



Selected Papers of #AoIR2025:
The 26th Annual Conference of the
Association of Internet Researchers
Niterói, Brazil / 15 – 18 Oct 2025

POLITICAL PODCASTS IN BRAZIL: LEFT-LEANING SHOWS IN A POLARIZED MARKET¹

Daniel Gambaro

Institute of Philosophy and Humans Sciences - University of Campinas (IFCH-Unicamp)

Introduction

Political division has intensified in Brazil since the public demonstrations of 2013 and the movements advocating for the impeachment of President Rousseff in 2016 (Fucks & Marques, 2022; Ortellado et al., 2022). Such divergences materialize in discursive disputes between the ideological constructs of the "right" and the "left," manifesting in issues such as: minority rights and meritocracy, 'Lulism' (supporters of President Lula da Silva) and anti-Workers' Party (PT) sentiment, 'Bolsonarism' (supporters of ex-president Jair Bolsonaro) and the defence of institutions, gender rights and the advocacy for patriarchal family, among others (Singer, 2021; Rocha et al, 2022; Tarouco, 2022). In conjunction, these different points mark a dispute for a legitimate vision of Brazil (2015).

Agents from both flanks are occupying new spaces in traditional media, social networking sites, and emerging formats such as podcasts distributed on streaming platforms. Following exponential growth in recent years (Kantar Ibope Media, 2024; Viana & Chagas, 2024), the Brazilian podcasting market is now entering a phase of consolidation. Taking advantage of their own previously constructed credibility, media outlets and some digital influencers find, in the affordances of podcasts (Lopez et al., 2023), a means to embed ideologies intertwined with news, opinions, and even fake news (Pinho et al., 2022).

This study examines the Brazilian podcast market to illustrate how the subject of "politics" circulates (Fausto Neto, 2018) on streaming platforms. Specifically, considering that some programs lean toward one side of the political spectrum, it will describe the distribution of left-wing agents within this market—left-leaning podcasts outnumber right-leaning ones.

¹ This text was partially translated from Portuguese to English with the aid of Chat GPT-4 and revised by human.

Suggested Citation (APA): Gambaro, D. (2025, October). *Political podcasts in Brazil: left-leaning shows in a polarized market*. Paper presented at AoIR2025: The 26th Annual Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers. Niterói, BR: AoIR. Retrieved from <http://spir.aoir.org>.

The relevance of this research bears on the increasing use of media outlets to enroot ideological positions. Podcasts, for that matter, contribute to the process of circulation of information (and misinformation), thus providing an open window where journalists and digital influencers exercise their credibility to defend a singular 'vision of Brazil'.

Methodology

As the primary methodology, a technographic analysis (Bucher, 2018) was conducted on four services (Spotify, Deezer, YouTube, YT Music), guided by the following premises: 1) using new user profiles with minimal provided data; 2) examining how recommendation lists for the theme "politics" are constructed on each service; 3) comparing results obtained through keyword searches using the terms "politics", "politics+right," and "politics+left"; 4) verifying whether podcasts identified on these lists and searches also appear in other recommendation lists, such as "Top Podcasts," "For You," and "Editor's Choice."

A floating reading of podcast descriptions provided by creators and of the titles on the episode's list was conducted to identify the recurring values associated with each side of the political spectrum (Bobbio, 2011; Tavares, 2024; Jorge et al., 2020). Then, the podcasts were categorised according to their predominant political leanings.

In each research instance, only the first 100 results were considered, yielding 949 unique titles. After refining the dataset by excluding foreign programs, non-podcast titles, inactive programs, and those outside the scope of this investigation—i.e., not consistently addressing Brazilian politics—511 programs remained².

Results and Discussion

Most recommendations and search results on Deezer—52%—and Spotify—40%—are podcasts affiliated with magazines, newspapers, news portals, and radio and television channels, against 26% on YouTube services. Conversely, YouTube and YT Music—neither of which provide "politics" recommendation lists—prioritize influencers and prominent YouTubers—48%—, against 29% on Spotify and 20% on Deezer.

In both cases, the results indicate that the four services prioritize economic rather than political criteria in their recommendations and search results for a new user—an approach that tends to maximize audience reach (Pajkovic, 2022) and underscores the decisive role of curation mechanisms (Martel, 2015; Gillespie, 2018) before "learning" the user's preferences.

Within the analysed *corpus*, 128 podcasts were identified as left-leaning, while 84 leaned to the right and/or were positioned by their creators as representatives of the financial market (which often aligns with right-wing values).

The left-leaning podcasts are categorised as follow:

² For more results from the technography refer to Gambaro (2025) and www.gambaro.pro.br/podcastsepolitica

- A. 23 podcasts produced by 13 newspapers, magazines, or news portals, of which 8 companies explicitly indicate a left-leaning identity, while 5 claim to be neutral or non-partisan.
- B. 8 academic podcasts made by professors, university-affiliated production companies, and scientific journals.
- C. 12 programmes created and/or distributed by podcast studios, notably two independent companies: Central 3 and Rádio Novelo.
- D. 9 programs developed by businesses that produce different forms of digital content.
- E. 49 podcasts produced by digital influencers, either individually or in groups.
- F. 13 programmes produced by unions, social movements, think tanks, and NGOs.
- G. 11 podcasts affiliated with political parties or created by political persons.
- H. 3 shows do not fall in any classification above.

Examining the programs from categories C, D and E (n=70), some key observations emerge:

- 4 programmes, found only on YouTube, have low reach and engagement.
- 16 have been discontinued—most appeared on Spotify searches.
- 15 programmes recommended by Spotify and/or Deezer only occasionally address national politics—some focus on activism related to ecology, food industry, and public security, and others are themed on history, philosophy, and geopolitics.
- 15 programs have one or more hosts analysing recent national political news.
- 8 are interview or discussion-based programmes comprehensively address Brazilian politics.
- 5 interview-based programs cover a range of topics but occasionally feature public figures discussing political issues.
- The remaining 7 programs include documentaries, radio dramas, and training courses.

Considering only right- and left-leaning podcasts from our *corpus* listed on YouTube services, only 30,5% of the left-leaning have high audience potential, as they are distributed in channels with subscriber counts ranging from 100,000 to 820,000. By comparison, 44,5% of right-leaning programs come from channels with more than 120,000 subscribers—9 channels have between 1 to 8 million subscribers.

Conclusion

Despite recommendation lists and search results across the four services show more left-leaning podcasts, they do not necessarily achieve the highest audience potential. Accounts of this peculiarity must stress that the platforms are market-oriented, and privilege recognized podcasts in their recommendation lists. So, the considerable number of discontinued podcasts, as well as shows with low audience performance possibly indicate a strategy to highlight relevant results among insignificant recommendations.

Nonetheless, it is relevant for this analysis that some podcasts recommended on lists and searches of politics are not really classified as “political”. Often—especially in the case of left-leaning podcasts—the connection to political agenda occurs through interviewees or subjects approached in some episodes. Another cause is the proliferation of initiatives segmenting the left into various activist movements, as identified by Ferreira (2016).

For that matter, right-wing media outlets and influencers seem to organize to explore the podcasting market and the platforms’ affordances, reinforcing discourses and personalities. In contrast, left-wing individuals and institutions diversify across numerous channels that often struggle to maintain continuity. In other words, the circulation (Fausto Neto, 2018) of political matters, discourses and visions of Brazil tend to be much more effective in the first case.

The data further suggest that, as currently structured, the podcasting market configures one more arena for the dispute of a legitimate vision of Brazil. Journalistic information is disseminated in the same space and while it is debated (and, at times, distorted) by a broad spectrum of podcasters, individual influencers, market-driven entities, and ideologically motivated actors.

References

Bobbio, N. (2011). *Direita e Esquerda: Razões e significados de uma distinção política* (3ª. ed). Ed. Unesp.

Bucher, T. (2018). *If... Then: Algorithmic power and politics*. Oxford University Press.

Fausto Neto, A. (2018). Circulação: Trajetos conceituais. *Rizoma*, 6(2), 08–40. <https://doi.org/10.17058/rzm.v6i2.13004>

Ferreira, G. G. (2016). Conservadorismo, fortalecimento da extrema-direita e a agenda da diversidade sexual e de gênero no Brasil contemporâneo. *Lutas Sociais*, 20(36), 166–178. <https://doi.org/10.23925/lis.v20i36.31855>

Fuks, M., & Marques, P. H. (2022). Polarização e contexto: Medindo e explicando a polarização política no Brasil. *Opinião Pública*, 28(3), 560–593. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1807-01912022283560>.

Gambaro, D. (2025). Podcast e política: uma tecnografia de três plataformas de streaming no Brasil. *Observatorio (OBS*)*, 19(1). <https://doi.org/10.15847/obsOBS19120252633>

Gillespie, T. (2018). A relevância dos algoritmos. *Parágrafo*, 6(1), 95–121. <https://revistaseletronicas.fiamfaam.br/index.php/recicofi/article/view/722>

Jorge, V. L., Faria, A. M. T. D., & Silva, M. G. D. (2020). Posicionamento dos partidos políticos brasileiros na escala esquerda-direita: Dilemas metodológicos e revisão da

literatura. *Revista Brasileira de Ciência Política*, 33, e227686.
<https://doi.org/10.1590/0103-3352.2020.33.227686>

Kantar Ibope Media (2024). *Inside Audio 2024*. Kantar Ibope Media.
<https://kantaribopemedia.com/conteudo/estudo/inside-audio-2024/>.

Lopez, D. C., Gambaro, D., & Freire, M. (2023). Binge Listening: Dimensões do consumo de áudio em podcasting. *Radiofonias – Revista de Estudos em Mídia Sonora*, 14(3), 199–226. <https://periodicos.ufop.br/radiofonias/article/view/7037>.

Martel, F. (2015) *Smart: o que você não sabe sobre a internet* (Kindle Edition). Civilização Brasileira.

Ortellado, P., Ribeiro, M. M., & Zeine, L. (2022). Existe polarização política no Brasil? Análise das evidências em duas séries de pesquisas de opinião. *Opinião Pública*, 28(1), 62–91. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1807-0191202228162>.

Ortiz, R. (2015). *Universalismo e diversidade*. Boitempo.

Pajkovic, N. (2022) Algorithms and taste-making: Exposing the Netflix Recommender System’s operational logics. *Convergence*, 28(1), 214-235.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565211014464>.

Pinho, M. D. C., Mesquita, P., & Carreiro, R. (2022). Febre dos podcasts de política no brasil. *Intexto*, 53, 110787. <https://doi.org/10.19132/1807-8583202253.110787>

Rocha, C., Solano, E., & Medeiros, J. (2022). Bolsonarismo. Em J. Szwako & J. L. Ratton (Orgs.), *Dicionário dos Negacionismos no Brasil* (Kindle). Cepe.

Singer, A. (2021). A reativação da direita no Brasil. *Opinião Pública*, 27(3), 705–729. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1807-01912021273705>.

Tarouco, G. (2022). Esquerda, direita e eleições presidenciais no Brasil. *Estudos Avançados*, 36(106), 133–133. <https://doi.org/10.1590/s0103-4014.2022.36106.008>.

Tavares, R. (2024). *Esquerda e direita: Guia histórico para o século XXI*. Tinta Da China Brasil.

Viana, L., & Vaz Chagas, L. J. (2024). Categorização de podcasts no Brasil: Uma proposta baseada em eixos estruturais. *Observatorio (OBS*)*, 18(1).
<https://doi.org/10.15847/obsOBS18120242369>.