



DEEPPAKES PARODIES, TECHNOLOGICAL SPECTACLE AND DIGITAL CATHARSIS. The Case of Iberian Son

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Deepfakes TikTok Artificial Intelligence Reception Political humour Pedro Sánchez Political hatred	<i>This study examines 1,919 user comments on 57 deepfakes created by Iberian Son and posted on TikTok, which parody the Spanish Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez. Content analysis and textual analysis are applied to explore whether the use of AI motivates viewership, the types of responses generated, and whether users infer implicit meanings not directly expressed in the videos. The results show that AI not only enhances the appeal of the content but also serves as a tool for digital catharsis. The comments reveal that these videos provoke visceral reactions and reactivate latent discourses of political hatred. Furthermore, users project broader ideological interpretations, some of which align with narratives associated with the far right.</i>

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1. Introduction

From a broad perspective, artificial intelligence (AI) is defined as the ability to perform behaviours and processes traditionally associated with humans through the use of machines, computer systems, or computational networks (Li et al., 2021). This conceptualisation highlights the potential of these technologies to emulate, replicate, or simulate a wide range of cognitive activities that, until recently, were considered exclusive to human intelligence. However, not all AI exhibits the same characteristics. Jungherr (2023) emphasises the need to distinguish between generative artificial intelligence (GAI) and AI designed for specific task resolution. This distinction is fundamental for engaging in academic debate about the impacts of AI across various domains of everyday life. In this regard, it is pertinent to highlight a significant subset of GAI, namely deepfakes, which are developed through deep learning and multi-layered neural networks trained on large datasets. These techniques enable the creation of entirely new content or the modification of pre-existing material, including videos, images, and audio (Oancea, 2024).

Within the academic literature, there is a consensus that the emergence of deepfakes represents a turning point in the ability to manipulate reality (Battista, 2024). The first deepfake videos to gain notoriety were those in 2017 that superimposed the faces of female celebrities onto sexual content without their consent. These quickly spread from marginal internet spaces (Reddit forums, 4chan, and others) to social media and video platforms, sparking varying degrees of debate and confusion. Their purposes also diversified. From 2018 onwards, political figures became the primary targets of these manipulations, affecting leaders such as Pelosi, Obama, Trump, Putin, and Zelensky, among others.

The dissemination of these synthetic media, generated through artificial intelligence, is facilitated by users' tendency to share novel content that often has a humorous character and evokes pleasure or intense emotions. Like memes, these elements contribute to their viral spread (Shifman, 2014). Moreover, the impact of such images on the public sphere is significant, as visual political communication reaches a wide audience through platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram, influencing public perception (Klinger, 2024).

This study focuses on deepfake videos created by Iberian Son, an audiovisual content creation project with its own YouTube channel and a presence on other social media platforms (X, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook). Specifically, it examines the comments these productions generate on TikTok. These short videos (approximately one minute in length) feature a standardised thumbnail with a striking image of the protagonist. A caption at the top explains the video's theme. For example, in video 41, an image of Pedro Sánchez's face appears alongside a plus sign and the "Ghostbusters" logo, with the title "Fangonsters." Additionally, the thumbnail includes a prompt to follow the account @iberianson. This initial element of the videos indicates the political theme to be addressed, the humorous tone, and, most importantly, the deepfake recreation to be developed.

The selected sample features Pedro Sánchez as the protagonist. His face is used as a deepfake on the body of another character from an audiovisual product, and his voice is also altered to fit the proposed representation. The tone is consistently humorous, primarily through parody or satire, and reinforces its entertainment value by drawing on well-known cultural references, such as commercial films like *Ghostbusters*, advertisements for products from the 1980s and 1990s (e.g., the board game *Scattergories*), or viral internet videos. These characteristics aim to engage both the young audience, typical of the platform, and an older audience familiar with these cultural products.

2. More Realistic Lies

To better understand the technological strategies employed in the videos of the sample, it is useful to classify deepfakes into various typologies based on the origin and complexity of the technology used. Farid and Schindler (2020) propose the following classification: face swaps; lip-sync; and the more advanced technique of gesture mimicking, which uses algorithms capable of adapting an individual's body movements to new contexts and situations. At the pinnacle of technological sophistication are full-body deepfakes, which integrate the aforementioned techniques and are those used in the case study.

These technologies are constantly evolving to achieve greater realism. For instance, audio deepfakes not only replicate a person's voice but also incorporate additional acoustic elements, such as ambient noise, contributing to the heightened verisimilitude of the produced material. The content of these videos also plays a fundamental role in their impact and purpose. Xu et al. (2023) identify two main strategies in their use: creating videos as evidence for fabricated narratives; and constructing deceptive

narratives using pre-existing evidence. Ultimately, the primary objective is to deceive audiences through concealment or falsification, persuading them of the authenticity of the presented content.

If the videos constitute clearly identifiable humorous political parodies, as is the case under analysis, the following question arises:

Q1. Does the quality and aesthetic achieved in deepfakes serve as an incentive to view and share these creations?

In research on the ever evolving and novel field of AI, Audry (2021) highlights the need to avoid the popular catastrophic view that portrays technology as a threat to humanity. Scholars such as Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2024) point out numerous advantages of these technologies, including the detection of hate speech, sentiment analysis, visual analysis, pattern recognition, and speech recognition, among other applications. Others even note improvements in human understanding and social dynamics (Gallo et al., 2022). More specifically, the benefits of deepfakes are cited for creating high-quality content in the audiovisual and entertainment industries (e.g., video game graphics, music videos, and other applications). Their utility in journalism is also emphasised, such as obtaining commentary from experts or individuals unavailable for live interviews, or protecting identities (Lundberg & Mozelius, 2024).

The academic literature also explores their negative uses, some already mentioned, such as their capacity for distortion, manipulation, and disinformation (Hwang et al., 2021). These informational disorders are concerning because they have a negative societal impact (Klinger et al., 2023), as the functioning of a democracy and political participation depend on an informed citizenry. The consequences of deepfakes during election campaigns are particularly emphasised, as these creations shape public opinion in a distorted manner. They also affect interpersonal relationships between citizens, their elected representatives, and public institutions (Cheatham et al., 2019). Furthermore, they exacerbate divisions and tensions within a community or nation and foster public distrust in audiovisual information generally, and in the media specifically, as deepfakes can be disseminated at any time, not only during election periods (Oancea, 2024).

These negative effects have necessitated the development of methods to detect and mitigate their impact (Abbas & Taeiagh, 2024). However, the models developed to date have limited capabilities: when confronted with the latest technologies, they often lag behind (Le et al., 2023). The importance of harmonising international legislation to mitigate the risks of these tools is also stressed. Recommendations include strengthening verification protocols and fostering global legislative cooperation to create a framework that promotes innovation while safeguarding ethical principles (Fabuyi et al., 2024).

3. Deepfakes Parodies: An Expanding Subgenre

The use of deepfake technology for defamatory purposes through ridicule is an increasingly common strategy in the digital era. This practice involves the intentional and derogatory exaggeration or distortion of a person in a humorous context (Samoilenko & Suvorova, 2023). The purpose of these videos is to influence viewers' opinions on specific issues and political figures, even potentially affecting voting behaviour during election periods (Diakopoulos & Johnson, 2021). The use of humour not only increases the propensity to share such content, as previously noted (Peifer & Landreville, 2020; Shifman, 2014), but also acts as a distraction, creating a relaxed environment that reduces the audience's critical capacity, thereby enhancing the persuasive efficacy and acceptance of the message (D'Errico, 2022; Yuan & Lu, 2022).

For these reasons, deepfake videos play a fundamental role in shaping political discourse. The nature of their content can alter public perceptions of events and political figures. This influence is evident even when exposure to such videos occurs involuntarily or accidentally (Jeong et al., 2023). A primary concern regarding this phenomenon is its impact on young audiences. This demographic shows a marked preference for short, dynamic, and entertaining audiovisual formats widely disseminated on social media. However, despite their familiarity with digital platforms, young people often lack the critical skills necessary to evaluate the authenticity and intentions of such content (Ballesteros-Aguayo & Ruiz del Olmo, 2024).

Political parody and satire have been analysed across various media (Leicht, 2023; Peifer & Landreville, 2020). Parody is characterised by the imitation of a person or style primarily for entertainment, though it often includes some commentary on the subject being imitated. In contrast,

satire not only employs imitation but also promotes critical evaluation of its subject (Glick, 2023). Its objective is frequently to reveal what are considered hidden or deliberately concealed truths. The case under analysis here (Iberian Son's creations) leverages the strengths of AI as a tool and satire, sometimes in the form of parody, as a cultural form that evaluates and critiques public figures.

An underexplored topic in the academic literature is the role of the communication source in the audience's appreciation of political parodies. In this regard, El Hana and Sabri (2021) demonstrate that political parodies generate a more positive attitude and exert greater influence when created by internet users rather than traditional media. This is because the public perceives media outlets as entities with political biases, which negatively affects the reception of these messages. To delve deeper into this aspect, the following research question is proposed:

Q2. What types of comments do political parodies/satires created with AI by an amateur source, presented with the aim of producing mere entertainment, generate?

Another significant aspect of deepfake videos is the use of false content and its impact on users' opinions. Clark and Lewandowsky (2024) show through experiments that, even when viewers are warned about a video's falsity, this does not prevent them from trusting its content, even if they believe the warning. Nor do technical flaws diminish the audience's perception of accuracy regarding such creations (Dobber et al., 2021). In fact, it has been observed that content is sometimes shared precisely because of its false nature. In any case, removing concerns about a video's authenticity can allow viewers to focus on the message conveyed (Lu & Yuan, 2024).

Regarding the interpretation of messages, it is noted that individuals tend to process and understand information according to their beliefs, ignoring or minimising contradictory data (Xu et al., 2023). This phenomenon is closely related to "confirmation bias," which involves the selective search, interpretation, and recall of information that reinforces one's convictions. Furthermore, the perception and evaluation of information are influenced by a sense of belonging to a social group. In this regard, Becker (2020) highlights how individuals shape their judgements based on ideas shared within their group. This effect is explained by social identity theory, proposed by Tajfel (1978), which posits that people tend to categorise themselves and others into social groups.

Similarly, Peifer and Landreville (2020) argue that an individual's response to a humorous message is mediated by the degree of favourability and affinity they feel towards the target of the humour. In other words, the processing of information is subjective and conditioned by emotional and social factors. These cognitive-social dynamics have significant implications in the context of disinformation. According to Botan (2018), many disinformation campaigns are strategically effective because they align with the audience's pre-existing expectations, beliefs, and prejudices. This reinforces opinions and values, contributing to polarisation and resistance to contradictory evidence.

Likewise, individuals tend to adjust their behaviour based on the actions and opinions of others, both in the dissemination and influence of such content (Colliander, 2019). In other words, comments from other users provide cues to viewers on how to interpret the content (Krämer et al., 2019). Positive comments lead to greater enjoyment, while negative comments result in less pleasure (Möller et al., 2021) and reduced appreciation and learning (Möller et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the user experience is conditioned by the social context in which these videos are disseminated. In this sense, audience responses to humorous content, based on their ideological affinity, gain particular relevance in scenarios of affective polarisation (Banda & Cluverius, 2018). Considering that deepfake parodies can convey both explicit and implicit messages (Matthes & Rauchfleisch, 2013), the following research question arises:

Q3. What implicit information do users extract from deepfake parodies/satires in a context of affective polarisation?

Some communication studies have problematised the potential effects of AI on shaping users' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours (Brewer et al., 2022). In particular, the potential of deepfakes to reflect existing societal fears and doubts has been explored (Farkas et al., 2018), as well as their role in creating new political imaginaries. The academic literature proposes fostering critical thinking as a key element for appropriately processing information (Appel & Prietzel, 2022).

4. Objectives and Methodology

This study analyses user comments on deepfake videos featuring Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, posted on TikTok, to address three general objectives:

- G01. To evaluate the impact of using artificial intelligence (AI) in creating political videos on audience engagement.
- G02. To examine the types of comments elicited by political parodies created with AI, presented as entertainment-focused content.
- G03. To investigate whether these videos prompt audiences to infer additional meanings beyond the explicit content.

A sample of 57 TikTok videos was selected, representing the complete set of videos about Pedro Sánchez created and posted by Iberian Son from the account's inception (8 October 2023) until the decision to cease downloading material and proceed to the next research phase (21 April 2025).

The videos were downloaded between 19 and 21 April 2025 (see Annex 1) using a freely accessible TikTok video download website. Concurrently, all comments associated with each video in the sample were retrieved using the Instant Data Scraper browser extension (Lacalle et al., 2023). For each video, an independent Excel file was generated, containing four fields: username, comment publication date, number of likes per comment, and comment text.

A total of 1,919 comments were collected and subjected to content analysis. A database was constructed with each comment as the unit of analysis, incorporating the following fields: video number, comment number, emoticons used to express emotions felt by viewers upon watching, evaluation of the technology, evaluation of the creator, comment type, comment text, and number of likes.

To assess the technology and the creator, open-ended variables were used to quantify the most frequently used adjectives, addressing research question Q1. Comments were classified into the following types: reflections (focusing on the truth, reality, or accuracy of the video content), ironic remarks (related to the video or politics), critical comments (negative in tone), expressions of desire, insults (including expressions of anger), calls to action, and others (e.g., amazement, nostalgia, warnings). As a single researcher conducted the coding, Krippendorff's alpha was not required (Krippendorff, 1990). Representative messages for each category were selected based on the number of likes received.

Textual analysis was applied to 1,188 written comments containing at least one sentence, excluding those consisting solely of emoticons. This analysis evaluated the content of different comment types (e.g., references to politicians, specific political events, or media), the language used (offensive, aggressive, or neutral), and additional information provided by commenters. This approach addresses research questions Q2 and Q3.

5. Results. Technological Awe and Beyond

The comments generated by the analysed videos reveal that technological awe is a key factor in their viewership and propensity to be shared. One of the most frequent user reactions is laughter: approximately 67% of comments include emoticons expressing amusement. This response suggests that these videos, despite their political content, are primarily consumed as a form of entertainment. Audiences assume that the scenes presented—often inspired by well-known films, news, or advertisements—are fictitious, yet this does not prevent them from valuing the videos as a playful and creative means of commenting on current affairs. Expressions such as “you made me laugh” (video 11) or “we take it as a joke” (video 54) indicate an ironic stance that establishes a comedic distance from conventional political discourse.

However, beyond the humorous component, users express explicit admiration for the technical quality of these productions. Approximately 8% of comments contain emoticons of applause or approval gestures, often accompanied by remarks about the realism achieved. Questions like “how do they do the voices? Do they use voice actors?” (video 54) reflect not only surprise but also curiosity about the technological processes involved. This interest suggests that the use of artificial intelligence (AI) serves not only as a narrative tool but also as a central element of the spectacle. In other words, the technical sophistication does not go unnoticed and acts as an additional incentive for circulation.

The expressions used to praise these aspects often have a superlative tone (“brilliant,” “spectacular,” “great,” “masterpiece”), and in some cases, users propose symbolic accolades such as a Goya, an Oscar, or even—ironically—a Nobel Prize. This hyperbole contributes to legitimising these creations as cultural products of artistic value. The assertion that this is “the best TikTok account” (video 51) reinforces this appreciation, though it is not always clear whether such recognition stems from technological innovation or the efficacy of the political content.

The creator of the videos also receives significant recognition from the audience. Approximately 33% of comments directly reference their talent, dedication, imagination, and ability to strike the right tone (“you’re a genius,” “you’ve outdone yourself”). This recognition transcends the evaluation of individual videos, highlighting a sustained relationship between the creator and the audience. Several users identify as regular followers, referencing characters from previous videos, comparing prior content, or requesting continuations of the stories. These expressions of loyalty indicate that the format not only attracts new audiences but also retains them over time. In this sense, deepfake technology not only acts as an element of fascination but also fosters digital communities around political humour.

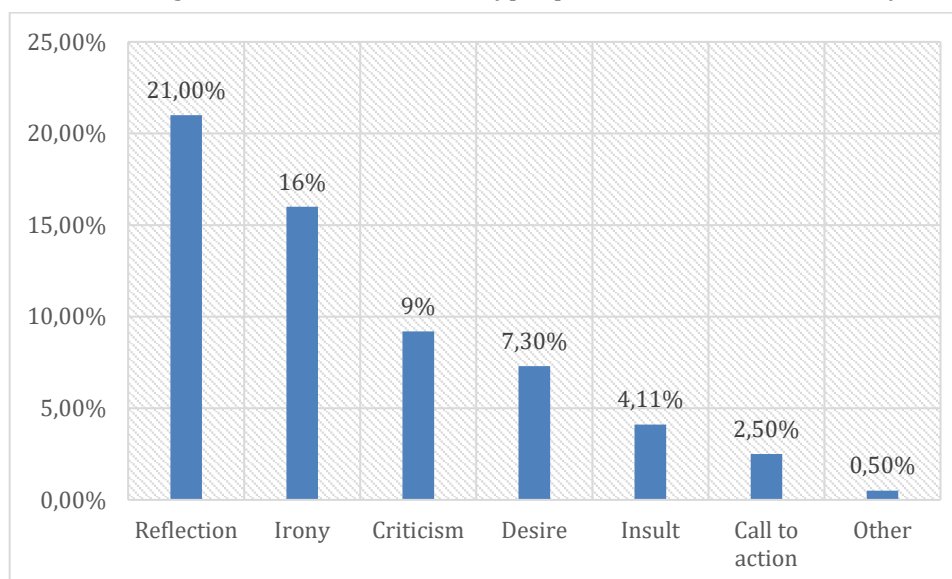
Only one comment expresses concern or fear regarding the advancement of these technologies (“AI gives me bad vibes,” video 40). This minority reaction contrasts with the predominant attitude that celebrates AI as a creative resource rather than a threat, which is significant given the ethical and political debates often surrounding deepfakes. In conclusion, the awe inspired by the aesthetic and technical quality of these creations not only encourages their consumption but actively promotes their dissemination. Far from causing confusion or alarm, the achieved realism is interpreted as a demonstration of talent, creativity, and technological mastery. This fascination translates into a high degree of emotional engagement, the consolidation of a community of followers, and sustained interest in this format, whose communicative potential—through its ability to blend humour, political critique, and digital aesthetics—appears far from exhausted.

5.1. Political Humour as a Space for Agitation

Approximately 60% of the analysed comments do not merely evaluate the video or its creator but also include text that allows for a deeper exploration of the audience’s response to the content. Humour, which is pervasive across all comment types, serves a dual purpose: providing emotional release and offering indirect critique of those in power. Many comments mock what users perceive as a tragic situation (“thank goodness we can laugh,” video 16; “it makes me laugh and feel pity at the same time,” video 54). In this way, humour becomes a form of passive resistance or collective mourning.

Regarding the nature of the responses, the videos predominantly elicited reflective comments (see Figure 1). Although viewers are aware that the images are clearly fabricated, they perceive them as effective parodies of reality and express strong identification with the content (“spot on, you nailed it,” video 11). These expressions lack argumentative substance but create an affective framework of complicity and emotional validation. They serve as a form of symbolic recognition, with the video articulating “what many people think.” The function of these messages is to affirm a shared truth and foster emotional consensus.

Similarly, the published reflections reinforce anti-system narratives, constructing a discourse that denounces corruption, tyranny, or incompetence (“the people are in ruins,” video 35; “sold out,” video 32). Some users even project the video content as a warning or prophecy about Spain’s future (“sooner or later, this will happen,” video 32). This prophetic vision reinforces the notion of an imminent collapse and seeks to raise awareness through fear, mobilising through dramatic effect. Finally, these reflective comments introduce elements that delegitimise the democratic system (“this is Spain, and it will show in the next elections, that’s who we are as a people,” video 49).

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of comment types posted on TikTok for the analysed videos

Source: Author's own elaboration, 2025.

The second most prevalent comment type, quantitatively, is ironic remarks. These comments typically relate to the video's content. When the videos feature parodies of advertisements for games (e.g., *Koldopoly*) or dolls representing Pedro Sánchez (e.g., *Fangoman*), users generally sustain the joke by granting credibility to the fictional product and its merchandise ("Where can I place the order?" or "Batteries not included"). This frames politics as a commercialised pop product. In the case of film recreations, users propose new titles for the fictional narrative, demonstrating alignment with the video's central theme ("*Gone with Pedro*," "*The Sausage Fugitive*," video 32). They also mock the genre to symbolically denounce perceived corruption or manipulation ("A mafia movie would suit him better," video 53), portraying Sánchez or his entourage as part of a criminal organisation ("The Sinaloa Cartel in Moncloa," video 16).

This irony reflects the politicisation of entertainment and vice versa. The comments target the Prime Minister, his government, separatist movements, and government coalitions. They also convey perceptions of power abuse or democratic deficits, suggesting the existence of a dictatorship or electoral manipulation ("We live in a dictatorship," video 48). References are made to television networks perceived as aligned with socialism ("Send it to El Gran Wyoming for *El Intermedio*," video 32) and even to censorship ("They'll definitely block the internet now," video 40). Through exaggerated, parodic adoration of the Prime Minister, his image as a saviour is ridiculed, critiquing his personalism and excessive political protagonism ("He'll be the next king," video 53).

The third most frequent comment type is critical. These comments not only target Pedro Sánchez and his circle but also express profound institutional distrust. They employ aggressive language and make broad, often unsubstantiated accusations with strong emotional undertones ("Socialist mafia. Thieves. Corrupt," video 32). This criticism sometimes blends political attacks with personal ones, focusing on the Prime Minister's wife ("Begoña to jail," video 48). Such tactics are common in polarised environments, as are references to ideological labels ("reds," "Soviet," "progressivism") that caricature the government as authoritarian or radical. These comments are reinforced by hyperbolic or parodic comparisons to dictators, expressing fear or rejection of perceived authoritarian leadership ("He's surpassed Franco," video 40). Critical comments also attack the public for tolerating certain behaviours, conveying frustration, helplessness, or disappointment with the democratic system ("Are there really people who vote for the PSOE? I'm shocked," video 16). Some comments mention scandals or errors by other parties ("And what about DANA, Yak-42, Prestige, 11M...", video 53), which could be interpreted as support for the socialists but also as indicators of broader disaffection with all political parties. These messages reflect a clear tendency towards emotional and symbolic disparagement rather than rational analysis. Most do not engage with specific policies but aim to ridicule or criminalise through simplification.

Comments expressing desires are less common (7.3% of the total) but highly revealing of the videos' impact on audiences. Some express a desire for punitive justice, often based on unsubstantiated accusations, as noted earlier. These reflect a need to see government figures punished ("life imprisonment," "the whole family ends up in jail," video 32). While not always directly inciting hatred, such messages may contribute to normalising punitive and dehumanising discourse. The desire for punishment leads some users to advocate for the figure's removal from the national stage, blending political rejection with identity-based exclusion, often projecting them to countries with negative ideological connotations ("Let him go to Venezuela with Zapatero," video 32). This reinforces stereotypes and fuels exclusionary rhetoric.

This desire for expulsion is often accompanied by calls for a change in leadership or ideology. Unlike the previous comments, these are not always laden with hatred but reflect clear partisan preferences. Alternative figures are often idealised as solutions to perceived problems ("Ayuso for president," video 43; "The PSOE will defeat Sanchismo," video 53). Equally noteworthy is the audience's push to amplify the videos' messages ("This needs to go viral," "This should be shown in schools," video 54), reflecting a strategy of indoctrination or expansion aimed at building social consensus. This further legitimises the videos' narratives. In summary, the expressions of desire identified are not neutral: many are imbued with negative emotional weight, punitive desires, or exclusionary rhetoric. While not all directly incite hatred, they contribute to a hostile and confrontational climate.

Additionally, some comments exhibit significant aggression and personal disparagement. These insults can be grouped into several categories. First, there are direct personal insults ("HDLGP," "perverse narcissist"), vulgar and highly offensive terms used to express absolute contempt for the political figure. The repetition of such acronyms suggests a normalisation of violent language. Second, comments incite violence ("Hitting him with a shovel was too lenient," video 48) or express political disdain ("lousy reds," video 32), bordering on political hate speech. This group reflects a high degree of ideological polarisation, with direct insults and violent language targeting Pedro Sánchez, and by extension, his supporters or ideology. It illustrates how parodic content triggers intense emotions and, in some cases, behaviours that approach or exceed the boundaries of civil discourse on social media.

Finally, some comments calling for action also tread legal or ethical boundaries by suggesting violent or subversive actions ("There won't be progress without war, war now!!!," video 32). These explicitly invoke conflict as a solution, normalising violent rhetoric. Others allude to social mobilisation within the bounds of protest and political critique, though with strong emotional charge ("GENERAL STRIKE NOW," video 39) or far-right-aligned slogans ("Vote for Vox now," video 40). It can be said that these videos transform political humour into a space for ideological agitation. Comments countering the general confrontational tone are scarce ("Let hatred rest someday, if possible," video 32) and receive little support in terms of likes.

5.2. *Opinions, Exaggerations and Insults*

The political themes addressed by users are closely tied to the content of the analysed videos. For instance, in the parody of an advertisement where Puigdemont discusses training a "dog" (video 11), comments focus on the negotiations between Pedro Sánchez's government and Junts. However, some remarks diverge from the central theme, notably criticising certain media outlets for their perceived editorial bias in favour of the ruling party, as well as alleging control or censorship of other media, including social media, as previously noted.

These parodies primarily elicit opinions. This means that the implicit information evoked by these users aligns with the video's intended message. These opinions reflect narratives commonly associated with certain far-right sectors. As observed, the videos and the forums they generate aim to accuse Pedro Sánchez of authoritarianism, opportunism, and excessive attachment to power (video 44). Users perceive Sánchez as governing for personal gain (attachment to power) rather than the common good. This reflects an emotional radicalisation of public discourse, where the political adversary is no longer seen as a legitimate opponent but as a moral enemy. Similarly, comments delegitimise the central government (video 40), either by denouncing the support obtained by the socialist to secure the presidency (video 12) or by referencing alleged corruption cases (videos 32, 49, among others), which fuel opinions about the impunity of political power.

A prevailing concern is the fear of Spain's weakening as a unified project in the face of peripheral nationalisms. Users express significant pessimism about Spain's unity, linked to the rise of separatist movements and concessions by the central government, such as the Amnesty Law. Beyond the legal debate, these messages reveal a lack of confidence in the legitimacy of democratic processes.

However, this is not a monolithic community in terms of ideology, as divergent opinions also emerge, particularly regarding corruption cases (videos 32, 49). Users mention controversial actions by the PP, notably issues with institutional coordination in managing emergencies, such as the Valencia DANA flooding. Political disaffection is also evident among some forum participants, who criticise the entire political class indiscriminately.

The aggressive tone of the comments reveals a profound emotional and ideological fracture in Spanish society, which surfaces on social media, particularly in these political humour forums. A segment of users feels that the country is being "robbed," "betrayed," or "destroyed," and these video forums amplify this climate, blending real events with exaggerations or insults laden with anger, contempt, and despair.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

When users are aware of the fictitious nature of the studied videos, their focus shifts to the message, as demonstrated by Lu and Yuan (2024). However, it is evident that comments are validated by the high technical quality, which lends an appearance of "aesthetic truth" and amplifies their impact on audiences. In other words, the videos, which draw on recognisable images to create deceptive narratives (Xu et al., 2023), are consumed not only for their political or humorous content but also as a form of "technological spectacle" (Q1). Artificial intelligence (AI) thus becomes part of the content's appeal, not merely a tool for its production. In this context, laughter serves not only as entertainment but also as a means of building community and collectively managing political discontent. Consequently, deepfakes should be understood not only as tools for enhancing online political communication (Klinger, 2024) but also as instruments of digital catharsis.

In this case study, Pedro Sánchez is transformed from a political figure into a narrative character endowed with traits of superheroes, villains, dictators, or unforgiving Caesars, among others. This discursive strategy, based on transformation, strips Sánchez of his institutional dimension and turns him into a parodied cultural product, more accessible and manipulable for audiences. Irony is systematically employed to undermine his legitimacy consistently, not only during electoral periods (Oancea, 2024). The artifice and manipulation convert him into a political merchandising product, transforming him into a tribal symbol consumed by audiences through entertainment. The narrative expands into a symbolic universe with additional characters (Begoña Gómez, Félix Bolaños, Ábalos, Óscar Puente, among others), constructing a humorous microcosm where each political actor becomes a recognisable figure in a national satire. As noted by various scholars (Cheatham et al., 2019; Diakopoulos & Johnson, 2021), this can affect citizens' relationships with institutions and even influence their voting behaviour.

The comments on these political parodies/satires (Q2) reveal a latent and sometimes explicit discourse of hatred, within a context of intense political polarisation, which often transcends critique to become personal, violent, and dehumanising attacks. Highly offensive terms ("HDLGP," "murderer," or "hitting him with a shovel was too lenient") indicate a normalisation of language that borders on incitement to hatred, as observed in other contexts (Bonaut et al., 2023).

Not only is the parodied politician dehumanised and stigmatised, but so are their voters or supporters, transforming ideological differences into near-tribal confrontations. The "other" is delegitimised not for their ideas but for their perceived inferiority or malevolence. Although these comments arise in the context of parody, the prevalence of severe insults suggests that humour serves as a channel for expressing aggression and hatred that might otherwise be deemed unacceptable. This demonstrates how such videos, which provide entertainment through humour, not only increase message acceptance (D'Errico, 2022; Yuan & Lu, 2022) but can also disguise or validate extreme user discourses.

Clear and exclusionary ideological identification ("Long live Vox," "lousy reds") points to a climate where public conversation on social media becomes an ideological battleground, with little room for nuance or dialogue. This digital polarisation reinforces ideological echo chambers and the radicalisation

of positions. Ultimately, these videos achieve a high emotional impact on users. Many comments reflect intense emotions such as anger, contempt, or helplessness (“I refuse to hit like... I feel too much anger”). It is concluded that the content not only prompts critical evaluations (Glick, 2023) but also visceral reactions. Contrary to El Hana and Sabri’s (2021) findings, it is evident that videos produced by an amateur source can lead to offensive expressions.

Regarding Q3, it is concluded that users do not limit themselves to the explicit content of the videos but extract implicit meanings, expanding the original humour into broader ideological narratives to critique political power. The responses are highly emotional, as users project their own feelings and judgements onto the political adversary. Contrary to Möller et al.’s (2021) findings, negative comments heighten and intensify emotions, amplifying enjoyment.

The videos act as triggers that activate pre-existing ideological discourses. In this case study, the followers of these videos share specific ideologies and values (Becker, 2020). Thus, even when the content does not directly reference certain themes (e.g., corruption or separatism), users introduce these topics in their interpretations, demonstrating that they read between the lines and extrapolate the message beyond the explicit content. Although critical voices targeting other parties (e.g., the PP) emerge, the vast majority of users operate within an interpretive framework aligned with far-right ideological positions, reinforcing the notion that political humour in these videos is perceived as a form of symbolic resistance against power.

Among the limitations, it should be noted that this is a case study within a highly specific political context, and while some conclusions may be generalisable, others are specific to Spain’s political situation. The coding performed by a single coder may introduce subjective bias. Additionally, the analysis is limited to the reception of these videos on a single social media platform, TikTok. It would be valuable to compare reception across other platforms where these creations are also disseminated to draw broader conclusions.

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Annex 1. Title and message of the Iberian Son videos posted on TikTok, under study.

Video number	Title	Message
1	Gran Pedrín	Crítica a la personalidad de Sánchez
2	Pedro como la Bella en <i>La Bella y la Bestia</i>	Relaciones del Gobierno socialista con Juns (partido independentista catalán)
3	Sánchez siendo Mariah Carey	Ansias de poder. El contribuyente paga su permanencia en el Gobierno
4	Ábalos Gladiador y Sánchez como César	Sánchez exige la dimisión a Ábalos
5	Sánchez como Aladdin	Es el mago que conseguirá amnistía a Puigdemont
6	Ayuso vs. Sánchez como superheroína y villano de Marvel	Conflicto personal entre ambos
7	Pedro y “las verdades”	Sánchez como Pinocho (mentiroso)
8	Gran Pedrín (versión larga)	Crítica a la personalidad de Sánchez
9	Pedrulo tropical (anuncio)	Sánchez con capacidad de dominar cinco poderes del estado
10	The Puigdemont Game (Retropubli)	Sánchez servil frente a Puigdemont y a sus exigencias
11	The Adiestrator (Retropubli)	Sánchez como mascota de Puigdemont
12	Hemoal x 7 votos (Retropubli)	Se deja comprar por 7 votos
13	Pedro Geropa (Retropubli)	Se deja comprar por 7 votos
14	Pedro quiere ser millonario	Siempre dice que sí a sus socios
15	Pedro no dimite	No dimite con ningún escándalo
16	Lo de Pedro y Bego (Parodia)	Amos representados como ladrones
17	Pedro de vacaciones. Falcón Viajes	Utiliza el avión oficial para su interés particular
18	Pedro monólogo	Bromea con dimitir y sus días de reflexión
19	Pedro...No se va!	No dimite
20	Pedro en... Star Wars	Sánchez continúa en el poder y se vengará
21	Pedro Fango... Predator	Lucha contra los “bulos”
22	Traducción de la carta de Milei (Parodia)	Milei echa del gobierno a Sánchez y a su ministro Puente (parodia de meme)
23	Pedro se come el rosco	Diccionario de términos que definen el gobierno de Sánchez
24	Sánchez y otros en 300	Frente al fango y otros políticos frente a sus enemigos
25	Pedro en Eurovisión	Servil por 7 votos y la corrupción
26	Pedro y el cohete	Sube los impuestos (la economía va como un cohete)
27	Milei vs. Pedro. Star Wars	Conflicto entre los dos políticos
28	Pedro, Milei y los insultos	Conflicto entre los dos políticos)

29	Indultén	Servil con los indultos
30	Escribiendo la carta	Carta a los ciudadanos tras reflexionar sobre su futuro
31	Pedro Biden	Sánchez envejecido tras 9 legislaturas: permanencia en el poder
32	Pedro exilia a Begoña. Casablanca	Salva a Begoña de la acusación de corrupción
33	Pedro vs. Nacho Cano	Confrontación con el músico Nacho Cano
34	Pedro culpable!	Sánchez y familia culpables de corrupción
35	Pedro Imfrutado	Como testigo y la posible imputación de Begoña
36	Pedro por las mañanas	Sánchez se siente guapo
37	El efecto Sánchez!	Irresistible para las mujeres
38	La migración no es un problema!	Acoge a migrantes
39	Impuestos! Lo que Sánchez no te cuenta!	Sube impuestos
40	Sánchez + IA	Sánchez y miembros del Gobierno con escándalos
41	Fangosters	Como cazador de fango
42	SanchIAzado	Maleable
43	Fangoman vs. Ayuso	Lucha entre ambos
44	Llegando a la India	Viaje y recibimiento a Sánchez en la India
45	Falso héroe. Lo que esperas de un líder en catástrofe	Sánchez y mala gestión en la DANA de Valencia
46	Psicosis	Mala gestión en la DANA de Valencia vs. Sánchez y autopercepción de ser el mejor
47	Que la pida!	Mala gestión en la DANA de Valencia
48	A la cárcel!	Actividades corruptas del Gobierno y Sánchez
49	El uno!	Como el número 1 de los corruptos
50	Mortal Kombat	Sánchez frente a Aldama como confidente de las tramas corruptas
51	Los vengadores	Sánchez frente a Aldama como confidente de las tramas corruptas
52	El futuro	Como tirano que gobernará eternamente
53	The Braveheart	Tirano contra Lobato (dirigente socialista de Madrid que dimite)
54	Fangoman!	Como falso héroe
55	Koldopoly	Tramas corruptas de Koldo y Sánchez como jefe
56	¿Has sido bueno?	Como falso héroe
57	Para todos! (Retroanuncio)	Gobierno corrupto y Sánchez como líder