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## Treatment and framing of energy issues on television: An analysis of the infotainment programs on the Spanish TV channel *La Sexta*

**Abstract**

This research analyses the news treatment of energy policies on infotainment television programs broadcast by the Spanish channel *La Sexta* during the 2016/2017 season. The main objective is to confirm whether the story of the energy issue evinces environmental concern in terms of news framing. We have used both qualitative and quantitative methodological techniques: content analyses from the framing perspective. After reviewing eight programs over a six-month analysis period, we have studied 18 units, about 42 broadcasting hours. The coverage focuses on two moments where specific events occurred pushing the issue to the top of the news agenda: the death of an elderly woman in Reus on 14 November 2016, due to a fire caused by a candle she used to light her home, and the alarming increase in the cost of electricity on 18 January 2017, coinciding with a period of high demand. The analysis yields significant data about the presence of energy issues linked to dramatic events of human and social interest; the preeminent role of the voice of non-specialist journalists, rather than citizens, experts and ecologists; and the indifferent or efficient view of the environment. The problem tends to be reduced to its economic aspects regarding energy poverty or the increase in the cost of electricity.

**Keywords**

**Energy, TV information, media, framing, energetic poorness, infoentertaining.**

### 1. Introduction

The ongoing search for new energy resources conditions Western countries committed to satisfying an increasing demand for energy, according to projections from the International Energy Agency (IEA), which expects world demand to increase by 35% between 2010 and 2035. On the other hand, 80 percent of global energy consumption depends on the burning of fossil fuels, the main cause of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere. Specifically, emissions from the energy sector comprise three-quarters of the total in industrialized countries

and over half of global emissions overall. In 2015, energy-related emissions amounted to 32,100 million tons (IAE, 2016), maintaining the year-on-year level first established in 2013.

In this context, Europe is facing numerous challenges in the field of energy, such as dependency on imports, limited diversification, safety risks that impact both producer and transit countries, climate change and slow progress in energy efficiency. These issues shape European energy policy, which aims to create an integrated energy market and ensure safety and sustainability in the energy sector. Moreover, the Secretariat for Energy of the Spanish Government states that the objectives of sustainable energy policies must be energy supply safety, energy market competitiveness and environmental protection. The official positions of government bodies take into account the close relationship between energy and the environment and advocate for the protection of the latter.

However, we should consider whether the connection between energy and the environment is evident in information published in the media, given that, according to the ideas of framing theory, the journalistic narrative about the way energy needs should be complied with shapes the social perception of these important issues to a significant extent. Therefore, the analysis of journalistic messages is a useful way of exploring public discourse as reflected in the media (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989); at the same time, it has the potential to influence the social perception of a specific issue, reinforcing or potentially altering the perspective and scope of such public discourse.

## **2. Theoretical background**

Numerous studies about the ways news and information programming address energy issues have focused on the crises caused by nuclear disasters, from Three Mile Island (for example, Rubin, 1987) to Fukushima (Renzi et al., 2016; Perko et al., 2012; Lazi & Kaigo, 2014; Gómez Calderón, Roses & Rivera, 2014, among others), as well as Chernobyl (Eribo & Gaddy, 1992; Gorney, 1992) and oil spills, such as the Prestige disaster on the Spanish coast studied by Vicente (2010) and Odriozola (2010, 2011). A key aspect of the analysis of disasters comes from the study of crisis communication from the point of view of public relations and corporate communication.

Besides crises as such, but still within the realm of risk, nuclear energy remains a central focus of research interest. Doyle (2011) examined the shift in position in British newspapers with regard to this form of energy, reframing nuclear energy as a low-carbon energy source, before the Fukushima disaster. The coverage of nuclear energy by the Chinese press has also been analyzed. Wang and Li (2014) confirmed that the media repeated the arguments set out in government energy policy and rarely published any antinuclear information whatsoever.

Moreover, many studies analyze specific energy aspects such as the process of establishing certain technologies or extraction techniques, for instance, carbon capture (Feldpausch-Parker et al., 2013) or the hydraulic fracturing technique (fracking). The use of fracking, and the debate about its use, has been analyzed in different countries: the United States (Evensen, Clarke & Stedman, 2014; Habib & Hinojosa, 2016), Germany (Bigl, 2017), Spain (Mercado, Álvarez & Herranz, 2014; Mercado & Monedero, 2016) and the United Kingdom, where Jaspal and Nerlich (2014), in their analysis of social representations of fracking in the four main British prestige newspapers, show how positions in favor and against are reflected: on the one hand, the representation of the potential risks to health and the environment; and on the other, in terms of benefits to the country's economy, the creation of employment, and energy safety.

The representation of renewable energies has been analyzed by Haigh (2010), among others, who found three common approaches in relation to international trade, the US economy and political strategy in nine North American newspapers. In other countries such

as Sweden and Australia, renewable energies were framed in a more complex way, as an environmental, political, scientific, economic and civil society issue, as Djerf-Pierre, Cokley and Kuche (2016) confirmed in a comparative study of the two most prominent newspapers in those countries. Devine-Wright (2014), in turn, has analyzed the images (pictures, illustrations, sketches) of renewable energies published in seven British newspapers. Other researchers have focused on the analysis of the news treatment of wind energy (Stephens et al., 2009) and bio-fuels (Kim et al., 2014) in US newspapers.

Nevertheless, the energy issue is much broader than the concerns regarding danger, crisis or different generation techniques because energy is part of our everyday life and is an essential part of the economic and political system. As a transversal concern, it is worth analyzing the ways it features and is presented in the media, in line with the view articulated by Enders et al (2016), which holds that research into energy communication should encompass the everyday nature of energy. For Anderson (2014: 2), the way in which environmental issues are framed in the media is of great significance because it may have an influence on “what is considered legitimate and of common sense”. This context shapes our research, which endeavors to analyze how energy is treated as an issue in news-information television programs based on the framing theoretical perspective.

The framing (frame) concept was drawn into the field of social communication from sociology (Goffman, 1974), having originated in the studies of psychology and anthropology. For Entman (1993: 52), media framing is built on the ideas of selection and relevance. Thus, framing is “selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and granting them more relevance in a communicative context, so that a definition of a specific problem, a causal interpretation, a moral evaluation and/or recommendation for the management of the matter described is promoted.” Likewise, Gitlin (1980) has argued that frames are means of presentation through which certain elements of the communicated text are emphasized or excluded by the communicator. These definitions suggest that news framing involves making one aspect of a problem more accessible, visible and/or relevant to the public.

The framing process plays a role in different stages: frame building, which generates different news or media frames; frame setting, the interrelationship between these media frames and the knowledge and predisposition of the audience; and lastly, the framing effect, the impact on the audience or the ways in which such frames influence the perception that individuals develop of the issue at hand (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007; from Vreese, 2005). Thus, the media are regarded “as powerful agents in the processes of social discourse framing, often being considered as the main generators of social frames” (Sádaba, 2001: 152).

Social norms and values, organization and interest group pressure, journalistic practices and the ideological perspectives of journalists may influence the way journalists frame the news (Scheufele, 1999). News discourse is conceived of as a sociocognitive process that involves sources, journalists and members of the audience, which operate within a shared culture and on the basis of socially defined roles. Framing analysis, therefore, is a constructivist approach that examines journalistic messages through empirically functional dimensions: syntactical, thematic and rhetorical structures (Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

One of the most frequently used classifications of news frames in the research literature is generic news frames and issue-specific frames. Applicable to different themes and cultural contexts, generic news frames include frames relating to conflict, economics, human interest and morality, as identified by Neuman, Just and Crigler (1992), to which Semetko and Valkenburg (2010) added the attribution of responsibility. The issue-specific frames refer to particular topics and enable greater specialization and in-depth coverage, although they are more difficult to apply in other research (from Vreese, 2005). For instance, in Spain, Igartua, Muñiz and Cheng (2005) analyzed the specific frames relating to coverage of immigration in the Spanish press.

Despite problems with regard to its conceptualization and systematization (Sádaba, Rodríguez Virgili & Bartolomé Castro, 2012), framing theory has become a “basic conceptual tool” in social communication research (Vicente & López Rabadán, 2009: 15).

Most of the abovementioned studies, those dealing with coverage of the energy issue as well as those that analyze news framing, have dealt with print media; no research on the treatment of energy issues on television programs has been found. Thus, the research view ought to be broadened to encompass television and, in particular, news information programs that draw on infotainment formulas and resources.

The study of television infotainment has been widespread since the emergence of the phenomenon of increased sensationalization on TV in the 1980s. Until then, information and entertainment were different genres, but neo-television inaugurated the hybridization that has come to define twenty-first century television. Some concern was expressed about entertainment features on news programs, the so-called info-show (Prado, 2003), in relation to the selection of stories, that is, the inclusion of soft news (news about celebrities, events, crimes, violence) and the adoption of a human-interest approach in hard news (Brants, 2008), which fosters the emotional charge typical of classical sensationalism in the tabloid press. García Avilés has noted how in news programs on the main European networks “the key criteria for selecting contents and narrative forms are their likely impact on the audience, rather than the capacity to provide significant information in the most rigorous way possible”.

Other authors argue that story-selection is not the defining feature of infotainment’s impact on quality journalism (Grabe, Zhoy & Barnet, 2001). In fact, the most commonly studied facet in this regard is the political news story. A number of analyses have shown the significance of infotainment programs for political processes (for instance, Nguyen, 2012), and how they mold political attitudes, knowledge and behaviors (Baum, 2003; Hoffman & Thomson, 2009), becoming a source of political news (Feldman & Young, 2008) or a gateway to traditional news stories for people who declare no interest in politics (Baum, 2003). Most research on political entertainment and learning has disclosed the possibility of “incidental” exposure to political news; that is, audiences look for entertainment and, in the process, access specific political information as a by-product of their main interest.

Casero and Marzal (2011) state that the general trend towards infotainment and the spectacularization of reality cannot be solely limited to news programs and encompasses all kinds of information programs. Thussu (2007: 8) talks about “global *infotainment*”, the globalization of television journalism, a US mode that privileges soft news at the expense of news about politics, civic and public affairs. However, Jebril, Albaek and Vreese (2013) have demonstrated that focusing on examples and highlighting the human-interest angle may contribute to reducing political cynicism, especially among those who are not very interested in politics. Thus, they call into question the frequent, unequivocally negative perceptions of infotainment, proposing a different approach for future research on this matter. Hence, the purpose here is to analyze hard news treatment of energy policies in news-information that evince characteristics of infotainment.

### **3. Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of this paper is to explore whether there is environmental concern in stories about energy issues on news-information programs that draw on the resources of television infotainment to a greater or lesser extent. The specific objectives are:

1. To find out the relevance of the energy issue (hierarchization) and time dedicated to the energy issue in information-focused non-news programs on *La Sexta*, a national TV channel in Spain.

2. To determine the infotainment narrative strategies used in information-focused non-news programs on *La Sexta* and assess the degree to which they are deployed.
3. To discover the news framing and eco-dominant framing linked to environmental issues in coverage of energy policies.

Qualitative and quantitative methodological techniques to trace the process by which energy issues were addressed on information programs: content analysis from the framing perspective in light of a review of the relevant research literature and documentation.

Content analysis scientifically examines “both the meanings and the signifiers of any text” (Wimmer & Dominick, 1996). The use of this technique “enables concise descriptions of messages of diverse nature, among these, the manifested versus latent messages and the formal features versus contents’ attributes” (Neuendorf, 2002).

The analysis period was six months, from September 2016 to February 2017, and the sample comprises daily or weekly broadcasts of information programs that use infotainment features to a greater or lesser extent on the private channel *La Sexta*, which belongs to the *Atresmedia* group. According to the study by Berrocal, Redondo and Campos (2014: 94), “*La Sexta* is by far the channel on which the use of infotainment resources seems most significant”. At the same time, according to the *GIPeYOP* and *Mediaflows* survey conducted in December 2016 among 5,414 individuals, this channel is the most popular source of information about politics. Moreover, *La Sexta* ranks high in terms of political influence; it comes in third place, after *Cadena SER*, a radio station, and *El País*, a national newspaper (López, 2017).

For the purposes of data collection, in line with Igartua (2006), the following variables were considered in relation to each unit of analysis:

- a) Identification: name of program and broadcast date.
- b) Formal characteristics: location (in summary or opening section), duration of the segment about the energy issue, total duration; infotainment features and the participation of journalists / citizens / experts / politicians.
- c) Information characteristics: generic framing and ‘eco’-specific framing.

The typical features of infotainment are: dramatization (emphasis on conflict, use of emotive strategies and/or structures characteristic of fiction); personalization (reduction to a specific case, the issue focuses on particular subjects); emotional charge (highlighting the emotions or personal feelings of people involved in the story); humor; speculation (telling a story based on information that may not be real or may never have happened); subjectivity; fragmentation (out of context, explanation of isolated facts); normalization (a simplistic account of possible solutions); colloquial language (common terms, slang, even vulgar expressions) and/or hyperbolic, exaggerated, sensational language that uses superlatives to “label reality as something unusual and fascinating” (Redondo, 2011: 156); and the use of resources such as labelling, graphs, post-production visual and sound effects, music or live reports. These characteristics have been cited by authors such as Salgado (2010), León (2013), Berrocal, Redondo and Campos (2014, 2015), Ortells (2011) and Ferré Pavia (2013). As Ortells (2015) explains, the prominence of journalists and ordinary people, rather than experts and official sources, is one of the distinctive features of the format. Therefore, the presence of these four types of actors or sources is also assessed here; and the emblematic features of infotainment, based on the terminology used by Berrocal, Redondo and Campos (2014) are rated along a gradual 1-to-3 scale.

To disclose the news framing based on the theoretical perspective outlined above, the primary purpose was to examine how the stories about energy issues were structured in terms of the classical functions of framing set out by Entman (1993: 52): definition of the problem, a causal interpretation establishing the parties responsible, a moral evaluation and/or the recommendation of a possible solution. Secondly, four issue-specific frames, relating to energy issues as such, are discussed: eco-indifference (no mention of

environmental concern); eco-efficiency (reference to the relationship with the environment, but highlighting the possibility of limiting harm through technology and efficiency); eco-sustainability (the harm to the environment is addressed and renewable energies are championed); and eco-radicalism (a change of model is advocated, not only regarding energy, but also the socioeconomic model based on new consumption habits). The eco-frames are drawn from Dryzek (1997), which discusses different approaches to the use of language in relation to environmental issues in recent years and uses three of the four “semantic-narrative formations related to the sustainable development and environmental problems” described by Lorente et. al (2009) in their media discourse analysis about the Bali Summit.

The object of study is an analysis of the treatment of energy issues in information programs broadcast on *La Sexta* that belong to the news-report or talk-show formats (magazine, debate and interview programs); depending on the greater or lesser prevalence of infotainment features, these programs might be described as infoshows, to use the definitions provided by Luzón and Ferrer (2008) and Gordillo *et al* (2011). Infoshows are programs that use a range of sensationalizing features (dramatic images, dramatization of discourse and/or content hybridization) in an information-based story a journalistic purpose is prioritized. The goal of such programs is primarily informative. An infotainment program called *El Intermedio* was also included in the sample to test whether, as Valhondo (2011: 89) says, it has turned into a “sort of practical beacon that illuminates public opinion in the midst of an over-abundance of data by offering an authentic, thorough and incisive critique” of energy issues.

Given Premium access by *Atresmedia* to *Atresmediaplayer*, the programmes analyzed are:

*El Intermedio*, a program defined as info-satire by Valhondo (2007), which uses humor in political topics to empathize with viewers. Hosted by a comedian who goes by the name El Gran Wyoming and Sandra Sabatés, produced by *Globomedia*, it has been broadcast from Monday to Thursday immediately after the eight-p.m. news bulletin since the launch of the channel in 2006.

*La Sexta Columna*: a weekly, one-hour report program. It is broadcast on Friday night to “analyze the main political and economic stories from a distinctive perspective”, as its website avers. It is hosted by Antonio García Ferreras and produced by Rodrigo Blázquez.

*Equipo de investigación*: as its name indicates, this program offers in-depth investigative reporting. Hosted by Gloria Serra, it started in 2011 and is defined as a “television format that uses innovative scripting and visuals; it is the only program to reveal the secrets of everyday life and to turn apparently insignificant characters into the protagonists of the stories we tell.”

*El Objetivo*: a weekly, breaking-news program produced by *Globomedia* and hosted by Ana Pastor. There is an in-depth interview, and sometimes a debate, every week; experts are invited to participate, and it is the first Spanish television format that uses fact-checking or data journalism in a section called *Pruebas de verificación* (“Fact checks”). Another outstanding feature of this program is the section called *Maldita Hemeroteca* (literally, “Damned Archive,” where guests are brought face to face with what they have said or done in the past). *El Objetivo* is broadcast on Sundays at 21:30 or 22:30 hours, depending on the season, and was launched on 2 June 2013.

*La Sexta Noche* is a weekly political debate, breaking news and events program hosted by Iñaki López and Andrea Roperó. It has been broadcast on Saturday nights since 26 January 2013, and includes a panel of well-known (and sometimes controversial) journalists and politicians. In-depth interviews are also offered, as well as edited pieces and reports where the host goes out on location. A distinctive feature of this program is the

participation of experts in a section called *El análisis en la pizarra* (literally, the “whiteboard analysis”). It is broadcast every Saturday from 21:20 to 02:20.

*Al Rojo Vivo* is a daily program focusing on the analysis and debate of national and international current affairs. It is hosted and directed by Antonio García Ferreras, and produced by the *La Sexta* newsroom. Its usual schedule is from 12:20 to 14:10, although it tends to extend its duration or broadcast special programs at night or weekend if current events so require – for instance, at election time.

*Más Vale Tarde* is an evening magazine program broadcast from Monday to Friday from 17:20 to 20:00. Produced by the *La Sexta* newsroom, it is hosted by Mamen Mendizábal, Hilario Pino, Alberto Herrera and Manuel Marlasca, and uses a talk-show format to discuss the latest news.

*Salvados* is a weekly in-depth report program presented by Jordi Évole. Produced by *Producciones del barrio* since October 2015, and previously by *El Terrat*, it was launched on 24 February 2008 as a series of special topic-specific programs. It is broadcast on Sundays at 21:30.

In short, this research focuses on the analysis of the treatment of energy issues on non-news information programs broadcast on *La Sexta*. At the same time, the infotainment features of these programs are also explored.

#### **4. Results**

After systematic sampling and viewing of programs in line with the initial research criteria relating to the representation of energy policies, 18 units of analysis were selected: 6 from *El Intermedio* (314.15 minutes), 4 from *La Sexta Noche* (1047.16 minutes), 4 from *Al Rojo Vivo* (629.56 minutes, one of them includes two separate pieces that mention the issue), 2 from *Más vale tarde* (232.52 minutes), and 2 from *El Objetivo* (135.56 minutes). Energy issues were not addressed on the weekly programs, *La Sexta Columna*, *Equipo de investigación* and *Salvados*, broadcast from September to February.

In the case of the program presented by Jordi Évole, the energy poverty theme had been explored before (14/02/2014); the energy sector had been analyzed as well, in a report entitled *Oligopoly: el juego de la energía* (“Oligopoly: the energy game”, 16/11/2012), as had the situation of solar energy in Spain (31/05/2017). More recently, *La Sexta Columna* broadcast a report called ‘Cohecracia: así no vamos a ningún lado’ (“Car-ocracy: the road to nowhere”) on February 5, 2017. After watching and analyzing it, it was not included in the sample since it did not refer to the energy issue as such but to pollution and mobility in cities, and did not refer to the energy debate explicitly. Although the object of study of this research are programs broadcast on “*La Sexta*”, it is worth mentioning that “*Informe Semanal*”, a program broadcast on the national public service channel, included no reports on energy issues (there are three reports in every weekly slot), not even when energy issues featured at the top of the news agenda. On Saturday in the week the cost of electricity increased dramatically (21/01/2017), “*Informe Semanal*” limited its coverage to the weather conditions involved without mentioning the energy problems.

The 18 programs analyzed comprise 4.8% of the reviewed sample (n= 375), and spent a total of 1 hour and 53 minutes addressing the topics of energy poverty and the electricity price increase, an average of 22 minutes per program. *La Sexta Noche* and *El Intermedio* gave relatively more time and prominence to the energy debate, more than half an hour each, the former in four broadcasts and the latter in six, with segments of varying frequency and duration: weekly and from Monday to Thursday; more than four hours, 262 minutes on average, and about 53 minutes, respectively. *La Sexta Noche* dealt with the area in 16% of the sample, 24 broadcasts on Saturdays from September to February, while the percentage for

*El Intermedio* is lower, at 6.5%, since it is broadcast from Monday to Thursday (93 broadcasts in the sample).

**Table 1.** Inclusion and time devoted to energy issues

PROGRAMMES	Analysis units	Sample	Topic inclusion (%)	Total broadcast time	Energy topic time
<i>El Intermedio</i>	6	93	6,5	05:23.:15	00:33:14
<i>Al Rojo Vivo</i>	4	117	3,4	10:48:56	00:12:43
<i>Más Vale Tarde</i>	2	117	1,7	04:26:52	00:06:37
<i>El Objetivo</i>	2	24	8,3	02:25.56	00:15:54
<i>La Sexta Noche</i>	4	24	16,7	17:45:16	00:33:38
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>4,8</b>	<b>41:45:25</b>	<b>01:53:25</b>

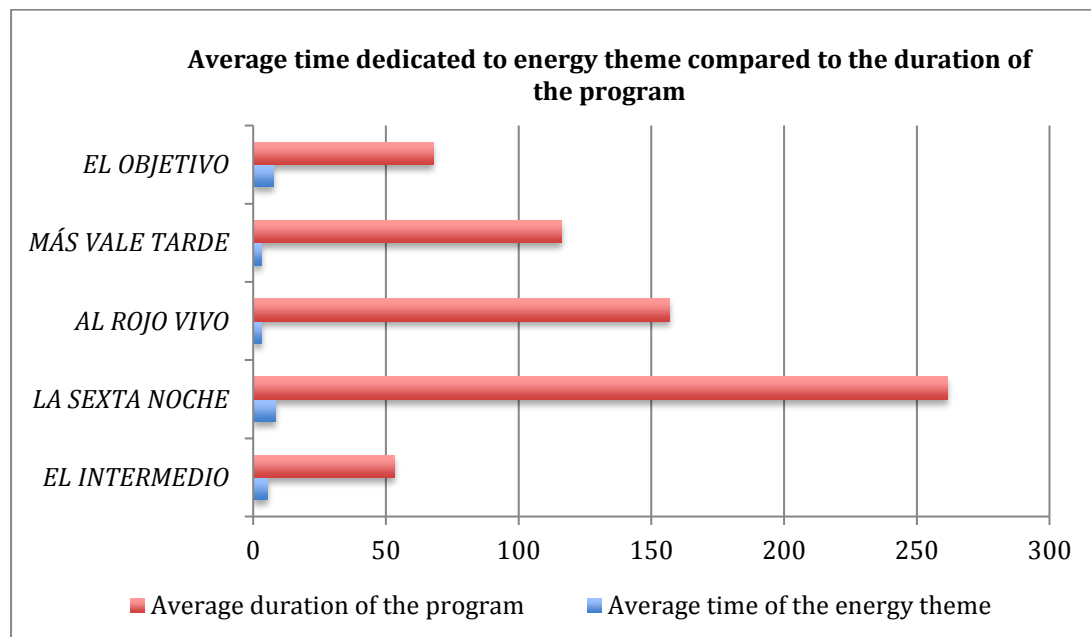
The issues raised most frequently are energy poverty and the increase in the cost of electricity, which were the focus of media attention on two specific occasions: 14 November 2016 and 18 January 2017. In the time period analyzed (6 months), 72.2% (n=13) of the broadcasts dealing with energy issues related to two events that had pushed the topic to the top of the news agenda.

The first event was the death of an elderly woman in the Catalan city of Reus on 14 November 2016 due to a fire caused by a candle she had used to light her home because the electricity service had been cut off. The second event occurred on 18 January 2017, when an alarming increase in electricity prices coincided with a period of higher demand due to the cold storm crossing the Peninsula. So dramatic was the increase that that the Public Prosecutor’s Office on Civil Matters of the Supreme Court opened proceedings to investigate the reasons for the “consecutive increases” in the charges on electricity bills.

To visualize these results in clear and distinct way, graphic 1 shows a comparison (in minutes) between the average duration of programs and the average time dedicated to energy issues in the segments analyzed. *La Sexta Noche* (8.3 minutes) and *El Objetivo* (7.79 minutes) dedicate most time on average to the energy topic when it is included in the program contents, followed by *El Intermedio* (5.52 minutes), *Al Rojo Vivo* (3.25 minutes) and *Más vale tarde* (3.18 minutes). In relative terms, more attention is spent on energy issues in weekly programs than daily ones, with the exception of *El Intermedio*.



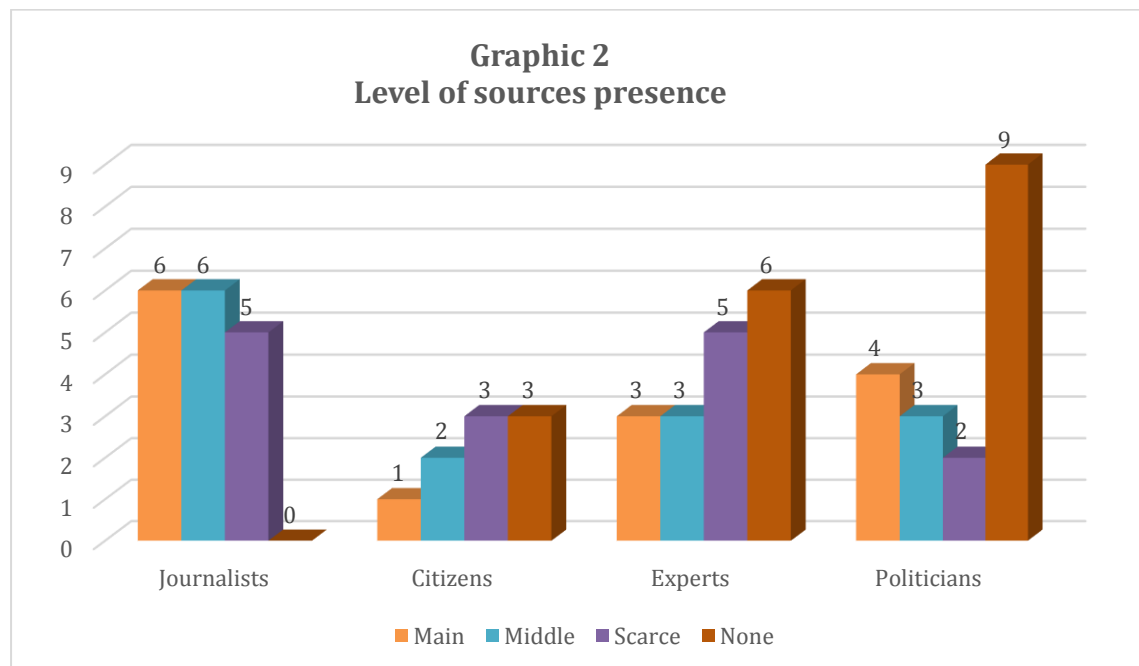
**Graphic 1.** Average time spent on energy issues compared to the duration of the program



Regarding the typology of sources used to present the information, four types have been catalogued: journalists, citizens, experts and politicians, and a scale has been established ranging from “no presence” of a source to the “main actor,” including “scarce presence” and “average presence”. Graphic 2 shows that journalists lead the scale of main actors, followed by politicians and experts. It is worth mentioning that citizens are never the main source in any of the programs analyzed. Regarding average presence, journalists again rank first, followed by experts and politicians, with citizens in last place. Scarce presence in the analyzed pieces is also led by journalists and experts, followed by citizens and politicians. Lastly, in most of the programs citizens are wholly absent, followed by politicians and experts. Reflection on the most repeated data in each source type prompts the conclusion that journalists are usually the main source or a source with average presence in the programs analyzed, while citizens, experts and politicians are usually absent.

The relatively limited role of citizens and affected parties in the segments analyzed is striking, which is in marked contrast to the results obtained from the analysis of other programs defined as infotainment by Ortells (2015). The difference is due to the different format she analyzed: *España directo* (TVE), *Andalucía directo* (Canal Sur), *Madrid directo* (Telemadrid) and *En connexió* (Canal 9). None of these programs address politics or current affairs; rather, they are structured around contributions from reporters on the ground and live links to the studio.

**Graphic 2.** Level of sources' presence



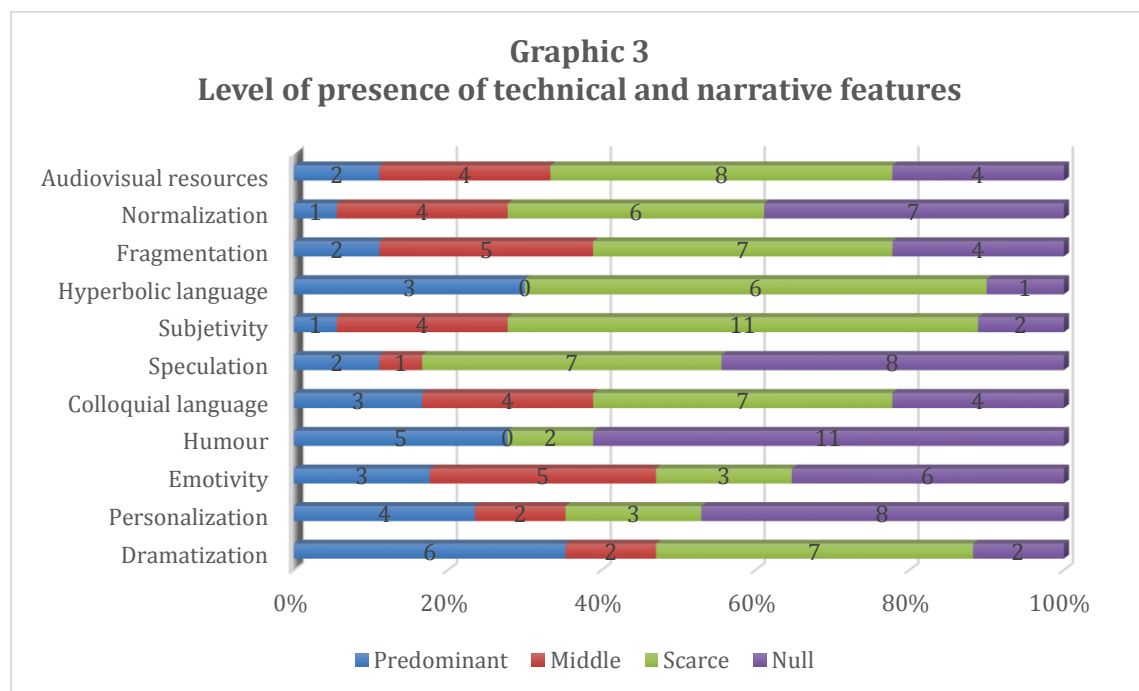
The technical characteristics and the narrative style typical of infotainment programs are rated on an average scale depending on the assigned value that ranges from 0 (lack of presence) to 3 (main feature). According to graphic 3, drama is the main feature in the pieces analyzed, a predictable trait considering the nature of the issues addressed, and the two news stories that caused their sudden prominence. An outstanding instance of such dramatization is to be found in the *El Intermedio* broadcast on 16 November 2016, when Sandra Sabatés mentions the number of elderly people in Spain that die due to causes related to energy poverty (about 7,000), six times more than deaths caused by traffic accidents. The second most prevalent feature is humor, essential in *El Intermedio* as well, where every information-segment given by Sandra Sabatés in a news-bulletin style is followed by a joke or satirical comment from El Gran Wyoming. In the 19 January 2017 program Wyoming, concerned about the extraordinary increase in the cost of electricity, tariff suggests an energy saving plan: turning off the studio lights so that besides saving, there will also be greater respect for the environment and a more intimate atmosphere. The program ends in almost total darkness.

The personification resource is evidenced, for instance, in the interview with Ada Colau on 25 January 2017 on *Al Rojo Vivo*, where the issue of energy poverty is addressed in relation to the specific measures taken by the mayor of Barcelona and the council she represents. Regarding emotion, a significant case is to be found in the story of Cristina, who shows her home in "La Sexta Noche" on 19 November 2016, explaining to Iñaki López how she lives with her four children in conditions of extreme energy poverty and how she has tried to explain the situation to her children. Colloquial and hyperbolic language is very common in debate or dialogue-format programs, *Al Rojo Vivo* and *La Sexta Noche*; for example, *La Sexta Noche* on 11 February 2017, when an electrician provides advice about how to pay less electricity and says, "in this way, those electricity vampires will not suck our blood out through our bills".

Regarding speculation, Rubén Sánchez (FACUA) in a segment presented on *Más vale tarde* on 18 January 2017, speculates about the fact that the Minister of Energy may have already calculated the approximate amount to be paid for electricity per year, "I don't know

if he was given [this information] by the electricity company bosses with whom he socializes.” A clear example of the fragmentation feature comes from *El Intermedio* on 18 January 2017, where there is talk about the increase in electricity price coinciding with the cold front, without contextualizing the situation, nor comparing it with the usual behavior of the market, the effects of the increase in demand, the low use of renewable energies or trade relations with countries that produce and purchase electricity. Finally, the use of audiovisual resources is frequent in most of the pieces analyzed (in 14 out of 18), and is especially prevalent in *El Objetivo* where great care is put into graphs, labelling and other effects in the sections called ‘*Verificación*’ and ‘*Maldita Hemeroteca*’. Subjectivity and normalization are the least prevalent features; the former is evident in the quarrel between Antonio Miguel Carmona (PSOE) and Antonio García Ferreras, the host, on *Al Rojo Vivo*, 22 December 2016, in relation to the demonstration against energy poverty in Madrid. Normalization is also present, for instance, in *La Sexta Noche*, 11 February 2017, when the “*Electricista 2.0*” assumes that everyone leaves mobile phone chargers and other electrical household appliance plugged in when they are not in use, leading to the much criticized increase on electricity prices.

**Graphic 3.** Level of presence of technical and narrative features

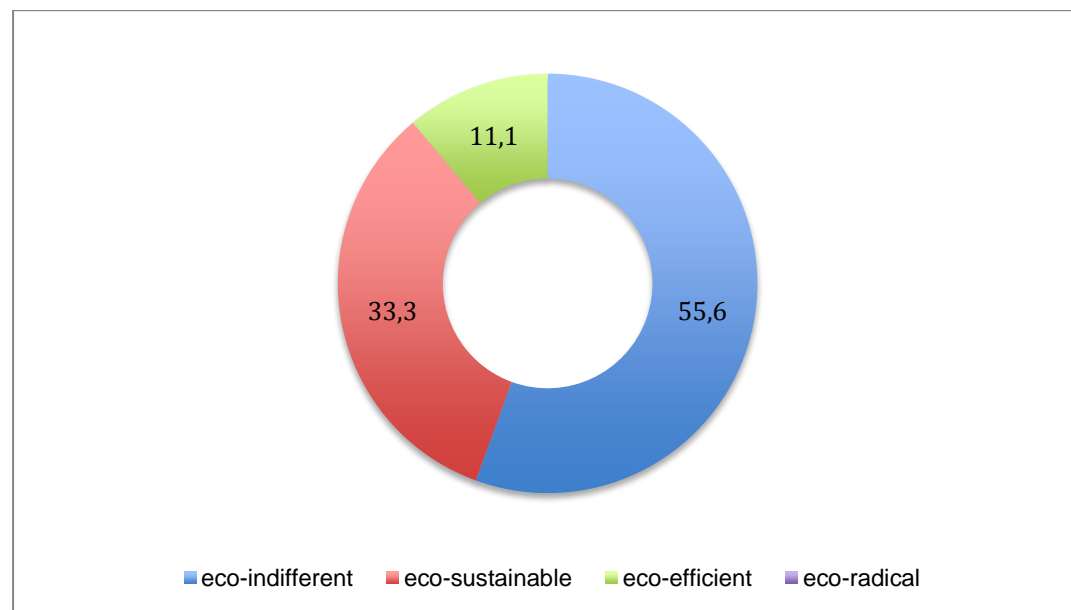


Regarding generic framing, in most cases (13) the subject of the pieces, understood as the definition of the problem, focuses on energy poverty, while on only five occasions, the main focus is the electricity pricing system. On the other hand, in relation to figures to whom responsibility for the current problem is attributed, first place goes to the government, followed by electricity companies and only, in an anecdotal way, is any blame laid against other public authorities or citizens themselves. Most of the pieces (12) have a moralizing purpose, as compared with five that do not. For instance, in *El Intermedio* on 18 January 2017, El Gran Wyoming explicitly requests that the electricity or gas not be cut off for people in vulnerable situations. In fourteen pieces a solution is envisioned, which in most cases (12) directly involves public authorities, and in only one case is there a reference to a change in the pricing system in users’ habits. El Gran Wyoming wants the government

to take action and exclaims: the government can do something unheard-of: govern! (*El Intermedio*, 18/01/2017). Four pieces make no explicit reference to any solution for the problem. In *La Sexta Noche* on 19 November 2016, Iñaki López suggests that a woman affected by energy poverty make her situation known to the social services of her local government authority.

Focusing on issue-specific frames, graphic 4 shows the prevalence of the eco-indifferent frame in the programs analyzed, followed in order of significance by the eco-sustainable and the eco-efficient. There is no mention of eco-radical ideas.

**Graphic 4.** Presence of eco-framings



## 5. Conclusions

Despite the fact that this study focuses on the pieces produced in a time period when two events occurred, pushing energy policy to the top of the news agenda, it is observed that the time dedicated to energy poverty and the increase in electricity prices for the period of analysis is minimal on infotainment programs: only 0.12% of the total duration time.

The issue is not included in the list of topics of the report programs such as *Equipo de investigación* and *Salvados* with production routines that are not strictly limited to the immediate present, during the period of analysis. However, not much attention was paid to energy issues on the daily programs *Al Rojo Vivo* and *Más vale tarde*, which focus on immediate current affairs, despite their duration. The range of topics that are dealt with on debate and weekly magazine programs, above all *La Sexta Noche*, enables the inclusion of energy issues to a greater extent than on programs that focus on daily political activity, concentrating on disputed between political parties and competing statements between politicians.

The energy debate receives greater coverage from a social perspective related to human interest and/or tragic events (*La Sexta Noche*), or from a critical-satirical perspective of complaint (*El Intermedio*). Perhaps the general consensus regarding the need for solutions for families that are most vulnerable to energy poverty, as well as the coincidence of the two key events with other more weighty news stories such as, for instance, Donald Trump's victory in the United States presidential election (10 November 2016), as well as a

number of cases of major corruption (Noos, Gürtel, Millet, etc.), have had a dampening effect on the prominence of energy issues.

Although journalists lead the scale of main actors, interviews with political representatives, members of social organizations, experts and, to a lesser extent, affected parties, have featured in all the pieces analyzed, except those of *El Intermedio*, where headlines published by other media are collected as news and infographics generated from official data are used to produce sketches of critical humor about the topic. Since half of segments analyzed were taken from dialogue-based formats focusing on current affairs (*La Sexta Noche*, *Al Rojo Vivo* and, to a lesser extent, *Más vale tarde*), the presence of journalists is more prevalent due to their more prominent role in such formats, in contrast to ordinary people who appear in other types of infotainment programs such as *"España directo"*.

In general, the characteristic features of infotainment feature prominently in the segments analyzed. The outstanding programs in this regard are *La Sexta Noche*, where dramatization, personification, emotion and the use of hyperbolic and colloquial language are used intensely, and *Al Rojo Vivo*, where in addition to those listed above, subjectivity is a frequent feature. *El Objetivo* and *Más vale tarde* are the most moderate in terms of the definition of the infoshow, with a less spectacular approach to information compared to the other programs analyzed. The use of audiovisual resources is consistent but for merely informative and/or explanatory purposes. In these programs, a strong influence of host(s)' personality is observed, most of which include moralizing conclusions and proposals to solve the problems presented.

This analysis discloses no relationship between the greater or lesser degree of infotainment and coverage of energy issues, which was dealt with more on *La Sexta Noche* than on *"Al Rojo Vivo"* because of decisions taken by those responsible for the running order who privilege different types of political information.

Lastly, regarding the use of specific framing, the primacy of the eco-indifferent framing and the total absence of the eco-radical framing is striking, despite the fact that *La Sexta* is one of the channels that is most committed to awareness-raising about environmental problems in the audiovisual context of Spanish TV channels, according to results from other studies (Mercado, 2010). The absence of specialized journalists on talk-shows and the scarce presence of experts or ecologists relegates the connection between two events that caught the attention of public opinion to a secondary plane, the death of a victim of energy poverty and the increase in electricity price during the coldest days of the year, as compared with the primary concerns of energy policies, the rational use of resources, renewable energy models and the relationship of energy consumption to climate change, going beyond the issue of financial savings to bring environmental conservation and sustainability into the heart of public debate.

This study represents a starting point to progress towards a second phase of research in the study of the effects on viewers (framing effect) through the approaches to information about energy policy and its link to environmental sustainability and the fight against climate change.

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