

Thematic, strategic and positional frames about the 2016 Peruvian presidential debate

Frames temáticos, estratégicos y posicionales sobre el debate presidencial peruano de 2016

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Received on: 19/12/2021 **Revised on:** 13/01/2022 **Accepted on:** 25/02/2022 **Published on:** 01/03/2022

Abstract

A reconceptualization of the game and strategy frames is carried out separately according to the international literature and sub-indicators are built to obtain a more accurate measurement of each of them. The coverage of the 2016 Peruvian presidential elections is analyzed in 20 radio, press and television programs, three days before the presidential debate, three days after and three days before the vote by way of comparison. The objective is to identify the impact that the presidential debate has on the prevalence of the use of the three journalistic frames in each of the presidential electoral rounds. The electoral debate influences the increase in the thematic framing of the first round, but not in the second round of elections. Positional framing is reduced after the electoral debate in both rounds, while strategic framing is not affected. The results show that the dynamics of the electoral system, such as the presidential debate, influence the prevalence of the use of framing. It highlights the need to study the influence of political dynamics on framing, decreasing the analysis around journalistic production. This broadens the way of seeing framing as discursive strategies to influence the audience and places them as part of a complex political communication process that also involves political institutions.

Keywords

Framing, strategic game frame, thematic frame, presidential debate, political communication, presidential elections, election coverage, news analysis.

Suggested citation: Macassi, S. (2022). Thematic, strategic and positional frames about the 2016 Peruvian presidential debate. *Universitas-XXI*, 36, pp. 113-135. <https://doi.org/10.17163/uni.n36.2022.05>

Resumen

Se realiza una reconceptualización de los enmarcamientos de juego y estrategia por separado según la literatura internacional y se construyen subindicadores para obtener una medición más precisa de cada uno de ellos. Se analiza la cobertura de las elecciones presidenciales peruanas de 2016 en 20 programas de radio, prensa y televisión, tres días antes del debate presidencial, tres días posteriores y tres días previos a la votación a modo de comparación. El objetivo es identificar la incidencia que tiene el debate presidencial en la prevalencia del uso de los tres enmarcamientos periodísticos en cada una de las vueltas electorales presidenciales. El debate electoral influye en el incremento del enmarcamiento temático en la primera vuelta, pero no en la segunda vuelta electoral. El enmarcamiento posicional se reduce después del debate electoral en ambas vueltas, mientras que el enmarcamiento estratégico no se ve afectado. Los resultados demuestran que las dinámicas del sistema electoral, como el debate presidencial, influyen en la prevalencia del uso de los enmarcamientos. Se resalta la necesidad de estudiar la influencia de las dinámicas políticas en los enmarcamientos, descentrando el análisis en torno a la producción periodística. Esto amplía la forma de ver los enmarcamientos como estrategias discursivas para influir en la audiencia y los sitúa como parte de un complejo proceso de comunicación política que involucra también a las instituciones políticas.

Palabras clave

Enmarcamiento, enmarcamiento de juego estratégico, enmarcamiento temático, debate presidencial, elecciones presidenciales, comunicación política, cobertura electoral, análisis de noticias.

Introduction

Studies on the role of the media in political significance during electoral processes have generated intense debates that have been in place to date. Recently, the study of media approaches has revitalized this discussion by focusing on its impact on citizen debate and contribution to democracy (Busby *et al.*, 2018; Scheufele & Iyengar, 2017).

According to Rinke *et al.* (2013, p. 475), “analysis of news framing has the potential, both to understand the functioning of modern democracies and to guide democratic practice,” which would help to understand the dynamics of political significance from a broader perspective. However, the relation between approaches and political systems and electoral dynamics has received little attention.

This study addresses presidential debates because they represent an electoral dynamic that could reinforce the contents of democracy, because they prioritize discussion and promote deliberation on the significant issues of governance.

Theoretical framework

Frame studies are a set of approaches that cover the analysis of production processes, thematic development, reception processes and even the impact on political communication processes (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999; Lecheler & de Vreese, 2019; Muñiz; 2020), becoming one of the dominant paradigms today.

In the studies on the content and structure of news, Chong and Druckmans's "media frames" (2007, p. 100) stand out, which are defined as "the words, images, phrases, and presentation styles that a communicator uses when transmitting information about a problem or event to an audience. The chosen frame reveals what the communicator considers relevant to the issue in question". For its part, D'Angelo (2018) makes a substantive precision when mentioning that the analysis of the news frames focuses on the production of news, while the media frames refer to the study of other audiovisual genres.

The analysis of the news frames has been applied to political processes, scandals, public disputes and conflicts, and the analysis of their impact on electoral processes attracted the attention of many researchers. Much of the reflection revolved around whether the journalistic coverage of elections strengthens or weakens democracy.

Election framing studies focused on the time spent by the media on themes (thematic-frame) or competition between candidates and their campaigns (strategic-game frame). The weeks before elections are often analyzed because of the interest in the person who leads the voting intention (Strömbäck & Aalberg, 2018), leaving aside other stages of the electoral process.

Strategic and positional framing in elections

Decades ago, Patterson (1994) identified that media coverage of elections paid more attention to adversary confrontation and delegitimization than to proposals. From their study, the research alerted on the predominant

ce of the strategic-game frame that uses a language of competence, the prediction of results or the personal attributes of the candidates, reducing the presence of thematic framing.

Capella and Jamieson's research (1996) finds that strategic-game frame affects citizens' attitudes, generating disaffection and political cynicism; in addition, according to Aalberg *et al.* (2011) it contributes to the loss of substance of political parties and the weakening of the democratic system.

When the media use strategic-game frames, they highlight "the behavior of politicians, demonstrating the self-interest of these actions, stimulating negative attributes about their character, pointing to earlier stories about politics, and reinforcing cynicism, such as mistrust" (Capella & Jamieson, 1996, p. 60). This encourages candidates to abandon programmatic speeches and to focus on strategic activities to gain greater media attention. The greatest use of these frames, according to Jamieson (1992 p. 166), is based on the fact that "the strategy scheme has the advantage of being a story. As such, it uses a native news structure, which reduces events to stories."

The strategic-game frames have also been described as those news in which:

Election coverage emphasizes victory, loss, strategy, and tactics, all the stories that encourage voters to view the campaign primarily through politics as a sports perspective. (Dunaway & Lawrence, 2015, p. 44)

Other authors used a similar concept called horserace to describe news highlighting candidates' attributes, as well as their position in the competition to win the election (Farnsworth & Lichter, 2007).

In summary, the authors addressed the framing of electoral coverage with dissimilar nuances, some used the concept of strategic-game schema (Jamieson, 1992; Patterson 1994), and others used strategic-frame (de Vreese & Semetko 2002; de Vreese, 2005) or strategic-game frame (Muñiz 2015) and also used the horserace concept (Sigelman & Bullock, 1991 or Iyengar *et al.*, 2004).

The literature shows concern about how journalistic coverage with game-strategic frame impacts on a lower intensity and frequency of news focused on programmatic, problematic, and proposed aspects. Iyengar (1994) includes them under the concept of thematic frame that has presumably been declining due to the priority given to episodic framing news, focusing on the description of proselytizing activities (Feezell *et al.*, 2019; Boukes, 2021; Theorin *et al.*, 2021).

However, one of the difficulties mentioned by Aalberg *et al.* (2011), is the accuracy of the indicators used to analyze these approaches. De Vreese (2005) notes that indicators related to strategic aspects differ from game-related indicators in terms of their effects on political cynicism. Thus, Aalberg *et al.* (2011) argue that both dimensions (strategic and game), correspond to different framing; in fact, the authors formulate differentiated indicators for each one.

This study supports the proposal of Aalberg *et al.* (2011) to separate the two dimensions but considers that the label of the “game” framing does not express the set of categories involved in journalistic practice. The dimension of the game has been renamed as “positional framing,” as the indicators reviewed in international literature (Jamieson, 1992; Patterson 1994; de Vreese & Semetko, 2002; Muñoz, 2015) refer mostly to a place that candidates occupy in an ordinal hierarchy, i.e., the expected “position” to arrive in the first place. Journalists structure the news and prioritize the information that generates in the audience the perception that one of the candidates outstrips or lags the other, thus creating an expectation about the results of the elections.

The “positional framing” will be categorized in news using winning and losing language, the role of the actor in the competition, the advancement or receding of candidates, the results of surveys and citizen opinions on trends (see sub-indicators in Annex 1). In other words, the journalist draws up the news by incorporating information on how the candidate moves forward or backward in an ordinal position that moves him or her closer to winning the elections.

On the other hand, strategic framing is categorized in the news that mentions the material and symbolic campaign resources and the personal attributes of the candidate. It includes the motivations, personality and image traits and discursive tactics employed. For more details, consult the methodology for operational definitions and Annex 1, which contains the sub-indicators for each of the three approaches.

Electoral dynamics and framing

Research on the analysis of framing in electoral processes increased from the initial statement of Etman (1993), but few studies explored its link with political processes. Araújo and Prior (2020) in studying Bolsonaro’s

candidacy find that the press framings are directly related to the political context, normalizing the candidate's undemocratic behavior, and affecting political dynamics. By contrast, Dimitrova and Kostadinova (2013) emphasize that it is necessary to explain what political dynamics beyond production processes influence the predominance of the use of game-strategic or thematic framing.

Khan (1991), finds that in the U.S. senate elections, the horserace framing is variable; there is a greater presence of this framing in states where there are competitive electoral processes and less prevalence in states with little political competence. Lawrence (2000) finds that the use of game-strategic framing prevails in public disputes or during the formulation of public policies. The comparative study of Strömbäck and Aalberg (2008) between the United States and Sweden shows the predominance of strategic framing in the United States, while the theme prevails in Sweden.

Esser and D'Angelo (2006) mention that the difference in the use of framing when elections are covered may be due to the culture of political communication in each country. In fact, Floss and Marcinkowski (2008) compare the framings produced in Germany and Switzerland and find differences that they attribute to the existence of dissimilar political cultures.

Therefore, differences in the uses of framing would be due to structural variables such as the configuration of the political system, national political culture, the intensity of controversy or choice. But presumably, electoral dynamics would also explain the differences in the intensity with which strategic, positional, or thematic framings are present in journalistic coverage.

It is well known that electoral systems vary substantially; some have a strong presence of patronage practices, others differ by the duration of their electoral processes, the presidential election with double round or systems that use direct presidential voting, or the delegated vote. These differences have not been sufficiently analyzed regarding the predominance of one framing over another.

From our perspective, differences in the intensity and frequency of the country-wide approaches could be explained by dissimilar configurations of electoral processes.

Some research explores the relationship between events in the electoral process and the production of news framings. Muniz *et al.* (2018) mention that stages and phases have a moderating effect on media framing. Dunaway and Lawrence (2015) investigated the newsmaking of news framing, finding

that certain contexts influence the criteria of journalists to select a particular frame.

Thus, the predominance of frames vary depending on the changes that occur in the electoral process; in fact, one of the most disruptive events is the presidential election debate.

Electoral debates should not be considered solely as thematic events, as their results would generate a positional effect (Télliez *et al.*, 2010) or reinforce the attitude of voters (Holbert, 2005). A recent study finds that young voters see the debates as an opportunity to learn about the true characteristics of the candidates (Arceo-Vacas *et al.*, 2020). However, it is to be assumed that its eminently thematic character, regardless of how it is perceived by viewers, should have an impact on the media's post-debate information production.

This study aims to analyze how electoral dynamics influence the prevalent use of strategic, positional, and thematic approaches, taking into account the first and second round electoral debates. The study will focus on how the media react to disruptive situations in campaigns, as electoral debates involve proposals, programs and solutions to campaigns aimed at the candidate's performance or interest in winning elections

Electoral Dynamics and Party System in Peru

It is important to outline the Peruvian electoral process to understand the role it plays in the production of journalistic frames. The Peruvian party system is living a crisis of representation that impairs the disrepute of politics (Levitsky & Cameron 2003; Tanaka, 2007), and is also considered one of the world's extremely volatile party systems (Mainwaring & Torcal, 2005). The weakness of political institutions gives the media more prominence because they become the regulators of politics, as they collect the demand from citizens and transfer it to political actors and vice versa. Peruvian media gained power and centrality in public decisions by developing this mediation process.

The 2016 electoral process began on January 11 with 19 presidential candidates and 28 congressional lists, i.e., with high volatility with respect to their Latin American counterparts (Cruz, 2016; Seifert-Bonifaz, 2016). Political parties became "foster care" for outsiders with little or no party ties included in their presidential lists. Therefore, it was possible that the can-

didate had a political orientation different to the party or its leaders, so that the first round meant the emergence of new faces in politics, whose political orientations were unknown to the population.

The well-known instability of the party system increased by the fact that Congress incorporated a few months ago a regulation that empowered the National Electoral Jury to disqualify any candidate who incurs handouts or irregularities, without any correction possibility of the administrative procedure. As a result, two candidates were excluded in the first round, increasing distrust of the political system.

The debate on the first round of elections was held with ten candidates,¹ although 70% of the electoral preference was concentrated on four of them. Keiko Fujimori was the only one who had secured her position to the second round of elections, but with expectations of obtaining 50% of the votes to win in the first round. The remaining three showed rising curves and similar probabilities of entering the second round in the elections of April 10. Therefore, the electoral debate was extremely important for the positional expectations of all candidates.

Likewise, the second round of elections followed the polarization pattern observed in the second round of 2011, with the participation of Keiko Fujimori and Ollanta Humala, a nationalist-oriented progressive. The difference was that there was no ideological confrontation in the 2016 elections, as both candidates had the same neo-liberal orientation. The support focused on the claim of Fujimorism to anti-fujimorist voters; therefore, in the second round, the personal attributes of candidate Fujimori (daughter of dictator Alberto Fujimori) regarding corruption and questioning her democratic credentials were the center of political discussion (Acevedo, 2016).

The presidential debate on the second round was held one week before elections. Candidate Kuczynski was below the polls and the debate would be crucial to retrace the trend. Five themes were addressed: economic growth and employment promotion; sustainable development and environmental management; education, poverty reduction and inequality; transparency and the fight against corruption; and citizen security and internal order (Portocarrero, 2016). The design focused on thematic issues, and once each

¹ Those who participated in the first round were Gregorio Santos, Fernando Olivera, Verónica Mendoza, Miguel Hilario Toledo, Alfredo Barnechea, Antero Florez-Araoz, Alan Garcia, Keiko Fujimori and Pedro Pablo Kuczynski.

topic was discussed, the other candidate could comment on the first one's presentation. This led to the personalization of opinions and the debate in various topics, so that the debate focused on the attributes and characteristics of the candidates, giving rise to positional coverage.

Methodological framework

The design of this research is quantitative with a descriptive level. This study incorporates a before and after design to investigate the impact of the first and second round debates on the prevalence of the positional (game), strategy and thematic frames that the media used in the Peruvian presidential election campaign of 2016.

Research Questions

As this is a descriptive study that seeks to investigate the impact of electoral contexts on frame coverage, research questions are asked instead of hypotheses:

- Will the presidential debate affect how often the media use thematic, positional, and strategic frames to cover election news?
- Will thematic and positional framing be more prevalent after debates, but will strategic framing be more present before presidential debates?
- Will the configuration of the first round versus the second round have a significant influence on the prevalence of the three types of frames?

Sample and observed periods

The analysis included 20 journalistic spaces in private media, radio, press and television. The highest rating news programs and the bestselling newspapers of the right, center and left political parties were selected. The sampling unit was all news published three days before and three days after the two presidential debates.

To analyze the impact of the presidential debate on the frames, 2223 electoral news were selected in the pre- and post-debate periods of the first

and second round. The news covered the period from March 28 to June 4, 2016, grouped in four weeks (see Table 1).

Table 1
Number of news according to presidential debates and voting

First round					Second round					Total
Pre Debate	Debate	Post debate	Pre elections	Election	Pre Debate	Debate	Post debate	Pre elections	Election	
March 28- April 2nd	April 3rd	April 4 - April 6	April 7-April 9	April 10	May 23rd-May 28	May 29	May 30- June 1st	June 2-June 4	June 5th	
536		397	334		441		310	215		2223

Students were trained in the analysis and codification of news, both in conceptual aspects and in analysis procedures. Each student codified the news on the SurveyMonkey platform, the database was exported to SPSS V23 for consistency and statistical analysis. A coordinator oversaw and unified the coding criteria.

Defined variables

The independent variable consisted on the time period before and after each presidential debate. Each period consisted of three days, considering that electoral issues remain on the agenda, and the period before elections was included as a comparison variable (see Table 1).

There were three dependent variables: positional (or game) framing, strategic framing, and thematic framing. These frames are based on the proposal of Aalberg *et al.* (2011) who separates strategic framing from (positional) game framing, including much of its indicators, but incorporating others formulated by Jamieson (1992), Patterson (1994), de Vreese and Semetko (2002), de Vreese (2005) and Muñiz (2015). Likewise, the name of the game framing was redefined by the positional framing, since it expresses better the set of indicators referred in the literature.

The measurement of these frames, as stated by Matthes and Kohring (2008), is expressed in a numerical intensity. Each frame has 4 or 5 sub-indicators that are coded as 0=absent and 1=present, so each news could contain

more than one sub-indicator and more than one frame. The score for each frame was calculated by adding its corresponding sub-indicators: zero (0) if the frame was not present in the news and 4 or 5 if it was strongly present.

For constructing the variables, Matthes and Kohring's approach (2008) was used. News from the 2014 election were analyzed, combined with a review of indicators developed by international literature. As a result, indicators were eliminated and others were incorporated that better expressed the thematic, positional and strategic dimensions, so that each indicator is independent, comprehensive and mutually exclusive.

The operational definitions, sub-indicators and reliability used in this research were as follows:

Strategic framing: How the media prioritizes in the story the related aspects of personal attributes, candidate motivations, strategies, tactics, activities and campaign resources employed. Four indicators were used: attribution of motivation; customization; campaign tactics and strategies; and competitive resources (see annex 1). This variable has a "Crombach alpha" of 0.631, which according to the standards of political communication with a sample of 2223 news is considered an acceptable reliability (DeSante, 2011).

Positional framing: The way the media prioritizes positional advancement or recoil in the story using the metaphors of competition, public opinion results, and the consequences of results, the candidates' advances, and the benefits resulting from campaign actions, to show a better or worse position of a candidate to win the elections. Five indicators were used: language of competition; positional advancement; positional advantage; expression of public opinion and prediction of results (see annex 1). This variable has a "Crombach alpha" of 0.677.

Thematic framing: The way the media prioritizes in the story aspects related to the contents proposed by the candidates or the population, with respect to problems, solutions, plans of government, demands, or reforms. Five indicators were used: problematic; demands; solutions; program and change (see annex 1). This variable has a "Crombach alpha" of 0.747.

Results

The first round discussion was complex because ten candidates participated in a dynamic of peer confrontation, with a lot of sarcasm and roughness. For the analysis, the intensity of the use of the three electoral frames,

before and after the first-round debates, was compared, incorporating a period of three days prior elections.

Regarding which frame was predominant during the first round, a greater presence of thematic frame was observed, the mean of which (0.58) was significantly higher than positional (0.41) and strategic (0.35 see Table 2) frames. These data show some differences from international literature, and studies such as Iyengar (1994) and Paterson (1994) described that the trend of electoral coverage prioritized game-strategic framing of coverage on thematic issues.

What was found would show the need of the media and the citizens to associate candidates, outsiders or new, with issues, solutions and proposals because each political leader personalizes his/her proposal in a weak party system and without re-election. So this prevalence of thematic framing in the first round would respond to the electoral dynamics of a volatilized multi-party political system.

With regard to positional framing, it was expected that the debate would stimulate positional framing with speeches of the winner/loser of the debate. But the results show the opposite, the average before the debate was 0.55, but after the debate it drops to 0.31 (see Table 2). It is possible that the reduction of the mean of positional framing is due to the greater predominance of the other frames.

In addition, the low presence of positional framing (0.31) at the pre-voting stage may be due to a ban on the dissemination of surveys during this period in Peru. In other countries, surveys are allowed up to 24 hours as in Canada, Colombia, France, Norway, Poland or there are no bans as in the United States, Brazil, Finland, United Kingdom, Denmark, Netherlands or Austria (ACE Project, 2020). Hence, the prevalence of positional framing would have a dependence on the polls that are part of the design of the electoral dynamics of each country.

Strategic framing is stable, and we note that there are no significant differences between the periods before and after the electoral debate, and neither in comparison with the three days before elections (see Table 2). The data show that this framing does not have the presence attributed to it in other studies (such as Patterson, 1994, Jamieson, 1993, Muñiz, 2015).

To measure strategic framing along with positional framing as one would only have increased the presence of these two dimensions at all stages of the elections by relegating thematic frame to the background. Therefore, we

checked the hypothesis of Aalberg *et al.* (2011) who argue that positional and strategic frames have different characteristics, but, in addition, we find that the debate influences the reduction of the average of positional frame.

Table 2
Difference in the means of frames according to the phase of the debate in the first round

		Pre-debate	Post-debate	Pre-elections	First round
<i>Positional framing</i>	N	536	397	334	1267
	Mean	0.55	0.31**+	0.31**+	0.41
<i>Strategic framing</i>	N	536	397	334	1267
	Mean	0.32	0.31	0.43	0.35
<i>Thematic framing</i>	N	536	397	334	1267
	Mean	0.47	0.65**	0.66**	0.58

Note. +Significant with respect to the pre-debate **Significant with respect to the post-debate ** Significant at 0.01 * Significant at .05.

The prevalence of thematic frame is a counterfactual outcome. In a ten-candidate debate, issues would have less attention, and subsequent media coverage should highlight personal attributes (strategic framing). On the other hand, we note that news that addresses proposals, analyzes, programs or solutions to problems is increasing.

We can conclude that the first-round debate has a positive impact as it is a public-opinion phenomenon that forces the media to produce more thematic news and reduce positional coverage.

In the presidential debate of the second round, where there were only two candidates Keiko Fujimori and Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, the means for the three types of frames are increasing. In addition, positional framing prevailed during the observed period (.95), followed by strategic framing (0.80) and finally thematic framing (0.56) (see Table 3). These results differ from those of the first round and could be related to the different information needs of a fragmented party system. The high average of positional framing at the beginning of the second round may be due to the increase in political

competition found in the Khan study (1991) which can also be applied to the Peruvian case due to high polarization.

Regarding the impact of the debate on positional framing, Téllez *et al.* (2010) argue that the media use the results of the discussions for positional calculation; however, the results show the opposite, as the post-debate average is significantly reduced from 0.95 to 0.65 (see Table 3). These data are consistent with those of the first round, where positional framing also decreases.

Moreover, positional framing drops even more three days before elections. The electoral closure could be a strange explanatory variable, but it could also be concluded that the debate would have an undesirable positive impact, which is the decline in the use of positional framing in coverage.

As for strategic framing, its prevalence in the debate (0.8 in Table 3) would be related to the constant questioning that anti-fujimorist activists made against the Fujimorist candidate for the corruption on her father's government.

According to Holbert (2005), the media could focus on the candidate's deliberation attributes in the debate, thus increasing strategic framing. However, the data show that there are no significant differences in the presence of strategic framing after the electoral debate (see Table 3), which is like what was observed in the first round.

The presence of strategic framing is significantly reduced three days before elections. One explanation is that the prohibition of proselytizing activities 48 hours and political propaganda 24 hours before elections reduce strategic journalistic events. The media would therefore depend heavily on campaign activities for the construction of strategic frames.

As for thematic framing, its presence before the debate is less than in the first round. There are no significant differences in the prevalence of this frame due to the debate, nor with regard to the pre-voting period.

The lesser presence of thematic framing in the second round would be explained because the proposals and plans of government did not change substantially in either candidate, as they were confluent, and at many points they were only differentiated by populist forms or by the authoritarian profile of the Fujimorist candidate. The thematic would therefore not be a journalistic novelty as it was in the first round, nor was there the need to profile the candidate with certain proposals

Table 3
Difference in the averages of frames according to the phase of the debate in the second round

		Pre-debate	Post-debate	Pre-elections	Total
<i>Positional framing</i>	N	441	310	215	966
	Mean	0.95	0.65 ^{***}	0.39 ^{**}	0.73
<i>Strategic framing</i>	N	441	310	215	966
	Mean	0.80	0.62	0.34 ^{****}	0.64
<i>Thematic framing</i>	N	440	303	208	951
	Mean	0.56	0.46	0.44	0.50

Nota. * Significant regarding the pre-debate ** Significant regarding the post-debate *** Significant at 0.01
* Significant at .05.

Conclusions

Regarding the first question, it is concluded that the presidential debates have an impact on the increase or decrease in the intensity of frames in post-debate news. Hence, changes in electoral dynamics can create conditions for coverage that prioritizes, for example, the greater presence of thematic framing.

The differences observed in the intensity of the frame can be explained by the different configuration of the electoral process in a political system with party fragmentation and high polarization such as the Peruvian one. The emergence in each election of new outsiders, without links to ideologies or government programs, requires the media to concentrate on the profile of candidates based on their proposals, which would explain the greater presence of the thematic frame in the first round.

As for the second question, we see that there are changes in the prevalence of framing, but the presidential debate does not affect all framing equally, some reduce (such as the strategic one) and others increase (such as the thematic one), but this will vary depending on the first or second round. Positional framing is the only one that reduces in both rounds, which seems to be in reverse with regard to events such as the electoral debate. Thus, the

relationships between electoral dynamics (such as debate) and the use of frames are not linear, the electoral context could influence on the fact that a particular frame predominates over another.

The prevalence of post-first-round thematic framing would be explained by the characteristics of the electoral process, with a fragmentation of candidates that would encourage the media to profile the candidate by associating it with thematic issues. By contrast, polarization between two candidates in the second round may influence the prevalence of strategic framing, which is less common in parliamentary systems. The results are consistent with recent studies that highlight the importance of the electoral phases and conjunctures on the framing (Muniz *et al.*, 2018; Dunaway & Lawrence, 2015).

On the third question, electoral dynamics would have an influence on the prevalence of framing. The ban on surveys and restrictions on advertising and pre-voting proselytizing activities are an unfavorable scenario for positional framing days before the vote.

The study shows that framing not only depends on the productive intentions of journalists to generate certain effects in audiences, as it has been mentioned (Scheufele, 1999; Lecheler & de Vreese 2019), but it also demonstrates that journalistic production processes interact with political processes. Therefore, these questions work only as independent variables that affect public perception of events. Instead, the framing is also affected—as dependent variables—by electoral events.

The results increase the complexity of understanding the relationships between electoral dynamics and frame production. As McMenamin *et al.* (2021) say, there may be a gap between electoral political dynamics and media framing, which may show greater media autonomy or perhaps a gap between political competition and media representation. In the case analyzed, the difference in the intensity on the use of frames may be because media prioritize strategic frames in favor of neoliberal or populist candidates of their choice.

In addition, the study highlights the centrality of presidential debates for democracy but suggests improving its design. The French debate model implemented in Peru is often more attractive to the public because it includes confrontation between candidates, but it could promote conflict framing analyzed by some authors (Bartholomé *et al.*, 2017; Macassi, 2019). By contrast, the presence of the panel of journalists and the non-direct confron-

tation between candidates, as Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) say, reduce the conflict and make it easier for the topic to be the focus of the debate.

It is also observed that, as Gauthier (1998) argues, presidential debates are triggers for political events, which often attract media attention to more substantive issues and generate a discursive extension to a wider audience (Verón, 2001). This would promote interpersonal deliberation during the elections and its subsequent contribution to democracy (Norris, 2000), but that would also motivate the reduction of positional framing as shown in this study.

An electoral process design that encourages debate can impact on more programmatic media coverage that contributes to the quality of democracy through a design of the electoral process that promotes debate and participation in media production and public, beyond the direct impact on production routines and patterns.

In the future, studies could be conducted to qualitatively specify the narrative frames present in the coverage of electoral debates to identify elements of the debates that stimulate the use of thematic framing.

Support and financial support of the research

Entity: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (Lima-Peru), grant DGI-2016-307.

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Annexed 1. Sub-indicators of each electoral frame

Strategic framing

- Competitive resources: the narrative refers to the candidates' resources, endorsements, favoritism or media coverage.
- Personalization: the narrative focuses on the advantages or disadvantages of their style, performance and personal attributes.
- Motivational attribution: the narrative refers to the candidates' reasons or strategies to perform their activities, speeches or behaviors.
- Campaign tactics and strategies: the discourse focuses on the elements of the campaign implemented by the candidates to improve their position in the elections.

Positional framing

- Positional advantage: the discourse emphasizes that the candidates' actions or performance improve or consolidate his/her position.
- Positional advancement: the discourse shows how politicians are, their proposals or ideas in terms of whether they grow/decline; winners and/or losers; advance/regress.
- Language of competition: the narrative uses a language of metaphors, generally associated with sport, competition, race, games or even war.
- Prediction of results: the discourse focuses on the positive or negative results of elections with respect to the candidates or their party.
- Expression of public opinion: the discourse focuses on survey data, interviews, or refers to the prevailing opinion regarding political actors, their proposals or ideas.

Thematic framing

- Programmatic: the discourse refers to the contents of the government plans or programs of the candidates or parties.
- Change: the discourse refers to institutional reforms, public policies, change of approaches, modification of laws.
- Problems: the news narrative focuses on general problems (health, education, crime).
- Demands: the news narrative refers to the needs, requests or complaints of the population (data, opinions).
- Solutions: the discourse emphasizes the proposals or solutions, social programs, public policies of the candidates to certain conditions, situations or problems.