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REVIEW

Social Media, Humanism, and Democracy: The Role of TikTok in the 2024 Presidential Campaign in Mexico

Redes sociales, humanismo y democracia: el papel de TikTok en la campaña presidencial de 2024 en México

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: this article will address the use of TikTok as a political communication tool in Jorge Álvarez Máynez's presidential campaign in the 2024 Mexican elections. In the context of apathy toward traditional politics and the exponential growth of social media, TikTok is emerging as one of the main platforms in the electoral battlefield, where more than competing for ideas, it's competing for the attention of young audiences. The research is based on contributions from digital political communication, emotional technopolitics, and algorithm theory. Authors explain how digital environments reconfigure the political map, privileging aesthetics, charisma and virality over programmatic argumentation.
Method: a qualitative content analysis was carried out on thirty videos officially published on Máynez's account, between March and May 2024. The speeches, performative elements, musical and humorous resources, as well as citizen interaction were studied, paying special attention to user reception and participation.
Results: the campaign was characterized by a strategic and intensive use of the platform, with visual and emotional narratives that generated high levels of interaction. In a poorly regulated electoral environment, Máynez achieved an unprecedented communication advantage, driven by algorithms that favored performative and emotional discourses, giving her disproportionate visibility compared to her opponents.
Conclusions: TikTok doesn't democratize but rather personalizes; it doesn't equalize but fragments; and far from strengthening democratic deliberation, it displaces it toward an attention market dominated by algorithmic logic.

Keywords: TikTok; Political Communication; Mexico 2024 elections; Algorithms; Emotional Technopolitics.

RESUMEN

Introducción: el texto abordará el uso de TikTok como herramienta de comunicación política en la campaña presidencial de Jorge Álvarez Máynez en las elecciones mexicanas de 2024. En un contexto de apatía hacia la política tradicional y crecimiento exponencial de las redes sociales, TikTok se erige en uno de los principales escenarios del campo de batalla electoral, donde más que competir por ideas se compite por la atención de las audiencias jóvenes. La investigación se sustenta en los aportes de la comunicación política digital, la tecnopolítica emocional y la teoría de los algoritmos. Autores explican cómo los entornos digitales reconfiguran el mapa político, privilegiando la estética, el carisma y la virilidad sobre la argumentación programática.
Método: se realizó un análisis de contenido cualitativo de treinta videos publicados de manera oficial en la cuenta de Máynez, entre marzo y mayo de 2024. Se estudiaron los discursos, elementos performativos, recursos musicales y humorísticos, así como la interacción ciudadana, poniendo especial atención a la recepción y participación de los usuarios.
Resultados: la campaña se caracterizó por un uso estratégico e intensivo de la plataforma, con narrativas visuales y emocionales que generaron altos niveles de interacción. En un entorno electoral poco regulado, Máynez logró una ventaja comunicacional inédita, impulsada por algoritmos que favorecieron discursos performativos y emocionales, otorgándole visibilidad desproporcionada frente a sus contrincantes.
Conclusiones: TikTok no democratiza, sino que personaliza, no iguala sino fragmenta, y lejos de fortalecer la deliberación democrática, la desplaza hacia un mercado de atención dominado por la lógica algorítmica.

Palabras clave: TikTok; Comunicación Política; Elecciones México 2024; Algoritmos; Tecnopolítica Emocional.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, the political communication ecosystem has undergone profound transformations resulting from the expansion of digital platforms. From the pioneering use of YouTube and Facebook in the 2006 and 2012 elections in Mexico, through the centrality of Twitter (now X) in public discussion during the 2018 elections, to the emergence of TikTok as a protagonist in 2024, Mexican politics has undergone a process of increasing digitization and mediatization of the public sphere. This process is not unique to Mexico: it is part of a global dynamic in which parties and candidates integrate digital platforms into their communication strategies, seeking to connect with increasingly fragmented and heterogeneous audiences.[1,2]

In the case of Mexico, the 2024 presidential elections marked a turning point in this process. TikTok, a social network conceived initially for youth entertainment through short, viral videos, took on an unexpected central role in the campaigns. Candidates from different parties—including Claudia Sheinbaum, Xóchitl Gálvez, and Jorge Álvarez Máynez—deployed specific strategies to position themselves on this platform, aware that it attracts much of the attention of Generation Z and young millennials, sectors historically less prone to formal political participation.[3,4,5] The key question, however, is whether this digital visibility translates into real impacts on election results and the quality of Mexican democracy.[6,7,8]

The academic debate surrounding this phenomenon is articulated in several dimensions. On the one hand, optimistic literature argues that networks such as TikTok expand the digital public sphere by allowing new actors, particularly young people and marginalized sectors, to participate in political conversation through accessible and creative languages.[4] In this sense, TikTok could be interpreted as an extension of so-called "connective democracy," where political action becomes more personalized and decentralized.[9,10,11]

In contrast, more critical positions emphasize that these platforms do not automatically democratize politics, as they are riddled with access gaps, economic inequalities, and algorithmic biases. Authors such as Zuboff[5] have warned about the rise of "surveillance capitalism," where citizen data is transformed into a commodity, subordinating political participation to the logic of the digital market. Similarly, studies on Latin America have shown that visibility on social media rarely replaces territorial mobilization, partisan roots, or patronage structures, which remain central in contexts of high inequality.[6,7]

Beyond the dispute between optimists and critics, a growing point of consensus is that contemporary politics is undergoing a process of platformization.[2] This implies that communication, organization, and mobilization repertoires are adapting to the algorithmic logic of private platforms, whose design prioritizes virality, emotionality, and personalized segmentation. In this framework, politics is not only communicated on social media, but is also reconfigured by it, adopting the formats, languages, and rhythms that social media imposes. The case of TikTok in Mexico 2024 is paradigmatic: the election campaign was transformed into a dispute to dominate trends, memes and generating viral interactions sometimes displace substantive debates on public programs and policies.[12,13,14]

This phenomenon raises tensions relevant to humanism and democracy. From a Habermasian perspective, the public sphere should be a space for rational and inclusive deliberation.[8] However, the dynamics of TikTok, based on seconds-long videos, filters, and music, call into question the possibility of profound and reasoned dialogue. As Papacharissi[9] points out, contemporary social media is characterized by "affective performativity," where visibility depends more on emotionality and entertainment than on deliberative rationality. In this sense, the rise of TikTok invites us to ask ourselves: Can democracy survive in environments dominated by brevity, humor, and virality?[15,16,17]

The Mexican case of 2024 allows us to explore these questions in a specific context, but with global implications. In Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro used TikTok and other platforms to mobilize his supporters, reinforcing polarizing narratives.[10] In Indonesia, election campaigns have incorporated TikTok as a central channel for attracting young people, albeit with ambiguous results in terms of electoral mobilization.[7] In the United States, figures such as Donald Trump and Joe Biden have resorted to TikTok indirectly, through influencers, given the controversy surrounding the app's national security implications.[11] These cases show that the debate about TikTok transcends borders and forces us to think about the relationship between algorithms, politics, and democracy in comparative terms.[18,19,20]

Likewise, the rise of TikTok connects with discussions about data colonialism. Couldry et al.[12] argue that the massive capture of data by global platforms constitutes a new form of colonial extraction, where users, particularly in the Global South, contribute information that is exploited for commercial and political purposes. In this context, the use of TikTok in Mexico should not only be analyzed as a communicative innovation, but also as part of a transnational network of digital power that poses risks of dependency and democratic vulnerability.[21,22,23,24]

Faced with these tensions, some authors propose a digital humanism approach,[13] aimed at safeguarding the dignity and autonomy of citizens in the face of algorithmic mediation. From this perspective, the challenge is not only to assess whether TikTok adds or subtracts votes, but to think about how to ensure that digital participation strengthens citizens' critical capacity, rather than reducing it to superficial interactions.[25,26,27,28] This requires digital and media literacy policies, as well as regulatory frameworks that protect algorithmic transparency without resorting to forms of censorship.[14]

Theoretical framework

The role of social media in contemporary political communication has been the subject of intense academic debate. While there is consensus that platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), and TikTok have transformed the communication repertoires of political actors and citizens, there is no agreement on the real scope of these transformations in democratic quality. This theoretical framework is organized into five sections: (1) social media and digital democracy, (2) platformization and platform society, (3) humanism and the public sphere in the digital age, (4) TikTok and political communication, and (5) algorithmic polarization and

information bubbles. Each section brings together optimistic, skeptical, and critical positions to construct a complex and ambivalent view of the phenomenon.

Social media and digital democracy

Social media has been interpreted as a new space for digital democracy. Fuchs[15] points out that these platforms enable direct interaction between political elites and citizens, reducing the media monopoly of large communication conglomerates. In line with this, Bennett et al.[4] introduced the concept of connective democracy, where collective action is organized in a decentralized, flexible, and personalized manner, facilitated by digital technologies. From this perspective, networks such as TikTok expand the possibilities for participation and deliberation.[29,30,31]

However, this optimistic view has been questioned. Brändle et al.[16] argue that the supposed democratizing nature of social media is limited, as algorithmic logic concentrates visibility on specific discourses, eroding pluralism. Ekoh et al.[17] warn that online political participation is mediated by structural conditions such as internet access, digital literacy, and socioeconomic inequality. In contexts marked by digital divides—such as Mexico and much of Latin America—networks tend to reproduce preexisting exclusions.[32,33,34,35]

Zuboff[5], from a critical perspective, argues that digital platforms are part of surveillance capitalism, where citizens' data is converted into commodities that are used for commercial and political purposes. From this perspective, "digital democracy" is subordinated to corporate interests that shape citizen interaction according to economic and political incentives rather than democratic principles.[36,37,38,39]

In short, social media can be seen as a field of tension: while they expand opportunities for participation, they also reinforce inequalities and power asymmetries.[40]

Platformization and platform society

A key concept for understanding the role of TikTok is that of platformization. Van Dijck et al.[2] argue that platforms are not simply communication tools, but socio-technical infrastructures that condition the way information is produced, distributed, and consumed. In this sense, politics is not only communicated on platforms, but also adapts to their operating logic: algorithms, visibility metrics, interaction design, and monetization of attention.

Chadwick[1] contributes to this reflection with his notion of a hybrid media system, in which political actors combine traditional strategies (mass media, territorial mobilization) with digital dynamics (social networks, influencers, virality). The Mexican case of 2024 embodies this hybrid model: although TikTok was central to the campaign, the election results continued to depend on traditional practices such as patronage, party loyalty, and territorial mobilization.

From a critical perspective, Couldry et al.[12] conceptualize this process as data colonialism, that is, a form of global extraction where user information is appropriated and used without transparency, creating new dependencies for countries in the Global South. Applied to TikTok in Mexico, this implies that the platform not only mediates political communication but also inserts the electoral process into a transnational dynamic of data control with profound democratic implications.[41,42,43]

Humanism and the public sphere in the digital age

Habermas' theory[8] of the public sphere has been a classic reference for analyzing political communication. However, his idea of a space for rational and inclusive deliberation is challenged in the digital environment. Fraser[18] had already warned that the public sphere is not homogeneous, but includes subordinate counter-publics that are invisible in Habermas' model. TikTok, in this sense, can be read as a space that amplifies youth and subordinate voices, but also fragments and trivializes public debate.

Floridi[13] proposes a digital humanism approach, which seeks to safeguard citizens' autonomy and dignity in the face of growing algorithmic mediation. From a cultural perspective, Jenkins[19] celebrates the emergence of a participatory culture in which users not only consume but also produce and circulate political content. However, Papacharissi[9] warns that this participation is mediated by affective performativity, in which political visibility depends more on emotionality than on rational deliberation.

Critically, Gorokhovskaia et al.[14] show how the digital boom is occurring in a context of global democratic decline, where censorship, manipulation, and surveillance undermine fundamental freedoms. Cedrún et al.[20], in a study on TikTok, argue that the logic of brevity and spectacle forces the simplification of political discourse, reducing its argumentative density.

Thus, digital humanism must be recognized as a tension: while networks expand cultural and political expression, they also degrade deliberative quality and expose citizens to algorithmic control dynamics.[44,45,46]

TikTok and political communication

TikTok has emerged as one of the most influential platforms in contemporary politics. Its appeal lies in its short, playful, and highly emotional format, which connects with Generation Z.[7] Vijay et al.[21] argue that the platform mixes the political with the humorous, transforming electoral communication into viral narratives. This phenomenon is part of the logic of politainment,[22] where politics takes on the forms of entertainment to capture attention.[47,48,49]

Papacharissi[9] reminds us that this dynamic of emotional performativity should not be underestimated: while it can trivialize debate, it also shapes perceptions of authenticity and closeness in public opinion. However, recent research shows that this "authenticity" is often designed by digital consultants specializing in virality,[23] reflecting a process of increasing professionalization.

In Mexico, Tienda et al.[3] conclude that TikTok increased the visibility of candidates, but this did not directly translate into votes. This finding coincides with McGregor[24], who describes social media as a "thermometer of opinion" rather than a decisive factor in

elections. Aspinall et al.[6] add that the technological modernization of campaigns does not eliminate traditional practices, but instead adapts them to the new digital environment.

In short, TikTok does not replace traditional politics, but is a strategic complement: it offers visibility, connects with young people, and democratizes symbolic communication, even if its effects on election results are limited.

Algorithmic polarization and information bubbles

TikTok's algorithmic design poses significant challenges. Ruhyat et al.[25] point out that the recommendation system personalizes content to an extreme degree, creating information bubbles that reinforce preexisting beliefs. This coincides with the notion of echo chambers proposed by Sunstein (2017), which fuels political polarization.

Valle-Cruz et al.[27], in their analysis of Latin American elections, show that algorithms intensify hostility and weaken deliberation. Wu (2016) complements this view by arguing that the attention economy privileges the emotional and viral over the truthfulness and complexity of the message.

However, authors such as Valtonen et al.[29] emphasize that media literacy can mitigate these effects. When users develop critical skills, it is possible to resist algorithmic logic and harness the inclusive potential of networks.

Thus, TikTok represents a double-edged sword: it democratizes symbolic participation, but it also intensifies social fragmentation and the risk of radicalization.[52] This scenario forces us to reflect on regulatory frameworks and educational policies that strengthen citizens' critical capacity.[53]

Critical synthesis

The literature review reveals at least three main approaches:

- Optimistic: TikTok broadens participation and connects with youth sectors, democratizing political communication.[4,7,19]
- Skeptical: Its impact is mainly symbolic, as traditional structures remain decisive.[3,24]
- Critical: Algorithmic logic reinforces polarization and erodes democratic deliberation.[25,26,27]

My position is based on a hybrid view: TikTok is an ambivalent space. It democratizes communication and amplifies young voices, but its transformative potential is conditioned by (a) algorithmic logic, (b) inequality of resources between campaigns, and (c) the persistence of traditional practices. Its real contribution will depend on the articulation between digital participation, territorial mobilization, and citizen literacy.[54,55]

METHOD

This article is part of a critical review of the literature with a qualitative approach. Unlike empirical research based on big data analysis, surveys, or interviews, this review favors an interpretive approach aimed at identifying, comparing, and discussing the findings of recent academic literature on TikTok, political communication, and digital democracy. This strategy responds to the objective of constructing a theoretical and comparative reflection that places the Mexican case of 2024 in a global framework.

The critical review of literature, also known as a narrative critical review,[30] is not limited to summarizing previous findings, but interprets them from its own conceptual framework. The emphasis is on analyzing convergences, divergences, and gaps in academic production on the phenomenon, which allows us to contribute to theoretical debates and propose future research agendas.

Search strategy and source selection

To ensure rigor and comprehensiveness, the bibliographic search was conducted in the leading international academic databases:

- Scopus
- Web of Science (WoS)
- Google Scholar (as a complementary tool for emerging open access literature)

The search process followed three stages:

Definition of keywords

Combinations of terms in English and Spanish were used, such as: *"TikTok AND political communication" "TikTok AND elections" "social media AND democracy" "platformization AND politics" "digital humanism AND democracy" "digital democracy AND Mexico"*

Inclusion criteria

- Academic publications between 2019 and 2025, given that TikTok is a recent phenomenon whose political relevance has intensified in the last five years.
- Articles indexed in high-impact journals, preferably in Q1 and Q2 in the areas of social sciences and communication.
- Books and chapters from recognized academic publishers (Oxford, MIT, Stanford, Cornell, etc.).
- Studies that explicitly address the relationship between social media, digital democracy, and political campaigns, with an emphasis on TikTok.

Exclusion criteria

- Purely technical literature on algorithms with no connection to political or social debates.
- Studies focused on platforms other than TikTok, except when they offer relevant comparisons (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram).
- Journalistic opinions without academic or methodological support.

Final corpus for analysis

After applying these criteria, a corpus of 55 academic publications was formed, distributed as follows:

- 30 articles in indexed journals (e.g., Information, Communication & Society; Political Communication; Government Information Quarterly; Comunicar).
- 15 chapters and reference books.[1,2,5]
- 10 regional studies on Latin America and the Global South.[3,6,7]

This corpus allows for a balance between global theories and empirical cases situated in diverse democratic contexts, with a special focus on the Mexican case.

Analytical strategy

The literature analysis was carried out in three phases:

- Thematic coding

The texts were grouped around central categories:

- Digital democracy and citizen participation.
- Platformization and platform society.
- Digital humanism and the public sphere.
- TikTok and political communication.
- Algorithmic polarization and democratic risks.

Comparison of approaches

Following Brändle et al.[16] and Chadwick[1], optimistic, skeptical, and critical approaches were distinguished regarding the impact of social media on democracy. This classification made it possible to organize the academic debate and show the tensions between different currents.

Construction of a critical synthesis

Finally, we developed our own interpretation that integrates scattered findings, highlighting gaps and emerging lines of research. This synthesis does not seek a definitive conclusion, but rather to provide a flexible conceptual framework that can be applied to different contexts.

Methodological justification

The choice of a critical literature review is justified for three main reasons:

Novelty of the phenomenon

TikTok has only recently established itself as a political platform (2020–2024), which means that the empirical literature is still limited and scattered. A critical review allows this knowledge, which is still under construction, to be gathered, compared, and systematized.

Comparative scope

The methodology facilitates the integration of diverse cases (Mexico, Brazil, Indonesia, the United States, and Europe), which is difficult to achieve through a single field study. In this way, global patterns and national particularities are identified.

Academic rigor

By relying on indexed and peer-reviewed sources, the review guarantees a level of quality consistent with Q1 journal standards. Furthermore, transparency in selection criteria ensures replicability.

Methodological limitations

Every methodological strategy has limitations that must be acknowledged:

- Lack of primary empirical data: This study does not include big data analysis (e.g., TikTok data mining) or interviews with users or political consultants. This limits the ability to evaluate microdynamics of interaction.
- Bias in literature availability: Much of the research comes from Anglo-Saxon or Asian contexts. Although Latin American works are included, academic production on TikTok in Mexico is still in its infancy.

- Risk of obsolescence: The speed of change in digital platforms means that relevant findings can quickly become outdated.
- Interpretive perspective: As this is a qualitative rather than statistical analysis, the results cannot be generalized in quantitative terms, although they do offer theoretical and comparative validity.

Rigor and reliability

To mitigate these limitations, methodological rigor measures were adopted:

- Inclusion of high-impact international literature and updates through 2025.
- Systematic and transparent search strategy across multiple databases.
- Thematic coding and comparison of approaches to avoid unilateral bias.
- Explicit recognition of limitations and the need to complement this study with future empirical research.

The methodology adopted responds to the need to articulate theory, comparison, and criticism in an emerging field of research. The critical review of the literature allows us to situate the Mexican case of 2024 within the framework of global debates on digital democracy and platformization, while recognizing its limitations and pointing to the urgency of complementary empirical studies. This approach does not replace the analysis of primary data. However, it does constitute a relevant contribution by offering a comprehensive, systematic, and theoretically informed overview of the role of TikTok in contemporary political communication.

Academic discussion

The analysis of TikTok's role in the 2024 Mexican presidential campaign allows us to transcend empirical description and enter into dialogue with broader academic debates on the transformation of political communication in the digital age. This discussion is organized around four themes: (1) the democratizing potential and its limits, (2) the tension between digital popularity and electoral effectiveness, (3) algorithmic polarization and its democratic implications, and (4) the challenges of digital humanism in unequal societies. Each theme is discussed comparatively, linking the Mexican experience with international cases.

Democratizing potential and its limits

Some literature argues that platforms such as TikTok increase the political inclusion of traditionally marginalized sectors, especially young people who had previously remained distant from institutional politics. Marlina et al.[7], in their study on Indonesia, show that TikTok made it possible to give visibility to youth discourses that would have been unlikely to circulate in traditional media. In Mexico, Jorge Álvarez Máynez's candidacy benefited from this dynamic, positioning himself as the "TikTok candidate" and achieving unprecedented levels of visibility among Generation Z.

From this perspective, TikTok embodies what Bennett et al.[4] called connective democracy: decentralized forms of political action, closer to the logic of social networks than to the hierarchical structures of political parties. The phenomenon is also connected to Jenkins' idea[19] of participatory culture, where users produce and disseminate political messages through memes, dances, or creative videos. Thus, humor, irony, and cultural appropriation become legitimate repertoires of participation.

However, the democratizing potential faces structural limits. Studies such as those by Ekoh et al.[17] show that digital divides condition online participation: those who do not have access to devices or lack digital literacy are excluded. In the case of Mexico, this means that the TikTok experience was concentrated in urban areas and among young people with constant access to the internet. At the same time, large rural sectors remained on the sidelines. Symbolic inclusion, therefore, did not necessarily translate into material inclusion in the democratic process.

Digital popularity vs. electoral effectiveness

One of the central tensions detected in Mexico 2024 is the gap between digital visibility and electoral success. The case of Máynez is illustrative: although he managed to accumulate millions of views on TikTok and build a youthful and disruptive identity, he did not achieve significant results at the polls. The phrase "likes are not votes"[3] sums up this paradox.

This finding connects with previous research in other contexts. McGregor[24] considers that social media functions more as an "opinion thermometer" than as a direct driver of electoral transformation. In Indonesia, Marlina et al.[7] point out that TikTok was crucial in attracting the attention of young people, but insufficient to guarantee their political mobilization. In Brazil, Recuero et al.[10] note that Jair Bolsonaro's intensive use of social media did not always translate into greater democratic legitimacy, but rather into a reinforcement of ideological bubbles.

This pattern reveals the persistence of what Chadwick[1] describes as a hybrid media system. Digital platforms provide visibility and shape political aesthetics, but their impact depends on their articulation with traditional structures: territorial mobilization, clientelism, organizational resources, and traditional media coverage. In Mexico, Morena's hegemony and territorial roots prevailed over Máynez's digital popularity, confirming that digital politics does not replace but rather complements traditional politics.

Algorithmic polarization and democratic risks

Another of the most relevant findings in the Mexican case is the role of TikTok's recommendation algorithms. By prioritizing emotional and viral content, the platform tends to reinforce echo chambers,[26] reducing exposure to diverse perspectives. Ruhyat et al.[25] show that this dynamic fuels toxic polarization, where political debate becomes a binary confrontation. In Mexico, although TikTok was mainly used for political entertainment, it also served to spread aggressive messages and misinformation that amplified

tensions between supporters and opponents.

This phenomenon coincides with what has been documented in other democracies. Valle-Cruz et al.[27] found that algorithms in Latin American elections intensify political hostility, while Wu[28] argues that the attention economy privileges virality even at the expense of truthfulness. Algorithm-mediated politics runs the risk of becoming a contest of digital popularity, where the winner is whoever achieves the greatest virality, rather than whoever contributes the most substantive policy proposals.

However, not everything is algorithmic determinism. Authors such as Valtonen et al.[29] point out that media and digital literacy can mitigate these effects, empowering citizens to interpret content critically. In the case of Mexico, this line of thinking opens up a field for public policies on digital education that counteract polarization and strengthen a critical democratic culture.

Digital humanism and Mexican political culture

Beyond electoral effectiveness and polarization, TikTok raises questions about digital humanism and the quality of public debate. Floridi[13] proposes a humanism aimed at preserving citizen autonomy in the face of algorithmic mediation. However, Papacharissi[9] emphasizes that politics on social media is characterized by affective performativity: users and politicians seek visibility through emotionality rather than deliberative reasoning.

In Mexico, this logic is intertwined with the national political culture, where humor, satire, and memes have historically been resources for resistance and political criticism. TikTok did not create this dynamic, but it did enhance it, allowing young people to appropriate political discourse through creative and ephemeral formats. This raises a tension: is this a degradation of deliberation or a cultural reinvention of politics in line with youth languages?

From a critical perspective, Cedrún et al.[20] argue that TikTok's logic of immediacy forces discourse to be simplified, reducing its argumentative density. However, from a culturalist perspective, Jenkins[19] and Revolusi.[31] argue that creativity and humor are also forms of political agency that should not be dismissed. In this sense, TikTok can be seen both as a risk to rational deliberation and as a vehicle for symbolic and cultural democratization.

Comparative synthesis

When placing the Mexican case in an international context, three key lessons emerge:

Digital politics is complementary, not substitutive. In all the cases analyzed (Mexico, Brazil, Indonesia, and the United States), digital platforms increase visibility and reconfigure political aesthetics. However, they do not replace traditional structures of mobilization and legitimacy.

The impact depends on the political and cultural context. While in Brazil social media reinforced ideological polarization, in Indonesia and Mexico, it operated more as a space for youth visibility and political entertainment.

Digital literacy is key. Both in the Global South and in consolidated democracies, the common challenge is to equip citizens with critical skills to resist algorithmic logic and harness the inclusive potential of platforms.

Towards a critical agenda

The academic discussion on TikTok in Mexico 2024 reveals that the platform is an ambivalent space: it democratizes symbolic communication by amplifying youth voices, but it reinforces inequalities and risks of polarization. Its real impact must be assessed not only in immediate electoral terms, but also in relation to processes of political socialization, legitimacy, and democratic culture in the long term.

In this sense, the study makes three contributions to the literature:

- It conceptualizes TikTok as part of the process of platformization of politics, where communication is adapted to global algorithmic logics.
- It points to the need for a digital humanism approach that recognizes both creative agency and the risks of trivialization and control.
- It proposes that TikTok's impact on democracy depends on its articulation with structural factors: partisan roots, territorial mobilization, and digital education.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of TikTok's role in the 2024 Mexican presidential campaign allows us to draw lessons of national and international scope on the transformation of political communication in the digital age. Although the platform took on an unprecedented central role in campaign strategies and raised the profile of candidates such as Jorge Álvarez Máynez, its impact was ambivalent: on the one hand, it democratized the symbolic conversation by including youth sectors; on the other, it reproduced structural inequalities and posed risks of algorithmic polarization.

These conclusions are organized into four sections: (1) theoretical implications, (2) practical implications, (3) limitations of the study, and (4) future research agenda.

Theoretical implications

Platformization of politics

The Mexican case confirms Van Dijck, Poell, and De Waal's thesis on the platformization of society: politics is no longer just communicated through platforms, but is adapting to their algorithmic logic. In 2024, candidates not only used TikTok as an additional

channel, but also transformed their communication to suit the short, emotional, and viral formats demanded by the platform. This implies that electoral politics is increasingly subordinated to private and transnational technological dynamics.

Media hybridization

The analysis also confirms the notion of a hybrid media system. While TikTok provided visibility and shaped narratives, election results depended on traditional structures such as territorial mobilization, patronage, and party loyalty. Contemporary politics develops at the intersection of the digital and the territorial, which explains why online popularity did not guarantee electoral victory.

Digital humanism

From the perspective of digital humanism, TikTok poses a dilemma: it broadens the cultural and symbolic participation of young people, but at the same time simplifies and trivializes public debate. Politics becomes performative and emotional, which strains Habermasian ideals of rational deliberation. This finding invites us to rethink the digital public sphere not as a substitute for classical deliberation, but as a hybrid space where creativity, humor, polarization, and simplification coexist.

Ambivalent democracy

Finally, the findings confirm that digital democracy is ambivalent: neither an unlimited promise of democratization nor a definitive threat. TikTok shows that platforms are spaces of dispute, where symbolic inclusion coexists with the reproduction of inequalities and the risk of algorithmic manipulation.

Practical implications

For parties and campaigns

Parties must recognize that likes are not votes. While digital presence is crucial for connecting with young audiences, its electoral impact depends on its articulation with traditional resources. The practical lesson is clear: successful campaigns will be those that manage to integrate digital strategy with territorial mobilization.

For democratic institutions

The rise of TikTok highlights the need for electoral bodies to move toward clear regulatory frameworks on the use of digital platforms in campaigns. The lack of regulation in Mexico allowed for overexposure of content without effective oversight of financing, segmentation, and misinformation. Following European experiences, it is essential to establish criteria for algorithmic transparency and political advertising on social media.

For citizens

The findings underscore the importance of digital literacy. As Valtonen et al. point out, critical skills can mitigate the negative effects of algorithmic polarization. In Mexico, this challenge is particularly urgent given the persistence of digital divides and educational inequality. Strengthening citizens' ability to critically interpret content on TikTok is a prerequisite for preventing emotionality and misinformation from dominating the public sphere.

For journalists and the media

The presence of TikTok also redefines the role of journalism. If politics circulates in viral and emotional formats, the media face the challenge of translating that dynamic into quality journalism that contextualizes, verifies, and contrasts information. Ignoring TikTok would be condemning oneself to irrelevance; integrating it critically may be a way to revitalize political journalism.

Limitations of the study

All research must acknowledge its limitations. In this case, the main limitations are:

- Absence of primary empirical analysis: The study is based on a critical review of literature and not on TikTok big data, surveys, or interviews. This limits the ability to analyze micro-dynamics of citizen interaction and reception.
- Dependence on available literature: Academic production on TikTok in Mexico is still in its infancy. Although international references were incorporated, there is a bias toward research in Anglo-Saxon and Asian contexts.
- Interpretative nature: As this is a qualitative analysis, the results are not statistically generalizable. Its value lies more in its theoretical and comparative validity than in its quantitative representativeness.
- Risk of obsolescence: The dynamics of digital platforms change rapidly. What we see in 2024 could vary radically in future electoral processes.

Future research agenda

Based on the findings and limitations, four lines of further research are proposed:

Empirical studies with big data

It is necessary to analyze large volumes of TikTok data during election campaigns. The use of data mining, network analysis, and machine learning algorithms would allow for the identification of patterns of virality, segmentation, and disinformation in greater detail.

Comparative research

The Mexican experience should be contrasted with other Latin American and global contexts. Cases such as Brazil, Argentina, Indonesia, and the United States offer opportunities to analyze similarities and differences in the relationship between TikTok, political culture, and democracy.

Impact on local campaigns and social movements

So far, the focus has been on presidential elections. Future research could explore the role of TikTok in municipal and legislative campaigns or in social movements, where the platform may have different effects in terms of organization and mobilization.

Citizen perspectives and digital ethnography

Qualitative studies are needed to investigate how citizens perceive, consume, and reinterpret political content on TikTok. Digital ethnography would allow us to understand the cultural and affective dimension of interaction, beyond metrics of reach or virality.

Closing

In summary, the case of Mexico 2024 shows that TikTok should not be seen as either the solution or the ultimate threat to democracy. Rather, it constitutes a space for symbolic and political dispute, where inclusion and exclusion, creativity and trivialization, democratization and algorithmic control are articulated.

The challenge for contemporary democracies is twofold: to harness TikTok's inclusive and cultural potential while designing regulatory, educational, and political strategies to counteract its risks. Only then will it be possible to articulate a digital humanism that preserves the dignity and autonomy of citizens, strengthening democracy in the age of platforms.

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