Fake news in the textile and clothing business system in Peru post COVID-19

Fake news en el sistema empresarial textil Alpaquero en el Perú post COVID-19

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Abstract
The study analyzes the impact of fake news in the Peruvian alpaca textile sector during the post COVID-19 phase, in the dimensions of production, sales and consumption. With a quantitative level methodology, cross-sectional experimental design and the use of the questionnaire and the interview form as instruments, the results reveal how a high proportion of respondents received false information, affecting 82%-95% of the participants depending on the sector. It is concluded that fake news constitutes a significant challenge for the alpaca textile sector in Peru, especially in the post COVID-19 period. Therefore, a proactive approach in the digital communication management of alpaca textile companies could mitigate the negative impacts of fake news and maintain their position in the global arena.

Keywords: fake news, company, textile sector, post COVID-19.

Resumen
El estudio analiza el impacto de las *fake news* en el sector textil alpaquero del Perú durante la fase post COVID-19, en las dimensiones de producción, ventas y consumo. Con una metodología de nivel cuantitativo, diseño experimental transversal y la utilización del cuestionario y la ficha de entrevista como instrumentos, los resultados revelan cómo una alta proporción de los encuestados recibió información falsa, afectando al 82 %–95 % de los participantes según el sector. Se concluye que las *fake news* constituyen un reto significativo para el sector textil alpaquero en el Perú, especialmente en el periodo post COVID-19. Por lo tanto, un enfoque proactivo en la gestión de comunicación digital de las empresas textiles alpaqueras podría mitigar los impactos negativos de las *fake news* y mantener su posición en el ámbito global.

Palabras clave: *fake news*, empresa, sector textil, post COVID-19.

Introduction

In the post COVID-19 context, the business world has had to adapt to new dynamics, not only due to the social and economic difficulties caused by the epidemic but also because of the rise of misinformation, particularly in the form of fake news (Oros, 2020; Álvarez, 2021). This phenomenon has had significant repercussions across various sectors, including the textile industry, which plays an important role in Peruvian culture and economy, particularly concerning the production of alpaca garments (Jara-Ortega & Jara-Rodríguez, 2023). Fake news has distorted the public's perception of products, processes, and the position of companies within the textile sector, adversely affecting their competitiveness and sustainability in a globalized market (García-Marín, 2021).

Moreover, the dissemination of fake news on digital platforms and social media has exacerbated the challenges faced by textile companies, which must contend with unfounded rumors and misinformation regarding the quality of their products, labor practices, or environmental impacts (Palomino et al., 2020). In a post COVID-19 environment, where textile companies are struggling to regain their market position, misinformation can have detrimental effects by creating a misleading image of brands, reducing consumer trust, and generating uncertainty among stakeholders in the production chain (Almonacid, 2022; Fan & Jaramillo, 2021).

Various academic fields have examined the issue of fake news, especially in communication, sociology, and economics (García-Marín, 2021). According to Vovkodav et al. (2022), this refers to intentionally misleading or incorrect information disseminated with the intent to influence public opinion, manipulate decisions, or generate sensationalism. In the post COVID-19 context, false information has spread more rapidly due to increased digitalization and the widespread use of social media in countries like Peru (Jara-Ortega & Jara-Rodríguez, 2023).

From a business perspective, fake news can directly influence corporate image and consumer decision-making (Pastor-Rodríguez & Frutos-Torres, 2024). The corporate reputation theory posits that reputation is a key intangible asset built over time, which, when impacted by erroneous information, can lead to economic losses and long-term damage (Mezones, 2019). In the textile sector, a company's credibility is measured by the excellence of its products and the transparency of its manufacturing processes, which, in the case of the alpaca sector, includes social and environmental responsibility (Halze & Zambrano, 2021).

In Peru, research on the alpaca textile system has highlighted the importance of this industry in both cultural and economic terms (Hinojosa, 2025; Fasson, 2023). The Peruvian alpaca sector represents an ancestral tradition that has been a significant source of employment in rural communities (Díaz-Garay et al., 2021). According to Vargas and Morillos (2020), there is a current population of over 3.6 million alpacas and more than 82,000 small breeders who depend on alpaca fiber for their livelihood; however, the market for alpaca products also faces challenges stemming from unfair competition and misinformation, which often damages the perception of these products' quality or even jeopardizes their competitiveness in international markets (Quispe & Ching, 2024; Torres & Zuñiga, 2024).

Additionally, according to Fajardo et al. (2024), some view cyberspace as a battleground where individuals, organizations, and communities can be attacked through digital communication channels, influencing decision-making and disseminating false information. In this regard, while the content of symbolic exchanges on social media platforms may vary to different degrees, it is difficult to detect and attribute coordinated inauthentic behaviors and the use of cyber proxies (Rubio et al., 2024).

In this context, strategic communication theory asserts that companies must manage communication proactively to prevent the spread of misinformation (Velardez, 2022; Vázquez & Paniagua, 2022). Therefore, to counteract the harmful consequences of fake news, it is essential to implement digital communication tactics and provide authentic and reliable material (Elías, 2023). In this sense, Peruvian alpaca textile companies can benefit from these tools to construct a positive narrative and combat misinformation in the digital space (Jara-Ortega & Jara-Rodríguez, 2023).

In summary, misinformation and fake news represent a significant threat to the Peruvian alpaca textile industry, which must be managed through effective communication strategies, strengthening corporate reputation, and protecting product quality against public distortion (López, 2021; Kuong & Manrique, 2024).

Methodology

According to Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza (2018), the methodology that formed the basis for this work utilized a quantitative approach and a cross-sectional experimental design. The analysis focused on fake news that circulated throughout the post COVID-19 phase and within the alpaca textile business sector in Peru, which is dedicated to the manufacturing, sale, and consumption of alpaca fiber.

In Peru, there are over 90,000 alpaca fiber entrepreneurs (producers) (El Peruano, 2023). In the following study, a representative sample of 498 individuals was considered for the survey, along with 52 for the interviews.

As shown in Table 1, the survey involved 28 presidents of alpaca associations, 390 individuals working in alpaca breeding, and 80 health professionals. The interviews were conducted with a sample of 28 association presidents producing alpaca fiber, 12 managers and executive personnel from the alpaca textile sector, and 12 directors of hospitals from the Ministry of Health, who have worked and are currently working in COVID-19 care.

Table 1

Centralization of personnel considered for the survey and interview

Survey	Alpaca sector representatives	Association presidents	Healthcare personnel	TOTAL
	390	28	80	498 surveys
Interview	Association presidents	Hospital directors	Textile sector managers and executives	TOTAL
	28	12	12	52 interviews

Furthermore, Table 2 indicates that within the health sector across the 15 departments that produce alpaca fiber in Peru, 8 departments were considered, with one hospital from the Ministry of Health selected from each that participated in COVID-19 care during the pandemic and for existing new cases. Additionally, of the 80 selected health professionals, there are 30 doctors, 30 nurses, 15 nursing technicians, and 5 nutritionists distributed by department and hospital.

Table 2

Hospitals and healthcare personnel considered for the research

No.	Hospital name	Department	Physicians	Nurses	Nursing technicians	Nutritionists
1	Dos de Mayo	Lima	4	4	2	1
2	Manuel Núñez Butron	Puno	4	4	2	1
3	Regional del Cusco	Cusco	4	4	2	1
4	Honorio Delgado E.	Arequipa	4	4	2	1
5	Departamental de H.	Huancavelica	4	4	2	
6	Regional de Salud	Apurímac	4	4	2	
7	Regional de Ayacucho	Ayacucho	3	3	2	1
8	Daniel Alcides Carrión	Pasco	3	3	1	
TOTAL			30	30	15	5

Using the variables of fake news and business systems in their three dimensions (production, sales, and consumption), a survey was employed as the technique, utilizing a questionnaire comprising 30 questions. This instrument was developed based on the questionnaire by Catalina-García et al. (2019). To determine its validity, expert judgments were sought from professionals in the alpaca textile sector, the medical field, and social media communications. The second technique used was interviews, with an adapted interview form as the primary data

collection tool, tailored to the specific questions of the industry. Additionally, specialists from the textile field and healthcare personnel verified the accuracy of the interview form.

The process and analysis of the information took place in two stages. The first involved administering the survey to representatives of alpaca breeding and fiber production associations from various departments in Peru, as well as healthcare personnel from eight hospitals under the Ministry of Health that have dealt with the treatment and control of COVID-19. The second stage focused on interviews conducted with representatives from the alpaca textile sector, including association presidents, managers, and executives, as well as hospital directors.

Results

Table 3 presents the results of the conducted survey. Among the 28 presidents of associations in the alpaca textile sector in Peru, it was found that 82% of the surveyed participants received fake news, while 14% did not and 4% did not respond. Regarding the 390 representatives from the textile sector, 95% received fake news, while 3% did not and 2% did not respond. In the health sector, out of the 80 surveyed, 74% received fake news and 7% did not.

Table 3

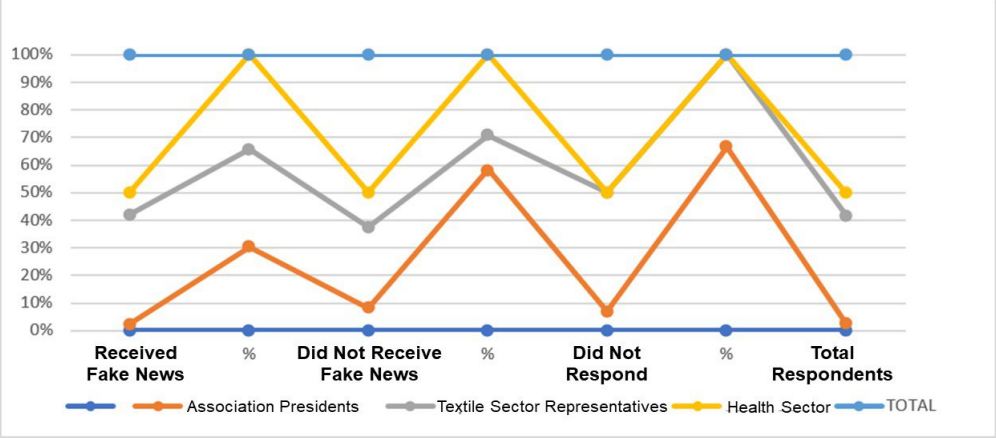
Survey on fake news

Respondents	Received Fake News	%	Did Not Receive Fake News	%	Did Not Respond	%	Total Respondents
Association Presidents	23	82%	4	14%	1	4%	28
Textile Sector Representatives	370	95%	14	3%	6	2%	390
Health Sector	74	93%	6	7%	0	0%	80
TOTAL	467		24		7		498

Figure 1 graphically illustrates the results corresponding to the respondents' perceptions regarding the reception of fake news, highlighting the participation of association presidents, representatives from the textile sector, and health sector members.

Figure 1

Results of the survey on fake news



On the other hand, Table 4 shows the most relevant means of spreading fake news according to the respondents. In the case of association presidents, 15 individuals received false news via WhatsApp, which represents 54%; 10 individuals received it through Facebook, accounting for 36%; and 3 individuals received it via Instagram, representing 10%. Similarly, among representatives from the textile sector, 62% received fake news

through WhatsApp, while 120 individuals (31%) received it via Facebook, and 30 participants (7%) received it through Instagram. In contrast, among health sector personnel, 64 individuals received fake news via WhatsApp, representing 80%; 10 individuals received it through Facebook, accounting for 13%; and 6 individuals received it via Instagram, representing 7%.

Table 4
Channels through which fake news was received according to respondents

Respondents	WhatsApp	%	Facebook	%	Instagram	%	Total Respondents
Association Presidents	15	54%	10	36%	3	10%	28
Textile Sector Representatives	240	62%	120	31%	30	7%	390
Health Sector	64	80%	10	13%	6	7%	80
TOTAL	319		140		39		498

Table 5 presents the results of the conducted interviews. Among the 28 presidents of associations in the alpaca textile sector in Peru, it was determined that 24 individuals received fake news, representing 86% of those surveyed, while 4 individuals, or 14%, did not receive fake news. Regarding managers in the textile sector, 10 individuals received fake news, constituting 83%, while 2 individuals did not, representing 17%. Among the directors of MINSA hospitals, out of 12 interviewed, 11 received fake news (92%), while 1 participant (8%) did not.

Table 5
Interviews on fake news

Respondents	Received Fake News	%	Did Not Receive Fake News	%	Total Respondents
Association Presidents	24	86%	4	14%	28
Textile Sector Managers	10	83%	2	17%	12
MINSA Hospital Directors	11	92%	1	8%	12
TOTAL	45		7		52

Table 6 shows the primary channels through which fake news was disseminated according to the respondents. Among the association presidents, 21 individuals received fake news via WhatsApp (75%), while 5 received it through Facebook (18%) and 2 through Instagram (7%). For the textile sector managers, 8 individuals received fake news via WhatsApp (67%), while 3 received it through Facebook (25%) and 1 through Instagram (8%). Meanwhile, among the MINSA hospital directors, 10 individuals received fake news via WhatsApp (83%), while 2 received it through Facebook (17%) and none via Instagram.

Table 6
Channels through which fake news was received in the interviews

Respondents	WhatsApp	%	Facebook	%	Instagram	%	Total Respondents
Association Presidents	21	75%	05	18%	2	7%	28
Textile Sector Managers	08	67%	03	25%	1	8%	12
MINSA Hospital Directors	10	83%	02	17%	0	0%	12
TOTAL	39		10		3		52

Discussion

The results indicate that the officials considered in this research receive erroneous information. However, the owners and operators of the alpaca fiber generation system do not provide further details but instead point out that this issue arises from the realm of fake news. The use of information technologies that support social communication platforms is beginning to concern them, particularly as they enter the fourth phase of the pandemic (Gomes et al., 2022).

Although the spread of the virus has been controlled, the World Health Organization has predicted that the official end of the international health emergency was on May 5, 2023; however, it is still possible that the pandemic may continue for several more years (Guardiola, 2023).

Moreover, Ballesteros (2020) indicates that TikTok has surpassed Google as the most popular website in the world. With the rise of social media as a news source, people are paying close attention to developments in information technology, which inevitably includes the dissemination of misinformation. In this case, information is distorted through this medium, causing confusion among individuals and within the business system itself. Therefore, the state must fulfill its responsibility to ensure that the use of available social media is more responsible, preventing the spread of false information. This is particularly important considering the increased circulation of fake news within the alpaca business system in Peru, which negatively impacts its development, especially in the post COVID-19 stage (Jara-Ortega & Jara-Rodríguez, 2023).

Additionally, based on an analysis of over 120,000 tweet cascades, Viteri & Carvajal (2023) discovered that fake news achieves a cascade of 10 retweets twenty times faster than real news. In any case, when it is determined that an institution or individual has disseminated erroneous information, social media platforms should collaborate with government agencies to impose sanctions, ensuring that users only see truthful information (Ayora & Paucar, 2023).

Ramón et al. (2022) argue that media coverage during emergencies, such as a pandemic, is crucial. Consequently, powerful organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) have expressed their disapproval of the dissemination of false information surrounding COVID-19 (Aleixandre-Benavent et al., 2020). In this regard, the WHO published a policy brief titled “Desinfomedia” (Román et al., 2022).

El Comercio (2022) reports that over 80 verification organizations have identified YouTube as one of the largest platforms for fake news globally. In response to this report, YouTube stated that it removes copyrighted content, which represents only a small percentage of all views (Jiménez, 2024). Although this percentage is lower, the emergence of these distortions can only be prevented through legislative control measures. Therefore, the responsibility for implementing such measures lies with the state and both public and private entities (Aba-Catoira, 2020).

Finally, Jiménez & Guerra (2022) note that the composition of the parties involved in potential civil liability arising from fraudulent publications presents various complexities, including: a) the choices made by the responsible party in response to communications from anonymous senders or as a result of advertisements or programmatic advertising executed by AI systems; b) the legal standing of the affected party concerning the damage suffered, as it does not appear that restrictions on imposing limitations perceived as censorship can be utilized to address the community or social damage caused by misinformation disseminated through such news; and c) the challenges posed by both the breadth and definition of measures aimed at ceasing the harm as well as the insignificant compensation for the damage created.

The degree of responsibility of public or private institutions in disseminating false information must be determined, resorting to monetary or custodial sanctions, as this creates distortions in their activities and can lead to significant economic losses within the business system (Cabello, 2020; Aba-Catoira, 2021).

Conclusions

Fake news in the post COVID-19 phase continues to affect the economic system of the alpaca textile sector in Peru. Consequently, the business system in the alpaca textile industry has responded by taking measures and cross-referencing information with specialists to identify fake news before it spreads and leads to poor decision-making.

Given that the volume of false information is virtually infinite, it is imperative for the business system to find and implement technology that enhances security and protects this type of data.

Furthermore, healthcare personnel are vulnerable to fake news, as they indirectly legitimize this type of information and disseminate it within their professional and personal networks. Despite their work requiring skepticism, this is still insufficient to prevent them from being misled, especially considering the post COVID-19 phase and the other distortions exposed.

In this context, the Peruvian government must take regulatory and control measures to prevent the dissemination of false information and, if detected, implement corrective measures that protect the economy from the damages that fake news can cause in the current social climate.

In conclusion, fake news presents a significant challenge for the alpaca textile sector in Peru, particularly during the post COVID-19 period. Misinformation negatively impacts consumer perception, company reputation, and the economic stability of the sector. This type of fake news can distort product images, create distrust, and affect competition in both local and international markets.

In a context where transparency and trust are essential, companies must adopt clear and truthful communication strategies to counter misinformation. Only through a proactive approach to reputation management and digital communication can alpaca textile companies mitigate the negative impacts of fake news and maintain their position in an increasingly competitive global market.

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