

Perception of the leaders of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Spain in television conferences about Covid-19

Emma Rodero

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Emma Rodero

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0948-3400>

Pompeu Fabra University
Department of Communication
Media Psychology Lab
UPF-Barcelona School of Management
Roc Boronat, 138
08018 Barcelona, Spain
emma.rodero@upf.edu

Abstract

The discourses of the political leaders about the Covid-19 pandemic have become central to many television networks. Many citizens follow these press conferences, as they can be affected by the government's measures against the virus. Due to its importance, analyzing how these individuals perceive their political leaders in these television appearances is relevant to determining their influence. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the perception of the ex-President of the United States (Donald Trump), the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (Boris Johnson), and the President of the Government of Spain (Pedro Sánchez) in television conferences devoted to battling against the Covid-19 pandemic. After watching two videos of each leader, a gender-balanced sample of 360 citizens of these three countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, and Spain) evaluated the politicians' attractiveness, credibility, and persuasiveness as well as the influence of these factors on the public's attitude toward them and voting intention using an online survey. The results showed that the Spanish President, Pedro Sánchez, was considered the most attractive, credible, and persuasive leader with the most favorable attitude toward him and the highest voting intention, followed by the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, and the American politician, Donald Trump. Therefore, the most physically and vocally attractive leader with the highest credibility and persuasiveness achieved the most favorable attitude and the highest voting intention. The most influential variables of the structural model analyzed in this study were persuasiveness and credibility, which mainly affected the attitude toward the politician and, to a lesser extent, voting intention.

Keywords

Communication; Political communication; Crisis communication; Perception; Physical attractiveness; Vocal attractiveness; Credibility; Persuasiveness; Attitude toward the politicians; Voting intention; Press conferences; Television; Politicians; Covid-19; Pandemics.

1. Introduction

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many presidents have given press conferences on television to inform the population about the situation and the measures applied to prevent the virus. These press conferences draw much attention, as citizens are directly affected by government measures. Therefore, these discourses significantly influence society. Most presidents use similar scenography, with a podium, patriotic symbols, and the country's flags behind them, which is a relevant political persuasion strategy (Miles, 2014). Schaefer (1997) called this strategy the "bully pulpit." Kimmelmeier and Winter (2008) showed that these symbols increase the feeling of nationalism among audiences. Therefore, as a

persuasive resource to influence people, we examine in this study how citizens perceive these presidential press conferences on television.

As an analysis of all presidential speeches is unmanageable, we focus on only three leaders in this research. During selection, we looked for three countries strongly affected by the pandemic, with heads of state appearing in a similar television frame using the bully pulpit (behind the podium with the country's flags) and with no more than two languages (English and Spanish), as participants in this study had to understand them all. These leaders were the ex-President of the United States, Donald Trump; the British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson; and the Spanish President of the Government, Pedro Sánchez. This study aims to assess the attractiveness, credibility, and persuasiveness of these heads of state in television conferences about the pandemic and analyze the relationship between this perception and the attitude toward them and voting intention. To do so, we conducted an online survey wherein a sample of participants from these three countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, and Spain) evaluated the leaders' attractiveness, credibility, persuasiveness, as well as their attitudes toward them and voting intention after watching two videos of each politician.

Crises such as the coronavirus are when politicians play an essential role. Therefore, we aim to know how citizens of these countries perceive their political leaders in this Covid-19 pandemic. As far as we know, no studies have systematically analyzed these different variables in conjunction and their effect on attitudes and voting intention. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by conceiving a structural model of persuasion applied to politicians that shows the relevance of a compelling performance in press conferences to persuade citizens.

2. Politician's perception

Some studies in different countries have related traits such as attractiveness, credibility, or likability with attitude and voting intention (Herrmann; Shikano, 2016), among them in Great Britain (Mattes; Milazzo, 2014) and the United States (Lenz; Lawson, 2011). Attitudes can modify behavior and, hence, voting intention. Therefore, this study will analyze the perception of attractiveness, credibility, and persuasiveness and how these variables can affect the attitude toward politicians and voting intention.

2.1. Attractiveness

Attractiveness is an essential component of persuasion that affects people's perception (Bailenson *et al.*, 2006; Eagly; Chaiken, 1975; Kniffin *et al.*, 2014) and influences political elections and electoral success (Berggren; Jordahl; Poutvaara, 2010; Herrmann; Shikano, 2016; Mattes *et al.*, 2010; Mattes; Milazzo, 2014; Poutvaara; Jordahl; Berggren, 2009; Rosar; Klein; Beckers, 2008). Due to the halo effect and the attractiveness stereotype, individuals ascribe more positive traits to attractive people of different races and ages (Dion, 2002). Therefore, attractive politicians are frequently assessed with more favorable evaluations (Hart; Ottati; Krundick, 2011; Nicholson *et al.*, 2016; Verhulst; Lodge; Lavine, 2010). Mattes and Milazzo (2014) have shown that politicians with baby faces are perceived as less confident than those with mature ones. Moreover, Berggren, Jordahl, and Poutvaara (2010), comparing different surveys, concluded that politicians on the right-wing in Europe, the United States, and Australia looked more beautiful.

With physical appearance and gestures, vocal attractiveness is one of the main features of the leader prototype (DeGroot *et al.*, 2011). People expect some vocal attributes in a leader, and when expectations are not met, they are more likely to consider the speaker a bad leader (Offermann; Kennedy; Wirtz, 1994). Zuckerman and Driver (1989) characterized vocal attractiveness as a confident voice without tension. Regarding performance, speaker fluency and naturalness are among the main attributions (Rodero; Mas; Blanco, 2014; Rosenberg; Hirschberg, 2009). On the contrary, an unsuccessful speaker is hesitant, insecure, and monotonous (Strangert, 2005), while a fluent speaker will use a fast, smooth, and accurate pace (Kormos; Dénes, 2004).

Studies about voice have focused primarily on three main aspects: the volume or intensity, the tone of voice and intonation, and the speech rate or duration. Some authors have found that intensity or volume should be louder (Rosenberg; Hirschberg, 2009; Yang *et al.*, 2020), intense, and energetic (Rodero; Mas; Blanco, 2014), as a loud voice sounds more present and confident. Regarding the tone of voice and intonation, there is a significant consensus. Most studies have shown that people prefer low-pitched voices for men and women, as they sound more attractive, credible, competent, dominant, and assertive (Klofstad; Anderson; Peters, 2012; Rodero; Mas; Blanco, 2014; Tigue *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, Klofstad, Anderson, and Peters (2012) found that this preference affects voting intention. Some studies have characterized an expressive intonation as having a moderate pitch level and significant pitch range variations (Hincks, 2004; Scherer; Klaus; Wolf, 1973; Strangert, 2005; Traunmüller; Eriksson, 1995; Yang *et al.*, 2020). Regarding rhythm and duration, some studies have concluded that a persuasive speaker should use a fast or, at least, faster speech rate than usual to be perceived as positive or charismatic (Rosenberg; Hirschberg, 2009; Rodero, 2020; Yang *et al.*, 2020). The study by Rodero (2016) established that the optimal pace for improving cognitive processing was between 170 and 190 words per minute (wpm).

“ This study analyzes the perception of attractiveness, credibility, and persuasiveness and how these variables can affect the attitude toward politicians and voting intention ”

In sum, vocal and physical attractiveness, among other nonverbal aspects, can help a leader be better perceived and improve attitude and voting intention. This idea allows us to posit the first hypothesis:

H1: The most attractive politician will achieve the most favorable attitude and voting intention.

2.2. Credibility

Attractiveness is related to credibility. Credibility is one of the most valuable outcomes in political communication (Burgoon; Guerrero; Manusov, 2016; Chebat; Filia-trault, 1987; Chebat *et al.*, 2007; Clark; Taraban, 1991; DeGroot *et al.*, 2011; Mitchell; Ross, 2013; Offermann; Kennedy; Wirtz, 1994; Strach *et al.*, 2015). Some classic studies have found that one effective way to increase message persuasion is to enhance the speaker's credibility (Holland; Weiss, 1951; Maddux; Rogers, 1980). Research related to political communication has demonstrated that the effectiveness of a politician depends on how trustworthy this leader is (Burke *et al.*, 2007; Dirks; Ferrin, 2002).

Attractiveness is an essential component of persuasion that affects people's perception and influences political elections and electoral success

Different visual and verbal expressions may lead the followers to believe that the politician is more credible. Attractive politicians are generally perceived as more competent, and this feature can predict more favorable impressions and modify voting intention. Moreover, the perception of source credibility is related to changes in attitudes (Guyer *et al.*, 2019) and electoral success (Laustsen, 2014; Olivola; Todorov, 2010). Therefore, if politicians are considered credible, we can hypothesize that people will have a more favorable attitude toward them and a higher voting intention. This is our second hypothesis.

H2: The most credible politician will achieve the most favorable attitude and voting intention.

2.3. Persuasiveness

Both attractiveness and credibility are attributes related to persuasion affecting all aspects of the political sphere (Mutz, 1996). Persuasion is a significant process that influences people's mental states and attitudes (O'keefe, 2015). Persuasive communication tries to convince others to change attitudes or behavior (Perloff, 2020). Therefore, attitude and behavior are central constructs of persuasion. In this case, we can infer that citizens may perceive this leader as more persuasive if the politician is considered attractive and credible. Altogether, these factors can foster a more favorable attitude and voting intention. This is our third hypothesis.

H3: The most persuasive politician will achieve the most favorable attitude and voting intention.

2.4. Attitude and voting intention

The speaker's attitude can affect communication effectiveness and certain variables such as persuasion or credibility (Brownlow, 1992). According to Spears and Singh (2004), an attitude is an internal and enduring emotional state experienced by subjects in social situations. These attitudes are determined by body action, postures and gestures (Dael; Mortillaro; Scherer, 2012), facial expressions (Ambadar; Schooler; Cohn, 2005; Barrett *et al.*, 2019; Ekman; Friesen; Hager, 2002), and vocal expressions or prosody (Cordaro *et al.*, 2016; Scherer; Klaus; Wolf, 1973).

Attractiveness and credibility are attributes related to persuasion

A vast amount of literature shows the effect of body language on political communication and attitude change (Ahler *et al.*, 2017; Dumitrescu, 2016). Some studies relate body language to changes in attitudes by modifying the perception of source attractiveness or credibility (Guyer *et al.*, 2019). This attitude can be more positive when speakers show interest by changing their facial and body gestures and position (i.e., eye contact, smiling, or leaning forward) (Burgoon; Guerrero; Manusov, 2016).

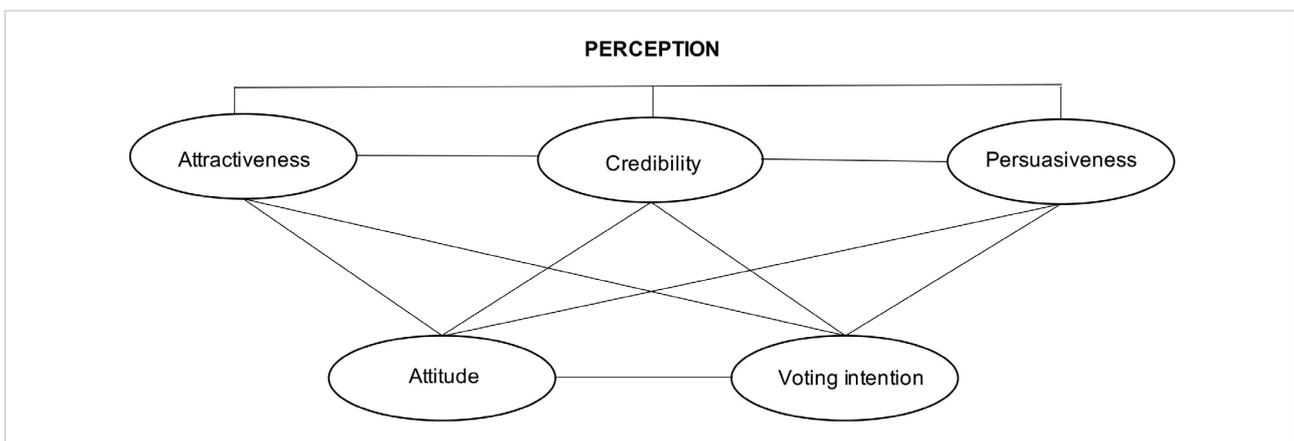


Figure 1. Structural model

Also, some research shows the effect of body language on voting intention (Ahler *et al.*, 2017; Dumitrescu, 2016). Traits such as attractiveness, credibility, or likability inferred through facial gestures can be related to voting intention (Herrmann; Shikano, 2016; Lenz; Lawson, 2011; Mattes *et al.*, 2010). Some authors have also found that low-pitched voices improve voting intention (Klofstad; Anderson; Peters, 2012; Klofstad, 2016; Tigue *et al.*, 2012). Figure 1 shows the theoretical model to test in this study.

3. Method

The survey was conducted over two weeks in April 2020 through a *Qualtrics* panel. The study was a mixed factorial design of 3 (leaders) by 2 (television discourses). These three variables were within-subject factors. There were two speeches by each politician (Trump, Johnson, and Sánchez). The order of the presentation was random.

3.1. Sample

The sample for the survey was composed of 360 people gender-balanced (182 women and 178 men). The criterium to be eligible was to understand English and Spanish at a high level. Participants who did not meet these criterium did not participate in the research.

There were three different groups in the sample according to the different countries. One hundred and twenty were Spanish, 120 were English, and 120 were American. Regarding the level of education, most of the sample were graduates (35%), followed by high school (33%), master's studies (15%), Ph.D. (13%), and elementary/middle school (4%). Concerning the socio-economic level, most of the sample was middle class (51%), followed by lower-middle (24%), upper-middle (13%), low (8%), and high class (4%). Regarding the ideological position, most of the sample (48%) was in the center, followed by left-wing (24%), right-wing (21%), extreme right (4%), and extreme left (3%).

3.2. Materials and stimuli

The interventions of these politicians were chosen with two criteria –the date and the scenography. The leaders had to appear in the press conferences with a similar television frame. We chose countries struck by the virus and with no more than two different languages, as the sample had to be competent in the two languages of the study: English and Spanish. These criteria led to selecting the ex-President of the United States (in 2020), Donald Trump; the English Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, and the Spanish President of the Government, Pedro Sánchez. With this election, gender comparison was also eliminated. All the videos were press conferences of the presidents to inform of the measures against the Covid-19. Two critical moments of the crisis were chosen: the end of March, when the heads of state took the most drastic measures, and the beginning of April (evolution of the actions against coronavirus). Figure 2 shows the politicians.

As the discourses were very long, we selected two fragments by each politician similar in scenography and content. Therefore, there were six videos in total. In the first discourse, the leaders provide recommendations to avoid the contagious and, in the second one, they praised the health services activity against the virus. These fragments were similar in extension, with 97 words for each politician (see Annex 1). Participants were exposed to the different video pieces in random order.

3.3. Variables of the study

The variables of this study were attractiveness, credibility, and persuasiveness and their influence on attitude toward the leaders and voting intention.

First, physical and vocal attractiveness were rated with two different 5-point scales. In the first one, respondents assessed to what extent this politician was physically attractive. In the second one, participants evaluated to what extent the politician's voice was attractive. The average of these two scales was the global level of attractiveness. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was .79.



Figure 2. Pedro Sánchez, Boris Johnson and Donald Trump

The politician's voice was evaluated by measuring the three main parameters explained in the literature review: volume or intensity, tone of voice and intonation, and speech rate or duration. The intensity of the discourses was measured in decibels (dB). Regarding tone or pitch, there are two types of pitch variations in the intonation curve concerning voice tone: pitch level and range. The pitch level is the midline where the intonation is delivered, while the range is the difference between the highest and the lowest pitch level. Pitch range can indicate if the intonation is very monotonous (lower pitch range) or more varied (higher pitch range). Both parameters have been measured in hertz (Hz). Finally, speech rate was measured in words per minute.

“ The variables of this study were attractiveness, credibility, and persuasiveness and their influence on attitude toward the leaders and voting intention ”

Secondly, this study focuses on credibility source attributed to the speaker –political or public figure– in a public speaking context (McCroskey; Holdridge; Toomb, 1974). We used the McCroskey and Teven (1999) credibility scale to evaluate this dimension (see Annex 2). The scale comprises three different constructs: competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill. These authors define competence as the perception of knowledge, expertise, and leadership abilities on a particular topic. The second variable is trustworthiness, understood as the perception of sincerity, character, and validity of the speaker's statements. Finally, the third component of the scale is goodwill which is the speaker's intention towards the listener: understanding, empathy, and responsiveness towards the speaker (McCroskey; Teven, 1999). The credibility level was the average of these three variables. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scale was .85.

Third, the Thomas, Masthoff, and Oren (2017) scale was used to evaluate persuasiveness. This scale comprises four constructs: motivational, appropriate, effective, and convincing. The persuasiveness index was the average of these variables. For this scale, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was .83.

Finally, we used two final scales to evaluate the attitude toward the politicians and the voting intention for each leader. Both were 5-point scales.

3.4. Procedure

First, participants had to choose the general language of the questionnaire, English or Spanish. Secondly, regardless of the demographics, participants had to answer some questions about the Covid-19 pandemic. The first question was about the measures they would carry out against coronavirus if they were the government. The second issue was if they agreed with the actions adopted by their respective governments against the pandemic. The third question was whether they agreed with the number of times the government's presidents gave conference press. We also asked about the impression of the three presidents. Participants evaluated the leaders on a 5-point scale from negative (1) to positive (5).

Finally, participants watched the videos of each politician and had to rate their attractiveness, credibility, and persuasiveness. At the end of the survey, they assessed the three different presidents' final attitude and voting intention.

4. Results

4.1. Previous questions about the Covid-19 pandemic

Questions about the coronavirus crisis formed the first part of the survey. The first question was about the measure they would carry out against coronavirus. Most of them (48%) defended a complete lockdown only with basic services working, followed by 21% who supported a lockdown only with minimum services to survive, 14% thought that it was necessary a lockdown only for risk people with all the services active, 13% defended a minimum lockdown with restrictions for few people as children and almost all the services, and 4% thought that it was not necessary to do anything against the virus. All the countries followed the same order.

The next question was if they agreed with the measures adopted by their respective governments. In this case, most of them (54%) agreed, followed by partially (32%) and do not agree (14%). All the countries maintained the same order.

The final question was whether the respondents agreed with the number of times the government presidents gave coronavirus information. In this case, most of the sample (40%) considered that the president of the government should appear before the media to explain all the measures that they take, followed by those (27%) that thought that the president only had to appear when they take important measures, 26% defended that the president had to explain the measures every day, and 7% considered that presidents never had to appear before media.

“ Half of the respondents defended a complete lockdown only with basic services to contain the virus ”

4.2. Politicians' perception

The results of the politicians' perception of attractiveness, credibility, and persuasiveness are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Perception of the politicians

Politician	Attractiveness		Physical attractiveness		Vocal attractiveness		Credibility		Persuasiveness	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Sánchez	3.95	.45	4.33	.62	3.57	.68	2.87	.91	2.86	.89
Trump	2.64	.37	2.75	.65	2.55	.58	2.45	1.02	2.46	1.01
Johnson	2.61	.52	2.23	.89	3.00	.67	2.67	.88	2.66	.84

Sánchez was the better evaluated in physical attractiveness, followed by Trump and Johnson. There were significant differences for politician, $F(2, 358) = 1610, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .599$. There were no significant results for the different discourses in any variable.

The Spanish politician was the best rated in vocal attractiveness, $F(2, 358) = 455.67, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .297$. The post hoc test showed significant differences among the three leaders in these two variables. In the two discourses, Sánchez used the loudest volume (73 decibels) compared to Trump (69 dB) and Johnson (66 dB), combined with a moderate speech rate (172 words per minute) faster than Johnson (117 wpm) but slower than Trump (176 wpm) and a dynamic intonation (107 hertz of difference) in front of the monotonous Trump (81 Hz) but moderate with respect to Johnson (151 Hz). Therefore, on balance, Sánchez used his voice in an effective way, according to the perception results.

Consequently, the Spanish leader was also the best evaluated in global attractiveness, $F(2, 358) = 2056, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .656$, followed by Trump and Johnson. The post hoc test showed significant differences between Sánchez and the other politicians. There was a positive correlation between the physical and voice attractiveness: Pearson Correlation ($r = .252, Sig. (2-tailed): .000$).

In credibility, there were significant differences for politician, $F(2, 358) = 35.84, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .082$. The most credible leader was Sánchez, followed by Johnson and Trump (see Table 2). According to the post hoc tests, there were significant differences among the three politicians.

About persuasiveness, there were significant differences for politician, $F(2, 358) = 35.39, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .032$. Sánchez was the most persuasive leader, followed by Johnson and Trump (see Table 2). According to the post hoc tests, there were significant differences among the three politicians.

Regarding attitude and voting intention, we also asked for the opinion about the different presidents assessed in this research at the beginning of the survey. The most positive impression was for the Spanish politician, Pedro Sánchez, followed by the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, and in the last position, the ex-President of the United States, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Attitude toward the leader and voting intention

Politician	Previous attitude		Final attitude		Voting intention	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Sánchez	2.90	.90	4.19	1.60	1.96	.85
Trump	2.34	1.2	3.43	1.92	1.64	.85
Johnson	2.70	1.1	3.96	1.67	1.85	.86

The Spanish leader was better evaluated by English participants ($M = 2.98; SD = .69$), followed by American ($M = 2.94; SD = .74$), and Spanish respondents ($M = 2.81; SD = 1.1$). The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, was better evaluated by the American subjects ($M = 3.09; SD = .83$), English participants ($M = 3.06; SD = 1.1$), and Spanish respondents ($M = 2.07; SD = .92$). Finally, the American politician achieved the best impression from the American participants ($M = 2.88; SD = 1.4$), followed by English subjects ($M = 2.44; SD = 1.1$), and Spanish respondents ($M = 1.81; SD = .99$).

Also, participants had to rate their attitude toward the leaders again after watching the videos at the end of the survey. The data were significant for politician, $F(2, 358) = 36.08, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .032$. As in the previous evaluation, the best score was for Sánchez, followed by Johnson and Trump. The post hoc tests showed significant differences among the three politicians. As shown in Table 3, the participants' final attitude toward the leaders was higher than the initial one, especially in the case of Sánchez (1.29) and Johnson (1.26 higher), followed by Trump (1.09).

Regarding voting intention, the data were significant for politician, $F(2, 358) = 25.96, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .024$. Sánchez obtained the highest score, followed by Johnson and Trump (see Table 3). The post hoc tests showed significant differences among the three politicians.

“ The most attractive, credible, and persuasive politician, the Spanish leader, achieved the most favorable attitude and the highest voting intention ”

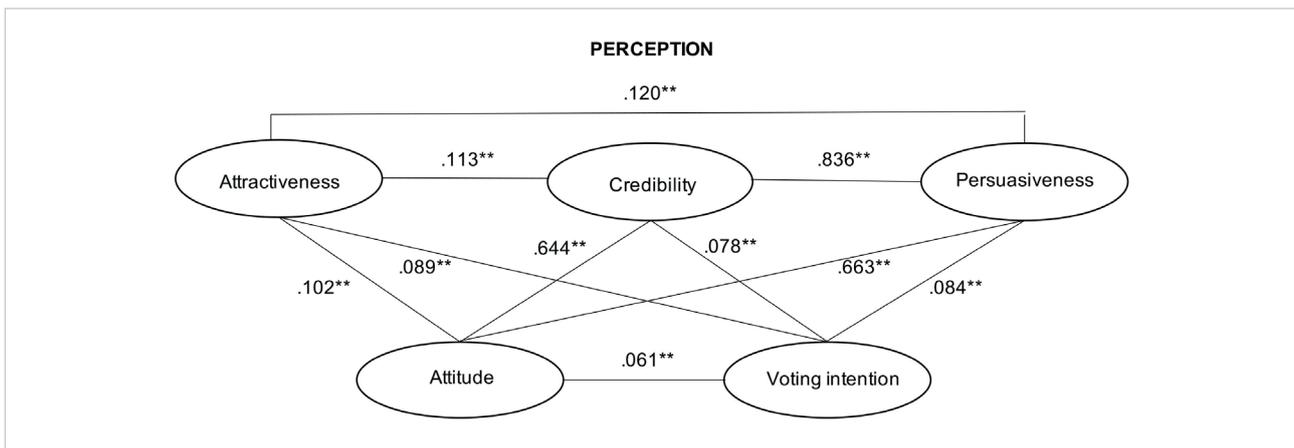


Figure 3. Final structural model ** $p < .001$

4.4. Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis 1 posited that the most attractive politician would achieve the most favorable attitude and voting intention. The results confirmed this hypothesis, as Sánchez was considered the most attractive politician, and this leader achieved the most favorable attitude and the highest voting intention. Moreover, there was a positive correlation between the global attractiveness and attitude toward the politician and between the attractiveness and voting intention (see Figure 3).

Hypothesis 2 established that the most credible politician would achieve the most favorable attitude and voting intention. This hypothesis is also confirmed, as the most credible politician, the Spanish governor, achieved the most favorable attitude and voting intention. Furthermore, there was a correlation between credibility, attitude toward the politician, and voting intention (see Figure 3).

Finally, Hypothesis 3 of this study was that the most persuasive politician would achieve the most favorable attitude and voting intention. The results of this variable confirm this hypothesis. The most persuasive politician, the Spanish leader, achieved the most favorable attitude and voting intention. In this case, there was a positive correlation between persuasiveness with attitude toward the politician and voting intention. Figure 3 shows the final structural model with the correlations.

5. Discussion and conclusions

This study examined the attractiveness, credibility, and persuasiveness of the politicians –Donald Trump (United States), Boris Johnson (United Kingdom), and Pedro Sánchez (Spain)– in television press conferences about the coronavirus pandemic and their relationship to attitudes and voting intention.

Regarding the evaluation of the pandemic, half of the respondents defended a complete lockdown only with basic services to contain the virus. Moreover, most of them agreed with the measures adopted by their respective governments and thought that governors should appear before the media to explain all the measures they took against the Covid-19.

Regarding the politicians’ perception, the results showed that the most attractive, credible, and persuasive politician, in this case, the Spanish leader, achieved the most favorable attitude and the highest voting intention. The variables of this study were positively correlated, especially credibility and persuasiveness (with the most important relationship), followed by attitude with persuasiveness and attitude with credibility. Therefore, these results confirm the structural model tested in this study.

Concerning attractiveness, the Spanish governor was rated as the most physically attractive politician, followed by Trump and Johnson. Sánchez has been qualified as a handsome politician in Europe (Heller, 2018) and in the United States, a country in which he has been considered a very “good-looking man,” even compared to Kennedy or Superman (ThinkSpain, 2021). Therefore, the result of this study is not surprising.

“ The most physically and vocally attractive leader (Sánchez) was also the most credible and persuasive politician, followed by Johnson and Trump ”

The second position was for the American politician. Trump has been considered a sexy man by many women (Dolan, 2016). The last position was for Boris Johnson. The English Prime Minister’s style has frequently been criticized due to his messy hair (McInnes, 2021). In consequence, the most physically attractive leader achieved the best results in the rest of the variables, in line with the halo effect and different previous studies that have shown changes in the attitude and electoral success (Ahler et al., 2017; Berggren; Jordahl; Poutvaara, 2010; Dion, 2002; Hart; Ottati; Krumdick, 2011; Herrmann; Shikan, 2016; Mattes; Milazzo, 2014; Nicholson et al., 2016; Rosar; Klein; Beckers, 2008; Verhulst; Lodge; Lavine, 2010).

Also, respondents considered that Sánchez had the most attractive voice, followed by Johnson and Trump. According to some research, the attributes found in Sánchez's voice were those that better characterize vocal attractiveness (Klofstad; Anderson; Peters, 2012; Rodero; Mas; Blanco, 2014; Rosenberg; Hirschberg, 2009; Strangert, 2005). As some studies have shown that a good voice can influence voting behavior, it is logical that Sánchez was the politician with a more favorable attitude and voting intention (Tigue *et al.*, 2012). However, attractiveness was the variable with the weakest relationship with the rest of the features. The strongest correlation was with persuasiveness, then credibility, and voting intention.

Regarding the attitude toward the leader and voting intention, the final order was the same as in the other variables: Sánchez, followed by Johnson and Trump

The most physically and vocally attractive leader (Sánchez) was also the most credible politician, followed by Johnson and Trump. These results showed that a leader perceived as attractive is also perceived as competent and trustworthy (Dirks; Ferrin, 2002). These outcomes are valuable in political communication (Mitchell; Ross, 2013; Strach *et al.*, 2015) and can predict electoral success (Laustsen, 2014; Olivola; Todorov, 2010), as this study has also demonstrated. The most credible politician attained the most positive attitude and the highest voting intention. Moreover, credibility was strongly correlated with other variables, especially with persuasiveness. Therefore, the more persuasive the leader was perceived, the more credible the politician was.

Both attractiveness and credibility affected persuasiveness, especially credibility (Mutz, 1996). The most attractive and credible politician was also perceived as the most persuasive (O'keefe, 2015; Perloff, 2020). As in the other variables, Sánchez was followed by Johnson and Trump. This result aligns with previous studies showing that a persuasive speaker should be considered trustworthy (Clark; Taraban, 1991; Rosenberg; Hirschberg, 2005). In fact, persuasiveness was the most influential variable in this study, with the strongest correlation with credibility. Therefore, the more credible the politician was perceived, the more persuasive the leader was.

Regarding the attitude toward the leader and voting intention, the final order was the same as in the other variables: Sánchez, followed by Johnson and Trump. Participants improved their attitude toward the leaders after watching the videos, especially Sánchez, followed by Johnson and Trump. Therefore, they generated a more favorable perception of the stimuli, which fostered a more positive attitude toward these politicians. The strongest correlations of this variable were with persuasiveness and credibility; thus, the more persuasive and credible the politician was perceived, the more favorable attitude toward him.

In the case of voting intention, the strongest correlations were, in this order, with attractiveness, persuasiveness, and credibility; thus, the more attractive, persuasive, and credible the leader was, the higher the voting intention. It is worthwhile to note that attractiveness was not a very influential variable in attitude but was in voting intention, according to some studies that have shown its relationship with political elections and electoral success (Ahler *et al.*, 2017; Berggren; Jordahl; Poutvaara, 2010; Herrmann; Shikano, 2016; Mattes; Milazzo, 2014).

In conclusion, the most important variables in the structural model were persuasiveness and credibility, which mainly influenced attitude toward the politician (O'keefe, 2015; Perloff, 2020). Furthermore, both variables with attractiveness determined voting intention, but to a lesser extent.

All in all, we can conclude that the most physical and vocal attractive leader with the highest credibility and persuasiveness achieved the most favorable attitude and the highest voting intention. Therefore, a good part of the leaders' political success is based on being perceived as attractive (not only physically but also vocally), but especially on being considered credible and persuasive.

The most important variables in the structural model were persuasiveness and credibility, which influenced attitude toward the politician and voting intention

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Annexes

1. Scripts of the videos

Donald Trump

Video 1

English: To keep new cases from entering our shores, we will be suspending all travel from Europe to the United States for the next thirty days. This is the most aggressive and comprehensive effort to confront a farm virus in modern history.

Spanish: Para evitar que entren nuevos casos en nuestro país, vamos a suspender todos los viajes desde Europa a Estados Unidos durante los próximos treinta días. Se trata del esfuerzo más agresivo y exhaustivo para hacer frente a un virus de granja en la historia moderna.

Video 2

English: The number one priority from our standpoint is the health and safety of the American people and that's the way I viewed it when I made that decision. Because of all we've done, the risk to the American people remains very low. We have the greatest experts in the world, really in the world, right here.

Spanish: La prioridad número uno desde nuestro punto de vista es la salud y la seguridad del pueblo estadounidense y así lo consideraré cuando tomé esa decisión. Gracias a todo lo que hemos hecho, el riesgo para el pueblo estadounidense sigue siendo muy bajo. Tenemos a los mejores expertos del mundo, literalmente del mundo, aquí mismo.

Boris Johnson

Video 1

English: Now it is the time for everyone to stop nonessential contact with others and to stop all unnecessary travel. We need people to start working from home where they possibly can. And you should avoid pubs, clubs, theaters and other such social venues.

Spanish: Ahora es el momento de que todo el mundo detenga el contacto no esencial con los demás y detenga todos los viajes innecesarios. Necesitamos que la gente empiece a trabajar desde casa siempre que pueda. Y debe evitar los pubs, clubes, teatros y otros lugares sociales de este tipo.

Video 2

English: Keeping the country safe is the government’s overriding priority and our plan means we’re committed to doing everything possible based on the advice of our world leading scientific experts to prepare all eventualities. And let’s not forget we already have a fantastic *NHS* fantastic testing systems and fantastic surveillance of the spread of the disease.

Spanish: Mantener la seguridad del país es la principal prioridad del gobierno y nuestro plan significa que nos comprometemos a hacer todo lo posible, basándonos en el consejo de nuestros expertos científicos líderes en el mundo, para preparar todas las eventualidades. Y no olvidemos que ya tenemos un fantástico sistema de pruebas del *NHS* y una fantástica vigilancia de la propagación de la enfermedad.

Pedro Sánchez

Video 1

Spanish: La declaración del estado de alarma permite movilizar al máximo los recursos materiales para combatir el virus. La victoria depende de cada uno de nosotros en nuestro hogar, nuestra familia, en el trabajo, en nuestro vecindario. El heroísmo consiste también en lavarse las manos.

English: The declaration of the state of alert allows the maximum mobilization of material resources to combat the virus. Victory depends on each of us at home, in our families, at work, in our neighborhoods. Heroism is also about washing your hands.

Video 2

Spanish: Reconozco con humildad nuestras limitaciones como las del resto de países para afrontar esta pandemia. Pero nos tenemos a nosotros mismos como sociedad, como comunidad. Tenemos el trabajo constante y el asesoramiento científico de los mejores profesionales a los cuales quiero volver a rendir tributo, y la absoluta determinación política por superarlas.

English: I recognize with humility our limitations as well as those of the rest of the countries to face this pandemic. But we have ourselves as a society, as a community. We have the constant work and scientific advice of the best professionals to whom I would like to pay tribute once again, and the absolute political determination to overcome them.

Annex 2. Scale of credibility

Competence								
Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unintelligent
Untrained	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Trained
Inexpert	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Expert
Informed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uninformed
Incompetent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Competent
Bright	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stupid
Goodwill								
Cares about me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Doesn't care about me
Interests at heart	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not interests at heart
Self-centered	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not self-centered
Concerned with me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unconcerned with me
Insensitive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Sensitive
Not understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Understanding
Trustworthiness								
Honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Dishonest
Untrustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Trustworthily
Honorable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Dishonorable
Moral	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Immoral
Phoney	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Genuine