

News quality: A comparative research on the news reports of public and private regional networks in Spain

Calidad informativa: un estudio comparativo de los servicios informativos de las televisiones autonómicas públicas y privadas en España

Qualidade informativa: um estudo comparativo dos serviços informativos das televisões regionais públicas e privadas na Espanha

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ABSTRACT

This work has the overall goal of creating a tool to assess the quality of information in newscasts of four Spanish regional TV stations, based on the following indicators: formal features; construction and prioritization of the topic; agenda, newsworthiness, type and treatment, and geographical distribution. We applied a content analysis with its own variables matrix on a sample of 32 prime time newscasts and 1327 units and tested its utility to evaluate informational quality. The analysis detects, for the examined stations, a tendency towards an infotainment model, with peculiar dynamics depending on the ownership.

Keywords: News quality, content analysis, newscasts, regional channels, Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Castile and Leon, Navarre.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo plantea el objetivo general de crear una herramienta para evaluar la calidad informativa de los telenoticias de cuatro televisiones autonómicas españolas, a partir de los siguientes indicadores: rasgos formales, construcción y jerarquización, agenda temática, criterios de noticiabilidad, tipología y tratamiento y distribución geográfica del contenido. Se aplica un análisis de contenido con matriz propia de variables sobre una muestra de 32 informativos y 1327 unidades en horario de máxima audiencia. Se comprueba la utilidad de la matriz para evaluar la calidad informativa. El análisis detecta la tendencia hacia un modelo de infoentretenimiento.

Palabras clave: Calidad informativa, análisis de contenido, telenoticias, televisiones autonómicas, Islas Baleares, Comunidad Canaria, Castilla y León, Navarra.

RESUMO

Este artigo tem por objetivo principal criar uma ferramenta para avaliar a qualidade informativa das transmissões de quatro televisões regionais espanholas, a partir dos seguintes indicadores: características formais, construção e hierarquização, agenda temática, critérios de noticiabilidade, tipologia e tratamento e distribuição geográfica do conteúdo. Uma análise de conteúdo com matriz própria de variáveis é aplicado em uma amostra de 32 programas informativos e 1327 unidades exibidas em horário nobre. A utilidade da matriz é verificada para avaliar a qualidade de informação. A análise detecta a tendência para um modelo de Infotainment no conjunto de dados.

Palavras-chave: Qualidade da informação, análise de conteúdo, telejornal, televisões regionais, Ilhas Baleares, Ilhas Canárias, Castilla y León, Navarra.

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INTRODUCTION

The regional TV stations have evolved relevantly since their inception in 1982. The arrival of the Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) to Spain in 2000 led to the expansion and increased offer of television in the country due to the appearance of private operators¹. The immersion of regional television channels in a diversified and competitive audiovisual market has led to the transformation of some of their informative features.

Regional radio and television entities emerged under two fundamental premises (Palacio, 2006): to establish social cohesion of the territories of their coverage and to enhance the identity processes of their citizens. To achieve both goals, they have become major producers and distributors of news content targeted to their audience. Their information services, as underlined by authors such as Habermas (1996), Hallin and Mancini (2004) and Patterson (2000), is one of the pillars of democratic societies.

This article examines the news of information services of four public and private regional networks, in order to analyze the quality of their content. To do so, we will evaluate the formal features of the news, the construction and prioritization of content, the establishment of a common agenda, the criteria of newsworthiness, typology and treatment of the news and, finally, the geographical distribution of the information.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The term quality has many interpretations from a journalistic and media point of view. Quality is usually to as a set of factors that allow evaluating the content from the perspective of production, combined with studies of working routines, contents and audiences (Gómez Mompert, Gutiérrez Lozano & Palau Sampio, 2013; Pérez Curiel & Luque Ortiz, 2014). In this paper, however, we will build on the concept of news quality coined by authors such as Belt and Just (2008), Patterson (2000), or Reinemann, Stanyer, Scherr and Legnante (2011), to refer to a set of indicators used to evaluate the quality of a news programs considering only the broadcasted content. From this perspective, we propose to use a set of indicators to assess the quality of information, including aspects related to content (understood as news quality) and structural ones:

- The type and treatment of the news
- The establishment of an agenda and newsworthiness
- Formal features of the news
- Geographical distribution of information

Regarding the type and treatment, we must clarify that the classification of news of television, radio and press services in the Anglo-Saxon tradition has followed different paths than non-Anglo-Saxon European studies. According to Reinemann, Stanyer, Scherr and Legnante (2011), the study about the way the media covered certain events (news coverage), especially in the United States, brought the emergence of different classification mechanisms. They all use the terms Hard news (Hn) and Soft news (Sn) to refer to two categories of news. Hn refer to those related to public themes involving the political class or, more specifically, current issues with rapid obsolescence (Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006). They can also refer to information that citizens need to know to function properly in their social reality. By contrast, Sn relate to information about events: contents about crimes, entertainment, and even sports news (Curran, Iyengar, Salovaara-Moring & Lund, 2009; Curran, Salovaara-Moring, Cohen & Iyengar, 2010).

According to Reinemann et al. (2011), it is possible to identify up to five dimensions of analysis on the treatment and the type of news. Our study uses the dimension applied by Patterson (2000). Through the elements of position, length, subject and main character of the story, we will determine the type and the treatment that the media applies to the information. Patterson says that the Hn news are directly related to the political, economic and public affairs issues. In contrast, Sn are present in other subjects and tend to group all the news that cannot be considered per se Hn.

This author believes that the processing of information may differ from the typology of the news. This dichotomy assumes that a Hn news may have a Sn treatment by the media. It is considered that a Hn treatment must meet the following requirements: give a reasoned explanation of the contents, giving voice to all stakeholders, investing all means available to cover up the news, use images of high representativeness, and prioritize un-biased descriptions in detriment of opinion. Therefore, if these requirements are not met,

the news receives treatment Sn. For Belt and Just (2008), the current trend revolves around the production of Sn, characterized by a low journalistic effort and a marked tendency to sensationalism.

With regard to the agenda of the media and newsworthiness, the role of newscasts in the selection of topics must be noted. The theory of agenda setting (McCombs, 2004) is essential in determining the responsibility of regional networks regarding the information they transmit to their audience. We can consider setting the agenda as a reliable indicator to check how the content in newscasts is distributed and ranked. Moreover, although this concept can also be approached from the study of journalistic routines, as shown by the work of Nguyen (2012), Tuchman (1983) or Walzer Moskovic and Retis Rivas (2008), our study focuses on the content broadcasted, without denying the future utility of contrasting these data with other involving professionals.

The establishment of the agenda is closely linked to the establishment of 'public opinion' (Lippmann, 1921) of the audience. Current studies, like Rubio Ferreres (2009), suggest that public opinion will depend largely on the "action of the media"; or as concluded in Smidt (2012), "different types of media coverage have different consequences on public opinion" (p. 76). Guerrero-Solé, Pont-Sorribes and Palencia-Lefler (2013) point out that the image that is created from the different themes through television depends on the diversity of content in the networks. Although in this work we do not address an impact analysis of the thematic agenda on the audience, we understand that the inclusion of this indicator could be useful for future studies focused on it.

As the formal features, these refer to the structure of the news. The amount of resources invested in covering the news is considered one of the most reliable indicators to detect the quality of an information service (García Jiménez, 1999; Gutiérrez Gea, 2000; Téllez & García, 2005). The use of a greater number of structures is a top media investment and therefore, the quality of news will be higher. Therefore, we studied the structures of recurring formal data on building a complete unit; i.e., the set of structures that make up a complete news story. This allows establishing a reliable indicator of information quality.

The distribution of content on the regional newscasts has an essential function in relation to its scope. The information is usually fragmented among different geographical areas, such as autonomous community, nationally or internationally. In this sense, these networks are usually characterized by a local or proximity service.

Authors as Garzón and Pomares (2013) or Ruiz Morales (2007) emphasize the geographical location of information as a measurable indicator of quality, considering that factors such as the duration of the news, its position, theme and the appearance of contextual elements can generate scarcity of information from some areas, a negative or positive interpretation of a specific territory, etc.

All these theoretical perspectives, from their respective approaches, involve an assessment of the importance of analyzing regional TV stations reality and the quality of its contents. Our aim is to bring clarity to the study of the information quality, and thus establish the consequences generated by the media through certain dynamics of construction and prioritization of content.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this work is to evaluate the informative quality of information services at a regional level. For this, we take as a starting point the indicators defined in the previous paragraph, and analyze the news of *Televisió de les Illes Balears* (IB3), *Radio Televisión Canaria* (RTVC), *Castilla y León Televisión* (CyLTV) and *Navarra Televisión* (NATV) in its prime edition, through their broadcasted content. This overall objective is specified in the following specific goals:

- To identify the formal structures that compose the piece of information to establish relationships between the content of newscasts and the resources invested in their preparation.
- To sort the type and treatment of news from the topic and coverage of the broadcasted information.
- To determine if there is a thematic agenda shared by the analyzed networks and get to know their configuration on specific topics.

- To identify the criteria that make the broadcasted information newsworthy.
- To examine the geographical distribution of the information to check the relationship between the number of news, population and geographical areas represented.

METHODOLOGY

We propose a methodology of empirical and quantitative character (Krippendorff & Bock, 2009; Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 2014 [2005]), through which we conduct a content analysis around a multiple case of study (Yin, 2014). This approach does not rule out the desirability of also using qualitative techniques. However, this study will only use a quantitative analysis, as it allows studying a large sample and applying a statistical treatment to the obtained data. The sample can be considered representative based on criteria related to the dissemination, and other geographical, linguistic, historical, of ownership and partnership. This can be seen in table 1, for each selected network.

As seen in table 1, the historical approach starts with regional television of new generation, considering that they had undergone fewer studies. IB3 and RTVC broadcast in two archipelagos are publicly owned, its newscasts are externalized and they are associated with the Federation of Organizations of Regional Radio and Television (FORTA, by its Spanish acronym²). Instead, NATV and CyLTV are privately owned regional television stations and their information services are linked to the public editors of each community, broadcast in mainland and are not associated with

FORTA. In addition, they are part of a new generation of private television with public service obligations. These stations are of interest as they arise in the digital context and some of them in a crisis, which could affect the quality of their content (Miguel de Bustos & Casado del Río, 2012).

As for the units of analysis, we studied and quantified 32 newscasts editions, with exception of sport and meteorology sections, of the weekly edition at noontime slot, on dates between 4 and 15 April 2013. The sample drawn from the newscasts comprises 1327 units, which were used entirely for statistical analysis (Morales Vallejo, 2011). These units correspond to each of the sections that structure the newscasts (preview, headlines, captions, body, summary, etc.). Our temporal and numerical sample is justified through similar studies, such as Humanes (2001), which selected a sample of five editions of news at noontime in their weekly edition and 445 units; Téllez and García (2005), who used seven editions of news at noontime, without specifying the units of analysis; and others, such as Guerrero-Solé, Pont-Sorribes and Lefler-Palencia (2013), using a sample of fourteen days and 2566 units, slightly higher than the rest, as they only selected political news.

Data collection was made through the content available on the websites of each of the networks. Each has video-on-demand (VOD) service and some, like RTVC or IB3 allow downloading content for offline viewing. The classification and treatment of the data collected required the construction of a matrix of variables from the categorization proposed by García Jiménez (1999), Gutiérrez Gea (2000), López Díez (2001), Patterson (2000) and Téllez and García (2005), among others.

Table 1. Relationship between selection criteria and television

Network	Channel	Criteria					
		Language	Historical	Owner	Geographical	Audience	FORTA
Radiotelevisión Canaria	TV Canaria	Spanish	1997	Public	Archipelago	<i>Telenoticias 1</i>	YES
Televisió de les Illes Balears	IB3	Catalan	2005	Public	Archipelago	<i>IB3 Noticias Migdia</i>	YES
Navarra Televisión	NaTV	Spanish	2012	Private	Mainland	<i>Primera Edición</i>	NO
Castilla y León Televisión	CyLTV	Spanish	2009	Private with indirect management	Mainland	<i>Noticias Castilla y León 14:30</i>	NO

Source: Own elaboration.

We now define categories that may lead to confusion and untangle their purpose regarding the proposed objectives:

Political category: it involves examining the agenda of the media regarding political groups with parliamentary representation in the autonomous community. In this category, we only consider the regional political actions.

Topic: it includes the main theme of the story and allows us to observe whether there is a hierarchy or construction of a specific thematic agenda.

Format: formal structure of the news, which allows identifying data substructures used in the making of each new:

- **Pisd:** Live anchorperson.
- **Vsd:** Video with protagonists and events of the news with direct sound.
- **Vpo:** Images of the facts and voiceover presenter.
- **Cisd:** Live connection.
- **VNo:** Images of the facts and other voiceover narrator.
- **P'isd:** Live video with sound from a person who answers, gives an opinion, argues, etc.

Table 2. Variables of the analysis matrix

Variable	Description/Categories
Network	Network of the newscast
Number of news	Identification of the analysis unit
Date	Day on which the information is broadcasted
Minute	Chronology of the news
Section	Preview, Headlines, Body, Sport, Time, Caption, Extra or Advertising space
Content	Transcription
General geographical category	Autonomous community
	National sphere
	International sphere
Regional geographical category	Specific region to which the news refers
Geographical category provincial capital	Provincial capital to which the news refers
Political category	Political party to which the news refers
Theme category	Culture, social life, Crime, Legal, Accidents, Economy, Self-Promotion, Celebrations, International Crisis, Unemployment, Employment, Education, Central Government, Regional Government, Immigration, protests, Environment, Urban Environment, Poverty, Politics, Religion, Health, security, Housing, Meteorology, Science and Royal Household of Spain
Format	Pisd., Vsd, Vpo, Cisd, Vno, P'isd, PP'isd, PRG an NRG
Selection criteria	Current news, novelty, controversy, usefulness, spectacular nature, abnormality, spatial proximity, notoriety of those involved, general interest, future development, number involved, presence in other media, interest of the network, cultural diversity and gender diversity
Type	Hard news
	Soft news
Treatment	Hard news
	Soft news

Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de García Jiménez (1999), Gutiérrez Gea (2000), López Díez (2001), Patterson (2000) y Téllez y García (2005), entre otros.

- **PP'isd**: Anchorperson live with another person also live on set.
- **PRG**: Graphic resource accompanied by the presenter's voice.
- **NRG**: Graphic resource accompanied by the voice of another narrator.

Selection criteria: indicates which aspects are considered newsworthy by different networks to choose, elaborate and broadcast their news.

RESULTS

FORMAL AND STRUCTURAL FEATURES OF THE NEWS PIECE

The quality of the news depends in part on the number of the formal structures used (Pisd, Vpo, VNo, etc.). The use of live host (Pisd) is a common resource

for all networks to compose the news. Instead, only in CyLTV the video with voiceover of the anchorperson commenting the images (Vpo) is the most common option. This structure is combined in some networks with statements, claims or arguments of common people, experts or various authorities (P'isd). We also note some consensus on the use of a video with a different narrator than the presenter of the facts (Vno). The live connection (Cisd), through a mobile unit, is not of widespread use among broadcasters, given its high cost. The structures more used for news composition is shown in table 3.

The use of a complex combination of structures of formats is a common feature in CyLTV and NaTV. An example is starting with the anchorperson live (Pisd), going to a video with voiceover of another narrator (Vno), which precedes one or more statements (P'isd). The latter two structures repeat.

Pisd + VNo + P'isd + VNo + P'isd + VNo.

Tabla 3. Combinaciones de estructuras para formar una noticia según su extensión y frecuencia

IB3		RTVC	
Combination	Percentage	Combination	Percentage
Pisd + Vpo	15.95%	Pisd + Vpo	8.12%
Vpo + P'isd	5.52%	Pisd + P'isd	5.31%
Pisd + P'isd	6.13%	Pisd + Vpo + P'isd	8.75%
Pisd + Vpo + P'isd	11.95%	Pisd + Cisd + VNo	7.5%
PP'isd + VNo + P'isd + VNo + P'isd + VNo	3.06%	Pisd + Cisd + VNo + P'isd	5.93%
Pisd + VNo + P'isd + VNo + P'isd + VNo	11.65%	Pisd + VNo + P'isd + VNo + P'isd + Cisd	7.5%
Simple structures	17.48%	Simple structures	46.86%
Other combinations	28.22%	Other combinations	10%
CyLTV		NaTV	
Combination	Percentage	Combination	Percentage
Pisd + Vpo	20.16%	Pisd + Vpo	13.13%
Pisd + P'isd	10.08%	Pisd + P'isd	8.75%
Vpo + P'isd	3.22%	Pisd + VNo	2.18%
Pisd + Vpo + P'isd	5.64%	Pisd + Vpo + P'isd	10.21%
Pisd + VNo + P'isd + VNo	2.41%	Pisd + VNo + P'isd + VNo	3.64%
Pisd + VNo + P'isd + VNo + P'isd + VNo	26.2%	Pisd + VNo + P'isd + VNo + P'isd + VNo	17.51%
Simple structures	12.9%	Simple structures	21.16%
Other combinations	19.35%	Other combinations	23.35%

Source: Own elaboration.

Instead, IB3 uses combinations of various structures to form a story. The units most commonly used are those which include a live anchorperson (Pisd), followed by a video narrated voiceover by the same person (Vpo), and live anchorperson (Plano ISD) followed by a video with a voiceover from another narrator (Vno), which ends with the statements of one or more persons (P'isd):

Pisd + Vpo

Pisd + VNo + P'isd

Similarly, RTVC employs numerous combinations of formats to create a story. Its news are made by a majority of simple formats: live anchorperson (Pisd), narrated video with its voiceover (Vpo) and video with voiceover of another narrator (Vno). These structures exceed, by a wide margin, other combinations, such as live anchorman (Pisd) narrated video with its voiceover (Vpo) and statements (P'isd).

With these data, we can say that the quality of the news from the point of view of the formal features is better in CyLTV and NaTV. Both networks prioritize the use of complex structures and we can assume greater investment in the development of their news. The ownership of both, private, may influence the formal configuration of their news. Still, both as RTVC and IB3 have a higher percentage of live connections, although their deepening of the content by complex combinations is much smaller than in the case of private regional networks.

TYPE AND TREATMENT OF THE NEWS

Leaving aside the formal and structural features, it is necessary to focus on the type and processing of information. Patterson (2000) relates the quality of information to those newscasts where Hard News type predominates, and whose treatment is, likewise, of Hard news. This means that the coverage includes a descriptive and objective approach that gives voice to all views involved in the facts. If necessary, experts who can deepen into the information are included. The news is reinforced with graphics to ensure the understanding of the audience. Highly representative images are used to illustrate the facts.

It is revealing what we can observe in table 4, as news classified and treated as Hard news correspond to a small percentage of the total sample. Instead, the news that have been classified as Hard news and treated as Soft news represent the majority of the total.

We note that RTVC has the lowest number of Hard news treated as such. In turn, this means it has the highest number of Soft news. IB3 has the highest proportion of Soft News treatment for Hard News. However, CyLTV and NaTV have the more reduced frequency of Hard News treated as Soft news. This implies significant quantitative differences between public broadcasters associated with FORTA, and similarities between private entities. An example of this is the news of Hard news typology and treatment of NaTV and CyLTV, which, considering the proportion of each analyzed news, show a trend toward increasing this type of content.

Table 4. Relationship between type and treatment of the news

RTVC		Treatment		CyLTV		Treatment	
		Hard News	Soft News			Hard News	Soft News
Type	Hard News	4.06%	29.44%	Type	Hard News	14%	33.16%
	Soft News	-	66.50%		Soft News	-	52.85%
IB3		Treatment		NaTV		Treatment	
		Hard News	Soft News			Hard News	Soft News
Type	Hard News	17.49%	31.84%	Type	Hard News	28.13%	38.54%
	Soft News	-	50.67%		Soft News	-	33.33%

Source: Own elaboration.

In this sense, the statistical intersection of variables *Type and Treatment* with a Chi Square Pearson analysis (X1) informs us of the existence or absence of a significant relationship between these variables. Thus, RTVC shows that $\chi(1)=19,298$, $p=.000$ and therefore, the relationship between the type of news and their treatment is significant. Both types Hard news as Soft news are recurrently treated as Soft. In the case of IB3, the results point to the same type of relationship as $\chi(1)=59,376$, $p=.000$. This relationship is, in turn, consistent with the results presented in table 4 where, again, most news of any type are treated as Soft news. CyLTV reproduces the same situation with $\chi(1)= 2,606$, $p=.000$, along with NaTV that, despite having the highest percentage of Hard news type and treatment, suggests a preference for soft treatment of the types of news with $\chi(1)=18.136$, $p=.000$.

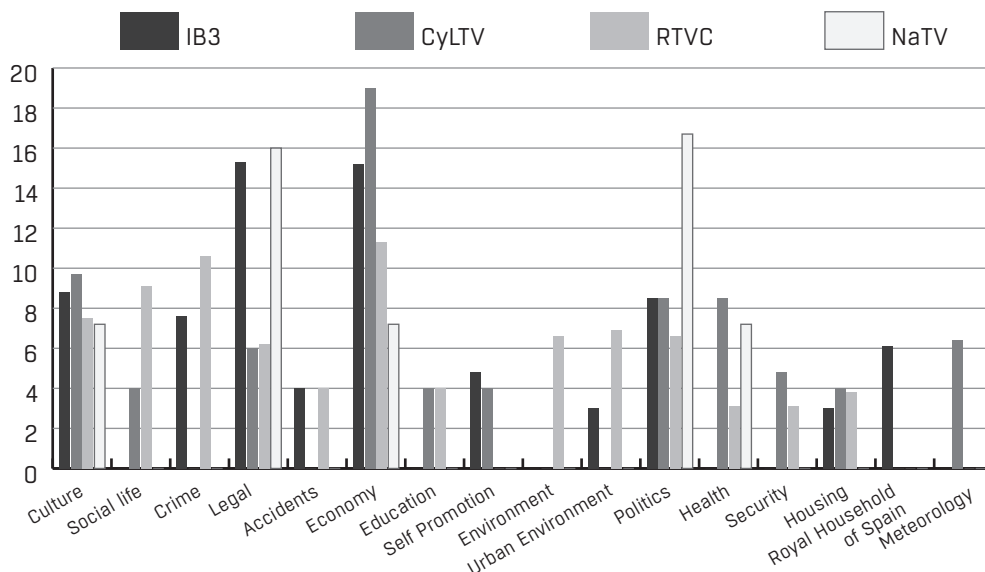
From the point of view of the type and treatment, we can conclude that private regional networks have better information quality. Instead, the fragmentation of issues on public regional networks and the short duration of their news, together with the use of simple structures, is not conducive to a Hard news type and treatment.

SETTING THE AGENDA

The thematic agenda is closely related to the responsibility of the media when it comes to generating an agenda of topics that the audience will prioritize and treat in their day to day, as postulated by the agenda setting. Using the variables that we established in the methodological section, we categorized the main themes of each news item. In this section, we try to determine the thematic selection preferences of information services. We consider two large blocks, which will be detailed in this section: *events or society* and *informative or factual*. The first block is associated, as pointed out in the theoretical framework, to a lower information quality than the latter. Figure 1 presents the distribution of topics treated by each information service.

Figure 1 shows the more highlighted themes for the news services of each of the broadcasters, by their percentage frequency. The *Economic* and *Legal Affairs* categories are shared by all the newscasts. As for the political and events content –broadly–, IB3 and RTVC share information on *Social Life* or *Crime* respectively. Instead, in CyLTV and NaTV the majority of their news

Figure 1. Thematic distribution of information by frequency (%)



Source: Own elaboration.

is dedicated to the political theme, being those that manifest more interest in this issue.

There is a similar presence of the theme *Culture* in all televisions. Finally, we must mention that televisions belonging to FORTA share, through this platform a lot of content, while CyLTV and NaTV are not subject to the guidelines of the agency or have their logistical support. This may be a possible indicator that explains some similarities in both.

To complete this classification, we examine whether there are specific issues that have been channeled and replicated by the networks during the same period. Clearly, these themes are, mostly, with information relating to the national or international geographical area, since regional or local information is reduced to a specific geographical area. Table 5 shows the organization of topics by network and the day they were broadcasted.

Table 5. Distribution of themes on television and broadcast day

Agenda	Networks				Date
	RTVC	IB3	CyLTV	NaTV	
Luis Bárcenas statement about an alleged offense of defamation	•	-	•	•	04/04/2013
2012 income tax campaign	•	•	•	•	
Rain in Spain / Destruction of a wall in Zaragoza	•	-	•	-	
Judge José Castro	-	•	•	•	05/04/2013
Infanta Cristina Indictment suspended for 27 April by the resource from prosecutor	•	•	•	•	
Measure of the Plan for Children and Adolescents of the Council of Ministers	•	•	•	-	
Alert in Spain by bad weather	•	•	-	-	
Appointed the lawyers of the Infanta	-	•	•	•	
South Korea deploys defenses against North Korea	•	•	-	-	08/04/2013
Transparency law and Royal Housing of Spain	-	•	•	-	
Job offer to Inaki Urdangarín in Qatar	•	•	•	-	
The German government calls for new measures of adjustment to Portugal	•	-	•	-	
Sara Montiel dies	•	•	•	-	
Margaret Thatcher dies	•	•	•	•	09/04/2013
CIS barometer	-	•	•	-	
Meeting between Mariano Rajoy and James Cameron	-	-	•	•	
Absolution of Francisco Camps and Ricardo Costa	•	•	•	-	09/04/2013
José Luis Sampedro dies	•	•	•	-	
Funeral of Sara Montiel	•	•	•	-	
Funeral of Margaret Thatcher	•	•	•	-	
Protection Law for Mortgagees	-	-	•	•	

Tabla 5. Continuación

Agenda	Networks				Date
	RTVC	IB3	CyLTV	NaTV	
Brussels warns that Spain will remain in recession in 2014	•	•	-	-	10/04/2013
Prohibition of public denunciations at less than 300 meters	•	-	-	•	
Strike of education in all its stages	•	•	•	-	
Decision of the Board of Andalusia on empty flats of banks and real estate	-	•	•	-	11/04/2013
Fire in the old town of Bermeo	•	•	-	-	
Statements of Joan Tardà in Congress of Deputies	•	•	•	-	
The decree on housing of the Board of Andalusia comes into force shortly	-	•	•	-	12/04/2013
The election campaign in Venezuela finishes	•	-	•	-	
Miguel Sanz statement for the collection of allowances of Caja Navarra	•	-	•	•	
Lower CPI due to the moderation in gasoline and food prices	•	-	•	•	15/04/2013
Nicolás Maduro wins elections in Venezuela	•	•	•	-	
The search for the body of Marta del Castillo resumes	•	•	-	-	
Mariano Rajoy and his wife meets with Pope Francis at the Vatican	•	•	•	-	15/04/2013
Pamplona Mayor Enrique Maya declares in front of the judge	•	-	-	•	

Source: Own elaboration.

The study of agenda setting allows checking that the similarities between RTVC and IB3 are because they share, through FORTA, audiovisual material. As for NaTV and CyLTV, we have also located shared audio or video clips. The themes most repeated by the four television networks were the imputation of Infanta Cristina and successive information about its cause, the 2012 tax income campaign or the autonomic deficit. To a lesser extent, they reproduced information about the election campaign in Venezuela, the (corruption) case *Caja Navarra* and the imputation of Miguel Sanz (Spanish politician)

Finally, the quality from the point of view of the agenda is not particularly outstanding in any network. In a way, a higher percentage of *Public Affairs* news type, to the detriment of the *Social Life* type, does show that

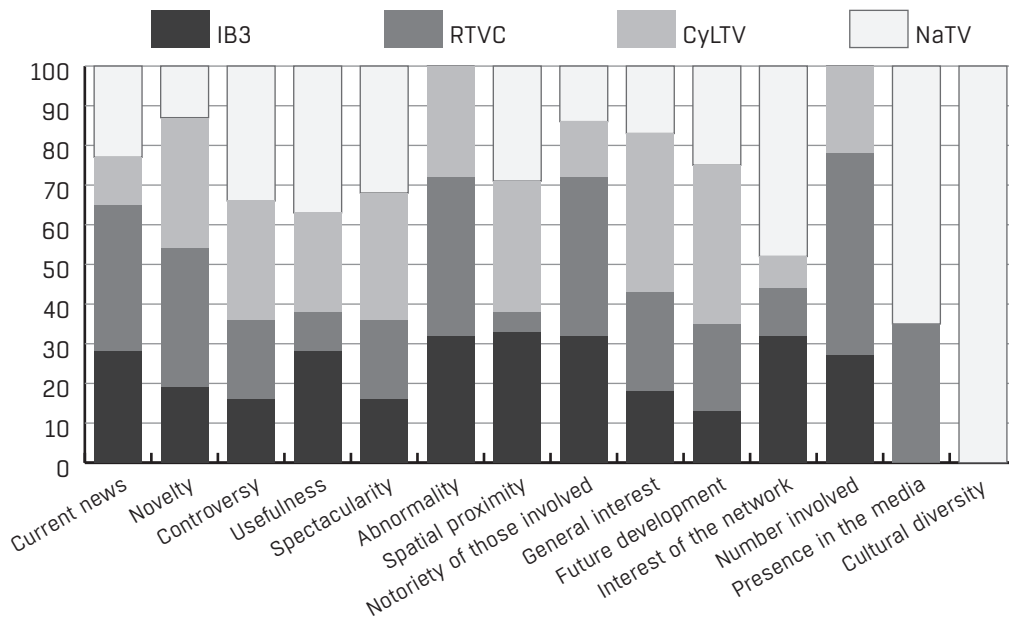
CyLTV and NaTV have better thematic quality. Still, the differences between the two groups are minimal and the fragmentation of the agenda on many issues provides a similar level of quality to all networks.

NEWSWORTHINESS CRITERIA

We observe the relationship that can be established between this criterion and the thematic category to ensure complementarity of both as an indicator of quality. Also, we check if there are significant differences between the four networks. It is useful to observe the distribution of the criteria of newsworthiness in figure 2.

As shown in figure 2, there is a wide range of selection criteria. Some of them are common in several of the analyzed networks and others are characterized by their particularity within the sample. *Current news* is

Figure 2. Distribution of newsworthiness criteria associated with thematic categories according to their cumulative frequency (%)



Source: Own elaboration.

the criteria for newsworthiness most used by IB3, RTVC and NaTV. Instead, CyLTV shows a selection of content mostly based on *Spatial Proximity*. They all share these two criteria, plus others such as *Controversy*. The latter is especially relevant in the selection of information of CyLTV and NaTV. Other criteria of newsworthiness have limited use in the newscasts, as *Presence in the media*, representing a minimum percentage in NaTV and RTVC, or *Cultural Diversity* in NaTV.

All information services share similar newsworthiness criteria in relation to their percentage frequency. Instead, it is possible to observe criteria that only one newscast uses, or the presence of additional selection criteria, whose percentage is minimal. This complementarity allows broadcasters to offer markedly local information, whose media interest focuses on the *General Interest* of the citizens of their autonomous community, in the *Novelty* or the *Usefulness* of the information provided. It is also notable that the criterion *Gender Diversity* was not used in any of the information analyzed or that

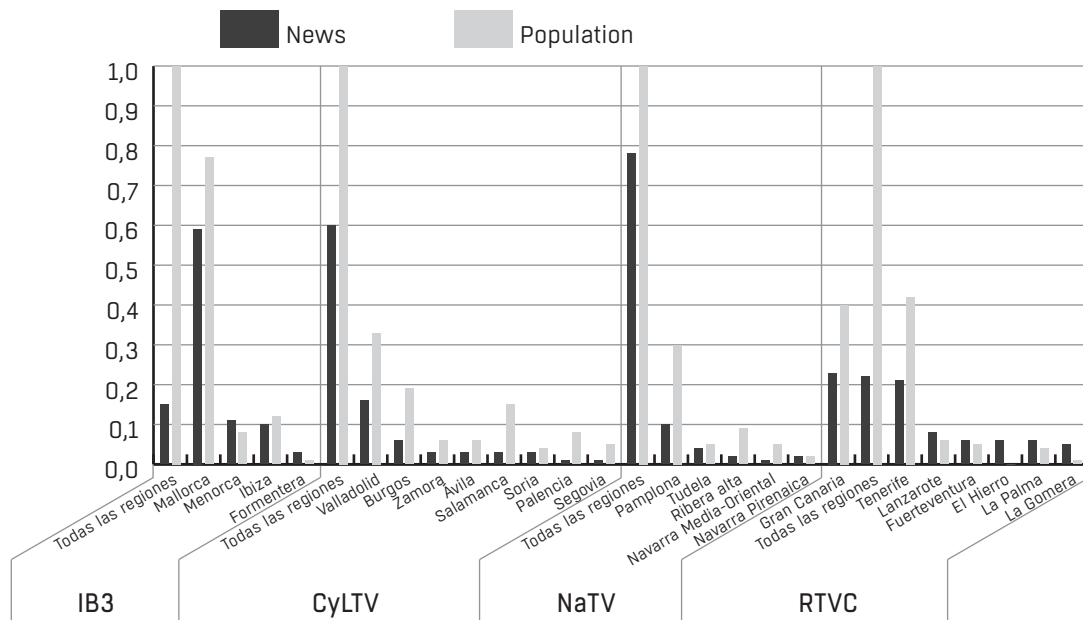
Presence in other media and *Cultural Diversity* have a minimum representation.

Finally, the results show complementarity between the thematic agenda and criteria of newsworthiness. In this case, there is no clear polarization between the group of public and private networks. Quality, from newsworthiness, does not show significantly different levels between the four stations. In any case, the absence of the *Gender Diversity* and *Cultural Diversity* criteria is detrimental to the overall quality of studied networks.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION

Our interest in analyzing this indicator is to check whether, as with the political or thematic agenda, there are representative differences between territories and, therefore, in the amount of information received by the citizens of the least-covered regions. We analyze and quantify the number of stories grouped in three broad geographical areas: regional, national and international. In addition, we classify the news associated with different regions within each community through a specific geographical category.

Figure 3. Distribution of information (%) depending on the specific geographic category and its population (%)



Source: Own elaboration.

The general geographic category shows the generalization of regional information. This is predictable, given the nature of these networks. In particular, NaTV does not offer in its information services any international coverage. Instead, the regional information occupies almost the entire newscast. CyLTV and IB3 show the highest frequency of national coverage, although the regional highlights. By contrast, RTVC is the network which devotes a higher percentage to international information, yet its regional coverage occupies almost the entire time.

With these results, we checked if there are specific geographic dynamics in which some regions were benefited in news coverage. To do this we compared the number of news and the number of people associated with each region to check as possible criteria for newsworthiness. The results are presented in figure 3.

In each of the regions, as seen in figure 3, priority is given to at least one of its regions, which do not always coincide with the provincial capital. IB3 makes a proportional distribution of information

regarding the islands of Mallorca and Formentera. Instead, an imbalance occurs in the covering of the islands of Menorca and Ibiza. In CyLTV, the larger percentage of the regional information is dedicated to all regions, followed by Valladolid. In this case, the imbalance is in relation to the regions of Salamanca, Palencia and Segovia. NaTV presents a similar situation as most of the regional information is dedicated to all regions of Navarre. Finally, RTVC divides its regional information between the islands of Gran Canaria and Tenerife, on one hand, and the remaining five islands of the Canary archipelago, on the other.

This indicator shows no significant differences between all public and private networks, although we see some independent features. The set of private networks devotes a higher percentage to news affecting the regional sphere as a whole. Instead, public regional networks prioritize certain regions, unable to justify from the proportional point of view. Still, by looking at the overall geographical category, all networks dedicate most of the information to the autonomous region.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The proposed indicators provide a new operational tool to assess different aspects of the information quality of regional news programs that expand existing models, such as Journalistic Added Value (VAP, by its Spanish acronym), posed by authors such as Puente, Pellegrini, Alessandri, Porath and Mujica (2003) in their opening article. In fact, the methodology is able to locate common dynamics and significant differences between television information services, as is shown by our results. This model is applicable to all kinds of information services, regardless of their geographical area, whether local, regional or national. In any case, the model will have to adapt its descriptive variables to each case, but their validity will remain unchanged, even in different media systems.

The formal features indicator shows that the investment of resources to develop the news is higher in the group of private regional networks. According Liepins, Porath and Puente (2010), this is synonymous with a more comprehensive information for the audience as it allows to deepen and better understanding of content. Instead, public regional networks prioritize simple structures, although they use live connection more frequently, which is a high-value contextualizing resource, which in turn implies a significant cost for information services.

The type and treatment of news are closer to a model of infotainment than one informative. García Avilés (2007) and Marín Lladó (2012) have treated this model, among others. García Avilés defines it as a new format between information and entertainment, in which “the viewer assumes the news without the rigor and objectivity” (p. 88) of an informative. Specifically, the content of RTVC and IB3 is the closest to this programming and coverage model, with a high percentage of Soft news type and treatment. The tendency of these regional networks follows a path towards a process of sensationalism of information. Some authors –as, for example, Gómez Mompert et al. (2013) – believe that this trend is one of the reasons for the detriment of audiovisual and printed information quality.

The thematic agenda and newsworthiness criteria have been shown as key indicators to explore content settings. The results are complementary to those obtained in type and treatment. Regional networks

channels have to deal with a fragmentation of the agenda, due to their condition of proximity informers (Miguel de Bustos & Casado del Rio, 2012). The balance between this responsibility and offering a diverse agenda that prioritizes issues of *Public Affairs* to the detriment of *Events* is complex. In fact, the results show, based on these indicators, similar quality levels among the four networks' shows. Still, the data related to CyLTV and NaTV show a more balanced agenda and higher quality than their public counterparts in terms of newsworthiness and configuration.

The geographical distribution of the news shows a clear prioritization of content that relates to specific regions within the autonomous communities. The principle of proportionality between the percentage of inhabitants and the percentage of news concerning a territory cannot always be justified. The regions prioritized, based on their autonomous community, are Mallorca (IB3), Gran Canaria and Tenerife (RTVC), Valladolid (CyLTV) and Pamplona (NaTV). In the case of the first two, there is the particularity of insularity, which may play a relevant role in this distribution. It should be mentioned that the information related to all the territories of the autonomous community predominates in all cases except in RTVC. Finally, considering the national and international geographical area, the distribution is uneven among the four televisions. RTVC broadcasts the highest percentage of international news, while NaTV prioritizes national information. CyLTV and IB3 prioritize the national level and provide a small percentage of international information. This distribution is logical, considering the principles of programming of regional TV station.

The implementation of these indicators could impact positively on improving the quality of information. It is necessary to conceptualize and operationalize the concept of quality to develop tools such as the ones proposed here, to account for the quality of contents. This tool focuses on improving aspects of the content broadcasted or manifested of the information service. Improving quality, in a broad sense, also needs changes throughout the production chain. It is about proposing organizational and political changes, economic, ethical and social. Organizational changes must be addressed through studies on journalistic routines (Masip, De la Hera,

Manjón, Pereira & Domingo Santa María, 2010; Meijer, 2003; Retis, Lamuedra & García Matilla, 2010, Aguilar-Paredes, Gómez-Domínguez, Villanueva Baselga & Sánchez-Gómez, 2015) conducted by information professionals. Political and economic changes require research to reveal how political actors are represented according to the editorial line, the professional ideology and ownership of the media. The ethical dimension involves paying attention to

codes of conduct and responsibilities of media and professionals in the development of content (Alsus et al., 2010). Finally, the social aspect is related to the responsibilities of public service attributed to the media and especially the regional media (Palacio, 2006). Therefore, future work on the quality of the content of news programs should be complemented by studies on the journalistic work and receipt of content, which allows providing an overview on media quality.

FOOTNOTES

1. The General Audiovisual Communication Law 7/2010 of 31 March and its subsequent amendments provide that in the case of absence of a public service provider for regional television of a community, private groups, through competition and respecting the public service obligations, can provide this service
2. FORTA is a platform composed of various public regional televisions. Its main function is managing the content of the associated televisions. This management includes the purchase and transfer of content between televisions partnership, thus saving costs.

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