Characteristics of the news programs of TVE, Tele 5, Antena 3, La Sexta and Cuatro: analysis of 149 news programs (2018-2024)

Características de los informativos de TVE, Tele 5, Antena 3, La Sexta y Cuatro: análisis de 149 informativos (2018-2024)

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ABSTRACT
Introduction: The "Observatory of the Quality of Information on Television" (OCITV) aims to determine the formal characteristics, content and treatment of the main state television news programs in Spain. **Methodology:** Preference was given to quantitative content analysis on a sample of 149 news programs (6.289 news items). **Results:** The average duration of the news programs is around 37 minutes and that of the news items that make them up is 47 seconds. There is a predominance of the queue format and the news genre. There is a preference for information framed in Spain. There is a strong presence of the citizenry as an informative agent that addresses information and that is addressed in the media. The President of the Government of Spain is the person with the highest news presence. Most of the information fits into the area of Society. Neutral current affairs image and informative tone prevail. **Discussion:** Quantitative analyses always present limitations and weaknesses, but they are undoubtedly valuable. The OCITV offers a relevant volume of analysis that allows projecting trends and validating with statistical results hypotheses from other research, such as the trend of television information to spectacularization and infotainment. **Conclusions:** In general, it can be said that news programs have a high audiovisual rhythm, superficial journalistic treatment of the topics, deficient use of sources and a notable imbalance of gender presence. They are very biased towards the male presence. There is a strong influence of hyper-events or news booms around a given topic. Different ways of dealing with information through the use of images and rhetorical tones were observed among the different channels analyzed.

Keywords: television; information; news; Observatory; content analysis.

RESUMEN
Introducción: El "Observatorio de la Calidad de la Información en Televisión" (OCITV) pretende aquí determinar las características formales, de contenido y tratamiento de los principales informativos de televisión estatales en España. **Metodología:** Recurrimos preferentemente al análisis cuantitativo de contenido sobre una muestra de 149 informativos (6.289 piezas). **Resultados:** La duración media de los informativos se sitúa en torno a los 37 minutos y la de las piezas que los integran en 47 segundos. Predominan el formato colas y el género noticia. Información preferentemente enmarcada en España. Fuerte presencia de la ciudadanía como agente informativo que habla y del que se habla. El presidente del Gobierno de España es el personaje con mayor presencia informativa. La mayor parte de las informaciones encajan en el área de Sociedad. Priman la imagen de actualidad neutra y el tono informativo**. Discusión:** Los análisis cuantitativos siempre presentan limitaciones y debilidades, pero son indudablemente valiosos. El OCITV ofrece un relevante volumen de análisis que permite proyectar tendencias y validar con resultados estadísticos hipótesis de otras investigaciones, como la propensión de la información televisiva a la espectacularización y al

infoentretenimiento. **Conclusiones:** En general, puede hablarse de informativos con alto ritmo audiovisual, tratamiento periodístico superficial de los temas, deficiente recurso a fuentes y notable desequilibrio de presencia de género, muy decantado hacia la presencia masculina. Fuerte influencia de hiperacontecimientos o *booms* informativos en torno a un tema. Se aprecian diferentes maneras de afrontar la información por uso de imágenes y tonos retóricos entre las distintas cadenas analizadas.

Palabras clave: televisión; información; informativos; Observatorio; análisis de contenido.

1. INTRODUCTION

Television news —paradigm of current affairs information— are particularly relevant in the creation of the public space and play a significant role in the process of shaping reality; in the formation of citizens' knowledge on various issues and, consequently, in the political, economic and social decision-making processes themselves. News programs are, in short, a powerful way of representing the world through images and sounds and, although in the current digital environment they no longer have a monopoly on the construction of socio-political reality (Ardanza-Ruíz & Lavín, 2021; Zabala-Cía et al., 2022; Arce et al., 2023).They continue to be the medium through which most people are informed in Spain (CIS, 2023) and about which citizens continue to have a high degree of trust as a source of information (Newman et al., 2023; Eguzkitza et al., 2023).

While from the 1960s to the end of the 20th century television was the most frequent subject of communication studies, so far in the 21st century, most researchers have changed their approach and have focused more on the phenomenon of virtual communication. Traditional television may have lost some of its appeal as an object of study for many researchers and it is true that news consumption is increasingly multimedia (Arjona, 2021; Marín, 2021; Abdullah et al., 2022), but for the vast majority of citizens, as shown by numerous recent sociological studies (e.g., CIS, 2023), television news remains their main information reference.

Television is the main source of information in Spain in all age groups over 35 years of age, but it also has a strong influence among the 18–34-year-old audience (CIS, 2023). Nor should it be forgotten that much of the multimedia consumption that has displaced classic linear television consumption is still, in the end, television consumption, even if in digital environments, which means that the younger audience also watches television news, although in many cases they only consult clips of these news programs on social networks or other web windows. In short, a lot of informative television continues to be consumed on the Internet.

The strength of television as a news medium is clearly shown by data such as the fact that every day between 2 p. m. and 4 p. m., more than 6 million people watch one of the state television news programs in Spain (TVE1, Antena 3, Tele 5 and La Sexta), according to data from Kantar Media in 2024. This figure would increase if regional news programs were included and, even more, if delayed viewings were added through other online windows, including the aforementioned fragments of newscasts present in social networks (Martínez-Sala et al., 2021; Caldevilla-Domínguez et al., 2021).

Based on the validity of informative television, the "Observatory of the Quality of Information on Television" (OCITV) was born, a consolidated research project of the Complutense University of Madrid that aims to study/analyze television news programs. The OCITV has been analyzing more than 10.000 news items of more than 200 television news programs from the five major Spanish television networks uninterruptedly since 2014 (TVE1, Antena 3, Cuatro, Tele 5 and La Sexta). Its currently seven members —the analysts— are university professors who are experts in television news, many of them also with very extensive professional careers in the field of audiovisual journalism. The research proposal being presented has several works as reference frameworks (e.g., Humanes, 2001, 2013; Soengas, 2005, 2007; Fernández, 2007) that have studied the newscasts of different television channels and that also employ samples, if limited in time, to verify specific

hypotheses and whose conceptual framework are the theories of agenda setting, newsworthiness criteria (news values), news framing and infotainment. The main difference between the aforementioned research and the project presented here lies in the fact that the former does not maintain continuity and, in general, these studies tend to be very critical of the quality of the information broadcast.

2. OBJECTIVES

The main general objective of the OCITV in the field of research is the study of television news programs in their different formats and genres, but with a permanent monitoring of daily news programs as a substantial element of the Spanish news ecosystem. This study takes on value over time, since it is possible to detect the evolution of these programs and, consequently, of Spanish society itself. It also seeks to promote debate on the importance of television information in a democratic, pluralistic, tolerant and inclusive society and to address and describe the way in which television news programs construct reality. In its *Global Risks Report 2024*, the World Economic Forum identifies disinformation and misinformation as one of the main risks worldwide at this time and the most serious in the short term, specifically for the next two years. In view of this scenario, we believe that the proposal of the OCITV is particularly relevant.

The specific objective of this article is the study of the main formal and content characteristics of the Spanish television news programs of the five major state-owned generalist channels, which also leads to insights into the quality of information (Anderson & Egglestone, 2012; Esser & Umbrich, 2013), based on two main parameters: pluralism (Díaz-Arias, 2000) and the professional treatment of information (Beder, 2004). Pluralism includes the diversity of locations, news agents and topics; while professional treatment refers to the use of sources, information balance, genres and formats and the use of hard/soft information (Sparks & Tulloch, 2000; Dader, 2007). That is to say, beyond the mere recording of statistical data, the aim here is to determine whether relevant parameters are met, such as the representation of plural points of view, the degree of contextualization of the information, the facts and people that stand out the most and, of course, the sources used and their type.

3. METHODOLOGY

The main daily television news programs are the universe being studied. The unit of analysis is the news item, understood as individualized information in a presentation format. The sample, limited from the beginning of the project to the news programs of TVE1, Antena 3, Cuatro[1], Tele 5 and La Sexta, is composed of newscasts of all days, including weekends, since these last ones are considered to be important as they usually have a greater presence of infotainment content. The midday and evening editions are included, excluding morning and early morning programs, which have a lower audience and, in general, are dependent on the content of the main news programs. The complete news programs are analyzed, from the incoming headline to the outgoing headline, excluding advertising blocks and autonomous sports and weather programs, except in the case of TVE1, the only channel that includes sports information as a block within the newscast itself. This does not mean that sports information (or meteorological information) is absent from the news programs of other channels, where it frequently appears in summaries, previews or in news items within the news block itself, as it happens relatively frequently with the weather.

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[1] *Cuatro* stopped broadcasting daily news programs with a classic format (*Noticias Cuatro*) in mid-February 2019, replaced then by the magazine program *Cuatro al Día*, which explains its lower presence in the sample of this paper. However, despite the limitation of its sample, it was considered enriching to include it in the analysis as well. On January 29, 2024, *Cuatro* resumed its own-produced news services under its classic name of *Noticias Cuatro*.

The project's driving force is a permanent technological platform for content analysis, an interactive analysis tool (HA) of intuitive use that has been created ad hoc for the OCITV. It is a NoSQL database whose code is developed in the GitHub repository on *Angular* language and mounted on Google's FireBase application platform. The seven analysts that currently make up the OCITV access the HA by username and password and proceed manually to data coding. The process of data collection in the HA by the analysts is relatively simple using drop-down lists and fields open to text entry (Figure 1). The HA has a very useful feature, which is to display the definitions of each variable in a pop-up window (tooltip), making the coding protocol more accessible to analysts on a field-by-field basis (Annex 1).

Figure 1: *Details of the HA.*

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Together with the HA, the OCITV has implemented its own data processing tool (HE), the work of Professor Felix Hernando Mansilla, with which the unstructured data collected in the analyses (HA) are converted into a structured SQL database. To do this, the JSON file generated by the HA is exported from Firebase to an intermediate application that structures the data and finally gives rise to a structured SQL database, the basis of the HE. With the HE it is possible to:

1) sort, filter and cross-reference the different variables, obtaining data tables, directly exportable to Excel;

2) search for news items of information by different criteria, a function that is useful both for debugging possible errors in the HA database and for grouping information for a more detailed qualitative analysis;

3) obtain in the HE application itself graphs of results. HE, therefore, not only makes it possible to obtain quantitative results of the informative analyses performed, but also to retrieve the informative news items that respond to a query, in which the various logical operators applied to both the values of the variables and the text included in the Headline field can be used. More detailed qualitative analyses can also be performed on the basis of the search results.

In a content analysis study, once the universe, sample and unit of analysis have been established, a coding sheet must be prepared with the variables under study and their possible values (Annex 1). The coding sheet, inspired by the work of Galtung and Ruge (1965) and Fernández (2007), has between 30 and 36 variables (some are dependent on others) and each variable has multiple values of different nature. For each piece of information, analysts fill out a form in the MT with the different variables and their corresponding values (Figure 1 and Annex 1).

The OCITV tries to measure the quality of news within a concept of journalistic accuracy based on the requirements of depersonalization, balance, precision and accuracy, which, according to the authors, are still valid, because the alternative is pure subjectivism, militant journalism or sectarian journalism (Díaz-Arias et al., 2015). Professional organizations have made a great effort to systematize these criteria in the form of deontological mandates and standards of good practice. The applied methodology makes it possible to clarify whether relevant parameters are met, such as the representation of plural points of view, the degree of contextualization of the information, the facts that stand out the most and, of course, the sources used and their type. This is in the wake of works such as those of Esser and Umbrich (2013), who apply five variables for the analysis of objectivity: points of view, expert sources, data-centered structure and formal separation between facts and opinions; or those of Anderson and Egglestone (2012), who measure quality through a qualitative matrix that addresses the criteria of selection (news values), assessment (hierarchy), sources, context, depth and formal quality, which they relate to a better understanding of the information.

The variables of analysis are organized around the lengths, formats and genres of the news items (Figure 1); the scope and location of the information (places); 'who is talking' (sources); 'who is being talked about'; 'what is being talked about' and 'treatment' (editorial assessment, type of images, presence or absence of labels and type of labels, role of the reporter, rhetorical treatments, balance, contextualization, relationship with the chain). Variables can include free text (e.g., the headline of the news item); closed list or controlled language (e.g., list of Autonomous Communities); tag cloud or free language (e.g., municipalities); or numerical scale (e.g., rating, balance, number of times). Closed-list variables are presented as drop-downs with either a single response (e.g., Autonomous Communities), or multiple response (e.g., type of labels used, which can be of several types in the same piece). The tag cloud variables allow the analyst to enter a short string of characters (descriptors or unit terms) in the HA, but the system suggests, depending on the characters that the analyst enters in the corresponding box, already existing tags to standardize the database and group the information. In summary, the HA offers variables that are significant categories (e.g., list of Autonomous Communities or list of categories of information agents) to which is added the creation of 'key-word variables' that complement the 'category-variables'. The 'category-variables' have pre-established values (closed lists in drop-down menus), while in the 'keyword-variables' the coder adds new values as they are detected (e.g., incorporating the name of new places where the information is produced or the name of new people who speak or are spoken about).

In the design of the variables of analysis, especially in the formal treatment, the professional practices of segmentation, ordering and evaluation of the information have been taken into account. For example, the relationship between formats/genres that television news programs use for each news event largely defines the importance that each news item has aroused for the editors (responsible for each edition of the news program). The most basic formats, such as tails and briefs, usually have short durations (15-30 seconds). VTRs (preceded or not by an entrance on set) are the most elaborate formats and usually exceed one minute or even two minutes in length. Other outstanding formats are the direct ones, which involve the displacement of reporters or special correspondents. Genres, on the other hand, respond to the treatment that editors decide to give to each news item. Thus, in a basic news item, the essential information of the event is simply collected, while a report goes deeper, offering contextual details, including statements, etc. Chronicles, in turn, offer a detailed account of events that took place over a period of time (parliamentary sessions, court sessions, sports competitions, accidents, natural catastrophes, etc.). This distinction therefore helps to clarify, together with the rest of the variables designed by the OCITV, the quality with which the topics are treated at the journalistic level (Aparicio, 2022).

As in other similar research, in the proposed model of analysis, there are also variables of valuation of places, people talked about, and topics talked about. Most frequently, a scale of positive, negative and neutral is used (e.g., Humanes, 2001), but there are also scales indicating 1 to 5 ratings (e.g., Aday et al., 2005), which is the one used by the OCITV, where 1 represents very negative; 2, negative; 3, neutral; 4, positive and 5, very positive. It should be noted that these ratings respond to the subjective impression perceived by the analyst, as opposed to the (more objective) data recording (e.g., the number of times a character speaks). It is not within the scope of this article to include results regarding ratings.

As Hidalgo (2019, p. 28) points out, in the process of knowledge construction in social research there are qualitative and quantitative studies. Quantitative research allows a rigorous, systematic and objective approach to the study of a reality, relying mainly on the analysis of categorical and numerical variables and preferably using statistical techniques that allow showing the trend of the data and establishing, through functional relationships, the interrelation and dependence of variables for explanatory and predictive purposes. The quantitative approach makes it possible to test hypotheses and establish relationships between variables from a logical/positivist perspective (Igartua, 2006). Criticisms that accuse quantitative analysis of being reductionist perhaps belong to a stage that has already been overcome, prior to a new era in which it is considered that these measurements can also be extraordinarily useful (Tilles, 2016). The analyses themselves yield basically quantitative results. It is true that quantitative research in the Social Sciences has limitations and shortcomings and, therefore, must be supplemented with qualitative research. However, quantitative results provide clues for the subsequent development of qualitative and more specific studies based on the information collected (Bardin, 1986; Krippendorf, 1990).

In the case of this study, the sample is composed of 149 newscasts and 6.289 news items (table 1) corresponding to the months of March, April, November and December 2018 (28 newscasts); April and November 2019 (48 newscasts); April, November and December 2021 (49 newscasts); December 2022 (8 newscasts); December 2023 (8 newscasts) and January 2024 (8 newscasts). The OCITV generally analyzes news programs in two annual rounds (autumn-winter and spring). Among all the analysis rounds carried out by the OCITV, the aforementioned have been selected because they are not particularly dominated by hyper-events, information peaks or news booms around a topic (e.g., COVID-19, *procès*, elections, wars, controversial laws, etc.), which would alter the results of a study, such as this one, which seeks to offer a description as generic as possible of the formal, treatment and content aspects of the 'standard' state television news programs in Spain. This is the reason why, for example, this analysis does not include news items from the spring 2020 news peak, in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, on which, moreover, the ICCTO published a specific paper (Díaz Arias et al., 2021). However, as it will be seen in the results, it is difficult to avoid certain influences of such hyper-events or news booms. Seventy-four midday and 75 evening news programs are collected here.

Table 1. *Sample description*.

	Number of news programs	%N	Number of news items	%N
Total	149	100%	6.289	100%
Cuatro	5	3,35%	145	2,30%
A3	36	24,16%	1.578	25,09%
T5	36	24,16%	1.669	26,53%
La Sexta	36	24,16%	1.356	21,56%
TVE	36	24,16%	1.541	24,50%

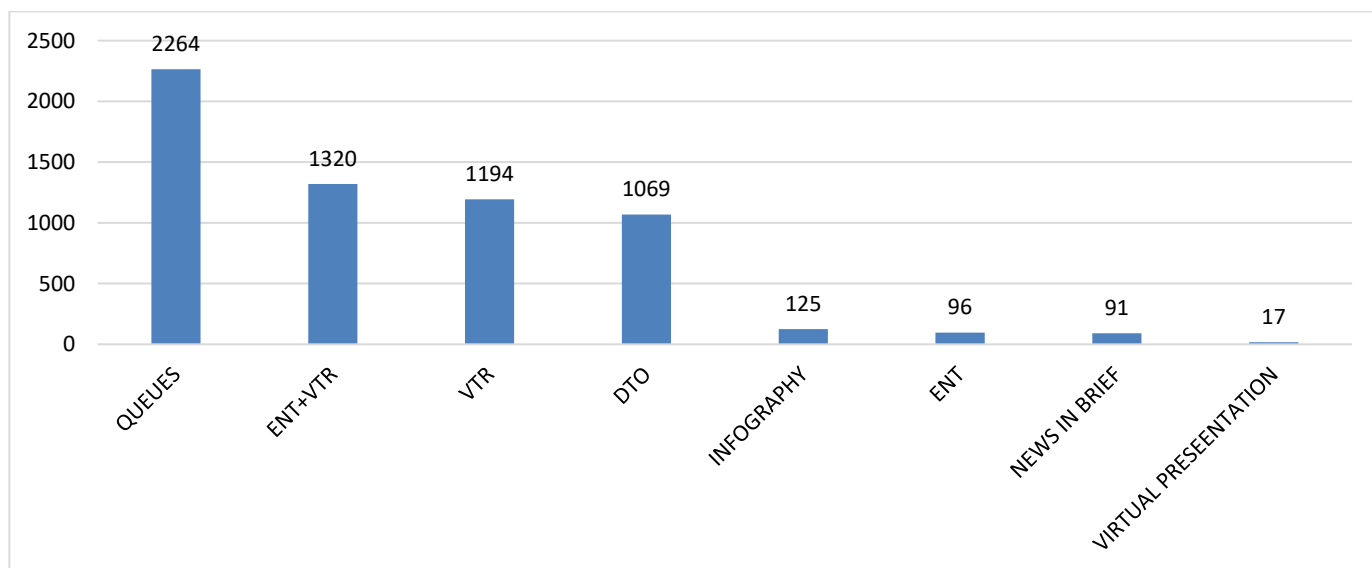**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

4. RESULTS

The average duration of the news programs analyzed was 37,43 minutes. The longest news programs are those of TVE, with an average duration of 45,25 minutes, and the shortest are those of Cuatro, with an average of 24,70 minutes. It should be remembered that, in the case of TVE, the sports section is integrated into the newscast itself and, therefore, forms part of the analysis, something that does not happen in the case of the other four channels, whose sports section is detached from the main newscast. Except for Antena 3, the average length of the evening newscasts is longer than that of the midday newscasts.

In terms of news items, the 36 Tele 5 news programs analyzed yielded a total of 1.669 news items compared to 1.541 news items for TVE in its 36 news programs analyzed. Antena 3 and La Sexta recorded 1.578 and 1.356 news items, respectively. The average duration of the news items was 47.33 seconds. In terms of channels, La Sexta offers the longest average length of news items (57,78 seconds), followed by TVE (54,10 seconds), Cuatro (50,78 seconds), Tele 5 (43,67 seconds) and Antena 3 (41,11 seconds).

The most used format in general is the 'queue' format (2.264 news items, 36% of the total) (Figure 2). Next, the following formats are used: the 'lead-in plus video' format (ENT+VTR) (1,320 news items, 21% of the total), video (VTR) (1.194 news items, 19% of the total), direct (DTO) (1.069 news items, 17% of the total), 'infographic presentation' (125 news items, 2% of the total), 'presentations or study lead-ins' (ENT) (96 news items, 1,5% of the total), 'briefs' (91 news items, 1,4% of the total) and 'virtual presentation' (17 news items, 0,27% of the total). In all five channels (table 2), the predominant format is the 'queue' format, with TVE as the channel that most uses it of the five analyzed channels (it is also the one using ENT+VTR the most). Tele 5 is the channel that makes most use of DTO and VTR. Antena 3 is by far the channel that makes most use of 'infographic presentation' and 'virtual presentation', although this channel shows some differences in this regard between the noon and evening newscasts

Figure 2: *Formats most commonly used in news items.*

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The predominant genre is the news genre (4.093 news items of the 6.289 total, 65% of the total) (Figure 3), followed by the chronicle (703 news items, 11% of the total), the report (684 news items, slightly more than 10% of the total), statements (385 news items, 6% of the total), the briefing (371 news items, almost 6% of the total) and, with a more limited presence, the interview (27 news items), the survey (15 news items) and the press conference (11 news items).

Figure 3: *Predominant genres in news items*.
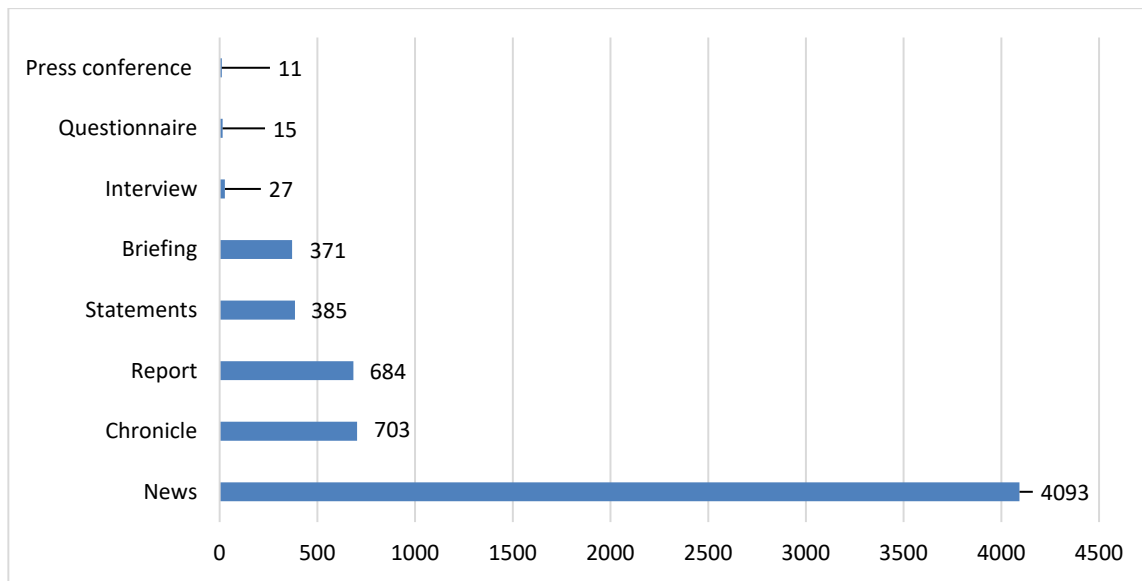
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The news genre is the most frequently used by all channels (table 2). In Antena 3, Tele 5 and Cuatro, the second most used genre is the chronicle, while in TVE and La Sexta the second most used genre, after the news, is the report. The highest average lengths of the news items with news genre are found in Cuatro (43,81 seconds) and TVE (43,30 seconds). The longest average duration of news items with chronicle format is found in La Sexta (79,51 seconds) and in this same channel the longest average duration of reports (106,07 seconds), ahead of TVE (96,77 seconds of average duration of its reports).

Table 2. *Most used formats and genres per channel*.

TVE	4 most used formats	1. Queues 2. ENT+VTR 3. VTR 4. DTO
	4 most used genres	1. News 2. Chronicle 3. Report 4. Statement
Antena 3	4 most used formats	1. Queues 2. DTO 3. ENT+VTR 4. Infographic pres.
	4 most used genres	1. News 2. Chronicle 3. Statement 4. Briefing
Tele 5	4 most used formats	1. Queues 2. DTO 3. VTR 4. ENT+VTR
	4 most used genres	1. News 2. Chronicle 3. Report 4. Briefing
La Sexta	4 most used formats	1. Queues 2. ENT+VTR 3. VTR 4. DTO
	4 most used genres	1. News 2. Report 3. Chronicle 4. Statement
Cuatro	4 most used formats	1. Queues 2. ENT+VTR 3. DTO 4. VTR
	4 most used genres	1. News 2. Chronicle 3. Statement 4. Report

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Out of the 6.289 news items analyzed, 3.972 (63% of the total) were national, 1.205 (19%) were international, 918 (13%) were local and 194 (3%) were global. In all channels, the national scope is predominant, followed by the international scope, except for Tele 5, where the local scope (284 news items) is behind the national (928 news items) and ahead of the international (235 news items). In accordance with the preferred national scope of the news items, the country with the most news items is Spain, followed by the United States (second), the United Kingdom (third), France, Italy, Russia, Germany, Belgium, China and Bolivia, to name the top ten in order of importance. In all channels, Spain is the country with the most information, followed by the United States and the United Kingdom.

Some 47% of the news items analyzed have sources (2.956 news items) and 53% lack them (3.333 news items). In terms of channels, TVE, La Sexta and Cuatro broadcast more news items with sources than without them. The channel that broadcasts more news items with sources is TVE (741 out of 1.356) and the one that broadcasts more news items without them is Tele 5 (902 out of 1.669). According to the type of sources, the most common is 'direct source' (not 'totals' or statements of people on camera, but the reporter quotes the source in the case of people that do not make statements on camera), followed by 'generic source' (e.g., 'according to sources of the investigation') and, very rarely, 'confidential source'. With regard to statements made by individuals on camera ('totals'), 6.834 'totals' were found in the sample analyzed, 4.300 by men and 2.534 by women (Figure 4). In all channels, the presence of men predominates over that of women in the statements. Tele 5 is the channel with the most statements made by women (753 by women compared to 1.142 by men); Antena 3 is the one with the smallest difference between male (891) and female (564) 'totals'; La Sexta is the one with the largest difference between male (1.208) and female (613) 'totals'.

Figure 4: *Gender share in the "totals" of the analyzed news programs.*
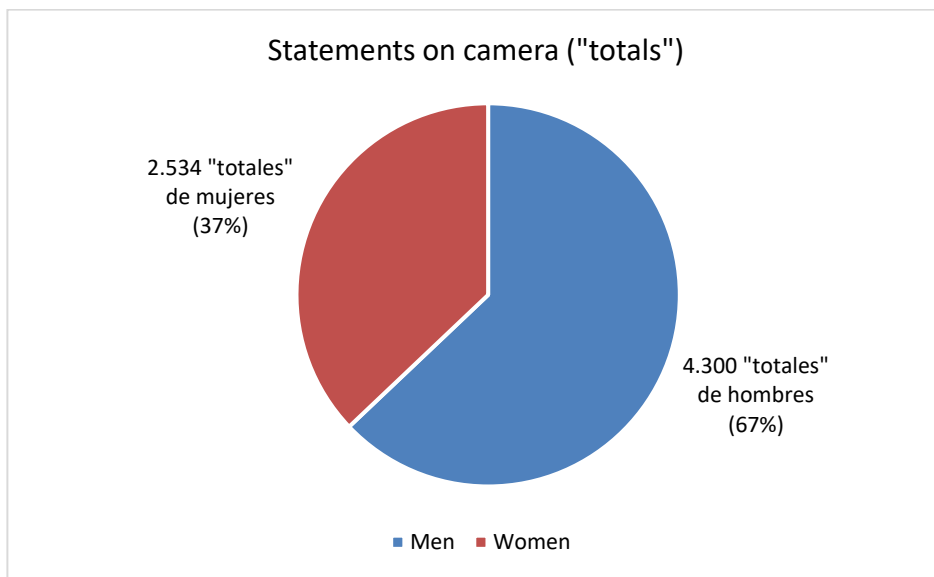
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In terms of news agents, the OCITV analyzes 'who speaks' and 'who is spoken about' in the news programs. According to categories, the news agent who speaks the most is by far the citizens (national or international individuals who speak or are mentioned without a special role), who are the leading news agent in 703 of the total number of occasions (Figure 5). The second most frequently mentioned news agent by category are professionals (doctors, lawyers, sociologists, etc.), who appear as the main agent in 517 news items. In third place is the Spanish Government (mainly the president and ministers), with 301 news items. In fourth place are the governments of autonomous communities (214 news items), followed by 'other opposition parties in Spain' (196 news items), the 'main opposition party in Spain' (152 news items) and 'business organizations and entrepreneurs' (123 news items). 'Sportsmen and sports organizations' (107 news items) and artists (102 news items) also occupy significant places in the informative treatment. At the bottom of the list of talking news agents are farmers (2 news items). Regarding specific people who speak in the news programs analyzed (the dates on which there are more news programs analyzed must be taken into account), we found 3.591 agents in the sample analyzed. The specific person who appears most often is Pedro Sánchez, who speaks on 191 occasions, followed by Pablo Casado (106 occasions), Pablo Iglesias (85 occasions), Albert Rivera (57 occasions), Cristina Cifuentes (41 occasions), Santiago Abascal (37 occasions), Carmen Calvo (35 occasions), Alberto Núñez Feijóo (34), Inés Arrimadas (33 occasions) and Fernando Simón (22 occasions). Outside the national sphere, the person who speaks the most in the selected sample is Donald Trump (25 occasions).

Figure 5: *Presence of news agents in the news according to category.*
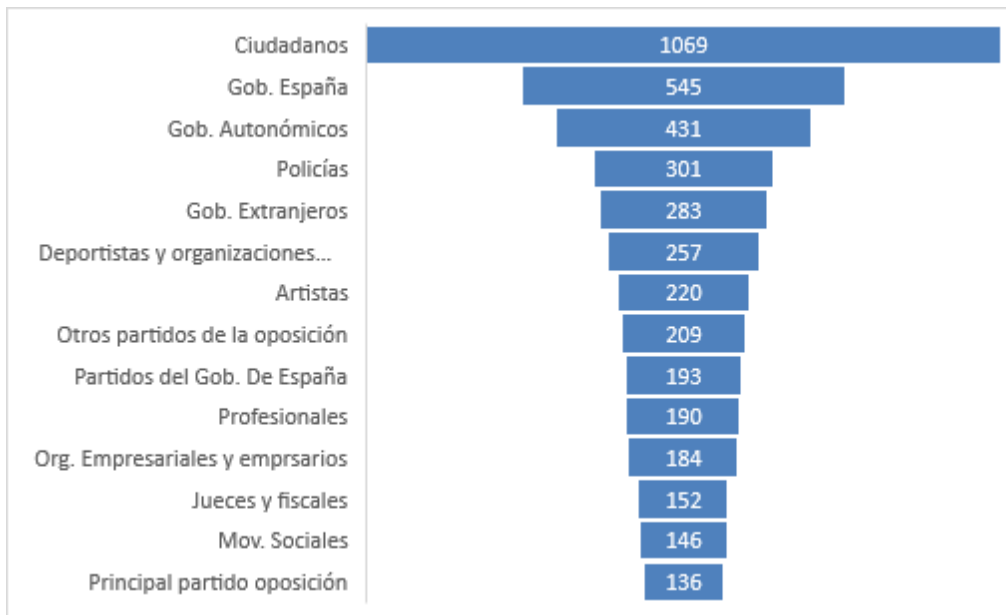

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

From the analyzed sample (the dates in which there are more news programs being analyzed must be taken into account), the major political referents by news presence (in terms of 'who speaks') are three: Pedro Sánchez (President of the Government of Spain since 2018 and leader of the PSOE since 2017), Pablo Casado (leader of the Partido Popular, the main opposition party, from 2018 to 2022) and Pablo Iglesias (second vice-president of the Government between 2020 and 2021 and leader of Podemos until 2021). The greatest presence of these three figures is found on La Sexta, with a notable difference over the rest of the networks. On La Sexta there is a very similar presence of Pablo Casado and Pablo Iglesias, slightly above Pedro Sánchez. On Antena 3, Casado and Sánchez 'speak' equally and slightly above Iglesias. On Tele 5 and TVE, Sánchez 'speaks' more than Casado, and Iglesias has the least visibility on these two channels.

With regard to 'who is being talked about' in the news programs under analysis (Figure 6), it is once again citizens as a category who top the list, with 1.069 news items (17% of the total). In second place, the Government of Spain (545 news items), followed by the Governments of Autonomous Communities (431 news items); police (301 news items); foreign governments (283 news items); sportsmen and sports organizations (257 news items); artists (220 news items); other opposition parties in Spain (209 news items); parties of the Government of Spain (193 news items); professionals (190 news items); business organizations and entrepreneurs (184 news items); judges and prosecutors (152 news items); social movements (146) and the main opposition party in Spain (136 news items). The person most talked about in the selected sample is Pedro Sánchez (157 occasions), followed by Pablo Iglesias (78 occasions), Donald Trump (75 occasions), Carles Puigdemont (70 occasions) [his news presence reappears strongly in late 2023 and early 2024], Qim Torra (61 occasions), Alberto Núñez Feijóo (60 occasions), Francisco Franco (55 occasions), Santiago Abascal (53 occasions), Pablo Casado (53 occasions), Cristina Cifuentes (43 occasions), King Felipe VI (41 occasions), Joe Biden (40 occasions), Diana Quer (35 occasions) and José Enrique Abuín (30 occasions), Theresa May (32 occasions), Vladimir Putin (30) and Benjamin Netanyahu (16 occasions). In the analysis, Bildu, Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya and the CDR ("Committees for the Defense of the Republic", Catalonia) also have a significant presence in this section.

**Figure 6:** *Who is talked about in the news items under analysis*.

Ciudadanos	1069
Gob. España	545
Gob. Autonómicos	431
Policías	301
Gob. Extranjeros	283
Deportistas y organizaciones...	257
Artistas	220
Otros partidos de la oposición	209
Partidos del Gob. De España	193
Profesionales	190
Org. Empresariales y emprsarios	184
Jueces y fiscales	152
Mov. Sociales	146
Principal partido oposición	136

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Although, as mentioned above, the aim was to find a sample of analyzed news programs in which there were no major distortions in their characteristics, topics and news agents derived from the presence of hyper-events, in order to offer a description of standard news programs, here it is possible to see traces of such hyper-events, such as the notable presence of Quim Torra and Carles Puigdemont, Francisco Franco, Cristina Cifuentes, Diana Quer and José Enrique Abuín, Theresa May, Benjamin Netanyahu or even King Felipe VI himself and Joe Biden. The explanation lies in the fact that some of the news programs analyzed are from November 2019, when the events of October 1 of the same year in Catalonia were still going on. The same happens with the trial for the murder of Diana Quer by José Enrique Abuín, or the exhumation of Franco's remains from the Valley of the Fallen, or the Cifuentes case, or the presidential elections in the United States, or the arrival and departure of Theresa May as head of the British Government. In the December 2023 and January 2024 news programs under analysis, there is a strong presence of personalities related to the Israeli-Palestinian war, such as Benjamin Netanyahu or Hamas.

Regarding 'what is talked about' in the news programs under analysis (Figure 7), in terms of major thematic areas, the first place was given to 'society' (2.971 occasions), followed by 'politics in Spain' (1.650 occasions), international issues (762 occasions), economy (584 occasions), culture (302 occasions), sports (284 occasions) and infotainment (266 occasions).

Figure 7: *Main thematic areas (What is being talked about).*
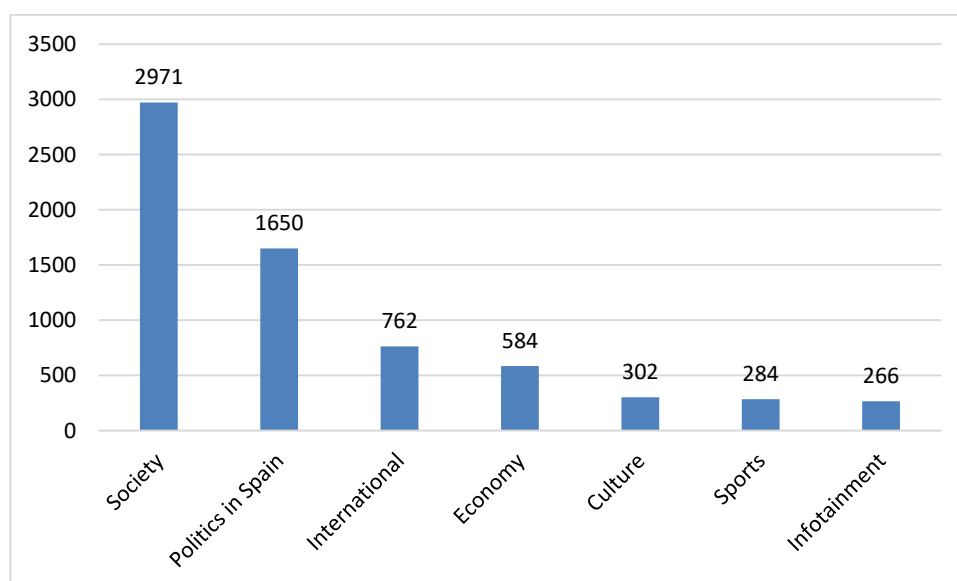
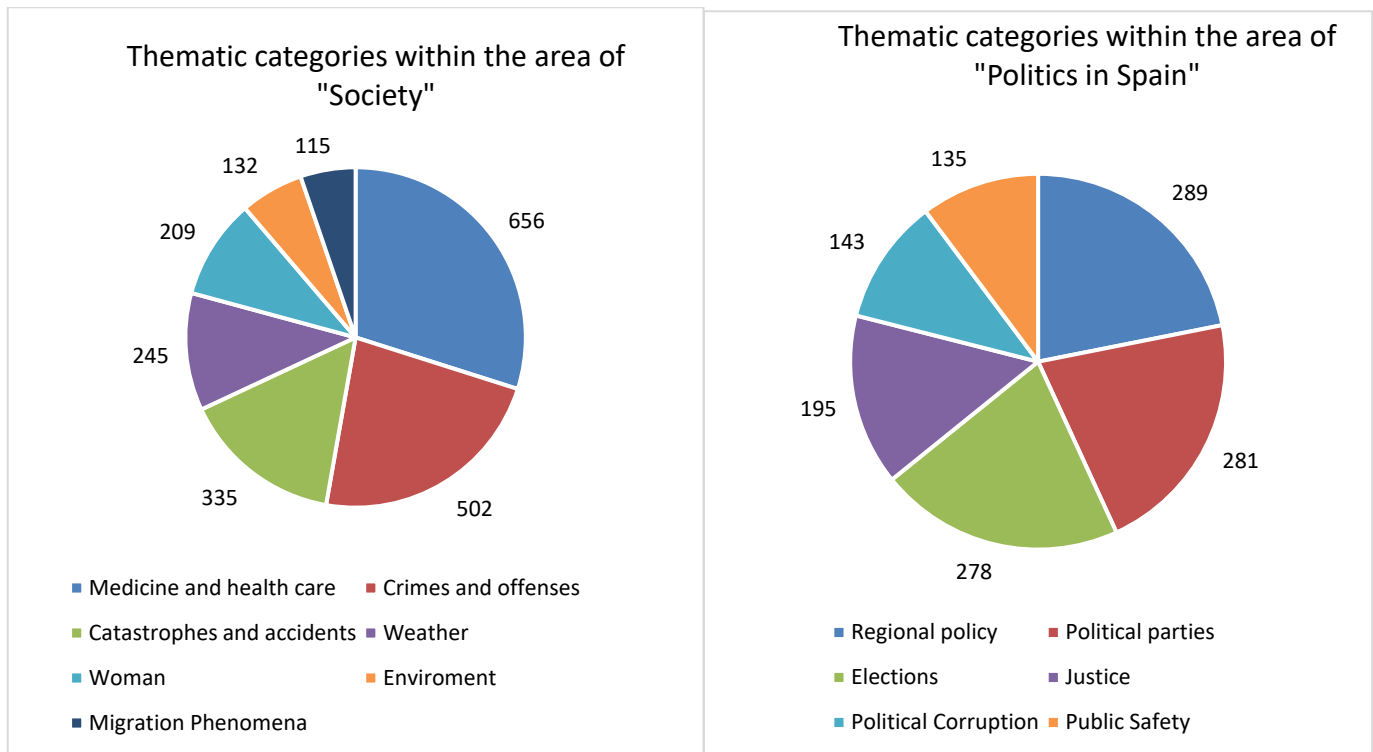**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

Most of the research on television news establishes as thematic categories either the classic sections (national, international, society, economy, sports, culture) or categories adapted to the specific object of study. The choice of large sections presupposes the existence of strict thematic blocks, in the manner of newspaper sections, which is not entirely true, since television news programs frequently mix news from different sections in the same block. The OCITV has opted for a detailed breakdown of thematic categories with 97 items (13 national, 6 international, 12 economy, 34 society, 18 culture, 13 sports, 1 other) (Díaz-Arias, 2015). In this way, it is possible to know the details, as well as the groups according not only to sections but also to contents that can be identified as belonging to infotainment (lifestyles, gastronomy, curiosities...) or to a threatening vision of the world (wars, conflicts, catastrophes, accidents, crimes, offenses...).

For those news items with mixed subject matter (such as crimes of male violence, which could be part of 'crimes and offenses' or, perhaps to a lesser extent, of 'woman'), OICTV has established the complement of tags (Díaz-Arias, 2015). That is, by means of tags (or keywords), major events are identified, using the labeling commonly used by the media. For example, a crime of male violence would be collected as ' Crimes and misdemeanors' in 'What is being talked about' and would be categorized as ' Male crime in Paterna' (to give an example) in the open text field ' tag'. Thus, by collecting the keywords most frequently used in the information, a subsequent cross-checking of data can be carried out, allowing the thematic areas to be further defined.

More specifically, within the area of society (Figure 8), the thematic category 'medicine and health' stands out (656 of 2.971 occasions), followed by 'crimes and offenses' (502 of 2.971), 'catastrophes and accidents' (335 of 2.971), weather (245 of 2.971), women (209 of 2.971), environment (132 of 2.971) and migratory phenomena (115 of 2.971). Within politics in Spain (Figure 8), the following stand out: regional politics (289 out of 1.650), political parties (281 out of 1.650), elections (278 out of 1.650), justice (195 out of 1.650), political corruption (143 out of 1.650) and citizen security (135 out of 1.650). Within the international category, the following stand out: politics in foreign countries (208 out of 762), internal conflicts in countries (126 out of 762) and European Union politics (98 out of 762). In economics, information on companies (115 out of 584); labor, employment and unemployment (87 out of 584); consumer affairs (16 out of 584); labor disputes (46 out of 584) and infrastructure (49 out of 544). In terms of culture, the following stand out: cinema (59 out of 302), pop music (49 out of 302), history (36 out of 302), plastic arts (32 out of 302), television (26 out of 302), literature (19 out of 302), national and foreign artistic heritage (19 out of 302), theater (15 out of 302), architecture (9 out of

302) and further away, classical music and opera, dance and ballet, video games, flamenco and copla, language, folk music, bullfighting and jazz. In sports, soccer (153 of 284), motorcycling (23 of 284), motor racing (23 of 284), tennis (17 of 284), winter and mountain sports (15 of 284), basketball (15 of 284), cycling (8 of 284), golf (5 of 284), handball (3 of 284), athletics (2 of 284) and other sports (39 of 284)1 stand out. In infotainment, popular festivals (93 out of 266), curiosities and interesting facts (84 out of 266), gastronomy and food (58 out of 266), celebrities and heart (18 out of 266), lifestyles and trends (12 out of 266) and fashion (7 out of 266) stand out.

Figure 8: *Main thematic categories in the areas of society and national politics.*

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In terms of channels, all of them are dominated by the area of society followed by Spanish politics. If sports are excluded in the case of TVE (third section), the following preferred sections per channel are international, economics, culture and infotainment on TVE; economics, international, infotainment, culture and sports on Tele 5; international, economics, culture, infotainment and sports on La Sexta; economics, international, infotainment, culture and sports on Antena 3; and international, economics, culture, sports and infotainment on Cuatro.

In terms of specific thematic categories (table 3), on TVE (excluding soccer, which is in first place), 'medicine and health' predominates ahead of 'crimes and offenses', 'regional politics', 'justice' and 'politics in foreign countries'; on Tele 5, the 'medicine and health' category predominates, closely followed by 'crimes and offenses', 'catastrophes and accidents', 'weather' and 'women'; on La Sexta, 'medicine and health' predominates ahead of 'crimes and offenses', 'elections in Spain', 'political parties in Spain' and 'women'; on Antena 3, 'medicine and health' predominates, followed by 'crimes and offenses', 'political parties in Spain', 'regional politics' and 'catastrophes and accidents'; on Cuatro (a very small sample), 'political corruption in Spain' predominates, followed by 'crimes and offenses', 'catastrophes and accidents' and 'environment'.

Table 3. *Preferred thematic categories addressed by the chains.*

TVE	1. Football
	2. Medicine and health care
	3. Crimes and misdemeanors
	4. Regional policy
	5. Justice
	6. Foreign policy of other countries
Antena 3	1. Medicine and health care
	2. Crimes and misdemeanors
	3. Political parties in Spain
	4. Regional policy
	5. Catastrophes and accidents
Tele 5	1. Medicine and health care
	2. Crimes and misdemeanors
	3. Catastrophes and accidents
	4. Weather
	5. Woman
La Sexta	1. Medicine and health care
	2. Crimes and misdemeanors
	3. Elections in Spain
	4. Political parties in Spain
	5. Woman
Cuatro	1. Political corruption in Spain
	2. Traffic and cars
	3. Crimes and misdemeanors
	4. Catastrophes and accidents
	5. Environment

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In addition to the list of thematic categories (what is being talked about), the analysis tool also allows us to add labels or descriptors to the news items, beyond having assigned them to one of the 99 thematic categories that OCITV has preset in its corresponding drop-down menu. In the case of the sample analyzed, a series of highly repeated labels were found which, once again, are closely related to what is known as hyper-events, news topics that dominate one or several peaks. Thus there still can be found in the selected sample for this work hundreds of tags related to 'covid-19', to the so-called 'Catalan *procès'*, to 'brexit', to the 'Spanish general elections of November 2019' and to the 'exhumation of Franco's remains'. More permanent labels also abound, such as 'gender violence', 'murder', 'sexual abuse', 'rape', 'traffic' and all those related to meteorological phenomena (storm, rain, snow, cold, heat, drought...). In the last two analysis rounds (December 2023 and January 2024), the tags such as 'artificial intelligence', 'Gaza', 'Amnesty Law' and [Spanish] 'Constitution' appear in a very strong way.

Most of the images offered by the channels analyzed are 'news images' (63%), followed by 'archive images' (21%), 'Internet and/or cell phone videos' (6%), 'studio images' (3%) [interview or presentation in the studio itself], 'synthesis images' (3%) [representation of reality using computer-generated images (animations, post-production, etc.)], 'staged images' (1%) [recreation of reality using real people or actors of a news event or situation], 'video-conference images' (1%) and, very rarely, 'staged images' (1%), and 'video-conference images' (1%)], and very minimal 'staged image' (1%) [recreation with real characters or actors of a news event or situation], 'video-conference image' (1%) and 'security camera image' (1%). In terms of channels, Tele 5 is the one that makes most use of 'Internet and/or cell phone videos' and TVE, the one that makes the least use of them. Antena 3 is the channel that makes the most notable use of 'studio image' and La Sexta is the one that makes the most use of 'synthesis image' (representation of reality through computer-generated images). QR codes are most common on Antena 3 and Tele 5, but not on TVE and Cuatro, which do not include them.

The OCITV methodology includes the analysis of the rhetoric of the image and the rhetorical tone of the news items. The verbal language, the gestural language of the people appearing in the information and the images used give a special meaning to each of the television information. The rhetorical resources (verbal, gestural, musical, visual) provide elements to decode the message and the receiver's attitude towards it. Here the use of images, especially loaded with meaning, is not the only factor to be considered, but also the general tone in which the information is constructed. In the analyzed sample, the 'neutral image' predominates (43% of the news items) over the 'symbolic image' (7%), the 'dramatic image' (7%), the 'action image' (5%), the 'emotional image' (5%), the 'violent image' (5%), the 'aesthetic image' (2%), the 'emphatic image' (2%), the 'lurid image' (0%) and the 'erotic image' (0%)1 (Figure 9).

Figure 9: *Presence of images per type*.
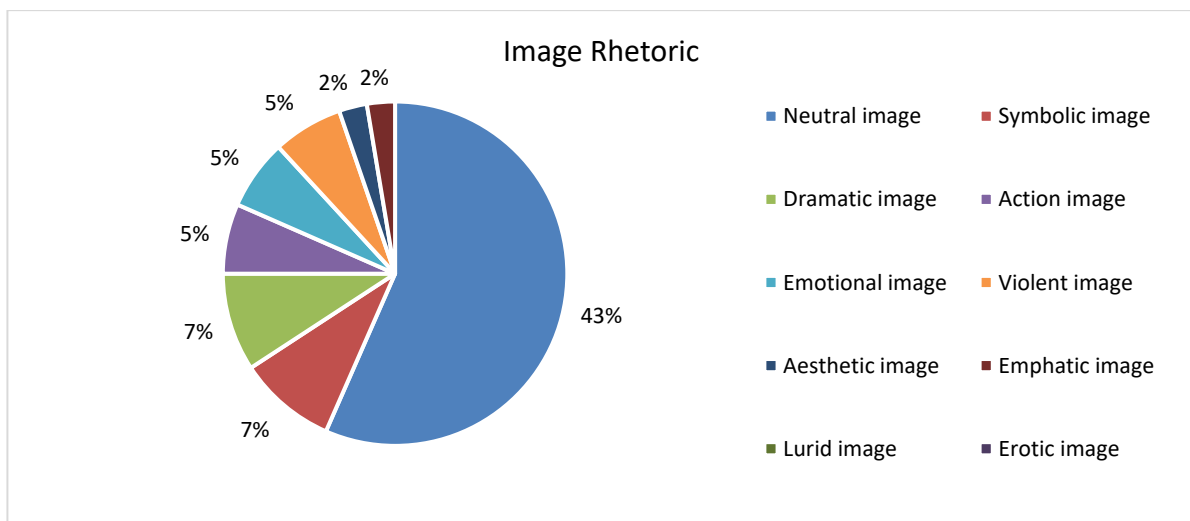
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Neutral images predominate in all channels (table 4). In Antena 3 and La Sexta, the symbolic and dramatic images are the most common; in Tele 5, the dramatic and action images, with a notable presence of violent images; in TVE, the neutral image is followed by the symbolic and action image; in Cuatro, the symbolic and dramatic image. In terms of rhetorical tone1, the "informative tone" predominates (19% of the news items) in all channels (table 4). After the informative tone, in Antena 3, the ''controversial tone'' and the '' party-related tone''; in La Sexta, the ''controversial tone'' and the ''sensationalist''; in Tele 5, the ''sensationalist tone'' and the ''sensitive tone''. In TVE, the 'informative tone' predominates, followed, albeit very marginally, by the 'party-related tone' and 'sensationalist' tones.

Table 4. *Predominance of image type and rhetorical tones per chain.*

TVE	Type of image	1. Neutral 2. Symbolic 3. Action
	Rhetorical tones	1. Informative 2. Party-related 3. Sensitive
Antena 3	Type of image	1. Neutral 2. Symbolic 3. Dramatic
	Rhetorical tones	1. Informative 2. Controversial 3. Party-related
Tele 5	Type of image	1. Neutral 2. Dramatic 3. Action
	Rhetorical tones	1. Informative 2. Sensationalist 3. Sensitive
La Sexta	Type of image	1. Neutral 2. Symbolic 3. Dramatic
	Rhetorical tones	1. Informative 2. Controversial 3. Sensationalist
Cuatro	Type of image	1. Neutral 2. Symbolic 3. Dramatic
	Rhetorical tones	1. Not applicable

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1, not very balanced; 5, very balanced), most of the news items (53% of the 6.289) are in the 3 range with respect to their balance (the extent to which the different points of view are represented and/or whether one is predominant). Scores from 3 onwards (balanced news items) are notably more common than backwards (unbalanced news items). In relation to contextualization (whether the information includes the required data and clues to be understood: background, causes, consequences), on a scale of 1 to 5 (1, poorly contextualized; 5, highly contextualized), 3 is the value that predominates.

In terms of the relationship between the broadcasted news and the direct interests of the channel, self-promotion of programs is the most common, followed by editorial stances, institutional activities of the channel, pro-cause campaigns and, finally, film premieres or other productions with the participation of the channel or the group to which it belongs. Antena 3 is the channel with the highest number of editorial stances, followed by pro-cause campaigns. La Sexta leads in self-promotion of the channel's programs, an aspect to which TVE also resorts relatively frequently.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Analyzing television news programs in cycles, as the OCITV does, has certain limitations. The more news programs are analyzed over a continuous period as long as possible, the more accurate the general description of them will be, but even so, there would still be very unstable or changing elements depending on the time of analysis, such as leading characters in the news or even topics. Nevertheless, the work of longitudinal quantitative analysis of a relevant volume of objects —such as the one presented here— yields data that

contribute value to the task of describing these objects in a general way. Beyond the situation joining specific characters or specific topics prevailing at certain moments or in certain periods of time, analyses such as the one presented here offer valuable clues for the achievement of the proposed objectives. Through this type of work it is possible to find stable variables, such as, the formats and genres used, the time given to the information, the use or not of sources, the type of images, the rhetorical tones, the informative balance or the implementation of new technologies for the innovative presentation of the information. Even after the apparently volatile specificities, such as the fact that a President of the Government may change and cease to be the figure with the greatest news presence, valid interpretations and conclusions can be inferred, such as the fact that the figure of the President, beyond his name and surname, is the predominant one in the news. In short, it is understood that this type of analysis makes it possible to project trends and identify general features in a reliable manner.

The overall picture that the results show is one of news programs that, both in terms of their average duration and the average length of their news items, tend towards dynamism, fragmentation and a high audiovisual rhythm (relatively rapid succession of news impacts in the different formats and genres). If the news item (and the grouping of news items) are considered as basic elements of the information, the data obtained reveal a superficial journalistic treatment of the issues, corroborated by the fact that the most used formats are the 'queues' (which last seconds) and the most used genre is the news report, which is limited to offering very basic information on the facts. There is a scarcity of reports and briefings, which are in-depth news items on the causes and consequences of the events. There is therefore a priority given to what has happened (news and chronicles) over the how, why and what for. In this sense, there is a tendency towards the American model of television information, characterized by progressively shorter news, quicker and more synthetic cuts, showing more and more facts and less and less analysis.

There is a significant use of live coverage by the channels —especially by Tele 5— which is probably not always justified, a hypothesis that needs to be confirmed by a qualitative study. It should be remembered that the live format presents emphatic doses of information and gives the viewer the feeling of being a privileged witness of what happened. Live television gives the event being reported a certain sensitive, affective and emotional logic and also favors the impression of immediacy.

It is striking that only 47% of news items are supported by sources, one of the main pillars of rigorous and quality journalistic practice, which is 16 points less than in a previous study conducted by the OCITV (Aparicio et al., 2016). The imbalance of gender presence in the use of sources, very much in favor of the male presence, is very remarkable. It could be said that the news programs reproduce a symptom of society, at least in its professional and political spheres, since 63% of the people who speak in the news programs are men, 26 points above women.

There is a strong presence of the citizenry as an informative agent that speaks and is spoken about. On the one hand, it is worth recalling the influence of one of the hyper-events that still dominated some phases of the analysis and that could explain, in part, this strong citizen presence: the COVID-19 pandemic. For certain researchers (Berrocal et al., 2014), the growing presence of people representing ordinary people, living examples of the target group to which the program itself is addressed, is also an infoshow component. The fact that the citizen becomes the main character of the information, offering his or her vision (sometimes passionate) of the issues, is part of infotainment. There is also a remarkable presence of institutional agents (State and Autonomous Communities), together with expert agents (professionals).

The presence of COVID-19 could also explain why 'medicine and health' has reached a similar prominence to the usual 'crimes and offenses', 'catastrophes and accidents' and 'politics', which continue to top the ranking of thematic areas. The trend, also supported by the prevailing thematic labels found, points to a change in the importance of the sections, with less information of a political nature to the benefit of those of a human nature.

Antena 3 and Tele 5 average a greater number of pieces with shorter duration per piece, which could be understood as a search for greater informative rhythm and a desire to make the television news product increasingly attractive. In both channels, especially in Antena 3, there is a commitment to technology and new ways of presenting information (Calvo et al., 2022), perhaps to transform the news into more attractive and entertaining stories, thus merging information and entertainment. Antena 3 is by far the one that most resorts to infographic presentation and virtual presentation, with a relevant presence of studio and synthesis images. Tele 5 is the channel that makes most use of Internet and/or cell phone videos and live connections. Both channels are also the most prone to infotainment, spectacularization and audience diversion to other windows (through the inclusion of QR codes in their newscasts). It may be concluded that there is a certain alignment of form and content between the news programs and the general strategic and stylistic line of the respective channels.

There are different ways of dealing with information through the use of images and rhetorical tones between Antena 3 and Tele 5, on the one hand, and TVE and La Sexta, on the other, which would allow speaking of a news treatment more focused on spectacle, entertainment and emotions in the first two. Also in this regard, there are differences between Antena 3 and Tele 5, with the latter being more appealing in its use of images, tone and themes to the viewer's emotions and feelings. Although a more qualitative analysis would be required, some data from the study point to Antena 3 as the channel possibly more openly positioned in terms of editorial line (Sotelo, 2024). In the case of Antena 3, a more detailed analysis of the different editions led by different hosts (characteristics of Vicente Vallés' newscast versus Sandra Golpe's, for example) would be interesting in order to investigate the differences between editions, since it is on this channel where the greatest and most significant formal dissimilarities between noon and evening programs can be seen.

La Sexta and TVE converge in many aspects: fewer news items and similar average length, a notable presence of the report genre and greater use of sources. The channel of the Atresmedia group stands out for its political news content, reflected in a greater presence of political leaders. Despite its status as a private channel belonging to the Atresmedia group (together with Antena 3), La Sexta's programming generally has the features of a public channel in terms of its commitment to current affairs, which is also reflected in its news programs, which are diversified from a business standpoint in line with those of Antena 3.

Certain data, such as the greater news coverage in terms of time and in-depth pieces or the greater presence of current affairs images, could be related to the difference in economic and human resources allocated to news services by TVE with respect to the other channels, although, as noted above, perhaps to a lesser degree with respect to La Sexta and the firm commitment of this channel to news as a hallmark of its corporate identity.

In general terms, television news in Spain reflects to a large extent the political fragmentation that has taken place in Spain in recent years, so that news agents no longer pay attention to a basically two-party confrontation (PSOE-PP) but to a dialectic with several players at cross-purposes (PSOE-PP-Podemos-Sumar-Ciudadanos-Vox-ERC-Junts-PNV...). However, in spite of this, the people who speak the most in the news continue to appreciate a reinforcement of the establishment, although it has been amplified. A strong presence of 'controversial' famous individuals is also detected (e.g. Iglesias, Trump...), in which regard it would be interesting to deepen if these appearances are related or not and to what extent by taking into account conflictive or disruptive elements of their speeches.

Autonomous Spain is strongly reflected as such in the news programs under analysis, as shown by the degree of presence of regional governments and the opposition to them. The imbalance between places and, especially, between the informative treatment of nations continues to be detected, as Aparicio (2022) points out in a previous OCITV study in which the author speaks of elite, second and third category nations. At the international level, the classic bias between developed and developing countries is confirmed. Among the top ten countries to which Spanish news programs pay attention, nine are leading Anglo-Saxon and European powers.

Despite the fact that most of the analyzed news items present informative balance (53%), the figure seems far from more desirable thresholds, which is also undoubtedly related to issues of lack of pluralism. The influence of hyper-events, news topics that significantly dominate one or several rounds of analysis, can be detected. The use of certain elements, perhaps prolonged or inherited from the COVID-19 period (Díaz-Arias et al., 2021), such as the use of videoconferencing or Internet and/or mobile videos, is noticeable. This growing use of non-professional images can perhaps also be interpreted within the framework of the search for new narrative forms that prioritize the spectacular or curious image and favor the anecdote and, sometimes, the superfluous, in a certain game of speculation with the emotional and emphasis on the dramatic aspects of the facts. On the other hand, this expansion of graphic resources can increase the newsworthiness of events that, precisely because they lack images, could be condemned to television invisibility.

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ANNEX 1: Analysis Tools

¿Quién habla? [i]

Agente Informativo   **Numero de veces**

Jefe del Estado España ▼   [▼] [🗑]

[Añadir Agente Informativo]

Personaje   **Numero de veces**

[   ]   [▼] [🗑]

[Añadir Personaje]

¿De quién se habla? [i]

Agente Informativo   **Valoración**

Jefe del Estado España ▼   [▼] [🗑]

[Añadir]

Personaje mencionado   **Valoración**

[   ]   [▼] [🗑]

[Añadir Personaje]

Categoría Temática [i]

¿De qué se habla?   **Valoración**

Elecciones en España ▼   [4 ▼] [🗑]

[Añadir Categoría]

Etiqueta   **Valoración**

elecciones municipales y autonómicas 28M   [4 ▼] [🗑]

[Añadir Etiqueta]

Tratamiento

Valoración editorial: [Sumario principal ⌄] [i]

Origen de la imagen:

| Imagen de actualidad |
| Imagen de archivo |
| Imagen escenificada |
| Imagen de síntesis |

[i]

Rótulos:

| Localización |
| Identificación |
| Informativo |
| Técnico |

[i]

Informador: [Narrador externo ⌄] [i]

☑ ¿Aparece en la imagen?

Retórica de la Imagen:

| Imagen violenta |
| Imagen dramática |
| Imagen emotiva |
| Imagen de acción |

[i]

Equilibrio: [3 ⌄] [i]

Contextualización: [3 ⌄] [i]

Relación con la cadena:

[⌄] [i]

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