

Reclaiming the Tourist Gaze: Indigenous Self-Representation Among Peruvian Creators and Its Resonance with Southeast Asia¹

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Abstract

This study examines how Indigenous Peruvian creators reclaim the tourist gaze through their self-representation on TikTok and Instagram. It builds on the tourist gaze (Urry & Larsen, 2011), treats the digital audience as an agent that can reproduce or contest it (Sarrica et al., 2021; Jalli, 2025), and reads creators' control over language, aesthetics, and political voice as visual sovereignty (Raheja, 2010; Meighan, 2021). The corpus is eight videos posted between January 2025 and February 2026, two from each of four creators chosen through purposive sampling: Alessandra Yupanqui and Soledad Secca (Solischa) in the Andes, and Gimena Cariajano and Euner Kajekui in the Amazon. Grounded in digital ethnography, the analysis combines Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis with Qualitative Content Analysis. Across

¹APA7th Citation: Paima, E. C. L. (2026). Reclaiming the tourist gaze: Indigenous self-representation among Peruvian creators and its resonance with Southeast Asia. In *Proceedings of the ICA Regional Hub Thailand 2026: Official Concurrent Event of the 76th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (ICA)* (pp. 66–94). Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University.

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The author is a recipient of the Kemitraan Negara Berkembang (KNB) Scholarship awarded by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia. The author reports no conflict of interest.

the corpus the creators rework traditional cultural markers through contemporary digital codes, treat Indigenous languages as a claim over the terms of their representation, and voice critique from within their own communities. These findings are read alongside emerging work on Indigenous creators in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The resonance is theoretical rather than empirical, and it points to a wider contestation of the tourist gaze across the Global South.

Keywords: tourist gaze, visual sovereignty, Indigenous self-representation, Indigenous content creators, Global South.

Digital platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have become central spaces where Indigenous communities across the Global South produce, circulate, and negotiate representations about themselves. Recent studies illustrate the scope of this shift. Barnes (2024), looking at how Indigenous artists work with TikTok, treats the platform as a relational tool that extends ancestral cultural practices into digital space. The work of Manesah (2025) takes a different angle, focusing on identity negotiation among Southeast Asian youth and how they engage local heritage on the same platform. A third contribution comes from Burgaleta Pérez and Lalangui-Campoverde (2025), who analyzed 1,580 videos from Latin American Indigenous tiktokers with more than a million followers each. Their findings show that only 1.11% of the videos engaged with social issues, while most narratives ended up absorbed by the entertainment logic of the platform. Read together, these studies suggest that digital platforms operate at once as spaces of visibility and as sites of cultural tension for Indigenous creators.

In the Peruvian case, the digital circulation of Indigenous representations does not happen in a vacuum. It takes place within a tourism system that has long stabilized an idealized image of Andean and Amazonian subjects. Urry and Larsen (2011) describe how the

tourist gaze used to circulate mainly through brochures, postcards, and travel guides. Today it travels through user-generated content, and the boundary between the official tourism industry and the casual digital tourist has effectively dissolved (Sarrica et al., 2021). The shift in medium has not changed the underlying logic. Certain cultural traits are still treated as the authentic ones, and the Indigenous subject still shows up in ornamental positions.

Less attention has been paid to the specific case of Indigenous Peruvian creators in this digital landscape. Existing work on Latin American Indigenous creators tends to move in one of two directions. One body of work approaches the topic on the regional scale, looking at content patterns across many creators at once (Burgaleta Pérez & Lalangui-Campoverde, 2025). Another, narrower in geographic focus, deals with Indigenous Amazonian leaders outside Peru, in Colombia, Ecuador, and Brazil (Pedro-Carañana et al., 2024). A systematic analysis of contemporary Indigenous Peruvian creators as producers of digital discourse facing the tourist gaze has not yet been carried out, nor has its articulation with the emerging literature on Indigenous creators in the Global South, particularly Southeast Asia.

The present study addresses this gap through the analysis of eight videos published between January 2025 and February 2026 by four Indigenous Peruvian creators on TikTok and Instagram: Alessandra Yupanqui (Andean, with Ayacucho and Huancavelica ancestry, based in a high-Andean community two hours from Cusco), Soledad Secca known as Solischa (Quechua, Occopata peasant community in the district of Santiago, Cusco, anthropology student at the Universidad Nacional San Antonio Abad del Cusco), Gimena Cariajano (Achuar, originally from Trompeteros in northern Loreto, based in Iquitos, where she works on cultural production at the Instituto Chaikuni and co-organizes the Muyuna film festival), and Euner Kajekui (Awajún, from the province of Condorcanqui in Amazonas, based in

Iquitos, social and LGBTQ+ activist and student of International Business and Tourism at the Universidad Nacional de la Amazonía Peruana).

Two research questions guide the analysis:

RQ1: How do Indigenous Peruvian content creators reclaim the tourist gaze through their self-representation practices?

RQ2: How does this resonate with Indigenous creator practices documented in Southeast Asia?

Theoretical Framework

The literature review unfolds around three axes that articulate the conceptual apparatus of the study. The first axis examines the tourist gaze as a digitalized and decentralized visual system. The second engages with the digital audience as an agent that reproduces or challenges exoticizing frames. The third gathers critical approaches to visual sovereignty and Indigenous modernity that the present study adapts to the Peruvian context. These same axes organize the dialogue with Southeast Asian scholarship developed in the Discussion, where it is read as a comparative horizon for the Peruvian findings.

The Tourist Gaze and Its Digitalization

The concept of the tourist gaze, formulated by Urry and Larsen (2011), describes tourism as a visual system that organizes the visitor's gaze through prior representations circulating in brochures, guides, and, in their contemporary version, digital images. The tourist gaze is not neutral. It selects, hierarchizes, and stabilizes certain traits as authentic while making invisible others that contradict the idealized image of the destination. Herrera (2013) traces how the national tourism system in Peru has consolidated an idealized image of the Andean peasant, reproducing a visual canon inherited from the colonial imaginary in

which the perceived authenticity of the landscape and of Indigenous peoples becomes part of their economic value. Digitalization extends this dynamic by turning every platform user into a potential producer of touristic images.

The Audience as Agent of the Tourist Gaze

The tourist gaze does not operate only from institutional producers. Recent work on digital representations of the Global South has shown that audiences also discipline the terms under which the Indigenous becomes representable. The role of audiences becomes visible in empirical work on tourism reviews. Sarrica et al. (2021) read through 8,126 TripAdvisor reviews of slum, township, and favela tourism destinations and found a consistent pattern: social media users were not just documenting destinations, they were reshaping them to suit their self-image as travelers. A place initially seen as stigmatized was reframed as a meaningful experience, but the reframing kept intact the exoticizing terms that had originally shaped how the place was perceived.

The audience therefore works in two directions at once. It disciplines, since in Southeast Asia hate speech aimed at gender, race, religion, and sexuality narrows what creators can say (Jalli, 2025), and it is also answered, since the three Amazonian leaders studied by Pedro-Carañana et al. (2024) use their Instagram accounts to make injustices visible and to propose alternatives on terms set by their own communities, a practice these authors call communicative justice. This double movement, audience pressure met by Indigenous response, is the terrain on which the present study reads the comment sections of its corpus, where creators often anticipate and pre-empt the objections their viewers raise.

Visual Sovereignty and Indigenous Modernity

The concept of visual sovereignty, developed by Raheja (2010), offers a frame for examining the practices through which Indigenous peoples reclaim control over the terms of

their representation. Visual sovereignty is not equivalent to Indigenous presence on screen; it implies authority over the decisions that structure that presence. The concept was developed in the context of North American Indigenous cinema, and the present study adapts it to the Peruvian digital context, operationalizing it along three observable dimensions: control over the language of the content, over the visual aesthetic, and over the political terms of the discourse.

The move from feature-length Indigenous cinema to short-form social video changes the scale but not the logic of the concept. Where Raheja examines authorship across a film and its circulation in festival and broadcast circuits, the present study locates the same authority in the compressed decisions of a single post: which language opens the video, which visual markers are placed on screen and how they are framed, and which claims the creator chooses to voice. The creator is at once director, performer, and distributor, and visual sovereignty is read here as the control exercised across those overlapping roles within the affordances of TikTok and Instagram.

Language adds another layer to the question. Meighan (2021) frames the use of Indigenous languages on digital platforms as part of a broader project of decolonizing the digital landscape, one where content that used to be framed in the dominant language gives way to Indigenous speakers asserting the right to speak in their own. Publishing in a native tongue is therefore not a cosmetic choice: it decides who the primary audience will be and reverses the usual expectation that Indigenous-language speakers accommodate Spanish.

Reclaiming representation is not a single gesture but a matter of degree. Creators move along a range that runs from open resistance, which confronts dominant representations directly, through negotiation, which works within accessible or marketable registers while redirecting their terms (Hayami, 2006), to accommodation, where the pull of platform and

audience expectations is partly conceded. Visual sovereignty is therefore better read as a position taken within this range than as a fixed property of a video.

What this authored representation asserts is a form of Indigenous modernity: the contemporary and contextually shaped forms of Indigenous identity that surface in communicative practice. It draws on García Canclini's (1989) reading of Latin American modernization as hybridization rather than substitution, where Indigenous and popular cultures coexist with mass media and transform one another instead of the modern simply displacing the traditional, and on his notion of multitemporal heterogeneity, in which pre-Columbian, colonial, and contemporary references hold together within a single cultural production. Read this way, cultural productions that combine traditional markers with contemporary codes are not contradictions between tradition and modernity but sites where the two meet, a dynamic the discussion traces beyond Latin America into Southeast Asia.

Methodology

Research Design and Paradigm

The study adopts a qualitative interpretive design of a descriptive character, structured around the principles of digital ethnography (Pink et al., 2016). The aim is not to measure the frequency of digital interactions but to understand the meanings that Indigenous Peruvian creators construct about their identity when that identity circulates on commercial platforms. From this standpoint, Indigenous modernity is not a fixed category but a discursive practice that subjects negotiate in front of their audiences, and digital platforms are treated as spaces where culture is actively produced, not as mere channels of distribution.

Sampling Strategy and Corpus Construction

The study focuses on TikTok and Instagram. Indigenous creators of the Global South keep their most consistent presence there, and the algorithms behind short-form video and image feeds decide which of their representations reach an audience (Barnes, 2024; Manesah, 2025).

The research relies on purposive sampling as defined by Patton (2015), oriented toward the informational richness of the cases rather than toward statistical representativeness. The corpus brings together four Peruvian creators with active presence on TikTok and Instagram and audiences ranging between 22 thousand and 734 thousand followers, who meet two simultaneous criteria: they publicly assume and defend an identity tied to Peruvian Indigenous heritage, and they publish sustained content addressing contemporary social issues. The first criterion excludes external observers and creators who celebrate Peruvian culture without positioning themselves from an Indigenous identity, while the second filters out cases whose production is ornamental or strictly festive.

Video Selection and Hierarchical Criteria

For each creator, two videos were selected, one from TikTok and one from Instagram, totaling eight units of analysis. The selection followed two hierarchical criteria. The principal criterion was thematic density in relation to the research questions, understood as the simultaneous presence of discursive articulations about visual sovereignty, Indigenous modernity, or political use of the native language. The secondary criterion was whether the video appeared as pinned on the creator's profile, which is treated here as a deliberate act of self-curation.

A pinned video that coincided with high thematic density was included. When the available pinned videos lacked substantive discursive elaboration, or when the creator had no pinned video on the corresponding platform, the selection was guided entirely by thematic

density. The corpus covers publications dated between January 2025 and February 2026. All videos were retrieved and verified during data collection between May and June 2026.

Table 1

Summary of the Eight Analyzed Videos

ID	Creator (people, region)	Platform	Date	Duration	Discursive pattern	Illustrative excerpt (creator)
V1	Alessandra Yupanqui (Andean)	TikTok	Jan 23, 2025	2:33	Resignification	"¿Por qué tenemos ojos 'chinitos' quienes tenemos rasgos indígenas?" [Why do those of us with Indigenous features have 'slanted' eyes?]
V2	Alessandra Yupanqui (Andean)	Instagram	Sep 5, 2025	2:18	Resignification; Political agency	"A mamá solo le faltaba conquistar una cancha, y hoy conquistó la del fútbol" [Mom only had a football pitch left to conquer, and today she conquered it]
V3	Soledad Secca "Solischa" (Quechua)	Instagram	Nov 5, 2025	2:48	Language as sovereignty; Internal critique	"Quyay quyaymi kashani" [I am very sad]; "Sonqoymi llanllarishan" [my heart is pounding]; "Ancha llakisqan tarikuni" [I am very worried]
V4	Soledad Secca "Solischa" (Quechua)	TikTok	Dec 27, 2025	3:08	Language as sovereignty; Internal critique	"Khunanqa willamuway" [tell me now]; "Llaqtaykipi, Aylluykipi?" [in your village, in your community]

Table 1

Summary of the Eight Analyzed Videos (Contd.)

ID	Creator (people, region)	Platform	Date	Duration	Discursive pattern	Illustrative excerpt (creator)
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V5	Gimena Cariajano (Achuar)	TikTok	Apr 19, 2025	2:21	Resignification	"Ya sé que me vas a preguntar por qué se masca... uno, sale más rico; dos, hay una historia cultural detrás" [I know you'll ask why it is chewed... one, it tastes better; two, there is a cultural history behind it]
V6	Gimena Cariajano (Achuar)	Instagram	Feb 19, 2026	2:47	Internal critique and political agency	"La tradición no se pierde por cuidarla, se fortalece cuando evoluciona" [Tradition is not lost by taking care of it, it grows stronger when it evolves]
V7	Euner Kajekui (Awajún)	Instagram	Dec 21, 2025	2:42	Language as sovereignty	"Hoy nos levantamos porque tenemos que ir al trabajo comunal" [Today we got up because we have to go to communal work]
V8	Euner Kajekui (Awajún)	TikTok	May 24, 2025	0:50	Internal critique and political agency; Resignification	"Los pueblos indígenas necesitamos leyes, pero que creen esas leyes con presencia de nosotros, con nuestras voces" [We Indigenous peoples need laws, but laws created with our presence, with our voices]

Note. Discursive patterns correspond to the three findings reported in the analysis: Resignification of cultural markers (Finding 1), Language as sovereignty (Finding 2), and Internal critique and political agency (Finding 3). Each video activates at least two patterns; the primary pattern is listed first.

Procedure of Analysis

The analytical framework combines two complementary methods within the study's interpretive, digital-ethnographic design. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (Machin & Mayr, 2025) examines verbal, visual, and sonic resources at the same time, while Qualitative Content Analysis provides the systematic coding procedure. The coding frame combined a concept-driven and a data-driven strategy (Schreier, 2012, pp. 89–90): three main categories were defined from the theoretical framework, namely contestation of the tourist gaze, visual

and linguistic sovereignty, and articulation of Indigenous modernity, and subcategories emerged from iterative reading of the corpus.

Within the category of visual and linguistic sovereignty, the three dimensions were coded through observable cues. Control over language was coded from the language spoken and captioned and from the presence or absence of self-translation. Control over the visual aesthetic was coded from whether self-curated markers, such as dress and body paint, were presented on the creator's own terms rather than as ethnographic display. Control over the political terms of the discourse was coded from claims about territory, rights, gender, sexuality, or the environment, and from internal critique directed at the creator's own community. Most videos activated more than one dimension, and these overlaps were retained rather than forced into a single category.

The analysis of the videos followed three steps. The first step was multimodal transcription of each video, covering verbal dialogue, descriptions of visual elements such as clothing, setting, framing and gestures, the use of music or sound, captions, and hashtags. The second step was coding according to the framework already described, refined until the analytical frame stabilized. The third step was intra-corpus comparison, aimed at identifying converging patterns and significant divergences between Andean and Amazonian creators. The analysis of audience reception is described separately below.

Reception Analysis

The reading of the comment sections followed the same qualitative content-analysis logic applied to the videos. For each video, the analysis first characterized the overall sentiment of the thread and the dominant forms of engagement and then grouped recurring reactions into thematic clusters through iterative reading. Comment volume varied widely across the corpus, from about 30 comments on the least commented video to more than

17,000 on the most commented one. For threads with few comments the full set was read, while for high-volume threads the reading proceeded from the most-engaged comments until no new thematic clusters emerged.

Comments reproduced verbatim in the findings were selected as representative of these clusters rather than for their individual force, and the relative number of likes on a comment was used as a secondary signal of which reactions were most visible within a thread, not as a quantitative measure of audience opinion. The comment sections were read as public traces of reception that show whether audiences reproduce or contest the exoticizing gaze, in line with the understanding of the digital audience as an agent (Sarrica et al., 2021), and they are reported analytically rather than as isolated anecdotes. Each thread was captured at a single point during data collection. The reception described here therefore reflects the state of the conversation at that moment, and it does not track how that conversation may have continued to unfold.

Language and Translation

The corpus is multilingual. Most of the material is in Spanish, while three videos contain Quechua and one is narrated in Awajún. For the Quechua segments, the creators provide on-screen Spanish subtitles, which were taken as the creators' own glosses and used as the basis for the readings reported here, with the original Quechua preserved. In the video narrated in Awajún, the creator does not subtitle the speech, and this absence of translation is treated as part of the phenomenon under study rather than as a gap to fill, so only the brief Spanish hook is rendered and the Awajún narration is read for its communicative function. All quotations were translated into English for this paper, with the original preserved alongside an English gloss, and Indigenous-language terms appear in the spellings the creators themselves use.

Trustworthiness

As a single-author study, coding reliability was addressed through trustworthiness rather than through agreement between coders. Beyond the iterative refinement of the coding frame described above, the full multimodal transcriptions together with the original-language material were retained so that each coding decision remains traceable. The engagement figures reported are current as of June 22, 2026, the point at which the corpus was compiled. The interpretive standpoint of a single analyst is taken up in the positionality statement.

Positionality

This study was carried out by a Peruvian researcher of Andean Indigenous descent, working from Southeast Asia. That location made the resonance with the region a situated vantage rather than an abstract comparison, and it reflects an interest in dialogue and cooperation among Global South Indigenous movements that increasingly share platforms and forums. The researcher does not speak Quechua or Awajún and approached this material through the creators' own Spanish translations. Full fluency was not required, given that the analysis addresses the function of using a native language rather than its literal semantics, though this remains a boundary of the reading. A researcher who analyzes Indigenous self-representation also risks reproducing the interpretive authority that the study questions, and this was addressed by foregrounding the creators' own words and self-translations, by reporting reception analytically rather than anecdotally, and by keeping interpretive claims within what the material supports.

Ethical Considerations

The research analyzes public digital content rather than human participants in an interview or experimental sense, so formal ethical board approval was not required. The study

analyzes content published on verified or public accounts whose creators openly assume public figure identities and whose production is oriented toward mass circulation.

Privacy expectations regarding this material are therefore reduced (Townsend & Wallace, 2016). No information was extracted from private accounts, and no underage creators were contacted. Comments cited verbatim in the findings preserve the public username as it appears on the platform, since these constitute public-domain content tied to voluntary public participation.

Findings

The eight videos analyzed reveal three discursive patterns that articulate the practice of Indigenous Peruvian creators as a response to the digitalized tourist gaze that circulates over Andean and Amazonian peoples. The patterns are not mutually exclusive: each video activates at least two of them simultaneously, and the difference between creators shows up in the emphasis and the modalities of articulation.

Finding 1. Resignification of Traditional Cultural Markers Through Contemporary Digital Codes

The first pattern shows that the creators do not present traditional cultural markers as folkloric objects offered up for external contemplation. They reactivate those markers with contemporary digital codes that break the ornamental function the tourist gaze assigns to them.

The pinned video by Alessandra Yupanqui on TikTok (Yupanqui, 2025a) illustrates this operation. The creator centers her video on a feature that is widely commented on in everyday Peruvian discourse: the eye shape of many Andean people, often described in informal speech as "ojos chinitos." In the tourist imaginary, this feature operates as an

exoticizing marker (Herrera, 2013). What Yupanqui does is reframe it. She draws on the National Geographic Genographic Project to present this same feature as scientific evidence of human migration and evolutionary adaptation across millennia.

The reception confirms the operation. Many comments reframe their identity through the video: viewers debate whether Andean features imply Asian ancestry and recognize traits such as straight hair as part of a shared genetic history. Teachers of history report using the video in their classrooms, which shows the content circulating as educational infrastructure rather than as exotic display.

The short film *Warmi Pukllay*, published by Yupanqui on Instagram (Yupanqui, 2025b), operates with the same logic but in a different narrative register. Andean women wearing polleras play an official football match while a professional commentator broadcasts the event in Quechua. The pollera, a marker that the Peruvian tourism system consolidated as part of the idealized image of the Andean peasant, here appears in athletic, competitive motion.

The closing details of the video, a polaroid photograph of the footballer mother pinned to the wall of her daughter's room next to posters of Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Neymar, places the Andean athlete in the same symbolic space as the global figures of men's football. What the tourist frame fixes as a passive subject reappears here repositioned as an active and contemporary one. In the video, Andean women stop being objects of someone else's representation and become the ones producing their own gaze (Jenkins, 2024). The audience receives it as an emotional affirmation rather than as folklore, with viewers responding that the piece moved them to tears.

The pinned video by Gimena Cariajano on TikTok, about the *pijuayo masato* (Cariajano, 2025), works through discomfort rather than celebration. The creator shows the full process of traditional fermentation, including the chewing stage that her mostly urban

audience will process as a hygienic taboo. She does not soften the practice to make it acceptable; instead, she argues preemptively for its cultural and technical logic.

The comment section confirms the friction she anticipates: a large share of viewers rejects the practice on hygiene grounds, with reactions such as "Is this india?" or remarks about tooth decay, while other users defend the fermentation from within, noting that saliva is the best ferment for pijuayo masato as their relatives have always known. Cariajano's approach inverts the move Sarrica et al. (2021) identified in digital reviews of Global South destinations: instead of softening a stigmatized image while leaving its exoticizing terms intact, she keeps the discomfort in view and defends the practice on its own terms.

Finding 2. Indigenous Languages as a Political Act of Sovereignty Over the Terms of Representation

This pattern shows that the use of Indigenous languages, in this corpus Quechua and Awajún, operates as a structuring element of the content rather than as cultural ornamentation. The tourist gaze reduces native languages to an exotic marker for external audiences, serving the experience of otherness that visitors are looking for (Urry & Larsen, 2011). The creators of the corpus invert this logic: the native language defines who counts as the primary audience and the terms on which that audience can access the representation. This coincides with what Meighan (2021) describes as decolonizing the digital landscape through Indigenous language use. The corpus documents two distinct modalities of this inversion.

The first modality is active translation as an intercultural bridge, exemplified by Solischa. Her Instagram video about mental health (Secca, 2025a) introduces Quechua expressions such as *Quyay quyaymi kashani* (I am very sad), *Sonqoymi llanllarishan* (my heart is pounding), and *Ancha llakisqan tarikuni* (I am very worried), which she herself translates into Spanish inside the video. Translation here does not imply conceptual

equivalence. The creator makes explicit that these expressions describe affective states that Western clinical language does not fully capture, and that psychological distress in her community is verbalized somatically.

When someone in her community goes through what clinical discourse would call depression or anxiety, the everyday expression is physical: the whole body hurts, the knees hurt, the emotion is not named in the abstract but anchored in the body. The comment section documents the reach of the video. One user connects a Bolivian Aymara expression with kabbalistic notions about the soul without spirit, which suggests that the audience is using the content to connect knowledge from different cultural traditions. The participation of public figures in the comments, including Pilar Sordo, a Chilean psychologist with wide media presence across Latin America, gives the operation external validation without dictating the terms of the conversation.

The video on Andean Christmas, published by Solischa on TikTok (Secca, 2025b), articulates the same logic through an interactive closing. The creator ends the piece by asking her audience, in Quechua, "Khunanqa willamuway" (tell me now) and "Llaqtaykipi, Aylluykipi?" (in your village, in your community), mixing Quechua and Spanish without flagging the transition as translation. The question does not need to be understood word for word to be answered: a Spanish-speaking audience can infer the sense from context, and this reverses the usual hierarchy in which the Quechua speaker is the one who must accommodate Spanish.

The second modality is immersion without translation as territorial affirmation of the language, exemplified by Euner Kajekui. His Instagram video about communal work (Kajekui, 2025a) runs for approximately two minutes and forty seconds. The first three seconds are in Spanish ("Today we got up because we have to go to communal work"), serving as a minimal hook for Spanish-speaking audiences. The rest of the video unfolds in

Awajún without subtitles. The decision not to translate sets who counts as the primary audience (his fellow Awajún) and who counts as the secondary audience (everyone else, who must accommodate the immersion).

The language that the tourist gaze reduces to ambient folkloric sound becomes here a threshold of access to the content. The external audience no longer consumes Awajún as exotic spectacle but enters the position of a learner, intrigued and wanting to understand. The reception documents this dynamic. Comments such as "I celebrate that you speak to us in your dialect, that should never be lost" and recurrent requests for subtitles do not constitute a rejection of the operation but rather a recognition that the creator holds authority over the linguistic decision.

Finding 3. Internal Critique and Political Agency in the Face of the Tourist Gaze

The third pattern shows that the creators' practice is not limited to contesting the external gaze. It also renegotiates traditions from within the community and articulates political positions that the tourism system tends to omit to preserve the idealized image of the Indigenous subject.

The video by Gimena Cariajano on the Amazonian carnival, published on Instagram (Cariajano, 2026), illustrates this operation. The creator identifies five problematic practices associated with the traditional celebration in her region: the deforestation of palm trees to assemble the humshas, the waste of water in a context of regional water crisis, the use of toxic chemical paints, the accidents and assaults normalized under the phrase "that's how carnival is", and the lack of consent in participation. She anticipates the predictable defensive arguments ("you are attacking the culture", "it has always been like this, what are you complaining about?") and refutes them one by one with environmental and civil rights reasoning.

Her central phrase, "tradition is not lost by taking care of it, it grows stronger when it evolves", articulates the conceptual position: cultural identity does not entail blindly defending everything tradition includes. The critique contests the logic of tourism extractivism, where the system extracts symbolic value from Indigenous festivities while leaving aside the internal frictions and material costs that the community itself recognizes.

The video by Solischa on Andean Christmas operates with the same pattern in an autobiographical register. The creator dismantles the hegemonic narrative of the "white Christmas" and shows the actual practices in her rural community. The critique becomes complete when she shares that she herself, as a child, slept out in the open in the doorways of Cusco waiting for charity gifts because her family came down from the highlands to sell ornamental plants for the urban nativity scenes.

This material dimension prevents reading the representation as romanticization of rural poverty. The creator's intervention in the comments, where she validates complaints about municipal mistreatment of plant vendors at Santurantikuy, shows that her practice operates as critical knowledge production about contemporary frictions.

Solischa's video on mental health reinforces this pattern through a different dimension. The creator introduces the category of climate and agricultural anxiety as a source of contemporary psychological suffering in Andean communities. This practice contests the touristic frame that represents the Andean subject as timeless and in harmony with nature (Urry & Larsen, 2011): the creator documents that the relationship with climate generates concrete material anxiety because climate determines whether there will be harvest and food. What the tourist imaginary stylizes as ecological harmony reappears reframed as structural vulnerability before the climate crisis.

Euner Kajekui's TikTok video (Kajekui, 2025b) extends this pattern into territory that is rarely brought together in a piece. He speaks out against extractive industries on Awajún land, calls for Indigenous control over legislation that directly affects his people, and at the same time he comes out as LGBTQ+ in front of a public audience. The combination is what matters. Each of these positions already exceeds the ornamental role the tourist gaze assigns to the Amazonian Indigenous subject; together they dismantle it.

The tourist imaginary accepts a body in feathers and paint as long as it stays traditional and silent on politics and sexuality. Kajekui occupies that visual register, wearing the feather crown and facial paint, while voicing an anti-extractivist, pro-sovereignty, and openly queer discourse, refusing the separation between the aesthetic surface the gaze wants and the political subject he is. The reception registers this directly: comments move between explicit support for his sexual identity ("I support you", "Estamos contigo Euner") and endorsement of his political claim, with viewers agreeing that laws affecting Indigenous territories must be made with the communities' voices.

Although the three patterns run across the corpus, the creators do not occupy the same position within them, and the contrast falls along the range from negotiation to resistance, tracking in broad terms the Andean and Amazonian cases. The Andean videos lean toward negotiation, redirecting representation within accessible registers and translating across languages to keep a wider audience within reach. The Amazonian videos lean toward more direct assertion of territorial and political claims, and the refusal to translate in one of them marks the firmest stance against accommodation. Accommodation itself surfaces in the corpus less as a creator's choice than as a pull from the audience, as the reception analysis shows. These are tendencies in a small corpus rather than fixed regional traits, yet they indicate that a shared project is pursued through different arrangements with the platform and its publics.

Discussion

The findings from the Peruvian corpus open a broader question. The practice of contesting the tourist gaze that appears in these four creators echoes practices reported in other countries of the Global South. The relation is framed here as resonance rather than empirical comparison: the analysis reads the Peruvian findings alongside secondary literature on Southeast Asia, without original data from that region. The parallel does not imply equivalence, shared origin, or causal connection. The literature on Indigenous creators and communities in Southeast Asia offers three points of convergence through which this resonance can be read.

The choice of Southeast Asia as the interlocutor for this reading rests on an existing line of South-South articulation rather than on an abstract affinity. Organizations of the Peruvian Amazon and of Indonesia act together within transregional Indigenous platforms, among them the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities, consolidated in 2019, which brings the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin, to which Peru's AIDSESEP belongs, into common cause with the Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago in Indonesia (Global Alliance of Territorial Communities, n.d.). Reading Peruvian and Southeast Asian self-representation alongside one another therefore follows a connection these peoples already sustain, even when the present study reaches Southeast Asia through its scholarship and not through a corpus of its own.

First Convergence: Digital Platforms as Spaces for Reopening Representation

When Yupanqui shows Andean women playing football in polleras with Quechua commentary, or when Cariajano defends the masato with its traditional fermentation against the rejection of her urban audience, both creators reopen what counts as representable heritage

beyond the frame that the tourist gaze stabilizes. This practice has a direct echo in what Hayami (2006) documents among the Karen in Thailand in the face of state-led ecotourism. When the authorities of Doi Inthanon National Park imposed the terms under which the Karen had to display their culture to tourists, one community member, with the support of his neighbors, built a village museum that objectified Karen culture on their terms. Hayami calls this practice "talking back".

Hamid et al. (2025) show that for the Mah Meri community in Carey Island, Malaysia, social media participation operates alongside community-based social capital as a factor that shapes sustainable Indigenous tourism development. The Kui in northeast Thailand work in the same direction. Santikarn (2026) documents that Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and personal blogs operate in their hands as informal archives where the language and historical memory of the community circulate outside the state's authorized heritage narratives.

Hakim et al. (2025) and Hinton and Putra (2020) extend this pattern to language: the Limola in South Sulawesi and the Lampung, Miskitu, and Mayangna youth they study use social media to reclaim Indigenous languages that had lost ground, in the same way that Solischa and Kajekui make language the structuring decision of their content.

Second Convergence: Breaking the Traditional-Modern Binary

The tourist gaze operates by visually fixing the Indigenous subject in a traditional position, which is what allows the visitor to experience the trip as an encounter with cultural otherness (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Herrera (2013) traces this dynamic in the Peruvian case, where present-day Indigenous people are essentialized by being fixed in a mythologized national past, which sustains the idealized image the tourism system sells as a product. The creators in the corpus deactivate this operation by appearing modern without ceasing to be Indigenous. Solischa teaches Quechua while studying anthropology at an urban university.

Euner Kajekui appears with a feather crown and facial paint while articulating a queer and anti-extractivist discourse, and Cariajano frames this position when she insists that tradition grows stronger when it evolves. A comparable tension appears in Thailand's national tourism branding. Its Tourism Authority markets the country as one of Asia's friendliest LGBTQ+ destinations, with campaigns such as "Go Thai Be Free" (TravelAge West, 2024), yet Indigenous communities inside its borders still lack full political recognition (Santikarn, 2026). The inclusive face projected outward coexists with the exclusion of Indigenous political subjects, the same tension Kajekui exposes when he fills the ornamental register with the politics the gaze omits.

Young Mien generations in Chiang Rai work in the same register. Tongdhamachart and Alwi (2023) document how this group posts on Facebook and Instagram and runs YouTube channels to share migration history, traditional food, and festivals from their community. They keep speaking their language and claiming their identity even as daily life plays out in a dominant Thai setting.

Duile (2021) and Tamma and Duile (2020) document a parallel conceptual challenge among the Duri communities in South Sulawesi, where claims of indigeneity are asserted within contemporary economic and legal frameworks, contesting the binary that places Indigenous identity outside of modernity. When the creators show modern Indigeneity, the tourism system loses one of its pillars.

Third Convergence: Audience Pressure to Maintain Exoticization

The comments analyzed in the Peruvian corpus extend this point empirically. As documented in the findings, the masato video by Cariajano drew hygiene-based rejection and the genome video by Yupanqui had to preempt exoticizing readings. In both cases, audience

pressure operates as a direct attempt to discipline creators who reopen the terms of their representation.

The pattern shows up clearly in Southeast Asian research. Jalli (2025), in her analysis of young activists on TikTok across Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, examined 5,155 comments and found that 12.7% carried hate speech directed at the creators' gender, race, religion, or sexuality. The attacks were sharpest against young women and LGBTQ+ creators. This regional pattern of audience pressure against marginalized creators resonates with what the Peruvian corpus documents in the comments against Cariajano and Kajekui, and extends the convergence to the Philippines, where the practice of contesting representational frames remains to be studied empirically among Indigenous content creators.

Taken together, the Peruvian findings and the Southeast Asian work make clear that Indigenous creators defend their visual sovereignty on two fronts at once: the institutional tourism narrative produced by the tourism industry itself, and the audience that keeps reproducing that narrative through the comment section.

The Platform Condition

Across the three convergences, these practices unfold on platforms that are not neutral stages, but environments shaped by algorithmic curation, engagement metrics, and uneven moderation. The visibility that allows an Andean or Amazonian creator to reach a wide audience is produced under conditions they do not control: recommendation systems decide what circulates, and creators are pushed to work with that logic rather than against it (Barnes, 2024).

The same infrastructure that amplifies a video can deprioritize it, and content that addresses political or identity claims is exposed to inconsistent moderation and to targeted hostility, a pattern documented for activist and queer creators in Southeast Asia (Jalli, 2025). The entertainment-driven logic of these feeds also tends to absorb Indigenous content into

ornamental or comedic registers, which is the tendency that the creators studied here work against (Burgaleta Pérez & Lalangui-Campoverde, 2025). Reclaiming the gaze, then, takes place within a commercial architecture that conditions how far that reclaiming can travel.

Conclusion

The analysis of eight videos published by four Indigenous Peruvian creators on TikTok and Instagram shows that they are not passive objects of the tourist gaze that circulates over their communities. They are active producers who reopen the terms under which the Indigenous becomes representable. Three discursive patterns support this reading. The first is that the creators resignify traditional cultural markers through contemporary digital codes that break their ornamental function within the tourism system. The second is that they use Indigenous languages as a political act of sovereignty over the terms of representation, sometimes through active translation that preserves cognitive categories of their own, sometimes through immersion without translation that sets the Indigenous language as the threshold of access to the content. The third is that they articulate critique from within their communities, alongside political positions that the tourism system tends to leave out to preserve the idealized image of the Indigenous subject.

The three convergences traced in the discussion give conceptual shape to the resonance that the title of this study claims between the Peruvian and Southeast Asian contexts. Across both regions, Indigenous creators widen what counts as representable, make language a site of sovereignty, and face audience pressure that tries to keep them exotic. The contestation of the tourist gaze by these Peruvian creators reads less as an isolated case than as one expression of a broader Global South pattern with territorial variations.

The study's claims are bounded in three ways. The corpus is small by design, eight videos from four creators, a choice consistent with qualitative inquiry that favors interpretive depth over breadth, so the analysis describes these cases in depth rather than generalizing to Indigenous Peruvian creators as a whole. The resonance proposed here rests on secondary literature rather than a parallel corpus, and the two regions differ in their histories of indigeneity, state recognition, and platform penetration, which limits how far the parallel can be taken. The patterns reported hold for the analyzed material, while the wider propositions about a Global South pattern stand as directions for further comparative work.

Beyond its analytical contribution, the study carries practical implications. The strategies traced here, from carrying a native language into wide-reaching registers to occupying an ornamental frame to voice political claims, form a repertoire that other Indigenous creators facing similar representational pressures can study and adapt. For the tourism sector and its communication practices, the findings suggest a move away from producing images of Indigenous communities and toward making room for the representations these communities author themselves. The uneven moderation and precarious visibility documented above mark where platforms and their regulators could offer fairer treatment to Indigenous, activist, and queer creators.

The resonance with Southeast Asia adds a forward-looking implication: the transregional articulation noted earlier has so far centered on territory and climate, and the parallels traced here suggest that online self-representation could become another front of that exchange, turning scattered local struggles into a shared conversation about who controls Indigenous representation.

Three paths for future research stand out. One direction is to widen the corpus and look at intra-Peruvian variations across different peoples, regions, and platforms, addressing

also the structural angle that Lupien et al. (2024) underline: access to technology remains unequal between communities, and social media does not flatten the field the way the early enthusiasm about digital participation suggested. Another is to develop empirical work with parallel Southeast Asian corpora that would let researchers test the regional resonance this paper sketches. A third path moves into the field rather than into the platform: ethnographic research that gets closer to the subjective experience of the creators themselves can reach dimensions that the analysis of public content alone cannot.

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