# Inter-Candidate Agenda Setting Effect of the 2018 Mexican Presidential Election: Political Party Candidates Vs. an Independent Candidate

Efecto del establecimiento de agenda entre candidatos en la elección presidencial de México de 2018: Candidatos de los partidos políticos Vs. el candidato independiente

**María de los Ángeles Flores**
The University of Texas at El Paso
Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0081-0180
mdelosangelesflores@utep.edu

**Abstract:** The 2018 Mexican presidential election marked the initiation of a new political communication dynamic in which traditional electoral communication strategies of political parties were challenged by an independent candidate. This study evaluated this innovative electoral setting by examining Telemundo's electoral coverage of party-affiliated candidates —Anaya Cortés, Meade Kuribreña, and López Obrador— and the independent candidate —Rodríguez Calderón— through agenda setting theory. The data was collected from Telemundo's national newscast "Noticias Telemundo" with José Díaz Balart during INE's official 90-day electoral campaign period. The inter-candidate agenda setting effect regarding the horse race topics was strong among the contenders suggesting that Telemundo's journalists were disseminating the same information regarding party candidates, but the journalists' reporting differed when covering the independent candidate. Outcomes indicate that there were two dominant political discussions in Telemundo regarding horse race topics, one emerging from all party candidates and the other one from the independent candidate. The inter-candidate agenda setting effect of issues presented strong correlations among all contenders, suggesting that their policy issues news agendas in Telemundo were nearly identical, which could have made it difficult for voters to distinguish among the candidates' campaign messages. Overall, Rodríguez Calderón challenged parties' political communication strategies in terms of horse race topics for his ability to disseminate a distinct campaign message in Telemundo despite having acquired the most negative coverage from journalists. But the independent candidate did not represent an opposition for parties regarding issues because his political rhetoric was not dissimilar from the other contenders.

**Keywords:** Candidates, election campaign, inter-candidate agenda setting effect, Mexico, presidential election

**Resumen:** La elección presidencial de 2018 en México inicio una nueva dinámica de comunicación política porque las estrategias de comunicación electoral que tradicionalmente utilizan los partidos políticos fueron desafiadas por un candidato independiente. Este estudio examina este innovador contexto electoral enfocándose en el poder de influencia entre los candidatos de partidos —Anaya Cortés, Meade Kuribreña, y López Obrador— y el candidato independiente —Rodríguez Calderón— a través de la teoría del establecimiento de la agenda. Se trabajaron datos del noticiero nacional "Noticias Telemundo" de José Díaz Balart durante los 90 días de campaña electoral que marca el INE. El establecimiento de la agenda entre candidatos presentó un efecto fuerte entre los contendientes, sugiriendo que los periodistas de Telemundo estaban difundiendo la misma información para los candidatos, pero sus reportes informativos cambiaron cuando cubrían al candidato independiente. Los resultados indicaron que hubo dos discusiones en Telemundo sobre los temas de campaña, una para los candidatos de los partidos y otra para el candidato independiente. Se observaron fuertes correlaciones entre los contendientes sugiriendo que sus agendas eran casi idénticas, lo cual pudiera resultar que los votantes tuvieran dificultad para distinguir temas políticos. En general, Rodríguez Calderón desafió las estrategias de comunicación política de los partidos por su habilidad para enviar un

mensaje de campaña distinto, a pesar de que fue el candidato que recibió más cobertura negativa. Además, no representó un desafió para los partidos políticos en los temas políticos porque su retórica no fue diferente a la de los otros contendientes.

**Palabras clave:** Candidatos; campaña electoral, elección presidencial, establecimiento de la agenda entre candidatos, México

**How to cite this paper / Cómo citar este artículo:** Flores, M. de los Á., (2024). Inter-Candidate Agenda Setting Effect of the 2018 Mexican Presidential Election: Political Party Candidates Vs. an Independent Candidate. *Revista de Comunicación Política*, *6*, e240602. https://doi.org/10.29105/rcp.v6i1.56

# Introduction

The most noteworthy democratic characteristic of the 2018 Mexican presidential election cycle was this nation's new electoral model, which allowed for the inclusion of independent candidates. That is, political parties as well as citizens were allowed to nominate an individual of their choosing for the presidential seat. For the first time in Mexico's contemporary political history, the 2018 presidential election allowed an independent candidate to register to run for the presidential seat. More than 70 years after the 1946 reform that denied citizens to be nominated to an elected position without a party affiliation, an innovative electoral dynamic was created whereby the communication power of influence of political parties was challenged by an independent candidate. Accordingly, the most remarkable characteristic of the 2018 Mexican presidential election was that the participation of an independent presidential candidate was permitted at the federal government level.

The aim of this research is to determine the political communication power of influence between party affiliated candidates and the independent candidate under this new electoral context. Traditionally, parties were the only entities permitted under the Mexican electoral law to nominate a presidential candidate. They had the potential of providing their presidential nominee with the necessary political machinery to run their electoral campaign nationwide until the 2018 election, which established a new set of electoral rules for the presidential seat. This election allowed an independent candidate to register to run for Mexico's highest office, thus creating an innovative electoral dynamic where the power of parties was challenged by an independent candidate. This research paper seeks to document scientific evidence regarding the political communication interplay across those candidates nominated by a party and the independent candidate.

In 2004, Jorge Castañeda Gutman, who served as Mexico's Secretary of Foreign Affairs from 2000 to 2003 under President Vicente Fox Quesada's administration, requested to the Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE), now Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE) to be registered as an independent candidate arguing that two laws permitted his registration. First, Article 35 of the Mexican Constitution, which reads in part, "Es un derecho fundamental para los ciudadanos el poder ser votado para todos los cargos de elección popular, y nombrado para cualquier otro empleo o comisión, teniendo las calidades que establezca la ley"[1] (Cámara de Diputados, 2024); and second, Article 175 of the Código Federal de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales (COFIPE) "Los ciudadanos están obligados a inscribirse en el Registro Federal de Electores y a informar a éste de su cambio de domicilio dentro de los treinta días siguientes a que éste ocurra. Asimismo, los ciudadanos participarán en la formación y actualización del Catálogo General de Electores y del Padrón Electoral en los términos de las formas reglamentarias correspondientes[2]" (Cámara de Diputados, 1990).

From Castañeda's (2016) point of view,

---

[1] "It is a fundamental right of every citizen to vote and be voted into a popularly elected office and he/she could be appointed to any employment or commission holding the qualities established by law."

[2] "The citizens are obligated to subscribe to the Federal Code of Institutions and Electoral Processes and to inform this agency of any change of address within thirty days after the change. Also, citizens would participate in the formation and update of the General Catalog of Electors and the Electoral Census in the terms of the regulatory forms that corresponds."

Nosotros los mexicanos escogemos entre los contendientes propuestos por los tres principales partidos políticos, quienes seleccionan a sus nominados, como es lógico, a través de sus reglas internas, practicas históricas, tradiciones y sus intereses. La sociedad civil no participa, o tuvo manera de participar en la selección de esos nominados...Yo estoy convencido que hoy, más que nunca, que en México la candidatura para el presidente de la república sin afiliación a partidos políticos es una necesidad indispensable, pero no es suficiente, para traer los cambios que necesita el país.[3] (p. 1)

To Castañeda, the party-based democracy known as partidocracia (party democracy) has created corruption, impunity, and human rights omissions, but non-party candidates would bring fresh political leadership because they would not have links to think tank groups.

IFE rejected Castañeda's request, arguing that indeed the COFIPE law used to allow the registration of independent candidates; however, the reform of 1946 introduced changes into the COFIPE law that barred the registration of independent candidates, giving that right exclusively to political parties. Castañeda decided to move forward by taking his case to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. In 2008, this court ruled that the Mexican state violated Castañeda's rights to judicial protection but did not violate his right to be voted on. The court recommended that Mexico adjust their secondary laws which regulate the protection of their citizens' electoral rights to be elected (Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2008). A year later, in late 2009, a political reform regarding the electoral law concerning the role of independent candidates was presented to Congress. After approval by Congress, this reform initiative was sent to the states' legislations for their review and potential approval. For this reform to have federal standing, the approval of at least half of the 32 states were needed.

Three years later, in 2012, Congress announced that it had received notice that 17 states had approved the electoral reform, and therefore an approval declaration could be written. The reform initiative was then made into law establishing the independent candidate at the federal, state, and local levels (Cámara de Diputados, 2013). The mid-term elections of 2015 registered the participation of 133 independent candidates at the local, state, and federal levels across the nation, with six of them winning positions. The victorious candidates were Manuel Clouthier Carrillo-Diputado Federal por Sinaloa (Federal Representative for Sinaloa), Pedro Kumamoto Aguilar-Diputado Estatal por Jalisco (State Representative for Jalisco), César Valdés Martínez-Presidente Municipal de Garza García, Nuevo León (Mayor of Garza García, Nuevo León), José Alberto Méndez Pérez-Presidente Municipal de Comonfort, Guanajuato (Mayor of Comonfort, Guanajuato), Alfonso Martínez Alcázar-Presidente Municipal de Morelia, Michoacán (Mayor of Morelia, Michoacán), and Jaime Heliodoro Rodríguez Calderón-Gobernador de Nuevo León (Governor of Nuevo León) (Arroyo, 2012).

---

[3] "We Mexicans choose among contenders proposed by the three main political parties, who select their nominees, as is logical, through their internal rules, practices, historical traditions, and their interests. The civil society did not participate, or had a way to participate, in the selection of those nominees...I am convinced that today, more than ever, that in Mexico a candidacy to the republic's presidency without political party affiliation is an indispensable necessity, although not a sufficient one, to bring about the changes that the country requires."

Corona Nakamura and Hernández Velazco (2015) observed that "Independent candidacies are instruments that drive transparency and accountability, they are spaces for the legal framework to contribute to the improvement of the system of representation in addition to being a new option in the sphere of political representation"[4] (p. 119). The prospect of the independent candidate opens the venue for citizens to self-nominate and be voted on to accurately represent their communities by taking leadership responsibilities to benefit all members of society. Espinoza Valle (2019) observed that political parties have been transformed to win elections, "the political parties have lost their identity...there are no more political parties which maintain their class prerogatives or ideology-based identity politics...or a prohibition against a representative democracy [for all] in favor of a direct democracy [for some]"[5] (p. 41). To Espinoza Valle (2019), those transformations have not strengthened the essence of political parties but have deteriorated them to the point of beginning to lose the voters' trust.

The 2018 election cycle provided the setting to quantify the transfer of salience dynamics between the party candidates and the independent candidate under the theoretical framework of Agenda Setting. This research approach is quite innovative because, for the first time in modern electoral history, an independent candidate is allowed to participate in a presidential election in over 70 years. This new political environment is testing the independent candidate's communication power of influence over party candidates, and vice versa, by assessing the influence that political parties had in the 2018 general election cycle. Three presidential candidates represented one political coalition each, while the fourth ran as an independent candidate. Each of the political coalitions consisted of the union of three political parties.

To ensure impartiality in this investigation, the presidential contenders are presented in alphabetical order according to their last name. Ricardo Anaya Cortés-RAC was the presidential candidate for the coalition México al Frente (Mexico to the Front), an alliance between the Partido Acción National (PAN, Nacional Action Party), Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD, Democratic Revolution Party), and Movimiento Ciudadano (MC, Citizens' Movement). José Antonio Meade Kuribreña-JAMK was the presidential nominee of the Todos por México (Everyone for Mexico) political coalition, which emerged from the fusion of Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party), Partido Nueva Alianza (PANAL, New Alliance Party), and Partido Verde Ecologista de México (PVEM, Ecologist Green Party of Mexico). Andrés Manuel López Obrador-AMLO was the presidential contender for the Juntos Haremos Historia (Together We Will Make History), a partnership between the Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional (MORENA, National Regeneration Movement), Partido del Trabajo (PT, Labor Party), and Partido Encuentro Social (PES, Social Encounter Party). The independent candidate for the presidential seat was Jaime Heliodoro Rodríguez Calderón-JHRC, known as El Bronco, who had to gather signatures from the citizenry equal to 1% of

---

[4] Original text in Spanish–translation by the author.
[5] Original text in Spanish–translation by the author.

the current population census and originating from at least 17 states of the total 32 states that comprise this nation to be in compliance with the Mexican electoral law.

This investigation's center of attention is to scrutinize the role that parties played in the 2018 election by comparing and contrasting presidential contenders having emerged from a party —RAC, AMLO, and JAMK— against the independent candidate —JHRC— focusing on their inter-candidate agenda setting effect. The research approach of this paper is innovative in that it examines the political communication discourse interplay across all four presidential candidates. This investigation has five goals to accomplish. First, to identify each presidential candidate's horse race and policy issues agendas. Second, to measure the inter-candidate agenda setting effect between contenders' horse race and issues news agendas. Third, from a cause-and-effect perspective, to determine the directional flow of influence between presidential candidates. Fourth, to determine the directional flow of influence between those candidates nominated by political parties and the independent candidate. And fifth, this paper examines whether the agenda setting effect can be discerned on an independent candidate with the same accuracy as in party candidates.

This new electoral environment creates the perfect opportunity to expand the inter-candidate agenda setting effect body of knowledge. This research also expands on the internationalization of agenda setting theory, especially the inter-candidate agenda setting effect in a Mexican presidential election. It is worth noting that the agenda setting theory was created mainly to test the presidential election cycles in the United States under the context of two political parties and two presidential contenders, which works extremely well in assessing that electoral system.

## Literature Review

Agenda setting theory examines the communication process, focusing on its effects on audiences. Maxwell McCombs (2004), one of the intellectual fathers of this theory, commented that his theory was inspired by Walter Lippmann's (1922) concept of 'pictures in our heads' describing the role that news plays in its audience's perceptions of reality. "Agenda Setting is a theory about the transfer of salience from the mass media's pictures of the world to the pictures in our heads. The core theoretical idea is that elements prominent in the media picture become prominent in the audience's picture" (McCombs, 2004, p. 68). Agenda setting theory calls attention to the learning process that takes place from the news to their audiences. As a result, news consumers learn that the importance of a topic or theme is directly related to the amount and frequency of coverage, increasing its level of salience. As McCombs (2004) explains, "for all news media, the repetition of a topic day after day is the most powerful message of all about its importance" (p. 12). For this reason, audiences perceive those topics and themes that are continuously present in the news as more significant than those presented once in a while.

Conventionally, agenda setting theory notes that during a presidential electoral cycle there are several campaign events taking place simultaneously, making it challenging for journalists to

cover all of them. Conversely, reporters have to implement a selection process to focus their news-gathering activities on any giving day. The editorial selection process of deciding which topics are newsworthy determines the agenda. Basically, journalists act as gatekeepers presenting a list of topics that from their point of view are the top problems in the nation that should be resolved at once. As McCombs (2004) stated, "this ability to focus attention on a few public issues —as well as many other aspects of public affairs— is the agenda setting role of the press" (p. 156). Therefore, the classic agenda setting effect proposition suggests that the news media's ability to focus the attention of their audiences on a few public issues is the agenda setting role of the press where "the unit of analysis on each agenda is an object, a public issue" (McCombs, 2004, p. 69) which operates from two perspectives—policy issues and horse race topics—where each of those angles generates its own agenda. In agenda setting theory, the label 'agenda' describes the list of most frequent issues or horse race topics during a particular period of examination.

Furthermore, Berelson et al. (1954) noted that political behavior emerges from how political events are covered by the news media, which have the potential to impact electoral results. From their point of view, journalists could potentially influence voters by focusing on the coverage of some topics over others and by providing more exposure to certain policy domains but not others. By the same token, Cohen (1963) stated "the mass media may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about (p. 13). He believes that journalists, through their reporting, have the ability to propose to news consumers what things they could take into consideration when deciding on a possible course of action such as voting for a particular presidential candidate. News consumers rely on these news agendas to be informed about their environment, "the news [do] not inject viewers with perspectives; [they suggest] that certain issues are more important than others and people [news consumers] come to accept these interpretations [as their reality]" (Perloff, 1998, p. 219). McCombs (2004) stated the following:

> Agenda-Setting theory in its fundamental form is about the transfer of salience among agendas. Most commonly, people think about the transfer of salience from the media agenda to the public agenda. But Agenda Setting theory also considers many other agendas, such as the agenda of news sources and policymakers, and some apply the term agenda building to the process of salience transfer among a series of agendas. (p. 143)

Agenda setting theory explains relationships among the mass media, the public, and policymakers, providing an understanding of the degree of similarities or differences in their connections as well as the direction of influence (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Typically, studies focus on the interconnection between the media and the public, but there are many other possibilities. This study expands the agenda setting theory by exploring the interplay between presidential candidates —inter-candidate agenda setting effect— focusing on observing the influence that they had on each other. Particularly, comparing and contrasting presidential contenders who emerged from a party with the independent candidate. The purpose is to determine whether the inter-candidate agenda setting effect can be detected on the independent candidate with the same precision as on the candidates

nominated by parties. Political communication scholars found that in presidential election coverage, the press focus has been usually on a candidate's attributes rather than on policy issues (Bennett, 2005; Bennett & Manheim, 2001; Susman & Galizio, 2003). Therefore, the present study centers on the examination of horse race topics as well as issues.

Several scholars state that Mexico's principal national private television network, Televisa, has had its journalistic coverage be all positive for the PRI, the ruling party, a behavior expected from government-controlled stations, not from private entity (Acosta Valverde & Parra Rosales, 1994; Alder 1993; Arredondo Ramírez et al., 1991; Bernal Sahagún & Torreblanca Jacques, 1988; Hallin & Papathanassopoulos, 2002; Lawson, 2002). Nevertheless, the 2000 presidential election marked an unprecedented transformation in the journalistic electoral coverage dynamics among news outlets. For the first time in history, electoral laws provided opposition candidates with free TV broadcast time, allowed public opinion polls, and organized televised debates, which influenced news media electoral coverage, completely changing the news gathering dynamics.

As Mercado et al. (2003) noted, "Coverage of the 2000 campaign by the media was unconventional by Mexico's standards. Traditionally, the Mexican broadcast media only gave time to ruling party candidates in their coverage. When covering other candidates, which was uncommon, such coverage was very biased against them" (p. 4). They argue that television electoral news coverage has replaced the traditional campaign rallies as the primary means for voters to receive information about candidates. Hence, they compared the 2000 presidential debates topics against the issues presented in electoral news broadcast on TV. Their results indicated that the top three issues during the debates were institutional change, corruption, and education, whereas for the media, the higher-ranking issues were education, corruption, and income distribution. Therefore, their hypothesis, which stated that the higher an issue ranked in the news media agenda, the higher that same issue would rank in the presidential debates' agenda, was mostly supported. This study demonstrated that political parties were less influential than the news media at the presidential electoral level. In the 2000 presidential election, an opposition candidate, Vicente Fox (PAN), won the presidential election and ended the PRI regime. In many ways, Fox's electoral triumph marked the transition from an authoritarian non-competitive political system to more democratic practices.

Likewise, Lawson and McCann (2004) observed that Televisa has been criticized for supporting the PRI. To them, Television Azteca "has a more balanced [journalistic coverage] at least with regard to the conservative National Action Party" (p. 7). Lawson and McCann noted that both networks have been hostile towards the PRD candidate. Their volume of coverage results indicates that Fox, received the most coverage, followed by Francisco Labastida (PRI) and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (PRD). Also, they found evidence in support of news media effects, "exposure to television news had significant, substantial effects on both attitudes and vote choices in Mexico's watershed presidential election of 2000…television influence in electoral campaign may be substantially larger in emerging democratic systems" (p. 1).

In a separate study, Hughes and Lawson (2004) examined the relationship between media ownership and partisan bias in television electoral coverage. They argue that "both commercial and state-owned television networks have proven deeply biased and civic oriented journalistic culture has only infrequently exercised a decisive influence on the behavior of broadcasters" (p. 85). Hughes and Lawson point three significant findings: first the private-owned national networks offered a more balance electoral coverage than the provincial broadcasters did, particularly state-run stations. Second, local private television (due to financial incentives and potential favors from government officials) and public stations (because coverage depended on whether governor intended to use the station for political purposes or not) were vulnerable to bias. Third, political inclinations of media owners and journalists did influence their electoral coverage, "the overall effect of professional norms remained relatively weak" (Hughes & Lawson, 2004, p. 82).

Moving on to the 2006 presidential election, Flores and McCombs (2010) analyzed the direction of influence between Mexican national television newscasts and presidential candidates' political television advertising during the six-month campaign cycle. They content analyzed Televisa's El Noticiero with Joaquín López Dóriga and TV Azteca's Hechos de la Noche with Javier Alatorre, which aired from January to June of 2006. In addition, 98 TV spots produced by the three presidential candidates —Felipe Calderón Hinojosa-FCH (PAN), AMLO (PRD), and Roberto Madrazo Pintado (PRI)— were analyzed. Outcomes documented that the flow of influence dynamic was reciprocal, indicating that the candidates' topics agendas were influenced by each other, but the predominant flow of influence was from TV newscasts to candidates' TV ads. Flores and McCombs (2010) noted that "television newscasts, not television candidates' political advertisements, set the agenda during the 2006 Mexican election" (p. 72).

Another study regarding television ads was conducted by Iturbe Carbajal (2013) who examined the most disseminated ads nationwide, investigating if negative ads that criticize an opponent contender provided more information to voters than positive ads, which typically consist of self-promotion messages. His outcomes demonstrated that ads focused more on positive than negative; most of the ads were about the candidates' personal attributes than about horse race topics and issues, where ads were more emotive than rational, and appealing to emotional fear. He concluded that even though negative ads can provide more information to voters about the candidates than positive ads, "that statement cannot be generalized to all countries because the 2006 election demonstrated that Mexico was an exception of that rule" (p. 182).

After complaints of fraud allegations regarding the 2006 election, reforms were approved by Congress in 2007 and 2008 to IFE's laws to bring equity and transparency into the electoral process while reducing its cost. Those new rules and regulations went into effect in the 2012 Presidential election changing the electoral communication landscape. The official campaign period was reduced from six months to three months and public funding for campaigns was reduced by 48% while private funding was limited to 10% of the spending ceiling. To minimize the influence of special interests, IFE became the only entity allowed to purchase radio and television advertising on behalf of the political

parties and all candidates signed a civility pact pledging not to contest the results. Flores-Macías (2013) determined that "electoral oversight authorities have become stronger—with the sharp prompt from the credibility setback of the disputed 2006 vote. Civil society has become better organized although the drug-related violence has taken a toll on press freedom" (p. 138).

Since then, the Committee to Protect Journalists considered Mexico to be one of the most dangerous countries for journalists in the world. Four candidates ran for the presidential seat in 2012: Josefina Vázquez Mota-JVM (PAN), AMLO (PRD), Gabriel Quadri de la Torre-GQT for the New Alliance Party (PANAL), and Enrique Peña Nieto-EPN (PRI) who won the election. Flores-Macías (2013) argued that EPN's "good looks, recent marriage to a famous soap-opera actress, and cozy relationship as governor with the country's television networks gained him favorable media coverage despite the vagueness of his proposals" (p. 131) making the return of the PRI to power possible. His results determined that the FCH's administration mediocre economic performance and high levels of violence contributed to PAN's defeat.

The first female presidential candidate was Rosario Ibarra de Piedra who was nominated twice, in 1982 and in 1988, representing the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT) on both occasions. In 1994, Marcela Lombardo Otero was appointed by the Partido Popular Socialista (PPS). In 1994, Cecilia Soto was designated by the Partido del Trabajo (PT). In 2006, Patricia Mercado represented the Partido Alternativa Socialdemócrata y Campesina (PASC). All of those female presidential candidates had emerged from left-wing parties. However, JVM was nominated by PAN, a right-wing party, and one of the three major political groups in the country. As Vidal Correa (2020) explained, unlike previous female candidates "JVM had great possibilities with the electorate polls placing her in the second position [at the beginning of the race] (…) the first woman with a real chance of being elected president in Mexico" (p. 533). But after the first presidential debate, AMLO gradually pushed JVM into third place. Vidal Correa (2020) evaluated how three major national newspapers covered JVM's campaign.

Vidal Correa (2020) determined that journalists were reporting about the historical significance of her nomination describing it as a milestone in Mexico's political history, but "the media [also] portrayed her as the weakest rival" (p. 533) because of her constant struggles to be competitive in the electoral cycle. Vidal Correa's outcomes documented that JVM was the candidate who received the least news coverage, "it could be argued that JVM already had very little chance of winning. This could explain the reluctance of the media to continue covering her" (p. 538). Likewise, her results demonstrated that JVM's coverage was centered on horse race topics, not issues, producing an 'empty' coverage because journalists' news stories were superficial. Regarding the candidate's personal attributes, Vidal Correa (2020) found that news stories presented JVM as more skilled than her male contenders because of her experience as a mother and a wife, her ability to run the race in heels, her aggressive, masculine attitudes in debates and campaign rallies, as well as her call to female voters to refrain from having sex until their husband/partner agreed to vote for her. Vidal Correa (2020)

determined that "the question as to whether gender bias in media coverage prevented JVM from winning... the answer is probably not" (p. 546).

A separate study evaluated political information efficacy by examining voters' perceptions of information reliability among traditional and new media news outlets in the 2012 election. Kavanaugh et al. (2016) demonstrated that voters perceive information from print newspapers, radio talk shows, and online digital websites as more reliable than government sources. By the same token, their results indicated that online websites and online video sharing websites were more reliable than political information distributed by social network sites —such as Facebook and Twitter— and that the voters' practice of sharing online political information with their family and friends is significant and positively associated as strong indication of political information efficacy. If voters have access to high quality information that they can trust and rely on, they will feel more informed about the election and qualified to actively participate in the electoral process. Kavanaugh et al. (2016) concluded that "In Mexico, there is still adequate press freedom for diverse points of view to be represented in mainstream press" (p. 601).

Adding to the social media analysis, Sandoval-Almazan (2015) noted that all three presidential candidates started their presidential campaigns in January 2012 in social media because it is not regulated and/or limited by law despite INE's official campaign period starting five months later, from May 1 to July 2 (election day). He examined EPN's twitter account (@EPN) and determined that the presidential candidate "used his twitter account to provide information of his political activities, and some thoughts about actual issues or political trends" (p. 5). Nevertheless, EPN's behavior during two separate events initiated two social media protest movements against him as described by Sandoval-Almazan. In December 2011, at the International Book Fair in Guadalajara, as EPN presented his book to the press, one journalist asked him to name three books that have marked his life or political career. Regrettably, he was not able to answer the question correctly mixing the names of authors of two well-known books. Twitter's response to EPN's mistake was viral becoming a trend topic a few hours after the incident. Subsequently, EPN's daughter made a re-tweet insulting Mexicans calling them "proletariat" in a clearly discriminatory way, causing anger among Twitter users and resulting in a social media protest movement, "the case of #Iamnotproletarian is the starting point of Enrique Peña's undermined presence on Twitter, but it shows the weakness of the candidate throughout the electoral campaign and remained until election day" (Sandoval-Almazan, 2015, p. 10).

A few months later, in May 2012, EPN was invited to visit Universidad Iberoamericana, a Catholic University. After his presentation, students questioned him about his term as governor of the State of Mexico while, a group of students were protesting against EPN's behavior calling him names such as 'coward,' 'murderer,' and 'Ibero University does not like you'. EPN could not use the front door because he encountered a barrier of students protesters on his way out forcing him to use another exit where he encountered the press who asked him about the scandal situation. EPN responded to the media that those protesters were not Ibero students but supporters from another candidate. His remarks to the press motivated students to produce a video showing their IDs, stating

their names, and making a declaration against EPN denouncing a biased news coverage of the race, kicking off another social media protest movement, which went viral, "his [EPN] blind side of the campaign was hit by #Iam132" (Sandoval-Almazan, 2015, p. 10). Sandoval-Almazan (2015) determined that both social media protest movements against EPN "seem not to impact on the political knowledge of Mexicans except on their political participation" (p. 10).

A compelling element of political communication is to assess the impact of media exposure in the encouragement of civic engagement and political participation since it works as a circular mechanism, as Díaz Jiménez (2017) explained, "those who are more exposed to the media and campaign communications become more politically engaged" (p. 126) increasing their political interest, political trust, and civic participation (voting). Furthermore, his outcomes specify that the total number of television spots in the 2012 presidential election was seven times higher than in the previous two elections considering that the excessive repetition of spots lead to saturation, exhaustion, and rejection among voters discouraging civic engagement. Even so, Díaz Jiménez's regression analysis suggested that "campaign information flowing through the media strengthens rather than erodes civic engagement of Mexicans" (p. 136) documenting that the 'spotization' phenomenon had limited impact.

The 2018 presidential election was the largest electoral process in Mexican history with over 3,400 candidates running for federal, state, and municipal positions with at least 100 of them killed or injured during the process. The central focus of all electoral campaigns is political communication; analyzing the media landscape is essential to fully appreciate the electoral dynamics. Several studies have examined the impact of electoral coverage by traditional news media outlets, social network sites, and digital news websites on voters. González (2021) looked at propaganda as a communication process of production and dissemination of ideas to persuade citizens' beliefs or actions to strengthen governance's legitimacy. His findings indicated that "every candidate received a rather homogenous coverage in terms of quantity and quality" (p. 329) but he observed that journalists focused their coverage on horse race topics instead of issues limiting the exposure of candidates' policies proposals. Also, González (2021) noted that news had mainly official sources of information replicating the political elites' discourse.

Therefore, his analysis determined that the journalistic coverage of the presidential campaigns adopted a form of propaganda. Likewise, González (2021) indicated that candidates' TV spots were also an expression of propaganda due to the high levels of personalization, "candidates themselves and not their policy proposals were the most important feature of their communication strategies" (p. 329) reaching for voters' support through emotional messages and their content was based on competitors' perceptions and point of view. Similarly, González (2021) indicated that party candidates used Twitter as a form of propaganda "they did not promote direct communication with the users, despite the potential of the platform to do so" (p. 329) being reluctant to discuss their ideas with their followers despite their high levels of replies, retweets, and favorites. However, the

independent candidate "did actually reply to some of the users' comments on his tweets…it is precisely this indication that may promote online deliberation" (p. 329).

Likewise, Glowacki et al., (2018) investigated computation propaganda and political polarization in news distributed by social network sites determining that "the majority of political news shared over Twitter and Facebook comes from professional news sources with established news brands" (p. 1) finding limited evidence of biased, partisan, ideologically skewed and opinionated content. Also, Glowacki et al. (2018) noted that AMLO dominated the Twitter conversation, "with almost four times as much daily content about him than any of the other candidates" (p. 1) identifying that Twitter and Facebook users preferred to share political news distributed by news organizations social network sites rather than from political parties and candidates. Similarly, Beltrán (2020) inquired if the consumption of traditional news, social network sites, and political ads had influence over voters' preferences, finding that none of them were a decisive factor for any of the candidates affiliated with a party determining that "media has [had] little or no effect on voter preferences" (p. 1).

Contributing to the discussion on social media implications, De León et al. (2023) stated that "citizens increasingly rely on social media such as Facebook to read and share political news" (p. 1193). They examined political news sharing behavior during the 2018 election period comparing it with a non-electoral (routine) period. De León et al. (2023) recognized that journalist's interest in news increases in electoral periods, although "this increase did not come at the cost of other news production" (p. 1204). Also, they found that Facebook users have the tendency to share more political news in electoral periods, but it is having a detrimental effect on limiting the sharing of other news types resembling a zero-sum game.

Lastly, De León et al. (2023) determined that "the 'news gap' is significantly reduced during elections: while journalists' interest in political news increases, it is far outplaced by the increase in political news sharing behavior" (p. 1205). The present study continues with the discussion of the role of news in the 2018 Mexican presidential election from a distinct standpoint by focusing on the international news media. This investigation scrutinizes how Telemundo's international correspondents covered the election to mostly Mexican citizens living in the United States who have the constitutional right to participate by voting overseas. This research inspects the type of information disseminated by Telemundo to Mexican voters who keep themselves informed by consuming/watching their national newscasts.

## Investigation Objectives and Research Questions

This investigation scrutinizes the presidential election focusing on the transfer of object salience of either a horse race topic or an issue among the candidates. This analysis is a classic agenda setting study by measuring the attention given to objects by the presidential contenders. This study centers on the first level of agenda setting theory by differentiating between all four presidential candidates' horse race topics as well as issues news agendas. As Cohen (1963) stated, journalists, through their

news stories, inform their audiences what to think about the world by constantly creating topics agendas, which is known within the agenda setting theory as "first level."

This study contributes in four ways to the growing agenda setting theory literature: First, this investigation measures the inter-candidate agenda setting effect observed on all four political candidates vying for the presidency; Second, this research allows for an opportunity to compare and contrast the horse race and issues news agendas of candidates affiliated with a political coalition with those of an independent candidate; Third, this paper documents whether the agenda setting effect can be observed on an independent candidate with the same accuracy as in party candidates, and Fourth, this examination determines the directional flow of influence among all of the presidential candidates as well as the flow of influence between party candidates and the independent candidate.

There are four research questions guiding this study:

*RQ1. What was the horse race agenda of each presidential candidate?*

*RQ2. What was the issues agenda of each presidential contender?*

*RQ3. What was the inter-candidate agenda setting effect regarding horse race and issues agendas for the entire electoral campaign period?*

*RQ4. From a cause-and-effect viewpoint, what was the directional flow of influence between party candidates and the independent candidate during the entire campaign?*

## Methodology

In an effort to internationalize agenda setting theory by testing it in other countries of the world, the traditional research design of two political parties and two presidential candidates should be modified to be able to measure each nation's unique political system's characteristics. In the case of the present investigation, as previously described, Mexico's electoral model changed by allowing the participation of an independent presidential candidate. Therefore, the research design of this paper had to be adjusted accordingly to be able to measure Mexico's new electoral framework. In addition, this investigation documents scientific evidence regarding the binational political communication interplay across the United States and Mexico.

This paper identifies those horse race topics and issues that several international journalists (correspondents) working for the U.S. Spanish-language television network Telemundo in Mexico highlighted in their electoral news reports concerning the presidential election. The present study expands the agenda setting theory body of knowledge regarding the international political dynamics that strongly interconnect two nations during a specific presidential electoral period. In one nation (Mexico), the presidential electoral process takes place, whereas in the other country (U.S.), Mexican

citizens residing abroad have the constitutional right and civic duty to participate in the electoral process to elect a president. Under Mexican electoral law, Mexican citizens living outside of Mexico are authorized to actively participate in the election of the president.

However, presidential candidates are prohibited from holding electoral events outside of the Mexican territory, complicating direct communication with voters. Consequently, candidates must find an effective communication channel with voters who reside overseas. Members of the international press established in Mexico is just that effective channel needed to disseminate their political messages. Therefore, the U.S. press has played a significant informational role during the Mexican presidential electoral period. Mexicans residing in the U.S. are an active audience with the power to support the presidential candidate of their preference by casting their vote. In this investigation, Telemundo, as U.S. international press, serves as the candidates' channel of communication where journalists through their reporting, build news agendas that could potentially transfer over to the Mexican citizens residing in the U.S.

To test the internationalization of agenda setting theory in Mexico, several facts were taken into consideration. According to INE´s results, AMLO won Mexico's presidential election with 53% of the vote (INE, 2018a). Similarly, AMLO won 65% of the vote from abroad, followed by RAC with 27%, JAMK with 4%, and JHRC with 2% (INE, 2018b). AMLO was a familiar political figure to Mexicans living abroad because he ran as a presidential candidate during the previous two elections. AMLO not only managed to win the Mexican vote abroad, but the margin of victory that he obtained (38%) dwarfs the margins of defeat in the vote abroad that he suffered in the previous two elections. INE's results regarding the votes abroad in the US indicated that in 2012, AMLO obtained second place in the vote abroad, just 3% below the winner—JVM (INE, 2012). In 2006, INE's results showed that AMLO also obtained second place, at 24% below the first place—FCH (INE, 2006). But in the 2018 election, AMLO was very successful in persuading a large portion of the voters abroad who had previously voted against him to vote in his favor. As can be seen in the previous presidential elections, PAN was consistently favored by the vote from abroad. However, during this election, that tendency changed to favoring another party, MORENA.

The 2018 Mexican presidential election was the third time that Mexicans residing abroad have had the opportunity to participate in their homeland's electoral process. According to INE, about 98,470 people residing abroad actively participated in the election by casting their vote (INE, 2018a). This number of votes represents a 142% increase (57,756 votes) from the previous presidential election in 2012 (INE, 2012). In 2018, the civic participation of Mexicans living abroad rose significantly, indicating that citizens are responding positively to INE's electoral campaigns. According to INE, the U.S., with 77% of voters, is the nation with the highest number of votes abroad, followed by Canada with 5%, and Spain with 3% (INE, 2018a). Since the vast majority of those voters abroad reside in the U.S., it is important to assess which type of news reports those Mexican citizens were receiving in order to cast an informed vote. Mexicans residing outside of their homeland rarely have an opportunity to meet a presidential candidate. Therefore, the role of the international electoral news

becomes essential for those voters. Through news reports from international correspondents, voters can learn about each candidate's political platform.

It is imperative to evaluate the role that the U.S. Latino-oriented media played in the election dynamics of Mexico. The top two U.S. Spanish-language news media networks are Univision and Telemundo. Traditionally, Univision has been the network with the highest news ratings. However, the Pew Research Center (2021a) determined that Univision's audience for their evening news decreased by 12.4% from 2017 to 2018 (from 1,138,172 to 997,117 viewers). In this same time period, Pew Research Center (2021b) indicated that Telemundo's evening news audience increased by 7.1% (from 656,599 to 703,056 viewers). This trend in news ratings was crucial in determining which newscast to select for the data analysis. According to Piñón (2019), Telemundo's audience share increased in 2018 to 38.6%, just 0.8% below the top network, Univision, which had 39.4% of the audience share. Those numbers showed that Telemundo was becoming an increasingly significant source of news for Latinos in the U.S. Also, in September 2006, Telemundo inaugurated their news bureau and corporate offices in Mexico City. Therefore, this network had adequate journalistic resources to generate news reports from Mexico's capital regarding the electoral cycle. In addition, although Telemundo's programming is in the public domain with free and open access to their national newscasts, Univision's is not. After a careful consideration of all of these factors, while at the same time taking into account limitations on research resources, Telemundo was selected for this investigation.

### Sample Selection

The data collection came from Telemundo's main national newscast "Noticias Telemundo" with José Díaz Balart, which airs in the evening from 5:30 pm to 6:00 pm Mountain time from Monday to Friday. The time frame was from March 30, 2018, through June 28, 2018, which was INE's official 90-day electoral campaign period. The unit of analysis was every news story about Mexico's presidential election broadcasted by Telemundo. The television network aired a total of 93 news stories during the 90-day electoral period. Essentially, Telemundo presented an average of about one election story per newscast over the course of the entire electoral cycle. This frequency of coverage reveals the high degree of importance that Mexican audiences represent for the network. Telemundo's official YouTube channel[6] was used to search for the newscasts and conduct a content analysis.

### Code Manual

This investigation uses a quantitative methodological approach to reveal all of the presidential candidates' agendas required to measure the flow of influence between contenders. While conducting the content analysis of election news, the coders were asked to identify horse race topics in each news report. To establish the "Presidential Candidate's Horse Race Agenda" coders recognized six horse race topics: (1) issues, (2) debates, (3) fundraising, (4) endorsements, (5) campaign activities, and (6) voting education/procedures. The first of these topics, "issues," encapsulates news on

---

[6] https://www.youtube.com/@noticias

specific hard issues that the candidates presented as their policy platform. Those issues were content analyzed to establish the issues agenda of each candidate which is presented in the next paragraph. The second horse race topic was "debates," which presented information about the three presidential debates, such as invitations to watch its live broadcasts, location or attendance, the dynamic of each debate, the moderators, line of questioning, candidates' performance, etc. The third horse race topic was "fundraising", which included news stories about the candidates and their political parties' fundraising and expenditures on campaign related activities. The fourth horse race topic was "endorsements," a category that encompasses news stories about celebrities, politicians, businesses, sports, and religious leaders pledging their support publicly to a particular candidate and songs that were created or produced to support a particular candidate. The fifth horse race topic was "campaign activities" which included news about rallies, public opinion polls, criticism or congratulations between candidates, speeches, exclusive interviews, and campaign schedules, among others. Finally, the sixth horse race topic was "voting education/procedures", which grouped news about party nominations, the relationship between the candidates and INE, candidate accreditation, voter registration, voting sites, overseas/abroad vote, civic participation, voting procedures, voting results, and the electoral system, among others.

To establish the "Presidential Candidate's Issues Agenda," coders were also instructed to identify which candidates made reference to specific policy issues while conducting the content analysis. Popkin's (1994) definition of issue as being an important campaign topic that is likely to propose a change in policy was the concept used in this research. Coders identified seven issues that were consistently reported by journalists: (1) corruption, (2) economy, (3) education, (4) politics, (5) security, (6) telecommunications, and (7) U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship. The first category was "corruption," which involves stories about dishonest or unethical conduct by those individuals in power, people who receive or give bribes, and plans to avoid or resolve unethical behavior in communities. The second was the "economy" with stories about job creation, employment, wealth creation, social mobility, production and consumption, maquiladoras, and available regional development. The third category was "education," which dealt with reports about formal systematic instruction, primary education, secondary education, universities, technical and vocational schools, teacher preparation, and universities' admissions process. The fourth category was "politics," which refers to the changes in the electoral law, former presidents' pensions, and revocation of presidential mandate/authority. The fifth category was "security," which encapsulates stories about how to protect communities and individuals, law enforcement agencies, and how to diminish violence in society. The sixth category was "telecommunications," which presented stories about transportation, the new airport in Mexico City, and national highway infrastructure. Finally, the seventh category was the "U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship" with news reports regarding immigration, deportation, border security, national resources, international trade, and NAFTA.

In addition, three other important variables were included in the codebook to understand Telemundo's electoral reporting environment focusing on journalistic balance, journalistic fairness,

and gender equality. The phrase "journalistic balance" refers to examining whether all perspectives are included in the news stories with equal amount of attention and without any supporting bias from the reporter. Likewise, the phrase "journalistic fairness" is looking at whether or not all sides of an issue were reported and if the news information or findings are reported in a professional manner while accurately building the news story on the facts. The two variables that measured journalistic balance and fairness were "frequency of reporting by candidate" evaluating if all candidates received the same journalistic attention by the computation of number of news stories aired in Telemundo and "tone of news story" by assessing the emotion or attitude conveyed through the writing and/or elaboration of the news story was presented in a straightforward language based on facts (neutral tone) or if it was opinionated with emotional language (positive or negative tone). Lastly, Mexican female journalists have faced major challenges in their professional careers such as gender discrimination, particularly while covering politics. The variable "reporter's gender" is measuring the increase or decrease of female reporters' participation in electoral presidential coverage to establish gender equality in newsrooms.

### Intercoder Reliability

The newscasts examination was performed during the summer 2018 time period, from May 15, 2018 to July 10, 2018. Two coders performed the content analysis. At the beginning of each coding session, both coders participated in a calibration exercise. The level of intercoder agreement was measured by calculating the intercoder coefficient of reliability using the formula for two coders suggested by Poindexter and McCombs (2000), as follows:

$$C.R. = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

where *C.R.* is the coefficient of reliability, *M* is the number of coding decisions that the two coders agreed on, $N_1$ is the number of coding decisions made by coder 1, and $N_2$ is the number of coding decisions made by coder 2. "As a rule of thumb, an acceptable coefficient of reliability is 80 percent or above" (Poindexter & McCombs, 2000, p. 203). The results indicated a 93% coefficient of reliability between coders.

### Statistical Analysis

The content analysis results were organized by frequency and percentage, and then ranked to identify the top electoral horse race topics as well as the top issues of each candidate. The Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient ρ (rho) was then calculated to assess the degree of correlation between the candidates' horse race agendas as well as the issues agendas. The formula used to calculate the correlation coefficient is:

$$\rho = \frac{\sum_i (x_i - \overline{x})(y_i - \overline{y})}{\sqrt{\sum_i (x_i - \overline{x})^2 \sum_i (y_i - \overline{y})^2}}$$

where $x_i$ and $y_i$ refer to the $i^{th}$ rank of the candidates' horse race agendas or issues agendas and $\overline{x}$ and $\overline{y}$ are the mean ranks of the horse race or issues of the two candidates being compared. This formula was applied due to tied ranks in most cases. A correlation coefficient of +1 would indicate a perfect agreement, a correlation coefficient of 0, no agreement, and a correlation coefficient of −1 would indicate a perfect inverse agreement. The strength of the correlation between two variables is therefore determined by the value of the correlation coefficient. For values of $\rho \geq .700$, the correlation is strong, the correlation is moderate for $.400 \leq \rho < .700$, low for $.100 \leq \rho < .400$, and weak for $\rho < .100$. A positive correlation between agendas suggests that as the ranking of topics in one agenda increases, the ranking of the corresponding topics in the other agenda also increases. In contrast, a negative correlation between agendas suggests that as the ranking of topics in one agenda increases, the ranking of the corresponding topics in the other agenda decreases.

To allow for a comparative analysis such as the "Inter-Candidate Agenda Setting Effect between Presidential Contenders," INE's 90-day campaign period was divided into two periods of 45 days each. The first period, called "initial phase," ran from March 30, 2018, through May 13, 2018. The second period, or "final phase," went from May 14, 2018, through June 28, 2018. The correlation coefficient formula (presented above) was also used to calculate the correlation between the initial phase and the final phase to conduct a compare-and-contrast analysis. For example, RAC ($x$) and AMLO ($y$), or "initial phase" ($x$) and "final phase" ($y$), etc. The horse race and issues agendas of all four presidential candidates were measured to assess similarities between the initial and final phases of the campaign (auto-correlations), and to identify the transfer of horse race or issues agendas between presidential contenders (cross-lagged correlations).

Lastly, to determine the directional flow of influence between candidates and between groups (e.g., party candidates vs an independent candidate), a cross-lagged correlation analysis was conducted. The aim was to scrutinize the two time periods of the campaign to examine the directional flow of influence regarding the discussion of horse race and issues between RAC, AMLO, JAMK, and JHRC. The method presented by Rozelle and Campbell (1969) for using cross-lagged correlations to determine the degree of causality between two variables over time was applied to this analysis. The Rozelle and Campbell method consists of computing three pairs of correlations: (1) auto-correlations $\rho_{X_1X_2}$ and $\rho_{Y_1Y_2}$, where X1 is variable X at time 1, X2 is variable X at time 2, Y1 is variable Y at time 1, and Y2 is variable Y at time 2; (2) synchronous correlations $\rho_{X_1Y_1}$ and $\rho_{X_2Y_2}$; and (3) cross-lagged correlations $\rho_{X_1Y_2}$ and $\rho_{Y_1X_2}$. The cross-lagged correlations are then compared to the Rozelle-Campbell baseline (RCb) statistic, which is computed using the autocorrelations and synchronous correlations, and is given by the formula (e.g., López-Escobar et al., 1998, p. 233):

$$RCb = \left(\frac{\rho_{X_1Y_1} + \rho_{X_2Y_2}}{2}\right)\sqrt{\frac{(\rho_{X_1X_2})^2 + (\rho_{Y_1Y_2})^2}{2}}$$

As Rozelle & Campbell (1969) explained, if the cross-lagged correlations $\rho_{X_1Y_2}$ and $\rho_{Y_1X_2}$ are both above the Rozelle-Campbell baseline, this suggests that the two variables influenced each other reciprocally; one variable could be more predominant than the other. If one of the cross-lagged correlation values is above the Rozelle-Campbell baseline and the other is not (e.g., $\rho_{X_1Y_2}>RCb>\rho_{Y_1X_2}$), then the variable at time 1 with a cross-lagged correlation value above the RCb influenced the other variable at time 2, but the reverse is not the case. If both cross-lagged correlation values are below the Rozelle-Campbell baseline, the two variables show no causality at all–they are independent of each other, indicating that neither candidate's agenda was influencing the other candidate's agenda. According to Campbell and Kenny (1999), if X in time 1 causes Y in time 2 more than Y in time 1 causes X in time 2, then $\rho_{X_1Y_2}$ should be greater than $\rho_{Y_1X_2}$ and greater than the value of the RCb, then X is said to cause Y. Furthermore, to determine the statistical significance of Spearman's rank-order correlations, a two-tailed t-test was performed. The correlations that were found to be significant at the .01 and .05 levels are indicated in Tables 5 and 6. The outcomes of the inter-candidate agenda setting effects as well as results regarding the directional flow of influence among party candidates and the independent candidate are presented in the following section.

## Results

Outcomes indicate that Telemundo's electoral coverage dealt with horse race news (61%), rather than with issues reports (39%). Also, results revealed that RAC (40%) was the candidate with the highest frequency of journalistic coverage in Telemundo followed by AMLO (27%), and JAMK (18%), while the candidate with the lowest news coverage was JHRC (16%). These results indicate that Telemundo's presidential candidates' coverage was not balanced because the difference between percentages is significant. Outcomes clearly demonstrate that Telemundo's journalistic coverage was centered on RAC. In addition, outcomes determined that JAMK received more favorable news coverage than the other party candidates, while JHRC's journalistic coverage was predominantly negative. Likewise, results determined that JAMK's campaign was mostly covered by male reporters, while AMLO's campaign was assigned predominantly to female journalists. The other two presidential contenders were covered by both male and female reporters without presenting a significant tendency. These findings indicate that Telemundo's female reporters were allowed to actively participate in the presidential electoral coverage indicating a remarkable step forward towards gender equality in Telemundo's news bureau in Mexico. This section is divided into four subsections, which present the outcomes of the four research questions guiding this study.

**Table 1.** Presidential Candidates' Horse Race Agendas.

| Horse Race | Ricardo Anaya Cortés | | | | Andrés Manuel López Obrador | | | | José Antonio Meade Kuribreña | | | | Jaime Rodríguez Calderón | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Initial Phase | | Final Phase | | Initial Phase | | Final Phase | | Initial Phase | | Final Phase | | Initial Phase | | Final Phase | |
| | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank |
| Issues | 43% | (1) | 39% | (1.5) | 89% | (1) | 63% | (1) | 67% | (1) | 55% | (1) | 92% | (1) | 81% | (1) |
| Debates | 24% | (3) | 39% | (1.5) | 4% | (3) | 16% | (2) | 13% | (2) | 25% | (2) | 0% | (4.5) | 11% | (2) |
| Fundraising | 0% | (5.5) | 4% | (4.5) | 0% | (5) | 0% | (6) | 0% | (6) | 0% | (5.5) | 0% | (4.5) | 0% | (5) |
| Endorsements | 0% | (5.5) | 2% | (6) | 0% | (5) | 6% | (4.5) | 7% | (4) | 0% | (5.5) | 0% | (4.5) | 0% | (5) |
| Campaign activities | 27% | (2) | 12% | (3) | 7% | (2) | 6% | (4.5) | 7% | (4) | 10% | (3.5) | 0% | (4.5) | 0% | (5) |
| Voting education/procedures | 5% | (4) | 4% | (4.5) | 0% | (5) | 9% | (3) | 7% | (4) | 10% | (3.5) | 8% | (2) | 7% | (3) |

*Note:* Anaya Cortés: autocorrelation ρ = .851; López Obrador: autocorrelation ρ = .616; Meade Kuribreña: autocorrelation ρ = .907; Rodríguez Calderón: autocorrelation ρ = .718.

**Table 2.** Presidential Candidates' Issues Agendas.

| Issue | Ricardo Anaya Cortés | | | | Andrés Manuel López Obrador | | | | José Antonio Meade Kuribreña | | | | Jaime Rodríguez Calderón | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Initial Phase | | Final Phase | | Initial Phase | | Final Phase | | Initial Phase | | Final Phase | | Initial Phase | | Final Phase | |
| | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank |
| Corruption | 38% | (1) | 10% | (4.5) | 32% | (1) | 25% | (2) | 50% | (1) | 0% | (6) | 36% | (1.5) | 14% | (3.5) |
| Economy | 6% | (5) | 15% | (3) | 8% | (5) | 15% | (4) | 20% | (2.5) | 27% | (2) | 36% | (1.5) | 14% | (3.5) |
| Education | 0% | (6.5) | 10% | (4.5) | 0% | (6.5) | 0% | (6) | 0% | (6) | 0% | (6) | 0% | (6) | 0% | (6) |
| Politics | 19% | (3) | 0% | (7) | 16% | (4) | 0% | (6) | 0% | (6) | 9% | (4) | 0% | (6) | 0% | (6) |
| Security | 25% | (2) | 30% | (1.5) | 24% | (2) | 20% | (3) | 20% | (2.5) | 18% | (3) | 18% | (3) | 36% | (1.5) |
| Telecommunications | 0% | (6.5) | 5% | (6) | 0% | (6.5) | 0% | (6) | 0% | (6) | 0% | (6) | 0% | (6) | 0% | (6) |
| U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship | 13% | (4) | 30% | (1.5) | 20% | (3) | 40% | (1) | 10% | (4) | 45% | (1) | 9% | (4) | 36% | (1.5) |

*Note:* Anaya Cortés: autocorrelation ρ =.211; López Obrador: autocorrelation ρ = .785; Meade Kuribreña: autocorrelation ρ = .252; Rodríguez Calderón: autocorrelation ρ = .673.

**Presidential Candidates' Horse Race Agendas**

The first research question asked about the horse race agenda by presidential candidate. The results show that six horse race topics —issues, debates, fundraising, campaign activities, endorsements, and voting education/procedures— were consistently noted by reporters. Results indicate that during the initial phase of the campaign period, the top three horse race topics for RAC were issues (43%), campaign activities (27%), and debates (24%) (see Table 1). During his final phase, RAC had a tie for the first place of his agenda between issues (39%) and debates (39%), followed by campaign activities (12%). However, from the initial to the final phase, the frequencies of RAC's horse race topics fluctuated. Whereas the topic of debates increased by 15%, moving from the third position to the first position of his agenda, the campaign activities topic decreased by 15%, from the second position to the third. RAC' agenda setting effect during both phases (auto-correlation) was strong ($\rho_{A1A2}$ = .851)[7] indicating a strong correlation and suggesting that this candidate maintained his focus on the same three horse race topics during both electoral periods.

Outcomes show that AMLO initially focused on discussing issues (89%), campaign activities (7%), and debates (4%) (see Table 1). For the final phase, AMLO continued his conversation on topics regarding issues (63%), debates (16%), and voting education/procedures (9%). The topic of debates, which was present in his initial phase, increased by 12% moving from the third place into the second place of his horse race agenda, while the topic of voting education/procedures, which was not present during his first period, increased to 9% during his second period. Still, the topic of issues remained at the top of his horse race agenda during both periods. AMLO's agenda setting effect (auto-correlation) was moderate ($\rho_{L1L2}$ = .616) because he changed his rhetoric toward the end of the campaign period.

For JAMK, results show that in the initial phase his top horse race priority was issues (67%) (see Table 1) followed by debates (13%). In addition, three topics were tied in third place of his horse race agenda: endorsements (7%), campaign activities (7%), and voting education/procedures (7%). During the final phase, JAMK continued his political rhetoric with issues (55%) at the top of his agenda, followed by debates (25%). Once again, he had a tie for the third place between campaign activities (10%) and voting education/procedures (10%). In the final phase, debates increased its frequency by 12% but remained at the second place on JAMK's horse race agenda. Likewise, the topics of campaign activities and voting education/procedures increased by 3%. Issues continued to be his top horse race topic for the entire campaign. JAMK's agenda setting effect during both phases (auto-correlation) was strong ($\rho_{M1M2}$ = .907), documenting a very strong correlation between both phases of the campaign, suggesting almost identical horse race agendas. JAMK was the presidential candidate with the highest auto-correlation between both campaign periods, indicating consistency in his political messaging across the entire campaign.

---

[7]A1 is Anaya Cortés–initial phase, A2 is Anaya Cortés–final phase; L1 is López Obrador–initial phase, L2 is López Obrador–final phase; M1 is Meade Kuribreña–initial phase, M2 is Meade Kuribreña–final phase; R1 is Rodríguez Calderón–initial phase, R2 is Rodríguez Calderón–final phase.

Finally, the outcomes for JHRC show that, during the initial phase, only two horse race topics– issues (92%) and voting education/procedures (8%)—were discussed (see Table 1). Those two topics transferred over to his final phase, but their frequency of coverage changed. To illustrate, issues remained as the top topic on the candidate's conversations, but its frequency decreased by 11%. JHRC's second topic of voting education/procedures also decreased by 1% moving from the second position into the third position. A new horse race topic was incorporated into JHRC's coverage during the final phase, debates (11%). His agenda setting effect (auto-correlation) was strong ($\rho_{R1R2}$ = .718) because JHRC's topics presented slight modifications throughout the entire campaign period.

In short, Telemundo's reporting of presidential candidates focused on their electoral conversation on discussing issues because this topic was at the top of their horse race agendas in both phases of the campaign period suggesting that all of them ran on issues and not horse race topics, thus reporters were engaging in a higher-quality democratic conversation with voters. The other three topics that frequently appeared on all Telemundo's news stories of the candidates' horse race agendas, but with varying percentages were debates, campaign activities, and voting education/procedures. Regarding the presidential contenders' horse race agendas comparative analysis between the initial and the final phases of the electoral campaign, outcomes document that Telemundo's reporting of three candidates registered strong auto-correlations and one obtained a moderate association. Furthermore, JAMK achieved the highest auto-correlation maintaining almost an identical agenda in Telemundo throughout the entire examination period. RAC and JHRC also sustained a strong connection in their respective agendas indicating similar horse race agendas during both periods in Telemundo, but AMLO showed only a modest interconnection between his agendas.

### Presidential Candidates' Issues Agendas

The second question inquires about the issues agenda of each presidential contender. As mentioned previously, the first topic in the horse race agenda was "issues" which captures hard news reports. Those news reports were content analyzed in detail to identify the specific issues that were discussed by the presidential candidates. The results show that seven issues —corruption, economy, education, politics, security, telecommunications, and U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship— were consistently noted by reporters. Outcomes indicate that during the initial phase of the campaign period, the top three issues for RAC were corruption (38%), security (25%), and politics (19%) (see Table 2). During his final phase, RAC changed his political conversation where security (30%) moved from the second place into the first place by a 5% increase, creating a tie with U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship (30%), followed by economy (15%), an issue that was also not present in the initial phase of the electoral campaign. Consequently, RAC's agenda setting effect during both phases (auto-correlation) was weak ($\rho_{A1A2}$ = .211)[8] indicating that his political conversation at some point of the presidential campaign period fluctuated among different issues.

---

[8]A1 is Anaya Cortés–initial phase, A2 is Anaya Cortés–final phase; L1 is López Obrador–initial phase, L2 is López Obrador–final phase; M1 is Meade Kuribreña–initial phase, M2 is Meade Kuribreña–final phase; R1 is Rodríguez Calderón–initial phase, R2 is Rodríguez Calderón–final phase.

Results indicate that AMLO initially focused on discussing corruption (32%), security (24%), and the U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship (20%) (see Table 2). For the final phase, AMLO continued with his political rhetoric, but those issues shifted frequency. For instance, the U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship (40%) increased by 20%, followed by corruption (25%), which presented a 7% decrease and security (20%) had a decrease of 4% from the initial phase of the campaign. Results demonstrate that AMLO made an unwavering effort to make his fight against corruption his top campaign issue. AMLO's agenda setting effect (auto-correlation) was strong ($\rho_{L_1L_2}$ = .785) because he kept the same political conversation throughout the entire campaign.

For JAMK, results show that in the initial phase his top issue was corruption (50%) (see Table 2) followed by a tie between economy (20%) and security (20%). By the final phase, he modified his political rhetoric switching his top issue to the U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship (45%), followed by a 7% rise of economy (27%), and a 2% decrease in security (18%). Even though the second and third issues remained the same through the entire campaign period, their frequencies changed, but the top issue was different in each phase shifting from corruption in the initial phase to U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship in the second phase. Therefore, JAMK's agenda setting effect (auto-correlation) was weak ($\rho_{M_1M_2}$ = .252) suggesting that his political conversation was different during each presidential campaign phase.

Lastly, the outcomes for JHRC showed that, during the initial phase, he had a tie for the top position on his list between corruption (36%) and economy (36%) followed by security (18%). For the final phase, JHRC reshaped his political message where security (36%), which used to be in the third position rose to the top of his agenda, presenting a tie with U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationships (36%). These were followed by another tie between corruption (14%), which decreased by 22% because it used to be his top issue at the beginning of the campaign, and economy (14%), which also decreased by 22% and was also in first place at the earlier period. JHRC's agenda setting effect (auto-correlation) was moderate ($\rho_{R_1R_2}$ = .673) suggesting that his issues agenda was somewhat similar during both phases of the campaign.

In short, according to Telemundo's reports, AMLO was the candidate with the most homogenous and persistent issues agenda during the entire campaign period. He made a constant effort to present his fight against corruption as his top campaign issue. Next comes JHRC who presented a somewhat similar issues agenda between campaign periods. On the other hand, RAC and JAMK discussed a completely different set of issues during each phase, suggesting that they sent out to voters two distinct political messages in Telemundo. That is, two of the three party candidates —RAC and JAMK— presented dissimilar issues agendas, but one candidate —AMLO— kept repeating the same issues conversation during both phases. Regarding the independent candidate —JHRC— his political message was to some extent consistent between periods. In the next section, the horse race and issues agendas interconnection among presidential contenders is analyzed.

**Inter-Candidate Agenda Setting Effect Among Presidential Contenders**

The third research question inquiries about the inter-candidate agenda setting effect regarding the horse race as well as the issues agendas for the entire electoral campaign period. In terms of the inter-candidate horse race agendas, outcomes show that the top horse race topic for RAC was issues (41%), followed by debates (33%), campaign activities (18%), voting education/procedures (5%), fundraising (2%), and endorsements (1%) (see Table 3). In addition, outcomes show that AMLO focused his conversation on issues (75%), followed by debates (10%), campaign activities (7%), voting education/procedures (5%), and endorsements (3%). AMLO did not discuss the topic of fundraising. Moreover, results indicate that the horse race topic of issues (60%) was also at the top of JAMK's agenda, followed by debates (20%), a tie for the third place between campaign activities (9%) and voting education/procedures (9%), finishing up with endorsements (3%). JAMK did not discuss the topic of fundraising either. The results for JHRC indicate that issues (85%) ranked on top of his horse race agenda followed by a tie for the second position between debates (8%) and voting education/procedures (8%). JHRC did not discuss the topics of campaign activities, endorsements, and fundraising.

Consequently, the inter-candidate horse race agenda setting effect presented six strong correlations suggesting strong similarities between the agendas of the presidential contenders. Outcomes show that the strongest correlations were found among the party contenders. For instance, between AMLO and JAMK with $\rho = .986$, as well as between AMLO and RAC with $\rho = .943$, and between RAC and JAMK with $\rho = .928$, indicating that the horse race agendas between all three party candidates were almost identical to each other (see Table 3). This outcome suggests that it could have been difficult for voters to distinguish between the presidential contenders' political conversation because they all had very similar horse race agendas. The data indicates that all of the political coalitions along with their party candidates were disseminating the same electoral message to voters.

Similarly, when the inter-candidate agenda setting effect was measured between the three party candidates against the independent candidate, results also show strong correlations indicating somewhat similar horse race agendas, but not identical in the cases involving the independent candidate. The fact that the association was not homogenous, as it was among the party candidates, positioned the independent candidate apart from the others making it easier for voters to differentiate his horse race agenda. Furthermore, the correlation between JAMK and JHRC was slightly more intense with $\rho = .861$ in comparison with the other two inter-candidate agenda setting effects. The correlation between AMLO and JHRC was moderate with $\rho = .772$. This same moderate correlation was observed between RAC and JHRC with $\rho = .772$. It seems that in terms of horse race topics there were two dominant political messages in the 2018 election, the first one was emerging from all three party candidates and the second from the independent candidate. This election cycle had four presidential contenders registered with INE to compete for the highest seat in public office, but their electoral message was reduced to just two viewpoints, instead of four perspectives.

**Table 3.** Inter-Candidate Horse Race Agendas--Entire Campaign.

| Horse Race | Ricardo Anaya Cortés | | Andrés Manuel López Obrador | | José Antonio Meade Kuribreña | | Jaime Rodríguez Calderón | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank |
| Issues | 41% | (1) | 75% | (1) | 60% | (1) | 85% | (1) |
| Debates | 33% | (2) | 10% | (2) | 20% | (2) | 8% | (2.5) |
| Fundrasing | 2% | (5) | 0% | (6) | 0% | (6) | 0% | (5) |
| Endorsements | 1% | (6) | 3% | (5) | 3% | (5) | 0% | (5) |
| Campaign activities | 18% | (3) | 7% | (3) | 9% | (3.5) | 0% | (5) |
| Voting education/procedures | 5% | (4) | 5% | (4) | 9% | (3.5) | 8% | (2.5) |

*Note:* Anaya Cortés & López Obrador ρ =.943; Anaya Cortés & Meade Kuribreña ρ = .928; Anaya Cortés & Rodríguez Calderón ρ = .772; López Obrador & Meade Kuribreña ρ = .986; López Obrador & Rodríguez Calderón ρ = .772; Meade Kuribreña & Rodríguez Calderón ρ = .861.

In terms of the inter-candidate issues agendas, results determine that over the entire campaign period RAC's top issue was security (28%) with a tie for the second place between corruption (22%) and U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship (22%), followed by economy (11%), politics (8%), education (6%), and telecommunications (3%) (see Table 4). AMLO presented a tie for his top issue position between corruption (29%) and U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship (29%), followed by security (22%), economy (11%), and politics (9%). This candidate did not discuss the issues of education and telecommunications during the entire campaign period. Also, for JAMK, the issue of U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship (29%) was the top issue on his agenda, followed by a tie between corruption (24%) and economy (24%), security (19%), and politics (5%). JAMK did not discuss the issues of education and telecommunications during both phases. However, on JHRC's issues agenda, security (30%) ranked at the top, U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship (27%) ranked second, and corruption (21%) and economy (21%) were tied for third place. This candidate did not discuss the issues of education, politics, and telecommunications during the entire campaign period.

Correspondingly, the inter-candidate issues agenda setting effect presented all strong correlations among contenders suggesting that their issues agendas were nearly identical. Results determine that the strongest inter-candidate correlation was between RAC and JHRC with ρ = .935, suggesting near identical issues agendas. Likewise, almost homogeneous issues agendas were observed between AMLO and JAMK with an inter-candidate agenda setting effect of ρ = .917. Similarly, another almost interchangeable issues agenda was documented between RAC and AMLO with an inter-candidate agenda setting effect of ρ = .881. By the same token, the inter-candidate agenda setting effect between AMLO and JHRC, with ρ = .810, registered similar issues agendas. Moreover, two of the correlations were the same, suggesting similar issues agendas. Those were between RAC and JAMK with ρ = .743 and between JAMK and JHRC with ρ = .743 as well. It is interesting to observe that this time around all of the presidential candidates were predominantly discussing two particular issues, corruption and U.S.-Mexico binational relations. Again, all four candidates were communicating to

voters the same electoral message, which could have made it difficult for voters to distinguish among the contenders.

**Table 4.** Inter-Candidate Issues Agendas--Entire Campaign.

| Issues | Ricardo Anaya Cortés | | Andrés Manuel López Obrador | | José Antonio Meade Kuribreña | | Jaime Rodrí- guez Calderón | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank |
| Corruption | 22% | (2.5) | 29% | (1.5) | 24% | (2.5) | 21% | (3.5) |
| Economy | 11% | (4) | 11% | (4) | 24% | (2.5) | 21% | (3.5) |
| Education | 6% | (6) | 0% | (6.5) | 0% | (6.5) | 0% | (6) |
| Politics | 8% | (5) | 9% | (5) | 5% | (5) | 0% | (6) |
| Security | 28% | (1) | 22% | (3) | 19% | (4) | 30% | (1) |
| Telecommunications | 3% | (7) | 0% | (6.5) | 0% | (6.5) | 0% | (6) |
| U.S.-Mexico relationship | 22% | (2.5) | 29% | (1.5) | 29% | (1) | 27% | (2) |

*Note:* Anaya Cortés & López Obrador ρ = .881; Anaya Cortés & Meade Kuribreña ρ = .743; Anaya Cortés & Rodríguez Calderón ρ = .935; López Obrador & Meade Kuribreña ρ = .917; López Obrador & Rodríguez Calderón ρ = .810; Meade Kuribreña & Rodríguez Calderón ρ = .743.

In short, outcomes regarding the horse race agendas indicate that the inter-candidate agenda setting effect was strong among the contenders in Telemundo. Moreover, the more powerful correlations were among party candidates, but when they were measured against the independent candidate, the connection decreased slightly. Results suggest that Telemundo's journalists were transmitting the same electoral message to voters regardless of the candidates' political coalition. However, Telemundo's reporting on the independent candidate distinguished him from the other candidates by sending a distinct electoral note. It seems that in terms of horse race topics there were two dominant political discussions in Telemundo regarding the 2018 election, the first one was emerging from the party candidates and the second from the independent candidate. In addition, the horse race conversation in Telemundo was dominated by two topics, issues and debates. Regarding the inter-candidate agenda setting effect of their issues agendas, results document that the dialogue in Telemundo was led by two issues, corruption and U.S.-Mexico binational relations. In this case, there was no divergence between party candidates and the independent candidate because all of their correlations were very strong, but without showing a particular tendency among them. Outcomes demonstrate that the set of candidates with almost identical issues agendas were between RAC and JHRC as well as between AMLO and JAMK. The next section examines which candidate was leading the electoral conversation in Telemundo.

**Directional Flow of Influence Between Political-Party Candidates vs Independent Candidate**

This last subsection addresses the fourth research question regarding a cause-and-effect perspective between party candidates and the independent candidate. The aim was to identify the flow of influence between presidential contenders by recognizing who was leading the electoral discussion

and who were following that conversation. Two time periods were observed, the initial phase as time one and the final phase as time two for each candidate. Those two-time frames were tested and juxtaposed against each other to find the direction of influence. The comparative examination was determined when only one of the two cross-lagged values was above the Rozelle-Campbell baseline (RCb), indicating one-directional flow of influence.

**Figure 1.** Directional flow of influence of presidential candidates' horse race agendas between (a) Anaya and López, (b) Anaya and Meade, (c) Anaya and Rodríguez, (d) López and Meade, (e) López and Rodríguez, and (f) Meade and Rodríguez.



(a)   Rozelle-Campbell baseline = 0.621

(b)   Rozelle-Campbell baseline = 0.738

(c)   Rozelle-Campbell baseline = 0.498

(d)   Rozelle-Campbell baseline = 0.646

(e)   Rozelle-Campbell baseline = 0.440

(f)   Rozelle-Campbell baseline = 0.591
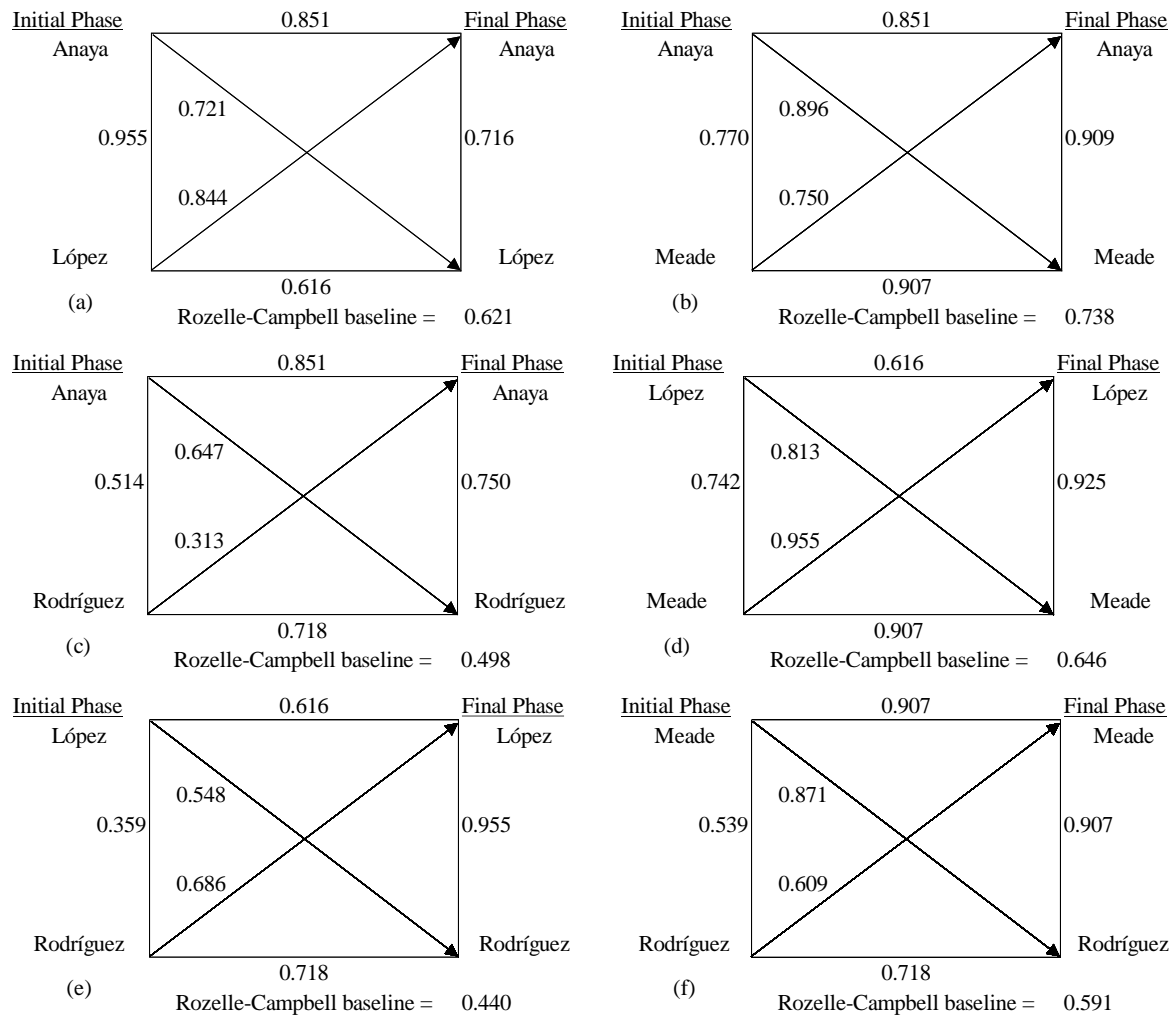
In terms of the directional flow of influence regarding the horse race agendas, results document one case of dominant one-directional flow of influence, as Figure 1(c) illustrates, the cross-lagged correlation analysis between RAC and JHRC clearly shows that the flow of influence was exclusively from RAC to JHRC ($\rho_{A1R2}$ = .647) since the Rozelle-Campbell baseline value (RCb = .498) is higher than the cross-lagged correlation from JHRC to RAC ($\rho_{R1A2}$ = .313). In addition, outcomes of

the directional influence dynamic documented five reciprocal relationships of influence between the candidates.

As Figure 1(a) presents, both cross-lagged correlations between RAC and AMLO are above the Rozelle-Campbell baseline of .621, indicating that their dynamics influenced each other, but the predominant flow of influence was from AMLO to RAC ($\rho_{L1A2}$ = .844) rather than in the other direction ($\rho_{A1L2}$ = .721). Likewise, Figure 1(b) shows a reciprocal influence between RAC and JAMK because their cross-lagged correlations are above the Rozelle-Campbell baseline (RCb = .738). Nonetheless, the flow of influence from RAC over JAMK was predominant ($\rho_{A1M2}$ = .896) than vice versa ($\rho_{M1A2}$ = .750). Similarly, Figure 1(d) presents another case of reciprocal influence between AMLO and JAMK. The evidence shows that both candidates influenced each other because their cross-lagged correlation values are above the Rozelle-Campbell baseline (RCb = .646). Still, the power of influence from JAMK to AMLO was predominant ($\rho_{M1L2}$ = .955) than in the other direction ($\rho_{L1M2}$ = .813). Additionally, as Figure 1(e) shows, the outcomes document another case of reciprocal influence between AMLO and JHRC since both of their cross-lagged correlation values are above the Rozelle-Campbell baseline (RCb = .440). However, the power of influence from JHRC over AMLO ($\rho_{R1L2}$ = .686) was more predominant than in the reverse direction ($\rho_{L1R2}$ = .548). Lastly, As Figure 1(f) illustrates, both cross-lagged correlations between JAMK and JHRC are above the Rozelle-Campbell baseline of .591, indicating that their dynamics influenced each other, but the predominant flow of influence was from JAMK to JHRC ($\rho_{M1R2}$ = .871) rather than in the other direction ($\rho_{R1M2}$ = .609).

The Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient matrix for the horse race agendas presents a summary of all of the correlation values between each pair of candidates during both time frames —initial and final— of the campaign (see Table 5). Outcomes determine that three synchronous correlations were statistically significant at the .01 level ($p$ < .01) between RAC and AMLO ($\rho_{A1L1}$ = .955) during the initial phase, between AMLO and JAMK ($\rho_{L2M2}$ = .925) during the final phase, as well as between AMLO and JHRC ($\rho_{L2R2}$ = .955) during the final phase. Also, one cross-correlation was found at the .01 level ($p$ < .01) between JAMK at the initial phase and AMLO at the final phase ($\rho_{M1L2}$ = .955). In short, there were three correlations with the highest value of .955 at the .01 level ($p$ < .01): between RAC and AMLO ($\rho_{A1L1}$ = .955) during the initial phase, between JAMK in the initial phase and AMLO in the final phase ($\rho_{M1L2}$ = .955) and between AMLO and JHRC at the final phase ($\rho_{L2R2}$ = .955).

Moreover, results document two synchronous correlations as statistically significant at the .05 level ($p$ < .05) between RAC and JAMK ($\rho_{A2M2}$ = .909) during the final phase and between JAMK and JHRC ($\rho_{M2R2}$ = .907) during the final phase. Similarly, four cross-correlations were found at the .05 level ($p$ < .05) between RAC at the initial phase and JAMK at the final phase ($\rho_{A1M2}$ = .896), between AMLO at the initial phase and RAC at the final phase ($\rho_{L1\,A2}$ = .844), between AMLO at the initial phase and JAMK at the final phase ($\rho_{L1M2}$ = .813), and between JAMK at the initial phase and JHRC at the final phase ($\rho_{M1R2}$ = .871). Likewise, two auto-correlations were found at the .05 level ($p$ < .05) for RAC ($\rho_{A1A2}$ = .851) during his initial and final phases as well as JAMK ($\rho_{M1M2}$ = .907). In short, the highest correlation found at the .05 level ($p$ < .05) was between RAC and JAMK ($\rho_{A2M2}$ =

.909) at the final phase. In short, only one case of dominant one-directional flow of influence from a party candidate —RAC— to the independent candidate —JHRC— was documented in Telemundo's newscasts indicating that the candidate leading the horse race conversation was RAC and the other three contenders were following him.

**Table 5.** Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient Matrix for Horse Race Agendas.

|  | Anaya (1) | Anaya (2) | López (1) | López (2) | Meade (1) | Meade (2) | Rodrí-guez (1) | Rodrí-guez (2) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anaya (1) | – |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Anaya (2) | .851* | – |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| López (1) | .955** | .844* | – |  |  |  |  |  |
| López (2) | .721 | .716 | .616 | – |  |  |  |  |
| Meade (1) | .770 | .750 | .742 | .955** | – |  |  |  |
| Meade (2) | .896* | .909* | .813* | .925** | .907* | – |  |  |
| Rodríguez (1) | .514 | .313 | .359 | .686 | .539 | .609 | – |  |
| Rodríguez (2) | .647 | .750 | .548 | .955** | .871* | .907* | .718 | – |

*Note:* (1) refers to the initial phase and (2) refers to the final phase of the campaign. $**p < .01$, $*p < .05$.

In terms of the cross-lagged correlation analysis regarding the issues agendas, outcomes reveal four cases of dominant one-directional flow of influence. As Figure 2(a) illustrates, the cross-lagged correlation analysis between RAC and AMLO clearly shows that the flow of influence was exclusively from RAC to AMLO ($\rho_{A1L2} = .598$) since the Rozelle-Campbell baseline value (RCb = .494) is higher than the cross-lagged correlation from AMLO to RAC ($\rho_{L1A2} = .413$). Similarly, Figure 2(b) shows a strong flow of influence from JAMK to RAC ($\rho_{M1A2} = .562$) since the Rozelle-Campbell baseline value (RCb = .160) is higher than the correlation from the other way around ($\rho_{A1M2} = .150$). Likewise, Figure 2(d) presents another significant one-directional flow of influence from JAMK to AMLO ($\rho_{M1L2} = .757$) since the Rozelle-Campbell baseline value (RCb = .383) is above the cross-lagged correlation from AMLO to JAMK ($\rho_{L1M2} = .262$). Moreover, Figure 2(f) clearly shows one-directional flow of influence from JAMK to JHRC ($\rho_{M1R2} = .713$) because this cross-lagged correlation is above the Rozelle-Campbell baseline value (RCb = .426) and not the other way around from JHRC to JAMK ($\rho_{R1M2} = .350$).

Furthermore, results document two reciprocal relationships of influence between the presidential contenders. As Figure 2(c) illustrates, both cross-lagged correlations between RAC and JHRC are above the Rozelle-Campbell baseline (RCb) of .369, indicating that their dynamics influenced each other, but the predominant flow of influence was from JHRC to RAC ($\rho_{R1A2} = .562$) rather than in the other direction ($\rho_{A1R2} = .534$). Finally, Figure 2(e) presents another case of reciprocal influence between AMLO and JHRC. The evidence shows that both candidates influenced each other because their cross-lagged correlation values are above the Rozelle-Campbell baseline (RCb = .565). Still, the power of influence from AMLO to JHRC was predominant ($\rho_{L1R2} = .706$) than in the other direction ($\rho_{R1L2} = .699$).

**Figure 2.** Directional flow of influence of presidential candidates' issues agendas between (a) Anaya and López, (b) Anaya and Meade, (c) Anaya and Rodríguez, (d) López and Meade, (e) López and Rodríguez, and (f) Meade and Rodríguez.



|   | Initial Phase | 0.211 | Final Phase |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) | Anaya 0.964 / 0.598 / 0.413 / 0.785 | | 0.755 Anaya / López | |

(a) Rozelle-Campbell baseline = 0.494

(b) Rozelle-Campbell baseline = 0.160

(c) Rozelle-Campbell baseline = 0.369

(d) Rozelle-Campbell baseline = 0.383

(e) Rozelle-Campbell baseline = 0.565

(f) Rozelle-Campbell baseline = 0.426
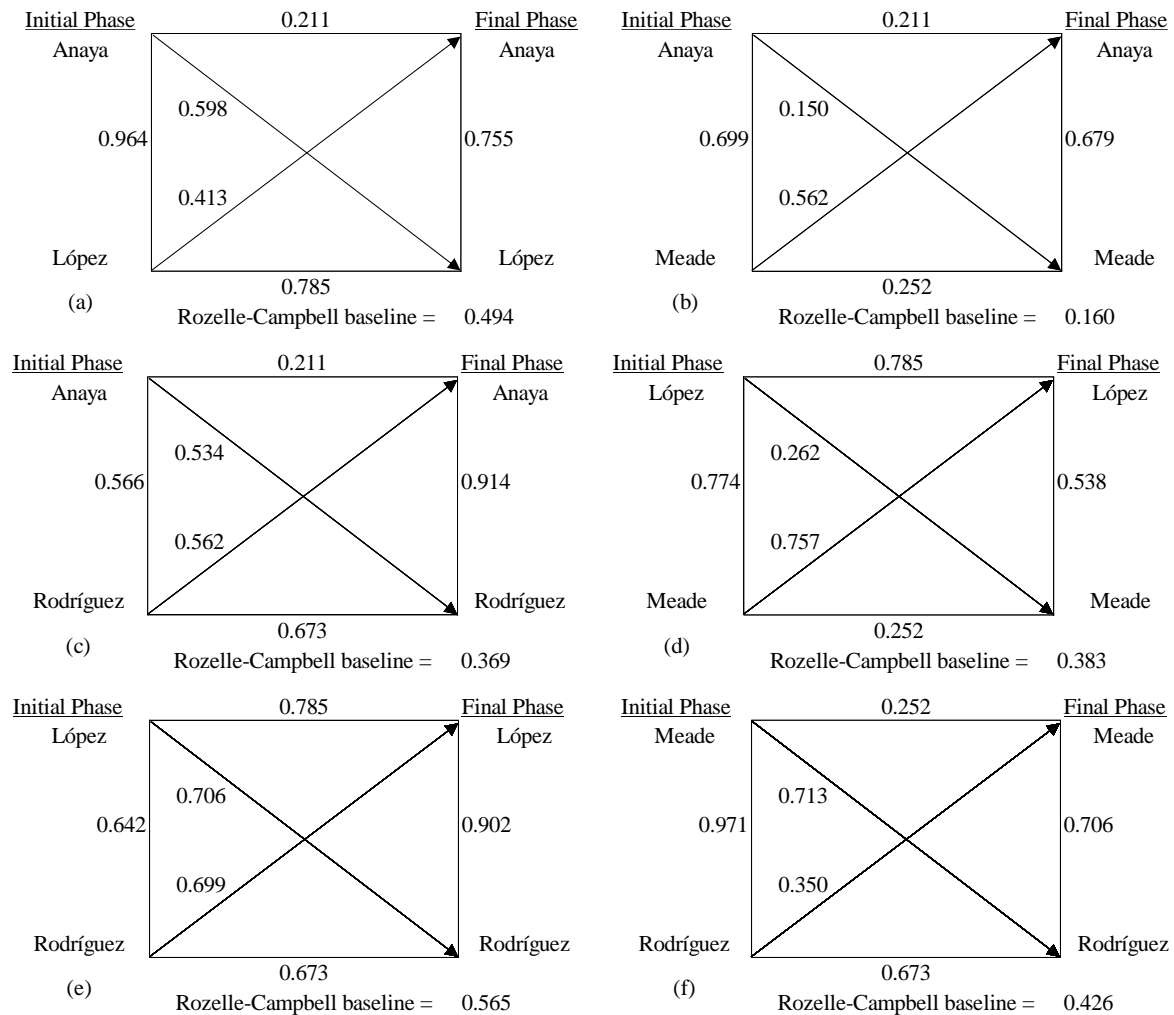
The Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient matrix for the issues agendas show a summary of all of the correlation values between each pair of candidates during both time frames —initial and final— of the campaign (see Table 6). Results indicate that four synchronous correlations were statistically significant at the .01 level ($p < .01$) between RAC and AMLO ($\rho_{A1L1} = .964$) during the initial phase; between RAC and JHRC ($\rho_{A2R2} = .914$) during the final phase; between AMLO and JHRC ($\rho_{L2R2} = .902$) during the final phase; and between JAMK and JHRC ($\rho_{M1R1} = .971$) at the initial phase. In short, the highest correlation found at the .01 level ($p < .01$) was between JAMK and JHRC ($\rho_{M1R1} = .971$) at the initial phase.

Regarding the outcomes at the .05 level ($p < .05$), two synchronous correlations were found to be statistically significant: between RAC and AMLO ($\rho_{A2L2} = .755$) during the final phase; and between AMLO and JAMK ($\rho_{L1M1} = .774$) during the initial phase. Similarly, one cross-correlation was found at the .05 level ($p < .05$) between JAMK at the initial phase and AMLO at the final phase ($\rho_{M1L2}$

= .757). One auto-correlation was also found at the .05 level ($p < .05$) for AMLO ($\rho_{L1L2}$ = .785) during his initial and final phases. The highest correlation found at the .05 level ($p < .05$) was AMLO's ($\rho_{L1L2}$ = .785) auto-correlation. In short, the rhetoric dynamic on the discussion of issues in Telemundo's newscasts presented a contrasting state of affairs detecting four cases of one-directional flow of influence, all of them headed by a party candidate. JAMK was influencing in three of those cases and RAC in the remaining one. As a result, JAMK was the leader concerning the issues discussion in Telemundo's newscasts and the other three candidates were the followers. In both news agendas, horse race and issues, the party candidates influenced the independent candidate.

**Table 6.** Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient Matrix for Issues Agendas.

|  | Anaya (1) | Anaya (2) | López (1) | López (2) | Meade (1) | Meade (2) | Rodríguez (1) | Rodríguez (2) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anaya (1) | − | | | | | | | |
| Anaya (2) | .211 | − | | | | | | |
| López (1) | .964** | .413 | − | | | | | |
| López (2) | .598 | .755* | .785* | − | | | | |
| Meade (1) | .699 | .562 | .774* | .757* | − | | | |
| Meade (2) | .150 | .679 | .262 | .538 | .252 | − | | |
| Rodríguez (1) | .566 | .562 | .642 | .699 | .971** | .350 | − | |
| Rodríguez (2) | .534 | .914** | .706 | .902** | .713 | .706 | .673 | − |

*Note:* (1) refers to the initial phase and (2) refers to the final phase of the campaign. **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$.

## Conclusion

The present study contributes to the internationalization of the agenda setting theory by testing it during the 2018 Mexican presidential election. Outcomes indicate that agenda setting effects were observed during this election in Telemundo's newscasts, particularly among party candidates and the independent candidate. The idea is that in order for agenda setting theory to become more international, it has to be tested outside of the United States electoral context taking into consideration the fact that every nation in the world presents its own particular political electoral situation dynamics that should be tested in great detail. Naturally, agenda setting theory methodology has to be adapted to the political context of the country where this theory would be tested. It is worth noting that agenda setting theory was born in the United States to measure the political system there, which generally consists of two political parties and two major presidential contenders. However, this is not the case in other countries such as Mexico because the 2018 election involved nine political parties organized into three political coalitions, which presented a presidential nominee and one independent candidate. Seventy years after the 1946 reform that denied citizens the right to be elected, the election allowed an independent candidate to register to run for the highest office, thus creating an innovative electoral dynamic where the power of political parties was challenged by an independent candidate.

Consequently, it was not feasible to reduce the analysis to only two candidates because that would have provided only a partial analysis. To understand this political environment, all four candidates had to be tested by the means of adjusting the agenda setting theory and its methodology to determine the power of influence between party candidates and the independent candidate —the inter-candidate agenda setting effect. This research makes a significant contribution to the internationalization of the agenda setting theory by recognizing the significant role that designing an efficient data-collection strategy plays. The internationalization process of agenda setting theory allows for the adjustment of the theory to a variety of diverse cultural and political environments through its methodological design as needed to measure some critical aspect of the electoral process taking place in the country of interest. In the case of this study, Mexico's new electoral model, which now allows the independent candidate to run for office, was the central point of the 2018 electoral cycle. Also, this study verifies that agenda setting effects can be observed among several candidates even though, traditionally, it has only been tested on two presidential candidates at a time. This investigation documents that agenda setting effects can be measured and observed on independent candidates with the same accuracy as in party candidates. Furthermore, this study expands the inter-candidate body of knowledge by testing the independent candidate's power of influence over party candidates and vice versa.

In the 2018 Mexican presidential election, three party candidates —RAC, AMLO, and JAMK— and one independent candidate —JHRC— were competing for the presidential seat. Results demonstrated that RAC received the highest amount of news coverage in Telemundo, while JAMK obtained the most favorable news coverage, and JHRC acquired the most negative coverage. In addition, outcomes determined that the general tendency of candidates' horse race agendas regarding the party candidates was to discuss predominantly issues and for the independent contender. Telemundo's reporting of all four presidential candidates focused on discussing issues, not horse race topics, engaging in an elevated democratic dialogue. The three horse race topics that routinely came into view in Telemundo were debates, campaign activities, and voting education/procedures. JAMK achieved the highest auto-correlation as it relates to the horse race, reaching almost an identical agenda for the entire examination period, followed by RAC and JHRC indicating a similar agenda, but AMLO gained a moderate auto-correlation showing a modest interconnection in his agenda. With respect to the inter-candidate agenda setting effect in Telemundo, results determined that all three party candidates had almost identical horse race agendas by achieving high correlations when compared-and-contrasted, making it very difficult for voters to distinguish between their electoral messages. Nevertheless, when Telemundo's reporting on presidential candidates was juxtaposed with the independent candidate, the correlation was moderate demonstrating that journalists covering JHRC presented a different electoral discussion, which set him apart from the party candidates. One case of dominant one-directional flow of influence from a party candidate —RAC— to the independent candidate —JHRC— was documented, indicating that the candidate leading the horse race conversation in Telemundo was RAC.

Regarding the candidates' issues agendas, the results documented that Telemundo's journalists reported on seven recurring issues: corruption, economy, education, politics, security, telecommunications, and U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship. Outcomes indicated that AMLO was the candidate with the most homogenous auto-correlation during the entire campaign period, calling attention to his fight against corruption. Reporters covering the other two party candidates —RAC and JAMK— presented a completely different set of issues in the initial and final phases of the campaign period, suggesting that Telemundo disseminated two distinct issues conversations. Regarding the independent candidate —JHRC— his political message was to some extent consistent between periods. The inter-candidate issues agenda setting effect in Telemundo's newscasts presented all strong correlations among contenders, suggesting that their issues agendas were near identical discussing about corruption and U.S.-Mexico bilateral relations. Once again, Telemundo's reporting on all four candidates were communicating the same message across the board, making it hard for voters to differentiate among the candidates' agendas. Outcomes regarding the directional flow of influence in Telemundo documented that JAMK was leading the issues conversation, modeling the other three candidates' issues agendas.

Overall, in the 2018 Mexican presidential election, the independent candidate challenged the parties' communication strategies in terms of the horse race conversation in Telemundo. JHRC had the capacity to disseminate a distinct horse race political message from the other contenders despite having acquired the most negative coverage from journalists. Nevertheless, the independent candidate did not represent an opposition to the parties' communication plan of action regarding the discussion of issues in Telemundo since JHRC's political rhetoric was not different from the other three contenders. The fact that Telemundo's reporting highlighted that all four candidates were focusing on the same issues made it difficult for voters to distinguish among presidential candidates. Nor did the independent candidate represent a challenge concerning the power of influence because he was not leading the political conversation in Telemundo. On the contrary, JHRC was influenced by RAC in regards to the horse race conversation in the newscasts. Also, JHRC was following JAMK's leadership as he dominated the issues discussion in Telemundo. Consequently, the independent candidate's power of influence over party contenders' rhetoric was weak. While the independent candidate in this election did not lead the political conversation, this analysis, in itself, does not necessarily discard the possibility for the independent candidate to lead all aspects of the electoral conversations in future elections.

The present study's limitation was that, due to restricted available resources, this research was conducted exclusively on Telemundo. Perhaps, if additional resources were available, a more comprehensive study that included Univision could have allowed for a comparative study between U.S. Spanish-language television networks. Since RAC lead the horse race conversation and JAMK commanded the issues discussion, but neither one won the election, for future research it would be essential to examine all four presidential candidates' personal attributes to understand their unique charm and leadership style. In addition, it would be interesting to replicate this examination in the

2024 Mexican presidential election comparing two female presidential contenders —Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo and Bertha Xóchitl Gálvez Ruiz— against one male candidate —Jorge Álvarez Máynez— to continue documenting the internationalization of agenda setting theory in Mexico.

## Acknowledgements

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## References

Acosta Valverde, M., & Parra Rosales, M. de L. (1994). *Los procesos electorales en medios de comunicación*. Academica Mexicana de Derechos Humanos, Universidad Iberoamericana.

Alder, L. (1993). The Mexican Case: The media in the 1998 Presidential election. In T.E. Skidmore (Ed.), *Television, Politics and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (pp. 145–173). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Arredondo Ramírez, P., Fregoso Peralta, G., & Trejo Delabre, R. (1991). *Así calló el sistema: Communicación y elecciones en 1998*. Universidad de Guadalajara.

Arroyo, M. (2012, March 15). Candidaturas independietes. *El Economista*. http://eleconomista.com.mx/columnas/columna-especial-politica/2012/02/15/candidaturas-independientes

Beltrán, U. (2020). Traditional Media and Social Networks in the 2018 Presidential Election. *Política y Gobierno*, 38(2), 1–19.

Bennett, W. L. (2005). *News: The Politics of Illusion* (6th edition). Pearson/Longman.

Bennett, W. L., & Manheim, J. B. (2001). The Big Spin: Strategic Communication and the Transformation of Pluralistic Democracy. In W.L. Bennett & R. M. Entman (Eds.), *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy* (pp. 279–298). Cambridge University.

Berelson, B. R., Lazarsfeld, P. F., & McPhee, W. N. (1954). *Voting: A study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*. University of Chicago Press.

Bernal Sahagún, V. M., & Torreblanca Jacques, E. (1998). *Espacios del Silencio*. Nuestro Tiempo.

Cámara de Diputados. (1990). *Código Federal de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales*. https://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/abro/cofipe/COFIPE_abro_14ene08.pdf.

Cámara de Diputados. (2013, December 27). *Decreto por el que se reforma el inciso 3) y se adiciona un inciso o) de la fracción IV del artículo 116*. https://www.diputados.gobmx/leyesBiblio/proceso/docleg/62/214_DOF_27dic13.pdf

Cámara de Diputados. (2024). *Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*. https://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/CPEUM.pdf

Campell, D. T., & Kenny, D. A. (1999). *A Primer on Regression Artifacts*. Guilford Press.

Castañeda, J. G. (2016, February 1). Por una candidatura independiente única. *Revista Nexos*. https://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=27509

Cohen, B. (1963). *The Press and Foreign Policy*. Princeton University Press.

Corona Nakamura, L. A., & Hernández Velazco, G. (2015). Las candidaturas independientes en México. *Revista de Investigacões Constitucionais, 2*(2), 117–135. https://doi.org/10.5380/rinc.v2i2.44513

Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos. (2008, August 6). Castañeda Gutman vs Estados Unidos Mexicanos. Sentencia de 6 de agosto de 2008. Serie C No 184. *Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos*. http://corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_184_esp.pdf

De León, E., Vermeer, S., & Trilling, D. (2023) Electoral News Sharing: A Study of Changes in News Coverage and Facebook Sharing Behavior During the 2018 Mexican Election. *Information, Communication & Society, 26*(6), 1193–1209. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.1994629

Díaz Jiménez, O. F. (2017). Election Campaigns, The Media and their Impact on Civic Engagement of Mexicans in the 2012 Presidential Election. *Comunicación y Sociedad, 26*(2), 123–146. http://dx.doi.org/10.32870/cys.v0i29.6302

Espinoza Valle, V. A. (2019). Candidaturas independientes en México 2015: La representación partidista cuestionada. *Revista Mexicana de Estudios Electorales, 3*(21), 39–63.

Flores, M. de los Á., & McCombs, M. E. (2010). Who Set the Television Agenda in the 2006 Mexican Election? News vs Advertising. *Journal of Spanish Language Media, 3*(1), 59–77.

Flores-Macías, G. (2013). Mexico's 2012 Elections: The Return of the PRI. *Journal of Democracy, 24*(1), 128–141.

Glowacki, M., Narayanan, V., Maynard, S., Hirsh, G., Kollanyi, B., Neudert, L. M., Howard, P., & Graphika, T. L. (2018). *News and Political Information Consumption in Mexico: Mapping the 2018 Mexican Presidential Election on Twitter and Facebook*. University of Oxford, Internet Institute. https://demtech.oii.ox.ac.uk/research/posts/news-and-political-information-

consumption-in-mexico-mapping-the-2018-mexican-presidential-election-on-twitter-and-facebook/

González, R. A. (2021). The Mexican 2018 Presidential Election in the Media Landscape: Newspaper Coverage, TV Spots and Twitter Interaction. In G. D. Rawnsley, Y. Ma, & K. Pothong (Eds.), *Research Handbook on Political Propaganda* (pp. 315–332). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Hallin, D. C., & Papathanassopoulos, S. (2002). Political Clientelism and the Media: Sourthern Europe and Latin American Comparative Perspective. *Media, Culture, & Society, 24*(2), 175–195. https://doi.org/10.1177/016344370202400202

Hughes, S., & Lawson, C. (2004). Propaganda and Crony Capitalism: Partisan Bias in Mexican Television News. *Latin American Reserch Review, 39*(3), 81–105. https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2004.0050

Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE). (2006). *Resultados del Voto de los Mexicanos Residentes en el Extranjero-Proceso Electoral Federal 2005-2006*. INE-Digital. http://www.votoextranjero.mx/web/vmre/historico-de-resultados

Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE). (2012). *Resultados del Voto de los Mexicanos Residentes en el Extranjero-Proceso Electoral Federal 2011-2012*. INE-Digital. http://www.votoextranjero.mx/web/vmre/historico-de-resultados

Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE). (2018a). *Elecciones Federales 2018-Programa de Resultados Electorales Preliminares*. INE-Digital. https://prep2018.ine.mx/#/presidencia/nacional/1/1/1/1

Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE). (2018b). *Resultados del voto de los Mexicanos residentes en el extranjero-Proceso electoral federal 2017-2018*. INE-Digital. http://www.votoextranjero.mx/web/vmre/elecciones2018

Iturbe Carbajal, C. I. (2013). *Las campañas negativas a través de los anuncios en televisión: Su papel en las elecciones presidenciales de México 2006*. (Doctoral thesis, Universidad Computense de Madrid). Docta Complutense. https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14352/37861

Kavanaugh, A. L., Sheetz, S. D., Sandoval-Almazan, R., Tedesco, J. C., & Fox, E. A. (2016). Media Use During Conflicts: Information Seeking and Political Efficacy during the 2012 Mexican Elections. *Government Information Quarterly, 33*(1), 595–602. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2016.01.004

Lawson, C. (2002). *Building the Fourth Estate: Democratization and the Rise of a Free Press in Mexico*. University of California Press.

Lawson, C., & McCann, J. A. (2004). Television News Mexico's 2000 Elections and Media Effects in Emerging Democracies. *British Journal of Political Science, 23*(1), 1–30. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123405000013

Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public Opinion*. Free Press.

López-Escobar, E., Llamas, J. P., McCombs, M. E., & Lennon, F. R. (1998). Two Levels of Agenda Setting Among Advertising and News in the 1995 Spanish Elections. *Political Communication, 15*(2), 225–238. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609809342367

McCombs, M. E. (2004). *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion*. Polity Press.

McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. R. (1972). The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 36*, 176–187. https://doi.org/10.1086/267990

Mercado, A., Hellweg, S., Dozier, D., & Hofstetter, C. (2003, May 27). *A Study of Agenda-Setting Theory in Presidential Debates in Mexico's 2000 Presidential Campaign* [Paper Presentation]. International Communication Association, San Diego, CA. https://0-doi-org.lib.utep.du/ica_proceeding-12158.PDF

Perloff, R. (1998). *Political Communication: Politics, Press, and Public in Am*erica. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Pew Research Center. (2021a, July 27). *Audience for Univision Network. Pew Research Center*. https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/chart/sotnm-hispanic-black-audience-for-univision-network/

Pew Research Center. (2021b, July 27). *Audience for Telemundo Network. Pew Research Center*. https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/chart/sotnm-hispanic-black-audience-for-telemundo-network/

Piñón, J. (2019). United States: Network Infrastructure of the Internet Television Industry. In M. I. Vassalo de López & G. O. Orozco Gómez (Eds.), *Television Distribution Models by the Internet: Actors, Technologies, Strategies* (pp. 307–340). Globo-Editorial Sulina.

Poindexter, P. M., & McCombs, M. E. (2000). *Research in Mass Communication: A Practical Guide*. Bedford/St. Martin's.

Popkin, S. L. (1994). *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns* (2nd ed.). The University of Chicago Press.

Rozelle, R. M., & Campbell, D. T. (1969). More Plausible Rival Hypotheses in the Cross-Lagged Panel Correlation Technique. *Psychological Bulletin, 71*(1), 74–80. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0026863

Sandoval-Almazan, R. (2015). Using Twitter in Political Campaigns: The Case of the PRI Candidate in Mexico. *International Journal of E-Politics, 6*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-7669-3.ch035

Sussman, G., & Galizio, L. (2003). The Global Reproduction of American Politics. *Political Communication, 20*(1), 309–328. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600390218931

Vidal Correa, F. (2020). Presidential Elections in Mexico: Media Coverage of the Josefina Vázquez Mota Campaign. *Women's Studies, 49*(5), 533–550. https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.2020.1772791