

How to cite this article in bibliographies / References

S. Berrocal Gonzalo, M. Redondo García, V. Martín Jiménez, E. Campos Domínguez. (2014): “Presence of infotainment in Spain’s mainstream DTT channels”. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, pp. 85 to 103. http://www.revistalatinacs.org/069/paper/1002_UVa/05_Been.html
DOI: [10.4185/RLCS-2014-1002en](https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2014-1002en)

Presence of infotainment in Spain’s mainstream DTT channels

Salomé Berrocal Gonzalo [CV] [ID] [ORCID] Full Professor in the area of Journalism. Universidad de Valladolid (UVa) Spain / salomeb@hmca.uva.es

Marta Redondo García [CV] [ID] [ORCID] Assistant Professor in the area of Journalism. Universidad de Valladolid (UVa) Spain / marta.redondo@hmca.uva.es

Virginia Martín Jiménez [CV] [ID] [ORCID] Assistant Professor in the area of Journalism. Universidad de Valladolid (UVa) Spain / virgimj@hmca.uva.es

Eva Campos Domínguez [CV] [ID] [ORCID] Associate Professor in the area of Journalism. Universidad de Valladolid (UVa) Spain / eva.campos@hmca.uva.es

Abstracts

Introduction. This article is part of the strand of empirical studies on infotainment and presents a characterisation of the infotainment content broadcast by the Spanish mainstream DTT channels. **Method.** The study is based on the analysis of the infotainment content included in the programming of the six most important mainstream DTT channels in Spain, and the content analysis of the prime time infotainment content. **Results.** Infotainment occupies a privileged position in the mainstream television channels but there are significant differences across networks. The main distinctive features that characterise infotainment are humour, drama and the use of technical resources to increase the sensationalism of images. **Discussion.** Infotainment is consolidated as a relevant macro-genre whose presence ranges from 34.91% (in La Sexta) to 8.12% (in La 2), being the magazine and debate shows the dominant formats. Surprisingly, the presence of infotainment in TVE 1 (18.10%) is higher than in the networks *Antena 3* and *Cuatro*.

Keywords

Infotainment; spectacularisation; television programming; DDT; television genres.

Contents

1. Introduction. 2. The origins of infotainment. 2.1. The origins of the phenomenon. 2.2. The origins of the term. 3. Characterisation of infotainment. Main distinctive features. 3.1. Thematic preferences.

3.2. Selection and treatment of information sources. 3.3. Technical features. 3.4. Narrative style. 4. Method. 5. Research results. 6. Discussion. 7. Notes. 8. List of references.

Translation by **CA Martínez Arcos**, Ph.D. (Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas)

1. Introduction

In the intense competition for viewers television channels use all kinds of resources to attract users and snatch them from their competitors. One of these strategies is the “spectacularisation” of reality that gives rise to the infotainment genre. This phenomenon is similar to the sensationalism of the popular press but the former has also developed new features as it spreads out and adapts to the rest of the media.

In the late 1980s scholars became interested in this process in which television news and entertainment ceased to be watertight compartments and converged to form hybrid products (Salgado Losada, 2010). Thus, television programmes started to combine the typical features of the most traditional news genres with the features that characterised entertainment programmes; which included incorporating “personal feelings, dramatic tones and comic ingredients” (several authors, 2012: 13) and seeking to capture, surprise and excite the viewer (Carrillo, 2013: 33).

Since the late 1980s studies on infotainment have gained more importance and have come to complete the initial theoretical-conceptual approach with the empirical analysis of TV programmes and products that demonstrate the growing presence of infotainment in the media and the analysis of its consequences. These studies have been carried out mostly in Anglo-Saxon countries, but also in Germany, the United Kingdom, Latin America, and Spain, and have extended their scope to the Internet where this trend is booming.

This research study is part of the strand of empirical studies on infotainment initiated in Spain by Berrocal *et al.* (2001) and tries to determine the current degree of penetration and importance of infotainment in Spain’s mainstream Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) channels.

The research study is based on the following hypotheses:

1. DTT has provoked an increase in the programming offer, a fragmentation of television channels – in themes and niche audience markets–, a greater fragmentation of audiences and, as a result, a reduction in advertising revenues (linked largely to the audience shares), and this has occurred in a climate of severe economic crisis. The increased competition between TV networks –as a result of the implementation of DTT– has lead TV channels to include significant amounts of infotainment content, as a way of attracting viewers. This genre is mostly concentrated in the prime time schedules.

2. In relation to the presence of infotainment in the different television networks, public broadcasters would remain less inclined to use this formula given that, in the Spanish case, they do not compete for advertising revenue and have a special commitment to public service which is difficult to meet with infotainment.

3. The strong competition among television networks leads to the emulation of innovations, formats and programmes as a strategy to attract the same target audience, depending on the time slot. Therefore the schedules of the different mainstream networks would be quite similar throughout the different time slots.

4. Given the fall in profits suffered by the major media groups that exploit DTT in Spain (Mediaset and Antena 3, now Atresmedia) due to the adverse economic environment, private broadcasters would opt to produce simple and cheap infotainment formats, like debate shows, magazine shows, reports, interview or news satire, to the detriment of formats that require a more expensive production such as documentary, docu-comedy and comedy series.

2. The origins of infotainment

2.1. The origins of the phenomenon

The term infotainment combines two concepts, information and entertainment, and reflects the trend in current journalism to erase the boundaries between traditionally distant and even divergent genres.

The phenomenon is rooted in the informative sensationalism that originated in the first generation of the popular press which is more inclined to entertainment than to information and refers to the journalistic trend to represent reality in a spectacular fashion that can occur in any media. As García Avilés points out, in this phenomenon “the content and narrative forms are selected mostly based on the impact they can cause on the audience, rather than on their ability to provide relevant information in the most rigorous way possible” (2007: 51).

There is no consensus about the date in which infotainment emerged on television. Stark (1997) places the beginning of the phenomenon in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the local channels of the United States, and describes it as a commercial discovery of their broadcast programmers: “It was the result of the genius of these producers who took elements from prime time fiction and adapted them to the local news programmes of all of their channels across the nation” (Stark, 1997: 39). This way of presenting news spread to the national channels whose news programmes were not achieving the success of the local TV channels. Thus, the newscasts of the national channels also began to introduce sensationalist news stories in order to recover the stolen audience.

However, most research studies place the beginning of infotainment between the late 1980s and early 1990s in the news programmes of the Western television channels. The event that triggered the birth of infotainment would be the expansion of commercial TV against the public networks and, derived from this, the need to develop strategies to attract a mass audience in a highly competitive market:

“Since television news programmes became commercial products, the need for entertainment has become a crucial priority for television broadcasters who have been forced to adapt the features of entertainment formats and the conversation modes that privilege an informal communication style, with an emphasis on personalisation, style and storytelling and entertainment tools” (Thusu, 2007: 3).

Lozano (2004) also points out that the reason for the emergence of infotainment was the search for profit and the fierce competition for the audience along with the liberalisation and deregulation of the media, which left communications companies free to search for maximum profitability.

2.2. The origins of the term

Infotainment is related to terms that were initially used to describe a similar process. Tabloidization is the term chosen by several authors in the Anglo-Saxon context: Langer (2000), Esser (1999) and Spark (2000), who defines it as “a change in the media’s priorities which shift the attention from news and information to entertainment” (Spark, 2000: 10, 11). In Germany the most used term is *boulevardisierung*, which derives from the *boulevard* or tabloid press, which focuses on scandals, celebrities and gossip (Lozano, 2004). In Latin America the word *espectacularización* (spectacularisation) is more commonly used due to the influence of the work of the Italian political scientist Giovanni Sartori: *Homo Videns* (1998) (Lozano, 2004).

The term infotainment began to be used in relation to television in the late 1980s to explain the evolution of television contents towards the fusion of genres. In 1988, Kruger became the first author to employ the term in an analysis of German television, and this term ended up becoming the word par excellence to define the phenomenon in the international media context (Graber, 1994; Brants, 1998; Delli Caprini and Williams, 2001; Anderson, 2004; Moy *et al.*, 2005), and in the Spanish context (Del Rey Morató, 1998; Berrocal, 2001; Several Authors, 2009, 2012; García Avilés, 2007; Ortells, 2009, 2011; Ferré and Gayá, 2009; Marín, 2010; Ferré, 2013).

Parallel to academic research, the American press has also been interested in analysing this television phenomenon. In 1993, *The Washington Post* carried out a study about the local television networks of five large cities and found out that the percentage of news that had to do with crime, sex, disasters, accidents and social fears accounted for between 46% and 74% of the news content, depending on the channel. In 1995 the *Rocky Mountain Media Watch* conducted a study of the local news programmes of 50 channels and found out that crime and disasters accounted for 53% of the news content (Stark 1997: 38).

3. Characterisation of infotainment. Main distinctive features

According to the literature review, infotainment manifests itself in three parallel ways in television: first, in the incorporation of soft news within traditional news programmes. Second, in the tendency to address serious issues that belong to the public debate within programmes and formats intended primarily for distracting viewers. And, finally, in the emergence of programmes that parody the news. There are concurrent traits in these three ways.

Given that infotainment is a complex and “promiscuous” phenomenon (Soler, 2013: 5) it is necessary to characterise it by identifying the main distinctive features that are present in the different phases of the construction of the television discourse: the choice of the issue to be addressed and the information sources, the technical resources used in the recording and editing of images and sounds, as well as in the expressive forms used to narrate the events.

It is the interest of this article to review the contributions made by various authors, like Früh and Wirth (1997), Lozano (2004), Ortells (2011) and Carrillo (2013), and to examine them in depth to perform a characterisation as complete as possible of the thematic and stylistic features that are typical of infotainment.

Not all the programmes that are analysed in this study exhibit these distinctive features of infotainment, since the intention of this first conceptual phase of the study is to produce an exhaustive list of the features that contribute to the spectacularisation of information.

3.1. Thematic preferences

Infotainment, as a hybrid style, is not confined to dealing with a closed list of issues; instead, it changes according to the current affairs, which are addressed in a frivolous and superficial manner. The thematic selection of this genre often favours the issues that are most likely to impact viewers and to increase the visual spectacle: crime and accidents, disasters, human interest news, curiosities and celebrities. In his study of the American local TV channels, Stark points out that these channels:

“always prefer stories of aircraft accidents or hurricanes which allow them to send their reporters some place from where they can broadcast live, to place them on a beach in the middle of heavy rain and to encourage them to babble and to pretend they are afraid” (Stark, 1997: 40)

However, another characteristic of infotainment is that it addresses serious issues (politics, economy) in a dramatic, humorous or parodic way. In fact, political issues are one of the most addressed issues in studies about infotainment, which are particularly interested in analysing the possible consequences of the extension of this communicative phenomenon on democratic life (Van Zoonen, 1998; Patterson, 2000; Hamilton, 2004; Berrocal and Cebrián, 2009). Political information, in this case, does not receive a treatment as rigorous as the one traditionally associated with this type of content; instead its treatment aims to entertain through jokes and anecdotes which are more attractive to the public.

In fact, some authors such as Grabe *et al.* (2000) deny the importance of the thematic selection in television infotainment, by pointing to the formal and distinctive features of this “genre-trend” (Carrillo, 2013: 33)

“Television producers, by cleverly playing with the tools of the tabloid style, are capable of transforming any story that rightly belongs to the realm of serious information into an exciting tabloid experience” (Grabe *et al.*, 2000: 587).

3.2. Selection and treatment of information sources

The official information source is parodied and its statements or gestures are presented out of context. Its errors are highlighted: the slip of the tongue, the ridiculous situations and the exaggerated gestures. Often this parodic effect is intensified through repetition of such situations or the editing of images and visual effects to blend reality and fiction.

- The citizen becomes the protagonist of the information. To the detriment of institutional sources, infotainment gives voice to the citizens who offer their passionate view of the problems they face and the reality they live: “the presence of anonymous citizens who are treated as first-order information sources replaces the official sources” (Ortells, 2011: 281). Thus, infotainment programmes offer the more human side of reality, told in first person by those affected by it.
- Journalists start to play a relevant role as “co-protagonist” (Ortells, 2011: 282) in the news story. They are no longer mere witnesses of the story that is being presented; they get involved in the news story and incorporate their personality through the gestures and comments they include in the narration. This leads to the identification of the audience with the journalists-characters that embody a number of qualities. This is the case of programmes like *Diario DK*, presented by journalist Mercedes Milá, and *Conexión Samanta*, hosted by Samanta Villar, both from the *Cuatro* network; and *El Intermedio*, presented by El Gran Wyoming, and *Salvados*, hosted by reporter Jordi Évole, both from La Sexta.

3.3. Technical features

Lozano (2004) indicates that infotainment has four distinctive features: personalisation, dramatisation, fragmentation and audiovisual effects. This author gives crucial importance to the audiovisual effects and highlights some of the most important: the subjective shot, dramatic music, slowing down of images and post-production effects.

For Ortells (2011) the distinctive technical elements are: live connections, recording styles that privilege movement, shoulder-held camera shooting, and the use of music and audio effects to increase dynamism.

Taking as starting point the previously mentioned technical characteristics of television infotainment, let's deepen the analysis of the different resources that contribute to the spectacularization of information.

- Shoulder-held camera shooting is used to offer viewers a greater sense of closeness a greater perception of reality and motion. This technique simulates a recording produced without mediation or with minimum technical mediation and offers a more realistic experience to the public, which generates a greater emotional involvement.
- Abundance of live connections -sometimes unjustified by the insignificance of the events- to promote the impression of immediacy. Live television aims to tell what is happening through the intense narration of the witness. Television technologies that allow connections via satellite are put at the service of the news shows and offer scenes like the ones described by Stark (1997: 40): “two reporters from the same channel wander around the crime scene with hardly anything to say other than to describe their own presence at the crime scene”.
- Profuse use of music to infuse the informative message with rhythm, emotion, drama or comedy. Despite the use of music is discouraged in the serious treatment of information, its presence takes

centre stage in infotainment programmes in order to enhance the preferred effect of the message: to awake emotions, drama or humour in viewers.

▪ Use of sound resources. The editing of ambient sound and sound effects are used to enhance the effects of the images. On television, it is customary to fake ambient sounds and this misrepresentation serves, in the case of infotainment, to add spectacularity to an action. As Kovach and Rosenstiel (2003: 111 and 112) explain:

“If a siren is heard during the recording of a scene for a television documentary and we put this sound in another scene to achieve certain dramatic effect, we have added the sound of the siren to the second scene. What was a real event has become fiction”.

▪ Editing of images. The fast cutting of images is used to transmit higher tension, and it is adapted to the rhythm of the music, emulating the style of the video clip. The use of slow motion produces the temporary expansion of the action and serves to highlight the importance of images in the context of the narrative, while the use of fast motion increases such effects as anguish or comedy.

▪ Preference for close ups and extreme close ups, which are more expressive images that highlight the emotion of people and reveal their reactions. The extreme close-up, which focuses on a part of the face, serves to emphasise emotional or physical circumstances.

▪ Use of the POV shot, in which the camera assumes the point of view of a character with the aim of making viewers to experience the same feelings. This shot is very common in recreations which invite the public to experience the narrated events.

▪ Profusion of transitions and post-production effects to achieve more visually attractive pieces. On-screen displays are often introduced into this process to describe images and testimonials and, often, to maximise them. The manipulation of real images through the introduction of humorous or parodic elements is also a post-production resource.

▪ Sensationalist broadcasts that recur to self-promotion and previews. Already since the origins of tabloid journalism and within the market logic it was necessary to promote the product to achieve maximum profitability. Television infotainment is characterised by the intense propaganda of its content in which the most prominent aspects are highlighted in a hyperbolic way. Previews of the programmes are used to show what is coming up and to delay the reward as a way to keep the viewer expectant at the screen.

3.4. Narrative style

De-contextualisation: Instead of placing reality in its deep political, social and economic context, infotainment only addresses a particular story in a trivialising way. News stories “focus on what’s immediate and happening at the moment and rarely provide background information” (Lozano, 2004).

▪ Personalisation: This trend is inevitable in television, which is a medium that needs to put face and voice to ideas, and this is maximised in infotainment so that the individual story is more

important than the reality in all its complexity. Van Zoonen and Holtz-Bacha (2000: 48) have examined this trend in infotainment as it occurs in electoral campaigns and point out that it is an effective method to simplify the complexity of politics.

- Sentimentality and emotion: Related to personalisation, these resources are used to exploit the feelings of the protagonists of the story, to delve into their experiences and feelings. Private lives become public.
- Dramatisation: the news stories have a beginning, climax and ending, a line of continuity that resembles a fictional narrative. Infotainment gives great importance to the storyline by exploiting those circumstances that, although minor, bring intensity to the narrative: “it imposes the need to impact the public, and no longer through names or statistics or unique and quality content: it is essential to resort to drama, emotions, fiction” (Carrillo, 2013: 37).
- Humour and criticism: Reality is demystified and ridiculed, incorporating ironic and cartoon-like elements. In many infotainment programmes comedy is dominant element and the perspective from which the events are analysed.

Linked to popular culture since long time ago, laughter appears in infotainment in the form of satire, mockery of the power establishment and alteration of the dominant order, where the powerful and the famous are humiliated. A classical mechanism through which “individuals take revenge on society, seeking to degrade with laugh the values or the value system imposed by society by coercive and oppressive means” (Stern, 1975: 159). In fact, the programmes that pioneered infotainment in Spain are comedy shows that were often uncomfortable for the political class: *Los Guiñoles* broadcast by Canal + and *El Informal* and *Caiga quien Caiga* broadcast by Tele 5.

- With regards to the writing style, infotainment uses a descriptive and expressive language which includes plenty of “adjectives, adverbs, superlatives and comparatives [...] –like for example: terrible news, extremely tired, tremendously shocked, impressive-, which are accompanied by on-screen displays, like for example: ‘creepy murderer’” (Marín, 2010: 133). In addition, infotainment gives preference to the language of the street and avoids formal expressions as a way to get closer to viewers. The way journalists and presenters talk to the public is unnatural and occasionally alarmist.

4. Method

The study of the presence of infotainment in the main Spanish mainstream DTT channels is based on the analysis of the programming of the two main public television channels (TVE 1 and TVE 2) and the main four private broadcasters Telecinco, Antena 3, La Sexta and Cuatro. The quantitative analysis focuses on calculating the total time dedicated per week by each network to the broadcast of programmes that belong to the infotainment genre. The sample of programming selected for the study is the one broadcast from 15 to 21 April 2013, although the results of the analysis are scalable since the studied programmes are largely consolidated and are under no risk of disappearing from the schedules in the near future. Programmes broadcast on the early morning (from 2:20 a.m. to 7:00 a.m.) were excluded from the study because they are fillers and of minor importance given the scarce audience they reach.

The strong presence of infotainment in television news programmes has been already described, but these programmes have been left out of this study given that their analysis would require a more exhaustive content analysis, like those carried out by authors such as García Avilés (2007), who carried out an ambitious comparative analysis of the most popular news programmes in thirteen European countries, and Ortells (2009), who examined the Cuatro network. Both studies confirmed the strong presence of the hybridisation of information and entertainment in the analysed networks.

The classification of programmes by genres is based on the categories established by Euromonitor: fiction, information, info-show, show, game-show, sports, children-oriented, youth-oriented, education, religion, and variety. From these categories we selected the two macro-genres: information and info-show which are related to infotainment. Table 1 presents the two macro-genres.

Table 1. Information and info-show genres

INFORMATION	INFO-SHOW
Current affairs	News satire
Variety show	Chat-show
Face-to-face show	Debate show
Debate	Docudrama
Documentary	Docu-series
Crime and accidents	Docu-soap
Interview	Docu-comedy
Magazine	Interview
Mini magazine	Reality game
Newsmagazine	Reality show
News programme	Talk-show
Investigative journalism series	Courtroom show

Source: Authors' own creation with data from Euromonitor

Based on the previous categories, we carried out a comparative analysis among networks, especially between public and private channels, but also within the private networks to identify the channels that included the largest and smallest amount of infotainment in its weekly programming offer, as well as the dominant genres.

After the viewing of the programmes, we carried out a qualitative content analysis to identify the aforementioned distinctive features of infotainment. We chose only the programmes broadcast in the primetime slot, which gathers up to 18 million viewers. There is no consensus when it comes to establishing the period covered by this time slot; and some authors place it from 22 pm to 1 am. This study has taken as reference the data collected by Barlovento (2011) for Kantar Media, as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Television time slots in Spain

Early morning	02:30 am - 07:00 am
Morning	07:00 am - 14:00 pm
Afternoon	14:00 pm - 17:00 pm
Evening	17:00 pm - 20:30 pm
Night 1 or Prime Time	20:30 pm - 24:00 pm
Night 2	24:00 pm - 02:30 am

Source: Authors' own creation with data from Kantar Media

5. Research results

Infotainment occupies a prominent position on the programming offer of the main Spanish mainstream DTT channels. The total weekly time devoted to this genre is 153 hours and 58 minutes. Table 3 shows the distribution of infotainment across networks.

Table 3: Amount of time dedicated to infotainment per week across networks

Network	INFOTAINMENT PER WEEK	PERCENTAGE
LA SEXTA	47h. 15m.	34.91%
TELECINCO	30h. 40m.	22.66%
LA 1	24h. 30m.	18.10%
ANTENA 3	24h. 25m.	18.04%
CUATRO	15h. 45m.	11.63%
LA 2	11h.	8.12%

La Sexta is the channel offering by far the greatest amount of infotainment, nearly twice as much as TVE 1 and Antena 3. Telecinco occupies the second place, dedicating more than one in five hours to this genre. The presence of infotainment in TVE 1, the first public broadcaster, was similar to that of Antena 3 (slightly over 18% in both cases). *Cuatro* is the private network with the lowest presence of this genre, 11.63%, while TVE 2 does not follow the trend since it only dedicates 8.12% of its weekly time to infotainment [1].

This analysis allows us to verify that infotainment is especially abundant in the morning and prime time slots. In the morning time slot infotainment appears in the form of magazine shows, which revolve around the analysis of the news through reports and debates that are mixed with more banal issues (celebrity gossip, accidents and curiosities). The morning magazine show is present in all six mainstream channels: *El programa de Ana Rosa* (*Telecinco*), *Las mañanas de Cuatro* (*Cuatro*), *Al Rojo vivo* (*La Sexta*), *Para todos La 2* (*TVE 2*), *La mañana de La 1* (*TVE 1*), and *Espejo Público* (*Antena 3*).

Table 4. Infotainment shows in the prime time slot

PROGRAMME	NETWORK	AIRING
<i>El intermedio</i>	<i>La Sexta</i>	Monday to Thursday: 21h.30-22h.30
<i>Salvados</i>	<i>La Sexta</i>	Sunday: 21h.30-23h.30
<i>La sexta columna</i>	<i>La Sexta</i>	Friday: 21h.30-22h.30
<i>Equipo de Investigación</i>	<i>La Sexta</i>	Friday: 22h.30-01h.45
<i>La sexta noche</i>	<i>La Sexta</i>	Saturday: 21h.30-01h.45
<i>El gran debate</i>	<i>Telecinco</i>	Saturday: 22h-2h.20
<i>La hora de José Mota</i>	<i>Telecinco</i>	Thursday: 22h.15-2h.30
		Repeats: Saturday: 9h.35-10h.45
<i>El hormiguero 3.0</i>	<i>Antena 3</i>	Monday to Thursday: 21h.45-22h.40.

In order to provide a detailed characterisation of the presence of infotainment in prime time, the following sections describe the distinctive features linked to this genre in each network:

La Sexta

El intermedio (“The intermediate”)

Genre: News satire.

Airing: Monday to Thursday from 21:30 to 22:30.

Hosted by José Miguel Monzón, known as the Gran Wyoming, this programme comically addresses the most important news of the day and gives an account of how the rest of the media have treated such information. It also includes the opinion of citizens through the segment *La voz de la calle* (“The voice of the street”) in which pedestrians are questioned about current issues. It premiered in 2006 and due to its success, in February 2013, the Antena 3 Group (Atresmedia) launched an international version of the show titled *El Intermedio: International Edition*, which was cancelled a month later due to low ratings

Distinctive features of infotainment: *El Intermedio* emulates the traditional news format (a studio in which an anchor is behind a desk and manages the interventions of some reporters), but through parody that distorts this format through the use of humorous discourses. It also uses the formula of the reporter who attends public events to make uncomfortable questions to or play tricks on official sources. With regards to the narrative style, this show narrates the news events with the use of irony, caricature and even mockery. This programme uses many of technical resources that are typical of infotainment: it presents manipulated videos starred by relevant figures that appear in ridiculous situations or making comic speeches. Real audiovisual material is edited and altered with the use of on-screen displays and post-production effects to produce comedy. *Franco*, for instance, is a puppet that offers a caricature of the dictator and makes comments about today’s events.

Salvados (“Saved”)

Genre: Investigative journalism series

Airing: Sundays from 21:30 to 23:30.

It is a programme about journalistic reports hosted by Jordi Évole, who discusses current affairs ironically and provocatively. It premiered in February 2008 as a special theme series and became a weekly show in October 2008. The channel describes the show’s formula as “A mixture of bold and

ironic reporting that takes reality with humour and ignores protocols in order to have fun and entertain” [2]. The show has provoked several controversial cases, of which the most important is the threat made by FE/La Falange to its presenter after he placed a bouquet of flowers with the colours of the Republican flag over Franco’s grave.

Distinctive features of infotainment: the director and host of the show plays a protagonist role, gets involved in the reports, makes viewers see the reality through his eyes, and entertains with his personality full of irony, insolence and false naivety. The show uses a very expressive writing style full of comparisons and images. The programme is technically sober, focused on the interview between the presenter and the character chosen as source, although sometimes uses fast motion and music to highlight an important circumstance.

Equipo de Investigación (“Research team”)

Genre: Investigative journalism series

Airing: Friday from 22:30 to 01:45.

Journalistic reports about a current issue. It premiered in February 2011 in Antena 3 but was moved to La Sexta in January 2013 to strengthen its prime time slot. The programme is presented by Gloria Serra. The report presented during the week of analysis was titled “Horse meat: the fraud”, which investigated the Spanish companies that commercialised this meat for human consumption.

Distinctive features of infotainment: The thematic selection is dominated by controversial topics, scandals, crime and accidents. Thus, during the analysed week the show examined such matters as: binge tourism in Salou, the murdering of Marta Del Castillo, the economic situation of the former tennis player Arantxa Sánchez Vicario, and the population of La Junquera as the brothel of Europe. From the technical point of view, the show systematically uses fast cutting to increase the tension of the images, dramatic music and on-screen displays to highlight the most sensationalist news and statements. The hidden camera is often used to obtain information. The host’s narration is exaggerated to increase the intensity of the story while the on-screen descriptions are full of dramatic adjectives.

La sexta columna (“The sixth column”)

Genre: Documentary

Airing: Friday from 21:30 to 22:30.

It is a monographic documentary programme about current political or social issues presented by Antonio García Ferreras. It premiered in January 2012 and its initial production and airing was linked to the emergence of a hot topic. Its airing eventually became weekly and was presented on the Friday prime time slot. It is produced by the news team of *La Sexta* TV. The episode titled “Rouco’s untouchable friends”, which analysed the power of the Catholic Church, prompted several advertisers to temporarily withdraw their ads from this programme. During the analysed week the programme presented the report titled “The absolution of the hunted King” addressed the Spanish monarch’s public request for forgiveness and the cause of this petition: the publication of a photo where he appeared next to an elephant killed in a hunt in Botswana.

Distinctive features of infotainment: With regards to the technical resources, *La sexta columna* uses fast cutting and music to increase the tension and rhythm of the story. Post-production effects and transitions are used in abundance to enhance the sensationalism: for example, in the episode presented during the analysed week, about the photograph of the King, images of different social

mobilisations are blended together, and images of the controversial events that have affected the Royal family are quickly presented to produce a cumulative effect. Images of wildlife and hunting and violent safaris are repeated in various segments of the report. The editing of real images with digital effects is used with a parodic purpose: an intervention of the King is interrupted by an elephant's trunk, images Walt Disney's Dumbo are inserted, and humorous photo montages are used to show the face of the monarch with a lion's body. The King appears ridiculed with several images of him falling in public. In relation to the writing style, it is expressive and incorporates a hyperbolic and intense adjectivation. The presenters' narrative style is exaggerated and sometimes mocking.

La sexta noche ("The sixth night")

Genre: Debate

Airing: Saturday from 21:30 to 01:45.

Weekly analysis of current affairs presented by Iñaki López and Sandra Fernández. The central part of the programme is the debate between its collaborators, which is seasoned with news, reports and interviews. During the programme's presentation conference, its aim to mix information and entertainment was made clear by its presenter: "We don't want to produce the classic sensible debate, in which people give their opinions in an orderly manner and sentences are long and endless. One has to take into account the fact that people watch television on Saturday nights also to be entertained" [3].

Distinctive features of infotainment: With regards to the selection of information sources, the programme often prefers the more impetuous and populist sources. Some of the collaborators selected by the programme are characterised for vehemently expressing controversial positions on reality, among them are Fernando Sánchez Dragó, José María Gay de Liébana (known as the indignant economist), Rocío Aguirre (sister of the former President of the community of Madrid, Esperanza Aguirre, who decided to leave the programme after a tense discussion with other collaborators) and Miguel Ángel Revilla, the former President of Cantabria. This last collaborator has his own section known as the "Opinion of Revilla" in which he generally offers populist comments.

Citizens also participate in the narration of the current affairs as protagonists. In the presentation of the show, co-presenter Sandra Fernández points out that her intention was to "Put faces", "to the reporting of personal stories" [4]. Indeed, there are stories of particular individuals who, from their direct experience, offer a vision of the current problems that affect them. In addition, presenter Iñaki López plays a central role within the programme since he becomes a street reporter that uses the interview to collect the testimony of the news protagonists and the citizens in the street. In terms of the technical resources, the show offers stories that contain music, and fast-cut and rhythmic images that support the intense and dramatised text.

Telecinco

El gran debate ("The great debate")

Genre: Debate.

Airing: Saturdays from 22:00 to 2:20.

Weekly debate show that addresses current, mainly social and political, affairs. The dialogue between collaborators, which is moderated by Jordi González, is mixed with stories, live connections, the testimony of people affected by the issues presented there, and opinion polls that reflect the views of the citizens. The programme is a spin-off of *La Noria*, a show that was pulled off

the air by Mediaset due to the criticism it received after the show presented an interview to the mother of the alleged killer of Marta Del Castillo, which also caused the boycott of most of its advertisers who did not want their brands associated with a discredited show.

Distinctive features of infotainment: The selection of topics favours the most controversial news of the week: crime and accidents, political and economic scandals, controversial statements, and the private life of popular characters. In terms of the information sources, this programme has the regular participation of journalists and politicians characterised by their eagerness to debate (Pilar Rahola, Alfonso Rojo and Melchor Miralles), as well as citizens who share their personal experience. The section titled *Fila Cero*, for instance, presents through live connections the stories of the citizens affected by the problems discussed in the show.

With respect to the technical resources, the show uses fast cutting and music to increase the emotions or to raise tension, the subjective camera shots and plenty of post-production effects and transitions. There are many live connections, usually with citizens who are direct victims of the problems addressed in the show. The narrative style is dramatic and intense, and is accompanied by a selection of images and the most impressive testimonies and an expressive and hyperbolic language.

La hora de José Mota (“José Mota’s hour”)

Genre: News satire and humour show

Airing: Thursdays from 22:15 to 2:00. Repeats on Saturday: 9:35 to 10:45.

Presented by comedian José Mota, this weekly show offers sketches about everyday life situations, news and today’s personalities. It premiered on TVE and TVE International. From 2009 to 2012 the show was aired in Friday’s prime time slot and was repeated on Saturday mornings and at different times. The show won the 2010 *Ondas* award for best Entertainment Programme. In May 2012 Mediaset hired José Mota to produce the same programme in Telecinco, where the first season was aired on Thursday’s prime time slot.

Distinctive features of infotainment: Part of the programme consists of the analysis of current affairs from a humorous perspective that includes the parody of celebrities and songs and dramatized jokes about everyday situations, in order to offer a complete satire of reality. Mota interprets several personalities from the world of politics, culture, sports and the media (Mariano Rajoy, Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba, King Juan Carlos, Fernando Alonso, Pitingo, etc.).

Antena 3

El hormiguero 3.0 (“Anthill 3.0”)

Genre: *Talk show*

Airing: Monday to Thursday from 21:45 to 22:40.

The content of this talk show revolves around humour, the dissemination of scientific experiments and interviews. It is presented and directed by Pablo Motos, in collaboration with the puppets ants - Trancas, Barrancas and Petancas. This show features the collaboration of The Man in Black, Mario Vaquerizo, Anna Simón, Luis Piedrahita, Jandro and J. J. Vaquero.

Distinctive features of infotainment: It makes a profuse use of music, post-production effects and editing resources (particularly slow motion) to reinforce the sensationalism of the show, especially in the sections that focus on the dissemination of scientific experiments. Throughout the programme, and especially during interviews, on-screen displays are used to guide the interpretation of images

and testimonies. Moreover, interviews are mixed with humour and different games that involve the interviewee. It is the interviews section which includes the informational content of the show, with the presence of singers, actors, writers and personalities involved, in one way or another, with today's news. Guests are interviewed in depth and in an informal way by Pablo Motos, with the collaboration of the puppet ants.

As for the information sources, the presenter and the director become “co-protagonist” of each of the sections of the programme. The narrative style of the presenter is characterised for relying in spontaneity, sarcasm, sentimentality and, above all, humour.

6. Discussion

The increase in the television offer as a consequence of the introduction of DTT has generated a significant presence of infotainment in the programming of the different Spanish networks, ranging from 34.91%, like in the case of La Sexta, to 8.12%, like in the case of TVE 2. However, opposing our first hypothesis, the broadcast of infotainment is concentrated not only on the prime time slot but there is also a strong tendency to reinforce this genre in the morning schedule through magazine shows.

The second hypothesis that proposed the existence of important differences in the presence of infotainment between public and private channels has neither been confirmed. While TVE 2 is the network that dedicates the lowest percentage of its schedule to the broadcast of infotainment, TVE 1 -the truly competitive mainstream public broadcaster- occupies the third highest position with 18.10%, just after La Sexta and Telecinco but ahead of Antena 3 and Cuatro. Although TVE 1 does not compete for advertising against the other channels, its effort to publicly legitimise itself with an attractive offer has made it to follow a programmatic strategy similar to that of the private networks in it comes to the introduction of infotainment.

The third hypothesis is largely confirmed since it was demonstrated that the competition among networks causes the emulation of formats. The study proved that the morning schedule of the six channels opted for the news magazine format and that in the prime time slot the most dominant genres are debate, investigative journalism, and news satire, whose production can be afforded by networks because they are cheaper to produce than other formats such as fiction, documentary, docu-comedy and humour shows.

The study confirmed the presence of most of the distinctive key features of infotainment programmes in the prime time slots of the six networks: the preference for dramatic or controversial topics, the incorporation of humour and parody as instruments to interpret reality; the importance given to the presenter who brings his/her personal vision to the narration of the events; the introduction of the voice of the street through the personalisation of the issues addressed and the introduction of surveys. In terms of technical resources, many resources are used to increase the already-high spectacular nature of the medium: fast cutting of images, postproduction effects, sound effects, introduction of dramatic music, and excessive use of previews.

Finally, the research study has highlighted the need to examine the evolution of television infotainment diachronically to determine whether, based on the data provided here, there is an

increase in the presence of infotainment in the mainstream channels over time and whether new distinctive features to portray reality are emerging with the objective of entertaining the public rather than stimulating their reflection.

Funded research

This article is part of a research project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness: *El infoentretenimiento político en televisión e Internet. Formatos, audiencias y consecuencias en la comunicación política española - INFOPOLTNET* (“Political infotainment on television and the Internet. Formats, audiences and consequences on the Spanish political communication”). Reference number: CSO2012-34698.

Dates:

-Start of the research study: 1 January 2013

-Completion of the research study: 31 December 2015

7. Notes

1. The calculation of the total time of infotainment broadcast per week also took into account the repeats of infotainment programmes included in the schedules of a same network.

2. Jordi Évole: “La edición semanal de Salvados dejará de ser temática”, *Fórmula tv*, 29 September, 2008: <http://www.formulatv.com/noticias/8791/jordi-evole-la-edicion-semanal-de-salvados-dejara-de-ser-tematica/> (13-June-2013).

3. Iñaki López: “Pretendemos hacer un debate apasionante, porque nuestra intención es también la de entretener”, *Fórmula tv*, 24 January 2013. <http://www.formulatv.com/noticias/29056/inaki-lopez-pretendemos-hacer-debate-apasionante-porque-nuestra-intencion-tambien-es-entretener/2/> (13-June-2013).

4. *Ibid.*

8. List of references

ArceMedia. (2013): Informe ArceMedia 2012, http://www.arcemedia.es/noticia_informe_view.aspx?id=251 (19-April-2013)

BM Anderson (2004): *News Flash. Journalism, Infotainment, and the Botton-Line Business of Broadcast News*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Barlovento Comunicación (2013): Análisis televisivo 2012, http://www.academiav.com/files/fotnot_inbarloventocomunicacion.pdf (12-April-2013)

S Berrocal, L Abad, E Pedreira and E Cebrián (2001): “La imagen de los partidos políticos in El Informal, CQC and Las Noticias del Guiñol en las elecciones legislativas de 2001”. *Zer* 11.

S Berrocal and E Cebrián (2009): “El ‘infoentretenimiento’ político televisivo. Un análisis de las primeras intervenciones de Zapatero y Rajoy en ‘Tengo una pregunta para usted’”. *Textual & Visual Media: Revista de la Sociedad Española de Periodística* 2, pp. 41-60.

Autores (2012): “El infoentretenimiento en internet. Un análisis del tratamiento político de José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, Mariano Rajoy, Gaspar Llamazares y Rosa Díez en YouTube”. *Doxa Comunicación* 15, pp. 13-34.

K Brants (1998): “Who’s afraid of infotainment?”. *European Journal of Communication* 13, pp. 315-335.

N Carrillo (2013): “El género-tendencia del infoentretenimiento: definición, características y vías de estudio”, in C Ferré Pavia (Ed.): *Infoentretenimiento. El formato imparable de la era del espectáculo*. Barcelona: UOC.

J del Rey Morató (1998): *El naufragio del periodismo en la era de la televisión. La industria del infoentretenimiento: de Aristóteles a Walt Disney*. Madrid: Fragua.

M Delli Caprini and B Williams (2001): “Let Us Infotain You: Politics in the New Media”, in WL Bennet & R Entman: *Mediated politics: communication in the future of democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

F Esser (1999): “Tabloidization of news: A comparative analysis of Anglo-American and German press journalism”. *European Journal of Communication* 14, pp. 291-324.

C Ferré Pavia (Ed.) (2013): *Infoentretenimiento. El formato imparable de la era del espectáculo*. Barcelona: UOC.

C Ferré and C Gayá (2009): *Infoentreteniment i percepció ciutadana de la política: el cas de Polònia*. Barcelona: Consell de l’Audiovisual de Catalunya.

W Früh and W Wirth (1997): “Positives und negatives infotainment. Zur Rezeption unterhaltsam aufbereiteter TV-Informationen”, in G Bentele and M Haller (Eds.) *Aktuelle Entstehung von Öffentlichkeit*. Constance: Universitätsverlag Konstanz.

JA García Avilés (2007): “El infoentretenimiento en los informativos líderes de audiencia de la Unión Europea”. *Anàlisi* 35, pp. 47-63.

ME Grabe, S Zhou, A Lang and PD Bolls (2000): “Packaging television news: The effects of tabloid on information processing and evaluative responses”. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 44, pp. 581-598.

D Graber (1994): “The infotainment quotient in routine television news: A director’s perspective”. *Discourse & Society* 5, pp. 483-508.

JT Hamilton (2004): *All the news that's fit to sell: How the market transforms information into news*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

B Kovach and T Rosenstiel (2003): *Los elementos del periodismo*. Madrid: Santillana.

UM Krüger (1988): "Information-Infotainment-Entertainment: program analysis". *Media Perspektiven* 10, pp. 637-664.

J Langer (2000): *La televisión sensacionalista*. Barcelona: Paidós.

JC Lozano (2004): "Infotainment in national TV news: A comparative analysis of Mexican, Canadian and U.S. news programs" in *Actas de la Annual Conference of the International Association for Media and Communication Research*. IAMCR/AIERI: Porto Alegre.

C Marín (2010): "El infoentretenimiento en televisión. Del límite al espectáculo" in A Salgado Losada (Coord.). *Creatividad en televisión. Entretenimiento y ficción*. Madrid: Fragua.

P Moy, MA Xenos and VK Hess (2005): "Communication and citizenship: Mapping the political effects of infotainment". *Mass Communication and Society* 8 (2), pp. 111-131.

S Ortells Badenes (2009): "La mercantilización de la información: la nueva era informativa en televisión". *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* 64, pp. 341-353.

S Ortells Badenes (2011): "La consolidación de los programas de infoentretenimiento en el panorama televisivo español". *Fórum de Recerca* 16, pp. 279-291.

TE Patterson (2000): *Doing well and doing good: How soft news and critical journalism are shrinking the news audience and weakening democracy and what news outlets can do about it*. Cambridge: MA Harvard University.

A Salgado Losada (2010): "Actualidad, humor y entretenimiento en los programas de televisión: de la terminología a la realidad profesional". *Trípodos* 27, pp. 59-73.

G Sartori (1998): *Homo videns. La sociedad teledirigida*. Madrid: Santillana.

T Soler (2013): "Una pareja de hecho (Prólogo)", in Ferré Pavia, C. (Ed.). *Infoentretenimiento. El formato imparable de la era del espectáculo*. Barcelona: UOC.

SD Stark (1997): "Local News: The Biggest Scandal on TV. It's shallow, it's stupid, it misleads the public-It's the local news". *The Washington Monthly* 29 (6), pp. 38-41.

A Stern (1975): *Filosofía de la risa y el llanto*. Barcelona: Editorial Universitaria

D Thusu (2007): *News as entertainment. The rise of global infotainment*. London: Sage.

L Van Zoonen (1998): "'Finally, I have my mother back: male and female politicians in popular culture". *Harvard International Journal for Press/Politics* 3, pp. 48-64.

L Van Zoonen & Ch Holtz-Bacha (2000): “Personalisstion in Dutch and German Politics: The Case of Talk Show”. *The Public* 7 (2), pp. 45-56.

How to cite this article in bibliographies / References

S Berrocal Gonzalo, M Redondo García, V Martín Jiménez, E. Campos Domínguez. (2014): “Presence of infotainment in Spain’s mainstream DTT channels”. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, pp. 85 to 103. http://www.revistalatinacs.org/069/paper/1002_UVa/05_Been.html
DOI: [10.4185/RLCS-2014-1002en](https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2014-1002en)

Article received on 10 November 2013. Submitted to pre-review on 12 November. Sent to reviewers on 14 November. Accepted on 24 January 2014. Galley proofs made available to the authoress on 27 January 2014. Approved by authoress on: 1 February 2014. Published on 2 February 2014.