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Peace and Business: Analysis of Donald Trump's Image by Political YouTubers in Spain

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This research analyses how Spanish political YouTubers construct narratives about Donald Trump. Based on a sample of 625 videos published by the main political YouTubers (N=15) between July 2023 and May 2025, it examines, first, the most recurrent themes used to discuss Trump and the perception these creators have on him through reflexive thematic analysis, and finally, which videos featuring Trump were the most viral. The results reveal a predominantly positive perception among content creators, who tend to portray Trump favourably —emphasizing his resilience after the assassination attempt, his status as a winner and economic leader, or even as a pacifist and negotiator in international conflicts. However, a smaller group depicts him negatively or satirically: Trump is presented as an economic failure, a fascist, or a global threat, often through ridicule or irony. Overall, the findings point to strong polarization, with few ambivalent voices that acknowledge his centrality without expressing ex-

La present recerca analitza com els youtubers *polítics espanyols construeixen narratives sobre la figura de Donald Trump. A partir d'una mostra de 625 vídeos publicats pels principals* youtubers *polítics (N=15) entre el juliol de 2023 i el maig de 2025, s'analitzen, en primer lloc, les temàtiques més recurrents per parlar de Donald Trump i la percepció que tenen els* youtubers *d'ell a través de l'anàlisi temàtica reflexiva i, finalment, quins vídeos on apareix Trump són més virals. Els resultats revelen una percepció majoritàriament positiva per part dels creadors de contingut, representant Trump de manera positiva, destacant-ne la resiliència després de l'intent d'assassinat, la seva condició de vencedor i líder econòmic, o fins i tot com a pacifista i negociador en conflictes internacionals. Tot i així, un grup reduït el descriu de manera negativa o satírica: Trump és presentat com un fracàs econòmic, un feixista o una amenaça global, sovint a través de la ridiculització o la ironia. Els resultats de l'estudi mostren una forta polarització, amb poques veus am-*

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plicit support. In sum, Trump operates as a contested figure: the same labels —pacifist, negotiator, businessman— are reinterpreted in opposite directions. In conclusion, despite being a foreign political figure, Trump occupies a prominent place in the Spanish online political debate.

Keywords: *Donald Trump, political communication, political YouTubers, reflexive thematic analysis, Spain.*

bivalents que reconeixen la seva centralitat sense expressar-hi un suport explícit. En conjunt, Trump opera com una figura amb un significat disputat: les mateixes etiquetes —pacifista, negociador, empresari— són resignificades en direccions oposades. En conclusió, encara que sigui un polític estranger, Trump ocupa un lloc destacat en el debat polític espanyol en línia.

Paraules clau: *Donald Trump, comunicació política,* youtubers *polítics, anàlisi temàtica reflexiva, Espanya.*

Over the last two decades, political communication has become increasingly digital, giving greater relevance to the online space (Mazzoleni, 2024). This transformation enabled activist networks to disseminate political messages, as seen in the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street and the 15M in Spain (Gerbaudo, 2018). Yet alongside progressive movements, the digital environment has also favoured the consolidation of reactionary or far-right forces. Current studies highlight the hegemony of the far-right in the digital sphere (Benkler, 2020; Gogarty, 2025), through the establishment of online political information ecosystems (Lewis, 2018), commonly known as the "fachosfera" in Spanish and "right-wing alternative media" in English. These spaces circulate antifeminist, racist, traditionalist and nationalist discourses (Mamié *et al*., 2021) and are sustained by political influencers (Riedl *et al*., 2023), who spread messages, coordinate discursively and approach young voters (Naderer, 2023).

However, political mobilisation on YouTube is not exclusive to the right. Progressive and left-wing creators have also developed alternative digital counter publics, commonly grouped under the labels BreadTube or LeftTube, which use formats such as the video essay to disseminate progressive ideas and challenge reactionary narratives (Kuznetsov and Ismangil, 2020; Liedtke, 2025). These competing political networks coexist within YouTube, a platform whose recommender system has also been examined for its potential role in processes of political radicalisation (Horta *et al*., 2020) and in the construction of the so-called "rabbit hole" effect (Lewis, 2024).

These far-right digital ecosystems have grown alongside like-minded leaders, with Donald Trump as their main global reference. His 2016 victory and 2024 re-election made him a central figure whose discursive influence transcends US borders. Several leaders have adopted strategies inspired by him, despite his rhetoric being rooted in the nationalist slogan "America First". His protectionist and nationalist policies, such as tariffs, withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and

reduced military commitments abroad (Klomp, 2025), exemplify this orientation, although this non-interventionist stance has not been consistently maintained, as shown by US military actions in Iran and Venezuela in 2026.

At the same time, Trump's transnational visibility makes it relevant to examine how political influencers outside the United States construct supportive, critical, or ambivalent interpretations of his figure, as well as to identify the discursive strategies they use to articulate these interpretations. The tension between these different evaluations provides a useful starting point for analysing how the meanings attributed to Trump vary and, in this case, how his figure is resignified within the context of Spanish political debate.

Within this context, the present research seeks to examine how Donald Trump is discursively constructed within Spanish political YouTube and how these representations vary according to creators' stances towards him. The research questions are:

- RQ1) How is Donald Trump discursively constructed by Spanish political influencers?
- RQ2) How do these representations vary according to the creators' stance towards Trump?
- RQ3) How are shared attributes and political themes interpreted differently across supportive, critical, and ambivalent representations of Trump?
- RQ4) What discursive constructions of Trump characterise the videos with the highest levels of audience engagement?

To do so, the study is grounded in an academic literature that addresses the emergence of Trump as a political leader and the global projection of his discourse in digital environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Donald Trump's Emergence and Leadership

The 2016 US presidential election marked a paradigm shift in democracies worldwide. Alongside Brexit, Trump's victory raised concerns over the success of far-right populist parties and causes (Galston, 2017). His 2024 victory symbolises the consolidation and normalisation of this movement within democratic institutions. Trump's importance lies not only in presidential power but also in his ability to influence other countries' political agendas and serve as a transnational reference point for the far right (Pérez-Curiel *et al.*, 2021; Kakisina *et al.*, 2022). This has encouraged European parties to adopt Trumpist narratives on issues such as illegal immigration or the 2030 Agenda.

Despite Trumpism's central position in the global far right, its specific ideology is difficult to define because of its unpredictability in action and speech and its recurrent contradictions. Alfredo Ramírez Nárdiz (2020) identifies its main ideological foundations:

> Trump identifies the American people as a group of good people —WASPs— threatened by internal enemies (economic, political, and cultural elites in cooperation with part of the press) and external enemies (foreigners, immigrants, refugees, terrorists, Mexico, China, and Germany). It claims to seek the restoration of an ideal past in which industrial workers (white, Anglo-Saxon men) were the dominant group (2020, p. 77).

For Alfredo Ramírez Nárdiz, this distinction is expressed through cultural supremacism, xenophobia, racism and sexism, while economic protectionism, isolationism, anti-intellectualism and political personalism are also structural elements of Trump's discourse. This antagonism also shapes Trump's immigration discourse, which draws on a "politics of fear" characteristic of right-wing ethnonationalist populism and frames immigration and border control as matters of national threat and identity (Demata, 2017). Trumpism has also been defined as "authoritarian capitalism" (Fuchs, 2017), in which concentrated economic power intertwines with state power and authoritarian practices, combining billionaire influence with nationalism, scapegoating, friend-enemy distinctions, law-and-order politics and mediated political spectacle.

Beyond the ideological content of Trumpism, Trump's political significance is also linked to a distinctive rhetorical style. Jennifer Mercieca (2020) analyses his communication through the tradition of demagogic rhetoric, identifying recurring strategies such as personal attacks, appeals to "the people", threats, and other rhetorical devices that capitalise on political distrust and dissatisfaction with established institutions.

Trump's political persona also draws on his real-estate career and participation in *The Apprentice* (2004-2015), which established him as a celebrity and symbol of business success. This entertainment background shaped the performative dimension of his political communication. Kira Hall *et al*. (2016) show how his campaign style combined entertainment, comedy, gesture and caricature to turn confrontation into political spectacle. Samuel Bourgeois (2026) further characterises his rhetoric as brash and norm-challenging, marked by impoliteness, personal attacks, and face-aggravating and ad hominem strategies that reinforce a "tough-guy" image.

This style was also evident on Twitter (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2021), where ridicule and attacks on political opponents were recurrent. After the January 2021 Capitol assault, the platform permanently suspended @realDonaldTrump, citing the risk of inciting violence. Trump then launched Truth Social, which became his primary platform; his Twitter account was reinstated in November 2022 after Elon Musk acquired the platform.

During his third election campaign, Trump continued to rely primarily on Truth Social while also maintaining a presence on X, incorporating audiovisual elements enhanced by AI tools, using the strategy of memefication in political communication (Bayarri Toscano and Fernández-Villanueva, 2025). During the campaign, this included AI-generated representations of Kamala Harris associated with communist imagery. This use of AI-generated political imagery continued after his return to office in 2025, with examples such as the *Trump Gaza* video and his representation as the Pope.

Figure 1. Examples of AI-generated imagery shared by Donald Trump

Source: Donald Trump's social media posts[1].

Recent research has also identified optimism as a recurrent feature of Trump's political self-presentation. Dani Setiawan *et al.* (2025) show how he consistently frames political decisions as victories, while Abigail Blyler *et al.* (2026) identify an increasingly optimistic explanatory style during the 2024 campaign, presenting problems as temporary and specific rather than systemic.

Together, these ideological and rhetorical dimensions make Trump a highly recognisable political figure beyond the US. Yet his transnational circulation does not produce a homogeneous interpretation: his attributes, actions and communication style can be appropriated, legitimised, contested or reinterpreted, making him a useful case for examining how political influencers construct competing meanings around the same figure (Bourgeois and Bousfield, 2026).

Influencers as Political Activists

Influencers have emerged as key actors in new forms of political communication (Castelo and Besalú, 2025). Their influence operates through both macro-influencers who occasionally address political issues —as when Ibai discussed moving to Andorra to avoid taxes (Oliva *et al.*, 2024)— and niche influencers (Martí-Danés and Pont-Sorribes, 2025), who act as political entrepreneurs (Finlayson, 2023) by monetising social media presence, promoting political views and commenting on current affairs. From a discourse perspective, influencers are defined not only by audience reach but also by the identities they construct and their relationships with audiences. These affective and identity dimensions (Garcés-Conejos and Georgakopoulou, 2024) are especially relevant politically because creators' positioning and public identity shape how they interpret political actors.

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1 From left to right: AI-generated image of Kamala Harris at a communist-style rally shared by Donald Trump on X (Trump, 2024); AI-generated image shared by Donald Trump on Truth Social (Trump, 2025a); two frames from the AI-generated "Trump Gaza" video shared by Donald Trump on Truth Social (Trump, 2025b).

Influencers initially developed around fields such as gaming, fitness, nutrition and fashion (Riedl *et al.*, 2021), but increasing specialisation has extended the phenomenon to politics (Tchubykalo *et al.,* 2021). Digital political micro-celebrities further the celebritisation of political communication (Caro-Castaño *et al.*, 2024), shaped by politainment (Berrocal Gonzalo, 2017) and contemporary digital culture. In this context, the political influencer emerges as a hybrid figure who combines political commentary and ideological positioning with the personal branding, audience engagement, and visibility strategies characteristic of influencer culture. This is particularly relevant on YouTube, which facilitates rapid monetisation and extensive audience reach.

More specifically, political influencers can be understood as content creators who publicly associate their online activity with political positions, social causes, or political actors through the content they produce and share (Riedl *et al.*, 2023). Their role can be conceptualised through three interconnected dimensions: politics, platforms, and influence. Unlike traditional political actors or opinion leaders whose public visibility may originate outside social media, political influencers build and exercise their influence within platform environments. In this sense, they operate as new intermediaries in political communication, interpreting political events and actors for audiences while simultaneously developing their own public identity and community.

Watching political videos constitutes a form of political socialisation, primarily unidirectional but with some interaction with creators and other users. This process can involve the Perceived Simplification of Politics, whereby political complexity is reduced to increase accessibility (Schmuck *et al.*, 2022). Such individualised digital socialisation highlights the role of political influencers in political alphabetisation.

Donald Trump provides a particularly illustrative case of the growing intersection between political actors and digital creators. During his last election campaign, he participated in several widely listened-to podcasts in the United States, such as *The Joe Rogan Experience*, *This Past Weekend with Theo Von*, and *Impaulsive Podcast*, as part of a communication strategy aimed at reaching younger and predominantly male audiences (Chakraborty, 2024).

This growing relationship motivates the analysis of Spanish political influencers' representations of Donald Trump on YouTube. Given the study's single-platform design, political YouTubers hereafter refers to the political influencers in the sample. Rather than considering these representations only in terms of support or opposition, this study examines how different stances towards Trump shape his discursive construction and how shared political attributes and themes may acquire different, and at times opposing, meanings across political YouTubers.

METHODOLOGY

The sample was defined according to six criteria: channels had to (1) belong to the *News & Politics* section in YouTube, (2) target a Spanish-speaking audience, (3) focus primarily on political topics, (4) use the monologue format (Aran *et al.*, 2014), (5) reveal the creator's identity, and (6) have at least 30,000 subscribers. Applying these filters through the software HypeAuditor[2] yielded 51 eligible channels; the 15 with the highest average views per video formed the final corpus.

Table 1. Final sample with criteria applied

	Account	Subscribers	Average views per video
1	Un Tío Blanco Hetero	544.586	135.250
2	InfoVlogger	420.496	134.952
3	BEGOÑA GERPE	549.497	132.066
4	Juan Ramón Rallo	837.108	131.103
5	Miguel Charisteas	136.121	127.274
6	Un Abogado contra la Demagogia	500.508	107.366
7	Liu Sivaya	445.102	74.715
8	Rubén Gisbert	679.147	63.298
9	Rubén Hood	139.483	49.782
10	Alán Barroso	118.547	46.474
11	El Canal del Coronel	565.494	46.329
12	Roberto Vaquero	391.456	38.565
13	Santiago Armesilla	321.452	19.865
14	Wall Street Wolverine	857.453	18.462
15	Cuellilargo	159.527	17.532

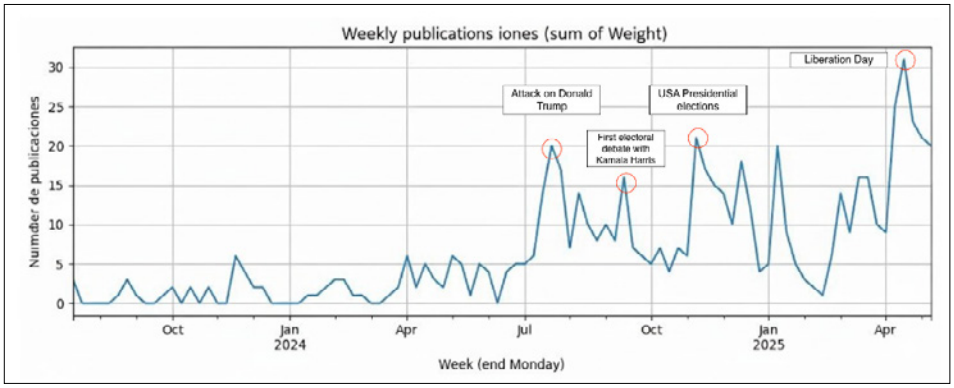
Source: Own elaboration.

In total, 4,826 videos published between July 2023 —when the Covid-19 pandemic was officially declared over in Spain— and May 2025 were collected. From these, the 625 videos (12.95 %) containing the term "Trump" were selected

2 HypeAuditor is an influencer analytics platform that provides data on social media accounts, including audience size, engagement, and performance metrics across platforms such as YouTube. In this study, it was used to identify and compare eligible political YouTube channels according to the sampling criteria.

for analysis. This period allows observation of a post-pandemic political context no longer dominated by health-crisis discourse. A chronological overview of the intensity of these publications is provided in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Chronological evolution of publications



Source: Own elaboration.

The study employed Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2019) from a discursive perspective, treating language as socially situated action. The analysis was conducted using ATLAS.ti[3] and involved familiarisation with the data, the generation of inductive codes, and their grouping into potential themes. These themes were then reviewed, refined, defined, and named, resulting in six higher-order interpretative categories. To complement the qualitative analysis, descriptive indicators were calculated: (a) frequency of videos mentioning "Trump" by channel, and (b) engagement metrics (views, likes, comments) for these videos, used to identify the most impactful items. The full codebook, including categories, definitions, and frequency counts, is provided in the Appendix (section 1). As part of the thematic analysis, each creator's stance towards Trump was identified from the dominant evaluative pattern found across their Trump-related content and classified as supportive, critical, or ambivalent. These categories refer specifically to the creators' representations of Trump and not to their broader political ideology.

3 ATLAS.ti is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software that provides tools for the systematic analysis of unstructured data, including text, audio, video, and visual media. In this study, it was used to code, organise, and analyse the qualitative content of the selected YouTube channels.

RESULTS

The Results first present the frequency of Trump references as descriptive context, then examine themes and discursive constructions through Reflexive Thematic Analysis, compare supportive, critical and ambivalent representations and the different meanings of shared attributes, and finally analyse the highest-engagement videos.

Frequency of Mentions of Donald Trump

As descriptive context for the subsequent analysis, the frequency of videos containing references to Trump was calculated for each YouTube channel (Table 2).

Table 2. Frequency of mentions of the word "Trump"

	Account	Total videos	Total videos where the word "Trump" appears	Percentage of videos where the word "Trump" appears
1	Un Tío Blanco Hetero	307	25	8,14
2	InfoVlogger	65	10	15,38
3	Begoña Gerpe	500	9	1,80
4	Juan Ramón Rallo	500	64	12,80
5	Miguel Charisteas	109	34	31,19
6	Un Abogado contra la Demagogia	467	21	4,50
7	Liu Sivaya	450	82	18,22
8	Rubén Gisbert	284	84	29,58
9	Rubén Hood	294	32	10,88
10	Alán Barroso	79	64	81,01
11	El Canal del Coronel	502	131	26,10
12	Roberto Vaquero	494	9	1,82
13	Santiago Armesilla	260	29	11,15
14	Wall Street Wolverine	501	30	5,99
15	Cuellilargo	14	1	7,14

Source: Own elaboration.

The results show that, in absolute terms, the channel that mentions Trump the most is *El Canal del Coronel*, with a total of 131 videos, followed by *Rubén Gisbert* with 84 and *Liu Sivaya* with 82. However, if we analyse the data in percentage

terms, it is *Alán Barroso* who stands out, mentioning Trump in 81.01 % of his videos, followed at a distance by *Miguel Charisteas* with 31.19 % and *Rubén Gisbert* with 29.58 %.

Overview of Topics and Representations

This section provides an overview of the main themes associated with Trump in each channel and the predominant representation of his figure. Table 3 summarises these patterns before they are examined in greater detail in Sections "Thematic Analysis Findings" and "Stances Towards Trump and Contested Interpretations".

Table 3. Main themes and representations of Trump by Political Influencer

Political Youtuber	Highlights	Representation of Trump
Un Tío Blanco Hetero	Assassination attempt (19), Trump as winner (10), Trump as survivor (9), Meloni (5), Anti-feminism (4)	Supportive → "resilient victim", "cultural icon", "Anti-progressivism"
InfoVlogger	Trump as the winner (4), enemies: Democrats, woke, La Sexta (6), Javier Milei (2), Elon Musk (2)	Supportive → "audacious", "successful", "symbol against the left"
Begoña Gerpe	Conspiracy (5), assassination attempt (4), secret service (4), Biden/Harris (4), Pedro Sánchez (5)	Supportive → "hero", "leader", "future victor", "victim of conspiracy"
Juan Ramón Rallo	Tariffs (29), first term (22), taxes (12), protectionism(13), Kamala Harris (11), Javier Milei (18)	Supportive → "economic leader", "Trump as a tax cutter", "criticism of protectionism"
Un abogado contra la demagogia	Assassination attempt (4), Trump as winner (3), 2024 elections (2), Elon Musk (2)	Supportive → "resilient winner", "supported"
Rubén Gisbert	Assassination attempt (45), first term (30) Ukraine-Russia (27), future winner (27), pacifist (26), Biden (11)	Supportive → "global leader", "resilient", "pacifist"
El canal del Coronel	Trump as a negotiator (10), economy (9), US elections (8), Ukraine-Russia (7), UE (5), China (5)	Supportive → "negotiator", "global leader", "pragmatic"
Roberto Vaquero	US elections (6), migration (3), Iran (2), political legitimacy (1)	Ambivalent → "legitimacy issues", "no explicit support"
Santiago Armesilla	US elections (14), international politics (10), Trump's reelection (9), Trump as the winner (6), assassination attempt (6) Elon Musk (5)	Ambivalent → "privileged", "winner"

Political Youtuber	Highlights	Representation of Trump
Wall Street Wolverine	Assassination attempt (8), economy (7), conspiracy (5), elections (4), cryptos (4), judicial persecution (4)	Supportive → "Resilient leader", "prosperous economy"
Cuellilargo	Elections (1), reelection (1), gender and politics (1), social engineering (1), symbolic victory (1)	Critical → "negative impact", "reelection"
Liu Sivaya	Ukraine-Russia (19), Zelenski (8), Trump as a negotiator (6), tariffs (4), rare earths (4),	Supportive → "pragmatic leader", "central in geopolitics"
Alán Barroso	Tariffs (53), China (38), commercial war failure (25), economic failure (24), Elon Musk (21) , China (17)	Critical → "economic failure", "liar", "responsible for the decline of the US"
Miguel Charisteas	Tariffs (14), international politics (12), pop culture (9), Elon Musk (7), Santiago Abascal (5)	Critical → "mockery", "ridicule", "Vox's submission to US interests"
Rubén Hood	Tariffs (9), Gaza genocide (6), fascism (5), oligarchs (4), ridicule of Trump supporters (2), Vox (2)	Critical → "fascist", "violent", "accomplice of oligarchs", "satirical criticism"

Source: Own elaboration.

Overall, the table shows that recurrent themes are associated with markedly different representations of Trump, ranging from supportive to critical and ambivalent positions. The following sections examine these discursive constructions and their contrasting meanings in greater detail.

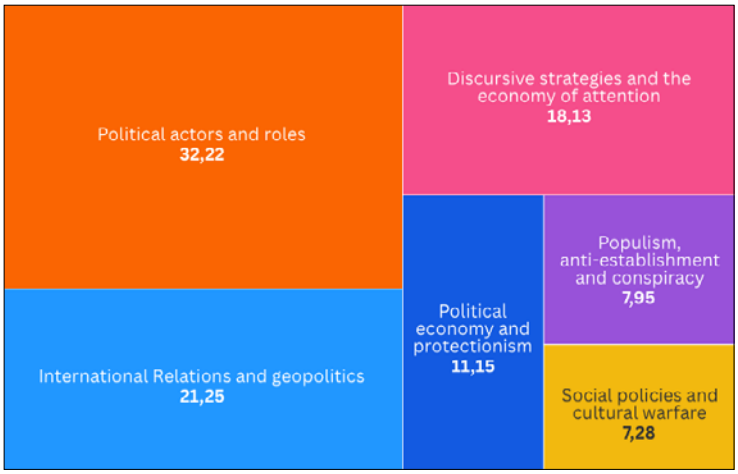
Thematic Analysis Findings

The reflexive thematic analysis identified six interconnected categories of Trump's representation: (1) political economy and protectionism, (2) international relations and geopolitics, (3) populism, anti-establishment sentiment and conspiracy theories, (4) discursive strategies and the attention economy, (5) political actors and roles, and (6) social policies and cultural warfare.

As Figure 3 shows, "Political actors and roles" (32.22 %) and "International relations and geopolitics" (21.25 %) are the most frequent categories, followed by "Discursive strategies and the attention economy" (18.13 %), "Political economy and protectionism" (11.15 %), "Populism, anti-establishment sentiment and conspiracy theories" (7.95 %), and "Social policies and cultural warfare" (7.28 %). Absolute frequencies appear in Appendix 1. The following analysis examines how these themes construct Trump differently:

1. Political economy and protectionism
   Tariffs are central to Trump's economic representation. For some creators, they express sovereignty; for others, they are arbitrary and threaten European

Figure 3. Percentage distribution of thematic categories



Source: Own elaboration.

sectors such as agriculture and automotive. *Juan Ramón Rallo* (29 mentions) and *Alán Barroso* (53) illustrate this polarity: *Rallo* highlights Trump's 'brutal' intention to raise tariffs while maintaining sympathy for his liberal rhetoric, whereas *Barroso* condemns protectionism as 'completely arbitrary and bullying'. *Miguel Charisteas* (14 mentions) and *Liu Sivaya* (4) also discuss the US-China trade war and its impact on global markets.

Cryptocurrencies and financial markets also function as political barometers. Several videos associate Trump's victories or announcements with rises in bitcoin and the stock market. *Wall Street Wolverine* states, "Bitcoin rising, Trump wins", while *Juan Ramón Rallo* notes that "the US stock market [...] has reacted positively" to his victory. Trump is therefore constructed either as an economic leader associated with sovereignty and market confidence or as a protectionist actor generating economic uncertainty.

2. International relations and geopolitics

Trump is presented as a central actor in global reconfiguration involving NATO, the US, China, Russia and BRICS. *InfoVlogger* and *Santiago Armesilla*, among others, portray him as restoring US leadership, while others see him as a threat to the international order.

In conflicts such as Ukraine and Israel-Gaza, Trump is assigned contrasting roles: a mediator or peacemaker capable of ending wars, but also an unpredictable source of geopolitical instability. El *Canal del Coronel* refers to his "rebalancing with NATO countries", *Liu Sivaya* recalls that "Trump has refused to follow NATO's plan", and *Rubén Gisbert* cites his promise to end

the war 'in 24 hours'. Gisbert's channel contains 27 references to Trump's geopolitical role, followed by *Liu Sivaya* (19) and *El Canal del Coronel* (10). By contrast, *Alán Barroso* warns that "he wants to turn the United States into a dictatorship", while *Rubén Hood* links him to "the authoritarian dynamics of neoliberalism". Trump is thus constructed either as a pragmatic negotiator and peacemaker or as an unpredictable and threatening international actor.

3. Populism, Anti-establishment and conspiracy
An antagonistic framework pits Trump against the deep state, media and elites. The Butler assassination attempt reinforces this narrative*: Rubén Gisbert* (45 mentions), *Un Tío Blanco Hetero* (19), *Begoña Gerpe* (4) and *Wall Street Wolverine* (8) devote extensive coverage to it. *Un Tío Blanco Hetero* argues that "the Secret Service is involved in a huge conspiracy", whereas *Begoña Gerpe* questions "the conspiracy theory perpetuated by the media".

   Heroic victimisation reinforces the leader's exceptionalism. *Rubén Gisbert* emphasises that "they have tried to kill him twice in two months". The media and platforms are seen as both censors and amplifiers: *Un Abogado contra la Demagogia* highlights that "support on *X* has been very important", and *Juan Ramón Rallo* denounces attempts to "censor an interview with Donald Trump". These interpretations construct Trump either as a persecuted anti-establishment outsider and resilient victim or as the centre of conspiratorial narratives contested by critical creators

4. Discursive strategies and the economy of attention
Ridicule, dramatisation and performative language emerge as recurrent discursive strategies in the representation of Trump. *Miguel Charisteas* jokes that "there are vaccinated Trump voters who don't dare to install Windows", and *Alán Barroso* quips: "Tomorrow Trump may wake up, look bad with his makeup, and be less orange than we like." *Miguel Charisteas* and *Rubén Hood* describe the "chaos" caused by his policies, while *Un Tío Blanco Hetero* and *El Canal del Coronel* highlight his iconic and performative image: a "showman" who dominates the media scene.

   Quantitatively, this category represents 18.13 % of total references, showing that Trump's persona is a prominent element of political YouTube discourse alongside discussion of his policies.

5. Political actors and roles
This category groups references to political, technological, and business figures associated with Trump. Political allies such as Javier Milei, Marine Le Pen, and Santiago Abascal situate him within a broader transnational network of like-minded actors. Javier Milei is particularly prominent in *Juan Ramón Rallo*'s content (18 mentions) and, to a lesser extent, in *InfoVlogger*'s (2).

   Technological and business figures, especially Elon Musk, also provide political and symbolic support. *Rubén Gisbert* notes that "Elon Musk gave Trump his [Twitter] account back [because] he wants to be on good terms

with him", while *Santiago Armesilla* places this relationship within a broader network of support from the technological and business sector.

Trump is also constructed through his adversaries, including the political left, media, international institutions and actors within Republican and business circles. *Alán Barroso*, for example, argues that "Trump's return has coloured the United States' relationship with its traditional allies with hostility", reinforcing an image of political and diplomatic confrontation.

As the largest category (32.22 %), these references construct Trump both as a central figure in a transnational political network and as a contested leader defined through alliances and opposition.

6. Social policies and cultural warfare
   Trump is frequently constructed as a symbol of opposition to cultural progressivism, particularly around anti-woke discourse, migration and national identity. *InfoVlogger* celebrates that "Donald Trump's victory is not just a victory; it is only the beginning of the end of the most absurd era we have ever lived through in history: the Woke era". Along the same lines, *Roberto Vaquero* frames his triumph as an opportunity for Europe: "What has happened with Donald Trump, believe me, is a tool that we now have in Europe to be able to change things [...] it is time for change, time to adopt sovereignist measures and remigration".

   Migration and deportation policies are interpreted through the same conflict over national identity. Some creators present them as protective sovereignty measures, while critical representations stress their exclusionary consequences. *Alán Barroso*, for example, warns that "Trump is separating families again". Trump is thus constructed either as a symbol of cultural resistance and national sovereignty or as an exclusionary actor whose policies generate social costs.

Stances Towards Trump and Contested Interpretations

Beyond thematic diversity, political YouTubers construct sharply contrasting images of Donald Trump, ranging from admiration to rejection. Most present him in positive terms, highlighting his resilience after the shooting in Pennsylvania, his status as a winner, and his role as an economic leader and international negotiator. This is evident in *Un Tío Blanco Hetero*, *InfoVlogger* and *Begoña Gerpe*, and geopolitically in *Rubén Gisbert* and *El Canal del Coronel*. His victimisation as an anti-establishment leader confronting elites and alleged conspiracies reinforces his image as an outsider and symbol of resistance.

By contrast, a smaller group offers negative or satirical portrayals. *Alán Barroso* presents Trump as an economic failure responsible for US decline; *Miguel Charisteas* uses mockery, including of his followers; and *Rubén Hood* portrays him as a fascist and global threat linked to Gaza and tariffs against Europe.

Ambivalent representations appear in *Santiago Armesilla* and *Roberto Vaquero*, who acknowledge Trump's political centrality without sustained support. *Juan Ramón Rallo* occupies a distinct position: despite sympathising with Trump, he

criticises his economic protectionism as incompatible with his libertarian views while emphasising his ideological alliance with Javier Milei. His case illustrates the coexistence of ideological affinity and economic dissent within the supportive spectrum.

Several creators use the same semantic repertoire to construct opposing meanings: "pacifist" and "negotiator" signify diplomacy for some and authoritarianism for others, while "businessman" conveys efficiency and prosperity (*Wall Street Wolverine*, *El Canal del Coronel, Juan Ramón Rallo*) or opportunism and greed (*Santiago Armesilla*, *Rubén Hood*, *Alán Barroso*). This semantic ambivalence illustrates Trumpism's symbolic plasticity, as identical attributes acquire divergent meanings depending on stance. Almost all YouTubers describe him as "unpredictable", valued as independence by defenders and instability by critics.

Overall, representations of Trump range from his mythification as a countercultural and resilient leader to his delegitimisation as an authoritarian or decadent politician, reflecting the diversity of interpretations within YouTube's political ecosystem, where his figure operates as a marker of contrasting political stances.

Most Viewed, Commented and Liked Videos of Donald Trump

The twelve videos with the highest levels of engagement are listed in Appendix 2. Although all belong to the Trump-related subcorpus, his figure does not occupy the same degree of centrality across them: Trump is the main topic in four videos, while in the remaining cases he plays a secondary role. Analysing these videos makes it possible to identify the discursive constructions associated with the content generating the greatest audience interaction.

The highest-engagement video, *Wall Street Wolverine's* "THIS is How ROTTEN the SPANISH STATE Is ALVISE PÉREZ" (7 April 2024; 1 Trump mention), received 5,386 comments, approximately 1.25 million views and 64,210 likes. Although focused on Alvise Pérez and criticism of the Spanish media system, it uses Trump as an example of allegedly decontextualised media coverage. His controversial "bloodbath" remarks (Reuters, 2024) are presented as having been taken out of context, incorporating Trump into a broader narrative of media distrust and portraying him as harmed by media interpretation.

A more explicit construction appears in *Rubén Gisbert*'s "ANALYSIS of the ATTACK on TRUMP – This Is How CROOKS Did It (But with HELP)" (24 Trump mentions; 3,828 comments, 824,576 views and 41,107 likes). Gisbert reconstructs the Butler assassination attempt by questioning whether Thomas Matthew Crooks acted alone and suggesting possible assistance. His claim that "Donald Trump effectively knows that they want to kill him" places the event within a broader narrative of persecution, constructing Trump as the victim of a possible conspiracy and institutional failure. The assassination attempt also organises the narrative around threat, heightening its dramatic and attention-grabbing character.

The opposite construction appears in *Alán Barroso'*s two Trump-focused videos: "THE REVOLUTION AGAINST TRUMP ERUPTS IN THE U.S. – AMERICA RISES UP!" (13 mentions; 3,718 comments, 697,558 views and 30,051 likes) and "THE U.S. BEGINS TO AWAKEN AGAINST TRUMP – THE COMING REVOLUTION" (24 mentions; 2,509 comments, 592,191 views and 23,090 likes). Barroso constructs Trump as an antagonist linked to economic and technological elites, authoritarianism and the negative effects of his economic policies. He states that "a revolution against Donald Trump is brewing in the United States because people are tired, tired of his constant changes of direction" and calls for "Donald Trump to stop lying and saying outrageous things". The vocabulary of "revolution" and "awakening" frames opposition to Trump as a collective response to a political threat. A similar strategy appears in his video on China and luxury products (14 mentions), where ridicule presents Trump as a "TV shopping host". His content therefore reinforces antagonism through dramatisation and negative characterisation.

The fourth video primarily focused on Trump, *Juan Ramón Rallo*'s "Trump Conquers the Presidency" (40 mentions of Trump), recorded 1,910 comments, 511,476 views, and 28,639 likes. Rallo presents Trump primarily through his electoral victory and economic programme, describing the result as a "resounding victory" while differentiating between policies he evaluates positively, such as tax cuts and deregulation. Trump is therefore constructed as a political and economic actor whose electoral success is recognised without implying endorsement of his entire economic programme.

Overall, nine of the twelve highest-engagement videos were published by creators classified as supportive towards Trump, compared with three by critical creators. Supportive framings are therefore more strongly represented among the highest-engagement content in the analysed sample.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The presence of Donald Trump in the videos of the Spanish political YouTubers analysed confirms the relevance that his figure acquires within this political communication ecosystem. Of the 4,826 videos published by the fifteen channels in the sample between July 2023 and May 2025, 625 (12.95 %) contain references to Trump. This presence, however, is highly uneven across creators. *Alán Barroso* stands out in particular, mentioning Trump in 81.01 % of his videos, followed by *Miguel Charisteas* (31.19 %), Rubén Gisbert (29.58 %) and *El Canal del Coronel* (26.10 %). Overall, nine of the fifteen channels mention Trump in more than 10 % of their content, showing his relevance across different political positions.

In response to RQ1, Trump is constructed through six interconnected dimensions: political economy and protectionism; international relations and geopolitics; populism, anti-establishment sentiment and conspiracy theories; discursive strategies and the attention economy; political actors and roles; and social policies and cultural warfare. The most frequent are political actors and roles (32.22 %), international relations and geopolitics (21.25 %), and

discursive strategies and the attention economy (18.13 %). Trump is therefore constructed not only through his policies but also through surrounding alliances, antagonisms and his performative and media dimensions. His association with other right-wing leaders further places him within a transnational political network connecting conservative figures and discourses.

Regarding RQ2, representations vary substantially according to creators' stance towards Trump. Supportive representations emphasise resilience, electoral victory, economic leadership, international negotiation and opposition to political and media elites, particularly in *Un Tío Blanco Hetero, InfoVlogger, Begoña Gerpe, Rubén Gisbert* and *El Canal del Coronel*. *Juan Ramón Rallo* occupies a more specific position, combining affinity with Trump and criticism of his protectionism. *Wall Street Wolverine*'s "Bitcoin rising, Trump wins" links his victory to market confidence, while *Rubén Gisbert*'s reference to ending the Ukraine war "in 24 hours" reinforces his image as an international negotiator. The Butler assassination attempt further constructs Trump as a resilient victim facing his adversaries, reinforcing his exceptional status.

In critical representations, by contrast, he is associated with economic failure, authoritarianism, international instability, economic oligarchy or social conflict, while irony and ridicule of his figure are also frequently used. These constructions are especially visible in *Alán Barroso*, *Miguel Charisteas* and *Rubén Hood*.

Between these two positions, ambivalent constructions also appear that recognise his political centrality without necessarily assuming a fully positive assessment of his figure. This type of representation appears mainly in *Santiago Armesilla* and *Roberto Vaquero*, who, despite being politically distant from Trump, do not articulate a sustained opposition to his figure either and positively assess some aspects of his political action.

This diversity allows us to answer RQ3. Donald Trump functions as a global discursive object through which Spanish political YouTubers reinterpret both international debates and debates specific to the Spanish political context. One of the main findings of the study is that shared attributes can acquire practically opposite meanings depending on the position from which they are interpreted. Concepts such as "pacifist", "negotiator", "businessman" or "unpredictable" do not possess a stable political meaning: for his supporters they may refer to independence, pragmatism, prosperity or negotiating ability, whereas for his critics they may represent instability, opportunism, authoritarianism or oligarchic interests. This discursive plasticity allows Trump's figure to extend beyond the US context and operate as a transnational reference point in political and cultural disputes.

Regarding RQ4, supportive representations are more frequent among the highest-engagement videos: nine of the twelve belong to supportive creators and three to critical creators. Supportive content foregrounds resilience, victimisation, electoral victory and political leadership, particularly around the assassination attempt and Trump's return to the presidency. Critical videos instead construct him as an antagonist associated with authoritarianism, political conflict and economic failure. Trump appears in the title of four of the twelve

videos, indicating that even when he is not the main topic, his figure can provide narrative centrality and attract attention.

Overall, supportive representations predominate, although this does not imply ideological homogeneity. Favourable or ambivalent evaluations of specific aspects of Trump's political role appear across different political positions, while the same attributes and themes acquire contrasting meanings depending on stance. Trump thus functions as a flexible political symbol subject to contested interpretations across the Spanish political YouTube ecosystem (Bourgeois and Bousfield, 2026).

This symbolic dispute also affects concepts such as "self-made man" and "businessman", which signify merit, prosperity and managerial ability for some creators but opportunism, concentrated economic power or ideological emptiness for others. Critical representations link this proximity between politics and business to authoritarian traits, consistent with Christian Fuchs's (2017) "authoritarian capitalism". Likewise, Trump's isolationism and non-interventionism are reinterpreted by some YouTubers as pragmatism or pacifism, simplifying international politics in line with Perceived Simplification of Politics (Schmuck *et al.*, 2022).

Trump's representation also adapts to influencer communication and the attention economy. Supporters and detractors alike use dramatisation, irony, spectacle and personalisation, constructing him as a media figure linked to politainment (Berrocal-Gonzalo, 2017; Caro-Castaño *et al.*, 2024) and political personal branding (Manfredi-Sánchez *et al.,* 2021; Pérez-Curiel and Limón Naharro, 2019). His international notoriety facilitates emotionalised and spectacularised representations, while influencers use narrative, affective and performative resources that reinforce his visibility.

Despite these multiple interpretations, the analysed YouTubers particularly emphasise two dimensions: economic nationalism and US foreign policy, from which two recurring images emerge: the businessman and the peacemaker. Critical creators contest these representations through alternative frames centred on authoritarianism, economic failure, international instability and ridicule. Trump therefore operates not only as a US political actor but as a transnational symbol around which ideological, cultural and communicative debates are reorganised within the Spanish digital political ecosystem.

APPENDIXS

1. Codebook

Table 4. Codebook of initial groups and categories

Categories	Definition	Frequency (%)
Topic 1: Political economy and protectionism		
Tariffs and economic policy	Mentions and evaluations of tariffs or trade measures linked to Trump, seen as tools of protection or sources of conflict.	7 %
Financial market and cryptocurrencies	References to stock or crypto fluctuations interpreted as indicators of Trump's economic performance.	1,51 %
Industrial and technological policy	Mentions of deregulation, subsidies, or alliances with business elites to legitimise Trump's economic leadership.	0,47 %
Moral readings of economics (protectionism vs. globalism)	Value-based interpretations contrasting national protectionism with globalist or elite interests.	2,17 %
Topic 2: International Relations and geopolitics		
Leadership and return to order	Portrayal of Trump as a leader restoring order and US global influence.	3,49 %
Authoritarian threat and democratic decline	Trump's association with authoritarian attitudes	1,89 %
War conflicts	Mentions of wars or crises (Ukraine, Gaza) depicting Trump as pacifier or instigator.	2,26 %
Foreign policy and effects on the rest of the world	Assessments of how Trump's policies affect Europe, Spain, and global stability.	13,61 %
Topic 3: Populism, anti-establishment and conspiracy		
Deep State and secret elites	Belief in a hidden elite controlling the government from the shadows and conspiring against the people or the leader.	1,98 %
Media, platforms and censure	Distrust of the media and digital platforms, accused of manipulating, censoring, and distorting the truth	1,41 %
Heroic victimization and resilience	Portraying the leader as a persecuted hero who endures attacks for the sake of the people.	1,32 %
Political persecution and conspiracy	Portrayal of institutional or legal actions as politically motivated.	2,26 %
Populist rhetoric	A discursive style opposing the "pure people" to the "corrupt elite" through emotional and anti-establishment language.	0,98 %

Categories	Definition	Frequency (%)
Topic 4: Discursive strategies and the economy of attention		
Ridicule, irony and political humour	Use of mockery and sarcasm to discredit opponents and simplify complex political issues.	4,63 %
Dramatization, epic and shock	Exaggeration and emotional tension turning politics into spectacle.	10,58 %
Celebrification (Trump personal brand)	Transformation of Trump's identity into a celebrity persona tied to fame and self-promotion.	2,55 %
Memes, symbols and digital culture	Use of viral imagery and online symbols to spread messages, build identity, and mobilize supporters.	0,37 %
Topic 5: Political actors and roles		
YouTubers as political actors	Online influencers who shape public opinion and political discourse through digital platforms.	0,95 %
Leaders and ideological allies (Milei, LePen, Abascal, etc.)	Mentions of national or global figures aligned with Trump's ideology.	8,31 %
Political enemies and adversaries (left, media, institutions)	Identification of actors presented as threats to the people or to Trump's agenda.	10,01 %
Popular supports	Different groups of population who declare support for Donald Trump.	1,51 %
Tech Oligarchy (Bezos, Zuckenberg) and Establishment	Powerful tech and economic elites seen as part of the global system controlling information and politics.	1,89 %
Political-electoral vocabulary	Strategic use of campaign language that simplifies complex issues and mobilizes voters emotionally.	9,55 %
Topic 6: Social policies and cultural warfare		
Antifeminism and anti-woke	Rejection of feminist and progressive movements as threats to moral order.	1,80 %
Social policies	Mentions of welfare, health, or education contrasting "hard-working citizens" with "undeserving others."	1,42 %
Tradition vs. progressism	Opposition between conservative values and liberal social change.	1,80 %
Migration policies	Restrictive stance on immigration, linking border control to national security and cultural preservation.	1,32 %
USA Nationalism / Isolationism	Emphasis on national sovereignty, economic protectionism, and prioritizing America over global engagement.	0,94 %

2. Results of Online Engagement

Table 5. Top 12 videos with highest ratings of engagement

	Political Youtuber	Video Title	Online popularity indicator (*Average between comments, views and likes*)
1	WallStreet Wolverine	THIS is How ROTTEN the SPANISH STATE Is 🤢 ALVISE PÉREZ	441627
2	WallStreet Wolverine	Why Is There So Much Effort to Eliminate the Second Amendment?	386252
3	Rubén Gisbert	ANALYSIS of the ATTACK on TRUMP – This Is How CROOKS Did It (But with HELP)	289837
4	El Canal del Coronel	Predictions and Advice for THE GREAT BLACKOUT	259972
5	El Canal del Coronel	This Is How the Elites Control You – Mario Conde	255665,333
6	WallStreet Wolverine	SECURITY EXPERT Shares His Experience in HONDURAS, MEXICO, and ISRAEL José Félix Ramajo	254465,333
7	Alán Barroso	THE REVOLUTION AGAINST TRUMP ERUPTS IN THE U.S. – AMERICA RISES UP!	243775,667
8	Alán Barroso	THE U.S. BEGINS TO AWAKEN AGAINST TRUMP – THE COMING REVOLUTION	205930
9	WallStreet Wolverine	THE CONTROVERSIAL OPINION OF MARIO CONDE ON JAVIER MILEI – Wall Street Wolverine	202608,667
10	WallStreet Wolverine	THE DECLINE OF THE POLITICAL CLASS 📉 IVÁN ESPINOSA DE LOS MONTEROS	186043,667
11	Alán Barroso	THE CHINESE HAVE HAD ENOUGH AND REVEAL THE TRUE VALUE OF LUXURY PRODUCTS	183939,333
12	Juan Ramón Rallo	Trump Conquers the Presidency	180675

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