Far-right parties youth social media targeting:
An analysis of Vox's Instagram and TikTok activity

July 2023
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Presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of International Master in Security, Intelligence and Strategic Studies

Word count: 20,096
Supervisor: prof. Maura Conway
Date of Submission: 26-07-2023

ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this research is to analyse the youth-targeted content published on social media platforms by Spanish far right party Vox, comparing their posts on Instagram and TikTok. Although both platforms are widely common among the youth, the average age of TikTok users is significantly lower; thus, the content uploaded by political parties on the platform is most likely targeted towards said demographic. The research will be achieved by conducting a visual content analysis of a number of publications uploaded on both platforms between 2020 and 2022. The investigation will observe the engagement received (likes, comments, views and saved content) as well as other variables such as the visual theme, tone, or elements directed towards the youth, among others. It was expected that these variables would portray the type of content with which Vox targets the Spanish youth. The research found that the type of publications the far right party uploads contain a humorous, angry or celebratory tone, memes and are adapted towards the discourse utilised by the youth online.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A recent study conducted by IAB Spain, a reputable marketing and communications agency, concluded that 94% of young people in Spain actively maintained social media accounts, engaging with them on a regular basis. Furthermore, the research shed light on the increasing role of social media as an information source for the younger generations. Approximately 39% of the people in this age cohort identified these digital platforms as their primary source for accessing information (Rico, 2023, n.p.). These data portray the important rise of social networks as sources of information. This development places these platforms in the same significance level as other traditional media such as television, radio or print publications. Political parties have seized the opportunity for disseminating their messages through these networks to reach their intended audience. Social media serve as an ideal vehicle to convey their communication with precision, ensuring direct and impactful outreach to the specific target and demographics.

Far right parties have not been an exception in the utilisation of these platforms for political purposes. They publish content with the goal of communicating with their audience directly and in a humane manner, or to avoid the traditional media, who they believe criticises them excessively and spread lies (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019, 4). These political organisations are aware of the large presence of young people on the Internet and thus, acclimate their content to match the preferences of the youth. In the case of Spain, the strategy seems to be performing adequately, as it is estimated that around 20% of young electors who will vote for the first time in the 2023 elections will support radical right party Vox. The party is the most followed Spanish political organisation on Instagram and the videos they post on TikTok obtain high numbers of engagement and often become viral (Castro Martínez and Díaz Morilla, 2021, 71-72).

Far right parties embrace a nationalist, anti-immigrant, and ultra-conservative ideology. Although its propagation does not directly mean the end of the

democratic system we currently hold, it may entail the potential regression on certain social rights, and it constitutes a looming threat to national security. Thus, it is imperative to comprehend the factors that explain the resonance of these convictions among the youth, as well as to understand the critical role played by social media in amplifying and disseminating the message of these political parties.

The primary objective of this research is to examine and analyse the youth-targeted content propagated by Spanish far right party Vox on various social media platforms; specifically, comparing and contrasting the party's activity on Instagram and TikTok. While prior investigations have been centred on Vox's overall messages on Twitter or other social networks, there is a noticeable lack of studies in terms of the underlying reasons behind how the party's content is deliberately targeting the Spanish youth. Consequently, this project aims to fill this lack of academic content by seeking to comprehend the similarities and differences between the publications uploaded on TikTok (a platform predominantly used by the youth), and Instagram (social network that is also frequented by the youth, but also encompasses a broader demographic spectrum). By doing so, this research aspires to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Vox tailors its messages and visual content to appeal to the interests of the youth. Additionally, this dissertation aims to contribute to the existing but limited body of literature that studies Vox's social media strategy and to the minimal analysis conducted on far-right parties' utilisation of visual content across multiple social media platforms.

In order to address the existing gap in the literature, this project proposes to answer the following research question: With what type of content is Vox targeting the Spanish youth? The initial hypothesis is that the party utilises methods such as humorous content, including young people among the images posted and address their demographic directly in their publications.

Additionally, to support the obtainment of the solution to said query, other questions will be addressed, such as:

- What content appears to resonate the most with youth based on social media statistics?
- Which are the similarities and differences between Vox's youth-targeted content on Instagram and TikTok?
- Which online strategies is Vox following to obtain success among the Spanish youth?

With the purpose of obtaining the results of these questions, this dissertation will be divided into seven sections: Firstly, a literature review will be conducted with the purpose of learning what has already been published regarding the topic of our concern. Thus, articles based on political parties' utilisation of social media will be investigated, with a special focus on the political atmosphere in Spain. Additionally, the small number of existing publications related to Vox and their relationship with the Spanish youth will be analysed. Next, a theoretical framework chapter will follow, which aims to explain the theories and approaches that explain the success of far right parties. The methodology section will define the chosen research design – visual content analysis – and the sample section and data collection. The next three chapters constitute the body of the empirical analysis and will contain the results obtained from the visual content analysis and a comparison between what has been observed on Instagram and TikTok, an analysis of the four main characteristics detected that enhance the party's connection with the youth, and the relation found between the existing theories that explain the far right's success and Vox's case. Lastly, the conclusions obtained from the analysis conducted will be summarised.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social networks have rapidly become a fundamental tool for political involvement and advocacy. These platforms allow politicians to communicate directly with potential voters, permits citizens to openly share their opinions and ideas, and have stimulated the interest and participation of a wider community in politics. However, it can also serve as a means for spreading bigotry (Karvelyte and Tenhnen, 2015, n.p.). As far right politicians are now prominent all across the globe, it is imperative to understand how they utilise social media platforms to spread their hate speech and reach wider audiences. As this dissertation is using the case of Spain to understand how far right parties are targeting the youth through social media, a particular focus in said country will be present throughout the study.

This literature review is divided into three sections. Firstly, it will begin delving into the existing publications on the utilisation of social media by all types of political parties and how they benefit from their existence, as well as how Spanish political parties in general employ social networks. Secondly, a short introduction to Spanish far right party Vox will focus on the views and ideology of the organisation, as well as its surge and rise in popularity. The last section will explore the connection Vox has managed to create with the younger generations and the social media strategy that the party follows. Due to the lack of academic research conducted so far on the latter sections, a majority of journal articles and Vox's own webpage will be studied, as opposed to academic publications.

Political parties' utilisation of social media

Social media play an indispensable role in political communication. The evolution of these networks has allowed citizens to become more participative in elections and political life because they act as engaging platforms that support

the dissemination of personal opinions and the propagation of news and events taking place around the globe. Additionally, they enable the connection between individuals and political parties. During the first years of existence of social media, politicians used these platforms solely as an advertising tool in order to share information during campaigning season about their ideals or about upcoming events. The principal objective was to provide their voters with reports and news, and they did not focus much on utilising social media as an interactive tool to connect with people. More recently, however, politicians and political parties have come to the realisation of the importance of building a close relation with the electorate with the purpose of remaining relevant to them (Graham and Schwanholz, 2020, 92).

Currently, political parties obtain great benefits by using social media. For instance, Graham and Schwanholz argue that these networks facilitate citizens to share their judgments and impressions publicly and, by doing so, parties manage to get feedback from potential voters about whether their approaches are supported. These assessments enable the different organisations to evaluate which resolutions should be reconsidered and which should be emphasised (Graham and Schwanholz, 2020, 93). Filmonov et al. assert that political parties are present on social media for four different reasons. Firstly, they use these networks with the purpose of broadcasting their message. As mentioned previously, social media are beneficial to politicians because they enable the rapid sharing of views and proposals. In comparison with traditional media, the internet includes the possibility of becoming viral and reaching a larger and wider audience of potential voters much faster. Moreover, social media also facilitates targeting a specific group of voters that they might want to approach, such as the youth. Furthermore, political parties and their candidates are benefitted by the use of these platforms because they assist in mobilising supporters and encouraging them to vote. While campaigning, politicians cannot reach every corner of a territory and, by using social media they are able to communicate with part of the electorate they are incapable of meeting in

person. The third reason Filmonov et al. provide to explain why politicians use social media is to manage the party's image and how they are perceived by the public. By having an active profile on these networks, politicians reveal part of their private lives, and the public can identify with them. Social media help to portray an image of closeness and familiarity with citizens that attempts to reduce the gap that has traditionally separated the electorate and the political spheres. This is due to the visual medium having a clear impression on the audience, which helps the dissemination of ideas. Lastly, these networks encourage the promotion of messages that have been emitted in different platforms. For instance, an interview given on TV or a newspaper can be easily accessed through a link on a political party's social media profile (Filmonov et al., 2016, 2-3).

Studies conducted across different countries agree that new and emerging political parties use social media more efficiently than traditional ones. Štětka and Vochocová argue that smaller parties had the need to partake in these networks in order to balance out their lack of monetary resources to campaign physically (Štětka and Vochocová, 2014, 1377). Additionally, populist parties on the entire spectrum of political ideology have also benefitted from having an active internet presence. They are able to reach their audience and avoid the traditional media, which they tend to classify as corrupt (Ballesteros Herencia, 2022, 195). Besides, the youth gravitate towards using social media rather than traditional newspapers, television or radio; therefore, populist political parties are boosting their campaigns by being actively present on networks – such as Instagram and TikTok – in order to be more alluring towards this section of the population (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019, 4).

Spanish political parties' presence in social media

In the case of Spain, although the form of government is a parliamentary monarchy, political campaigns are centralised and have a presidential style in

which the main candidate appears as the face of the political party. Accordingly, social media is used to extol the image of the politician and depict them as intimate with potential voters (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019, 4). A study conducted in Spain by Alonso Muñoz et al. agrees with the previously mentioned argument that emerging political parties are more active in social media (Alonso Muñoz et al., 2017, 49). Leftist Podemos, centralist Ciudadanos or far right party Vox manage to connect with audiences through this means better than traditional parties such as the conservative Popular Party (PP) or the Social-Democratic Party (PSOE), because the latter are already consolidated and do not have the need to rise quickly in popularity (Ballesteros Herencia, 2022, 195). Instagram, for example, has become a necessary tool in political communication and it has been crucial in the most recent electoral periods in Spain. Moreover, it acts as an accurate exhibit of how politics are developing in the country. According to a recent study, the polarisation in Spanish politics and the rise of populism can be noticed on Instagram because there has been an escalation in the discussion of political issues and emotional negative appeals are more present in the politicians' messages and content (Cano Orón et al., 2022, 175). Additionally, although TikTok is not a tool designed for political discussion, it connects with young audiences that have traditionally been forgotten by politicians and helps to cause an impact on a content-saturated environment and reach a wide audience (Ballesteros Herencia, 2022, 196). In this platform, Spanish populist parties (Podemos and Vox) are the most active and successful. Although leftist Podemos posts videos more frequently, Vox's publications reach more accounts (Morejón Llamas, 2023, 38-39).

The far right in Spain: Vox

Overview of Vox and its ideology

Vox's ideology is summarized in a document titled *100 medidas para la España viva* (100 solutions for the living Spain). The publication was launched in 2018

and addresses what the party identifies as the issues that concern the Spanish population. In this document Vox gathers the fundamental characteristics of its policies (Aguilera Carnerero, 2019a, np.). According to the party, the urgent points that need to be tackled are national unity, the destruction of the middle class, high taxes, border security and the reduction of liberties (Vox, 2018, np.). One of the main aspects of its ideology is national unity. The party aims to abolish the constitutional principle of autonomy which establishes the reconnaissance of the autonomous communities and their administrative structures (such as the autonomic parliaments). It intends to create a country that is united through common symbols and language and eliminate the other official regional languages and cultural diversities that exist across Spain (Aguilera Carnerero, 2019a, np.). Moreover, the party also rejects the cultural changes that have surged in the last decades – it is contrary to feminism, same-sex marriage or abortion and supports the idea that men are being targeted and criminalised due to the law against gender violence. Nativism is another important aspect of Vox's philosophy. The party holds the idea that Spain should primarily be for Spanish people and considers the presence of those who were not born in the country a threat to national security. Closing the borders and the criminalisation of immigration – especially those of Muslim origin – are some of Vox's electoral proposals. In this vein, it has adapted Donald Trump's slogan "Make America Great Again" into the Spanish version *"Hacer España Grande Otra Vez"*. Besides, its members use warlike vocabulary and expressions during speeches and political campaigns that relate the party with what the organisation considers to be the glorious past of Spain. For instance, during the past national elections the party associated their movement with *La Reconquista* (a historical reference to the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain during the 15th century) (Andaluza, 2018, np.). In terms of economy, its agenda is conservative and pushes for market liberalism, minimal intervention from the state and a decrease in the social welfare state (Rama et al., 2020, 3). According to a study conducted by Ferreira, other far right parties across Europe tend to blur the lines

in their socioeconomic positions in order to augment their potential votes across the left and right axis, but Vox is clearly conservative and pushes for a neoliberal economy (Ferreira, 2019, 94).

Surge and rise in popularity

Vox was founded in 2013 when a section of the conservative Popular Party (PP) affiliates split from the organisation because they considered the party was taking moderate stands on certain situations (Ferreira, 2019, 76). Specifically, Vox's founders clashed with how the PP tackled the Catalan independence crisis, or its stances on gender equality laws, the abortion law, a more progressive education system, or the historical memory law that guarantees rights for the victims of the Spanish Civil War (Bridge Initiative Team, 2021, np.). Instead of recognising itself as a far right party, Vox claimed to be the "national centre-right", because it believed that the Popular Party had drifted towards the left from its original position and started designating its members as the "coward right". Nevertheless, Vox began radicalising progressively through the years and in 2017 it participated in a conference with other European far right parties. In 2018, some of the leaders of Vox met with Steve Bannon, Donald Trumps' chief strategist and a year later joined the ECR political group in the European Parliament, along with Le Pen and Salvini (Ferreira, 2019, 76-78).

After 2008, most members of the European Union were facing the surge of far right parties as a result of the recession, discontent with the political spheres and, later on, the refugee crisis. Nevertheless, until 2018, Spain and Portugal were an exception among the European countries because they were not experiencing the appearance of these type of organisations (Rama et al., 2020, 7). Multiple studies were published explaining the reason for the Iberian anomaly, but the following lines will focus on the Spanish case. Alonso and Rovira Kaltwasser argued that the Spanish were an exception because of two reasons. Firstly, the existing electoral system impedes minoritarian parties to

gain access to parliament, and secondly, the conservative PP had managed to obtain the approval of far right voters, which did not leave space for such party to surge. Moreover, the memory of the 40-year-long Franco dictatorship was still present in the population, which may have deterred far right movements from gaining support. (Alonso and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015, 40). Rama et al. explain that in Spain, the economic recession opened the way for populist left party Podemos to gain support and the lack of trust in politicians was handled by the emergence of two new parties – the aforementioned Podemos and liberalist Ciudadanos. Moreover, said study found that the 2015 refugee crisis did not cause a great impact in Spain in political terms. Instead, the event that opened the opportunity for the rise of the far right was the 2017 celebration of the unconstitutional Catalan referendum of independence and the Popular Party's unsuccessful handling of the situation (Rama et al., 2020, 7). Since then, Vox has gained seats for the first time in multiple autonomic parliaments and is currently the third largest party in the Spanish parliament with 52 seats (Hedgecoe, 2019, np.).

Vox and the Spanish youth

Vox has formed close connections with part of the youth in Spain. A study conducted by the Spanish Centre for Sociological Research (CIS) has shown that Vox would be the party that obtains the most votes among first-time voters in the elections that will be held later in 2023. Around 20.1% of young electors (those who came of age between 2019 and 2023) will support said party (Carreño, 2023, np.). Traditionally, the youth has supported left parties, as a way to show anti-establishment ideas and a desire for rebellion; nevertheless, young Spaniards are siding with a party that is generally identified as old-fashioned and having outdated values. According to experts, Vox acknowledges the sympathy that is gaining from younger generations, and, therefore, is using strategies to strengthen it (Aguilera Carnerero, 2019b, n.p.).

Vox's appeal to the younger generation

One of the main activities that links the party with the youth is "Cañas por España" (Beers for Spain). The name itself intends to sound appealing to the younger generations, as it uses the word "caña", which is a slang term for beer (Aguilera Carnerero, 2019b, n.p.). The founders of the project claim that it began with the idea of creating an alternative to the monolithic thinking that takes place across universities, where they consider every organisation to be leftist and there is no space for those with right wing ideas. The activities that the movement arranges consist of meeting in bars to have beers with far right journalists and members of the party, including Santiago Abascal and Javier Ortega Smith (president and vice-president of Vox, respectively) among other top-level politicians from the organisation (Fàbregas, 2018, n.p.). The movement has expanded rapidly and has initiated other events that range from protests in front of abortion clinics (Nebot, 2021, n.p.) to parties in nightclubs (Viejo, 2019, n.p).

Moreover, during the past two years, Vox has organised a festival that takes place in October, during the weekend prior to the National Day of Spain. It intends to celebrate the Spanish culture and history. During daytime, there are political speeches – including appearances from international leaders such as Georgia Meloni, Viktor Orbán or Donald Trump – shows, food trucks and children's play areas; and at night, concerts and fireworks are organised for the youth (Vox, 2022, n.p.). The festival has been surrounded by controversy both of the times it was celebrated. In 2021, a neo-Nazi rapper performed a verse that can be translated as "I will resist until the end like in Berlin", referring to Hitler's regime. Likewise, last year, a band sang "vamos a volver al 36" (we will return to the year 36), alluding to the 1936 coup d'état that gave way to Franco's dictatorship. The event is clearly intended to appeal to the younger generations, as it is located in the MadCool area, where one of the biggest music festivals in

Spain (MadCool) also takes place. Additionally, it includes performances by rappers and DJs which are music genres preferred by the youth (González, 2022, n.p.).

Vox's social media presence

Another reason why Vox is attracting the attention from the Spanish youth is because of its activity on social media. Although so far there is not a wide range of publications on how the party's social media strategy is targeted towards attracting the youth, the following paragraph will review some of the techniques that Vox has used on their social media platforms to gain popularity.

When the party was created, it was not relevant enough to obtain the attention of mainstream media, which is necessary to reach a wide audience and obtain potential voters. Therefore, the party established their presence on social media, where it was able to spread its message at a very little cost (García Herrero, 2019, pp. 70-72). The Spanish political party has been inspired by other European and American far right organisations and follows a similar social media strategy (Applebaum, 2019, np.). For instance, Vox uses tactics to intensify polarisation by publishing content with messages that are eminently controversial with the aim of appealing to those who agree with its ideology and enraging the opposition. By following this approach, the party is permanently present in the social conversation and thus, its proposals are discussed daily. This methodology is exacerbated by the algorithms of social media, because the more a message is refuted and debated, the more people it reaches. Moreover, Vox uses an oversimplified and imperfect language in their publications, which appeals to the younger generations, that are not interested in complex policies that are used by traditional political parties (Terán, 2021, n.p.). The party also benefits from the existence of supporter groups that pass around information through messaging platforms like WhatsApp. Vox has a phone number that voters can add to their contacts and receive chain messages directly. The group

encourages its followers to acquire an active position and share the delivered communications with their friends and family. This technique was already successful when utilised by Jain Bolsonaro's presidential campaign in Brazil (Alonso and Viejo, 2018, n.p.). The party also undermines the work of journalists in Spain by filing complaints towards them or not allowing their presence in press conferences with the purpose of intimidating and silencing mainstream media and encouraging voters to only trust what is shared on Vox's social media profiles. Vox is following Trump's strategy of picturing the press that is critical with the party as an enemy (Albin, 2022, n.p.).

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Prior to the elaboration of the pertinent analysis, it is crucial to comprehend the theories that have been elaborated surrounding far right politics. Considering it is a phenomenon that has been on the rise for the past few years, plenty of approaches have been published, but the following paragraphs will encompass those that are more relevant to this research. Therefore, the coming section will be divided into four areas. Firstly, the term "far right" will be conceptualised and defined. Next, the characteristics of the far right will be explored, looking into the different waves that the ideology has gone through and focusing on the traits that establish the fourth and current period. Later, two different theories that explain the reason why far right parties succeed will be analysed ("supply-side and demand-side theory" and "in-group vs out-group approach"). Finally, this section will include a short description of various strategies used on social media by far right parties that enhance their chances to be more visible and gain potential voters (echo chambers, disinformation, micro-targeting and memes and internet culture).

Far right ideology

The term "far right" is a broad and contested concept. Multiple scholars and institutions have provided different interpretations of the expression. This dissertation will utilise the term following the definition provided by author Cas Mudde. In his book published in 2019, Mudde points out that the term "far right" refers to those who stand on the right of the political spectrum and are "anti-system", not the traditional conservatives and liberals. Additionally, he explains that the term "far right" can be separated into two subgroups. On the one hand, the extreme right, which dismisses popular sovereignty, which is the main principle of democracy. On the other hand, the radical right accepts democracy but rejects some of its elements, such as minority rights, rule of law and the system of checks and balances. The radical right is reformist and believes in the people's right to choose (Mudde, 2019, 19). Nevertheless, radicalism is not a gentler style of extremism. The two are different forms of far right, although they can be easily confused because at times extremist parties attempt to cover their ideology to evade legal consequences. Radical parties also stand against the established system; however, it is not as revolutionary and must be understood within the liberal order in which they exist (Golder, 2016, 478). This dissertation will focus only on the radical right, as the Spanish far right party Vox fits under characteristics that said term englobes. Nonetheless, the terms "far right" and "radical right" will be used interchangeably and in the character of synonymous concepts, as the "extreme-right" subgroup will not be discussed and therefore, there will be no space for misinterpretation.

Characteristics of the far right

Von Beyme published in 1988 an essay analysing the three different waves of right wing ideology after the Second World War in Europe. In said publication, the author describes the first wave as neo-fascist groups that were reminiscent of the pre-war regimes but that never obtained any political power. The second

wave of right wing parties appeared in the second half of the 1950s and some did achieve a brief political experience. The last phase started in 1980 and was more successful than its predecessors, although they cannot be defined as politically relevant (Von Beyme, 1988, 4-11). Mudde claims that far right parties gained relevance in the beginning of the twenty-first century, and he identifies it as the "fourth wave" (Mudde, 2022, 102), which is the one this dissertation will focus on. According to the author, this last wave is defined by four main attributes: extreme heterogeneity, mainstream and normalisation, porous boundaries, and the radicalisation of the radical right.

In the category of "extreme heterogeneity", Mudde explains that radical right groups vary in terms of ideology and political relevance. While some groups merely focus on street politics, others concentrate on electoral politics; and even if certain parties can be well established and organised, others are very new and uncoordinated (Mudde, 2022, 103). Therefore, as diverse groups can fall under the category of "radical right", one of the characteristics of the fourth wave is its heterogeneous trait. Another attribute of this phase is how far right politics have become mainstreamed and normalised. It is now common that policies and issues that were once only discussed by radical right parties are being brought up by conservative parties or are being debated in traditional and social media. In this vein, Mudde claims that a characteristic of this wave is the gradual loss of boundaries (or porous boundaries) between conservatism and the radical right. In order not to lose voters, conservative parties have shifted further right on certain issues like security or immigration (Mudde, 2022, 104-105). Lastly, due to the aforementioned normalisation of the radical right, far right parties need to deviate from the mainstream and thus, are becoming more radicalised. The author poses the example of how in previous decades, making racist comments publicly would signify an electoral setback but nowadays politicians are permitted to say such remarks and are elected to parliament (Mudde, 2022, 105).

Success of far right parties

There are a variety of theories that explain the electoral success of far right parties. An extended approach is the supply-side and demand-side explanations. Demand-side explanations centre around the grievances that make radical right parties appealing or that call for their existence. Supply side explanations focus on the environment in which said party is located and the decisions that it might make to succeed and obtain support from the electorate (Golder, 2016, 478).

On the demand factors, some theorists believe that there is a minor support for far right parties in every society, however, it only surges when a severe crisis related to modernisation reaches a country. According to Golder, certain people are incapable of adapting fast to societal change and are more likely to shift towards the radical right, who support traditional morals. Parties that customarily had their interests in mind now give priority to multiculturalism or sexual freedom, which are values that fall far from their concerns. Another demand-side explanation is economic hardships because, when there is an economic crisis, individuals are likely to want to blame others for their grievances and, on many occasions, minorities and immigrants tend to be made responsible. Lastly, Golder claims that, as understood by social identity theory, people tend to associate individuals of similar characteristics in different groups. Accordingly, the discrepancies that can be observed between the groups can create tension (or cultural grievances), that allow for the emergence of far right parties (Golder, 2016, 482-485).

Golder states that supply-side explanations consist of two elements: an appropriate political opportunity structure that determines whether a country is open to hold a new party; and the media, which determine to what extent a party is able to express its ideology. Nowadays, even if traditional media impede a radical right party to communicate with the electorate, social media can allow for an organisation's message to be shared rapidly (Golder, 2016, 485-486).

Some authors believe that there are internal factors that should also be considered in the supply-side category, such as the organisation and leadership of the party. When a far right party is seen as coordinated and has a charismatic leader, it is more likely for the organisation to succeed electorally, as opposed to parties that lack financial resources or frequently adjust their ranks (Immerzeel and Muis, 2017, 916-917).

A different theory that explains the success of far right parties is the in-group and out-group approach. It consists of a technique used by radical right organisations in which the party manages to divide society in two. On the one hand, a group that has common values and culture (in-group) and on the other hand, the rest of society (out-group), which is being excluded from the in-group. The boundaries that are constructed between the two sections do not necessarily coincide with geographical borders and they can be flexible or exclusionary (Awad et al, 2022, 987). Individuals are more likely to accept and support those belonging to their same in-group instead of actively disfavouring the out-group. However, if the in-group has the impression that they are under threat, group discrimination is likely to arise (Hogg, 2016, 6). Far right parties construct exclusionary boundaries between the two groups and claim the existence of a threat that is targeting the in-group. Members of the party benefit from excluding other ethnicities and nationalities from belonging to the in-group and manage to market a conflict between "us" and "the others". Additionally, radical right parties attempt to diffuse the ideological differences within an in-group, so the ethnic and cultural dissimilarities that exist in regard to the out-group are heightened and, therefore, those boundaries seem more noticeable. Moreover, since the beginning of the 21st Century, radical right parties in Europe have constructed images that enhance the division between the European values of the in-group and "the others". For instance, they label Muslim or African men as sexual assaulters, which creates an imagery of migrants being dangerous and a threat to the in-group (Awad et al, 2022, 987-988).

Far right social media strategies

The strategies employed by far right parties on social media are different depending on the group and region. Nonetheless, the purpose behind these techniques is to attract new voters and to strengthen the support of those who were already convinced by said ideology. The following paragraphs explore four of the various strategies that academics have highlighted as procedures employed by far right political parties that benefit the dissemination of their beliefs: echo chambers, disinformation, micro-targeting and memes and counter-culture. Often, said strategies can be observed at the same time and intertwined with each other.

Echo chambers

One of the ways in which social media is able to favour far right parties is by limiting the type of content to which a person is exposed and as a result, connecting groups of people that are like-minded while isolating them from other ideologies (echo chambers). Such term can be difficult to operationalise, as there is no real consensus over its interpretation and what mechanisms it may encompass. The notions that most definitions include are that it is a system on social media that strengthens the ideals of a person, which leads to shifting an entire group of people with similar beliefs towards more extreme ideologies (Cinelli et al., 2021, 1). The algorithms on social media platforms are able to comprehend the nature of the content that members prefer in terms of their interests, beliefs or susceptibility and proceed to show new posts that match their predilections. Therefore, echo chambers are an obvious effect of the nature of social media, as they aim to encourage the users' participation by portraying content that they will enjoy (Khosravinik, 2017, 64). Such mechanism provokes the shift of social consciousness and can affect political communication and

public debates (Cinelli et al., 2021, 5). Even if social media are not the cause of the rise of far right political groups, the values and structures of these platforms and the spread of the idea that classical politics are obsolete have facilitated its acceleration. The new type of politics that are being built rely on affective communication, where feelings tend to have more importance than arguments and rationality. Social media's algorithms enable the creation of echo chambers, where extreme ideals gain popularity and maintain users that think alike separated into different groups that avoid interactions with others (Khosravinik, 2017, 64). Nonetheless, it is not possible to say that echo chambers exclusively benefit far right parties, as other ideologies take advantage of their favours. However, these mechanisms do assist political organisations with extreme views and are less likely to aid parties located in the centre of the political spectrum, as constantly receiving information that is similar and is not being challenged incites users to acquire more extreme ideals (Bimber et al., 2020, 695).

Disinformation

Social media can also be used to manipulate the public. Such strategy is known as disinformation, and it is another method used by far right political parties. It appears often when there is online polarisation which is fostered by the existence of the aforementioned echo chambers (Cinelly et al, 2021, 1). It consists of falsehoods that are disseminated on purpose to achieve a political goal and that are presented as news. Its objective is to seem believable to the public and therefore disrupt the general information flow (Bennett and Livingston, 2018, 124). Disinformation is injurious to society and to democratic values because it consists of intentionally misleading information that confuses citizens and creates false beliefs deliberately, as opposed to satire or a particular mistake (Chong, 2019, 140). Disinformation can start anywhere from social media to political speeches and tends to get amplified when traditional media acknowledge it. In the past, traditional media would disregard false statements;

nevertheless, nowadays such declarations are published even if the aim is to fact check it. This causes the misleading information to reach wider audiences, and with the help of social media, the piece of disinformation becomes part of the public discourse within minutes of its emergence. Additionally, far right parties utilise in their favour the media's attempt to correct the false statements they have spread by attacking the press and spreading anger and hate towards them. Moreover, even if disinformation can be a strategy used by parties from across the entire political spectrum, in Western societies it is customarily condensed in the far right side. The opposition to minority rights, rule of law or the system of checks and balances clash with the democratic and liberal values and therefore, prejudices and anger are spread through falsehoods (Bennett and Livingston, 2018, 124-125).

Micro-targeting

Micro-targeting is a term used to describe the practice used by political parties that consists in utilising digital big data to direct messages tailored to appeal to a specific individual or group and, therefore, gain the sympathy of potential voters. This social media strategy requires first to find the target group by analysing personal online data. Then, messages that suit the data that has been obtained are created and shown to those individuals at a certain time, on a particular platform or on a specific fashion (Binder et al., 2022, 435-437). This strategy permits political parties to reach people from different ideologies, instead of focusing their political campaign based on the attributes and tendencies of their average voter. Although this technique may seem of dubious legality, in the European Union the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) provides some regulation regarding the protection of private and personal data and their use and exchange. This legislation limits the restrictions of those who control data. Nevertheless, it states that personal data on political opinion can be used for electoral purposes. Therefore, when users of social media create an

account, they give consent to private companies to use their data for such activities. Considering many users allow themselves to post on their social media accounts a vast amount of information regarding their political ideology, these platforms are an optimal source to obtain political information (Hegelich et al., 2018, 2-3). Nevertheless, micro-targeting can be considered manipulation when it takes advantage of citizens' susceptibilities and tackles their fears through falsehoods or by using personal data that has been obtained illegally or through non-legitimate actors (Dobber, 2020, n.p.). This strategy can also be used by political parties across the entire political spectrum, but during recent years far right parties and right wing populist parties have been known for employing micro-targeting during their political campaigns where electoral integrity was at risk due to a lack of transparency in claiming how were the selected data being obtained (Bednarski et al., 2019, 5). For instance, the 2016 Cambridge Analytica scandal during the US elections (Aagaard and Marthedal, 2023, 2) or Vox during the elections of 2019 (El Confidencial, 2019, n.p).

Memes and Internet culture

Memes can be defined as "groups of digital items that share common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance, created with awareness of each other, and circulated, imitated and transformed by many users via the Internet (Shifman and Trillò, 2021, 2484). Memes are able to transmit the user's values not only through the message it is conveying, but also through the way it is said and to whom it is being transmitted. As social media platforms have become more popular through the years, publishing and sharing memes has become a fundamental tool in the internet culture. Therefore, they have been endorsed as a means to transmit political commentary (Shifman and Trillò, 2021, 2485-2487). As a result of the democratisation of media, and due to all citizens being able to share their opinions publicly, traditional party politics are becoming less popular and a new style is rising that emphasises appearances, emotions and

performance. Conveying political messages in a popular style allows politicians to reach the electorate through symbolism and imagination, not just through the message being transmitted (Heikkilä, 2017, 2-3). Moreover, memes allow politicians and the electorate to summarise complex opinions in a concise, sharp and effective style that causes other people the urgency to interact with it – whether it is to agree or to disagree (Martínez Rolán and Piñeiro Otero, 2016, 146). Far right parties take advantage of the use of memes to mask racist, homophobic and hateful comments behind what can be perceived as humour or internet culture. Their message comes across as less violent because it is transmitted in a friendly and more agreeable manner, which may seem appealing to potential voters. Additionally, memes serve as a tool to signal new targets as an enemy, which emphasises the fabricated differences between the aforementioned "in-group" versus "out-group" confrontations. For instance, it is common to find memes shared by far right parties and their supporters that mock the "politically correct culture" and enhances the enmity between the two collectives (Shifman and Trillò, 2021, 2485). Therefore, the far right parties' message is able to reach a wider audience when it is conveyed in the format of a meme, as it is less hostile and it attempts to be hidden behind humour (Heft et al., 2021, 2503).

IV. METHODOLOGY

Research design

The research that has been carried out during this project is a result of an academic investigation. It combines descriptive and analytical methodologies. With the objective of acquiring in-depth knowledge of the subject matter, an extensive literature review was carried out. It was completed with the purpose of understanding the existence and emergence of the Spanish political party Vox, the connection they have built with the younger generations through social media, as well as contextualising their ideology within the Spanish society and

political atmosphere. Moreover, this section was included to analyse the utilisation of social media by political parties in general – with a focus on its usage by the currently most popular Spanish political organisations. Accordingly, said chapter contains a summary of the work of multiple authors in the political science or communications sphere. Furthermore, due to the small number of academic publications available that study the online strategies carried out by Vox, a collection of journal articles and Vox's official webpage and electoral programmes have been analysed.

Secondly, a theoretical framework chapter was included with the purpose of understanding the main approaches that have been elaborated regarding the far right. The objective of this section is to conceptualise the term "far right" in order to comprehend what this research refers to when the word is mentioned. Additionally, it analyses some theories developed by multiple authors that explain the reasons for the success of far right parties, as well as some theories behind the strategies used on social media. Such evaluation is conducted by summarising the recent publications of multiple academics such as Cas Mudde or Matt Golder. The theoretical chapter will be a key element to develop the subsequent analysis in the next section, considering these approaches will be contrasted with the results obtained during the empirical investigation. For instance, by comparing the outcomes with the theories that have been elaborated about the strategies that are followed on social media by far right parties. Understanding which are the main arguments surrounding a topic is essential to contextualise its research and to be able to build additional knowledge on the matter. In summary, these first two chapters are encompassed under the umbrella of descriptive methodologies, as they allow the researcher to identify and interpret patterns and ideas by analysing words that describe a social phenomenon (Thomlison, 2001, 132).

For the empirical analysis, which constitutes the second part of the investigation, the methodology that has been adopted is visual content analysis,

with the objective of researching which is the type of content that Vox is targeting the Spanish youth. Additionally, a small quantitative analysis will be conducted in order to study the numerical aspects of the research; for instance, the number of likes, views and comments that the publications have obtained. Nevertheless, the key aspect of this dissertation is the aforementioned visual content analysis, which will be interpreted as per the description published by Bell in "The Handbook of Visual Analysis". The author defines it as an observational process that enables the researcher to analyse audiovisual content by adopting defined values and variables. Moreover, this method favours the description of what is represented in a visual image because it permits the characterisation of the different relevant areas that compose said visual representation. Through this method the investigation may examine visual, verbal, graphic or oral materials that contain significant information. It divides all units of information (in the case of this dissertation, posts published on social media) into different dimensions or variables that permit the description of the totality of the corpus. Bell considers that variables illustrate the way something is represented within the visual representation being observed, instead of the depiction of reality. (Bell, 2004, 13-16).

This method is deemed the most appropriate for this study because visual content can be very persuasive for propagandising any kind of political ideology. Illustrations are likely to influence more intense emotions than written or spoken words, as they are easier to process and are perceived as less threatening by the audience. Furthermore, images tend to be more difficult to forget than texts, as they are stored in the person's memory effortlessly and are more accessible to retrieve at a later stage (Klein, 2020, 159-160). Vox, as many other political parties, is keen on publishing content on its social media platforms in order to spread their ideology with little effort and effectively. However, the organisation has chosen to enhance their online presence on the platforms that are used by younger audiences. Therefore, in order to understand the purpose behind Vox's social media strategy that is targeting the Spanish

youth, it is necessary to investigate the nature of the visual content they are producing in said webpages. This methodology offers a robust and nuanced approach that examines not only the visual components, but also allows for the interpretation of the symbolic meaning behind said visual items. Additionally, it favours the obtention of the contextual factors and references that are included in the content published by far right parties.

Sample selection

Adopting the previously explained research methods, this dissertation will analyse the Instagram and TikTok accounts of the Spanish far right party Vox with the intention of understanding the type of content that the political organisation is publishing to target the country's youth. In the interest of the analysis, the central main account of the party of each social network will be studied (@vox_es on Instagram and @vox_espana on TikTok). Vox has multiple accounts on each platform dedicated to the diverse branches of the party. For instance, there are official profiles of the party devoted to each of the 17 autonomous communities and 50 provinces in Spain. Measuring the activity of these accounts would not be impartial, because certain territories have experienced regional elections in the set period while others have not, which causes certain profiles to be more active than others during specific seasons. Moreover, there are official accounts that represent smaller areas (such as cities, towns, and neighbourhoods), as well as the official accounts of the party in the Parliament or Senate, among others. Additionally, there is an Instagram profile dedicated to the youth (@voxjovenes), although it is not as active and more unknown than the central one. Consequently, and by reason of not extending the scope of the investigation, this research will only analyse the central account of the party on Instagram and TikTok due to being the most followed and active profiles. Thus, the examination will increase the probability of being feasible and accurate and reduce possible obstructions of data.

The examined period of time will extend from January 1st 2020 to December 31st 2022. Vox's TikTok account was created in early 2020 so both platforms' analysis will start on that date to measure the party's activity on an equal period of time. Likewise, the research will finalise at the end of the year 2022 because national elections will be held on 2023. During electoral periods, it is likely that the party is more active than regularly, as politicians are keener to seem appealing to the general public, and the content might vary slightly in order to accommodate to the electoral race. Therefore, analysing the party's social media posts outside of campaigning season will portray how the organisation is able to gain sympathy of citizens whether they are old enough to vote or not. During this period, Vox has uploaded 1405 posts on Instagram; hence, a smaller portion will be examined, in order to make this research more attainable – the 5 most liked posts per month will be selected, creating a total sample of 180 Instagram posts. Additionally, all of the TikTok videos uploaded during the selected three years will be analysed, which consists of 138 posts.

As mentioned, with the purpose of understanding how Vox is attempting to reach the Spanish youth, two of the most popular social media platforms among the younger generations will be analysed – Instagram and TikTok. The immense significance that visuals have for politicians who aim to gain the sympathy of citizens can be observed on the growing importance of parties being active on these platforms. Even if it is not accessible to understand with precision the consequences that using social media may have on the electoral results, attaining high levels of engagement is considered to be a positive sign. (Olof Larsson, 2021, 2-3).

Instagram became popular as a social network that centres around images. This research will focus on three of the main functions that Instagram enables to post – photos, videos, albums (which allow for up to ten photos or short videos to be uploaded on one single post). There are other categories available that will not be analysed on this investigation such as stories, whose content is designed to

disappear within 24 hours, or Instagram Television (or IGTV), which permits users to post videos that last longer than 60 seconds. The posts that are shown to each user are largely based on the accounts they follow, although tailored advertisements have gained a strong presence too. Moreover, Instagram's algorithm also displays content from profiles that are not followed, but are based on the user's preferences through the function "explore" (Olof Larsson, 2021, 2-4).

On the other hand, TikTok is a platform where the only available function is short video. Its popularity expanded rapidly in 2020, coinciding with the Covid-19 global pandemic (Fahmi et al., 2023, n.p.). The content shown to users on this social network depends immensely on the algorithm and current trends, rather than those who are followed by each profile. The algorithm automatically selects the videos that each user will scroll through based on their preferences and previously liked posts (Abidin and Zeng, 2021, 2462). These two platforms were deemed as most appropriate to conduct this research because the majority of users belong to the younger generations. On Instagram, around 70% of people using it are encompassed between the ages of 13 to 34, and 40% of the total are aged between 13-24 (Statista, 2022). On TikTok, the statistics prove that the majority of its users are even younger – around 67% of accounts are owned by youngsters between the ages of 13 and 24, and the total number rises to 92% if users between 25 and 34 years old are included (Oberlo, 2022). Both platforms are optimal to observe young people's engagement with political content. Due to being shaped mainly by young audiences, the posts have a humorous and entertaining nature and are becoming more popular among political parties (Abidin and Zeng, 2021, 2462).

The term "youth" is arduous to conceptualise because there is no clear consensus with its definition and the years that it encompasses. Different states and regions understand the experience of being young differently and thus, its interpretation varies. For instance, the United Nations detail that the term

includes people ranging from the ages of 15 and 24 years old (UNESCO, 2020, n.p.). However, in other regions such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the category is expanded to include 10 more years than the UN, as the organisation's definition comprises people aged between 15 and 34 (ASEAN, 2017, 8). Nonetheless, as the country being researched is Spain, which is a member state of the European Union, this dissertation will follow the definition of the EU, which encompasses people between the ages of 15 and 29 (Eurostat, 2023, n.p.).

The selected sample is appropriate to answer the research questions and objectives proposed because it supports the investigation of the type of content with which Vox is targeting the Spanish youth, as well as the comparison between the two platforms. Although both social networks are mainly used by young people, it is clear that the presence of users within said age range on TikTok is a lot stronger than on Instagram. This observation will portray the similarities and differences between the posts uploaded on the platforms and it will contribute to the almost inexistent literature regarding far right parties youth targeting.

Data collection

As was mentioned earlier, the data used for this analysis has been retrieved from Vox's Instagram and TikTok accounts (@vox_es and @vox_espana, respectively), which will be herein referenced as "(Vox [@vox_es], n.d)" and "(Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.)".

Initially, the easily quantifiable content was analysed by checking on which platform was the post uploaded, or the number of likes, comments, saves, views, or type of post (still picture, video, or album). This data is related to the engagement and interactions that the account is obtaining. The platforms' algorithms are more likely to show users the posts that are obtaining more

attention. Therefore, a publication that gets an abundance of likes or comments is more likely to go viral and reach a wider audience (Lego Munoz and Towner, 2022, n.p.). On certain occasions, the data is not publicly available; for instance, on Instagram it is not possible to know the number of times a post has been saved or the total of views a still picture or an album has.

Moreover, other variables have been analysed during the data collection:

- *Visual theme.* Measures the predominant themes in the images or videos posted. Some of the common values observed were: Vox members, other party's politicians, citizens, youth, Spanish symbols, parliament, or other.

- *Tone.* Explores the character or sentiment that appears to dominate the visual imagery. The main values observed within this variable were: humorous, victimist, angry, celebratory, or other. For instance, a meme is considered to have a humorous tone, or a video of a person exalting their pride for being Spanish is contemplated as celebratory.

- *Emotions and appeals.* This variable aims to explore the feelings that the content is attempting to invoke on the users. The values observed were anger, hope, sadness, admiration, patriotism, amusement or other. For example, a political leader surrounded by a large number of their followers aims to create admiration on the observers.

- *Youth-centric elements.* Analyses the components of the picture that are directly related with the younger generations, such as young people being pictured, an explicit appeal towards the youth or memes and internet culture.

- *Image quality.* Assesses whether the quality of the visual image is high (big production or from a news media outlet) or low (pictured or recorded with poor quality or roughly edited).

Limitations and ethical considerations

Notwithstanding, it is essential to be aware of the potential limitations that this investigation might face that can interfere with the accuracy of the answers to the proposed research questions. For instance, some of the topics posted on the party's social media accounts may be related to the context taking place during that period of time in Spain instead of responding to Vox's ideology or proposals. If this were the case, certain publications may not include noteworthy content that matches the party's general social media strategy, as it would consist of posts that have been more improvised than those that are customarily shared, and the information retrieved from the image in question might only be relevant during a limited period. Additionally, another limitation this dissertation must deal with is the inability to determine the exact age of the users viewing, interacting, and relating with the content being shared. This data is not publicly accessible, which may potentially hinder the accuracy of the analysis. Nevertheless, although the audience can be slightly imprecise, the platforms being studied (Instagram and TikTok) are mostly comprised by the younger generations, as was mentioned previously. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that the majority of the public can be understood as "youth". Lastly, this method of investigation might be hindered by the existing possibility that the party has deleted some content from the social media accounts. Said limitation was handled by conducting the analysis during an established time period (June 2023), when the posts on the selected timeframe were the same as they were at the time this investigation was arranged (November 2022). In order to encourage further research on the topic, it must be clarified that this dissertation will focus on years without a general election in sight. It would be interesting to analyse as well how the party varies its contents during a political campaign – during the first seven months of 2023 (electoral year), Vox has uploaded 219 videos to TikTok, which is a larger amount than the previous three years combined.

This project faces no research ethical risks, as the data collected and analysed derives from content published online by the political party Vox. These publications have been posted willingly by the organisation and therefore, complies with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Said requirement establishes in its article 9.2 that handling personal data is not forbidden when the "processing relates to personal data which are manifestly made public by the data subject" (GDPR, 2018). This regulation applies to the case that concerns this investigation, as the political organisation has shared the content purposefully and with the intention of being seen by the wide audience.

V. RESULTS

This chapter will examine the results obtained from the analysis conducted on the Instagram and TikTok accounts of Spanish far right political party Vox in order to understand the necessary data to answer the proposed research questions and reach the objectives established. Firstly, the numerical elements of this investigation will be examined such as the likes, views, comments and saved posts. These components are key to comprehend the engagement each of the party's social media accounts is obtaining, as well as an elemental step to understanding with what type of content is Vox is targeting the Spanish youth.

Results

The first result that can be observed is that in general, Instagram obtains a higher amount of likes than the TikTok account. The photography app has amassed a total of 7.35 million likes in the publications analysed (Vox [@vox_es], n.d.), while TikTok only managed to obtain 487,113 (Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.). An explanation for this noticeable difference is that the party has 680,000 followers on Instagram and 250,000 on TikTok. Additionally, Vox has had an account on

Instagram since 2016 (Alonso and Viejo, 2018, n.p.) but did not become a user of the video app until 2020.

When analysing the party's Instagram profile, we can observe that the most common type of publications are videos, because 72 out of the 180 posts examined were done in this format. The next most frequent kind are still pictures (total of 64), followed by 44 albums – which combine multiple stills or videos (or a blend of both). Moreover, this order matches with their followers' preferences, as the total amount of likes obtained on video publications reaches 2.79 million, 2.6 million on still images and 1.96 million on albums; the sum of the comments received is 148,000 on videos, 106,000 on still images and 70,000 on albums. Although the number of views and saved posts is not publicly available on this platform, it is safe to say that the type of content that is most engaging with the public and, therefore, most probable to reach a wider audience, are videos (Vox [@vox_es], n.d). On TikTok, all of the publications are videos, so this variable was not possible to measure. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that the posts that obtain the most likes are also those that are the most viewed and commented. There are some minor divergences on some publications, but they are so reduced that they do not interfere with the validity of our research (Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.). For the sake of obtaining fluidity, when measuring the engagement, only the number of likes will be mentioned. Additionally, the number of times the videos have been saved by other accounts was also explored but this feature is used minimally (only 12 TikToks out of the 138 analysed were saved by over 200 users) (Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.). Thus, the data from this variable will not be mentioned across this dissertation.

Visual theme

Concerning the visual theme displayed on the Instagram posts, the most admired publications are those that include the leaders of Vox, as they have received a

total of 1.85 million likes. They are followed by posts which contain images of citizens and party supporters as the main visual theme, which have 1.8 million hearts. Memes are also appreciated on this platform, as they have been double tapped 829,000 times. Additionally, other categories that stand out are images displaying news media content (610,000 likes), young people (559,000), debates at parliament (539,000), and politicians from other parties (491,000). The remaining posts were categorised as "other" as they were not frequent enough to obtain a separate classification (Vox [@vox_es], n.d). On TikTok publications obtain a lower number of likes in general, but those with leaders of Vox as the main visual theme are also the most liked (131,000). Nevertheless, those that contain memes come second, with a total of 101,000 likes. The rest of the categories analysed obtain a lower amount of hearts: citizens and party supporters received 77,000; debates at parliament obtained 64,000 likes; images displaying young people got 40,000; videos with the opposition as the central image acquired 14,000 likes and videos taken from the news media 3,000 (Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.). On Instagram the order of preferences from the spectators matches in a relatively accurate manner the number of times the party publishes content with said visual images - the most common feature to appear are top members of Vox, as they are the central image of 47 posts. 40 publications are led by citizens and party supporters and 19 of them are meme content that have been adapted to match the party's ideology. Additionally, a smaller number of publications have youth as a central theme, news media recordings or captions, scenes from the parliament or members of other political parties (in said order) (Vox [@vox_es], n.d.). Nevertheless, analysing TikTok demonstrates that the posts with the highest number of likes do not always match those that are posted more often. While the content that is most liked by users is the one that contains members of Vox, memes, and citizens, the publications that the party shares more often are those where its politicians appear (60 videos), followed by images of debates in the parliament (23) and the opposing parties (14) (Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.). This illustrates that, for

instance, although memes are preferred by TikTok's young audience, the party does not publish those type of videos very often.

Tone and emotion

Users from both platforms seem to agree on their preferences of the tone that the image or video is portraying. On Instagram and TikTok, the order of predilection in the sentiment that dominates the image is angry, celebratory, and humorous. Nevertheless, on the video platform the difference in likes between the categories (181,000; 159,000; 128,000; respectively) (Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.) is narrower than on Instagram (2.33 million; 1.81 million; 929,000) (Vox [@vox_es], n.d). When analysing the number of times each type of post is uploaded on the social networks, it is possible to observe that there is a divergence in the categories that are seen more often. For instance, on the photography platform, the most common posts are the celebratory ones (54), followed by those with an angry tone (41) and sentiments labelled as "other" (39) – which may include, for instance, images of the party's political proposals (Vox [@vox_es], n.d). On TikTok, however, the order of number of likes obtained and the number of times posted does match (Vox [@vox_es], n.d). Additionally, the Instagram publications enjoyed the most by the public are those that attempt to invoke emotions of anger, patriotism and amusement (3.5 million; 1.47 million and 829,000 respectively) and the order of posts that are shared more often matches – 79 posts aim to make the viewer angry, 33 intend to make users feel patriotic and 24 pretend to amuse the audience (Vox [@vox_es], n.d). On the other hand, content on TikTok is preferred when they intend to cause anger (159,000 likes), amusement (150,000) and hope (1 00,000 likes); but it is more common to see publications that invoke anger (59 posts), hope (23) and patriotism (21) among its audience (Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.).

The difference between the "tone" and "emotion" category can be observed in multiple videos; for instance, videos where the images criticise (in a heated

fashion) a collection of laws approved by the current and past governments but promise they will be eliminated if Vox wins the elections (Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.). Therefore, even if the tone of the video is angry, the purpose of publishing it is to generate hope for a better future among the viewers. This data portrays that content is more likely to gain attention when the message is communicated furiously and aims to enrage viewers, especially on Instagram. While on TikTok it is also evident that videos with an angry message are more likely to obtain attention, the difference in the numbers is not as wide, proving that other type of content is also appreciated.

Quality

When analysing the quality of the images shown on both social networks, we encounter that the audiences prefer different type of content. Instagram users are more likely to enjoy content labelled as "low quality", meaning pictured or recorded roughly – using mobile phones or unedited videos, for instance – as around 69% of the likes are destined to this type of content (Vox [@vox_es], n.d). On the other hand, Vox's TikTok seems to prefer content that has been edited and seems more professional (63% of the likes were allocated to publications that were categorised as "high quality"). These results are in accordance with the total number of posts uploaded, because 71.7% out of the 138 TikTok videos published were considered to be good quality (Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.) and 56,7% of the Instagram posts analysed were marked in such category (Vox [@vox_es], n.d). These results could potentially signify that the videos uploaded on TikTok are more thought out and have been intentionally recorded, while the party is more likely to publish on Instagram images or videos taken spontaneously with a hand-held phone or someone else's content that has been viral previously and is reposted by the party. For instance, there are multiple posts on this platform that show Vox's leader Santiago Abascal having impromptu meetings with his followers on the street, or viral

videos that portray different minorities committing a crime are reposted on their Instagram account with a racist or homophobic message (Vox [@vox_es], n.d).

Youth-centric elements

The last variable to be analysed is the one that measures whether there are elements in the visual unit that are related or relatable to the younger generations. On Instagram, for instance, 58 out of the 180 publications included youth-centric elements, which makes a 32.78%. Additionally, it is interesting to point out that the total number of likes obtained in those publications is lower than those that do not contain this type of material (only 26.95% of likes are allocated to youth-centric elements) (Vox [@vox_es], n.d). On TikTok, the results obtained are very different: 26% of the videos published were related to the young audiences (36), however, 48.2% of the total number of likes were given on publications with said type of content (Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.). This result portrays that on TikTok, where the public is generally younger than on Instagram, visual elements that contain young people or components that are related to them cause more appeal and are therefore more engaging. Considering this variable is very significant for this dissertation, it will be analysed more in-depth on Chapter VI.

Evolution throughout the years

Prior to comparing the outcomes from both platforms, it is essential to call attention to the evolution of the content published on TikTok throughout the years. Out of the 138 posts uploaded during the period of time established on this dissertation, only 9 were published in 2020; 18 videos were made public in 2021, and the following year, the party posted 111 videos, which corresponds to 80,43% of the total number of publications. Additionally, there is a big difference in the engagement that the account has obtained throughout the three

stages because even if most of the videos were uploaded during 2022, only 45% of the total number of likes were allocated to said year. Additionally, 2020 and 2021 obtained respectively 29.55% and 25.45% of the share. It is evident that the recent decision taken by Vox of becoming more active in this social network has caused a shift in the type of content uploaded. For example, 33% of the content produced in 2020 were memes, the percentage lowers to 22% when measuring the year 2021 and, in 2022 only 7 out of the total number of videos posted belong in this category (6%). Similar percentages are obtained when analysing the content with a humorous tone (22%, 27%, 11%). However, the disparity becomes very visible when analysing which publications have youth-centric elements: 7 out of 9 videos shared during the first year that Vox created its account portrayed this type of content (78%), 9 videos containing these elements were uploaded in 2021 (50%) and 30 during 2022 (27%). The augmentation in the frequency of publications explains the rising number of videos that were published with an angry or victimist tone. During the first two years of membership in this platform, Vox published 6 videos with these sentiments dominating (22%), as opposed to the 59 videos that portrayed this tone in 2022 (53% of the posts). Additionally, the percentage of publications that depict a celebratory tone has been reduced throughout the years. In 2020, more than half of the videos uploaded communicated their message in a congratulatory and jubilant manner, which is similar to the data obtained from 2021, that shows that 9 out of 18 videos express this sentiment. Nonetheless, in spite of the totality of posts shared in 2022 having increased significantly, those conveying a celebratory tone were merely 22.5% (Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.). Due to the large difference existing in the quantity and style of publications between the first two years Vox was active on TikTok and the year 2022, it is safe to say that there has been a shift in the initial strategy. While in the beginning the content published was straightforwardly directed towards young people, in 2022 the videos that are being shared on this social network are not as clearly tailored for the youth.

On the other hand, with the data that has been observed on Instagram it is not possible to attain a conclusion regarding the frequency of publications, because this study has analysed a set number of posts per month. Therefore, as 60 units of visual images per year were obtained from this platform, it is not possible to understand the development Vox has had on Instagram throughout the years. Nonetheless, there has been an exhaustive analysis of the different variables separated across the years which has established that there are no significant divergences in the party's style of sharing content. One of the occasions that showed a telling difference happened when exploring the variable that measures the tone of the visual unit. It portrayed that in 2020, 20% of the publications were communicated through a celebratory tone; in 2021, 26% of the posts portrayed this expression and, in 2022, the percentage reached 43%. Additionally, the percentage of posts that aim to make the audience feel hopeful also increased significantly during 2022. The first year, only 5% of the posts published had the objective of provoking that emotion to their viewers. In 2021, the amount increased slightly until 6%; however, during 2022, 16% of the posts uploaded to Instagram aimed to create this feeling (Vox [@vox_es], n.d). A possible explanation for the increased triumphant tone could be that during 2022, opinion polls were claiming the decline in support of the conservative Popular Party, benefitting far right group Vox (Benito, 2022, n.p.). This interpretation is proven because within the first two months of the year 2022, 6 of the most liked posts on this platform consisted of images of electoral polls portraying the rise of the party and expressing their desire to continue advancing upwards (Vox [@vox_es], n.d).

Comparative analysis of Instagram and TikTok

The primary objective of this section is to address the proposed research question "Which are the similarities and differences between Vox's youth-targeted content on Instagram and TikTok?". Thus, the following discussion will

delve into the divergences present in the content published by far right party Vox on both social media platforms. Although some of the disparities have already been signalled in the previous paragraphs, the next segment of this chapter will accomplish a more comprehensive analysis and identify new distinctions.

Differences

Taking into account the results obtained during the examination of the data selected, there are some clear differences between the content that Vox is posting in each social media platform, such as the type of visual themes portrayed, the tone expressed in the publication and the emotions seeking to attain from the public. As mentioned in the previous section, there are certain noticeable divergences within the same platform throughout the years. Nevertheless, some characteristics are still evidently distinct between Instagram and TikTok, no matter the year. For instance, content published on TikTok is more likely to have a humorous tone. A potential reason to explain the phenomenon may be that TikTok is almost exclusively used by the younger generations and people under 30 years old. This sector of the population is less likely to expresses interest in governmental topics and traditional political strategies than the rest of society. Instead, it is more responsive to jokes, memes, the entanglement and recrimination between political leaders and their personification and humanisation (Morejón Llamas, 2023, 241-242). Therefore, in an attempt to connect better and impress its audience, Vox creates specific content that is intended to be humorous. Additionally, the publications uploaded by the party on this platform are prone to seek a feeling of hope from the public. The previous reasoning may be applied in this case as well. Due to the youth of TikTok users, Vox aims to portray itself as the only possible protector of their future and the solution to their worries (Morejón Llamas, 2023, 241-242).

Connected to this idea, another difference that is appreciated is that TikTok users are more likely to engage with content that has elements related and relatable to the youth. On the contrary, Instagram accounts do not tend to like youth-centred publications as much and connect more to images where the central visual elements are regular citizens. In fact, even if almost a third of the posts uploaded to the platform has youth-related content, only a quarter of the likes obtained are awarded to said category. This may be explained by the fact that Instagram users correspond to a more diverse age range and, therefore, their interests are more varied. Consequently, the posts that obtain higher engagement numbers are prone to be generic and not as individualised. Additionally, political parties on Instagram tend to prefer maintaining a steady flow of content that gives the account a professional appearance (Castro Martínez and Díaz Morilla, 2021, 71). Therefore, intertwining those posts with youthful ones would throw off the party's chosen aesthetic.

The last major difference that will be pointed out is the divergence in the visual quality of the content uploaded. Looking through the party's TikTok account, one is significantly more likely to encounter high quality videos and images than when analysing Vox's Instagram profile. Not only the number of publications tend to present a nicer aspect, but also users like, comment and view videos that display a higher quality. Generally, the posts shared on this platform have been professionally edited and recorded and appear to have been more thought out than those on Instagram. In contrast, the content shown on the latter social network seems rawer and more improvised. On many occasions, Vox reposts videos or photographs taken by others that have previously gone viral in Spain with the intention of criticising the acts portrayed, usually adding racist, homophobic, or sexist commentaries. Reposting viral content allows the party to obtain views and engagement on their profile rather than the original author. This technique is reserved to Instagram and it is not common to encounter it when navigating the video platform. A potential explanation for this divergence in the quality of the content may be that ultimately, TikTok is a primarily

entertainment platform, where the main purpose is to watch videos, rather than to connect with others (Abbasi et al., 2023, 344). Therefore, a political party may want to carefully plan and generate the product that will shared, as it is more likely to catch the eye of the users viewing it and stimulate their engagement with the content. Nevertheless, this explanation clashes with the idea that TikTok users expect to watch content that is approachable and relatable (Castro Martínez and Díaz Morilla, 2021, 70). When videos are evidently planned and thought with dedication, the politician in question may seem unreachable and someone with which it is more difficult to empathise, which defeats the alleged purpose of creating a TikTok account. However, these type of publications manage to obtain the desired goal of attaining engagement, which proves that Vox strategy is working.

Similarities

Even if the content displayed on each platform may seem different, there are a number of characteristics that are shared between Instagram and TikTok. For instance, on both social networks it is very frequent to encounter publications that are communicated in an angry tone. Messages displaying warlike comments, the stigmatization of persecuted minorities, or heated critiques towards the opposing parties are often found both on Instagram and on TikTok. A more aggressive and emotionally charged discourse is more likely to receive engagement from the audience and, therefore, the party intends to distribute content in said tone. The reason behind this is that passionate messages resonate often with viewers because they comprehend the information in a personal manner (Morejón Llamas, 2023, 241-242). In fact, by adding an angry tone to the party's posts, Vox manages to obtain reactions from those with ideologies on the other side of the political spectrum because they decide to refute the ideas shared on that image. However, the more people view, comment, or share a publication, the more engagement it receives, and it ends up reaching a wider

audience. Thus, the purpose behind Vox sharing angry content on Instagram and TikTok is fulfilled, because they manage not only to communicate their ideology, but also to become viral and approach potential new followers.

Another similarity detected is related to the recent decision of augmenting the number of posts that are shared on TikTok. The party is set to increase the frequency of uploads on the video platform, which has resulted in publishing the same content on both social networks. When Vox's TikTok account was first established, the party created productions specifically tailored for that application. For instance, memes, content charged with humour, or videos that appeal directly to the younger generations. Nevertheless, during 2022, it is more common to find the same video published on both platforms, with slight changes in the hashtags utilised and the font displayed on the text. As an example, on 27 September 2022, the party posted on TikTok and on Instagram the same video, accompanied with the same caption and emojis. The video shows Pedro Sánchez, the current Prime Minister of Spain during a press conference and it is captioned "Te quitan el dinero y se lo dan a los milloriarios" (translated as: "They take away your money and give it to millionaires"). The only difference appears in the background colour of the text within the image and some of the hashtags used (Vox [@vox_es], 2022a; Vox [@vox_espana], 2022a) (See Annex 1). This phenomenon has occurred on multiple occasions during the year 2022, which did not occur during the previous two years of existence of Vox's TikTok account. Thus, although most of the content analysed shows divergences (as was pointed out in the previous section), the current trend seems to be that both platforms are mirroring each other. In this vein, Instagram has also seen some changes in the content being uploaded. In particular, the party is uploading more images with a triumphant and celebratory tone than the previous years. This change on the registry used may signify an evolution in Vox's social media strategy, which potentially is occurring due to the rapid rise in popularity of the party (Benito, 2022, n.p.). The organisation is now well known and established across Spain, so the need for becoming viral is no longer essential, or at least

not a primary strategy. Although the angry-toned publications still occur (Vox [@vox_es], n.d.; Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.), those publications do not seem to be a priority anymore. Therefore, the similarity that unites both platforms is the recent change of strategy that has seen more celebratory publications and less specific to each social media account.

VI. VOX'S YOUTH-TARGETED CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

As seen in the results obtained from the data's analysis, Vox successfully adapts its message to resonate with the youth and their interests. This chapter will explore four of the main characteristics observed that help enhance the party's connection with the youth, with the purpose of learning what type of content is being shaped to match the younger generations' online discourse.

Youth-centric interests

A prevailing characteristic found on Vox's Instagram and TikTok accounts that attracts the younger generations is the discussion of topics that are of interest to them. In its publications, Vox discusses subject matters such as the uncertainty about the future, the difficulty of accessing the job market, the hopelessness the youth feel about purchasing a residence, or the adversities they must confront before being able to start a family. By addressing the challenges and priorities that are faced by this sector of the population, Vox is able to capture their attention and disclose the solutions it offers to mitigate them (Tannous, 2023, n.p.). For instance, on a video posted on the party's TikTok account in October 2021, the party's leader Santiago Abascal addresses the youth directly and states a variety of issues that he claims are what concerns them the most – the fatherland, freedom, the future, jobs, housing and family (Vox [@vox_espana], 2021a.). In a different example from the same year and platform, Abascal is shown addressing the Spanish parliament during a session and criticising the

attempts from the government to help the younger generations to develop appropriately. He claims that the ruling party is failing to address the real worries that the youth encounter and that they are being led astray with the new measures the government implemented such as sexual education at schools or accepting young migrants into Spain. The message from this publication is finished with an image that reads a sentence that can be translated as "the Spanish youth want a respectable future" (Vox [@vox_espana], 2021b.). Additionally, the party publishes from time-to-time images on Instagram with measures they would implement if they won the elections and often, they are intended to attract young people's attention. For instance, a post made on this platform on October 22, 2022 announces that Vox will supply €250 to help young people (aged between 18 and 35 years old) pay for their rent (Vox [@vox_es], 2022b). The party understands that said age group is very active on Instagram and an image disclosing a positive measure that could benefit is likely to go viral and attract potential new voters.

A different manner in which Vox shows their knowledge in youth-centric interests is by addressing young people's enjoyment of celebrations and festivities. The party posts content defending the Spanish traditions, which are frequently linked with partying. For instance, a video posted on TikTok in July 2021 displays town festivities, bullfights, local fairs, wine drinking, traditional dances and young people that appears to be having fun (Vox [@vox_espana], 2021c.). The purpose of this video is to encourage the youth to be proud of the Spanish traditions, villages and people. Although it does not have a direct electoral aspiration, it does intend to appeal to those who feel like they have been forgotten by other political parties and make sure they understand that Vox has them in mind at all times. Additionally, as was mentioned in the literature review chapter, Vox organises a festival with music and activities to celebrate Spain's National Day. The days before the event, the party becomes very active on its Instagram and TikTok accounts with the purpose of advertising the festival. Additionally, the names of the musicians that play are disclosed in

publications that have a style that resembles music festivals. The chosen artists are DJs, or perform rap or urban music, in an attempt to allure the youth to attend the event (González, 2022, n.p.). Simultaneously, Vox addresses university students that are interested in politics on its social media accounts. As was mentioned in the literature review, the party organises meetings between the youth and Vox politicians or journalists to encourage discussions and to socialise. They claim that universities are leftist institutions where they feel unable to share their opinions. Therefore, the party publishes pictures of the meetings (or announcing them) with the intention of connecting with this sector of the youth who could potentially become supporters or even active members of the organisation (Vox [@vox_es], n.d.; Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.).

Santiago Abascal is aware of the relationship the younger generations have with his party. He declared that Vox's appeal to the youth relies on the lack of support other parties have showed to this section of the population. He believes that what they are looking for is to secure a future while connecting to their own roots (Aguilera Carnerero, 2019b, n.p.). In sum, addressing the interests of those who feel detached from politics and abandoned by the traditional political organisations is what has given Vox an advantage in obtaining the attention of the youth, and they are exploiting it through the most appropriate channel: Instagram and TikTok.

Humorous content

The usage of humour on social media posts is a clear sign that Vox is aspiring to be relatable to the younger generations. Authors agree that humour is a key aspect to take into account when creating social movements and generating support for them because it helps people to identify with the group, as they consider themselves to be included within the joke and the outsiders are those who do not understand it. The sense of community created is appealing to experience being part of something, which is a feeling sought by many

adolescents and young adults (Dreisbach, 2021, n.p.). Multiple studies agree on the fact that humour is beneficial in politics because it helps to accentuate the message given, it enhances the recollection of the shared information, it supports the credibility and persuasiveness of the speaker and it also provokes the reaction and emotional response of the audience (Alenda et al., 2022, n.p). For far right parties, humour helps to entertain the public, who will be able to find a way to relate to politicians. It serves as a tool behind which to hide hateful or derogatory comments, belittling the opposition and those who do not follow their same ideology, and spreading their political agenda (Martikainen and Sakki, 2021, 612). Vox uses humour on their online platforms by posting memes (which will be discussed in the next chapter), or by editing videos teasing the opposing parties and their proposals, or the media.

An example of a publication that is contains a humorous tone is found in a TikTok posted on May 2022, which depicts a debate in the parliament and contains a text that reads (translated into English) "Santiago Abascal ridiculing Pedro Sánchez" and it is accompanied by three laughing-face emojis. Prime Minister Sánchez appears first in the video complaining about Abascal's excessive employment of testosterone, referring to an enormous display of toxic masculinity. Vox's leader replies teasingly saying that testosterone has given him very pleasurable experiences throughout his life (Vox [@vox_espana], 2022a). Vox has also orchestrated pranks on the opposing parties with the purpose of ridiculing them, recording the moment and uploading it on the internet. For instance, a member of Vox seized control of the sound system during an antifascist event in which leftists and independentist parties were speaking. The event was being held in support of 6 young persons who had been arrested with charges of assault on Government Officials during a protest against a Vox meeting that was taking place in their city (Gil, 2021, n.p). The far-right supporter played on the speakers the anthem of the Civil Guard and the National Police, which startled the members of the opposing parties and stopped the event momentarily. The moment in which the music started playing was

recorded and later uploaded on Vox's TikTok account, which received thousands of views and humorous comments (Vox [@vox_espana], 2021d). Therefore, the party managed to connect online with the younger generations and provoke laughter in the expense of the opposing parties.

The party utilises humour to make fun of journalists and news media outlets that do not abide by their ideology. On an Instagram video published in September 2022, the party inserts visual and sound effects to an excerpt from an interview on the Spanish public TV channel to one of Vox's top figures – Javier Ortega Smith. The publication introduces noises imitating a flatulence whenever the journalist moves in his chair or sounds that indicate confusion and embarrassment to tease the TV anchorman. Additionally, the party includes audiovisual content from known Spanish shows in the middle of a speech to accentuate the joke on the presenter and edits a picture of the journalist at the end of the interview to make it seem as if he were crying (Vox [@vox_es], 2022c) (See Annex 2). By teasing the media on their publications, the party is not only able to create a humorous post that will appeal to the youth or that is likely to become viral, but Vox also utilises it to diminish the credibility of traditional media outlets. (Ballesteros Herencia, 2022, 195).

Viral hashtags

A characteristic used by far right groups and political parties is hijacking hashtags, or "hashjacking". This technique consists of taking the name of a hashtag and using it in content that is not related to it or that defends the opposite idea. Therefore, when users access the link expecting to find a specific type of publications, they encounter that it is flooded with far right images or videos. This way, these organisations are able to reach a sector of the population that would generally not receive radical right propaganda through the platforms' algorithms. Furthermore, it allows parties to fill with their ideas and beliefs a hashtag that is destined to defend the opposite view. Their goal is to dominate

the debate around a specific hashtag and to create a stronger bond between those who adhere to their discourse, while isolating those opposing it (Darius and Stephany, 2020, 3). During the analysis conducted on the selected data, it is evident that Vox is familiar with this technique and has taken advantage of it in multiple occasions.

For instance, the party includes the hashtag #feminismo (#feminism in English) in numerous occasions, particularly when they mention women on their discourses. For instance, the party's account uploaded a video in May 2022 with said hashtag attached. In the video, Vox's ex-member Macarena Olona declares that society is telling women they can only be fulfilled by working, but her party defends those who want to have children and a family. She adds that without said elements, women find themselves sad and alone in their homes. Furthermore, she explains that Vox wants to give them the right to make a choice. By using those words, Olona manages to hijack the abortion debate, as the sentence "right to choose" is generally stated by those who defend the existence of the right to have the procedure. Thus, by using #feminismo on such a publication, people who access the hashtag will encounter Vox's videos that seem innocent and that defend women's decisions, when in reality they are suggesting that women who do not want to have children will feel sadness and loneliness without them (Vox [@vox_espana], 2022b).

A different reason why Vox utilises popular hashtags is to have the opportunity to approach the Spanish youth. The party understands which trends are successful at the time and utilise them in their favour. For instance, a trend that takes place on Spanish TikTok is adding the hashtag #lentejas (#lentils) on each publication. The tendency appeared on the platform as a joke, when a user shared that adding this piece of text to a post would help it become viral, as the algorithm would detect it as worthy of showing it to more people. People quickly understood that the information was fake, but continued using it as an inside joke, only understandable for those with an account on this social media

platform (Vinuesa, 2022, n.p.). Vox adds this hashtag to some of its videos, especially those with "lighter" content. For instance, a TikTok post showing Abascal being greeted and admired by citizens, where he seems cheerful and good-natured contains #lentejas in its caption (Vox [@vox_espana], 2022c). When the youth clicks on the hyperlink that redirects the page to show all of the content published with said hashtag, they will find a video of Santiago Abascal being friendly and chatty with his supporters. Instead of sharing content with the party's political ideology, Vox categorises with this tag content that is easy to digest by the younger generations and that portrays the leader in an amicable light. Other examples of this technique being used by the party are #fyp (stands for "for you page") or #CristianoRonaldo (Vox [@vox_es], n.d.; Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.).

Adaptation to discursive techniques

Another feature that explains Vox's relationship with the youth is that the party is able to adapt its messages delivered in social media to the style in which young people communicate. The political organisation utilises a rather simplistic language, making use of slang words, which helps the youth perceive them as humans worried about their needs rather than detached politicians. Vox is able to promise sensational plans for the future while avoiding to speak about the necessary procedures to achieve it. The party appeals directly to the younger generations' feelings, expressed with terms and expressions they are familiar with or through the music they listen to (Terán, 2021, n.p). Vox manages not only to find a discourse that reaches the youth more efficiently, but they also are able to differentiate themselves from the rest of the parties who use complicated political or economical terms that are not easily comprehensible.

An example of the adaptation to youthful discourses can be seen on a video published on TikTok on June 8th 2022, in which a member of Vox gives a speech on the parliament and she addresses the youth. She tells the younger generation

that they do not have to put up with the measures applied by the government that are leading them towards a future without jobs or with an unhappy life. During her discourse, she introduces words utilised by the youth, such as the Spanish slang word for "job" (curro). Additionally, she invites them to rebel against the established order that is leading them astray. The member of Vox is attempting to appeal to the youth by adapting her language to express the party's ideas in a manner that they tend to use and hear when conversing with their friends. The politician does not introduce any complicated proposals mentioning political terms – the only solution she gives the youth to fix their problems is to support Vox (Vox [@vox_espana], 2022d).

Furthermore, the party incorporates music to the videos published in order to elevate the message they are trying to convey. The chosen songs adapt appropriately to the tone of the videos and make them seem more appealing. For instance, on a video comparing Vox politicians with Popular Party politicians, the music chosen is a reggaeton song, which is a genre preferred by the younger generations and played mostly during parities or celebrations. The music perfectly expresses the message Vox is delivering, because when the artist sings (translated) "when the day gets ugly" and "you make it beautiful again", pictures of the conservative party and of the far right appear respectively (Vox [@vox_espana], 2022e). Additionally, Vox utilises rap songs that complain about the established parties and their policies on their TikTok videos. In a post uploaded before the regional elections in Madrid, a group of artists appears painting graffities on a wall that read "Protect Madrid" surrounded by pictures of iconic monuments of the city and Spanish flags. The song that plays in the background is by a young rapper who mentions the need to fight for freedom and to defend one's neighbourhood (Vox [@vox_espana], 2021e). By sharing this content, the political organisation aims to appeal to the youth by making its claims resonate with them and obtain their sympathy.

VII: SUCCESS OF VOX ON SOCIAL MEDIA

This section will compare and contrast the analysis obtained from the data selected and the theoretical framework that was laid previously. The purpose of this chapter is to understand whether the existing theories that explain the reasons why radical right parties gain success are visible on Vox's social media. Thus, firstly the approaches that describe the techniques the far right utilises on social networks to obtain support will be discussed, followed by an analysis of two theories that demonstrate Vox's success among the youth.

Vox social media strategies

Echo chambers

The mechanisms by which echo chambers occur have not been analysed in this dissertation's investigation and, therefore, it is not possible to conclude whether Vox is benefitting from this phenomenon. The study conducted measured the number of likes, comments, views and saves that the publications on Instagram and TikTok obtained; nevertheless, understanding the consequences derived from engaging with the party's posts was out of the proposed scope. As mentioned in the third chapter of this project, echo chambers limit the variety of the content that internet users are compelled to watch on their social media pages based on the type of publications they engage with the most. The platforms' algorithms dictate what accounts will be shown in a person's TikTok or Instagram feed depending on the users' previous decisions to like, comment or share other publications (Cinelli et al., 2021, 1-5).

Our analysis was not able to determine how the youth's interaction with Vox affected the content they were exposed to, as it was limited to understanding which type of content they were more likely to enjoy. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to analyse in future investigations the effect that the engagement with the radical right's party has on their social media accounts and whether the type

of content they receive shifts towards the right. An interesting tendency that has been observed during the past years is the rise of influencers that communicate far right ideals on their social media profiles, adapting them in a way that is enjoyable to the younger generations of Spain. They express anti-feminist beliefs such as stating that feminism seeks to obtain inequalities between men and women, negative perceptions on paying taxes, or the idea that scientific arguments are being faked with the purpose of obtaining political support (Pérez Colomé, 2023, n.p.). These content creators are also adapting their message to appeal to the youth, in a similar style to what Vox is publishing. Therefore, as the videos and images being shared have some characteristics in common, it would be useful to analyse whether their content is being targeted to those who engage with Vox's videos, which would be a sign that an echo chamber is being formed.

Disinformation

The data obtained has also proven that Vox employs a calculated strategy that consists in the dissemination of disinformation with the goal of manipulating their audience. The political organisation shares on occasions content that contains falsehoods or that has been deliberately transformed, possibly with the intention to confuse citizens. The information disseminated creates unreal expectations purposefully in order to gain support while accusing the opposing parties or the media as liars. By adhering to this strategy, Vox manages to incite the public's outrage and persuade a substantial number of people that their party and the news media outlets that are affiliated with them are the only valuable sources to obtain accurate information.

Such examples can be observed on the party's Instagram account, for instance. In multiple occasions, the platform has had to flag Vox's publications as containing false information. In April 2021, the political entity shared an image on Instagram that contained a picture of one of their advertisements they located

in Madrid's subway stations. The poster portrays an elderly lady and a racialised young man using a scarf to cover his face. In the centre, a text explains that unaccompanied foreign minors obtain €4,780 each month from the government, while a grandmother's monthly pension is only €426. The caption of the publication states that Spanish citizens should not have to sustain migrants who enter the country illegally, and that after the elections Vox will return them to jails in their country of origin, where they belong (Vox [@vox_es], 2021a). The information is clearly fake, as it has been announced by the social network after being verified against multiple sources. Nevertheless, a substantial number of people will have seen this information published on the walls of the Madrid subway stations, as well on Instagram before the correction was added. This way, Vox willingly spreads hatred towards a vulnerable sector of society.

The party spreads disinformation on a wide variety of topics other than migrants. A recurrent subject in which falsehoods are disseminated is squatters. The issue has been brought up to public discourse in Spain by the radical party, as it did not use to occupy a place in the media or in people's minds. Nevertheless, Vox publishes fake stories stating that elderly people have had their house occupied while being admitted in the hospital or families not being able to enter their house after returning from holidays because squatters have moved in. The political organisation posts headlines from newspapers that adhere to their ideology and who have published articles with modified information that do not correspond to reality (Vox [@vox_es], 2021b). Additionally, throughout the data obtained there are examples of disinformation that has been shared by Vox on its social media accounts on topics such as feminism, abortion, news media outlets, electoral polls, newly passed laws or the opposing parties and their members (Vox [@vox_es], n.d.; Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.).

Micro-targeting

The comprehensive analysis carried out by this research lacks the capacity to definitively determine whether Vox adopts another one of the strategies used by multiple far right parties around the globe, known as micro-targeting. The technique consists in utilising big data to forward precisely tailored messages to specific individuals or groups. Its overarching purpose is to gain the sympathy of potential voters by presenting them with ideas that closely align with their interests and worries. Therefore, it is often considered by academics as a form of manipulation because it targets people's vulnerabilities and proposes solutions to mend their problems. One of the defining attributes of micro-targeting involves the acquisition of data originated at the targeted individuals' social media accounts (Binder et al., 2022, 435-437). However, obtaining this type of data is not possible through visual content analysis, which was employed in this research. Consequently, confirming whether Vox has adopted the strategy of micro-targeting remains beyond the scope of the present study.

Nevertheless, the empirical data analysed has demonstrated that Vox is following a strategy on social media platforms, which has been specifically tailored to resonate with the younger generations. This organised plan involves the publication of content that mirrors the type of posts generally favoured and enjoyed by the youth. By aligning their message with the preferences of the target audience, Vox ensures that its communication accumulates a wide visibility within the younger demographics. The key advantage that Vox obtains from this approach lies in the exploitation of the platforms' algorithms. Not only does their content achieve the desired virality due to obtaining high levels of audience engagement, but the party also benefits from the likelihood of their publications appearing prominently on the feeds of the youth. This is achieved by incorporating elements that parallel the discursive techniques favoured by young people. For instance, the aforementioned utilisation of trending hashtags and incorporating viral TikTok sounds, such as excerpts from popular reggaeton

or pop songs. By integrating such appealing components, Vox ensures its message aligns with the digital discourse, which effectively engages the younger generations on these social networks.

Memes and Internet culture

The last far right social media strategy that was addressed on the theoretical framework chapter was the publication of memes with topics related to the parties' ideology. Through this strategy, political organisations are able to convey their message in a humorous way that seems inoffensive and obtain people's support in response. It is considered to be a style of communication that relies on symbolism and imagination instead of the traditional political speeches or pamphlets (Heikkilä, 2017, 2-3). They are able to transmit an opinion in a concise and simplistic manner, which enables parties to omit intricate details. Far right parties take advantage of this strategy by hiding offensive comments behind the excuse of humour (Shifman and Trillò, 2021, 2485). Additionally, the comical nature of the image or video in question improves the likelihood of the content obtaining likes, comments or being shared. Viewers – in this case, the younger generations – understand the publication as a good-natured joke and often overlook the insensitive and hateful information that it may contain (Heft et al., 2021, 2503).

Many examples can be found of memes and internet culture uploaded by Vox to Instagram and TikTok. For instance, a video published on Instagram on June 2021, depicts a video of football player Cristiano Ronaldo in a press conference. The video quickly became a meme in Spain because it enabled a wide range of possibilities of making different humorous remarks. In the video, the athlete has three different brands of water available in front of him but he removes two of them out of the camera's reach and lifts the remaining one in sign of appreciation for that brand. Vox undertook the opportunity and edited the video by attaching the faces of three Spanish politicians to the bottles of water. Two of them were

meant to represent the social-democrat and Conservative parties – the ones that are removed – and the one selected by Ronaldo depicts the face of Santiago Abascal. The publication obtained a high number of engagement (74,000 likes and 2,500 comments), which demonstrates the power memes can have in politics (Vox [@vox_es], 2021c) (See Annex 3).

Another meme that obtained far-reaching attention and engagement was one published in September 2021 that was uploaded on TikTok. The original video was also popular among the Spanish youth at the time. It portrays a protest taking place in which young people are holding LGBT+ flags and screaming chants in support of the collective. The Spanish National Police are standing in a line in front of the demonstrators and a person begins to cross the street in front of them, smoking and seemingly unbothered by the protest happening, and he even waves at the marchers. In Vox's rendition of the meme, the demonstrators' faces are covered with the party's opponents – such as other political parties or certain news media television channels and radios, and the man passing by appears to represent Vox (Vox [@vox_espana], 2021f) (See Annex 4). The meme is supposed to represent the party being unbothered by the critiques they receive from the opposition and the traditional news media.

These two examples are a good representation of the types of memes that Vox uploads to humour and connect with the younger demographics. Although most of the ones analysed target the opposing parties as the centre of the joke, some of them also include other groups as "enemies" of the parties, such as the traditional media or the LGBT+ collective.

Theories of Vox's success

This section will compare the data obtained from the analysis of Vox's social media and the theories explained on chapter III that describe certain reasons why the far right achieves successful results on elections.

The theory that justifies the electoral success of far right parties due to the existence of demand-side and supply-side factors argues that their accomplishments are based on the grievances that citizens feel and drive them towards the radical right, and the environment in which the party is located in society that makes it appealing (Golder, 2016, 478). This theory could be applied in the context of Spain and its youth. In the past decade, the country has experienced a series of crises that divided the established two-party system as a result of new parties appearing with the goal of appeasing the troubled situation. For instance, the global economic crisis that originated in 2008, which left Spain in a devastated condition, the refugee crisis that peaked in 2015 all across Europe and the celebration of the anti-constitutional referendum that pushed for the auto-determination of independence of Catalonia. The first two situations were handled somewhat successfully by the existing parties at the time, but the desire of the Catalan nationalist to form a new country scared many citizens who believed that the unity of Spain as we know it would disappear (Rama et al., 2020, 7). This climate of tension and polarisation throughout the territory of Spain, and the standardisation of political parties being present on social media created the perfect environment for a radical right party to gain supporters rapidly – which is what theorists named demand-side factors. Thus, Vox appeared announcing itself as the solution needed to save Spain from falling apart. On the other hand, the party provided its followers with arguments that pleased their fears, which can be observed in the data analysed. For instance, Vox claims to be the biggest defender of the Spanish nation, and it often publishes content related to their pride of being Spanish and praising the traditions and culture that the country has. Those who were afraid that the Catalans would go through with their claim for independence probably found comfort in Vox's message and online content, as they believed the party would defend their interests. Additionally, a dissatisfied youth that faced problems to access the job market, felt connected with a party that is constantly speaking to them and using the language and means they are used to. Vox promises the

younger generations a better future plagued with happiness and freedom but without utilising complicated and political terms. The party provides its followers with groups of people to blame for their misfortunes, which assist them in redirecting their discontent towards vulnerable people. This way, migrants, people from the LGBT+ community, feminists, traditional news media outlets and other politicians get targeted as an annoyance that ruined the pre-crises Spain (Vox [@vox_es], n.d.; Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.). These factors combined with the velocity in which messages are spread and the charismatic leader of the party depict perfectly the supply-side factors that multiple authors conceptualised.

The other approach discussed in this dissertation is the in-group and out-group theory, in which the radical right party in question divides society into two groups. One of them is comprised by the people who share similar values and culture (in-group) and the other one is formed by the rest of society, who are excluded from the in-group (out-group). This theory describes the former group as exclusionary and difficult to access when you do not belong in it from the beginning (Awad et al, 2022, 987). This division can be observed clearly in Vox's discourse and online publications. The party differentiates between the "good and proper" Spanish (in-group) and their enemies, which conform the out-group. The latter group is formed by migrants, feminists, LGBT+ activist, opposing parties, the traditional media or citizens who do not support Vox. On its social media posts, the party openly states that "the others" do not love and respect Spain as much as Vox and its voters, and they celebrate belonging to the better side of society in which traditional values are respected and followed (Vox [@vox_es], n.d.; Vox [@vox_espana], n.d.). Furthermore, the far right party is able to construct imaginary boundaries that separate both sections and to convince its followers that they are being threatened and discriminated against. For instance, in a video posted in November 2022 on Instagram, the party announces that the President of parliament is censoring them and not allowing Vox politicians to voice their opinions because the microphone of the member

of Vox who was speaking was turned off in the middle of her speech. Abascal explains that they are under constant attack because of their beliefs and that freedom of expression is not guaranteed under the current government. In reality, the woman speaking had called members of the government terrorists and was advised by the President of the parliament to take back the false accusation. The member of Vox refused to comply and, therefore, her microphone was turned off (Vox [@vox_es], 2022d). Additionally, the party also enhances the differences between the in-group and the out-group by claiming that Vox is the only party that will defend the real interests of the former group, while the opposing organisations look after the latter group. In a TikTok video posted in October 2021, Vox lists in a simplistic and humorous way all of the concerns of the outgroup such as not traveling by plane, LGBT+ people wanting to indoctrinate children, Catalan nationalists wanting an independent country, feminists explaining that the patriarchy exists, the media wanting undocumented minors to be accepted into Spain or the leftist party wanting people to smoke marijuana (Vox [@vox_espana], 2021g). By creating this oversimplified content, Vox manages to make people feel like the out-group is not fighting for the people's true interest and, therefore, they consider they belong in the same group as the radical right organisation. Thus, the imagined division between the two sectors is heightened.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

In sum, this research project has achieved the objective of answering the proposed research questions. The analysis has concluded that the type of content that Vox is targeting the Spanish youth has a set of clear characteristics. Firstly, their publications include youth-centric interests; in other words, the party uploads content that is related to the uncertainty of the future, the difficulties of entering the job market, buying houses or starting a family. Additionally, the far right organisation understands the desire of this age group to celebrate and enjoy

parties, so they emphasise on the importance of maintaining and commemorating the Spanish traditions, holidays and festivities. Furthermore, the party includes on its social media a variety of humorous content in which they tease and make fun of the opposing parties or the traditional news media outlets. A different characteristic of the content published by Vox on Instagram and TikTok is the inclusion of viral hashtags on both the accounts' posts. The party utilises this function even if the publication is unrelated to the topic, but it allows their message to reach new audiences. Moreover, the party adopts the discourse style of the younger generations in order to seem more relatable to them and includes slang words or popular music in its content. It is worthy of mentioning that the data showed the evident evolution of the type of content throughout the years. Although 2020 and 2021 had relatively similar publications, the year 2022 saw a change in the type of publications being uploaded.

This research has also concluded that the content that resonates the most with the youth, based on social media statistics are posts that have a celebratory, humorous, or angry tone, as they are the most likely to obtain high numbers of engagement. This type of content becomes viral more easily because it receives views and comments from people who support the message or those who are against it. As such, due to the platforms' algorithms the publications reach a wider audience and are more probable to obtain likes.

When comparing the content uploaded on Instagram and TikTok, the data portrayed that TikTok contains more humorous and youth related publications than Instagram. A possible explanation may be that as Instagram users also include adults rather than mostly young people, its content is more likely to incorporate more serious messages. Additionally, TikTok users tend to prefer high quality and better edited content than those on Instagram, possibly because TikTok is seen as an entertainment platform and its users are drawn to better produced videos. Some similarities found between both social networks are the

large number of posts that include an angry tone, as well as the apparent change of strategy that is taking place on the digital platforms.

Lastly, the online strategies that Vox adheres to in order to obtain success among the youth are disinformation, and memes and Internet culture. The party has had posts flagged multiple times as false information by the platforms, but it continues to offer this type of content in order to gain support by the youth by accusing the opposing parties and the media as liars. Additionally, Vox creates memes and shares them on TikTok and Instagram often, not only to connect with the Spanish youth, but also to obtain engagement and to transmit their controversial opinions in a way that seems humorous. Through social media, the party adheres to the theories shared by academics in which they enhance the polarisation of society by creating and augmenting two sections – out-group and in-group. Furthermore, on Instagram and TikTok they provide the supply-side factors that society required after the demand-side factors were unlocked.

This research has been valuable to understand what type of content that Vox publishes resonates with the youth, which is a first step to comprehend why does the radical right's nationalist and ultra-conservative message make an impression on the younger generations. After this analysis, there is room to commence further research on the matter. For instance, it would be interesting to study why does the party seem to be changing its social media strategy after it has been proven to attract young people, or the role far right influencers have in strengthening the youth's radical right's ideology.

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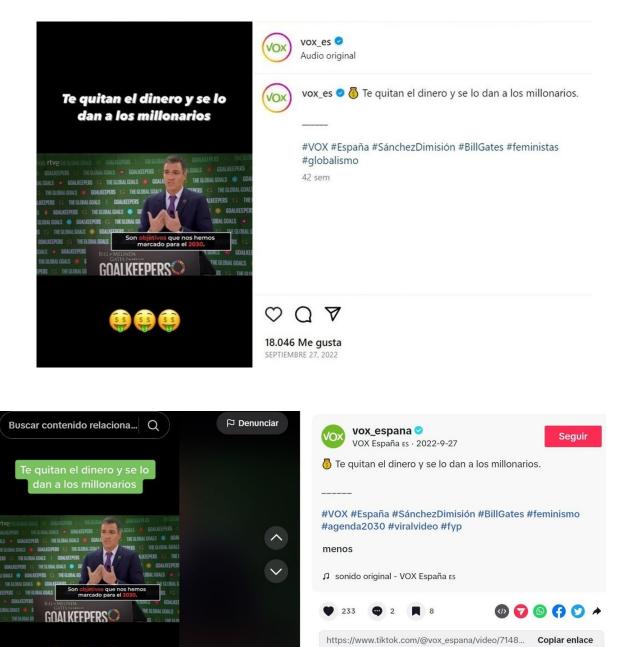- Vox [@vox_espana]. (2022e). "#Vox #España". TikTok. Accessed on
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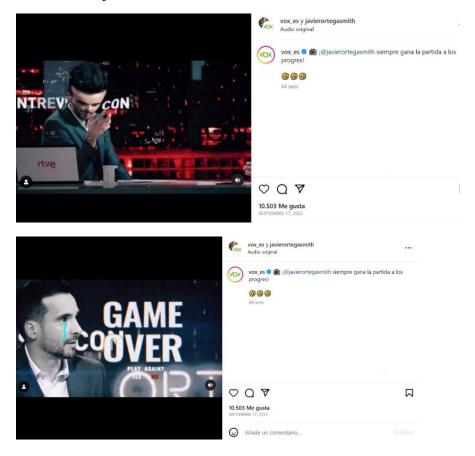
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X. ANNEXES

Annex 1. Instagram and TikTok post showing the same visual content.

Annex 2. Stills from an Instagram video on Vox's account with edited content to tease a TV journalist.

Annex 3. Meme depicting Cristiano Ronaldo choosing Vox out of the main three Spanish political parties.

Annex 4. Meme depicting Vox unbothered by the criticism received from the opposition and other news media.