo). The methodology used to form the sample was simple random sampling. The results obtained from the survey were as follows.



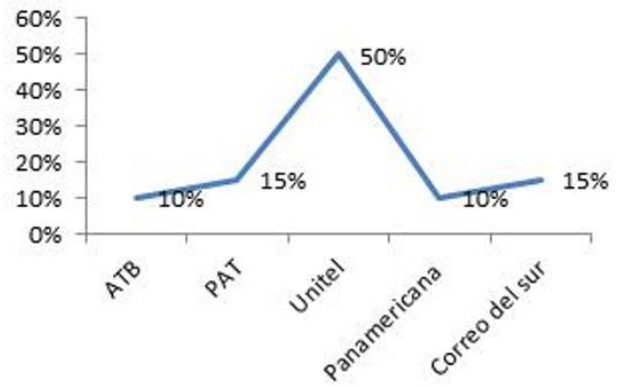
**Figure 1** Do you think that the media influence the population when it comes to making value judgements on political issues?

When respondents were asked whether or not the media influences them to make value judgements on political issues, 95% said "Yes", while the remaining 5% said "No".



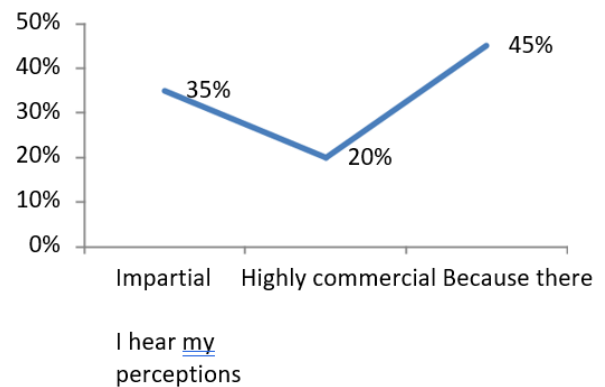
**Figure 2** What is the type of media you access most often?

When respondents were asked about the type of media they access most, 75% responded that they access television, while only 10% access print media.



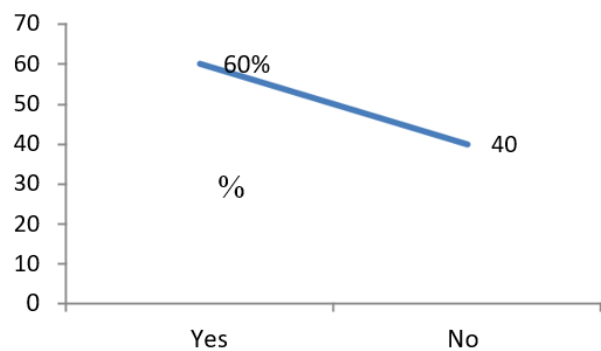
**Graphic 3** Which radio, newspaper or TV channel do you usually follow?

The media most followed by the population is the Unitel network, with 50% of those surveyed indicating that they follow it, and only 15% indicate that they follow the local newspaper Correo del Sur.



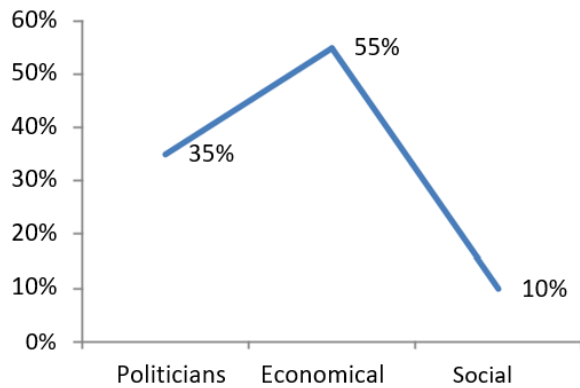
**Graphic 4** Why do you think you follow a media outlet for information?

35% of respondents indicated that they follow a certain media outlet for information because it is unbiased, 30% because it has a political position, and the remaining 35% indicated that they follow a media outlet for information because it listens to their perceptions.



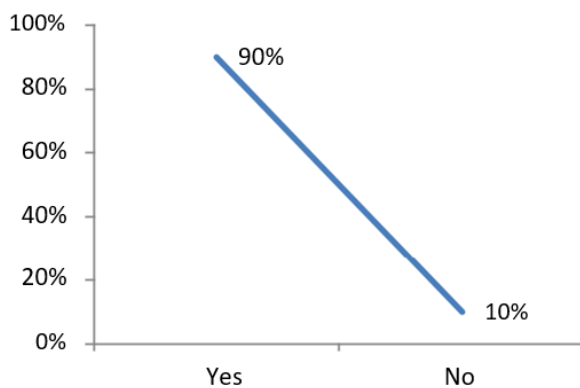
**Graphic 5** Do you think that some private media have certain interests behind them?

60% of respondents believe that the Private Media has some interests behind it, while 40% believe that the Private Media does not have any interests behind it.



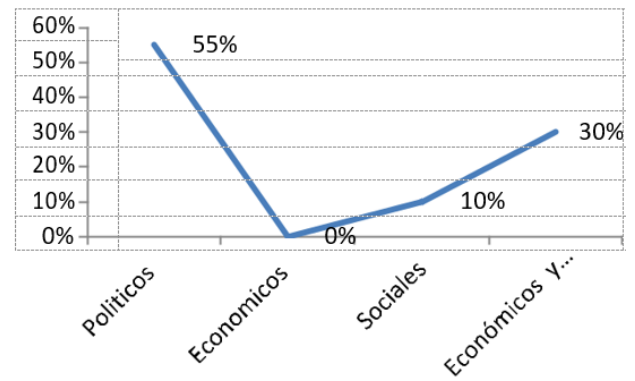
**Graphic 6** If you answered "Yes" to question 6, what do you think those interests are? If not, please refrain from answering this question.

40% of respondents believe that the private media have economic-political interests behind them, and only 5% believe economic interests, 10% indicate social interests and 40% indicate that the state media have economic-political interests behind them.



**Graphic 7** Do you believe that the state media have some economic-political interests behind them?

90% of respondents believe that the State Media have interests behind them and 10% indicate that they do not.



**Graphic 8** If you answered "Yes" to question 8, what do you think those interests are? If not, please refrain from answering this question.

55% of respondents indicated that the State Media have political interests behind them, 10% indicated social interests and 30% indicated that the State Media pursue economic-political interests behind them.

**Conclusions**

It is the private media groups that have the greatest influence in the city, as they are the private media that most people follow in order to get information.

Despite the lack of technology to which the media have access, as reflected in the World Information Technology Report, it is the television channels to which the population has most access.

Despite the fact that the majority of the population believes that both state and private media groups pursue specific interests, one third of the population believes that they follow a media outlet for information because they believe it to be impartial, whether state or private.

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