

Tik Tok as a political communication tool in Jorge Yunda's campaign for mayor of Quito in Ecuador 2023

Tik Tok como herramienta de comunicación política en la campaña de Jorge Yunda a la alcaldía de Quito en Ecuador 2023

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ABSTRACT

The correct use to disseminate government plans in the social network Tik Tok generates an impact of influence that we will address in this research that focused on Ecuadorian politics specifically in the city of Quito, in which we analyzed the use of TikTok as a political communication tool in the campaign of Jorge Yunda for mayor during the campaign of January and February 2023. A qualitative methodology was applied, in which observation and interview techniques were developed, and a quantitative one, applying a survey to a non-probabilistic sample of young people between 18 and 29 years old in the city of Quito. The results highlight that Yunda's account focuses on political content, mixed with humor and history that crucially underlines the use of this social network as a political tool to build effective links between candidate and citizens, taking advantage of its ability to create

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shocking and easily consumed content, as well as the affinity that the politician has with the audiences, taking advantage of the duration of the videos that is crucial in the era of fast information and the short attention span of users.

Keywords: politician, highlight, tools

RESUMEN

El uso correcto para difundir planes de gobierno en la red social Tik Tok genera un impacto de influencia que abordaremos en esta investigación que se centró en la política ecuatoriana específicamente en la ciudad de Quito, en la cual se analizó el uso de TikTok como herramienta de comunicación política en la campaña de Jorge Yunda a la alcaldía durante la campaña de enero y febrero de 2023. Se aplicó una metodología cualitativa, en la que se desarrollaron técnicas de observación y entrevista, y una cuantitativa, aplicando una encuesta a una muestra no probabilística de jóvenes entre 18 y 29 años de la ciudad de Quito. Los resultados destacan que la cuenta de Yunda se enfoca en contenido político, mezclado con humor e historia que subraya de manera crucial el uso de esta red social como herramienta política para construir vínculos efectivos entre el candidato y los ciudadanos, aprovechando su capacidad de crear contenido impactante y de fácil consumo, así como la afinidad que tiene el político con las audiencias, aprovechando la duración de los videos que es crucial en la era de la información rápida y la corta capacidad de atención de los usuarios.

Palabras clave: político, destacar, herramientas

INTRODUCTION

Political communication immersed in social networks has managed to consolidate itself as an effective tool for political actors. In this context, networks such as TikTok have played a fundamental role, in addition, nowadays, to carry out a political campaign with this type of digital instruments has generated visibility among the audience. Ecuadorian politics is no exception, "TikTok was used by the candidates to occupy the mayoralty of the city of Quito that took place from January 03 to February 02, 2023" (El Comercio,

2023). This research analyzed the use of TikTok as a political communication tool in the campaign of Jorge Yunda for mayor of Quito in Ecuador during the campaign of January and February 2023, for that it is necessary to provide a perspective on the use and impact generated by this social network in its adherent users in recent times.

The sectional elections of 2023 in Ecuador were developed with the purpose of selecting various authorities, including mayors, who would take office in different localities of the national territory (Celi, 2023). For this analysis, the case study was carried out with Jorge Yunda Machado who "permanently used the TikTok social network to have visualization among the young audience that was his main objective, due to the fact that this social network is in a constant digital boom" (Baquero, 2023).

TikTok, is a social network that was created in China with the name Douyin in 2016, later in 2017 it would be launched internationally as TikTok, it did not take long to be one of the most downloaded mobile applications in the United States, thus becoming popular in more than 150 (Becerra and Taype, 2020, p. 249).

This social network is the most used by young people according to Beer (2019), "41% of users are around 16 and 24 years old" (para. 6). In this regard, "The Global State of Digital report, prepared by Hootsuite and We Are Social, estimates that around 3.484 billion people use social networks, which is equivalent to approximately 45% of the world's population" (Del Campo, 2022, para. 30). Social networks on the Internet are a widely accepted communication tool among young people, who have immersed themselves in the virtual space to interact from different platforms, according to their needs and interests (Zúñiga, 2022, p. 7). According to a study by Ponce (2021):

Social networks have forced politicians to adapt to the structures of each application and to make efforts to fit into the dynamics of the new narrative, which has brought about a revolution in the creation and dissemination of political campaigns. (p. 15).

Therefore, the use of TikTok as a political communication tool in Jorge Yunda's campaign allowed maintaining a propaganda developed in networks in a special way in TikTok because the segmentation of content made by the candidates acquires the citizen approach and their way of acting or deciding makes the population mentalize their political preference (Hidalgo and Cedeño, 2022).

For this reason, the online participation of cybernauts has gone from being an isolated comment to become a political strategy on the Internet, in this way the political and strategic communication that has been carried out in Ecuador since 2016 has generated more interaction between citizens and social networks (López, 2016).

In the following lines we outline contexts of: Electoral campaigns generated in social networks in Latin America, Political Communication and use of TikTok in Ecuador.

Electoral campaigns generated on social networks in Latin America

Coro (2021), points out that "Electoral campaigns are strategic scenarios, which are developed around different junctures, where different processes are present as campaign strategies of a movement or political party" (p. 11). In this sense, social networks have transformed the way political campaigns are conducted.

Donald Trump boosted the use of social networks. According to Andrew Bosworth, a senior executive at Facebook, Trump won because he developed the best digital advertising campaign ever seen. Although he initially dismissed the use of Big Data, his advisors convinced him to use large-scale data in order to segment voters and convince them to vote for him, thus winning in key states such as Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin (Barreto and Rivera, 2021, p. 21-22).

Rafael Correa began his journey through social networks in 2006, developing the production of digital content that was directed to networks such as YouTube, Hi5 and Flickr in which the tours and speeches of his political campaign were published (Rivera, 2014). Correa was reelected as president in 2009 triumphing in the first electoral round and repeating the victory in the 2013 elections defeating his main contender, Guillermo Lasso. Freire and Gómez (2015) "assure that the audiovisual productions disseminated in social networks influenced the voting intention in favor of Correa in 83 % of the voters" (p. 22). Correa's most powerful tool was @MashiRafael, the Twitter account he personally managed to connect with his followers and confront his detractors (Báez, 2018, p. 22).

Political Communication and use of TikTok in Ecuador

According to a study conducted by Morales (2021), Xavier Hervás, a prominent political aspirant in Ecuador's 2019 presidential elections, presented an innovative approach by using TikTok as a strategic tool for his political campaign. Hervás became the candidate with the highest number of posts shared on the platform, leveraging mainly content of a political nature, as well as sharing more personal aspects to establish an intimate bond with citizens. This strategy allowed him to achieve an impressive level of engagement with his audience.

The surprising thing about that electoral contest was that, despite having no previous experience in the political arena, Xavier Hervás stood out among a group of 16 candidates and reached fourth place in the 2019 presidential elections. His success in using TikTok as a means to connect with the electorate and power, developed influence on digital platforms in the current political scenario (Boscán, 2021).

He is considered the pioneer of this communicational trend, Xavier Hervás, candidate of the Democratic Left, jumped in 45 days from 0.5% of voting intention to 15% of the valid vote of the electoral process, in a campaign basically limited to the participation in social networks and presidential debates. (Boscán, 2021).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This article focused on analyzing the use of TikTok as a political communication tool in the campaign of Jorge Yunda, in which the strategies used in the social network were determined through interviews with the political figure and campaign advisor, as well as the impact generated in the audience of the city of Quito and the analysis of the type of content broadcast during the campaign period January - February 2023.

This research work proposed a literature review, as mentioned by Guirao (2015) "we approach the knowledge of a topic and it is in itself the first stage of the research process because it helps us to identify what is known and what is unknown about a topic of our interest" (p. 7). Similarly, a qualitative and quantitative approach was applied. In the first instance, a content analysis was developed, in this context Aigner (2009) states that "it is the technique that allows investigating the content of communications through the classification into categories of the manifest elements or contents of such communication or message" (p. 1).

Meanwhile, in the quantitative approach, an analysis matrix was used to verify data from the account of the chosen candidate, according to Hurtado (2000) "they are instruments designed to extract information, usually not so obvious, either from a document or a real situation" (p. 459), in addition to a survey applied to a certain group of inhabitants of the city of Quito to know the impact of the contents in Yunda's social network. 459), in addition, a survey applied to a certain group of inhabitants of the city of Quito was conducted to know the impact of the contents in Yunda's social network, according to Gómez (2023) "this research technique used to collect information, data and comments through a series of specific questions. It is carried out by applying a questionnaire to a sample of people" (para. 5).

The account we worked with was that of Jorge Yunda in the TikTok social network, specifically in the development of the sectional elections of 2023, "due to his presence in electoral campaigns in 2019 with the intervention of social networks as a political strategy" (Revelo, 2021, p. 9). For the sample, 29 videos were chosen that made use of different narrative discourses used in their content.

Likewise, the quantitative population according to data taken from the INEC of 2010 determined a number of 508,729 inhabitants (this data has not been updated at the time of this research), therefore, a representative sample of young people between 18 and 29 years old was obtained, since they are the people who use this social network the most. According to Cerón (2023) mentions that:

In terms of age, 56.7% of people are 25 years old or older, while 52.83% of Tik Tok users are between 18 and 24 years old, however, millennials and centenarians are known for creating and using content on this platform.(para. 3)

RESULTS

To expand the research, two personal interviews were conducted. The first took place with Jorge Yunda, former candidate for mayor of Quito, while the second was conducted with Alex Baquero, advisor to the electoral campaign. These interviews focused on gaining a better understanding of the strategies employed during the 2023 electoral campaign period. Baquero highlighted that, despite some obstacles faced by Yunda during the campaign, these were not enough to stop the production of content in social networks. This is explained in the following lines

Strategic lines for the use of Tik Tok in the campaign of Jorge Yunda

From Baquero's perspective, the approach to the political campaign was based on an analysis of the context of political content hosted on the TikTok digital platform. It was identified that this application presents novel ways of transmitting political messages, moving away from traditional methods by venturing into the production of videos with messages of a positive, peaceful and direct nature.

One of the secrets to have impact within TikTok is to make use of trending hashtags and turn it into a recurring strategy (Ramírez, 2022). According to Baquero mentioned that the hashtags they used most frequently were #JorgedelaGente and #Yundaalcalde2023, in addition to other trending hashtags, which were strategically leveraged by the TikTok algorithm.

During the interview, Yunda expressed that he maintained constant advice and information about the issues relevant to his role in the campaign for the 2023 elections. However, regarding the comments received on his TikTok account, he opted for a personal interaction by interacting with questions, congratulations and harsh criticism towards his candidacy, which contributed significantly to optimize his electoral strategy. In this context, Yunda identified TikTok as a very user-friendly and strategic application as a means of disseminating information, highlighting its ease of use for the publication of short videos and the attractiveness of its algorithm for the public that interacts with its content through "likes" or following the account of the content creator. These aspects appeal to the target audience. Yunda says he worked with young people who had clarity on the type of content to target this segment.

Throughout Jorge Yunda's campaign on TikTok, he and his advisors focused on promoting policy proposals related to key issues such as employment, security, education and, especially, animal welfare. Jorge Yunda notes that the TikTok platform has experienced an exponential increase in adoption. Despite being an application of recent appearance in the digital market landscape, he argues that its proper use can generate significant results. In this context, he predicts that any candidate who employs Tik Tok as a strategic tactic in future election campaigns will gain a decisive advantage in the next election.

In the following tables, a content analysis of Jorge Yunda's TikTok account in the 2023 sectional elections was carried out. The first table details the data of the candidate's account that was analyzed from January 5 to February 5, 2023.

Table 1. TikTok feed analyzed

Name	Account	NS	NP	NM
Jorge Yunda	@jorgeyundamachado	73.9K	29	787.3K

Source: ReHuso 2022 Magazine

NS: number of followers

NP: number of publications

NM: number of "likes"

According to a study by Chávez et al. (2017), "the starting point of such a boom of social networks in political communication was due to the impact they had on the election campaign of the president of the United States (Barack Obama) in 2008" (p. 11).

In the case of Ecuador, Jorge Yunda, constantly used the TikTok social network to increase his visibility and presence by taking advantage of the platform's algorithms. The candidate benefited from the immediacy of the platform to transmit stories in a minute, taking advantage of the functions of the application that generate visualizations in the content. This generated greater interest from the population in watching his videos (Banda and Zabala 2022, para. 4).

Thus, the following figure shows the descriptions used in the videos published in the TikTok social network and the number of views during the electoral campaign for the 2023 sectional elections.

Table 2. Description of contents in Jorge Yunda's account in the period January-February 2023.

Account	Date	Description	No. of views
@jorgeyundamachado	05/01/2023	Of course we can have the city we dream of.	38.9K
	07/01/2023	Neither what cinema, nor what Netflix, don't miss "Mi destino es como el viento" complete on fb and YouTube by #JorgeYunda .	47.5K
	07/01/2023	And in the end it was sold out.	176.4K
	09/01/2023	A historic mission for #Quito .	462.6K
	11/01/2023	A Quito legend adapted to our reality #padrealmeida .	32.4 K
	15/01/2023	And how did you do in the debate?	152.7K
	16/01/2023	For our rurality!	36.6K
	19/01/2023	Yunda and @Guillermo Churuchumbi 2023 .	376,3K
	20/01/2023	Video without text in the description.	42.5K
23/01/2023	Video without text in the description.	214.1K	

24/01/2023	Video without text in the description.	38.7K
26/01/2023	More opportunities for the guambras with my pana @Guillermo Churuchumbi we can achieve it.	421.7K
26/01/2023	Where you come from, as you...	58.7K
27/01/2023	My panas of His Excellency Rockstar... A great theme @Guillermo Churuchumbi.	344.4K
27/01/2023	At the ballot box we will miaullaremos.	24.8K
27/01/2023	Video without text in the description.	194.8K
28/01/2023	That wasff the works...	202.4K
28/01/2023	Mission Cantuña!	26.0K
29/01/2023	Let's reclaim the #river and #quostreams of #quito.	39.2K
30/01/2023	Clean campaign.	35.6K
31/01/2023	An environmentally friendly city.	42.3K
01/02/2023	Thank you to my #panas #brothers #yuntas #chullas #chullasquiteños.	35.1K
01/02/2023	We are just humble color.	53.3K
02/02/2023	Jorge of the people.	30.0K
02/02/2023	To fulfill every family's dream of owning their own home.	123.1K
02/02/2023	No crime was ever committed.	233.5K
04/02/2023	Let's see those works.	572.4K
05/02/2023	Let's go for a Quito of the people.	77.4K
05/02/2023	May democracy triumph, as far as I am concerned, God and the people of Quito will decide.	71.6K

Source: Own elaboration (Silvia Tualombo; David Vargas, 2023).

According to Ballesteros (2020), users consume political entertainment content on social networks, as is the case of TikTok, which is characterized by hosting fast and lighthearted consumption content that has had an unprecedented development in the last year, becoming a formidable force in American politics. During the electoral period Jorge Yunda elaborated a total of 29 videos maintaining different descriptions that helped him to make his content visible among the TikTok algorithm, according to Wong (2023), "a good description can complement and enrich the content of the video. It can provide additional context, explain the topic or message of the video, or add relevant details" (para. 6). A message is also conveyed within the video, which is why this research was

responsible for analyzing the type of narrative discourse contained in each of the videos generated during the political campaign.

Table 3. Content Classification

Narrative discourse	No. of times used	Percentage
Politician	29	48.6%
Humor	8	12.9%
Social	7	11.3%
History	7	11.3%
Presence	11	17.7%

Source: Own elaboration (Silvia Tualombo; David Vargas, 2023).

The deduction of Table 3, the account of the candidate Jorge Yunda presents a high percentage in terms of narrative discourse with political content, with a total of 48.6%, this means that the strategies used were focused with a political message. From the perspective of Negrete & Rivera (2018), political participation in technological communication, through social networks, involve the creation of convergence points. This is carried out as part of an active approach in the implementation and management of political activities, with the objective of promoting an open government.

Followed by a narrative discourse with humorous content, with a total of 12.9%, "It is that in which the sender has a kind of license to violate the linguistic norms and to alter the communicative pact with actions such as going out of context" (Studuco, 2022, para. 1); the social with a total of 11.3% , "It is that which is said and described in a society, facts that function independently of the uses of each individual" (Rodriguez, 2022, para. 5), the historical with a total of 11.3%, refers to "The ability to update the set of experiences of a collectivity through an act or series of specific acts of language"(De la Guardia, 2016, p. 100), the presence as a political figure manages a total of 17.7% refers to a type of speech in which the importance of being present at the right time and in the right place is emphasized.

As for the application of the surveys to a specific group in the city of Quito, taking into account that a questionnaire of questions regarding the TikTok social network and the presence of Jorge Yunda in it was carried out. A finite population formula was used:

$$n = \frac{NZ^2 pq}{d^2 (N-1) + Z^2 pq}$$

Where:

N= Total population

Za= 1.96 squared (if 95% certainty)

$p =$ expected proportion (in question case $5\% = 0.05$)

$q = 1 - p$ (in this case $1 - 0.05 = 0.95$)

$d =$ precision (in his research he used 5%)

The survey consisted of open and closed questions, applied to a representative sample of young people between 18 and 29 years old, since they are the people who most use this social network. To determine the sample size, the corresponding formula was applied to a youth population of 508,729, according to INEC data from 2010 (which have not been updated), which resulted in a number of 200 surveys applied.

The results obtained in the survey suggest that Jorge Yunda's political campaign in Tik Tok was perceived positively and effectively by a significant part of the young people surveyed in the city of Quito.

Regarding the opinion about Tik Tok as a fundamental tool for political campaigns, we can conclude that more than half of the respondents (62%) consider it to be an important tool. Moreover, 37.5% of them believe it is very fundamental. These data suggest that Tik Tok has a significant influence on political campaign strategies according to the perception of the respondents.

Ninety-nine percent of respondents admitted to having heard the name Jorge Yunda at some time, while the remaining 1% said they had never heard of him. These results suggest that the candidate in question is well known among the majority of young people in the city of Quito. Importantly, this high level of recognition may be attributable to his presence on the TikTok platform, which has proven to be an effective tool for connecting with a young and engaged audience today. Therefore, these results reflect the importance of using social networks appropriately to reach a wider audience during a political campaign.

Regarding the viewing of Jorge Yunda's political campaign videos on Tik Tok, the results indicate that the majority of respondents (66.5%), have seen these videos. Only a small percentage (6.5%) claimed not to have seen these videos. The high number of views of Jorge Yunda's political campaign videos on TikTok suggests that his campaign has reached a wide audience and has generated greater engagement with users, especially among the younger audience. TikTok is a highly effective tool to show the young audience of the 21st century the new way of communicating and interacting with political candidates, thus building new scenarios and virtual communities (Loor and Baquerizo, 2022).

The survey results indicate that candidate Jorge Yunda achieved high exposure through the videos produced during the political campaign on TikTok. The fact that 79.5% of respondents occasionally watched the videos and 11.5% watched them frequently shows that these promotional strategies on the platform were effective in reaching a wide audience. TikTok's popularity as a social media platform and its ability to generate viral content may have been key factors in making a large percentage of the surveyed population aware of Jorge Yunda's videos.

The results of the survey indicate that 74.4% of the respondents do not accurately remember the videos made by Jorge Yunda during his campaign in Tik Tok. However, a significant number of people preferred to describe some reference of these, among which stand out: "Cantuña", "When I was in the market", "The one with the dogs", "The one with the chimichurri" and "The campaign proposals".

It is important to note that a large number of people do remember them. These videos stayed in people's memories, suggesting that the campaign was effective in terms of generating impact and recording among the young audience. Therefore, it is critical that politicians understand the importance of properly utilizing social media and digital marketing tools to reach a wider and more engaged audience, as Yunda did during his campaign.

Regarding the effectiveness of Jorge Yunda's campaign in Tik Tok to reach young voters, 76% of the respondents considered that it was a very effective way. On the other hand, 21.5% thought it was a not very effective way. A small percentage, 2.5%, did not lean toward either position. This indicates that the majority of respondents perceived the Tik Tok campaign as an effective strategy to reach young voters.

The results suggest that Jorge Yunda's TikTok campaign had a significant impact on the voting decision of more than half of the respondents (57%). Given that we sampled the population of 18-29 year olds voting in Quito and found that it directly influenced the voting decision of about 289,975 voters, this could indicate that the TikTok campaign strategy reached a considerable proportion of people and had a significant influence on their voting decisions.

Therefore, although the results suggest a significant impact of the TikTok campaign on respondents' voting decision, it is necessary to consider these results within the context of methodological limitations and the representativeness of the sample used in the survey "In many cases, a sample of adequate size can provide results as accurate as surveying the entire population. This is because statistics allow inferences to be drawn about the population based on the data collected from the sample" (Unié, 2008, n.p.). According to the results, the majority of respondents (79.1%) stated that they had never shared Jorge Yunda's content. This could imply that his presence on the social network and his fame may have led some people to be cautious or avoid sharing his content for various reasons, such as keeping a certain distance from his political image or avoiding controversy. While 20.4% claim that they rarely shared the content creator's content. These data suggest that the candidate managed to have a presence in a percentage of Quito's population and they were aware of the role he played for the position of mayor of Quito.

According to the survey results, most young people were familiar with Jorge Yunda's political campaign on TikTok and considered it innovative and creative. In general terms, young people positively evaluated the use of social networks to disseminate political messages and highlighted the importance of adapting to new forms of online communication.

However, some respondents expressed concern about the possible trivialization of politics and the lack of depth in the messages conveyed in the campaign. Despite these concerns, the survey results suggest that it had a positive and relevant impact on a significant portion of Quito's young voters. The platform was perceived as a fundamental and effective tool to reach this demographic group, and in many cases, influenced their voting decision.

CONCLUSIONS

Tik Tok has proven to be a platform that appeals to a large number of users, especially the Z generation. As such, it is a perfect stage for political candidates to reach out to younger voters, establish a connection and make their political vision known.

Baquero and Yunda mention that this application involves a lot the affinity that the politician has with young people, with the people who consume it, and ensures that 60% of the electoral roll is composed of young people ranging from 16 to 32 years old. The use of this platform is a strategy to support the public he wants to reach with his political communication message, and society continues to visualize it, as well as a means of transporting information.

Short video length is crucial in the age of fast-paced information and short attention spans of audiences. However, maintaining a clear and direct approach is not enough on its own. It is also critical to adapt to the visual media available to achieve effective political content, Yunda points out that Tik Tok, is a very welcoming application and method of conveying information, with a simplicity of use by broadcasting short videos and a compelling algorithm for the audience to react by liking or following the account of the person providing the content.

The use of Tik Tok in politics is not without its critics. The nature of the platform and the content shared on it can generate mockery and criticism of political candidates and their campaigns. As Yunda makes clear, it also has drawbacks. As a consequence, publishing content on these platforms makes it open to all kinds of criticism. As proof, she obtained comments from infamous "TROLLS" who mocked her political campaign with inappropriate comments that disqualified her use of social networks for electoral purposes. Following this same line Baquero mentions that they lost because it was a very difficult fact to contain and the key that played against his campaign. He makes it clear that without control over Fake news, the caliber of disinformation that is spread in the same social networks and the ease with which it spreads, little could be done to contrast them.

The video application is undergoing a metamorphosis, shifting from content focused on filters and choreography to a diversity of niches addressing a wide range of topics. This transformation involves a greater variety of videos with clear and direct approaches to diverse topics, including political content, which is critical to effective communication today. Yunda mentions that his advisory group and he personally focused on promoting

employment, security, education and especially animal welfare issues, and also played with humor and parody to create humorous content to accentuate the political message. Tik Tok tends to be associated with entertainment and fun, which may not be compatible with the image that political candidates seek to project. In contrast, television has been the predominant news source for most of the time. However, interactions with television have diminished due to the more interactive and personal alternatives provided by social networks. Yunda states that access to traditional media, such as radio, print and television, has always been selective, making it difficult for candidates to have a presence in politics through these media. However, with the arrival of the digital era, his team of advisors opted to use technology to disseminate their message through social networks, which is how his most recent electoral campaigns were developed. Despite the potential drawbacks, the use of Tik Tok in Yunda's campaign for mayor of Quito in Ecuador 2023 may present a unique opportunity to use innovative technology to reach a wider audience and enhance the image of political candidates. Tik Tok allows politicians to show their more relatable and human side in a less formal and more accessible context.

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