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## The communications strategy via Twitter of Nayib Bukele: the millennial president of El Salvador

**Abstract**

**On June 1, 2019, Nayib Bukele assumed the presidency of the Republic of El Salvador, becoming the youngest leader in the democratic history of this Central American country. His communications strategy on Twitter attracted the attention of the international press, because of a peculiar way of using this tool to tweet direct orders to his governmental team through Twitter, with many of his messages having a humoristic lilt. Observing this way of communicating prompted a wish to investigate the communications strategy of President Nayib Bukele on Twitter. Online tools, such as Twitonomy and Vicinitas, were used for the quantitative analysis of the account over the first two weeks of his presidency. Additionally, an in-depth interview was held with the communications secretary of the government of El Salvador, Sofía Medina. Finally, a broad description of the economic and social situation of the country helps understand the relevance of the data obtained from the analysis, emphasizing the scarce access to both information technology and social networks among the inhabitants.**

**Keywords**

**El Salvador, Nayib Bukele, Twitter, Communications Policy, Communications Strategy.**

### 1. Introduction

Twitter has become a compelling tool for political communication (Bustos Díaz & Ruiz del Olmo, 2019; Pérez-Curiel & Limón Naharro, 2019; Rúas-Araujo & Casero-Ripollés, 2018), beyond its utility in crisis situations, for social mobilization, and a standard means for politicians to publicize their message (Moya-Sánchez & Herrera-Damas, 2016).

Since its launch in 2006, Twitter has also become a topic for academic study and debate (Campos-Domínguez, 2017), as political communications strategies and their importance have been consolidated. Numerous works have emerged that analyze specific cases, above all on leaders with great influence such as Donald Trump (Pérez-Curiel & Limón Naharro, 2019). Other studies have approached the use of social networks by regions (Matassi & Boczkowski, 2020) and there are few studies on Latin-American leaders. In an investigation completed by Sejado-Boj, Díaz Campo and Lloves-Sobrado (2015), no common pattern was observed in the use of Twitter among the leaders under analysis, while the heads of communication strategy affirmed that they found themselves “in an exploratory phase of the tool” where the sole tendency was to diminish self-promotion. What was clearly observed was that, rather than employing it “as a tool for conversation,” it was used as a channel for the mass broadcasting of information and its potential for interaction with the public was not exploited. The medium

changes, but the language must also be adapted to a new form of exchanging opinions, with a tendency towards hybridization and the strengthening of shared topics, unconnected within the environment (García-Orosa & López, 2018)

Over recent years, the activity of political actors within a social network has often been on the agenda of the communications media (Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2017). The source of this investigative study arises from the headlines of the mainstream Spanish press that covered the messages on Twitter of Nayib Bukele, the recently appointed president of El Salvador. Some examples of those titles are: “*Los trucos tuiteros de Nayib Bukele* [The tweeting tricks of Nayib Bukele]” (Rauda, *El País*, 15/06/2019), “The ‘millennial’ president of El Salvador who dismisses public employees on Twitter: Right away, my president” (Reuters, *El Mundo*, 07/06/2019) or “That’s what Nayib Bukele’s like, the youngest (and most hipster) president of Latin-America” (Sánchez-Olmos, *El Mundo*, 13/06/2019).

The smallest country of Central America is rarely on the agenda of the international media and when it is, it is a matter of questions relating to migration, violence, or natural disasters. On this occasion, interest was awakened by the arrival to power of a young president who used the social network, Twitter, as a tool for direct communication with his colleagues. In a humorous and carefree tone, he managed to refer to decisions of great importance for the continuation of the government, such as the appointment and dismissal of public-sector employees. The messages that caught the attention of the international press were peculiar, contained precise orders from the president to his administrative team, from joking over the acquisition of coffee to –as we have said– relevant affairs of state such as dismissals and appointments.

The hashtag #*SeLeOrdena* [You are ordered to] went viral, twitterers joined in the game, following the hashtag to joke with the President. Memes and amusing images began to circulate in reaction to the phrases of the President, and souvenirs were created for tourism with the phrase “*Se le ordena que me invite a unas pupusas*” [You are ordered to offer me some *pupusas* (a traditional Salvadorian stuffed flatbread)] accompanied by an image of President Bukele.

Bukele named himself on his Twitter social network profile as “the coolest President,” up until the birth of his daughter on the 15 August when he changed his biography to present himself as “Layla’s dad.”

This investigation is structured around two sections: on the one hand, the detailed context of El Salvador, a country that hardly has any access to information technology; on the other hand, a meticulous analysis of the Twitter account of Nayib Bukele over a particular period. The context is fundamental for the final analysis and reflections, as we may ask ourselves what is the objective behind the use of Twitter by Nayib Bukele and to which sector of the public is it addressed, in a country where the majority of the population possesses no access to Internet.

## 2. Description of the problem

Nayib Armando Bukele Ortez, the youngest president in the democratic history of El Salvador and the sixth president from the end of the Civil War, is known in the press as the president of Twitter or the millennial president (EFE, 2019; Cartagena, 2019).

Born on July 24, 1981, in San Salvador –a city in which he would be elected mayor, many years later– in the heart of an entrepreneurial family from Palestine. He embarked on the study of legal sciences at the Central American University José Simeón Cañas but dropped out of his studies to enter the family business. At present, he is the owner of the Yamaha motorcycle distribution network in San Salvador and businesses offering publicity services (Delcid, 2019).

The son of a well-known entrepreneur, Armando Bukele, at the age of 18 he was directing family businesses and, before taking the plunge into politics, he launched his own publicity

company, branded Obermet (LA Network, 2018), which was later criticized for allegedly receiving multi-million dollar contracts from the Government of the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) (*Diario El Mundo*, 2018; *El Titular*, 2018).

In 2012, Nayib Bukele, as an FMLN candidate, was elected Mayor of Nuevo Cuscatlán, a town of approximately 8,000 inhabitants. Three years later, he became mayor of San Salvador, also as a representative of the FMLN. After various disagreements with the party and some quarreling in public with its members, the Ethics Tribunal expelled him from the party in October 2017.

He subsequently founded Nuevas Ideas to participate in the state elections that was a path rife with obstacles. First, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal obliged him to hold primaries in the party, before he could present himself as a candidate. Due to the proximity of the elections, Bukele decided to stand as a candidate for Cambio Democrático (CD), in order to participate in the primaries. The process was eventually cancelled, because the obligatory quota of votes established by its Electoral Code had not been reached. Finally, Bukele joined a mainstream party, the Gran Alianza por la Unidad Nacional (GANA) (Alas, 04/02/2019).

After taking office on June 1, 2019, he ended thirty years of bi-party rule. In the act in which he assumed the post of president, a crowd called out slogans like “Yes he could,” and he promised to work for the country “with the guidance of God.” He also had words for the millions of El Salvadorians living abroad. Earlier, Bukele had sworn loyalty to the United States, according to various reports published in *El Faro* and *Nueva Sociedad*, and had expressed opposition to the presidents of Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Honduras, Nicolás Maduro, Daniel Ortega, and Juan Orlando Hernández, respectively, as may be seen in the following tweet:

Dictators such as Maduro in Venezuela, Ortega in Nicaragua and Juan Orlando in Honduras, will never have any legitimacy, because they maintain themselves in power by force and do not respect the will of the people. A dictator's a dictator. Whether “left-wing” or “right-wing” (@NayibBukele, January 24, 2019).

In contrast with the extent of the Twitter activity of president Nayib Bukele, as of June 12, 2019, his predecessor, Salvador Sánchez Cerén, had 22,800 tweets and 122,000 followers, while the new president had as many as 44,300 tweets, and was followed by 856,000 people, despite having been in office for only 11 days.

### 2.1. *Justification and delimitation of the topic*

This country, on which, for example, there are no travel guides published in Spain, and on the history of which it is very difficult to find a book in bookshops or libraries, leapt into the international media thanks to the tweets of this millennial president. After the inauguration of Nayib Bukele, newspaper articles published in Spanish newspapers on El Salvador highlighted that this president governed through the hashtag ‘#SeLeOrdena’ [You are ordered to], followed by a command, a dismissal or an appointment; for example, the appointment of the Spanish youtuber AuronPlay as the Minister of Youtube. The underlying question of this study is to establish what type of messages were those that managed to bring fame to the president of one of the countries with the highest murder rates in the world.

In the first place, an approach to the reality of El Salvador is proposed, in order to achieve that objective, with special attention to network access among its inhabitants. In this way, the aim is to establish the extent to which his messages reach the population. Bukele is the first president of the region of Central America who has entered the limelight of the international community due to his social network strategies.

The analysis was limited to the use of Twitter –and not other platforms such as Facebook and YouTube, the two most frequently consulted social media in El Salvador–, because it was

within that social network that the president reached the level of international popularity remarked upon from the start of this paper.

In particular, the objective of the study is centered on the twitter account @nayibbukele. The activity was analyzed in general and, with greater precision, during the first 15 days of his Government, between June 1 and 15, the period in which various reports were published in the mainstream press in Spain on Nayib Bukele's use of Twitter.

## 2.2. Methodology

The methodological perspective employed in this study is intended to be plural, with a critical perspective and, therefore, the various strategies that are detailed in this section were approached with the simple structural-based approach (Reig, 2017) as a theoretical-empirical basis, adding value to the data that could be extracted with any network tool, and seeking to contribute the connection with the reality in El Salvador.

The first phase of this work consisted of a documentation phase to prepare the problem and to set forth a contextualization of El Salvador, and some results regarding potential access to technology among its inhabitants. The bibliography on El Salvador is scarce in Spain, although resources have been located on the Internet. Business reports that study the on-line behavior of Salvadorians on the social networks, so that other businesses incorporate those tools, such as Analitika, are also worth mentioning.

In addition, the Salvadorian press was also examined, especially the following newspapers: *El Faro* (<https://elfaro.net/>), *La Prensa Gráfica* (<https://www.laprensagrafica.com/>), *Elsalvador.com* (<https://www.elsalvador.com/>), *Diario El Mundo* (<https://elmundo.sv/>), and other publications on Latin America, such as *Nueva Sociedad* (<https://nuso.org/>). In this way, it was possible to become familiar with the political context of the country and the figure of its president. The publications of the Division for Economic Development of The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) were also of great utility, in order to understand the social reality.

Moreover, various on-line tools were employed to analyze the Twitter account of Nayib Bukele (@nayibbukele), especially Twitonomy and Vicinitas. It may be clarified in this section that some difficulties were found when examining the account. From the outset, it was thought that the advanced search function on Twitter would provide significative data for the investigation. However, the data-protection policies notably reduced the scope of that tool.

The Vicinitas tool allowed the most recent tweets of the leader to be downloaded and the sample was filtered to reduce it to posts during his first two weeks as president. The text, made up of 813 tweets, was manually edited to remove the stop words, prepositions, articles, and demonstratives, and the 30 most frequently employed words of the political leader were extracted with the 'Word Frequency Counter' tool. A graphic representation was prepared with these words, by using the online generator of word clouds 'www.nubedepalabras.es/

Among the 813 tweets, a manual procedure was followed to list the number of retweets and 'Likes'. The procedure was simple, the link to the tweet was inserted in the navigator and, in this way, the information was collected. With these data, the tweets with over a thousand retweets and 'Likes' were selected, amounting to 134. From that sample, a file was opened for analysis with the categories that are detailed below.

Elements of the file for analysis:

Text of message	Typology	Num. RT	Nm. 'Likes'	RT + Likes	Language	Tweet, RT or reply
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● humor</li> <li>● order/humor</li> <li>● propaganda</li> <li>● Retweet</li> </ul>					

Other data are included in the file for analysis such as mentions, URLs, photographs and labels, but they were not analyzed, as they had no relation to the objectives of this work.

Four graphs were prepared on the basis of the earlier information. The first was a column graph showing the number of successful tweets on each day of the period under analysis. The second was a dispersion graph, in which the number of messages published at each hour of the day may be consulted –always the local time at San Salvador–. Finally, two circular graphs were prepared, in which the type of publication (tweet, retweet, or reply) and the typology of the message (humor, order/humor, order, propaganda, and retweet) is shown.

The analysis of the 5,000 most recent followers of the president was possible with the Vicinitas tool, in order to try to ascertain whether the impact of the messages was greater outside of El Salvador rather than within the country. Initially, the intention was to confirm their location, but due to the data-protection laws, the locations were only established for 17.28% of the sample, for which reason that path was abandoned. However, other data were collected such as: their names, the date the accounts were opened, the number of people they followed, the number of followers they had, and the number of published tweets.

The Communications Secretary of the Presidency of El Salvador, the licentiate Sofia Medina, was interviewed on October 9, 2019, in the Presidential House of El Salvador.

### 3. Results

The Republic of El Salvador, better known as El Salvador or the Tom Thumb of America, is the smallest country of Central America and the only one with no Caribbean coastline. Its neighboring countries are Guatemala and Honduras. These three neighbors are known as the Northern Triangle of Central America. It also has a maritime frontier with Nicaragua, in the Gulf of Fonseca, with nine isles within its territory.

El Salvador is a little larger than 21,000 square kilometers –with a population density of 303 inhabitants by square kilometer–, divided into 14 states within which 170 volcanos are found, 14 of which are active. Its more than six million inhabitants live amidst one of the highest murder rates in the world due to the presence of violent gangs of youths, principally known as the ‘Mara Salvatruchas.’

In 2015, El Salvador became the most violent nation of the world, with a murder rate of 104 per 100,000 inhabitants. In 2016, the rate fell to 81 murders for each 100,000 inhabitants, but this country has yet to leave the circle, together with Honduras, Venezuela and Guatemala, of the most violent countries of the world (Dalton, 15/01/2017).

The indigenous population represents 12% of all inhabitants, among which the Nahua-Pipiles, Kakawiras and Lencas peoples are prominent. “Other studies provide evidence for the existence of some communities of Mayas and Chortís” (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación, 2019). Despite its adversities, according to Lara-Martínez (2009), the Salvadorian poet, Julio Enrique Ávila, praised his homeland as:

...the smallest country of the continent, the Tom Thumb of America. It is so tiny, so tiny, that you could imagine it fitting in the cup of your hand. However, the geographic smallness, the poverty of the land, has been conquered by an indomitable indigenous soul that has made its hilltops bloom and sunk its wooden plough down to the cliff edges and the mountain sides. The whole country cultivated, it offers itself to the pilgrim as a generous garden; and under its shade a garden with its arms open wide, with its arms crossed, to welcome whoever comes from afar in search for shelter or sustenance. A people who gained all from their work, in a tenacious and patient struggle; but who know how to share the sparseness of their meal with whoever might be in need of it.

#### 3.1. Salvadorian society: the reality and the networks

El Salvador was ranked number 121 out of 189 countries in the world, immediately behind Palestine and Iraq, in the 2017 Human Development Index (HDI), an annual report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on development, in relation to health,

education, and the per capita income of each country. Its ranking was close to its neighbors: Nicaragua was ranked 124<sup>th</sup>, Guatemala 127<sup>th</sup>, and Honduras 133<sup>rd</sup>. Spain was in 26<sup>th</sup> position, behind Slovenia and ahead of the Czech Republic.

According to the diplomatic data for 2019, available on the web page of the Ministry of External Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, the urban population of El Salvador represented 60.2% and the rural population 39.8% of the overall population. The illiteracy rate in 2016 among adult men of El Salvador was around 12% –in Spain, this figure was 2%–, according to information from *Expansión*. The illiteracy rate in the case of women was as high as 14%.

El Salvador, only ahead of Nicaragua, Cuba, and Haiti, is the fourth country of Latin American and the Caribbean with the fewest homes that have Internet access. Internet connections are not even available in 20% of homes, a percentage that is notably reduced in the rural population, in which not even 2% of homes have this service. In 2016, seven out of every hundred inhabitants benefitted from a fixed bandwidth connection, slightly less than the average in Latin America and the Caribbean where it was around 10%. The average for this service in the OCDE was situated at approximately 27%. However, some 34 out of every 100 Salvadorans had a broadband connection through their mobile phone –the average for the country was 63%, when in the OEDC it was 100%–; all according to the Latin American Regional Broadband Observatory [ORBA] of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC), based on ITU data from the World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database, 2017.

The 4G connection within El Salvador is highly inferior to the other countries analyzed by ORBA. Beyond the navigation speeds and the possibility of having fixed broadband in homes or through mobile phones, it is also of interest to know how many Salvadorians have access to Internet –whether through a personal computer at home, a mobile telephone, school, work, or a cultural center–. Almost 30% of the population of El Salvador is connected to Internet, around half the average of its neighboring countries, at around 60%.

Twitter, the platform that has catapulted the president, Nayib Bukele, to international fame, and that has been transformed into one of the most widely used communication tools to conduct political campaigns (Jungheer, 2016), is the third most consulted social media network by Salvadorians, behind Facebook and YouTube. One third of the inhabitants of the country use that network to comment on current affairs (Analitika, 2015).

Despite the fact that this social network is used by both heads of state and governments from over 88 countries and by 92% of the United Nations Member States, according to Twiplomacy –the annual study conducted by Burson-Marsteller on the use that world leaders make of digital media–, the use and the effect of social networks within El Salvador is not very well studied (Aguilar, 2018). As previously pointed out, it is perhaps because a significant percentage of the population are unable to access social media networks: from among the six-million inhabitants of El Salvador, 1.9 have access to Internet (López Eguizábal, 2018).

In this sense, the survey from the General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses of the Ministry of the Economy of El Salvador may also be cited, in which it assures the reader that around 1.8 million Salvadorians had access to Internet in 2017, 22% more than in 2016. In addition, in that same year, 16.57% of homes from the country had access to Internet (Morales, 2018), while 44.7% of Salvadorians had access to 4G coverage.

### 3.2. *The communication strategies via Twitter of Nayib Bukele*

In this section, the results of analyzing the Twitter account @nayibbukele over the first 15 days of government of the current Salvadorian president are presented, in other words, between June 1 and 15, in order to try to discover which communication strategies were the ones to have brought him fame in this social network. Before continuing with the study of the

messages published by the leader in his first two weeks as president, some general data will be detailed on this Twitter account.

The profile of @nayibbukele was created on Friday, February 13, 2009, in El Salvador. Bukele had accumulated 46,412 tweets as of July 31, 2019, had over one million followers, followed over 500 profiles, and had been included in almost 900 lists.

The president, Nayib Bukele, tweeted a total of 813 messages between June 1, 2019, up until June 15, 2019, with an average of 54.20 posts each day between tweets and retweets. However, some months later the leader either deleted two tweets, or deleted two retweets, or deleted one tweet and a retweet –leaving a total of 811–, having as a result an average of 54.07, at the time this statistic was examined.

The ten most retweeted accounts by Bukele over the period under analysis were: @MariaChichilco (30 RT), @NuevasIdeasSV (24 RT), @LaHuellaSV (17 RT), @LRodriguez\_SV (14 RT), @USAmbSV (12 RT), @RomeoHerrera1 (11 RT), @presidencia\_sv (11 RT), @tcsnoticias (11 RT), @InformaTVX (11 RT), and @ElMundoSV (10 RT). From among them, a broad majority belonged to his own Government, such as the ministries of Local Development and Public Works and Transport, @MariaChichilco and @RomeoHerrera1, respectively; the Presidential Commissionaire of Strategic Projects, @LRodriguez\_SV; the official account of the Republic of El Salvador, @presidencia\_sv, and the account of his own party, @NuevasIdeasSV. With the exception of the account of the Embassy of the USA in El Salvador, all the others were sent to various communications media (@LaHuellaSV, @tcsnoticias, @InformaTV, and @ElMundoSV).

With regard to the contents of the tweets under analysis, the ‘Word Frequency Counter’ tool, was used to identify the following words (English translations) that were the most frequently repeated in all of his posts: Nayibbukele (416), president (358), Salvador (121), orders (87), government (77), SV (67), minister (54), post (54), our (53), all (51), ElSalvador (46), minister (44), thanks (43), remove (39), people (39), relations (36), ex (36), Bukele (36), order (33), director (32), name (31), Monterrosa (30), Morocco (30), do (30), FMLN (30), salary (28), new (28), SFArmedForces (28), Sunday (27), and, finally, to work (26). The graphic representation of the Spanish words that were actually tweeted can be seen in the word cloud that is shown below.

**Figure 1:** Words used most frequently by Nayib Bukele on Twitter.

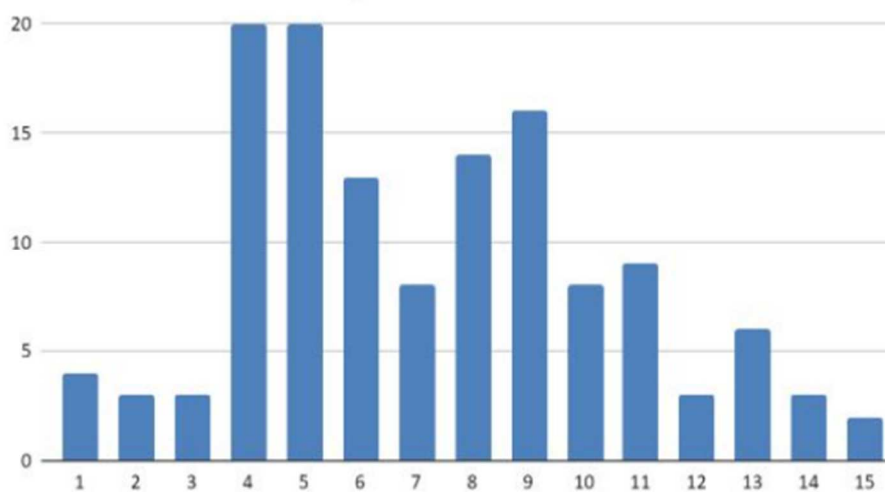


Source: Own elaboration.

As has been mentioned in the methodology section, the Vicinitas tool was used to download the 813 tweets in an Excel document and the numbers of retweets and 'Likes' were manually verified in all the posts. In this way, all those that had exceeded one thousand reweets and 'Likes' were selected for a more exhaustive study, with a view to determining which were the most common features of the most popular messages. With these criteria, the sample was reduced to 134 tweets, or those that had stimulated the greatest interest within the tweeting community.

The time of day on which the message was posted and the data were organized into a table. It must be clarified that the Vicinitas tool collects the posts and classifies them by time zone +0000, so six hours were manually subtracted from all the posts, as the time in El Salvador is within the -6:00 time zone.

**Figure 2:** Number of successful tweets by day.



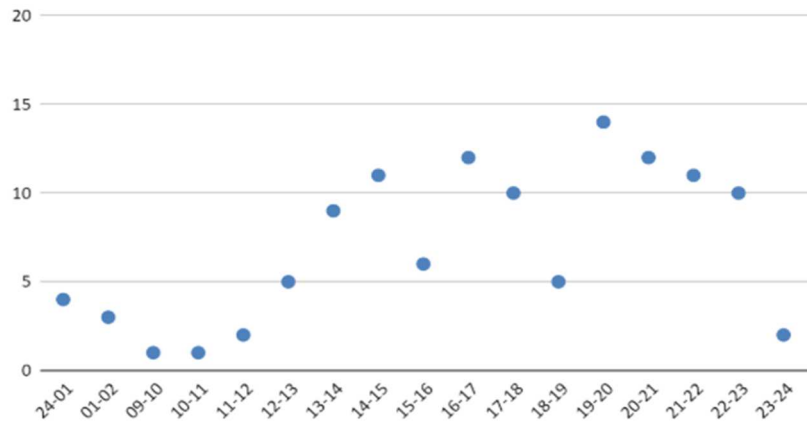
Source: Own elaboration.

In figure 2, the number of posts may be seen on the Y-axis and the days that are analyzed on the X-axis, which is to say between June 1 and 15. Nevertheless, it is as well to specify that two publications from May 31 –included in the sample, because they were posted on June 1 within the time zone +00:00– were rejected, because they fell outside the agreed time limits of the study.

June 4 and 5 were the days on which a total of 20 daily posts accumulated over one thousand retweets and 'Likes' on Twitter. Those days were followed by June 8 and 9 with 14 and 16 successful messages, respectively. The period during which the leader achieved most popularity within the aforementioned social network ran from Tuesday, June 4, until the following Tuesday, June 11. It is of interest to mention that the June 8 and 9 corresponded to Saturday and Sunday, despite which the pace of the posts was unrelenting. After finding this result, an interest arose in ascertaining whether the presidential account was managed by a community manager or whether the president was posting seven days a week.



**Figure 3:** Number of tweets by hour of posting.



Source: Own elaboration.

In figure 3, the hour of day –always the local time in El Salvador– is presented when each of the 134 selected messages was posted, highlighting the interval between 19:00 and 23:00 hours as it is the one in which a higher number of tweets were posted. Equally, the interval between 13:00 and 18.00 hours can be highlighted.

Considering that these time intervals are remarkable, as it is the account of a President of a Republic, the tweets posted between 01:00 and 02:00 hours are mentioned below:

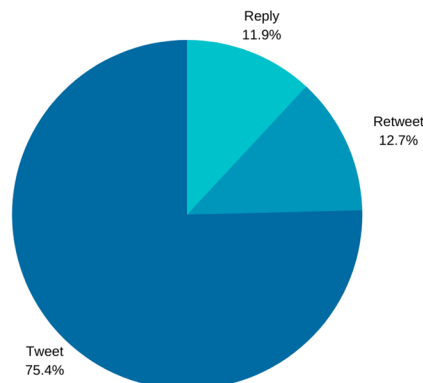
They should publish a correction. Where did he make that alleged claim? Do they have any audio, video or at least a mock-up cartoon of where I supposedly said that? (Posted on Thursday, June 13, at 01:04 hours).

You are ordered @Forbes\_Mexico to publish a correction and stop affirming that I said things that I have not said (Posted on Thursday, June 13, at 01:07 hours).

What is sleep? (Posted on Thursday, June 13, at 01:11 hours).

From 2:00 hours until 9:00 hours, no message from the sample was posted. Moreover, the messages that the President retweeted were excluded from the analysis, because it is not possible to ascertain the time at which Nayib Bukele shared them. In all, from among his 134 publications with over one thousand retweets and ‘Likes’, 17 retweets and 16 replies were found. The number of own messages amounted to 101.

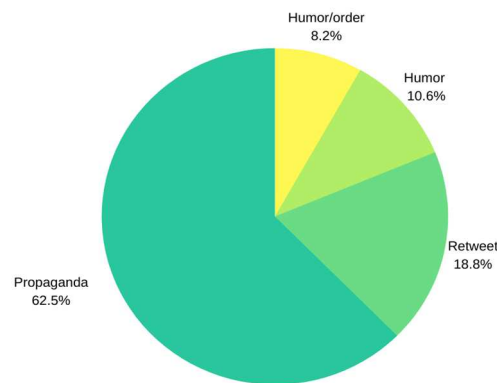
**Figure 4:** Type of messages: tweet, retweet, and reply.



Source: Own elaboration.

According to the new policy on Twitter that permits public viewing of the application from which the tweets are sent and having confirmed the information with Twitonomy, it appears that the messages from @nayibbukele were published through Twitter for iPhone. This device has no means of programming the time a message will be sent, which suggests that in all probability the messages were posted within the hourly intervals shown in the preceding figure.

**Figure 5:** Main topics of the most successful tweets.



Source: Own elaboration.

The 134 successful tweets were classified by their nature. The chosen categories were: order (where a high percentage of messages have the same structure ‘You are ordered to’); humor/order (for those humoristic imperatives such as ‘You are ordered to go to sleep’); humor; propaganda (where various constants were found such as calls for public security or counterpropaganda to the opposition with criticism of the corruption of the earlier Government); and retweets (above all news published on his Government).

The category into which most messages are placed is propaganda, understood as a communications strategy in favor of his Government. It includes a total of 53 messages, representing 39.6% of the tweets. The publication of this category with greatest interaction was: “We have received another donation of medicine and medical supplies (apart from the 5.6 million dollars that we received yesterday). This time it’s 20 million dollars, thanks to Cross International, through the Foundation Una Mano Amiga [A Friendly Hand]. #SíSePuedeElSalvador” [#YesyoucanElSalvador].

The following category with the greater representation was ‘Order.’ As mentioned in the introduction to the work, Nayib Bukele has been recognized in the on-line community for his use of the expression ‘*Se le ordena que* [You are ordered to]’, followed by an imperative mandate to his ministers or close associates. This situation has moved on, as his associates in high office have replied and have informed him of the outcomes regarding the requests from the man in charge. Quite frequently, this strategy has been employed to dismiss public sector employees with some type of link with the preceding Government, added to which he has reported the savings that might be gained by dismissing such personnel. A clear example of the messages within this category is the one that will be commented upon a little later. In reference to the posts of significant orders through the social network, Sofía Medina, Communications Secretary of the Presidency of El Salvador, explained that it was the strategy of an efficient government. “Why do we have to call a meeting when we can get it done in a second? In a second you can make something happen,” the president argued in relation to the dismissals that he published on Twitter.

Although this close associate of Bukele acknowledged that it was not “normal” practice, she insisted that it was effective. In addition, she considered it an exercise in transparency, because “you are telling the public everything that’s happening.” “You’re not hiding anything, it’s not a private meeting” (Medina, 2019).

The message with most retweets and ‘Likes’ from this category was “The immediate removal from office is ordered of Guillermo Funes Cartagena, as Director of @BCIE\_Org, with a salary of 20,000 dollars a month. An office that he has held for 10 years, since the arrival of his brother to the Presidency of El Salvador.”

Having popularized this strategy, the president started to employ it in a humoristic tone. Even though the posts of this sort, only seven, representing 5.2% of the total, are not abundant, the tweet that has had most success of all those published between June 1 and June 15 is found within this category: “You are all ordered to give me a like and like that I’ll be the President of Twitter.”

Almost a dozen texts are within the category of humor, that is 6.7% of the total, with messages like “My problem is only with the ties 🚫👔 Other options are OK 😊.”

On the other hand, the message with most retweets is, in turn, a retweet from Donald Trump: “The United States stands ready to work with @NayibBukele to advance prosperity in El Salvador and the hemisphere. Congratulations President Bukele on your inauguration!” The tweet from Nayib Bukele that has been retweeted most often is “Officially I am the coolest President of the world 😊.” The one that has gained most ‘Likes’ is “You are all ordered to give me a like and like that I’ll be the President of Twitter,” followed by the most retweeted message of all –the one from Donald Trump–.

The retweets and the ‘Likes’ were added together, with a view to establishing which tweets had most interactions. With this total, the ten messages with most interaction are shown in the following table in descending order.

**Figure 6:** Tweets with most impact.

	Text	Date	Hour	Retweets	Like	TOTAL
1	“You are all ordered to give me a like and like that I’ll be President of Twitter”	Thursday, June 7	00:53	5,200	68,500	73,700
2	“The United States stands ready to work with @NayibBukele to advance prosperity in El Salvador and the hemisphere. Congratulations President Bukele on your inauguration!”					
3	“Officially I am the coolest President in the world 😊”	Thursday, June 6	21:34	7,300	56,400	63,700
4	“You are ordered to go to sleep”	Tuesday, June 11	00:46	5,900	44,600	50,500
5	“We have received another donation of medicine and medical supplies (apart from the 5.6 million dollars that we received yesterday). This time it is 20 million dollars, thanks to Cross International, through the Foundation Una Mano Amiga. #SíSePuedeElSalvador”	Thursday, June 6	17:57	5,000	38,200	43,200
6	“We will need the support of the people for the changes that are coming”	Saturday, June 8	18:06	3,900	37,700	41,600
7	“The immediate removal from office is ordered of Guillermo Funes Cartagena, as Director of @BCIE_Org, with a salary of 20,000 dollars a month. An office that he has held for 10 years, since the arrival of his brother to the Presidency of El Salvador.”	Monday, June 10	12:31	6,400	34,800	41,200
8	“You are all now ordered not to call corrupt politicians clowns”	Sunday 9, June	23:16	5,400	32,700	38,100
9	“Well, I have learnt a lot from @lopezobrador_, so I’ll let him take my place ...”	Monday, June 10	16:52	6,400	28,400	34,800
10	“My problem is only with the ties 🚫📄 Other options are OK 😊”	Saturday, June 8	21:21	1,800	32,900	34,700

Source: Own elaboration.

As may be seen from the table, half of the messages that generated greater interaction had a humoristic lilt to them –three of the five combined humor with an order–, such that despite the scarcity of tweets of that nature –only 6.7% of the total–, it may be affirmed that their projection and scope were notable. The other messages related to four orders and a retweet.

In an interview conducted in the course of this investigation, the Secretary of Communications confirmed that Nayib Bukele was the one who wrote and published the messages on his Twitter profile. This governmental department defended it as a key piece in the success achieved on Twitter. “He has always managed his social networks, generated his posts, tweets and chosen the photos, among other things” (Medina, 2019). In addition, the Government has an Area of Digital Strategy that controls the messages posted by the Government on social networks and digital publications to ascertain “what is trending and what the network behavior is like,” one of his tasks is to carry out “a daily diagnosis of how the digital behavior of all the Governmental accounts are doing, the debate that has grown up around us and where it is going” (Medina, 2019).

As Medina (2019) explained, the president has received no training for the management of his social networks. “The tendency and the curiosity of being connected motivated him, he’s always been more of a technological person,” she added.

With a view to verifying the third objective relating to whether the president had greater success within or outside his country, the last 5,000 followers of the account @nayibbukele were downloaded, to confirm their localizations. Twitter users are not obliged to show their locations and, for that reason, it was impossible to geo-localize all the followers.

However, along these lines, it has been discovered that the leader has a broad percentage of followers with abnormal activity for Twitter. From the sample of 5,000 followers, a total of 2,301 profiles were not followed by any one person.

In addition, a total of 2,734 followers had posted no messages, a figure that rises to 3,236, if those posting no tweet or merely one are counted. From among the 5,000 users, a total of 226 profiles exclusively followed @nayibbukele and some 2,500 had an average of 20 followers. As will be seen in the discussion, these data might lead one to think that accounts with very low levels of activity that follow the president could therefore be false accounts.

On that point, the Salvadorian Mauricio Cuéllar (@cuellarSV), a consultant in image auditing and corporate communication and an active member of the Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (Arena), posted on his Twitter account that, having completed an audit of a sample of 2,000 followers of Nayib Bukele, 45.9% were false, representing a total of 449,547 false accounts.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

The president, Nayib Bukele, has achieved a popularity within the digital context, triumphing in a way that never before been seen among the leaders of El Salvador nor in neighboring countries. It is notable that he is the first president in Central America to employ digital communication techniques, similar to those used by other leaders of countries with very different social realities.

Nayib Bukele has followed a strategy of self-promotion on his Twitter account, with which he has sought to create a personal image in a positive light. As professor Reig (2017) maintained, social networks also serve to feed human egomania. Bukele posts no messages of national interest of public service which might be expected from a leader who represents the Presidency of a country. In addition, he has presented himself publicly as the “savior” who will rescue the country from the difficult social reality which it faces. In his Twitter bio-data, he has presented himself as the “Coolest president of the world” and the “most cheerful.” In his inaugural speech and in numerous tweets he has moreover likened El Salvador to an “sick child that needs medicines,” a simile in which he would be the doctor that will treat the patient. It may therefore be inferred that these positioning tactics have as their final end the

promotion of his own image and, in consequence, he has managed to broaden the visibility of the country in the social network under analysis.

According to the results of the analysis, the principal objective of Bukele has been none other than to change the image that the international community has of the country. His tweets do nothing to praise the merits of El Salvador. He has presented himself before public opinion as a young politician engaged in new transformative politics. The Twitter account @nayibbukele offers no public service information –save some exceptions–, instead it is mainly employed to churn out Government propaganda or counterpropaganda replying to the political opposition. In general terms, rather than grappling with the concerns of El Salvador, the tweets share trivial or somewhat light-hearted messages, such as “What there is no doubt about is that we’re talking of a fluid medium for politics that is increasingly liquid,” (Caldevilla-Domínguez, Rodríguez-Terceño & Barrientos-Báez, 2019).

The image offered by the president has connected with the new Salvadorian generations. Bukele has shown himself to be publicly committed towards the construction of a better country, in order to disincentivize the migration of young people. Messages from Salvadorian youth to the President can often be found, such as birthday congratulations and public recognition of his achievements. Among the tweets with most interactions is a response from the president to a clown who requested that the leader order that corrupt politicians not be called clowns, alleging that circus people are “quite unlike them, honorable, workers, friendly, people love us.”

The account @nayibbukele has received feedback through the messages from the ministries. The president has worked the network with his ministers, to achieve fame on Twitter, highlighting above all the cooperation with María Ofelia Navarrete, first minister of Local Development. It is therefore a beehive strategy –whether planned or not, in which the leader orders a minister to do something and the minister, in turn, responds with the message. As previously commented, his most well recognized tweets are those that include orders, which have in part functioned, because they have counted on feedback from his team.

It may be sensed that the scope of the Twitter account of Bukele has been greater beyond the frontiers than within the country. We may recall that almost 40% of the population live in rural zones, where only 2% of the homes have an Internet connection. Geo-localization of the followers of the leader has not been possible, but the data contributed from the results confirmed that full access to the network is not available to the Salvadorian population. However, it may indeed be highlighted that the national press has echoed these messages and, by doing so, they will have reached the public domain. Twitter may be considered as a tool for political information, which on occasions marks the media agenda (Mancinas-Chávez, Moreno-Cabezudo & Ruiz-Alba, 2019). The Salvadorian journalist, Nelson Rauda affirmed in *El País* that Twitter circulates outside the digital sphere, in other words, both in the press and in daily life. He detailed cases where the companies or citizens have made use of the famous phrase “You are ordered to.” Although a broad percentage of the population cannot consult Twitter, they know of the messages posted by the leader, because they are echoed in the press. One tendency of political leaders on social networks is to pursue personal feuds and to attract the attention of the communications media (Campos-Domínguez, 2017).

The tweets of Bukele function much better within the tweeting community than the retweets and the replies. Throughout the whole period under analysis, which is say within the universe of the 813 tweets, the leader retweeted 640 messages (78.72%), replied on 36 occasions (3.93%) and posted 141 own tweets (17.34%). Upon analyzing the working sample, the 134 successful messages, it was observed that despite having a much lower number of his own messages, the tweets amounted to 75.4%, the retweets 12.7%, and the replies 11.9%.

Bukele has openly expressed a closeness towards Donald Trump. Some similarities may be appreciated with regard to the strategies on Twitter of both leaders. In addition, the Salvadorian maintained a very good relation on Twitter with the profile of the ambassador

from the United States in El Salvador (@USAmbSV). Throughout the whole period under analysis, that diplomat is the one that he mentions on most occasions and is the fifth most cited user in his tweets.

Through the development of this investigation, it has been demonstrated that humor and spectacularism on Twitter have been two key strategies. Despite the humoristic tweets having been posted on fewer occasions, those tweets occupy –to a greater percentage than other categories– the positions of the most shared tweets and are the most highly valued among the tweeting community.

It has been possible to confirm that the communications strategy that functions on Twitter is the carefree message of humor. Serrano (2020) defined this practice as “the emoticon policy” and Hernández-Santaolalla and Rubio-Hernández (2017) affirmed that political information is turned into sensationalism and pure (political) entertainment, with the messages becoming increasingly simple and personalized. It is an expression of social change which political communication is confronting. The difficulty of positioning the message among the great quantity of information that circulates daily may be compensated by the analysis of representative cases, knowledge of which allows us to advance in the complex world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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