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How to Navigate the Personal-Official Divide on Social Media? Institutional Strategies and Ethical Mechanisms for Colombian Public Officials

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Abbreviations

Chancellery	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
DAFP	Administrative Department of Public Service
OI	International organisation
MinAgriculture	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MinCommerce	Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism
MinCulture	Ministry of Culture, Arts, and Knowledge
MinDefence	Ministry of National Defence
MinEducation	Ministry of National Education
MinEnergy	Ministry of Mines and Energy
MinEnvironment	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development
MinEquality	Ministry of Equality and Equity
MinFinance	Ministry of Finance and Public Credit
MinHealth	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
MinHousing	Ministry of Housing, City and Territory
MinICT	Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies
MinInterior	Ministry of the Interior
MinJustice	Ministry of Justice and Law
MinLabour	Ministry of Labour
MinScience	Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation
MinSport	Ministry of Sport
MinTransportation	Ministry of Transportation
SNS	Social network sites

1 Introduction

During the latter half of 2023, a phenomenon known as “Mr Taxes” caught the attention of millions of Colombian users on TikTok and other social networks (Rodríguez 2024). The protagonist was Luis Carlos Reyes, the Director of the National Directorate of Tax and Customs (DIAN) at the time, who used his personal TikTok account, @luiscarlosrh, to share short and humorous videos about information on taxes and tax obligations (RTVC Noticias 2024). His videos, characterised by the freshness of the answers and the interaction with the public, contributed to humanising a field generally perceived as difficult or distant, thus generating an agile communication bridge between the government and the taxpayers (Saavedra 2024). Due to his good management in the position and the great attention he received, Reyes was then promoted to Minister of Commerce, Industry and Tourism in mid-2024 (Sacristán 2024), from where he continued to use his personal social media account, no longer for tax issues but for business and tourism matters (Fajardo Sánchez 2024).

Reyes’ strategy exemplifies how social network sites (SNS) can be integrated into modern governance to inform and promote participation. It also highlights a broader trend in political communication emerging in digital governance: elected or appointed political figures utilising personal channels to share official information. This practice, while innovative, also brings forward unresolved institutional conflicts, especially with the delineation of public responsibilities, institutional legitimacy, and the ethics of personalisation in digital governance. Critical voices have pointed out, for instance, the confusion such practices may generate between the informative duties of a public official and the promotion of a personal image, especially relevant in light of his future political ambitions (El Colombiano 2024).

This dual role of public official and political figure illustrates the broader communicative tensions that arise when public officials, particularly those with political mandates or aspirations, use personal social media accounts in the exercise of their duties. On the one hand, their visible and direct interaction with citizens promotes transparency and public engagement. On the other hand, such visibility may blur boundaries between institutional communication and political marketing, potentially distorting public perception or sidelining accountability.

In this context, the organisation and management of social media within public institutions, particularly by political figures once in office, has gained relevance as digital platforms reshape the landscape of political communication (OECD 2021). Under the broader framework of e-government, SNS offer opportunities for real-time, multidirectional communication and participatory engagement and have become

embedded into the daily operations of governments seeking to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of public administration (Khan et al. 2024; de Kool 2014).

Although social media platforms have stopped being merely an instrument for election campaigns and now have become part of everyday governance and public administration (Ramos Alderete 2022), most academic attention still focuses on their impact during campaigns (Abid et al. 2023; Ceccobelli et al. 2020; Hoffmann et al. 2016). Hence, there is insufficient understanding of how public officials, especially those with political profiles, organise and manage their social media presence after taking office (Aburumman and Szilágyi 2020; Tan et al. 2024). This includes how they distinguish between personal and professional accounts and manage their dual roles as individuals and institutional representatives.

This paper responds to this gap by investigating how Colombian public officials, in their capacity as political leaders once in office, organise and manage their presence on social media. It explores how the institutions they work on, and the officials themselves, draw boundaries between their personal and institutional digital identities, as well as the consequences for governance, transparency, and public accountability.

1.1 Research questions

The research investigates the social media practices of Colombian national-level institutions and public officials with political authority. It does not focus on rank-and-file bureaucrats or technical civil servants, but rather on those with high visibility and leadership roles, who are responsible for shaping government narratives and maintaining public legitimacy through communication. Specifically, the study will focus on the following research questions:

A. How do Colombian government and public officials at the national level manage and differentiate their official social media accounts from their personal accounts once in office?

B. What mechanisms do national communication teams in Colombia use to uphold ethical standards and safeguard accountability and transparency with the overlap between personal and institutional social media use?

These questions allow the study to go beyond simply describing what information is posted on the official or personal accounts, instead focusing on how public officials and their institutions govern their social media presence as part of their institutional responsibilities. The intent is to uncover the practices, rationales, and constraints that shape the online communication of political actors in Colombia's public administration.

Hence, the obtained results will contribute to the research on digital political communication in the public sector and will also be of help for policymakers and public managers seeking to build clearer strategies for social media involvement and increase the public administration's ability to handle the blurring of personal and official worlds online.

1.2 Motivation

The difficulty of distinguishing between personal and institutional accounts on social media and discerning when a public official is acting as an individual or on behalf of the state is not a new issue; however, the massification of SNS and their importance in political communication has exacerbated this problem (Knight Columbia 2024, 2020).

Examples of this issue can be found in countries such as Mexico, when in 2018 the Mexican Supreme Court of Justice evaluated a lawsuit filed by a journalist against the Attorney General of the State of Veracruz for the latter having blocked the journalist from his X (former Twitter) account. The Supreme Court declared the lawsuit founded, considering that the plaintiff had the right to know the content of the attorney's X account since this public servant used it quite frequently to disseminate information about his activities as an official. Therefore, according to the Court, public officials must not forbid the citizens or, in this case, journalists, access to that governmental information (CELE 2024).

Another example is the landmark case of Knight First Amendment Institute v. Trump in 2019, when President Donald Trump was sued for blocking a group of politically opposing users from his personal X account. The lawsuit was declared founded since it was interpreted that Donald Trump's X account was an official account and that it qualified as a "designated public forum". With this decision, it was established that public officials' social media accounts can constitute public forums when used for governmental purposes; hence, their ability to restrict access based on political orientation is limited (Blevins and Wesner 2019).

In Colombia, a similar discussion was also studied. In 2021, the Constitutional Court addressed the case of Martha Lucía Ramírez, former Vice President of Colombia, regarding two publications she made on X and Facebook consecrating the country to the Lady of Fatima so that she would help the country stop the Covid-19 pandemic. A citizen filed an action to protect his fundamental rights to freedom of thought and religion, alleging that the vice president had violated the principle of religious neutrality of the state by posting a message on her personal social media accounts referring to a specific religious figure. In the resolution of the case, the Colombian Court analysed the freedom

of expression in the context of public officials and the nature of their personal accounts on SNS. It was determined that a public official's social media account derives its character not from its origin statement but from the actual use of such platforms in carrying out governmental functions. Also, the decision gave a hint of how social media can be misused by public officials to violate citizens' rights, calling for accountability mechanisms (Colombian Constitutional Court 2021).

These court cases illustrate the importance of differentiating between the personal and institutional use of social media accounts by public officials. The communicative practices of the officials on social media raise significant questions regarding public accountability, administrative transparency, and the potential misuse of SNS for political gain rather than for the purposes of governance. This is coupled with the growing tendency of public officials to adopt and embrace popularity-driven approaches via their social media activities (Ceron 2017), like the figure of "Mr Taxes", which calls for an immediate understanding of these dynamics.

Hence, the study focusses on senior-level Colombian public officials, particularly political leaders such as ministers, the president, and the vice president, who occupy the top executive positions within the national government. These are people with political mandates, visibility, and leadership obligations, and they frequently use social media not merely to inform but also to emphasise their own profiles. As such, they represent a distinct category of public official compared to career civil servants: they are public leaders whose communication habits can influence institutional legitimacy, democratic accountability, and citizens' trust in government.

While previous research has examined the electoral uses of social media, this study seeks to understand what happens once leaders take public office : How do they manage their social media presence? How do they and the institutions for which they work distinguish (or not) between their individual and institutional accounts? What kinds of boundaries (if they exist) are drawn when using digital tools for public communication?

The Colombian case offers a particularly relevant perspective. On the one hand, the country has a high level of social media adoption and political engagement online (Bianchi 2024; We Are Social and Meltwater 2025). On the other hand, the line between official and personal communication is often blurred and lacking unified guidelines, as illustrated by high-level figures like President Petro or ministers like Reyes, whose personal profiles are utilised to disseminate institutional messages or confront political criticism (Duarte Sandoval 2023; Saavedra 2024). This overlap emphasises the importance of investigating how political leaders maintain their digital presence after taking office, as well as the ramifications for public governance.

An examination of the current practices of Colombian national-level institutions and public officials will enhance the comprehension of the organisational aspects of social media communications employed in public administration. Therefore, the analysis might be useful for academics and government practitioners responsible for further discussing adequate regulatory frameworks that guide the behaviour of public officials in the digital arena since the absence of specific rules can lead to administrative confusion, legal controversies, and even affect the legitimacy of institutions.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The subsequent sections of this thesis are organised as follows. The next section contains a literature review (Section 2). It begins with the studies on the use of social media in public administration. Then, it moves on to the personalisation of politics in social media: its drivers, types, case studies, and impact. Later, it will shed light on the discussions about the relationship between personal and institutional accounts, along with its ethical considerations. The review finally concludes by highlighting the gaps in the literature and how some will be tackled in this study by concentrating on Colombian public officials' use of social media in governance. The third section sets out the theoretical framework (Section 3), consisting of two parts, for answering the two questions. The fourth section presents the methodology (Section 4), which follows a qualitative approach with mixed methods of semi-structured interviews, conducted with communications teams from ministries, including representatives from the Presidency and Vice Presidency, and desk research, which included document review and descriptive analysis of social media. The fifth and sixth sections are the results and analysis (Section 5) and discussion (Section 6), which focus on integrating the findings with the theoretical concepts to identify patterns, strategies, and tensions in the organisation and management of social media by the Colombian government and public officials. Finally, the last section offers a conclusion (Section 7), outlining the contributions of the study and its limitations and suggesting directions for future research.

2 Literature review

2.1 Social media use in public administration: institutionalisation

In many ways, the digital revolution has transformed political communication and governance (Khan et al. 2024). SNS is currently one of the primary channels via which politicians and public officials communicate with citizens (Abid et al. 2023; Aburumman and Szilágyi 2020). According to Mergel and Bretschneider (2013), the use of social media by government organisations can be seen as an extension of the digitalisation efforts of governments in a new wave of the e-government era, given that SNS have become tools for enhancing transparency, accessibility, and citizen engagement in e-government. Political leaders these days are not bound by mere traditional channels of communication or mass media; now they interact with their constituencies through social media platforms (Hoffmann and Suphan 2016).

This shift in communication within the public administration presents both opportunities and challenges (Mergel 2012). On the one hand, scholars such as Ceron (2017) and DePaula et al. (2018) highlight that social media provide a way through which governments can democratise information and promote social-political debates because citizens are more likely to connect with their governments in real-time, overcoming the filters of time and space of a face-to-face interaction with the administration. For example, researchers have found that social media is quite helpful in crisis situations where the citizens have a need for constant updates and that can be done with short communications on SNS while continuing to focus on handling and coordinating the crisis by the public organisations (Špaček 2018). Even so, it is important to note that the level of participation and engagement also depends on the public administration's styles and types of content shared on their social media sites.

On the other hand, researchers note that if even at first this democratised engagement is praised, if not managed properly, it could potentially be in danger. For Khan et al. (2024), the higher accessibility could bring potential risks, including false information and illegal data sharing. Following Djerf-Pierre and Pierre (2019), governments with SNS also have the potential power to control the narrative and selectively limit engagement, undermining the democratising promise. Hence, for the pertinent use of social media by government, there is the need for structured guidelines and parameters. To take advantage of and achieve the benefits of social network sites, it is required to have structured organisational support and a governance culture that emphasises the correct values while using them (Khan 2017). In other words, adopting social media platforms in the public sector necessitates a culture of openness, transparency, and cooperation. Such a culture

helps ensure that increased connectivity with citizens does not come at the expense of accountability or ethical standards (Khan 2017).

Now, as digital engagement practices become more rooted in government institutions' structures, policies, and protocols, governments have made it easier for people to use social media to talk to them (Mickoleit 2014). In this context, "institutionalisation" refers to the establishment of standardised practices and guidelines that define how social media is used, monitored, and managed within government institutions. This process is meant to find a balance between the platform's ability to be casual and interactive and the need for formal, consistent communication that upholds public sector values like fairness, accountability, and transparency (Meijer and Torenvlied 2016). Thus, institutionalisation means a move from ad hoc social media use to regulated, routine practice.

There are several models for institutionalising social media in public administration (Villodre et al. 2021). A centralised model, for instance, uses formal policy guides and structured evaluation processes, while a distributed model encourages trial and error and learning on the job. Studies reveal that the process of institutionalising social media varies across different government settings. For example, some countries have set comprehensive rules about how public officials can use social media, while others' approaches are still more scattered. Aburumman and Szilágyi (2020) noted that in regions with robust e-government frameworks, social media has become an integrated component of public sector communication, embedded into departmental policies and frequently overseen by designated communication teams. Such institutionalisation enhances consistency in messaging by allowing governments to present unified narratives and maintain a reliable voice in digital spaces. Institutional guidelines often cover areas such as content standards, tone, responsiveness, data privacy, and legal compliance, helping public institutions navigate the complex legal and ethical landscape of social media use.

Overall, the dynamics of the adoption of social media within governments often follow the three-stage adaptive pattern proposed by Mergel and Bretschneider (2013), which underlines intrapreneurship and informal experimentation in the early stages of development that must eventually be formalised to control risks and streamline content curation. First, the informal early experimentation, marked by a decentralised use of social media by individuals within government agencies who adopt social media for personal or departmental benefits. At this stage, the experimentation is individualised, lacks any official standards, and often presents blurred lines between personal and professional use. Second, the coordination of the chaos begins as social media experimentation grows, and different versions of practices emerge as well across different departments or organisations. To address this "chaos", the organisations start seeking to

draft standards and policies. But these standards are still informal. The third is the institutionalisation and consolidation of social media use; it becomes formal within the public organisations with established policies that guide social media use, manage risk, and streamline processes. In this final stage, social media becomes part of the official communication strategy, and because of that, there are designated roles to ensure compliance, coherence, and accountability (Mergel and Bretschneider 2013). In short, what begins as scattered, bottom-up innovation matures into a structured practice governed by clear rules and roles.

For Barberá et al. (2024), the degree of institutionalisation can also influence the management and operationalisation of social media as a tool for crisis communication. During high-stakes situations, such as natural disasters or political crises, well-established social media protocols may allow governments to coordinate messaging effectively, minimise misinformation, and maintain public trust. On the contrary, in the absence of standardised practices, officials may resort to improvised messaging, which risks inconsistencies and may inadvertently escalate tensions (Barberá et al. 2024). Thus, institutionalisation can be seen as an essential framework for enabling responsive, transparent crisis communication while ensuring that official statements maintain a level of professionalism and factual integrity. With predefined roles and content parameters, agencies are better equipped to speak with a unified voice during emergencies, preserving public trust in government communications when it is most needed.

Another dimension of institutionalisation that will be discussed further in the next subsections is the standardisation of personal vs institutional account management. Research indicates that when formal distinctions between personal and official accounts are unclear, public officials may inadvertently blend their personal and institutional roles on social media, resulting in "hybrid" accounts that present challenges for public accountability. Andrews (2019) and Meijer and Torenvlied (2016) both argue that institutionalisation must include clear delineations between personal and official use to prevent potential conflicts of interest and uphold ethical standards. Such distinctions are essential not only for clarity in public communication but also for protecting the integrity of governmental institutions from the undue influence of individual personalities, a trend discussed next on personalisation.

2.2 Personalisation of politics in the digital era

The rise of social media has profoundly personalised political communication, identified as a self-promotion strategy that allows public officials to craft and project personal narratives in unprecedented ways (Karlsson and Åström 2018; Pedersen and Rahat 2021). This trend builds on the classic theory of self-presentation introduced by Ervin Goffman

back in 1978. “From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, Goffman discussed how people present themselves to others through a dramaturgical metaphor. People are actors on a stage, driven to instil a desired impression in the audience members’ minds” (Colliander et al. 2017, p. 278), creating a tension between a public-facing (front-stage) and a private (back-stage) behaviour.

In the digital era, office-holders increasingly act as political “influencers”, cultivating their individual image online and becoming the focal point of discourse, often eclipsing the institutions they represent, such as political parties, governments, and parliaments (DePaula et al. 2018; Pedersen and Rahat 2021). Political communication traditionally adopted an institutional frame of credibility, where whoever the public officials were, they were expressing the joint voice of government agencies. However, personalising politics means a shift away from institutions and collective beliefs toward individual leaders and personas.

Scholars have long distinguished different aspects of political personalisation. In 2007, Rahat and Sheafer established a three-typology of political personalisation. First, institutional personalisation, which entails the establishment of laws, methods, and structures that prioritise and/or emphasise the individual politician over political groupings and parties. The second typology of political personalisation is media personalisation, which refers to a change in the presentation of politics in the media, focusing on candidates and politicians instead of parties, institutions, or issues. In this typology, there is also a distinction between political personalisation in the unpaid media (also known as media coverage of politics) and paid media (also known as political advertising). The third typology is the personalisation of political behaviour, which distinguishes between the behaviour of politicians and that of the electorate. On the one hand, there is a consensus that a politician’s personality attributes, particularly as perceived by citizens, can influence voting behaviour, but, on the other hand, personalisation also refers to the importance of voters’ personalities in their own decision-making (Hamřík 2020; Rahat and Kenig 2018).

In the context of social media, it is the behavioural aspect–how officials act and communicate once in power– that is especially salient. Behavioural personalisation of politicians implies an increase in individualised political activities and a decline in collective partisan activity messaging. SNS allow political actors to boost their personal appeal by direct, often unmediated interactions with the public, generating a sense of proximity (Starke et al. 2020). Sharing glimpses of political figures’ personal stories, experiences, and opinions is a big part of personalisation. Such personal disclosures make them seem more appealing and approachable and make it harder to tell the difference

between their public and private lives (Osei Fordjour 2024, 2024) . According to Criado and Villodre (2020), this alters how public officials communicate with citizens by changing their discourse about work or policy formation and creating their own distinctive brands. In short, social media has fast-tracked a self-promotion strategy in governance, shifting emphasis from the office to the officeholder.

Within this trend, researchers have distinguished various personalisation strategies and degrees of personalisation that public officials employ online. Metz et al. (2019) and Van Santen and Van Zoonen (2010), for instance, have used a three-personalisation typology that distinguishes between professional qualities (individualisation), private persona (privatisation), and personal emotions (emotionalisation) communication narratives. Metz et al. (2019) study of German parliament members' Facebook activity found that self-personalisation is a common communication style, particularly via visual content: posts that included emotional or private life details tended to significantly boost audience engagement. Citizens seem to favour intimate, humanising content from political actors; an indication of public desire for a close-to-life connection with leaders. Specifically, the authors discovered that when politicians share emotional anecdotes, family moments, personal photos, or achievements, they frequently receive higher interaction rates, which implies that the strategic use of emotions and personal narratives can be an effective impression-management tool. At the same time, the choice of strategy or of how much to personalise is influenced by factors such as the political context, the individual politician's personality, and the specific platform being used, meaning not all officeholders push the personal angle to the same extent (Metz et al. 2019).

In fact, Grusell and Nord (2020) categorised the behavioural personalisation of politicians in a similar typology but based on the context in which officials present themselves, as: professional, where leaders are engaged in political or work-related activities; personal, showing leaders in less formal, non-political settings but still maintaining a certain level of distance; and private, revealing intimate aspects of the leader's life. By examining Instagram's influence on Swedish political party leaders' presentations during the 2018 general election campaign, the authors put this framework into practice. Surprisingly, the study found that, although Instagram allows for personalised interaction, professional portrayals were more often projected on the platform than private or personal aspects. The study found that 96% of the photographs examined featured leaders in formal, campaign-related activities, indicating a strategic emphasis on branding and long-term party tactics rather than displaying unique emotional or personal characteristics. In these cases, social media is viewed as an extension of traditional political branding (emphasis on credibility and party messaging) rather than a complete window into the politician's personal life. Thus, while the technological capabilities of SNS such as Instagram and X

enable individualised contact, real usage may be limited by professional norms and political calculation in specific governance contexts.

Additional case studies illustrate how in-office public officials across different democracies navigate personalisation on social media. In the United States, for example, a detailed assessment of former Vice President Kamala Harris's X activities in her first year showed personalised expressions (Osei Fordjour 2024). By sharing anecdotes about her childhood, education, family, and day-to-day life as vice president, Harris sought to build a relevant human picture beyond political messages, connecting with citizens on a personal level even as she performed official duties. This strategy demonstrates how even the holders of high office now communicate in a style more typical of campaign-trail outreach, blending governance with personal storytelling.

Similarly, in Canada, former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has used social media, particularly Instagram, to build a carefully managed personal brand while in office. According to Lalancette and Raynauld (2019), Trudeau's posts frequently showed him with his family, doing things he enjoyed (like boxing or running), and giving people a look behind the scenes at his life as a leader. In this way, Trudeau is shown not only as the leader of the country but also as a normal person that people can relate to, creating a kind of "celebrity status" image. This kind of personalisation in an office can make a leader more appealing and well-known. People may feel like they know the person making policy decisions, which can help build trust and confidence. However, as will be discussed in Subsection 2.3, it also brings questioning about where the line should be between personal charm and institutional force.

The European governance context provides a contrasting picture of personalisation practices. A study of Norwegian ministers' communication revealed a decentralised personalisation style in which ministers used SNS to increase their visibility and influence rather than to promote the government or party's message (Figenschou et al. 2017). In other words, ministers acted as autonomous political communicators, highlighting their initiatives and personality traits, sometimes even competing subtly for public attention. This decentralised approach aligned with the growing demand for individualised communication by the media, as journalists seek to have direct contact with ministers, incentivising officials to cultivate their own distinct voice online (Figenschou et al. 2017). The case demonstrates how, even within a single administration, personalisation can shift power to individual officeholders, which ends up presenting to the public a group of personal brands rather than a cohesive government message. However, not all examples from Europe demonstrate an unrestrained rush towards personalisation. As noted above,

Swedish party leaders displayed caution on Instagram (Grusell and Nord 2020), indicating that some political cultures still value a professional attitude on social media.

Moreover, research in Israel has shown that structural factors, like electoral systems and media coverage, influence personalisation trends. For example, the transition to candidate-centred campaigns, where election coverage and advertising focus heavily on the party leaders, has resulted in a greater emphasis on individual politicians over parties (Balmas et al. 2014). These findings, together with previous research by Rahat and Sheafer (2007), show that the digital-era personalisation of governing authorities is part of a longer wave of political change, rushed by social media but founded on larger processes that benefit individual leaders.

Moreover, personalisation is not confined to domestic politics; it also characterises how officials engage audiences in international governance and diplomacy. Ecker-Ehrhardt (2023) found that leaders of international organisations and diplomats increasingly adopt personal narrative and emotional appeal in their social media outreach. "IO officials regularly provided content that claims a more personal access to their everyday lives, for example, by celebrating personal relationships with colleagues and joint engagement for global governance. Regularly, the fine lines between private and professional roles blurred when communication linked personal experiences to organisational matters" (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2023, p. 215). With this strategy, there is a chance that it will bring people to international organisations, making them more approachable and trustworthy for everyone. Thus, personalisation can get people more involved and make global actors seem more like real people instead of cold bureaucrats. However, the same study warns of an inherent tension: this communicative human touch may collide with the rational-legal authority on which international organisations rely (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2023).

Cross-cultural research further illustrates that the effectiveness and reception of personalisation vary by context. In some African countries, politicians incorporate elements of their religious identity or strong relationship with their wife or patriotic background into their social media persona to gain support of constituents even in non-electoral periods (Osei Fordjour 2024). These identity-based personal appeals can increase a leader's social media presence and appeal to audiences where shared religion or community ties are strong. However, what works in a certain setting may be less effective in another; methods that interest followers in Ghana may not translate well to Western European audiences, and vice versa (Osei Fordjour 2024, 2024).

These findings serve as a reminder that personalisation is a context-dependent strategy. Additionally, using more than one SNS makes these strategies even more complicated since each one has its features and restrictions that politicians who want to connect with

their constituents must figure out. Based on Boulianne et al. (2024), platforms are different not only in how they are built (like how they handle privacy, anonymity, and connectivity) but also in how they work socially (like how strong social ties are and what the norms are for interacting). Because of this, officials need to make sure their strategy fits the platforms they use. For example, Enli and Skogerbø (2013) and Theocharis et al. (2023) discovered that Facebook usually fosters strong-tie relationships centred on community engagement, and it is used for broader marketing and exposing oneself, while X supports weak-tie networks and manages to facilitate real-time interactions, ongoing dialogues, and engagements effectively.

However, Boulianne et al. (2024) critically noted that the proliferation of platforms and the dynamics of each could lead to fragmented audiences, increasing the risks of homogenisations and ideological echo chambers within communities, especially on platforms with greater anonymity and closed-network structures. Consequently, officeholders must not only decide how personal to be but also strategically choose the best place and timing for their content to maximise outreach while avoiding fomenting a polarisation of the political discourse, because "politicians may find it attractive to drum up support, activism and campaign contributions among homogeneous groups of like-minded citizens" (Hoffmann and Suphan 2016, p. 553). The following subsection, in particular, focusses on the boundaries between personal and official roles, as well as the subsequent mixing of those roles in social media, and the issues that arise as a result.

2.3 Blurring of personal and official accounts: boundary challenges

In the era of social media, public officials may cross the line between their professional duties and personal identities online. Bezboruah and Dryburgh (2012) observed that modern communication technologies have facilitated a growing ease for public administrators to "blur the boundary lines" between their identities as private citizens and their responsibilities as government officials. The role multiplicity framework suggests that a public official's roles (professional vs citizen) intersect with the type of information shared (public vs private), creating various scenarios. In an ideal world, when officials are working, they would only use official social media channels and share public information. When they are not working, they would use private accounts for private content. However, problems can happen when these situations overlap, like when a public official shares private information on a work-related platform or when a private person shares public information on a personal platform. Such scenarios could affect both personal privacy and public accountability.

This situation is known, following Davis and Jurgenson (2014), Hoffmann and Suphan (2016) and Marwick and boyd (2010), as "context collapse", referring to the blurring of

boundaries between different social contexts (like personal and professional) on platforms like social media where individuals may share information with multiple audiences simultaneously. In the case of public figures using social media in both a private and a professional capacity, "politicians are bound to experience 'context collapse'. In fact, politicians may find it particularly challenging to form consistent, context-adequate self-presentations on social media (online 'personae') due to the rise of personalised political communication" (Hoffmann and Suphan 2016, p. 562).

According to some academics, using personal narratives and identities strategically can increase public trust and responsibility (Osei Fordjour 2024), but there are risks involved as well (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2023). Some of the benefits of personalisation can include enhanced citizen engagement and public trust and improved electoral prospects (Golbeck et al. 2010; Lovari and Materassi 2021). However, it also risks trivialising political discourse because the combination of personal and political content can distort the public's perceptions of accountability, transparency, and institutional trust (Poulakidakos and Giannouli 2019). For instance, officials may avoid accountability for controversial comments by claiming that they were made in a personal capacity. Conversely, informal remarks might erroneously be interpreted as official government positions.

Golbeck et al. (2010), for instance, found that in the U.S. Congress, the X use by Congresspeople is primarily to "disperse information, particularly links to news articles about themselves and to their blog posts, and to report on their daily activities. These tend "not to provide new insights into government or the legislative process or to improve transparency; rather, they are vehicles for self-promotion" (Golbeck et al. 2010, p. 1612). Kruikemeier (2014) also identified this situation studying the Dutch national elections of 2010, where the candidates' tweets predominantly focused on their personal lives, including their emotions and private activities, rather than the campaign. In other words, it appears that the communication is often about public officials' or candidates' private personas and less about political issues.

From the point of view of Blevins and Wesner (2019), the practice of combining personal accounts for official activity may negatively affect public access to information and transparency, as well as have legal implications, such as creating grey areas in record-keeping and public access to information or allowing endorsements or partisan comments to sneak into channels intended for impartial public communication (Rueda Fonseca 2024). For example, if an official uses a personal X account for official announcements, that account may be considered an official public forum subject to freedom of information laws and public scrutiny (Andrews 2019). Moreover, that same account is assumed to not

be able to cause discrimination, so the authorities cannot exclude constituents from those social media sites.

As mentioned before, some courts in various countries have determined that under certain conditions, private social media accounts become public forums and, as such, might infringe on citizens' rights; thus, scholars advise that officials use them with extreme discretion. Following Andrews (2019), the public forum doctrine of the United States applies to the social media accounts of officials, impacting how they engage with citizens and manage dissenting voices. Similarly, in Latin America, Urquizo Pereira (2020) and Velazco (2022) both conclude that a public official does not have broad discretion to block citizens on platforms. Blocking users, they argue, impedes the citizens' fundamental rights to seek information and to express themselves. In essence, when an official uses a social media account to communicate ideas, opinions, or official activities, that account takes on a public forum character; thus, any arbitrary exclusion of followers, like blocking critics or constituents, may eventually result in an unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination, violating freedoms of expression and public information. That being the case, a key point emphasised by these studies is that an official social media page that is used for business purposes cannot be treated as a completely private space.

A blurred social media presence can also strain institutional trust. According to Pedersen and Rahat (2021), such a focus on the individual politician at the expense of collective institutions is problematic given the risk of losing institutional credibility. When political communication becomes highly personalised, the line between the individual and the office they represent vanishes because it is not that easy to know who is saying what: public officials or the office they represent (de Kool 2014). This is especially true when official statements are published on personal social media accounts, threatening the institution's identity and consistency. While a personalised, informal style on social media can make officials appear more approachable and sometimes increase citizen engagement, it does not necessarily result in greater trust in government. Citizens expect a certain level of formality and objectivity from official channels. Mixing government information with personal content can affect the perceived integrity of the institution.

This issue was illustrated in a study by Hrdinová et al. (2010), who examined the social media policies and guidelines of 26 government agencies from the United States and internationally (four international, eight federal, five state, and nine local) and interviewed 32 professionals from 14 government agencies. The authors discovered that the boundaries between personal, professional, and organisational use, while conceptually separate in most policies, are, in fact, quite fluid and frequently overlap in practice. The research highlights that social media environments do not easily accommodate the notion

of “an organisation” as a coherent communicator; rather, they operate through individual identities that serve several roles (official , professional, and private). This creates a situation in which a public official or political appointee may, intentionally or unintentionally, merge personal opinions with organisational messages in a single communication act. As a result, organisations have an increased need to create explicit social media rules that govern role separation and account management. For this reason, the authors propose that governments should have eight essential elements when designing social media policies: 1) employee access, 2) account management, 3) acceptable use, 4) employee conduct, 5) content, 6) security, 7) legal issues, and 8) citizen conduct (Helbig and Hrdinová 2016; Hrdinová et al. 2010).

Overall, the consequences of having overlapped personal and institutional social media accounts are complex. Khan et al. (2024) identified concerns about privacy, security, ethics, and misinformation as central. As a result, strategic personalisation becomes a true balancing act for political actors, with both significant benefits and potential pitfalls. When public officials mix facts of their job with opinions of their own, it can be hard to tell the difference between their personal views and the government’s (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2023; Grusell and Nord 2020), and if public opinion focuses on personality instead of policy, they are more likely to be manipulated and given false information (Osei Fordjour 2024).

In these “context collapse” situations, politicians who use social media need to learn how to set boundaries so that they can present themselves in a way that is intentional and appropriate for the situation, to distinguish between personal and official online personas. Boundary management theory supports this view by describing how individuals construct and maintain boundaries between work and non-work roles. Kreiner et al. (2009) identified that people use various tactics (behavioural, temporal, physical, and communicative) to achieve their preferred level of separation or integration between domains. When it comes to public officials on social media, research on politicians’ online self-presentation has considered different preferences for boundary management, trying to find the right balance between their “front-stage” professional life and their “back-stage” personal life (Colliander et al. 2017).

Some governments may take a centralised approach by developing guidelines and policies for the use of social media (Villodre et al. 2021). Other administrations, however, follow a more decentralised strategy, allowing individual officials to administer their accounts freely with less oversight (Meijer and Torenvlied 2016). The latter implies a potential outcome of inconsistency and the risk of violating legal or ethical standards. For example, according to Jiménez Aguirre (2018), the legal framework in Peru underlines

the importance of clear regulations for avoiding abuses and protecting citizens' rights and therefore calls for more centralisation. The author highlights the notion of legality as a critical aspect in evaluating public officials' responsibility for controlling their social media accounts (Jiménez Aguirre 2018). Furthermore, given that self-promotion on social media blurs the line between official tasks and personal activities, there must be particular attention paid to the guideline about the misuse of public resources due to potential conflicts of interest in the communications strategies (DePaula et al. 2018).

Additionally, a clear management differentiation between the accounts may help with the blurred line when considering the dual roles that a public official plays, both government officer and politician (Andrews 2019). A common practice is to delegate the management of official accounts to communication professionals or a social media team (Triantafillidou and Yannas 2023). With this, a wall is put between an official's private voice and the institution's voice by letting staff control the output on an official channel. According to Lovari and Materassi (2021), because of this, social media managers (SMMs) play a critical role in establishing trust between municipalities and citizens through social media communication. The communications team ensures that messaging follows organisational protocols, maintaining consistency and avoiding personal expression on official feeds. For example, the office of a government ministry might oversee posts on the minister's official account, while the minister himself or herself runs a private account for personal messages. This approach uses delegation to enforce boundaries and enables peer review before content is published, increasing accountability. For that, the authors emphasised the importance of training them to navigate the complexity of social media administration. For instance, by teaching them how to differentiate what kind of posts belong on a ministry's official page versus one's private profile, thereby institutionalising boundary awareness and retaining public trust and transparency.

Another strategy is to keep the official and personal social media accounts separate. That being the case, officials can have official accounts on platforms like X, Instagram, and Facebook for work-related content and keep personal accounts for private updates on those same platforms as private or just do not publish anything related to their work. Many government agencies encourage this practice, with some even providing dedicated official accounts for specific roles. Using separate devices or profiles for work avoids accidentally posting personal content on official feeds, reinforcing boundaries and clarifying context.

Finally, Starke et al. (2020) mentioned that tracking social media activity is important for understanding how it affects public accountability and open government, although it may

be hard to do. Social networking services can result in more positive views of politicians, but such perceptions do not necessarily influence government trust. Therefore, emotive and private content may promote participation, but it might be important to see the substantial use of these engagements with citizens (Hoffmann et al. 2016; Metz et al. 2019), which makes the evaluation even more complex.

2.4 Research gaps: opportunities for Colombian social media governance research

Many researchers are interested in how social media is used by the government, but there are some gaps in the research that this study will try to fill. First, more and more studies are looking at how politicians use social media during campaigns, mainly how it impacts elections and how it shapes political branding (Abid et al. 2023; Holtz-Bacha et al. 2014). The research has largely ignored how politicians use social media every day for governance, policy communication, and citizen engagement once they are in office (Tan et al. 2024). Consequently, a focus on campaign contexts results in a limited understanding of the institutionalisation of social media in government operations beyond elections because, from a theoretical perspective, organisations move from informal experimentation with social media to formalised and regulated use (Mergel and Bretschneider 2013). But by focusing only on the campaign stage, studies overlook how officials subsequently incorporate social media into official communication channels and develop norms and policies for its use.

The campaign-centric view also gives a lot of weight to the idea that politics has become more personal as politicians build personal brands and talk to voters directly. But this point of view does not always think about whether and how personalisation changes when people assume office. Because of this, it is not clear if public officials will keep showing their personal side on social media after they take office or if they will switch to a more official voice. Some evidence suggests that leaders may still use personalised communication styles while they are in office, giving more weight to personal messages than official ones (Figenschou et al. 2017; Osei Fordjour 2024). But during this governance phase, there has not been enough research to find out how common this is or how it affects the honesty of government communication.

Second, there is a notable geographic and contextual gap because research on government social media use has been heavily concentrated in North America, Europe, and other developed regions, with relatively few studies focused on Latin America (and even fewer on Colombia specifically). Many of the studies so far have been focused on Western settings or comparable democracies (Abid et al. 2023; Criado and Villodre 2020; de Kool

2014; Holtz-Bacha et al. 2014; Osei Fordjour 2024). Other studies have focused on Asian contexts like Indonesia and Israel (Balmas et al. 2014; Priyowidodo et al. 2024; Yavetz and Aharony 2020), broadening the scope but still overlooking Latin American cases (Jiménez Aguirre 2018; Ochman 2021; Ramos Alderete 2022; Urquizo Pereira 2020; Valenti et al. 2015; Velazco 2022). In fact, Tan et al.'s (2024) systematic literature review said that political communication studies still do not look enough into how to use SNS for government in developing and non-Western contexts.

This understudied situation is visible in Colombia. The political communication landscape in the country is characterised by a combination of modern digital adoption and traditional personalistic politics; yet there has been limited scholarly attention to the online behaviour of Colombian public officials. While some Colombian research (Bossio Pacheco 2021; Mora-Álvarez 2019; Rueda Fonseca 2024) studies the normative and legal stages, the current academic work addresses a different gap by focusing on the practical management and organisation of public officials' social media accounts. The existing works largely examine what officials should do or the legal ramifications of online behaviour (e.g., protecting speech or prohibiting blocking), but they do not empirically investigate how officials themselves navigate these challenges. Hence, with this study focused on Colombia, there is a direct response to calls for more non-Western and developing-country research on social media in government (Tan et al. 2024).

Third, there is a methodological gap in how this phenomenon has been studied. The majority of prior research relies on quantitative design-content analyses of posts, engagement metrics, or surveys of followers (Barberá et al. 2024; Ceccobelli et al. 2020; Djerf-Pierre and Pierre 2019; Hoffmann et al. 2016; Jukic and Merlak 2017; Karlsson and Åström 2018; Poulakidakos and Giannouli 2019). While these studies have been useful, Abid et al. (2023); Barberá et al. (2024); and Hoffmann et al. (2016) argued that this methodology fails to represent the particular experiences and ethical challenges of public officials managing social media accounts. The absence of qualitative studies on this topic underscores the need for more in-depth and context-sensitive studies.

Considering the above gaps, the relevance to the Colombian context becomes clear. Colombia presents a compelling case where these unresolved issues intersect; social media use by officials is increasingly prevalent, but the formal institutionalisation of this practice is nascent, and the country's legal and ethical framework is only beginning to grapple with the implications. The potential risks of blurred personal-official boundaries on social media are not just theoretical here; they have materialised in controversies and legal challenges. Notably, recent court decisions in Colombia have underscored the consequences of failing to distinguish between personal and official communication

online, affecting principles of administrative transparency and public accountability (Colombian Constitutional Court 2021, 2024). These cases highlight scenarios such as public officials blocking citizens on supposedly “personal” social media accounts that were used for official announcements, raising questions about citizens’ rights to information and free expression in digital spaces. Such developments stress that without clearer guidelines and understanding, social media can become a grey area of governance, potentially leading to conflicts of interest or abuse of public resources for personal image promotion. This study, therefore, is not only filling an academic gap but also responding to an urgent practical concern in Colombia’s democratic governance.

Hence, this study aims to fill in these gaps by looking at the national-level practices of Colombian public officials. It will examine how they manage their personal and institutional accounts and the ethical difficulties that arise when they combine them. The possibility of abuse has raised concerns in some studies, ranging from disinformation to ethical transgressions (Sherman 2011); and, as Khan et al. (2024) highlighted, cultural background influences public officials’ usage of social media, communication strategy, and personalisation. Therefore, it is necessary to further investigate whether the use of social networks by public officials in Colombia can generate conflicts of interest within the government. Court decisions have shown that failure to investigate this issue can have later consequences for administrative transparency and public accountability. These goals of the study are in line with what is missing from the existing research: they want to give a detailed, nuanced account of how Colombian officials use social media, giving insights that are both important for academic research and directly useful for making social media governance better in Colombia.

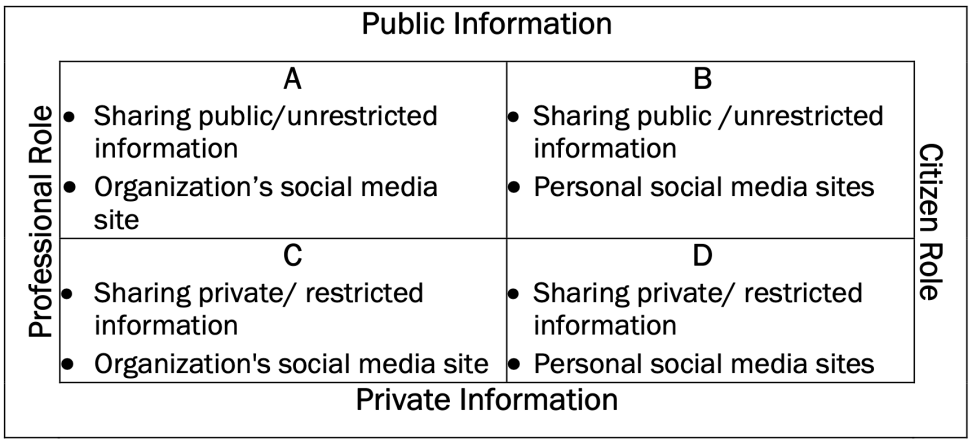
3 Theoretical framework

To examine how Colombian institutional communication teams and public officials' heads of those institutions distinguish their official social media accounts from their personal accounts (RQ1), the research adopts an integrated theoretical framework combining the role multiplicity and privacy framework of Bezboruah and Dryburgh (2012) and the boundary theory of Kreiner et al. (2009). This public-private identity boundary perspective will help to understand how the institutions and officials negotiate personal and official personas on social media.

According to Bezboruah and Dryburgh (2012), in today's world, individuals switch between their roles as private citizens and public administrators both during and outside of work hours. Moreover, "the changing nature of public and private information, along with advances in communications and Internet technology, makes it possible for individuals to blur the boundary lines between these roles" (Bezboruah and Dryburgh 2012, p. 475). Therefore, they proposed the role multiplicity and privacy framework with four specific scenarios that affect public sector employees (group which includes the public officials with political authority) and the way in which they choose to use social media sites.

The role and the information are the two variables that combine to create the four scenarios. The authors defined the role as either a professional one, such as that of a public official in their profession, or a citizen one, such as when acting outside of one's profession. Then, Bezboruah and Dryburgh (2012) made the differentiation that when individuals assume the professional role, they are confined to the official/employer's social media sites, and when individuals assume the citizen role, their social media activities are confined to their personal platforms.

Regarding the information variable, the authors proposed two types of information that can be placed on social media sites: private and public. According to them, private information is information that an individual or organisation may want restricted, while public information can be freely shared and not restricted. Considering these variables, given the specific roles of the individual and the types of information that can be shared on social media sites, the four ways that can intersect are shown in Figure 3.1.



Source: Bezboruah and Dryburgh (2012)

Figure 3.1 Public officials' role multiplicity demonstrated across four quadrants.

Hence, under this model, an official acting in a professional capacity would confine public information to institutional channels, whereas personal views should reside on private profiles. Based on Bezboruah and Dryburgh (2012), the different characteristics for each quadrant that explain an official's role in the context of information are as follows:

A. **Professional role sharing public information:** the public official is acting in a professional role and is sharing public, unrestricted information on the organisation's social media site.

B. **Citizen role sharing public information:** the public official is acting as a citizen and sharing unrestricted information with others who are accessing their personal social media sites.

C. **Professional role sharing private information:** the public official is acting in a professional role and may be, with or without intent, sharing private or restricted information on their government organisation's social media site.

D. **Citizen role sharing private information:** the public official acts as a citizen and places private information on a personal social media site. This may include evidence of behaviours or opinions that may compromise the official's professional role.

Several scholars have commented on the connections between these or similar categorisations (Dutta 2010; Jameson 2014). For instance, Jameson (2014) gave some more characteristics when studying the interactions among public-private and personal-professional communication applied in the private sector use of X by a CEO.

To differentiate the various social media sites and information shared by public officials and the institutions they work for, this research applies the model in Figure 3.1. The categories will help identify the distinctions between professional and citizen roles and between public and private information, which is important in the public sector context.

Complementarily, the boundary theory serves to focus on the "ways in which people create, maintain, or change boundaries in order to simplify and classify the world around them" (Kreiner et al. 2009, p. 705). The boundary theory has effectively addressed a wide range of research topics in various contexts, including those related to role transitions, the quality of interpersonal relationships, and the interface between individual and organisational identities. Specifically, Kreiner et al. (2009) investigated how individuals manage boundaries between work and home life and proposed a framework with four types of boundary work tactics that are common to help create the ideal level and style of work-home segmentation or integration. These boundary work tactics help individuals navigate the demands of their professional and personal lives while mitigating work-home conflict.

I. **Behavioural tactics:** these involve specific actions taken to manage boundaries. Some examples are getting help from others, like staff or family, to set boundaries; using technology like caller ID or email filters to manage who can reach you; prioritising tasks based on urgency; and mixing or separating work and home life in a flexible way.

II. **Temporal tactics:** these involve controlling time to create separation or integration between work and home. Techniques include scheduling work or home time, reserving time for unforeseen demands, and taking breaks for getaways or vacations.

III. **Physical tactics:** these include manipulating the physical environment to reinforce boundaries. For instance, adapting physical barriers (such as fences or separate offices), controlling physical distance between work and home, and using artefacts like calendars, key rings, or uniforms to signal work-home separation.

IV. **Communicative tactics:** these involve setting expectations and directly addressing boundary violations. Setting expectations includes informing others about personal boundaries (e.g., not answering calls after certain hours), while confronting violators involves addressing those who breach set boundaries.

Although these tactics for work-home boundary challenges are not SNS-specific, these tactics can be applied to the management of the institutions' and public officials' social

media accounts because they also present boundary challenges. Hence, adapting Kreiner et al. (2009) framework to the current research, some of the tactics into how officials may be balancing their public and private accounts effectively are shown in Table 3.1.

Boundary work tactic	Indicators	Description and examples
Behavioural tactics	Using other people	Public officials can employ communication teams or social media managers to handle official accounts, ensuring clear differentiation between personal and professional interactions.
	Leveraging technology	Officials can use separate social media platforms or accounts with different privacy settings. They may also use scheduling tools to automate posts for official accounts while keeping personal interactions spontaneous.
	Invoking triage	Prioritisation is crucial in crises. Officials may choose to delay personal social media engagement when political or governance-related issues demand attention.
	Allowing differential permeability	Some officials can opt to share personal content on official accounts strategically (e.g., post family moments to humanise their image) while keeping sensitive private matters offline.
Temporal tactics	Controlling work time	Officials can designate specific hours for official social media engagement while keeping personal social media interactions outside work hours.
	Finding respite	Taking social media breaks or delegating account management during vacations can prevent boundary blurring.
Physical tactics	Adapting physical boundaries	Officials may use distinct devices for personal and professional social media activities to reinforce separation.
	Manipulating physical space	Officials may have dedicated office spaces for handling social media engagement, avoiding mixing personal and professional interactions.
	Managing physical artifacts	Using separate visual branding (e.g., different profile pictures and banners for personal and official accounts) helps in distinguishing boundaries.
Communicative tactics	Setting expectations	Clearly stating in bio descriptions that an account is official or personal helps manage public expectations. Some officials explicitly inform followers that they will not discuss personal matters on their professional accounts.
	Confronting violators	Officials may need to block or publicly address individuals who inappropriately blur boundaries, such as those who demand official responses on personal accounts.

Source: own elaboration

Table 3.1 Boundary work tactics applied to social media sites.

Overall, Kreiner et al. (2009) boundary work tactics provide a useful framework for understanding how public officials and their institutional communication teams control the distinction between personal and official social media use. By employing behavioural, temporal, physical, and communicative tactics, officials can maintain professionalism while preserving personal space, thereby reducing work-home conflicts in the digital sphere.

To examine the mechanisms through which national communication teams in Colombia uphold ethical standards and ensure accountability and transparency in public officials' use of personal and institutional social media accounts (RQ2), Uys' (2014) integrated ethical framework will be used. This framework aims to enhance ethical conduct within the public sector, and it is based on three main components: guidance, control and coordination, and ethical management. This model suggests that unethical behaviour in public institutions usually happens because of weak rules and systems, poor leadership, and a lack of a culture that encourages honesty. This research looks at the ethical issues that arise when personal and official social media accounts mix in Colombia. Uys' (2014) framework offers strong guidance on how public officials can manage their social media ethically.

First, the guidance component involves establishing clear ethical norms, values, and principles that public officials must adhere to. This includes ethical codes of conduct that define acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, the role of ethical management and leaders, and ethical auditing; all under the umbrella of public service values such as impartiality, transparency, integrity, and accountability. To stop ethical breaches before they happen, guidance makes sure that public officials know what their ethical duties are before they happen (Uys 2014). Hence, a clear set of rules is needed to make the difference between personal and official use of social media. Lack of clear rules makes it unclear whether comments made on a personal account should be taken as official statements.

Second, the control and evaluation pillar emphasises the implementation of oversight and enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines. The author highlights that formal monitoring, reporting, and accountability structures are necessary to prevent unethical behaviour. This approach includes mechanisms such as legal requirements to ensure compliance and ethics committees and advisory bodies to oversee ethical dilemmas and provide guidance (Uys 2014). For example, ethical rules for social media are only words if there are not proper ways to monitor and enforce them. By holding people responsible, these rules help protect free speech. They make sure that officials who use their websites fairly do not spread political bias, false information, or their own personal views while saying they work for the organisation.

The third component, ethical management, focuses on fostering an ethical culture within public institutions through leadership and institutional commitment. Ethical management includes education and awareness initiatives to ensure that public servants and officials are well-informed about ethical expectations and potential ethical dilemmas, counselling mechanisms for officials when encountering ethical problems, and developing secure

channels or hotlines for whistleblower reporting in order to encourage reporting of unethical behaviour. Moreover, ethical management makes sure that ethics are not only followed inside of the organisation but also outside it, which encourages public trust and loyalty. Therefore, a loyalty-based management requires sophisticated interaction, such as learning from and listening to the public. This strategy may include changes to service design and ongoing reviews of service practices (Uys 2014).

Table 3.2 summarises Uys' framework, including some descriptions relevant to the current research, as well as some examples of the components for optimal ethical conduct within the public sector in terms of public officials' use of social media.

Component	Indicators	Description and examples
Guidance	- Ethical climate - Code of ethics - Ethical leadership - Ethical auditing	Establishment of clear guidelines that differentiate official from personal social media use, defining acceptable online behaviours, and ensuring transparency. An example could be formal codes of ethics explicitly including social media policies (e.g., what type of personal information can be shared on official channels). Also, ethical leadership is demonstrated by senior officials who actively model ethical social media behaviour, reinforcing a culture of integrity and transparency within institutions.
Control and coordination	- Legal and regulatory frameworks - Workable code of conduct - Enhanced accountability - Social responsibility	Effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms ensur public officials adhere to ethical standards online. For instance, regulations preventing officials from blocking constituents on social media platforms to preserve transparency or the implementation of internal oversight, audits of social media activities, and mechanisms for public accountability, such as public records of social media interactions.
Ethical management	- Education and training - Whistleblower protections - Ethical risk management - Trust and loyalty development	Continuous ethical education and training for officials and their communication teams about responsible social media use. Examples can include training programmes on digital ethics and regular workshops to manage boundary tactics effectively.

Source: own elaboration

Table 3.2 Integrated ethical framework applied to the use of social media by institutions and public officials.

Applying Uys' (2014) model to Colombia's evolving digital governance landscape, this study may capture the level of formalised social media policies, ethical accountability structures, and leadership-driven ethical culture and evaluate if it is sufficient to prevent the erosion of public trust and administrative transparency due to the overlap of personal and institutional social media accounts.

Collectively, these frameworks (public-private identity, boundary work tactics and ethical governance) provide a comprehensive structure for analysing how Colombian institutions and officials at the national level manage their social media presence. Each framework is

directly linked to a research question: boundary theory and role multiplicity explain account differentiation and Uys's governance model elucidates the institutional norms and ethical and accountability structures that guide these practices. By combining theoretical insights with interview data, the study will present a detailed analysis of social media usage in government that considers the intricate interplay between public officials' personal and institutional agency, as well as the ethics implications.

4 Methodology

This research used a qualitative single-case study design (Lim 2024) focusing on Colombia's national government. The case study method works well for examining the intricate, situation-specific phenomenon of public officials' use of social media while in office; it "allows for a more observational and descriptive analysis, focusing on documenting and understanding rather than actively participating in change, which is central to action research" (Lim 2024, p. 15). Because of its high social media penetration, active use of digital platforms in governance, and ongoing institutional digital transformation initiatives, Colombia was chosen as the single-case context. Furthermore, Colombia presents a compelling case for investigating the blurring of personal and official communication online due to recent debates and controversies, including public discussions and legal scrutiny regarding officials' use of personal social media accounts. The study combines desk research of relevant documents with semi-structured interviews with key government communication personnel to gather rich, first-hand insights into this phenomenon. The data collection methods, the analytical approach, and the study's limitations are described in detail below.

4.1 Case selection

The selection of Colombia as the focus of this study is justified by its dynamic sociopolitical landscape and evolving use of digital technologies in governance. Being one of the most socially connected countries in Latin America, it is ranked very high regarding internet and social media diffusion as of January 2024, with more than 77.3% of its inhabitants being active on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X (Bianchi 2024; We Are Social and Meltwater 2025). This high level of connectivity turns Colombia into the perfect setting for studying how public officials leverage these tools to communicate and govern.

Moreover, the political and administrative landscape in Colombia is currently undergoing a digital transformation. According to the OECD, Colombia was one of just a few countries in Latin America that by 2013 had a national strategy on the institutional use of social media, highlighting the role that these tools should play in open governance and public services (Mickoleit 2014). As such, this study makes a great opportunity to understand how national public officials and their institutional communication teams are implementing the strategy.

Additionally, empirical evidence also puts into light the remarkable usage of social media by political leaders and public institutions in Colombia. The Colombian government operates numerous official accounts, while their public officials also actively engage

through personal profiles on various platforms, creating fertile ground for studying how they navigate this duality. President Gustavo Petro illustrates this dynamic by establishing himself as a major digital figure (Murcia 2024; Ríos 2024). With over 8.1 million followers on X, his social media presence has gained substantial attention, resulting in 91.9 million interactions during his first two years in office (Murcia 2024).

This kind of activity demonstrates not simply the reach of digital platforms but also the interest of the president and his team in being present and constantly publishing on social media. This trend has been identified since 2014, when the Colombian government was among the high-frequency tweeters among Latin American governments (Mickoleit 2014). This makes Colombia an ideal context for studying the use of public officials in a social media-dominated communication environment.

Finally, Colombia has not been exempted from discussions about public officials facing the challenge of the blurred boundaries between personal and institutional presence on social media. The visibility and expectation on officials for ensuring openness and inclusion by means of digital is raising this duality and with it, court cases analysing the violation or not of constitutional rights, as can be noted from the latest constitutional decisions of the Colombia Court (Colombian Constitutional Court 2021, 2024).

4.2 Data collection

The primary data source of the study was semi-structured interviews. The study targeted communication directors or heads of press offices of all ministries, as well as ministers themselves and the high offices of the Presidency and the Vice Presidency, based on the premise that these people have a solid knowledge of social media management in their institutions and leaders. Initial contact was done by sending formal invitation letters and emails to each organisation, describing the research and requesting an interview with the person in charge of social media communications. Follow-up contacts were made to schedule interviews and address any questions or concerns from potential participants. The planned sample included at least one interview with each of the 21 units of the national government (19 ministries and the Presidency and Vice-Presidency offices).

A core set of open-ended questions guided the interviews, but the interrogator could also dig deeper into new topics and adapt to each official's experiences. The semi-structured format was chosen to strike a balance between consistency and flexibility. Instead of a rigid, structured interview format (Lim 2024), this approach allowed for detailed, honest answers and opened the door to unexpected issues that came up during the conversation.

The research questions for the study and the chosen theoretical framework (see Subsection 1.1 and Section 3) were used to make the interview guide. The question themes were based on important ideas from the literature, such as role multiplicity and privacy (Bezboruah and Dryburgh 2012), boundary theory (Kreiner et al. 2009), and an integrated ethical model for enhancing ethics within the public sector (Uys 2014). These guidelines ensured that topics such as differentiation between personal and institutional accounts and ethical considerations were systematically covered in each interview. The list of guided questions is attached in Appendix B for the communication teams and Appendix C for the heads of the institutions.

Interviews were done in Spanish, which is the official language of Colombia, and conducted in two ways: written correspondence or virtual meetings. The written interviews consisted of sending a structured questionnaire by email to the interviewees, giving them time to provide their answers. This type of interview usually included a second round of questions sent to explore the answers given in greater depth and clarify positions. The virtual interviews were conducted via videoconferencing platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Google Meet, which usually lasted between 30 and 40 minutes. All participants in the interviews gave their permission for them to be recorded, transcribed, or preserved as text. Appendix A shows the respondents' profiles and affiliations with a specific ministry, as well as a timeline of the interviews and the duration (if applicable).

At the conclusion of the data collection phase, 25 interviews were conducted with 20 of the 21 originally planned units of the national government. This collection included representatives from the communications teams of the presidency and vice presidency and 18 national ministries, plus interviews with five heads of the national government, also known as ministers. The participating institutions and public officials cover a wide range of government sectors, including: the Presidency; Vice Presidency; Interior; Foreign Affairs; Finance and Public Credit; Justice and Law; National Defence; Agriculture and Rural Development; Health and Social Protection; Mines and Energy; Commerce; Industry and Tourism, National Education; Environment and Sustainable Development; Housing, City and Territory; ICT; Transportation; Culture, Arts and Knowledge; Sports; Science, Technology and Innovation; and Equality and Equity. This scope of participation provided a realistic view of institutional practices in social networking across the Colombian government. Only one entity, namely the Ministry of Labour, had yet to be interviewed at the time of the analysis. However, the high response rate from the rest of the ministers and communication offices of the ministries ensured that the data captured both common practices and unique nuances in how the online presence of Colombian public officials is managed.

In addition to the interviews, the research incorporated extensive desk research to collect secondary data and contextual information, including checking the social media accounts of both ministries and ministers and having interviews with experts knowledgeable in public sector communication and social media in Colombia to help provide broader insights into the context of social media use in Colombian governance. Appendix D includes a list of the social media accounts of the ministries and ministers of the Government of Colombia that were found.

As part of the process, official documents, policies, and public records about how the Colombian government uses social media were also looked over. Some important sources were national digital strategy documents and guidelines (like the Colombian Digital Government Manual and the National Digital Strategy 2023-2026), internal communication manuals from different ministries, and civil service rules about how public officials should use social networks. Furthermore, relevant court decisions and legal frameworks were studied, mainly those that dealt with public accountability or rules for officials on social networks (for instance, the "Chao Marcas" Law, which states that officials cannot use official symbols on personal accounts). Thus, the desk research provided an understanding of formal norms and institutional expectations around social media activities.

By comparing this desk research with the interviewees' perspectives, the study was able to identify gaps between official policy and practice and corroborate interviewees' accounts. This use of different types of data makes the results more reliable by putting personal testimonies in the bigger picture of Colombia's e-government and communication policies.

4.3 Data analysis

The interviews were written down or transcribed and then put together in their original language (Spanish) so that they could be analysed. The qualitative data was analysed using a thematic analysis approach (Lim 2024), which combined deductive and inductive coding strategies to uncover recurring themes and patterns in social media management practices and ethical considerations.

On the one hand, the theoretical frameworks and research questions of the study helped with deductive coding by giving a list of themes and categories that were already known. The literature-based frameworks were used to create an initial codebook with categories that showed the expected key aspects of the phenomenon. For example, there were codes for telling the difference between institutional and personal account usage by identifying the four quadrants of the public-private and personal-professional communication and the

specific boundary management work tactics (behavioural, temporal, physical, and communicative) and codes for identifying the ethical social network site practices of the institutions as well, by using the guidance, control and coordination, and ethical management components. Applying this deductive structure to the interviews ensured that analysis directly addressed the concepts deemed important by theory and prior research.

On the other hand, an inductive coding process was carried out to capture emerging ideas and patterns not covered by the initial codebook, allowing for a more profound understanding of how public officials in Colombia use social media. This methodology involved adding new codes whenever interviewees introduced novel insights or perspectives on social media management. This dual coding approach allowed for the identification of both anticipated and unexpected themes in the data.

It is worth noting that in line with ethical research guidelines, for the results and analysis (see Section 5), respondents' names were omitted, only being identified by their positions or unit of working within the institutions. Furthermore, some interviewees requested that their direct quotes not be used in this thesis. This means that direct speech was only used with participants who gave clear permission. All interview quotes used in the paper were translated from Spanish to English, taking care to preserve the original meaning and context.

Additionally, in compliance with KU Leuven's guidelines for responsible use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), the current study indicates that GenAI technologies were utilised in a limited and transparent manner during the thesis writing process. ChatGPT was used as a conceptual support tool to explore structural choices and generate ideas for organising content during the planning stages. Likewise, QuillBot was used as a language assistant to improve grammar, clarity, and overall readability of content written by the author. These tools were not used to generate substantial material, theoretical arguments, or empirical discoveries. The author retains full intellectual ownership of the work, and all academic integrity standards were followed throughout the research and writing process.

4.4 Limitations

Despite the careful design, this study has some limitations. First, the sample of interview participants, while extensive, is not fully comprehensive: one targeted institution and some heads of the ministries did not participate. At the conclusion of the data collection phase, one ministry and 16 heads of national institutions had yet to be interviewed, which leaves minor gaps in coverage. It is possible that the non-participating parties (i.e., the

Ministry of Labour, the President and Vice President, and the ministers of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Agriculture, Health, Energy, Education, Environment, Housing, ICT, Transportation, Culture, Science, and Equality) have different practices or viewpoints, so their absence may bias the overall findings.

Second, because data collection relied on self-reporting by government communications officials and ministers, there is a potential response bias in the information provided. Participants may have tended to portray their social media management practices in a positive or legal manner. For instance, by stressing following ethical rules or keeping accounts separate, which could reduce unprofessional or unwanted actions (important to know for the study). The research tried to mitigate such impacts by ensuring confidentiality and encouraging honest responses, but social desirability will always influence answers.

Third, the research design offers an indirect insight into the ministers' personal decision-making on social media. Interviews were conducted mainly with the communications teams and a few high officials themselves, so the data reflect more an institutional perspective on how personal accounts are managed. The staff can talk about day-to-day management and policy, but they might not fully understand the minister's personal goals or arbitrary choices when they use their accounts. Due to this gap, it may not be possible to know what drives or influences a minister's online actions.

Fourth, the study's findings are based on the practices and perceptions that officials reported, without direct observational verification. The study did not, for instance, monitor the officials' social media accounts in real time or conduct checks of content beyond what was shared by participants. This reliance on self-reported practices means some discrepancies between described and actual behaviours may exist. However, the inclusion of desk research (reviewing guidelines and public content) offers a partial way to validate the consistency of self-reports with documented policies and observable social media activity.

Lastly, since the present investigation was a very in-depth study of just one level of government institutions in Colombia, the results may not be directly applicable to other countries or levels of government. The political, cultural, and institutional factors influencing social media management in Colombia could differ elsewhere. The strength of this approach lies in analytical generalisation, meaning the ability to relate findings to theoretical concepts, rather than statistical generalisation.

5 Results and analysis

This section presents the study's empirical findings, which are based on qualitative interviews with Colombian representatives of the national level institutions and public officials' heads of those institutions about the distinction between personal and institutional social media accounts for governance purposes. The findings are organised into subsections that reflect the study's theoretical framework: first, the institutional and public officials' social media practices used to distinguish official from individual accounts; second, the mechanisms used to maintain ethical standards and safeguard responsibility and transparency in the interplay between personal and institutional social media use. But first, from the desk research, a breakdown of social media usage in Colombia will be provided as context, as well as an analysis of the main policies that establish general rules and principles of government communications for ministries, including their conduct on social media.

5.1 Social media in Colombia

Colombia is at an advanced stage of digital penetration, with a dynamic social network ecosystem, widely diversified and deeply rooted in the daily lives of its population (Pinzón Lemos 2025). According to DataReportal, in January 2025, Colombia had a population of approximately 53.2 million inhabitants, of whom 77.3% (equivalent to 41.1 million people) had Internet access (Kemp 2025). In this connected universe, 36.8 million people (equivalent to 69.2% of the total population) maintained active identities on social networks. This figure remained stable with respect to the previous year and points to a consolidation rather than an expansion of the digital ecosystem.

The use of social networks in Colombia shows not only a wide penetration but also a remarkable intensity. Based on the Global World Index, Colombian users spend an average of 3 hours and 25 minutes a day on these platforms, placing the country in fourth place globally in terms of daily consumption of social networks, above the world average of 2 hours and 30 minutes (Saavedra 2025). This behaviour indicates that social networks are not merely distribution channels but also spaces for sustained interactions that compete for attention with traditional media and other forms of entertainment.

Among the platforms, WhatsApp is the most widely used (91.9%). Facebook closely followed (89.1%), and Instagram (86.3%). Rounding out the top five are TikTok (73.8%), which moved up one spot compared to the previous report, and Facebook Messenger (68.6%). Telegram (53.8%) and Pinterest (46.4%) followed. X (formerly Twitter) occupied more niche roles (42.7%), highlighting a preference in Colombia for visual and video-centric platforms. LinkedIn, although designed for professional networking,

showed considerable traction, reflecting the increasing digitalisation of professional spheres (34.1%) (We Are Social and Meltwater 2025).

While most Colombians use social media for personal and recreational reasons, such as communicating with friends and family (55.2%), searching for content of interest (39.3%) or filling the spare time (39.3%), government organisations and public figures have steadily gained prominence in these digital spaces (Wike et al. 2022). However, interactions with government-related content remain restricted when compared to entertainment and social categories (We Are Social and Meltwater 2025).

These statistics show that the Colombian social media landscape is a consolidated, highly digitised environment with intensive consumption patterns that encompass social, cultural, commercial, and informational aspects. This structure not only shapes citizens' interactions with each other and institutions but also sets new guidelines for public communication. As a result, public leaders face a significant challenge in innovating creatively to compete for attention and generate meaningful participation, transparency, and public accountability online.

5.2 Regulations on government communications on social media

In Colombia, the regulation of the use of social networks by public officials and state entities is at a stage of regulatory development that, although it has progressed in recent years, continues to present significant gaps in the face of the dynamics and complexity of the contemporary digital environment. Currently, this regulatory framework is composed of presidential circular letters, general laws, administrative directives and legal concepts, revealing a trend towards the mentioning of guiding principles rather than the imposition of binding or punitive rules on the digital behaviour of public officials.

One of the most relevant documents in this area is **Circular Letter N.° 01 of March 22, 2019**, issued by the Presidential Advisors for Communications and for Innovation and Digital Transformation, addressed to the ministers and administrative department directors. It establishes recommendations of good practices for the use of institutional and personal social networks by public servants of the national executive branch. The document recognises the importance of SNS, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn and Flickr, as official communication channels and stresses the need to manage them under principles of security, truthfulness, participation, respect and legality. This approach aims to professionalise the management of digital communication without losing sight of its bidirectional nature and potential for citizen involvement.

The document also highlights the importance of a clear differentiation between institutional and personal social networks of public officials. Although the latter are considered part of the private sphere of the public servant, the circular insists on the need to maintain a clear and visible dividing line with respect to their official role, recommending, for example, that it be made explicit in the profiles that the opinions expressed are personal and do not reflect the institutional position. Other recommendations from Circular Letter 01/19 are:

- Whenever you use any social media platform, you should be aware that this action may be interpreted as official, representing the entity.
- It is advisable to clearly state on your account profiles that your communication is personal and does not represent the entity's views.
- Public servants should not use social media platforms for political proselytising or other behaviours that are inappropriate or prohibited, in accordance with existing legal prohibitions.
- It is recommended to always maintain respect and cordiality with other social media users when using public servants' personal communications. It is recommended to apply the principle of respect toward the opinions expressed by government opponents, as well as the parties or movements they represent.
- It is recommended to avoid getting caught up in unproductive conversations. Such conduct only creates a negative image for the user. Once you've provided relevant responses to questions and comments, end the conversation if it doesn't lead to something constructive.

Complementarily, **Presidential Directive N.° 02 of April 2, 2019**, underscores the role of the digital transformation of the State through the strengthening of the Single Portal of the Colombian State. Although this directive is mainly orientated towards the centralisation of online services and procedures, it also establishes a more cohesive state communication logic, where the social networks of the entities must be articulated as effective, accessible and reliable points of contact with the citizenry.

Law 2345 of 2023 establishes a milestone in the attempt to standardise the image of the Colombian state and depoliticise institutional communication. This norm expressly prohibits "government brands", i.e., communication strategies associated with particular government figures or plans that blur the continuity and institutional neutrality of the State. In accordance with this law, all public entities are required to adopt a Visual Identity Manual with strict parameters on symbols, colours and authorised accounts for official

spokespersons. At the level of SNS, the legislation implies that the spokesperson accounts must be properly identified and assigned to the entities and may not be maintained as personal channels by former officials once their term of office has ended. This Law 2345/23 has two rules about the differentiation of accounts:

> ARTICLE 6. Prohibitions. All expenditure on state advertising intended to self-promote, enhance, or denigrate the image of national or territorial government officials through the promotion of their personal social media accounts and those of political parties or movements and government brands is prohibited.
>
> […]
>
> ARTICLE 7. Spokespersons' accounts for state entities. State entities shall adopt, within their Visual Identity Manual, the accounts authorised for the exercise of institutional spokesperson duties to inform the public about the exercise of the state entity's public functions through social media or other media outlets. The spokespersons' accounts or identities shall belong to the state entity, and under no circumstances may those who served as public servants retain them once they have left office. The return of spokesperson accounts must be made explicit in the management report. Those holding public office may not use public funds on personal accounts other than those designated for spokesperson duties.

Hence, Law 2345/23 has been the closest one to being a legal framework that regulates the individual behaviour of public servants on social networks. Anyway, the Administrative Department of Public Service, in some recent legal concepts (**Concept N.° 291841 of July 6, 2020**, and **Concept N.° 198941 of May 23, 2023**), has continued to acknowledge that there is not a specific regulation (with the force of law) in this area. They have also reiterated that the general principles of bona fides, impartiality and respect that govern the civil service also apply to the digital environment (based on Law 1952 of 2019).

The DAFP has also cited the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court, particularly **Judgement T-155 of 2019**, which establishes an interpretative framework for weighing the right to freedom of public servants and public officials. This judgement emphasises that, although public officials maintain their rights as citizens, their institutional duty requires greater diligence and communicative responsibility, especially when their messages can be interpreted as official positionings. However, the Court recognises that freedom of expression enjoys a presumption of primacy and that, even in the case of critical expressions, these are constitutionally protected as long as they do not violate fundamental rights of others, such as the good name or honour, and do not constitute

unfounded accusations or speech excluded from the scope of constitutional protection, such as the advocacy of hatred or incitement to violence.

In this regard, Judgement T-155 of 2019 establishes that any assessment of the scope of an expression made by a public servant must address a contextual analysis that considers five dimensions: who communicates, what is being communicated about, to whom it is being communicated, how it is being communicated, and through which medium. This assessment must be carried out in an integrated, rather than isolated, manner to adequately balance the protection of freedom of expression with the safeguarding of other fundamental rights. Therefore, although there is no express prohibition limiting the critical participation of public officials on social media, prudent, informed, and non-harmful conduct is required, to the extent that their opinions may directly impact public perceptions of the state and its institutions (Colombian Constitutional Court 2019).

Finally, **Judgement T-475 of 2024** from the Colombian Constitutional Court has been the most current ruling about this issue. It reaffirmed the need to distinguish between the institutional and personal accounts of public servants on social media, especially when it comes to digital platforms such as X. In its ruling, the Court established that when a public entity manages an account for institutional purposes, it becomes an official channel of communication with the public and, therefore, is subject to the principles of publicity, neutrality, and universal access. So, unfairly blocking users on these accounts is a violation of basic rights like access to public information and freedom of expression, as it wrongly prevents citizens who want to monitor government actions or join in democratic discussions from participating in the public conversation.

This ruling reiterates the constitutional jurisprudence that grants enhanced protection to political speech and expressions of public interest and emphasises that public officials and entities have a “power-duty” to communicate, which cannot be exercised arbitrarily or selectively (Colombian Constitutional Court 2024). However, despite this jurisprudential advance, the Court implicitly recognises the persistent lack of specific and systematic regulation regarding the use of public officials’ personal accounts in the exercise of their public functions. The regulatory vacuum regarding the distinct limits and obligations between personal and institutional rights on social media allows for the maintenance of grey areas that hinder public scrutiny, accountability, and the effective guarantee of fundamental rights in the digital environment. Thus, the ruling once again underscores that regulatory development in Colombia regarding the use of social media by public officials has not yet caught up with the complexity of the contemporary communication environment.

In summary, the current Colombian regulatory framework for social network sites and public officials constitutes a fragmented body, composed of administrative recommendations, general principles of public law and some recent norms that aim more at institutional image than at communicational dynamics. This context helps to understand how current public servants interpret, negotiate and organise their digital presence once in office and what margin of action and creativity is left to them in the face of a legal system that is not sufficiently prescriptive, thus turning to be more enabling.

5.3 Social media presence of Colombian ministries and ministers

As of April 2025 (the time of data collection for this study), every Colombian national ministry operates official accounts on multiple social media platforms. Regarding both the President's Office and the Vice President's Office, they are active on 8 social network sites: X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Threads, as well as Flickr, a platform for online photography storage.

In the case of the 19 ministries, they all have official pages on Facebook, X, and Instagram, making them the most widely used SNS. A comparable percentage of ministries actively use TikTok (94.7%) for short video outreach, and not nearly half have set up an official Threads account (47.4%) (Meta's Twitter alternative launched in mid-2023), showing an uneven adoption of more recent networks. While most ministries, particularly those in the technical or economic sectors, have a LinkedIn presence (73.6%), some important ministries, like the Interior, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Defence, and Transportation ministries, do not use LinkedIn for official communications. What's more, 18 ministries have an official YouTube channel (94.7%), except for the recently formed Ministry of Equality, which had not established one; these channels are usually used for hosting longer video content such as press conferences or educational content.

It is worth pointing out that ministries such as Justice, Health, Environment, ICT, and Equality have a WhatsApp account (26.3%). Furthermore, three ministries–Justice, ICT, and Sport– have opted for Spotify (15.8%) as a streaming platform. Finally, two ministries–Environment and Housing– also have a Flickr account (10.5%). The social media channels that each ministry has are compiled in Table 5.1. A checkmark (✓) means there is an account on the specified platform, whereas a dash (-) indicates no account was found. Overall, the data indicates that all ministries ensure coverage of the major mainstream platforms, with more variable engagement on emerging platforms or professional networks.

N.	Institution	X	IG	FB	TH	TT	YT	in
1	Presidency of the Republic •	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Vice Presidency of the Republic •	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Ministry of the Interior	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-
4	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
5	Ministry of Finance and Public Credit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Ministry of Justice and Law * °	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-
7	Ministry of National Defence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
8	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
9	Ministry of Health and Social Protection *	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
10	Ministry of Labour	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Ministry of Mines and Energy	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
12	Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓
13	Ministry of National Education	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
14	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development * •	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Ministry of Housing, City and Territory •	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
16	Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies * °	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
17	Ministry of Transportation	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-
18	Ministry of Culture, Arts, and Knowledge	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
19	Ministry of Sport °	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
20	Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21	Ministry of Equality and Equity *	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓

Note. Platforms: X (Twitter), IG (Instagram), FB (Facebook), TH (Threads), TT (TikTok), YT (YouTube), and in (LinkedIn). Additional platforms: * = have a WhatsApp account, ° = have Spotify account, • = have Flickr account.

Table 5.1 Social media accounts of the Colombian national-level government.

When these statistics are compared to the heads of national-level agencies, the ministers' personal SNS accounts are much less consistent across platforms. As mentioned, each ministry has a minimum of Instagram, Facebook, and X accounts; on the contrary, very few of the ministers themselves have profiles on those same platforms: 79% of ministers have an X account, 58% are on Instagram, and 47.4% are on Facebook. Even fewer use more recent platforms like Threads (21%) or TikTok (15.8%) and only two ministers are present on LinkedIn (10.5%). In the cases of the president and vice president, they are the only officials with personal accounts on X, Instagram, Facebook, Threads, and TikTok;

and President Gustavo Petro is the sole official with his own YouTube and WhatsApp account. It is also important to point out the case of 4 ministers, namely those in charge of Finance, Justice, Sport, and Equality, who do not have a personal social media presence on any of the major platforms. In these situations, all online communication is conducted through the official ministry accounts. The social media channels that each current minister is present on are compiled in Table 5.2.

N.	Head of the institution (Minister)	X	IG	FB	TH	TT	YT	in
1	Gustavo Francisco Petro * (**President**)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
2	Francia Elena Márquez (**Vice President**)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-
3	Armando Alberto Benedetti (**Minister of the Interior**)	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-
4	Laura Camila Sarabia (**Minister of Foreign Affairs**)	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	-
5	Germán Ávila Plazas (**Minister of Finance**)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	Angela María Buitrago (**Minister of Justice**)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	Pedro Arnulfo Sánchez (**Minister of Defence**)	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	Martha Viviana Carvajalino (**Minister of Agriculture**)	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓
9	Guillermo Jaramillo (**Minister of Health**)	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-
10	Antonio Sanguino Páez (**Minister of Labour**)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-
11	Edwin Palma Egea (**Minister of Energy**)	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓
12	Cielo Rusinque Urrego (**Minister of Commerce**)	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	José Daniel Rojas Medellín (**Minister of Education**)	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-
14	Lena Estrada Añokazi (**Minister of Environment**)	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-
15	Helga María Rivas Ardila (**Minister of Housing**)	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-
16	Julián Molina Gómez (**Minister of Information**)	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-
17	María Fernanda Rojas (**Minister of Transportation**)	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-
18	Yannai Kadamani (**Minister of Culture**)	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-
19	Patricia Duque Cruz (**Minister of Sport**)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20	Yesenia Olaya Requene (**Minister of Science**)	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-
21	Carlos Rosero (**Minister of Equality**)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Platforms: X (Twitter), IG (Instagram), FB (Facebook), TH (Threads), TT (TikTok), YT (YouTube), and in (LinkedIn). Additional platforms: * = have a WhatsApp account.

Table 5.2 Social media accounts of the Colombian ministers.

The contrast between institutional and personal social media use becomes even more evident when comparing their audience sizes. Table 5.3 provides the follower count of each ministry's official accounts versus the minister's personal accounts on each platform. A striking pattern is that official ministry accounts generally have larger followings than the personal accounts of the ministers, with a few notable exceptions. For instance, the Ministry of Health's Facebook page has about 1.9 million followers and 1.5 million on X, whereas the Health minister's personal Facebook reaches only around 51,000 and 65,000 on X. This pattern holds across many other ministries, like the Ministry of Defence's X account, which has 1.1 million followers, compared to the Defence minister's mere 22,000 followers on the same social network site. Similar gaps appear for the three main SNS in the ministries of Education and Agriculture.

These differences suggest that the institutional accounts serve a broader public audience that follows government news and services, accumulated over time and possibly spanning multiple administrations. The ministers' personal accounts, in contrast, often reflect the individual's prior public profile; many ministers are technocrats or newcomers with limited personal followings, so their accounts (if they exist at all) tend to have modest follower numbers.

However, there are important exceptions where a minister's personal brand outshines the institutional account. The most prominent cases are the president and vice president. President Gustavo Petro's personal social media presence far exceeds that of any official government account: he has over 8.1 million followers on X, compared to 2 million for the presidency's account. Similarly, he commands 2.9 million on Facebook and 1.9 million on Instagram on his personal profiles, several times more than the institutional presidency pages: 1.3 million on Facebook and 464,000 on Instagram. He also reaches about 2.0 million on TikTok via his personal account, whereas the presidency's TikTok had approximately 413.1K followers. Vice President Francia Márquez, a former social activist, likewise has built a substantial audience: over 1.1 million X followers and more than 768,000 on Instagram, eclipsing the vice presidency's institutional accounts, which have nearly 315K and 96K on those platforms, respectively. These figures highlight how high-profile public figures leverage personal accounts for communication and enjoy a visibility that can surpass official channels.

Other ministers with significant personal followings include those with prior political careers. For example, the Minister of Commerce, Cielo Rusinque, has around 173K followers on her personal Twitter; a notable audience, though still less than half of the Commerce Ministry's 374K followers on X. Concerning this ministry, it is important to clarify that, although former minister Luis Carlos Reyes was referenced as an example in

the initial phases of this research, he served as the head of the commerce ministry until mid-March 2025 (El Colombiano 2025); thus, his data was excluded from the results of the study conducted in April. However, just to keep in mind, Reyes' TikTok account currently has 447.8K followers.

The Labour Minister, Antonio Sanguino, a former senator, similarly has about 97K Twitter followers and active profiles on Instagram and Threads, giving him a larger personal reach than most of his cabinet colleagues, yet still well below the Ministry of Labour's own follower counts. These cases show that when ministers come into office with an existing base of supporters on social media, their personal accounts can serve as important parallel communication channels, potentially complementing or amplifying official messaging.

Nevertheless, for most ministers, the institutional accounts remain the primary source of social media outreach in terms of audience size. Numerous cabinet ministers either do not engage on certain platforms or have only a token presence; for instance, several have Facebook pages with just a few hundred followers or no official page at all. In such instances, the ministry's communications team essentially carries the full load of public engagement on social media, and the messaging is kept in the institutional voice. This underscores a structural differentiation: the official accounts are dedicated to institutional communication, sharing policy announcements, public service information, and organisational news, while the ministers' personal accounts (when active) lean toward personal branding and political discourse.

As for the cases of the president and vice president, they use their personal accounts to promote government agendas but also to project their individual leadership personas, blurring the line at times between institutional communication and personal political messaging. Meanwhile, lower-profile ministers who lack personal followings tend to appear only through official ministry channels, maintaining a clearer separation between the institution's communications and any individual's voice.

The visibility gap is immediately apparent in most instances, as shown in Table 5.3, which also highlights in grey the accounts with the greatest reach in terms of followers for each SNS among the 21 entities studied and their representative officials.

N.	Institution and Head	X		IG		FB		Threads		TikTok		YT		in	
		Ins	Mi	Ins	Mi	Ins	Mi	Ins	Mi	Ins	Mi	Ins	Mi	Ins	Mi
1	**Presidency of the Republic** Gustavo Petro	2M	8.1M	464K	1.9M	1.3M	2.9M	92.1K	427K	413.1K	2M	397K	235K	45K	-
2	**Vice Presidency** Francia Márquez	314.7K	1.1M	95.7K	768K	46K	491K	18.6K	197K	14.9K	527.2K	15.7K	-	3K	-
3	**Ministry of Interior** Armando Benedetti	640.4K	572.1K	87.7K	46.9K	76K	53K	-	-	14.1K	-	14K	-	-	-
4	**Ministry of Foreign Affairs** Laura Sarabia	451.7K	110.5K	175K	32.8K	133K	-	35.1K	6.340	30.8K	-	29.6K	-	-	-
5	**Ministry of Finance** Germán Ávila	630.6K	-	52.2K	-	45K	-	-	-	3.643	-	-	-	40K	-
6	**Ministry of Justice** Angela María Buitrago	451.7K	-	52K	-	57K	-	-	-	10.3K	-	49.2K	-	-	-
7	**Ministry of Defence** Pedro Sánchez	1.1M	22K	219K	-	583K	-	42.9K	-	97.7K	-	68.2K	-	-	-
8	**Ministry of Agriculture** Martha Carvajalino	507.7K	11.1K	79.8K	1.732	142K	-	-	244	6.598	1.001	64.8K	-	34K	873
9	**Ministry of Health** Guillermo Jaramillo	1.5M	65K	479K	6.853	1.9M	51K	-	-	22K	-	74.9K	-	17K	-
10	**Ministry of Labor** Antonio Páez	759.2K	97.2K	125K	8.787	320K	28K	21.7K	2.013	126.3K	8.924	25.1K	-	65K	-
11	**Ministry of Energy** Edwin Palma	436.9K	44.2K	59.8K	7.211	65K	37K	-	1.015	4.384	-	23.6K	-	137K	172
12	**Ministry of Commerce** Cielo Rusinque	374K	173.4K	137K	-	243K	-	-	-	-	-	67.1K	-	50K	-
13	**Ministry of Education** Daniel Rojas	848.6K	77.2K	212K	10.1K	511K	164	-	-	43.4K	14.6K	89.1K	-	130K	-
14	**Ministry of Environment** Lena Estrada	687.1K	4.026	142K	3.388	314K	4.2K	23.4K	-	13.5K	-	37.9K	-	36K	-
15	**Ministry of Housing** Helga Rivas	506.4K	2.809	101K	1.169	179K	400	19.1K	-	52.2K	-	25K	-	34K	-
16	**Ministry of ICT** Julián Molina	845.1K	1.017	169K	-	425K	-	32.9K	-	18.4K	-	97.3K	-	195K	-
17	**Ministry of Transportation** María Fernanda Rojas	461K	34.6K	94K	-	125K	-	-	-	9.839	-	9.61K	-	-	-
18	**Ministry of Culture** Yannai Kadamani	648.4K	5.074	181K	6.336	438K	2.4K	-	-	16.9K	-	36.2K	-	15K	-
19	**Ministry of Sport** Patricia Duque	138.9K	-	90.1K	-	161K	-	-	-	5.890	-	10.7K		4K	
20	**Ministry of Science** Yesenia Olaya	192.4K	17.3K	83.6K	3.925	157K	2.9K	13K	-	2.046	-	21K		121K	
21	**Ministry of Equality** Carlos Rosero	11.9K	-	32.3K	-	9.3K	-	-	-	6.015		-		-	

Note. Platforms: X (Twitter), IG (Instagram), FB (Facebook), YT (YouTube), in (LinkedIn). Ins = denotes the ministry's official account followers. Mi = denotes the minister's personal account followers. All values are rounded to the nearest hundred: "K" = thousands, "M" = millions.

Table 5.3 Follower count of official ministry accounts vs ministers' personal accounts on major social media platforms[1].

[1] All follower data were collected on April 15, 2025, to ensure consistency in comparative analysis. It is acknowledged that follower counts are subject to change over time, and the figures presented reflect the state of the accounts at the time of data collection.

It's also worth mentioning platform-specific dynamics. Some ministries, such as Health, Defence, and Education, have particularly large Facebook followings (hundreds of thousands or more), most likely due to their broad public service goals and ability to reach out to various areas and communities via this platform. Whereas platforms like Threads show relatively low follower numbers for both institutions and officials, due to still nascent recognition as informative platforms in those communities. With respect to LinkedIn followings, it varies widely; certain ministries orientated toward economic and scientific communities (e.g., Commerce, Science and Technology ministries) garnered over 100K followers on LinkedIn, suggesting a targeted professional audience, while most ministers do not utilise LinkedIn at all in a public capacity.

In summary, institutional accounts provide wide coverage and generally command larger audiences, ensuring that government information reaches citizens, whereas ministers' personal accounts, where they exist, add an extra layer of outreach that depends on the individual's popularity and engagement style. This dual structure of social media presence allows us to distinguish clearly between the communications that are institution-centric and those that are person-centric within the Colombian government.

5.4 Negotiating personal and official social media account boundaries in Colombia's national government institutions

All interviewed ministries confirmed that the official social media accounts on major platforms are managed by their communications teams or designated staff within the ministry. Because of that, the content on these institutional accounts is carefully curated to reflect the ministry's work and exclude private matters. For example, the digital team of the press advisory office of MinICT "is dedicated to creating content exclusively for the official accounts of the ICT Ministry, highlighting its mission, projects, and plans to digitally transform the country". Similarly, the President's Office noted that public-interest content is disseminated "only through its institutional channels", managed by the communications team under editorial criteria and scheduling tools to ensure consistency and transparency. In practice, this means that the accounts are branded and authored in the voice of the ministry: using official logos and third-person language, posting news, announcements, live videos and educational content that highlight the agency's mission and activities.

In fact, several ministries explicitly stated that they use each SNS for specific purposes. For instance, the Ministry of Interior uses each platform according to the network's functionality: X for informative and agenda-setting topics, "anything of priority or urgent need for dissemination is shared or disseminated on this network"; Facebook for

conceptual, informative and audiovisual content, trying to reach communities and regional media outlets (considering that Facebook has a greater presence in Colombia's different regions); Instagram for emotional storytelling via Reels about its initiatives and content that connects with the audience and that encourages interaction; and even repurposes Instagram content on TikTok to deliver messages in a trendy format and extend reach to a youthful opinion without losing accuracy. Finally, YouTube as a chronological repository of the various campaigns carried out by the Interior Ministry departments.

Similar to the Ministry of Interior, 13 other ministries, along with the Presidency and Vice Presidency, agreed that their digital communication strategies involve segmenting content for each social network based on the characteristics and dynamics of each platform. Generally, the ministries use Facebook for news on management progress, official announcements, live event broadcasts, and educational content. X is for official communication, real-time information, and agendas. The entities manage Instagram, TikTok, and Threads, emphasising closeness to citizens and content that humanises their mission. YouTube is used for explanatory content and audiovisual archiving, and LinkedIn for institutional communication with an emphasis on the entities' missions linked to their international positioning.

However, there are still 5 ministries–Foreign Affairs, Finance, Commerce, Education, and Housing– that do not assign different functions to each social network site, nor change the content; rather, they adapt the content to the formats relevant on each platform. As the interviewee from the Ministry of Finance stated, "the same topic can be addressed from different perspectives, whether through a graphic piece, a video, or a press release". In the end, for these ministries, "the wording of the content or accompanying audiovisual material may vary across platforms, but the content remains the same".

Now, these practices illustrate a broad pattern: even if ministries tailor their content and tone to each network's strengths or if they just present the same information all over the different platforms, both uniformly intend to keep the subject matter tied to official business.

Having a formal content planning process to ensure alignment with institutional goals and the minister's agenda also demonstrates the intent of the ministries to keep it official all the time. For instance, the Ministry of Commerce organises a weekly communications preview committee with representatives from various departments before the start of the ministry's agenda to agree on social media content for the week and the type of media to be used for this purpose. In those meetings, they identify key topics to highlight and even conduct a communications audit across the ministry to gather material. They also analyse

the impact of previous posts to inform themselves and determine which content goes to which platform. After setting the week's agenda, they produce texts, figures, and audiovisual pieces for publication. And once it is time for publication, a review and final approval are done. This systematic approach is done as well in other ministries like Agriculture, Energy, Interior, and the Vice Presidency.

As for the rest of the ministries, weekly planning is not something that they practise; it tends to be more immediate, and they publish it depending on the daily tasks and activities done by the ministry and minister. Still, all the ministries share the idea that before publishing, a review and approval are necessary. They usually review for relevance, tone, and language, validate internally, and then authorise publication according to a timeline. But this checking point is only done for the institutional accounts, all the ministries (except for a Ministry of Housing clarification explained later), presidency and vice presidency were emphatic in saying that they do not check the content that its head of institution is going to post beforehand, they do not supervise it nor control it.

The interviewee from the Ministry of Finance, for example, explained that they do not manage minister Diego Guevara's personal accounts because these are for his exclusive use and he has full control over their management. Therefore, the content, interactions, and posts on these accounts are his sole responsibility. On the contrary, the official accounts of the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit are managed by the entity's communications team. In the same way, the person interviewed from the Vice Presidency argued that the social media accounts of the public officials are not of an institutional nature but rather represent the full exercise of the right to free expression, where he or she shares their opinions in their role as citizens and not in relation to the public office they hold.

Thus, for the separation between official agencies' accounts and personal public officials' accounts, identification cues and content rules are implemented. In the institutional accounts, managed by the communication teams, citizens can expect a formal, impersonal, technical and neutral tone appropriate to public service, but equally approachable, respectful, and consistent with institutional policy. Whereas a minister's personal X, Facebook, Instagram, etc., accounts, which are managed by the minister, have a casual, personal and political tone. According to the interviewees from the Defence and Science ministries, their official tone is "formal, professional, and respectful" to match the seriousness of science or defence matters, implicitly distinguishing it from a politician's personal rhetoric. The change of tone is also justified by the interviewee of the Interior Ministry because "the personal accounts of any official, including a minister, are their sole responsibility and their private management".

Moreover, institutional accounts universally display government insignia and use formal biographies. In contrast, personal accounts of officials carry individual names, photos, and often non-official descriptions. As examples, the Culture Ministry, as well as the ministries of Finance, Agriculture, Energy, Environment, and Interior, ensure the separation by: one, emphasising identification; hence, official accounts carry the institutional names and logos, whereas the minister's accounts use his or her name and photo; and two, differentiating the content; thus, official feeds contain only institutional information, while the minister's personal feed may follow her or his personal criteria. The Vice President's office provided a concrete example: its official profiles show the Colombian coat of arms, use third-person messaging and an "Official account of the Vice President" banner, whereas Vice President Márquez's personal profiles display her portrait, first-person voice, and a personal bio (e.g., "Proud mother, lawyer, defender of human rights…"), signalling that those channels are her private platforms.

For the interviewed person from the Ministry of Culture, the independence of the public entity is non-negotiable: "citizens must be certain that the ministry's policies and programmes are governed by objective and transparent criteria and not by the opinions of a particular official. This separation guarantees the institution's continuity and stability, regardless of changes in administration".

Despite these separation practices, the interviews revealed conceptual ambiguities and overlaps that test the boundaries between official and personal accounts, mainly regarding the public perception, because often citizens do not distinguish as neatly as the ministries do. As a result, when the interviewees of ministries were asked whether the public can consider their minister's opinions on social networks as official government statements, different responses emerged. They were less forceful in establishing the previous boundaries between the official role and the individual's citizen role on social media. Some ministries even acknowledged that when a minister speaks on social media, people may take it as an official statement, creating tension between the desire to separate and the reality of a personalised political environment. Ministries can be grouped by their approach to handling this issue as follows.

On the one hand, strict separation is maintained. The Presidency and Vice Presidency along with 10 ministries–Foreign Affairs, Finance, Justice, Health, Energy, Commerce, Culture, Sport, Science, and Equality– were categorical: the head of the institution's personal opinions on social media do not constitute official statements, period. All of them answered "no" when asked if the minister's personal posts could be considered official, insisting that official statements are only those made via the ministry's official social media accounts. The interviewee from the Culture Ministry, to give an example,

stated that while the minister's words carry weight, the ministry "maintains a separation" and the institution's policies are not driven by one official's opinions. On the same line of thought, the person from the Ministry of Energy commented that, "although absolute separation on social media is difficult, it can be achieved through appropriate use of the platforms and clear communication of personal and institutional identities". The response from the Ministry of Commerce was more intriguing because, while it was direct in responding about differentiation, it made a disclaimer: "while the minister's personal accounts are her property, comments or posts made on them should not be construed as official government statements unless she explicitly indicates that she is speaking on behalf of the ministry or the government".

The interviewee from the Vice President's office explained best the position of this group: even though a person's personal and professional identity are not divisible (as they are part of the person's identity, just as other aspects, such as personal history, origins, values and beliefs, personality, etc.), it is possible to separate the use of social media and their identity or purpose. In the case of this entity, the official Vice Presidency's social media channels are intended to inform and disseminate information not only about the vice president's agenda and institutional management but also about the public officials, programmes, and projects that comprise the agency and the national government. Meanwhile, Francia Márquez's social media accounts are a personal space, created long before she took up her current position, where she freely expresses her opinions, not only on political matters but also on various topics, including family and personal matters that are part of her private life. In that sense, the vice presidency's social media accounts will be consistent in their existence but undergo changes in content, themes, and styles every four years with each constitutional change of government. "Their existence will be tied to the continued existence of this department or institution in the legal system. Meanwhile, Francia Márquez's social media accounts will not change, given that they are channels for expressing her identity, and they will remain operational for as long as she wishes".

Based on this group, if a minister posts something newsworthy, these ministries might decide not to share it unless it fits with official messages and is coordinated. For example, the Ministry of Culture stated that there is natural collaboration in disseminating mutually interesting activities but no obligation for reciprocal interaction, which means that if the minister shares something, the ministry may or may not share it, preserving independence.

It is worth noting that within this group, the ministries of Justice, Sport, Equality, and Finance answered easily with a "no" regarding the minister's opinions on his or her social

networks being perceived as official government statements because their ministers do not have social media accounts; then, “there is no need to make this distinction”, and they can effortlessly respond to a situation they haven’t faced. In the interview with the Minister of Justice, she explicitly stated that she has no personal social media accounts at all, preferring to let the ministry’s official channels speak on her behalf, adding that in her public office she “refrain[s] from expressing [her] opinion” on any platform outside the ministry’s official accounts. By not having personal profiles, these officials draw an unequivocal line: any communication coming from them is inherently official. This approach simplifies boundary management by effectively eliminating the personal-public overlap online.

In the middle group, some ministries acknowledged a partial overlap or took a pragmatic “sometimes” stance. The person interviewed from the Interior Ministry said that in principle the minister’s personal posts are not official statements; “however”, given his high rank, there’s a risk they could be interpreted as such. Thus, the Ministry of Interior avoids making a definitive no, thereby acknowledging a blurred area. The communications team’s approach to handling this scenario and managing the associated risks involves being aware of what the minister posts and possibly advising him to avoid certain content. Indeed, the interviewee from the ministry mentioned aligning dissemination topics with the minister’s line of argument, suggesting coordination but in no case control. Similarly, the Agriculture Ministry said official statements will always come from institutional accounts but acknowledged that the minister’s social media accounts can be “a source of information” without compromising the ministry’s position. This is a complicated position because, despite the ministry’s assurance that those personal posts do not influence its positioning, it implies that while they try to maintain an official narrative on institutional accounts, they recognise that the public and media might still seek out and pay attention to the minister’s personal social media for information.

Within this group, the Ministry of Environment provided an insightful perspective. The interviewee noted that “the absolute separation between personal and institutional matters on social media is not always possible, especially in the case of high-level officials”. Hence, the ministry relies on the principles of public servants to act in a transparent, ethical, and consistent manner to maintain the distinction responsibly. At the same time, the Environment Ministry conceded that when the minister’s personal posts “refer to official or public environmental matters in the exercise of her duties”, they can be interpreted as institutional statements, and in those cases, they are aligned with the ministry’s narrative. This in fact means that if the minister is talking about her work in

the ministry on her personal account, people can take it as coming from the ministry, so they ensure consistency.

Another interesting point of view came from the person interviewed from the Ministry of ICT, who said that the minister, Julián Molina Gómez, is in charge of representing the ministry, making policies, and promoting plans and programmes for the sector. Therefore, "in practice, Minister Molina uses his personal account on X primarily to disseminate official information from the ICT Ministry, such as achievements, programmes, and policies, which reinforces his role as a representative of the entity", and because "there is no public evidence that he expresses opinions on this platform that deviate from institutional communication", so far the posts can be understood as an extension of his work. Nonetheless, as a citizen, the minister still has the right to freedom of expression and the moment he uses his accounts to do so, they should no longer be perceived as official government positions.

The "sometimes" position reflects a permeable boundary, meaning that the ministries do not formally blur the accounts, but they are prepared for the eventuality that the public perceives them to blur. Following this group, the strategy here is often to align messaging across personal and official channels behind the scenes. For example, if the minister plans to post about a policy update, the ministry's communications team is likely to coordinate the content with the ministry himself or its personal team (or at least quickly replicate it on the official account) so that both channels reinforce the same message.

At the other end, a few ministries effectively integrate the minister's personal account into their communications strategy, thus treating personal posts as an extension of official communications. This is more rare and arguably contrary to the official stance of separation, but the data shows a couple of clear cases. The Ministry of National Defence straight away said "yes" to understanding the Defence minister's opinions on social media as official statements, and for this reason his messages are often aligned with the institutional policy and the defence sector's communication strategy. The interviewee acknowledged that it's challenging to separate the minister's personal and professional identities given his position, and even though his X account is personal, "his statements are interpreted as official communications". This honest admission shows that the minister's account is treated almost like an official one by the communications team of the ministry. Similarly, the Ministry of Education answered that the minister, as head of the entity, makes some of his announcements via his own social media, and then the ministry's official accounts replicate and amplify that information. In other words, the Education minister's personal account is used deliberately to break news or make

statements, effectively functioning as a first line of communication, with the official account playing a supporting role.

The Ministry of Housing also answered positively to perceiving the minister's opinions on their social media networks as official government statements but made the reservation that the accounts of the minister were created as an institutional means for the minister to act as spokesperson; therefore, her opinions can be perceived as official. This suggests that the Ministry of Housing actually set up official social media channels in the name of the minister–her X and Facebook accounts– and labelled them with the minister's title. In this way, the communications team manages them as institutional accounts. Indeed, they manage these for public use and the minister, as spokesperson, disseminates institutional information. This system turns out to be an intriguing model: the minister essentially has an official persona account run by the ministry, meaning it is separate from any private personal profile she might have. In such cases, anything posted there is de facto official.

In this group is also the Ministry of Transportation, which, beyond elaboration, stated that "of course" the posts of the minister should be understood as official "given that she is the official spokesperson for the ministry", implying that the minister's personal voice is considered the voice of the ministry to the public. However, when asked about the management of the minister's personal accounts, the interviewee answered that the personal accounts of the minister are managed solely by her and clarified that "although she may occasionally share messages related to her public role; these accounts are not considered official channels of the ministry and do not formally represent the institutional position". This final statement contradicts the initial one, showing that not even in answers does the ministry have the boundaries clear as to when the minister's personal account on SNS should start or end.

Overall, these four ministries show an integration, which means that the line between official and personal accounts is blurred or crossed on purpose, using the personal account as an official way to communicate. This scenario may happen because a minister has a large following or prefers to communicate directly, and the government takes advantage of that reach. Here the person and office are merged in the online communication sphere, which can have the benefit of more authenticity and reach but also carries risks if not carefully managed.

In summary, separation strategies between official and personal accounts include formal policies (rules forbidding mixing content), separate account management (communication teams only handle institutional pages, never logging into ministers' personal profiles), visual branding cues (verified badges, logos on official accounts vs

personal avatars), and content scoping (keeping personal life out of official feeds). However, the effectiveness and perception of these strategies vary. Ministries such as Culture and Commerce demonstrate high segmentation, working actively to remind the public that personal opinions do not equal institutional positions. They even limit their interaction with ministers' posts to maintain that distance.

On the contrary, ministries like Defence and Education show controlled integration, where the communication operation extends to the minister's personal outreach. However, in this context, the institution must also adjust its approach to the individual's statements. We see that where ministers are very publicly outspoken, the institution adapts by treating those personal communications as part of the official narrative (to ensure consistency and avoid contradiction). Where ministers are more reserved or explicitly separate (or have no social media presence), the institution has an easier time keeping channels distinct. For instance, the Justice minister's lack of personal accounts means the ministry's communications are fully institutional with no bleed-over.

The interviewees did not indicate any major conflicts or incidents arising from personal vs official account confusion so far. No ministry reported a case of having to publicly clarify or retract a statement due to mix-ups. Such behaviour suggests that, up until now, their differentiation strategies have been adequate in practice or that officials have been careful. Nonetheless, many acknowledged it's a delicate balance that requires continuous attention. Regarding this issue, the interviewee from the Vice Presidency pointed out that because public officials have a "dual nature of power and duty" in communication, each case must be assessed in context until specific legislation emerges, considering the type of account and its purpose. Such an approach implies an understanding that managing this boundary is an evolving challenge that is not fully resolved.

5.5 Mechanisms for upholding ethical standards in the management of overlapping social media accounts

Managing official social media in a government context raises several ethical and accountability issues, some of which were directly or indirectly addressed by the interviewees. The overlap between personal and institutional accounts is in itself an ethical and public accountability concern; for instance, if a minister's personal post is taken as policy, is it accountable in the same way as an official press release? Does it bypass institutional checks? Another set of challenges involves maintaining truth, impartiality, and respectful discourse on official channels. There are also concerns about public trust regarding if social media can help or hurt trust in government depending on

how responsibly officials use it. The interviews indicated that the ministries are aware of these stakes and have implemented various ethical safeguards.

A primary measure is the development and adherence to clear guidelines or protocols governing social media use. The Presidency, Vice Presidency and ministries like Justice, Interior, Foreign Affairs, and Environment, for instance, invoked the Presidency's Circular Letter 01 of 2019, mentioned in Subsection 5.2, as a higher-level government guideline to instruct public servants to act transparently and ethically online and to "be clear about the difference between institutional and personal opinions". This provides a moral standard to officials, essentially telling them: when in doubt, clarify if you are speaking personally or for the institution.

Additionally, Foreign Affairs, Justice and Environment ministries, along with three more ministries–Commerce, Interior, and Sport– also referenced concepts or recommendations from the DAFP and the MinICT for the responsible use of social media. However, when asked about this, the representative of the ICT Ministry did not mention any specific regulation but rather general mandates of the Constitution, the Law, and the Civil Service Regulations regarding the exercise of public functions by public officials. This argument was justified by the fact that "public officials are free to manage their social media accounts personally, as guaranteed by Article 20 of the Political Constitution, which establishes that freedom of expression is a fundamental right. The Ministry of Information Technology would be wrong to not allow public officials to express themselves through their social media accounts". Thus, these general guidelines form the backbone of ethical expectations for these institutions regarding the issue.

Along with that, at the ministry level, some ministries have their own social media policies or editorial policies that incorporate ethical rules. The person interviewed from the Ministry of Transportation, for instance, mentioned its guidelines for the management of social media, which have general ideas for personal vs official account conduct but do not completely tackle the issue. The mentions go in the same direction as Circular letter 01/19 by saying that whenever a public servant uses a social media account, they must be aware that this action can be interpreted as official, representing the entity; and because of that, it is recommended that personal profiles clearly state that the communication is of an individual nature and does not represent the views of the Ministry.

In the case of the Ministry of Energy, their internal manual prohibits using official accounts for personal purposes, especially to disseminate personal opinions that could be confused with institutional positions; but it does not mention anything the other way around regarding using personal accounts for official purposes and how that should be understood. The person from the Housing Ministry also mentioned their manual for

disseminating information of interest to audiences via the web and external social media but did not specify how personal vs official accounts would be handled. Overall, these documents often include general ethical principles, such as do not disseminate false information, maintain confidentiality where require (do not leak private data on social media), ensure inclusivity and non-discrimination in communication, etc.

Ministries also guard themselves against the misuse of official resources for personal or political agendas by prohibiting personal content on official pages and by not allowing official accounts to be drawn into partisan battles or personal feuds. To give an instance, the Transportation, Justice and Housing ministries have a rule about not engaging in controversy with other accounts unless it is strictly for correcting misinformation about an event or figure specific to the sector, and then when doing it, they do so objectively and respectfully. Therefore, they are avoiding using an official account impulsively or vindictively, which is important for maintaining professionalism and neutrality.

The Vice Presidency and Ministry of Culture took a strong stance that the institution's image must not be heavily influenced by personal opinions or activities of its officials, stressing that the priority is to strengthen the institution's voice which transcends any one vice president or minister. This viewpoint is deeply rooted in ethical governance: it is about maintaining continuity, objectivity, and public trust even as public officials come and go. Based on the interviewees, this separation is meant to keep the public's trust because if an official's personal views were seen as those of the organisation, they could make it seem political or unstable. Their precautions are meant to keep their credibility from falling.

Another ethical aspect is accountability for content. If a minister says something inaccurate or inappropriate on social media, even on a personal account, it can become an ethical issue for the government. While 17 interviewees, representatives of their ministries, declared that they do not control the personal accounts of their ministers (except the Ministry of Housing, which, as mentioned before, created and understood the personal accounts of the minister as official as well), some have informal oversight. For example, the Culture Ministry mentioned that although they do not manage the minister's personal account, the team "reviews the minister's interactions, given her importance in the sector, as part of a comprehensive communications strategy". This implies a form of monitoring, not to censor the minister, but to be aware of what she's communicating and how the public reacts so the ministry can then respond or adjust if needed.

As a subtle way of coordinating ethics, the communications team watches over the minister's public personal communications, which the public may perceive as press statements. If the minister posted something problematic, the communications team

would likely provide advice on damage control or clarification. However, in the study data, no one gave a concrete example of having to do this (such admissions would be sensitive), but the awareness and readiness are there.

Specifically, on the issue of training and awareness, when asked about education for officials on ethical social media use, the responses varied, indicating that the need is recognised but not uniformly implemented. On the one hand, the Presidency, Vice Presidency and 11 ministries–Interior, Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, Finance, Commerce, Education, Environment, Housing, ICT, Sports, and Equality– agreed to having training initiatives. Finance Ministry said they hold periodic workshops on social media best practices; they even mentioned a workshop that occurred on Feb 27, 2025, for officials to promote good practices and proper information management. The ministries of Interior, Commerce and Education pointed out government programmes via DAFP or MinICT and gave examples of topics covered, such as cybersecurity, content best practices, security tools and verification. But interestingly the Ministry of Education noted these trainings are about use and appropriation of social media, "not their ethical use", implying a gap specifically in ethics training.

The interviewee from the Environment ministry said they had held internal training sessions on ethical use aligned with a guide to good practices in public communication and are strengthening training with the support of DAFP and MinICT in the current year. They even held a TikTok training session, showing the government's recognition of new platforms' importance. The Ministry of Housing also cited the Presidency's commitment to educating digital staff, including a training in March 2025 about TikTok best practices and security training featuring experts from TikTok Latin America. The Ministry of Sport echoed this, describing the same TikTok training event in detail as an example of ethical and strategic social media training for public officials.

On the other hand, five ministries–Justice, Defence, Energy, Transportation and Science– said that there is no training about ethical conflicts in the handling of social media accounts by public officials. The interviewee from the Justice Ministry said the press office does not provide training to officials on how to manage their social media, and it has not even been considered because "everyone has the right to free expression". That answer points to an internal free-will attitude, possibly based on the idea that officials should know how to behave or that rules are enough. In the same line of thought, the Science Ministry said there is no specific training but, going further, stated that it is not their competence to intervene in personal use of social media, even though they promote responsible behaviour abstractly: "although responsible behaviour is promoted and

institutional integrity is protected, it is not within the ministry's competence to intervene in the personal use of such channels".

The Ministry of Energy was also part of this group and acknowledged not having specific training in this issue but highlighted having sufficient laws (e.g., Law 1712 of 2014, Resolution 1519 of 2020 and Law 1952 of 2019) that help understand the substantive and procedural rules that govern the public sector and activities of public officials. Likewise, the Ministry of Transportation said that they follow the guidelines of the Presidency of the Republic for the responsible and ethical use of social media by public officials. For the interviewee, despite "these guidelines do not constitute formal training, they serve as a clear institutional guide on how personal and institutional accounts should be managed, what types of information can be shared, and how to avoid confusion between personal and official accounts".

A position a little opposite from those opinions within this group is the one from the Ministry of Defence. The interviewee noted the current absence of training and considered it would be beneficial to have one to prevent misinformation and ensure responsible use. Two other ministries–Culture and Health– did not take a position on this issue.

The overall picture is that ethical awareness is present, and there are efforts to educate and guide, but a formal, consistent training programme for all public officials on social media ethics is not yet institutionalised across the government. Instead, there are ad hoc workshops and reliance on central guidelines. This is an area where the ethics management model suggests improvements. In this regard, ministers were directly asked about the need for a standardised national policy or regulatory framework to govern the conduct of public officials on social media. Four of the five ministers interviewed–those of Defence, Energy, Commerce, and Environment– answered with an unqualified "Yes" that Colombia should develop more specific regulations or an official manual on social media use by public servants. Their consensus was that an updated framework would provide uniform guidelines, clarify ethical boundaries, and prevent confusion. Such a manual, suggested the Defence Minister, would "help prevent misunderstandings, abuses, or confusion between personal and institutional matters".

Interestingly, the only dissenting voice on the need for new regulation came from the Minister of Justice, who answered "No" to the question of a new framework. This divergence can be contextualised by the ministry's emphasis on existing rules and her personal practice of avoiding personal social media. From her perspective, the combination of current guidelines and her strict separation might be sufficient. Indeed, the minister already operates as if a strong boundary policy were in place (by self-imposed

rules). She also seemed worried that rules too strict could limit the freedom of speech of government officials.

Finally, an important thing to note that was mentioned by the interviewee from the Ministry of Mines and Energy is related to transparency and anti-corruption mechanisms established in the disciplinary guide for public servants (Law 1952 of 2019). Even though this law does not directly deal with social media, the policy makes it clear that any wrongdoing, including wrongdoing that might happen online, can be reported and punished. It situates social media behaviour within the broader integrity framework of government services. Hence, if a minister were to use social media to clandestinely campaign or to defame someone, theoretically those general disciplinary codes would apply. Thus, ethical oversight is not entirely absent; it would be covered under broad civil service rules of conduct. The ethical bottom line is prudent self-regulation by officials: knowing that their freedom of expression is somewhat diminished by their office, they should exercise greater prudence and respect. This calls for personal integrity in officials, which is part of cultivating an ethical culture.

6 Discussion

This section focuses on studying the results. Drawing on interview data, the findings are interpreted using three theoretical frameworks–role multiplicity, boundary work, and ethical governance– to analyse how Colombian national public officials and institutions negotiate the personal and official digital identities on social media, the boundaries maintained, and ethical standards upheld. The discussion is structured around the two research questions. First, it looks at how institutions manage role complexity in social media communication. Second, it explores the mechanisms, such as policies, oversight, and training, that are used to ensure ethical behaviour in this context. Together, these analyses offer observations about the evolving governance of digital communication in Colombia's public sector.

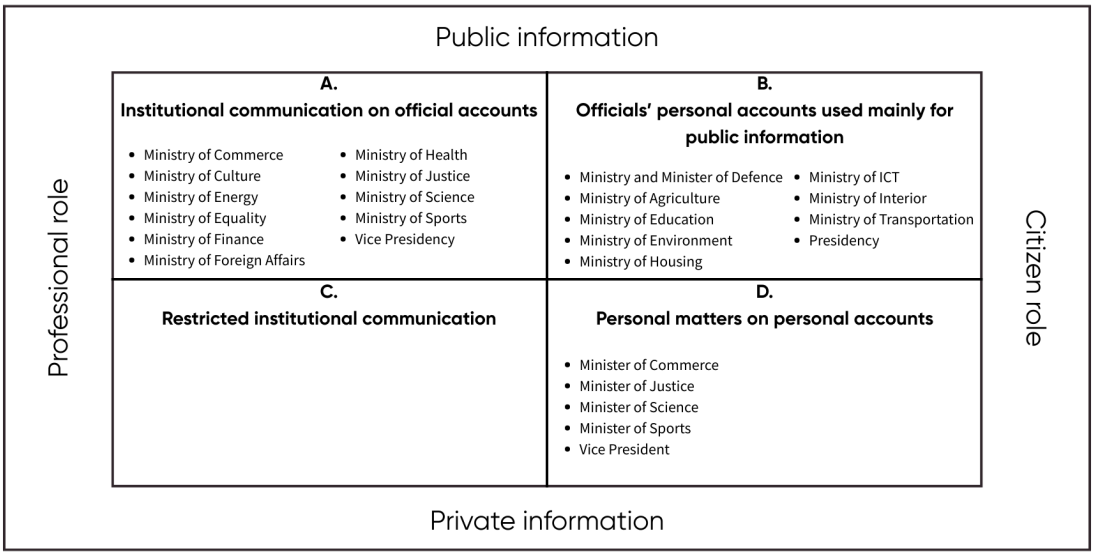
6.1 Navigating role complexity: how institutions strategically manage personal and official digital identities

Using the Bezboruah and Dryburgh (2012) four-quadrant role multiplicity framework, it is possible to determine the position of each Colombian national institution in relation to the boundary between personal and official roles in the social networks of its public officials, as well as the position of their ministers (the ones interviewed), based on interviews.

As explained in Section 3, under this model, a public official can operate either in a professional role as an office-holder using institutional channels or in a citizen role as a private individual using personal profiles; additionally, they can share either public information (unrestricted, official content) or private information (restricted or personal content). The intersection of these dimensions yields four scenarios. Figure 6.1 visualises this framework and situates the presidency, vice presidency, and each ministry within the appropriate quadrant, along with five ministers.

A significant group of 11 Colombian national institutions fall into Quadrant A (Professional/Public), indicating a strict separation of personal and institutional social media accounts. According to this scenario, officials must stick their professional communications to official channels and share only public, institutional information there. For instance, the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Commerce explicitly maintain high segmentation between ministers' personal opinions and the ministry's official voice. Their communications teams emphasised that the minister's personal social media posts are not equivalent to institutional viewpoints. These ministries avoid sharing any personal or partisan content on official accounts and even refrain from interacting with ministers' personal posts to maintain a clear boundary. Similarly, the ministries of Justice, Sport,

Equality and Finance, in which their heads do not have social media accounts, were emphatic in saying that all public communications occur through the ministry's institutional accounts.



Source: own elaboration

Figure 6.1 Role multiplicity quadrants (adapted from Bezboruah & Dryburgh 2012) with placement of Colombian institutions.

Quadrant A position reflects a strategy of role purity, meaning ministers act in their official capacity only on official profiles, keeping personal life or views entirely off institutional feeds; in the same way, personal profiles are by no change understood as part of their work as officials (the tactics in which they accomplish this will be discussed in Subsection 6.2). This method provides the most clarity and control because communications stay on point and are supervised by the institution. This lowers the chance that a personal comment could be taken as an official position.

The trade-off, however, is a potential loss of the personal touch or direct citizen engagement that personal profiles can offer. The results of the interviews indicate that ministries in Quadrant A intentionally focus on the institutional voice over the individual, emphasising continuity and information neutrality. Communications officers from the Vice Presidency and Culture Ministry, for instance, stressed that the institution's image "must not be heavily influenced by personal opinions" of officials. They wanted to keep the public's trust in the office itself, not just in one person who holds it. In short, Quadrant A institutions enforce a firm boundary that safeguards the objectivity of official communication at the expense of personalisation.

The opposite stance and also complementary to this position is Quadrant D, which represents officials acting in a private citizen role and sharing private information only, essentially a normal personal social media use on private profiles. When officials are not working, they should always be in Quadrant D; when they make personal updates like family photos, hobbies, or personal opinions that are not related to their job. The ministers of Commerce, Justice, Sports, and Science interviewed insisted that their personal matters are only mentioned on their personal accounts, if they have any.

Now, the personal material is usually harmless and has nothing to do with governance. However, Quadrant D may come up in public sector discussions when personal posts affect work or how people see public officials. For instance, if a minister's private Instagram shows actions or words that go against their official role, like controversial opinions or proof of wrongdoing, those "private" posts can quickly become public issues.

This overlap is an area of sensitivity because even being personal accounts, an official's conduct reflects on the institution's image. Here it is important to highlight what the Constitutional Court has been saying regarding the condition of "privacy" of the public officials' accounts. According to the Court, the use by public officials of their personal accounts on social networks can compromise the neutrality of the state when they are used to communicate institutional information specific to their position; hence, the condition of "privacy" may change if their use shows otherwise. These situations have occurred in Colombia in the past, though based on the interviewees, it has not happened under the current government. However, to cope with the possibility of this issue, some communications teams of the ministries informally monitor the Quadrant D content of their ministers. The Ministry of Culture, for example, noted they quietly "review the minister's interactions" on personal accounts as part of a broader strategy. This is not to police private life per se, but to stay aware of any personal post that might blow back on the institution.

Once again, no interviewee cited a concrete example of a personal-post scandal, suggesting that ministers have been generally prudent (or simply that such issues were kept internal). Nonetheless, the ethical burden falls on the individual official to exercise discretion in Quadrant D. Colombian public figures should be conscious that their freedom of expression is somewhat diminished by their office, meaning that even private-citizen content must be handled with integrity. In effect, while Quadrant D is a space of personal expression, for high-profile officials it is never fully private in the eyes of citizens or the media. Thus, the limits of Quadrant D call for rigorous personal self-regulation to prevent ethical spills into the workplace.

Precisely, this is the role mixing that occurs in Quadrant B. The rest of the ministries and notably the presidency fall into this scenario, where public officials act in a private or citizen role using their personal accounts on social media yet share public, governance-related information. Here, the lines completely blur because personal social media profiles become part of the way for official announcements or political messaging. President Gustavo Petro's social media behaviour exemplifies Quadrant B. Petro relies heavily on his personal accounts to communicate governmental matters to the public, and his personal following (more than 8 million on X) far exceeds the official presidency account's audience.

The Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Education also display controlled forms of integration consistent with Quadrant B. They allow the blending of the minister's personal outreach with the institutional narrative. These cases show officials switching hats with their institutions by using their citizen-role account to perform official communication, which can amplify reach and lend authenticity or informality to the message. Interviewees likewise mentioned that when a minister is very active or outspoken on personal channels, the institution adapts by treating those personal communications "as part of the official narrative" to maintain consistency. The Ministry of Housing went so far as to create and treat its minister's personal accounts as official channels under the communications team's purview, essentially an official persona operated on a personal account platform.

All these cases fit in Quadrant B because public information (policy positions, announcements, government initiatives) is disseminated through channels bearing an individual's name. The criteria for placement in Quadrant B include evidence that an official's personal profile is used for governance matters and that the institution coordinates or responds to those communications. The benefit of this approach is greater audience engagement and a humanised communication style (as seen with the viral "Mr Taxes" TikTok case).

However, risks and ambiguities arise because the public (including the head officer himself) may have difficulty distinguishing when an official's post is an authoritative policy statement versus a personal opinion, especially when newsworthy announcements come from personal accounts first. The Constitutional Court has reiterated that this issue must be analysed case by case and that a judge must determine if it violates the rights of others or the community. But the question remaining is how to handle this daily and determine the status of each post. Relying solely on going to a judge cannot be the only way. Unfortunately, so far, the only guideline is from the judicial side, and its position is as follows:

> Basically, and as long as there is no specific legislation on the matter, the tensions between rights arising from interactions on social networks will have to take into account the specifics of the case and the analysis will vary depending on the type of social network involved, on whether the accounts are purely institutional or those of individual public servants, on the purposes defined for each channel, and on a host of other features that will impact the analysis of specific cases and that will have to be considered in their specific context (Colombian Constitutional Court 2024).

The Colombian communications teams are aware of this ambiguity and have responded by closely monitoring and synchronising messages. For instance, when the minister of Education posts an update on their personal profile, communications staff of the ministry quickly replicate it on the official account so that both channels reinforce the same message. This practice acknowledges that personal and institutional voices are effectively merged in the public eye.

In summary, Quadrant B entities embrace an integrated role approach, capitalising on the personal account's reach and relatability, but they must manage the heightened need for coherence and guard against the erosion of official accountability.

Finally, Quadrant C, in which ideally no institution should be, as it represents a public official acting in a professional capacity yet sharing private or restricted information on official channels. Such behaviour would entail using an institutional account to post content that is personal, confidential, or otherwise inappropriate for public dissemination. For example, the scenario could involve a minister leaking internal deliberations or airing personal offences on the ministry's X feed. Based on the interview data, no ministry or high office has openly admitted any cases of Quadrant C behaviour, and several safeguards exist to prevent it. Ministries like Energy explicitly prohibit using official accounts for personal purposes or opinions that could be confused with institutional stances.

Similarly, multiple communications teams stressed that personal life is kept out of official feeds as a matter of policy. The absence of reported incidents (no instances of having to retract or clarify an official post due to personal content) suggests that Colombian institutions so far have succeeded in avoiding this pitfall.

Quadrant C thus remains a hypothetical risk rather than an observed practice in this study. The fact that it would be illegal highlights a crucial point: officials are aware that even a minor inadvertent infringement would constitute a significant ethical breach, thereby violating privacy and public trust. Given that no lapses were revealed, the scenario could

suggest rigorous filtering by communications teams and self-censorship by officials. It may also reflect luck or underreporting. Caution is needed because a single Quadrant C incident, like an off-the-cuff personal remark on an official page, could undermine institutional credibility. Some ways to make sure that this quadrant stays off-limits shall be mentioned when talking about ethical safeguards in Subsection 6.3.

In summary, by using the role multiplicity framework, it is possible to see a differentiated landscape. The Presidency and a few ministries operate in an integrated mode (Quadrant B), blending personal and official outreach; the majority of ministries enforce a separation (Quadrant A), and none openly report crossing into the problematic Quadrant C. All the ministers interviewed affirmed navigating Quadrant D with caution due to the implicit visibility of their personal persona. The placement of each entity and minister in Figure 6.1 reflects both deliberate policy choices and adaptive responses to each official's prominence and behaviour. This pattern underscores the central challenge noted by Bezboruah and Dryburgh (2012), which is that modern communications technology tempts officials to blur boundaries, but institutions vary in how much blurring they permit or encourage. The Colombian case demonstrates an ongoing balancing act, blur or not blur, manifested in various quadrant strategies for different offices. Each approach has implications for public engagement and administrative clarity.

6.2 Drawing the line: tactics for delimiting institutional and personal roles on social media

The way Colombian institutions manage the personal-official boundaries can be further understood via the boundary work tactics (Kreiner et al. 2009). This framework focuses on how individuals and organisations actively create, maintain, or adjust boundaries between roles. Based on Kreiner et al. (2009), four types of tactics are commonly used to achieve a desired level of separation or integration between work and non-work domains. In the context of public officials' personal and official social media use, these tactics translate into concrete practices, such as delegating account management, arranging the timing of posts, separating devices or profiles, and explicitly signalling accounts (see Table 3.1 for more examples).

The interviewees revealed the tactics currently employed by Colombian national institutions and public officials. The patterns point to an uneven but telling adoption of boundary strategies, with clear differences between institutions that proactively compartmentalise personal and official communications (located in Quadrant A) and those that deliberately integrate them for strategic purposes (located in Quadrant B), as

seen in Subsection 6.1. The tactical behaviours that reinforce social media boundaries in the public sector from day to day are the following.

I. **Behavioural tactics.** The main tactic used within this group is "using other people", which means Colombian ministries heavily rely on organisational support to maintain social media boundaries. One common practice identified was the use of dedicated communications staff to manage institutional accounts. All interviewed entities indicated that ministries', presidency', and vice-presidency' official social media accounts are managed by professional digital communications teams rather than by the officials personally. This management ensures that the content remains consistent and that the personal impulses of public officials are filtered out. By "using other people" in this manner, institutions clearly delineate the tone, content and frequency of official channels.

   Another behavioural tactic that was evident was leveraging technology to facilitate separation. All offices, regardless of whether their minister has social media or not, have their own social media accounts; some are present on more SNS than others, but all are present at least on Instagram, Facebook, and X (see Subsection 5.3). So, it is evident that the technology separation exists; there is, for instance, an official ministry X account vs the minister's personal X account. Additionally, each account typically has different privacy settings and verification logins to prevent confusion between them.

II. **Temporal tactics.** Interviewees were less explicit about tactics for timing and scheduling differences in social media use, but they did mention some aspects. The Vice Presidency and Colombian ministries, such as Commerce, Agriculture, Energy, and Interior, show evidence of structured timing for publications on their official SNS accounts because their communications teams use editorial calendars and weekly content plans.

   However, ministers themselves do not appear to be formally constrained in when they may use their personal accounts. No interviewee described any rules stating that "ministers may not post from personal accounts during office hours" or that "ministers may only post outside of working hours on their personal accounts". Given the always-on nature of politics, such a temporal separation might even be unrealistic. Furthermore, there was no direct evidence of the "finding respite" tactic, such as taking deliberate breaks from social media or delegating during off-hours. On the contrary, officials like the President are known to post at all hours (even in the early morning), reflecting personal initiative (El Colombiano 2025). This lack of formal temporal rules might be an area of vulnerability because,

without clear guidelines, an official posting late-night personal opinions could still cause confusion and chaos (Añez Held and Pacheco 2025).

Instead, the implicit norm is that personal posts should not distract from or contradict the official message. Communications teams likely coordinate timing informally; for instance, if a minister is planning to publish something important, the ministry ensures it does not clash with official releases, or they prepare to amplify (reposting or liking) it accordingly. These cases of alignment were evident in ministries like Education and Defence.

One particular temporal tactic raised by the communications personnel is the long-term separation between administrations. They noted that institutional accounts carry on over time with changing office-holders, whereas personal accounts do not. This means that ministries attempt to maintain the institutional Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media accounts as independent entities, accumulating followers across different administrations by posting consistently, with no regard if the minister of duty is more or less active on its social platforms. Meanwhile, a minister's personal account may surge during their service and then fade away or remain flat. This dynamic underscores a temporal boundary, which is that the official account is continuous (public memory of the institution), while the personal account is tied to the individual's time in office.

III. **Physical tactics.** Physical separation strategies involve using distinct spaces or artefacts for different roles. In the social media context, the primary "space" is digital; hence, that space is shared, but the physical separation may happen through separate accounts and devices. As mentioned in the behavioural tactics, by leveraging technology Colombian institutions definitely employ digital separation because every ministry maintains distinct official accounts (often with the ministry's name and logo) separate from the minister's personal profiles. But more significant, the aesthetic in the ministries' accounts serves as a complementary physical boundary. Representatives of several ministries, like Finance, Culture, Environment, Interior, Agriculture, and Energy, mentioned that official social media accounts use institutional branding, meaning government emblems and logos or formal photographs, whereas personal accounts use the individual's photos and portraits (they are prohibited from using official designs by the "Chao Marcas" law). Thus, this clear visual branding difference is not only a communicative tactic but also a virtual physical separation because it helps audiences instantly distinguish which type of account it is based on profile appearance.

Another physical tactic that also connects with behavioural tactics is the use of separate devices or infrastructure. Interviews indicated that, since the digital communications teams control the ministries' social media, they have their own computers or cell phones to carry out this exercise; it is not the minister's phone or computer that is used. This configuration can help more clearly establish the physical boundary and reduce the risk of cross-posting errors, such as, for example, the minister accidentally posting something personal from the ministry's account because he or she has both accounts on the same mobile phone. This situation was not reported by the interviewees, indicating that physical compartmentalisation is enforced at the device level.

Indeed, interviewees reported that ministers do not log into institutional accounts at all. This distinction is an essential physical/digital boundary because ministers have access only to their personal accounts, while communications staff hold the keys to official accounts. By technically preventing officials from posting directly to institutional pages (except by sending content to the team), ministries create a robust physical/technical separation that greatly reduces boundary blurring.

IV. **Communicative tactics.** Finally, regarding setting expectations and addressing boundary violations when they occur, there are a couple of examples from the Colombian institutions. On the one hand, several ministries mentioned they implement the tactic of "setting expectations" by labelling accounts. This procedure often means that social media bios or descriptions note the account's nature. In fact, some ministries recommend to their officials that their personal profiles include clarifications like "opinions are my own, not the ministry's". The Ministry of Transportation, for example, has guidelines advising that if a public servant uses a personal account, they should explicitly state that it is individual communication not representing the institution. Such a statement is a textbook communicative tactic; it directly signals the boundary to the audience.

However, based on the desk research, it was evident that not all officials have such clarifying phrases. Of the 17 heads of offices with social media accounts, only two have a clear statement regarding the status of their accounts. Only the Vice President and the minister of Commerce have implemented this tactic. The Vice President, Francia Márquez, has the following description: "Proud mother. Social leader, lawyer, defender of the environment and human rights. Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia. Personal opinion account" (highlighting outside the original text); and the minister of Commerce, Cielo Rusinque, describes herself as: "Superintendent of Industry and Commerce, former Director of the DPS.

Professor, constitutionalist, Latin Americanist, progressive. Personal Account" (highlighting outside the original text). In both cases, the communicative tactic is employed. While the vice president mentions her position, she makes the statement of being a personal account for her own views, and in the case of the minister of Commerce, she detaches herself completely from her positions and additionally mentions being a personal account.

On the contrary, President Gustavo Petro, along with his ministers from Interior, Foreign Affairs, Defence, Agriculture, Health, Energy, Education, Environment, Housing, ICT, Transport, Culture, and Science, all have in the description of their X accounts the position they are currently holding in the government. That is their main description.

This situation is very telling, because, for example, the Ministry of Transport, which has this guideline suggesting making the clarification, is currently not being enforced by its minister. Moreover, ministries such as Foreign Affairs, Health, Labour, Energy, Culture, and Science, which were categorised in Quadrant A for their strictness regarding account separation and their insistence that only official communications occur through official channels, should be the first to advise their leaders not to identify themselves with their government positions or, if they choose to do so, at least clarify that despite holding those positions, the account is intended for "personal opinions only".

In terms of implications, communicative tactics, or their absence, directly affect public understanding. Clear disclaimers and policies likely reduce confusion by letting the public know when something is simply an official's personal opinion. Conversely, without clear signals, there's potential for blurred accountability; a risk if, for example, a heated opinion on a minister's Facebook is interpreted as the ministry's stance.

Overall, the boundary work tactics observed reveal various practices. Colombia's government employs all four types of tactics to varying degrees, with the behavioural tactic being the most established. The heavy reliance on communication teams (behavioural) forms the backbone of boundary management. Physical tactics are partially present and intersect somehow with communicational tactics in terms of image and logos, but the clear statements, even though they are suggested, are not as commonly used. Temporal tactics are the least formalised; they are left to individual discretion rather than formal policy.

This distribution of tactics makes sense in a resource-constrained and trust-based context because it is easier to assign staff and issue general guidelines than to police when an official can post or not. The consequence is that clarity and coherence largely depend on human judgement and institutional culture rather than strict technical barriers or schedules. So far, this semi-formal approach has worked "well enough" (no public fiascos were reported) and officials seem generally mindful, but the variability across institutions (some highly proactive, others more laissez-faire) means that boundary integrity is uneven. As the discussion in the next subsection will demonstrate, there is a call for even more standardised guidelines. The argument is essentially an appeal for stronger communicative and regulatory mechanisms to manage these boundaries uniformly.

6.3 Upholding ethics in a blurred public sector digital sphere: institutional mechanisms

Having examined what Colombian institutions do to manage account boundaries, the study now evaluates how well these practices uphold ethical standards, using Uys' (2014) integrated ethical framework. This framework suggests that sustaining ethical conduct in public sector social media use requires attention to three components. In essence, organisations need to guide officials in proper behaviour, monitor and correct mistakes, and cultivate values and training that encourage ethical self-regulation. By applying these lenses to Colombian national entities' interviews, the evidence reveals a landscape of partial measures: some formal guidelines exist, but there are significant gaps; enforcement is based on general laws and personal responsibility rather than systematic oversight; and efforts to foster an ethical digital culture through training are in their early stages and are uneven. The evaluation of each component proceeds as follows.

a) **Ethical guidance and codes of conduct.** Colombia's public sector has made initial progress in developing guidelines for social media ethical use from the institutions and their public officials, but the codes of conduct are still fragmented and incomplete. A key reference is Presidential Circular Letter 01 of 2019, which is cited by numerous interviewees as a high-level guideline for social media behaviour. This circular letter encourages public servants to maintain transparency and clearly distinguish between their personal opinions and the institutional stance. Its inclusion of the phrase "be clear about the difference", which is a communication tactic previously observed in Subsection 6.2, offers a clear ethical message that combining roles is risky and needs to be avoided or explicitly clarified. Thus, the circular letter reminds of an ethical principle, namely that officials wear two hats (a personal one and a professional one) and must indicate which one they are wearing when using SNS. As a guidance document,

though, it stops at principles and does not enumerate specific dos and don'ts for social media use.

This situation explains why, seeking to complement the circular letter, several sectoral authorities have issued recommendations. Many interviewees, for instance, mentioned the DAFP and the Ministry of ICT as sources of advice for responsible social media use. They have made recommendations that cover general issues like transparency, data protection, and citizen engagement online. But an intriguing aspect is that when asked about recommendations for public officials' responsible social media use directly, the representative from MinICT itself did not point to any dedicated social media regulation but instead focused the attention back on the Constitution and civil service law to justify a hands-off stance. Specifically, the interviewee noted that Article 20 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, implying that public officials are free to manage personal accounts as they wish under that right.

This perspective reveals a tension in the guidance component. On one hand, officials are told "be ethical and separate personal from official" (Circular letter 01/2019), but, on the other hand, the default legal view is that the personal accounts of public officials are a legitimate right of their freedom of expression and because of it, nobody is going to guide them in their use as the public figures that they are. As a result, there is a somewhat vague official guidance environment, strong on urging ethical mindfulness, weak on enforceable specifics. At this point, it is important to emphasise that the ethical guidelines are not intended to restrict or censor officials in any way; rather, they are meant to provide them with the necessary resources to use their personal accounts in a way that does not conflict with their official positions.

In search of more codes of conduct or ethical guidelines, at the individual ministry level, some have developed their own social media policies or codes. For example, the Ministry of Transportation has an internal guideline for social media management that echoes the presidential circular letter by advising officials that anything they post could be considered representing the entity, and thus personal profiles should explicitly state they are personal. The Ministry of Energy's manual prohibits using official accounts for personal content (a one-way boundary rule). The ministries of Housing and Justice have a manual on information dissemination; however, it does not provide clarity on the usage of personal accounts. In general, these documents incorporate broad ethical principles, such

as truthfulness (no spreading false information), confidentiality (no leaking private data), respect, and non-discrimination (no giving unfair treatment).

What is missing, however, is comprehensive guidance on the dual-role issue. Notably, the Ministry of Energy's policy forbids posting private content on official accounts, but it does not mention the other way around, as in using personal accounts for official matters. This omission is common; none of the guidelines cited provide a clear protocol for how an official should behave if they choose to make public announcements on personal channels. In practice, this grey area is precisely where a few ministries and ministers are currently operating (as shown by Quadrant B of Subsection 6.1), and the lack of official guidance in these scenarios means a complete reliance on personal judgement.

The ethical risk here is inconsistency. One minister might very responsibly clarify "speaking in a personal capacity", while another might routinely broadcast policy positions via personal posts without clarification. An example, previously mentioned, is that while Vice President Marquez has been emphatic that her X account is for her personal opinions, President Petro, on the contrary, describes his X account as "President of the Republic of Colombia 2022-2026. 🇨🇴". What exacerbates the inconsistency is that, whether clarified or not, both accounts can still post information about their official positions, which can, in fact, turn these accounts into official accounts, according to the Constitutional Court, because the sharing of public information transforms them into a public forum digital space, even if they are not accounts from the Presidency or Vice Presidency.

From a citizen's standpoint, these ambiguities and the allowance of inconsistent behaviours make engagement with one or another account more difficult. Which is the official one? From which one is it expected to have the official information without the political/personal component? From the ministers' standpoint, these situations also bother them. Four of five ministers interviewed explicitly called for more specific regulations or an official social media manual for public officials. They believe a standard framework would "provide uniform guidelines, clarify ethical boundaries, and prevent confusion".

b) **Control and enforcement mechanisms.** In terms of oversight and enforcement, Colombian institutions currently favour a light-touch, decentralised approach, relying on general accountability frameworks rather than specific policing of social media behaviour. One reason for this is that the constitutional right to free expression makes authorities hesitant to impose strict controls on officials' personal communications, as mentioned in the guideline component.

Consequently, formal monitoring of personal accounts is minimal: 17 out of 18 ministerial communications representatives interviewed said they do not have the authority to control or directly manage their minister's personal accounts. The only exception was the Housing Ministry, which, by treating the minister's accounts as official presentations, exercises more direct oversight over them. For the remaining ministries, enforcement is carried out in an indirect manner. Some ministries engage in informal monitoring; for instance, the Culture Ministry does not log into the minister's social accounts, but they do "review the minister's interactions" and closely monitor her public posts as part of their communications strategy. The purpose of this surveillance is to maintain situational awareness, ensuring that the communication team of the ministry is promptly informed if the minister's personal posts spark public controversy, enabling them to formulate appropriate responses.

This measure can be considered a soft enforcement because the ministers are not prohibited from posting, but there is a safety net in place to catch and address any issues that arise after their postings. In ethical terms, this places a lot of trust in officials' own restraint, with the communications team acting as a cautious advisor rather than a watchdog. Indeed, interviewees indicated that if something problematic were posted, they would "provide advice on damage control or clarification", but they did not cite any instance of formal discipline or public retraction, which suggests that such scenarios have been avoided or handled quietly.

However, one aspect that can be enforced by the regulations currently in place is the prohibition of state spending on the self-promotion of national government officials through their personal social media accounts, based on the Lay 2345 of 2023. Furthermore, at the ministry level, some of the guidelines repeat this idea that by no chance can the official resources be used for the management of officials' personal accounts. Ministries like Transport, Justice, and Housing, for instance, also include the rule that there cannot be an engagement in personal feuds or political fights via official profiles. Codifying these limits allows for their enforcement in the event of a violation. For example, a public official could be subject to discipline under these rules if he or she allocates part of the office budget to social media accounts or posts a partisan remark on an official account.

Another layer of enforcement comes from general legal frameworks that, while not specific to social media, apply to misconduct in any setting. According to the interviewee from the Ministry of Energy, the disciplinary code (Law 1952 of

2019) and similar regulations allow for the reporting and punishment of any wrongdoing by a public servant, even if it occurs online. To illustrate, if an official uses social media to campaign or to defame someone, the existing laws on misuse of office, libel, or electoral law could be invoked. Such an approach is essentially a post hoc enforcement because if a social media action crosses into illegal or gravely unethical territory, the official could face investigation or sanctions just as they would for an official misdeed offline. No interviewee reported a case of this happening in their institutions, but the mention of the framework indicates awareness that it is possible.

The downside of relying on general laws is that, since they fail to address more specific situations, they only come into effect through subsequent interpretations when substantial harm has already occurred. Thus, they are not preventive and may be too slow or an ineffective tool for the complexities of social media conduct. Notably, no specific enforcement bodies or audits for social media use within ministries were identified. There was no indication of routine audits of officials' accounts or a requirement to archive and review social media communications. Some ministries did mention public accountability measures, such as maintaining records of official interactions on social media, but the topic was not a prominent theme. Therefore, oversight falls largely to each ministry's communications team, if it so chooses, and ultimately to public scrutiny from the media and citizens who can report posts they deem inappropriate by public officials. This effectively "enforces" the rules through reputational costs.

c) **Ethical culture and management practices.** The third pillar of Uys' (2014) framework is fostering an environment where ethical social media use is supported by training, leadership, and a culture of accountability. Here, the findings show a developing but inconsistent ethical culture around digital communications in the Colombian government.

On the plus side, there is clear awareness of the problem at senior levels. The fact that ministries invoked ethical principles and that most ministers desired stronger policies indicates a cultural recognition that the overlap in social media use between personal and institutional roles is a serious issue. Some ministries have taken proactive measures to provide education and training. Notably, the Presidency, Vice Presidency, and 11 ministries reported having training initiatives related to social media best practices. For example, the Finance Ministry holds periodic workshops on proper information management and recently ran a session on social media good practices.

Other ministries, like Interior, Commerce, and Education, referenced government programmes via the DAFP or the MinICT that covered topics like cybersecurity, content best practices, verification tools, etc., as part of enhancing officials' social media expertise. The Ministry of Environment even organised internal training specifically on the ethical use of social media and aligned it with a guide to best practices in public communication. Additionally, together with the Ministries of Housing and Sports, they described a training initiative supported by the Presidency: a workshop in March 2025 on TikTok best practices and security, with experts from TikTok Latin America.

These examples show that an ethical training programme is starting to take shape, which is good news. It recognises that officials and their teams need to learn not only how to use social media well but also how to do it in a responsible way. However, this positive picture is not uniform. Five ministries admitted to having no specific training on ethical conflicts in social media account management. The Justice Ministry respondent even said they had not considered providing such training because "everyone has the right to free expression", indicating a laissez-faire attitude that assumes all officials are capable of using social media appropriately. The Science Ministry likewise took a hands-off stance, saying it is not their scope to interfere in personal use, even though they normally urge responsible behaviour. These responses may indicate either lower perceived risk or a belief that formal training is unnecessary if officials are simply expected to know the basics of right and wrong.

The Ministry of Energy also acknowledged that it lacks training on the subject, but its reasons pointed to the fact that existing laws, such as transparency and anti-corruption laws, are sufficient guidance. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Transportation stated that its training is based on following the President's directives as a de facto guide, without actually implying formal training. In essence, some parts of the government lean towards an implicit ethical culture that can be summed up as "we trust our people to use common sense and existing rules", rather than explicit capacity-building.

Meanwhile, the representative of the Ministry of Defence stood out within the no-training group by actually lamenting the lack of it. The respondent recognised that the current state of things is not ideal and suggested it would be beneficial to prevent misinformation and encourage responsibility. In the same way of thinking, this office's head said: "I believe Colombia needs an institutional manual to guide public officials' use of social media. These platforms have

become key communication channels and, therefore, require protocols or guidelines that help foster transparency, institutional accountability, and respect for citizens' rights without disregarding the freedom of expression of each individual. This would help prevent misunderstandings, abuses, or confusion between personal and institutional matters".

Hence, the overall picture is that, while ethical awareness exists, a systematic, institutionalised training programme across the government is not yet in place. Furthermore, from an ethical culture perspective, this means practices and norms can vary widely between ministries. If one minister has a strong personal ethic or a background that values digital engagement, they might push boundaries differently than another who is more conservative, and each ministry's culture will adapt to that without a unifying standard.

Another element of ethical culture is leadership by example. Some leaders model strict separation; as an illustration, the Justice Minister's personal avoidance of social media sets a tone in her ministry that boundary-crossing is unwelcome, whereas others model active engagement, like the President's prolific personal posting sets an expectation that being outspoken is part of leadership. Both approaches carry ethical implications: the former prioritises institutional integrity, and the latter prioritises direct communication and transparency (though personal transparency). At this point, the ethics framework would encourage senior officials to model whatever the desired balanced approach is, but in Colombia's case, the diversity of approaches means no single ethos dominates. The only common thread is that all acknowledge a duty to not betray public trust online.

Finally, an important part of this ethical culture component is whether institutions have channels for ethical issues to be raised, similar to whistleblowing or internal discussion. The study did not identify explicit mention of whistleblower protections or reporting mechanisms specific to social media misuse. Perhaps because no major incident has occurred, this has not been tested. But the disciplinary law (Law 1952 of 2019) provides a route to report misconduct broadly, so, theoretically, if a staffer notices an official is abusing social media in some way, he or she can report it under this law. But beyond this reporting mechanism, in practice, it is important that the internal culture encourages junior staff or communications advisors to speak openly with their ministers and challenge their social media ideas, if necessary. In this situation, respondents did say that their communications teams feel comfortable advising ministers, which is beneficial.

In conclusion, applying Uys' (2014) ethical framework reveals that Colombian national institutions are aware of and actively managing the ethics of social media use; however, there is room for improvement: they have foundational guidance that requires updates and more detail; the control mechanisms are mostly informal or rely on general laws and personal responsibility; and they have developed a culture of ethical awareness with some training and leadership support, although it remains inconsistent.

The overlaps in personal-institutional digital identity pose manageable risks at present, but the consensus among many officials is that clearer rules and more systematic ethical management would better safeguard against future problems. Essentially, Colombia is in a transitional phase of digital governance evolving from an implicit understanding of "do the right thing online" toward an explicit framework ensuring that as social media becomes ever more intertwined with governance, it does so in a way that is accountable, transparent, and aligned with democratic values.

The ethical challenge for Colombiana, then, will be to, on the one hand, institutionalise the good practices observed, such as clarification descriptions, not using official accounts for personal politics or training officials, and, on the other hand, close the gaps by clarifying rules for personal account use in official capacity and ensuring consistent oversight. In doing so, they can create a digital communications environment that harnesses the benefits of personal engagement without compromising institutional integrity or public trust.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Synthesis of answers to the research questions

Focusing on how public officials and their institutions govern their social media presence as part of their institutional responsibilities, the objective of the thesis was to find out the practices, rationales, and limits that shape the online communication of political actors in Colombian public administration. The results have facilitated the resolution of the two initially proposed research questions. Concerning the first research question, which asked how Colombian national public officials and institutions manage and differentiate the overlap between personal and official social media accounts while in office (RQ1), the findings revealed different approaches to navigate the dual online identities and communication roles, highlighting that while clear-cut separation is the "theoretical" norm, it is not always the practical one.

In principle, many Colombian national institutions profess a strict division between institutional and personal profiles. Officials use the institutional accounts for formal announcements, policy information, and content directly related to their governmental role, while reserving personal accounts for behind-the-scenes insights or individual viewpoints not appearing in official press releases. Communications directors from most ministries maintained that only the posts on the official accounts have value as government statements and that ministers' personal opinions do not constitute official statements. Several agencies enforce segmented boundaries, using separate branding and third-person institutional voice on official accounts while personal accounts carry the individual's voice and identity. Some officials even abstain entirely from social media or delegate all messages to the institutional team, emphasising that all public communication is fundamentally official. This ideal of separation aligns with the role-multiplicity theory's notion of distinct citizen vs professional roles, and a few interviewees indeed reported guidelines forbidding content mixing and a practice of never cross-posting personal content on institutional feeds.

Importantly, when using personal social media in a professional capacity, officials should include disclaimers or explicit cues to signal the account's nature. For example, it is recommended (but not increasingly practised) that officials state in their profiles that their communication is personal and does not represent the institution's views. Such measures help set expectations that posts from a "personal" account are the official's own opinions, not official policy statements.

However, interviews also uncovered frequent ambiguities and overlaps that test these boundaries in practice. Even when ministries strive for separation, public perception often

blurs these boundaries. The interviewees recognised that citizens tend to interpret high-profile officials' personal posts as government statements, especially if they concern public matters. A middle group of institutions acknowledged this grey area and adopted a pragmatic "sometimes" stance. For example, the Interior Ministry insisted the minister's own tweets were not official yet conceded that due to his rank, they could be seen as such. Hence, the communications team stays vigilant, advising the minister and quietly coordinating messaging across personal and official channels.

In such cases, the personal account is not formally an official account, but behind the scenes, the content is aligned to ensure consistency and avoid contradiction. This illustrates a permeable boundary approach, where there is no open merging of accounts, yet the personal profile functions as a semi-official platform in the public domain. The Environment Ministry interviewee effectively summarises this reality by saying that absolute separation is not always possible for high-level authorities, so they rely on officials' personal integrity to maintain distinctions while tacitly treating any work-related post on a personal page as part of the institutional narrative.

At the far end of the spectrum, a few cases have evidenced the full integration of personal social media into official communication strategies. These are rare but illustrative. The Ministry of National Defence, for instance, frankly, admitted that the minister's personal X account is effectively accepted as an official channel because his statements there are aligned with institutional policy and interpreted as official communications by both the public and the ministry's team. Similarly, the Education Ministry uses the minister's personal profile to break news and make announcements first, with the ministry's official account amplifying those messages afterward.

Notably, one ministry (Housing) created social media accounts in the minister's name but treats them as institutional accounts managed by the communications staff, blurring the personal-institutional division by design. In such instances, the person and the office are merged in the online sphere; the minister's "personal" feed serves as a front line for government communication. This approach can leverage the official's popularity and authentic voice for broader reach, but it is problematic because it means the hybrid account doubles as a public asset and a private platform simultaneously.

Thus, RQ1 is basically answered by showing that Colombian public officials' social media presence is managed on various levels that range from strict separation to careful coordination to intentional integration. This shows that the line between personal and official accounts is frequently permeable and context-dependent rather than absolute. To protect institutional integrity, officials should avoid mixing sensitive institutional content with personal posts in ways that may blur lines, such as not sharing confidential

government information or internal matters on personal platforms. But in reality, some well-known Colombian officials still choose to use their personal social media accounts for both personal and official communication. They do this because they like the large following and direct reach. One example that stands out is how President Petro uses his personal X to regularly share presidential agendas and government decisions. While this unified approach can amplify reach and present a "humanised" leadership image, it blurs the distinction between personal voice and public office.

When this happens, their personal accounts can effectively be perceived by the public and even the judicial courts as de facto official channels. Thus, many officials have to learn to manage overlap through cautious self-regulation: sticking to one-directional cross-posting, like sharing institutional announcements from personal accounts without expressing personal opinions; using privacy settings prudently; or seeking advice from their communications teams about what content is appropriate for their profiles.

Focussing on the second research question, which asked about the mechanisms that national communication teams in Colombia use to uphold ethical standards and safeguard accountability and transparency in light of this overlap of personal and institutional social media use (RQ2), the research found that Colombian government institutions have developed some guidelines, oversight practices, and training initiatives to deal with officials' social media conduct.

One key mechanism was the establishment of ethical guidelines and social media policies at the national and institutional levels. To date, Circular No. 01 of 22 March 2019 appears to be the highest national guideline for public officials in terms of social media use; ministries even use it as their basis for developing their own guidelines going forward. These institutional guidelines establish expectations for online behaviour by public servants, emphasising principles like impartiality, respect, and the protection of confidential information. For instance, two government-issued social media manuals (from the Transportation and Energy ministries) explicitly instruct that official entity accounts must not reflect administrators' personal opinions or political biases and that public officials should never use institutional channels for partisan proselytising or unauthorised personal content. The same guidelines advise officials to keep personal and official communications as separate as possible; they even advise against using government email addresses to create personal social media accounts to avoid confusion between personal and institutional views.

In terms of oversight and moderation of social media use, communication teams play a key role. In many entities, the communications office monitors both the official institutional accounts and, to the extent possible (indirectly), the postings of their head

official to ensure alignment in information messaging. In specific instances, communication teams have indicated that they either manage the official accounts directly (such as for Housing) or coordinate with the administrators of the official's personal account or with the officials themselves to prevent mixed messaging. This coordination can involve scheduling content releases so that major announcements first appear via official accounts (for transparency and archiving reasons), after which they may be amplified on personal accounts. This rule that important government information must be shared through official accounts keeps things honest, even if an official shares the news personally. It also serves as an audit record, but no audits on this issue have been discussed.

Moreover, content posted to an institutional social media account often requires review and then approval by communications advisors, especially if it involves responding to public comments or controversial issues. This could also be considered an oversight measure aimed at ensuring that interactions remain professional, accurate, and aligned with the institution's values, thereby safeguarding accountability.

Another critical mechanism is training and capacity-building on ethical social media use. The study found that, in response to emerging digital challenges, there have been indeed collaborative efforts to educate public officials and their teams about responsible online behaviour. Workshops and training sessions are seen as activities to reinforce the guidelines. However, the training on social media use does not yet include discussion or instruction on how officials should express personal beliefs online without compromising the neutrality of their office. That is still a missing aspect of the training. Such training initiatives are important, alongside the guidance and example from the head officials, in order to create an environment of accountability. Nevertheless, whether trained or not, the interviews show that ministers are expected to be acutely aware that their online speech can carry institutional weight and must therefore meet the standards of transparency and integrity expected of public office.

Overall, RQ2 is addressed by demonstrating the various mechanisms that the Colombian government currently has in place to deal with the blurred mix of roles on social media while also mentioning their gaps. Having these mechanisms in place and up to date is ethically significant for issues such as public accountability. Because if, for example, a public official uses a personal account for government purposes, it creates ambiguity about which communications are subject to official scrutiny, record-keeping, and public oversight. It is these mechanisms that help address these concerns. However, since they are still insufficient, the Colombian Constitutional Court has had to intervene. In this case, for instance, it has explicitly warned that an account's character is defined by its use, not

its descriptions, so if an official carries out governmental functions on a personal profile, that account assumes an official nature. This means officials cannot evade accountability simply by labelling an account as “personal” if, at its core, it promotes public affairs.

Taken together, the findings from RQ1 and RQ2 reveal a complementary dynamic between institutional and individual practices and institutional ethical mechanisms for managing personal-institutional overlaps in social media. On the one hand, the practices of institutions and officials tend to be adaptive and rooted in personal initiative. However, these personal approaches can vary widely among officials, reflecting differences in communication style and comfort with transparency. On the other hand, institutional frameworks provide a relatively consistent set of expectations that all officials must follow. Ministries expect their officials to make conscious decisions about account separation, tone, and content curation to reconcile their dual roles. Formal guidelines and oversight by communication teams simply attempt to provide guidance without being prescriptive, because at no point is it desired to infringe on public officials’ freedom of expression. However, this results in a lack of standardisation and full compliance, which is necessary to ensure that no individual’s use of social media undermines public ethics or transparency.

In essence, the overlap between personal and institutional usage is controlled through a combination of individual responsibility and organisational accountability. The juxtaposition of the answers to the two research questions demonstrates that when officials’ own efforts align with institutional mechanisms, like an official voluntarily following the recommended practice of not using a personal account for official announcements in accordance with formal policy, the result is a strong upholding of ethical standards. In contrast, gaps or contradictions between personal behaviour and institutional regulations can cause controversy, necessitating more strict enforcement measures.

In the end, the study concludes that effective governance of this overlap in Colombia requires synchronisation of individual and institutional actions: public officials must internalise and implement ethical guidelines, while communication teams must continue to enforce standards, provide guidance, and adjust policies in response to new challenges. This collaboration is crucial for preserving public trust, accountability, and transparency in the rapidly evolving world of governmental social media use.

7.2 Implications of the findings

The thesis’s findings carry important implications for public sector communication practices and the governance landscape in the digital age. One takeaway is the need to

modernise public communication strategies. The fact that individual leaders' personal profiles often serve as major information channels means that government communication units must adapt. Institutions can no longer rely solely on official press releases or agency-branded accounts to reach citizens; they must also account for the personalised digital presence of their leaders. This calls for innovative protocols. For instance, communication teams could work together to come up with plans that leverage an official's personal following while preserving an institutional voice. Some ministries in Colombia have already implicitly adopted this, coordinating institutional content with their ministers' personal publications to ensure a unified narrative.

Embracing such hybrid strategies could be considered a form of public sector innovation, using the popularity and relatability of personal accounts to enhance outreach. However, it must be done carefully. The innovation here is not to focus on technological aspects but rather on organisational ones; it requires new internal workflows and guidelines so that personal social media usage complements rather than undermines institutional communication. Plus, public institutions may need to train officials on how to engage online as dual representatives (as individuals and as state actors), which is a skillset not traditionally part of bureaucratic communication training.

Yet again, this approach should be handled with care because, if not clear, it can raise concerns about the honesty, fairness, and trustworthiness of institutions. These aspects are cornerstones of ethical governance, and they can be fragile in the face of perceived inconsistencies. On the one side, the use of personal accounts by officials can humanise and add authenticity to government communication, potentially increasing trust among citizens who feel they are getting a more genuine, unfiltered view of public leaders. On the other side, trust can be easily eroded if those same channels are considered vehicles for propaganda or if officials selectively engage with the public, such as by blocking dissenting voices, which citizens could interpret as censorship.

The findings highlight the tension between personalised communication and institutional identity. Legitimacy comes from government institutions being continuity-driven and policy-focused, not just platforms for one person's views. But when a minister's persona dominates the messaging, the personal brand could overshadow the institution's mission and credibility. This has implications for how the public interprets institutional stances: it may become unclear if a policy position is an official government position or a personal opinion. Over time, heavy personalisation could weaken the perception of ministries as stable entities, as everything becomes tied to the personality of the officeholder. Thus, public sector organisations must find ways to maintain their institutional voice and values, even as they operate in a media environment that favours personal storytelling.

Practically, the thesis' findings can be translated into actionable steps for institutional communication practices and digital governance reform. For instance, the following steps could be taken by the Colombian government, from ministries to the president's office, to improve ethical oversight and clarity in social media use.

- Adopt (or strengthen) official social media policies that clearly distinguish personal and institutional use because the digital era has outpaced many of the existing rules that separate personal and official conduct. Traditional civil service codes did not anticipate X or Facebook merging roles in real time. This thesis's evidence indicates that in the absence of updated guidelines, officials must independently navigate ethical ambiguities. Such situations can lead to uneven or self-serving practices because, while some officials might self-regulate responsibly, others might push the limits. Hence, requiring transparency in the personal accounts of public officials when they discuss work-related matters would be essential. For example, it is important to define whether an official's social media accounts qualify as public records and to establish clear expectations for conduct, similar to the existing rules regarding the use of official email versus personal email for work. Then, officials might be instructed to include a disclaimer on profiles (e.g., "views are my own, not the government's") to help distinguish individual opinions from official statements.

- Give officials ethical social media training and advice, such as regular workshops or modules, to help them figure out how to handle the times when their personal and professional roles overlap in social media. This would ensure that they understand not only the technical aspects of SNS but also the standards of transparency, accountability, and respectful engagement online that are expected from the public sector. Training can reinforce the importance of officials being cautious when discussing public issues on personal profiles and clearly stating that their opinions are their own and not those of the institution. However, even with disclaimers, officials must remember that their public role can lead to personal posts being always perceived as official positions, so they must exercise caution at all times. By making officials more aware of these small details, ethical training helps them avoid making mistakes that could hurt the public's trust and integrity of the institutions.

- Set up oversight roles or committees to help make sure the standards are followed and to offer support. Government bodies may consider designating communications officers or ethics committees to monitor and guide social media use. Proactive oversight would provide officials with guidance on grey areas and

ensure adherence to the new standards. This kind of supervision helps keep things consistent and makes sure that officials are held quickly accountable if their online behaviour goes against the rules, like when an official uses an agency account for personal messages by accident. The public sector can also learn from these mistakes identified. More so, the fact that the government consistently checks and balances digital communications also shows to the public that it is serious about keeping them safe and well informed.

Implementing measures like these allows government institutions to better navigate the intersection of personal and official digital personas. In the end, the thesis's results are important because they can help shape changes in the public sector that make things more open, keep official communications honest, and increase trust among citizens in the digital age. The way public officials act online has real effects on the trustworthiness of institutions and participation in democracy. For this reason, ensuring that social media use aligns with ethical standards and good governance principles is both a practical and urgent priority for any public sector, specifically Colombia's in this context.

7.3 Addressing the literature gaps

This present thesis set out to fill specific gaps in the scholarly literature on digital identity and public communication by government officials, and the conclusions illustrate some conceptual, theoretical, and empirical contributions in that regard. On the one hand, conceptually, this study bridges and extends different areas of literature, including digital identity in politics, platform-mediated communication, role theory and boundary management strategies, to better explain personal/institutional overlap in social media. It introduces a more profound way to think about public officials' social media use, not as a simple extension of official communication but as a hybrid persona that blends professional roles with personal identity.

Digital politics researchers have noticed that social media makes people focus on the personalities of politicians, making it harder to tell the difference between their personal lives and their public offices. The notion of context collapse, as discussed by Davis and Jurgenson (2014), Hoffmann and Suphan (2016) and Marwick and boyd (2010), is especially relevant because online platforms merge multiple audiences into a single space, making it difficult for individuals to maintain distinct social contexts. This thesis builds on that concept by showing how Colombian officials experience context collapse in practice. For instance, when a minister posts something, must it be interpreted or perceived by public opinion as its own view or the institutional one? By focussing on this phenomenon, the thesis suggests that a public official's social media identity is inherently

dual and context-dependent, requiring constant negotiation between personal authenticity and institutional norms.

Importantly, the study also integrates ethical considerations into this blurred digital public identity. Prior research on platform-mediated public communication has frequently focused on technological and engagement aspects, such as social media facilitating direct citizen interaction and personal branding, but less attention has been paid to the normative side, such as the duties, values, and ethical boundaries that arise when officials speak in a personal voice while acting in an official capacity. This thesis demonstrated that officials, who must uphold principles of transparency, accountability, and impartiality online, must balance their ethical responsibilities when managing personal vs institutional accounts. By doing so, the research extends the concept of digital political identity to include an ethical dimension, highlighting that an official's online persona is shaped not only by self-presentation and audience engagement but also by adherence to public service norms.

Moreover, by referencing Latin American legal precedents and administrative responses, such as court rulings and institutional experiments like the Housing Ministry's pseudo-personal account approach, the thesis enriches the scholarly conversation about how democracies are dealing with the governance of digital identities. It provides a case-based contribution to digital governance literature, highlighting that effective governance of social media in public office may require rethinking asset ownership, continuity, and the definition of official communication. These are all topics that prior literature had flagged as issues but had not resolved; the thesis does not have the reach to solve all of them either, but it does add to the conversation so it can go on.

On the other hand, theoretically, this study builds upon and extends existing theories of role identity and public communication in new ways. It incorporates ideas from the boundary theory to explain how institutions and officials compartmentalise or integrate their personal and professional roles on social media while also challenging some of those theories' assumptions in light of the empirical findings. Classic role theory suggests that individuals experience role conflict or ambiguity when they face incompatible expectations from different roles, like the personal citizen vs the public servant. This thesis not only confirms that social media can intensify such role ambiguity for public officials, but it also uncovers adaptive strategies officials use to cope. As an illustration, officials reported using informal norms, like adding disclaimers such as "opinions are my own" or maintaining separate posting styles or not posting at all, to signal which role or "hat" they are wearing.

By documenting these coping mechanisms, the thesis extends boundary theory into the digital era because it demonstrates how the traditional segmentation (strictly separating personal and professional life) vs integration continuum plays out on interactive platforms in the government setting, where complete separation is often impossible. The findings suggest that existing models of work-life boundary management may need adaptation. In the case of public officials in Colombia, they practised something like a contextual role-switching online, which indicates that theoretical frameworks must account for the fluid, real-time decision-making required by social media's always-on nature.

Furthermore, the thesis contributes to theory by examining the consequences and ways to deal with personalisation in official communication. Communication scholars have already argued that the rise of personalised political communication can both humanise governance and undermine institutional authority. Ecker-Ehrhardt (2023), for example, observed that in the context of international organisations, portraying officials as the "personal face" of an institution may undermine the depersonalised, rational-legal authority that modern institutions are supposed to embody. The Colombian case similarly shows that when ministers intermingle official announcements with personal opinions or partisan commentary, it creates ambiguity about whether they speak for the government or themselves, potentially weakening public perceptions of the institution's neutrality.

But in this personalisation scenario, the study's findings add nuance to that debate in terms of the ethical management of the situation by the institutions. Thus, the thesis provides evidence supporting a more cautious theoretical perspective: indiscriminate personalisation can erode institutional legitimacy, and as such, there should be mechanisms in place in order to guide, oversee, and train officials in the current social media scenarios. By doing so, the thesis shows that there are practical ways to reconcile contradictory theoretical viewpoints about the personalisation dual effect: allowing it to continue to enhance engagement and relatability (a theoretical positive) up to a point, but beyond that point having clear guidelines to avoid role confusion and credibility risks (a theoretical negative). For example, institutional norms can be in fluctuation; some Colombian ministries unofficially acknowledge personal accounts as part of their communications ecosystem, a finding that challenges any strict normative view that personal and official must always be separate.

Finally, empirically, this research provides new insights that significantly broaden the scope of existing knowledge. It is the first in-depth study (to the knowledge of this thesis) to investigate how national-level public officials in Colombia manage their social media accounts at the intersection of personal and institutional usage. This study adds a much-needed Global South perspective to a literature so far dominated by cases from North

America and Europe. Researchers have called for more studies of non-Western social media in government, and by focusing on Colombia, this work responds directly to that call. The Latin American setting introduced unique characteristics, such as high social media adoption (Bianchi 2024; We Are Social and Meltwater 2025), highly personalised political cultures (Luján and Acosta y Lara 2024), and emerging regulatory frameworks (Colombian Constitutional Court 2024), which contribute to a better global knowledge of how personal and institutional online identities interact.

The findings, for example, mirrored phenomena noted elsewhere (like blurred official-personal boundaries) but also revealed context-specific nuances. In Colombia, the lack of unified guidelines and a political tradition of personalism may make the fusion of personal branding and official communication even more pronounced. By documenting these dynamics, the thesis extends digital governance debates to Latin America, evidencing how culture and governance context shape social media practices of public officials. It shows that theories developed largely from Western cases hold true in some aspects (e.g., boundary theory's relevance to officials' identity management) but also that local legal and cultural factors (such as court doctrines on public forums or public expectations of accessibility via personal channels) critically influence outcomes. This work contributes to a more pluralistic literature that recognises digital governance is not a one-size-fits-all strategy.

Plus, the thesis contributes empirically by using a qualitative methodology, responding to calls in the literature for context-sensitive approaches that capture actors' lived experiences (Abid et al. 2023; Barberá et al. 2024; Hoffmann et al. 2016). There was a lot of quantitative data in the literature review, like content analyses, follower metrics, and so on. This meant that the lived experiences and ethical perceptions of the officials themselves were often missed. By employing qualitative methods, mainly semi-structured interviews with communication teams and officials, this thesis provides an in-depth, human-centred perspective that was previously scarce. It captures the reasoning, internal dilemmas, and unwritten rules that quantitative analyses cannot easily reveal. For instance, hearing directly from ministry staff about how they coordinate a minister's social media posts with official messages or from a minister who deliberately avoids social media, gives texture to the understanding of role multiplicity in action and sheds light on how the lines are crossed or negotiated in everyday government.

In conclusion, this thesis fills certain gaps in the literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of how personal and institutional social media identities are negotiated by public officials, with Colombia as a revealing case study. It offers conceptual clarity on the hybrid nature of digital identities in public offices; theoretical advancements in

understanding the benefits and management risks of personalisation; and empirical evidence that adds both a new geographic dimension and practical examples to the ongoing scholarly conversation.

7.4 Study limitations

While this thesis provides important insights, it is not without limitations. For starters, the scope and sample of the study limit its generalisability. The qualitative data came from interviews with officials from the communications teams of 20 national entities and five ministers, all in Colombia. Although this focus produces rich, context-specific findings, the sample size is still small and primarily concentrated in the national executive level. Hence, the experiences of these high-level actors may not represent all public officials in the country. For instance, lower-level officials from the local or regional government might navigate the blurred roles in social media differently. Therefore, there should be caution when extrapolating the results too broadly. The patterns identified, like segmentation vs integration of accounts, are indicative of the Colombian national context, but other jurisdictions or levels of government could exhibit different dynamics.

Secondly, as a qualitative study, the research carries inherent subjectivity. The thesis relied on self-reported practices and perceptions from interviewees, which can introduce biases. It is possible that ministers and communications staff painted a positive picture of social media management in their organisations or played down some problems, either intentionally or unintentionally. For instance, the researcher had to scrutinise the optimistic responses with other sources, such as court cases and media scandals, because none of the respondents openly admitted to having blurred the ethical boundaries between personal and official use of social media. While the interviews were kept anonymous to encourage honesty, the data is still subject to social desirability bias.

Another limitation concerns temporal and platform-specific factors. Social media and its role in governance are rapidly evolving. The study was essentially dependent on a specific government, which was the Colombian government of Gustavo Petro in early 2025. Policies, public expectations, ministers, or technologies might have shifted even in the short time since data collection. For example, new platforms or changes in government could alter the way officials use social media. This is especially important to consider in the Colombian context, where there have been over 50 different ministers in nearly three years of government (Rivera Guevara 2025; Torrado 2025), implying a constant change in the representation of national institutions (the subject of this thesis's study), and each leader may have a different approach to social media. Therefore, some findings could become outdated as digital communication norms change.

Finally, given the focus of the study around the public officials' and institutions' use of social media, it did not quantitatively assess outcomes like citizen reactions or the policy efficacy of social media use. The aim was exploratory and diagnostic. While this thesis gains depth in understanding "how" officials manage accounts, it does not measure the impact of those practices on public opinion or institutional performance. That impact remains presumed (e.g., that trust may be harmed by blurred accounts), rather than empirically measured in this work.

Together these limitations suggest that the conclusions reached should be interpreted as contextual insights rather than universal rules. They point to the need for further research and perhaps mixed-method approaches to build on what this study has begun. Hence, despite these limitations, the thesis provides a significant foundation for future investigations. The next section will talk about some possible directions of research.

7.5 Future research directions

Building on the results and recognising the above limitations, there are some interesting areas that could be explored further in the future to learn more about personal and institutional social media use in governance. For instance, studies could explore how to formally manage the transition of digital communication assets (social media accounts, follower bases, content archives) when public officials enter or leave offices. That would be particularly needed in contexts like the Colombian one, which, as mentioned, has constant changes to its official ministers. This task might involve comparative research on models like the United States' approach of archiving presidential accounts or developing frameworks suited to parliamentary systems and local contexts.

Researchers can illustrate how to best stop the "rupture of content" and loss of continuity that current improvisational practices cause by designing and testing policy solutions in real life, perhaps through pilot programmes or simulations during changes in administration. This kind of work could directly fill in the gaps found in this study about transitions and also could help shape changes that stop the lack of public trust that happens when an official's online presence disappears or changes every time the government changes.

Another line of research can look at citizen expectations: do people believe a ministry is accountable for what its minister says on Facebook, X, Instagram, and so on? Assessing public sentiment and opinion on this topic will help shape accountability frameworks that balance an official's freedom of expression with their duty to the public. As a result, this research could help create checks and balances for the era of social media, making sure that personal accounts do not turn into loopholes in government accountability.

Apart from that, the dynamics observed in Colombia would be valuable to compare with those in other countries, both in Latin America and elsewhere. Future research could undertake cross-national studies to see how different political cultures and governance systems handle the personal vs institutional social media mix. For instance, how do officials in countries with stronger institutional communications protocols differ in practice from those in more personality-driven political systems? Or an intranational comparison could also be intriguing. For example, looking at local vs national officials or legislative vs executive branches to see if similar challenges occur in different branches of government. By looking at things through a wider lens, researchers can see if the results of this thesis can be applied to other situations and help build a theory of digital governance that takes into account differences in culture and institutions.

Lastly, considering the rapid and evolving advancements in artificial intelligence, research in social media governance should also include this component. To give an example, malicious actors are now using AI to mimic a politician's voice or image, potentially disseminating false statements that blur the line between official and fake communications. The growing ease of creating synthetic content suggests that a future may arrive when it becomes extremely difficult to distinguish between real statements and those fabricated by AI. Hence, scholars should investigate how governments can safeguard the integrity of official communication in such an environment. Case studies of any early uses of "AI personas" in governance or communication experiments where chatbots stand in for government agencies could also be part of the research. Understanding these developments will be critical in developing normative guidelines and technical tools to ensure that the next wave of digital innovation enhances rather than undermines public trust and ethical governance.

Ultimately, this thesis is just the start of a topic that can be further looked into, given that governments worldwide are now integrating social media into their operations; thus, the blurred distinction between personal voice and public office will continue to appear as an issue. Both academics and practitioners can work together to study and develop frameworks that promote innovative and engaging public communication that also maintains transparency, accountability, and integrity in the digital public sector.

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Appendix

A List of interviewees

The following representatives of the national government institutions of the Republic of Colombia have been interviewed in the framework of this research:

Institution	**Profile of interviewee (Position or unit)**	**Date and type of interview**	**Duration (virtual interview)**
Presidency of the Republic	Communications and Press Secretary	30.04.2025 / 09.05.2025 Written interview and follow-up	N/A
Vice Presidency of the Republic	Coordinator of the Legal and Regulatory Management Group	07.04.2025 / 30.04.2025 Written interview and follow-up	N/A
Ministry of the Interior	Office of Public Information of the Interior	07.04.2025 Written interview	N/A
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Press and Corporate Communications Working Group	17.03.2025 / 14.05.2025 Written interview and follow-up	N/A
Ministry of Finance and Public Credit	Legal Sub directorate of the Ministry	31.03.2025 / 22.05.2025 Written interview and follow-up	N/A
Ministry of Justice and Law	Head of Press and Communications Office	20.03.2025 Virtual interview	56 min
	Minister of Justice and Law	02.05.2025 Virtual interview	21 min
Ministry of National Defence	Sectoral Director of Communications	27.03.2025 Written interview	N/A
	Minister of National Defence	05.05.2025 Written interview	N/A
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	Head of Communications of the Ministry	08.04.2025 Virtual interview	36 min
Ministry of Health and Social Protection	Coordinator of the Communications Group	02.04.2025 Virtual interview	21 min
Ministry of Mines and Energy	Coordinator of the Communications and Press Group	27.03.2025 / 06.05.2025 Written interview and follow-up	N/A
Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism	Head Of Legal Advisory Office	01.04.2025 Virtual interview	46 min
	Minister of Commerce, Industry and Tourism	02.05.2025 Written interview	N/A
Ministry of National Education	Communications Advisory Office	31.03.2025 Virtual interview	32 min
Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development	Coordinator of the Communications Group of the Ministry	21.04.2025 / 30.04.2025 Written interview and follow-up	N/A
Ministry of Housing, City and Territory	Secretary General of the Ministry	31.03.2025 / 01.05.2025 Written interview and follow-up	N/A
Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies	Head of the Press Advisory Office	06.05.2025 Virtual interview	57 min
Ministry of Transportation	Coordinator of the Strategic Communications Group	09.04.2025 Virtual interview	45 min

Ministry of Culture, Arts, and Knowledge	Coordinator of the Press and Outreach Group	01.04.2025 Virtual interview	38 min
Ministry of Sport	Coordinator of the Internal Communications Working Group	28.03.2025 Virtual interview	42 min
	Minister of Sports	24.04.2025 Virtual interview	16 min
Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation	Communications Advisory Office	04.04.2025 Virtual interview	37 min
	Minister of Science, Technology, and Innovation	09.05.2025 Virtual interview	14 min
Ministry of Equality and Equity	Communications Advisory Office	08.04.2025 Virtual interview	20 min
Linterna Verde (non-profit organization)	Chief Executive Officer	30.04.2025 Virtual interview	42 min

B Interview guide for Colombian national institutions: communication teams

1. What are the main objectives that the communication team of the ministry/presidency/vice presidency seeks to achieve through its official presence on social networks?
    a. How have these objectives evolved over time?
2. What type of content is usually shared on the ministry/presidency/vice presidency' social network accounts?
3. How does the ministry/presidency/vice presidency determine the tone, frequency and type of content that is shared through its social media accounts?
4. Does the ministry/presidency/vice presidency use different platforms for different functions (e.g., official communication on X, personal engagement on Instagram)? If that is the case, what is the differentiation, and why?
5. How does the ministry/presidency/vice presidency handle interactions with citizens through social media?
    a. How does it handle negative comments or criticism on its official social media accounts? Is there a response?
6. Is there collaboration between different government agencies for similar social media management, or does each ministry act independently in developing its digital communication strategy?
7. Is there any policy or rule (written or tacit) in the ministry/presidency/vice presidency on the use of personal and official accounts by public officials?
    a. Are there any regulations explicitly guiding what can and cannot be shared on social media by public officials?
8. Does the ministry/presidency/vice presidency manage the personal accounts of the minister/president/vice president?
9. How does the ministry/presidency/vice presidency differentiate between its official accounts and the personal accounts of the minister/president/vice president on social networks?
10. What role does the communication team or social network manager play in differentiating between the personal accounts of the minister/president/vice

president and the institutional accounts of the ministry/presidency/vice presidency?

11. Are technological tools or strategies used to maintain the boundary between private (minister/president/vice president) and official (ministry/presidency/vice presidency) accounts (e.g., separate devices, privacy settings, content scheduling)? How effective these tools or strategies have they been?

12. Are there mechanisms in place within the ministry/presidency/vice presidency to ensure that government-related content does not appear on the minister/president/vice president's personal accounts, or vice versa? How effective these mechanisms have they been?

13. Does the ministry/presidency/vice presidency measure and study public interactions on the minister/president/vice president's social media accounts?

14. Can the opinions of the minister/president/vice president on its social media accounts be perceived as official statements of the government?

15. Does the ministry/presidency/vice presidency consider it possible to completely separate the personal and professional identity of the minister/president/vice president on social networks?

16. How does the ministry/presidency/vice presidency ensure that the minister/president/vice president's personal use of her social networks does not compromise public confidence in her institution?

17. Does the office of the ministry/presidency/vice presidency believe that the use of social media by public officials can contribute to public trust in the government?

18. Is there a formal oversight mechanism in the ministry/presidency/vice presidency to ensure that social media use aligns with principles of administrative transparency and accountability?

19. Does the ministry/presidency/vice presidency provide training or education for public officials on the ethical use of social media?

    a. If yes, please share initiatives. If not, does the ministry/presidency/vice presidency think this is something that should be considered?

C Interview guide for heads of the Colombian national institutions: president, vice president, ministers

1. Can your social media accounts (on X, Instagram or Facebook) be considered an extension of your work as a minister/president/vice president?

2. How do you distinguish between the accounts of the ministry/presidency/vice presidency and your social media accounts? What clues, such as naming conventions, biographies or visual branding, do you use to communicate this distinction to the public?

3. Who manages your social media accounts? Have you delegated the management of your social media accounts to the communication staff of the ministry/presidency/vice presidency, or do you manage them yourself?

4. What kind of information do you consider appropriate to share from the official accounts of the ministry/presidency/vice presidency and what information do you think is reserved for your personal accounts?

    a. What factors influence your decision to post certain content on your official account versus your personal account?

5. What mechanisms do you use to protect your privacy on social media, particularly considering your role as a public figure?

6. Have you explicitly communicated to citizens or your followers the nature of each of your accounts (official or personal)? How have you done so?

7. Have you encountered challenges in maintaining a boundary between personal and official communication on social media? How have you addressed them?

    a. Have you ever had to delete, edit, or retract a post because of concerns over its appropriateness for an official account?

8. Do you use your social networks as a one-way tool to inform, or do you also promote dialogue and collaboration with citizens?

    a. If you promote dialogue, why and what are the limits of these interactions?

9. How do you handle comments or requests for official action addressed to your personal social media profiles?

10. What kind of objectives does your ministry/presidency/vice presidency pursue through its social media channels (e.g., promoting transparency, demonstrating engagement, rapid responsiveness, promoting citizen services, etc.)?

11. In your opinion, what is the right balance between personal expression and public accountability on social media for a public official?

12. In your view, what are the primary ethical challenges that arise when public officials manage both personal and official social media accounts?

13. How do you ensure that your personal use of social media does not compromise public trust in your institution?

14. Do you think that social network sites have changed the way that public officials are held accountable for their actions?

15. Do you think Colombia needs a standardised national policy or regulatory framework to regulate the conduct of public officials on social media?

D List of social media accounts of the ministries and ministers of the Government of Colombia identified

Presidency of the Republic

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	infopresidencia	https://x.com/infopresidencia
Instagram	infopresidencia	https://www.instagram.com/infopresidencia
Facebook	Presidencia de la República de Colombia	https://www.facebook.com/PresidenciadeColombia
YouTube	infopresidencia	https://www.youtube.com/user/SIGCOLOMBIA
TikTok	presidenciadecolombia	https://www.tiktok.com/@presidenciadecolombia
LinkedIn	Presidencia de la República de Colombia	https://www.linkedin.com/company/presidencia-de-colombia/
Flickr	Fotografía oficial de la Presidencia de Colombia	https://www.flickr.com/photos/197399771@N06/albums/
Threads	infopresidencia	https://www.threads.net/@infopresidencia

President Gustavo Petro Urrego

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	petrogustavo	https://x.com/petrogustavo
Instagram	gustavopetrourrego	https://www.instagram.com/gustavopetrourrego/
Facebook	Gustavo Petro	https://www.facebook.com/gustavopetrourrego/
YouTube	GustavoPetroOficial	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHAnpr1IrQjhDpe7_oj97Ww
TikTok	gustavopetrooficial	https://www.tiktok.com/@gustavopetrooficial
Threads	gustavopetrourrego	https://www.threads.net/@gustavopetrourrego
WhatsApp	Gustavo Petro	https://www.whatsapp.com/channel/0029VaW3Bt8002TA7ul6Rn0D

Vice Presidency of the Republic

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	ViceColombia	https://x.com/ViceColombia
Instagram	vicepresidenciacolombia	https://www.instagram.com/VicepresidenciaColombia
Facebook	Vicepresidencia de la República de Colombia	https://www.facebook.com/VicepresidenciaColombia
YouTube	VicepresidenciaRepublicaCol	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKDciPMHbrOW7WUVT9smceA
TikTok	vicecolombia	https://www.tiktok.com/@vicecolombia
LinkedIn	Vicepresidencia de la República de Colombia	https://www.linkedin.com/company/vicecolombia/
Flickr	Vicepresidencia de la República de Colombia	https://www.flickr.com/photos/197682409@N05/
Threads	vicepresidenciacolombia	https://www.threads.com/@vicepresidenciacolombia

Vice President Francia Márquez Mina

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	FranciaMarquezM	https://x.com/FranciaMarquezM
Instagram	franciamarquezm	https://www.instagram.com/franciamarquezm/
Facebook	Francia Márquez	https://www.facebook.com/FranciaMarquezMina/
TikTok	franciamarquezmi	https://www.tiktok.com/@franciamarquezmi
Threads	franciamarquezm	https://www.threads.net/@franciamarquezm

Ministry of the Interior

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	MinInterior	https://x.com/MinInterior
Instagram	mininterior	https://www.instagram.com/mininterior
Facebook	Ministerio del Interior	https://www.facebook.com/MinInterior/
YouTube	MininteriorGovCol	https://www.youtube.com/c/MininteriorGovCol
TikTok	mininterior	https://www.tiktok.com/@mininterior

Minister Armando Alberto Benedetti

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	AABenedetti	https://x.com/AABenedetti
Instagram	armandobenedetti	https://www.instagram.com/armandobenedetti/
Facebook	Armando Benedetti	https://www.facebook.com/aabenedetti/

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	CancilleriaCol	https://x.com/CancilleriaCol
Instagram	cancilleriacol	https://www.instagram.com/cancilleriacol/
Facebook	Cancillería Colombia	https://www.facebook.com/CancilleriaCol
YouTube	CancilleriaGovCol	https://www.youtube.com/c/CancilleriaGovCol
TikTok	cancilleriacol	https://www.tiktok.com/@cancilleriacol
Threads	cancilleriacol	https://www.threads.com/@cancilleriacol

Minister Laura Camila Sarabia

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	laurisarabia	https://x.com/laurisarabia
Instagram	laurisarabia	https://www.instagram.com/laurisarabia
Threads	laurisarabia	https://www.threads.net/@laurisarabia

Ministry of Finance and Public Credit

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	MinHacienda	https://x.com/MinHacienda
Instagram	minhacienda	https://www.instagram.com/minhacienda/

Facebook	Ministerio de Hacienda y Crédito Público	https://www.facebook.com/MinisterioDeHaciendaYCreditoPublico
YouTube	minhaciendacolombia	https://www.youtube.com/user/minhaciendacolombia
TikTok	minhaciendaco	https://www.tiktok.com/@minhaciendaco
LinkedIn	Ministerio de Hacienda y Crédito Público	https://www.linkedin.com/company/minhacienda/
Threads	minhacienda	https://www.threads.com/@minhacienda

Ministry of Justice and Law

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	MinjusticiaCo	https://x.com/MinjusticiaCo
Instagram	minjusticiaco	https://www.instagram.com/minjusticiaco
Facebook	Ministerio de Justicia y del Derecho	https://www.facebook.com/MinJusticiaCo/
YouTube	MinJusticiaCo	https://www.youtube.com/user/prensaminjusticia
TikTok	minjusticiaco	https://www.tiktok.com/@minjusticiaco
WhatsApp	Ministerio de Justicia	https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029VaYmSaN2ER6ljcpQtQ2r
Spotify	MinJusticiaCO	https://open.spotify.com/show/4yrPCXgcWFRwYzesimn4Il

Ministry of National Defence

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	mindefensa	https://x.com/mindefensa
Instagram	mindefensaco	https://www.instagram.com/mindefensaco
Facebook	Ministerio De Defensa Nacional	https://www.facebook.com/MindefensaColombia
YouTube	mindefensa	https://www.youtube.com/user/MinDefensacolombia
TikTok	mindefensa	https://www.tiktok.com/@mindefensa
Threads	mindefensaco	https://www.threads.com/@mindefensaco

Minister Pedro Arnulfo Sánchez

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	PedroSanchezCol	https://x.com/pedrosanchezcol

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	MinAgricultura	https://x.com/MinAgricultura
Instagram	minagriculturacol	https://www.instagram.com/MinAgriculturaCol
Facebook	Minagriculturacol	https://www.facebook.com/@minagriculturacol
YouTube	minagriculturacol	https://www.youtube.com/user/AgriculturaldiaMADR
TikTok	minagriculturacol	https://www.tiktok.com/@minagriculturacol
LinkedIn	Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural	https://www.linkedin.com/company/minagriculturacol/

Minister Martha Viviana Carvajalino

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	MCarvajalinoV	https://x.com/MCarvajalinoV
Instagram	mvcarvajalino	https://www.instagram.com/mvcarvajalino/
TikTok	marthacarvajalino	https://www.tiktok.com/@marthacarvajalino
Threads	mcarvajalinov	https://www.threads.net/@mcarvajalinov
LinkedIn	Martha Carvajalino	https://www.linkedin.com/in/martha-carvajalino-4a2520230/

Ministry of Health and Social Protection

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	MinSaludCol	https://x.com/MinSaludCol
Instagram	minsaludcol	https://www.instagram.com/minsaludcol/
Facebook	Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social	https://www.facebook.com/MinSaludCol
YouTube	MinSaludCol	https://www.youtube.com/user/MinSaludColPrensa
TikTok	minsaludcol	https://www.tiktok.com/@minsaludcol
WhatsApp	MinSaludColombia	https://www.whatsapp.com/channel/0029Vae0midLo4hhHS7uJI3N
LinkedIn	Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social de Colombia	https://www.linkedin.com/company/minsaludcol/

Minister Guillermo Jaramillo Martínez

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	GA_Jaramillo	https://x.com/ga_jaramillo
Instagram	guillermo_alfonso_jaramillo	https://www.instagram.com/guillermo_alfonso_jaramillo/
Facebook	Guillermo Alfonso Jaramillo	https://www.facebook.com/GuillermoJaramilloM

Ministry of Labour

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	MintrabajoCol	https://x.com/MintrabajoCol
Instagram	mintrabajocol	https://www.instagram.com/mintrabajocol/
Facebook	Ministerio del Trabajo Colombia	https://www.facebook.com/MinTrabajoCol/
YouTube	MinTrabajoCol	https://www.youtube.com/user/MinTrabajoCol
TikTok	mintrabajocol	https://www.tiktok.com/@mintrabajocol
LinkedIn	Ministerio del Trabajo Colombia	https://www.linkedin.com/company/mintrabajocol
Threads	mintrabajocol	https://www.threads.com/@mintrabajocol

Minister Antonio Sanguino Páez

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	AntonioSanguino	https://x.com/AntonioSanguino
Instagram	antonio_sanguino	https://www.instagram.com/antonio_sanguino/
Facebook	Antonio Sanguino Páez	https://www.facebook.com/antonio.sanguino.79/
TikTok	antonio_sanguino	https://www.tiktok.com/@antonio_sanguino
Threads	antonio_sanguino	https://www.threads.net/@antonio_sanguino

Ministry of Mines and Energy

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	MinEnergiaCo	https://x.com/MinEnergiaCo
Instagram	ministeriominasyenergia	https://www.instagram.com/ministeriominasyenergia/
Facebook	Ministerio de Minas	https://www.facebook.com/MinEnergiaCo/
YouTube	MinisteriodeMinasYEnergia	https://www.youtube.com/user/MinisteriodeMinas
TikTok	minenergia	https://www.tiktok.com/@minenergia
LinkedIn	Ministerio de Minas y Energía	https://www.linkedin.com/company/minenergia/

Minister Edwin Palma Egea

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	PalmaEdwin	https://x.com/PalmaEdwin
Instagram	edwinpalmae	https://www.instagram.com/edwinpalmae
Facebook	Edwin Palma Egea	https://www.facebook.com/EdwinPalmaEgea
Threads	edwinpalmae	https://www.threads.net/@edwinpalmae
LinkedIn	Edwin Palma Egea	https://www.linkedin.com/in/edwinpalma/

Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	MincomercioCo	https://x.com/MincomercioCo
Instagram	mincomercioco	https://www.instagram.com/mincomercioco/
Facebook	Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo	https://www.facebook.com/MincomercioCo/
YouTube	MincomercioColombia	https://www.youtube.com/mincomerciocolombia
LinkedIn	Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo	https://www.linkedin.com/company/ministerio-de-comercio-industria-y-turismo/

Minister Cielo Rusinque Urrego

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	cielo_rusinque	https://x.com/cielo_rusinque

Ministry of National Education

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	Mineducacion	https://x.com/mineducacion
Instagram	mineducacioncol	https://www.instagram.com/mineducacioncol/
Facebook	Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia	https://www.facebook.com/Mineducacion
YouTube	mineducacion	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwdbQiqF4uzBj8ihqWKmQAQ
TikTok	mineducacioncolombia	https://www.tiktok.com/@mineducacioncolombia
LinkedIn	Ministerio de Educación Nacional	https://www.linkedin.com/company/mineducacion/

Minister José Daniel Rojas

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	DanielRMed	https://x.com/DanielRMed
Instagram	danielrojasmedellin	https://www.instagram.com/danielrojasmedellin
Facebook	Daniel Rojas Medellín	https://www.facebook.com/people/Daniel-Rojas-Medell%C3%ADn/61567133740519/
TikTok	danielrojasmedellin	https://www.tiktok.com/@danielrojasmedellin

Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	MinAmbienteCo	https://x.com/minambienteco
Instagram	minambientecol	https://www.instagram.com/minambientecol
Facebook	Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible	https://www.facebook.com/MinAmbienteCo/
YouTube	minambiente	https://www.youtube.com/user/minambientegov
TikTok	minambientecol	https://www.tiktok.com/@minambientecol
WhatsApp	Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible	https://api.whatsapp.com/send/?phone=573102213891&text=Bienvenido+al+Portal+Web+del+Ministerio+de+Ambiente+y+Desarrollo+Sostenible.+Cu%C3%A9ntanos+%C2%BFc%C3%B3mo+podemos+ayudarte+hoy%3F&type=phone_number&app_absent=0
LinkedIn	Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible	https://www.linkedin.com/company/ministerio-de-ambiente-y-desarrollo-sostenible
Flickr	Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible	https://www.flickr.com/photos/190806595@N03/albums/
Threads	minambientecol	https://www.threads.net/@minambientecol

Minister Lena Estrada Añokazi

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	LenAmazonas	https://x.com/LenAmazonas
Instagram	LenAmazonas	https://www.instagram.com/lenamazonas/
Facebook	Lena Estrada (Añokazi Kiriyateke)	https://www.facebook.com/anokazi.kiriyateke

Ministry of Housing, City and Territory

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	Minvivienda	https://x.com/minvivienda
Instagram	minvivienda	https://www.instagram.com/minvivienda
Facebook	Ministerio de Vivienda, Ciudad y Territorio	https://www.facebook.com/MinVivienda/
YouTube	minvivienda	https://www.youtube.com/user/minvivienda
TikTok	minvivienda	https://www.tiktok.com/@minvivienda
LinkedIn	Ministerio de Vivienda, Ciudad y Territorio	https://www.linkedin.com/company/ministerio-de-vivienda/
Flickr	Ministerio de Vivienda, Ciudad y Territorio	https://www.flickr.com/photos/155992734@N03/
Threads	minvivienda	https://www.threads.com/@minvivienda

Minister Helga María Rivas

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	HelgaMaRivasAr	https://x.com/HelgaMaRivasAr
Instagram	helgarivasardila	https://www.instagram.com/helgarivasardila/
Facebook	Helga María Rivas	https://www.facebook.com/HelgaMariaRivas/

Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	Ministerio_TIC	https://x.com/Ministerio_TIC
Instagram	ministerio_tic	https://www.instagram.com/ministerio_tic
Facebook	Ministerio TIC Colombia	https://www.facebook.com/MinisterioTIC.Colombia/
YouTube	ministeriotic	https://www.youtube.com/user/minticolombia
TikTok	ministerio_tic	https://www.tiktok.com/@ministerio_tic
WhatsApp	P.A.C.O. Ministerio TIC	https://api.whatsapp.com/send/?phone=573212173083&text&type=phone_number&app_absent=0
LinkedIn	Ministerio de Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones	https://www.linkedin.com/company/ministerio-de-tecnolog-as-de-la-informaci-n-y-las-comunicaciones/
Threads	ministerio_tic	https://www.threads.net/@ministerio_tic
Spotify	MinTIC Pódcast	https://open.spotify.com/show/63nyKOaGr97Lrdn3cJpKVD

Minister Julián Molina Gómez

SNS	Profile	Link
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Ministry of Transportation

SNS	Profile	Link
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Instagram	mintransporteco	https://www.instagram.com/mintransporteco/
Facebook	Ministerio de Transporte Colombia	https://www.facebook.com/MintransporteColombiaoficial
YouTube	Mintransporte	https://www.youtube.com/user/Mintransporte
TikTok	mintransporte	https://www.tiktok.com/@mintransporte

Minister María Fernanda Rojas

SNS	Profile	Link
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Ministry of Culture, Arts, and Knowledge

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	mincultura	https://x.com/mincultura
Instagram	mincultura	https://www.instagram.com/mincultura/
Facebook	Ministerio de Cultura	https://www.facebook.com/MinisterioCultura
YouTube	minculturascolombia	https://www.youtube.com/user/Mincultura
TikTok	minculturas	https://tiktok.com/@minculturas
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Ministry of Sport

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	MinDeporteCol	https://x.com/MinDeporteCol
Instagram	mindeportecol	https://www.instagram.com/mindeportecol/
Facebook	Ministerio del Deporte	https://www.facebook.com/MinDeporteCol/
YouTube	MinisteriodelDeporteColombia	https://www.youtube.com/user/coldel1
TikTok	mindeportecol	https://www.tiktok.com/@mindeportecol
LinkedIn	Ministerio del Deporte Colombia	https://www.linkedin.com/company/ministerio-del-deporte-colombia/
Spotify	Deporcast	https://open.spotify.com/show/5E6CmHokhIvoshNpkXkFzR

Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	MincienciasCo	https://x.com/MincienciasCo
Instagram	minciencias_co	https://www.instagram.com/minciencias_co/
Facebook	Minciencias	https://www.facebook.com/MincienciasCo

YouTube	MincienciasCanalOficial	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHLPpahfZdAMLON_EedlcA
TikTok	mincienciasco	https://www.tiktok.com/@mincienciasco
LinkedIn	Ministerio de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación	https://www.linkedin.com/company/minciencias
Threads	minciencias_co	https://www.threads.net/@minciencias_co

Minister Yesenia Olaya Requene

SNS	Profile	Link
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Facebook	Yesenia Olaya Requene	https://www.facebook.com/angela.y.olaya

Ministry of Equality and Equity

SNS	Profile	Link
X (Twitter)	MinIgualdad_Col	https://x.com/MinIgualdad_Col
Instagram	minigualdadcol	https://www.instagram.com/minigualdadcol/
Facebook	Ministerio de Igualdad y Equidad de Colombia	https://www.facebook.com/MinIgualdadCol
TikTok	minigualdad_col	https://www.tiktok.com/@minigualdad_col
WhatsApp	Ministerio de Igualdad y Equidad	https://www.whatsapp.com/channel/0029VaKU3ocGufIqiER8i33G?fbclid=PAZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAaYIlIWlaWsVt7J60HtYWhIpn3nA6wf8SUmK9lnRoTvHEtCqXdQ9MJlQr-o_aem_hP9_erhy2o-lc1gvOnhxGw
LinkedIn	Ministerio de Igualdad y Equidad	https://www.linkedin.com/company/ministerio-de-igualdad-y-equidad
Threads	minigualdadcol	https://www.threads.net/@minigualdadcol

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Tallinn, 01 June 2025

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