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POLITICAL INFLUENCERS COMMUNICATION DURING THE 2023 ARGENTINIAN CAMPAIGN ON TIKTOK

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: the aim of this research is to find out about the modes of communication used by Argentinean political influencers on TikTok during the 2023 presidential campaign, in order to investigate the content -between August and November- published by 10 influencers, who have different statuses in terms of the number of followers. We analyze the strategies of enunciation, the convergences between digital politics and the contents of the mass media, the political internet users involved and the types of content. **Methodology**: a qualitative analysis was carried out, using methodological tools from socio-semiotics. **Results**: the existence of 4 enunciative strategies in their clips has been evidenced: the imitation of ways of communicating on social networks of citizens, politicians, militant internet users and journalists. Thus, with their content on the media platform, they emulate the form of enunciation of other socio-political subjects. **Discussion**: it was observed that these new digital actors generate discourses of adherence to one of the political candidates, however, at the same time, they also produce discourses in rejection of one or more of them, as well as of politics in general. **Conclusions**: it has been shown that not all political influencers during the Argentinean campaign of 2023 assume the role of filter - of intermediaries - between politicians and citizens, but that this is linked to their strategy of enunciation.

Keywords: TikTok, political influencers, discourses, election campaign, citizenship.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Today, political communication is mainly based on social networks. This paper analyzes the digital discourses of political influencers on TikTok during the period leading up to the 2023 Argentine presidential elections.

The choice of TikTok is based on the growth of the platform in recent years, as it has gained strength from the deepening digitization of social practices with the COVID-19 pandemic. This also occurred in the context of a trend towards the creation and consumption of increasingly shorter videos with broader content (Wang, 2020). At the same time, the Asian social network generates a particular overlap with politics (Figuereo-Benítez *et al*., 2022), since it amplifies the political discourses of rulers and candidates, as well as those of citizens, as in the case of influencers.

At the same time, leaders use TikTok to present themselves in a close way. (Wilches-Tinjacá *et al*., 2024). In Argentina, the penetration of this social network is significant. In fact, at the beginning of 2024, it had more than 21 million users over the age of 18, considering that the total number of social network users was 31 million, equivalent to 68% of the total population (We are Social, 2024).

Currently, there has been an acceleration of the mediatization of politics (Veron, 2001 [1984], 2013; Hepp, 2020), which implies an advance in the digitization of social practices. At the same time, in recent years, digital political conversations have been joined by users who, without being previously known, build their community of followers through the production of political discourses and thus generate influence on other users. This paper focuses specifically on the communication of these political influencers during the Argentine campaign of 2023. The choice of the electoral campaign period responds to the fact that it is a moment of media and political positioning.

1.1. Contemporary digital policy

Contemporary digital political discourse is affected by changes in the world of politics. First of all, the parties that channeled protests and played "a role as an escape valve or transmission belt between citizens and institutions" (Forti, 2021, p. 46) have been dissolved. At the same time, the centrality of negativity has increased, the predominance of rejection over adherence to a project (Rosanvallon, 2007, Annunziata, 2015).

Second, another process has emerged: the process of personalization and personalism of politics (Annunziata, 2012; Slimovich, 2022). In other words, media campaigns and political power are increasingly concentrated in people and less in parties. This is accompanied by a fluctuating citizenship in voting (Cheresky, 2019). In this context, the role of users, such as political influencers who generate digital discourses in support of some candidates and against others, becomes more important, since the voter's decision is short-term and influenced by the political conjunctural situation.

Finally, the deepening of the digitalization of the political has led to the emergence of "digital political-journalistic interfaces". It has been defined as a "political-journalistic interface" to the interweaving of the political and the informative, specific to the mediatization of the political in the mass media (Verón, 2001 [1984]). On a parallel level, the concept has been extended to social networks and has been called the "digital political-journalistic interface" (Slimovich, 2022). In other words, the existence of an interface between the political and the informative/journalistic in digital spaces has been shown. It was specified that this type of interweaving is generated differently from the traditional one, because in social networks political and media logics are linked to those of social networks. In this sense, digital political discourses, such as the TikTok clips analyzed in this research, are traversed by meaning-producing social operations that replicate in digital spaces the genres, logics, and contents of the informative/journalistic in mass media. In this sense, this work asks: What are the digital political-journalistic interfaces used by political influencers on TikTok during the Argentine presidential campaign of 2023? (PI1).

1.2. TikTok Policy

TikTok has become a social network where political leaders connect with younger audiences. Figuereo Benítez *et al*. (2022) studied the communication strategy of four Ibero-American presidents: Jair Bolsonaro (Brazil), Nayib Bukele (El Salvador), Guillermo Lasso (Ecuador), and Sebastián Piñera (Chile). They conclude that the presidents used this social network as a traditional medium, "as a one-way channel, without exploiting the participatory potential of the platform" (p.110). For their part, Cervi and Marín-Llado (2021) study the use of TikTok by Spanish political parties and show that they tend to use it as a unilateral tool to promote their political ideas. In addition, they emphasize that the most attractive publications for the audiences are those that encourage interaction and are oriented towards politainment.

Similarly, Vijay and Gekker (2021) analyze the social network in the Indian context and show how the platform can be rethought as an alternative way of playing politics, shaped by socio-cultural and political factors, as well as by the possibilities and limitations of the social network. Finally, for the Argentine case, Ariza *et al*. (2022) analyze the use of TikTok by 378 politicians in 2022. They conclude that the social network connects with an audience that is not necessarily related to politics.

1.3. Follower Internet users, opponents and militants

Digital political-journalistic interfaces that are present in digital political content today, such as TikTok clips, are generated by male/female candidates, but also by ordinary users who develop political discourses on social networks.

There is currently a process of expanding the public space that involves a generation of political-media players, such as political Internet users, users who do not have any kind of political position nor journalists and who develop political content on social networks.

Taking into account the discursive production of political Internet users on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter/X, they have been classified into (Slimovich, 2022):

1- Adherent Internet users: they construct digital discursivities that emphasize their political position in favor of a politician or a party. They thus position themselves as adherents. At the same time, they may or may not question the opponent or counter-target (Veron, 1987a). Within this category are:
   a- The militant Internet users. They are the ones who put their digital[2] identity at stake in these discursivities. These are the users who are able to change their profile picture to that of a political leader - or for a cause - and/or join a digital campaign.
   b- The logical follower Internet users. They are the ones who develop "logical micro-arguments" in favor of a politician or a party: "micro-enemies", "micro-examples", "micro-comparisons".
   c- The passionate followers Internet users. They are the ones who develop "passionate micro-arguments" in favor of a politician or party. The passions brought into play can be positive - such as joy, enthusiasm, surprise or pride - or negative - such as fear or anger.
2- The oppositional Internet users: individuals who develop discursivities that put their political position at risk by rejecting one politician or party. At the same time, they may or may not express their allegiance to another. They are subdivided into:
   a- The logical oppositional Internet users. They are the ones who develop logical micro-arguments to express their opposition to a politician or party.
   b- The passionate oppositional Internet users. They are the ones who produce passionate micro-arguments in favor of a politician or party.
3- The citizen Internet users. They are individuals who do not manifest a party identity, nor do they explicitly express their support or rejection of an action or a politician, but who nevertheless put their socio-political status at risk by participating in the digital political conversation.

In recent years, a new type of digital individual has entered the public sphere, that of political influencers. Like supporters and opponents, they are Internet users who develop political content in digital spaces. Moreover, like militant Internet users, they put their identities at risk with every publication. However, political influencers have a special feature: they have a community of followers of their own, in addition to the community of followers of the politician they support or oppose. For this reason, it is relevant to compare the productions of these political influencers with those

[2] Internet users develop representations of themselves on social networks and thus create their digital identity, about which there is less information than that expressed in person (Marwick, 2013). The information and materials displayed by the political Internet user, the interaction with others, the nickname, the writing style, the type of images he/she uses, the email address, the types of rhetoric of his/her profile description can be used to make inferences about the digital identity.

previously developed by political Internet users who also produced political content but did not have a community of followers.

1.4. Political influencers

Influencers usually start as ordinary users whose content focuses on their daily lives and then become influencers by accumulating a large number of followers (Abidin, 2016). In other words, influencers are built into publicly known people on media platforms, as opposed to users who are already known for their media activity before opening an account on the social network. In the past, influencers mostly appeared as experts in sports, fashion, and games, using their status to collaborate with brands for marketing purposes. In recent years, however, some of them have opted for more meaningful content (Riedl *et al*., 2021), thus becoming the "new political strategists" (Pérez Curiel & Limón Naharro, 2019, p. 72).

Since the pandemic, the role of influencers has become more important and "civic and social engagement" (Mateus et al., 2022, p. 1) with their communities of followers has been strengthened. Various studies confirm that political influencers generate content that resonates, especially among the youngest (Harff & Schmuck, 2023). Currently, different studies have attributed to them the category of opinion leaders (Fernández Gómez *et al*., 2018; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955), as long as they consider that, in a second step, they constitute intermediaries between politics and citizenship.

On the other hand, influencers have different status depending on the number of followers they have. Campbell and Farrel (2020) create a typology and call: "mega-influencers" those who have more than one million followers; "macro-influencers" those who have between 100 thousand and one million; "micro-influencers" those who have between 10 thousand and 100 thousand; and finally, "nano-influencers" those who have less than 10 thousand.

Studies on the status of political influencers suggest that they must be perceived as "close" to the audience, they must develop their own language and not replicate political propaganda, and "they must build their message around specific causes and not directly to candidates or political parties" (Fullana Landero, 2022, p. 10). On the other hand, research on the narrative of political influencers who adhere to the President of the Community of Madrid, Isabel Díaz Ayuso, suggests that these users publish content that focuses on the political dimension and the attacks that she generates on the opposition; and thus they are shaped as complementary to those of politics itself, which are focused on characteristics of advertising and commercial discourse (Caro-Castaño *et al*., 2024).

In terms of content, Sehl and Schützeneder (2023) examine political influencers on German social networks in the context of the 2021 elections and conclude that their clips were characterized by a high density of information, but opinion was less prominent. In short, the form of the publications partially coincides with the conceptions of the role of journalists in this country. For their part, Fischer *et al*. (2022) study those who produce content on YouTube, through a comparative analysis of

English and German-speakers. They conclude by identifying two types of content on the platform: "partisan mockery" - crossed by a mixture with entertainment - and "attractive education" - with journalistic styles. On a parallel level, Shmalenko *et al*. (2021) study the impact of influencer contents on the formation of the political agenda. They emphasize that user audiences have expanded with social networks and that, in this context, influencers have more opportunities to introduce, reinforce, and support issues that control political discourse.

This article examines this type of digital socio-political individuals, and their placement on the TikTok media platform in the context of the presidential campaign.

In this regard, this study asks: is there content from Argentine political influencers on TikTok that mimics that produced by political Internet users on other social networks? (RQ2), and also are there other specific types of content produced by political influencers on TikTok? (RQ3), finally, do Argentine political influencers on TikTok exercise as effective opinion leaders during the 2023 election campaign? (RQ4).

1.4.1. The radical right in Argentina

The 2023 electoral campaign in Argentina unfolded over three electoral events. The primaries, open, simultaneous and mandatories elections, held on August 13th constituted a decisive scenario in which the parties outlined their internal candidacies, while at the same time outlining a panorama of electoral preferences in relation to the general elections. Three political forces were very close each other: *La Libertad Avanza*, led by Javier Milei (29.86 %), positioned in first place; *Juntos por el Cambio* (28 %), led by Patricia Bullrich; and *Unión por la Patria* (27.28 %), headed by Sergio Massa. In the general elections, held on October 22nd, consecrated Massa in first place (36.6 %), followed by Milei in second place (29.9 %). The run-off election, held on November 19, resulted in the victory of the Milei and Villarruel formula over Massa and Agustín Rossi (55.5 % vs. 44.5 %)[3]. This was the first time in the history of Argentine that the radical right wing won the elections.

The traits developed by the leaders of *La Libertad Avanza* during the presidential campaign were, in some respects, similar to those adopted by the far-right in social networks in other parts of the world. First, these political forces are characterized by the use of new technologies to influence the media agenda and generate repercussions (Forti, 2021; Semán, 2023; Stefanoni, 2021). Second, there is a commitment to contain citizen angers through digital messages (Forti, 2021). That is, individuals who are dissatisfied with the current socio-political situation are called upon. This includes the realization by leaders, as was the case of *La Libertad Avanza*, of outbursts and complaints to other political leader sectors. In the social networks, the allusion to the anger of the Argentine citizenship was expressed through operations of production of meaning of "media hyperboles". That was the case of the use of a chainsaw in public acts by Milei to materialize his idea that the government would require a cut in the role

[3] Source: Cámara Nacional Electoral.

of the state and an adjustment. At the same time, the representation of the presidential candidate with the figure of a lion shows that the bet is constituted as a man capable of governing and imposing himself on the rest of the political forces, and "his theatricality and chameleon-like capacity make him a character capable of being quickly spectacularized" (Martins, 2023, p. 879).

Third, it has been pointed out that the far-right has an ambivalent relationship with the mass media (Forti, 2021). In the case of the Argentine radical right, it became clear that during the electoral campaign, despite the fact that many of the interventions of the presidential candidates took place in the media, they were constructed in their discourses as adversaries, both to them and to journalists.

In this sense, this paper asks (RQ5): are there characteristics of this mode of digital communication of the candidates of *La Libertad Avanza* that can be transferred to the political influencers that adhere to this space?

2. OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this research is to describe the communication of political influencers on TikTok.

The following specific objectives were also defined:

SO1: To know the enunciative strategies used by political influencers on TikTok, during the period of the 2023 presidential campaign.

SO2: To identify the interactions with the genres, logics and contents of the mass media of political influencers on TikTok, during the period of the 2023 presidential campaign.

SO3: To investigate the types of political Internet users summoned by political influencers on TikTok, in the period of the 2023 presidential campaign.

SO4: To differentiate the types of content of political influencers on TikTok, taking into account their influencer status.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this article a qualitative analysis is conducted. A methodology from socio-semiotics (Steimberg, 2013; Verón, 1987b; 2013) is applied to the TikTok videos of political influencers. In this way, the videos are understood as discourses: "spatio-temporal configurations of meaning" (Verón, 1987b, p. 127) that are socially embedded and have restrictions in their generation and effects. We analyze the clips issued by influencers during the campaign period, on the assumption that by analyzing these publications we can access a -partial- reconstruction of the process of meaning production that gave rise to them (Verón, 1987b). In this sense, it is suggested that, methodologically, "the system of production leaves traces in the products and that the former can be reconstructed (fragmentarily) from the manipulation of the latter" (p. 124). Thus, these TikTok clips were studied in order to reconstruct the operations of meaning production used by the influencers during the campaign period.

In principle, the socio-semiotic analysis consisted of distinguishing the clips according to the thematic dimension. A distinction was made between those containing thematic motives (Segre, 1985) related to the presidential campaign and those containing motives linked to political history, international relations, among others. The multiple significant subjects brought into play were taken into account, as well as their articulation: linguistic text, photography, video, music, hashtags.

In a second case, political influencers are classified according to the type of enunciative strategy they use in their videos. The definition of media enunciative is considered: "the semantic effect of the semiotic processes by which a communicative situation is constructed in a text, through means that may or may not be linguistic in nature" (Steimberg, 2013, p. 53). Thus, the starting point is that "a discourse constructs a certain image of the speaker (the enunciator), a certain image of the one to whom it is spoken (the addressee) and, consequently, a link between these places" (Verón, 1985, p. 3). Taking this into account, we described the type of image of the political issuer constructed by each user and how he/she positioned himself/herself in relation to citizenship. In this way, it was possible to distinguish whether the image of the issuer constructed through the publications was that of a user with greater or lesser political/informational knowledge/competence than the citizen, or on an equal footing.

In the third case, and in relation to the previous one, the clips are considered according to the addressee they question. In this sense, following Verón (1987a), political enunciation is intrinsically linked to the creation of an opponent. This subject, excluded from the identifying group, is called the "counter-target". At the same time, the political enunciator connects to a positive addressee through a presupposed belief. This constructed partisan subject is called the "pro-target". Finally, the semiotician suggests that a third type of addressee is always configured, the one who is "out of the game" because he is not convinced: he is the "paradestinarian".

In the fourth case, the types of political Internet users involved, as described above, are taken into account. In relation to the type of link they establish with others, it was also considered whether there is a call to action by the political influencer.

Finally, it was evaluated what type of "digital political-journalistic interface" (Verón, 2001 [1984]; Slimovich, 2022) is at play.

3.1. Corpus

The unit of analysis of this study consists of the publications made by Argentine political influencers on TikTok from August 1st, 2023 -the period before the primary and mandatory elections- to November 18th, 2023, the period prior to the *ballotage*. The corpus was formed taking into account the clips published by each of the selected Internet users.

In order to select the 10 influencers, two criteria were taken into account. Firstly, all profiles that appeared in the TikTok search with the keywords "Argentine politics" were selected. Secondly, the sample was intended to be gender-representative -four

are women and six are men-. Secondly, from the list of users provided by the platform itself, the 10 influencers that appeared first in the search were selected taking into account these 4 indicators:

1. Contents: that their publications had as their object of reference the Argentine political-electoral issue.
2. Periodicity: that they had published at least 20 clips during the campaign period (August-November 2023).
3. Party adherence or rejection: they should adhere to and/or reject the main parties in contention during the 2023 elections: *La Libertad Avanza*, *Unión por la Patria* and *Juntos por el Cambio*.
4. Status: who belonged to the different statuses, mega-influencers, macro-influencers, micro-influencers and nano-influencers.

The analyzed users were chosen using a convenience sampling (Mendieta Izquierdo, 2015), taking into account that all the selected users had the public account, that is, that their contents were freely accessible, and excluding journalist users and those who hold a political position from the sample. The collection was done manually.

In this way, the sample was made up of 10 users with different numbers of followers, from hundreds to millions, thus covering all the categories of influencers typified by the literature. In this way, it is considered that the sample, although small, allows access to the ways of communication of these Argentinean digital socio-political subjects in periods of electoral campaign, and finally to outline a classification of them.

Thus, the corpus of analysis c consists of the publications of 10 users: 2 mega-influencers, 3 macro-influencers, 3 micro-influencers and 2 nano-influencers.

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Figure 1

Types of influencers, number of followers and clips published

TikTok users	Type of influencer	Number of followers[4]	Clips (between 1/08/2023 to 19/11/2023)
@tomasfenati	Mega-influencer politician	1,6 million	48
@mateconmoteok	Mega-influencer politician	1,2 million	869
@rodrigomarquez.ok	Macro-influencer politician	360, 5 thousand	68
@leduckvideos	Macro-influencer politician	155 thousand	52
@frandrank	Macro-influencer politician	105, 7 thousand	24
@pellegrino.fede	Micro-influencer politician	17,9 thousand	26
@florenciacuria6	Micro-influencer politician	29,8 thousand	133
@aguschicote7	Micro-influencer politician	40,1 thousand	144
@sabrizamba	Nano-influencer politician	4784	39
@cyberia78	Nano-influencer politician	9127	178

Source: Own elaboration.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Political influencers emulating citizenship

In the corpus, the enunciative strategy of emulating citizenship has been found in the contents of the mega-influencer @MateconMote, the macro-influencer @rodrigomarquez.ok and the nano-influencer @sabrizamba.

In the case of @MateconMote, in his TikTok account is possible to visualize the questioning of the Internet users who opposes Alberto Fernández's government, Massa, and Milei's followers. The recurring thematic motives are oriented to campaign issues. When there is a call to digital action, it does not refer to stimulating militancy

[4] Data recorded in December 2023.

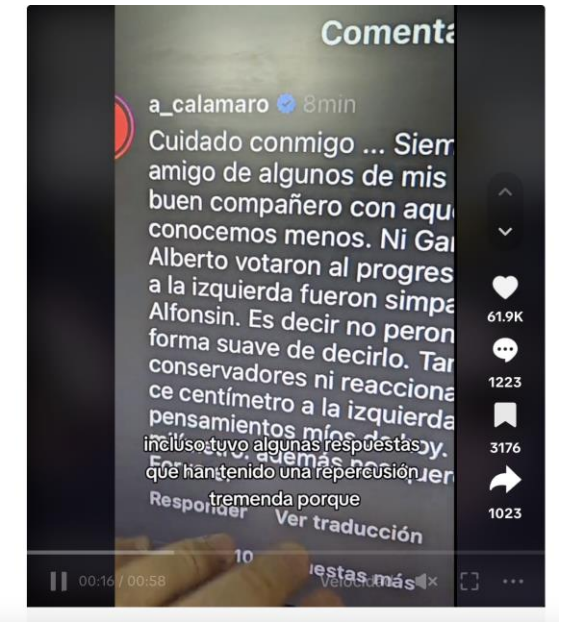
(which would bring him closer to a militant Internet user) but alludes to fundraising among peers.

The use of the digital political-journalistic interface is demonstrated in two ways. On the one hand, videos of television interviews are replayed on one part of the screen, and on the other, the influencer is displayed making gestures. It is an imitation of the television split screen. This type of intervention requires the user to respond with meta-signs that can disprove the television fragment. At this point, @MateconMote's position mimics that of the political viewer reacting to television content at home. On the other hand, there are also clips in which a political news item is displayed that the influencer points to it on the screen, scrolling through readers' comments (see Figure 2). In this way, both the finger on the screen and the subsequent description place @MateconMote in the role of an ordinary Internet user, as if he were at home reading the news and browsing the interventions of other citizens.

"Andrés Calamaro says he votes for Milei and created a great controversy in the networks, look at this news. Andrés Calamaro expressed his support to Javier Milei for the election, we can choose between something different or more shots in the feet" (see figure 2).

Figure 2

Comment reading



Source: @Mateconmote's Tiktok account on November 11, 2023.

For all these reasons, and despite the fact that he has more than a million followers, this type of user is classified as an "emulating citizenship influencer".

This type of enunciative is also observed in the user @rodrigomarquez.ok, who questions the Internet user who opposes Kirchnerism and Milei's follower. The thematic motives are related to economic issues of the country, to the comparison of

the national level with other countries, as well as to its own entrepreneurship related to imports.

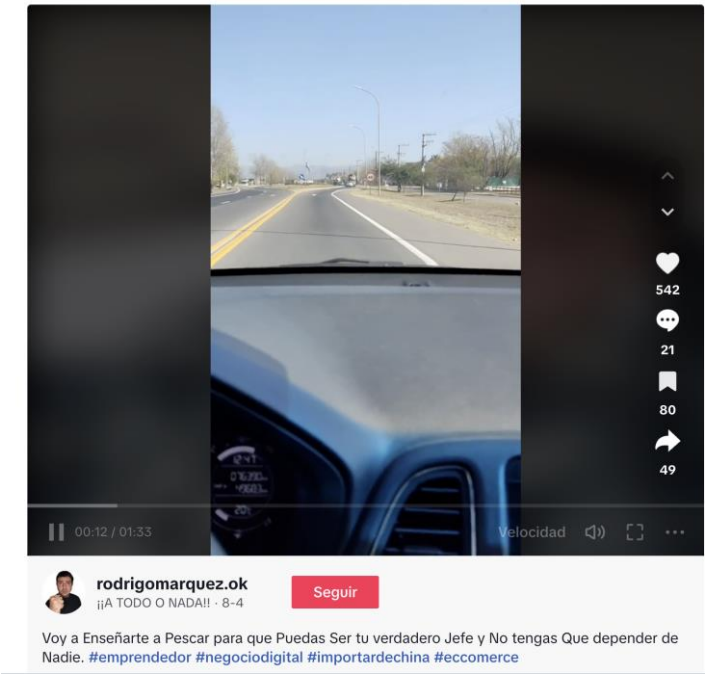
His enunciative strategy seems to be linked to that of the "common man" and he places himself far from the militants, since in his clips he generates questions to other Internet users on how their vote should be. On the other hand, later, in his publications, he tells that his family asked him to vote for the candidate Milei, but he confesses that he is afraid that the libertarian option is a bad choice.

Likewise, his communication in TikTok contains homemade micro-fictionalizations. These are based on passionate micro-arguments aimed at generating fear for the future and irritation with Kirchnerism. In fact, the videos show the influencer with different objects, such as banknotes to highlight the country's inflation. There are also film inserts to illustrate the happier future without Kirchnerism.

In addition, the clips are barely edited, suggesting a homemade development. This configuration of spontaneity is also visualized in videos recorded in everyday situations. This is the case of the clip in which the route is shown and it becomes clear that he is driving (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Videos about everyday situations



Source: @rodrigomarquez's TikTok account.ok on August 4th, 2023.

The nano-influencer @sabrizamba also builds a strategy of emulation of citizenship. In her audiovisual materials, she calls on the Internet users of Massa, those of *Juntos por el Cambio*; and at the same time, the anti-Kirchneristas and anti-Mileistas. The call to vote for Massa begins after the general elections, in which *Juntos por el Cambio* was excluded from the presidential race. This shows a change in party loyalty.

Among the recurring thematic reasons are the surprise of the results of the primary elections and the changes of voters from one franchise to another, materialized through the genre: "video response to comments" (see Figure 4).

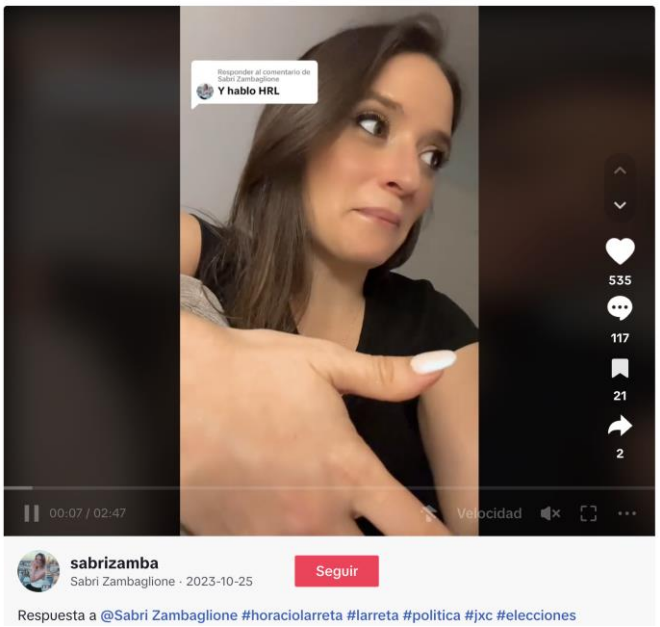
In addition, there is evidence of criticism towards leaders of *Unión por la Patria*, despite the fact that at the same time there is content in supporting them. This enunciative strategy places the influencer as another citizen who defends democracy and who assumes that she temporarily supports a candidate but does not share his history or his party.

There is a use of the digital political-journalistic interface in which the contents of political television programs, such as interviews with governors and candidates, are replayed without any kind of editing of the material, only the linguistic text accompanying the video is added. In this way, the word of the political leaders is put in the center.

The calls to action to the Internet users who follow her account deserve a separate paragraph, since they are oriented in a negative way to the electoral dimension: the request to the voters of *Juntos por el Cambio* not to vote for Milei in the election.

Figure 4

Video response to comments



Source: @sabrizamba's account on TikTok on October 25th, 2023.

4.2. The political emulator influencers

In the case of the micro-influencer @pellegrino.fede, the enunciative strategy of emulating the politician is evident. His contents are oriented towards the questioning of the Internet user who opposes Milei. The recurring thematic motives focus on

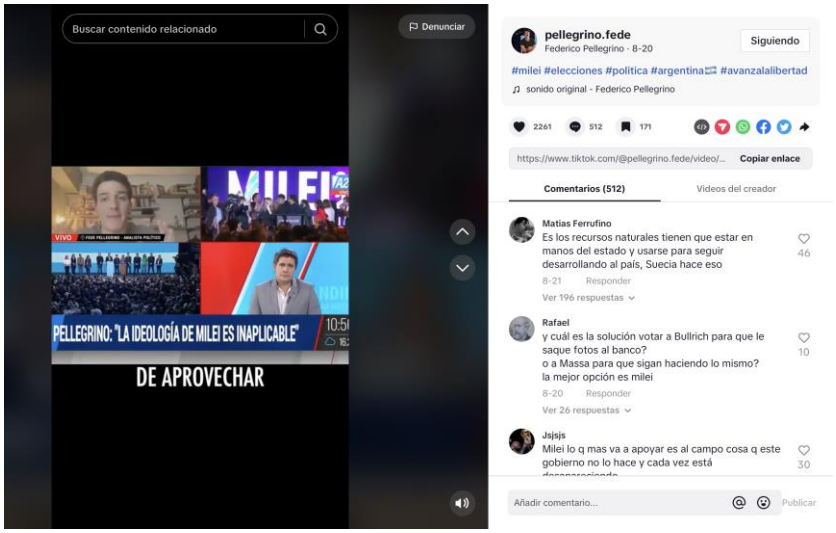
showing the axes of the candidate's campaign, as well as on hypothesizing what the future would be with the libertarian as president.

A convergence with the mass media can be observed, as fragments of political opinion television and news programs are shown, in which the influencer himself participates as an interviewee. And through the linguistic text, the meaning is anchored, as in the case of the influencer shouting on television, which is reproduced in the clip: "It's literally a world final if Milei wins but loses" (see Figure 5). This modality is similar to the one recorded in the leaders' discourses in their digital spaces. On the other hand, a call for electoral action is registered in these television fragments, similar to those made by the candidates themselves in their social networks, with the difference that the influencer only promotes a negative vote against Milei.

On the other hand, it becomes clear that the clips were recorded at home, however there is a process of filtering and editing: as black and white images to emphasize aspects of the audiovisual material.

Figure 5

Videos with influencer participation



Source: @pellegrino's TikTok account.fede on August 20th, 2023.

4.3. The emulating influencers of the militant Internet user

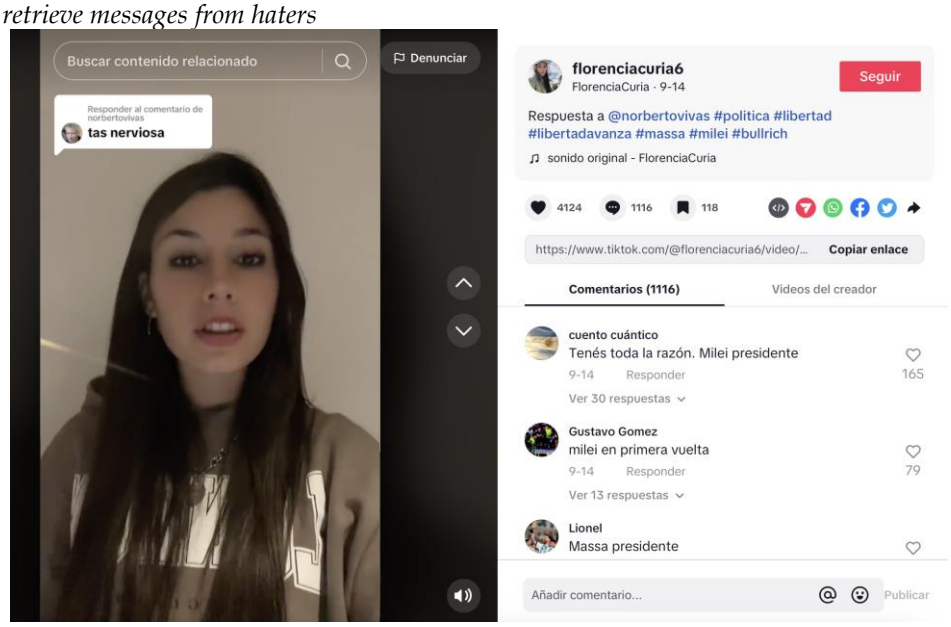
In the analysis, the enunciative strategy of emulation of the predecessors of political influencers is also seen: the militant internet users. This is the case of the contents of the micro-influencer @FlorenciaCuria, the macro-influencer @leduckvideos and the nano-influencer cyberia78.

In @FlorenciaCuria's videos, there is an interpellation to the Internet user opposing Milei. The recurring thematic motives have to do with the conjunctural issues of the campaign and also with the history of political leaders. On the other hand, the use of the digital political-journalistic interface is combined with the TikTok genre "duo", which allows one to enter television content shared by other militant Internet users

opposed to Milei on the right side of the screen and to express one's reaction on the left side, which accompanies the user's argument. There are also genres that are currently used by both militant Internet users and political leaders, such as the video selfie in response to other Internet users' comments. However, a difference is observed since the influencer engages in discussion with the messages of other Internet users, opponents and supporters, and also retrieves the hate messages (see Figure 6). In this way, she approaches a militant Internet user.

Figure 6

Videos that retrieve messages from haters



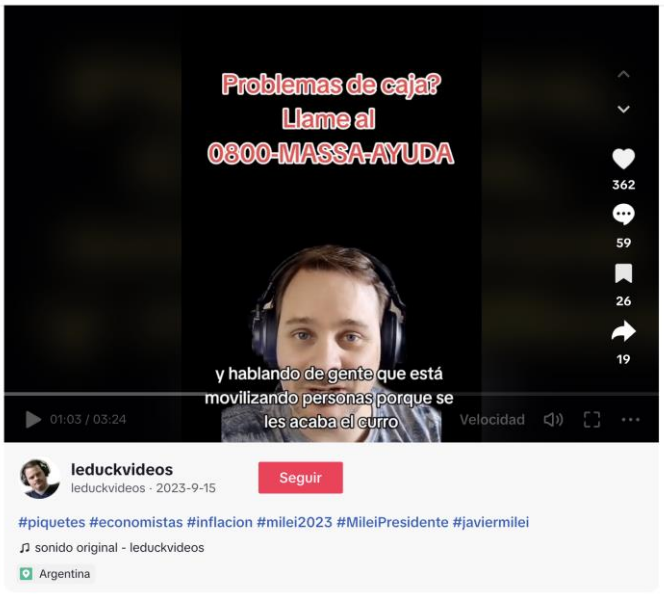
Source: @florenciacuria6's TikTok account on September 14th, 2023.

Another case of an enunciative construction of emulation of the militant Internet user is that of @leduckvideos. In his publications, he interpellates the militant Internet user by constructing himself as a follower of the right-wing leader. However, the interpellation of the "counter-targets" (Verón, 1987a) is also evident. He summons electoral opponents, but also journalistic opponents. The recurring thematic motives are linked to Alberto Fernández's officials, electoral opponents, the Argentine economy, the media and journalists, and plunder.

In his clips, he develops logical micro-arguments to show that Milei is the person who will solve the country's problems. There are also passionate micro-arguments that appeal to anger, such as digital fragments of happy people in the midst of looting businesses. Likewise, there are argumentative evidences that mix the logics of politics with those of playfulness (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Videos with argumentative evidences



Source: @leduckvideos's TikTok account on September 15th, 2023.

The use of the digital political-journalistic interface is generated by two genres of TikTok. On the one hand, there are "duos" with digital media related to Milei that publish television content. On the other hand, he also uses the "green screen" filter: in the case of interviews with Milei's opponents and excerpts of interventions to opposing journalists. Thus, the reaction of the influencer generates a counter-argumentation operation. Likewise, the user declares to have exclusive information about the candidate of *La Libertad Avanza*.

On the other hand, the user @cyberia78 also has enunciative strategies that emulate the militant Internet user. In her clips, she questions the left-wing Internet user and constructs Milei as a political opponent. Her recurring thematic motives include the platform of the extreme right in Argentina, Brazil and Chile, corruption in Latin America, the decline of institutions in the region and the importance of CONICET (for its acronym in Spanish) scientists in Argentina.

In her videos, other people's discourses play an important role. First, television clips of politicians and digital contents from other influencers are shared. On the one hand, contents shared by other users are displayed, such as television interventions by the leaders of the Libertarian Party (see Figure 8). On the other hand, contents from the accounts of other influencers arguing against the Libertarian candidate is replicated. Cyberia78 is thus positioned in an equivalent position to those other militant Internet users who replicate it in their videos. Finally, the speaker proposes herself as a political spokesperson on social networks; at the same time, she rectifies herself in the face of other people's messages.

Figure 8

Videos of televised interventions by political leaders

Source: @cyberia78's Tik Tok account on August 29th, 2023.

4.4. Political influencers emulating journalists

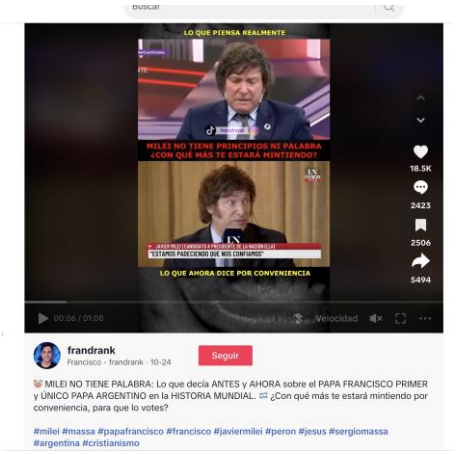
The analysis of the corpus revealed the emulative enunciative construction of journalists in three political influencers: the macro-influencer @frandrank, the mega-influencer @tomasfenati and the micro-influencer @aguschicote.

First of all, @frandrank asks in his videos the Internet users who are against Milei and those against Bullrich. He does not express support for any particular candidate. The recurring thematic motives in his clips are related to the candidates' discursive changes during the electoral campaign, rumors, the country's economic crisis, and international political news. In terms of the call to action, this is at the digital level, as he calls on his followers to take action on social networks, thus stimulating participation by placing Internet users in the role of the public: he asks them to express their point of view on the issue raised in the video.

His audio-visual material displays the incorporation of operations of the digital political-journalistic interface. These are "micro-tests" of his point of view. On the one hand, the changes in the politicians' strategies over time are shown, placing on one part of the screen the candidate's exclamations in the run-up to the PASO; and on the other part, the same topics addressed after the results of the general elections (see Figure 9). Thus, the effect is to show the contradiction as the video unfolds, without the need for explicit words from the influencer. These split-screen edited videos mimic the way news is constructed in news and political opinion programs.

Figure 9

Videos of politicians' contradictions



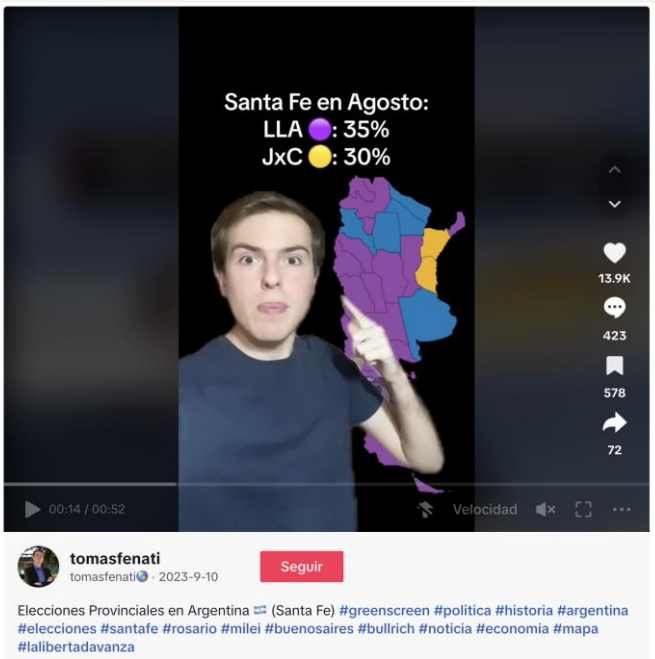
Source: @frandrank's Tik Tok account on October 24th, 2023.

On the other hand, there are also clips in which @frandrank shows audiovisual material of different politicians and then generates a video-selfie with logical micro-arguments to explain the changes and future consequences. In this way, he exposes the contradictions of the leaders of *Juntos por el Cambio* and *La Libertad Avanza*, as if he were a journalist in a political opinion program. He also assumes a specific role of media professional during the electoral process, presenting polls and praising the effectiveness of the candidates' strategy from a neutral position. In this way, the Influencer reclaims historical journalistic genres: the informative brief, the narration of the campaign as a horse race, the political note edited with personified animations of the candidates, among others.

Influencer @tomasfenati, for his part, adopts the enunciative strategy of neutrality, since he challenges the citizen Internet user - the para-recipient - and does not have an allegiance or rejection of any candidate. The recurring thematic motives focus on economic and political-electoral issues, as well as the connection of current events with Argentine history and international relations. In his clips, he also uses strategies from the world of information: archival images to illustrate news, descriptions of current events, and maps and infographics (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

Videos with informative strategies



Source: @tomasfenati's TikTok account on September 10th, 2023.

Finally, in the case of the user @aguschicote7, there is also evidence of an enunciative construction that mimics the mediated journalists' discourses, despite the fact that he challenges Internet users opposed to the right and at the same time, he positions himself as a supporter of Massa. The recurring thematic motives of his videos are oriented to show the lies of the campaign, the position of the artists before the elections, and the civic, political, and journalistic agenda.

It visualizes genres, operations and contents that result from the mediatization of television politics. In this way, publications with political-journalistic interfaces that imitate the form of the "press release (gazette) genre " are observed. Thus, there are descriptions of political-media events, explanations of decisions made by political actors, the use of statistics and figures, and contextualization operations aimed at questioning a political Internet user. In addition, the influencer generates clips with operations of fictionalization of the political scenario - operations that are used by political television programs. In fact, there are videos in which an electoral news story is told through the crossing of political, ludic and fictional logics; and thus, the way of narrating the campaign is built under the construction of characters and musicalization (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

Videos with political, playful and fictitious logics

Source: @aguschicote's TikTok account on October 25th, 2023

4.5. Viewing results according to emulation type

The results of the research on the political influencers in terms of the types of Internet users called, followers and opponents, the type of call to action they use, the recurring thematic motives in their clips, the interface operation and the enunciative strategy of each type of political influencer can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1.

Results based on influencer type

	Influencer citizenship emulator	**Political emulating influencer**	**Militant Internet user emulator**	**Influencer journalist emulator**
Internet users opponents	Internet user opposed to Alberto Fernández, Massa, Kirchnerism and Milei.	Internet user opposed to Milei.	Internet user opposed to Milei.	Internet user opposed to Milei / opposed to Bullrich/ opposed to the right wing
Follwer Internet users	Milei's Internet follower, Massa's Internet follower, Follower of *Juntos por el Cambio*.	-	Milei's Internet follower, ring-wing follower, left-wing follower	Massa's Internet follower
Recurrent motives	Campaign/economic/ international issues	Campaign issues/Hyp	Campaign issues/past	Campaign/economic/internati onal issues/past of Argentina

		othetical future	of political leaders	
Call to actions	Carried out peer-to-peer	---	Carried out peer-to-peer and hate messages are retrieved and interpellated.	It places its followers in the role of the audience.
Political-journalistic interface	TV programs replacement for the role of the ordinary Internet user	Influencer as interviewee	Convergence with digital genres (e.g. Dúo)	Emulation of news and political opinion programs.
Enunciative strategy	Same political-informational knowledge as the citizen.	Holder of greater knowledge /political competence	Holder of greater knowledge /political competence	Holder of greater informational knowledge

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 1 shows that the influencers who emulate the citizen are presented as "close" to their followers -with the same type of political-informational knowledge-, in line with the studies mentioned above (Fullana Landero, 2022). However, in the other three cases: the emulators of the politician, the journalist and the militant Internet user are positioned as having greater political-informational knowledge than the common man, which distances them from their audiences. This divergence may be due to the fact that the sample was collected during the election campaign and that the recurring motives of the clips are oriented towards campaign themes, which imply a staging of a certain competence on the topic. On the other hand, the results of the study showed that none of the surveyed influencers directly replicated paid political propaganda, in line with what the literature expresses about these types of users. Finally, although there are political influencers who adhere to causes and ideas (see in Table 1 the survey of Internet users who are, among others, supporters of the right/left-wing party), there are also others who support or reject specific politicians or parties, contrary to what was experienced in the Fullana Landero survey (2022).

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this section, we return to the objectives and research questions that guided this work. The analysis of the content of political influencers and their enunciative strategies has shown that their communication is based not only on adherence to a candidate, but also on opposition. In this way, the rejection of a leader, certain ideas and/or a certain electoral platform prevails over the adherence to a candidate. There are even influencers analyzed who do not express support for any person and focus their content and calls to action on showing the disadvantages of a specific partisan

choice (SO3). Thus, these political influencers focus their communication on the opposition to Argentine politics, in line with what the literature describes as a characteristic of the new actors of contemporary politics, based on negativity (Rosanvallon, 2007; Annunziata, 2015). Furthermore, the communication of these political influencers is based on political content, and commercial and promotional strategies were not evidenced, in line with the study by Caro Castaño *et al*. (2024).

In response to SO1 and RQ2 and RQ3, the analysis has demonstrated the existence of 4 enunciative strategies of political influencers in their content in TikTok: the emulation of the citizen, the politician, the militant Internet user, and the journalist. Thus, political influencers in their content in TikTok imitate the way of enunciation of other socio-political individuals. The research concludes that these modes of communication are transversal to the status of influencer, since there is no direct relationship between the enunciative strategy and the number of followers (SO4).

First, with respect to influencers who imitate the content produced by ordinary citizens, it has been observed that they position themselves as if their digital resources were equivalent to those of a user with few followers. At the same time, they show that they have not decided to vote, that they are not sure that the candidate they want to vote for will be good for the country, or even that they are changing the partisan choice between one election and another. In this way, they acquire one of the characteristics of the modern voter: the fluctuation of the vote (Cheresky, 2019).

Second, with respect to the user who has a strategy of imitating the way the political leader or candidate is published, it should be noted that he/she uses editing resources to highlight aspects of the video, thus giving it an institutional imprint. Third, influencers who imitate militant Internet users generate a type of content that places them enunciatively above an ordinary user. They position themselves as spokespersons for the community of political Internet users and/or as a link between the followers and the candidate.

Finally, with regard to the strategy of imitating journalistic content, this finding is in line with the conclusion of the research by Sehl and Schützeneder (2023), who show that among European influencers there were similar ways of communicating as those of journalists. At the same time, our research shows that political influencers provide political education to Internet users in the context of the Argentinean elections of 2023, which is also in line with the analysis of Sehl and Schützeneder (2023) in the context of the German federal elections of 2021 and with the queries of German and English-speaking political YouTubers (Fischer *et al*., 2022). However, in the Argentinean case, in contrast to the findings of the German election content, information and opinion are not separated, but coexist mixed among their clips.

In response to SO2 and RQ1, the analysis revealed a heterogeneity of resources brought into play by political influencers in relation to digital political-journalistic interfaces, depending on their enunciative strategy. First, television contents are replicated through TikTok's own genres, imitating the point of view of the viewer and the common Internet user. Second, they replicate other users' videos, equating the political

content of their peers with their own, thus enunciatively approaching the figure of the militant Internet user. Third, the influencers, with an enunciative strategy who emulates the journalist, show the contradictions of the candidates with the presentation of the television videos. Finally, television interviews in which the influencer himself/herself participated are also included. In this way, the overlap between the political and the journalistic is aligned with the enunciative strategy of imitating the digital content produced by the candidate.

On the other hand, our research has evidenced the use of ludic and fictional logics in combination with political and social network logics. This strengthens the thesis that politainment is part of the content produced by political influencers (Fischer *et al*., 2022; Vijay & Gekker, 2021).

In response to RQ5, it is worth mentioning the specific investigation on political influencers who follow the leader of *La Libertad Avanza*. This showed that there are contents aimed at promoting negative feelings, such as discontent; and there were also attacks on journalists who appear as adversaries in their discourses, in line with the strategies of the radical right in Western democracies (Forti, 2021) and with the type of campaign developed by Milei. On a parallel level, in this group of influencers who adhere to libertarian ideas, it is observed a use in their clips of sense-producing operations such as exaggeration and irony, in line with Milei's histrionic behavior in the media and social networks (Martins, 2023).

This study, by focusing on the types of content of political influencers and their enunciative strategies, as well as the types of Internet users called, is the first to show the relationships between political influencers on TikTok and other types of users in social networks, citizens, journalists, politicians, militant Internet users. In this sense, both supporters and opponents of a candidate, as well as the politician himself, should pay attention to the types of political contents on this platform and their implications in terms of relations with the audiences, citizens: the types of calls to action, the recurring thematic motifs, and the political and journalistic interfaces involved.

Regarding the possible impact of political influencers on digital political communication, the results of this study show that they position themselves enunciatively in different ways, that they converge with mass media content through the digital political-journalistic interface, and that they use digital genres to argue. In this way, they generate digital political discourses that are inserted into an expanded public space of social networks and, during election periods, coexist with the official and specific discourses of the candidates.

Regarding the role of political influencers as opinion leaders in the sense of intermediaries (SO1 and RQ4), our research has shown that there are only two cases in which they function in this way. On the one hand, when they construct an enunciation that mimics the militant Internet user, they position themselves as a link between politicians and citizens, as a spokesperson for the politician and/or as a link between journalists and citizens. On the other hand, when political influencers have a strategy of emulating journalism, they are configured as spokespersons for the citizenry.

However, when they emulate the content of the political leader or the citizen, they do not fulfill this function. In this way, our results contrast with others that define the specificity of political influencers in assuming the role of filter between politicians and citizens. However, it would be desirable to confront these findings with subsequent research with a larger number of observed political influencers.

Regarding the limitations of the study, it should be noted that this research focused on a specific case of 10 political influencers on TikTok, in an electoral period in Argentina that involved a political shift to the extreme right. The extrapolation of the results should be done taking into account the social network, the type of period involved - electoral or non-electoral and what type of election - and the political-media framework involved. Finally, the research focused on the clips of Argentine political influencers and their enunciative strategies has opened an area of possible research focused on the relationships of this type of political-media users with others - such as journalists, the candidates themselves, or the citizenry - as well as the potential classification of political influencers according to their media and political-partisan status.

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