

Examining Internet and Technology Around the World



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This book offers comparative insights into the challenges and opportunities surrounding emerging technology and the internet as it is used and perceived throughout the world, providing students with cross-cultural and cross-national perspectives.

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MEXICO

Recently in Mexico, mobs on social media have started to ridicule and bully the entitled behavior of the country's elite via the hashtags #Lad and #Lady, plus the insolent behavior the elite was caught doing. For example, the hashtag #LadyChiles was used to mock a wealthy woman who had mistreated her housemaid for allegedly stealing a chili from her kitchen (Najar 2014).

The Lords and Ladies of Mexico first came to the spotlight in 2011, when two rich, drunken women were recorded insulting and physically attacking a police officer in the wealthy Mexico City neighborhood of Polanco. The women assaulted the police officer after he had simply called them out for being intoxicated on the street, which is illegal in Mexico. Social media was suddenly filled with the hashtag #LadPolanco to criticize what people considered to be arrogant and erratic behavior by Mexico's elites. Similarly, a scandal in 2016 led to the emergence of the hashtag #LadyCoralina, to criticize a rich, young woman who cheated on her fiancé in the upscale beach club Coralina in Cancun. Emma Alicia Paz Ayala (c. 1990-) kissed a man she was not engaged to at her bachelorette party. Someone recorded a video and posted it online. After seeing the social media posts, her fiancé immediately called off the wedding. Pictures of the infidelity became an online meme, and Paz Ayala's family believed that her reputation had been permanently damaged. Her actions received a lot of negative attention on social media that could be classified as cyberbullying, with theorists not only mocking but also criminalizing her behavior and humiliating her for her actions (Posta 2016).

Along similar lines, elites and businesspeople have often gotten caught on film for bad behavior. Driving and/or auto-involved incidents have become popular for highlighting arrogant, corrupt behaviors. One example is the hashtag #LadAndAshi, used in 2016 to criticize a man who drove his Audi down a Mexican bike lane. The driver almost ran over a bicyclist, argued with a police officer, and then drove away angrily. He also told the policeman to call his father, ostensibly to make the matter go away quietly. However, the bicyclist filmed the exchange, starting his phone after the Audi touched his back tire. He then posted the video to social media, where it went viral.

A second example from the same year was #LadBolloRoyce. Emir Garduño (c. 1974-) got enraged after a man cut off his car in traffic. He beat and intimidated the man with a gun, only later learning that the victim was an off-duty policeman

(Hernandez 2016). A passerby filmed the confrontation and posted it online. A similar incident occurred with #LadFerrari. Filming and posting the videos to one way that the powerless combat corruption and abuse of the system, which seems to favor the rich and powerful.

Why is there so much commotion in social media around these Mexican Lords and Ladies? According to Mexico's national survey about discrimination, one of the main factors that Mexicans hold divided them as a society was wealth, a constant fight between "the rich and the poor" (Basso-Mejia 2012). It is not just the poor who are organizing brigades to attack the elites with the #Lady and #Lad hashtags. The hostility has been mutual. This cyberbullying fight has even entered the political arena: Mexicans supporting the left (the poor), especially Mexico's current leftist president Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), also known as AMLO. The chaitos represent the common citizen on the streets and in the subway and working in the fields with their bare hands. They represent the lower class, the people of Mexico ("el pueblo"). Pijs is another derogatory word, which is used to represent those who support the right in Mexico, according to the stereotype, they are usually concerned as high-level, educated businessmen.

In the 2018 Mexican presidential election, the cyberbrawl between #Lad and #Lad was aggravated. While the #Lad had in the past been able to organize smear campaigns against the left using bots and TV commercials, the chaitos in this presidential election were able to organize both offline and online mass rallies to harass and fight the #Lad. Chaitos considered that people in Mexico, especially those from the lower levels of society might not always have a strong internet connection. In response, they crafted dynamics to attack opponents that could work with intermittent internet (Quinto Feder 2018). Examples included creating printable instructions, facilitating offline protests, and mobilizing offline collective action such as orchestrating people online to paint murals on the street.

Mexicans have a history of actively bullying and mocking their peers. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Mexico is currently the country with the highest number of bullying cases in elementary schools. With respect to the bullying between the elites and the lower classes, historians believe that this fight arose during the days of the Spanish conquest and is a process that has neither stopped nor finished. The Spanish conquest had the ultimate goal of pushing the natives into religious and political submission. One way of creating this submission was through social stratification, where the citizens who were born in Spain or were the sons of the Spanish could rule everything, while everybody else (especially the natives) could only take lower-level jobs.

The modern Mexican state was born from these social class divisions, and they continue to be heavily present in modern society. However, the Spanish were never able to control the Mexicans entirely. Mexicans never fully assumed the roles the Spanish wanted from them. In Mexico, there has been a continuous violent battle between the upper and lower classes to readjust their power and redefine the roles that each actor can play in society.

Mexico's cyberbullying could be seen as a rebel dance that attempts to fight submission and bring justice to its social classes. However, it is perhaps not the most effective dance, as the best ways to fight classism are unlikely to occur through vicious public attacks that bring permanent injury to others' characters or personas. Moving forward, it might help Mexicans to consider how much social justice their #Lad and #Lady hashtags have brought. Participating in the cyberbullying might make them feel better. But it is still necessary to think about how they could bring true justice. Could the same creative energy they are putting into involving and attacking each other be used to bring true social change?

Steph Sengco, Norma Elva Chavez, and Gabriela Huerta

Further Reading

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