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Concentration of the network media economy in Mexico and its regulatory challenges (2019-2022)

Concentración de la economía de medios en red en México y sus desafíos regulatorios (2019-2022)

Concentração da economia dos meios de comunicação em rede no México e seus desafios regulatórios (2019-2022)

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This article examines the concentration in the media, telecommunications, and Internet sectors in Mexico during 2019-2022. It analyzes 20 services in three layers of the networked media economy: infrastructures, traditional and digital media, and Internet services. Using quantitative data, the study reveals high levels of concentration, with América Móvil and Grupo Televisa dominating. It also highlights the growing concentration in digital services, dominated by US technology giants. Finally, the implications of these dynamics and the regulatory challenges that Mexico faces to configure a plural and competitive network media economy are discussed.
Keywords: Media economics, concentration, regulation, Internet, telecommunications.

Este artículo examina la concentración en los sectores de medios, telecomunicaciones e Internet en México durante 2019-2022. Analiza 20 servicios en tres capas de la economía de medios en red: infraestructuras, medios tradicionales y digitales, y servicios en Internet. Utilizando datos cuantitativos, el estudio revela altos niveles de concentración, con el dominio de América Móvil y Grupo Televisa. También se resalta la creciente concentración en servicios digitales, dominados por gigantes tecnológicos estadounidenses. Finalmente, se discuten las implicaciones de estas dinámicas y los retos regulatorios que enfrenta México para configurar una economía de medios en red plural y competitiva.
Palabras clave: Economía de medios, concentración, regulación, Internet, telecomunicaciones.

Este artigo examina a concentração nos setores de mídia, telecomunicações e Internet no México durante 2019-2022. Ele analisa 20 serviços em três camadas da economia de mídia em rede: infraestruturas, mídia tradicional e digital, e serviços na Internet. Utilizando dados quantitativos, o estudo revela altos níveis de concentração, com o domínio da América Móvil e do Grupo Televisa. Também destaca a crescente concentração em serviços digitais, dominados por gigantes tecnológicos norte-americanos. Por fim, discute as implicações dessas dinâmicas e os desafios regulatórios que o México enfrenta para configurar uma economia de mídia em rede plural e competitiva.
Palavras-chave: Economia dos meios de comunicação, concentração, regulamentação, Internet, telecomunicações.

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Introduction

Mexico –the second-largest media market in Latin America– is a strategic case for analyzing concentration, where corporate power, regulation, and digital access intersect amid rapid technological change and regulatory uncertainty. We draw on the "network media economy" framework, which comprises 20 services grouped into three broad categories: 1) telecommunications and Internet infrastructure, 2) traditional and digital audiovisual media, and 3) Internet and application services (Winseck, 2019). Examining each component provides a comprehensive picture of market concentration in Mexico.

Between 2019 and 2022, the network media economy expanded by 17%, propelled by digitalization and the growth of telecommunications and Internet services (Gómez et al., 2024). While this expansion improved connectivity and diversified offerings, it also entrenched high concentration in key segments –pay television, mobile telephony and Internet access, and core digital services such as social media, search engines, operating systems, and browsers.

This analysis is especially salient given imminent institutional shifts that will reshape telecom and broadcasting governance in Mexico. As of July 2025, the Federal Telecommunications Institute (Instituto Federal de Telecomunicaciones, IFT) is slated for dissolution as part of a broader state reorganization and redesign of sectoral regulation arising from constitutional reforms approved at the end of 2024 by the administration of President Claudia Sheinbaum (2024-2030) (Castillo, 2024).

The article's primary objective is to assess economic concentration across telecommunications, media, and Internet services in Mexico. A secondary objective is to evaluate the IFT's performance over its decade of operation as a central actor in sectoral governance. During this period, the IFT applied sanctions and asymmetric measures to curb the market power of the Preponderant Economic Agents (AEPs) –América Móvil in telecommunications and Grupo Televisa in television– each controlling more than 50% of several relevant markets (Gómez, 2020). Notably, no other Latin American country has implemented a comparable mix of antitrust and asymmetric remedies in these sectors.

Given these dynamics, this article offers timely evidence to inform debates about the future of telecom and broadcasting regulation in Mexico amidst an evolving digital economy and shifting institutional architecture.

Theoretical framework

Concentration in telecommunications, media, and Internet markets has distinctive features that set them apart from other economic sectors. Their services are embedded not only in exchange and market logics (Mastrini & Becerra, 2006) but also in cross-sectoral functions that shape meaning, structure the public sphere (Garnham, 2000), and enable fundamental rights –access to information, freedom of expression, and citizen participation (Noam & The International Media Concentration Collaboration, 2016). Accordingly, research on media, telecom, and Internet concentration exceeds conventional competition analysis and speaks to broader debates over the configuration of symbolic and cultural power in contemporary democracies.

Given this complexity, a multidimensional approach is required –economic, political, cultural, and social (Sánchez-Ruiz, 2024). In this study, we use standard economic indicators –the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) and the four-firm concentration ratio (CR4)– as entry points to diagnose market power in the networked media economy (Hoskins et al., 2004; Iosifidis, 1997). These metrics help identify patterns of dominance that we then relate to effects on media and digital systems, providing a preliminary scaffold for critical analysis of concentration today (Miège, 2006; Napoli, 2011).

We also adopt Winseck's (2019) "networked media economy" framework, which integrates infrastructure, media services, and digital applications within an interconnected, evolving system that defines the contemporary communications economy. It comprises three interrelated layers:

1. Telecommunications and connectivity infrastructure: broadband networks, fiber-optic backbones, radio spectrum.
2. Traditional and digital audiovisual media: broadcasting, pay television, and streaming services.

3. Internet applications and services: search engines, browsers, social media, app stores, operating systems.

This perspective foregrounds convergence across layers and the economic-political-technological relations that jointly shape markets as well as cultural and social practices (Winseck, 2016).

Methodology

This study uses a quantitative design to assess concentration across 20 markets spanning the three layers of the networked media economy. Our primary metric is firm revenue. Data were compiled from multiple sources: official datasets and annual reports from the IFT; the Ministry of the Interior's National Registry of Print Media; the Mexican Film Institute (Instituto Mexicano de Cinematografía, Imcine) and the National Chamber of the Film Industry (Cámara Nacional de la Industria Cinematográfica, Canacine); audited financial statements of publicly listed firms; and market studies from specialized consultancies (e.g., PricewaterhouseCoopers, Market Intelligence, The Competitive Intelligence Unit). We also drew on journalistic reports and other documentary sources published by consulting firms between 2016 and 2024.

A central challenge was limited access to company-level revenue in several markets. Where disclosure was incomplete, we produced estimates using observable proxies –subscribers/users, print circulation, telephone lines, market shares, and audience ratings. For search engines, operating systems, and browsers, we relied on Statcounter's usage statistics.

To evaluate concentration, we used standard indicators –CR10, CR4, and HHI –to capture the distribution of market share and the dominance of leading firms. CR4 is the sum of the market shares of the four largest firms; CR10 covers the top ten (Hoskins et al., 2004). The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) is calculated as the sum of squared market shares of all identifiable firms active in a given market. We exclude residual "other" categories unless they represent a definable cluster of very small firms or we have sufficient information to trace the underlying entities.

HHI values range from 0 to 10 000: values near 0 indicate fragmented markets with full competition, while 10 000 indicates a monopoly (Huerta-Wong & Gómez, 2013). Following Noam (2009), we interpret HHI levels as: <1 000, non-concentrated; 1 000 - 1 800, moderately concentrated; >1 800, highly concentrated.

Studies on media concentration in Mexico

Research on media concentration in Mexico was crucial for understanding telecom and media market dynamics prior to the 2013 constitutional reform and the 2014 Federal Telecommunications and Broadcasting Law. Produced amid weak regulation, limited transparency, and rising consolidation, these studies offered critical diagnoses that laid the groundwork for subsequent analyses of concentration in Mexican media and telecommunications.

In 2010, Trejo Delarbre examined television concentration in Latin America and identified Mexico as a paradigmatic case, given the dominance of Televisa and TV Azteca in free-to-air TV. He argued that this configuration constrained pluralism and democratic quality by narrowing the range of voices and reinforcing ties between media conglomerates and political power (Trejo, 2010). The same year, Gómez and Sosa (2010) analyzed the pay television market, showing an equally concentrated landscape in which Televisa was consolidating its position across cable and satellite. Their findings linked concentration to reduced competition, higher prices, less content diversity, and slower technological innovation.

Trejo (2011) further highlighted the outsized societal influence of free-to-air television, given its high household penetration and agenda-setting power. In an international comparison, Huerta-Wong and Gómez (2013) –as part of the international project *Who Owns the World's Media?*– applied CR4, HHI, and Noam's indices to 12 media and telecom services in Mexico, reporting high to very high concentration in most markets, with implications for competition, media pluralism, and cultural diversity. In the global perspective, Mexico ranked among the most concentrated in fixed and mobile telephony and in free-to-air TV (Noam & The International Media Concentration Collaboration, 2016). More recently, studies have examined concentration in Internet

services (Gómez, 2021) and public perceptions of media concentration, showing that political motivation and audience sophistication shape beliefs about control by a few economic groups (Cisneros, 2021).

Our study advances this literature by providing updated data and fine-grained analyses of ownership structures across the networked media economy in Mexico from 2019-2022. The results furnish an empirical basis for debates on regulatory design and public communication policies aimed at strengthening diversity and competition.

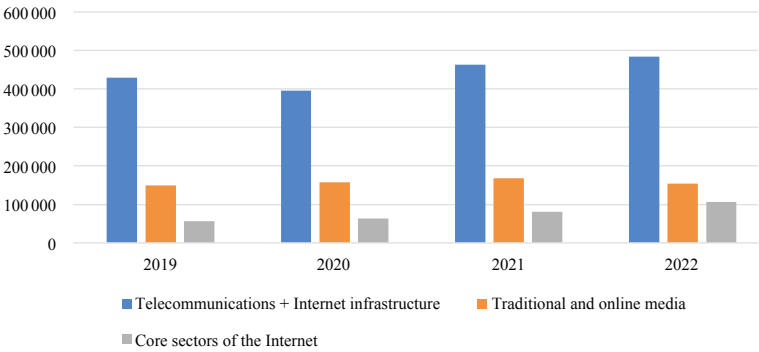
The Network Media Economy in Mexico and the Concentration (2019-2022) in 20 Services or Markets

A key finding is the 17% increase in total revenues across the 20 services analyzed between 2019 and 2022. This growth reflects the dynamism of the three layers of the networked media economy –infrastructure, traditional and digital audiovisual media, and Internet applications and services– and their role as an engine of development for the Mexican economy. In nominal terms, revenues rose from MXN 634 357 million in 2019 to MXN 744 116 million in 2022, showing sustained expansion despite the COVID-19 shock and the 2020 global slowdown. Importantly, this aggregate growth coincided with persistent –and in some cases rising– concentration levels in several markets, as detailed below.

This growth is driven by a handful of services with rapid adoption and diversification –digital advertising, streaming music, and SVOD– as well as connectivity upgrades, notably fiber optics and mobile broadband, which expanded penetration, investment, and user bases. Together, these trends underscore digital convergence as a structural force: legacy services (telecoms, broadcasting) are increasingly integrated with digital platforms, spawning new business models and accelerating the transformation of the audiovisual sector. Beyond topline revenues, this dynamism is reshaping Mexico's economy by deepening digital value chains and intensifying dependence on e-commerce, entertainment, and telecommunications.

An examination of business structure reveals pronounced revenue concentration. In 2022, CR10 indicates the top ten companies captured 92.8% of total revenues –a high degree of consolidation. This group includes four Mexican firms, four U.S. firms, one Spanish firm, and

FIGURE 1
DEVELOPMENT OF THE NETWORK MEDIA INDUSTRY, 2019-2022
(MILLION PESOS)



Source: The authors with data generated by the research.

one Swedish-U.S. joint-capital company, highlighting the weight of six transnational corporations across the three layers of Mexico's networked media economy. The CR4 rises to 72%, also signaling high concentration by international standards: three of the four companies are Mexican (América Móvil, Grupo Televisa, Megacable) and one is from the United States (AT&T). Leadership is most evident in CR1: América Móvil holds 47.22% of total networked media economy revenues, consolidating its position as the dominant player. This enduring dominance points to persistent structural imbalances despite a decade (2014-2023) of asymmetric measures and sanctions by the IFT (2023).

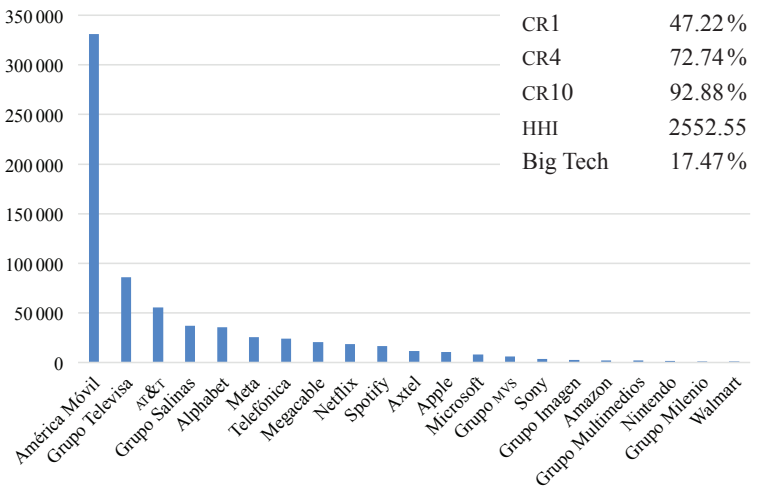
U.S. tech giants have also expanded their footprint: in 2022 they accounted for 17.7% of total revenues, with Alphabet, Meta, and Netflix propelled by digital advertising and streaming. This reflects the globalization of networked media markets and raises regulatory challenges for enforcement, competition policy, and the cultural effects of predominantly transnational content.

A comparative lens helps situate Mexico. Using the GMICP's standardized metrics, we contrast Mexico with its trade partners (United States, Canada) and select BRICS economies (China, India, Brazil).

Mexico records the highest CR1 and HHI values –confirming the outsized weight of a single firm (América Móvil). By contrast, Brazil surpasses Mexico on CR4 and CR10, suggesting a more consolidated oligopoly at the upper-mid tiers (Mastrini et al., 2024). The United States posts the lowest concentration across indicators (Buckweitz & Noam, 2024), consistent with a more diversified firm landscape and fast-paced innovation –though notable concentration persists within Internet services. China is striking, despite a closed market and strong state control, it shows low CR1 and HHI, even below Canada. This likely reflects deliberate "controlled fragmentation", distributing power among major actors under a shared-prosperity logic (Jiang et al., 2024; Tang, 2020).

In addition, China's networked media economy is marked by the vigorous rise of domestic tech firms, which account for roughly 30% of total sector revenues (Jiang et al., 2024). This reflects not only state-led strategies for digital and technological upgrading, but also the rapid

FIGURE 2
LEADING COMPANIES IN THE NETWORK MEDIA ECONOMY IN MEXICO, 2022



Source: The authors with data generated by the research.

scale-up of national platforms –Tencent, Alibaba, Baidu– that have consolidated leadership at home while expanding globally (Hong, 2017; Tang, 2020).

India offers a contrasting profile: its networked media economy shows lower concentration across CR1, CR4, and HHI than Mexico and Brazil, suggesting a broader plurality of actors and less dominance by any single firm –even acknowledging the significant role of *Reliance* (Athique et al., 2024). These cases indicate that comparable emerging economies can foster more balanced competition –or at minimum, limit consolidation– through policy design and market dynamics that may hold lessons for Mexico.

As a preliminary conclusion, the international comparison highlights the structural challenges that Mexico faces in terms of economic concentration in the media and telecommunications, highlighting the need to rethink regulatory policies and promote conditions that favor more equitable and plural competition in its network media economy.

Next, we zoom in on the three layers of Mexico's networked media economy. Service-by-service analysis will pinpoint concentration levels, identify leading firms, and assess their competitive effects.

TABLE 1
COMPARISON OF CR1, CR4, CR10, HHI AND % SHARE OF TECH GIANTS IN NETWORK MEDIA ECONOMIES IN MEXICO, USA, CANADA, BRAZIL, CHINA AND INDIA

Concentration index	Mexico	United States	Canada	Brazil	China	India
CR1	47.2%	11.18%	23%	32%	17.9%	31.7%
CR4	72.7%	32.8%	66%	82%	70%	42%
CR10	92.8%	54.5%	82%	99.4%	82.1%	65.4%
HHI	2552	384	1263	2165	648	1662
Big Tech	17.7%	18.30%	18.13%	13%	30%	7.32%

Source: The authors with open data from the reports of the Global Media and Internet Concentration Project of Brazil, Canada, China, the United States, India and Mexico.

Telecommunications infrastructure and Internet connectivity

Infrastructure is the foundational layer that enables connectivity across media, telecommunications, and Internet services. The sector posted strong growth from 2019 to 2022, with revenues rising from MXN 429 382.7 million to MXN 483 729.2 million. Its contribution to GDP increased from 0.8% (2014) to 1.8% (2022), and its resilience during the COVID-19 years was notable: a 7% compound annual growth rate (CAGR), outpacing the rest of the economy (Gómez et al., 2024).

Internet access also expanded: 78.6% of the population used Internet services in 2024, up from 59.4% in 2016 (IFT, 2024). Nonetheless, digital divide gaps persist, especially in rural and low-income areas. To address these, the state has advanced two flagship initiatives –Red Compartida and Internet para Todos– and launched CFE-Telecomunicaciones, which leverages Federal Electricity Commission infrastructure to provide low-cost Internet (Gómez et al., 2024). The government also acquired 23% of Altán Redes, the wholesale mobile network responsible for extending coverage where private operators do not reach, and with designing, deploying, operating, and marketing the "network for everyone".

When analyzing the concentration by services in the telecommunications sector in Mexico, two segments stand out: mobile telephony and Internet, and pay television (see Table 2). In the case of mobile telephony and Internet, América Móvil, through its Telcel brand, continues to be the dominant player, with a market share that exceeds 65%, followed far behind by the companies AT&T and Telefónica. Despite the asymmetric measures imposed since 2014, as a Preponderant Economic Agent (AEP-T), which sought to reduce its preponderance, the HH index in this segment has decreased by only 1 000 points, indicating a marginal reduction in the concentration of this market in the last ten years (IFT, 2024). In contrast, other services such as fixed telephony and fixed Internet have experienced a significant decrease in their concentration. For example, América Móvil/Telmex's share of the fixed Internet market has decreased to 38%, reflecting increased competition in this service with three other Mexican companies: Megacable, Grupo Televisa and TotalPlay. Another service that stands out with the highest concentration, according to the HHI index, is pay television,

which reached a maximum of 5 239 points in 2019, the highest score recorded in the telecommunications sector during the period of this research (see Table 2). This high index reflects the dominance of Grupo Televisa, which currently controls around 60 % of the pay television market in Mexico. This concentration has been maintained thanks to a series of strategic mergers that have consolidated its leadership position in the segment (Gómez, 2020). It should be noted that América Móvil/Telmex is excluded from this service due to a restriction in its concession title (Sosa, 2017). A relevant fact is that the transitory Article 9 of the Telecommunications Law of 2014 allowed mergers between cable companies without authorization from the IFT, facilitating the expansion of Grupo Televisa. This provision has been criticized for favoring its dominant position in the market (Álvarez, 2015; De Swaan, 2014). While regulatory measures have had some effect on reducing concentration in some services, competition in mobile telephony and Internet, as well as in pay television, remains limited. América Móvil and Grupo Televisa maintain dominant positions, especially when considering revenue-based metrics to generate the HH index, which reveal an even more marked concentration than that reported by the IFT, which does not incorporate this variable in its indicators. This highlights the need to adjust existing regulatory measures and to promote initiatives that foster fair competition, as well as allow the entry of new players, greater investments and benefit consumers with more choice and better prices.

TABLE 2
HERFINDAHL-HIRSCHMAN (HHI) CONCENTRATION INDICES IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES BY ECONOMIC INCOME, 2019-2022

Year	Mobile telephony	Fixed telephony	Fixed Internet	Pay TV
2019	6 056	4 279	4 472	5 239
2020	6 058	4 606	4 077	4 583
2021	5 918	4 727	4 108	4 581
2022	5 578	4 383	3 810	4 335

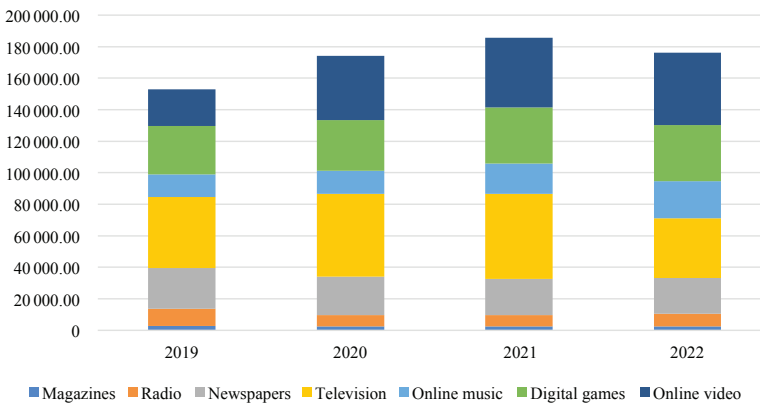
Source: The authors with data generated by the research.

Traditional and digital media

This layer is pivotal for a robust public sphere and cultural diversity. A plural audiovisual market safeguards freedom of expression and ensures that varied voices and cultures have space across both digital and legacy channels. Access to diverse, reliable information also underpins informed citizenship and political culture, enabling fundamental rights such as the rights to information and to culture.

Traditional services are rapidly hybridizing into digital formats, producing new product bundles and distribution logics. The fastest-growing segments are online video, online music, and video games (Figure 3), propelled by rising consumption of on-demand content, ubiquitous high-speed connectivity, and mobile adoption.

FIGURE 3
TRADITIONAL AND ONLINE MEDIA REVENUES, 2019-2022
(MILLION PESOS)



Source: The authors with data generated by the research.

In 2022, television was no longer the top-earning medium within this layer; SVOD overtook it for the first time, signaling a marked shift in Mexican consumption toward the flexibility and breadth of platforms like Netflix, Disney+, and Amazon Prime Video. Within traditional media, television and magazines post the highest concentration levels

(see Table 3), whereas radio and newspapers show low concentration, falling within a broadly competitive range.

Historically, Mexico's free-to-air TV market has ranked among the most concentrated worldwide (Noam & International Media Concentration Collaboration, 2016). Since Televisa's designation as a Preponderant Economic Agent in Broadcasting (AEPR) and the rollout of asymmetric obligations –coupled with IFT's issuance of new national, regional, and local licenses– the HHI has trended downward since 2019, though it still indicates high concentration. National advertising remains heavily centralized: Televisa, 62 %; TV Azteca, 28 %; Imagen TV, 6 % –five national networks in total–, while the remaining 4 % is split among newer regional/local players (Multimedios, Heraldo Televisión, Canal 13, etc.) (Larrosa et al., 2024).

By contrast, radio is more dynamic and plural: both CR and HHI are low and have declined over time. The sector is adjusting to digital competition for ad spend and to reduced federal government advertis-ing (Larrosa et al., 2024). Lower production costs give radio greater flexibility, and it remains a key medium for news and music despite digital disruption.

Commercial radio is led by roughly nine national groups plus nine regional groups, with additional plurality from public-service, community, social, and Indigenous stations that supply local and culturally specific content, bolstering a more diverse radio ecosystem (Larrosa et al., 2024).

TABLE 3
HERFINDAHL-HIRSCHMAN (HHI) CONCENTRATION INDICES IN TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL MEDIA BY ECONOMIC INCOME, 2019-2022

Year	Television	Online music	Video on demand	Radio	Daily	Magazines
2019	4 339	7 735	3 991	1 001	375	3 436
2020	4 364	6 874	3 246	841	375	3 436
2021	4 260	7 623	2 738	777	375	3 436
2022	4 195	6 648	2 820	549	375	3 436

Source: The authors with data generated by the research.

The newspaper market also registers the lowest concentration among traditional media (low CR4 and HHI), with a substantial plurality of voices. Still, since 2016, the rise of large digital platforms –and since 2019 the fall in official advertising– has forced news organizations to pivot toward online content and subscription models. Even amid restructuring, newspapers continue to provide essential scrutiny and diverse perspectives on national and local affairs across Mexico (Larrosa et al., 2024)

Online video and music services

New online video and music segments have been more dynamic than legacy media. Their centrality within the networked media economy has risen year after year over the study period.

Online video –especially SVOD and ad-supported VOD (AVOD)– is the fastest-growing cluster. These models are reshaping distribution and business logics across the audiovisual field. Revenues in SVOD+AVOD grew from MXN 34 040 million (2019) to MXN 48 043 million (2022) –about 41 % growth (PwC, 2024).

The leading SVOD platforms in Mexico are Netflix, Disney+, HBO Max, Amazon Prime Video, Paramount+, Claro Video, and ViX+. By the end of 2022, there were 12.6 million SVOD subscriptions –roughly 43 million people (≈45 % of the population) with access to at least one video portal with original content. According to Camargo (2024), Netflix held >60 % of subscribers, followed by Disney+, Amazon Prime Video, Max, and the Mexican services Claro Video and ViX+.

Concentration (HHI) in SVOD remains very high, though trending slightly downward. Despite many nominal "players", the subscriber base is heavily clustered around U.S. platforms. Mexican services compete mainly with local content and event rights tied to linear TV (e.g., Olympics on Claro; Mexican football on ViX+). Meanwhile, U.S. platforms are moving into sports rights, pulling SVOD closer to the logics of linear television.

Notably, despite Netflix's decade-long dominance –>50 % share in recent years– the IFT has not issued opinions or measures aimed at fostering competition in SVOD. Even for a relatively new market, sustained high concentration would normally warrant at least a regulatory assessment of competitive conditions.

Online music shows strong, sustained revenue growth. Streaming rose from 85% to 95% of industry revenues between 2018 and 2022; sector revenues neared US $ 365 million in 2022 (ICEX, 2023). The market is highly concentrated, led by Spotify, YouTube Music, Amazon Music, and Apple Music –with no strong national platform. In 2022, Spotify alone exceeded 76% of subscriptions (Camargo, 2024). Culturally, streaming has amplified the reach of regional Mexican genres across the U.S. Latin market and Latin America (ICEX, 2023; Gómez et al., 2025).

Internet core applications and services

The third layer of the networked media economy is the most recent and, in many cases, the one that generates the most innovation. It is home to some of the most dynamic global firms in the global digital economy, but it is also the most concentrated, with HHI levels close to the monopoly threshold (10 000 points) (see Table 4). Unlike the other two layers, this one is clearly dominated by the US tech giants. It includes everything from operating systems and application vendors, to browsers, search engines, social media, and Internet advertising.

App distribution in Mexico is dominated by a duopoly formed by Alphabet and Apple, which completely controls this segment, capturing 100% of the MXN 26 406 million generated in 2022. This segment saw an impressive growth of around 80% during the years covered by this research.

On the other hand, the digital advertising market in Mexico was valued at approximately MXN 80 billion, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 25% from 2019 to 2022, according to our data. This market is also highly concentrated, with just two companies –Alphabet (50.2%) and Meta (32.3%)– accounting for 82.5% of total revenue in 2022. Far behind them are Amazon and Grupo Televisa, which together have just under 3% of the market. The remaining revenue is fragmented among numerous digital mediums, each getting only a small slice of the digital advertising pie. This high level of concentration reaffirms the dominance of U.S. tech giants in the digital advertising space in Mexico.

The data provided here offers an overview of the current scenario, highlighting significant changes in the networked media economy. The historical dominance of traditional media, such as television, has given way to the growing influence of digital platforms. For example, while television accounted for 58 % of media advertising in 2010, by 2022 the share of the Internet in this market has grown to 58 %, while television has fallen to 26 %. This change has also altered the distribution of revenues, which were previously mainly captured by Mexican media, but now almost 58 % of that revenue flows to US tech giants such as Meta and Alphabet (Larrosa et al., 2024).

As for social media, which is the platform that distributes and amplifies much of the information from traditional media, we have that Meta, through Facebook and Instagram, captures the highest percentage of visitors and accounts, representing approximately 50 % of monthly traffic to social media in 2022. This segment consists exclusively of American technology companies and a Chinese platform (TikTok). We also highlight the role of X (formerly Twitter) as the most politically influential social media in Mexico, although very localized among the urban middle classes.

In the other services analyzed, the central role of Alphabet stands out, which has the Google Chrome browser, the Android operating system and the Google search engine, all of which are the most used in their respective categories. The only exception is the computer operating system segment, where another American tech giant, Microsoft, maintains dominance. The only sector in which Alphabet faces competition is in the mobile operating system market, where Apple's iOS retains a 23 % share during the years covered by the investigation.

To conclude with this third layer of the network media economy in Mexico, it is essential to point out that it is an unregulated field and only in 2023 the Federal Economic Competition Commission (Cofece) began an investigation into Alphabet's dominance in the digital advertising segment. However, at the time of writing this article, no resolution has been issued in this regard. In addition, we must underline that this layer is the most concentrated in the networked media economy, reporting the highest levels of concentration, raising serious concerns about competition and the market power of big tech companies.

TABLE 4
HERFINDAHL-HIRSCHMAN (HHI) CONCENTRATION INDICES IN INTERNET CORE APPLICATIONS AND SERVICES 2019-2022

Year	App distribution	Digital advertising	Social media	Search engines	Mobile search engines	Mobile operating system	Desktop operating systems	Mobile browsers	Browsers desktop
2019	5 033	3 111	2 335	9 372	9 821	7 323	5 459	9 821	6 006
2020	5 103	3 395	2 239	9 285	9 831	7 023	6 413	9 831	5 927
2021	5 096	3 597	2 898	9 119	9 774	6 575	5 373	9 774	5 855
2022	5 141	S/D	S/D	7 796	9 663	6 468	6 679	9 663	7 642

Source: The authors with data generated by the research.

Discussion of the results and final remarks

It is important to note that the three sectors that make up the networked media economy in Mexico are growing, although at different rates and in some cases facing challenges due to high levels of concentration. In fact, of the 20 services analyzed, only two are in the low concentration range according to the HH index, while the rest (18 services) are located in the high concentration range. The results of the CR4 index for each of the three sectors of the networked media economy are also worrying, since all three are above 70 %, with the last layer standing out as the most concentrated with values close to 100 % (see Figure 4).

As for the dominant companies within the network media economy in Mexico, we highlight the following: in the first place, there are two national champions: América Móvil and Grupo Televisa. América Móvil, the company with the highest revenues, is a telecommunications giant in Latin America, with its revenues mainly concentrated in both fixed and mobile telecommunications services. In contrast, Grupo Televisa operates in two layers and in several segments, with a significant presence in broadcast television, pay television and magazines.

On the other hand, we identified seven foreign companies among the main revenue generators in the networked media economy in Mexico. These include U.S. telecommunications giant AT&T and tech giants such as Alphabet, Meta, Netflix, Apple, and Microsoft. These companies exert a significant influence on the three layers of the networked media economy with their significant market shares and innovative services, underlining the growing transnational and convergent dimension.

This phenomenon poses challenges for competition and market regulation, as these companies have an inordinate capacity to influence the dynamics of the Mexican market, from the production and distribution of content to the control of data and information on a large scale.

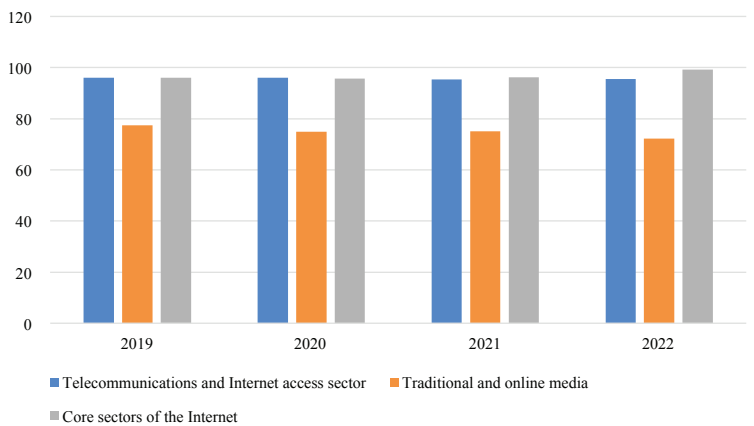
One interpretation of these results is that the regulatory measures implemented by the IFT with respect to companies declared as Preponderant Economic Agents in the telecommunications and television sectors are insufficient and need to be refined. The new telecom governance will need to reconsider the approach to declaring AEPs by service

rather than by sector. This adjustment could lead to more effective regulatory oversight and a more balanced competitive environment.

Moreover, after a decade of the imposition of asymmetric measures and given the results of concentration indicators, it is clear that asymmetric regulation will not be a temporary feature, as originally anticipated. Instead, the regulation of communications markets should be seen as reflecting endemic characteristics –e.g., high capital intensity, strong network effects and economies of scale, persistent barriers to entry, etc.– that do not soon give way, if ever. Therefore, additional mechanisms are required to improve the effectiveness of regulators and regulations, ensure that companies comply with their regulatory obligations, and that markets can be effectively supervised in both the short and medium term. This would involve deploying all available regulatory mechanisms to address market imbalances and promote fairer and more equitable competitive growth.

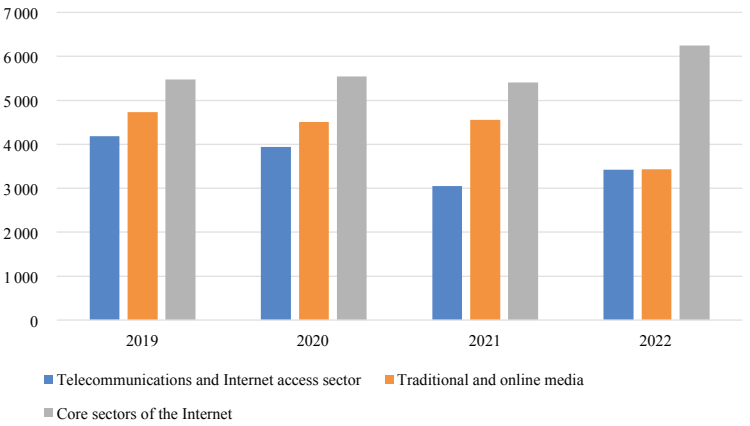
When we situate Mexico alongside Brazil, China, India, the United States, and Canada, a common thread emerges: regulating concentration in the networked media economy is a shared challenge, though

FIGURE 4
CONCENTRATION BY SECTOR 2019-2022 (CR4)



Source: The authors with research data.

FIGURE 5
CONCENTRATION BY SECTOR 2019-2022 (HHI)



Source: The authors with research data.

countries pursue it with different tools and outcomes. The U.S. and Canada have centered antitrust scrutiny on large tech platforms. Brazil and India have leaned toward more interventionist sectoral regulation in telecommunications. China has pursued an industrial-policy model –combining protectionism and strong state steering– to cultivate domestic competition. These experiences –antitrust, market regulation, and industrial policy– underscore the range of options and the need for Mexico to recalibrate its policy mix to local structures and constraints, reducing concentration through instruments tailored to national particularities.

The federal government's decision to eliminate the IFT introduced uncertainty, given the Institute's independence and its role in insulating technical decisions from political and commercial pressures, especially in spectrum awards and licensing. Going forward, licensing and procurement must remain transparent, rules-based, and insulated from patronage, to sustain fair competition and public trust. The new legal design seeks to address this by proposing two bodies: 1) a Telecommunications Regulatory Commission as a decentralized entity within

the Digital Transformation and Telecommunications Agency, retaining spectrum, licensing, and authorization functions with technical and managerial autonomy; and 2) a National Antimonopoly Commission within the Ministry of Economy, tasked with competition oversight, preponderance determinations, and asymmetric regulation (Peña Merino in Sheinbaum Pardo, 2025).

A key limitation of this study was restricted access to firm-level revenue data crucial for concentration analysis. In the transition to the new institutional architecture, it is essential that public collection and disclosure of revenue statistics improve rather than regress, enabling consistent HHI/CR monitoring across markets.

In sum, Mexico's future governance of communication should treat the networked media economy as an interconnected system, demanding coordinated, cross-cutting regulation. A comprehensive yet flexible framework –combining competition policy, sectoral regulation, and data transparency– will be necessary to address high concentration, protect users' rights, and support a more plural, innovative, and competitive digital communication system.

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