



**THREAT ANALYSIS**

# Venezuelan Marketing Specialist Behind AI-Generated Journalists Linked to Known Disinformation Network



**APRIL 2023**

**RESEARCH**



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## **DISCLAIMER:**

The reporting contained herein from the Nisos research organization consists of analysis reflecting assessments of probability and levels of confidence and should not necessarily be construed as fact. All content is provided on an as-is basis and does not constitute professional advice, and its accuracy reflects the reliability, timeliness, authority, and relevancy of the sourcing underlying those analytic assessments.



# Executive Summary

Nisos found that Venezuelan marketing specialist and “vlogger” Pablo Jose Navas likely operated a social media channel called House of News Espanol that used AI-generated journalists to promote Venezuelan government propaganda. While researchers did not directly tie Navas’ social media channel to the Venezuelan government, Navas has various professional and social connections to entities that have worked for the Venezuelan government and promoted pro-Caracas narratives.

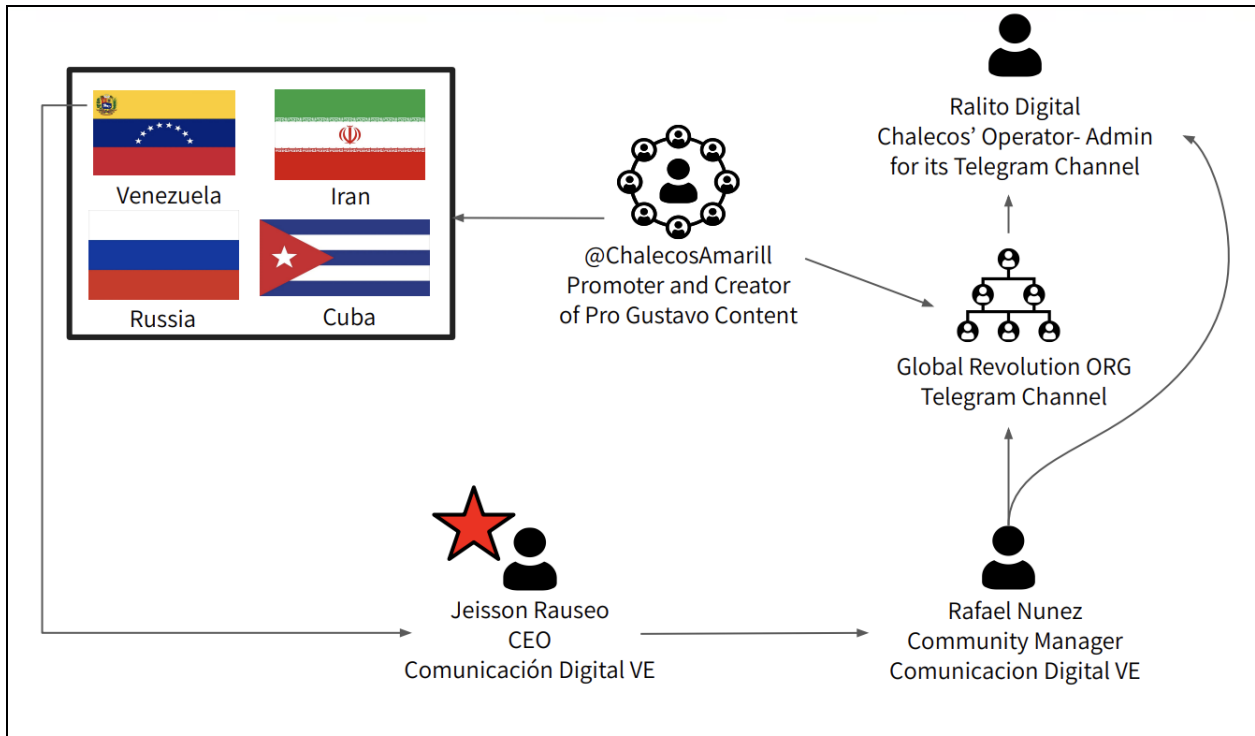
- Navas appeared in the social network of Jeisson Rauseo, the CEO of Venezuelan company Comunicacion Digital VE, which previously employed another marketing specialist involved in an influential disinformation effort advancing Venezuelan government interests during Colombia’s 2022 election season. Additionally, Navas’ current employer, Identidad Digital, shared notable branding similarities with Comunicacion Digital VE on social media, suggesting a close link between the two.
- Identidad Digital previously engaged in at least three government contracts with Corporacion Venezolana de Guayana (CVG), the parent company of Minerven—a US-sanctioned company. Navas’ social media accounts are politically aligned with the Venezuelan government.

Understanding the tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) of foreign influence operations—including the growing use of AI in those efforts—helps social media and technology companies ensure their platforms are used in accordance with their community standards, protecting their brand value and bottom line. Attributing the entities behind sock puppet accounts and information operations helps social media platforms with transparency to better inform their audiences and hold individuals accountable. Sock puppet accounts adopt false online identities, typically created by a person or group, to promote specific opinions or views, which helps disassociate the view from the true source.



## Background

In 2021, Nisos researchers uncovered a prolific [disinformation campaign](#) in which a Venezuelan marketing specialist used an influential sock puppet to drive social media narratives supporting then-Colombian presidential candidate and former M-19 revolutionary member Gustavo Petro. The influential Twitter account, @ChalecosAmarill, promoted political candidates sympathetic to Caracas throughout Latin America and engaged in disinformation operations from December 2018 through March 2022. Nisos found indicators that a Venezuela-based marketing expert, Rafael Nunez, was the likely person behind @ChalecosAmarill. Nunez’s listed employer, Comunicacion Digital VE, is led by former employees from Venezuela’s Ministry of Communications and Information (MINCI) who remain well-connected to Venezuelan government officials.



**Graphic 1: An illustration of the previously identified social network that attempted to influence Colombia’s presidential elections.**

## Details

### AI-Generated Journalists

In February 2023, House of News Espanol—an English-language media entity with Spanish subtitles—surfaced on multiple social media platforms to promote the perception of a thriving Venezuelan economy, entertainment and tourism in Venezuela, and provide geopolitical commentary on El Salvador’s crackdown on domestic organized criminal organizations. Within the same week, media organizations reported on the channel and its use of synthetic journalists, which were created using artificial intelligence (AI).<sup>1</sup> House of News Espanol had a short-lived presence on social media,

<sup>1</sup>[https://english.elpais\[.\]com/international/2023-02-22/theyre-not-tv-anchors-theyre-avatars-how-venezuela-is-using-ai-generated-propaganda.html](https://english.elpais[.]com/international/2023-02-22/theyre-not-tv-anchors-theyre-avatars-how-venezuela-is-using-ai-generated-propaganda.html)



and although this effort to publicize Venezuelan propaganda did not generate significant influence, it revealed the potential of using AI in the information environment as well as its potential to inspire others to engage in similar activities.

- In contrast, in April 2023, Kuwait’s English-language news agency, Kuwait Times, publicized its official use of an AI-generated journalist named Fedha to present news bulletins.<sup>2</sup> Similar to House of News Espanol, the reporting occurred in English while the video displayed native language subtitles. Unlike House of News Espanol, however, Kuwait Times was transparent with Fedha’s purpose and affiliation. House of News Espanol listed no public affiliation with an official media outlet, despite reports of its content being reshared by Venezuelan state news organization VTV.<sup>3</sup> The Venezuelan government denied a relationship exists between the two entities.

## Unmasking House of News Espanol

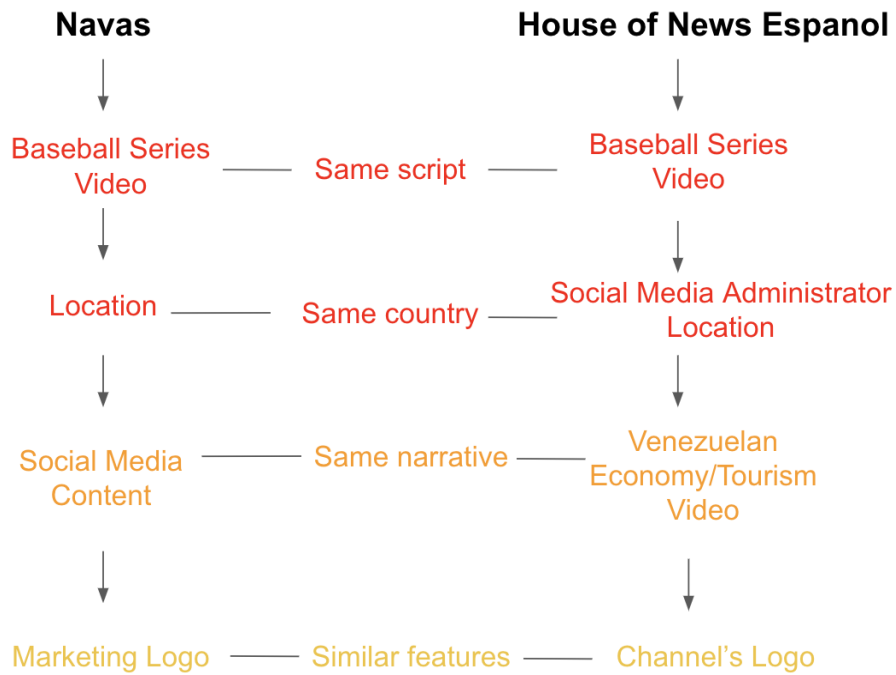


**Graphic 2: Snapshot from El Pais showing AI-generated journalists that appeared in House of News Espanol.**

Nisos identified Venezuela-based independent “creative director” Pablo Jose Navas—whose personal and professional activities and publications share similarities to those found on House of News Espanol’s social media accounts—as the likely creator of House of News Espanol. The following graphic highlights several key indicators of Navas’ close association with House of News Espanol:

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.kuwaittimes\[.\]com/fedha-kuwait-news-ai-news-presenter-represents-everyone/](https://www.kuwaittimes[.]com/fedha-kuwait-news-ai-news-presenter-represents-everyone/)

<sup>3</sup> [https://english.elpais\[.\]com/international/2023-02-22/theyre-not-tv-anchors-theyre-avatars-how-venezuela-is-using-ai-generated-propaganda.html](https://english.elpais[.]com/international/2023-02-22/theyre-not-tv-anchors-theyre-avatars-how-venezuela-is-using-ai-generated-propaganda.html)



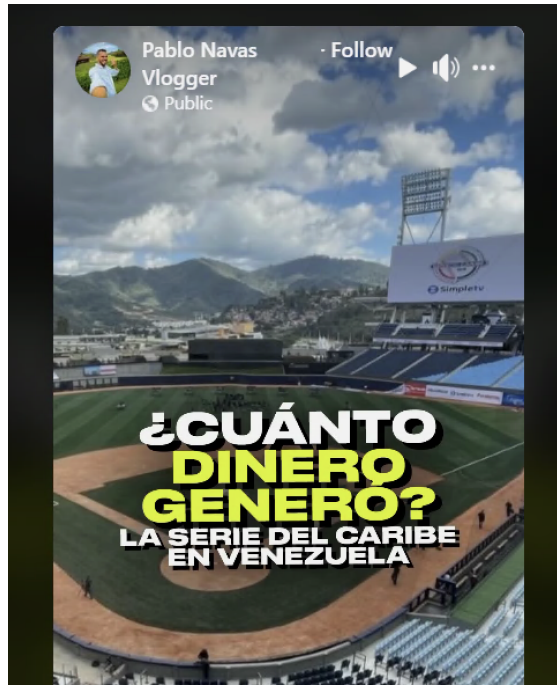
**Graphic 3: Sample of observations that contributed to the unmasking of House of News Espanol, listed from strongest to weakest.**



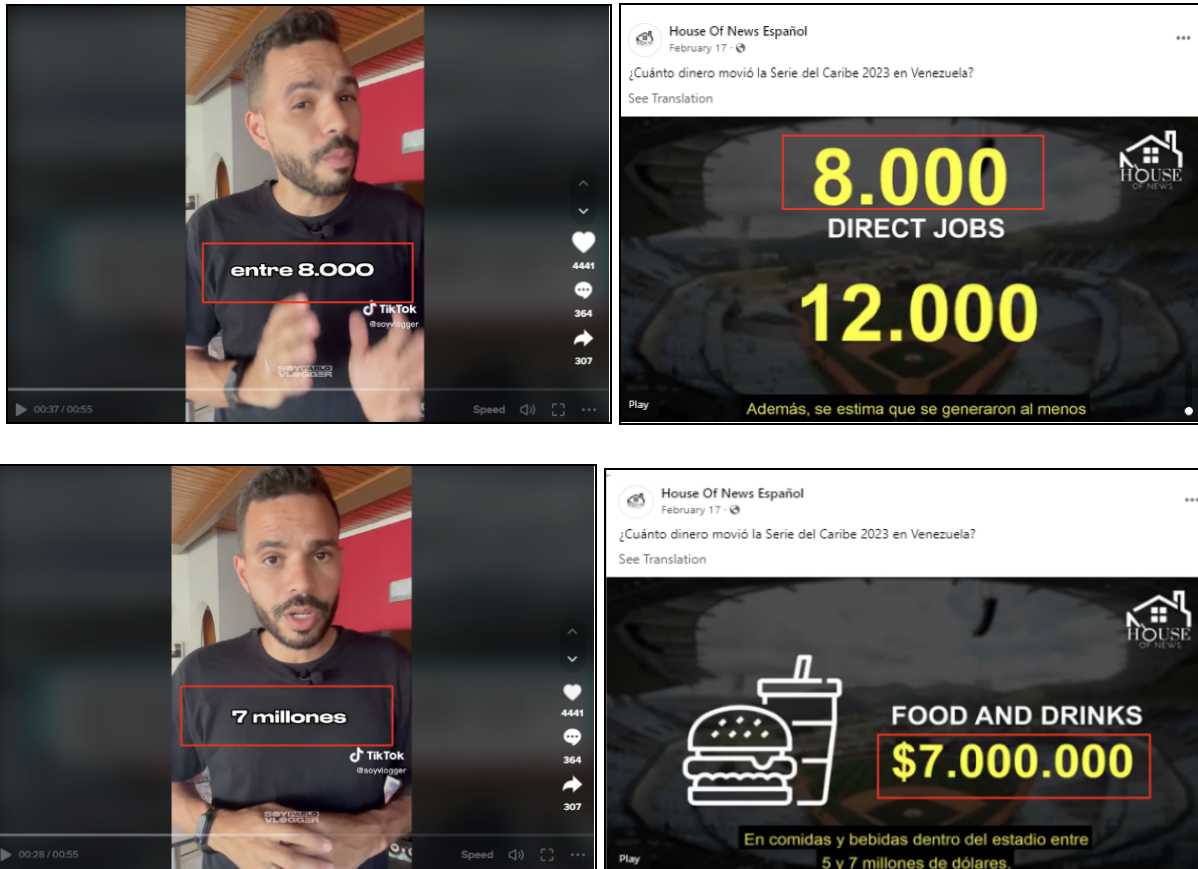
**Graphic 4: Photo of Pablo Navas.**

## Script and Other Social Media Content

Navas published a video in February 2023 across various social media platforms about Venezuela’s financial windfall from hosting part of a popular international baseball tournament. The video included the same verbiage found in one of the videos uploaded to House of News Espanol’s social media account several days later.



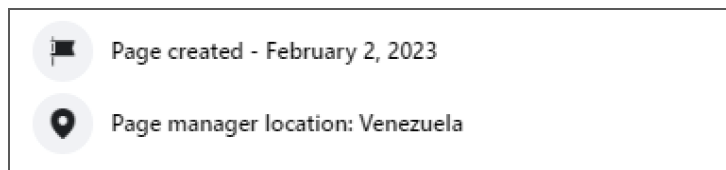
**Graphics 5 & 6:** (Above) Snapshot of a video uploaded by Navas that included the same script and similar video footage used by the House of News Espanol's video covering the same topic (below).



**Graphics 7 - 10: (Left) Snapshot from Navas’ video about the baseball series highlighting sales statistics from the event. (Right) House of News Espanol provided the same sales statistics from the event.**

## Location

Navas claims to reside in Venezuela, where the House of News Espanol’s social media page is administered. Further, in a video from February 2023, Navas discussed the use of AI to create characters for a digital series, specifically a dinosaur-themed show. Similarly, House of News Espanol used AI-generated characters (journalists) for its news coverage. Navas’ perspective on AI in video production indicated he sees it as a benefit.







**Graphics 13 & 14: (Top) House of News Espanol’s Page Transparency showing its operator’s location. (Below) Navas’ LinkedIn profile.**

## Logo Similarities

Some of Navas’ logos and other advertisement-related graphics bear striking resemblances to those used by House of News Espanol. For example, a logo he reportedly created for a US-based real estate agent shared similar features as the House of News Espanol logo. Specifically, both logos use negative space to create shapes and letters (MS for ‘Monica Sanchez,’ and the shape to create the chimney of the house) as well as the stroke for the fonts being mixed between a thin and wide style. Also, using the magnifying glass as part of the typography in House of News Espanol’s logo is similar to using the house window inside of the MS logo.



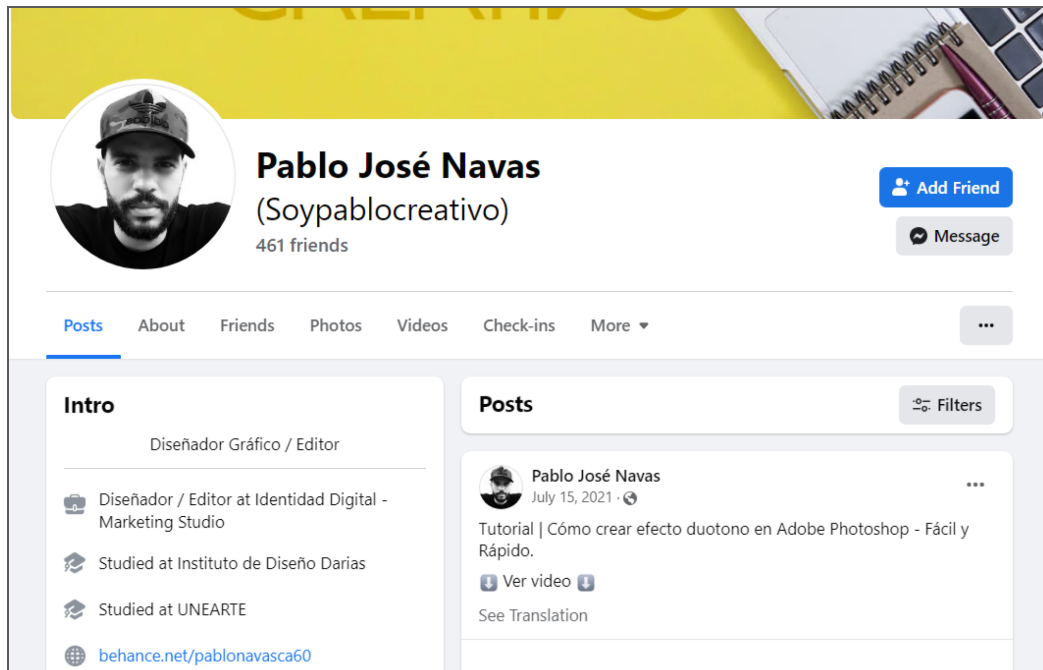
**Graphics 15 & 16: (Left) Logo reportedly created for Navas’ customer. (Right) Logo for House of News Espanol.**

## Identidad Digital, Navas’ Listed Employer

Navas’ social media profile listed Venezuela-based company Identidad Digital as his employer; a



review of the company’s social media page corroborates the affiliation, including one post from September 2021 that showed Navas alongside his wife in its profile picture.



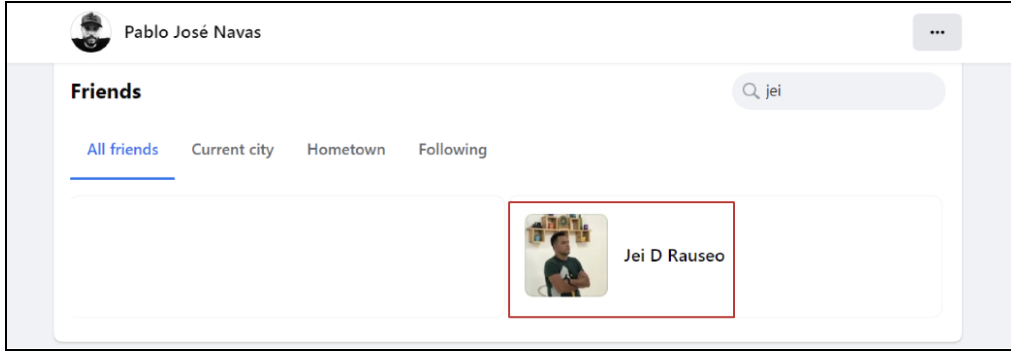
**Graphic 17: Navas’ social media account listed Identidad Digital as his employer.**

According to corporate data, Identidad Digital participated in at least three government contracts with Venezuela’s state-linked mining firm, Corporación Venezolana de Guayana, as of 2019. In March 2019, the US Department of the Treasury sanctioned its subsidiary, Minerven, for illicit gold mining and financial schemes to fund Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro’s government.<sup>4</sup>

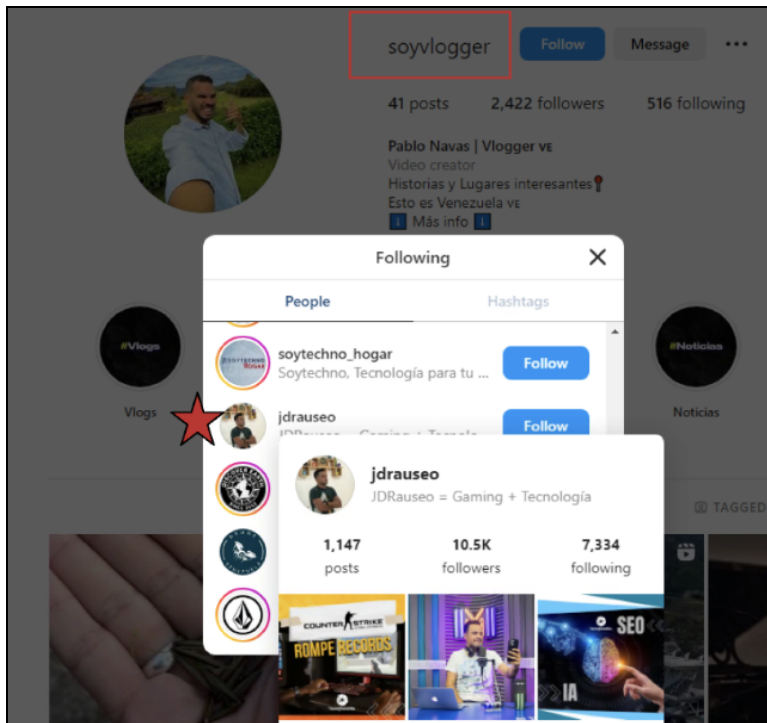
## Navas’ Ties to Business Network Advancing Venezuelan Government Interests

Navas manages several active marketing-focused social media profiles, while others appear personal and inactive. Navas’ personal social media profiles showed a mutual following with Comunicacion Digital VE’s CEO, Jeisson Rauseo. Rauseo is the former Director of Social Media at the Ministry of Communications and Information (MINCI). Nisos previously linked one of Comunicacion Digital VE’s employees to an information operation that advanced Venezuelan government interests and attempted to interfere with elections in Colombia. Identidad Digital's social media page appeared as “Identidad Digital VE” in 2020. The pages’ names shared similar branding characteristics as Comunicacion Digital VE.

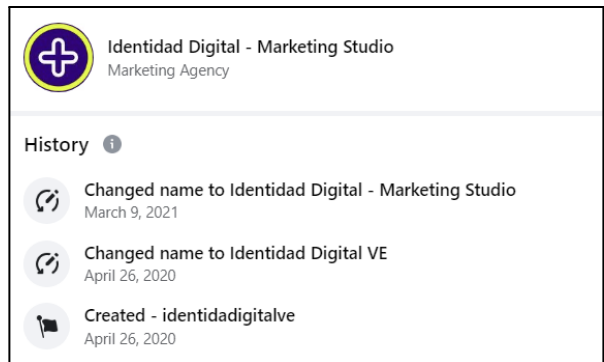
<sup>4</sup> <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm631>



Graphic 18: Snapshot showing a mutual following between Rauseo (Jei D Rauseo - right) and Navas on social media.



Graphic 19: Snapshot of Navas' social media followers from another platform - Rauseo appeared in the list.



Graphics 20 & 21: (Left) Identidad Digital's social media page's history shows the previous name as "Identidad Digital VE." (Right) Rauseo's company, Comunicacion Digital VE's social media page name ending with "Digital VE."