

ARTICLES/ARTÍCULOS

The Use of YouTube by Political Parties in Andalusia

El uso de YouTube por los partidos políticos andaluces

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ABSTRACT

Social media platforms have become instrumental for propaganda strategies. Of all the social networks, the video-sharing site YouTube has successfully established itself as the audiovisual platform par excellence, arousing the interest of political parties. This study analyses the YouTube communication of the main political parties in Andalusia as a result of the lack of academic literature on the use of this platform at a regional level and, more specifically, in the self-governing region of Andalusia. To this end, the content of the videos shared in 2020 on the official YouTube channels of the Andalusian parties was analysed. The findings provide information on the frequency with which the various parties upload content, the main topics, the type of interaction (positive or negative) and the objectives and role as a propaganda tool. The research shows the predominance of the radical right party Vox regarding different variables; the importance of the economy, policy and government; the use of YouTube for communicating party stances; and the propaganda attacks on rival parties and/or governments.

KEYWORDS: andalusian political parties; political propaganda; YouTube politics; social media and politics; content analysis.

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RESUMEN

Las redes sociales se han convertido en plataformas esenciales para las estrategias propagandísticas. Entre todas las redes existentes, YouTube ha conseguido erigirse como la plataforma de almacenamiento audiovisual por antonomasia, siendo de gran utilidad para los partidos políticos. Este estudio analiza la comunicación de los principales partidos políticos andaluces en YouTube, debido a la escasez de literatura académica acerca del uso de esta plataforma a nivel autonómico y, más concretamente, en Andalucía. Para ello, se ha realizado un análisis de contenido de los vídeos publicados en los perfiles oficiales de los partidos andaluces en YouTube durante el año 2020. Los resultados del análisis aportan información acerca de la frecuencia de publicación de los diferentes partidos, las principales temáticas utilizadas, el tipo de interacción (positiva o negativa) o los objetivos y funciones propagandísticas. La investigación evidencia el predominio del partido de derecha radical Vox en distintas variables, la importancia temática de la economía, la política y el gobierno, el uso de YouTube para comunicar posiciones de los partidos y el ataque propagandístico a partidos y/o gobiernos rivales.

KEYWORDS: partidos políticos andaluces; propaganda política; política en YouTube; redes sociales y política; análisis de contenido.

1. Introduction: Social Media and Politics

With there being significant participation from political parties and leaders on the internet and social media, Spain could arguably be said to be immersed in what Davis, Baumgartner, Francia and Morris (2009) conceptualise as a post-maturity phase in internet campaigns, where the use of sophisticated websites is normalised and attention is directed towards social media. The use of social media became a relevant resource from the time of Barack Obama's campaign in 2007–2008 (Capra et al., 2008; Church, 2010), being integrated into the repertoire of political communication on a global level. This is evidenced by Donald Trump's systematic use of Twitter and Facebook in the 2016 US campaign, which continued throughout his presidency; and, during that same campaign, by the activity on new social media such as Instagram and Snapchat (Bosseta, 2018).

Spain can be included among those countries where social media has represented a turning point in political communication (Ruiz del Olmo and Bustos Díaz, 2016). In particular, social media use in current Spanish politics is within a context of far-reaching changes: traditionally, the panorama was characterised by a virtually two-party system where the social-democratic party, Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), and the conservative party, Partido Popular (PP), held power alternately since 1982, both in the central Spanish government and in the majority of the self-governing regions. The first cracks appeared in the 2014 European elections when the left-wing party Podemos was created, with the main traditional parties losing a significant number of votes. The rise of Podemos — which appeared in a turbulent social context following the success of protest movements such as the 15-M or anti-austerity movement in Spain — was followed by that of Ciudadanos, a center-right liberal party that originated in Catalonia and quickly became another serious competitor for the bipartisanship. Following the 2015, 2016 and 2019 general elections, Ciudadanos and Podemos transformed themselves into relevant political forces, until the point at which the latter formed the current Spanish progressive coalition government with PSOE. At the same time, a separatist movement was

gaining momentum in Catalonia that polarised Catalan politics into pro- and anti-independence groups. As a result of the reaction to this phenomenon, the radical right-wing party Vox (Ferreira, 2019) entered parliamentary life between 2018 and 2019, becoming the third-largest political force in Spain.

These general trends of change are also seen in the self-governing region of Andalusia. Andalusia is one of the most important regions in Spain: in 2020, Andalusia had a population of 8,464,411 inhabitants, compared to the country's total of 47,450,795, thus making up around one-fifth of the Spanish population (Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE), 2020). Politically characterised by the predominance of PSOE of Andalusia, which governed the region for 36 years, the results of the elections held on 2 December 2019 brought about a historic change: PSOE received the most votes; however their share was not enough to form a government, and Vox caused political uproar by entering the Parliament of Andalusia. Thus, for the first time since the Franco dictatorship, Andalusia is governed by a centre-right coalition between Partido Popular Andaluz and Ciudadanos Andalucía, which had the political support of Vox until May 2021 (RTVE.es, 2021).

All this has implied a series of changes — both in how the leaders' activities are perceived and in the political activity itself — that have taken the socio-political map of Spain and Andalusia to a climate unseen in recent years. In this context, the term “new politics” has become a common reference in public discourse. Originally applied to Podemos and Ciudadanos, the label appears to encompass all those actions that intend to “*acercar la política al ciudadano*” (bring politics closer to the people; Civieta, 2015), combining the use of tools and technologies that enable greater visibility of the dealings and negotiations of the parties. Thus, there is the realisation that other ways to understand and do politics exist — in contrast to the so-called “old politics” — that enable new ways of communication and leadership (Domínguez Benavente, 2017). This new politics is associated with the use of social media, to the extent that the differentiation between new/old leaders has become a variable of analysis for these networks (López-García, 2016; López-Meri et al., 2017).

The aim of this article is to examine the communication dimensions of this climate of political and technological change, focusing on the analysis of the messages conveyed by the main political parties in Andalusia on one of the most important social media networks: the video-sharing site YouTube. Before addressing this aim, it is necessary to review the literature on how this platform has been used.

2. Theoretical Framework: The Use of YouTube by Political Parties

Content and political ramifications on YouTube have already been the subject of numerous research studies, the majority of which focus on content analysis (Berrocal Gonzalo, Domínguez and García, 2012; Gil Ramírez, 2019; Litvinenko, 2021; Cerdán Martínez, 2021). For example, Möller, Kühne, Baumgartner and Jochen (2019) focus, from a statistical point of view, on the likes, dislikes, comments and number of views of the most-watched YouTube videos, both for entertainment and political videos. Among other findings, they indicate that

the viewers of political audiovisual content respond in a different way to social information than those who watch videos for entertainment. Contextually, it is important to remember that YouTube is not the only video-sharing network that has been studied with reference to its political dimension: TikTok, currently a hugely popular social network, has also been analysed from the viewpoint of its potential to spread political ideology due to its entertaining features (Vijay and Gekker, 2021); from the perspective of the metrics reached and the narrative themes used (Barreto and Rivera Prado, 2022); or highlighting how Podemos has adapted to TikTok slang and its technical specificities (Cervi, Tejedor and Marín Lladó, 2021).

More precisely, the review of specific literature on the propaganda use of YouTube by political parties and candidates offers some results on an international level. Already in the 2006 US election cycle, Gueorguieva (2008) indicated the relevance of YouTube when putting lesser-known candidates on the map and building support. Church has studied YouChoose and its YouTube section, “a viral forum for presidential candidates to campaign in the digital sphere” (2010: 125), and, in his study of clips of 16 candidates in the 2008 US elections — combining a quantitative and qualitative approach — he points out that the content “appeared to focus primarily on the character of each candidate rather than his or her respective policies (*ibid.*: 130). Research by Klotz (2010) on the 2006 and 2008 electoral campaigns for the US Senate, based on content analysis and keyword tracking, finds that YouTube did not generate new political communication formats in the 2008 elections, with the ad format still predominating. The landmark 2008 US campaign has also been studied by Ridout, Fowler and Branstetter (2010: 14) — who compile adverts with over 1,000 views and data on political advertising coverage in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, as well as conducting a survey —, for whom “the 2008 election appears to be the first true ‘YouTube’ election”. Pineda, Garrido and Ramos (2013) analyse the similarities and differences in a content analysis of spot ads and political videos on YouTube during the 2008 elections in Spain and the United States. They find that the candidate is key in the general stance adopted, indicating that questions surrounding ideology and the parties play a secondary role, and that American and Spanish adverts do not use the same campaign points, with the exception of the issue of economic growth. Vesnic-Alujević and Van Bauwel (2014) also use content analysis to study the use of YouTube by three parties from four countries (France, Italy, Ireland and Slovenia) during the 2009 European Parliament elections. They conclude that the parties differ in their strategies — both at a national level and on ideological terms — and that they use different styles. Furthermore, they conclude that more than half of the 67 videos sampled centred on issues as opposed to the candidate, while YouTube is a network that should favour personalisation. Within the Asian context, Foong Lian (2018) analyses 35 videos by the main parties who ran in the 2016 Sarawak state elections (Malaysia) in order to analyse the cultural meaning of the audiovisual content. She finds an ideological battle between “us” and “them” with a view to underscore nationalism, providing hegemonic and anti-hegemonic framework on the realities of Sarawak. Sohal and Kaur (2018) study the use of YouTube during the 2014 elections for the Parliament of India, analysing 92 adverts by the Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party. They find

that both parties primarily focused their content on appealing to voters. The article by Olof Larsson (2018) on the presence of Norwegian parties on YouTube provides information about likes and dislikes, perceiving them as relative indicators of popularity on this social media network. On the other hand, by means of a discursive and semiotic approach, Romero (2019) analyses the speeches made by Mauricio Macri on Facebook and YouTube during the 2015 presidential elections in Argentina, finding that Macri's main modes of presentation are developed in contrast with what is commonly understood as "politics". Based on a study that includes, among other elements, tools derived from the narratological study, Rodríguez-Serrano, García-Catalán and Martín-Nuñez (2019) investigate the strategies of misinformation used by twelve European extreme right-wing parties. They find the creation of a common enemy for the people to be a main topic, as well as a xenophobic approach that positions immigration as a key problem; in another investigation on the topic, the same authors (2021) highlight the use of patriotic motives.

In the case of studies focused on Spain, and according to Álvarez García (2010), YouTube was the most exploited network by both PSOE and PP in the 2008 election campaign. Later, by means of a descriptive and quantitative content analysis, Berrocal, Gil Torres and Campos-Domínguez (2016) studied the most viewed YouTube videos on the political parties that achieved representation in the European Parliament following the 2014 elections, as well as those videos on their main leaders. Their findings show that personalisation is not the norm and that the party, the platform or the actions/activities are at the fore. Gómez de Travesedo and López (2016) carry out a content analysis of the PP, PSOE, Ciudadanos and Podemos profiles during the first pre-campaign week of the 2015 elections, studying formal, content and interaction variables. They conclude, among other data, that PSOE is the party that has taken most care of this platform, as well as being the party that attributes most relevance to the candidate while, in the case of PP, this is given to other party members. Focusing on the elections held on 26 June 2016, and based on a content analysis of 80 videos, Berrocal-Gonzalo, Martín-Jiménez and Gil-Torres (2017) conclude that the most-watched videos during the on-going campaign were *politainment*, while the most-watched videos in the election campaign were informative. In their quantitative and qualitative analysis of 80 videos by PP, PSOE, Ciudadanos and Podemos, Gil-Ramírez, Gómez de Travesedo-Rojas and Almansa-Martínez (2019) highlight personalisation — without exceeding, however, the attention given to the parties, except in the video thumbnails — and a scarce *politainment* approach. Likewise, the study by Gil Ramírez, Castellero Ostio and Gómez de Travesedo Rojas (2020) is quantitative and qualitative, and it analyses the most-viewed videos on PP, PSOE, Vox, Podemos and Ciudadanos. The study finds that in the audiovisual content thumbnail, the political representative prevails over the abbreviations of the parties, while in the title text it is the other way around. Studying videos uploaded by Spanish parties, users and the media, Gil-Ramírez and Gómez de Travesedo-Rojas point out that "la clase política española aún no está aprovechando las posibilidades y herramientas que ofrece YouTube ni para posicionarse estratégicamente, ni para establecer una comunicación recíproca con la ciudadanía" (the Spanish political class is still yet to take advantage of the opportunities and tools that YouTube offers either to position themselves strategically or to establish reciprocal communication with the people; 2020: 39).

Returning to the electoral context, Villar-Hernández and Pellisser Rossell (2021) analyse — from a descriptive and quantitative perspective that includes elements such as narrative emphasis, among others — 44 spot ads shared for the elections held on 26 June 2016 by PP, PSOE, Podemos and Ciudadanos. They find, among other elements, that all the parties make more emotional appeals — except for Ciudadanos — and that the leaders are present, but not in an exaggerated way, and therefore it appears that the trend of personalisation is slowing.

The literature on the political use of YouTube in Spain also includes regional and/or local studies. Methodologically combining content analysis and survey (with Likert scale), Vázquez Sande (2016a) studies the most-watched YouTube videos of the 23 candidates who became the representatives of the seven main cities in the 2011 municipal elections in Galicia, finding that storytelling is used to associate the candidate with different lifestyles and show their private life (family, for example). The same author (Vázquez Sande, 2016b) confirms that the candidates who used personal storytelling in the 2011 elections in Galicia are not young, come from majority parties and have been candidates on previous occasions. Studying the values transmitted and the resources used, Vázquez Sande (2017) also observes that the transference of symbolic capital based on the candidate's qualities is not explicitly carried over to the political sphere. On the other hand, Gandlaz, Larrondo Ureta and Orbegozo Terradillos (2020) qualitatively analyse 13 spot ads on YouTube by the parties that achieved representation in the 2016 Basque Parliament elections (EAJ-PNV, EH Bildu, Elkarrekin Podemos, Partido Socialista de Euskadi-Euskadiko Ezkerra and PP) — according to concepts such as the factors of the video that contribute to their virality and repercussion, the recognition of common aspects in the more successful videos, and the comparison of each party's election results — and they observe that the channels with most subscribers, uploaded videos and views correspond to the parties that obtained the most votes (EAJ-PNV and EH Bildu).

Focusing specifically on Andalusia, the literature on the use of YouTube by the parties in this region of southern Spain is, however, non-existent. There is research on the use of social media networks, such as Twitter (Deltell, Claes and Osteso, 2013; Díaz and Del Olmo, 2016; Pérez-Curiel and García Gordillo, 2019) and Instagram (Carrasco-Polanco, Sánchez-de-la-Nieta-Hernández and Trelles-Villanueva, 2020) during elections in Andalusia; however, there are no studies on the political and propaganda use of YouTube by parties in Andalusia. It is precisely this gap in research that this article endeavours to fill. Parting from the general objective of analysing the political communication on YouTube by the main political parties in Andalusia in 2020, we propose — taking into account the previous review of the literature — the following research questions (RQ) as secondary objectives:

RQ₁. *Which political parties in Andalusia are most active on YouTube?*

RQ₂. *Which Andalusian parties have the highest number of views, likes and comments on YouTube?*

RQ₃. *What are the main topics addressed by the Andalusian parties in the videos?*

RQ₄. *For the Andalusian parties, what are the main purposes of the videos they publish on YouTube?*

RQ₅. *What are the main propaganda targets of the Andalusian parties on YouTube?*

3. Methodology

The choice of YouTube as the sample frame for the analysis of this research is justified based on the popularity and political relevance of this online site. Created in 2005, YouTube is the most important digital video platform, with an audience of over one billion unique users each month (The YouTube Team, 2013). Furthermore, YouTube has significant reach on social media and is accessible through more than 350 million mobile devices (Ricke, 2014). The selection of YouTube also lies in the fact that it has been naturally included in the repertoire of political parties given that it is one of the sites that “provide popular venues for individuals and organisations to express their views, opinions and shared lives with the larger community of web users, which in turn may affect thought and behaviour in realms such as politics” (Capra et al., 2008: 211). Its users, on the other hand, are an attractive audience for political campaigns: a substantial portion of voters use networks such as YouTube “and can be reached there by candidates and their campaign ads” (Gueorguieva, 2008: 291). For that reason, YouTube is a platform used by the main parties in the run-up to an election (Álvarez García, 2010), as well as being “the one-stop source for popular videos about politics” (Davis et al., 2009: 21).

The analysis sample comprises, on the one hand, all the videos uploaded during 2020 to the official YouTube channels of the political parties in Andalusia that achieved parliamentary representation in the 2018 regional elections: the coalition Adelante Andalucía, Partido Popular Andaluz, Ciudadanos Andalucía, PSOE de Andalucía and Vox Parlamento de Andalucía. It should be pointed out that the parties Izquierda Unida Andalucía (IU-A) and Podemos Andalucía (Podemos-A) initially formed part of the coalition Adelante Andalucía (Adelante-A); in 2020, however, there was a divide between these parties and the branch of the Anticapitalistas, the current leader of the Adelante-A project, to which the Izquierda Andalucista party also belongs. Therefore, in light of the potential confusion that the label “Adelante Andalucía” may entail, it is preferable to analyse both the audiovisual content of this organisation and that of the individual parties that are or have been part of it: Anticapitalistas Andalucía, IU-A, Podemos-A and Izquierda Andalucista (table 1)¹. Based on these nine channels, the total number of videos in the sample amounts to 999.

The data-gathering technique chosen to respond to the research questions is content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004), a quantitative technique that will enable a frequency analysis to be performed. As regards the operationalised variables and categories for the analysis based on the research questions (table 1), firstly, the posting frequency of each Andalusian party has been included. In addition to this, there is a variable of formal elements that is based on the quantification of the average number of views, the likes that each video receives, the dislikes and the comments — elements

that have already been used for the analysis of Spanish political communication on YouTube (Gómez de Travesedo and López, 2016). Thirdly, a theme-related variable has been included to clarify the main topics addressed by the parties. Research into the topics of political YouTube videos has also already been the object of study (cf. Pineda, Garrido and Ramos, 2013; Berrocal, Gil Torres and Campos-Domínguez, 2016; Vázquez Sande, 2016; Gil-Ramírez and Gómez de Travesedo-Rojas, 2020). In this instance, this study departs from the thematic operationalisation proposed by Graham, Broersma, Hazelhoff and van 't Haar (2013), with the addition of some topics proposed by Aladro Vico and Requeijo Rey (2020), as well as some items provided on an *ad hoc* basis in order to adjust the analysis to the reality of the region under study, such as Andalusian nationalism. Fourthly, to study the general purposes or functions of the videos (reflect news, present a stance, use humour, etc.), we once again revert to the operationalisation of Graham, Broersma, Hazelhoff and van 't Haar (2013), with the partial addition of the research undertaken by Ruiz del Olmo and Bustos Díaz (2016). To complement these functions, a variable related to the propaganda target of the audiovisual content has been included on the coding sheet, entailing references in favourable/defensive, neutral or attacking terms (Baines and O'Shaughnessy, 2020: 234) to Andalusian political parties, the Regional Government of Andalusia and the central Spanish Government, to thus reveal the propaganda strategies of the parties in relation to themselves, their opposition and their political allies.

Table 1

Methodology summary table

Sample of parties on YouTube	URL address of the video source on YouTube
Adelante Andalucía	https://www.youtube.com/c/AdelanteAndaluc%C3%ADa
Anticapitalistas Andalucía	https://www.youtube.com/c/AnticapitalistasAndaluc%C3%ADa
Ciudadanos Andalucía	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIT9UzICuWKQWSe_x_PmA2g
Izquierda Andaluista	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0-Bob1WL4WhOfwB75bVg2g
Izquierda Unida Andalucía	https://www.youtube.com/user/iuandalucia
Partido Popular Andaluz	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPx6C_S8AXg281jc4MZLokA
Partido Socialista Obrero Español de Andalucía	https://www.youtube.com/user/psoeandalucia
Podemos Andalucía	https://www.youtube.com/c/Podemos_AND
Vox Parlamento de Andalucía	https://www.youtube.com/c/VOXParlamentodeAndaluc%C3%ADa
Analytical variables and operationalisation of concepts	
Variable 1: Posting frequency.	
Variable 2: Formal elements (average number of views, likes, dislikes and comments).	
Variable 3: Video topics.	
Variable 4: Video purposes.	
Variable 5: Propaganda target of the videos (reference in favourable/defensive, neutral or attacking terms)	

In terms of intercoder reliability, for which Krippendorff's alpha coefficient (α) has been used, an initial trial of two reliability tests, each with two coders, was carried out, obtaining an average reliability in the thematic and purpose variables of 0.80 (which is minimally acceptable in terms of content analysis), while the variables relating to propaganda were insufficient, $\alpha = 0.67$. Following this test, the coders were instructed to profile the meaning and applicability of certain variables and categories (including the thematic variable). A second reliability test delivered an average value of $\alpha = 0.94$ in the thematic and purpose variables, and $\alpha = 0.83$ in the variables related to propaganda. This second test also delivered an agreement of 0.98 in the block relating to the comments, likes and views variables.

4. Results

This section presents the main empirical results arising from the use of the designed content analysis methodology, in order to respond to the research questions posed. To start, table 2 provides information on the variable of video posting frequency on YouTube by each party during 2020.

Table 2

Videos posted by each party (frequencies)

Party	Videos
Vox Parlamento Andalucía	508
Ciudadanos Andalucía	174
Partido Popular Andaluz	81
IU Andalucía	65
PSOE Andalucía	63
Adelante Andalucía	58
Podemos Andalucía	33
Anticapitalistas Andalucía	16
Izquierda Andalucista	1
Total	999

Vox is the party that shares and stores the most videos on the social network under study, a long way ahead of Ciudadanos Andalucía (Cs-A) and Partido Popular Andaluz (PP-A). The lowest frequencies correspond to Anticapitalistas Andalucía (Anticapitalistas-A) and Izquierda Andalucista (Izquierda-A), with the latter only posting one video in 2020. These data indicate a clear predominance of the right-wing parties on the political spectrum in Andalusia (Vox, Cs-A and PP-A are the most

active on YouTube), as well as the predominance of new parties, Vox and Cs-A, which together make up 68.26% of the total audiovisual production of the Andalusian parties, while a party that is so historically integrated in the Andalusian reality, such as PSOE de Andalucía (PSOE-A), merely posts 6.3% of the total.

Moving on to how the parties' messages are received, table 3 shows the average and standard deviation related to the number of views, likes, dislikes and comments on each YouTube channel, obtaining the type of user engagement with each party.

Table 3

Number of video views, likes, dislikes and comments (average, \bar{X} , and standard deviation, σ)

Parties	Views		Likes		Dislikes		Comments	
	\bar{X}	σ	\bar{X}	σ	\bar{X}	σ	\bar{X}	σ
Adelante Andalucía	240.9	509.9	12.6	13.5	1.5	3.1	2.2	7.8
Anticapitalistas Andalucía	86.4	59.3	4.6	4.2	0.3	0.8	0	0
Ciudadanos Andalucía	23.9	70	1.1	3.7	0	0.1	0.2	0.5
IU Andalucía	1437.9	10622.2	21	100.1	2	10.8	2.7	16.6
Izquierda Andalucista	122	0	6	0	1	0	0	0
Podemos Andalucía	207.8	714.8	5.3	6.7	1.1	2	0.3	1.1
Partido Popular Andaluz	10.2	9.2	1.1	0.9	0	0	0	0
PSOE Andalucía	277.5	504	4	11	0.5	1.1	0.4	0.9
Vox	1083.7	5886.2	131.7	478.1	1	5.7	17.3	67.9
Overall total	689.5	5027.4	69.9	347.7	0.8	5	9.2	49.3

IU-A, which ranks fourth in posting frequency in table 2, is the party that receives the most views by YouTube users, as well as dislikes. At the same time, Vox not only ranks first in terms of posts, but it is also the party with more positive engagement, as it has the most likes and comments by far, with the number of dislikes in line with the rest of the parties; thus, it can be said that this ultraconservative party generates considerably more enthusiasm on YouTube than its opponents. Regarding traditional parties like PSOE-A and PP-A, the low average number of likes stands out, as well as the major difference in average views, with PSOE-A receiving nearly 28 times more views than PP-A. On the other hand, the high standard deviations in the number of views of Adelante-A, Vox and, particularly, IU-A indicate that the consumption of political videos may concentrate on a few audiovisual productions that are watched in abundance. Likewise, the high standard deviation value in the overall total value of likes indicates a significant spread in terms of the videos that are received favourably by the users.

Table 4
Video topics (%)

Topic	Adelante-A	Anticapitalistas-A	Cs-A	IU-A	Izquierda-A	Podemos-A	PP-A	PSOE-A	Vox	Total
Economy and business	12.1	25.0	26.4	23.1	-	3.0	19.8	11.1	30.1	24.9
Government	10.3	6.3	6.3	9.2	-	-	14.8	19.0	13.0	11.4
Health and well-being	3.4	-	16.1	12.3	-	3.0	16.0	12.7	9.3	10.7
Education	5.2	-	10.3	1.5	-	3.0	4.9	11.1	8.5	7.7
Current parliamentary affairs	20.7	-	6.3	9.2	-	-	-	6.3	2.0	4.3
Campaign and/or parties	-	-	1.7	13.8	100.0	48.5	1.2	1.6	1.8	4.0
Andalusia/Andalusian nationalism	3.4	6.3	0.6	4.6	-	6.1	16.0	1.6	2	3.3
Budgets	-	-	2.3	6.2	-	-	2.5	3.2	2.8	2.6
Gender/feminism	5.2	-	0.6	3.1	-	3.0	1.2	1.6	3.1	2.5
Immigration	-	-	1.1	-	-	3.0	-	-	4.1	2.4
COVID-19	15.5	-	6.3	1.5	-	-	-	1.6	0.6	2.3
Media	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.3	1.7
Environment	-	6.3	1.7	-	-	3.0	1.2	-	1.6	1.4
Corruption	1.7	-	-	-	-	-	1.2	3.2	1.6	1.2
Infrastructures	-	-	1.7	-	-	-	-	-	1.8	1.2
Human/civil rights	1.7	-	1.1	1.5	-	3.0	-	-	1	1.1
Other	17.2	25.1	8.1	7.7	-	21.2	21.0	4.8	6.7	9.6
Undefined	3.4	31.3	9.2	6.2	-	3.0	-	22.2	6.9	7.7

Table 4 shows that “economy and business” is the preferred topic of Andalusian parties on YouTube. This is seen in parties with parliamentary representation, such as Vox (the party with the most audiovisual content on the topic), or that are even in government, such as Cs-A, which includes in one of its videos an appearance by Juan Marín (Cs-A spokesman and Vice President of the Regional Government of Andalusia) where he comments on the importance of strengthening and developing the tourism sector following the COVID-19 health crisis (Ciudadanos Andalucía, 2020). The economy also predominates in parties without representation, such as Anticapitalistas-A, as illustrated in the interview with Lisardo Baena, trade unionist of the Spanish General Confederation of Labour (CGT) and Anticapitalistas activist, in which he talks about the PP and PSOE labour reform (Anticapitalistas Andalucía, 2020). In other instances, the prevailing topic is “campaign and parties”, as Izquierda-A and Podemos-A show, and which is confirmed in a video featuring Pilar González (senator of Adelante-A), in which she participates in a campaign event and underscores the Andalusian sentiment as a fundamental cornerstone for a prosperous future in the region (Podemos Andalucía, 2020). Furthermore, videos about the government stand out in parties such as PSOE-A (in particular), PP-A,

Vox and Adelante-A. It is important to highlight that, although the parties have preferred topics, Vox offers the most thematic variety, from budgets through to immigration, as well as media, nationalism and education.

Table 5

Video purposes (%)

Purposes	Adelante-A	Anticapitalistas-A	Cs-A	IU-A	Izquierda-A	Podemos-A	PP-A	PSOE-A	Vox	Total
Party stance	81	81.3	44.3	78.5	100	51.5	84	42.9	46.3	53.7
Criticise/debate a topic	12.1	18.8	14.4	10.8	-	3	3.7	44.4	48.4	32
Highlight achievements	1.7	-	32.2	4.6	-	-	6.2	6.3	2	7.9
Politician's stance	-	-	1.1	-	-	45.5	6.2	-	0.6	2.9
Recognition/appreciation	1.7	-	1.7	4.6	-	-	-	1.6	0.8	1.2
Reflect news	1.7	-	0.6	-	-	-	-	-	0.2	0.3
Personal matter	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.4	0.2
Offer advice/help	1.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1
Undefined	-	-	5.7	1.5	-	-	-	4.8	1.4	2.1

In terms of the purposes or functions of the audiovisual messages, table 5 shows that nearly all the parties use YouTube in order to define themselves and adopt a stance. An example of this is a video posted by Adelante-A in which Inma Nieto makes a statement in Parliament taking a stand against male violence and speaks of the need to create measures to favour effective gender equality between men and women (Adelante Andalucía, 2020). For their part, PSOE-A and Vox focus more on “criticising/debating a topic”; for example, Eugenio Moltó (Vox representative in the Parliament of Andalusia) makes a statement in which he criticises the shortage of medical practitioners in Andalusia (Vox Parlamento de Andalucía, 2020). In general, the low number of individual politicians taking a stance (with the exception of Podemos-A) and the negligible frequency of personal matters stand out, as well as the importance of the category “Highlight achievements” in the case of Cs-A — logical given that Ciudadanos is in the regional government.

Table 6*Video propaganda target (%)*

Target	Adelante-A	Anticapitalistas-A	Cs-A	IU-A	Izquierda-A	Podemos-A	PP-A	PSOE-A	Vox	Total
Attack the Regional Government of Andalusia	57.3	45	-	54.4	-	11.1	-	72.1	25	24.2
Attack the Spanish Government	4.0	15	18.4	-	-	11.1	52	4.4	20.8	19.1
Defend the Regional Government of Andalusia	-	-	51.5	-	-	-	28.4	-	-	13
Neutral reference towards the Regional Government of Andalusia	1.3	-	3.4	2.2	-	-	-	5.9	22.5	12.2
Attack PSOE-A	9.3	10	14.3	1.1	-	2.8	16.7	-	9.5	9.8
Attack Adelante-A	-	-	5.6	-	-	-	-	-	3.1	2.7
Defend Vox	-	-	1.1	-	-	-	-	1.5	3.2	1.9
No propaganda target	10.7	-	0.8	1.1	-	13.9	2	-	1	1.9
Defend the Spanish Government	1.3	-	-	16.7	-	-	-	4.4	-	1.5
Defend another party (Podemos)	-	-	-	1.1	-	44.4	-	-	-	1.3
Attack PP-A	2.7	5	-	2.2	-	-	-	2.9	1	1
Defend Cs-A	-	-	3.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.8
Attack Cs-A	2.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.6	0.5
Attack Vox	2.7	-	-	5.6	-	-	-	-	-	0.5
Defend Adelante-A	2.7	-	-	4.4	-	2.8	-	-	-	0.5
Defend PSOE-A	-	-	-	2.2	-	2.8	-	5.9	-	0.5
Other	2.7	5	0.4	2.2	-	2.8	1	-	0.2	0.8
Undefined	2.7	20	0.8	6.7	100	8.3	-	2.9	13.2	8

* This may exceed 100% due to the fact that one video may have several propaganda targets.

Lastly, table six offers data on the propaganda targets, whereby the most noteworthy finding is the predominance of the attack on the Regional Government of Andalusia by some of the left and centre-left opposition parties: Adelante-A, IU-A, Anticapitalistas-A and, particularly, PSOE-A. An example of this is the press conference by Rodrigo Sánchez Haro (PSOE-A MP), who criticises the inactivity of the President of the Regional Government of Andalusia, Juanma Moreno, in light of the alarming COVID-19 data during the third wave of the pandemic. In fact, he even goes so far as to classify it as “*la fracasada gestión de Moreno Bonilla*” (the failed management of Moreno Bonilla; PSOE de Andalucía, n.d.). Vox shares a propaganda target with these progressive parties — the fact that the radical right attacks the liberal-conservative Regional Government of Andalusia in 25% of videos is very significant. PP-A also chooses to attack, but in this instance, the attack is against the Spanish Government; for example, Toni Martín accuses Pedro Sánchez

and his progressive coalition government of creating tension and confrontation between the citizens (PP andaluz, 2020). For their part, both Cs-A and Podemos-A direct their propaganda targets towards defence.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

YouTube is established as a key tool for the propaganda and strategy tactic of political parties. As we will see, this digital propaganda takes on particular characteristics if we study the production of videos by the main parties in the self-governing region of Andalusia.

To start, the data on posting frequency indicate a clear predominance of the centre-right and right-wing parties in the political spectrum, with Vox (in particular), Cs-A and PP-A being the most active on YouTube — such that the total sum of videos by the right wing (763) is nearly three times greater than the sum of audiovisual content by the left wing (236) —, as well as the predominance of the new as opposed to traditional parties — the fact that half of the videos have been published by Vox alone indicates the communicative drive of this party versus traditional parties such as PSOE-A, which posts eight times less videos than Vox. These data contradict prior research that points to parties with a longer track record posting more spot ads on YouTube (Villar-Hernández and Pellisser Rossell, 2021); that PSOE and PP (respectively) use YouTube the most during pre-campaign (Gómez de Travesedo and López, 2016); and that in the Basque regional context, the channels with the highest number of videos correspond to the parties with the most votes (Gandlaz, Larrondo Ureta and Orbegozo Terradillos, 2020). On the other hand, and taking into account the ideological variable, the elevated audiovisual production of the right wing in Andalusia contrasts with the evidence that points to Podemos adopting the language used on the new video platform TikTok (Cervi, Tejedor and Marín Lladó, 2021) or that Podemos and IU are the most active parties in Andalusia in terms of the use of images on Twitter (Díaz and Del Olmo, 2016). This indicates potential differences in terms of the use of YouTube, in comparison to other platforms, according to each party's ideology. Furthermore, our data coincide with the international prominence that the political right appears to have on social media video sites. There is evidence that, in Norway, the right-wing populist Progress Party plays a prominent role on YouTube (Larsson, 2018), and that on TikTok, the users of the US Republican Party generate more political content and obtain more responses (Medina-Serrano, Papakyriakopoulos and Hegelich, 2020) — while in Spain there is no outright prominence on the part of the right wing, since Podemos and Ciudadanos are the parties that post most frequently on TikTok, and do so consistently, while Vox is among the parties that posts the least (Cervi and Marín-Lladó, 2021). In any case, our data coincide with the literature concerning the markedly active role of Ciudadanos, highlighted in the research carried out by Gil-Ramírez and Gómez de Travesedo-Rojas (2020). On the other hand, the notable production by Vox may qualify the idea that the activity levels of the Spanish parties and the management of the image that is projected on YouTube are in their infancy (Gil-Ramírez and Gómez de Travesedo-Rojas, 2020); on the contrary, the use that Vox makes of YouTube in Andalusia already indicates a marked state of maturity when posting content. In

relation to this party, and as the study by Castro Martínez and Díaz Morilla (2021) reveals, it is more active on networks aimed at young users, such as YouTube, Instagram or TikTok, with its presence on Gab, a social network that does not limit any content and where the users are associated with extreme right stances, also being of significance.

The predominance of Vox is not limited to its posting frequency. It is the party with the highest average number of likes and comments, and the party with the second highest average views (second only to IU-A), which indicates that it generates considerably more engagement than other parties. In the Basque context, Gandlaz, Larrondo Ureta and Orbegozo Terradillos (2020) find that the channels with the most views correspond to the parties that are most voted for; in Andalusia, neither PSOE-A nor PP-A (the most voted for parties) receive the most views on YouTube. In this vein, Andalusian propaganda also differs from previous research data; for example, according to the study by Gil-Ramírez and Gómez de Travesedo-Rojas (2020), the videos that YouTube groups under the tag “Ciudadanos” receive the most views, while the users who search for content related to “Podemos” on the platform leave the most comments. In terms of the positive or negative reaction (likes/dislikes) that the content provokes in viewers, both “Ciudadanos” and “Podemos” stand out for obtaining the highest results. In Andalusia, however, Vox surpasses the average number of likes received in comparison to the “new politics” parties Cs-A and Podemos-A — in comparison to the average 131.7 likes received by Vox, the videos by Cs-A and Podemos-A barely receive 1.1 and 5.3 likes on average, respectively. Contextually, it is important to take into account that the likes a video receives are a comparatively more favourable indicator of the comments left than the dislikes (Larsson, 2018). All this can be related to the idea that the minority parties with extreme ideology, some without representation in parliament and scarce focus from traditional media, find an important opening in YouTube (Rodríguez-Serrano, García-Catalán and Martín-Núñez, 2019). Although Vox can no longer be considered a minor party, it highlights the connection between ideological radicalism and social media — it must not be forgotten that this is the party with the most YouTube followers in the context of the extreme right (Rodríguez-Serrano, García-Catalán and Martín-Núñez, 2019). More generally, the low average number of comments left on Andalusian political videos contrasts with the data by Vesnic-Alujevic and Van Bauwel (2014) on YouTube in the 2009 European elections, that indicate that comments were left on 43.5% of videos.

The data also indicate that the “new politics” does not present homogeneous results given that Cs-A, for example, has far fewer average views than traditional parties such as PSOE-A — with an average number of views eleven times greater than that of Cs-A — and new parties such as Podemos-A. The idea that the “emerging parties”, so-called in the early days, gain an advantage on YouTube over “old politics” in terms of the activity that their channels record (Gil-Ramírez and Gómez de Travesedo-Rojas, 2020) is not entirely applicable in Andalusia, since between Podemos-A and Cs-A, for example, there are large differences in terms of posting frequency, number of views, topics discussed and purposes.

In relation to the latter, it must also be mentioned that, although Podemos has been indicated in the literature as a party that surpasses PP and PSOE and nearly equalises Ciudadanos in terms of the number of views accumulated (Gil-Ramírez and Gómez de Travesedo-Rojas, 2020), in Andalusia, it has a lower average number of views than traditional parties such as PSOE-A or IU-A.

The analysis of the topics addressed by the parties indicates interests focused on the economy and purely governmental, parliamentary and political matters — the videos included in these thematic categories, in fact, amount to 44.6% of the total. This is in line with previous studies on Spanish political advertising on YouTube, which highlight the importance of topics such as “Democracy” and “Campaign” (Pineda, Garrido and Ramos, 2013), and, at the same time, contradict the idea that the majority of the videos by Spanish parties during the pre-campaign inform about topics of social and media interest (Gómez de Travesedo and López, 2016). Compared with this, social matters are relatively secondary in the communication of Andalusian parties — the thematic category of gender/feminism, for example, only accounts for 2.5%. Furthermore, the literature indicates that the political content on YouTube related with the main Spanish parties is focused on contextual and circumstantial matters, such as the motion of censure or the verdict on the Gürtel case and the corruption of PP (Gil-Ramírez and Gómez de Travesedo-Rojas, 2020), something which is not reflected in the Andalusian propaganda, since, with the exception of Adelante-A and IU-A, matters such as current parliamentary affairs are also secondary. Furthermore, topics such as nationalism, which has certain importance in the Sarawak (Malaysia) election videos according to research by Foong Lian (2018) are relatively secondary in Andalusia. Something similar occurs with immigration; in our data it accounts for a negligible 2.4%, while it is a key issue in the YouTube strategies of the European extreme right (Rodríguez-Serrano, García-Catalán y Martín-Núñez, 2019).

In terms of the purposes of the videos, the importance of the parties taking a stance and the tendency towards debating and criticising topics — categories which, together, amount to 85.7% of the total — indicate that the Andalusian parties tend to favour corporate and general issues instead of personalised and individual aspects. This finding has significant implications for the debate around the tendency to personalise politics on social media, as well as indicating that YouTube is fundamentally used in Andalusia to create party brand, and not the brand of the individual leader. On the other hand, this tendency markedly contrasts with the accumulated knowledge about YouTube: research pointing out that the large majority of campaign videos feature the candidates and not the parties (Berrocal-Gonzalo, Martín-Jiménez and Gil-Torres, 2017); that the videos by European extreme right parties place emphasis on the figure of the leader (Rodríguez-Serrano, García-Catalán and Martín-Núñez, 2019); and that Vox strongly strives for personalisation on YouTube (Gil Ramírez, Castellero Ostio and Gómez de Travesedo Rojas, 2020). Compared with this, the management of YouTube in Andalusia is closer to the data pointing to the lack of personalisation regarding topics such as Catalan independence (Gil Ramírez, 2019) or the use of YouTube by political parties in India, with a slight emphasis on personal traits (Sohal and Kaur, 2018).

Considering the propaganda target in relation to attacking, defending or referring in a neutral manner to other parties and/or institutions, a pattern emerges in which attacking the ideological and/or political opposition is key. In particular, PSOE-A is attacked both by the right wing (PP-A, for example) and by the left wing (notably, Anticapitalistas-A), and the same happens with the Regional Government of Andalusia — which, in fact, is the most attacked governmental office. The tendency towards propaganda attack is not limited, therefore, to a specific ideological stance. This is in line with previous studies that indicate attacks on YouTube aimed at political opposition parties in the United States (Church, 2010), and how, in Spain, PSOE and PP focus more on attacking (Gómez de Travesedo and López, 2016). Furthermore, it appears that the tendency to attack in Andalusian politics is particularly radical within the Spanish context, given that, for example, the study by Villar-Hernández and Pellisser Rossell (2021) on the use of YouTube in the 2016 elections indicates that all the parties opt for positive spot ads, except for Unidas Podemos.

To summarise, our research shows, in addition to the predominance of Vox in various analytical variables, a panorama where the parties in Andalusia are focused on the economy, policy and the government; where YouTube is essentially used to communicate party stances; and where the propaganda message primarily seeks to attack opposition parties and/or governments. From here on, more research needs to be done on the communication of Andalusian parties on YouTube and other social media, both as the object of study and in comparison to other self-governing regions in Spain.

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Notes

1. The organisation Primavera Andaluza, associated with Adelante Andalucía, has not been included in the sample due to the fact that it does not define itself as a political party.

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