



# Typography in Ecuadorian presidential contests. Use and application in the construction of propagandistic discourse.

La tipografía en contiendas presidenciales ecuatorianas.  
Uso y aplicación en la construcción del discurso propagandístico

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Received: August 19, 2023  
Accepted: October 12, 2023  
Published: April 01, 2024

## Resumen

In design, typography acquires multimodal roles in the construction of the message. Characterizing and understanding it required a two-phase investigation. In the first phase, with a quantitative approach, 171 texts present in 72 graphic pieces were analyzed, applying a matrix of theoretical variables referring to typographic formalism, visual grammar and content analysis. The initial results highlight the use of typography as a graphic, compositional and aesthetic representation of the text. In the second phase of a qualitative and interpretative hermeneutic nature, a controlled experiment was carried out regarding the degree of significance of typography, applied in three Ecuadorian provinces with the highest concentration of voters. The quantitative-qualitative results show that typography in Ecuadorian political propaganda acquired a functional and aesthetic rhetorical role, limiting itself to being the graphic representation of language through text, and disconnecting from the symbolic, historical, social and cultural value in relation to the group to which the message is addressed.

**Keywords:** Typography, propaganda, elections, semiotics, content analysis

## Abstract

*En el diseño, la tipografía adquiere roles multimodales en la construcción del mensaje. Caracterizarla y comprenderla requirió de una investigación de dos fases. En la primera fase, con un enfoque cuantitativo, se analizaron 171 textos presentes en 72 piezas gráficas, aplicando una matriz de variables teóricas referentes al formalismo tipográfico, a la gramática visual y al análisis de contenidos. Los resultados iniciales destacan el uso tipográfico como representación gráfica, compositiva y estética del texto. En la segunda fase, de corte cualitativo e interpretativo hermenéutico, se realizó un experimento controlado referente al grado de significación de la tipografía, aplicado en tres provincias ecuatorianas de mayor concentración de electores. Los resultados cuanti-cualitativos muestran que la tipografía en la propaganda política ecuatoriana adquirió un rol retórico funcional y estético, limitándose a ser la representación gráfica del lenguaje a través del texto, y desconectándose del valor simbólico, histórico, social y cultural en relación con el grupo al que se dirige el mensaje.*

**Palabras clave:** Tipografía, propaganda, elecciones, semiótica, análisis de contenido

◆ **Introducción** *A Brief History of the Presidential Election*

**D**uring the sixteenth century, presidential elections in Ecuador were marked by political instability, power conflicts, overthrows, and social revolts (Pachano, 2004). Since the peaceful return to democracy in 1944 and the call for elections in 1948, presidential elections have been marked by the alternation between different ideological and power currents (Freidenberg, 2020). By 1979, a new system of presidential elections with four-year terms was implemented.

León Febres Cordero was the winner of the contest in 1984. From 1997 to 2006, the country experienced one of its most politically unstable periods: economic and political crises, popular and military revolts, uprisings, etc., which led to unexpected changes of government in the country.

Subsequently, voter political participation, growth rate, and turnout remained steadily growing (Instituto de la Democracia, 2019). The expansion of the age range, the ease of voting abroad, the digitization and systematization of processes, and other modifications in the regulations of national elections by the Consejo Nacional Electoral, have a direct impact on voter participation statistics.

*Tabla 1. Participación electores en contiendas presidenciales de 2002 a 2013*

Contest	Voters	Costa	Sierra	Amazon and Galapagos	Exterior	Urban	Rural	Participation	# of candidates	Concentration Voting (2nd round)
2002	8154425	49,4%	46,3%	3,6%	-	79,4%	20,6%	5298581 65%	11	38%
2006	9.165.125	48,5%	46,5%	4,1%	1,6%	79,2%	20,8%	6.549.677 72%	12	38%
2009	10.529.765	47,8%	46,0%	4,4%	1,8%	78,9%	21,1%	7.928.748 73%	8	-
2013	11.666.478	47,6%	45,4%	4,6%	2,4%	78,0%	22,0%	9.465.860 81,1%	8	-

Fuente: Instituto de la Democracia, 2019.

In the 2002 elections, propaganda strategies were characterized by actions on the ground and in the air. The political discourse involved economic investments in the traditional media and visits to strategic villages in the territory to persuade the decision to vote; In addition, traditional activities were developed to deliver printed material and merchandising, such as: T-shirts, matches, caps, flags, among other products.

By 2006, there was a disruption to the democratic chaos and a new president was elected: Rafael Correa, of Alianza País, the first political organization that, in the campaign, broke stereotypes and incorporated digital communication strategies as part of the propaganda base and the massification of the campaign (Rivera, 2014).

In terms of electoral results, economist Rafael Correa became a historic milestone by obtaining unprecedented results in the following races. For the first time, a candidate managed to win in the first round in 2009 and 2013. This broke the pattern of election trends corresponding to the alternation between left and right parties.

### ***Complexity of communication strategy in politics***

Campaigns produce creative new proposals to reach voters. They are designed from the possibilities of innovation and applied in multimedia, hypermedia and transmedia formats. Thus, platforms, channels, tools and resources are diversified in form and process to be applied in discursive strategies.

In each electoral contest, there are strategic components of political campaigns in Ecuador. However, innovations are also emerging in the form of creative and technological resources in the strategic communication system. These innovations, added to the critical elements related to the political, cultural, economic, social and even family spheres, become key factors that have a significant impact on the construction of public opinion, voting intention and decision.

The communication process in an electoral contest is intricate and requires the communication system to be comprehensive. This system must consider crucial factors, including public image, political discourse management, public relations, campaign performance, strategy, endorsements, partnerships, projects, and proposed work plans. These are components that become fundamental discursive resources to consolidate the persuasive communication of the candidate or the political organization.

On the other hand, candidates become the protagonists of a political spectacle like a reality show, which through their interactions affect the level of popularity and recognition (Amado, 2016).

Renowned international strategies have left their mark with their approaches emulated empirically or methodically in presidential or sectional campaigns

in different territories: David Alexrod, renowned expert strategist in social networks and electoral base mobilization, accompanied Barack Obama in his victory in 2008 and 2012; Mark MacKinnon, a prominent member of George W. Bush's team in 2000 and 2004, worked on the candidate's positive image and his ability to use the media, a strategy that has been emulated by other strategies for his candidates; Linton Crosby, Boris Johnson's strategist in 2019, was characterized by his simple communication strategy on key issues to improve communication with residents; James Carville became an expert in strategies that connect with rural and low-income populations. Regional strategists also stand out, such as Venezuela's Juan José Rendón, an expert in the use of technology and social networks. All of them have deciphered the complexity of the political communication strategy by raising creative, innovative, diverse, effective and winning proposals.

Connecting with strategic groups, achieving effective communication, reaching out from the emotional or any other path that strategists propose for their candidates and teams, involves the use of graphic language and audiovisual language. Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary work allows us to ideate, plan, execute and evaluate the strategy in the world of persuasive communication and political discourse, as well as in the propaganda-advertising strategy.

### ◆ Theoretical foundation *Persuasive Communication, Political Propaganda, and Public Opinion*

Propaganda has played a fundamental role in all areas of society and is most strongly present in electoral contests. For Vázquez Liñán and Leetoy (2016), propaganda is understood as "a communicative process aimed at deliberately influencing people's perceptions, attitudes, ideas and behaviors, with the aim of promoting the interests of the propagandist" (p. 27).

Throughout history, people have always been influenced (Álvarez, 2019). Beginning with World War I, psychologists devoted themselves to the study of persuasion, and their results migrated to other disciplines. One of the most analyzed theories around propaganda is the "Hypodermic Needle", created by Lasswell (1927). This theory studies the propaganda disseminated in the media and refers to mass society, which is very manipulable and influenced by them, which leads to the formation of public opinion. In addition, the theory is used to analyze political discourses or how governments use the media to create messages that become behavioral threads around their opinions and actions.

According to Freidenberg (2004), this study suggests that "any message properly presented by the media can have an instantaneous and massive persuasive effect on recipients who are highly vulnerable to influence; and that mass communication has direct effects on attitudes and behavior" (p. 5).

Media outlets influence their audiences through the messages they spread. These media play a fundamental role in the functioning of the democratic system (Holgado-González, 2003). In this sense, Habermas (1962) stated that the mass media are not only transmitters of information, but also give way to the construction of public opinion, since the audience or readers generate opinions from journalistic messages or content generated by communicators. According to Aguado (2004), the media represent the stimulus that, involuntarily for the audience, influences their points of view and choices according to the objectives of the sender of the message.

From another context, Dahlgren (2009) emphasizes that one of the problems of contemporary democracies is the decline in the commitment of citizens, political representatives, and the system. And within this system, the media and mediatized political communication can play a significant role. As Chavero (2020) mentions, in Ecuador the media have stripped themselves of their mediating role to position themselves as political actors and influence the political agenda.

### ***Content analysis in persuasive communication***

In the discipline of Advertising, the existence of a constructive interaction between elements that make up the process of construction of the message is recognized. Through content analysis, it is possible to understand this complex and dynamic system from a disciplinary perspective. This involves identifying and evaluating the relationship between the message and the communicative objectives, strategies and results. It is also possible to approach this system from the dynamics of communication, which involves topics such as narrative, discourse and rhetoric, among others.

This approach facilitates the interpretation of messages, whether they are the candidate's own or those of his opponents; issued regardless of the formats used, consisting of texts, images, audio, video, among others.

In the dimensions of message production and consumption, the advertising industry has a constant interest in understanding the reception, effectiveness, influence, trend or perception, around tangible and intangible elements such as: products, services or brands, to improve the effectiveness of the message.

In addition, political or propagandistic communication in relation to Advertising addresses interesting approaches, such as influencing public opinion and persuasion (Gerstlé, 1977), changes and adaptations in the media (Jamieson, 1992), or power and ideology (Street, 1997); For this reason, multidisciplinary discussions enrich the understanding of its dynamics within society and allow us to improve the communication proposal from the professional field.

From the perspective of image studies, efforts can follow several angles, for example, addressing discursive studies. Van Dijk (2003) indicates that a detailed study of linguistic phenomena at the microtextual level is necessary to understand the discursive construction of the social and cognitive relations expressed in texts. In this context, on the microtextual, towards the decoding of the image, the visual nature itself opens infinite possibilities for understanding the sociocognitive effects, in which multimodal studies (Kress, 2010) have made significant contributions.

The study variables can be approached from two approaches: one conceptual and the other formal. The first explores aspects that include the semiotic, rhetorical, narrative, discursive, ideological and cultural perspectives, to name a few. From the point of view of specificity, theories can be approached that include chromatic schemes, influences such as temporal stereotypes, fashions and trends are explained. The mechanics of reproduction deduce influences on the use and evolution of technologies. On the other hand, in the formal approach, composition, resources, elements, technique, styles and technologies are analyzed. The relationship between planes, forms and space can also be interpreted, and according to their use, the relationship between plastic arts and discourse can be understood.

This operationalization of variables in content analysis therefore defines the research focus or interests. Methodologically, there are several dimensions of study on text, literature and speech implication, such as pragmatics (Grice, 1975; Searle, 1969) or theories of enunciation (Benveniste, 1966; Ducrot & Todorov, 1972), which are a fundamental part and, through multimodalism and interdisciplinarity, allow the results of the analysis to be interpreted and are related to the objective of the research and the existing theory.

### ***Formal and visual grammatical construction of typography***

From the theories of graphic language and visual grammar, visual discourse analysis and multimodal studies (Kress, 2010), each element that makes up the message affects the different discursive levels. That said, it becomes relevant to focus efforts to understand the role of typography in a political campaign. In this regard, it should be taken into consideration that, due to historical complexity and multidisciplinary relevance, typography involves the art of creating and designing typographic characters (Tschichold & Monzó, 2002) that allow effective communication, in addition to contributing to the meaning, legibility and beauty of the message, which can affect its comprehension (Lupton, 2015; Warde, 1955). This coincides with what Robert Bringhurst (2014) said, who attributes to typography the ability to improve the clarity and effectiveness of the message.

Studying typography from formal and pictorial architecture allows us to identify the different fonts and typographic families that have been

created and used in different printed and digital products throughout history. Henestrosa stated that, with the proliferation of new typography options in digital format, the limits of traditional manufacturing processes that used the technique of metal forging have been overcome (Garone, 2010). The diversity of typographic options makes its categorization more complex.

Typography, from its etymological conception, refers to a system of manual printing with movable type born in East Asia, perfected and spread in Europe in the mid-fifteenth century. On the other hand, it also refers to signs composed of sets of typographic characters, which are constantly updated over time, in technological, functional, cultural and aesthetic terms (Ares, 2013). For Roberto Gamonal (2014), typography is a "cultural artefact" with a profound impact on the history of humanity.

As a prelude, it is not clear when and where the transition from communication to graphic language through signs began, but it is believed to have originated in the Eastern Mediterranean before 2,000 BC (McLean, 1987). Some systems stand out throughout history: on the one hand, the Cuneiform tablets (4,000 B.C. to 100 B.C.) are the first standardized writing system, characterized by the technique of engraving wedges on wet clay tablets in ancient Mesopotamia. And, on the other hand, writing based on pictograms, Egyptian hieroglyphs made up of 750 elements that represent objects in their environment (Ambrose & Harris, 2009).

Another well-known system of the East is based on ideograms; Chinese writing from 3,000 years ago stands out for this. Its main feature is the assignment of a word to a sign, which can represent abstract concepts, such as the song of a bird. A further example is the Japanese script which, as a basis in the Chinese script, was simplified to a syllable script, Hiragana and Katakana style (Ambrose & Harris, 2009).

In 1,600 B.C., the Phoenician characters were born, composed of 22 signs; These became the basis for the emergence of the Latin alphabet, which represents sounds that when combined could generate the Arabic and Hebrew script (800 B.C.), as well as the Semitic languages and Aramaic (900 B.C.), Greek, Latin and modern European, among others (Ambrose and Harris, 2009). This gave rise to the Roman alphabet of 26 letters, uppercase and lowercase, and to Roman numerals, which from their modifications gave rise to the "movable type" initially in Asia, and then consolidated and positioned in Europe with the contribution of Gutenberg.

For the designer and art historian Mariana Garone (2010), in the Americas "the elaboration of texts in indigenous languages was one of the first concerns of missionaries and officials of the colonial administration and, at the same time, it was the main motive that drove the arrival and dissemination of typographic art" (p. 99). Mexico is the place in the

Americas where the printing press was first established as a tool of missionary work. Through creativity, this instrument solved the limitations in alphabetic and technological writing, which allowed the creation of indigenous texts (Garone, 2010).

Typography has a great complexity of creating, modifying or adapting. Cristóbal Henestroza, in an interview, mentions that a final typeface can contain:

[...] uppercase, lowercase, different sets of numerals, small caps, punctuation marks, monetary, diacritics, ligatures [...] In total, the round font currently consists of 452 signs (glyphs, say purists). To this must be added those of italics (469 signs), bold (452), bold italics (469), plus other variants that I added: rotund Gothic (345), aldine cursive (462), titles (460), ornaments (71) and four capitular fonts, each with 187 signs. (Garone, 2011, p. 19)

Typography today shows its ability to adapt and its relevance in the communication of human beings. For example, it has enabled the evolution of digital printing and digital media to communication systems with augmented reality or virtual reality.

On the other hand, by characterizing the visual grammatical function and the symbolic value of the type, the discursive load and its impact on the message that is intended to be emitted are revealed. Within the visual grammatical function, the typographic hierarchy is recognized, which refers to the organization of typography in a design, to guide the reader's attention to the most essential information. Different font sizes, weights, colors, and styles can be used to create a visual hierarchy that highlights the essential: legibility that is principled by the ease with which the reader can read the text in a design. Typefaces that are legible and easy to understand should be chosen, especially when dealing with large blocks of text. Aspects such as line spacing, letter spacing, and line length should also be considered to ensure smooth reading.

Typographic contrast corresponds to the difference between fonts used in a design. Fonts with different weights, styles, and sizes can be combined to create interesting visual appeals that grab the reader's attention or aid in better understanding. Alignment is an important aspect of typography, as it benefits or affects the readability and visual organization of a design. Alignment options include left, centered, justified, and right alignment. Negative space refers to the white space between letters and lines of text and can be used to improve the readability and visual organization of a design, as well as to create a sense of balance and harmony.

Each typeface has its own personality and can convey different emotions and moods. When choosing a typeface for a design, you should consider: the personality of the font, how it fits the message you want



to communicate; the role and its communicative function, be it such as: headlines, before headlines, subtitles, headline breakers, text bubbles; the handling of blocks or paragraphs of text; repetition; frequency, among other characteristics.

### ***Typography and Political Advertising Propaganda***

There is conceptual confusion within the disciplines that approach propaganda as part of their professional practice, since the terms propaganda and public relations are often taken as synonyms, as well as those of advertising, persuasion, political campaigns or even psychological warfare (Brown, 1958; Carey, 1997; Gordon, 1942; Jowett and O'Donnell, 2012; Lasswell, 1995; Linebarger, 1948; Lumley, 1933; Murty, 1968; Winkler, 1978, cited by Laskin, 2019).

Although propaganda relates its beginnings to the religious sphere (propagare in Latin means to propagate or extend), its relationship with planting and agriculture allowed its concept to be taken to the propagation of the Catholic faith. In the Middle Ages, this term spread to other angles and took on great historical relevance with the role it played in the First World War, due to Nazi propaganda strategies. The term then acquired a negative connotation or rejection by association with the events of war that initiated the proposition of other terms and disciplines that move away from that connotation.

History has shown that propaganda is an intrinsic part of humanity. Its use in relation to power, dominance, ideology, culture or other types of social manifestations and interests makes this discipline acquire social, professional and scientific relevance and interest. This transcendence allows us to reflect on the use of visual language and its components in the construction of visual discourse towards the configuration of the design of the different graphic and audiovisual pieces that make up a propaganda campaign. For the purposes of this research, by concentrating interest on its use and application as part of the configuration of the design, typography acquires roles of complementarity of the message as its main emitter, and as a compositional aesthetic element in graphic and audiovisual pieces.

It must be understood that communication has an impact on the decision to vote, and design is the weapon used by political organizations to convey their final message to the electorate (Calvo, 2015); therefore, it is crucial to select or design a typographic font that adds symbolic value to the candidate's identity and is coherent with the message you want to convey (Knight Without Swords, 2014). On the other hand, as well as other issues, propaganda graphics are influenced by international references, hence it is common to see identical or almost identical adaptations of successful campaigns in other countries.

A clear example of the evidence of these cases is the headline published by the *dissenycv.es* magazine of digital analysis on the article "Electoral typography. Is there life beyond Gotham?", where they highlight the use of the same font family in various political campaigns worldwide (Gorria, 2014). This is in line with the research and subsequent publication of Helena Carazo (2011), who, after a historical review of the use of typography in propaganda, concludes that there is evidence of the little use of serif typography, the similarity and little innovation and what she calls "political anesthesia". In addition, it defines that much of political communication is the same typographically, it is repeated.

At the Latin American level, studies are more widespread. The works of Fontana (2013), Consolo (2013) and Cosgaya (2012) stand out, presenting studies on typography in this region. They agree that advances in typography at the disciplinary and academic levels focus on experimental typography and its relationship with the cultures of its environments. For this reason, addressing the descriptive and rhetorical analysis of typography in Ecuadorian political propaganda allows us to generate a path of expansion to, in the first instance, interest other professionals, dignify design through quantitative methodologies and develop interdisciplinary studies that describe the importance of typography in visual communication.

### Methodological design

For the study of typography in Ecuadorian political propaganda, the object of study was determined to be the propaganda advertisements of the electoral contests held in Ecuador from 2002 to 2013. The units of analysis are the texts present in the advertisements of graphic pieces corresponding to the parties registered with presidential candidates in the Consejo Nacional Electoral, and which, at that time, represent the political forces of the country.

This research was carried out under a quantitative and qualitative methodological approach. The content analysis matrix technique was implemented, a method that allows the interpretation of messages, texts or discourses (Piñuel-Raigada, 2002). As stated by Krippendorff (2019), this technique has become a scientific approach that can generate conclusions based on verbal, symbolic or communicative information.

The analysis was carried out with nominal variables referring to the use of typographic fonts. It was categorized by typeface, typographic classification, variants and resources used in the propaganda pieces. The methodological study was descriptive to delve into the graphic and typographic findings of political propaganda. Once the data were collected, they were transferred to the statistical analysis program *ibm spss*, version 25, to perform the frequency and chi-square inference analyses.

The study was structured from formal and pictorial analysis. The analysis variables were defined according to the structure of the message construction, the hierarchy of the textual message and the theoretical construct. Each word or phrase such as "copy" had a role within the message and the visual discourse, whether it was to complement the visual message, to inform or to be a direct message. In addition, the terms used in editorial layout were used to prioritize the roles of the text in the graphic pieces analyzed.

To develop an organized methodological process, a numerical coding system was implemented for nominal variables; another for the political organizations analyzed; and a complementary table referring to the winners and the graphic piece analyzed.

In relation to the theoretical construct that underpins this research, a matrix was developed that allowed the characterization of the use of typography in presidential election propaganda (see table 2). The matrix was structured into five categories of analysis: demographic, typology, typographic category, variant and resource.

Different bibliographic sources propose various classifications of typography, each of them valid according to historical, process, formal, artistic or functional argumentation. But all these classifications and others not mentioned in the document are based on a basic classification: Serif or Sans Serif typefaces, and Sans Serif or Sin Serif typefaces. This translates into the existence or not of aesthetic projections or finishes in the endings or shears of the letter. For Frutiger, Osterer and Stamm (2021) serifs can be classified into diverse types according to their shape, such as straight, curved, triangular or hooked serifs. Its use depends on aesthetic function, readability or readability.

Following a more specific classification process, typography was modified and adapted to new supports, processes, formats, languages, styles and uses. This classification has been limited to the concepts most frequently mentioned by authors (Bringhurst, 2014; Frutiger et al., 2021; Tracy, 1986): black, Roman, Gothic, scripted, graphic, modern, grotesque, Egyptian, and geometric. In addition, typographic studies subdivide graphic typefaces into handwritten and decorative. But, for the purposes of an analysis of the function of use and its relationship with the propagandistic political message, this subdivision is not alluded to in the present study.

Typefaces are organized into families, these typefaces form a group designed to be used together, and share common characteristics, while presenting variations in weight, width, thickness, and other details, providing greater versatility in design (Butterick & Spiekermann, 2013).

Digitization significantly expanded the spectrum of variants for a typeface family. As in the previous category, the most traditional ones (normal,

light, italics, and bold) were selected for the study, since identifying with such a specific variant—light or italics—did not modify the result of the characterization or research analysis.

Table 2. Detailed consolidation matrix of information based on categories, variables and indicators.

Variable	Text	Ob. of study	Results				Typology	
Text	Role of text	Political Organization or Alliance	Stake	Results	Contest	Graphics	Type	
Headline	1	1	1	1	2002	1	0	1
	1	1	1	1	2002	2	0	1
	1	2	1	2	2002	1	0	1
	1	2	1	2	2002	2	0	1
Caption	2	1	1	1	2002	1	0	1
	2	1	1	1	2002	2	0	1
	2	2	1	2	2002	1	1	0
	2	2	1	2	2002	2	0	1
Body	3	1	1	1	2002	1	0	1
	3	1	1	1	2002	2	0	1
	3	2	1	2	2002	1	1	1
	3	2	1	2	2002	2	0	0
Note or footer	4	1	1	1	2002	1	0	0
	4	1	1	1	2002	2	0	0
	4	2	1	2	2002	1	0	1
	4	2	1	2	2002	2	0	0

Uso de fuentes tipograficas										
Variable	Classification									
Text	#Type in one piece	Black	Roman	Gothic	Script	Graph	Modern	Egyptian	Geometrics	#Classes in the ssame piece
Headline	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Caption	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Body	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Note or footer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1

Uso de fuentes tipograficas								
Variable	Variant					Resource		
Text	Normal	Light	Italics	Bold	#Variants in the same piece	Typographi- cal contrast	Typographic combination	Typographi- cal harmony
Headline	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
Caption	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
Body	0	1	1	0	2	0	1	0
	1	0	1	0	2	0	1	0
	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Note or footer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

Source: Matrix prepared for the project on the use of typefaces, 2022-2023.

To identify the typographies of each propaganda piece, three specialized platforms were used (see figure 1): 1. WhatTheFont, 2. WhatFontIs and the Chrome 3 extension, WhatFont. The capacity of these tools is not exact in some cases, but it allows you to recognize the features that stand out in the text and identifies similar fonts within your extensive databases, thus allowing you to recognize their classification, type, variant or any other indicator evaluated in the matrix. This reduces the margin of error when identifying and analyzing fonts in charts.

## WhatTheFont

Instant font identification powered by the world's largest collection of fonts.

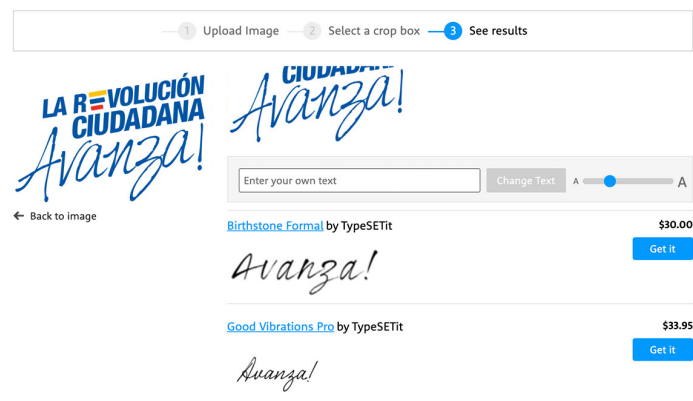


Figure 1. Typographic font identifier used in Alianza País campaign.  
Source: Screenshot from the WhatTheFont App, 2022-2023.

The validation was carried out through the consultation of two academics in Graphic Design, who, from their conceptualization and professional expertise, evaluated the matrices by characterizing the use of typography in graphics used in presidential campaigns of the corpus of study and delivered a rubric for the evaluation of the matrices. A professional specialized in statistics and quantitative research performed data evaluation and descriptive analysis in IBM-SPSS, version 25.0, to validate and curate the information, which allowed us to open several research edges of our own or for third parties.

The validation of the collection of information was carried out with a pilot test carried out on 25 students of the Advertising career of the sixth semester of the Technical University of the North; All of them with acquired knowledge about typography and a previous consolidation of knowledge through training related to the variables and indicators that appear in the matrix.

In the first instance, the characterization exercise of the graphic pieces was carried out individually and their subsequent analysis with pairs of students (process evidence, see figure 2), to support and discuss their criteria to identify typography, use and function. Subsequently, a second analysis of the information required in the matrices was carried out in working groups according to the date of the elections studied; and it ended with the consolidation of information and joint discussion of all participants to validate the functionality of the matrices according to coding.

**Qualitative analysis phase**

For the qualitative analysis, the controlled experimental method was applied, designed from the generation of study groups, as representative samples, in the three provinces with the highest concentration of voting: Pichincha, Guayas and Manabí, which represent almost 50% of voters at the national level. Each group of eight people was defined by stratified random sampling, which was then chosen according to relevant selection criteria argued according to the theoretical bases of the research. Arias (2012) suggests that this input should be considered for up to 12 people to maintain control, effectiveness in data collection, and efficiency in the process, data collection, and interpretation. In each province, control groups were set up jointly under the same guidelines as the other groups.



Figure 2. Design of graphic pieces with common characteristics identified in the study corpus.  
Source: Authors.

For the experiment, two generic propaganda graphic pieces were developed, according to the design characteristics that most coincide between the contenders of the different campaigns studied, to avoid ideological biases in the interpretation. Each design with a specific generic message was modified only in its font. The typographic selection and combinations were carried out according to the statistical data obtained in the typographic characterization carried out in the first phase of the research. Thus, "grotesque" and "geometric" typographies were applied as the most used, and "graphic" typographies were applied for contrast. The following typographic combinations were also applied in the design: "contrast" and "harmony" as the most and least recurrent, respectively. And an option with classic typography, without variants: "Calibri" "normal" version, for control.

A questionnaire was developed with nominal variables and an ordinal scale, addressing aesthetic, functional, subjective, and interpretative dimensions, categorized into axiological, ideological, functional, aesthetic and communicational values. This was to recognize whether changes in typographic selection could affect the interpretation of the message and discourse. The sum of all the variables analyzed in a graph, where 4 was "very high" and 0 "not at all", became the "degree of significance" of the propaganda piece, which could reach a maximum of 135, if all the variables were interpreted at a "very high" level. To systematize and facilitate the analysis, the value of the degree of significance was divided into 10 levels of "degree of significance", where 1 was the minimum and 10 the maximum.

The results were transferred to the IBM SPSS statistical analysis program, version 25, to perform the frequency and chi-square inference calculations as part of the analysis. And for the discussion, the hermeneutic methodology was applied as a process of interpretation and understanding of knowledge.

**Results** Typographic resources in design, through contrast or harmony in typography, can increase the legibility values and aesthetic value of the message. In applications, to cite the findings obtained in this study, the relationship of properties in bold contrasts with smaller scales and versions of the same font family in italics or light.

For the quantitative descriptive analysis, using the IBM-SPSS software, an organizational simplification was performed to the matrix in Table 2, where the analysis variables were prioritized according to the typographic characterization categories. The coding described in the "values" of the variables was applied.

The first associations analyzed were based on the role of text within the composition, with the classification of typographic families.



Table 3. Analysis of the association between the role of the text in the graphic piece and the typographic classification used.

	Black	Roman	Gothic	Script	Graphic	Modern	Grotesque	Geometric	Graphic + grotesque	Roman + Geometric	Roman + Gothic	Black + grotesque	Black + script
Holder	9 13,0%	1 1,4%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	1 1,4%	9 13,0%	34 49,3%	9 13,0%	1 1,4%	1 1,4%	0 0,0%	3 4,3%	1 1,4%
Holder	1 1,4%	1 1,4%	0 0,0%	1 1,4%	0 0,0%	1 1,4%	47 82,5%	2 3,5%	2 3,5%	0 0,0%	1 1,4%	1 1,4%	0 0,0%
Holder	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	1 2,8%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	33 91,7%	1 2,8%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	1 1,4%	0 0,0%
Holder	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	8 88,9%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	1 11,1%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%
Total	10 5,8%	2 1,2%	1 0,6%	1 0,6%	1 0,6%	10 5,8%	122 71,3%	12 7,0%	3 1,8%	1 0,6%	2 1,2%	5 2,9%	1 0,6%

Source: Authors.

Note: These are 171 cases processed, corresponding to existing texts in graphic pieces of the study corpus, from 2002 to 2013.

The association between the nominal variables of the role of the text of the graphic piece with the selection of the type of typography used, with Pearson's chi-square statistic to determine the existence of association between variables, is 0.012. Therefore, the following hypothesis is accepted: H1: there is a statistically significant association between text role and typographic class. It is recognized that, despite the statistically significant association, it does not imply a causal relationship, i.e., it cannot be said that the typographic style is related to the role of text of the propaganda piece or vice versa.

It is also evident that the selection of more legible, easy-to-read and aesthetically attractive typographic styles is the majority. Grotesques and their sub-classifications are the most used with 71.3%; without neglecting the modern ones, due to their rich aesthetic-functional morphology, and the geometric ones, due to their ease of reading, which together add up to 12.8%. The use of black colors represents 5.8%, these are chosen for their great visual weight. The fonts with the most features, details, italics and graphics are the least used or applied for complementary texts or aesthetic features.

According to the relationship between the nominal variables of each presidential election year and the typographic classification used, which is presented in Table 4, Pearson's chi-square is 0.06, of asymptotic significance, which shows that the association between them is weak and does not allow us to conclude that there is a causal relationship between them. In other words, there are no specific patterns of typographic selection for each year of the electoral contest, despite the wide variety of typographic options available in digital format in recent years.

Table 4. Association Between Presidential Election Year and Chosen Typographic Classification

	Black	Roman	Gothic	Script	Graphic	Modern	Grotesque	Geometric	Graphic + grotesque	Roman + Geometric	Roman + Gothic	Black + grotesque	Black + script
2002	1 2,3%	2 4,7%	1 2,3%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	29 67,4%	5 11,6%	2 4,7%	1 2,3%	2 4,7%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%
2006	3 6,8%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	1 2,3%	4 9,1%	32 72,7%	1 2,3%	1 2,3%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	2 4,5%	0 0,0%
2009	5 14,3%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	1 2,9%	0 0,0%	6 17,1%	22 62,9%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	1 2,9%	0 0,0%
2013	1 2,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	39 79,6%	6 12,2%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	2 4,1%	1 2,0%
Total	10 5,8%	2 1,2%	1 0,6%	1 0,6%	1 0,6%	10 5,8%	122 71,3%	12 7,0%	3 1,8%	1 0,6%	2 1,2%	5 2,9%	1 0,6%

Source: Authors.

Note: Relationship between variables according to our own study, 2022-2023.

The association between the organizations or political alliances participating in the different electoral contests with the use of pictorial resources is statistically proven with a Pearson chi-square of 0.000. As these are nominal variables, it cannot be concluded that there are causal relationships between them, but the linear association of 0.837 shows to be strong between both variables. On the other hand, the association between electoral results and typographic variants is statistically significant but does not imply a causal relationship between variables. This shows that in each electoral contest, the use and application of typography maintains common features without there being any verification to be a cause for modification of results. In addition, the above agrees with the statement of Helena Carazo (2011), who evidenced the little use of serif typography, the similarity between typefaces, the lack of innovation and what she called "political anesthesia".

As the results of the first phase of the research were inconclusive, a second qualitative phase was incorporated, which sought to interpret in a methodical and hermeneutic way the role of typography in the visual discourse of the campaigns.

The results obtained in the controlled experiment show the predominance of rhetoric in its dimension of function, as use and application; to convey a message, have better legibility and contribute to the aesthetics of the propaganda piece. To reaffirm or contrast the analysis, a relational analysis was carried out between variables, finding relevant relationships between the text and the variables clarity of the message, composition, degree of significance and coherence. The findings confirm that:

[...] The gradual codification of the use of letters and the arrangement of texts are not only aspects pertinent to orthographies and grammars, but also construct the aesthetic nature of books in these

Table 5. Relationship between clarity of message and text. Chi-square test languages and participate in the transmission of cultural ideas and values. (Garone, 2010, p. 118)

For example, as shown in Table 5, the relationship between message clarity and text represents a chi-square value of 0.004, indicating a strong association between the two variables.

	Value	df	Asymptotic significance (bilateral)
Pearson's Chi-square	34,640 <sup>to</sup>	16	,004
Reason for plausibility	34,375	16	0,005
Linear association by linear	14,969	1	0,00
N valid cases	48		

Source: Authors.

Note: Result obtained with spss software version 25.0

It should be noted that all the graphs analyzed in the controlled experiment had some degree of significance. While minimum (level 2) and maximum (level 8) outliers can be observed, the pattern of association is in the range of level 3 to 6, including control units of analysis and regardless of the place where the study was conducted, the election results, or the ideological current. This shows that there is no relationship between the subjective, axiological, ideological, communicational direction elements and the typographic variants modified in the graphic pieces of the study and reaffirms the functional rhetorical value as an iconic sign representative of the text and its aesthetic compositional role.

These were elements that were very little attended to by the designers who configured the graphic pieces analyzed, which, Roberto Gamonal (2014) rightly mentions, implies "a lack of sensitivity and attention not only towards language, but also towards its graphic manifestation" (p. 375), since "typography supposes the materialization and visual representation of the thought and knowledge of the human being that exponentially multiplies its dissemination and reproduction thanks to the printing press and the printing press". movable types" (p. 375).

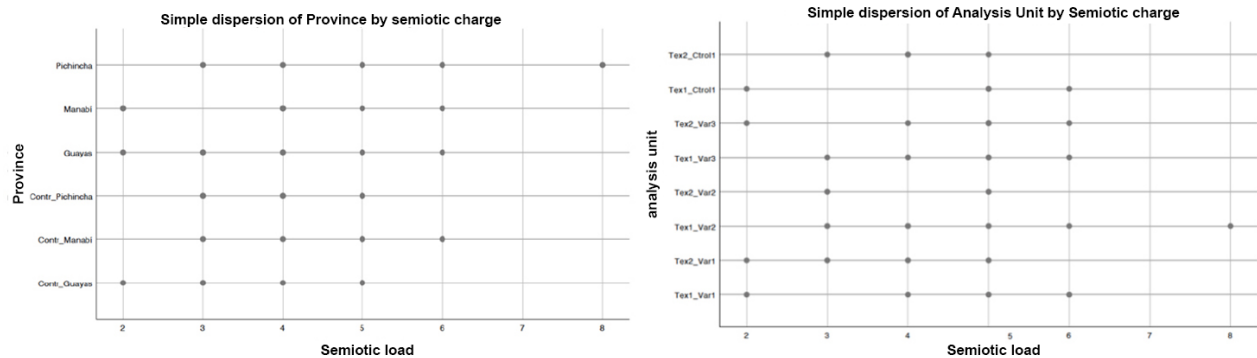


Figure 3. Simple scatter plot between units of analysis by their degree of significance and by place of study.

Source: Authors.

Note: Graphs obtained with spss software version 25.0

### Conclusions About typographic characterization

Sans serif fonts are the most used by political organizations throughout the study period; The typefaces categorized as grotesque or neogrotesque are the most selected in their different variants. Although there is agreement in the use of typefaces, it cannot be generalized that the use of a specific typeface or with certain characteristics is significantly linked to the winning candidates. What can be done is the description of the use and importance of typefaces according to their nature, as well as their properties, roles, uses, styles and characteristics according to the frequency of use.

Content analysis creates the opportunity to integrate meaningful elements for reading into the behavior of the image. At the beginning of the research, the hypothesis and questions surrounding the relationship between typography and election results were determined, which was an overly ambitious objective; However, it allowed us to describe the obvious and to know that this variable is not the only one in conjecture according to the political communication system used.

As a result of statistical understanding, these cases can be objective and pragmatic. The design researcher can read with aesthetic and conceptual elements to understand empirical interests when approaching studies that are quantitatively verifiable. The researcher can study the training and specialization in typographic design, since in Latin America we lack our own proposals and references and those of European or North American currents.

This approach to typography allows us to approach the great questions of human beings that have historically been discussed, regarding

communication and the expansion of the understanding of meaning through symbolic production (Eco, 2000). Although it is true that there is agreement in the use of grotesque fonts, beyond their percentage, the typographic configuration in the propaganda design is relevant. Among several notions, this typography provides a functional, aesthetic and communicational value, which would support the reason for its use.


### ***On hermeneutical analysis***

The configuration of a typeface involves many formal and subjective components that nourish and give personality to the letter, giving it a representative, interpretative, phonetic, grammatical, historical, social, cultural and rhetorical value. There are many elements that incorporate and are synthesized in the features that particularize and differentiate one typography from another.

On the other hand, from the pragmatic semiotics of Pierce (2008), the theory of enunciation of Benveniste (1966), the socio-semiotics of Verón (2009) and the cultural semiotics of Eco (2000), it is possible to understand the relationship and cohesion of the subjective and knowledge elements of individuals and collectives in the interpretation and understanding of the message.

This suggests that the use of typography in Ecuadorian political propaganda would contribute from the process of signification, in relation to prior knowledge and historical, social and cultural social agreements in the construction of the candidate's visual discourse. But the quantitative-qualitative results obtained show that typography in Ecuadorian political propaganda in presidential campaigns from 2002 to 2013 acquired a functional and aesthetic rhetorical role, being limited to being the graphic representation of language through text without linking to symbolic, historical, social or cultural values. This may be because the subjective elements with which these typographies were constructed are far from the Ecuadorian context.

The results of this research open up a range of new ontological, academic and empirical questions, open to other territories, related to the contribution of the designer in the generation of typographic proposals linked to the context of the country, loaded with subjective elements of their own, but with the same functional rhetorical characteristics that political propaganda finds in the classic typographies used in campaigns.

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