



Fairness and Editorialization in Media Coverage of the 2024 Mexican Presidential Campaign

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[Abstract] The media plays a crucial role during electoral campaigns, as their coverage makes it possible to identify the thematic agenda during elections and helps to shape the public perceptions of the candidates. Although such coverage is expected to be based on principles of fairness and objectivity, editorialization processes occasionally arise when subjective evaluations are inserted within the information. This article aims to assess the news coverage of the three presidential candidates in Mexico during the 2024 electoral campaign. The study draws on data from the radio and television newscasts monitoring, conducted nationwide by the Instituto Nacional Electoral (National Electoral Institute). The results show that while coverage among the candidates tended to be balanced at the national level, there are clear differences in various federal entities or at the subnational level. Moreover, while the overall level of editorialization was low, we identified differences among the candidates at both national and subnational levels.

[Keywords] Presidential elections, news coverage, editorialization, television, radio.

[Título] Equidad y editorialización en la cobertura mediática de la campaña presidencial mexicana de 2024

[Resumen] Los medios desempeñan un papel esencial en el contexto de las campañas electorales, ya que su cobertura permite conocer la agenda temática que se discute durante las elecciones y elaborar una imagen de las personas que contienden en el proceso electoral. Si bien es de esperar que esta cobertura se

base en criterios de equidad y objetividad, en ocasiones se presentan procesos de editorialización a través de la inserción de valoraciones subjetivas en la información. Tomando esto en consideración, este artículo busca determinar la cobertura noticiosa de las tres candidaturas a la presidencia de México durante la campaña electoral de 2024 para informar sobre ellas. Para ello, se utilizaron los datos del monitoreo del Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE) de los noticiarios de radio y televisión en toda la república. Los resultados reflejan que, aunque la cobertura entre las candidaturas tendía a mantener un equilibrio a nivel nacional, en las diferentes entidades federativas o a nivel subnacional se observaron diferencias claras. Además, aunque el proceso de editorialización global fue limitado, se identificaron diferencias entre las candidaturas tanto en el ámbito nacional como en el subnacional.

[Palabras clave] Elecciones presidenciales, cobertura informativa, editorialización, televisión, radio.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary electoral processes unfold in a highly mediated public spheres, wherein traditional media continue to occupy a central role in the configuration of public opinion. During electoral periods, political debate intensifies, and the media emerge as both essential sources of information and key platforms for the exchange of political messages. Scholarly contributions have demonstrated that electoral campaigns constitute a “natural laboratory” for examining the media’s role in shaping collective perceptions. Within these contexts, the media not only facilitate communication between political actors and the citizenry but also exert influence over the framing of issues, the salience of candidates, and the narratives that dominate public discourse. (McCOMBS & VALENZUELA 2020).

In societies like Mexico, radio and television news programs remain privileged spaces for the dissemination of political information, particularly during electoral campaigns (MUÑIZ 2024). However, the manner in which the media presents this information does not always conform to criteria of fairness, impartiality, or pluralism. Instead, news coverage is frequently shaped by structural dynamics, editorial policies, and historical alignments with political actors (GÓMEZ 2020; GONZÁLEZ MACÍAS & ECHEVERRÍA VICTORIA 2017). A growing body of literature suggests that the Mexican media system has been characterized by journalistic practices involving editorialization, understood as the incorporation of subjective judgments or opinion-based evaluations into news reporting on candidates, thereby influencing the formation of public opinion (JUÁREZ-GÁMIZ 2013; FLORES GONZÁLEZ *ET AL.* 2018; MÁRQUEZ RODRÍGUEZ 2004; MARTÍNEZ GARZA & MALTOS 2019).

Such practices become particularly salient in electoral settings, where disparities in the volume and evaluative tone of news coverage can translate into significant political advantages or disadvantages for candidates. In this regard, the media not only disseminate information but also frame political processes within specific discursive logics that may reinforce or undermine public perceptions of political figures (MARAÑÓN LAZCANO & SALDIERNA SALAS 2019). The theoretical framework of agenda-setting posits that the media possess the capacity to shape public opinion by emphasizing certain issues—such as political parties or candidates—during electoral contests (McCOMBS & EVATT 1995; McCOMBS *ET AL.* 2000).

Research on election coverage in Mexico has focused primarily on presidential elections (MARTÍNEZ GARZA 2013; 2014; CASTILLO QUIÑÓNEZ 2014; MARTÍNEZ GARZA & GODÍNEZ GARZA 2013; MARTÍNEZ & MALTOS 2019). These studies have consistently documented that, for an extended period, electoral coverage exhibited systematic bias favoring political actors aligned with the incumbent government (JUÁREZ-GÁMIZ 2013; MARTÍNEZ GARZA *ET AL.* 2015; MARTÍNEZ GARZA & GODÍNEZ GARZA 2013). Such bias manifested both in unequal access to media coverage and in editorializing practices that introduced subjective value judgments into news reporting (ECHEVERRÍA 2017; JUÁREZ-GÁMIZ 2013). Although recent evidence suggests a trend toward more equitable and less editorialized coverage (MUÑOZ 2024), there remains no conclusive indication that this transformation has permeated the media system uniformly.

Within the particular context of the 2024 Mexican presidential election—characterized by heightened political polarization and the prominence of candidates affiliated with the incumbent administration—it becomes especially pertinent to scrutinize the distribution of media coverage and the evaluative tone directed toward each contender. Accordingly, this study seeks to analyze the allocation of coverage time and the degree of editorialization applied to the three presidential candidates during the campaign for the 2023-2024 general elections, or Proceso Electoral Federal – PEF, drawing upon monitoring data provided by the Instituto Nacional Electoral – INE (National Electoral Institute).

2. MEDIA COVERAGE OF ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS IN MEXICO

The media have assumed a central role in the democratic transformation experienced in Mexico since the late twentieth century, a process that culminated in 2000 with the alternation of presidential power after decades of hegemonic dominance by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional – PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party). Nevertheless, a substantial body of scholarship has persistently underscored the bias that characterized media outlets—particularly radio and television—throughout the twentieth century, a phenomenon rooted in a corporatist relationship involving networks of exchange and mutual benefit between media organizations and successive

governments (GONZÁLEZ MACÍAS & ECHEVERRÍA VICTORIA 2017; MARTÍNEZ GARZA *ET AL.* 2015). This arrangement, far from serving the public interest by disseminating truthful and impartial information, fostered a process of alignment with incumbent administrations through the adoption of corresponding editorial lines (ECHEVERRÍA 2024; GÓMEZ 2020).

This scenario began to shift during the 1990s, driven by processes aimed at establishing more equitable media access for diverse political organizations. In this regard, the political agreements signed in 1994 and the monitoring exercises periodically implemented by the Instituto Federal Electoral – IFE (Federal Electoral Institute), now the Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE), proved essential (ACEVES GONZÁLEZ 2004; MARTÍNEZ GARZA *ET AL.* 2015; MARTÍNEZ GARZA & GODÍNEZ GARZA 2013). Complementing these developments was a broader modernization process that affected a significant portion of the Mexican media system, characterized by a tendency to adopt certain principles associated with the liberal model—such as objectivity, political detachment, and civic orientation—particularly among national media outlets and those based in major cities (GONZÁLEZ MACÍAS & ECHEVERRÍA VICTORIA 2017; LAWSON 2002).

Nevertheless, this process of modernization and professionalization of journalism does not always appear to have materialized uniformly across subnational contexts within Mexico's various federal entities (ECHEVERRÍA 2017; GONZÁLEZ MACÍAS & ECHEVERRÍA VICTORIA 2017). Studies such as those by González (2013) and Espino Sánchez (2016) conclude that this modernization has remained incomplete, as clientelistic practices persist in certain segments of the Mexican media landscape, particularly at local and regional levels. Consequently, González Macías & Echeverría Victoria (2017, 47) contend that within the Mexican media system, one cannot assume “neither a general transformation nor complete stagnation; rather, a hybrid set of practices with varying levels of modernization is evident.”

Notwithstanding advancements in journalistic professionalization and media modernization within Mexico, practices characterized by clientelism, a lack of economic independence, and enduring political ties persist. Echeverría (2017, 227) argues that this journalistic culture perpetuates, in an inertial manner, the editorial subordination of media outlets to political

actors. Consequently, it remains possible to identify media organizations that conform to the characteristics Gómez (2020) identifies as prevalent in the media systems of Latin America and Southern Europe at the beginning of the twenty-first century: the instrumentalization of private media by political parties and governments, the politicization of public media, limited journalistic professionalization, and a deeply entrenched tradition of opinion-oriented journalism.

One of the contexts that most clearly reveals the degree of modernization achieved in the work of the media is the electoral process. In the Mexican case, the coverage of electoral campaigns has historically exemplified this relationship between media and power, consolidating an informational logic markedly distinct from the liberal press model, wherein informational neutrality is posited as the normative standard (MARTÍNEZ GARZA *ET AL.* 2015; MARTÍNEZ GARZA & GODÍNEZ GARZA 2013). This reality, subjected to sustained critique from both academic and political sectors prompted an agreement in 1994 among the country's diverse political forces aimed at guaranteeing equitable media access during electoral processes. Within this same framework, in June 1994, the IFE, through its Broadcasting Commission, formulated guidelines recommending that media outlets offer balanced, pluralistic, and equitable coverage (MAGAR & MOLINAR HORCASITAS 1995).

In parallel with the issuance of these guidelines, the electoral body began conducting periodic monitoring of news programs to determine the airtime allocated to candidates, parties, and participating coalitions (CÓRDOVA VIANELLO 2013). This type of analytical exercise has also been undertaken in academia, with the aim of identifying whether candidates received equitable treatment in news coverage (ARREDONDO RAMÍREZ 1990; JUÁREZ-GÁMIZ 2013; MARTÍNEZ GARZA 2014). Indeed, media monitoring in Mexico has been characterized as a vital instrument for overseeing compliance with journalistic objectivity and the equitable treatment of different candidates in campaign coverage (ACEVES GONZÁLEZ 2004; MARTÍNEZ GARZA 2013; 2014).

These studies have traditionally adhered to the empirical framework of agenda-setting theory, seeking to determine whether media coverage of political parties and candidates was equitable, or to identify thematic agendas during

these processes (MARTÍNEZ GARZA 2014). This theory postulates that the media possess the capacity to establish the issues or topics of relevance in public opinion; that is, to define the agendas or repertoires of concerns that individuals perceive as most important. To achieve this, they rely on the “salience” or degree of prominence with which selected topics are presented in their news content (McCOMBS 2006). These topics encompass any “social, often contentious, problem that has emerged and is covered by the media” (DEARING & ROGERS 1996, 3), whether consistently over time or circumstantially.

In the electoral arena, these agendas expand from issues to objects, encompassing diverse aspects susceptible to media coverage (YIOUTAS & SEGVIC 2003). Specifically, McCombs (2006, 138) defines objects as “an element to be studied, whether it be candidates, an issue, a policy, or anything about which one can have an attitude or opinion.” In this sense, in addition to the traditional coverage of electoral proposals, the media also devote attention to other dimensions, such as the electoral performance of parties or their candidates (McCOMBS *ET AL.* 1997). Thus, during campaigns, the media not only convey the salience of certain issues but also that of the parties, coalitions, or candidates competing within them.

Seminal studies on electoral coverage in Mexico have revealed clear instances of inequality (FLORES GONZÁLEZ *ET AL.* 2018). During the 1988 presidential campaign, for example, a disproportionate amount of media coverage favoring the candidate of the ruling party was detected (ARREDONDO RAMÍREZ 1990; JUÁREZ-GÁMIZ 2013). In the 1994 elections, although an improvement in terms of equity was observed, a balance favoring the PRI persisted (MAGAR & MOLINAR HORCASITAS 1995). However, starting with the 2000 presidential elections, a trend toward greater equity in media coverage time became apparent (LAWSON & MCCANN 2004; JUÁREZ-GÁMIZ 2013; MARTÍNEZ GARZA & GODÍNEZ GARZA 2013). Studies conducted since then have analyzed political parties and presidential candidates as objects of the media agenda, as demonstrated by the review carried out by Flores González *et al.* (2018).

For example, Lozano *et al.* (2011) analyzed news coverage from commercial television stations in 2006 and found equitable coverage of the main candidates, yet identified disparities concerning the candidates of minor parties. Martínez Garza & Godínez Garza (2013) observed a similar pattern in the

2012 elections, with the exception of the public television station Canal Once, which offered more equitable coverage. Sanmartín Fernández (2022) focused his analysis on the leading candidates of 2012 and observed greater coverage for Peña Nieto than for López Obrador. Meanwhile, Martínez and Maltos (2019) studied three public television channels during the 2018 elections and found equitable news coverage. Based on the background described and considering the 2024 presidential campaign in Mexico as a case study, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1: Did the media provide equitable coverage of the presidential candidates with the strongest prospects of victory at the national level?

RQ2: Did the media provide equitable coverage of the presidential candidates with the strongest prospects of victory at the subnational level?

3. THE EDITORIALIZATION OF CANDIDATE COVERAGE

Whereas early approaches to the agenda-setting theory focused primarily on the selection and salience of objects, as well as the transfer of the agenda to the audience, by the mid-1990s scholarly inquiry began to shift toward examining the modalities through which the media present these objects (McCOMBS & EVATT 1995; McCOMBS & VALENZUELA). This evolution redirected analytical focus from the first level of agenda-setting to the so-called second level, which proceeds from the premise that the media, in addition to indicating which objects merit consideration, also determine how to reflect on them through the use of different attributes that shape the image of the reported object.

In this regard, McCombs & Evatt (1995, 30) point out that attributes “can be (a) considered as parts of a whole, (b) associated with certain perspectives, or (c) linked to some broader component of an emotional or cognitive nature.” That is, they refer to aspects related to the objects that appear in news content. Consequently, along with the object agenda, the existence of an attribute agenda is also recognized (McCOMBS *ET AL.* 1997). McCombs *et al.* (2000) offer a precise conceptualization of attributes characterizing them as the properties and features through which the media construct the image of any issue, topic, person, or object deemed newsworthy.

Several studies on the second level of the agenda-setting within candidate coverage have proposed the existence of two possible attribute agendas, differentiated according to the dimension of the characteristics emphasized in the news reporting (LÓPEZ-ESCOBAR *ET AL.* 1996; McCOMBS & EVATT 1995). On the one hand, scholars have posited the existence of a substantive or cognitive attribute agenda, which “expresses those factors that society considers priorities in the capture of the image of politicians” (LÓPEZ-ESCOBAR *ET AL.* 1996, 64), encompassing elements such as ideology, personality traits, dispositional characteristics, or salient qualities of the candidate as presented in news information (GHANEM 1997).

In contrast to the substantive agenda, the affective attributes agenda refers to “elements related to form, proximity, and human interest” (RODRÍGUEZ DÍAZ 2004, 68), that is, to the descriptions or media treatment of political actors (LÓPEZ-ESCOBAR *ET AL.* 1996). This dimension is connected to the concept of affective valence, understood as an internal component pertaining to the affective aspects of news content, which denotes the evaluative character or value-laden tone of the information. The use of this agenda entails the incorporation of qualifying adjectives into the news discourse to characterize the candidate (McCOMBS *ET AL.* 1997), such as “honest,” “corrupt,” or “dangerous.” The selection of certain adjectives effectively frames of the candidate from a positive, negative, or neutral perspective.

Studies developed from this perspective reveal that the employment of adjectives constitutes an integral component of the journalistic practices applied in the production of news coverage concerning candidates. This phenomenon largely conflicts with the pursuit of objectivity expected of information, an ideal considered defining of professional journalism (HUMANES *ET AL.* 2017). Practices such as the editorialization of information or the use of adjectives favoring or disfavoring particular political actors are recurrent, although contrary to the principles of impartiality and journalistic objectivity (DE GASPERÍN SAMPIERI 1999; ECHEVERRÍA). Such practices undermine factuality, understood as coverage grounded in verifiable facts and not on the transmission of opinions within purely informative content (MÁRQUEZ RAMÍREZ 2012).

Although objectivity has constituted a cornerstone of Anglo-Saxon journalism (HUMANES *ET AL.* 2017), this liberal model rapidly diffused to other media systems, where it sought to adapt to the professional standards of objectivity, factual accuracy, and editorial distance necessary to ensure the impartiality of disseminated information (MÁRQUEZ RAMÍREZ 2012). According to this author, these principles serve to preclude biases and value judgments that conflict with objectivity. Echeverría (2017), for his part, argues that bias in political journalism engenders practices that systematically favor certain actors at the expense of others. To prevent this, two analytical tools prove essential: equitable access to coverage and balanced editorial treatment, reflected in the favorable or unfavorable characterizations of political actors (ECHEVERRÍA 2017).

Editorialization is generally understood as the process by which opinion is introduced into news content through the deployment of descriptive adjectives or idiomatic expressions that function as value judgments about the subject of the information (ECHEVERRÍA 2017; JUÁREZ-GÁMIZ 2013). This incorporation of opinion implies a greater level of subjectivity on the part of the journalist, a characteristic more typical of the opinion genre than of the news and interpretive genres (FONTCUBERTA 1993). This phenomenon is alternatively denominated information evaluation, as it imparts a specific tone to the coverage of the subject, which can range from positive to negative depending on the favorable or unfavorable nature of the adjectives employed. Additionally, other dimensions such as tone of voice or gestures when conveying information are recognized as resources for adjectival language (MÁRQUEZ RODRÍGUEZ 2004).

Editorialization has been identified as a prevalent practice within Mexican media news content, attributable in part to the confusion between journalistic genres and the inclusion of opinions and adjectives when reporting events (JUÁREZ-GÁMIZ 2013; MÁRQUEZ RODRÍGUEZ 2004). However, scholars have also observed that the modernization of the Mexican media system has led to a reduction in this practice within certain contexts, driven by the objective of establishing a more pronounced separation between information and opinion (GÓMEZ 2020; GONZÁLEZ MACÍAS & ECHEVERRÍA VICTORIA 2017). The tensions generated by the imperative to adapt to this

logic in journalistic practice have been documented by Márquez Ramírez (2012), who highlights the self-censorship that reporters sometimes exercise to avoid expressing opinions or judgments, in contrast to the greater editorializing frequently undertaken by program hosts who present their news reports.

These structural changes in Mexican media are compounded by external efforts aimed at promoting greater equity and balance in the editorial treatment of news coverage during electoral processes. An example of such efforts is the set of guidelines developed since 1994 by the IFE and subsequently by the current INE, designed to encourage electoral coverage based on balanced and objective information (MAGAR & MOLINAR HORCASITAS 1995)—a type of coverage that has been analyzed through various monitoring programs conducted periodically (CÓRDOVA VIANELLO 2013; MARTÍNEZ GARZA 2014; MUÑIZ 2024). Moreover, in addition to equity in access to news content, objectivity and impartiality depend on the treatment received in the media (DE GASPERÍN SAMPIERI 1999).

Studies on editorialization show a disparity of results across electoral cycles. Magar & Molinar Horcasitas (1995) noted that coverage remained minimally editorialized in the 1994 elections. In contrast, Márquez Rodríguez (2004) observed that in the 2003 elections, the country's main television networks—Televisa and TV Azteca—showed a greater tendency toward opinion-based commentary. Juárez-Gámiz (2013) identified higher levels of editorialization during the 2012 elections, both on television and, more notably, on radio. Regarding affective valence or the tone of information, the results also diverge. For instance, in the 2006 elections, Lozano *et al.* (2011) detected more positive television coverage of candidates Madrazo and Calderón—the winner of the election—than of López Obrador.

In the 2012 elections, findings indicate that the majority of assessments remained neutral (ECHEVERRÍA 2017; JUÁREZ-GÁMIZ 2013). However, Sanmartín Fernández (2022) observed more favorable media coverage of Peña Nieto—the eventual winner—and more negative coverage of López Obrador. Conversely, Martínez Garza & Maltos (2019) detected a greater number of criticisms on public television channels directed at López Obrador—the victorious candidate in the 2018 elections—than at the

opposition candidate, Anaya. Building upon this empirical background and considering the particularities of the 2024 Mexican presidential campaign, we formulated the following research questions:

RQ3: To what extent was information concerning the presidential candidates editorialized in national and subnational news broadcasts?

RQ4: What affective valence dominated the assessments of presidential candidates in national and subnational news broadcasts?

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. TECHNIQUE AND ANALYZED SAMPLE

The study draws upon data generated through the monitoring and content analysis of the pre-campaign and campaign periods corresponding to the 2023-2024 Federal Electoral Process (PEF in Spanish), coordinated by the INE and carried out by the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (UANL). This monitoring provides information on radio and television coverage throughout both electoral phases. This article analyzes exclusively the data derived from news programs during the ninety-day presidential campaign conducted in Mexico between March 1 and May 29, 2024. The monitoring is based on a catalog of radio and television programs that broadcast information related to the electoral process, approved by the INE. To delineate this sample, the electoral body applies a federal probabilistic sampling method that considers criteria such as: (i) national audience reach, (ii) territorial equity, (iii) demographic representativeness, and (iv) political relevance, in addition to proportionality considerations according to type of broadcasting license, time slot, and frequency.

From the 503 programs included in the monitoring, only radio and television news programs were selected for this study, thereby reducing the final corpus to 489 programs. Within each program, mentions pertaining to both the electoral campaign and the presidential candidates were identified. Each mention was operationalized as a monitoring item, understood as the unit of analysis capable of encompassing the different variables used in the content analysis. Consequently, the final sample for the study consisted of 219,631 pieces.

4.2. INSTRUMENT OF ANALYSIS

The codebook for this study was developed based on selected variables derived from the INE's methodological framework.¹ This instrument was structured according to the following categories:

4.2.1 COVERAGE OF EACH PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

The time dedicated to each candidate within the identified monitoring items was tallied. When any of the three candidates was mentioned only tangentially, airtime was attributed exclusively to the main candidate; however, if the reference was general to the campaign, the airtime was distributed among the candidates mentioned. Due to the absence of a database containing precise airtime measurements for each individual item and candidate, the analysis employed aggregate data available through the monitoring portal, which provides the percentage of airtime allocated to each candidate at the national and state (subnational) levels.

4.2.2 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

The analysis focused on the pieces corresponding to the three candidates contesting the presidential election: (1) Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, nominated by the Sigamos Haciendo Historia coalition (Morena-PT-PVEM); (2) Bertha Xóchitl Gálvez Ruiz, candidate of the Fuerza y Corazón por México coalition (PAN-PRI-PRD); and (3) Jorge Álvarez Máynez, candidate of the Movimiento Ciudadano (MC) party.

4.2.3 LEVEL OF EDITORIALIZATION OF THE INFORMATION

Each piece was evaluated for the presence or absence of value judgments expressed by the communicators when transmitting the information, whether through qualifying adjectives or idiomatic expressions with an adjectival function. A single piece could contain multiple value judgments and be directed at one or more candidates; that is, a given value judgment could be applied to more than one candidate simultaneously. Based on these observations, we constructed an indicator of the level of editorialization, calculated

¹ All the information regarding the Project is available at: <http://monitoreo2024.ine.mx>

by dividing the number of pieces containing evaluations by the total number of pieces corresponding to each candidacy. The resulting value expresses the percentage of editorialized pieces both globally and disaggregated by state.

4.2.4 AFFECTIVE VALENCE OF EDITORIALIZED INFORMATION

Each identified evaluation was classified as positive or negative in relation to the candidate to whom it referred. Subsequently, a differential was calculated by subtracting the positive evaluations from the negative ones. This indicator allowed the establishment of the affective valence of the editorialization, expressed as a delta value that could range between -100 (all negative evaluations) and 100 (all positive). A result of zero indicated a neutral evaluation of the piece.

4.3. STUDY CODING AND RELIABILITY

The coding of the pieces was carried out by the monitoring team at the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León. Prior to the analysis, this group received training in the use of the codebook designed by the INE and participated in training exercises. Although inter-rater reliability tests were not applied due to the substantial volume of information and the limited time of the study, reliability was ensured through multiple levels of review. Each unit was coded by monitors, and a supervisory team verified their results. Subsequently, a secondary review group re-examined the work, and finally, a coordination team validated the findings. In this manner, the monitoring data and the phrases identified as assessments were corroborated by multiple entities, with the objective of achieving a greater degree of consistency.

5. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

5.1. COVERAGE TIME DEVOTED TO PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACIES

First, the total coverage time allocated to each candidacy at the national level was analyzed (see Table 1). Given that the specific airtime dedicated to each candidate within each monitored segment was unavailable, and only overall data was provided, the analysis was conducted using the percentages that this airtime represented within the national coverage and in each state. Accordingly, we applied a chi-square test for one sample, or goodness-of-fit test with

categorical variables. This test determines whether the empirical distribution of a categorical variable fits a predetermined theoretical distribution (QUEVEDO RICARDI 2011). For the purposes of this study, the percentages of airtime allocated to each candidate were compared against a theoretically uniform distribution across the three existing presidential candidates.

The data show that Claudia Sheinbaum’s candidacy received the greatest proportion of airtime, accounting for 40.45% of the total airtime dedicated to the three candidates in news broadcasts. Xóchitl Gálvez’s coverage closely followed at 36.65%, while Jorge Álvarez Máynez registered the lowest overall coverage at 22.90%. Despite these observed disparities, the chi-square test did not show significant differences among the three percentages, $\chi^2(2) = 4.940$, $p = .085$. Although this result suggests a relatively equal allocation of time at a national level, the test indicates a trend difference between the coverage times of Claudia Sheinbaum and Jorge Álvarez Máynez.

TABLE 1

Percentage of coverage time dedicated to each candidate in news
programs, by federal entity

Federal entity	CS	XG	JAM	$\chi^2(2)$	p
Aguascalientes	34.36	44.37 _a	21.26	8.061	.018
Baja California	44.90 _a	36.57	18.53	10.535	.005
Baja California Sur	45.69 _a	39.74	14.57	16.059	< .001
Campeche	41.15	34.29	24.55	3.860	.145
Chiapas	48.41 _a	29.85	21.75	10.640	.005
Chihuahua	39.90	40.80 _a	19.30	9.260	.010
Mexico city	39.56	38.43	22.01	5.840	.054
Coahuila	37.26	35.76	26.98	1.820	.403
Colima	48.55 _a	31.07	20.38	12.860	.002
Durango	40.24 _a	38.45	21.31	6.606	.037
Guanajuato	40.93 _a	38.77	20.30	8.060	.018
Guerrero	39.52	33.67	26.81	2.515	.284
Hidalgo	38.14	35.56	26.30	2.480	.289

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Jalisco	36.82	35.74	27.44	1.820	.403
State of Mexico	39.21	37.03	23.76	3.980	.137
Michoacán	44.08 _a	32.07	23.85	6.080	.048
Morelos	44.97 _a	30.40	24.63	6.500	.039
Nayarit	48.37 _a	30.43	21.20	11.455	.003
Nuevo León	36.68	34.03	29.28	0.980	.613
Oaxaca	43.58	30.73	25.69	5.129	.077
Puebla	42.35 _a	35.97	21.67	6.320	.042
Querétaro	39.64 _a	38.53 _a	21.83	6.079	.048
Quintana Roo	47.21 _a	30.90	21.90	9.620	.008
San Luis Potosí	40.90 _a	37.64	21.46	6.980	.031
Sinaloa	36.85	39.23	23.92	3.980	.137
Sonora	39.70	37.11	23.18	4.940	.085
Tabasco	39.33	35.08	25.60	2.660	.264
Tamaulipas	37.85	39.21	22.94	4.820	.090
Tlaxcala	51.67 _a	25.59	22.74	15.109	.001
Veracruz	40.46	35.02	24.52	3.500	.174
Yucatán	49.72 _a	32.12	18.16	15.440	< .001
Zacatecas	41.86	33.50	24.63	4.297	.117
Total	40.45	36.65	22.90	4.940	.085

Source: Own elaboration

Note: CS = Claudia Sheinbaum, XG = Xóchitl Gálvez, JAM = Jorge Álvarez Máynez. Weighted data were employed, as only the aggregate record for each type of rating was available. Percentages accompanied by subscripts indicate the candidate with the greatest presence in each respective state.

Subsequently, we examined coverage patterns for each federal entity within the country (see Table 1). Compared to the national result, statistically significant differences were identified at the subnational level in 17 of the 32 entities, whereas in the remaining 15, coverage proved relatively equitable. Among the entities with greater equity were those encompassing the country's main metropolitan areas, such as Mexico City, $\chi^2(2) = 5.840, p = .054$, Nuevo León, $\chi^2(2) = 0.980, p = .613$; y Jalisco, $\chi^2(2) = 1.820, p = .403$. Conversely,

among the entities that demonstrated statistically significant differences, Claudia Sheinbaum registered greater coverage in fourteen of them, compared to two where Xóchitl Gálvez predominated and one in which both received similar airtime. Candidate Jorge Álvarez Máynez received the least coverage in all of these states, exhibiting statistically significant differences.

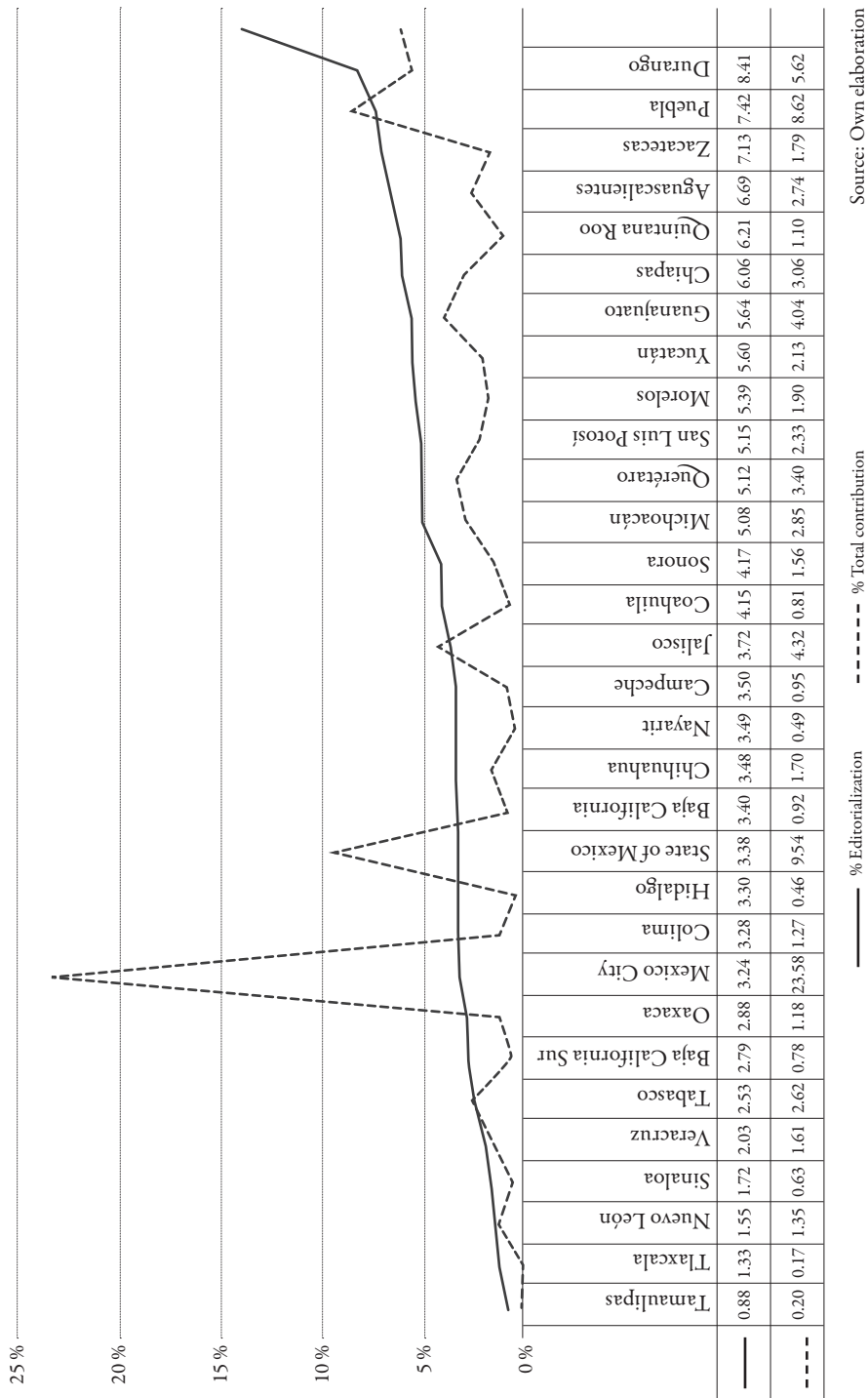
5.2 EDITORIALIZATION OF INFORMATION

To analyze the level of editorialization in news broadcasts during the election campaign, we employed data pertaining to the number of news pieces that received evaluative treatment as a reference. Of the 84,626 news pieces examined, only 3,469 contained evaluations of the information broadcasted. This indicates that throughout the electoral campaign, 4.10% of radio and television news broadcasts presented some degree of editorialization. In addition to the overall analysis, the level of editorialization at the subnational level was determined by analyzing the data corresponding to federal entity.

Regarding the various states, the results obtained showed statistically significant differences in the levels of editorialization recorded across entities, $\chi^2(31) = 45.600$, $p = .044$. When comparing the level of editorialization in each entity with the national average (4.10%), 17 entities were found to have a volume of editorialized pieces below the mean, while 15 registered levels above it. Figure 1 shows each entity's contribution to the total number of pieces evaluated (dotted line) and the level of editorialization within its coverage (solid line). It is evident that entities such as Mexico City, State of Mexico, and Jalisco contributed a substantial volume of pieces evaluated due to the number of media outlets analyzed in the monitoring; however, they did not register high levels of editorialization.

FIGURE 1

Number of pieces valued and editorialization level by federal entity



In contrast, states like Quintana Roo, Aguascalientes, and Zacatecas registered high levels of editorialization in their coverage, despite contributing a small number of evaluated pieces to the overall monitoring. Conversely, states like Puebla and Durango stood out for exhibiting both phenomena concurrently: a considerable volume of articles with evaluations and high levels of editorialization (see Figure 1). This result may be associated with the previously reported finding, given that eleven of the states that showed statistically significant differences in the coverage time allocated to the three candidates were among the fifteen that exceeded the national percentage of editorialized pieces.

5.3. TONE OF EDITORIALIZATION IN THE INFORMATION

Among the 3,469 evaluated pieces, we identified a total of 5,252 evaluations corresponding to the three presidential candidates. Of that total, 1,727 were positive (32.88%) and 3,525 were negative (67.12%). This yields a negativity level of 34.24% in the evaluated information, calculated from the difference resulting from subtracting the percentage of negative evaluations from the percentage of positive ones. Upon analyzing the distribution of these evaluations among the candidates, statistically significant differences were observed, $\chi^2(2, N = 5252) = 162.992, p < .001, V = .176$, indicating a differentiated tone towards the candidates within news coverage (see Table 2).

TABLE 2

Number and percentage of ratings received by candidates at the national level

	Claudia Sheinbaum		Xóchitl Gálvez		Jorge Álvarez Máynez	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Positive	841	42.01 _a	504	32.83	382	22.27 _b
Negative	1161	57.99 _a	1031	67.17	1333	77.73 _b
Total	2002	100	1535	100	1715	100
Δ	-15.98		-34.33		-55.45	

Source: Own elaboration

Note: Weighted data were employed, as only the aggregate record for each type of evaluation was available. Percentages accompanied by subscripts indicate the candidates that received the highest and lowest number of evaluations. The delta value represents the difference between the percentage of positive and negative evaluations, with a possible range between -100 and 100.

The adjusted residuals revealed that Claudia Sheinbaum received a higher percentage of positive ratings (42.01%) compared to Jorge Álvarez Máynez (22.27%), whereas the latter registered significantly more negative ratings (77.73%) than Claudia Sheinbaum (57.99%) (see Table 2). In both cases, Xóchitl Gálvez’s percentages positioned her at an intermediate level between the two contenders. In addition to the data concerning the tone of the ratings, the results of the generated differential were analyzed, providing a comprehensive view of the editorializing directed at each candidate. Across all cases, the differential yielded negative values, with a negativity index of 15.98% for Claudia Sheinbaum, 34.33% for Xóchitl Gálvez, and 55.45% for Jorge Álvarez Máynez.

TABLE 3

Evaluations received by candidates and affective valence by federative entity

Federative entity	Claudia Sheinbaum		Xóchitl Gálvez		Jorge Álvarez Máynez		<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	Δ	<i>n</i>	Δ	<i>n</i>	Δ	
Aguascalientes	88	9.09	59	-8.47	47	-78.72	<.001
Baja California	18	33.33	14	-71.43	17	-52.94	.004
Baja California Sur	16	-12.50	8	-25	13	38.46	.266
Campeche	16	0	12	-66.67	17	-76.47	.030
Chiapas	91	91.21	23	-47.83	49	-30.61	<.001
Chihuahua	41	-51.22	30	46.67	22	-54.55	<.001
Mexico City	467	-32.33	373	-27.08	391	-57.54	<.001
Coahuila	12	-100	10	-60	11	-81.82	.267
Colima	16	-25	17	-76.47	17	-41.18	.224
Durango	90	24.44	98	-71.43	81	-35.80	<.001
Guanajuato	103	-68.93	71	-21.13	65	-56.92	<.001
Guerrero	143	-63.64	139	-55.40	141	-61.70	.664
Hidalgo	7	42.86	8	25	9	-33.33	.267
Jalisco	71	-38.03	58	-68.97	79	-62.03	.076
State of Mexico	178	-42.70	152	-36.84	133	-57.89	.125
Michoacán	82	-9.76	34	-23.53	42	-66.67	.007
Morelos	33	-63.64	14	-28.57	47	-82.98	.046



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Nayarit	5	-60	3	33.33	11	-63.64	.223
Nuevo León	23	65.22	17	17.65	22	-45.45	<.001
Oaxaca	21	4.76	11	-81.82	23	-73.91	.004
Puebla	137	-21.17	122	-42.62	174	-49.43	.023
Querétaro	37	-51.35	51	-5.88	81	-72.84	<.001
Quintana Roo	30	60	25	-76	18	-88.89	<.001
San Luis Potosí	53	28.30	21	-14.29	49	-83.67	<.001
Sinaloa	11	-63.64	10	40	16	37.50	.017
Sonora	29	10.34	29	-44.83	22	-90.91	<.001
Tabasco	76 _f	63.16	26	-46.15	29	3.45	<.001
Tamaulipas	2	0	7	71.43	4	-100	.023
Tlaxcala	3	100	1	100	5	20	.358
Veracruz	27	48.15	24	-16.67	15	-46.67	.006
Yucatán	46	17.39	41	7.32	31	-29.03	.123
Zacatecas	30	-80	27	-70.37	34	-35.29	.060

Source: Own elaboration

Note: Weighted data were employed, as only the overall record for each type of rating was available. The delta value represents the difference between the percentage of positive and negative evaluations, with a possible range between -100 and 100. Frequencies and percentages for positive and negative evaluations were omitted from the table to simplify the data presentation.

Table 3 presents a disaggregated overview of the number of evaluations each candidate received across the different states, as well as the differential between positive and negative assessments.² In general terms, the pattern observed at the national level was replicated in thirteen states, wherein negative evaluations predominating over positive ones for all three candidates. A detailed analysis by candidate reveals that Claudia Sheinbaum received the most favorable evaluative treatment across the states, with fourteen states showing predominantly positive assessments of her candidacy, compared to eight for Xóchitl Gálvez and four for Jorge Álvarez Máynez.

Furthermore, Claudia Sheinbaum’s candidacy was the only one to register a neutral evaluative outcome both in Campeche and Tamaulipas. In contrast,

² In order to improve the understanding of the data, the frequencies and percentages of positive and negative ratings were omitted from the table, and only the difference between the two was retained.

Jorge Álvarez Máynez's candidacy showed the highest level of negative evaluative coverage, predominating in twenty-eight states. Xóchitl Gálvez also received a high level of negativity, with unfavorable evaluations in twenty-four states. Finally, Claudia Sheinbaum emerged as the candidate with the fewest states reflecting negative assessments, with a total of sixteen cases (see Table 3).

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This article aimed to examine the radio and television news coverage of the three candidates for the presidency of Mexico during the 2024 election campaign. Specifically, it sought to determine whether news coverage was equitable—understood in terms of the airtime allocated to each candidate—and objective—conceptualized in terms of news editorializing—at both the national and subnational levels.

Concerning the first research question, which inquired whether the media provided equitable overall coverage of the candidates, the results confirm the existence of equity, given that no statistically significant differences were detected in the coverage received by the three contenders. Although the two candidates with the highest probability of winning received marginally greater coverage than the MC candidate, these disparities did not reach statistical significance. This finding situates the 2024 national coverage within the historical trend identified by previous scholarship, which has documented a trend toward greater equity in the airtime dedicated to the different presidential candidates in Mexican media (FLORES GONZÁLEZ *ET AL.* 2018; MARTÍNEZ GARZA & GODÍNEZ GARZA 2013).

However, in response to the second research question, differences in coverage were detected at the subnational level. The results show that in a majority of states—17 out of 32—coverage lacked equity in the airtime allocated to the candidates. Moreover, it is noteworthy that in most of these states, the inequitable bias favored the candidate representing the governing coalition, Claudia Sheinbaum. It is equally significant that the states that contain the country's main metropolitan areas—namely Mexico City, Jalisco, and Nuevo León—showed higher levels of equity. Considered collectively, these findings reinforce the idea of a hybrid media system in Mexico (GONZÁLEZ MACÍAS & ECHEVERRÍA VICTORIA 2017), characterized by pronounced distinctions

between national and local media. Within the latter context, imbalances in news coverage of electoral campaigns appear to persist.

Regarding the third research question, the data suggest a differentiated editorial approach between the overall coverage of presidential candidates and that developed at the subnational level. Although the aggregate volume of editorialized news was relatively low (4.10%) in comparison with findings of previous studies, marked differences in the volume of editorialized information were again observed when comparing the different states of the country. Seventeen of these entities registered levels of editorialization below the overall average, and within this group were those containing the main metropolitan areas, including Jalisco, Nuevo León, and Mexico City. This result confirms, once more, the existence of a hybrid media system characterized by differences contingent upon the regional area in which the media outlets operate.

While these findings might suggest a certain degree of objectivity achieved by the national media in their coverage of the 2024 electoral campaign, it is advisable to review the data derived from the fourth research question before reaching such a conclusion, as this allows for a more precise determination of whether objectivity and balance in the editorial treatment of the candidates actually occurred. Analyzing the affective valence used in the editorialization process reveals clear distinctions among the candidates, notwithstanding that negativity predominated in the treatment accorded to all three. In this regard, the editorial treatment received by Claudia Sheinbaum was considerably more positive than accorded to the other two candidates, whereas Jorge Álvarez Máynez received the most negative treatment of the three.

This result is reinforced by the data obtained in the subnational analysis, which reveals that in a considerably larger number of states, Claudia Sheinbaum's editorial treatment was positive compared to that of the other two candidates. This finding contrasts with the high negativity recorded in the editorialized reports of the entities by Xóchitl Gálvez (24 out of 32 entities) and Jorge Álvarez Máynez (28 out of 32). The results demonstrate that, although coverage may be equitable in terms of airtime allocation, it does not necessarily achieve balance and objectivity in editorial treatment. This aspect is particularly relevant considering the influence that such editorial practices may exert on the formation of public perceptions and attitudes toward political contenders.

The study's findings allow the conclusion that a dual tendency characterized the coverage of the 2024 Mexican presidential election. In general terms, the results indicate that, at the national level, coverage of the different candidates tends to be equitable, consistent with patterns observed since the first elections of the twenty-first century. However, editorializing processes continue to constitute a component of news coverage. Although the trajectory appears to shift toward reduced opinion-based content in news reporting, as evidenced by the low percentage of editorialized news stories nationwide, this practice persists as a strategy employed by some Mexican media outlets. Finally, discernible divergence emerges between electoral media coverage at the national and subnational levels; within the latter context, certain states maintain approaches that fall short of the fairness and objectivity that ought to guide journalistic practice during an electoral process.

The study was conducted considering certain limitations, primarily stemming from the use of secondary data provided by the INE's monitoring during the 2024 campaign. The inability to operationalize the variables and the methodology employed for their measurement prevented complete control over the results obtained. This constraint is compounded by the absence of an inter-rater reliability analysis to determine the level of intercoder agreement achieved in the study. Although the monitoring team implemented mechanisms to reduce potential biases inherent in observational research, future investigations should calculate the level of intercoder agreement to enhance the reliability of the data.

Finally, the need to weight the data to calculate the results, as in the case of the percentages analyzed using chi-square tests, may have prevented these findings from precisely reflecting the actual media coverage during the electoral campaign. Accordingly, future studies would benefit from utilizing comprehensive databases that provide the corresponding values for each variable in each unit of analysis. All such methodological consideration should be reviewed in light of subsequent monitoring exercises conducted by the INE and future studies that work with data derived from this type of monitoring endeavor.

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Authors contribution:

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FELIPE MARAÑÓN: conceptualization, investigation, writing (original draft).

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