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TikTok and Political Communication in Peru: Content, Trends and Themes

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Abstract

This research analyzes the use of TikTok by Peruvian political leaders during the 2021 presidential election process and in subsequent years, with the aim of identifying communication patterns and interaction strategies. Based on a quantitative content analysis of 533 posts by five politicians with the largest presence on the platform, it examines ways of adapting to the digital environment and the dynamics of closeness with the audience. The relevance of the study lies in the growth of TikTok as a channel for information and connection with young voters, transforming the traditional logic of political communication. The methodology combines categorical coding and descriptive analysis to assess aspects such as posting frequency, content types, audiovisual resources, and levels of interaction. Among the main findings is the predominant use of personal over institutional content, the adaptation to digital trends through platform-native formats (trends, emojis, hashtags), and a general strategy focused on projecting closeness and spontaneity. The study concludes that TikTok has redefined political interaction in Peru, establishing itself as a key tool for campaigns and political visibility. It also emphasizes the need for future research to analyze the impact of these strategies on electoral behavior and the spread of disinformation.

Palabras clave
"Political Communication"; "Social Media"; "TikTok"; "Electoral Campaigns"; "Perú"

1. Introduction

In recent years, the use of social media has become significantly more prevalent in Peru, with a steady increase in the number of users and the penetration of the internet into everyday life. According to data provided by Simon Kent (2024) in Datareportal, the country has more than 25 million internet users, equivalent to about 75% of the total population. In terms of social media use, it is estimated that more than 24 million people are active on these platforms, representing 70% of Peruvians.

The Peruvian population is approximately 35 million, with an annual growth rate of 1%. This demographic increase is most noticeable among the younger generations in urban areas. Thus, one in eight Peruvians lives in urban areas, where digital connectivity is a key factor in accessing information, education and online services (Kent, 2024).

According to a study by Ipsos (2024), 87% of the country's population uses social media as their main means of communication. In terms of popularity, WhatsApp leads with 98% usage, followed by Facebook (95%), YouTube (94%) and TikTok (70%). TikTok, in particular, has experienced exponential growth in recent years. While in 2021 only 27% of users employed this platform, in 2023 the figure rose to 43%. The report also notes that, since 2019, TikTok has gone from being a relatively insignificant social network to becoming one of the main digital platforms in the country.

After presenting this scenario, which shows the popularity of social media in general, and TikTok in particular, among the Peruvian population, studies on social media use in Peru also reveal a transformation in the preferences and behaviours of the user community.

To cite a few examples of specific groups in this country, entrepreneurs in Peru have recognised TikTok's potential to establish an authentic connection with their audience and have taken advantage of its short-form video capabilities to effectively promote their products and services (Torres-Veneros, 2024). The rapid growth of the platform between 2021 and 2023, mentioned above, has transformed the way users create and interact with content thanks to its short video format, making it a central element of digital culture and communication (Neto et al., 2022; Kulaga, 2024). The advertising effectiveness of the social network itself has also been observed among university students, indicating a strong correlation between TikTok advertising and consumer attitudes, especially with regard to tourism (Mamani et al., 2024).

In short, TikTok continues to grow at a steady pace in many countries, such as Peru, given the increase in the number of downloads of the application on mobile devices in that country. This phenomenon has transformed the way the Peruvian user community consumes and produces digital content, which is particularly relevant in the field of political communication.

Based on the analysis highlighting the growth of TikTok within the Peruvian digital ecosystem, this study's general objective is to examine the role of this platform in the communicative strategies of Peruvian political leaders, particularly during the 2021 presidential election process and its evolution in subsequent years. The research seeks to understand how TikTok is employed by politicians to foster a sense of proximity with their followers and potential voters. From this general objective, the following specific objectives (SO) are derived: to compare the communicative strategies of different Peruvian political leaders on TikTok (SO1); to analyse the type of content and language employed in their posts (SO2); and to examine the evolution of TikTok usage by Peruvian politicians in recent years (SO3).

Furthermore, and in alignment with the previously defined research purposes, the following research questions (RQ) are also posed: Do Peruvian political leaders maintain a high frequency of posting on TikTok? (RQ1). Does the content published by political leaders exhibit precarious or professional production? (RQ2). Is there consistency in the editorial and aesthetic line of the videos, or does this vary to capture a larger audience? (RQ3). Do political leaders have a greater presence on TikTok than their respective parties or groups? (RQ4).

Finally, based on the problem statement and the established objectives, several hypotheses are proposed: that the posts of Peruvian political leaders on TikTok seek to project an image of proximity to their followers and voters (H1); that the use of TikTok by political leaders responds to a strategy of adaptation to current digital trends (H2); and that the frequency of posts by Peruvian political leaders on TikTok has progressively increased in recent years (H3).

The growth of TikTok in Peru and its adoption by political leaders suggest a transformation in the way political communication is developed within the digital sphere. Through this study, the aim is to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the relationship between social media and the communicative strategies of political actors in an electoral context, providing evidence of TikTok's impact on interaction with the citizenry. Given the rapid evolution of digital communication, it is essential to continue research that analyses how these dynamics affect public perception and the electoral behaviour of the population, specifically in the case of Peru.

1. Theoretical framework

2.1. The role of social networks in political communication

Since its inception, social networks have been instrumental in the dissemination of political movements and in electoral and institutional communication. They are credited with a significant role in democratic strengthening by facilitating social organisation and the amplification of political messaging (Enguix, 2017). Their study allows for the exploration of phenomena such as citizen participation, participatory democracy, and digital activism. The Internet has consolidated itself as an essential tool for socio-political communication, fostering active and plural participation, as well as new inclusive spaces for public debate (Moreno-Freites & Ziritt-Trejo, 2019).

Within digital communication research, the study of social media use by political actors has evolved towards approaches that combine content analysis with algorithmic structures and interaction metrics. In this regard, works such as those by Ausserhofer and Maireder (2013) or Bruns and Highfield (2016) highlight how digital platforms generate connected public spheres in which actors seek visibility and resonance. Particularly, the case of TikTok has been addressed by authors such as Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik (2021), who underscore its potential for civic participation through ephemeral and personalised content. Furthermore, recent studies have begun to classify forms of political participation on TikTok, including the use of humour, performance, and personal narratives as attraction strategies (Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2023).

TikTok, one of the most influential platforms in the current digital ecosystem, was launched in 2016 by the Chinese company ByteDance under the name A.me, subsequently renamed Douyin in December of the same year. In 2017, the application was introduced to international markets under the name TikTok and, following the acquisition of Musical.ly, consolidated its global presence in 2018. This merger allowed for the expansion of its functionalities, offering tools for the creation of short videos lasting between 15 and 60 seconds with filters, effects, and live streaming options. In a short space of time, TikTok became one of the most downloaded mobile applications, reaching 80 million downloads in the United States and 8 billion globally (Bastero, 2024).

TikTok is characterised by its short-form video format in vertical orientation, the duration of which ranges between 1 and 10 minutes. Its interface is organised into three main sections: 'For You', which employs a personalisation algorithm based on user interactions; 'Following', which displays posts from subscribed accounts; and 'Create', where users can record, edit, and publish content using various personalisation tools (Morais, 2020). The platform is distinguished by its accessibility in video editing, allowing for the integration of music tracks, visual effects, and filters to enhance the quality of the audiovisual material.

A key element of TikTok is its capacity to generate fluid and dynamic transitions within videos, favouring audience retention. Likewise, the platform encourages interaction among the user community through likes, comments, and the 'duet' function, which allows users to replicate or react to other content using the same music and duration (Hernández, 2022). These characteristics have bolstered its popularity among Generation Z, a demographic group composed of digital natives who consume information primarily through mobile devices (Peña-Fernández et al., 2020).

From a communicative perspective, TikTok is based on a content personalisation model, where the viralisation of videos depends on algorithms that prioritise posts with the highest number of interactions. The platform combines informative and narrative elements with emotional components, facilitating the capture of user attention. Its design promotes rapid and immediate content consumption, where hashtags play a central role in the distribution and dissemination of audiovisual material (Peña-Fernández et al., 2020; Fernández, 2023).

In the political sphere, TikTok has transformed candidates' communication strategies, favouring the personalisation of discourse and the construction of an image closer to the electorate. Through informal settings such as kitchens, offices, or bedrooms, politicians seek to generate a more direct connection with voters. In turn, users respond to this content through imitations, parodies, and recreations, which reinforces the trend towards personalist politics (Salazar & Moreno, 2023).

In this context, the concept of 'scrolling politics' emerges, referring to the competition between political content on social networks to capture user attention. Audience retention has become a key factor in political communication strategies on TikTok, where success depends on the ability to adapt messages to the narratives and codes of the young population, the predominant demographic group on the platform. In 2022, 65% of TikTok users were under 35 years of age, highlighting the importance of designing strategies based on education, information, and entertainment as the primary motivations for digital consumption (Salazar & Moreno, 2023).

In conclusion, TikTok has consolidated itself as a key platform in contemporary digital culture, combining interactivity, viralisation, and content personalisation. Its impact on political and social communication reflects a shift in the dynamics of information consumption, where algorithms and audiovisual narratives play a central role in the dissemination and reception of messages.

2.2. Use of social networks in Peruvian politics

Since the 2011 Peruvian presidential elections, social networks have begun to play an increasingly relevant role in political campaigns. In that contest, several candidates, including Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, tentatively explored the use of digital platforms to disseminate messages and connect with voters (Rojas, 2016). However, it was during the 2016 elections that Kuczynski consolidated a more structured and innovative digital strategy, which marked a turning point in the country's political communication. According to Abad and López (2020), the success of his social media campaign—especially on Facebook and YouTube—prompted other candidates to incorporate digital strategies more systematically in subsequent electoral processes.

Linares (2011) notes that, compared to other countries in the region such as Chile, the growth of social media use in Peruvian campaigns was slower. In 2011, Kuczynski had 36,490 followers on Twitter, surpassing Alejandro Toledo and Keiko Fujimori. Nevertheless, only 1% of the electorate used this network, predominantly within high socio-economic sectors (Abad and López, 2020).

Anti-Fujimorism also gained relevance on social networks. In 2009, the Facebook page "No a Keiko" was created, consolidating its influence during the 2011, 2016, and 2021 elections (Mendoza, 2024). In 2016, the page "Keiko no va" disseminated critical content regarding Fujimorism, which spurred mass mobilisations (Vidal, 2022).

The Peruvian sociologist Fernando Tuesta (2017) explains that, in the 2016 elections, all candidates utilised social networks, albeit without well-defined political communication strategies. On X (formerly Twitter), Kuczynski and Fujimori promoted hashtags: #UnidosLaHacemos and #JuntosHaciaElFuturo, respectively (Tuesta, 2017). During the second round, Fujimori doubled her followers on Facebook, while Kuczynski saw greater growth on Twitter. Furthermore, he maintains that, although social networks acquired a relevant role in Peruvian politics, the number of followers did not determine the electoral results. Following the elections, many official accounts lost interest or were deactivated, reflecting the ephemeral nature of political digital activity.

2.3. Use of TikTok by Peruvian Political Leaders

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 significantly increased the popularity of TikTok in Peru, where the majority of users were passive consumers of content rather than creators. According to a study by the consultancy firm Ipsos (2020), the primary activities on the platform included following trends, searching for public figures, and watching videos, with comedy, music, and challenges being the most popular content. In that year, only 31% of surveyed users generated and shared videos, while 84% performed searches. The demographics of TikTok in Peru showed that 12% of social media users had an account on this platform, with a higher prevalence among young women and single individuals (Cóndor, 2020).

The political use of TikTok gained relevance in November 2020, when protests erupted following the impeachment of former President Martín Vizcarra and the inauguration of Manuel Merino. During these mobilisations, Peruvian youth employed TikTok as a means to document police violence and disseminate information through hashtags that increased the visibility of the events. Among the most widely used were #MerinoNoEsMiPresidente, with 10.5 million views, and #EsteCongresoNoMeGobierna, with 400,000 views within two days. Consequently, the platform began to consolidate as a space for activism and news dissemination (Ortiz, 2020).

In general terms, and according to the Digital News Report (2023), TikTok experienced a 14% growth compared to other networks since the pandemic, becoming the fourth most used platform for news consumption in Peru. Political topics dominate 60% of the content on the platform, followed by health and climate (31%) and entertainment news (26%).

Analysis of the 2021 presidential elections revealed that candidates such as Pedro Castillo and Keiko Fujimori utilised the platform primarily to build their personal brand rather than for substantive political discourse, often focusing on entertainment rather than political issues (Cervi et al., 2023). Thus, Peruvian presidential candidates emphasised personalisation, focusing on their individual images rather than political matters. This platform allowed candidates to connect with the electorate through a more personal approach, in contrast to the more unidirectional communication observed on Twitter (Kvalvaag, 2022).

The viral potential of TikTok has been recognised by digital communication experts, who highlight its utility for political campaigns, institutions, and governments. Looking ahead to the 2026 elections, it is expected that this platform will continue to play a key role in candidate promotion and audience segmentation, given that its use is no longer limited solely to young people but has expanded its reach across different age groups (Zúñiga, 2024).

2. Method

The present study is based on a descriptive quantitative content analysis, employing categorical coding of the TikTok posts of the five most prominent Peruvian politicians on this platform. Although an interpretative component is included in the coding process, this study adopts a descriptive quantitative approach, in line with the frameworks proposed by Neuendorf (2002) and Krippendorff (2004) for systematic content analysis. This approach facilitates the identification of patterns in the use of TikTok by political actors through the quantification of frequencies, content types, visual formats, and modes of interaction.

Content analysis, therefore, plays an essential role in this study. Guix (2007) explains that the objective of this technique lies in identifying the codes used by the discourse sender, examining the content of the messages, contextualising their development, and extracting information of interest that enriches the research. In this regard, Cáceres (2003) highlights that one of the fundamental goals of this approach is to achieve data reduction through groupings, thereby providing meaning to the analysed information in relation to the previously established theory. This process allows for the consolidation of relevant

findings and the generation of pertinent information for future comparisons with related research.

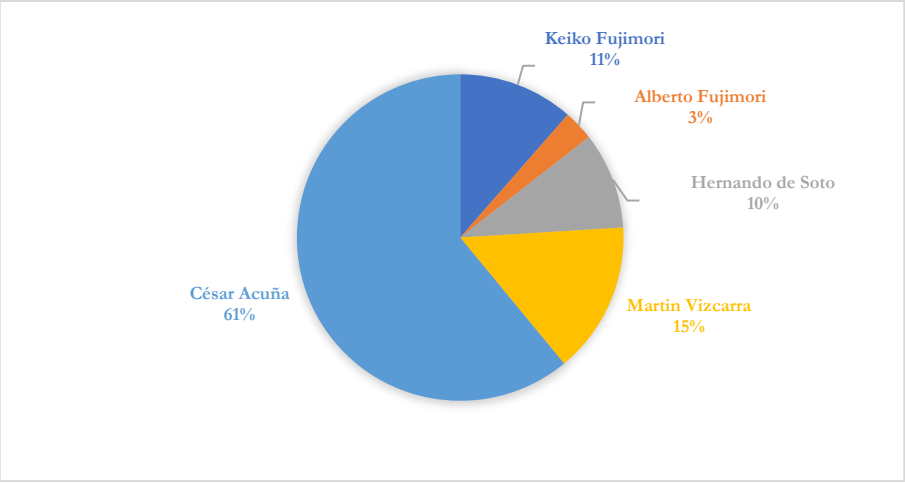
To achieve the proposed objectives and address the formulated questions and hypotheses, a total of 533 TikTok posts from the five Peruvian politicians with the greatest presence on this platform were examined. The selection of the leaders analysed was based on a criterion of digital relevance, determined by the number of followers, posting frequency, and interaction levels on TikTok, according to public data updated as of September 2024. Only politicians with high-visibility national roles or presidential experience were considered, in order to ensure the pertinence of the analysis within the Peruvian political context. The sample, comprising César Acuña, Martín Vizcarra, Keiko Fujimori, Hernando de Soto, and Alberto Fujimori, represents various ideological orientations and degrees of party institutionalisation, allowing for the observation of diverse communicative patterns. This selection responds to the need to analyse figures with a sustained presence on the platform and the capacity to influence the digital public conversation.

The period of analysis spans from 17 February 2021, the date on which the first TikTok post by a Peruvian political leader was recorded (César Acuña), to 7 September 2024, when the coding of the posts published until that point was conducted. The selected timeframe responds to the intention of covering a period of significant political and media transformation in Peru. This interval includes the development and conclusion of the 2021 electoral process, the subsequent period of political instability involving several changes in presidential leadership, as well as the death of Alberto Fujimori in 2024—events that directly influenced the digital activity of the leaders analysed. Including a broad range allows for the observation of the evolution of their communicative strategies across different contexts—campaign, governance, and post-presidency—which enriches the comparative analysis and permits the identification of continuities and ruptures in the political use of TikTok. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that the conjunctural variations inherent to the period may influence the motivations and communicative styles of the leaders, constituting a limitation to be considered in the interpretation of the results.

Taking into account the sample described above, Figure 1 displays the relationship between the leaders and the percentage of total posts, which is detailed as follows. Firstly, César Acuña —the current Regional Governor of La Libertad— is the politician with the highest number of posts on TikTok (@cesaracunap), with a total of 325 posts, representing 61% of the overall volume. His account records 2.8 million 'likes' and 308,600 followers, while he follows 25 profiles on the platform.

Martín Vizcarra (@mvizcarraperu), former President of Peru (2018-2020), follows in second place with 80 posts, representing 15% of the total analysed. He is the politician with the highest number of 'likes' (8.5 million) and has 895,600 followers, following only two profiles.

Figure 1. *Percentage of TikTok posts analysed by Peruvian leaders*



Source: Own elaboration

Next, Keiko Fujimori, daughter of former dictator Alberto Fujimori, has published 61 pieces of content during the analysed period on her profile (@keikofujimorih), representing 11% of the total. She has accumulated 8.6 million 'likes' and possesses the largest number of followers among the politicians analysed, at 1.1 million. She follows 26 users.

In fourth place, Hernando de Soto (@hdesotoperu), an economist and 2021 presidential candidate, has 51 posts on the social network, equivalent to 10% of the total. His TikTok account has obtained 4.2 million 'likes' and has 451,600 followers, while he follows 30 people.

Finally, the politician with the least activity on TikTok is the former dictator Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000), with only 16 posts, representing 3% of the total analysed. His account (@alberto.fujimori.pe) has accumulated 673,100 'likes' and has 189,400 followers, while he follows three users. Fujimori, it should be noted, passed away during the process of conducting this study, specifically on 11 September 2024, due to complications arising from advanced tongue cancer.

Regarding the variables to be studied in the 533 posts, a mixed-method coding process was carried out, examining the following:

- Date of publication of the content.
- Number of views obtained by each post, thereby reflecting the reach of the content on the platform.
- The thematic categories used to classify the posts were defined based on a review of previous research on political communication on social networks, especially those focused on TikTok and the construction of digital political discourse (Jungherr et al., 2012; Valenti et al., 2015). This framework allowed for the adaptation of a categorical system of eleven main themes: politics, personal matters, culture, economy, health, current affairs, sports,

history, opinion, security, and education. Each category was operationalised according to the predominant focus of the content: for instance, 'politics' includes messages regarding campaigns, proposals, or public management; 'personal matters' groups posts about daily life, family, or hobbies of the politician; 'current affairs' refers to reactions to recent news events; 'history' comprises accounts or evocations of the leader's political past; and 'opinion' includes personal assessments or reflections on social issues. The remaining categories respond to specific and recurring themes in Peruvian digital communication, such as education, security, or sport. The coding was performed independently by two researchers, with subsequent comparison and joint adjustment of discrepancies to ensure the reliability of the process. A pilot test was conducted with a sample of 30 posts to refine the definition of the categories and ensure consistency in their application to the dataset. This procedure provided the analysis with greater rigour and transparency, reducing the margin of ambiguity in the interpretation of the results.

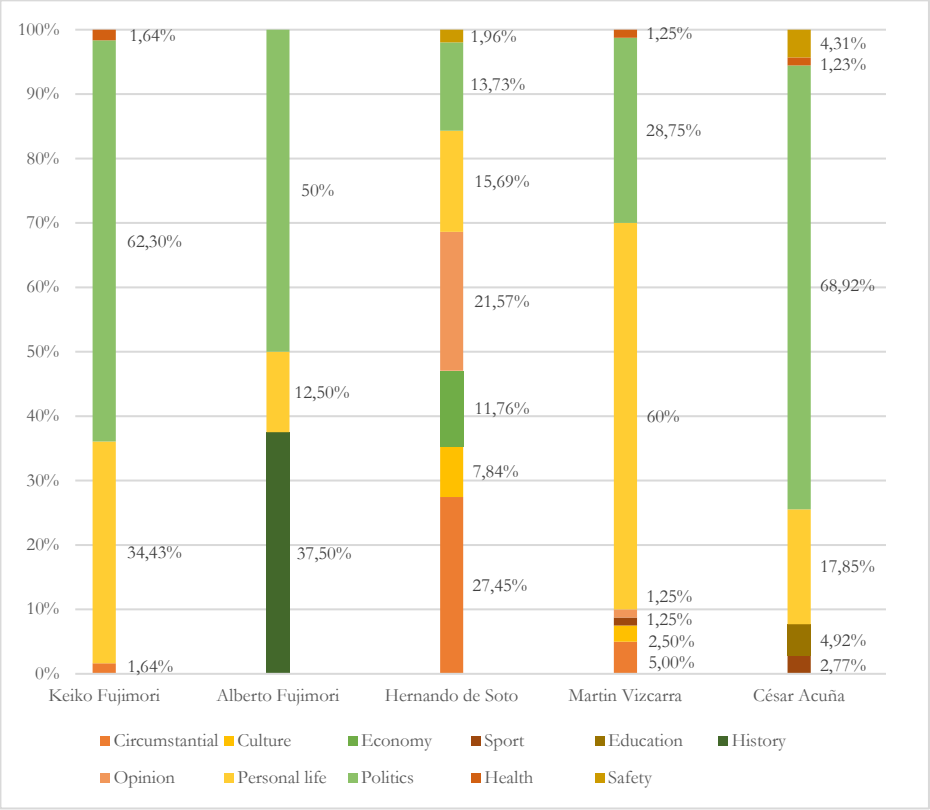
- Given that TikTok is a platform centred on audiovisual content production, the typology of shots in the videos was examined, identifying the following formats: videos with multiple shots, medium shot, three-quarter or American shot, bust shot, wide shot, animated photo, and photo carousel, as well as possible combinations between several of these formats.
- Additionally, the use of multimedia resources such as emojis and hashtags was examined. Whether the leaders interacted with their followers through comments on their posts was also considered, as this is regarded as a key element in political communication strategies, given its impact on the dissemination and viralisation of content on the platform.

3. Results

4.1. Thematic Distribution

Regarding the themes observed in the digital activity of Peruvian politicians on TikTok, as illustrated in Figure 2, in the case of Keiko Fujimori, political topics represent 62.3% of her total posts, followed by videos of a personal nature, which constitute 34.4%. Both health-related content and current affairs each account for a presence of 1.6%.

Figure 2. *Thematic analysis of the posts made by Peruvian political leaders*



Source: Own elaboration.

For his part, Alberto Fujimori also prioritises political themes, which comprise exactly half of his publications. These are followed by posts related to history, representing 37.5%, consisting of personal accounts regarding the ten years during which he held power. Finally, videos of a personal nature cover 12.5%.

Hernando de Soto, in contrast, presents a higher proportion of publications related to current affairs (approximately 27.8%), followed by opinion pieces (21.6%). Personal content videos constitute 15.6%, while political ones account for just over 13.7%. Regarding economic themes, which are his area of expertise, these represent 11.8% of his posts. Those of a cultural nature cover 7.84%, and security-related content accounts for 2%.

Meanwhile, Martín Vizcarra has opted to place greater emphasis on his platform on personal videos, which represent 60% of his publications. These are followed by those related to the political sphere (28.8%). In terms of current affairs content, these constitute 5%, while those of a cultural nature reach 2.5%. Topics such as sport, opinion, and health share the same percentage: 1.3% each.

Finally, Regional Governor César Acuña has 68.9% of his publications linked to political themes, followed by personal content (17.9%). Furthermore, 4.9% of his posts address education, 4.3% security, 2.8% sport, and, lastly, 1.2% health.

4.2. Reach and Views

Taking the video views variable as a reference, a ranking has been compiled of the most and least viewed videos for each candidate, which can be consulted in Table 1 (the number of followers for each, as of January 2025, is indicated in parentheses), the most relevant results of which are explained below. In general, it is observed that the most popular content is linked to electoral campaigns and personal topics, whereas the least popular posts deal with proposals and legislation.

Keiko Fujimori stands out with videos related to her 2021 electoral campaign, with the most viewed clips featuring trending music and her family, reaching up to 11.1 million views. In contrast, her least popular videos address political issues such as laws on medicines and entrepreneurs, with view counts ranging from 47,400 to 475,000.

Table 1. Most and least viewed posts of Peruvian leaders on TikTok

CANDIDATE	TOP 5 MOST VIEWED POSTS	TOP 5 LESS VIEWED POSTS
Keiko Fujimori (1.100.000 followers)	-Proposal to provide care (trending music of the moment) – **political** (11.1 million) -It is today (trending of the moment) on the morning of the elections – **political** (10.7 million) -Some behind-the-scenes details of the campaign – **personal** (8.7 million) -Challenge with her daughter: who knows more about the other – **personal** (8.7 million) -Trend: 'let's go for a change' – **political** (8.6 million)	-Generic medicines sales law – **health** (47,400) -Entrepreneurs' law – **political** (194,000) -Reflection on the Constitution on its 30th anniversary – **political** (267,500) -Commentary on abuses in charges for medicines – **political** (288,500) -New platform and chapters in the 'orange school' – **political** (475,000)
Alberto Fujimori (189.400 followers)	-Chavin de Huantar: the dream rescue – **history** (4 million) -Chapter 1 of my video memoirs – **history** (1.1 million) -Chapter 2 of my video memoirs – **history** (793,100) -Unseen photos of Alberto Fujimori – **politics** (735,600) -In Peru, there was no terrorism – **history** (727,900)	-Reaffirmation of the decision to run in the presidential elections – **political** (102,600) -Unseen photos with the Peruvian people – **politics** (105,000) -Video memoirs: the great adjustment of the 90s – **history** (108,300) -Non-existent crime: Pativilca case – **politics** (158,800) -Chapter 3 of my video memoirs – **history** (172,100)
Hernando de Soto (451.600 followers)	-Do not be afraid – **current affairs** (1.7 million)	-Report on his sponsorship – **personal** (3,091) -Visit to the city of Ayacucho – **personal** (3,395)

	-Informal workers are not the problem, they are the solution – **economic** (469,800) -Hernando de Soto and the mystery of the lost PUCP book – **personal** (392,600) -Division in Peru – **opinion** (355,800) -Peruvian copper will end Putin's war – **opinion** (302,500)	-Why can the 'partidocracia' not defeat crime? – **security** (3,640) -More news soon: let's talk more – **political** (10,500) -Memories of the April 5th coup d'état – **cultural** (11,800)
Martín Vizcarra (895.600 followers)	-Listening to Dina – current affairs (7.5 million) -Dina Ron Ron – current affairs (6.2 million) -With Morita enjoying Grupo 5 – personal (6.1 million) -Showing my kitchen while having breakfast – personal (5.2 million) -Hello, sharing my TikTok account here – personal (5 million)	-From freshman to president – political (155,900) -Happy Father's Day – personal (169,500) -Happy Peasants' Day, happy Saint John's Day – political (205,700) -Greetings to engineers on their day – personal (220,500) -Happy day to all the mothers in Peru – personal (230,700)
César Acuña (308.600 followers)	-Trend: 'claro que yes' – political (5.1 million) -Trend: priorities in his government – political (4 million) -Birth of his youngest grandchild – personal (3 million) -Paolo Guerrero at UCV – sport (2.7 million) -Political campaign working from home – politics (2.6 million)	-Photo with a peasant woman who reminds him of his mother – personal (1,060) -Improvements for agriculture – politics (1,060) -Listening to residents #GENTEVALIENTE – politics (2,272) -Listening to residents #GENTEVALIENTE – politics (2,393) -Listening to residents #GENTEVALIENTE – politics (2,413)

Source: Own elaboration.

Alberto Fujimori, for his part, maintains a strong historical focus, with videos regarding his time in power garnering millions of views, such as the Chavín de Huántar rescue (4 million). Conversely, his least viewed posts deal with his potential 2026 candidacy and other political topics, failing to exceed 200,000 views.

Hernando de Soto presents a variety of themes, ranging from current Peruvian affairs to his stance on the economy and the division within the country. His most-viewed video, concerning the national situation in Peru, reached 1.7 million views. His least popular videos include reports on his sponsorship in the provinces and his visit to Ayacucho, in some cases recording fewer than 4,000 views.

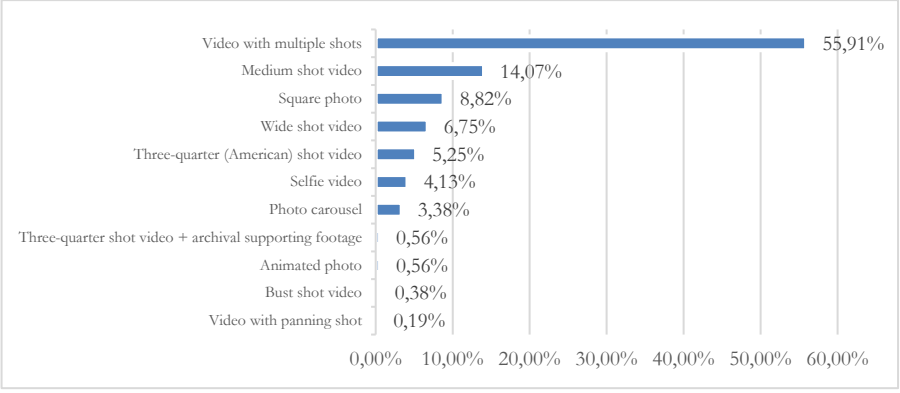
Martín Vizcarra achieves high view counts on videos covering current affairs and personal topics, such as his reactions to messages from President Dina Boluarte (7.5 million). However, his least-viewed videos are related to commemorative greetings and his profession, with figures hovering around 150,000.

Finally, César Acuña stands out for his 2021 electoral campaign videos, such as 'Claro que yes', which attained 5.1 million views. His least popular videos include political photos and clips with low engagement, in some instances not exceeding 3,000 views.

4.3. Shot Types

As shown in Figure 3, videos with multiple shots are the format most frequently employed by the politicians analysed, representing nearly 56% of the total. Recordings in medium shot rank second, accounting for over 14%. On the other hand, the square photo format, consisting of a static image, represents almost 9%, while videos in wide shot reach 6.75%.

Figure 3. Shot typologies



Source: Own elaboration.

Additionally, three-quarter or American shot videos represent 5.25%, followed by selfie-style videos—in which the individuals record themselves holding the mobile phone and pointing directly at their faces—accounting for over 4.1%. Regarding photographs, the carousel format, which displays different images within a single post, represents 3.38%.

The formats least utilised by the analysed politicians are as follows: animated photos (images with added effects, 0.56%), three-quarter shot videos with archival supporting footage (0.56%), bust shot videos (0.38%), and finally, videos with panning shots (0.19%).

4.4. Content Analysis and Interaction Strategies

Finally, this section details the findings regarding the formats utilized by political figures for content presentation (video or still imagery), the inclusion of emojis in descriptions, the presence of hashtags, comment volume, and the degree of interaction with the user community via responses to public feedback.

Keiko Fujimori publishes exclusively in video format, incorporating emojis in approximately 97% of her posts and hashtags in nearly 92% of cases. Although all her publications receive comments, her engagement level remains moderate, with a response rate of just over 34%. Regarding Alberto Fujimori, nearly 69% of his posts are videos, while over 31% consist of photographs. His use of emojis is minimal (12.5%), and he does not employ hashtags in any publications. Despite receiving comments on all posts, he maintains no interaction with users.

Hernando de Soto also demonstrates a preference for video (98%) but uses emojis infrequently (just over 27%); similarly, hashtags appear in only 39% of his posts. His interaction level is remarkably low, with a response rate to comments of approximately 8%. Conversely, Martín Vizcarra publishes exclusively in video format, using emojis in 17.5% of his posts and hashtags in 56%. He stands out for having the highest level of engagement, responding to users in 97.5% of instances.

César Acuña alternates between video and photo content, though the former predominates at 81.5%. His use of emojis is sparse, with 72.55% of posts lacking them; however, he is the most frequent user of hashtags (65.23%). He is the only subject analyzed with posts that received no comments (1.23%) and, despite having the highest publishing frequency, he does not respond to any community feedback.

Martín Vizcarra exhibits the highest level of interaction, whereas César Acuña and Alberto Fujimori fail to respond to comments entirely. Keiko Fujimori and Hernando de Soto demonstrate intermediate levels of participation. These disparities in engagement among the analyzed leaders carry significant implications for political communication and digital leadership. The lack of responsiveness from Acuña and Fujimori suggests a unidirectional utilization of TikTok, centered on message dissemination and image projection rather than the construction of a dialogue with the audience. This strategy aligns with a traditional communicative logic—analogous to displaying a billboard or broadcasting a television spot—wherein the recipient is relegated to a passive role.

From a political leadership perspective, a lack of interaction may limit the perception of proximity and authenticity, attributes particularly valued by young audiences in digital environments. In contrast, the high participation of Martín Vizcarra, reflected in his replies to comments, reinforces the idea of a more horizontal and participatory communication, which contributes to strengthening his symbolic capital and his connection with the electorate. This contrast demonstrates that, within the TikTok ecosystem, interaction is not only an indicator of visibility but also a strategic component in the construction of political legitimacy.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The results of this study have allowed for the examination of the role of TikTok in the communicative strategy of Peruvian political leaders, confirming the growing relevance of this platform within the digital sphere and its impact on political communication. As established in the theoretical framework, social networks have transformed campaign

strategies and fostered more personalised and direct communication with the audience (Enguix, 2017; Moreno-Freites & Ziritt-Trejo, 2019).

However, the findings demonstrate that this interaction should not be understood as homogeneous. While some leaders, such as Martín Vizcarra, employ TikTok to establish a genuine dialogue with their audience through replies and active participation, others, such as César Acuña or Alberto Fujimori, use it primarily as a unidirectional dissemination channel. In these cases, the platform functions more as a visual storefront than as a space for conversation.

Even so, in the absence of direct interaction, politicians can project a sense of proximity through audiovisual resources—medium shots, colloquial language, family presence, or domestic settings—which reinforce an image of accessibility and empathy before the public. Thus, TikTok acts not only as a means of contact but also as a device for the staging of proximity, where authenticity is constructed more through aesthetics and narrative than through effective dialogue (Salazar & Moreno, 2023; Peña-Fernández et al., 2022).

The findings therefore evidence that Peruvian political leaders have adopted TikTok in diverse ways: some prioritise genuine interaction as a tool for connecting with voters, while others use the platform primarily as an instrument for visibility and symbolic positioning. This partially confirms the first hypothesis, which posited that TikTok posts seek to build an image of proximity to the audience. As highlighted by Salazar and Moreno (2023), social media politics has evolved towards a personalist approach, in which politicians seek to differentiate themselves through spontaneous and close content. The results obtained support this notion, as the analysed political leaders have incorporated informal formats and everyday narratives into their posts.

Regarding the second hypothesis, which suggests that TikTok usage responds to a strategy of adaptation to current digital trends, the data reflect that the majority of Peruvian politicians have increased their presence on this platform in recent years, aligning with previous studies that indicate the growing importance of TikTok in digital communication (Bastero, 2024). Furthermore, the content analysis demonstrates that politicians have employed visual formats inherent to the platform, such as the use of trends, filters, and hashtags, thereby confirming the hypothesis of adaptation to the communicative logics of the social network.

With respect to the third hypothesis, which states that the frequency of TikTok posts has progressively increased, the results show that the presence of Peruvian politicians on the platform has been rising, albeit with differences in the intensity of use among various actors. For instance, while César Acuña leads in the number of posts, other politicians like Pedro Castillo have maintained a more passive strategy, relying on the organic viralisation of their followers. This concurs with the observations of Velásquez (2021), who noted that political participation on TikTok can vary according to the individual strategies of candidates and their level of engagement with the audience.

The data obtained allow for the addressing of the proposed research questions. Firstly, the results show that Peruvian political leaders maintain a high frequency of posting on TikTok, although with differences between candidates (RQ1). César Acuña and Keiko Fujimori stand out for their high posting frequency, while others, such as Pedro Castillo, exhibit lower self-generated activity. Regarding the quality of content production, both

precarious and professional productions are observed (RQ2). While some leaders, such as Hernando de Soto, opt for more elaborate productions, others, like Martín Vizcarra, publish more spontaneous videos, in line with the platform's informal trends (Salazar & Moreno, 2023).

Concerning the consistency in the editorial and aesthetic line of the videos, a diversity of approaches is observed (RQ3). Some politicians maintain a defined editorial line, while others vary it according to trends and audiences. This supports the idea that TikTok content is highly adaptable (Peña-Fernández et al., 2020). Finally, the data suggest that political leaders have a greater presence on TikTok than their parties or groupings (RQ4). Politicians' personal accounts generate more interactions and views than institutional ones, reaffirming the predominance of personalisation in digital political communication.

In conclusion, TikTok has consolidated itself as a key tool in political communication in Peru, allowing leaders to build an image of proximity, adapt to digital trends, and increase their visibility before the electorate. The results obtained confirm the proposed hypotheses and address the research questions, providing empirical evidence on the use of this platform within the Peruvian electoral context. Nevertheless, it is recommended that complementary studies be conducted to analyse the actual impact of these strategies on electorate perception and behaviour, as well as on the spread of political discourse and disinformation on social networks. Finally, this study contributes to the literature on digital political communication by providing a detailed analysis of the role of TikTok in the communicative strategy of Peruvian leaders, aligning with previous research on the evolution of the digital sphere and its influence on citizen participation and the construction of political image.

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