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The logic of digital influence: how social networks redefine votes

*A lógica da influência digital: como as redes sociais redefinem votos**La lógica de la influencia digital: cómo las redes sociales redefinen los votos*

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Abstract

This article examines how digital platforms, particularly social media, shape visibility and influence strategies in Brazil's 2024 elections. It discusses the role of algorithms, emotions, and platform logics in building political narratives and public engagement. Based on bibliographic research and digital methods, it analyzes cases of campaigns that transformed online exposure into political capital. The study concludes that digital visibility redefines power relations and expands the influence of social media on contemporary electoral communication.

Keywords: Social media; Digital visibility; Algorithms; Politics; Digital Methods.**Resumo**

O artigo analisa como as plataformas digitais, especialmente as redes sociais, moldam as estratégias de visibilidade e influência nas eleições brasileiras de 2024. Discute-se o papel dos algoritmos, das emoções e da lógica das plataformas na construção de narrativas políticas e no engajamento do público. Com base em pesquisa bibliográfica e métodos digitais, examinam-se casos de campanhas que transformaram a exposição online em capital político. Conclui-se que a visibilidade digital redefine relações de poder e amplia o impacto das mídias sociais na comunicação eleitoral contemporânea.

Palavras-chave: Redes Sociais; Visibilidade Digital; Algoritmos; Política; Métodos Digitais.**Resumen**

El artículo examina cómo las plataformas digitales, especialmente las redes sociales, configuran las estrategias de visibilidad e influencia en las elecciones brasileñas de 2024. Se discute el papel de los algoritmos, las emociones y la lógica de las plataformas en la construcción de narrativas políticas y en el compromiso del público. Con base en investigación bibliográfica y métodos digitales, se analizan casos de campañas que transformaron la exposición en línea en capital político. Se concluye que la visibilidad digital redefine las relaciones de poder y amplía la influencia de las redes sociales en la comunicación electoral contemporánea.

Palabras clave: Redes sociales; Visibilidad digital; Algoritmos; Política; Métodos Digitales.

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Introduction

In the contemporary context, technologies have enabled an even more intricate amalgamation between media, culture, and society, creating an immersive communication ecosystem in which relational aspects gain strength; media shape and structure not only the environment in which information circulates, but also people's behavior, influencing how they perceive and interact with the world around them. This metaphor of media as an ecosystem has roots in media ecology studies, advocated by scholars such as McLuhan (1962) and Postman (1992), who influenced theoretical thinking about the symbiotic relationship between technology and forms of communication, highlighting how each new medium affects human cognition and social organization. In this sense, new forms of media consumption emerge in response to the coexistence, competition, and complementarity among different media, giving rise to "new media species."

Fidler (1997) initially described this process as mediamorphosis, emphasizing the capacity of media to evolve and adapt to new technological and cultural contexts. Subsequently, Jenkins (2006) popularized the concept of media convergence, exploring how different platforms and media forms interconnect, promoting a constant exchange of content, ideas, and cultural practices. In addition, Scolari (2013) expanded this discussion by working with the concept of transmedia narrative, in which stories go beyond the formal boundaries of traditional media, creating a complex entanglement of narratives that unfold across multiple platforms. These stories interrelate synchronously and asynchronously, generating new dynamics of media content consumption and production.

Digital media, especially social media platforms, today assume a central mediating role within the ecosystem of sociotechnical and cultural relations, where narratives are constructed that, although often not entirely truthful or laden with biases, are credible enough to "surround us and circulate through our inner mental structures" (Scolari, 2013), shaping our perceptions and thoughts. The decentralization of content production/distribution, as anticipated by Lemos (1997), is now evidently consolidated and reflects the transformation of digital media into environments in which multiple actors can create and disseminate content, breaking with the centralized logic of traditional communication, whose model has been in decline since the 2010s. This new scenario promotes a dynamic and fragmented flow of information, in which platforms constantly reconfigure power relations and shape new forms of influence. Simultaneously, as pointed out by Hjarvard (2012), digital media, by becoming an integral part of social institutions, have reached a degree of self-determination that imposes their own rules on these institutions. Thus, in addition to fostering diversified participation, platforms create their own logic that influences institutional behavior, leading many organizations to adapt to this new reality. The combination of these factors results in an ecosystem in which power is redistributed and renegotiated, not only among individuals, but also among institutions and digital media, which in turn condition how social, political, and economic spheres operate.

What was once limited to visibility campaigns in traditional media now expands into a scenario of hyperconnectivity, in which digital visibility becomes a crucial strategic resource. In particular, the contemporary political environment is deeply immersed in this logic, in which algorithms, data, and emotions intertwine to shape public opinion. Politicians and strategists understand that presence on social media is not merely a matter of exposure, but of complex management of interactions, emotional reactions, and narrative, with the potential to be converted into votes. Based on O'Neil (2020), algorithms should be understood as non-neutral sociotechnical systems that incorporate economic interests and reproduce inequalities by deciding who sees what, and with what intensity.

The manipulation of visibility on digital platforms is not passive; it is intentional and strategic. Modern electoral campaigns exploit the specificities of each platform, adjusting their approaches according to what resonates most with the audience, using engagement metrics to legitimize their reach and influence. In this context, the use of algorithms to amplify certain content, especially that which evokes intense emotions such as fear and indignation, becomes a common tactic. As noted by Da Empoli (2022), many of the strategists behind political campaigns behave as true "engineers of chaos," insofar as they design actions by taking into account the dynamics of digital media visibility, the modus operandi of algorithms, and an understanding of what generates repercussion (controversy, fear, confrontation). The author observed that propaganda on social networks feeds primarily on negative emotions, as these intensify engagement and stimulate user participation. This mechanism helps explain the success of fake news and the spread of conspiracy theories, phenomena that rely precisely on the mobilization of fear and other reactive emotions (Da Empoli, 2022, p. 21).

Thus, the present article aims to understand how digital platforms, and social media in particular, shape the strategies of visibility and influence that characterize electoral campaigns in Brazil in 2024. It seeks to analyze how candidates and their teams exploit algorithmically mediated regimes of visibility, the logic of digital



influence, and engagement metrics—likes, shares, and comments—to convert exposure into political capital and votes. The investigation is guided by three central questions: (1) how do mechanisms of visibility and algorithmic recommendation on digital platforms reconfigure the space of electoral competition?; (2) in what ways does the logic of influence and performance affect the credibility and political legitimacy of candidates?; and (3) to what extent can digital visibility be interpreted as a new resource of political power? The contribution of the study lies in proposing a critical reading of the platformization of Brazilian politics, highlighting the articulation between media visibility, emotion, and the symbolic conversion into votes, thereby contributing to the field of Communication by integrating perspectives from media ecology, regimes of visibility, and algorithmic dynamics.

The text is organized into different sections that address essential aspects of the impact of social media on elections. It explores how visibility on online platforms is constructed and manipulated by candidates and strategists, highlighting the dynamics that govern such exposure. In addition, it discusses the ways in which social media enable the rapid rise of political figures, using recent examples that illustrate the phenomenon of digital influence in electoral campaigns. The analysis is further deepened by examining the relevance of engagement metrics, such as likes and shares, and the role these metrics play in legitimizing campaign success, in epistemological proximity to the digital methods approach through social listening (Angeluci; de Farias, 2024).

It also examines how the algorithms of digital platforms shape content visibility and influence user behavior, directly impacting candidates' strategies of exposure. Finally, reflections are presented on the use of controversy and digital marketing strategies in contemporary electoral campaigns, showing how these elements have been crucial for converting visibility into votes.

Materials and Methods

The research adopts a qualitative approach of an exploratory and interpretive nature, combining a bibliographic review (Flick, 2009) with the analysis of digital data obtained through digital methods using social listening (Angeluci; de Farias, 2024). The methodological design is based on the collection and interpretation of content published on platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook during the 2024 electoral cycle, using the Stilingue tool to monitor mentions and interactions related to candidates and political events. Trends in visibility and engagement were observed around emblematic cases, such as those of Pablo Marçal and João Campos, making it possible to identify patterns of virality, controversy, and digital performance, as well as to understand patterns and trends that shape public perception. The conceptual operationalization articulates three main analytical dimensions: (i) visibility, understood as the capacity to be seen and recognized on digital platforms; (ii) influence, associated with perceived credibility and the ability to mobilize interactions and affects; and (iii) conversion, understood as the process of symbolic transformation of exposure into political legitimacy and votes.

This triangulation between theory, digital data analysis, and case studies contributes to illustrating how algorithms and regimes of visibility act as mediators in the construction of authority and political presence in the online environment, not only describing the influence of social networks on politics, but also explaining the mechanisms that sustain the logic of digital visibility and its relationship with electoral decision-making.

Visibility and Legitimacy in Digital Media

It can be inferred that we live under a regime of hypervisibility whose maxim is that those who are not seen—especially in digital media—are not remembered: “visibility is a prerequisite for public existence” (Silva; Baldissera, 2021, p. 161) and, therefore, it is not exempt from strategic dispute. Managing media visibility thus becomes a strategic necessity for brands, organizations, individuals, and public figures who depend on their own image, or even an imposition of the creator economy. By creator economy we mean an ecosystem of businesses, services, and roles oriented toward content creators, in which digital influencers produce materials, courses, mentoring, and consultancy, turning themselves into brands and commercializing products or services. This dynamic is based on the premise that we all become products, whose visibility is an essential condition to attract attention and generate legitimacy, whether in the sphere of hobbies or in the professional domain. In this way, the creator economy promotes forms of direct monetization from audiences, expanding the influence, visibility, and impact of creators in their respective fields of activity.

Digital media visibility (Terra, 2024) and legitimacy are interconnected, especially in the current context in which social networks and digital platforms play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and constructing identities. Digital media visibility refers to the capacity of individuals, groups, or institutions to be seen and heard



in the digital sphere. This involves exposure on platforms such as social networks, blogs, podcasts, and other digital media, where presence and interaction are fundamental to reaching broad audiences.

On the other hand, legitimacy refers to the acceptance and recognition of an entity, action, or idea as valid and authoritative. In social and political contexts, legitimacy is often achieved through factors such as institutional recognition, conformity with social norms, and public favorability. Thus, digital media visibility acts as an essential factor in the construction and maintenance of legitimacy, while legitimacy provides a foundation that can enhance visibility and influence in the digital environment.

We will focus on the issue of visibility. Campanella devotes his analyses to the management—possible to be undertaken—of regimes of visibility. Such action is situated within the field of negotiations that social media users engage in to achieve exposure and visibility and, in cases involving influencers, public figures, or celebrities, monetization. The author (Campanella, 2023, p. 4) highlights that the connected subject—the entrepreneur of the self—submits to datafication with the aim of obtaining economic advantages.

For Banet-Weiser (2018), we are dealing with an economy of visibility characterized as a media ecosystem that is simultaneously technological, economic, and cultural, oriented toward the accumulation of metrics such as views, clicks, and likes. In this environment, political and symbolic disputes unfold through strategies that seek to maximize exposure, attention, and public prominence (p. 2).

Scheid explains that an organization's visibility in online environments is composed of:

“(...) everything that circulates about it, that is, it is not limited to what it chooses to make visible, since in these environments a greater number of users are able to disseminate and amplify the circulation of information. The phenomenon of visibility also implies the process that makes something visible, the logics of the medium, and the strategies of actors” (Scheid, 2021).

Thus, what organizations, individuals, influencers, or public figures—engaged in explicit strategies of digital visibility—do is to garner validity or authority through recognition derived from media exposure, ensuring credibility and legitimacy among their publics and audiences.

Logic of Digital Influence

To ensure the authority, recognition, credibility, and reputation required, candidates and politics—more broadly—resort to the logic of digital influence as a form of consolidation. This logic is composed of a set of factors that contribute to the construction of a digital persona, namely:

- **Authenticity** (original content, formats, or ways of positioning oneself digitally) and **transparency** (honesty that fosters personal connection or accountability);
- **Engagement** (responses and interactions with audiences make them feel recognized and valued);
- **Frequent content** (to maintain audience attention);
- **Diversified platforms** (respecting their specific formats and languages);
- **Algorithms and visibility** (content that generates engagement tends to be more promoted by algorithms and, consequently, increases the visibility of that agent);
- **Collaborations and partnerships** (with other influencers and content creators, with brands, parties, coalitions, etc., helping to expand reach and visibility);
- **Data and analytics** (understanding audience behavior and reactions, public opinion, and media coverage for performance purposes, strategy revision, and process renewal).

These elements form a dynamic ecosystem in which influence is built, maintained, and adapted, responding quickly to changes in audience preferences and digital trends.

For Rocha, the use of digital platforms for electoral purposes has become increasingly common and has gained strength:

The appropriation of tools used by the influence industry in elections is a phenomenon that has been growing in scale. The most voted city councilor in São Paulo is a young Bolsonaro-aligned influencer, Lucas Pavanato (PL). In Campinas, another influencer was the second most voted councilor, Vinicius de Oliveira (Cidadania). (Rocha, 2024)



The researcher emphasizes that digital tools help highlight figures in a distinct manner and perhaps even with greater strength than traditional party machines:

Unlike the logic employed by party machines, the tools of the influence industry are capable of rapidly catapulting figures into national politics. Politicians such as Nayib Bukele in El Salvador, Javier Milei in Argentina, and Jordan Bardella in France are the most recent and well-known examples in this regard. (Rocha, 2024)

In light of this scenario, it becomes evident that the logic of digital influence has consolidated itself as a fundamental tool in the political field, redefining how candidates construct their images and connect with the electorate. The rise of political figures propelled by digital strategies demonstrates that the ecosystem of influence not only complements traditional party structures, but can also surpass them in reach and impact. Thus, as digital platforms become increasingly central to public debate, understanding and mastering their mechanisms becomes essential for any political actor who wishes to stand out and remain relevant in the contemporary landscape.

Conversion and Performance

In digital media, success is measured by volumetric performance. Likes, comments, reposts, and, consequently, buzz are what impact and legitimize the success of a communication action or campaign. Campanella reinforces that it is the profile itself that bears responsibility for managing its regime of exposure and visibility: “(...) users themselves are responsible for making themselves visible and recognizable online” (Campanella, 2023, p. 5).

Da Empoli (2022) highlights the capacity of digital networks and their strategists—whom he calls “engineers of chaos” (p. 20)—to change “(...) the nature of the democratic game” (ibid.), by drawing on the logic of engagement and immediacy.

Beyond a new dynamic that persuades and moves from the realm of followers to conversion into votes, the author emphasizes that we are not dealing with the Internet as a democratic instrument or a synonym for participation, but rather as a mechanism of control that captures large volumes of data and uses them for commercial and political purposes (Da Empoli, 2022, p. 54). In short, the *modus operandi* of networks imposes a logic that quantifies human behavior through the digital. Measurement and performance dictate the rules for organizations and their communicational processes, due to the obligation to quantify and track everything that is done and proposed. The logic of conversion and performance in digital social media combines an understanding of audiences with the use of data to continuously optimize strategies. It is an approach that requires constant analysis and adaptation to maximize the impact and value generated by social networks. As O’Neil (2020) argues, the data economy privileges systems capable of predicting and influencing collective behaviors based on statistical profiles, even if this entails imprecise generalizations about individuals—a logic that underpins contemporary practices of electoral microtargeting.

Platform and Algorithmic Logic

The logic of digital platforms refers to the way social networks and other online platforms organize and distribute content, prioritizing, in principle, user experience (while we know that the commercial interests of the companies that own the platforms are also at play) and engagement. This logic is strongly mediated by algorithms, which analyze user behavior data to determine which posts are most relevant and deserve prominence. Algorithms favor interactive content that culminates in what are known as vanity metrics, such as likes, comments, and shares, creating a cycle in which popular content gains even more visibility. These circles of popularity and visibility can lead to the formation of informational bubbles (Pariser, 2012) and to the promotion of polarizing content.

Campanella (2023, p. 24) discusses how creators are valued by algorithms for their ability to retain users on the platform for longer periods and to encourage them to return to watch more videos. In other words, the more time we spend on a profile or consuming a certain type of content, the more “of the same” the platform will offer us. Although, as users, we have no control over what will be presented in our social media feeds, professional profiles are assumed to have a deeper understanding of platform and algorithmic logics and to better master these regimes of visibility and exposure. Magalhães (2019, apud Campanella, 2023, p. 24) states that platforms produce an “algorithmic regime of visibility in which end users are expected to produce certain media practices, even though they do not have access to the infrastructural resources of the platform responsible for reading and metrifying users’ actions”.

The algorithm does not understand whether the content is good or bad. Thus, Janones (2023, p. 562) warns us that “(...) the only parameter of the algorithm is whether what was published generates engagement, whether it provokes any kind of reaction in the user.” Additionally, the author points out that many users rely precisely on what generates repercussion, controversy, and word of mouth in order to appear in the digital environment and generate spillovers: ““Any publicity is good publicity” (*“Falem mal, mas falem de mim”, in Brazilian portuguese*) —this maxim has never been so true” (Janones, 2023, p. 596).

Within this logic of retention to which we are subjected on digital social platforms, a simple, so-called amateur aesthetic can be a differentiating factor, as opposed to Hollywood-standard productions or even the Globo standard, as Janones notes: “The more homemade it is, the more the algorithm will enable distribution and the more views you will get. It is exactly the same logic as the professional photo versus the informal photo. More than not requiring perfection, social networks—especially Facebook—repudiate perfection” (Janones, 2023, p. 280).

Janones (2023) also argues that the figure of the leader (or candidate) must be central, as the “star of their network,” speaking about issues from their own perspective (2023, p. 320). He further emphasizes the figure that becomes a martyr and, consequently, is able to mobilize votes:

Another dilemma is that social networks only value the figure of the hero, the influencer, the myth (and will increasingly deepen this tendency). While democracy privileges institutions, networks encourage personalism and benefit the individual who sells themselves as the savior of the nation. It is the space of the selfie, the first-person post, and the exposure of life in its most intimate aspects (Janones, 2023, p. 1430).

The logic of platforms and algorithms redefines the dynamics of digital communication by prioritizing engagement and content personalization. This model favors charismatic figures and polarizing content, creating cycles of visibility that directly impact the public sphere.

Election as a Media Product

The objects of analysis in this article are drawn from examples originating in the 2024 electoral campaigns for mayoral offices and city councils. However, in order to help justify the movement through which politics approaches entertainment and media showcases, we return to Beiguelman when referring to the massive strategy adopted by Jair Bolsonaro, then President of the Republic, in the use of social media as a mechanism of exposure and relationship with his supporters:

(...) On social networks, the president makes it clear that they were not merely means of access to power. More than vehicles of personal communication, networks are his main institutional channel and the space for the construction of his image. An image that is the language through which the official history of his government is being written” (Beiguelman, 2021, p. 175).

Han also warns about how media-driven elections and their campaigns have become in contemporary times:

“(...) Whoever stages themselves best is the one who wins the election. Discourse degrades into show and propaganda. Political content plays an increasingly minor role. Politics thus loses its substance, eroded into a telegraphic image of politics” (Han, 2022, p. 30).

Contemporary electoral campaigns increasingly conform to the dynamics of entertainment and media logic, in which image construction and performance on social networks become central elements. Political discourse gives way to spectacle, and winning an election may depend on the ability to attract and sustain public attention. In this context, politics becomes a media product, exploiting digital engagement strategies and transforming electoral competition into a true battle for visibility.



Analysis and Discussion

Our analysis focused on two political figures from different poles in the 2024 elections: Pablo Marçal, who ran for Mayor of São Paulo, and João Campos, the reelected mayor of Recife. Marçal positioned himself as an outsider alternative by presenting himself as an entrepreneur, digital influencer, and personal development coach. He ran for Mayor of São Paulo under the Brazilian Labor Renewal Party (PRTB), and his campaign stood out for its intensive use of social media. João Campos, from the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB), is a civil engineer and the son of former Pernambuco governor Eduardo Campos. In 2024, he was reelected mayor of Recife in the first round, with approximately 78.11% of valid votes, while maintaining a strong presence on social media.

Fábio Vasconcelos, a professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), stated on the podcast *Café da Manhã* (a partnership between *Folha de São Paulo* and Spotify) that the then-candidate Pablo Marçal (PRTB) mastered what he calls the “grammar of the algorithm,” that is, making controversy, memes, sensitive topics, fights, and disputes the core of his digital content, thereby attracting attention, visibility, likes, and coverage from both social media and traditional media.

When searching for the term “Marçal” on the Stilingue platform, which processes social listening data (Figure 1), by surveying publications across several social media platforms such as Instagram, X (Twitter), and Facebook, it is possible to observe that the candidate’s name was rarely mentioned until August, when the 2024 electoral campaign began. From that point on, the candidate began to receive a high volume of publications mentioning his name, which supports the idea that he used algorithmic logic to his advantage, as shown in the figure below.

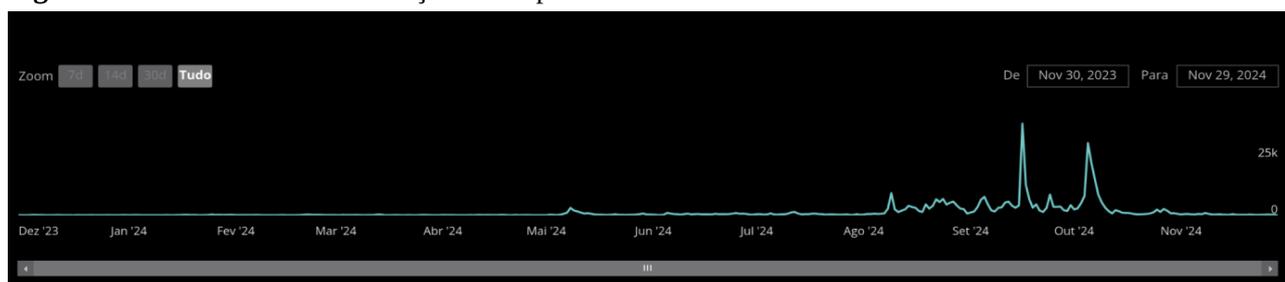
During the same period, the publication that received the highest number of comments mentioning “Marçal” was an Instagram post by GloboNews (Figure 2), with 66,000 comments, citing Pablo Marçal as one of the sources of fake news regarding actions carried out in Rio Grande do Sul during the environmental tragedy caused by floods.

The algorithmic appropriation by candidate Pablo Marçal reached even greater repercussion when he implemented a strategy of producing “clips” from excerpts of his own videos during the 2024 electoral campaign on TikTok and Instagram, aiming at the viralization of content on social networks. He encouraged followers to extract impactful excerpts from his speeches and interviews, promoting competitions with prizes for those whose videos achieved the highest engagement, according to Caetano (2024) in an article published in *Estadão*. This approach exploited algorithmic logic, which prioritizes highly interactive content, expanding his online visibility. However, this practice raised legal questions, resulting in the suspension of his profiles on several platforms by order of the Electoral Court, due to possible campaign irregularities. The repercussions of this logic were reported by several media outlets, as shown in the compilation of news below (Figure 3).

Controversy seems to be the link that connects the campaigns of political influencer agents. In this regard, Lindstrom, when comparing sex with controversy in terms of what gains visibility, states:

But the question remains: is it sex that is selling, or controversy? The evidence points to controversy. Of course, sex, which is inherently linked to our survival as a species, is powerful in itself; however, in many cases, attention may be more effective than the suggestive content itself. And although sex and controversy are, at least in the world of advertising, inseparably linked, when it comes to knowing what truly influences our behavior and what makes us buy, controversy can often be the stronger factor” (Lindstrom, 2017, p. 95).

Figure 1 - Search for the term “Marçal” in the period from November 2023 to November 2024.



Source: Stilingue



Figure 2 - GloboNews post on Instagram



Source: Instagram

Figure 3 - Compilation of selected news items about Marçal’s video clipping strategy in the press



Source: Google (compiled by the authors)



Many politicians, candidates, and those involved in elections seem to rely on the terrain of controversy. Beto Vasques, a professor interviewed by *Folha de S. Paulo* (Albuquerque, 2024), states that Pablo Marçal, for example, makes use of the PTE method—polemic, conflict, and engagement—and ends up finding resonance in what Da Empoli corroborates as generating clicks and user retention. The latter also highlights the tactic of “plots” (*complôs*) (2022, p. 78), which function on social networks precisely because they provoke strong emotions, controversy, indignation, and anger, which in turn generate clicks and keep users engaged.

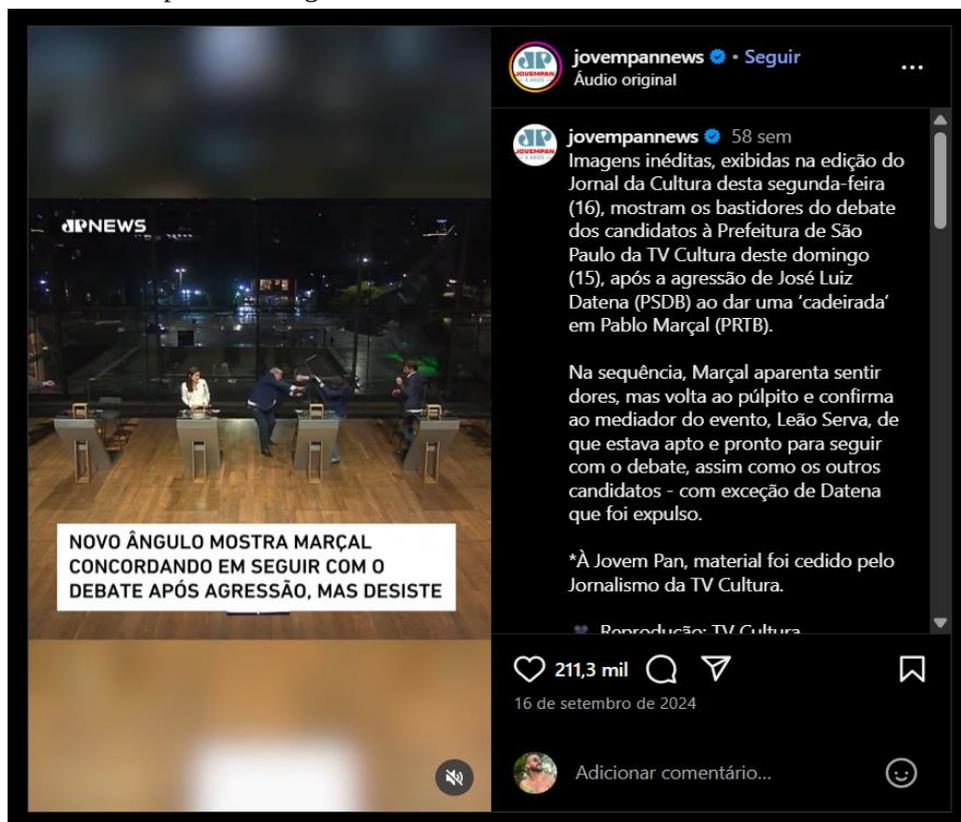
Vasques argues that such a method (PTE) is configured as “(...) a tactic designed to compete for people’s mental availability in an attention economy world, where everyone is being bombarded by millions of stimuli all the time” (Albuquerque, 2024).

According to Luiz Bueno, coordinator of the Political Philosophy Center of the Laboratory of Politics, Behavior, and Media at PUC-SP, in an interview with *Estadão* and *Rádio Eldorado* (2024), Pablo Marçal’s performance was that of an agent who does not operate within the logic of politics, but rather within that of networks and influence, in what he calls a “no-holds-barred” arena.

This “no-holds-barred” logic becomes evident when observing the peak of mentions of the term “Marçal” on social media between November 2023 and November 2024. According to analysis conducted on the Stilingue platform, the maximum point of repercussion occurred on September 16, 2024, the date on which candidate José Luiz Datena assaulted Pablo Marçal with a chair during a debate broadcast by TV Cultura. The episode generated widespread repercussion both on social media and in news outlets, with the post that achieved the highest engagement during this period being published by Jovem Pan News, which reported the incident and reached 213,000 likes on Instagram, as illustrated in Figure 4.

João Campos, the elected mayor of Recife in the first round, employed a digital strategy very similar to that of a digital influencer and a brand in order to achieve results of visibility, desire, proximity, and, ultimately, conversion of his base into effective votes. Figure 5 shows a user who identifies himself as a fan of the mayor receiving a box full of campaign materials. The TikTokker produces a #received video, just as if it were a brand sending products for consumption.

Figure 4 - Jovem Pan News post on Instagram



Source: Instagram



Figure 5 - TikToker receives campaign materials from João Campos and turns the action into #received content on the platform



Source: Orlande Tereal's TikTok profile (https://www.tiktok.com/@orlandetereal/video/7421593441567542534?_r=1&_t=8qO6o0SrLny)

The analysis of the cases examined shows that the 2024 electoral campaigns in Brazil fully incorporated the logic of digital platforms, in which visibility and engagement are treated as metrics of symbolic and political power. However, it is worth recalling O'Neil (2020, p. 264), who argues that the data economy rewards those who best convert information into profit, intensifying the prediction of collective risks and stimulating ever-greater data collection, even if this produces distortions in the evaluation of individuals.

It is observed that candidates such as Pablo Marçal exploited the algorithmic potential of social networks to transform controversy into attention and attention into influence, becoming agents of continuous circulation of discourses and affects. This dynamic reinforces the thesis that digital politics is governed by regimes of visibility in which emotional engagement—especially indignation and controversy—functions as the main vector of amplification. On the other hand, the case of João Campos illustrates the professionalized appropriation of the aesthetics and strategies typical of the influence industry, demonstrating that the personalization of communication and the appeal to authenticity strengthen identification with the electorate.

The logic of digital influence relies on algorithmic infrastructures that organize, classify, and prioritize content according to economic interests and performance metrics. As O'Neil (2020) argues, such systems are not neutral: by converting behavioral data into predictions and profits, they come to shape collective decisions on a large scale, often through statistical categories that simplify individuals and operate without transparency. In the electoral context, this dynamic favors strategies of segmentation and personalized persuasion, shifting political competition toward the terrain of visibility engineering and behavioral prediction.

Concluding remarks

Contemporary elections are being shaped by media dynamics in which digital communication plays a central role (Saad, 2015). Candidates use social media and online platforms to promote themselves and their messages, constantly formatting discourse and language to attract audiences. Media coverage not only informs,

but is also compelled to address narratives and events originating from networks. Platform logic enables audience segmentation, data collection, and decision-making based on performance.

Janones (2023) is categorical in stating that there is no individual genius behind success in social media exposure, but rather a manual to be followed (p. 540), a recipe that includes focusing on the individual (p. 320), authentic speech, a simple aesthetic (p. 280), framing themes as if they were a soap opera (p. 418), and the ability to set agendas on networks (p. 549). Therefore, we believe that candidates who were successful in terms of vote conversion, as well as those who achieved visibility, make use of the logic of networks and algorithms to display themselves and shape debates on social media and in the press. Rocha (2024) supports this view by arguing that knowing how to use the logic of networks can “catapult” a figure in ways that traditional party machines can no longer achieve.

Returning to the premise stated in the article’s title, we venture to say that the logic of influence helps generate media visibility, boosting trust and, as a consequence, converting into votes or, at the very least, into positions of prestige, prominence, exposure, and notoriety. These findings indicate that the contemporary electoral arena is structured less around programs or ideologies and more around visual and interactional performances, mediated by algorithms that privilege what is most commented on and shared. The main analytical contribution of this study thus lies in demonstrating how digital visibility is converted into a new form of political capital, shifting the axis of democratic legitimacy toward circuits of popularity mediated by platforms.

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