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Cynicism, Distrust and Dissatisfaction Among Spanish and Mexican Millennials and Centennials in Audiovisual Consumption on Streaming Platforms

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Political cynicism is a psychosocial feeling of distrust and dissatisfaction with politics and the establishment. In the current context, dominated by social and economic uncertainty, political cynicism is affecting how we engage with information and technology, promoting the preference for safe spaces in entertainment narratives that are available on streaming platforms. The main objective of this study was to analyse whether millennial and centennial viewers in Spain and Mexico consider that major studios, production companies, and audiovisual distributors are only concerned with their economic and political interests or whether they also feel a genuine interest in social or citizen causes when addressing certain narratives. To explore this, a quantitative study was conducted through two national surveys, one in Mexico and the other in Spain (n = 998), aimed at millennial and centennial populations.

El cinismo político es un sentimiento psicosocial de desconfianza e insatisfacción hacia la política y el establishment*. En los tiempos actuales, dominados por la incertidumbre social y económica, el cinismo político está llegando a afectar la forma en que nos relacionamos con la información y la tecnología, lo que promueve la búsqueda de espacios seguros en las narrativas de entretenimiento que se pueden ver en plataformas de* streaming*. El objetivo principal de este estudio era analizar si los espectadores* millennials *y* centennials *de España y México consideran que los grandes estudios, productoras y distribuidoras audiovisuales solo se preocupan por sus intereses económicos y políticos o si también sienten un interés genuino por causas sociales o ciudadanas a la hora de abordar determinadas narrativas. Para ello, se realizó un estudio cuantitativo a través de dos encuestas nacionales, una en México y*

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The findings show that participants in both countries feel a high level of political cynicism, particularly men, right-wing voters, and millennials, who demonstrate greater political cynicism than their counterparts. Besides, the study concludes that the high sense of political cynicism that seems to plunge young generations in Spain and Mexico into high levels of distrust is a consequence of a hyperconnected and overstimulated lifestyle.

Keywords: *political cynicism, distrust, streaming, cinema, series.*

otra en España (n = 998), dirigidas a la población millennial *y* centennial*. Los resultados muestran que los participantes de ambos países sienten un alto nivel de cinismo político, particularmente los hombres, los votantes de derecha y los* millennials*, que son los más cínicos políticamente. También se concluye que el alto sentimiento de cinismo político que parece sumir a las generaciones jóvenes de España y México en altos niveles de desconfianza es consecuencia de un estilo de vida hiperconectado y sobreestimulado.*

Keywords: *cinismo político, desconfianza,* streaming*, cine, series.*

We are currently facing a convulsive political and emotional scenario that seems to focus on citizens' distrust of those in power. Faced with this current crisis of confidence, citizens need the representatives of the institutions to have an optimal image, that is, to transmit "trust, certainty and credibility" while, on the contrary, a poor image is often projected, which can become "discredit, mockery, disbelief, loss of power and detractors" (Sevilla, 2021, p. 99). Citizen confidence, which is necessary to establish "the pulse and order of social life," is pursued by creating and organizing public policies to reduce the uncertainty of the future (Sena and Dettano, 2021, p. 97).

In the West, we live in an era determined by individualism and a "normative reorientation of the social bond" in which the citizenry seems to ask "How to inhabit a commons?" a question difficult to answer since, nowadays, "there are too many ways to answer it' (Dipaola and Lutereau, 2020, p. 93). Umberto Eco (2014, p. 436) already explained the state of *the ugliness of life* when he stated that human beings have become accustomed, in their routine, to the saturation of horrible spectacles such as populations where children die of hunger, countries where women are raped by invaders, territories where torture is normalized or graphic accidents on television: "We saw limbs shattered by the explosion of a skyscraper or a plane in flight, and we live in terror that the same thing could happen to us". Life has become ugly, politics and the economy are unstable, and citizens have become cynical.

All that said, some of the most pressing questions are "How to protest, how to respond today, how to act in the face of this situation of multiple and highly depersonalized tyrannies in which the distinction between oppressors

and oppressed becomes increasingly blurred?" (D'Auria, 2020, p. 104). In the academic literature on political cynicism, it is not easy to find a clear answer to the labyrinthine problem faced on various fronts by today's society, as it even becomes difficult to distinguish victims from those who are not. On the one hand, we are faced with real problems that require social emergency aid and, on the other, with the victim as the "hero of our time", a sign of prestige and recognition, a powerful "generator of identity, of rights, of self-esteem" (Giglioli, 2017, p. 6).

This research seeks to examine the level of political cynicism of millennial and centennial generations in Spain and Mexico to understand whether they distrust what is represented in the audiovisual narratives they consume in streaming. In the digital era, where entertainment is sacralised and screens absorb so much attention, we wonder if young people in both Ibero-American countries believe that their entertainment manipulates them politically by selling ideological content or if, on the contrary, they believe that there has been a positive and disinterested change in audiovisual design and production.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Political Cynicism: The Crisis of Representative Democracies Today

It is important to pay attention to political cynicism as a psychosocial feeling of symptomatic distrust in today's democracies. According to Erber and Lau (1990, p. 236), based on David Easton's thesis, "the legitimacy of democratic political systems depends largely on the electorate's trust that the government will do the right thing, at least most of the time". In other words, it depends on citizens' trust in their rulers and the fulfilment of their expectations.

Political cynicism is fundamentally about citizens' dissatisfaction with the government, generating frustration among the people and consequently delegitimizing the ruling class. Such frustration is expressed "in the belief that politicians care more about their interest than about that of the citizens, more about preserving their positions than about the interests of the country" (Balmas, 2014, p. 437), meaning that there is a tendency towards negative evaluations of politicians' work habits, honesty and integrity.

In a more generic scope, cynicism "is the belief that people lie and are only interested in themselves" (Corral Cumbreras and Powell, 2019, pp. 47-48). This term has been applied to the realm of politics, stating that rulers only think of their benefit over the public interest (Agger *et al.*, 1961).

The central thesis of Joseph N. Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson's book, entitled *Spiral of Cynicism* (1997), was that "the media largely report strategically on politics, which fuels public distrust and cynicism," eventually eroding "civic engagement and electoral participation" (Vreese, 2005, p. 284). In their research, Cappella and Jamieson provided the first direct evidence of the impact of strategic framing, and through a program of experimental studies, content analysis, and surveys, reached two main conclusions (Valentino *et al.*, 2001, p. 349):

1. Strategic frames affect the type of information people extract from a news story. That is, strategic news propagates strategic thinking about politics. The subjects in Cappella and Jamieson's (1977) research recalled much more strategic information about campaign candidates than those exposed to other issue-oriented news stories.
2. Strategic news about political campaigns increases candidates' cynicism.

At this point, it is crucial to discuss what these authors understood through strategic communication. This concept is defined as "news that focuses on winning and losing, is governed by the language of "war and games, "emphasizes "actors, critics and audiences, "focuses on the style and perceptions of the candidates" and, in addition, gives paramount importance to opinion surveys (Jamieson, 1992; Vreese, 2005, p. 284).

In the same vein, Lin and Lim (2002) showed that the media is partly to blame for the creation of a negative attitude towards media coverage of campaigns, as well as the cynicism and lack of effectiveness of the citizenry towards the political process, fostering a high level of disaffection in the young population. As a result, a significant part of the citizenry ignores its participatory responsibility in the political process; consequently, democracy is undermined. On the contrary, according to Song *et al*. (2020), the perception of being informed decreases citizens' political cynicism, and these individuals play an active role in the democratic process despite the illusion of being informed.

Political cynicism is closely related to increased anger, anxiety, and decreased enthusiasm and seems to encourage political information seeking on the Internet due to distrust itself (Tian *et al*., 2020). However, it should be noted that political cynics have not abandoned politics even though they do not trust it (Pinkleton and Austin, 2004).

According to López de Lizaga (2022), cynicism can cause tremendous damage to political liberalism because it can cause significant instability: "It annuls the possibility of reasonable agreement". Starting from John Rawls's writings, the cynic is understood as "one who affirms his beliefs because they are his own without worrying at all about whether or not they are true" (López de Lizaga, 2022, p. 530). In this sense, the differentiation between the "dogmatic cynic" and the "fanatical cynic" is proposed because the former imposes his beliefs because they are true, whereas the latter imposes them because they are his own, a scenario that logically is the breeding ground for post-truth.

On the other hand, incivism, understood as the "violation of social norms," causes citizens to lose trust in politicians, questioning their willingness to solve the conflict, thus fostering political cynicism (Otto *et al*., 2019, p. 4). Therefore, cynicism behaves as a unique predictor of political and social variables, such as anti-political attitudes and voting as a means of protest and racial prejudice (Pattyn *et al*., 2012). Another factor influencing the proliferation of political cynicism is the citizenry's perception that they are not getting what they deserve at work, distancing the worker from the political system in all facets (Hootegem *et al*., 2021).

Political cynicism can also proliferate through satire or activism. In research conducted by Shao and Liu (2018), which inquired into the effects of satire

in the authoritarian context of China, it was found that online satire created political cynicism among its audience, discouraging the political participation of educated youth, deflating the public's political trust, political efficacy and electoral participation, concluding that political satire could eventually "stabilize the authoritarian regime temporarily", results very close to those found by Romero-Rodríguez *et al*. (2021) in young people from Spain, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela. In this sense, the negative messages that satire can communicate about a regime are not discussed. However, the adverse effects it can have on the attitudes and behaviours of citizens regarding politics are quite likely that political satire is not the beginning of political activism against a regime, but rather a path towards cynicism.

Similarly, individuals' perceived misinformation also influences their political cynicism, as "misinformation, or disinformation, about elections and politicians during campaign periods elevates political cynicism at the voting time" (Jones-Jang *et al*., 2021, p. 15). In short, exposure to misinformation collectively undermines public beliefs in democratic values and systems, fostering political cynicism that is generally associated with decreased political participation and the obstruction of democratic processes (Uslaner, 2018).

It is also important to keep in mind that, apart from post-truth, disinformation, and the proliferation of fake news, conspiracy beliefs are also linked to lower support for representative democracy. However, political cynics offer greater support for direct democracy, that is, a democracy that allows citizens to vote not on parliaments but substantive issues, "promising to give power back to the people", which would be a possible solution to political cynicism (Pantazi *et al*., 2022, p. 16).

Similarly, populism leads to political cynicism (Rooduijn *et al*., 2017). Populist political actors tend to mobilize reactionary and exclusionary forms of politics among those who are politically cynical (Krouwel and Abts, 2007). Moreover, populist movements around the world often resort to social networks to propagate their populist rhetoric and discourse (Engesser *et al*., 2016; Ernst *et al*., 2017; Gerbaudo, 2018). Likewise, according to Ahmed and Masood (2024, p. 8), "traditional modes of political information dissemination may fall short for cynics". Thus, "Distrust in a system can trigger populist demands in a society" (Espinosa *et al*., 2022, p.10). For example, in Latin America, various populist groups and authoritarian political movements are emerging, both on the ideological left and on the ideological right, with narratives that pit so-called good citizens-or moral people-against the corrupt elite (Espinosa *et al*., 2022; Salinero, 2015; Mélendez, 2022) as a common strategy of these discourses.

According to the Edelman Trust Barometer in Spain (2023a), no institution is considered ethical and competent, there is institutional imbalance, economic optimism plummets, polarization is more severe when divisions are more entrenched (Spain being highly polarized), and ideology becomes identity, as only around 20 % of Spaniards would help, live near, or work with a person who totally disagreed with them or their point of view. This clearly shows that there is a relationship between political cynicism and polarization in Spain today.

As for the Edelman Trust Barometer in Mexico (2023b), this report shows a "dangerous and deep polarization" of the country driven by "lack of trust in social institutions, economic anxiety, misinformation, massive class division and lack of leadership". Thus, in Mexico, very few would help (30 %), live near (15 %), or work with someone who disagrees with their point of view (16 %), resulting in a country with considerable distrust of its political institutions.

From the Multiplex to the Living Room: New Ways of Consuming Audiovisual Entertainment

After the collapse of large movie theatres in the 1970s, both in Europe and America, they had to "reinvent themselves" with the arrival of mini and multiplex cinemas to solve the crisis brought about by the advent of television in the home. This solution brought economic and commercial advantages, such as flexible schedules and contributions to new urban developments. It was then that the projection enclosures were installed in shopping malls, once again turning cinema into a spectacle for the masses. This has resulted in the absolute social democratization of cinema. Access is guaranteed regardless of social class, race, age, gender, or socioeconomic status (García Santamaría, 2012).

In the last decade, there has been an increase in the popularization of streaming content consumption driven by large platforms such as Netflix, HBO, Filmin, and Amazon Prime Video, causing a powerful "disruption" in audiovisual consumption habits (Neira *et al*., 2021, p. 3).

Media audiences now take "atawad" place, an acronym that stands for "anytime", "anywhere", and "any device". There is even a reference to "atawad+ac", incorporating the formula "any content" (Hernández-Pérez and Rodríguez-Mateos, 2016), so that media consumption is nowadays, in many cases, multiscreen and multitasking. Consequently, the contemporary viewer does not want to feel "tied to the schedules programmed by the channels, but can choose to view the content whenever they want, either recording it (time shift) or watching it in streaming (VoD)". (Quintas-Froufe and González-Neira, 2016, p. 380).

This brings us to the realm of binge-watching, which entails factors such as "catching up with the plot, relaxation, a sense of completion, cultural inclusion, and enhancement of the viewing experience" (Steiner and Xu (2018); Rubenking *et al*. (2018). According to Donstrup (2024a, p. 67), the Spanish television viewer of television series, immersed in university studies and with an average age of 23 years, has the need-to-know subsequent events, follows the habit of viewing such series (the so-called comfort series), and is interested in the dynamics of the narrative itself. However, among the motivations for consumption is the act of being able to talk about the series with friends or the contextual proximity to the narration (Donstrup, 2024a, p. 67).

On the other hand, according to Tóth-Király (2017, p. 472), today's viewers, as online TV series appear, run the risk of falling into negative habits, so we should differentiate between "involved" and "problematic" viewers Thus, spending too much time in front of screens can trigger harmful health effects such as higher

levels of anxiety, feeling of loneliness, and low sense of well-being among others (Mentzoni *et al.*, 2011; Bélanger *et al.*, 2011; Yau *et al.*, 2013); Ang *et al.*, 2012; Lemmens *et al.*, 2011; Aa *et al.*, 2009) among others.... Also, viewers with high levels of involvement can be considered as a risk group that could easily develop problematic use (Tóth-Király, 2017, p. 483).

Following Nærland (2019), there are five functions that capture the main varieties of how engagement with television series enables connection with audiences: Charging, Deepening, Affective Motivation, Introduction/Extension, and Solidification. First, through emotional investment, engagement with television series can spark interest in politically significant issues; second, they function as a narrative vehicle for audiences to make sense of and reflect on politically significant events; third, they stimulate social affinities with the community, which can focus attention on issues of collective importance; fourth, engagement with TV series can make audiences aware of issues they were previously unaware of or uninterested in; and finally, the practice of watching TV series can consolidate their general orientation towards the political sphere (Nærland, 2019, p. 13).

One might ask about the technological and digital changes we are currently experiencing, whether these transformations affect the viewer's perspective, and even the film's narrative or political analysis. According to Daniel Krauze (Solórzano and Krauze, 2021), the arrival of smartphones spoiled the vision of cinema as a temple: "It is very rare to go to the movies and not have a person sitting next to me or sitting in front of me or in the back who does not have a cell phone on or is not talking. And that invariably distracts me", so the author does not believe that most of the population wants to see a film exclusively to "appreciate or enjoy it". He also believes that the COVID-19 pandemic has popularized the viewing of feature films and series via streaming, which encourages the idea that a billboard is not as varied as the OTT catalogue, or even fatalistic positions on the death of the film.

This leads to content digitization, Internet access through broadband connections, and the massification of mobile devices, resulting in enormous transformations in the audiovisual industry (Komissarov and Sánchez-Narvarte, 2019). Consequently, these processes change how content is "produced, distributed, and consumed", enabling the parallel emergence of new business models and market restructuring.

Moreover, it is essential to pay attention to the irruption of new media technologies such as windows to misinformation, turning social networks and digital platforms into a breeding ground to promote virality and the massification of content, making it seem natural (Romero-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2021). In other words, media can create realities in the viewer, and cinema is not far from this perspective. According to Lipovetsky and Serroy (2009, p. 14), cinema today leads more to the diversification of content than to uniformity because, after all, cinema would not know how to live or develop without innovative films that satisfy the public's need for novelty, mobilize supply, and market. In this sense, the mass media cannot escape its commercial roadmap and inclination towards the law of supply and demand, offering the public what it wants to receive (Eco, 1984, p. 61).

On the other hand, the culture of the current series is immersed in dystopia and in the search for shock at all costs, cementing the finding of cruelty or depression as a sign of intellectual nourishment (Fernández Rodríguez and Romero-Rodríguez, 2021) and understanding audiovisual cruelty as a stylization of everyday horror (Fernández Rodríguez *et al*., 2023, p. 2). Jarrod L. Green (2019) identifies nine functions of science fiction discourse (the usual genre of dystopia): communication, critique, conciliation, engagement, curiosity, catharsis, change, competition, and connection. Of these functions, Donstrup (2024b, p. 201) highlights the function of engagement, which relates to the fan community, in which textual experience is enriched through various platforms. Similarly, this author found that participants expressed concern about the unpleasant sociopolitical situations depicted in dystopian series (Donstrup, 2024b, p. 201), as dystopia "functions as a narrative vehicle that effectively conveys the concerns about negative social trends that the author of such stories wishes to convey" (Donstrup, 2024b, p. 202).

How Do Millennials and Centennials Consume Streaming Services?

Beyond strategic innovations at the corporate scale, Netflix's biggest revolution has been its focus on consumers, so it is critically important to approach who are the primary consumers of streaming platforms and what they watch or expect when consuming a series or movie via VoD. Consequently, special emphasis should be placed on millennials and centennials, who are currently the largest demographic generations in the world (Ranzolin, 2018). These generations are currently consuming the largest number of products of all kinds, including mass media and audiovisual productions (Fuenmayor and Aranguren, 2018, p. 59).

Some of the attitudes perceived in these population groups when consuming content are: The second screen phenomenon, which consists of a tendency to use a second or third device to interact with third parties while viewing television content (Gallego, 2013). They pay special attention to audio versus image, as can be observed in the constant use of smartphones or applications such as Spotify, even relegating the radio in favour of music (Pedrero Esteban *et al*., 2019) and the messages they tend to receive and retain more easily are usually short and concise.

The audiovisual content of the series that millennials want to consume is usually characterized by the renunciation of old prejudices related to gender and racial stereotypes, a more flexible and inclusive openness, a sense of brotherhood, community, and cooperation over one's individualism, and ultimately, the idea of social change and progress (Fuenmayor and García Aranguren, 2018). On the other hand, they are a generation that is highly attached to technology, which quickly encourages the consumption of platforms.

Centennials, for their part, reflect characteristics of millennials on social and political issues such as demographic race, ethnic diversity, the perception that racial and ethnic diversity is good for society, the belief that government should look out for the good of society, and political liberalism (Ross and Rouse,

2020). In short, they are generational groups conscientious of social justice and diversity in all forms.

The main objective of this study is to examine the level of cynicism and generalized dissatisfaction with the current audiovisual content production system. Consequently, the research question (RQ1) has been to understand whether millennial and centennial viewers in Spain and Mexico consider that large audiovisual production and distribution companies are only concerned with their economic and political interests, or, on the contrary, whether they also feel genuine and legitimate interest in social or citizen causes when producing and disseminating audiovisual productions.

Second, we aimed to determine the audience's perception of production companies as entities that only pursue economic and political well-being. The third objective inquiries into the audience's view of production companies as a sign of absolute passivity towards their claims, and finally, the fourth objective aims to decipher whether the public's opinion is that production companies do not care about money and politics, but about making content that viewers like.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This research is field-based, descriptive, and quantitative, as it seeks to determine the magnitude of the phenomena in a representative sample of audiences in Spain and Mexico by conducting a survey, which was previously validated by a panel of experts.

Regarding the scope, although we searched for a sample size that would allow, through probabilistic methods, to infer the responses to the total universe under study, it is not less accurate that there are some population sectors (clusters) less represented in the survey. However, proportional affixation was sought, and this was understood within an exploratory-correlational scope.

Quantitative methodology uses data collection to test hypotheses based on numerical measurements and statistical analysis to establish behaviour patterns and test theories (Hernández Sampieri *et al*., 2014). In exploratory research, basic data analysis is applied to identify the frequency at which a phenomenon of interest occurs and its general characteristics (Ramos Galarza, 2020).

Instrument

Once the questionnaire was designed, which was conducted after a theoretical construction of dimensions and indicators, it was subjected to expert judgment. The experts "are people whose specialization, professional, academic or research experience related to the subject of the investigation allows them to evaluate, in content and form, each of the items included in the instrument" (Soriano Rodríguez, 2015, p. 25). The judgment was made from a round with ten experts who evaluated the 18 variables (including the three questions referring to political cynicism) that the survey asked about, resulting in an arithmetic mean of 3.47 in all cases except one (so that variable was removed from the final survey).

The expert panel was conducted using a survey form in which the research strengths and weaknesses of the instrument were judged. Subsequently, a pilot test was applied to a minimum proportion of the effective sample to confirm the comprehension and consistency of the data-collection instrument. The independent variables selected for the survey by the experts are listed (Table 1).

Table 1. Independent variables

Code	Independent variables	Answer options
VI1	Country of residence	Spain, Mexico.
VI2	Age range	18-21, 22-25, 26-34, 35-41.
VI3	Sex	(M, F, other)
VI4	Educational level	Elementary school, High school, Vocational training - non-university technical, University (degree in progress), University (degree completed), University (master's degree in progress), University (master's degree completed), University (doctoral degree in progress), University (doctoral degree completed), University (doctorate completed)
VI5	Ideological spectrum with which it identifies	Extreme left, moderate left, center, moderate right, extreme right
VI6	Most frequently used streaming platform	Netlifx, HBO, Filmin, Amazon Prime, Disney+, Other
VI7	What is the main reason you watch audiovisual content?	Entertainment, criticism, accompaniment, art

Source: Own elaboration.

The final instrument included seven independent variables that allowed us to triangulate the responses of the covariates exposed to the three dependent variables, referred to as cynicism. The instrument was applied from April 26 to June 16, 2022, with 1025 responses through Google Forms, Mexico (primarily residents of large urban centers: Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterey), and Spain (Madrid, Barcelona, Seville, and Huelva). The statements that responded to the dependent variables were structured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

1. Major production and distribution houses (Warner, Disney, Universal, Netflix) think exclusively of their political and economic interests when creating a particular series or movie.
2. Major production and distribution companies do not care about anything related to the social causes that viewers denounce on social media; they only care about not losing audiences and expanding their political ideas.
3. Major production and distribution companies are only interested in creating content that people want to consume for market reasons, regardless of their ideological interests.

Sample

The reasons that led us to focus on the study of millennials and centennials[1] in Spain and Mexico were the following: First, according to a FINDER survey (Fernández Rodríguez *et al*., 2023, p. 3), Spain and Mexico are the two Spanish-speaking countries where more streaming platforms are consumed in their respective continents. In fact, in the list of countries worldwide that determined the percentage of the population that has at least one streaming service at home for the year 2021, Spain was ranked 7th place with 57.67 %, and Mexico ranked 10th with 56.01 %. Therefore, Spain and Mexico are among the top ten countries where most streaming is consumed worldwide and, specifically, the only two Spanish-speaking countries in the top ten ranking.

In both countries, the most consumed platform is Netflix, with Spain being the most watched in 2021, with 33.8 % of consumption (Barlovento, 2021), and Mexico (89 % by 2020) (Chevalier Naranjo, 2020). In addition, Netflix is expected to continue to lead the sector in Mexico by 2026 (Statista Research Department, 2021).

Regarding OTT usage in Spain and Mexico by millennial and centennial audiences, the following characteristics can be summarized: on the one hand, in Spain, millennials and centennials exceed 88 % of the consumption of streaming platforms in age groups ranging from 18 to 44 years old (Barlovento, 2021). On the other hand, in Mexico, 53 % of millennials seek entertainment as their primary content preference, 78 % pay for Netflix as their leading OTT service, 93 % prefer movies, 88 % series, and are the group that consumes the most significant amount of online video content (IAB, 2017).

Simple random probability sampling was carried out, a method of selecting units drawn from a homogeneous population of size (n) so that in each of the samples, they have the same opportunity to be chosen (Tamayo, 2001). Because the "target population" (millennials and centennials) in both countries is greater than 100,000 people, the calculation formula for infinite populations will be used to determine the number of people to be surveyed (Aguilar-Barojas, 2005).

Taking into account a confidence margin of 95 %, a margin of error of +/-5 % and the population size of millennials and centennials in Spain, totalling 13,180,957 people (INE, 2021), and in Mexico, representing 46,200,000 individuals (INEGI, 2020), a minimum sample of 345 people for each country is needed in both cases.

1 For this research, the generational age classification millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) and centennials (born between 1997 and 2012), explained by Dimock (2019), will be used.

Table 2. National political cynicism survey sample in Spain and Mexico

Generation	Spain	Mexico
Male Millennials	160	108
Female Millennials	139	172
Total Millennials	299	280
Male Centennials	100	27
Female Centennials	252	40
Total Centennials	352	67
Total both generations	651	347

Source: Own elaboration.

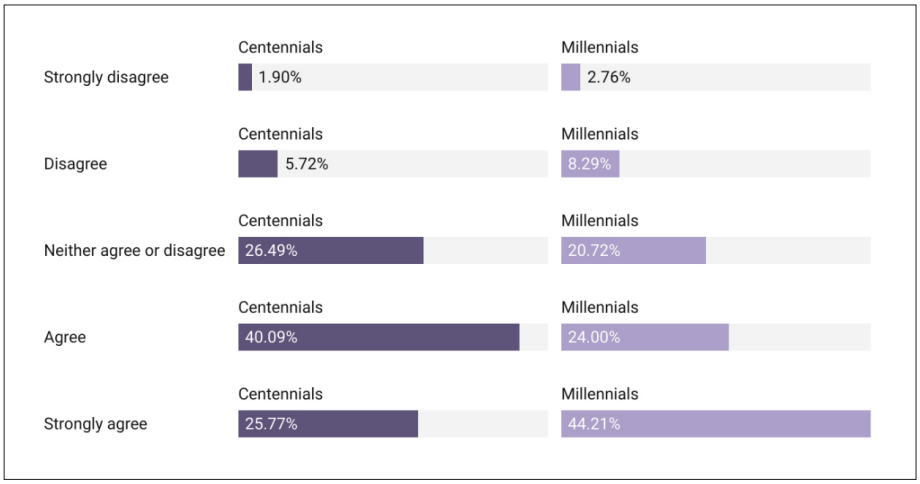
As shown in Table 2, the effective sample of the present study will be 998 people, 347 individuals from Mexico and 651 from Spain, with an age range of 18-41 years. In addition, because this is a random selection probability sample, all elements have the same probability of being chosen; the individuals who will be part of the sample are selected randomly by random numbers (Casal and Mateu, 2003).

RESULTS

The Interest of Production Companies from the Viewers' Perspective

As shown in Figure 1, both millennials and centennials in Spain and Mexico agree that the major production and distribution companies (Warner, Disney, Universal, Netflix...) think exclusively of their political and economic interests when creating a series or movie. However, it can be seen that millennials are decidedly more in favour of this statement than centennials, since 44.21 % of millennials surveyed strongly agree, while only 25.77 % of centennials think the same way.

Figure 1. Major production and distribution houses (Warner, Disney, Universal, Netflix) think exclusively of their political and economic interests when creating a particular series or movie



Source: Own elaboration.

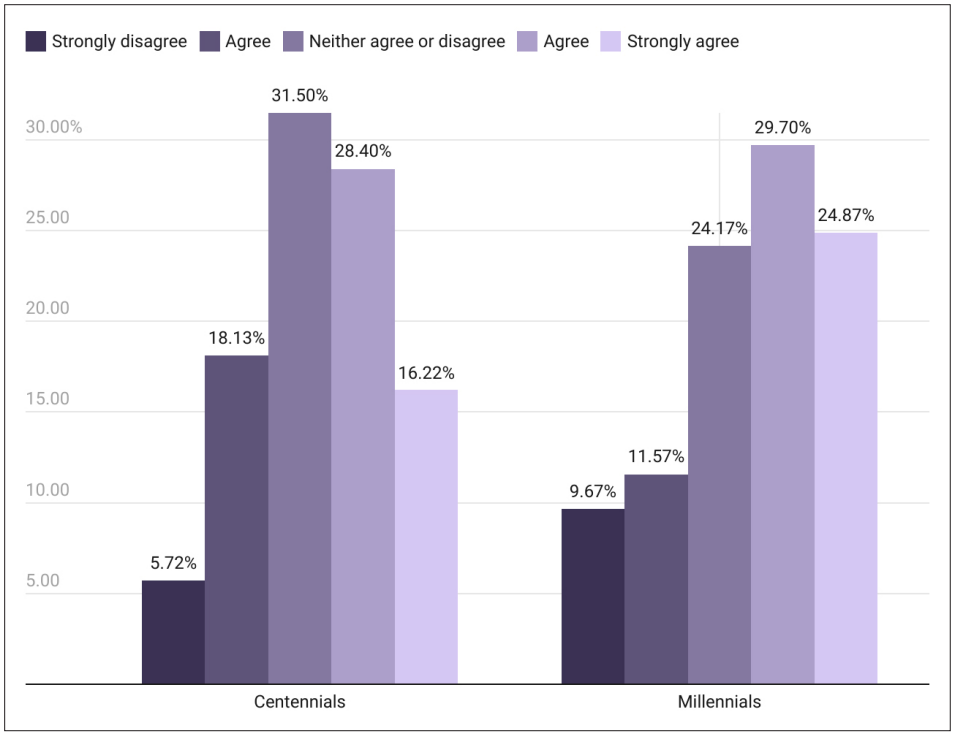
There is greater agreement in Mexico (M = 4.07; SD = 0.957) than in Spain (M = 3.84; SD = 1.083), [t(783.719) = -3.467, p<0.01] around the statement. Similarly, there are significant differences according to age, with greater agreement among the oldest (M = 4.01; SD = 1.193) than among the youngest (M = 3.74; SD = 0.905). Likewise, men show greater agreement (M = 4.08; SD = 1.081) than women (M = 3.83; SD = 0.988), [t(996) = 3.680, p<0.001]. In this way, we can glimpse how the tendency to cynicism about the present item orbits mostly among millennials, males and Mexicans of all respondents. On the other hand, a significant and positive correlation [R(1000) = 0.156, p<0.001] was also found between the ideological spectrum (in which the highest values correspond to the right) and agreement with the statement in this section. That is, there is a greater agreement with the statement among people located further to the right of the ideological spectrum. However, no significant correlation was found between educational level and political cynicism.

Regarding the streaming platform usage, the degree of agreement with the statement correlates significantly and positively with Netflix [R(1000) = 0.092, p<0.01] and Filmin [R(1000) = 0.080, p<0.05] usage, and negatively with Amazon Prime [R(1000) = -0.087, p<0.01] usage. However, the correlation is not significant with the consumption of HBO, Disney+ and other platforms. Thus, the degree of agreement with the statement is significantly and positively correlated with leisure-fun motivated consumption [R(1000) = 0.077, p<0.05], critical [R(1000) = 0.976, p<0.05], and negatively with companionship motivated consumption [R(1000) = -0.078, p<0.05]. In this sense, those with a higher level of cynicism around the statement in this section are Netflix and Filmin subscribers and those who stream movies or series motivated by entertainment and critique.

The Audience's Perspective on the Confrontation Between Social and Economic Issues in Audiovisual Production Companies

As shown in Figure 2, millennials and centennials agree with the statement, "Major production and distribution companies do not care about anything related to the social causes that viewers denounce on social media; they only care about not losing audiences and expanding their political ideas". However, centennials seem more reticent to this belief than millennials, who are mostly in favour with 29.70 %, while the majority of centennials are represented by 31.50 % undecided.

Figure 2. Major production and distribution companies do not care about anything related to the social causes that viewers denounce on social media; they only care about not losing audiences and expanding their political ideas



Source: Own elaboration.

In Mexico there is greater agreement (M = 3.56; SD = 1.104) than in Spain (M = 3.34 SD = 1.237), [t(777.507) = -2.937, p<0.01] around the statement in this section. Similarly, men show a higher agreement (M = 3.59; SD = 1.139) than women (M = 3.31; SD = 1.209), [t(877.320) = 3.726, p<0.001] with the statement, although there are no significant differences derived from age group according to the

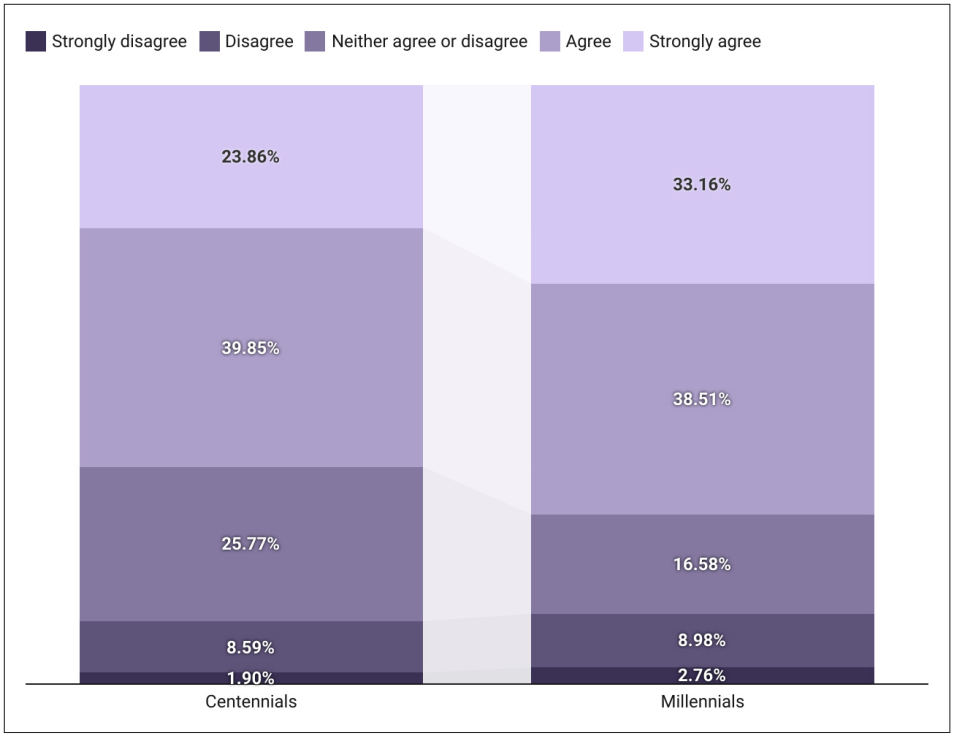
one-factor Anova test. On the other hand, a significant and positive correlation [R(1000) = 0.079, p<0.05] was found between educational level and agreement with the statement, that is, there is greater agreement the higher the educational level. Likewise, there is a significant and positive correlation [R(1000) = 0.121, p<0.001] between the ideological spectrum and agreement with the statement, that is, there is a greater agreement with the statement among people located further to the right of the ideological spectrum. In summary, the people who agree more with the statement that producers only think about the expansion of political ideals, obviating any social intentionality, that is, those who are more dominated by the feeling of political cynicism, are, in general, Mexican viewers, males, right-wing voters and those with higher educational levels.

Regarding platform consumption, it was found that the degree of agreement with the statement correlates significantly and positively with the consumption of HBO [R(1000) = 0.073, p<0.05] and Amazon Prime [R(1000) = 0.075, p<0.05], and negatively with the consumption of other platforms [R(1000) = -0.149, p<0.001], being insignificant with the consumption of Netflix, Disney+ and Filmin. On the other hand, the degree of agreement with the statement correlates significantly and positively with consumption motivated by leisure-fun [R(1000) = 0.102, p<0.01] and negatively with consumption motivated by education [R(1000) = -0.093, p<0.01], being insignificant with consumption motivated by accompaniment, criticism and art.

The Perception of Narrative as Merchandise and Audiovisual Marketing

Figure 3 shows how the responses of millennials and centennials in Spain and Mexico to the statement "The major production and distribution companies are only interested in creating content that people want to consume for market reasons, regardless of their ideological interests" were highly positive in both generations. However, in the case of millennials, there is a more positive agreement than in the case of centennials.

Figure 3. Major production and distribution companies are only interested in creating content that people want to consume for market reasons, regardless of their ideological interests



Source: Own elaboration.

Once again, men show greater agreement (M = 3.97; SD = 1.032) than women (M = 3.77; SD = 0.979), [t(996) = 3.014, p<0.01] with the statement in this section. However, there are no significant differences between viewers from Mexico and Spain according to Student's t-test. Neither were there relevant differences derived from the age group according to the Anova test nor between individuals of different educational levels.

On the other hand, a significant and positive correlation [R(1000) = 0.161, p<0.001] was found between the ideological spectrum and agreement with the statement, i.e., there is a more significant agreement with the statement in people located further to the right of the ideological spectrum. This, like the two previous variables related to cynicism, may be striking since people with left-wing ideologies tend to be more critical of major audiovisual production companies.

Finally, regarding streaming platforms, the degree of agreement with the statement correlates significantly and positively with the consumption of Netflix [R(1000) = 0.152, p<0.001] and HBO [R(1000) = 0.084, p<0.01], and negatively with the consumption of other platforms [R(1000) = -0.096, p<0.01]. The

correlation is not significant with the consumption of Amazon Prime, Disney+, FIlmin and other platforms. On the other hand, the degree of agreement with the statement is significantly and negatively correlated with consumption motivated by companionship [R(1000) = -0.084, p<0.01] and by education [R(1000) = -0.065, p<0.05]. The correlation is not significant with consumption motivated by leisure-fun, criticism and art.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In response to the main objective of the research, it has been found that generally, a reasonably high level of political cynicism has been found among millennial and centennial audiences in Spain and Mexico. In particular, millennial audiences, right-wing voters and men are those with a higher sense of political cynicism. In particular, it is striking that right-wing voters are those who define themselves as more critical of the major producers than those who identify themselves as closer to left-wing ideological values. On the other hand, although age or nationality (in this case, Spain or Mexico) is not a clear indicator of political cynicism, it can be seen that millennials are those who feel more political cynicism than the younger generations (centennials).

Mexican millennials, male and of right-wing ideology, consumers of Netflix and Filmin platforms who watch content for entertainment or to consume content critically, are the ones who believe that production companies, or majors, only think about their political or economic interests when preparing the production of a film or series. However, consumers of Amazon Prime Video or those who watch movies or series motivated by having audiovisual content to accompany them while they do other activities (passive multitasking) tend to be strongly against this statement.

Viewers in Mexico, men, those with a higher level of education, right-wing voters, HBO and Amazon Prime Video consumers and those who pay for their streaming service in order to have fun or be entertained are those who tend to agree with the idea that producers only think about not losing audience, expanding their political ideas and, in short, obviating any genuine interest in social causes that may be reflected in their products. However, this statement is perceived negatively by those who consume other platforms (other than Netflix, Disney+ and Filmin) and those who watch content motivated to educate themselves.

Likewise, men, right-wing voters and Netflix and HBO consumers turned out to be those viewers who are more in favour that the major producers are only interested in creating content that people want to consume because of money-related issues, never with political ideology or social values. On the contrary, the audience of other platforms outside Amazon Prime, Disney and Filmin, and those who consume streaming motivated by companionship (passive multitasking) and to educate themselves, do not agree with this statement.

In response to the second research objective, both millennials and centennials in Spain and Mexico agree with the idea that the big production and distribution

companies (Warner, Disney, Universal, Netflix...) think exclusively about their political and economic interests when creating a particular series or movie. On the other hand, in response to the third objective, it was found that both millennials and centennials agree with the idea that the major production and distribution companies do not care at all about anything related to the social causes denounced by viewers in networks. However, centennials seem to be more reticent about this belief than millennials. Finally, the fourth objective confirms positively in both generations the belief that large production and distribution companies are only interested in creating content that people want to consume for market reasons, beyond their ideological interests". However, in the case of millennials there is a more positive agreement than in the case of centennials.

The concept of political cynicism has historically been referred to as a negative feeling towards rulers and their personal interest as the executor of all their actions (Balmas, 2014; Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Agger *et al.*, 1961). However, the media play a relevant role in the level of cynicism among citizens (Jamieson, 1992; Lin and Lim, 2002).

It is not surprising that today's viewers, so anxious and distrustful, opt for greater "freedom" when it comes to audiovisual consumption, wishing to get rid of the schedules of the networks and being able to watch what they want and when they want on streaming platforms (Quintas-Froufe and González-Neira, 2016). With all this, the weekly oversupply and the ability to park a movie or series at any time (Solórzano and Krauze, 2021), i.e., greater anxiety for consumption, end up appearing.

As discussed in the research, today's viewer, according to Tóth-Király (2017, p. 472), is at risk of falling into negative habits since the appearance of online TV series but, on the other hand, these can also arouse and awaken interest in political issues of which THIS audience is ignorant (Nærland, 2019, p. 13). Likewise, our study coincides with the latest Edelman Barometer conducted in Spain (Edelman, 2023a) and Mexico (Edelman, 2023b), which states that in both countries' populism and distrust of the political class is a serious problem.

In this line, the audiovisual entertainment consumed by the younger generations in these countries shows evident signs of political cynicism in terms of the vision that these viewers have of the series or movies they consume in streaming. Moreover, the current series culture stylizes everyday horror and feels a deep admiration for dystopia (Fernández Rodríguez and Romero-Rodríguez, 2021), being, in parallel, a genre that engages viewers with unpleasant situations of a sociopolitical nature (Donstrup, 2024b).

However, all this also leads to self-censorship of the creators, who believe that the "moral sanctions" of the audience can lead to economic losses, causing "boring audiovisual products" due to political correctness or wanting to please the audience, assuming that the lack of risk is a maxim of the current production (Solórzano and Krauze, 2021), based on audiovisual marketing.

This is consistent with Chul Han's (2020) statement that the growing tendency towards selfishness and the atomization of society radically shrinks the spaces for common action, thus preventing the formation of a counter-power that could really question the capitalist order.

With all this, it is concluded that the high feeling of political cynicism that seems to submerge the young generations of Spain and Mexico in high levels of distrust is a consequence of a hyperconnected and overstimulated way of life in which information or clientelist claims are viable even towards producers, directors and artists.

As a limitation of the study, the samples are more representative by country than by generation. This is due to the fact that, in the centennial sample, Mexican respondents are underrepresented and Spanish respondents are overrepresented, so the results of this study, in terms of centennials, are exploratory and it would be advisable to continue investigating political cynicism and audiovisual consumption of this generation in future research. As some research suggests (Ahmed and Masood, 2024; Balmas, 2014; Corral Cumbreras and Powell, 2019; Espinosa *et al.*, 2022; Fernández-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2023), political cynicism is very present in the digital world and shows high symptoms in younger generations. Therefore, further deciphering the link between screens, entertainment and disaffection for politics in the centennial generation is a matter of vital importance for the future of democracies, not only Spanish-speaking ones, which are facing major challenges today.

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