

PRESS RELEASE

FIRST DEFOE-SPIN EXPERIMENT EFFECTS OF PRE-ELECTION SURVEYS

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- **DEFOE-SPIN present their First Experiment to determine and measure the effects of pre-election surveys.**
 - **The information of the surveys can change vote intention, since one out of every three participants of the experiment modified their vote intention once they had access to a survey.**
 - **By showing the participants of the experiment various survey scenarios, the obtained results show that, more than strategic (useful) vote to make the second place competitive, the participants preferred to reinforce the advantage of the winner, as shown in each of the cases:**
 - **Treatment 1, which shows a poll with a tie between the candidates in second and third places, does not reveal the existence of the effect of strategic vote.**
 - **Treatment 2, which shows a poll with a close position between the candidates in first and second places, as well as an unclear second and third place position, reinforces the first place, revealing the existence of a bandwagon effect (i.e., supporting the potential winner).**
 - **Treatment 3, which also shows a poll with a close position between the candidates in second and third place –similar to Treatment 2, but with candidate Meade, running for the PRI, in second place-, reveals a decline in his votes, which may be showing a strong anti-PRI vote.**
 - **The control, which shows a poll with well-defined first, second and third places, reveals a more substantial loss of votes from the candidate in second place (Anaya) than from his peer in third place (Meade) in favor of the first place (AMLO), which, again, suggests the existence of bandwagon effect.**
 - **The scenarios used in the polls for the experiment (an innovative exercise in Mexico) reflect the results of the different polls published during this electoral process.**
 - **The participants show a bigger propensity to reinforce the first place than to emit a strategic vote to make the second place more competitive. This may be due to a strong anti-PRI effect.**

DEFOE (defoe.mx) and SPIN-TCP (spintcp.com) present the **First DEFOE-SPIN Experiment** to measure the effects of pre-electoral surveys, and to innovate in the design of research that provides useful information during the Presidential campaign 2018 in Mexico (encuestadefoe-spin.com).

In general terms, experiments try to directly compare the effect of distinct doses of stimuli (treatments) with the absence of them (control) within a determined group of participants. A brief survey is made to these participants before randomly assigning them to different groups and simultaneously presenting to them one of the treatments (or the control, depending on the group to which they have been assigned) in a closed environment. Finally another survey is made to the participants immediately after they have been exposed to the treatment. This methodology allows to reveal the changes in their behavior or choices derived from their exposition to the treatments (or control). The ex-ante and ex-post measurements allow the investigators to make a causal relation between the treatment and the change in the behavior or choices of the participants.

Differently from surveys, which only show correlation between variables, experiments allow to know a “cause-effect” relation between variables. In addition, experiments do not need to have representability, since their only objective is to know the effect of the treatment among participants. Economics and, increasingly, Political Science have used experiments for decades to gather solid information which allows to make serious affirmations about investigation hypotheses.

The **First DEFOE-SPIN Experiment** was carried out on April 14 and 15, 2018, with 240 participants in a range of ages from 40 to 70 (the most active voters in the last three federal elections). Participants were congregated in three cities: 80 in Mexico City, 80 in Guadalajara, Jalisco, and 80 in Boca del Río, Veracruz.

The **First DEFOE-SPIN Experiment** measured the effect of four different scenarios derived from different surveys published during this electoral process. The difference in the polls showed to participants in each treatment is the distance between the first and second places, the second and third places, and one more in which the order of the second and third places are inverted:

- *Treatment 1 (tie for the second place)*
 - AMLO (40%) > ANAYA (25%) = MEADE (25%) > INDEPENDENTS (10%)
- *Treatment 2 (unclear second place)*
 - AMLO (34%) > ANAYA (30%) > MEADE (28%) > INDEPENDENTS (8%)
- *Treatment 3 (reverted unclear second place)*
 - AMLO (34%) > MEADE (30%) > ANAYA (28%) > INDEPENDENTS (8%)
- *Control (well-defined places, based on an average of published surveys)*

- AMLO (40%) > ANAYA (30%) > MEADE (20%) > INDEPENDENTS (10%)

The **First DEFOE-SPIN Experiment** was defined to participants as an analysis of the information presented in media and public opinion. Each treatment and the control was presented to 60 participants and the design was as follows:

Treatment/City	Mexico City	Guadalajara	Veracruz	Total
T1	20	20	20	60
T2	20	20	20	60
T3	20	20	20	60
Control	20	20	20	60
Total	80	80	80	240

Each participant was given a closed envelope which contained the same news about the format of the upcoming presidential debates amongst candidates, a survey (differentiated according to the treatment assigned to each participant, as explained above), a blank card, and a pen. Through the screening of a video, the participants were instructed to write a summary on the blank card about the content of the news and the survey. All the participants, from the moment they received their envelope, during the entry survey, during the experiment and during the exit survey, were forbidden to speak so as not to contaminate the results. The full methodology can be found in the executive summary and on the site encuestadefoe-spin.com.

The most important results of the **First DEFOE-SPIN Experiment** are the following:

- The presentation of various survey scenarios modified the vote intention by candidate in one out of every three participants (27 percent), modifying more slightly the intention of voting by party (35 percent). That is, there were those who modified their vote intention among parties belonging to the same candidate's alliance. Therefore, we can affirm that **the information of the surveys can modify the intention to vote.**
- The results of the application of the different treatments and the control show the following differences in magnitude of the changes in the vote intention of the participants:
 1. In *Treatment 1 (tie for the second place)*, AMLO remains in the first place, Anaya in the second and Meade in the third. The biggest change that is perceived in the aggregate is the growth of Meade, as well as the disappearance of those who were going to cancel their vote because they decided on a candidate once they saw the survey of Treatment 1. **Treatment 1, which shows a survey with a tie between candidates for the second and third place, does not reveal the existence of the strategic voting effect.**

2. In *Treatment 2 (unclear second place)*, the vote for AMLO increases, going from the second to the first place on the ballot, and the one from Anaya falls, going from first to second place; Meade remains in third place, although he also loses votes. The exchange of votes from Anaya to AMLO in Treatment 2 is the largest in the entire experiment. **Treatment 2, which shows close competition between first and second places, strengthens the first place, which reveals the existence of the effect of getting on the winner's train (bandwagon effect).**
 3. In *Treatment 3 (reverted unclear second place)*, the vote for Anaya increases, going from the fourth to the second place on the ballot, while Meade goes from the second to the third place. Anaya does not lose any vote, being the only case in the whole experiment. Zavala gets the higher amount of votes in the entire experiment, due to the experiment carried out in Boca del Río, Veracruz. **Treatment 3, far from showing the reinforcement of the second place (Meade in the entry ballot), takes votes away from him, which may reveal a strong anti-PRI vote.**
 4. In the *Control (well-defined positions)*, the vote for AMLO increases, keeping the first place. Anaya loses more votes than Meade and the result is a tie for the second place. **The control, which presents well-defined first, second and third places, shows a higher loss of votes from Anaya than from Meade towards AMLO, which reveals the existence of the effect of getting on the winner's train (bandwagon effect).**
- The most frequent changes in vote were between Anaya and AMLO, followed by changes between Meade and AMLO, while changes between Meade and Anaya were less frequent in comparison, as is shown in the following decreasing ordering (the revealed effect in parenthesis):
 1. Anaya to AMLO (*Bandwagon*)
 2. AMLO to Anaya (*Schadenfreude*)
 3. Meade to AMLO (*Bandwagon*)
 4. AMLO to Meade (*Schadenfreude*)
 5. Anaya to Meade (*Strategic vote*)
 6. Meade to Anaya (*Strategic vote*); Zavala to Anaya (*Strategic vote*); Meade to Zavala (*Schadenfreude*).
 - There are changes by age, education level, and gender, by treatment, which will be analyzed during the following days.

The **First DEFOE-SPIN Experiment** is completely public, including the database (240 observations and more than 40 variables), the entry and exit surveys, the screened video (with the instructions given to the participants), and the prototype of the treatments and the control. All of these, with the purpose to allow any interested person, not only academics but particularly analysts and mass media, in Mexico or anywhere else in the

world, to know the methodology, carry out different analysis and, given the case, make suggestions for the refinement of the exercise.

In **DEFOE-SPIN**, we are interested in retaking the agenda of the electoral behavior in Mexico, which has lagged behind in the last years, due, precisely, to the lack of complete and public databases related to public opinion studies, including electoral surveys and experiments.

The **DEFOE-SPIN** experiments seek to trigger debates around the electoral behavior in Mexico, become a platform from which new theoretical frameworks and current survey methodologies can be debated, and lead by example to what we understand as transparency and commitment to the scientific duty of carrying out and publishing electoral surveys and experiments. It is important to emphasize that we are against the regulation of surveyors by the authorities and we strongly believe that the guild of surveyors should be self-regulated by the adoption of the best international practices, including the absolute transparency in the publishing of all the information related to public surveys.

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