Political personalization and journalistic infotainment. A frame analysis

Personalización política e infoentretenimiento periodístico. Un estudio desde los encuadres

Personalização política e infoentretenimento jornalístico. Um estudo do enquadramento

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ABSTRACT

News media increasingly cover elections as infotainment, highlighting conflicts and strategies instead of campaign themes and proposals. The personalization of politics could explain this phenomenon, either because of the design of some political systems, that concentrate power and visibility in individuals, or the personalized narratives of the media. To investigate its impact on political coverage, we conducted a comparative content analysis of frames related to infotainment in the Mexican press, between a presidential election, highly personalized, (2012) and a congressional one (2015). Findings show a tenuous association between the personalization of election and such frames.

RESUMEN

Crecientemente, los medios cubren las elecciones como infoentretenimiento, destacando conflictos y estrategias en lugar de temas y propuestas. La personalización de la política puede explicar en parte esta tendencia, tanto por el diseño de ciertos sistemas políticos, que concentran poder y visibilidad en individuos, como por las narrativas personificantes de los medios. Para indagar su impacto en la cobertura se realizó un análisis comparativo de encuadres vinculados con el infoentretenimiento en la prensa mexicana, entre una elección presidencial altamente personalizada (2012) y una parlamentaria (2015). Los resultados muestran una asociación tenue entre la personalización de una elección y dichos encuadres.

RESUMO

Cada vez mais os meios de comunicação cobrem as eleições como infoentretenimento, destacando aspectos de conflito e estratégia em vez de temas e propostas eleitorais. A personalização da política pode ser explicar em parte essa tendência, tanto por desenho de alguns sistemas políticos, que concentram poder e visibilidade em indivíduos, como por as narrativas personificantes dos meios. Para a perguntar sobre seu impacto na cobertura, uma análise comparativa do infoentretenimento na imprensa mexicana, entre uma campanha presidencial altamente personalizada (2012), e uma parlamentaria (2015). Os resultados mostram uma associação tênue entre a personalização das eleições e essas variáveis.

INTRODUCTION

From the normative point of view, the information that citizens need to make electoral decisions should lead them to know and understand major social problems, to get acquainted with the political actors running to solve them and their qualifications, and to be aware of the proposals and programs they offer. However, an important part of the population lacks the civic competencies that raise their interest and understanding of these aspects, which is why certain media are prone to elaborate political information that contains entertainment elements capable of attracting said audiences, often depoliticized.

This journalistic trend has been conceptualized internationally as infotainment, a concept that extends a stream of long-standing reflections focused on the growing secularization, trivialization and popularization of politics and politicians, largely by means of their mediatization (Debray, 1992; Edelman, 2002; Sartori, 1998). In this regard, international literature, particularly the one that explores the presence of strategic and game-like frameworks, has made considerable efforts to determine the scope and degree of spread of this trend in various countries (Berganza, 2008; D'Angelo, Calderone, & Territola, 2005; Jensen, 2012; Klein, 2000; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Takens, van Atteveldt, van Hoof, & Kleinnijenhuis, 2013).

However, an empirically validated explanation of this phenomenon has found less consensus. Most studies link the phenomenon to the constraints and economic environments of the media (Dunaway, 2013; McMenamin, Flynn, O'Malley, & Rafter, 2012; Rafter, Flynn, McMenamin, & O'Malley, 2014; Trussler & Soroka, 2014), the endogenous components of media systems (Dimitrova & Kostadinova, 2013; Kerbel, Apee, & Howard Ross, 2000; Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2006; Strömbäck & Van Aelst, 2010) and less frequently to explanations related specifically to political factors, such as the competitiveness of elections, the reduction of ideological or public policy differences in parties (O'Malley, Brandenburg, Flynn, McMenamin, & Rafter, 2013), their professionalization and social ideological uprooting (Skorkjær Binderkrantz & Green-Pedersen, 2009) and the consensual or conflictive nature of the political system (Dimitrova & Kostadinova, 2013).

Although widespread, one of the least explored, albeit obvious political factors is the personalization of politics. Regarding media visibility, it is natural that in a federal election of the Executive branch, strong leaders or personalities who pretend to occupy the position of president or prime minister achieve significant prominence. In addition, the cultural relevance of individual leadership, the adversarial or agonal nature of these processes and the participation of charismatic media leaders introduce a narrative component that could prompt a story to be closer to the entertainment, than, for example, a parliamentary, plebiscitary or judicial election, where parties and institutions compete at the formal level, instead of personalities. It is feasible to suppose that the personalization factor, in its dense political and journalistic, cultural and narrative significance, influences the coverage of the presidential elections to include entertainment elements. Such coverage is not frequent in other types of elections or political events; thus, to assert that personalized coverage is a general trait of contemporary journalism would be equivocal.

This paper aims to explore whether the nature of a non-presidential, non-personalized election, at the same national scale, yields to variations in the patterns of infotainment coverage if compared to a presidential one. As a case study, this is achieved by comparing the electoral coverage of the 2012 Mexican presidential election with the 2015 legislative election, and operationalizing the infotainment phenomenon through the method of frame analysis, as already mentioned. The theoretical framework presented here develops a particular definition of infotainment linked to the frames identified by literature and establishes the foreseeable weight of personalization as a differentiating factor of electoral coverage. This is the point of departure to establish certain hypotheses. On the other hand the methodological section presents the inductive and deductive procedures to establish the codebook used in the analysis, as well as the sampling procedure. Finally, the findings and following conclusions reveal certain similar patterns of coverage focused mainly on strategies and conflicts between the parties, as well as the minimum salience of issues, but with a some emphasis on aspects related to the type of election.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
POLITICAL PERSONALIZATION AND JOURNALISTIC NARRATIVES

The phenomenon of political personalization has been a concern for academics of political communication at least since the rise of television as the main showcase for political actors (Sartori, 1998). However, it is difficult

to define this personalization, despite its ubiquity, since it includes both poltical and media emphasis.

In the first emphasis, personalization can be understood as a result of the organization of power hierarchies within political systems and organizations, which distribute it more towards individual leadership rather than to institutions or collegiate bodies. The basic design of political systems illustrates this: in consensual systems, a multiplicity of political, institutional and civil society actors have a role in the design of public policies; parties compete for the right to represent certain segments of society and changes in power arise from rearrangements in governing coalitions, rather than through elections, all of which forces cooperation. In contrast, in the majority systems, decisions tend to be centralized in an executive branch controlled by a single party, representativeness is verified on a national scale and elections mean an almost total transfer of power to other actors, resulting in an opposition (of losers) often contentious (Dimitrova & Kostadinova, 2013; Hallin & Mancini, 2004)

Based on this design, voter attention turns more towards presidential elections, considered more important; in these, they weigh their options since they attribute them greater importance in the implementation of public policy. In contrast, in second-order elections such as those of Congress, voters pay less attention and use them mostly to express dissatisfaction with the government or send a message of change in the direction of their policies (O'Malley et al., 2013).

Consequently, the majority political design and the particular attraction that it exerts over voters logically favors a greater personification of power, since the system gives political leaders considerable margins of representativeness and political maneuvering. Therefore, the pronounced visibility of personal leadership, during elections and government, as well as the intense media coverage with features of confrontation and one-person protagonism in such periods, could be considered a systemic outcome of such design, considering everything that is at stake regarding the individuals that are elected and govern (Van Aelst, Sheafer, & Stanyer, 2012; Vliegenthart, Boomgaarden, & Jelle, 2011).

This institutional order also interacts with a cultural matrix of political embodiment that is not exclusive to the contemporary era: the fascination aroused by strong individuals and the cult of personal image have been widely used resources since antiquity (as in the case of Roman Caesars), going through

the first modernity (Napoleon) and the communist systems (Stalin, Castro), considering the efficiency that personalist leadership entails. Consequently, this cultural feature has permanently demanded of politicians a dimension of performance or staging that gives strength and credibility to their discourse (Dader, 1998; Debray, 1992), a condition recently emphasized by the weakening in the affective relationship between voters and parties.

In addition to these institutional and political-cultural features of personalization, the media dimension of the phenomenon adds other elements: on the one hand, we can observe the strategic intention of political actors to increase their individual profile beyond their partisan membership, pursuing intense and favorable journalistic coverage. On the other hand, journalists exercise criteria that sift the coverage of issues and political events with personifying treatments, mainly cover political individuals rather than institutions, and emphasize both their qualities, linked to their public function, and characteristics of their personal and private lives, which are irrelevant to their position but interesting to audiences (Vliegenthart et al., 2011).

This preference is preceded by some components typical of the traditional norms of journalistic production: news-values oriented to individuals rather than groups, in a hierarchy of power that invariably points to the highest level of the Executive branch (Wolf, 2001); the influence and audiovisual demands of television, that entail the substitution of abstract and complex ideas for the concrete gestures and discourses of familiar faces (Van Aelst et al., 2012), and a proneness to narrate events not from the point of view of the processes, structures and social institutions, but of individuals involved in conflicts and seeking the resolution of disputes. Media seek to produce these narratives so the audiences experiment greater understanding, identification, and impact from them (Johnson-Cartee, 2005).

In short, the political and media aspects described make more likely a journalistic coverage in which people, and not institutions or groups, are the relevant agents of political events. In the end, the personifying political system adds to journalistic news-values to make more likely to highlight certain patterns of infotainment coverage, described below.

JOURNALISTIC POLITICAL ENTERTAINMENT AND RELATIVE FRAMINGS

The phenomenon that we intend to analyze has

acquired several names in academia from the difficulty of grasping it theoretically: at the end of the seventies, transformations in journalistic content have been associated with a media logic (Altheide, 2004); in the nineties, with a tabloidization (Barnett, 1998; Gripsrud, 2000; Zelizer, 2009), spectacularization (Lozano, 2004) or soft news (Patterson, 2000); and in the early 2000s, with the phenomenon of infotainment, politainment or pop politics (Baym, 2008; Brants, 2005; Mazzoleni & Sfardini, 2009). These concepts share similar attributes, particularly the way in which they point to the decentralization of traditional journalism as a privileged discourse to communicate the political and its consequent displacement to informal domains or languages, largely those of entertainment. However, they have different traits that point in several directions.

Hence, and in response to this conceptual plurality, the working concept for the purposes of this research is journalistic political entertainment[1], defined as an emphasis, in political news, on formal or thematic elements capable of making the political contents more accessible and attractive to audiences not interested in familiar with that field. This implies that the once rigid and jealously guarded separation between serious information and entertainment is diluted and mixed, showing the latter to a greater extent (Delli Carpini & Williams, 2001). It also entails the goal of journalistic companies to expand their markets beyond their usual elite audience, already used to the consumption of political information. In order to do so, they need to produce messages capable of capture, captivate and retain the attention of the audience, the main (and scarce) good that the media sells to its advertisers (McQuail, 2001).

However, the matrix of language used by the formal press to do these operations corresponds to what Altheide (2004) calls "media logic", originally stemmed from television and later adopted by tabloids: it is an "evocative, encapsulated, highly thematic, familiar with the audience and easy to use" grammar (Altheide, 2004, p. 294) that structures fragmentary, simplified and effective messages to communicate with the audience in an effective way, in the manner of the grammar of advertising and entertainment. This not only structures the presentation of the message, but also the rest of the production processes and even the assumptions to construct the messages; it includes rhythm, language and its format, "which in turn prescribes codes to define, select, organize, present and recognize information" (Altheide, 2004, p. 294).

The combination of the aforementioned formal attributes, such as brevity, simplification, sensationalism and informal language, and a selection of less institutional topics closer to audiences such as scandals, "news you can use" or touching pieces of human interest, constitute a style that moves away from the argumentative and linguistic complexity of traditional journalism and approaches the television formats with which most audiences are familiar.

To synthesize the phenomenon described, it is possible to explain it from the micro to macro: in this regard, the production of political news is subjected to the media logic, with stylistic codes and thematic selections close to television and, therefore, with massive appeal potential. Thus, the political, once serious and argumentative, is secularized, popularized and refined as a commodity that fundamentally seeks to attract the attention of uneducated or uninterested audiences in political matters, under a commercial imperative, which ends up easing the stable division between serious information and entertainment, intermingling and placing the first in the foreground.

Regarding the operationalization of the concept, it is possible to resort to the methodological and theoretical perspective that identifies strategic or game frames[2] in the media messages, to which it is possible to add others that respond to a similar pattern, such as those of conflict or human interest. Since the frames "manifest the way in which the conventions and processes of journalistic production translate political events into templates for the news" (de Vreese, 2014, p. 148), it is possible to interpret and implement them as a condensed symbolic expression of the resources used by infotainment to attract the attention of depoliticized audiences.

Here we briefly describe its content: under the frame of conflict, the election is portrayed as a polarized scenario, in which frictions and controversies occur between individuals, groups and institutions, with little attention to the issues that are at stake and the substance thereof (Berganza, 2008). The game frame uses the language and narrative of sports, and shares with the previous one the attributes of a fierce competition, an agonal and confrontational character, as well as the expression of a strong desire of the candidates to win (Anikin, 2009). It is the frame that originates the treatment of elections as a horse race, with a dose of speculation about winners, losers and the final results of the race (Jensen, 2012; Johnson-Cartee, 2005). In the strategic frame, the reporters interpret the motives and intentions that underlie the actions or proposals of the candidates, as well as the tactics they need

to gain positions or remain in front. It describes campaign events "from the point of view of candidates interested in themselves, rather than in the common good" (Patterson, 1993, p. 10). In turn, the frame of human interest produces stories that express the human face or emotional angle of the events, issues or problems related to the campaign, as well as funny events of the candidates.

The outlined frames do not report the political content, the public issues and problems or the proposed solutions, an expected performance based on a normative understanding of the media as forums for plural voices that contribute to an informed political deliberation (Christians, Glasser, McQuail, & White, 2009). Rather, they communicate the partial results of the election in terms of a dramatic, attractive and exciting contest. They share elements of pleasure or excitement, the claim of attention, the narrative instead of the factual and the popular as opposed to the formal, substantial and, therefore, typically elitist. In that sense, they try to raise the level of public enthusiasm of depoliticized audiences for political events, and symbolically manifest the tendency towards political entertainment (Anikin, 2009).

As we mentioned in the introduction, the more or less intense production of these coverage patterns includes economic, cultural (journalistic culture) or political factors as antecedent conditions. However, within the latter, one thing that is evident –although less explored– is the personalization of politics, whose political, cultural and journalistic relevance, with immediate consequences in terms of media coverage, was described in the first section. Taking this factor as an independent variable, it is possible to expect the following assumption regarding journalistic entertainment:

- *H1* The coverage of the presidential election will use the frames related to infotainment to a greater extent than the journalistic coverage of the Congressional election.

On the other hand, beyond the determinations of the political system that emphasize personal leadership, there are actors who make deliberate and strategic efforts to obtain media visibility, which can lead them to indirectly collaborate with the media to produce the frameworks linked to infotainment when, for example, they give strategic statements in their public appearances or hold conflicting positions with their

rivals. If the hypothesis of personalization is correct, it is likely that those individual actors are more susceptible than the parties or unions, for example, to be framed in this way. In the context of an election, this generates a second hypothesis:

- *H2* Individual political actors, or candidates, will be covered with infotainment frames to a greater extent than institutional political actors.

The research design presented below aims to assess such assumptions.

METHODOLOGY

As a case study, the conditions that precede the phenomenon of journalistic political entertainment in Mexico –such as a political system that personalizes power by virtue of a majority and presidentialist design, presidential elections with more participation than parliamentary elections, a certain personality cult and a modern information media immersed in contemporary forms of journalism, more narrative than factual– justify the plausibility of the hypotheses outlined and their empirical research. On the other hand, some cross-sectional and descriptive work in the literature demonstrate stable patterns of coverage regarding each measured election, of an even frequency of issue and strategic or game frames, centered on the entertaining dimension of the election (Echeverría & Bañuelos, 2015; Echeverría & Meyer, 2015; Echeverría & Millet, 2013; Muñiz, 2015).

Although the Mexican case is rather atypical with respect to other Latin American countries, so that the results could not be extrapolated, the design and hypotheses proposed in this paper can serve as a starting point to replicate in other places.

Based on this, this empirical study focuses on a sample of news pieces from the Mexican federal elections of both 2012 and 2015, respectively, to renew the Presidency and the Congress. These political processes were selected due to their counterfactual nature regarding the presence/absence of personalization, a component prone to journalistic treatments such as those already described. In this way, the advantages of comparison in political communication are highlighted, in this case of counterfactuals, which raise awareness about the particularities taken for granted by the researcher and point out phenomena that have not been conceptualized (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

However, it should be noted that this is an imperfect comparison since during the lapse between both elections (three years) some variables that might impact the compared data could have been introduced. However, it is necessary to observe that a comparison between presidential and congressional elections that occur in the same year would also be hampered by the way in which the media de-emphasize its coverage in favor of the former, which ends up in a steep contrast. Nevertheless, this limitation of validity corresponds to the exploratory nature of this study, although it should be considered in future research.

The method chosen to carry out this work is quantitative content analysis. The newspaper sample was integrated by daily press corresponding to the national quality or prestige press, due to its importance in the formation of public opinion and because it constitutes, in theory, the space less susceptible to spectacularization, given the tradition of liberal journalism that these newspapers embody. Although the inclusion of the tabloid press or television would have broadened the scope of the proposed hypothesis, since it is a more widely disseminated media, we think that the quality press better demonstrates the degree of penetration of infotainment in traditional journalism, while those other media have demonstrated to be colonized by this trend for several decades (Aalberg, Strömbäck, & de Vreese, 2011).

Because they are high-circulation, national distributed, prestigious or quality newspapers, according to the National Register of Printed Media (SEGOB, 2013), we reviewed the digital newspaper archive of *Reforma*, *La Jornada*, *El Universal*, *Milenio* and *Excélsior*. The sample was integrated by the constructed week method, which consists of choosing a random date for each day of the week within the sample period, which has shown its statistical reliability in several works (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998).

The scope of this exercise consisted of all the editions of the five newspapers published during the days that the campaign lasted, sixty in the case of the parliamentarian, from April 5 to June 3, 2015, and ninety in the case of the presidential one, from March 30 to June 27, 2012. Thus, in both electoral periods, seven random dates were chosen containing 35 editions each, from which resulted, for the 2012 election, 251 sampling units (news pieces) and for 2015, 172. Only news stories that dealt with the election of the President or federal deputies were chosen, without considering opinion pieces (columns, editorials, cartoons) or news of campaigns for governor or municipal president.

The codebook used in this exercise was developed for a previous work and its elaboration combined inductive and deductive processes. Based on the categories established by literature (Aalberg, Strömbäck, & de Vreese, 2011; Capella & Jamieson, 1997; Klein, 2000; Lawrence, 2000; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Strömbäck & Luengo, 2008), we conducted a qualitative analysis by constant comparison to a sub-sample of news pieces of the 2012 election (n=212) in order to adjust the definitions of the frames to the Mexican context, which resulted in minimal variations. Although this makes it difficult to compare the results with the North American and European regions, it paves the way for Latin American applications of the method.

Therefore, for this exercise, this codebook contemplates two macro frames called dispute[3] and political, and seven general frames: human interest, game, strategy and conflict, corresponding to the first macro frame, and issues, policies and ideas, political process and political leadership, to the second. For the coding of the specific corpus of this exercise, we adopted the following criteria: in the first instance, we decided to identify a single dominant frame by news piece, because although literature admits the possibility of tracking different frames in each piece, such a detailed coding would make it difficult to obtain global observations and conclusions (D'Angelo et al., 2005; Skorkjær Binderkrantz & Green-Pedersen, 2009). The headline was the unit of analysis within the news pieces, for practical and theoretical reasons, since this constitutes the "most powerful framing device of the news" (Van Dijk, 1990), which is able to activate concepts in the reader and thus influence the interpretation of the rest of it (Klein, 2000; Tewksbury, Jones, Peske, Raymond, & Vig, 2000). The coders classified each unit as pertaining to one of the frames, using as criteria a list of three descriptive sentences for each one. The fact that the unit adjusted to at least one of the descriptions was enough to classify it in a certain frame.

When applying the Kappa intercoder reliability test on 10% of the 2012 notes, the macro frames had a reliability of .831 and the frames, of .739, considered satisfactory for an exploratory exercise such as this (Riffe et al., 1998). However, in the case of the congressional election, the data obtained in successive pilot tests for this exercise did not achieve satisfactory reliability tests (.357 and .431, respectively, with two coders), possibly due to a lag between the previously developed protocol, applied to a presidential election, and this one,

of a congressional nature. Needless to say, this task is a pending issue in the achievement of a reliable and replicable instrument in elections of a different nature.

FINDINGS

The first result at once simple and significant points to the volume of news pieces collected in the sample and generated proportionally in each election: the 251 pieces published to cover the presidential are reduced to 172 in the congressional, 1.5 times fewer, which expresses, with little ambiguity, an editorial criterion that assigns a considerably lower newsworthiness to these last elections.

On the other hand, at the macro frames level (table 1), the proportions in both elections vary very little. For the politics frame in 2012 and 2015 there is a difference of only 0.2% (43.8% and 43.6%, respectively), which is very similar for the dispute frames (2012 stands at 56.2%) and 2015, at 56.4%). This lack of variation is supported by the fact that there is no statistical significance in the relationship between the variables of election and macro frames, $\chi^2(1, N = 423) = 0.002$, $p = .964$, so at least at this macro level the type of election does not seem to make a difference in their coverage.

However, the frequency of specific frames does vary significantly. Although the political leadership frame remains practically the same, (3.2% in 2012 and 5.2% in 2015), a significant datum regarding the scarcity of substantial information published in 2012 about candidates -the proportion of news pieces concentrated on the issues, policies and ideas frame- had a drastic reduction: in 2012, these aspects occupied 19.1% of the news pieces, but by 2015 they had practically disappeared (1.7%). Campaign issues were only indirectly addressed in three news stories regarding a specific event.

Regarding the frame of political process, which deals with the procedural and legal aspects of the elections, its proportion in 2015 doubled (36.6%) compared to 2012 (21.5%), particularly in terms of details of formal organization, possibly as a result of the electoral reform of 2014 that introduced changes in the organizational and electoral control schemes, which were widely commented at the time. However, it is notorious that the net frequency is similar in each election, 54 in 2012 and 63 in 2015, in what seems to be a central trait of media coverage.

The analysis of the standardized residuals confirms these associations, since in 2012 the variable issues,

policies and ideas had a value of 5.4 and in 2015 the one of political process had a value of 3.4, while political leadership is within the range of +/- 1.96 (1.1), so that there is no association between the type of election and this variable.

Regarding the dispute macro frame, the frame of each election have contrasting differences. In both cases, the most prominent are those of strategy and conflict; however, the proportion of both varies significantly. While in 2012 conflict represented 31.9% of coverage, in 2015 it rose to 47.1%; and if in 2012 strategy represented 12.7% of the news pieces, in 2015 it was reduced to 4.7%, one third.

Moreover, the frame of human interest was reduced in 2012 (5.6%) and was practically marginal (1.7%) in 2015. The low frequency of the game frame is also evident in both elections, related to the dissemination of surveys and a sports treatment, explicitly competitive, of the election, of only 6% in 2012 and 2.9% in 2015.

In general, these differences in the frames, and in a noticeable way in those of conflict, strategy, political process and issues, confer statistical significance to the relationship between type of election and frames, $\chi^2(6, N = 423) = 54.114$, $p = < .001$, even with a moderate linkage (Cramer's V, .358, $p = <.001$) between both variables. The standardized residuals practically rule out important associations between elections and human interest variables (2.0 in 2012) and game (1.5 in 2012) and confirm a moderate relationship between the 2012 presidential election and the strategy frame (2.8), as well as the 2015 congressional election and the conflict variable (3.2).

The exploration of the second hypothesis is displayed in table 2, where the 25 actors that served as sources in the news stories were condensed into four types, according to their similarities. Of each of them, we report the percentage of coverage, as well as the value of the standardized residuals, in that order. Contrary to what was expected, the candidates are not associated with the macro frame dispute (55%, -.4), while the parties and civil society are (67% and 75%, respectively, 2 and 2.2 in standardized residuals). This is clearer at the level of particular frames, where the candidates are not associated with the game frame (6%, 1) and strategy (12%, 1.4), and are barely linked to the conflict frame (32%, -2.3). On the contrary, candidates are strongly associated with issues, policies and ideas (26%, 8) and to a large extent to the "political process" (16%, -5).

Surprisingly, it is the political parties and civil society organizations that have the greatest association with the

		Election	
Macro frame		2012	2015
Politics	N	110	75
	%	.44	.44
	Standardized Residuals	.0	.0
Dispute	N	141	97
	%	.56	.56
	Standardized Residuals	.0	.0
Frame			
Issues, policies, ideas	N	48	3
	%	.19	.02
	Standardized Residuals	5.4	-5.4
Political process	N	54	63
	%	.22	.37
	Standardized Residuals	-3.4	3.4
Political leadership	N	8	9
	%	.0	.1
	Standardized Residuals	-1.1	1.1
Human interest	N	14	3
	%	.06	.02
	Standardized Residuals	2.0	-2.0
Game	N	15	5
	%	.1	.0
	Standardized Residuals	1.5	-1.5
Strategy	N	32	8
	%	.13	.05
	Standardized Residuals	2.8	-2.8
Conflict	N	80	81
	%	.32	.47
	Standardized Residuals	-3.2	3.2

Table 1. Comparison between the frames used in each election

Source: Own elaboration.

macro frame of dispute (67% and 75%, respectively, and 2 and 2.2 in standardized residuals), and they also have a greater link with the conflict frame (56% and 59%, 3.5 and 2.6 in standardized residuals). In general, the data show a statistically significant relationship between the type of actor covered and macro framing, $\chi^2(4, N = 423)$ = 19.215, p = 001, but with a small correlation (Cramer's V = .213, p = <.001), as well as a statistically significant relationship between the first variable and the specific frame, $\chi^2(24, N = 423)$ = 125.556, p = <.001, although with a moderate correlation this time (Cramer's V = .272, p = <.001). This implies that the intensity of use of the frames

		Type of actor				
Macro frame		Candidates	Parties	Electoral authority	Civil society	Other sources
Politicis	N	84	25	38	8	30
	%	.45	.33	.66	.25	.42
	Standardized Residuals	.4	-2.0	3.6	-2.2	-.3
Dispute	N	103	50	20	24	41
	%	.55	.67	.34	.75	.58
	Standardized Residuals	-.4	2.0	-3.6	2.2	.3
Frame						
Issues, policies, ideas	N	49	0	0	0	2
	%	.26	.00	.00	.00	.03
	Standardized Residuals	8.0	-3.5	-3.0	-2.2	-2.6
Political process	N	29	20	37	6	25
	%	.16	.27	.64	.19	.35
	Standardized Residuals	-5.0	-.2	6.6	-1.2	1.6
Political leadership	N	6	5	1	2	3
	%	.03	.07	.02	.06	.04
	Standardized Residuals	-.8	1.3	-1.0	.7	.1
Human interest	N	10	1	1	1	4
	%	.05	.01	.02	.03	.06
	Standardized Residuals	1.2	-1.3	-1.0	-.3	.8
Game	N	11	2	0	2	5
	%	.06	.03	.00	.06	.07
	Standardized Residuals	1.0	-.9	-1.8	.4	1.0
Strategy	N	22	5	2	2	9
	%	.12	.07	.03	.06	.13
	Standardized Residuals	1.4	-.9	-1.7	-.6	1.0
Conflict	N	60	42	17	19	23
	%	.32	.56	.29	.59	.32
	Standardized Residuals	-2.3	3.5	-1.5	2.6	-1.1

Table 2. Relationship between actors and frames

Source: Own elaboration.

is related to the type of actor, without being a general trend, although it is not applicable to the candidates.

A final data set compares the coverage of the actors between elections, and although it has a more descriptive quality, it could give greater context to the second hypothesis. Although some of these actors are not comparable due to the nature of the elections, such as the treatment of the candidates, given the tiny proportion of news pieces about said actors in the 2015 process compared to the 2012 presidential one, this does not happens with three other groups of well-differentiated actors: political parties, electoral

Macro frame		PRI		PAN		PRD		Partido Verde		Morena		Parties		Business chambers		NGO´s		Experts		Civil society		Electoral authority	
		2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015
Política	N	3	7	3	2	1	1	0	4	0	1	10	15	0	1	2	1	0	1	3	4	9	29
	%	0.50	0.54	0.33	0.22	0.14	0.14	0.00	0.36	0.00	0.11	0.40	0.31	0.00	0.33	0.67	0.06	0.00	0.20	0.60	0.15	0.82	0.62
Contienda	N	3	6	6	7	6	6	0	7	0	8	15	34	1	2	1	15	0	4	2	22	2	18
	%	0.50	0.46	0.67	0.78	0.86	0.86	0.00	0.64	0.00	0.89	0.60	0.69	1.00	0.67	0.33	0.94	0.00	0.80	0.40	0.85	0.18	0.38

Frame		PRI		PAN		PRD		Partido Verde		Morena		Parties		Business chambers		NGO´s		Experts		Civil society		Electoral authority	
		2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015
Issues, policies, ideas	N	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Political process	N	2	4	3	2	4	1	0	4	0	0	9	11	0	0	1	1	0	1	2	3	9	28
	%	0.33	0.31	0.33	0.22	0.40	0.14	0.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	0.36	0.22	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.06	0.00	0.20	0.40	0.12	0.82	0.60
Political leadership	N	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
	%	0.17	0.23	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.11	0.04	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.04	0.00	0.02
Human interest	N	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.02
Game	N	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0
	%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.14	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.11	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.33	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.08	0.00	0.00
Strategy	N	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1
	%	0.00	0.08	0.22	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.12	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.09	0.02
Conflict	N	3	5	4	7	4	5	0	7	0	7	11	31	1	1	1	13	0	3	2	17	1	16
	%	0.50	0.39	0.44	0.78	0.40	0.71	0.00	0.64	0.00	0.78	0.44	0.63	1.00	0.33	0.33	0.81	0.00	0.60	0.40	0.65	0.09	0.34

Table 3. Comparison of actors and frames between the two elections *

* Because of its minimum frequencies, some actors were removed from this table, but preserved in the final summation.

Source: Own elaboration.

authority (National Electoral Institute, Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judicial Branch) and civil society (experts, business, religious and non-governmental organizations) (table 3).

Thus, in terms of macro frames, political parties receive an unexpectedly similar treatment in both elections, considering that their visibility increases significantly in the legislative elections (from 25 to 49 news pieces), probably occupying the space of the presidential candidates in 2012. However, the contentious treatment in both cases is predominant in the two elections, in a proportion of two thirds of the news pieces (60% in 2012 and 69.4% in 2015), increasing slightly in the last election.

Regarding the specific frames, two of them predominate the others, which have minimum frequencies: the news pieces on the parties are framed more frequently as a political process in 2012 (36%) than in 2015 (22.4%) and above all as a matter of conflict, exacerbated in 2015 (63.3%) compared to 2012 (44%).

On the other hand, the electoral authority, represented in this case by the National Electoral Institute and the Electoral Court of the Federal Judicial Branch, significantly increased its journalistic visibility and were given an adversarial characterization vis a vis with political parties and civil society: the 11 news pieces published in 2012 became 47 in 2015, a considerable increase. The macro framing of dispute doubled from 18.2% to 38.3% for that actor, and the conflict frame went from 9.1% to 34% of the news pieces. This, of course, reduced the political process frame from 81.8% in 2012 to 59.6% in 2015.

Civil society organizations received much more coverage in 2015 (26 news pieces) than in 2012 (5). Although both the business chambers and the Catholic Church increased their visibility, NGOs received the most coverage compared to the 2012 process, as their visibility increased from three to 16 news pieces. The treatment of these social groups greatly increased its emphasis on aspects of entertainment, since it went from 40% of the news pieces in 2012 to 84.6% in 2015. In particular, the information related to the civil society organizations increased its framing in terms of conflict, from 33.3% in 2012 to 81.3% in 2015.

Finally, it is striking that the newspapers in the sample did not frame the electoral information coming from these three sets of actors as a matter of issues, policies and ideas, an aspect that is verified in the case of the 2012 candidates. This is not to be taken lightly, given that,

at least normatively, the media are supposed to serve as vehicles for the problems and campaign proposals, useful to the information needs of the citizens.

CONCLUSIONS

This investigation was proposed to confirm hypotheses regarding the influence of political personalization, both in its own political and media dimension as in the journalistic coverage linked to infotainment. The results indicate that the personalization of a presidential election, of an agonal nature both in the political and media spheres, does not seem to be related to a coverage with frames related to infotainment. They also indicate that the personification of a given actor, in comparison with a group or more abstract actors, is also not a factor that increases the probability of receiving such treatment. In short, personalization does not explain the prevalence of infotainment frames.

Alternately, the conclusions of this study go in the opposite direction to others conducted on European elections, where personalization is confirmed as a differentiating explanation of coverage, although the mainly parliamentary systems could be the key factor in such discrepancies (Dimitrova & Kostadinova, 2013; Skorkjær Binderkrantz & Green-Pedersen, 2009). This reinforces the need to conduct these studies with greater emphasis on presidential systems, such as those of several Latin American countries.

This study has certain limitations that could shed light on the meaning of the results. Regarding its explanatory capacity, the independent variable is considerably simplified since it only includes a dimension of personalization, the type of election, excluding other indicators of the same phenomenon, besides being limited to a single case of study, the Mexican. Likewise, it does not involve diverse choices of one kind or another, so that the results may well be associated with various contextual factors related to the recent behavior of the media, rather than to a structural phenomenon; this same limitation applies to the asynchrony in the comparison between both elections (2012 and 2015), which could lead to differences in the political or media conditions related to personalization. In addition, the problems observed with the reliability of the data of the 2015 election make it difficult to draw up conclusive statements, so that the relationships evidenced should be interpreted with caution. All these warnings could be considered in future investigations of this type.

DISCUSSION

A first indication of the influence of personalization on journalistic coverage could be the data of the largest number of news stories published in the presidential election compared to the congressional one. Although it is difficult to discern if it is an effect of the hierarchy news-value or of political personalization, a systemic interpretation admits that the particular arrangement of the Mexican political system, of a presidential nature, ends up conferring greater journalistic relevance to the election of the Executive power.

Regarding the first comparative hypothesis –that the journalistic coverage of the presidential election will use to a greater extent the frames related to infotainment than the journalistic coverage of the congressional election–, it is not supported by the data. First and at a macro level, there is a relative parity between the politics and dispute frames, both within each election and between both elections. The data show a significant presence, although not predominant, of this form of infotainment coverage in the Mexican press, coinciding with other works (Echeverría & Bañuelos, 2015; Echeverría & Meyer, 2015; Echeverría & Millet, 2013; Muñiz, 2015). Since such parity is held between the two elections, this behavior could reveal a structural feature of the Mexican press.

Likewise, when observing the data about the specific frames, the proposed hypothesis is somehow reversed twice: on the one hand, the conflict frame increases significantly in the congressional elections, going from a third (31.9 %) to about half (47.1%) of the news stories and, on the other hand, the frame contrary to the infotainment, the one of issues, policies and ideas,

drastically reduced from 19.1% in 2012 to 1.7 % in 2015.

In this regard, it is the congressional elections that have a treatment closer to infotainment. This statement is contextualized by considering the treatment of the actors involved in the coverage. Although at the level of macro frames a contentious coverage is slightly increased, the conflict frame rises notoriously from 2012 to 2015; the same occurs with political parties (from 44% to 63%), electoral authority (from 9.1% to 34%) and civil society organizations (33% to 81%, respectively), while those actors are not covered under the substantial frame referring to campaign issues and political proposals.

On the other hand, the second hypothesis established that individual actors, because of their personalization, would fall more within the infotainment frame than the group actors. The data do not support this hypothesis: in fact, it points to a greater association of the candidates with the themes and proposals frames, and also corroborate that political parties and civil society, as well as group entities, are more prone to infotainment treatments. Both results show that personalization factors, such as presidential elections and candidates, are associated with rather traditional and politically substantial journalistic coverage.

Despite the methodological limitations previously described, the findings at the exploratory level are interesting and we believe that, along with the methodological design used, they lay the foundations for conducting longitudinal and comparative studies in the same system, as well as extrapolated to others, that allow us to establish with greater precision the factors related to the forms of entertaining journalistic coverage.

FOOTNOTES

1. The denomination of "political entertainment" still faces the problem of defining a process of content generation, as if their action was necessarily to entertain audiences. However, it solves the need to place it in a research line of related objects, despite the arbitrary nature of its nomenclature.

2. For the purposes of this work, frames are understood as schemas of treatment of journalistic information manifested in the selection, exclusion and emphasis of certain subjects over others, and their organization in a discourse that presents them according to a given meaning (Muñiz, 2011; Reese, 2001; Zhang, 2000). The frames reside both internally in journalists, as internalized guides to information processing, and externally in journalistic content (Klein, 2000) and are governed by institutional constrains, practices or ideologies (Sádaba, Rodríguez, & Bartolome, 2007).

3. Literature often calls the macro framing opposite to the political as strategic. However, and derived from our analysis, it seems to us that this type of coverage exceeds elements of political strategy when contemplating aspects of emotionality or conflict; thus, this term falls short in relation to what it designates. The expression of dispute, on the other hand, is a metaphor centered on the agonal dimension of electoral competition, which more easily encompasses the aforementioned aspects.

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