

## Newspaper Reading as a Form of Cultural Participation: The Case of Colombia

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**Abstract:** Cultural participation and its usual forms have been almost exclusively studied for Western industrialised countries. We fill this gap by analysing newspaper reading in Colombia, where this form of cultural participation is particularly important and potentially enables significant crossovers at societal level. We apply an economic model with rational addiction to national micro data from the “Survey on Cultural Consumption 2012”. In a country where the habit of reading on paper still resists a relative diffusion of the Internet, we show the persistence of a certain participation gap even if with some distinctive features with respect to general cultural participation. The average profile of a Colombian newspaper reader corresponds to a middle-high educated white/mixed male in his working age, married/cohabiting and living in metropolitan areas. Regressions results show that both the likelihood and the intensity of reading newspapers are positively influenced by higher levels of education and having a habit of reading in general, a higher age, being a male and resident in major cities. From a policy perspective, our findings point to possible socio-economic leverages in order to lower such a participation gap, and hence contribute to foster more egalitarian conditions among the population.

**Keywords:** Cultural participation; Newspaper readings; Participation gap; Colombia

**JEL Classifications:** Z11, D12, C25

## 1. Introduction

Newspapers reading is a form of cultural participation, where newspapers are a written form of cultural expression of media, with a content ranging from news to politics and economics, as well as literature, the arts and culture. In many regions, such as Latin America, newspapers and newspaper reading represent a form of cultural expression and participation of particular importance for traditional, historical and cultural reasons, potentially enabling significant crossovers at societal level. In Colombia, this is also reflected in major public policies aiming at promoting general reading among especially disadvantaged strata of the population and investing in public libraries at national, departmental and municipal levels (Soto, 2007; Álvarez-Zapata *et al.* 2008).

Economic and sociological literature shows that cultural participation and consumption is characterised by a quite high socio-economic stratification (e.g. Seaman, 2006 and Chan and Goldthorpe, 2010). In particular, since the seminal work of Baumol and Bowen (1966), cultural economists have tried to explain the “participation gap”. According to the participation gap, individuals who decide to participate in cultural activities or consume cultural goods constitute a distinguished segment of the population, namely white, with high educational level and high income (McCarthy *et al.*, 2001). The empirical analysis of the participation gap has focused to a great extent on those cultural goods and services that are produced in the same moment when they are consumed, are time-intensive and occur especially outside the house, such as at the theatre, opera, museum and other arts venues (e.g. Gray, 2003).

The participation gap is not strange to newspaper reading either: “the most likely to read newspapers are more with more education or income, and who are white” (Pew Research Center, 2015: 26). However, the empirical literature lags behind in explaining the individual determinants of newspaper reading and dedicated studies are only a few. Existing empirical research on the determinants of newspaper reading, mainly contributed by sociologists and communication scholars, is almost restricted to Western industrialised countries. Age results the main predictor of newspaper reading in the USA and Germany (Schoenbach *et al.*, 1999) and Western Europe (Lauf, 2001). In larger Europe (23 countries considered), Elvesta and Blekesaune (2008) found that the amount of time that individuals spend in newspaper reading is affected by gender, age, education and household income. In particular, highly educated aged men in households with high incomes seem to spend more time in reading newspapers. As for the frequency of reading newspapers, in Finland it is similarly affected by age, education and household income, while gender resulted not significant (Taipale, 2012). In Turkey, Aydin (2009) found high levels of income and education, being female and urban inhabitant associated with newspaper reading. In the USA, Malthouse and Calder (2002) highlighted the socio-demographic heterogeneity of the weekly distribution of newspaper readers. For instance, women seem to read relatively more than men on Sundays, while men read more throughout the week.

The advent of the Internet should reduce the participation gap of forms of cultural participation such as reading newspapers online. Yet, according to empirical findings, printed daily newspapers are still preferred by readers, who are generally highly educated and belong to the high social classes (Lee and Fujioka, 2017). Hsiang and Lewis (2009) showed how the printed newspaper market and its readers are concentrated in small towns rather than in large urban centres.

To our best knowledge, only one study has been dedicated to newspaper reading in Latin America, and its findings are in line with those of the studies presented above. Torche (2007) found that education, income, gender and age are the main determinants of the frequency of reading newspapers in Chile. In particular, higher levels of education and income and being older and male increase the frequency probability of reading newspapers.

The contribution of this paper is at least threefold. First, we characterise the nature of newspaper reading as a form of cultural consumption and hence as an economic decision, as distinguished from other forms of more “traditional” cultural consumption (e.g. music, museums, etc.). Second, we investigate cultural participation and a possible participation gap in the context of a developing country, where such studies are very scarce. In order to estimate the main socio-economic variables that influence individuals’ decision to read a newspaper in Colombia, we exploit micro data from the national “Survey of Cultural Consumption 2012” (“Encuesta de Consumo Cultural 2012”). In particular, our analysis allows highlighting features of readers as distinct from non-readers. Finally, we compare found evidence with that of countries with higher income levels and lower socio-economic inequalities.

The paper is organised as follows. In the next section newspaper reading is introduced through an economic approach. In Section 3 we present the database and the empirical models. In Section 4 we showcase the empirical results about the readers’ profile and their likelihood to read newspapers. Section 5 deepens the discussion of the results also with respect to general findings on cultural participation and from a policy perspective. Section 6 concludes the paper.

## 2. Newspaper Reading as an Economic Decision

Newspaper reading is a mean through which individuals access the news, information and opinions on a wide range of topics, including economic, political, social and cultural ones (Lazzaro, 2014). Reading newspapers and, more in general, reading are relevant from the perspective of educational, cultural and social policy (Wright, 2006). Newspapers also help readers to learn about current news of general interest and to form an opinion about them (Schönbach *et al.*, 2005). However, the discussion is open to whether newspapers have an opinion effect, that is whether newspapers influence the views of readers or, vice versa, readers choose the newspapers that reflect their pre-formed points of view (Duffy and Rowden, 2005). Yet, as for political content de Leon (2016: 357) provides empirical evidence that “newspapers’ ideology determines their endorsements, making partisan papers more likely to make political recommendations.”

What does an individual get when she reads a newspaper? From the perspective of cultural economics, newspaper reading is understood as a form of cultural consumption or participation that aims to increase knowledge and culture. More specifically, newspaper reading can be considered as an input to the production of cultural experience that is generated through a function of domestic production *à la* Becker (1965). The arguments of the function of domestic production include physical capital (such as, in the case of digital newspapers, the device to read them), goods purchased on the market (such as the newspapers in the case of print ones), the time an individual spend to read newspapers, and past capital investment in cultural consumption. The accumulation of the latter makes the production of future cultural experience more efficient (Stigler and Becker, 1977).

Individuals produce their cultural experience in leisure time. Since Becker (1965), the concept of leisure has been redefined and understood as non-working time during which individuals carry out activities that have no substitutes on the market. According to Aguiar and Hurst (2007), an activity can be theoretically defined as leisure based on the degree of substitutability between the arguments of the function of domestic production that reflect the technology of consumption, namely market goods and individual’s time. From this perspective, the individual’s decision of whether to allocate part of her leisure time to newspaper reading or to other potentially competing alternatives (such as watching TV, doing sports, etc.) implies different patterns of cultural access and participation.

By applying a framework of cultural participation with rational expectations (Becker and Murphy 1988; Levy-Garboua and Montmarquette, 1996) to newspaper reading, we can expect that an individual will read newspapers with a greater intensity (e.g. daily vs. once a week) when she accumulates a specific capital (of cultural consumption) that generates a rational addiction to this kind of cultural participation. To accumulate such a capital, individuals rely on different inputs: past experience (amount of time allocated to newspaper reading); learning (participation in clubs of discussion about local, national and international latest news, courses, workshops); experts' opinions (researchers and journalists specialised on specific issues and topics) and others' choices (most read newspapers, social interaction). Being involved in reading newspapers represents a good proxy for a high level of accumulated capital of cultural consumption associated with high socio-economic status. In the empirical literature derived from sociology, musical tastes, similarly to newspaper reading, have been considered as markers of cultural preferences and status (DiMaggio, 1987 and Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007).

From the perspective of the demand theory, individuals' preferences can be largely captured by socio-demographic characteristics such as education, age, gender and ethnicity (Gray, 2003). In the model of Stigler and Becker (1977) these variables reflect the relative costs of producing cultural experience, assuming stable and similar preferences among different individuals. Finally, participation in cultural activities can be affected by social interactions, like marriage or civil relationship, as shown by Upright (2004) and Lazzaro and Frateschi (2017).

Investigating a possible participation gap in newspaper reading is therefore worthy for several reasons:

- (1) Newspaper reading can be described as time-intensive individual activity and characterised as a leisure good, as suggested by Becker (1965);
- (2) Reading can be done inside or outside the home and furthermore it can be easily fragmented over time throughout the day or week;
- (3) The financial costs associated with participation are not high, and in principle they are limited to the purchase or loan of, respectively, print newspapers or access to the online versions.<sup>1</sup>

### **3. Data and Methodology**

We obtained the empirical micro data from the "Survey on Cultural Consumption 2012" ("Encuesta de Consumo Cultural 2012", hereinafter ECC2012) conducted by the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) of Colombia.<sup>2</sup> The ECC2012 allows characterising "perceptions and behaviours that express cultural practices of the population aged 5 years and over" (DANE, 2013: 4). The sample is representative at the national level, has a probabilistic, stratified, multistage and clustered sampling design, and includes 29,285 individuals living in 8,636 households. Households were selected on the basis of current housing according to the information from the National Census of Population and Housing 2005. Conceptually, the ECC2012 is a survey on participation that covers both readers and non-readers of newspapers (McCarthy and Jinnett, 2001). Data were collected by means of face-to-face interviews of people aged five years and more

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<sup>1</sup> In other cultural activities participation costs are particularly high. For example, in the case of the performing arts they are not limited to the ticket and also include travel costs (tolls, parking, etc.), transportation, babysitting, etc. (Borgonovi, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> See "Encuesta de Consumo Cultural": [www.dane.gov.co/index.php/educacion-cultura-gobierno-alias/consumo-cultural](http://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/educacion-cultura-gobierno-alias/consumo-cultural).

during 12 months from September 2011 to August 2012 included.<sup>3</sup>

In our analysis we adopt Seaman’s (2006) taxonomy of participation equations of “Type P”. Following this taxonomy, we use the information on the characteristics of the individual as distinguished from the characteristics of the individual’s household. We filtered the sample for respondents aged 12 and older, for a selection of 21,025 individuals.

The two questions from the ECC2012 that allow us to build the dependent variable that reflects the decision observable on the market are:

- [Question 29:] Have you read newspapers in the past month? <sup>4</sup> a. Yes \_\_ b. No\_\_ {Continue}
- [Question 29a:] How often have you read newspapers?
  - [1]=Once a month
  - [2]=Once a week
  - [3]=Several times a week
  - [4]=Every day

The participation equation  $P_i^t$  of an individual  $i$  at time  $t$  is:

$$P_i^t = c + \delta N_i^t + kM_i^t + vS_i^t + oT_i^t + \gamma C_i^t + \lambda R_i^t + \varepsilon_i^t \quad (1)$$

where  $P_i^t$  is the dependent variable that encompasses the two observables decisions that the individual takes on the market for newspaper reading. The first decision reflects a dichotomous variable that takes the value of 1 if the individual reads, and 0 if she does not. The second decision is about the intensity of reading and is logically derived from the first one. It corresponds to an ordered discrete variable that takes the values of 1 (= once a month), 2 (= once a week), 3 (= several times a week) or 4 (= daily).

Given the participation equation and the nature of our dependent variables, where one is a discrete dichotomous variable and the other is an ordered discrete variable, we apply two distinguished estimation models (Cameron and Trivedi, 2005). In the first step we estimate the dichotomous decision to participate (to read newspapers or not). The second step applies is an individual has made the choice to read, where we estimate the intensity (frequency) of participation through a probit model. Following Long and Freese (2001: 80), the adjustment measures in the discrete choice models provide only partial information, which must be evaluated in the context of the theory behind the analysis, the results of previous investigations and the estimated parameters of the considered model. In addition, the estimated values of the parameters do not have a direct interpretation, in principle we are interested in their sign and statistical significance (Greene and Hensher, 2010). For both the binomial probit and the ordered probit, if the estimated coefficient is positive and statistically significant, it indicates that the variable in question is a factor that increases the likelihood of participation.

Our models allow to estimate the relative importance of personal characteristics (age, gender), “mixed” variables (involving personal as well as social and cultural aspects: marital status, self

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<sup>3</sup> For children younger than 12, responses were provided by parents or legal guardians at the children’s presence to validate the provided information (DANE, 2013: 14).

<sup>4</sup> In the ECC2012 newspapers are part of a group called ‘publications’ which are defined as “media or channels of information and communication flow between a group of people or public ideas, stories or experiences that are structured and expressed through words and images. In this category are books, magazines and newspapers in physical or digital format”. That is, Question 29 does not distinguish the format of the printed/digital newspaper, or whether it is a newspaper with regional or national circulation.

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recognition of ethnicity), cultural consumption capital (general education, reading habits, active (overall) cultural participation, access to the Internet (the latter necessary condition to read newspapers online), socio-economic status, the time constraint (main activity) and other variables (residence) to explain newspaper reading. The influence of these variables on cultural participation has been highlighted in the previous section. Table 1 shows in detail the definition of the dependent variables and the vector of explanatory variables.

**Table 1.** Definition of variables

Variable	Definition	Type	Description
<i>Dependent variables:</i>			
<i>Newspaper reading</i>	Have you read newspapers in the past month?	<i>D</i>	1=Yes; 0=No
<i>Frequency of newspaper reading</i>	How often have you read newspapers?	<i>O</i>	1=Once a month; 2=Once a week; 3=Several times a week; 4=Every day
<i>Explanatory variables:</i>			
<u><i>Personal characteristics</i></u> $N_i$			
<i>Age</i>	Age categories	<i>O</i>	1=12-18; 2=19-29; 3=30-44; 4=45-64; 5=65+
<i>Male</i>	Gender	<i>D</i>	1=Male; 0=Female
<u><i>Mixed variables</i></u> $M_i$			
<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>O</i>	1=Married +civil partnership; 2=Single; 3=Widowed +divorced
<i>Ethnicity</i>	According to their physical features, culture or people, you recognise yourself as:	<i>D</i>	1=White/mixed; <sup>5</sup> 2=African descent; 3=Indigenous/Rom
<u><i>Accumulated cultural capital</i></u> $C_i$			
<i>Level of education</i>	Level of education	<i>O</i>	1=Pre-school-Basic; 2=Secondary; 3=University +Technological college; 4=Postgraduate
<i>Cultural participation</i>	Active cultural participation	<i>D</i>	1=Yes; 0=No
<i>Reading habit</i>	Do you have the habit of reading?	<i>D</i>	1=Yes; 0=No
<i>Internet</i>	Does your household have an Internet connection?	<i>D</i>	1=Yes; 0=No
<u><i>Socio-economic status</i></u> $S_i$	Socio-economic status	<i>O</i>	1= Low; 2= Medium; 3=High
<u><i>Main activity</i></u> $T_i$	Which activity occupied most of your time last week?	<i>O</i>	1=Employed; 2=Student; 3=Domestic labour; 4=Seeking employment; 5=Disability; 6=Others
<u><i>Others</i></u> $R_i$			
<i>Place</i>	Place <sup>*, **</sup>	<i>O</i>	1=13 Major cities; 2=10 Intermediate cities; 3=Others cities

**Notes:** (N1) Variable types are either Dichotomous (D) or Ordered (O) variable.

(N2) \*13 major cities: Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla, Bucaramanga, Manizales, Pasto, Pereira, Cúcuta, Ibagué, Montería, Cartagena, Villavicencio; \*\* 10 Intermediate cities: Neiva, Tunja, Armenia, Popayán, Valledupar, Florencia, Sincelejo, Riohacha, Quibdó, San Andrés.

<sup>5</sup> By “mixed” we intend here “mestizo”, namely, in Latin America a person of mixed race, especially one having Spanish and American Indian parentage.



## 4. Empirical Results

### 4.1 Profile of newspaper readers

Out of the total sample of 21,025 individuals, 62.3% (12,885) have read newspapers in the previous month. Colombian newspaper readers mainly prefer the printed format, as shown in Table 2: 87% read exclusively in print, 2.7% in digital format and 10.3% both formats.

**Table 2.** Newspaper reading by format

<b>Format</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Exclusively in print	11,208	86.98
Exclusively in digital	349	2.71
Print/Digital	1,328	10.31
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,885</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 3 on the next page shows the profiles of Colombian readers and non-readers of newspapers. For all variables there are significant differences between the two groups. 80% of newspaper readers are aged between 19 and 64, with the segment 30-44 being the most representative one (29.4%). Gender distribution is balanced (50.3% males vs. 49.7% females), the slightly predominant marital status is married/cohabiting (50.4%), while about 90% of readers consider themselves as ethnically white/mixed. The prevailing educational levels of newspaper readers are secondary (49.5%) and higher education (28.9%). 85.3% of newspaper readers declare to have a 'reading habit', while only 43.44% have an Internet connection at home. The commonest socio-economic status is the middle one (62.4%), while 76% of readers are active in the labour market (57.1% working against 19.2% looking for a job) and 46.6% reside in the 13 major capital cities.

Compared to readers, non-readers of newspapers are distributed more homogeneously in terms of age, although with a relative importance of the end segments: 23.7% of individuals between 12 and 18 and 10% of individuals over 65 years do not read newspapers. The proportion of singles (42.6%) with respect to married and widowed individuals is more important in the case of non-readers, as a rather low level of education (preschool/primary, 31.7%). Only 30% of non-readers state that they have a 'reading habit', and only 32.1% have an Internet connection at home. The commonest socio-economic status is the low one (38.3%), 23.1% are devoted to household chores, 24.7% are job seekers and 60.1% reside in other municipal capitals (very small cities).

The obtained profile of Colombian newspaper readers stresses a certain participation gap, not dissimilar from activities related to 'high' culture, in particular with reference to the level of education and socio-economic status. It also confirms the evidence from studies on other forms of cultural participation conducted in other countries (basically Western industrialised ones) about the relative importance of individual characteristics such as age, gender and marital status.

An additional explanatory variable included in our analysis – 'reading habit' – sheds more light about the profile of non-readers. This variable is related to the ability of individuals to accumulate cultural consumption capital and to their preferences for reading in general. Indeed, we can notice that non-readers of newspapers are also weak readers of books (60%) and magazines (69%).

**Table 3.** Profiles of readers and non-readers of newspapers

Variable	Newspaper reading (%)		
	Readers (n=12,885)	Non readers (n=8,140)	Test of mean differences
<b>Age categories:</b>			
12-18 (reference group)	13.2	23.7	***
19-29	24.9	21.4	***
30-44	29.4	22.8	***
45-64	26.0	22.1	***
65+	6.4	10.0	***
Gender (Male)	50.3	39.8	***
<b>Ethnicity:</b>			
White/mixed (reference group)	89.3	87.8	***
African descent	6.7	6.6	***
Indigenous/Rom	4.0	5.7	***
<b>Marital Status:</b>			
Married + civil partnership (reference group)	50.4	42.5	***
Single	36.8	42.6	***
Widowed + divorced	12.8	14.9	***
<b>Level of education:</b>			
Pre-school-Basic (reference group)	17.9	31.7	***
Secondary	49.5	51.3	***
University + Technological college	28.9	15.8	***
Postgraduate	3.7	1.2	***
Has a reading habit	85.3	70.3	***
Active overall cultural participation	8.2	7.3	**
Has Internet connection at home	43.5	32.1	***
<b>Socio-economic stratum:</b>			
Low (reference group)	29.4	38.3	***
Medium	62.4	57.8	***
High	8.2	3.9	***
<b>Occupation:</b>			
Employed (reference group)	57.1	42.3	***
Student	3.6	3.5	***
Domestic labour	15.6	23.1	***
Seeking employment	19.2	24.7	***
Disability	1.1	2.9	***
Others	3.5	3.5	***
<b>Place:</b>			
13 major cities (reference group)	46.6	35.2	***
10 Intermediate cities	10.5	4.7	***
Others cities	43.0	60.1	***

**Note:** \*\*\* and \*\* indicate the statistical significance level of  $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.05$ , respectively.

Table 4 shows the results about the answers to the question “Who created your habit of reading?” A substantial difference is evident for individuals’ own initiative, typical of only 21% of non-readers, against 35% of readers. Hence we can argue that not reading newspapers is linked to the more general aspect of lack of a reading habit.



**Table 4.** “Who created your habit of reading?”

Person/Institution	Did you read newspapers in the last 12 months?			
	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
Teachers	4,503	34.95	2,973	36.52
Family members/Household	1,798	13.95	975	11.98
Friends	125	0.97	55	0.68
Own initiative	4,543	35.26	1,704	20.93
Librarian	9	0.07	4	0.05
Other	11	0.09	11	0.14
Without reading habit	1,896	14.71	2,418	29.71
Total	12,885	100.00	8,140	100.00

#### 4.2 Regression results

The regression results are shown in Table 5. Two equations are estimated for participation: reading newspaper (Model 1) and, for readers, frequency of reading newspaper (Model 2). Our discrete choice models focus on the estimation of the probabilities for the different alternatives or observed results (Greene and Hensher, 2010). To facilitate the interpretation of the results of the models estimations, we also present the marginal effects of each explanatory variable on the decision of reading newspapers. In the case of the ordered probit equation (Model 2), we present the marginal effects for each of the categories “once a month”, “once a week”, “several times a week”, “every day”.

With regard to personal characteristics, age has a significant effect on reading newspapers. More precisely, there is a non-linear effect showing that for the elders (65+) the probability of reading newspapers decreases at an increasing rate. Compared to the reference group (12-18), for individuals aged 45-64 the probability of reading newspapers increases by 15.5%, while being a male increases the probability of reading newspapers by 12% with respect to females. With reference to the mixed variables, marital status and ethnic self-recognition also matter. Being single versus being married/cohabiting reduces the probability of reading newspapers by 3.2%, and indigenous/gypsy/Rom individuals are less likely to read newspapers compared to white/mixed individuals by 6%.

The results shown for the variable educational level are positive and monotone. More specifically, with respect to pre-school/basic primary education, the marginal effect doubles from secondary (12.9%) to graduate education (23.5%). Similarly, investment in courses and cultural workshops is positively associated with reading newspapers (5.2%). With regard to the main economic activity, the results show that being incapacitated to work, a student, a job seeker or a housekeeper reduces the likelihood of reading newspapers with respect to active workers. On the other hand, belonging to an upper socio-economic status increases the probability of reading newspapers by 7%.

Having the habit of reading in general increases the probability of reading newspapers by 20% and being culturally active by 5.2%. On the other hand, having access to the Internet at home increases the probability of reading newspapers by only 2%. Moreover, compared to residents in 13 major cities, the probability of reading newspapers is reduced for those living in smaller towns by 11%. These results may reflect the urban nature of reading newspapers, as well as a more limited offer of printed newspapers.

Table 5. Determinants of newspaper reading in Colombia

Dependent Variable	Model 1: Dicotomic Probit		Model 2: Ordered Probit				
	Did you read newspapers in the last month?		How frequently did you read newspapers?	Once a month	Once a week	Several times a week	Every day
	Coefficients	Marginal Effects	Coefficients	Marginal Effects	Marginal Effects	Marginal Effects	Marginal Effects
Age categories (ref: 12-18 years)							
19-29	0.277***	0.109***	0.103**	-0.023**	-0.018**	0.013**	0.028**
30-44	0.377***	0.146***	0.155***	-0.034***	-0.028***	0.018***	0.043***
45-64	0.402***	0.155***	0.245***	-0.051***	-0.046***	0.025***	0.071***
65+	0.227***	0.089***	0.393***	-0.075***	-0.077***	0.031***	0.120***
Male	0.319***	0.120***	0.194***	-0.038***	-0.037***	0.018***	0.058***
Ethnicity (ref: White/mixed)							
African descent	0.041	0.015	0.214***	-0.038***	-0.044***	0.013***	0.068***
Indigenous/Rom	-0.150***	-0.058***	-0.061	0.013	0.011	-0.006	-0.018
Marital Status (ref: Married + civil partnership)							
Single	-0.085***	-0.032***	-0.053**	0.011**	0.010**	-0.005**	-0.016**
Widowed + divorced	-0.042	-0.016	-0.013	0.003	0.003	-0.001	-0.004
Level of education (ref: Pre-school-Basic)							
Secondary	0.329***	0.129***	0.243***	-0.055***	-0.042***	0.030***	0.066***
University +Technological college	0.505***	0.193***	0.353***	-0.075***	-0.064***	0.038***	0.100***
Postgraduate	0.633***	0.235***	0.357***	-0.076***	-0.065***	0.039***	0.102***
Has a reading habit	0.517***	0.201***	0.180***	-0.038***	-0.033***	0.020***	0.051***
Active cultural participation	0.140***	0.052***	-0.147***	0.031***	0.027***	-0.016***	-0.042***
Internet connection at home	0.055***	0.021***	0.039*	-0.008*	-0.008*	0.004*	0.012*
Economic activity (ref: employed)							
Student	-0.126**	-0.048**	-0.065	0.012	0.013	-0.005	-0.020
Housekeeper	-0.193***	-0.074***	-0.218***	0.045***	0.040***	-0.023***	-0.063***
Job seeker	-0.065**	-0.024**	-0.109***	0.021***	0.021***	-0.010***	-0.033***
Disable	-0.522***	-0.204***	-0.062	0.012	0.012	-0.005	-0.019
Others	-0.027	-0.010	-0.188***	0.038**	0.035**	-0.019**	-0.055***

Socio-economic status (ref: Low)							
Medium	0.037*	0.014*	-0.007	0.001	0.001	-0.001	-0.002
High	0.187***	0.069***	0.266***	-0.046***	-0.055***	0.015***	0.086***
Place (ref: 13 major cities)							
10 Intermediate cities	0.344***	0.114***	0.100***	-0.015***	-0.021***	0.003***	0.034***
Small cities	-0.284***	-0.109***	-0.353***	0.073***	0.065***	-0.036***	-0.102***
Constant	-0.673***						
Constant cut1			-0.731***				
Constant cut2			0.254***				
Constant cut3			1.216***				
Observations (n)	21,025		12,885				
Log likelihood	-12673.345		-16551.866				
Wald $\chi^2$ (24)	2502.10		1204.84				
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.0969		0.0365				
Prob. > $\chi^2$	0.0000		0.0000				

**Note:** \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* indicate the statistical significance level of  $p < 0.01$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , and  $p < 0.10$ , respectively.

As for the frequency of reading newspapers, the results of Model 2 stress the importance of age. In this case, when an individual has already made the decision to read newspapers, age shows a positive and monotone relationship. Indeed, being 65 or older increases the likelihood of reading newspapers every day by 12% compared to 2.8% of teenagers. Being male, African descent and of a higher educational level increases the likelihood of reading newspapers several times a week and every day.

Concerning the aspect of accumulation of cultural capital, having the habit of reading increases the probability of reading newspapers every day by 5.1%. On the contrary, active cultural participation reduces the likelihood of reading newspapers several times a week and daily, while it increases it for lower frequencies (once a month and once a week). This effect may be due to time restrictions that prevent individuals to participate to both cultural alternatives. Having an Internet access at home slightly increases the frequency of reading newspapers.

Individuals belonging to the high socio-economic stratum present a higher likelihood of reading newspapers every day by 8.6%. This result can be linked to the prevailing reading format in Colombia, namely the printed format. The means of acquiring newspapers is generally through the subscription or purchase of loose units on the street, which may explain the relative importance found for socio-economic status and may contribute to widening the participation gap between high and low socio-economic status (Angelucci and Cage, 2016: p5). Finally, the frequency of reading newspapers is concentrated in the largest cities.

## 5. Discussion

Our findings show a certain participation gap for newspaper reading. The obtained socio-economic and demographic profile of Colombian newspaper readers are in line with some previous findings about newspaper readers and, more in general, some features of cultural consumers in other countries, mainly Western and industrialised ones. Overall, our empirical results confirm a significant positive correlation between age, gender, educational level and socio-economic status. Yet Colombian newspaper readers present some distinctive features.

Differently from major findings on reading newspapers in Western industrialised countries (Schonbach *et al.*, 1999; Lauff, 2001; Elvesta and Blekesaune, 2008; Taipale, 2012) and Chile (Torche, 2007), and other forms of cultural participation (e.g. Seaman, 2006), Colombian newspaper readers are concentrated in the most active socio-economically segment (work career and family formation), counterbalancing more usual participation gaps.

Differently from the general cultural participation gap, men confirm to predominate in newspaper reading also in Colombia, where men read newspapers even more than women, probably due to a content that is not exclusively cultural *stricto sensu*, the latter usually more preferred by women, while. This gender gap could be possibly explained by a particular motivation of men to satisfy their needs for general (Sternvik *et al.*, 2008: 13) or political news (Smith, 1986; Lee and Fujioka, 2017).

On the other hand, similarly to previous results about reading newspapers and cultural participation, Colombian newspaper readers have attained middle-high education and live in metropolitan areas, which may facilitate access to printed newspapers, bought or read in libraries. In fact, despite almost one half of Colombians readers are connected to the Internet, they still keep the habit of reading on paper.

In line with previous studies on other forms of cultural participation (e.g. Borgonovi, 2004), reading newspapers is complementary to other forms of cultural participation, although not in terms of intensity. Remarkably, complementarity is shown also for other forms of reading and furthermore in terms of density, possibly indicating an addiction effect. Notice that married Colombians present a higher likelihood and intensity of being involved in a typical solitary activity like reading newspapers, possibly subtracting time together with their spouses in other cultural activities and practices (Lazzaro and Frateschi, 2017).

As for non-readers of newspapers, they stand out with respect to readers, in terms of age (probably due to alternative reading for the youth and physical barriers for the elders), socio-economic status, marital status and reading habit.

## 6. Conclusions

We have analysed newspaper reading as a form of cultural participation in a country, Colombia, where such a form is particularly relevant. From a taxonomy perspective, we have treated reading newspapers as a leisure good in the sense proposed by Becker, which can be modelled in terms of rational addiction through domestic production functions. National micro data were obtained from the “Survey on Cultural Consumption 2012”.

We have shown that newspaper reading in Colombia is marked by a socio-economic and demographic participation gap, as it is the case for more general forms of cultural participation shown in Western industrialised countries. However, this gap presents proper features, where gender, age and socio-economic status impact differently from other forms of cultural participation and, to a more limited extent, from newspaper reading in other countries. As for marital status, education and being active in other forms of cultural participation, Colombian newspaper readers are more in line with general findings on cultural participation in other countries. The average profile of Colombian newspaper readers corresponds to somebody with a habit of reading in general, male, married or cohabiting, 19-64 years old, with a secondary and vocational educational level, employed, with a medium-high socio-economic status and residing in major cities.

We have explained this gap by estimating two models on the likelihood to read newspapers and its intensity. We have shown that both the likelihood and the intensity of reading newspapers are positively influenced by higher levels of education and having a habit of reading in general, an increasing age, being a male and a resident in major cities.

From a public policy perspective particularly oriented toward incentivising reading among more disadvantaged strata of the population, our findings point to possible socio-economic leverages in order to lower such a participation gap, and hence contribute to foster more egalitarian conditions among Colombian citizens.

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