

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.48009/3\\_iis\\_2025\\_2025\\_104](https://doi.org/10.48009/3_iis_2025_2025_104)

## Impact of local governments' social media engagement on citizens' trust, satisfaction, and word-of-mouth: A study of Lima-Peru

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### Abstract

This study investigates the role of social media engagement by district mayors in Lima, Peru, as a mechanism to build citizen trust, satisfaction, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) behavior. This research is grounded in the Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) frameworks to examine how different types of content—videos versus text and photos—used by mayors in their interaction with social media influence trust towards both the mayor and municipality. In turn, this trust impacts citizen satisfaction, which leads to eWOM behavior. A survey conducted with social media users in Lima who follow their local government officials highlights the potential of social media to enhance trust and improve citizen satisfaction. Results demonstrate that video content positively influences trust in the mayor and the municipality, increasing satisfaction and positive eWOM. This study contributes to the literature by identifying social media content as a trust-building tool in local governance. It provides practical insights for municipalities on effective social media strategies to improve citizen engagement.

**Keywords:** trust in local government, social networking sites (SNS), citizen satisfaction, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), digital engagement

### Introduction

In Peru, municipalities are essential in governance as they provide key services such as public safety, sanitation, infrastructure maintenance, and local economic development. These institutions should be critical in promoting citizen engagement and effectively meeting local needs (Ley Orgánica de Municipalidades, 1984). Within Peru, this study focuses on Lima (Peru's capital) for two reasons: 1) around a third of the population lives in this city (INEI, 2021), and 2) its diversity, given the migration from people from other parts of the country, with over 3 million Peruvians relocating from other provinces to the capital (INEI, 2017). Dissatisfaction with municipal services is a latent issue in Lima, with recent data showing that 69% of residents disapprove of the mayor's policies (IPSOS Perú, 2024). Additionally, disparities in resource allocation, infrastructure, and public services contribute to varying levels of citizen satisfaction. Wealthier districts such as Miraflores and San Isidro have better services, with higher citizen satisfaction reported regarding safety, cleanliness, and public infrastructure quality. Indeed, a survey for 2021 reported that 85% of residents in Miraflores and 82% of residents in San Isidro were satisfied with the initiatives of their mayors (Ortiz Llana, Zapana Ruiz, and Meneses Claudio, 2023). In contrast, districts like San Juan de Lurigancho and Villa El Salvador face significant challenges, frequently grappling with underfunded services, inadequate infrastructure, and growing public discontent, with only 34% and 28% of satisfied

residents (Ortiz Llana, Zapana Ruiz, and Meneses Claudio, 2023). These disparities highlight the critical need for equitable local governance, as recent studies have shown that persistent service inequalities and lack of responsiveness from municipal authorities can erode public trust, decrease civic engagement, and increase the likelihood of protests and social conflict (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2013; Mamokhere, 2023).

Public trust is fundamental for effective governance, particularly in democracies where the legitimacy of government actions relies on citizen confidence and support (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2013). In recent decades, public trust in governments has been in continuous decline (Keefer, 2018), particularly in Latin America, where widespread corruption and the ineffective functioning of democratic institutions have significantly eroded public confidence (Barómetro, Américas and Zechmeister, 2019; Latin America Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), 2019; Lupu, Bustamante and Zechmeister, 2020). This study focuses on municipalities because they interact directly with citizens, dealing with their everyday needs (Tejedo-Romero et al., 2022).

In recent years, social media has become a central feature of modern communication, profoundly influencing how people interact, share information, and form opinions. In Peru, there are around 23.14 million social media users (Statista, 2023), with Facebook being the most used social networking site (SNS) with 90% of users, followed by Youtube (78%), Instagram (76%), and Tiktok (72%) (Statista, 2023). Governments have also recognized the potential of these platforms to foster citizen satisfaction by enhancing transparency and creating interactive channels for feedback as trust-building mechanisms. By leveraging social media, government agencies can disseminate information rapidly, gather public feedback, and engage in two-way communication, creating opportunities for more responsive and accountable governance (Criado & Gil-Garcia, 2019; Lovari & Valentini, 2020). Some mayors use these tools to promote their progress by uploading content about their policies and actions. Cases like Ulises Villegas (mayor of Comas district) and Pedro Spadaro (mayor of Callao district), who have 1.3 million and 381k followers respectively on TikTok, show that citizens are very interested in following the actions of their mayors. This digital shift enables a greater interaction and collaboration between public officials and citizens, which is particularly valuable in building trust and fostering more inclusive decision-making processes (Criado and Gil-Garcia, 2019).

Similarly, word-of-mouth (WOM), particularly electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), has become increasingly prominent in shaping public opinion and trust in local governance. eWOM refers to the online sharing of experiences, reviews, and feedback through social media platforms and other digital channels, enabling citizens to communicate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with municipal services and governance practices (Beyari & Abareshi, 2019; Çoban & Öztürk, 2020). This digital information exchange amplifies positive and negative perceptions within the community (Parmelee, Perkins, and Beasley, 2023). In the context of local government, eWOM reflects public sentiment and influences other citizens' views, shaping collective attitudes toward municipal authorities. By engaging in eWOM, citizens play an active role in assessing and communicating their local officials' effectiveness and transparency, thus impacting trust, satisfaction, and civic participation (Çoban & Öztürk, 2020).

This study aims to determine whether social media engagement (i.e., usage of digital services) by district municipalities and their mayors in Lima may lead to improved citizen trust and, in turn, whether trust will increase citizen satisfaction and improve public approval ratings (which are low within Lima's local governments). This study follows a quantitative approach and a non-experimental and transverse design. Thus, this study will use a survey to collect citizens' perceptions of their mayors and their municipalities' engagement with social media. In addition, structural equation modelling will be used as a data analysis technique to assess the connection between social media use and these critical indicators (i.e., trust,

satisfaction, e-WOM), in order to shed light on the role of digital communication in local governance. Ultimately, the study seeks to understand whether SNS can close the gap between government actions and citizen expectations, fostering a more engaged and satisfied community.

## Literature review

This study conducted a literature review of prior studies that focused on the impact of social media on trust in local governments. It was divided into three research streams: 1) systematic review studies, 2) qualitative studies, and 3) quantitative studies. In the first group of studies, comprehensive literature reviews have contributed to understanding how social media exposure impacts trust in government and influences civic satisfaction and participation. Porumbescu (2017) provided a thorough review of the evolution of social media use in government settings, concluding that social media can significantly enhance government transparency and citizen engagement. However, the review also highlighted the need for strategic planning and policy development to ensure that social media is used effectively to build public trust. This finding is echoed by Lupu et al. (2020), who reviewed citizens' use of social media in government and noted that transparency and trust are deeply interconnected but require deliberate efforts from government bodies to nurture these outcomes through consistent engagement strategies. However, research gaps remain in exploring how different social media content types may affect trust.

Qualitative studies (the second stream) have provided rich insights into government officials' use of social media and its impact on public trust. For example, Criado & Gil-Garcia (2019), through a case study across Europe, highlighted the dual effect of social media on citizen trust and engagement. While their findings suggested that social media could enhance transparency and foster trust, they also warned that increased transparency could lead to public backlash if not managed carefully. Similarly, Padeiro et al. (2021) examined the use of social media by local governments in Portugal during the COVID-19 pandemic. They found that different phases of the pandemic required different engagement types, significantly impacting citizens' trust. This finding highlights how varying content strategies may influence satisfaction differently, depending on contextual and situational factors. Al-Omoush et al. (2023) further explored this dynamic during the COVID-19 pandemic in Jordan, emphasizing that consistent communication on social media was crucial for building public trust in times of crisis. Their study underscored the importance of balancing openness and strategic messaging to avoid negative public perception.

Quantitative studies (the third stream) have further enriched this field by applying statistical methods to explore the complex relationships between social media use, trust, and citizen engagement. For example, Poluan et al. (2022) assessed the impact of social media marketing on public satisfaction in South Minahasa, Indonesia. Their findings indicated that local governments' strategic use of social media could significantly enhance public attitudes and satisfaction. Similarly, Arshad & Khurram (2020) examined the influence of government social media presence on citizens' online political participation in Pakistan. They found that responsiveness and transparency were key factors in building trust and encouraging engagement, demonstrating that the way governments communicate on social media matters as much as the content itself.

Additional studies specifically examined the effects of social media on satisfaction and trust in municipal contexts. For instance, Perea et al. (2021) examined citizens' word-of-mouth on local government Instagram pages and found that informative and engaging content positively impacts satisfaction and trust. This result highlights the potential of social media to act as a platform for fostering trust and enhancing citizen satisfaction when used effectively. Similarly, Haro-de-Rosario et al. (2018) explored the effectiveness of

social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter in engaging citizens, concluding that different platforms could yield varying levels of citizen trust and engagement depending on content type and delivery.

In summary, the gap in existing literature is as follows: 1) the lack of differentiation between trust in the municipal organization (e.g., the city government as a whole) and trust in individual leaders, and 2) a scarcity of studies that specifically investigate how different content in SNS may impact citizens' trust. This study fills these gaps by focusing on the impact of different types of content on trust towards the organization and mayor in the context of social media use in local governance.

## **Theoretical framework**

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a framework that explains how relationships are formed and maintained through reciprocal exchanges that provide mutual benefits. According to SET, individuals will likely remain in a relationship if the perceived benefits outweigh the costs, leading to reciprocity and cooperation (Blau, 1964; Coyle-Shapiro & Diehl, 2017). In municipal communication, SET implies that when citizens receive valuable information from their mayors or municipal institutions, they perceive it as a beneficial exchange that strengthens their relationship with local government (Shin & Hall, 2012). This information exchange, which includes updates on policies, services, and responses to community concerns, fosters a sense of accountability and responsiveness, thereby enhancing the perceived value of the relationship (Leong & Meng, 2022)

Trust is a fundamental element within SET, as it reflects an individual's willingness to be vulnerable in a relationship based on the expectation that the other party will act beneficially and reliably (Coyle-Shapiro & Diehl, 2017). Within the framework of SET, trust reduces the uncertainty and risk involved in relationships, as individuals place faith in the cooperative interactions that they believe will yield positive outcomes (Christensen & Lægveid, 2005; Parra Saiani et al., 2024). In social media interactions between citizens and municipal authorities, trust emerges as a product of consistent and transparent information sharing. When citizens trust the information they receive from their mayor or municipality, this trust reinforces the reciprocal nature of the relationship, ultimately enhancing citizen satisfaction and engagement (Shin & Hall, 2012; Leong & Meng, 2022)

### **Stimulus-organism-response (SOR) framework**

Although SET explains the relationship between the content which local governments share on SNS and citizens' trust as an exchange between these two actors, how this trust may be translated into further citizen approval requires another framework. This study proposes the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework to assess this relationship. SOR provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing these connections because it explains the effect of environmental stimuli on human behavior (Russell & Mehrabian, 1974), and prior studies have adapted this framework to similar situations (e.g., Mansoor, 2021; Matheus et al., 2021; Ortiz Llana et al., 2023). Stimuli refer to external factors or inputs, such as visual or auditory cues, that elicit individual reactions (Islam & Rahman, 2016). An Organism represents the internal processes, including cognitive and emotional responses, triggered by the stimuli, such as perception, trust, or satisfaction (Jacoby, 2002). Finally, Response refers to the resulting behavior or actions, such as participation, purchase, or engagement, that occur because of the interaction between the stimuli and the organism (Jacoby, 2002). In this study, the objective is to capture citizen approval.

### ***Social media content as a stimulus***

Social media platforms have become central to modern communication strategies. These platforms enable local government officials to engage directly with citizens, disseminate information, and foster public dialogue, which can further shape public trust (Haro-de-Rosario, Sáez-Martín and del Carmen Caba-Pérez,

2018; Arkorful et al., 2021) The interactive nature of social media allows for real-time feedback and engagement, making it a dynamic stimulus that can evoke a range of cognitive and emotional responses from the public (Fu, Liu and Li, 2024). These platforms have also become essential tools for political communication, enabling mayors to reach diverse segments of the population and engage with them on various themes. Studies show that the choice of platform can influence the effectiveness of communication, with platforms like Facebook and Twitter often being more effective for disseminating detailed policy information, while Instagram and TikTok are better for visual storytelling and engaging younger audiences (Mansoor, 2021; Thorson et al., 2021)

This finding might be explained by the content used on different platforms. For example, Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) are primarily used for text-based and photo content, providing more space for detailed updates, discussions, and policy explanations. In contrast, platforms like Instagram and TikTok are heavily oriented toward visual and video content, which can create more engaging and direct forms of communication (Vancottem, 2024). Research indicates that video content, especially on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, generates higher engagement rates and is perceived as more transparent and authentic compared to text or photo posts (Padeiro, Bueno-Larraz, and Freitas, 2021; Thorson et al., 2021). These differences suggest that the choice of platform and content type (text and photos versus videos) serve as distinct stimuli that can influence public trust in governments differently.

### ***Trust as an organism variable***

Trust is a central concept in this framework and serves as the mediating factor that influences how citizens interpret the stimuli, which in this case is the content published on SNS by their local government, and how these interpretations lead to specific responses, such as satisfaction and participation. Trust in government is defined as the belief that government officials and institutions are competent, act in the public interest, and are committed to honesty and fairness (Criado and Gil-Garcia, 2019; González-Bustamante, Carvajal and González, 2020; Ding, Xiong and Wang, 2024). Trust is a crucial element in democratic governance as it underpins the legitimacy of government actions and policies (Ortiz Llana, Zapana Ruiz, and Meneses Claudio, 2023). High levels of trust can increase citizen compliance with regulations, and yield high public cooperation, and robust citizen engagement, whereas low trust can result in skepticism, non-compliance, and political disengagement (Carpini, 2020).

Within the context of local governance, this study proposes to divide this concept into trust towards the mayor as an individual leader and the municipality as an institution. Trust towards the mayor may be influenced by personal factors such as charisma, communication style, and perceived integrity, which can be enhanced through effective social media engagement (Morgeson et al., 2011). On the other hand, trust towards the municipality involves institutional factors such as transparency, accountability, and overall service delivery (Mansoor, 2021; Tejedo-Romero et al., 2022). Social media can impact these two types of trust differently. For instance, a mayor's proactive engagement on social media might build personal trust, but institutional trust may remain low if the municipality fails to deliver on public services.

### ***Satisfaction and eWOM as response variables***

Satisfaction and eWOM are the behavioral outcomes that represent the "response" in the SOR framework. They reflect how citizens react to their perceptions of local governance. Citizen satisfaction refers to the degree to which individuals feel content with the quality of public services, governance processes, and responsiveness of their local authorities (Christensen & Lægheid, 2005). eWOM refers to online user-generated content, such as reviews, comments, and ratings, which enables citizens to share their experiences and opinions about local governance and municipal services (Criado & Gil-Garcia, 2019; Lovari & Valentini, 2020). eWOM provides a platform for citizens to exchange views, thereby fostering a network of shared knowledge that can significantly influence public perception and trust in local authorities

(Nogueira, Ribeiro, and Remondes, 2024). Through eWOM, citizens inform others about their satisfaction or dissatisfaction and contribute to a collective evaluation of the performance of their local government, potentially influencing other citizens. Both satisfaction and eWOM are essential components of democratic governance. High satisfaction levels and positive eWOM indicate a healthy democracy where citizens feel their voices are heard and their needs are met. In contrast, low levels may point to governance deficiencies and potential social unrest (Mamokhere, 2023).

## Research model

Using the SOR and SET as guiding frameworks, this study explores how different content formats—videos versus text and photos—impact trust in the mayor and municipal institutions. This trust influences satisfaction levels and eWOM in local governance (see Figure 1).

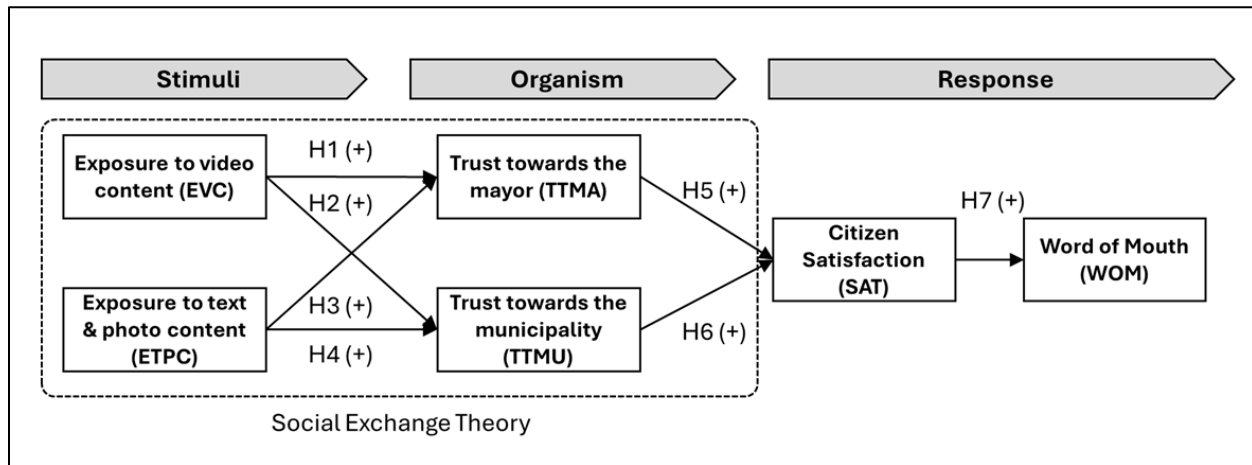


Figure 1. Research Model

### Impact of stimuli on the organism

Videos shared on social media by public figures such as district mayors can create a more personal connection with the audience. Video content has been shown to enhance perceived accessibility and authenticity, as it provides a more direct and engaging format for conveying information. When mayors utilize video content effectively, it can foster greater trust in the public figure, and may positively impact citizens' perceptions of the entire municipality. When mayors share updates, initiatives, and responses to public concerns through video, it can improve the perceived transparency and accountability of the municipal institution they represent.

**H1:** *Exposure to video content on social media positively influences trust towards the mayor*

**H2:** *Exposure to video content on social media positively influences trust towards the municipality*

Text and photo content on social media, though less dynamic than video, can also effectively communicate important information and create a sense of consistency and reliability among public officials. Text and photos allow for detailed updates, enhancing citizens' understanding of municipal policies and initiatives, which can foster trust in the mayor. As in the case of video content, the use of text and photo posts by mayors can reflect positively on the municipality's reputation. Informative posts can create a perception of a well-organized and transparent municipal institution, further increasing trust in the municipality.

**H3:** *Exposure to text and photo content on social media positively influences trust towards the mayor*

**H4:** *Exposure to text and photo content on social media positively influences trust towards the municipality*

## **Impact of the organism on the response**

Trust in a public official, such as a mayor, can significantly enhance citizens' satisfaction with local governance. When citizens believe in the integrity and reliability of their leaders, they are more likely to view municipal services and policies favorably. This sense of trust is a foundation for positive evaluations of governance quality and responsiveness. In addition, trust in the institution also plays a crucial role in shaping citizen satisfaction. When citizens trust their municipality as a credible and accountable institution, they tend to have higher levels of satisfaction with the services and policies it implements. Institutional trust can make citizens feel more secure and supported in their community, leading to greater satisfaction. Hence:

**H5:** *Trust towards the mayor positively influences citizen satisfaction*

**H6:** *Trust towards the municipality positively influences citizen satisfaction*

Citizen satisfaction with local governance may lead to positive word-of-mouth behaviors. When citizens are satisfied with their municipality, they are more likely to share favorable opinions and recommend municipal initiatives to others. This form of engagement can help enhance the local government's reputation and encourage broader community support. Therefore:

**H7:** *Citizen satisfaction positively influences citizens' word-of-mouth*

## **Research methodology**

This study follows a quantitative approach and a non-experimental and transverse design. Thus, this study will use a survey to collect citizens' perceptions of their mayor's and their municipality's engagement with social media.

All variables were measured using established scales from recent studies. The detailed questions and sources for each variable are shown in the Appendix. All the items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The study surveyed residents of Lima, Peru, who actively engage with social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and X, focusing on individuals who follow or interact with their local government authorities. Data collection was carried out through a self-administered online questionnaire using Google Forms. The instrument was administered in Spanish. Using a snowball sampling method, participants were recruited through social media, leveraging networks of individuals who engage with municipal government pages or local influencers. Social media platforms were used to reach a broad and diverse sample, capturing the digitally active population in Lima (Boulianne, 2020).

The research model was analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine the relationships between the latent variables. These constructs are inherently abstract and cannot be directly observed, which makes SEM an appropriate method for the analysis. By allowing for the simultaneous assessment of multiple relationships, SEM enables a nuanced understanding of how these underlined constructs interact and influence each other. SmartPLS facilitated a robust path analysis, enabling the evaluation of direct and mediating effects within the model.

## **Sample**

Data collection took place in October and November 2024, resulting in 127 valid responses used for the analysis. Table 1 shows detailed information on demographic data.

**Table 1. Sample Demographics**

Variable	Options	Distribution	Percentage
Sex	Male	74	58.27%
	Female	50	39.37%
	Rather not say	3	2.36%
Age	18 to 25 years old	57	44.88%
	26 to 30 years old	2	1.57%
	31 to 35 years old	1	0.79%
	36 to 40 years old	3	2.36%
	41 to 45 years old	10	7.87%
	46 to 50 years old	7	5.51%
	51 and over	47	37.01%
Education	School	2	1.57%
	Technical	3	2.36%
	University	84	66.14%
	Master's	29	22.83%
	Doctorate	9	7.09%

## Results

The validity of the measurement model was confirmed by assessing construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. To evaluate reliability and convergent validity, item loadings, internal consistency, and the average variance extracted (AVE) were analyzed. Item reliability was determined by inspecting the loadings of each item on its respective latent construct, with all loadings exceeding the 0.7 threshold recommended by Barclay, Higgins, and Thompson (1995) (see Table 2). Internal consistency was evaluated using composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha, with values ranging from 0.932 to 0.934, 0.933 to 0.956, and 0.902 to 0.950, respectively (see Table 2). Both measures exceeded the 0.7 benchmark proposed by Nunnally (1978). Additionally, all AVE values surpassed the minimum criterion of 0.5, as Hu et al. (2004) recommend. These results confirm that the model has satisfactory reliability and internal consistency.

**Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity**

Construct	CA	CR	AVE
Exposure to Text & Photo Content (ETPC)	0.934	0.958	0.883
Exposure to Video Content (EVC)	0.932	0.956	0.880
Trust Towards the Mayor (TTMA)	0.933	0.957	0.882
Trust Towards the Municipality (TTMU)	0.956	0.966	0.850
Satisfaction (SAT)	0.950	0.962	0.835
Word-of-Mouth (WOM)	0.902	0.938	0.835

Note: CA = Cronbach's Alpha; CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted

This study examined the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio to evaluate discriminant validity. Based on current guidelines, HTMT values should be below 0.85 when constructs are conceptually distinct, and below 0.90 when they are conceptually related (Kline, 2011). As shown in Table 3, all HTMT values fall below 0.85, except for the relationship between trust towards the mayor (TTMA) and satisfaction (SAT), and between trust towards the municipality (TTMU) and TTMA, which recorded values of 0.88 and 0.856, respectively. However, these still fall within the acceptable 0.90 threshold, given their conceptual proximity, TTMA being a predictor of SAT and closely related to TTMU. These results collectively support the adequacy of the measurement model in terms of item reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.



Table 3. Heterotrait-monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Exposure to Text & Photo Content (ETPC)	---					
2. Exposure to Video Content (EVC)	0.829	---				
3. Satisfaction (SAT)	0.458	0.454	---			
4. Trust Towards the Mayor (TTMA)	0.442	0.442	0.880	---		
5. Trust Towards the Municipality (TTMU)	0.452	0.446	0.832	0.856	---	
6. Word-of-Mouth (WOM)	0.699	0.697	0.656	0.589	0.546	---

### Structural model

To evaluate the explanatory capacity of the structural model, this study examined the  $R^2$  values associated with each dependent variable and the path coefficients linking them (refer to Figure 2). The model explains 19.6% of the variance in trust towards the mayor, 20.5% in trust towards the municipality, 73.2% in citizen satisfaction, and 37.8% in word-of-mouth. The results of the path analysis indicate that exposure to video content significantly influences trust towards the mayor (H1,  $\beta=0.233$ ,  $p<0.1$ ) and trust towards the municipality (H2,  $\beta=0.229$ ,  $p<0.1$ ). This study also found that exposure to photo and text content has a direct effect on trust towards the mayor (H3b,  $\beta=0.237$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and trust towards the municipality (H4,  $\beta=0.252$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Moreover, the results show that citizen satisfaction is predicted by trust towards the mayor (H5,  $\beta=0.542$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and trust towards the municipality (H6,  $\beta=0.355$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Finally, it was demonstrated that trust significantly impacts word-of-mouth (H7,  $\beta=0.615$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

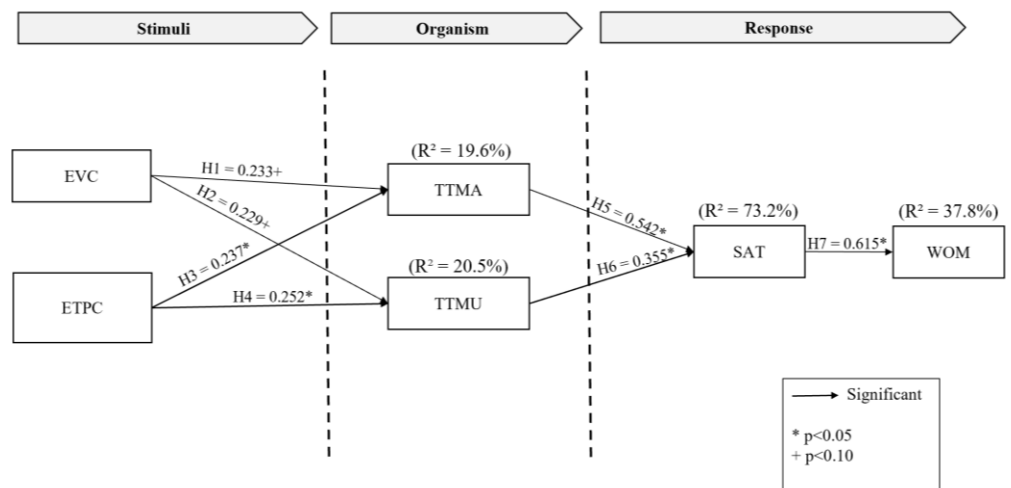


Figure 2. Structural Equation Model Assessment

### Discussion

Social media use by district mayors in Lima has become a prominent feature of municipal communication strategies. As social media engagement grows in Peru, particularly in urban areas like Lima, local governments increasingly leverage platforms to connect with citizens. This trend can impact citizen satisfaction by fostering trust in individual leaders and the municipal institution. The objective of this study was to determine whether social media engagement by district municipalities and their mayors in Lima may

lead to improved citizen trust, and in turn, if trust will increase citizen satisfaction, and improve public approval. Overall, the findings provide empirical evidence supporting the significant role of social media content type in shaping trust, influencing citizen satisfaction, and word-of-mouth (WOM) behaviors.

Regarding the hypotheses proposed in this study, results indicate that video content and text & photos shared in social media positively influence trust towards the mayor and municipality, supporting H1, H2, H3, and H4. However, the impact of video content was lower than that of text and photos (standardized coefficients of video content are lower than those of text and photos). This finding contradicts previous studies that suggest video content creates a more direct and engaging connection with the audience, enhancing perceived transparency and accessibility (Porumbescu, 2017). These findings underscore the importance of consistent, informative posts, as they give citizens a sense of regularity and openness that builds trust in the leader and institution. These findings highlight that different content types serve as valuable tools for mayors aiming to foster trust through digital engagement.

In line with H5 and H6, the study found that trust in the mayor and municipality positively influences citizen satisfaction. This outcome is consistent with literature that links trust in public officials to higher satisfaction with governance, as trust reduces perceived uncertainty and fosters positive attitudes towards municipal services (Tejedo-Romero et al., 2022). Citizens who trust their local leaders and municipal institutions are more likely to feel content with the quality and responsiveness of public services, which reflects positively on the overall perception of municipal governance. The study also confirmed H7, showing that higher levels of citizen satisfaction can lead to positive eWOM behaviors. Satisfied citizens are more inclined to share their positive experiences and promote municipal initiatives, suggesting that municipal engagement strategies can benefit from encouraging satisfaction-driven eWOM. This result aligns with existing literature, demonstrating that satisfaction contributes to civic pride and promotes a more positive community image through citizen endorsements (Perea et al., 2021).

### **Theoretical implications**

This study addressed two key gaps: 1) the lack of differentiation between trust in the municipal organization (e.g., the city government as a whole) and trust in individual leaders, and 2) the scarcity of studies that specifically investigate how different content in SNS may impact citizens' trust. This study contributes by providing empirical evidence that video and text/photo content foster trust in mayors and municipalities, positively influencing citizen satisfaction. Additionally, the study offers insights into the Peruvian context, helping to broaden the understanding of how social media can support trust-building and engagement within diverse municipal settings.

### **Practical implications**

First, this study highlights the potential of social media for mayors and municipal institutions to foster trust and satisfaction among citizens. By utilizing video content, mayors can connect with citizens directly and engage them, enhancing perceptions of transparency and accountability. However, the study also finds that text and photo-based content can have an effect that is equally, if not more, impactful in reinforcing credibility and reliability. Text and photos allow for detailed and thoughtful updates, giving citizens a clearer view of policy details, achievements, and ongoing projects. This combination of video for immediacy and engagement, and text/photo content for depth and clarity, suggests that municipalities would benefit from a balanced social media strategy that leverages both formats. Municipalities should consider investing in resources and training that enable mayors and their communication teams to deliver high-quality content across these media. They should also analyze engagement metrics to identify which content best fosters trust and meets citizen expectations.

Second, the positive impact of social media-driven trust on citizen satisfaction indicates that municipalities could benefit from consistent and interactive communication with citizens through social platforms. To achieve this, municipalities should prioritize regular updates on policy changes, community events, and ongoing initiatives while fostering two-way communication where citizens feel their voices are valued. Transparent and frequent updates can improve satisfaction by making citizens feel included and informed about local governance. Municipalities could implement dedicated social media roles or departments responsible for ensuring timely responses to citizen inquiries and maintaining an active online presence. Additionally, it is recommended that municipalities conduct periodic feedback surveys to assess citizen satisfaction and adjust their social media practices based on the insights gathered, thereby promoting a continuous improvement loop in public engagement.

Finally, the study's findings on citizen satisfaction's influence on word-of-mouth (WOM) behavior underscore the importance of cultivating a satisfied and engaged citizen base. Municipalities can encourage residents to share their positive experiences by highlighting local achievements, improvements in infrastructure, and other community-oriented developments. To support this, municipalities might consider launching campaigns incentivizing citizens to share their experiences on social media, such as using specific hashtags or participating in themed content-sharing days. Moreover, creating feedback mechanisms where citizens can easily share their stories, suggestions, or testimonials could help amplify positive WOM. By promoting these initiatives, municipalities can enhance their reputation, strengthen community ties, and foster a culture of civic pride, ultimately contributing to higher citizen engagement and satisfaction.

### Conclusions

This study provides valuable insights into the factors that influence citizen trust, satisfaction, and engagement with municipal governance through social media engagement by district mayors in Lima. It was found that both video and text/photo content play a significant role in shaping trust toward mayors and municipalities. In turn, this trust positively impacts citizen satisfaction with municipal governance and encourages positive word-of-mouth behavior among residents. These findings suggest that social media can effectively foster transparency, improve citizen satisfaction, and encourage civic participation. Municipalities should consider strategic social media engagement, focusing on content types that build trust and align with citizen expectations in order to strengthen their connection with the community.

### Limitations and future studies

This research is exploratory, examining the influence of social media content on trust, satisfaction, and citizen engagement within a specific context. Some limitations should be noted. First, while the study provides empirical support for the relationships proposed, further theoretical development is needed to explain how different content types may impact trust and satisfaction as distinct variables. Future studies could expand on the theoretical framework, exploring additional variables that may mediate or moderate these relationships, such as perceived transparency or responsiveness.

Second, the sample was limited to citizens in Lima, somewhat skewed toward an educated group, and included only individuals who were currently engaged with local governments via social media. These specific features may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Hence, future studies should consider a more diverse sample across various regions, age groups, users and non-users of SNS, and so on, to assess whether these findings hold in different contexts to assess the external validity of these results. Third, the study focuses solely on two types of social media content (video and text/photo) but does not account for other forms of engagement, such as live interactions or user-generated content. Expanding future research to include a

broader range of social media formats could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how engagement strategies affect citizen trust, satisfaction, and participation.

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## Appendix: Survey questions

<b>Exposure to Text &amp; Photo content (ETPC)</b>	
<b>ETPC1 (<math>\lambda = 0.923</math>)</b>	In a typical week, how often do you look up text or photo posts uploaded by your mayor/municipality?
<b>ETPC2 (<math>\lambda = 0.947</math>)</b>	In a typical week, how frequently do you access text or photo posts about your mayor/municipality?
<b>ETPC3 (<math>\lambda = 0.949</math>)</b>	How often do you access social network sites in a typical week to see text or photo posts about your mayor/municipality?
<b>Exposure to Video Content (EVC)</b>	
<b>EVC1 (<math>\lambda = 0.932</math>)</b>	In a typical week, how often do you look up videos posted by your mayor/municipality?
<b>EVC2 (<math>\lambda = 0.936</math>)</b>	In a typical week, how frequently do you access videos about your mayor/municipality?
<b>EVC3 (<math>\lambda = 0.946</math>)</b>	How often do you access social network sites in a typical week to see videos about your mayor/municipality?
<b>Trust Towards the Mayor (TTMA)</b>	
<b>TTMA1 (<math>\lambda = 0.940</math>)</b>	I believe my mayor is trustworthy in his/her leadership and decision-making.
<b>TTMA2 (<math>\lambda = 0.938</math>)</b>	I trust my mayor to provide the public with all necessary and important information.
<b>TTMA3 (<math>\lambda = 0.939</math>)</b>	I believe my mayor respects the promises made to citizens.
<b>Trust Towards the Municipality (TTMU)</b>	
<b>TTMU1 (<math>\lambda = 0.917</math>)</b>	My municipality provides sufficient information about policies and decisions.
<b>TTMU2 (<math>\lambda = 0.923</math>)</b>	My municipality is transparent in its communication with the public.
<b>TTMU3 (<math>\lambda = 0.923</math>)</b>	My municipality is open about decisions and actions that affect the community.
<b>TTMU4 (<math>\lambda = 0.927</math>)</b>	I trust my municipality to act in the community's best interest.
<b>TTMU5 (<math>\lambda = 0.920</math>)</b>	The actions of my municipality are consistent with the promises made to the public.
<b>Satisfaction (SAT)</b>	
<b>SAT1 (<math>\lambda = 0.903</math>)</b>	I am satisfied with how my mayor communicates the policies of the municipality.
<b>SAT2 (<math>\lambda = 0.922</math>)</b>	The administration of my mayor has met my expectations in providing local services.
<b>SAT3 (<math>\lambda = 0.905</math>)</b>	I feel that my concerns are promptly addressed by my mayor's office.
<b>SAT4 (<math>\lambda = 0.926</math>)</b>	I am generally satisfied with the quality of public services provided by my municipality.
<b>SAT5 (<math>\lambda = 0.912</math>)</b>	I am satisfied with the transparency of my mayor's decision-making process.
<b>Word-of-Mouth (WOM)</b>	
<b>WOM1 (<math>\lambda = 0.899</math>)</b>	How often do you post positive comments about the mayor's or municipality's actions on social media?
<b>WOM2 (<math>\lambda = 0.907</math>)</b>	How often do you follow updates from the mayor through your social media?
<b>WOM3 (<math>\lambda = 0.934</math>)</b>	How often do you recommend the mayor's posts or municipality updates to your acquaintances on social media?