Disciplining news practices in the age of metric power

A networked ethnographic study
of everyday newswork in a Spanish media group

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I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Wherever contributions of others are involved, these are clearly acknowledged.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the encounter of journalists with metrics in the quantified newsroom. Drawing on scholarship on news production, the critical political economy of media, the sociology of quantification and the Foucauldian approach to power and resistance, the thesis asks who decides which metrics matter in news production and what is the role of metrics in the newsroom. Drawing on a networked ethnography, the study examines the production and circulation of metrics within the Spanish media group Atresmedia and in particular in the news department of the television station La Sexta. In so doing, the thesis follows the flow of metrics into the newsroom and identifies the nodes that determine the repackaging of metrics. Finally, the thesis interrogates the journalists' consumption, interpretation and use of metrics. Empirically, the thesis is based on a 17-week networked ethnography, including 44 semi-structured interviews with journalists, data analysts and executives. The empirical data are presented in four levels: (1) The data ecosystem, (2) the institutional stage of metrics production, (3) the news team practices in the lights of metrics, and (4) the individual professional consumption of metrics.

Drawing on the empirical analysis, the thesis argues that the metrics that arrive at the newsroom are crafted, re-packaged and re-signified to subtly convey disciplinary techniques that permeate the process of news production whilst also engendering resistance, with consequences for news products, news programming, audiences, and journalistic autonomy. Ultimately, the research contributes to understanding of the relationship between journalism and metrics. It also provides insights into the debates about the future of journalism in a challenging economic, social and political climate.

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1. INTRODUCTION

When I first set foot in a TV newsroom as a freshly graduated journalist in the mid-1990s, it coincided with the implementation of the automated data audience collection system in the Chilean TV industry: the so-called people-meter.[1] As I became part of the newsroom culture, my editor soon explicitly told me not to worry about it. On repeated occasions, I overheard what was considered to be the golden rule of the newsroom: journalists did not need to be exposed to the quantified data provided by the people-meter, nor did they need to be aware of the struggles of the TV channel's commercial department. This was frowned upon or even forbidden. Almost 30 years later, the situation has changed completely. A new position had been established in the newsroom's hierarchy: the audience engagement editor is responsible for assisting journalists in making editorial decisions by negotiating between audience metrics and journalistic judgement (Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc Jr. 2018).

However, in Chile, even before digitisation, audience measurement informed newsroom practices in real-time. Data was – and still is – reviewed while each item of news is being broadcast, creating a mesmerizing spectacle of editorial decision-making during the actual newscast. Professional journalistic judgement is being audited minute-by-minute by the metrics. The news values are reduced to only one: news' pieces popularity. However, I only acknowledged the true extent of the pervasiveness and intrusiveness of real-time metrics in the Chilean broadcasting system after leaving Chile to work in Spain. The real-time audience data report is more common in Latin America. In Europe, except for the Netherlands, the norm is to receive audience data the day after broadcast (Cabello 2014). While working in public television in Spain (TVE), I started to understand that it was not only the persistence of data, but also the delivery timing and format that made a difference.

In my MSc studies (Global Media and Communications), I investigated the relationship between journalism and metrics in Chile. Back then, my concern was the editorial bias of Chilean TV news because of an alignment with audience data that did not give space to unrepresented social groups or regional information as long as these did not peak highly in the audience meter system. In Spain, I thought that the television system had managed to escape real-time audience data until the arrival of internet-based metrics.

Recent research suggests that the metrics' impact on news decision-making could be more complex than initially thought. Some research points out that influence could be more pervasive in news organisations that work exclusively online and receive

[1] *A device settled in a statistical sample of households to measure programmes and television stations tuned into by each viewer, which I will refer to extensively in this research.*

real-time metrics. Tandoc Jr. (2014a) found that journalists in these kinds of organisations consider the more popular stories more newsworthy. According to other accounts, metrics could have either a steadfast or weak impact in newsrooms that hold a robust journalistic rationale depending on whether or not they aim to maximise their audience for public good-oriented content (Hindman 2017). Availability of a vast financial endowment could also be a key element in relation to how much attention news organisations pay to metrics (Petre 2015; Usher 2013a). Nonetheless, ongoing research continues to raise concerns that firm reliance on metrics can jeopardise journalists' civic duties (Bunce 2017; Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc Jr. 2018).

This thesis aims to analyse the specific encounter of metrics with journalists in a quantified newsroom in the context of the commercial Spanish television system. Using a networked ethnography approach, the research examines the production and circulation of metrics within the Spanish media group Atresmedia. The analysis pays attention to the repackaging of metrics and how it flows into the newsroom. Focusing on the case of La Sexta TV, an Atresmedia-owned television station, this thesis also investigates journalists' consumption, interpretation, and application of metrics in La Sexta TV's newsroom.

My interest in the subject regarding the management of metrics stems from my observations, as a journalist and media researcher, in different newsroom cultures in Chile, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, México, the United States and China. Seeing these different journalistic cultures, I wondered whether news teams could develop autonomous strategies to harness the metrics information instead of being entirely ruled by them. The wide range of newsroom cultures I have had privileged access to has helped me to develop a critical appraisal of news production practices, particularly in terms of the circulation of newsroom metrics. My experience has contributed to the shaping of my research questions.

1.1. Research questions

The first research question asks:

- What counts as quantified data, both in journalistic practice as well as for the news business? What are the differences in the assessment regarding what data matters at the individual, team and institutional levels?

Rather than assuming the nature or prevalence of audience data, this study asks what counts as data in the newsroom and the conditions that make a specific set of data prevalent, through the following questions:

- Which agents participate in re-signifying the meanings of the audience analytics and metrics used by news workers?

- To what extent do journalists use quantified data in the construction of their professional identity?
- How does the news team navigate and negotiate the news decision-making processes with the quantified assessment provided by two audience measurement systems, one provided by linear television and the other supplied by internet-based applications?

In this thesis, I understand journalism as being the organised provision of news as public communication. Journalism's news-making task involves identifying newsworthy information and comments, which are "gathered, filtered, evaluated, edited, and presented in credible and engaging forms" (Anderson, Downie, and Schudson 2016:60). The latter is a narrow definition of what entails news production but does not reflect journalism's social value in a broader context. Bourdieu (2006), in his field theory, highlights that journalism, like any cultural production, works between two conflicting logics: the economic logic based on the market rules as a business venture and a symbolic logic as a professional field whose duty is to produce a public good (Benson 2004). This premise points to the core of this research. While La Sexta's newsroom is producing both a social service and profits, the study asks which of these ends the metrics serve, who determines what metrics prevail in the newsroom, and what practices determine that prevalence.

There is much existing literature that supports the notion of market-driven journalism, which is fuelled by the availability of internet metrics (Zamith 2018; Ferrucci, Painter, and Kalika 2019; Tandoc Jr. 2019; Belair-Gagnon, Zamith, and Holton 2020). However, these authors also account for professional journalistic logic-driven news production, a second logic – in the same vein as Bourdieu's symbolic logic stated above, whose definition also has a broad scope. Habermas (1989) emphasises the importance of journalism-provided information in creating "public spheres" where citizens can debate current events as equals and make informed political decisions. Schudson (2008) holds that journalism – I should add Western liberal journalism – has become an accountability mechanism developed to underpin representative democracies. Likewise, journalism serves as a watchdog for preventing abuse by political and business leaders on behalf of public opinion (Waisbord 2000; Donsbach 2008). Further probing the difficulty involved in grasping the complexity of what journalism is and does, Anderson (2006) proposed that journalism, as an essential part of print capitalism, plays a crucial role in creating "a community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations" (2006:36).

By confronting the social value of journalism with the news business logic, it raises questions about which of the two logics the metrics serve and if any resistance to metrics emerges among journalists. For the interests of this research, there is the need to answer who determines the meaning of metrics and to what extent journalists are subjects of ongoing training to adhere to one (public duty) or other (market profits) aim of the news organisations.

This research became interested in how the authority and legitimacy of numbers, in particular in statistics, are produced and in how such numbers acquire legitimacy for journalists. In the existing literature, there is little theory that explains how journalists choose which numbers to trust. In the field of data journalism, where statistics are extensively used, some studies argue that the journalists' trust in figures lies in their confidence in the news sources and, more broadly, in the accepted assumption regarding the transparency of measured reality (Van Witsen 2018). In historical research, Anderson (2018) considers how American journalism turned to numeric information, seeking a new form of evidence to make claims about truth amidst a crisis of journalistic objectivity. However, one issue is the quantified data input in news reporting, and another matter refers to metrics assessing journalistic performance and the news product. In this latter vein, I became intrigued by the origin and process of metrics production within a media conglomerate and metrics' role in conveying a representation of audience performance. I questioned whether metrics objectively speak by themselves or whether they bring a purposeful meaning of what to do and what not to do in news production. On this basis, I decided to ask which actors are involved in packaging the metrics used by news workers, and for what purpose. I then considered whether the quantified data plays a role in forming journalists' identities and professional autonomy. This research also explored what happens when journalists face two institutionalized measurement systems and how these competing systems inform their news decision-making and their understanding of the audience's preferences.

The thesis draws on Michel Foucault's account of power, disciplining techniques and practices of resistance, in order to explore the relationship between journalists and metrics. The Foucauldian concept of power has hardly been used in journalism studies (Andrejevic 2008). However, with the arrival of digitisation, critical studies of new media have invoked the issues of bio-power, discipline, knowledge and, particularly, surveillance (see, for instance Fenton 2016b; Bunce 2017; Gollmitzer 2019). This study’s working hypothesis suggests that the use of metrics is normalised in newswork as a disciplinary mechanism. That is why the research seeks to examine the metrics' role on the job, whether its effects – such as self-control and self-surveillance – are manifested, and whether these effects reflect the internalization of domination or not. Moreover, it considers whether the evidence suggests that there is a continuously updated evaluation that occurs through metrics.

As noted earlier, my experience working in television ranges from being a journalist with news production submitted to online metrics' complete control (as happens in

Latin America) to the professional performance in an environment where metrics are received the morning after (as happens in Spain). I selected the delayed metrics delivery system as my research subject for two main reasons. First, the online measuring in Latin American TV systems is similar to the effects of internet metrics, broadly studied. From my experience, online metrics leave little or no room for journalistic deliberations. The path of collective TV news production involves a chain of journalistic and editorial tasks. However, with online metrics, each news story's net value, along with the newsworthiness of the sequence of news stories within the newscast, is subverted at the time of broadcast, when the editor in the switch room juggles with the news packages like poker cards, betting to defeat the rival's newscast by moving them or simply taking them out of the newscast. Secondly, as is the case for the Spanish television system, the delayed metrics delivery illustrates how the professional journalistic mindset interacts with metrics by avoiding its oppressive real-time presence. Understanding that newsroom quantification is unavoidable in current journalism, this research seeks to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the new set of media audience proceedings, newsroom practices, and journalistic identity in a quantified environment. This study aims to add a fresh perspective to the growing literature on the pervasiveness of metrics.

1.2. Context: Atresmedia and the Spanish Television System

As stated above, the empirical focus of this research is the Atresmedia group. This Spanish media conglomerate aims to produce niche news products for audiences segmented by their political affiliation or proclivity through two main channels: Antena 3 and La Sexta TV. Antena 3 produces news for a public interested in right-wing news, and La Sexta TV is focused on the left. This partisan split is not new in the Spanish media system. Hallin and Mancini (2004) documented the media-political alignment in Spain as a case of strong political parallelism. Any observer fairly quickly identifies the media's political orientation in a one-to-one connection between each media and each political sector. This occurs in Spain with newspapers, television channels, and radio stations (Gunther, Motero, and Wert 2000). What is new with Atresmedia is its public declaration of the TV channel’s political alignment; it is worth noting that it is not a formal political party affiliation, rather an ideological leaning. In terms of Hallin and Mancini, there is a one-to-one parity between each TV station and the opposing side of the political spectrum (with La Sexta on the left and Antena 3 on the right), but this is the first time in Spain that one media firm has offered content for opposing political parties.

Atresmedia's main controller, who headed the acquisition of La Sexta TV in 2011, José Manuel Lara, in his last interview before his death, made clear the media group's political claim:

> *Antena 3 TV, currently, is a centre-right TV channel, a serious and respectful TV channel of the left-wing parties. With La Sexta TV, I want to make a centre-left television, a serious TV service that must be respectful of the centre right-wing people. I know it is not achieved yet, but we are working on it.*[2]

When La Sexta officially began broadcasting in March 2006, the Spanish television system was preparing for the analogue switch-off on 3rd April 2010 (Government of Spain 2007) and the television industry was readying for major foreseeable changes, such as the expansion of the broadcast offer and a severe fragmentation of the audience.

What was not known at that time was that the system would suffer the scourge of two successive economic crises, in 2008 and 2012, resulting in an upheaval of the traditional financing system. This was a global phenomenon that was exacerbated for the news media for two reasons: first, the news industry had undertaken a convergence process to take advantage of the internet's opportunities; therefore, the news media sector increased their indebtedness. At the same time, the advertising-dependant funding model collapsed. Accordingly, news media employment became evermore precarious, or worse, it meant unemployment for a large contingent of journalists, as documented across several Western countries (Gollmitzer 2014; Nielsen 2015; Waisbord 2019).

The first global economic crisis in 2008 was weathered with difficulty, but the scourge of the second in 2012 became unbearable: in just two years, the number of unemployed professional journalists in Spain tripled, from 9,937 in 2011 to 27,443 in 2013 (Soengas Pérez, Rodríguez Vázquez, and Abuín Vences 2014:3). This unemployment figure was equivalent to more than 35% of the total number of journalists in Spain, which at that time was estimated at 77,832 (APM 2013:45); 179 media outlets – national and local – closed between 2008 and 2012 (2013). However, the combined impact of economic crises and technological convergence was significantly different for television compared to print media. 2007 was the year in which the decline in income for newspapers and television began; the internet was the only industry with sustained growth. The difference between the television industry and the newspaper industry is that television could stem the decline and began a smooth recovery from 2013, which was not the case with newspapers. To understand how this trend was reversed and what the political economic role of

[2] *José Manuel Lara Bosch was CEO of the Planeta Editorial group, founded by his father, and CEO of Atresmedia. In this latter position he led the negotiations for the acquisition of La Sexta TV in 2011. He passed away on 31st January 2015 and the interview was published three days later (Ortega Figueiral 2015:24). The quotation was translated from Spanish.*

audience data in that process was, it is necessary to take a brief tour of the history of television in Spain. This tour can be graphically viewed in the timeline of main television public policies in Spain (1976-2018) included in Appendix E.

The story begins in 1956 with the public television monopoly, TVE, created under the dictatorial regime of Francisco Franco (Gunther, Montero Gibert, and Wert 2000), a monopoly that only changed under democracy with the expansion of the television offer. The first step of this change came with creation of television stations for autonomous communities – legally enacted with Law 46/1983 on the Third Television Channel (1983) – which were public television channels that were dependent on the autonomous communities enshrined in the 1978 Constitution. The Spanish audio-visual industry continued to increase in size with the birth of private channels, thanks to the Organic Law 10/1988 on Private Television (1988). In 2010 the arrival of digital terrestrial television (DTT) and the creation of satellite channels, cable channels and pay TV (García Santamaría 2013:369) exacerbated the fragmentation of audiences. Therefore, by 2017 the Spanish system had six categories (Salaverría and Gómez Baceiredo 2017) of television:

(1) a duopoly of private audio-visual media – Mediaset España and Atresmedia –audience leaders and also leaders in advertising revenue;

(2) national public television – RTVE Radio Televisión Española – which is financed through tax over the use of radio spectrum, government subsidies for public service, and – unique to Spain – a tax over the gross income from commercial free-to-air TV stations, pay TV and telecommunications companies;[3]

(3) multiple digital pay TV platforms, mainly paid for by subscription, including those provided by telecommunications companies, such as Movistar+, Vodafone TV and Orange TV, and also multinational subscription systems such as Netflix, HBO and Amazon TV;

(4) several private niche channels that broadcast nationwide, but with smaller audiences, not recorded by Kantar Media's audimeters[4], such as 13TV (run by

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[3] *The Spanish Radio and Television Corporation's financing sources were established in Law 8/2009 (2009). In 2016, the Radio y Televisión Española's (RTVE) operating income was €973,465,700. Funding sources were distributed that year as follows: tax over the use of radio spectrum, 39%; public service compensation, 35%; telecommunication companies' special tax, 13%; free-to-air TV special tax, 5%; pay-TV's special tax, 2%. The remaining 6% of RTVE income corresponded to sales of content, events, and intellectual property among other sources (CNMC 2018).*

[4] *Audimeter is a generic term introduced by Nielsen (1942, 1945; Kingson 1953) referring to the media usage tracking devices first designed to monitor radio listening, then television watching, and today's cross-media consumption (Hill 2014). In Spain, Kantar Media is the company responsible for conducting television audience measuring. The audimeter used by Kantar Media is a people-meter device placed in a statistical sample of households to measure the channels and the programmes tuned into every minute of the day.*

the Episcopal Conference of Spain), Intereconomy (right-wing political and economic news), DKiss TV (entertainment), and Real Madrid television (football);

(5) regional public television channels; and

(6) local television channels.

In other words, in a period of shrinking media funding, there were two giant players, one national public television channel, and a myriad of regional and paid channels struggling to survive. It is worth noting the international performance of Spanish television firms. Although there is a vast Spanish-speaking population globally –at least 480 million[5] people had Spanish as their mother tongue in 2018 (Vítores 2018) – Spanish-speaking countries are not a relevant market for Spain's public or commercial television. For instance, in 2016, Televisión Española programmes' international sales represented 0.0047% of its total gross income (CNMC 2018). Atresmedia created advertising companies in 2018 in Chile, Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico, all of which sell various forms of advertising on the internet to be inserted into any Atresmedia web pages. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, they have not reported income up to 2020. Atresmedia International is the brand responsible for international sales through pay TV channels and cinema. It does not report income in the Atresmedia group’s annual statements between 2017 and 2020 (Atresmedia 2018, 2019, 2020a). Regarding content production and distribution, nationally and internationally, including cinema production and distribution in Spain, Atresmedia reported income for this item in 2019 that amounted to 10% of gross income (Atresmedia 2020b). Atresmedia group accounts for one worldwide known TV production, *Money Heist* (Vancouver Media 2017), streamed by Netflix. However, Atresmedia bought 20% of the production company, Vancouver Media, and only after *Money Heist*’s international success (Ropero 2019).

In terms of the Spanish market, according to a report by the consulting firm Infoadex, commercial television is still the main medium for advertising investment, which altogether for 2018 received 38.6% of the total investment of advertising in conventional media, including traditional media, the internet and pay TV (INFOADEX 2019:4). As detailed in Chapter 6, Spanish TV participation in total advertising investment does not represent an unusually high percentage. A comparison between Spain and the United Kingdom shows that, as a proportion of total media advertising investment in 2018, the Spanish TV system had a share of 16.6% while the British system had 21.7%, significantly higher.[6] To understand the power of the size of the

[5] *The same year, 2018, Spain’s population was around 47 million.*

[6] *Source: author’s own elaboration with data gathered from Infoadex report (2019) and Advertising Association/WARC Expenditure Report (2019)*

first group within the Spanish television system, it should be noted that in 2017 the Atresmedia and Mediaset duopoly obtained 90% of the total advertising investment in the Spanish television system described above (2019:15). On the other hand, in the same year, both media groups, with their 13 channels, collected 54.55% (Barlovento Comunicación 2018:45) of the audience share.

La Sexta TV

As will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 8, in the 2000s the Spanish political system was still based on a bipartisan scheme that included not only political parties but also the media associated with each sector (Hallin and Mancini 2004), a scenario in which the public of a particular political tendency chose the medium from which to inform themselves by ideological affinity (Gunther, Motero, and Wert 2000). The veteran Spanish journalist Iñaki Gabilondo described the political parallelism and its consequences unmistakably as a pathology of the political system and media system, one that appeared far earlier than the social media filter bubbles:

> *It brought about a pathology in which people no longer wanted to go to the media for understanding the world, but to confirm their own points of view (Iñaki Gabilondo interviewed by Iglesias Turrión 2014, 20’58").*[7]

The above quote suggests that the social networks' echo chamber effect – referring to an environment in which a person only encounters opinions and beliefs similar to their own, with no need to accept alternative viewpoints (Barbera et al. 2015) – is not new. It existed in media systems with a high degree of political parallelism, but the phenomenon has intensified given the architecture of online environments.

From its inception, La Sexta TV was marketed as a youthful, urban leftist TV station (Casero Ripollés 2016). Its core programming was based on political humour programmes and the acquisition of global sports events such as the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany or the 2006 FIBA World Championship – the Basketball World Championship for men's teams in Japan (García Chamizo 2011). Politically motivated programming took shape on La Sexta during the 2011 economic crisis. News debate programmes left their marginal schedules and started to be aired on prime time. In 2011 the TV station transformed its content with the aim of capturing a certain sector of Spain’s ideological spectrum, a growing section of the audience that included news consumers who were dissatisfied with the existing bipartisanship schema. La Sexta TV was the last analogue signal to go through concession in Spain, during the socialist government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. Rodríguez Zapatero, President of Spain

[7] *The quotation was translated from Spanish.*

between 2004 and 2011,[8] led the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE in its Spanish acronym) but on the ideological spectrum he positioned himself further to the left than the previous Socialist President, Felipe González[9] (García Chamizo 2011; Fernández Sande 2012). La Sexta TV was first aligned with the PSOE, then the most left-wing party, but from 2011, when the PSOE government ended, it aligned with an increasingly significant group that was no longer satisfied with bipartisan politics or media (Humanes 2016). After 2014, when a third political force, Podemos, challenged the two traditional parties which had alternated in power for 30 years, La Sexta sought its audience niche by aligning with the population who gave their vote to the new party.

This evolution, in conjunction with the initial urgency to capture an audience, added to the economic crisis that threatened the existence of the company just five years later, contributed to creating the attitude of reporters reading audience data as a way of gaining some insight into whether the company was economic viable. Another point to consider is the business model with which La Sexta TV was established and which was maintained after the merger with Atresmedia (Manfredi and Artero 2014). It is a model that considers human resources as non-core assets and as a non-structural expense of the business, leaving journalists in a precarious condition. From the beginning, La Sexta TV's business model consisted of full outsourcing of all services so that the company had no significant burdens if there was a sudden fall in advertising. However, only the staff and programmes were easy to cut – the large sports events were a different matter as the company bet on such events to launch the channel and achieve a large audience share (Alcolea Díaz and Blanco Leal 2007). Those sports events rights represented a two-to-four-year commitment.

The business model of La Sexta TV posed, from the beginning, that the journalistic team was considered an expendable expense. According to Larson (1979), being a professional implies having power and prestige, to which Abbott (1988) adds the need to have a discourse of authority in the corresponding field and the ability to defend a space of jurisdiction to put into practice a skill or knowledge. The labour conditions undermining the journalists' professional authority, as happens at La Sexta TV, is not unique to Spain and has been broadly exemplified globally in the creative industries (see, for instance, in creative industries in general Terranova 2012;

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[8] *Rodríguez Zapatero governed the eighth and ninth legislatures of Spain, being the fifth President of the Government of Spain after the return to democracy (more details at https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/president/presidentes/Paginas/RodriguezZapatero_BIO.aspx).*

[9] *Felipe González headed the Government of Spain between 1982 and 1996, during four legislatures (More details at https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/president/presidentes/Paginas/GonzalezMarquez_BIO.aspx).*

McRobbie 2016; Gill 2019; and in journalism in particular Örnebring 2018; Gollmitzer 2019).

As will be discussed in Chapter 8, precariousness instilled in the company's logic and recognized by reporters has remained in force today. Almost the entire team belongs to an external company, Liquid Media, except for a select number of senior staff members, including the five heads of the newsroom and some presenters. There is a deep fear of failing with audience numbers, causing the reporters to wait every morning with anxiety to find out whether the metrics will provide cheering or anxiety.

1.3. Thesis outline and key findings

The thesis is organised into three parts: the first deals with the discussion of the theoretical framework (Chapters 2 and 3); the second refers to methodological issues (Chapter 4); and the third focuses on the empirical analysis (Chapters 5 to 8). The four empirical analysis chapters discuss the findings from macro to micro-level: Chapter 5 maps the data ecosystem that observes the key institutions within the Spanish television system. This is followed by the analysis of the Atresmedia group metrics practices (Chapter 6) and newsroom team practices (Chapter 7). Finally, in Chapter 8, I turn my attention to the micro-level: how individual journalists understand data as well as how they understand themselves through processes of datafication in terms of their professional identity and autonomy.

Chapter 2 argues for a holistic approach to analysing journalism and metrics which brings together the sociology of news, the political economy of media, and cultural studies approaches. This analytical framework allows me to make sense of journalistic practices at a micro level as well as the normative standards of television news production in Spain (macro level). The sociology of news production provides a framework to investigate all stages of news production. This thesis examines both the construction of news and professional journalistic identity aiming to uncover the metrics' cycle triggered by the use of digital technology. As will be detailed in Chapter 4, the focus of the fieldwork is on news-making routines that have remained consistent despite the ongoing technological evolution detected in the nuanced role of metrics. The critical political economy of media approach allows me to review state regulations and ownership patterns and evaluate to what extent these factors shape the production of both news and metrics. The third perspective incorporated into the analysis of the role of metrics in news production is cultural studies. I use the Foucauldian (1995) concepts of power, discipline, and resistance to observe the news team's daily micro-negotiations to achieve newsworthiness standards and engaging stories alike. As mentioned earlier, Foucault's analysis of power has not been influential in journalism studies (Andrejevic 2008). My study argues that Foucault's theory offers important insights in the understanding of datafied newsroom cultures. This is in line with the renewed interest in Foucault's notions of governance and discipline in the context of critical data and algorithm studies. I will develop the Foucauldian approach to data in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 examines the literature on quantification and datafication. Rather than assuming the authority and legitimacy of numbers, the chapter outlines the intended and unintended biases of quantification, which is the foundation of datafication. The chapter draws on science and technology studies, the sociology of quantification and Foucault's framework of power in order to make sense of the ideological and technical factors that have contributed to the rise of metrics and the instances of control, bias, and surveillance that exist thanks to the availability of large and ever-updating datasets. By analysing the production of measures and metrics as different products, in this chapter I emphatically argue that metrics – and all its derivatives, such as rankings and any aggregations – include mathematical and psychological elements and social and political components (Murray and Gal 2002). Thus, I hold that it is not possible to accept that numbers have a fixed meaning. This observation is particularly relevant for the present research since it aims to uncover the role of metrics in news production and in the negotiation of journalists' identities; therefore, it is crucial to unveil the meanings that metrics convey. Chapter 3 also explains the ability of a market information regime to discipline the field of news production. A market information regime is defined as a quantified measuring tool used in production to assess competing actors' performance (Anand and Peterson 2000). Moreover, the chapter discusses the emergence of a new measurement system from internet-based metrics, called the 'user information regime' (Webster 2010). As my research involved the tracing of data flows that came from two different measurement systems, this last point prompted me to examine the degree of disciplinary power (Espeland and Sauder 2007) that the two measuring systems have on a particular news team. This thesis uses Foucault's (2003) concept of discipline as a silent mechanism of power to render individuals docile, to turn productive workers into well-behaved persons.

Chapter 4 discusses the methods used to operationalize the research questions. This section presents the mixed approaches used as part of an overarching networked ethnography which includes participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and mapping as primary data sources. As supplementary methods, the study also includes the think-aloud process, tweet text analysis, and document examination of audience reports and press releases. My ethnographic approach aims to develop a deep understanding of newsroom culture and unearth deep-seated attitudes towards metrics. Participant observation allowed me to understand the role of metrics in journalism practices by contrasting what journalists do with what they tell me they do during the interviews regarding audience data (Belair-Gagnon et al. 2020). The participant observation granted me access to a whole set of data through interactions both in and out of the newsroom with editors, journalists, data analysts, and executives. The networked approach helped to identify the nodes that were involved in the metrics' repackaging and in selecting four observation sites: (1) the traditional newsroom – the physical premises and the team which produces news contents to be delivered through TV sets; (2) the digital newsroom – the team responsible for posting on internet-based platforms all the news content produced in the traditional newsroom; (3) the audience analysis office; and (4) the corporate communications division. I carried out 17 weeks of participant observation and conducted 44 semi-structured interviews; a sample of 483 tweets was analysed all of which went through a thematic qualitative text analysis. Besides, the thesis examined audience reports and press releases. As the study's subject is a multi-faceted phenomenon that combines the production of news and metrics, the negotiation of journalistic identity and professional autonomy, the mixed methods approach proved to be an effective research tool. I conclude this chapter with a reflection on the position of the researcher as interviewer and as an insider/outsider of the newsroom culture.

Chapter 5, as the first empirical chapter, aims at understanding the circulation of data within and outside the newsroom. The mapping analysis of the flows of data – the primary tool to build the data ecosystem – reports four levels of data processing: collectors, analytics, decision-makers, and disseminators. It also identifies two sets of data circulating, which relate to two different market regimes: the audience data collected from a statistical sample of viewers of the linear television; and the data pulled from news consumption on social media or internet platforms. The data ecosystem map proves to be crucial in organising a phenomenon that, at first sight, might seem scattered and unattainable. It also identifies the nodes involved in re-packaging or re-signifying metrics. Finally, it offers an overview of the sites of discipline and resistance within the newsroom that result from the accepted or rejected data flows.

Chapter 6 reviews institutional policies on metrics. It details how the Atresmedia group proceeded with the immediate goal of scaling up in audience ratings and the medium-term goal of improving its revenues. It describes metrics' packaging intervention pre-and post-data collection through practices such as the arbitrary segmentation of programmes or the audience data inflation to optimise the ratings included in Twitter messages. This chapter also explains Atresmedia's advertising sales strategies, such as those that oblige advertisers to buy airtime in packages on all Atresmedia TV stations at the same time. This sales strategy allows the group to charge high fees for television channels that have low ratings. These strategies entail the news team being trained to produce and organise their news content to ensure the company's commercial commitments. I argue that, despite the inflexible institutional discourse in favour of the traditional audience measurement system, metrics derived from news consumption on social networks challenge traditional audimetry data. As there is a power interplay between two forms of audience measurement, news workers have to deal with two contradictory representations of audience preferences. However, the company trains news workers to give attention to only one audience representation, which is reinforced daily through metrics communication.

Chapter 7 focuses on how editors and journalists in the newsroom negotiate and navigate among different market information regimes. In examining the practices related to metrics, this chapter follows the news production based on four of the five stages of the model of news construction created by Domingo and colleagues (2008): access and observation; selection and filtering; processing and editing; and distribution. This chapter describes the development and consolidation of the data gatekeeping editor role, which is responsible for filtering what data counts in news making and makes sense of audience performance. The data gatekeeper role is to accommodate the news that is considered relevant but which, in terms of audience figures, is less engaging, without losing sight of metrics. Something that participant observation makes clear is that it is not easy to discern between the emergence of metrics and the uses of technological devices in the current digital environment. Smartphones and laptops are reporters' most used devices. Therefore, the chapter shows how I traced these devices' usage to analyse the role played by metrics that are generated by these gadgets. The key finding in this chapter concerns the emergence of a virtual newsroom which exists in parallel to the well-established physical and digital newsrooms. The virtual newsroom reinforces the physical newsroom's structure whilst also engendering a new form of power relation both within the news team and between journalists and sources. The empirical data highlights how the use and understanding of audience metrics creates a divide between the physical and digital newsrooms and, consequently, excludes the digital newsroom from participating in the virtual newsroom.

Through the lens of Foucauldian disciplinary techniques (1995)– surveillance, normalising judgement and examination – this chapter details the process through which the commercial-oriented data reading penetrates and prevails in the newsroom: firstly, through a systematic and timely pace of metrics delivery; and secondly, with carefully worded messages which are delivered mainly through social media. On the other hand, this chapter documents the resistance practices to metrification which are only permitted by the data gatekeeping editors. These practices consist of purposely neglecting the audience figures for short periods (days or a week) in a sort of trial-and-error test of their 'journalistic instincts'. However, the main wielding of newsmakers’ agency in managing audience metrics was observed when they deliberately included relevant news pieces that were not grasping the audience's attention; such practices are time-limited. The data gatekeeping editors acknowledge that they have some leeway to sacrifice the audience figures if they have genuinely newsworthy information that could be less engaging for audiences. These editors also say that they are aware that they have some leeway in the focus they apply to metrics results; in other words, editors can take occasional ‘risks’ by including content that might not be so appealing for audiences, but they cannot disregard the metrics too often.

Chapter 8, the last empirical chapter, pays particular attention to how journalists themselves deal with metrics. This chapter observes that newsroom culture is highly influential in the way journalists understand their professional autonomy as a team value rather than as an individual one. Drawing on writing on political parallelism (Hallin and Mancini 2004) and journalists' perceptions of their professional autonomy (Reich and Hanitzsch 2013), I argue that both Atresmedia and newsroom staff actively build their understanding of professional identity and journalistic autonomy. This research details how, within the newsroom culture, at least two well-rooted beliefs account for the struggles that the news team carries out against political and economic powers in producing news. This chapter shows how these shared unquestioned beliefs are newsroom myths. Moreover, these myths and the perception of good audience figures underpin professional autonomy and the news team's self-esteem. Journalists are caught between two parallel and often contradictory audience measuring systems, the ‘official’ metrics of the people-meter and social media data. Navigating the implications of the two systems has become a key component of their jobs. Some journalists attempt to craft their news products to satisfy to both measuring systems.; others opt to produce for only one of them. In terms of the Foucauldian analysis of the regimes of power (1982), this chapter concludes that the presence of two competing measuring systems undermines the disciplinary power that market information regimes seek to convey to the news team. It is worth mentioning that this is not about one measurement system cancelling out the other. Instead, the presence of two systems offers opportunities for journalists to develop practices of resistance.

The final chapter of this thesis returns to the original research questions and provides an outline of the thesis's original contribution as well as reflections on possible future investigations. In terms of the first research question about what counts as data in the La Sexta newsroom, the thesis finds that among all quantified data that circulates in the news organisation, the people-metered audience metrics are the newsroom's prevalent metrics. That predominance occurs thanks to a subtle, timely, and systematic disciplinary system created by the media group. The described set of controlling techniques regulates the news team processes of making decisions. Likewise, the full range of deployed disciplinary mechanisms operates over the media managers and their proceedings regarding metrics. Any change in the form of data aggregation (in particular, the practice of splitting programmes) or the pace of data delivery will ultimately change their position in the rankings. In response to this regulatory regime, the thesis observes a few resistance practices employed by the news team. For example, news team members develop data filter modes to decide what news is. Furthermore, journalists negotiate two contradictory audience data flows reflecting the two competing market information regimes. While metrics play a broad role in underpinning the perception of professional autonomy and journalistic authority, the disciplining impact of metrics in news selection, news product editing and journalistic performance is often undermined by the existence of alternative measuring systems. The inconsistent representation of the audience creates a space of questioning and resistance. Ultimately, all news decision-making is filtered through the audience metrics.

Finally in this chapter, I reflect on this thesis's theoretical contribution, which widens the perception of the pervasiveness of metrics by applying a Foucauldian framework. This perspective provides a new understanding of the metric power logic, even in a highly journalistic-minded newsroom. At the end of the conclusion, I set out the research's contribution around the metrics as an unavoidable input of the news production, regarding the news team’s resistance and consolidation of filtering practices. Furthermore, this last section discusses the need to train journalists in data literacy and qualitative analysis of audience response. This new understanding of the relationship between journalism and metrics aims to shed light on the debate about media's future in a challenging economic, social, and political environment.

2. JOURNALISM AS AN OBJECT OF STUDY

2.1. Introduction: A holistic understanding of journalism

This thesis is about the relationship between journalists and the metrics that flood the newsroom and fill the digital applications they need for work. This research embraces a concept of journalists that touches at least three realms: as members of an institution that shares a set of normative values; as professionals with a body of knowledge and know-how to carry out a set of practices; and as employees of an organisation (Zelizer 2005a; Vos 2018). But it must also consider what Lewis and Westlund (2014) point out as two relationships that one cannot lose sight of because they heavily shape current journalism: the interplay of humans and technology and the interplay of editorial, technology, and business interests. With this aim in mind, the research adopts a holistic three-dimensional approach to encompass all the manifold stakeholders. In this chapter, I outline the three approaches – sociology of news production, critical political economy and cultural studies and the strengths and limitations of each approach – and explain why together they are necessary for fully understanding the phenomena this thesis is concerned with.

The study of news and journalism has traditionally oscillated between two main paradigms: political economy and cultural studies. While studying news production in this manner, by isolating the steps of the process from each another, every approach tends to prioritize either structure (ownership), or agency (the audience) (Fenton 2009). In the case of political economy, the focus is media ownership and the ruling classes, while cultural studies gives priority to the agency of the audience and the ideological context within which consumption takes place. The boundaries between these approaches are blurred and, in the last two decades, efforts have been made to converge these perspectives to provide a comprehensive account of the process of news creation (Fenton, Bryman, and Deacon 1998; Murdock and Golding 2005; Fenton 2007; Devereux 2013; Yao 2017)

The topic of this research, which surpasses traditional newsroom boundaries, requires an analytical framework that is even more comprehensive than those two traditional paradigms to encompass the observation of the structural forces involved in the financing and regulation of media; the agency of the journalists; and the myriad micro-practices involved in the chain of news production. Therefore, this research will contribute to challenging the classic divide by observing the practices that are performed by at least three different stakeholders within the media group studied: (1) the media business Atresmedia group, that has self-declared its immediate goals to achieve maximum profits and the highest social influence[10] and consequently must respond to their audiences' concerns in a competitive market; (2) a news industry that not only produces commodities of a symbolic nature, but which also receives and circulates symbolic contents as production inputs; and (3) a very specific organisational structure that is able to maintain a continuous chain of news production.

I will explain how the sociology of news production helps to address the analysis of the quantified newsroom by providing a framework to make sense of routines, practices and values of the journalistic and media work that are worth exploring. In addition, this chapter reviews the debate about journalistic identity, in terms of the professional autonomy and added strains journalists must endure due to the highly datafied contemporary environment. This research recognizes the power wielded by the ruling structures of society, which is partly mediated by the metrics, but also acknowledges that the news team is a collective of professionals with social and political agency and the capacity to make their own choices. There is extensive research showing that journalists are capable of manipulating the collective perception (see, for instance, Larson 1979; Zelizer 1993; Hallin and Mancini 2004; Schudson and Anderson 2009; Mellado and Hellmueller 2015), building their own professional identities, and adopting oppositional attitudes on the basis of pieces of information provided by metrics, both as individuals and as a news team (see for example: Anderson 2011; Usher 2014; Petre 2015). When proposing the sociology of news production, Schudson (1989) references how scholarly inquiry was facing a research gap, given that the prevailing paradigms would not offer the ability to examine what he called the black box. In other words, political economy and cultural studies were unable to address the personal principles and beliefs, collective values and social factors involved in news production. The multidimensional theoretical framework proposed in this research aims to address that research gap.

Later in this chapter, I will present a critical review of key studies in news production and examine the features of each theoretical perspective that are incorporated into the adopted multidimensional approach. I argue that many of the insights arising from classic journalism studies, compiled in the sociology of news production, remain relevant in understanding news output, the stages of news generation and journalists' occupational contexts in traditional media organisations. However, I highlight how the advent of digital technologies has also induced substantial changes in professional

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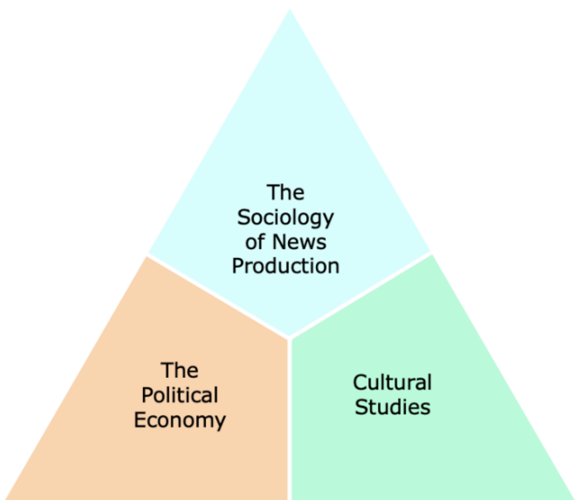
[10] *During the Annual Atresmedia stakeholders' meeting, in April 2018, the media group CEO José Creuheras highlighted the pursual of influence in society: "Influence is, and will increasingly be, a strategic asset for a Group like Atresmedia. What is it to be influential? It means that people trust the information we provide them" (Palomo 2018). One can argue that the pursuit of profits and influence describes the main goals of any private media company, but what I highlight here is that Atresmedia's owners and executives leave no room for doubts about the aims of the business group.*

journalism. The next section includes a critical account of the literature around journalistic practices and routines. This analysis outlines the principles for the participant observation of the newsroom. In the last section I will address the debate around professional journalistic identity, how it has evolved and is in a state of permanent adaptation to technological change; and also, what the current factors are that pressure or undermine journalistic authority. At this point, I discuss the role played by the metrics in repairing or threatening journalistic autonomy (Deuze 2005; Anderson 2008c; Schudson and Anderson 2009). That debate is central to understanding how journalists are coping with the differences between their journalistic judgement and the assessment that is provided by the audience metrics, something I explored during the fieldwork interviews.

2.2. Beyond the Dominant Paradigms: Towards a Multi-dimensional Approach

The political economy of media is concerned with power relations and how politics and economic structures intersect to shape production, therefore political economy deals with the structural inequalities of production and access to consumption. The political economy of media is mostly adopted in European scholarly production, particularly in the UK. Cultural studies, in turn, focuses on the social agency of the active audiences and their ability to reproduce or resist dominant narratives. For reasons that I will explain later in this chapter, neither of these approaches is entirely appropriate on its own to address the research questions in this inquiry. However, both approaches provide vital support to this research's primary theoretical approach, the sociology of news production (Figure 2-1). The sociology of news production has a solid tradition in the study of newsroom routines and professional values, and also serves as a guideline for observation on the basis of a theoretical corpus to describe roles, practices, rules and processes in the newsroom.

Figure 2-1: The holistic multi-dimensional theoretical approach supported by three paradigms



All three media research paradigms mentioned above pre-date the popularisation of the web to distribute news content and pre-date highly intense newsroom datafication. In studying online journalism and new communications technology, several scholars have drawn attention to the risk of overemphasising the impact of the "revolutionary character of online technologies and the Web" (Boczkowski 2005:2) in news production (Domingo 2008; Curran 2009; Zelizer 2019). Zelizer (2019) stresses that journalism studies that focus primarily on technology can blur what has remained stable in news production in the face of technological changes. In addition, Curran (2009) suggests assessing with sceptical caution the impact that new communications technology may have and warns about the need for "examining not what new technology could do, but what economic power would permit" (2009:32). In the same vein, the research must establish the extent of the technological convergence process between the linear analogue TV newsroom and the digital newsroom – responsible for incorporating web news and video streaming – and exploring how the news production works for each team, whether they work in combination or separately. Also of interest is an exploration of the way Atresmedia managerial staff values the news product distribution channel, whether broadcast traditionally or digitally, and whether there are differences in the value placed on the news regarding the device or internet platform through which it is delivered. Lastly, the research must answer how the datafication works in each process.

Moreover, as will be explained in Chapter 3, the parallel news production for linear TV broadcasting and on-demand internet-based streaming generates the coexistence of two market information regimes. In other words, the operation involves two measuring systems, each, in turn, providing feedback on how each player in the market works and what the audience preferences are in such a manner that news teams are perennially exposed to twofold feedback.

In the following section, I will review each theoretical block of this research. First, this research seeks to understand the role of structural factors – such as corporate policies, ownership patterns and state regulations – in shaping market information regimes and data circulation. This line also aims to determine how metrics are re-packaged to conveying new meanings and new social orders in the newsroom. This thesis also needs an analytical framework for making sense of the cultural complexities of journalistic work and journalists' ambivalent relationship to metrics.

Sociology of News Production

The extensive body of studies regarding newsroom routines and journalistic values was first systematized as a paradigm by Michael Schudson in 1989. For Anderson (2013), Schudson's perspective manages to integrate "[the 70-year tradition of] micro-studies of journalistic behaviour into the standard approaches to the sociology of news production" (2013:169). The sociology of news production allows for the analysis of organisational structures and workplace practices, the cultural and practice-driven dimensions of journalism, as well as individuals' agency within this. From the perspective of news as a constructed reality, Schudson points out that news products can be studied like any other manufactured good (1989), that is, taking into consideration the whole spectrum of influences that impinge on the news processes, which Schudson summarises in three key categories: the political economy of society, the social organisation of newswork and political culture (1989). The sociology of news production approach stresses a research focus shift from the editor-reporter relationship towards the reporter-source relationship. Schudson (1989) suggested that the aforementioned interaction is the very core of what doing journalism means:

> *One study after another comes up with essentially the same observation, and it matters not whether the study is at the national, state, or local level— the story of journalism, on a day-to-day basis, is the story of the interaction of reporters and officials* (1989:271).

This study draws on the reporter-source relationship as much as the relationship between reporters and editors/owners. Both relationships exist in an interplay of power that shapes journalistic performance and news products. To better understand why the research focus shift in journalism studies is needed, it is necessary to consider the evolution of the sociology of journalism, also called the sociology of news.

The very roots of the sociology of journalism have been traced back to the early twentieth century in Max Weber's 'Sociology of the Press', presented in 1910 in a meeting of the German Sociological Society in Frankfurt which was concerned with the institutional role played by the press in society (cited in Zelizer 2004; Belair-Gagnon and Revers 2018). Nevertheless, it was not until after the Second World War that journalism studies launched. In the pre-internet age, broadly speaking, the sociological research in journalism can be divided into two underlying assumptions: first, news selectivity, which was based on the premise that facts are out there waiting to be reported, thus, selection became the key issue in journalism; and the second premise that the news is a constructed reality, that is to say, the news is a product manufactured in a process in which beliefs, preferences and viewpoints of journalists are at play (Tandoc Jr. and Duffy 2019).

Considered as pioneering the theoretical premise of news selectivity are David M. White's (1950) early study on gatekeeping, which examined the personal reasons given by newspapers editors for rejecting potential news, and Warren Breed's 'Social Control in the Newsroom' (1955), that explained the process through which news companies socialise journalists into becoming followers of corporate policies (Reese and Ballinger 2001). Robert E. Park's (1922) earlier work on 'The Immigrant Press' in the United States is considered an effort to turn journalism into a target for sociological inquiry (Zelizer 2004). Furthermore, Park hypothesised that news and press were a form of knowledge (Schudson 2005b). This pioneering works also includes Helen MacGill's (1940) research on human interest stories. Zelizer drew attention to the fact that those initial works focused on "discrete journalistic practices" (2004:52), which were limited enough to make them subjects that could be easily examined.

Regarding the premise that states the news is a constructed reality, a shift in perspective emerged from the wave of long-term newsroom ethnographic studies carried out mainly in the US, from the early 1970s onwards. Regarding the premise that states the news is a constructed reality, a shift in perspective emerged from the wave of long-term newsrooms ethnographic studies carried out mainly in the US, from the early 1970s onwards. Pioneering works in this golden era were Edward Epstein's (1973) 'News from Nowhere: Television and the News' and David Altheide's (1976) 'Creating reality: how TV news distorts events'. Epstein demonstrated how media policy and budgets were involved in shaping television news coverage, while Altheide offered insights into the nature of news bias and explored the institutional processes of selecting and producing programmes. Scholars of this second generation of workplace ethnographies included Tunstall (1971), Tuchman (1978), Schlesinger (1978), Gans (1979), and Fishman (1980), who were among a dozen or more researchers examining the news processes that connect the character of news events and news organisations (Altheide 1983). This series of ethnographic studies looked at news routines and norms intending to acknowledge the role of the bureaucratic organisation of journalism in shaping newsgathering structures (Belair-Gagnon 2019). By carrying out the occupational analysis of newswork, those studies explored journalistic behaviour regarding ethical dilemmas, source-reporter relationships, or the philosophy of journalistic autonomy.

Before continuing with this review, I want to define newswork as the simple and straightforward work that journalists do (Marjoribanks and Deuze 2009). This definition is both simple and complex at the same time, given the changes that technologies have imposed on the profession. Apocalyptic phrases abound: "Journalism as it is, is coming to an end" (Deuze, 2008). Nonetheless, I recall Zelizer's (2019) suggestion not to lose sight of what remains stable, meaning that, for instance, news selection and newsgathering processes and the gatekeeper mediating them all remain central in news production.

Without that second wave of newsroom ethnographies, we would not have the theoretical knowledge of news production, and "our understanding of journalism would be limited to what little we are able to glean from the observation of news content, or from what journalists say they do" (Paterson 2008:2). In this regard –

and in the light of what the next chapters reveal – the understanding and the use of metrics by news workers in a contemporary highly datafied newsroom, the inconsistency between what journalists say they do and what they actually do has become a norm.

Returning to the premise of news construction, Gaye Tuchman's (1978) 10-year ethnographic study, a multi-sited participant observation at a TV station, a newspaper newsroom, and a news beat site in New York City constituted a milestone in journalism studies (Zelizer 2004). For Tuchman, the news was a frame through which the reality and social world were routinely constructed, and consequently she examined the professional practices and norms of the journalists through which that process was taking place. Tuchman's research focused on news routines and normative values.

Tuchman (1978) drew attention to how news media manufacture events from the continuum of daily experiences and grant them newsworthiness in a negotiated social process by distributing reporters in time and space. Tuchman also shed light on how news workers create and manage controversy, and additionally asserted (1972) that the journalistic notion of objectivity is a strategic ritual that comprises a set of procedures whose final goal is to protect journalists from the risks of criticism and also allows them to claim professional authority. In the light of this thesis' research questions and following Tuchman's insights, one might wonder whether metrics replace or supplement earlier strategic rituals and models of authority that contribute to the 'making of news'?

The golden era of journalism studies also had an important chapter in Europe, within the Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG), formed in 1974, which attracted attention with its critical studies of television news broadcasting (Belair-Gagnon and Revers 2018) in the UK. Even though the work of the GUMG is often associated with the political economy approach, I argue that it has also contributed to the sociology of news production and the study of news audiences. GUMG developed video content analysis and audience reception analysis using focus groups, combined with qualitative interviewing and participant observation – a mixed set of methods that attempted to compare the news product with what the audience interpreted from it. Its foundational principle was that "the news is not a neutral product, for television news is a cultural artefact" (Eldridge 2000:113).

The GUMG stated its object of study was television journalism, particularly hostile news, a label they gave to the systematic bias on television news that prefers to broadcast conflicting events and news that benefits powerful individuals or organisations. Their work aimed at challenging the journalistic claim of objectivity and impartiality in the TV journalism of the BBC and ITV (2000). In the publications

‘Bad News’, ‘More Bad News’ and ‘Really Bad News’ (see Beharrell and GMG 1976, 1980; Philo and GMG 1982), they pored over news values, and noted the similarities in news stories, news sources and even the newscast story order on two TV stations that declared full autonomy and impartiality (Eldridge 2000). Considering this research's focus on whether quantified data shapes news production and journalistic performance, the findings of GUMG that predate electronic data collection from the audience suggest that the idea of hostile and conflicting news being to the audience's taste was in the journalists' mindset long before the newsroom's quantification became the norm. Furthermore, by finding similarities between newscast content, news focuses, sources, and even the news order, GUMG set a viewpoint over news homogenisation long before the frenetic copying, pasting, and sharing practices arrived and became standardised in today's newsrooms. Some studies blame these practices for promoting news homogeneity (Lawlor 2015).

Also worth mentioning Golding and Elliott's (1979) first cross-cultural study collected data from TV stations in Nigeria, Ireland, and Sweden (Mosco 1981). In that study, they conclude that news philosophies, political systems, and broadcasts were the same in the three different cultural contexts. That was a pioneering comparative study followed by multiple other research for differences in news audience reception (Jensen 2003), influences on the journalistic job (Hanitzsch et al. 2019), the perception of journalistic roles, comparison between different newsroom cultures (Hanitzsch and Mellado 2011; Mellado et al. 2012), and media systems (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 2012).

Post-2000, some Spanish scholars have participated in multi-national academic research of comparative studies in news production. This investigation has a particular interest in the academic work led by David Domingo in producing two different models. The first one helped to compare – in eight European countries and the US – the citizen participation opportunities in the media. Domingo's team achieves that aim by breaking down the main stages of news production workflow (Domingo et al. 2008). The second model is an analytical grid of four dimensions that assesses the degree of technological media convergence (Domingo et al. 2007). The first of Domingo and colleagues' models of participatory journalism is interesting for this research because it created and validated an assessment model that fits every country and every newsroom culture involved in the study. The model proved to be a comprehensive and solid tool to trace every process in any news production chain. Later in this chapter I will detail how I utilized Domingo's participatory journalism model during my fieldwork.

The analytical model of news media convergence was also part of an academic cross-national study led by Domingo. Media convergence refers to the degree of integration between traditional and online news production. Domingo and colleagues (2007) developed a typology of four dimensions or stages of convergence that allows the characterization of the technological evolution of newsrooms. The degree of technological convergence matters for the core aim of this research. Each form of news production and news delivery, either linear television broadcasting or internet-based streaming, has its datafication process and its audience measurement system. From Domingo and colleagues' (2007) perspective, media convergence is an ongoing – completely non-linear – multi-layered process. Hence, they propose a four-component analytical model that helps to identify which players are the leading convergence advocates or who work as resisting groups. At the same time, the model allows for an exploration of how journalists appropriate, make sense of and incorporate emerging technologies and their inherent metrics into news production.

The four dimensions of media convergence assessed in Domingo and colleagues' (2007) model are: (1) integrated production; (2) multi-skilled professionals; (3) multiplatform delivery; and (4) active audience. First, the integrated production dimension asks whether the premises and the content management software are separate or shared items between traditional and digital newsrooms and whether there is collaboration and joint news coverage planning between them. The multi-skilled professionals' dimension examines whether journalists can produce for different media outlets, can report on various thematic areas and can perform most news production tasks. The multiplatform delivery dimension pays attention to the extent to which the contents are exchanged between the different media outlets and whether that sharing is automated or not. Lastly, the dimension of the active audience looks at whether the news media promotes the submission of user-generated content and audience participation. This research used the indicators mentioned above to build the interviews, guide the participant observation, and code the analysis. Appendix F of this thesis contains the complete list of indicators for assessing journalistic convergence.

Returning to the foundations of sociology of news, Schudson (1995) looks at the concept of objectivity from a historical perspective. Schudson focuses his definition of objectivity on the ability to separate facts and values: "the belief in objectivity is a faith in "facts", a distrust in values, and a commitment to their segregation" (1995:6). The prevalence of the objectivity norm in journalistic practices would be an outcome of a link between journalistic objectivity to group cohesion, social conflict and occupational authority (Schudson and Anderson 2009). The search for objectivity brought two areas of investigation to journalism studies: first, the need to find a rational explanation for the complex role occupational values have in newswork; second, Schudson (1989) came to the conclusion that there was a gap in how the prevailing paradigms were not able to examine what was occurring in the space between the superstructure and the news outcome. Schudson (2005) breaks away from the radical constructivist perspective of news creation. He proposes that the news is a journalists' manufactured product that does not come from anything. Journalists "act on 'something' in the world. The 'something' they work on is events, happenings, occurrences in the world that impress journalists and their audiences." (2005:173). In this regard, Schudson concludes that the news product in the sociology of news production is mainly event-driven, rather than institution-driven, therefore the process of news making should be called news generation rather than news creation.

Adopting the sociology of news approach in this research provides the tools to observe forces in action in the realm of the newsroom. However, the research design extends beyond the boundaries of the newsroom. This study explores the entire news and metrics ecosystem. It follows the teams that deal with audience metrics in the media conglomerate outside the newsroom. The aim is to trace the strategic protocol through which metrics become an authority: who re-packages metrics and when and whether someone attaches them new meanings. To understand the formation of the metrics and their embedded readings, this research draws on political economy and cultural studies traditions.

Critical Political Economy and Cultural Studies Approaches: Strengths and Limitations

From the critical political economy of media, Murdock and Golding (2005) consider the media and telecommunications industry from a twofold perspective. Firstly, as big users and providers of essential infrastructure that play a crucial role as the first point of encounter between consumer demands and consumable goods. From this angle, media are also full-fledged economic actors as massive employers that participate in the flows of exportation. The second perspective looks at media industries as manufacturers of goods of symbolic nature that provide images and discourses which are inputs for people making sense of the world (2005:60). MacChesney (2012:2) adds that the political economy of media also deals with the interaction of the media industry with forms of power in society, whether it is reinforcing the rule of the elite or feeding an informed political debate which allows people to become effective citizens.

For media workers who care about crafting audiovisual media content, it is hard to acknowledge that what matters in the media business is the audience accrued rather than the content produced. That was the thesis put forward by Dallas Smythe (2013 [1952]), who called attention to the practice by which advertisers pay for the size and quality of the audience's attention. The business model of commercial media, and in particular commercial television, seeks to maximise profits by selling audiences to advertisers and using various other means to create networks and content that specifically serve their business interests (Mosco 2009:114). Turow (2005) provides an explanation for the nature of the media business model. Turow uses the expression "the industrial construction of audiences" to refer to the main aim of the current business of the media (2005:105). Through resource dependence theory (RDT), Turow explains how, in a context of struggle for resources, organisations are compelled to leverage others' resources for their own benefit. This should be done by avoiding any dependence, but rather by making others dependent on oneself (2005:107). According to Turow, that is exactly what the advertisement industry has been doing: cultivating media dependency on them for funding. The advertising industries make a profit out of gaining access to consumers as "resources". However, it is not just a random audience that appeals to them: they do not seek citizens, nor are they interested in gathering public opinion; the crucial question for them is how to attract real customers through media. Zuboff (2019) disagrees with Turow and holds that what the advertising industry is interested in gathering is the means for behavioural modification. However, Turow's point of view about mono-dependency can explain today's traditional media funding crisis, which is due to the advertising industry breaking away from its long-lasting mass media association when the audience started to radically change its media consumption habits. Metrics are instrumental for the media advertising funding schema under some specific conditions, such as a consensus measurement system agreed by just a few market players (Kosterich and Napoli 2016). A solo measuring system for a whole market that allows any player in the market to get to know its own and everyone's performance is called a market information regime (Anand and Peterson 2000), a concept that will be discussed in Chapter 3. However, regarding the media funding model, the proliferation of metrics leads to the question of whether the market players' performances remain clear enough when social media metrics challenge a near-monopoly traditional audience system. This research aims to answer how media managers and journalists manage competing market information regimes.

What role do datafication and metrics fulfil in the power relations at play when producing news? Do they play a disciplining role only at the newsroom level or also at higher managerial levels? Murdock and Golding (2005) postulate that the dominant class and ruling elite are also subject to constraints, and for that reason, the media system's policymaking process has become another core element of the political economy of media. An example of the restrictions that media owners must endure is the industry-dominant information market regime, which is subscribed to by the media and the advertising industry. The media that want to participate in the market must submit to the rules of choice, collection and interpretation of data established in said agreement.

In this research, I hold that there is a gap in the academic research regarding the strategies deployed by the traditional media industry to rule the market information regimes. Whereas the advertising industry is moving quickly towards media that provides a highly personalised targeted audience, traditional media must deal, on the one hand, with what remains in the traditional market information regime that emerged along with analogue television and, on the other, with the new market information regime that dominates interactive media platforms. In this study, the coexistence of these twofold measurement systems represents a critical aspect that academia has overlooked in analysing the media funding crisis. Spanish media scholars have tackled media fusion, media acquisition and media conglomerate formation in Spain, as well as its strategies to massively attract audience attention (for instance, Bermejo 2009; Jones 2011; Arrese, Artero and Herrero 2009; García Santamaría 2016; Casero-Ripollés, Izquierdo-Castillo and Doménech-Fabregat 2016; García-Santamaría, Carretero and Cedillo 2017; García-Santamaría, Serrano and Espínola 2017; García-Santamaría and Pérez-Serrano 2020). However, to my knowledge, the interplay between the two competing data regimes has not been studied. This study acknowledges that the ruling information regimes and their metrics are a by-product of media policymaking. Hence, the political economy framework will allow me to address significant facets of this inquiry, such as mapping the intentional and unintentional data flows towards the newsroom and which of these are considered business-minded and which are not.

In spite of the robust theoretical framework that political economy offers, there has been a strong criticism from cultural studies regarding its reductionist logic (Grossberg 2008:1112) of channelling the whole debate about news production through an analysis of economic forces, even in the case of critical political economy, which widens the scope but still remains strongly anchored in political and economic variables that rule the media ecosystem. A turning point in this perspective has been the critical political economy's view that the media has a central role in the circulation of meaning and the distribution of the symbolic system that enables people to act in the world, to understand it and to communicate with one another (Hardy 2014).

In the literature, one can easily find arguments for and against the centrality of political economy forces in analysing the media's role. For instance, media research has admittedly found difficulties in determining the link between ownership and news coverage, mostly given progressive blending and boundary diffusion between commercial and state-owned media (Noam 1991; Brants 2005). However, it is also true that Waisbord (1994) discovered how, in Latin America, government officials benefit more from public media than citizens, and in China, Zhao (1998) showed the effects of media communications in a media matrix controlled by the Chinese state which uses them as a mouthpiece for the interests of the government.

Looked at from another perspective, the worldwide technological transformation of media industries and the promise of the redistribution of communication power through digitization has increased the dependence on communication resources. Faced with this scenario, media research should be concerned with how these resources are organised and controlled (Mosco 2009). Therefore, the political and economic forces that operate in a news organisation and a media system should not be dismissed but, at the same time, are not sufficient to explain the phenomenon of production and circulation of meanings. There are ongoing efforts, as Hardy (2014) documents, for adopting forms of inquiry that address aspects of media communication that the traditional political economy approach used to disregard, such as content and the audience.

This research is interested in analysing the three levels of news decision making: the executives of the media conglomerate as a news organisation; the newsroom as a team; and professional journalists as individuals. Furthermore, the research considers the cultural dimension of news generation and the relational interplay between journalists' agency and media organisation policies in constructing reality as a cultural product. It also considers exploring the journalistic agency in decoding the meaning conveyed by the metrics. Recent research demonstrates that the ownership policy can constrain and even shape, but cannot annul, journalistic autonomy and journalistic agency. (e.g. Usher 2013; Sjøvaag 2013; Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2012; Molyneux and Mourão 2019).

Cultural studies, whose roots can be traced back to two separate traditions from the 1960s and 70s – at the University of Chicago University in the US and the University of Birmingham in the UK – tends to focus its attention on the "collective codes of knowledge and the belief system by which journalists are presumed to make sense of the world" (Zelizer 2005b:199). The British tradition of cultural studies focused on the ways in which audiences interpret the news and the extent to which they reproduce power and hegemonic structures. While some criticisms have focused on the observation that cultural studies emphasised audience agency, a closer look suggests that British cultural studies have traditionally been concerned about questions of power. Hall and colleagues (1978) convincingly argued in a large study about policing, ideology and social control that there is no power balance among those involved in creating the interpretation and evaluation of the world. Hall and colleagues exposed the role played by the dominant control culture – to which the rulers and the press belong, as well as the audience and social life – when they attempt to answer how meaning is taken from the world and turned into a symbolic product on which people rely as a trustworthy source of information on what is happening in the world. Therefore, at the core of cultural studies is the pursuit of the understanding of symbolic power.

By seeking to ascertain which journalistic features are worth poring over, scholars from the cultural studies approach appraise what has been called the untidy and textured material of journalism in which they seek repeated patterns (Schudson 1989). In other words, they analyse the meanings, rituals, conventions, and cultural symbols in the journalistic discourse. These studies, by using text as a useful analytical entry, have given priority to words, while also making use of images or sounds (Zelizer 2004), and by doing so, have brought forth a wide range of research methods, both quantitative and qualitative.

Although Foucault avoided being associated with any school of thinking (Powell 2012), as an interdisciplinary grouping, cultural studies has increasingly appropriated the French philosopher's works (Khan 2004). The Foucauldian framework of power and resistance – which I discuss extensively regarding the power of metrics in Chapter 3 – also counts as cultural studies. This thesis is aimed at exploring the notion of discipline behind the systematic deployment of metrics in the newsroom. Not as an overtly coercive form of power but rather in the Foucauldian sense of discipline, understood as a set of skills that must be mastered (Danaher et al. 2000) to successfully achieve a socially recognised journalistic performance. Therefore, the linkage between metrics and disciplining are immersed within the cultural studies' concept of symbolic power.

In sum, drawing on the sociology of news I can trace the chain of news production and news delivery and observe the difference made by quantified data. The critical political economy approach will underpin the analysis of the relationship of the media conglomerate and the quantified data, considering to what extent data circulation is being promoted, restrained, or channelled. The lenses of cultural studies allow me to understand the encounter between journalists and the quantified data: to compare the message conveyed by the metrics and the readings and interpretations that journalists bring to those metric messages. Table 2-1 serves as an overview of the three theoretical approaches that underpin this thesis. In this table, their key tenets, the methods deployed, and their strengths and weaknesses are summarized.

In the following section I outline the existing research regarding the routines and prevailing news values involved in news production, which inform the newsroom ethnography. The discussion on routines and practices brings together the sociology of news and the work of de Certeau (2013) and other cultural studies authors who have theorised practices as forms of resistance to power structures.

Table 2-1: Comparing the three theoretical frameworks that sustain this research

	POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MEDIA	CULTURAL STUDIES	SOCIOLOGY OF NEWS PRODUCTION
KEY TENETS	**Political Economy of Media** studies the power relations that configure the flow of information from mass media to its audiences. PEM looks at mass media systems, media ownership patterns, support mechanisms, government policies and regulations, the process of globalisation, information and communications technologies. The focus of PEM are the structural inequalities of production in general, access to media, and the consequences of these on media representation and information availability. PEM is also primarily concerned with how the structure of media ownership (economic and political) shapes news content.	**Cultural Studies** emphasises the analysis of people's cultural practices and how they relate to dominant cultural practices. CS looks at the individual's social agency and their resistance ability to the dominant cultural agendas. CS researchers looks at ideology, class structures, national formations, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and generational issues. Cultural studies has examined questions of symbolic power and hegemony: asymmetries between elites and those who have no access to symbolic power (the means of representation); processes of 'othering'; stereotyping; and 'writing from the margins'.	**Sociology of News Production** pursues a sociological understanding of newswork; its focus is the social organisation needed for producing news and looks at how it is journalistic autonomy is expressed and exercises the news decision-making power. SoNP tries to understand how organisational and occupational routines constrain journalistic work.
FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS	**Critical Political Economy of Media** attempts to bridge the economic and political dimension of media with social and cultural life. CPE Looks at the long-term implication of the state and corporations in media culture. Therefore, it has a more holistic perspective while continuing to be concerned with justice, equity and the public good.	**Cultural Studies** has spread worldwide with branches and scholars in all continents. It has also expanded theoretically, by engaging with main intellectual trends, such as feminism, poststructuralism or postmodernism.	**Sociology of News Production** systematises a body of intellectual production that spans over 70 years of research, including the exploration of social control in news selectivity (gatekeeping theory), in the occupational ideologies of news workers (framing, agenda-setting, news values), or the formation of professional journalistic identity (journalistic roles, objectivity, autonomy).

			SoNP is also continuing to study the evolving technological relationship between journalists and sources.
METHODS	Documentation analysis, historical research, textual and media content analysis, economic, statistical and market analysis	CS uses a multiplicity of critical approaches to analyse, interpret, and criticise cultural artefacts and audience research. CS merges sociological methods such as interviewing with the analysis of cultural texts. Also, CS commonly conducts ethnographic research and textual analysis.	Mostly ethnographic studies of news production. SoNP looks at practices and routines of journalists not only within the boundaries of the newsroom but also in the journalists-sources relationship. To achieve that, SoNP extensively employs qualitative and quantitative methods.
CRITIQUE	PEM is usually criticised for overemphasising the intersection of political and economic power at the expense of meaning-making processes in the reception, consumption and use of media content. (Fenton 2007; Flew and Smith 2014; Hardy 2014)	CS focuses on symbolic power and has a crucial emphasis on thinking contextually. It means that CS promotes thinking about something more as the sum of its relations with other elements of social reality and not only in terms of its essence. Roughly speaking, this perspective creates an anti-reductionist stance that has led some scholars to criticise Cultural Studies for not prioritising particular intellectual stakes. (Storey 1996; Lewis 1997; Procter 2004; Fenton 2007)	The research focuses mainly on the gathering of news or news selection rather than on the routines of giving format to the news as a news product. SoNP has also been criticised for not being a full-fledged paradigm, but rather a compilation of research. (Lau 2004; Belair-Gagnon 2019)

2.3. News Routines: The Generation of News as a Product

Journalistic practice has become the focal point of sociologically-oriented scholars who aim to understand how journalists work. This subject has been observed mainly by following, step-by-step, news workers’ daily activity, in order to identify regular patterns at play in news generation. This research seeks to observe news routines and news values, but more specifically, the encounter of those routines and values and any sort of metric thus identified. This, in turn, should lead to the understanding of the underlying patterns and their purposes. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the news routines and news practices – used as interchangeable terms in the literature – have been described from the dawn of journalistic studies. Lippmann asserted that systematisation is a managerial standard, whereby "in a standardised product there is an economy of time and effort, as well as a partial guarantee against failure" (1922:353). According to Tuchman (1973), news routines are the strategies that allow news workers to handle non-specialised emergencies and unexpected events that happen in the field and the need to accomplish newswork within relatively stable parameters, ranging from meeting deadlines to complying with the requirements of the news organisations' style guides (Zelizer and Allan 2010:136). The third generation of newsroom ethnographers emerged around 2010 with a focus on the technological change surrounding news production (e.g. Turner 2005; Ryfe 2009; Robinson 2011a; Lowrey 2011; Anderson 2013b; Willig 2013; Usher 2014). These have featured studies focused on routine, by understanding that the routines and practices are the core of news production and faithfully reflect the never-ending technological evolution which the newsroom is undergoing. Many of those studies include the issue of interaction, audience engagement and audience metrics (see, for instance: Bruns 2008; Anderson 2011; Petre 2015; Tandoc Jr. 2014; Tandoc Jr. and Vos 2016). These cases will be analysed in detail in Chapter 3 on critical data studies and the rise of metrics.

Every definition used and provided for news practice refers back to the practice theory borrowed from Giddens, Bourdieu, Latour, and other social theorists (Ryfe 2017:129). In practice theory, Reckwitz explains that a practice is:

> *A routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to each other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge* (2002:249).

The notion of practice has been theorised in different ways. Giddens (1984) sees practices as shared social activities through which the world becomes meaningful and ordered. Ultimately, for Giddens, practices are the backbone of how societies are structured and held together. Latour (2005), instead, sustains that, on a macro level, practices are not equivalent to a fixed structure but rather focus on associations. By unpacking practices in four elements, Couldry (2012) finds a way to encounter structure and associations. According to Couldry, routinisation is the first key element of practices, meaning that they are regularly performed. Second, practices are socially recognised; hence, they can be performed and identified by separate individuals. Thirdly, humans enact practices to solve their needs. Finally, practices provide a basis for thinking normatively. Couldry (2004) adds that when the practice is put to work, it always involves three elements: an action, an object, and a discourse. Therefore, a practice should be a combination of doing an activity, in which objects necessarily take part, and should include a discourse since the person who carries out the practice needs to describe, explain or understand what is being done (Ahva 2017). From another viewpoint, de Certeau (2013) distinguishes between the practices enacted by structures of power or institutions, which he calls strategies, and the practices carried by individuals, which he names tactics. Drawing on Foucault's conception of power and resistance, de Certeau poses that the relationship between strategies and tactics is a battle between the strong and the weak. Tactics would be a form of creative resistance enacted by individuals to behave in accordance or against the strategies produced by the institutions. De Certeau (2013:127) describes tactics as "shortcuts and detours" to navigate in society.

De Certeau's perspective allows the continued linkage of both opposite understandings of practices at one end, as the cement of the society, and at the other, seeing practices as the shortcuts of the marginal individuals to face the dominant culture. The gap between these two conceptions of practices is at the core of the debate about who receives the most benefit from enacting practices in the newsroom culture. Sparrow (1999) understands that routines are constructed, performed or altered by news workers, although they must still remain in line with senior editors' newsroom hierarchy. Instead, Ryfe claims that "the rules of how to produce the news are embedded not in journalists themselves, but in the practice of news production" (2006:209–210), and that is why journalists interact more or less in a coordinated way when producing the news, according to Ryfe. The lack of control journalists have over the news practices, as Ryfe has stated, leads one to think, as Lowrey claims, that "routines can also be a source of dysfunction" (2008:3270), unable to adapt when there is a need for change. Likewise, they can be a disciplinary tool that allows mass scale news production (Lowrey 2008:3271). One of the most salient journalistic practices is the norm of objectivity, which is also one of the most debatable. Tuchman (1972) claims that objectivity only serves to protect the interests of journalists, while Hansen and colleagues (1994) found evidence that suggests that journalistic accomplishment with the norm of objectivity is a simple formality. In other words, Hansen found that journalists in their reports routinely add opposing views "with the aim to challenge a statement but without involving the journalist's point of view" (1994:568). In terms of the present research, what is most interesting to explore is whether – and if so to what extent – journalists adapt or negotiate their news values, practices and routines in light of metrics.

The routinisation of news production: an analytical toolbox

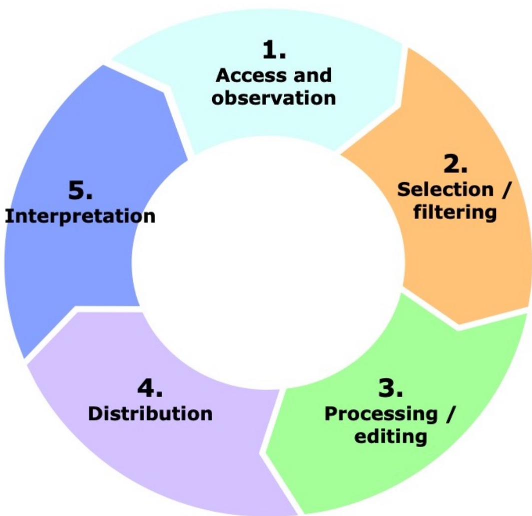
Many academic studies have created models of news production that divide news routines into stages, all of which attempt to create distinctive categories, each covering – in chronological sequence – the whole chain of news production. During the wave of newsroom ethnographies in the 1980s, two models emerged: one for the printed press, the other for TV news production. Fishman (1980) depicted a four-stage model involving: detecting occurrences, interpreting them as meaningful events, investigating their factualness, and assembling them into stories. He situates three out of four news routine stages outside the newsroom. The model for TV news routines, at that time, was elaborated after 14 weeks of observation in a TV newsroom in the Western US (Bantz, McCorkle, and Baade 1980:52), and proposed five steps in TV news production: story ideation, task assignment, gathering and structuring materials, assembling materials, and presenting the newscast. The arrival of the Internet brought with it the emergence of a reductionist model elaborated by Bruns (2005) which considers only three stages, each one marrying practices and performers: input, which refers to news gathering by journalists; output, or news publishing by the editorial hierarchy; and response, which refers to the comments made by the public about the news. These three models, whilst achieving a synthesis of the chain of news production, depict a highly bureaucratic system and are unable to capture the complex, powerful organisational system that those journalistic routines entail.

In operative terms, the present research will use a more nuanced model, the five-stage 'Participatory Journalism Practices in the Media and Beyond' formulated by Domingo and colleagues (2008); the team of researchers drew this work from the sociology of the news approach by dissecting the many practices that involve gatekeeping. Their aim was to create a model that covers any process of information dissemination. The schema created is an extrapolation of "the diffusion of public communications in small, dense communities which entails greater complexity than simply transporting information from one point to another" (Domingo et al. 2008:328). It also considers that the process can stop at any stage, therefore, it is not necessary to run the entire circuit every time. Each stage is a sort of container of a set of practices, and each can be opened or closed for audience participation. The news production stages considered are: (1) Access and observation, (2) Selection / Filtering, (3) Processing / Editing, (4) Distribution, and (5) Interpretation (see Figure 2-2).

Domingo and colleagues' (2008) objective was to create a theoretical prototype that worked for any public communication, with or without institutionalised media involvement, for communications before and after the arrival of the internet, even including one-way and two-way communications. The authors tested the model in 16 news media outlets in eight European countries and the US (2008:327) to check that this model could embrace all the key features of today's mass communication processes. Domingo and colleagues' model was only tested on newspapers; I apply it to a TV news corporation in the present research. In terms of routines, as mentioned above, each stage contains a set of practices, namely:

1) Access and observation. This stage refers to the newsgathering or "the process of collecting information with the intention of turning it into news" (Zelizer and Allan 2010:90); it also involves all sourcing routines, which refers to specific strategies deployed to obtain stories from pre-established relationships, for instance, the beat system (Tandoc Jr. and Duffy 2019), an area – geographic or specialised – that is regularly covered, a journalistic routine whose coverage leans towards elite sources but ensures access to breaking news (Zelizer and Allan 2010:10). Finally, this stage also comprises objectivity routines which require balanced sources, personal detachment, factual reporting, and authoritative sources (Lowrey 2008:3271).

Figure 2-2 News production stages adaptation from participatory journalism practices model (Domingo et al. 2008:333).



2) Selection/Filtering. The second model stage involves the newsgathering process from second-hand sources, such as bloggers or citizen journalists, volunteers or those on commission – or even just material publicly available,

for instance, on social media. This stage also includes the verification processes of news de-selection, which is applicable to the news released on homepages, where the news is taken down in order to refresh the site (Tandoc Jr. and Duffy 2019); and gatekeeping, the filter that decides on the inclusion or exclusion of information from a given system (Zelizer and Allan 2010:50)

3) Processing/Editing. The third step refers to the practices of decision-making with regards to news formats and release channels, for instance, the use of the inverted pyramid as a storytelling format.
4) Distribution. In this fourth stage, the model looks at the rituals of news release (Peters 2012), and the uses of social media promotion. It is worth mentioning that in the pre-internet era, the distribution was not considered a task for a journalist and was instead a responsibility belonging to the media company. That has recently changed, and distribution is part of journalistic routines, an active role that reporters are expected to play in synergy with the TV station news release.
5) Interpretation. The final stage of a mass communication process presently involves routines of audience data review and also the decision making regarding the policies of interaction (Tandoc Jr. and Duffy 2019). In other words, it involves looking at when and what interactions journalists and the news team should engage in. During the data analysis section of this thesis, I will not examine the interpretation stage as a separate aspect. This decision is taken based on the journalists create a working image of the audience from the audience metrics. That interpretation of the audience preferences becomes observable in every stage of news production; therefore, there is no need for a separate stage of interpretation; it will be examined through every previous stage of the model.

In sum, the theoretical model elaborated by Domingo and colleagues (2008) serves both as a toolbox and a grid. As a toolbox, it allows the researcher, throughout the participant observation, to run through the checklist, comparing it with what is detected in the fieldwork. Meanwhile, it also serves as a grid in which the researcher can consider a new practice detected which has not previously been listed. In addition, the theoretical model suits this research well, as it is a generic model of disseminating communications and, as stated earlier, the purpose of the inquiry is to observe two processes of meaning formation: news generation on the one hand; and on the other, the meanings conveyed by the metrics taken from the quantified newsroom.

2.4. Professional Journalistic Identity: Authority and Autonomy

Drawing on a constructivist perspective, Anderson argues (2008b) that scholarship in newswork can be classified into two different lines of research: theorising on how journalists shape reality; and researching how journalists shape themselves into an occupational category that involves professional authority. The first branch of research, concerned with how journalists shape reality, involves all the intermediate level ethnographic studies of news organisations in the 1970s and 1980s as mentioned earlier. The assumptions of this constructionist view of media research are usually taken for granted in the academic literature (Anderson 2008b). We have seen how the assumed constructivist strain of the news has been used as an argument to question the reality presented by some news media outlets. I will return to this point later, linked to the second branch of academic research in journalism which, instead of seeking to demonstrate the constructed nature of reality, attempts to demonstrate the constructed journalistic identity. This area of research tries to uncover the factors involved in the creation of a community of legitimate journalists who are empowered, as professionals, with the ability to present a version of reality that is accurate and authoritative (2008b). In sum, while the first strand of research draws attention to the discrepancies between the reality presented by the news and the actual events without mediation, [11] the second tradition pores over the occupational nature of journalism, in the ways it is codified and publicly legitimated. Zelizer asks what there is in the lattice of cultural symbols, rituals and conventions that allows journalists to maintain "their cultural authority as spokespeople for events in the public domain" (2004:178).

On the basis of Andrew Abbott's work in 'The System of Professions' (1988), Schudson and Anderson (2009) argue that in the construction of the journalistic professional authority, the professional jurisdiction or the very link between knowledge and work (2009:95) prevails over any other asset. According to Abbott, "in claiming jurisdiction, a profession asks society to recognize its cognitive structure through exclusive rights; jurisdiction has not only a culture, but also a social structure" (1988:68). Thus, the social acknowledgement of the professional jurisdiction takes shape at a critical juncture in the formation of professional authority. A profession claims its presumably exclusive expertise and links that expertise with its daily work practices. Abbott defines journalism as a special case of information professionals, who are described as professionals who do not give recommendations for action but rather a recommendation of certain information that will further an action that the receiver may wish to perform. In simpler terms, "information

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[11] *Although mediation has been overburdened with the widespread use of media, mediation is inevitable in social life. Humans return to language to bridge their lives and circulate symbols and meanings.*

professionals help clients overburdened with material from which they cannot retrieve usable information" (Abbott 1988:217). With regard to the journalistic jurisdiction, in spite of the fact that it has grown to be increasingly powerful over the course of the twentieth century, argues Abbott, it has always been a permeable profession, in which a lack of schools, handbooks and codes of conduct has not resulted in the exclusion of newcomers, and has led to professionals unable to monopolize their expertise who seek recognition in public opinion and in the workplace (1988:227). I am highlighting this point because in the construction of the professional identity or any identity there is a need for feedback in order to build professional confidence and self-esteem. Whether professionals of journalism claim some privileges to access the elite or the right to speak about events in the public domain, I propose to examine to what extent the journalist trusts the quantified data to build up professional self-esteem and make such claims.

Journalism scholars have become increasingly interested in examining how the boundaries of journalistic authority are being maintained and how the envisioning of the reporter role is being challenged, to the extent that new journalistic roles such as bloggers and journalistic hybrids have joined the media system (e.g. Singer 2003, 2004; Deuze 2008b; Anderson 2013b; Bakker 2014; Berglez, Ollausson, and Ots 2017; Brüggemann 2017; Mellado and Van Dalen 2017; Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc Jr. 2018). Most of these scholars mainly focus on the newer forms of newswork. Coddington (2019) focuses his attention on the practice of news aggregating, meaning a news product that was not initially reported by the media organisation that publishes it; instead, the news production process considers the repackaging, summarising, combining or reorganising of stories already published by other media outlets. Coddington found that journalists who practice the aggregation – as a form of knowledge creation – are never as close to the news story evidence as those journalists who carried out the reporting. Consequently, aggregation generates frail journalistic identity, less job satisfaction, and weaker journalistic authority (2019). In Spain, Casero Ripollés and colleagues (2015) studied the soundbite journalism culture in political journalism, referring to the practice of planning press conferences without considering the opportunity for journalists to ask questions. The evidence found points also to a loss of journalistic authority. The abovementioned are examples of practices that have emerged with the new communication technology. Regarding this research, in terms of professional identity and authority, the target is to go one step further and examine the interaction between the inherent metrics of a highly datafied media system and traditional journalistic roles.

In the scholarly literature on news, there are few articles linking traditional news-making, the use of metrics and the sociology of occupations, with the work of Wilson Lowrey being the exception. Using the sociology of occupations, Lowrey (2006) compared the role perception between bloggers and traditional journalists, and some of their conclusions shed light on the vulnerabilities of the journalistic role and the procedural changes in news making. Among the vulnerabilities, in another work, Lowrey and Anderson (2006) mention that increased transparency between readers and journalists may weaken the occupation's authority as well as its "specialness" in the eyes of the public (2006:3); the increasing access to reader feedback suggests that traditional journalists who mimic blogging to some extent would be using more non-elite sourcing stories (Lowrey 2006:493) or even implies that traditional newsrooms are using blogs as news sources (Lowrey 2008:70).

Returning to the duality described at the beginning of this section, at the crossroads of having, on one hand, the so-called manufactured news and, on the other, journalists who are shaping themselves into an occupational category, what remains unanswered is the question of what remedial measures are used to recover the credibility of news and the authority of the journalist. The subset of research on fact-checking as a journalistic genre in itself, as opposed to its use as an intermediate tool of verification, is still at a rather nascent stage (see some examples: Hansen et al., 2019; Nyhan et al., 2019; Constant, 2019; Jääskelïnen and Maike, 2018). From a wider viewpoint, this research also aims to determine whether, at this juncture, the relationship between metrics and journalists threatens, repairs or reshapes the professional authority of news workers.

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the need to examine journalism from a holistic multi-dimensional approach, which allows grasping its dimensions as an institution, as a profession, and as a set of practices. For this reason, I considered, first, using the lens of the sociology of news, which provides a framework to observe and make sense of news production processes. The sociology of news approach will also help understand the purpose that journalistic routines serve and the extent to which the newsroom culture shapes the perception of the occupational role and the construction of professional autonomy. Secondly, this research draws on the critical political economy of media, which allows taking into account the intersection of media ownership, broadcasting regulations, the data ecosystem, and the financing system of the media conglomerate in question within the context of Spanish media. Finally, cultural studies provides a framework for analysing the symbolic power embedded in metrics and understanding the context in which metrics are re-packaged by the media conglomerate and consumed by journalists. This research also draws on cultural studies to understand journalistic practices. This multidimensional approach provides an analytical framework for understanding the extent to which journalism in the quantified newsroom is being transformed.

I reviewed how the academic literature on news-making has evolved, and the implications that stem from the three sociological conceptions of the relationship between events in the world and its staging on news: the selectivity in newsgathering; the news as a created reality; and event-driven news generation. In addition, this chapter has broken down the chain of news production into its most recognisable journalistic routines and the news practices embedded in each stage of news production, the oldest and the newest, through the use of Domingo and colleagues' (2008) model of participatory journalism.

This chapter also discussed the dilemmas that journalists face in their professional performance. News workers are increasingly accused of a lack of coherence between the events in the world and how they are presented in news outlets. Consequently, the journalistic authority to stand as spokespeople for events of public interest is also the subject of questioning (Zelizer 2004). Given this breakdown in their professional authority, I suggested that the journalistic jurisdictional weakness – regarding the definition provided by Abbott (2008) in the previous section related to professional authority – is making room for a new role for the metrics.

In the next chapter, I review the second theoretical foundation of this research, the scholarly literature that addresses the rise of metrics in the current media ecology, in general, and in the realm of broadcast journalism, in particular. Likewise, as this research looks at all forms of quantification, I will make a critical account of social research regarding newsroom datafication, corporate policymaking on market information regimes, the consequences of audit society and self-quantification. To make sense of the rise of metric culture, the next chapter will thoroughly examine the Foucauldian framework of micro-practices of power and resistance as well as the power disciplinary toolbox. The ultimate conclusion of these first two chapters is to account for the theoretical supports employed to understand the entanglement between journalistic practice, professional identity, and the role of metrics.

3. AUDIENCE, METRICS AND DISCIPLINARY POWER

3.1. Introduction

One of the first lessons taught to any novice journalist is that their work should capture the audience’s attention straight away. TV reporters know they should grab the viewers’ attention from the first image: the challenge is to persuade the viewer to remove their thumb from the remote control. This assertion's rationale is that the audience members can only be informed if they remain exposed to the news conveying device. Nevertheless, strictly speaking, it is not a piece of advice for improving the journalistic performance or the news quality; it is all about numbers, audience engagement records; the more, the merrier.

Journalism studies have paid relatively little attention to the increasing spread of datafication. Only in the last decade, with the proliferating media consumption through digital devices, media scholars have noticed the implications of the rise in datafication in news production processes. It has not been an easy task, given the data’s multiple origins due to its collection from a wide range of activities carried out in a myriad of devices and platforms (Madsen et al. 2016). One common assumption in journalism studies is that audience metrics have wide-ranging implications for selecting what news gets covered and the format the news products take. However, scholarly research is still limited and predominantly devoted to media organisations established as digital media, whose contents are internet-based, and web distributed only, or newsrooms that have pioneered the digital switchover. For instance, Petre's (2015) study on metrics at Gawker Media, an online data-driven news outlet from the United States founded in 2003 which was compared with The New York Times, a strong journalistic minded media but also audience-oriented assisted by metrics (See, likewise, Boczkowski 2004; Anderson 2011; Usher 2014; Tandoc Jr. 2015; Tandoc Jr. and Jenner 2016; Erdmann et al. 2016; Ferrer-Conill 2017; Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc Jr. 2018; Zamith 2018; Bruns and Nuernbergk 2019)

Few media scholars have undertaken the task to study the datafication of the audience response from the market perspective as an information regime. Anand and Peterson (2000) define a market information regime as a systematic source of industry-wide performance data which serves to give a sense of the actions and the behaviour of consumers, rivals, and suppliers that participate in a particular production field. Little academic research has examined what occurs during the transition from one market information regime to the other or when a market information regime is updated (Adams 1994; Méadel 2015; Andrews and Napoli 2006; Kosterich and Napoli 2016). However, the coexistence of both information regimes has been under-examined. Webster (2010) differentiates between two information regimes: the market information regime that serves media providers and exists before digitisation; and the user information regime, that including the search and recommendations systems built-in web platforms and social media, inform the media provider but, first and foremost, the media user. This chapter will explain their differences and whether the user information regime has become a proper market information regime.

In the previous chapter (2), I argued that I have adopted a multidimensional holistic approach that allows me to observe and make sense of an ample array of decision-making processes involved in the news production. That analytical framework should allow me to encompass the structural forces, the agency of the journalists and the newsroom micro-practices, separately as well as together. The present chapter aims to provide the theoretical framework for understanding the normalisation and ubiquity of metrics in the whole news production process. For this reason, in the first section, I will discuss the rise of metrics in a socio-political context; how numbers have become a new form of social authority; how datatification has accelerated the pace, the size and the extension of data collection; the pitfalls and biases involved in turning qualitative data into quantitative data; and the challenges involved when big data's become a regulating force of social life. In the second section, I will review the literature regarding news and metrics. Finally, the third section discusses the Foucauldian (1995) theory of power and why I consider it pertinent to analyse the flows of metrics that steam in news production from Foucault's discipline concept.

Today's newsroom is poured not only by flows of metrics, but these metrics are being aggregated perennially in order to build rankings which are daily updated. Therefore, journalists and the news teams are subjects of daily assessment (Sauder and Espeland 2009). Observing how the news teams accept or resist the metrics and how they build expertise over data will allow understanding the underlying role that data serves in news production and the construction of journalists' professional role.

3.2. The Rise of Metrics

We live in a world saturated with numbers: prices, indicators, rankings, ratings, followers, likes, temperature, distance, time, weight, height, percentages, and so on. The notion that any phenomena or social behaviour can be turned into quantities for analytical purposes might be traced back to the 17th century with the publication of the first tables of mortality (Lazarsfeld 1961). Another example from the same century is the statistical tables prepared by the Lutheran Church of Sweden to assess every family's ability to read, and knowledge of Catechism (Briggs and Burke 2018). These historical examples of quantification are the origins of the contemporary massive and pervasive spread of metrics due to digitalisation and the widespread use of always-connected devices.

Rottenburg and Merry (2015) add another hint to be considered to explain the prevailing dependence on metrics: from the 80s onwards, there was a point of inflexion in the understanding of the world's economy management when neoliberal reforms critically transformed the relationship between the state, economy and civil society. Neoliberalism, as James Crompton (2010) summarises, is a political economy theory which stresses marketplace efficiencies and at the same time, downplays the state's agency in managing public assets and as a market regulator. One central assumption of neoliberalism is that carrying out those practices will grant the individual wealth and prosperity. The definition does not encompass what the experience has revealed us: that market efficiency with no regulation downgrades the value of the human resources and turns workers into low paid and expendable beings. Harvey (1989, 2011) further argues that neoliberalism is a cultural change that leads to a shift in the ethical beliefs replaced by market ethics. Harvey also contends that "the social good will be maximised by maximising the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market" (2011:3). Thereby, in the search for efficiencies, the neoliberal policy of governance boosted the use of technologies of information and the capabilities to collect, mine, store, transfer, and analyse large databases to guide decision-making (Harvey 2011). Given that this research examines the circulation of flows of data and metrics inside the media conglomerate, neoliberal policies help to understand the uses and interpretations that every section of the media group makes of the data that receives.

As noted in the previous chapter, the size and the quality of the audience — which is a media product traded in the advertising market — are at the core of the media business model (Smythe 2013) and the audience measurement systems are the central tool to the economics of media industries (Ang 1991; Napoli 2003). When it comes to the metrics that are in use in media conglomerates and TV newsrooms, both variables - neoliberal policies and the widespread availability of digitalised ever-connected devices - can explain how the two different market information regimes, or the two forms of audience measurement systems coexist and overlap. The first market information regime is based on representative samples from members of the audience whose data are collected electronically by a people-meter (Bourdon and Méadel 2011). The people-meter device was born in the pre-digital era, but it is still widely used today (Buzzard 2002). The data is collected and stored minute by minute throughout the day, but all data is packed and sent for analysis once at the end of the day (Portilla 2015). The second measurement system is fed from the data collected from the entire population that is consuming digitalised contents using ever-connected devices, and the data is collected and sent for analysis in real-time (Webster 2014).

These measurement systems constitute what is referred to as information regimes, which is a generic term taken from organisational studies. An information regime is a common knowledge socially constructed and widely distributed as "outcomes of cooperative and competitive interactions" (Moldoveanu, Baum, and Rowley 2003:224) among firms in the same field of production. From this idea has emerged the concept of market information regimes which apply to any field of production and refers to “the prime source [of information] by which producers in competitive fields make sense of their actions and those of consumers, rivals, and suppliers that make up the field" (Anand and Peterson 2000:271).

In media industries, the market information regime is predominantly used by media providers who need the audience data to monetize success but also to judge content performance and adapt their audience-building strategies (Napoli 2003; Webster 2010). The information regime that emerged after the creation of the interactive web is struggling to become a dominant market information regime in the TV Spanish system as well as throughout the rest of the world. Due to the fact that it equally serves the media providers as media users it was called "User information regime" by Webster (2010).

Table 3-1 Market information regime vs User Information regime, main features according to Webster (2010)

MARKET INFORMATION REGIME	USER INFORMATION REGIME
It has existed since the early twentieth century, with the market-share concept	It has emerged with Web 2.0 and social media, after 2004
Produced by traditional media	Produced by social media
N = statistical sample	N = supposedly almost all*
Data delivery pace is once in a day**	Real-time data delivery
Used mainly by MEDIA PROVIDERS who seek to manage and sell public attention	Used by ->MEDIA USERS to find information consistent with their needs and preferences ->MEDIA PROVIDERS to make sense and manage digital media environment
Data is collected and processed by an independent supplier	Social media, internet platforms and data suppliers that automate data collection, processing and delivery which, in the end, takes the shape of recommendations for the user

** «N=All» is an uncritical assertion held by Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier (2013) and the big data industry despite significant failures. An example is the cancelled Google Flu project after its massive estimation error (see Lazer et al. 2014). Schönberger and Cukier consider that some messiness should be tolerated. For boyd and Crawford (2011, 2012), the claim that all people's data is collected is problematic as significant parts of the population are excluded or underrepresented. Moreover, people and users are not the same. So, the messiness size cannot be readily estimated.*

*** Data delivery pace varies country by country, the most common being the compilation of data in tables with next day delivery to TV channels. In countries such as The Netherlands, Argentina, Colombia or Chile, the data is delivered almost in real-time, with just a minute of delay, but the audience data delivered only refers to the market share.*

Table 3-1 summarizes and broadly compares and contrasts the main features of both information regimes which will be properly addressed at the end of the next section.

In a broader sense, both market information regimes work under different logics for sampling, data collection, analysis, interpretation, framing processes, and a different pace of data delivery. One market information regime precedes the big data era, the other is the result of it. For this reason, I need to borrow, on one hand, from the sociology of quantification to review how an entire media system came to the agreement to track a specific pattern of TV consumption in a statistical sample of viewers, an agreement which, against all predictions, remains at work. On the other hand, I likewise require digging deeper into the sociology of (big) data to manage to understand the role of social media metrics in the media conglomerate and how they affect journalists as well.

Sociology of quantification or the human faith in numbers

The sociology of quantification was established in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Porter 1995; Espeland and Stevens 2008). Quantification is defined as the act of a measurement through which “heterogeneous beings are made comparable through a work of selection and abstraction of their properties so as to make them transferable across different domains” (Brighenti 2018:28). In turn, the sociology of quantification is concerned with and examines the collective work of producing numbers and the expertise of producing trustworthy enough numbers as to be the source of authoritative knowledge (Espeland 2015). Berman and Hirschman (2017) also note that quantification matters, and it is in need of a thorough study due to the potential that numbers have to powerfully alter the trajectories of individuals, organisations, and fields.

The fact is that the largest and most systematic source of quantified data in TV newsrooms is generated by audience measurement systems, however, most of the analysis of audience measurement relies on communication studies rather than sociology of quantification (Bourdon and Ribke 2016). One branch of scholars in audience measurement, mainly from the U.S., analyses the technology, conventions and history of the measurement system from a neutral perspective without paying much attention to the power wielded by the ownership, the state regulations or other stakeholders (See, for instance: Ettema and Whitney 1994; Webster, Phalen, and Lichty 2006). From a neo-Marxist perspective, more concerned with the superstructure, Dallas Smythe (2013) pointed out that the largest single block of the population's off-the-job work time is sold as audiences' attention time to advertisers. Nevertheless, workers' time of attention to media is not traded by the workers themselves, it is done by the mass media. Likewise, Smythe argued that what advertisers buy is not the audience commodity in bulk, instead, it is an audience with specifics terms of provision such as a foreseeable number of people paying attention at given scheduled timeslot to a precise means of mass communication. Moreover, the audiences traded should possess socio-economical features such as gender, age, level of studies and purchasing power, among others.

Smythe (2013) also identified that Nielsen - a global marketing research firm founded in 1923 and created the market share concept that brought to television and radio audience measurement (Siklos 2008) - has a near-monopoly in providing the service of sizing and quantifying the audience commodity. The operations of this company span over 106 countries (Nielsen Company 2015) and Bourdon and Méadel (2014) found that in 2009 more than 80 countries' TV systems adopted the Nielsen's people-meter technology exclusively. The condition of monopoly or near-monopoly is critical for the strength of the measurement system because it guarantees the single standard or currency in the audience marketplace, and there is no alternative audience value (Buzzard 2012; Méadel 2015; Kosterich and Napoli 2016). On another front, Ang (1991) claims that audience measurement creates a rating discourse or untruthful assumption of a compacted collective of viewers who, in an act of disciplined behaviour, all turn the television device on simultaneously. Later in this chapter, I will discuss the disciplinary factor from the Foucauldian perspective. My concern is with the disciplining of news producers rather than the disciplining of audience members. Although both streams of analysis of the audience measurement systems offer useful elements for understanding the kind of knowledge which is built through the audience data, in this research, I also rely on the sociology of quantification and the use of statistics to explore the construction of the truth of numbers, and what mechanisms, rankings and indicators are used to build a representation of the audience, one that is credible for the news workers. It should be said that understanding how numbers generate trust is helpful for making sense both of the market information regime and the user information regime.

In the literature, the attributes of numbers are highlighted in terms of how they enforce trust (Porter 1995) or that numbers are endowed of authority (Desrosières 1998) and discipline (Espeland and Stevens 2008) but first and foremost of how numbers are able to facilitate comparisons (Diaz-Bone and Didier 2016). With the internet, the enormous amount of data perennially collected, stored and analysed has created a new phenomenon of study, one which alters the power relations (Diaz-Bone and Didier 2016), hides or makes visible certain issues in society (Beer 2016) and generates new types of disciplining (Espeland and Stevens 2008).

By pondering on the history of statistics, Hacking (1991) resorts to Foucault's notion of archaeology as an analytical tool to uncover the governing rules of today's state of knowledge and systems of thought (Gutting and Oksala 2019). Hacking (1991) points out that the emergence of statistics as a tool for state management would lastly rule the social life. By signalling the most salient features of quantification, Espeland and Stevens (2008) emphasise its reactivity, referring to how measurement intervenes in the social world that it depicts and how numbers cause people to think and act differently through the elusive self-inflicted power of discipline. Every piece of quantified data surround people in social settings, every measurement operates over the very activities that are being measured, as well as shapes the self-perception of those whose characteristics or behaviour are the subject of the measurement. In Foucault's terms, this is the way in which individuals are made governable (Porter 1995; Espeland 1997; Miller and Rose 2013). According to Diaz-Bone and Didier (2016), what matters is to be aware that numbers are produced, are communicated and have an effect to unleash political power. While I agree with Ruppert, Isin and Bigo (2017), who conclude that research should focus on those who exercise power through data rather than whether data represents reality, I also argue that power is also revealed in the study of those involved in configuring representations of society through data.

Sociology of (Big) Data

Big data is not simply data, it becomes big data when the collection of data is so large that it is impossible to store, process or analyse on one computer or, speaking in a broader sense, none the above can be done by traditional means. In the literature, the most popular definition used is the 3V's definition:

> "*Big data is high-volume, high-velocity and/or high-variety information assets that demand cost-effective, innovative forms of information processing that enable enhanced insight, decision making, and process automation"* (Beyer and Laney 2012).

That definition covers the technical challenges involved in big data; however, it does not account for the new dynamics of knowledge creation that big data entails. Mayer-

Schönberger and Cukier (2013) emphasise that big data can create new forms of value which can "change markets, organisations, the relationship between citizens and governments, and more" (2013:15). Gitelman and Jackson (2013) offer a more critical approach to what big data is, observing that raw data is an oxymoron – data is curated, produced and manufactured. In other words, Gitelman and Jackson explain the sieve that every phenomenon should pass through before being reduced into data. What that sift contains will be discussed later in this chapter.

Datafication is the process of turning every single fact of human life or life in society into a machine-readable format (Andrejevic and Burdon 2015). Datafication involves two processes: i) Quantification; and ii) Real-time analysis. Very often, quantification and datafication are used synonymously; however, Powell (2019) distinguishes between the traces of behaviour that are datafied (datafication) and the conversion of those traces into numbers (quantification). The second key task is the real-time analysis, which in media means to receive immediate feedback on every content released (2019). The easy part is to convert the quantitative data into a machine-readable format[12] (Dietrich et al. 2009).

The toughest part is to turn the qualitative data (text, images, videos) into numbers. This later stage marks the sequence that matters the most for my research: first, the conversion from online news consumption behaviour to values expressed in numbers (nominal measures such as sentimental analysis of Twitter of Facebook posts or ratio measures such as a number of video views); secondly, the process of data packaging and analysis followed by the delivery of an outcome of that process into the newsroom, - taking into account that it is a message which claims to contain the response of the audience and it is a message in the format of numbers - and, lastly, the interpretation and use of these messages-in-numbers by the news team.

Kitchin (2014) acknowledges that one of the weaknesses of big data processing is that much of the richness of qualitative data can get lost in that translation into a numeric form. However, he concedes that some improvement has been made through machine learning and data mining techniques. There is concern regarding the reactive effect that introduces new forms of quantification in content production (Espeland and Stevens 2008), namely, metrics when producing knowledge unavoidably modifies what it describes. Alternatively, at the large scale of big data, it changes the culture from which the data is taken and reintroduced (Beer and Burrows 2013).

In 2005, Dodge and Kitchin (2005) mapped how data were embedded in everyday life, linked and allowing the identification of people, objects, transactions, communications or territories. All of this is possible thanks to the universal and

[12] *CSV, JSON and XML are among the most popular.*

systematic digital labelling of all data collected, which means that everything can be traced due to the unique indexal identification. In Dodge and Kitchin's description (2005), codes allow the production of "a dense rhizomic assemblage that will enable its users to know simultaneously and in real-time the what, when and where of people and things" (2005:23) and to what extent this is a new form of power/knowledge in Foucauldian terms. Once the algorithms were invented it was possible to effectively analyse those huge volumes of data and employed statistical methods to make predictions from and about the users' coded behaviours. All these new connections not only demonstrate an unprecedented availability of data but also unleashed new uses and new techniques which generate new forms of knowledge by shedding light over unforeseeable patterns (Andrejevic and Gates 2014). Zuboff (2019) warns us about a new form of power, instrumentarian power which is based on the collection of human experience and turning it into behavioural predictions. Zuboff describes a new stage of capitalism which seeks to control the means of behavioural modification, to know and shape human conduct at large scale without the oversight of democratic institutions.

There is also concern about the claim that the data collection has reached such an exhaustive coding degree that includes all social behaviour. Nissenbaum (2004) calls attention that there is no way of distinguishing between what is included as coded facts and what is not. Fairfield and Shtein (2014) underline that most big data research is conducted out of secondary databases, in other words, by researching with data collected for a different purpose than the present. The original aim of the first data harvester remains concealed, and the researcher lingers blindsided over the bias contained on those databases. The data collection and indexation at an industrial level, has boosted two main areas of concern in social research, the mass scale social surveillance and the quantified self, which I will review below.

a. The matter of surveillance

From the Foucauldian (1995) approach, surveillance is a key discipline technique, and in biopolitics, which means to discipline population at large scale, and -as we will discuss later in this chapter- metrics become a shortcut to get the disciplining done. De Certeau (2013) called it strategies. Therefore, it matters to review what surveillance in the big data age means, particularly in a quantified newsroom.

The society of widespread surveillance in which we live and, consequently, industrial manipulation of human behaviour through machine intelligence (Andrejevic 2007; Zuboff 2019) can be analysed by breaking down surveillance modalities. At present, we face an automated frameless surveillance style (Andrejevic 2019), which takes place mainly inside homes and places of work, thanks to monitoring devices always on data capture mode, such as smart speakers, smartphones and CCTV cameras. Likewise pervasive is the dataveillance, which is the surveillance carried out by processing and analysing data records; social sorting, which consists of categorising people's data so that different groups may be treated differently through predictive policing; facial recognition or biometrics (See, for example, van Dijck 2014; Kitchin 2016; Lyon 2014, 2018).

Kitchin (2014) asserts that there is a line drawn which attempts to differentiate modes of data collection taking into account the position of the surveillant organisation. On one side is the term surveillance, which is used to refer to the monitoring of the individuals from an outside position by another entity. On the opposite side is the term sousveillance (Mann 2004). If surveillance is a top-down act of authority, sousveillance is the inverse act, it is "a philosophy and procedures of using technology to mirror and confront bureaucratic organisations" (Mann 2004:333) which involves community-based organisations wearing portable devices to watch the watchers for legal or accountability reasons. This meaning of sousveillance refers mainly to devices. Later in this chapter, I discuss the sousveillance effect in using an alternative market information regime that challenges the official one in the realm of the newsroom.

Sousveillance also includes the quantified-self movement (Kitchin 2014) which involves people who actively monitor and record their personal data, namely, persons who monitor aspects of health and fitness. These data are shared with service-providing companies, thus gaining insights about their personal performances but also providing companies a rich steam of personalised data.

b. Quantified-self

This research questions the sort of uses metrics have in the newsroom culture, whether it is top-down managed in disciplinary terms or whether journalists have an interest or are pushed to self-monitor their professional journalistic performance. Not all those subjects who use or wear self-monitoring technologies do so voluntarily. Recently, throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the press have noted the trend of firms leaning on surveillance tools to ensure outcomes from remote working (e.g. Satariano 2020; Murphy 2020; Morrison 2020; Allyn 2020). But this is not a new trend. Through wearable self-tracking technologies, data collection devices are increasingly a requirement at the workplace under the argument that such data will help to improve productivity (Lupton 2014). According to Moore and Robinson (2015), external monitoring subjects the workers to forms of transgression of the body-mind dualism in the workplace, intensifying precarity. The data processed creates new patterns to follow, which are permanently updated to improve employees' performance. The perennial gap between actual and expected performance becomes a source of anxiety and disempowerment.

Foucault (2008) explained the emergence of the homoeconomicus, the neoliberal human model in which all workers are becoming entrepreneurs, bound to deliver the profitability of their human capital and not just from their labour. Drawing on Foucault, Lazzarato (2011) postulates the split self as an effect of the quantification process. The individual is split into two components: an inner manager that exploits an inner worker. Lazzarato underlines that while individuals are encouraged to behave as entrepreneurs, at the same time, they are kept in an employee’s relationship.

When it comes to analysing the explosion of quantified data in news production and journalistic professional identity, it is necessary to look at the effects of interactive journalism. The emergence of participatory journalism involves outsiders of the professional journalistic community who gather, produce and distribute news content in audio, video and text formats (Wall 2015). This ability of the members of the audience to take part in newsmaking has meant a reframing of news media production as a process in which many actors contribute, and not just as one part of a relationship, consisting of producers on one end and receivers on the other, but as co-producers (Robinson 2011b).

The interaction between journalists and members of the audience that generates contents is mediated by the abundant metrics in social media. News producers are no longer absolute gatekeepers (Meraz and Papacharissi 2016). There are at least two versions of this loss of control. On the one hand, by transferring the gatekeeping role from human factor to audience metrics or patterns of news consumption detected by the social media algorithms (See, for example, Anderson 2011; Tandoc Jr. 2014b). On the other hand, the journalistic role has been reshaped to become responsive to what the audience metrics' routinely feed portrays as what the audience expects (Hanusch and Tandoc Jr. 2017). In addition, Bunce (2017) found there to be a newsroom power struggle since the introduction of audience metrics imposed on the news team by managers. Bunce detected an ongoing clash between those that were guided by for-profit motivations and those who prioritise journalistic values. It must be said, parallel to the loss of power in making the decision about what deserves to be in the news, the former absolute gatekeepers or news producers have gained agency in gathering audience attention, marking a shift in their professional identity. In this regard, from the other side of the relationship between web analytics and journalists, Belair-Gagnon and Holton (2018) found that web analytics firms aim to address news production values and norms without assuming responsibility as journalists, and instead they foster for-profit norms and values in newsrooms "by introducing web analytics as disruptive, connective, and routinized in news production" (2018:505). However, in order to dig deeper into the relationship between news production, journalistic professional identity and metrics it is necessary to thoroughly review the timeline of how audience metrics have been incorporated into the chain of news production.

3.3. Media industries and their need for metrics

The uniqueness of media industries is that in the marketplace they serve two different sets of consumers who produce differentiated outcomes (Napoli 2003), although the two are fully intertwined. The first product is a wide range of contents to be consumed by an audience, that is news, entertainment, sports, just to mention a few. Sometimes such contents are provided supposedly free of charge – given in exchange for the receivers' time of attention- as it is the case with free-to-air television, radio or many websites. In other cases, such as cable TV, newspapers, magazines, cinema, and OTT platforms of streaming media (Netflix, Hulu, HBO, Amazon etc) the contents are offered for a price. Media companies also produce audiences, and the buyers of these audiences are advertisers. Another unique feature of the media industry is the mutual dependence of its two products. They need to produce content to gather an audience, and the opposite is equally true: without an audience, there is no content. Before big data, media companies needed to know their audience size and composition, and TV media companies have been able to determine the prices they charge the advertising industry for printed space or airtime (Buzzard 2015) as well as for content production and scheduling decisions (Ang 1991).

However, since the emergence of big data, the media industry has been pushed to generate a third product or a redefined version of the audience product to continue to be attractive to the advertising industry. Media is required to harvest data from the members of the audience and to use big data services to better tailor content to local audiences (Arsenault 2017). In this way, big data has become a critical force shaping the media networks, given that only giant media conglomerates are able to create enclosed internet platforms and engage audiences large enough as to extract data for the application of big data services. By linking this dilemma with this research's interest, this study considers it worthwhile to explore what newsmakers consider their aim when deciding what news is, meaning, whether they seek to produce contents or engage audiences or gather metrics, or all together. Likewise, how that viewpoint defines their professional journalistic identity.

News meets metrics

Whether it is because the press is assumed to play a pivotal role in liberal democracies according to normative theories (Carey 1993; Habermas 1989; Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2007) or because of its ability to move public opinion

(Castells 2009) or at least to make some stories more prominent in people's minds (McCombs and Shaw 1972, 1993; Entman 1993) media scholars have focused their efforts on understanding the news production process, looking at how news workers at different levels, journalists and editors, select what stories to cover from the continuous flow that is the reality and, afterwards, to decide what is the better format to shape and deliver the content (Shoemaker and Vos 2009).

In recent years, new communications technologies challenged traditional newsmaking processes, and new journalistic practices emerged (Deuze 2008a). Firstly, media companies and news teams have been driven to produce contents for both online and offline delivery (Boczkowski 2005; Robinson 2011a), second, the data from users' media consumption is permanently and pervasively feeding news decision making. Notwithstanding, since the early days of media research, it is clear that audience data is not straightforwardly accepted by journalists (Schlesinger 1978; Gans 1979). The task of seeking how to improve the audience metrics represents a challenge for modern professional journalists. Metrics threatens journalistic autonomy by intervening in determining newsworthiness (Deuze 2005). The journalistic work transgression is significant since control over content is conceived as an essential part of the profession (Lewis 2012).

Although the flows of audience analytics towards the newsroom add a new sort of tension, recent academic media research has found increasing awareness and a growing - although uneven - rate of adoption and use of audience analytics and audience metrics in the newsroom, in particular in those media that have shifted to the web. At the Philadelphia Inquirer and other media that belong to Philadelphia Media Holdings, Anderson (2011) observed that major editorial decisions were made based on audience metrics. Reporters directly consulted website traffic numbers and frequently accessed the reports of click accounts. Conversely, in Al Jazeera English Online, Usher (2013a) found that several top-level commands downplayed the use of audience analytics and metrics, consequently, it had limited use in the newsroom. Usher links the apparent disregard for data with the robust financial support that the outlet had. The unequal adoption of the newsroom use of metrics was also reflected on Petre's work at the New York Times (2015) where she found that in a culture of selective exposure to metrics, journalists used audience analytics and audience metrics fundamentally to validate their news decision-making, rather than to guide their editorial decisions. More recently, Christin (2020) showed how spikes and falls in audience metrics beget guesswork that leads to actual news decision making. It should be noted that these different outcomes regarding newsrooms' adoption of audience analytics map onto with divergent funding models. The above findings raise questions about the whether there is a relationship between audience metrics and job precarity, which is one theme I explored in the fieldwork.

Information market regimes at play

While most media throughout the twentieth century adopted some kind of audience measurement system, only the television industry integrated an audience measurement system so early into its daily work with such pervasiveness (Balnaves, O'Regan, and Goldsmith 2011; Napoli 2011). In the current state of affairs, with the new technology which tracks and stores every click of every user in an expanded market of web analytics, providers focus on the construction of more sophisticated understanding of the audience across specific dimensions. The most frequently used among news media are Chartbeat, Omniture, Kantar Social, Ezy Insights, Facebook Insights, Twitter Analytics and Google Analytics (Boczkowski 2014; Petre 2015; Assmann 2019). All of these have been created in the last decade and are aimed to process and analyse and prepare automated reports basically counting clicks, detecting consumption patterns and conducting sentimental analysis from the user posts, information that serves the newsrooms in assessing news production and news delivery strategies (Petre 2015; Tandoc Jr. 2014b; Anderson, Bell, and Shirky 2015; Cherubini and Nielsen 2016; Bunce 2017; Hanusch 2017; Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc Jr. 2018; Zamith 2018). The web audience analytics systems aspire to put some order into the messiness of audience measurement by narrowing the target of the measure and are mainly used as a tool for media-planning to allocate advertising resources as they run instead of being planned beforehand, as they used to be in the traditional advertising industry (Graves and Kelly 2010).

Besides the external web analytics services described above, many media companies have built in-house their own internal analytics systems that allow tracing real-time readership. That is the case of the analytics system "Ophan" in The Guardian newspaper (Edge 2014), or "Stela" in The New York Times (Zhang 2018) or "RFV" in the Financial Times (Georgieva 2020) to mention a few. Bunce (2017) found that, as managerial newsroom tools when all these web analytics are openly accessed by the news team, they serve "to encourage journalists to comply with managerial priorities without needing to be asked" (2017:5). In this way, it is possible to assert that the news team is aligned or have been disciplined in market values by quite subtle practices, a normative technique of disciplining in Foucauldian terms (1995 [1977]).

The real-time web analytics for newspapers and radio does not predate Web 2.0. In the pre-digital era, audience measurement has been completely different for television. Since the mid-1980s the worldwide television industry has embraced the real-time sampled electronic audience measurement patented by Nielsen. This system has the generic name Television Audience Measurement (TAM)[13]..

The people-meter was a device for the measurement and collection of data which emerged in the 1980s as a way of capturing from household viewing information and transferring it directly from a set-top box on the television to a computer. The people-meter did not radically alter the classifications of the audience but it did introduce greater expectations of speed of delivery of the results of audience ratings (Balnaves and O'Regan 2010). Napoli (2003) contends that with each new technology is enacted a new audience measurement system. The periodical surveys were enough for print media and radio until the arrival of television when audience measurement systems, in turn, were transformed with the arrival of cable television, and another step forward occurred with the dominance of the internet in media consumption.

As was explained earlier in this chapter, the market information regime — which provides primal data for all free-to-air and cable television content consumption in the realm of a national TV system — in which has been at work in most countries for more than 30 years despite the development of media technology. According to Méadel (2015) the strength of the market information regime in the field of television has prevented its full replacement is due to two key conditions: it is a consensual agreement of the use of one market information regime for the monetisation of content and the agreement also remains in place because there are just a few players involved in the decision making. That is the case in television systems, one TAM per country, agreed by the main players in television industry and advertising sector. The irruption of new television streaming services, such as Youtube, Netflix, HBO and other video-on-demand services that capture audience attention but do not participate in the traditional audience measurement systems have made stumbled the traditional broadcasting industry (Napoli 2016). However, an agreement to change the market information regime does not seem possible since the players in nationwide TV systems prefer to continue enjoying their privilege of controlling the TV audience measurement system as a tool to convert the audience into advertising revenues.

The user information regime -which, according to Webster (2010), involves the various search and recommendation systems, expressed in metrics and decided by hidden algorithms- has become a critical factor in a widening array of media platforms. Moreover, these search and recommendation systems guide much more than our web consumption. More and more media outlets' search engines, such as Google TV, Amazon, Netflix, iTunes or Spotify rely on ever more sophisticated user information

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[13] *The Television Audience Measurement (TAM) got its name from the division of the Nielsen company launched in 1950 (Balnaves and O'Regan 2010; Bourdon and Méadel 2015)*

regimes as a tool for recommendations that work by offering the user contents that match their preferences but also work by setting patterns of consumption (Beer and Burrows 2013). These systems all rely quite heavily on historical data on consumers' media usage to anticipate user preferences and guide their media selections accordingly (Napoli 2010).

The power interplay between the traditional market information regime and the user information regimes, whether both coexist or one is replaced by the other, are crucial circumstances for the scope of this research because they represent challenging flows of data feeding the news production. There is one study regarding the change of audience measuring systems in the publishing industry. Andrews and Napoli (2006) considered what was involved in the process of installation of a new market information regime and found that the alternative system can produce a substantially different portrait of audience preferences, introduce new inputs into business decision making, and also affect the speed and pace of data delivery for decision making. The books industry is not comparable with the television industry in terms of the audience data managed, however, this report by Andrews and Napoli (2006) allows us to acknowledge the disruption that can be unleashed, especially if one considers that one of the aims of audience data is to reduce uncertainty.

3.4. Foucault: Metrics as Disciplinary Power

The sociology of quantification has been concerned at length with the ability of metrics to discipline the social. It is argued that numbers carry authority, are trustworthy and are equipped with the gift of ubiquity (Hacking 1991; Porter 1995; Espeland and Stevens 2008; Bruno, Jany-Catrice, and Touchelay 2016; Diaz-Bone and Didier 2016). The first question that needs to be answered is what explains these assumptions of authority, trustworthiness and ubiquity of quantification. Porter (1995) proposes that the authority of numbers derives from their capacity to create and overcome distance, both physical and social. Firstly, Porter argues that numbers achieve high degrees of credibility by using standardized calculations, which implies the subordination of personal interests and prejudices to public standards. However, there is a significant literature on data and numbers' bias. Spirer et al.(1998) describe how statistics are misused and reach incorrect conclusions due to purposes, ignorance, or carelessness of researchers; Huff (1993) tackle the statistic's lack of legitimacy causes; Adler et al. (2009) address one of the most common statistics failures: a not well-defined subject of study. The list is endless. However, the authority of numbers is preserved due to, on the one hand, the existence of reflexive ethical research correctly carried out. On the other, it is necessary to consider the low level of public statistical literacy and the non-statistical nature of human intuition

(Spirer et al. 1998) which allows for deception even without making erroneous conclusions.

Porter's second argument says that numbers' authority is built over a highly structured language, rule-bound and uniform that make the numbers constitute a technology of distance. Numbers would be a seemingly impersonal and disciplined discourse; namely, the numbers are a common language of quantity and standardizing calculations that scientists worldwide share. All of which, holds Porter (1995), is well suited for communication that, in broad terms, explains the spread of quantification. Porter goes further with the assertion that

> *The disciplined discourse of "quantification is preeminent among the means by which science has been constructed as a global network rather than merely a collection of local research communities"* (Porter 1995:ix).

Porter is quite explicit in assuring that numbers produce a form of power: "numbers create and can be compared with norms, which are among the gentlest and yet most pervasive forms of power in modern democracies" (1995:45). Considering what Porter describes above, what I intend to do in this section is to examine whether the circulation of quantified data can be understood as an exertion of power within a media conglomerate and if, indeed, there is a metric power as such.

In order to understand the linkage that Foucault sees between metrics and discipline power, it is necessary to review his theory of power. The Foucauldian concept of governmentality is a combination of the terms 'government' and 'rationality' (Huff 2007). Foucault elaborates what has been termed his theory of power[14], through his ideas of government and governmentality as opposed to the top-down notions of power which are common in liberal, psychoanalytic or Marxist theories which see power as arising from the sovereignty of state, as a form of subjugation stated by the law or as a form of domination of an entire social body by another, respectively (Lynch 2011). Conversely, Foucault has a more comprehensive view of what names biopower (1978). Foucault observes that power arises in any relationship and understands the exercise of power as one that emerges from the social fabric. For Foucault, power exertion also entails the task of conducting people towards self-control of the individual (Huff 2007), therefore looking at both the organised practices of the state and the individual practices by which the population governs itself. Now I need to focus on Foucault's understanding of resistance.

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[14] *Foucault never claimed to have developed a theory of power, he disliked presuming that he had reached a complete understanding of the phenomena or of the social world. Foucault preferred the use of the term analysis over theory (Lynch 2011). Some of the fundamental Foucauldian ideas on government, which became his preferred term for power, and governmentality as a theoretical tool for analysing rationality, techniques, and exertion of power were rescued from his posthumously published recorded lectures (Gutting and Oksala 2019).*

Power and Resistance

One of the most famous of Foucault 's arguments says that “where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (1978:95). By reading Foucault's work, what is most striking is the deep feeling of how pervasive, "ubiquitous and all-encompassing" (Pickett 1996:445) the modern forms of power are. Even more, power and forces of domination are productive, or put in another way, they are in a constant process of reproduction or reinvention, which make them harder to identify (Dreyfus, Rabinow, and Foucault 1983). To understand his concepts of power and resistance, it is necessary to follow his line of inquiry. Foucault produced a set of methods to uncover previously hidden mechanisms of domination and discipline. He did this while studying the subjectification of the human being – examining the procedures through which the person is led to self-observe, self-analyse, self-interpret and self-recognise as a domain of possible knowledge (Florence 1998:461). One of Foucault’s modes of inquiry in this field was to observe what he called the dividing practices used for the objectification of the subject. These dividing practices are binary categories in which the subject objectifies themselves, for instance, sick or healthy, good boy or criminal (Foucault 1982:778). By observing the process of self-knowledge, Foucault identified the idea of resistance. He thought that it was useless to study the rationalization of power[15] since most of its modes and micro-practices remained masked; therefore he opted to bring to light those practices of dominance and discipline through the examining of antagonistic strategies (Foucault 1982:780)

It was then when Foucault came to the conclusion that repression is not the most frequent form of domination, but rather the belief that one is resisting repression is what really upholds domination because this belief hides the real working of power (Dreyfus et al. 1983). Therefore, in the task of identifying the modes of dominance, “Foucault shows a dubious lack of concern with what resistance is for, as long as it is enough against” (Pickett 1996:447). The Foucauldian concept of resistance, which he mainly developed by explaining the history of sexuality, produces a frequent misunderstanding which comes to light, for instance, when movements of sexual emancipation claim to be opposed to the forms of dominance and are declared to be a sort of political resistance to the current forms of power. Nevertheless, in the Foucauldian analysis of power, when the liberation movement defines itself as against

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[15] *Rationalization of power has concerned scholars since industrialisation, such as Marx, Weber, Taylor or Foucault and it aims to understand how a form of socialisation -be they religion, labour, education or others- are rendered docile or what practices or set of practices make the docility achievable. The study of rationalization of power involves the analysis of disciplinary systems and technologies of control (O'Neill 1986)*

some dominant power, what it is actually doing is to fulfil the role of supporting the existence of that very same dominant power (Dreyfus et al. 1983).

Foucault's understanding of the intrinsic link between power and resistance is far from being critique-free: it has been said that the implications of Foucault's approach leads to political impotence (Thiele 1990), moreover, if power and resistance are zero sum, the resistance turns into de facto paralysis (Trombadori 1991; Pickett 1996). Another criticism points to how Foucault's resistance approach denies the agency that individuals have to transform themselves into an unruly subject when the resistance is conceptualised as intrinsically linked to power and the responsibility for supporting it (Pizzorno 1992). According to Foucault's critics, his idea about the mutual dependence of power and resistance can help to explain the status quo but fails to do so with the mechanisms that explain the power switchover. However, by delving deeper into a Foucauldian understanding of resistance it is possible to find two different models of resistance: tactical reversal and aesthetics of existence (Thompson 2003). By taking notice of them it is possible to suggest that Foucault did not conceive a sum zero or paralyzed situation, but rather he had in mind a clash of forces which remain in a sort of evolving conflict. Regarding the tactical reversal mode of resistance, Foucault (1978) concluded that the interplay of power relations produces fragmented, dependant, and relentlessly changing subjects. For Foucault, the aesthetics of existence entails the care of the self and refers to an autonomous form of subject self-governance or active formation of oneself that can be found in the governmental model of power (Huijer 1999).

It is worth noting that Foucault pointed out that the main objective of resistance struggles is to attack the technique of power instead of engaging in a fight with an institution or power elite (1982:781). For this research, there is a need to examine – if there is a metric disciplining power as such – how the newsroom resistance's target would manifest. With this aim in mind, the next section will thoroughly review the forms of discipline deployed by the power described by Foucault.

Power and discipline

The ultimate concern of governmentality is how we govern others and ourselves, and in this regard Foucault identifies the disciplinary power as a modern form of power which is 'capillary', it is continuous, diffuse, and comprises complex relations enacted through subtle practices and banal procedures" (Sauder and Espeland 2009:69) or as it was expressed by Foucault himself:

> *The success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments, hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination"* (1995:170 [1978]).

In this section, I will review each one of these disciplinary techniques under the light of quantitative measures which are conceived - by Espeland and Stevens (2008) in the formulation of the sociology of quantification - as key mechanisms in the disciplinary power, given that their core tasks are to simplify, compare, classify and evaluate what is being subjected to measurement.

In Discipline and Punish (1995 [1977]), Foucault argues that discipline is a mechanism of power that regulates the thought and behaviour of members of society in an unobtrusive, almost undetectable manner, conversely to what was - according to Foucault's historical account - the brute, sovereign force exercised by monarchs or lords. Discipline works by organising space, scheduling time and everyday activities. As a task-driven organisation, a TV newsroom counts with daily scheduled news meetings, news assignments, specific desk distribution in the floor plan, and group-based communications through the instant message applications to shape and tightly discipline the workflow needed to coordinate hundreds of news workers producing several daily newscasts. This research examines whether the disciplinary technique through metrics uses unobtrusive paths and suits established communication means to train and, as a result, govern newsroom staff's thoughts and behaviour to handle the news business commercially.

Hierarchical surveillance is also an integral component of disciplinary practices. As will be discussed ahead in the next section, according to Foucault (1995), hierarchical observation is a technology of surveillance, a way of controlling conduct and improving performance. Individuals are disciplined by implanting the notion of permanent observation that works through deep-rooted beliefs that they can be seen without knowing whether they are seen. Foucault (1995) argues that modern society is a disciplinary society and what is meant by that is that modern power is exercised through disciplinary practices in disciplinary institutions, such as prisons, schools, hospitals, or militaries. Nowadays, disciplinary techniques used in surveillance do not rely on direct gaze; instead they involve mechanisms that allow remote monitoring on a large scale, such as quantification and organising individuals or social groups into ranks. For this reason, we should review what is happening in our current technological environment.

Thanks to the technological twist of the interactive devices with the data-capture mode always-on, human behaviour is increasingly conducted through electronic settings. Consequently, our interactions are becoming increasingly quantifiable (Abbott 2000). In that environment of datification, some scholars have already begun to pay attention to the performative aspect of digital data circulation, in particular, the processes through which the measurement alters the self-image of the individuals or social groups which are subjects of measurement. By analysing social media applications such as Facebook, YouTube or Wikipedia among others, Beer and

Burrows (2013) concluded that crowdsourced data, whether it be metadata, likes, shares or comments, are "recombinant and recursive" while giving shape and capturing culture (2013:56). In other words, quantified data, culture and users are immersed in a loop of shaping each other. Sauder and Espeland (2009) examine the strategies to deal with rankings effects, such as organisations who found themselves positioned in a hierarchical scale or labelled as cases of success or failure. Beer (2015) describes how - in England - professional football teams employ data analysts with the purpose of using statistics before, during and after the match in order to redefine individual and team performances. Ruppert, Isin and Bigo (2017) go further in analysing what data meant for the state-citizen relationship and argue that data has become an object of power often used to demonstrate political decision support. Moreover, data production and data consumption drive social structuring, which builds fields of power and knowledge, in Foucauldian terms. Therefore, data regimes create authority and legitimacy, which certain institutions monopolise for governing purposes (2017).

Cheney-Lippold (2017) calls attention to the devaluation of the embodied individualities compared with the computationally calculated, assigned, stored and communicated digital identities. Digital identities, Cheney-Lippold argues, would be the preferred identities used to feed institutions' decisions made on individuals. One's identity is no longer a unique self-assigned identity. Nowadays, everyone would have multiple and conflicting identities created without our consent by the online applications that we usually used. Cheney-Lippold adds that in this algorithmically driven process, the individuals not only lose the ability to self-govern their identity rather they also miss the signs of self-identification that emerge from the reflexivity implicit in the collective capability of social constructivism (2017). For instance, what is meant to be male or female or to be a middle-aged professional? These reflections point to the core of this investigation: Does metrification interact with the newsroom culture in shaping journalistic identity and if so, how does that unfold? Moreover, one should ask whether the multiple audience data regimes received in the newsroom allow journalists to distinguish between the embodied viewers and the audience depicted by the data. Alternatively, whether the conflicting data regimes open the door to the individual and collective deliberation in defining what news the audience needs and wants to know.

a. Metrics and hierarchical surveillance

Rigorous surveillance is a key element of disciplinary power. In his metaphor of the panopticon prison, Foucault (1995 [1977]) argues that individuals who are exposed to the likelihood of being observed tend to be self-disciplined persons. Foucault describes the ideal surveillance as continuous, anonymous, invisible, embedded in everyday routines and encompassing both regulators and the regulated. But, as Foucault explains, invisible disciplinary power imposed on the subjects of surveillance turns surveillance into "a principle of compulsory visibility" (1995:187). In the same vein, disciplinary power lays obsessive attention to details "For disciplined man, as for the true believer, no detail is unimportant" (1995:140). In this regard, Espeland and Stevens (2008) propose that surveillance is complemented by conceptual arrangements such as statistical or actuarial surveillance as well as having been augmented by new technologies such as street cameras, drones and all the devices that configured the sensor society (Andrejevic and Burdon 2015). In addition, the systems that associate surveillance with data-mining and facial recognition (Cammaerts 2013) have given form and updated modes of surveillance through distance. By this token, quantification has become a key mechanism of disciplinary power by its capacity to simplify, classify, compare and evaluate those who are subjects of surveillance. Quantified measures facilitate the normalization of patterns (Espeland and Stevens 2008). Porter (1995) pointed out how authoritative and credible numbers are well suited for communication, therefore, quantified measures allow and facilitate remote collaborators to check on people and things they wish to control. In the introduction to World of Indicators, Rottenburg and Merry (2015) puts this as clearly as possible: "Through measurement the world becomes knowable, without distracting details, neatly compartmentalized and ordered, and knowable at a distance" (2015:7)

b. Metrics and normalization

Foucault conceives the power of the norm as a principle of coercion "that appears through discipline" (1995:184). The power of the norm functions within homogeneity as a rule, which is enacted by defining a class of subjects as the same and then using normative criteria to establish individual differences. This normalizing process, which operates by simultaneously linking and distinguishing classes and individuals, suits the mechanism of quantification. Foucault points out that "the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences" (1995:184).

Normalization operates through punishment and rewards, a succession that seeks to train the desired pattern and correct the outliers. Thus, this research is particularly interested in observing how the metrics messages that arrive at the newsroom are built, what their wording is. The aim is to detect how punishment and rewards manifest. Foucault explicitly refers to the construction of ranks as a form of distribution, which creates categories, marks the gaps and hierarchies qualities, skills and attitudes (1995:181), ultimately, it conforms to a system of punishment and gratification. By this token, normalization underlies the very definition of quantification which fundamentally is about "creating units that can be counted and described numerically with the aim of putting them in some order" (Rottenburg and Merry 2015:7) .

Foucault (1995) identifies five processes of normalization that model discipline: comparison, differentiation, hierarchization, homogenization, and exclusion. Sauder and Espeland (2009), by looking at the specific phenomenon of rankings creation, reached the conclusion that the process of comparison through the application of a common metric to the set of subjects of measurement reinforces the idea of objects of the same class and conceal the differences. On rankings, differences between individuals remain reduced to intervals in shared metrics while all the quantified subjects are grouped in the same class. The creation of hierarchies, the third key process of normalization, requires a previous step which is the commensuration, which aims to create a metrical relationship between objects in a way that "makes them comparable, objects that before the commensuration were not comparable" (Espeland and Stevens 2008). It is the commensuration which produces and exposes the hierarchy. Sauder and Espeland (2009) observed that locating one subject in one performative position of the ranking against the others "is a central and deeply consequential aspect of the discipline imposed by processes of normalization" (2009:73). For Foucault, hierarchization is an essential mechanism for disciplining is expressed as follows: in discipline, each element "is defined by the place it occupies in a series and by the gap that separates it from the others (...) Discipline is an art of rank" (1995:145–46). Regarding homogenization, the research on rankings reveals that the quantified subjects felt encouraged to conform to the assumptions embedded in the rankings and discourage innovation. Finally, Foucault's concept of exclusion helps explain why subjects that are under quantified measurement in a ranking prefer to conform to normative standards which presumably they purported to reject. This research aims to observe how metrics work within the newsroom, whether they intervene to make newscast comparisons, create quasi-hierarchies of news stories in the minds of news workers, and whether they lead to journalist behaviours being excluded according to metrics assessments.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter was devoted to reviewing and understanding the pervasive presence of metrics in modern society, a phenomenon that touches every human aspect of life including journalism. The circulation of data is recursive —given that it affects in a loop the very subject described— and it is never-ending. It ranges from the collection, quantification, storage and processing of data at one end through to the return of the data already processed to social life at the other. This is a process which is fuelled by the steadily increasing array of human behaviour which is being carried out more and more through electronic data collection devices (Abbott 2000).

In this chapter, I discussed how the pervasiveness of data has been analysed from an individual and social viewpoint. Beer and Burrows (2013) postulate that crowdsourced data is recombinant and recursive and "shape[s] as well as merely captures culture" (2013:56). At the individual level, self-quantification studies have reported how wearable devices are changing the lives of workers whose data collected is being used to boost productivity (Lupton 2014; Moore 2017; Moore, Upchurch, and Whittaker 2018). The implementation of these self-quantified technologies at the workplace have had plausible and ideological consequences. Among the first ones we can count the perception of workers that their precariousness has been increased by devices taking control over their bodies (Moore and Robinson 2015). Among the second, Lazzarato (2011) suggests that quantified data is inscribed in workers' traditional mindset as a form of entrepreneurialism which - in neoliberal settings - creates split selves: individuals encouraged to behave as entrepreneurs but at the same time remaining in a relationship as employees. According to Lazzarato's thesis of the split selves (2011), each individual is a divided self, and contains a manager and a worker both of whom are in permanent interaction and can lead to having individuals in which an inner manager exploits an inner worker.

I also discussed how the market information regimes are built and how they inform the players in the market about their performance and their rivals' performance. In this sense, this chapter has shown how research on the role of data in news production is ongoing, inconclusive, but necessary, as we see some cases where newsrooms audience metrics tend to replace professional journalistic judgement regarding newsworthiness (Anderson 2011). A crucial point for this research is to fathom how journalists carry out their decision-making about what news the audience needs and wants given that they are dealing with competing market information regimes which, in turn, provide mismatching audience's representations.

The ubiquity of data and its ever-updating delivery pace in the journalists' workplace touch each step of the news production chain, moulding the logics involved in media, as a profession, as a practice and as a business. This chapter examines literature that explains two phases of data production. On the one hand, at the point of data collection, the complex process is to sieve the audience news consumption response to turn it into data with the ideologies, myths, and assumptions in general that that process entails (Gitelman 2013). On the other, the implications of the meticulous work on repackaging metrics to make sense of them, to put them in context and successfully conveyed them. This latter perspective is addressed by using Foucauldian terms (1995 [1977], 1982)– of disciplining media business and news professionals through surveillance and normalisation techniques. In particular, with sights set on the ranking creation process through the metrics aggregation tied up to audience data (Sauder and Espeland 2009). However, exactly how does this disciplining trend occur, and what are the resistance against it, if it took place? That is precisely what I aim to uncover through the research presented in the empirical chapters.

In order to understand to what extent to which metric power in yielded and resistance is manifested, this research is organised in four empirical chapters from macro to micro perspectives. Chapter 5 examines how data circulates in a media conglomerate; Chapter 6 investigates the managerial practices deployed to re-signify the metrics and how state regulations and business practices shape the metrics that pour into the newsroom. Chapters 7 and 8 focus on news production practices and journalistic autonomy in the light of metrics. First, Chapter 4 details the methodological design of this investigation and the methods chosen to answer this research's questions.

4. NETWORKED TV NEWSROOM ETHNOGRAPHY: Methodology and Research Design

4.1. Introduction

This thesis makes use of ethnographic methods, in particular network ethnography (Anderson 2013b), participant observation and in-depth interviews as well as 'talk aloud' (Mehlenbacher 1993) techniques with journalists, editors, news producers, newsroom managers and professionals outside of the physical newsroom, such as media group executives, experts analysing audience data and professionals responsible for organising corporate communications. In addition, text analysis of Twitter messages is conducted.

This chapter aims to clarify the methodological, empirical and theoretical choices and explain the relevance of the nodes selected for the study. I will explain the rationale for embracing a network ethnography design, and why I have chosen a wide range of data collection methods to examine the issue of this inquiry. The second part delves into the specific methodological steps used to respond to the research questions. Finally, we conclude with a reflection on my positionality as researcher.

4.2. Adapting the Research Design

Based on my previous experience in newsroom culture as a journalist and a researcher, and informed by secondary sources, my research proposal was initially focused on the production of the audience data information, as the major source of quantified data in the newsroom, and its consumption by journalists. All of this was planned to be addressed through a multi-sited ethnography that changed in the process - as will be explained ahead. Up to that point I had foreseen the relevance of observing two sites: first, the newsroom, as the main site for the consumption of metrics and, second, the audience analysis section part of the Marketing Department, which is the main site of production of audience metrics.

However, after the first two weeks of fieldwork, a major news event unfolded - the Catalonian independence referendum[16]. On 1st October 2017 La Sexta's news programmes became the most-watched nationwide linear TV news[17]. The figures

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[16] *The referendum was convened and organised by the Catalonia regional government and the opposition of the central government of Spain. After a long legal struggle and referendum's clandestine preparation, the Spain's government commanded a halt to the vote by mobilising the police force. The images of the police beating the constituents went viral on social media and the conflict become a European issue (see The Economist 2017:49 Oct 7th).*

[17] *La Sexta TV decided to broadcast a live special edition devoted to the Catalonian independence referendum on 1st October 2017 from 8 am until 1h30 am. It was the only*

were lower in the coming days, but the overall numbers of the newscasts began to grow steadily until completion of this fieldwork.

On the next day, after a 17-hour working day and live broadcasting for most of the team, newsmakers were on duty at 8 am. When the audience outcome of the previous day came available, the tired faces turned into smiles. There was a round of applause, but the biggest celebration took place within the many WhatsApp chats of every working team. I witnessed some in which there were congratulations sent by the bosses. At the beginning of each message thread there was a screenshot attached, all of them from different sources, namely: a Twitter message from the Atresmedia Corporate Communications account, a screenshot taken from Kantar Media's app, a headline from a TV specialized media, and so on. Trays full of skewered tortillas, coffees, and soft drinks arrived at the newsroom for celebration at mid-morning. The mood of the team was reflected in an informal conversation with a producer, when I commented on how tired the team should have been...

- *´Yeah, but the data gives you a rush[18] that helps[19]* (Jimena, editor)

In chapter 8, which relates to professional journalistic authority, I will further explore and analyse this particular effect that makes journalists celebrate a big success and which, at the same time, reinforces the team's shared sense of duty and their collective identity. It was true that the audience records for the day of the referendum were outside of the norm[20]. However, the events of the day after the referendum, made me realize that the quantified data of audience attention to La Sexta TV news coverage came from multiple sources in a myriad of tailored messages and were conveyed by many senders through different channels of communication. The journalists who were overwhelmingly bombarded by such messages, reacted in very different ways. Even their own description of the situation was that they were experiencing an adrenaline rush. I was confronting an issue which was complex, multi-faceted, and one which extended beyond the boundaries initially proposed. This compelled me to rethink my original research project and led me to seek ways to

nationwide TV station with special programming, the rest of the TV channels opted to inform viewers of what was going on in Catalonia via their traditional newscast scheduling (Vertele and El Diario.es 2017).

[18] *In this case, the producer used the term 'Give a rush' ("te da un subidón") which in Spanish has a meaning taken from drug addicts' slang which refers to the pleasant effect felt after a heroin shot*·

[19] *Fieldwork notes taken on 2nd October 2017*

[20] *To give a sense of the result, on the referendum day, Sunday 1st October 2017, the overall day's average audience share taken by La Sexta with its intensive coverage, was 17.5% of switched-on household TV sets (Formula TV 2017; PRnoticias 2017; Vertele and El Diario.es 2017). In comparison to the previous Sunday, 24th September 2017 (6.8%) and the Sunday immediately after (6.8%) (taken from Atresmedia internal reports), the audience outcome on the referendum day was remarkably high. While from Sunday to Sunday the curve returned to normal, a steady growth could be observed at the end of that month, October 2017, when La Sexta's average audience was 9.1% (Objetivo TV 2018:33).*

understand the circulation of audience data in a wider, but manageable, context beyond the newsroom and the audience analysis department.

4.3. Rationale

Previous studies of newsroom metrics

The issues of the audience response to news products and news workers’ awareness about that audience reaction emerged in early newsroom ethnographic studies (Schlesinger 1978; Gans 1979). However, the particular subject of audience metrics became the focus of journalistic studies soon after news organisations plunged into the exploitation of the interactivity provided by web 2.0 and with the consequent full access to the audience content consumption data digitally gathered, in real-time (MacGregor 2007; Boczkowski 2010; Anderson 2011; Hanusch and Tandoc Jr. 2017).

Those studies focusing on web metrics were carried out predominantly through in-depth interviews (MacGregor 2007; Karlsson and Clerwall 2013; Cherubini and Nielsen 2016) and participant observation (Anderson 2011; Petre 2015; Bunce 2017; Christin 2018). To a lesser extent, content analysis (Zamith 2018) and surveys (Hanusch and Tandoc Jr. 2017) were used. Ferrer-Conil and Tandoc’s (2018) call attention towards the lack of ethnographic research in the relationship of news editors and audience data, a gap that I am tackling through my research. It must be said that all of the previous studies were based on the assumption that within the boundaries of the conventional newsroom it was possible to untangle the encounter between journalism and metrics.

In the following section, I will reveal how the network ethnography helped me to find the focus and the boundaries of the research, within but also beyond the conventional newsroom.

Challenges and Research Focus

The focus on the newsroom as the appropriate site for empirical research of newswork has been highly contested in the digital age, since "the internet and assorted digital technologies flatten and disperse the (post)modern workspace" (Anderson 2009:7). However, what remains accepted is that the newsroom still serves as one of the main sites in which news’ gatekeeping forces converge (Reese and Shoemaker 2016; Robinson and Metzler 2016). The despatialisation of the TV newsroom has occurred as a gradual process to which digital technologies have contributed from the early 2000s. In this research, the newsroom is one of several sites under participant observation to capture the whole landscape of the data circulation.

The ethnographic fieldwork takes the shape of one case: the Spanish media conglomerate, Atresmedia. In particular, I will be looking at La Sexta TV's newsroom's dealings with metrics, but also at some other departments of the media group. The methodological choice to focus on this specific media conglomerate is primarily for scholarly reasons as well as practical reasons. First, most academic research about the effects of quantification in the print media newsroom have focused on the abrupt arrival and novelty of metrics. The television industry experienced daily measuring of its audience before digitalisation. In this sense, television has gone through an incremental process of audience datafication and it is important to study what difference digitalisation makes for a field that is already relying on metrics. How do different data regimes intersect and with what consequences? Second, the media group Atresmedia is also an interesting case study, as stated in the Introduction of this thesis, because with two nationwide TV stations, it has opted to produce content focused on two opposed political niche audiences. Atresmedia, particularly La Sexta's newsroom, was also selected due to the lack of research focusing on a national TV newsroom struggling to find its audience niche while dealing with two divergent market information regimes. The practical reasons for choosing Atresmedia are related to my previous nine-year experience working as a journalist in the Spanish television market, which gave me confidence that I would obtain the access I needed for the long-term fieldwork.

The research strategy combines a varied set of ethnographic field methods from participant observation, semi-structured interviewing and mapping, as primary methods, to the think-aloud technique and Twitter text analysis as complementary methods. I realised that the newsroom team was receiving data from the audience's response from scattered sources, both internal and external sources. Moreover, those metrics were embedded in messages with a wording full of superlative adjectives that re-signified the final meaning of the information. Then it became clear to me that I needed to obtain a global vision of the data ecosystem to first handle the dispersed nature of the subject of study.

Therefore, the research design should guarantee, on one hand, the detection and mapping of the stages, agents, and actors participating in the processing of raw data (primary data), and the generation and transformation of the audience metrics. On the other hand, it should also allow mapping the myriad stages and actors who participated in the consumption and use of data in the newsroom. In this research, I agree with the distinction between audience analytics and audience metrics (Carlson 2018; Zamith 2018), according to which "audience analytics refer to the system and software that enable the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting" of data (Zamith 2018:421), while audience metrics point to "the quantified and aggregated measures of audience preferences and behaviours generated by those data collection and processing systems" (2018:422). It should be mentioned that both Carlson and Zamith make this distinction based on a data ecosystem that only counts the input of digital, real-time data. I find this distinction useful and have widened it to include the linear TV audience data which is electronically collected and is not delivered in real-time in Spain's TV system. In this research, I understood that one set of data may output multiple metrics conveying manifold intended or unintended meanings.

To answer the fundamental research question regarding what counts as quantified data in the realm of the newsroom, it was necessary to identify the significant actors with their duties and aims in the audience data processing. To do so, I needed to determine who produced the data, what data matters the most and to whom, and which data deserves to be transmitted to what intended audience. Considering that La Sexta TV belongs to Atresmedia group, with more than 2,000 employees distributed among six TV stations and four radio broadcasters, among other services, and that all of them -including La Sexta- share services such as audience analysis, marketing, public relations or content research, I was impelled to work with a methodology under time and budget limitations. Thus, I chose to conduct a network ethnography that would better organise the participant observation and the interview sample.

I drew on Anderson's study of the Philadelphia News Ecosystem (2013b) who carried out a ethnography of a community which is messy, scattered, multi-sited, and comprised of individuals who could be either insiders or outsiders to the newsroom. Anderson drew a map of the online media sphere of the city of Philadelphia as the first stage of research in which he sought to spot and track the network of relationships and its nodes (links or flows between people, groups, organisations and information-processing devices). In the following stage, he used ethnographic field methods to analyse those field sites chosen via social network analysis (Anderson 2013b), a method first referred to as network ethnography by the Howard (2002). In short, Howard proposes the use of social network analysis to justify case selection for ethnography (2002). At that initial point in my investigation, the ethnographic method supported by the social network analysis was the tool that helped me to determine who I should study in order to understand the state of the art in the practices and routines of the newswork. Thus, the research enabled me to explore beyond the conventional boundaries of the newsroom (Anderson 2009) and examine the role played by audience data, which has been incorporated into the realm of the news production and is already an integral part of the gatekeeping processes.

This networked ethnographic approach has similar traits to the multi-sited ethnography which focuses much more on the fields, boundaries, and processes in configurations of relations, instead of being focused on the culture of bounded groups (Desmond 2014). In general terms, an ethnography study "incorporates fully into the ethnographic sample at least two types of actors or agencies occupying different positions within the social space and bound together in a relationship of mutual dependence or struggle" (2014). However, a multi-sited ethnography seeks to map cultural formations produced in several different localities, by contrast with the traditional mode of ethnographic observation which is intensively single sited (Marcus 1995). The networked ethnography goes one step further in allowing the inclusion, from a multi-sited approach, of people or groups connected through devices, not necessarily an in-person relationship (Krebs 2008:1). The purpose of this inquiry is to detect the significant nodes and their paths of communications, and to identify those which have the strongest and most significant links. Likewise, the methodological lens of the social network analysis serves to gain a holistic view of the whole data ecosystem to justify the site's selection for participant observation through focused immersion, and to assist the sampling for the interviewing (Howard 2002). In a hyperconnected organisation such as Atresmedia, the ethnography assisted by social network analysis is the primary method chosen to shed some light on the mediated, meaningful communications mostly carried out through chat rooms on WhatsApp, and email messages. These exchanges convey reframed meanings for audience analytics and have attached symbolic capital, none would be detectable through a traditional ethnographic study bound to the newsroom.

The next sections of this chapter will discuss the methodological choices made to examine how journalists relate and use audience data. To this end, the methods deployed aim to detect which individuals or groups of individuals within the media company have a role and/or say in relation to the audience metrics, what counts as data to them, and what type of things they do or say in relation to the audience data.

4.4. Gaining Access and Data Gathering

In the course of nine years working as a professional journalist in the Spanish media landscape, I built many professional relationships, especially in the television environment. Although I never worked at Atresmedia, I was able to contact some former colleagues who currently work there and, consequently, I was aware of who the key people at top tiers of the organisation were and who could grant me access to conduct my research. Given the existing autonomy degree in every newsroom and department of the media conglomerate, I had to meet with every senior manager to gain access to the newsroom and the other departments. In July 2017, I obtained access to La Sexta's newsroom and the Atresmedia audience department. The fieldwork began in September 2017. As mentioned earlier, an added challenge to this research is that many of the reactions to the metrics circulation occur and thrive through e-mail and chat technology, which is difficult to track using traditional ethnographic methods such as participant observation. Moreover, being granted access to the newsroom does not guarantee further access to the chat rooms, a virtual place where the members' interaction, the metrics communication and interpretation and the wielding of power -both between editors and journalists and journalists and news sources- usually take place.

WhatsApp chat groups access proved to be the most daunting challenge. After several unsuccessful attempts to be integrated into some of the many active chat rooms, I decided that my persistence was putting the trust I had been awarded at risk. Therefore, during the interviews and informal conversations, I requested to see those chat rooms, and I could review the chat groups structural organisation and see how openly journalists commented on the audience metrics. The fact that nobody allowed me to take a screenshot of those conversations is extra proof of how sensitive the chat rooms are for the news making team. All data gathered in those conversations were written down immediately after the interview in an attempt to record as many details as I could recall. I was also able to catch WhatsApp's practices during the participant observation periods when I was authorized to observe how the team worked seated from behind their chairs. Each time, I explicitly asked those involved whether they allowed me to watch what was going on on their computer's screens. Due to the extensive use of the Whatsapp web application, I could also capture this app's journalistic usage in this way.

I obtained access - by being incorporated into the distribution lists- to the daily emails that convey the audience metrics. There are four email messages released daily during the working day which I receive. There is one report from the people meter, another from the linear TV content consumed through platforms, websites, and social media accounts that belong to each Spanish audio-visual media group. The third is what is called Social TV report, one page summarizing the comments on Twitter and Facebook regarding linear TV content from any TV station (see Table 4-1). All these audience reports are intended to cover all possible sites, platforms and devices of media content consumption. The three types of emails mentioned above contain information only intended for the media group's staff members. Besides, I also received the daily metrics press releases addressed to television specialized media. The documents were delivered by email and stored in two hard disks, and the documents are organised by site of observation and by date. There is a total of 3,838 documents, all of them opened, read and reviewed as soon as they arrive. The documents are detailed in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1: Overview of Audience reports reviewed

	Total docs	Prepared by	From	Until
People-meter's report	892	Audience analysis office	Sept 17th, 2017	June 15th,2020
Twitter & Facebook reports	1,314	Audience analysis office	Nov 15th, 2017	June 14th,2020
La Sexta site reports	1,067	La Sexta digital division	Nov 17th, 2017	June 16th,2020
Audience data press releases	565	Corporate comms office	April 26th, 2018	July 10th 2020
Total	3,838	NA	NA	NA

After the initial weeks of participant observation in the newsroom with informal chats with the team and executives of the TV station, I collected enough data to give shape to the data ecosystem map that will be detailed in Chapter 5. After the social network analysis of that map, and the identification of the meaningful nodes and links, I was ready to choose the sites for the participant observation which were: (1) La Sexta's newsroom; (2) the Audience Data Analysis office; (3) La Sexta's Digital Contents division, and; (4) Atresmedia's Corporate Communications office.

Participant Observation: Metrics users, Data Analysts and Metrics disseminators

The study of news production, historically, has deep ties to the ethnographic approach (Tunstall 1971; Tuchman 1978; Gans 1979; Fishman 1980). The long-term immersion offers the advantage of naturalizing the ethnographer's presence, thereby facilitating the re-visitation of controversial or emerging issues through informal conversations. Through the longitudinal and in-depth immersion researchers develop a rapport with their participants leading to in depth accounts (Geertz 1973; Cottle 2007; Berry 2011; Maxwell 2016). The authority that the ethnographer brings to the study lies in their ability to make "thick descriptions" (Geertz 1973:6), in other words, accurately describing and interpreting -an action, character, process, behaviour or relationship- by providing context and background that reveal levels of significance (Singer 2009). Moreover, only through long-term engagement with a social group the ethnographer can develop an understanding of the different aspects of a phenomenon (Madianou 2010). For instance, in this study ethnography revealed the relevance of metrics' both in news production and journalistic identity.

Concerning the debate around the newsroom's lack of clear boundaries, Zelizer (2004) asserts that the porosity is currently even more accentuated given the state of today's communications and media technologies. Moreover, according to Zelizer, the emphasis on the newsroom neglects or circumvents the newsgathering tasks that journalists perform outside the news company home base (2004). Thanks to the evolved technological communication devices, journalists maintain an always-on communication mode and are constantly scattered outside the newsroom, which raises further questions about the blurred boundaries of the newsroom (Robinson and Metzler 2016). However, the lack of boundaries not only refers to the in-out dichotomy in the newsroom, but also to the duality between the virtual and physical space in which news practices take place, two realms which are not mutually exclusive. Some media scholars propose an understanding of the notion of virtual newsrooms as socially produced spaces (see Robinson 2011; Zaman 2013; Baines et al. 2015; Usher 2015; Bunce, Wright, and Scott 2018).

The notion of space was initially brought about by Lefebvre (1991), who postulates space as a social construction continuously produced and reproduced by its users. He states there is a distinction between ideal space, which relates to mental categories, and real space, "which is the space of social practice" (1991:14). Later, in the same vein, Harvey (2019) identifies three categories of space: the 'absolute space' which stands for the fixed and concrete space that people need to organise the pragmatic and measurable real-world; the 'relative space', that represents the association between objects; and the 'relational space' which is embedded in the objects and the connection between these objects and other objects. This relational space refers to the axes that links space and time, not considering these variables on their own. Just as Bunce, Wright and Scott (2018) and Baines et al (2015), who studied virtual newsrooms – i.e. people that do not share a physical newsroom but are connected through instant messaging applications - I argue that Harvey's trifold category is useful to analyse the physical workplace of the news team and the virtual newsroom practices taking place in WhatsApp groups or Twitter. As Robinson observes, this insights gives a window to "jokes passed through the newsroom via text messages, leaving out those who did not ‟text’" (2011a:1132). As Harvey highlights, it is worth noting that there is a permanent interplay between the three categories that should be analysed in dialectical tension rather than in a hierarchical relationship (2019). What matters the most for this research is to what extent the ongoing news practices in each space are quantified; and what paths data flows coming into the newsroom follow, as well as what the permeability degree is of each newsroom space. These are the key questions for the research design.

La Sexta's newsroom was the primary focus of this research and also the largest field site among those observed in the study, as shown in Table 4-2. Moreover, the newsroom comprises multiple subsites, such as the general room subdivided into aisles of desks in which several teams carry out tasks for different newscasts, debate programmes or documentaries. Besides, there are three television production studios and three corresponding production control rooms, all of which converge to master control in charge of broadcasting the signal.

Table 4-2: Size of the sites chosen for participant observation

	EMPLOYEES	WORKING DAYS	WORKING HOURS
La Sexta's Newsroom	440	Monday to Sunday	06h30-01h00
Audience Analysis Office	7	Monday to Friday	08h00- 17h00
La Sexta Digital Team	8	Monday to Sunday	10h00-21h00
Atresmedia Corporate Communications	17	Monday to Sunday	07h00-16h00

The second observation site chosen is the Audience Data Analysis department, as this team is the entry point for audience data analytics. Formally, the audience analytics' team is responsible for informing the entire media conglomerate of the daily audience data outcome as early as possible. Their main concern is the traditional linear television. They also prepare periodical reports, both quantitative audiences data written reports and qualitative audience studies. Such revisions can be weekly, monthly or on a biannual basis in the case of qualitative reporting. In this team of seven analysts, only one handles the audience data coming from the consumption of the newsroom products.

The third site of participant observation was La Sexta's digital division which does not belong to La Sexta's newsroom, and, on the contrary, hierarchically depends on Atresmedia Digital Division. La Sexta Digital's team has eight online journalists supplying services for all programmes broadcast by La Sexta. This includes platforms, websites and social media accounts (Table 4-2).

Lastly, the fourth site of participant observation was the Atresmedia Corporate Communications office which oversees the relationship with other media in terms of what is published about the media group. Among their tasks, this research is interested in the daily dissemination of the audience metrics through press releases and through a sort of battle of tweets from 7am, with the rival media conglomerate, Mediaset. This task is fulfilled by two journalists who prepare the Twitter messages which are conveyed via two different accounts. Likewise, the same professionals prepare daily press releases which are sent to TV specialized media.

In sum, the participant observation was carried out over 17 weeks, divided into two periods: 11 weeks from 17th September to 30th November 2017, and 6 weeks from 18th March until 30th April 2018. During those two periods, I was moving between departments as frequently as I could. I visited the traditional newsroom premises, attending meetings as well as programmes broadcastings in the switch rooms or the studio. In the middle of that period, I also attended the early morning tasks of the audience analysis team, other two weeks I observed the work in the corporate communications office and finally, two more weeks with La Sexta's digital unit.

La Sexta Noticias' team works in a siloed approach within the media group, slightly disconnected from the rest of Atresmedia group's media which shares the same building. However, the heads of the newsroom and news anchors usually participate daily in meetings outside the newsroom. I realised how isolated this department is when no one within the unit was able to help me reach out to other departments within Atresmedia group. In fact, my participants weren't even aware where the other departments were located within the building. Most of the news team confines their movements within the newsroom, the studio sets assigned to La Sexta's programmes and to the cafeterias.

It took me some time observing the team to obtain a clear vision of the newsroom structure. Workstations are shared, so only a few members of staff have their desks assigned permanently. Throughout the working shifts, several reporters were successively using the same desk and computer, while reporters could use different desks on different days. However, that constant change was limited to the reporters coming in and out every day. Conversely, the members of the staff that edited and prepared each programme and which were called "la cocina" (the kitchen), had their workstations perm located. Thus, the reporters' daily desk selection followed a pattern of being seated as close as possible to the programme's kitchen with whom they are working. The sense of ongoing change was also fuelled by a constant reassignment of large areas of the newsroom. From one day to the next, an entire section appeared emptied, with no people, no computers, and only the desks and chairs remaining in the space. Then, one week later the same space appeared again full of new professionals, which meant a new team was starting a new programme. I witnessed this kind of situation three times during the fieldwork.

From the beginning of the fieldwork, I was assigned to a desk on which I could work on my notes, among the administrative personnel. That place served me well as a base from which I could observe and plan my next steps. I always asked for permission to sit in a new place of observation one day in advance, to minimize disturbance or surprise. I was authorized to attend the main news editorial meetings of the day which professionals from all the news programs attend. Soon after, I discovered I was invited to the meetings in which selected members of the staff decided the news menu of the day, but I was excluded from the meetings where the bosses (so called as the 'commandants' by the team) discussed openly the audience data. Given that the newsroom is an open office, and the annex rooms have glass walls I could easily determine who was involved in the debates and reviews of audience data outcomes. I was able to reconstruct such discussions by asking the participants about their account of these meetings, the contents discussed, and their decisions.

As I effectively could attend the editorial news meeting with the decision-makers every day, I had the chance to identify the members of each programme participating in the meeting. Case by case, I was able to gain their trust to sit behind their backs and see them moving, chatting and working, and observe the tense and relaxing moments of the day. As explained earlier in this chapter, newsroom staff extensively prefer to communicate through smartphones applications as a less disruptive mode of exchange, and they would rather use the mirror applications of the instant messaging chats on the computer's screens. Thanks to this kind of habits, from my quiet seated position from behind, I observed the content and the wording of these instant messaging chats, as well as the Twitter use in the computer interface and other newswork related applications – always with the participant's consent[21]. At an early stage of the fieldwork, I was carrying a notebook and maps of the site, taking notes in front of the news making team. I stopped doing so because my writing was very disturbing for many of them, and many people asked what my notes said. Therefore, I decided to take breaks during the observation and go back to my desk to write the notes. I had fruitful chats at coffee time and lunch breaks, within Atresmedia cafeterias. Although I am not a smoker at all and I have a low tolerance for the smell of tobacco, and the smoke, I had to adapt and accept become a passive smoker to take the opportunity to chat with the talkative smokers that met regularly outside of the newsroom, in the garden. The gain of this experience cannot be measured, but has been documented in other ethnographies (see Forde's study of music journalists, 2006).The informal encounter allows a more horizontal relation in which the subjects of the study asked me freely about my research and those who I already interviewed also commented further on their answers.

Something that caught my attention was that almost nobody lived near Atresmedia. The media group is located in San Sebastian de los Reyes, a town to the north-east of Madrid. Many people that were part of La Sexta TV from the beginning, had bought or rented a house in the town in which La Sexta TV was located at its birth, in a neighbourhood called Ciudad de la Imagen (City of the image) in the town of Pozuelo de Alarcón in the far south-west of Madrid. There is no direct public transport between those two towns, therefore many of La Sexta's workers drove more than 37 km from home to work and another 37 km back home every day. I understood that nobody wanted to stay late in the night to chat after work.

Mapping the Data Circulation

Social network mapping is a technique that gathers information on the size, composition and links of a social network. It also tells us about the frequency of contacts and how long the relations last among members of the same network, and through what sort of devices the relationship is carried out (Tracy and Abell 1994).

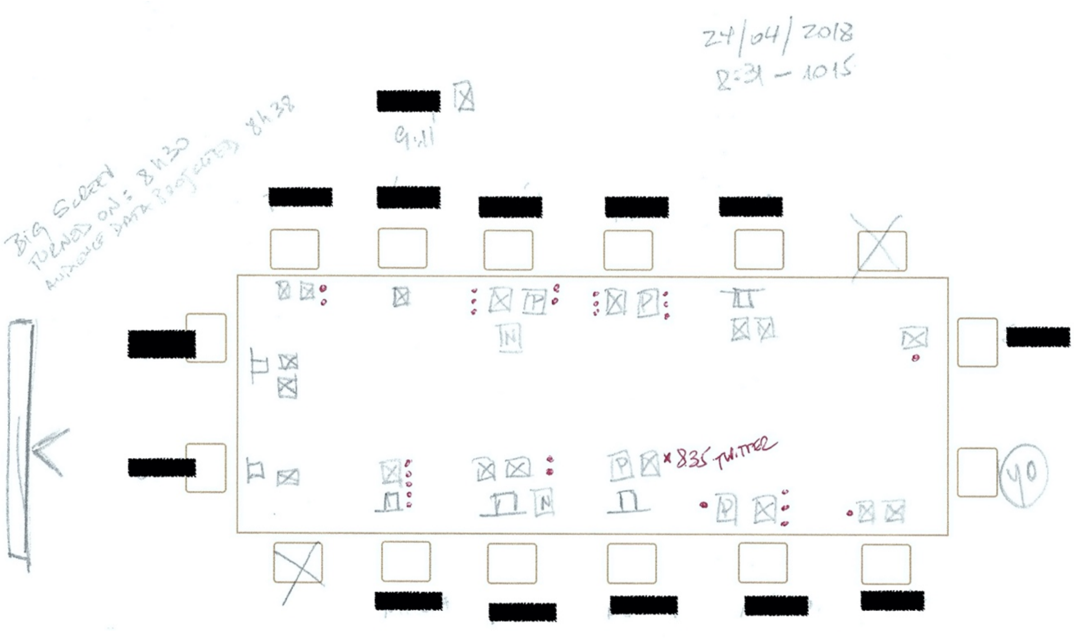
[21] *I should add that my training as a TV journalist has made me highly aware of asking permission for questioning, recording or taking pictures. For me, that is a natural and automatic behaviour. Research ethics issues will be discussed in full later in the chapter.*

By mapping the data circulation, at the beginning of this research, I aimed to ascertain the beginning and endpoint of the audience data flow within the media conglomerate, including all the steps in between, from receiving tabulated data until the quantified data consumption in the newsroom. By adopting the networked ethnography approach, the mapping technique becomes essential for visualising the actors, relationships, technologies, flows, practices and routines that make up the news production, news management and audience data analysis.

Inspired by Emma Hemmingway's newsroom study at BBC Scotland (2006) which produced overlapped maps based on three axes - the temporal position (chronogram), the social position (sociogram) and the technological position (technogram) of the actors in the newswork - in order to expose the interplay of human and non-human actors in the construction of news facts - I decided to draw maps from every situation I was witnessing during fieldwork. These maps were a pivotal tool of data collection through participant observation. At the same time, those maps provided information for the interviews. The task of mapping in this research involved registering exactly at what time things happen, which professionals are involved and what devices they used for the information exchange, all within the same map. By carrying out this repetitive task I was able to discover the path followed by the messages containing the metrics, at what time the messages were delivered, what kind of message it was, what level of detail it contained, to whom it was addressed, and through what device it was received. More importantly, from the myriad of messages received, I could determine which metric messages would prevail in the news team conversation and what processes they triggered.

The maps collected data of the participants, their spatial position and devices carried to the meeting, and their interaction with the devices. The map in Figure 4-1 shows the editorial news meeting on April 24th, 2018. The names and the titles have been covered to maintain anonymity; these correspond to the sociogram axis in Hemmingway’s mapping technique. In addition, my position as researcher is reflected with the label “yo” (“me” in Spanish). The chronogram axis can be seen in the date and hours of the meeting, time of incorporation of new members, the time and uses of the big screen to show the rundown of the audience data report, and the time of arrival of the Twitter push notification with the audience data message.

Figure 4-1: Example of editorial news meeting three axes map



Note: Data collected on Apr. 24th, 2018

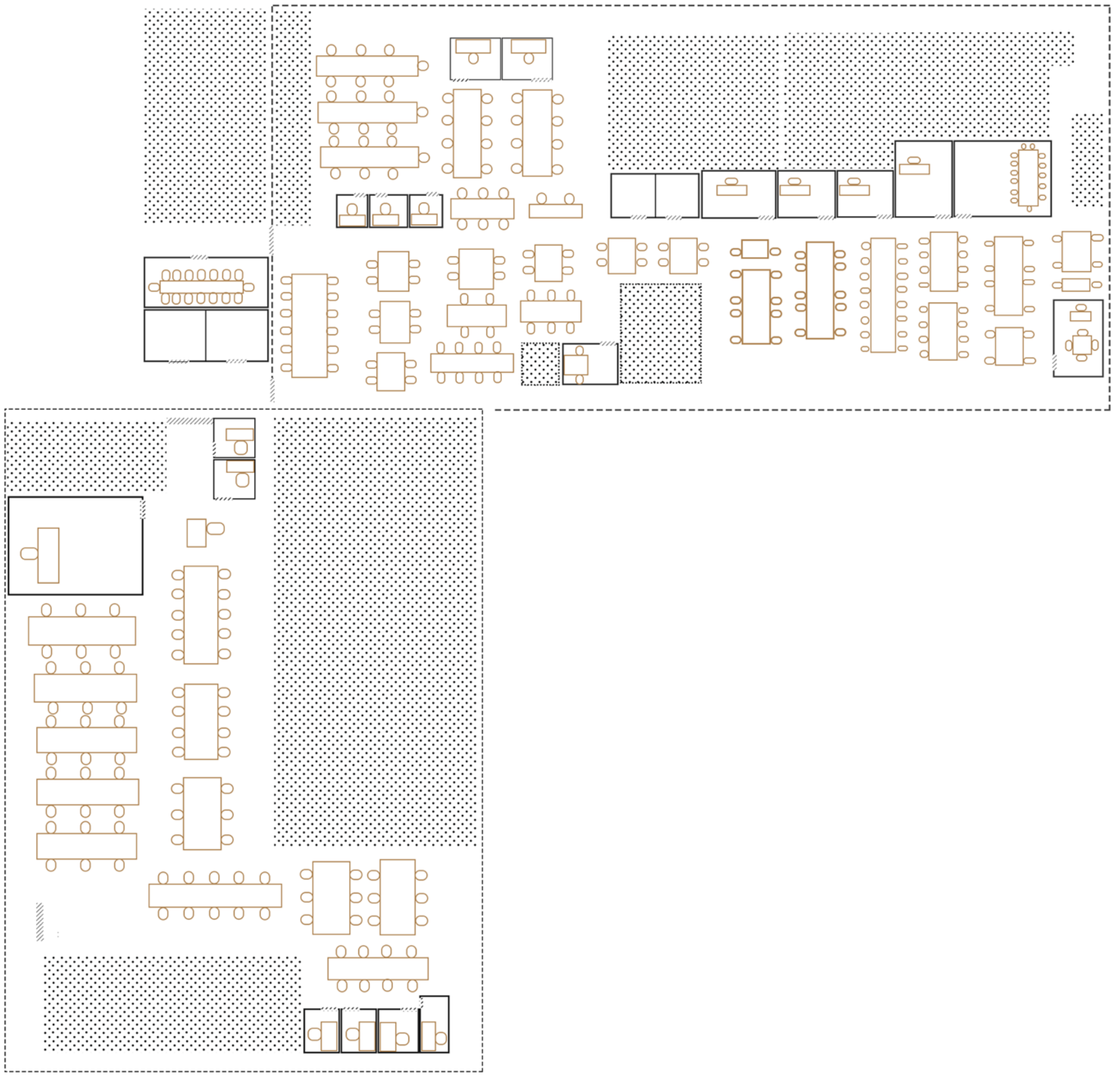
Map legend:

- Laptop
- N Notebook
- P Newspaper
- X Mobile phone (many have more than one)
- Number of times I saw a person consulting the device

A map was generated for every workstation cluster where a whole news programme team is placed; what is called in Spanish: "la cocina", the kitchen. In the maps, I described the position of the team members, their titles, the detectable data delivery rituals, devices used in these rituals, and so on.

The other map used was the floor plan of the newsroom which contains most of the news team. Only one programme was not included in this floor plan, which is “La Sexta Noche” (La Sexta Night) that is placed in another building. I made this sketch from a fire evacuation plan found on a wall in the newsroom. The basic floor plan comprises all the workstations clusters, video ingestion desks, edition suites, private offices, and meeting offices.

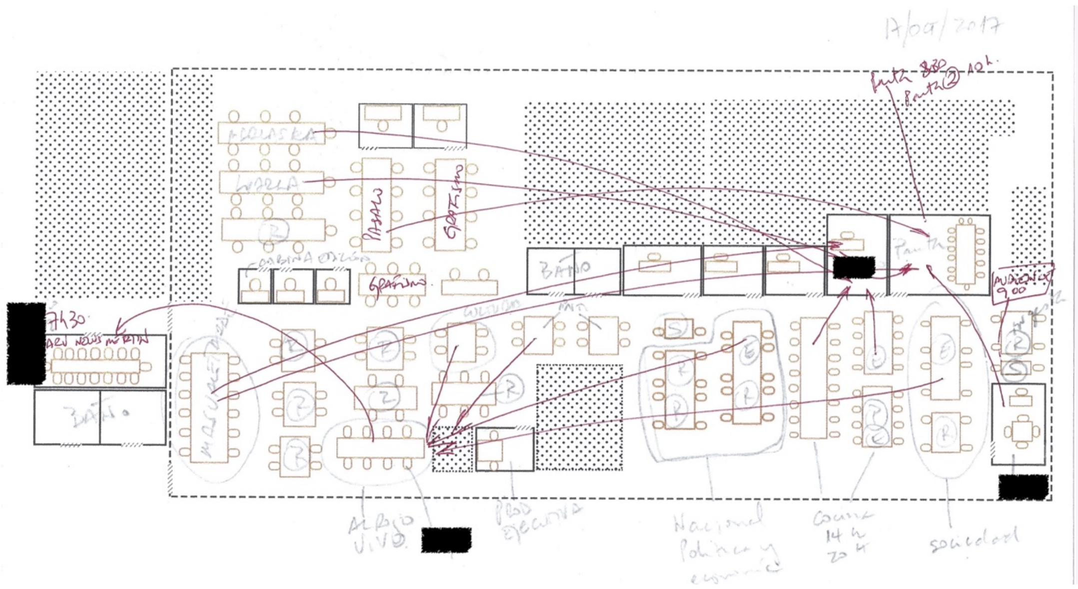
Figure 4-2: The floor plan of La Sexta's newsroom



Note: The horizontal section is section A and the vertical is section B

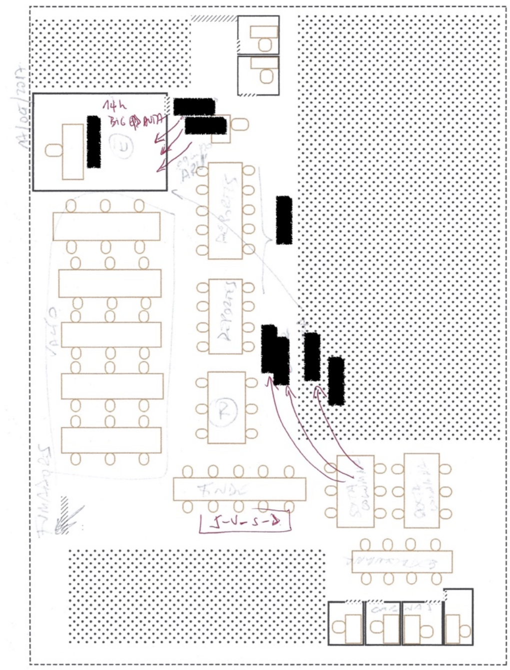
Figure 4-2 shows the entire floor plan of La Sexta TV. Figure 4-3 and Figure 4-4 show the handwritten data collected in each section of the newsroom plan. The black patches on the maps are names erased to preserve anonymity. Although it is a large open office, the space is not for the exclusive use of the newsroom. The dotted sections (in Figure 4-2, Figure 4-3 and Figure 4-4) are workstations that do not belong to the newsroom but to other programmes, and there is no separating wall between them.

Figure 4-3: Floor plan of La Sexta's newsroom. Section A. Links map



Note: Data collected on Oct-17th, 2017

Figure 4-4: Floor plan of La Sexta's newsroom. Section B. Links map



Note: Data collected on Oct-17th, 2017

In the review of those maps there emerged recurring data exchanges that can be interpreted as ritualised practices of quantified data delivery. The sum of those points of exchange allowed me to produce a visualisation of the data ecosystem which will be further explained in this chapter, as will the sampling of the participant observation sites and the selection of the interviewees.

Interviewing the metrics producers, metrics re-packagers and metrics users

After carrying out some weeks of participant observation which allowed me to map the data ecosystem, I started recruiting interviewees. I conducted 44 semi-structured interviews, three of which were not recorded, given that the interviewees asked not to. The interviewees were 35 journalists, two audience analysts, two corporate communications staff members and five executives (summarized in Table 4-3). Most of the interviews (41 out of 44) were recorded on a mini-iPad with the Voice Recorder application, which was password locked; systematically, I transferred every interview to a MacBook Air. Afterwards, all the data collected was backed up on two hard drives stored separately. The standard interview procedure mainly was to conduct the interviews in quiet rooms, and after the interviews, I remained alone in that room and made notes of the conversation. If the interviewee used notes during the interview, I asked to keep them or take a paper picture. Later on, every interview was manually transcribed, the interview notes scanned and added to the interview's transcript using NVivo software. Likewise, any notes or sketches carried out during the interview were scanned and added to the NVivo software. With regards to the unrecorded interviews, I wrote down a detailed account at the end of these and also uploaded to Nvivo and coded.

Table 4-3: Interviews' overview [22] [23] [24]

	Node cases					
	La Sexta's Newsroom	La Sexta's Digital Contents Division	The Audience Data Analysis Office	Atresmedia's Corporate comm. Office	Atresmedia Executives	Total
People Interviewed	33	2	2	2	5	44
Male	20	1	2	0	4	27
Female	13	1	0	2	1	17
Age	23-55	26-32	38-51	40-44	48-64	
Median age	42,5	29	44.5	42	52	44
Median interview length	52'	43'	38'	68'	75'	
Interviews Time in min	1716'	86'	76'	136'	375'	2389'
Weeks of Participant Observation	17 weeks	2 weeks	4 weeks	2 weeks	N/A	

[22] *Four interviewees did not report their age.*

[23] *The timed interviews correspond to the time recorded in one-to-one sitting interviews, thus that time does not include meetings nor informal conversations.*

[24] *This does not include follow up phone calls.*

The interviews lasted on average 54 minutes. Several of the formal newsroom staff members' interviews were conducted in two or three sessions, were unplanned disruptions due to newswork demands. Due to anonymity compromise, this thesis does not offer a detailed list of interviewees, although it is available upon request. All interviews were anonymised at the point of transcription. The research's ethical considerations are discussed later the chapter.

It is worth noticing that there is a clear gender divide in senior jobs while reporters and news producers are equally divided between males and females (Table 4-4). The interviewee sample reproduces the newsroom divide. For instance, four of the five commandants -the name that is internally given to the high hierarchy of the newsroom- are men; the beat-sources news editors are all men; meanwhile, news editors responsible for programmes were three women four men.

Table 4-4: Overview of the newsroom's interviewees [25] [26] [27]

	TV Reporters	News Producers	Editors	Total
Interviewees	10	12	11	33
Male	5	6	9	20
Female	5	6	2	13
On screen role	10	3	2	15
Off camera role	0	9	9	18
With social media account	8	2	10	29
Without social media account	2	1	1	4

As explained above, the selection of the sites to be observed and the interviewees were executed in consideration of the data collected through the mapping process, which allowed the detection of nodes and procedural stages, as well as following the links among the participants in the network of metrics exchange (Krebs 2008:9). A first assessment sought to identify worthy nodes or inflexion points - in other words, the groups or individuals who create or transform the audience data analytics into messages with metrics embedded. With regard to the sample of interviewees, to put it in simple terms, the aim was to reach "all relevant actors and contexts in the organisation" (Howard 2002:558) based on the visualisation of the nodes.

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[25] *Table 4-4 contains all journalists interviewed only from the traditional newsroom.*

[26] *The second column of news producers includes three news anchors interviewed but collectivised as news producers to shield their anonymity.*

[27] *In order to be counted as active social media producers, the interviewees were asked to self-report their activity on social media. In turn, I checked that information by reviewing their timeline on Twitter. Those who had at least one original post once a week throughout the weeks of the fieldwork remained in this category.*

Semi-structured interviews provide unique access to experiences and reflections (Bryman 2012) that this investigation is seeking to discover, through professionals who participate in different stages of the audience metrics processing in the media conglomerate. Interviews enable the airing of journalists' own accounts of how they perceive and interact with the institutional policies which are supposed to be conveyed by audience metrics messages. Additionally, interviews provide insights on the extent to which journalists internalize the use of metrics in news making routines and practices.

It should be noted that in this research, interviewing adopts the social construction of knowledge as its epistemological underpinning (Kvale 2007a). It is not within the scope of this research to discover the actual influence of metric power in the news product, but rather to examine different accounts of the role of metric power in news making and in the construction of the professional identity of journalists.

The interview topic guide was informed by the literature review and also by the participant observation. In fact, interviews and participant observation process provided mutually feedback in an ongoing process. The topic guide for the interview is included in Appendix A. The questions were centred on four main areas of inquiry:

1. The institutional understandings of audience data.
2. In a scenario of two competing audience information regimes, which one prevails in every professional team within the media group.
3. Metrics at work: in which way are they incorporated into daily routines and news practices.
4. The journalistic professional understanding of data. What does data tell us about journalistic performance, identity, and professional autonomy.

The research covered different sections of the media conglomerate and different levels of responsibility in the newsroom hierarchy. Therefore, the interviews were open to accommodate the different roles. Each interview was intended to emphasise different issues, depending on the role played by each individual in the TV news content production.

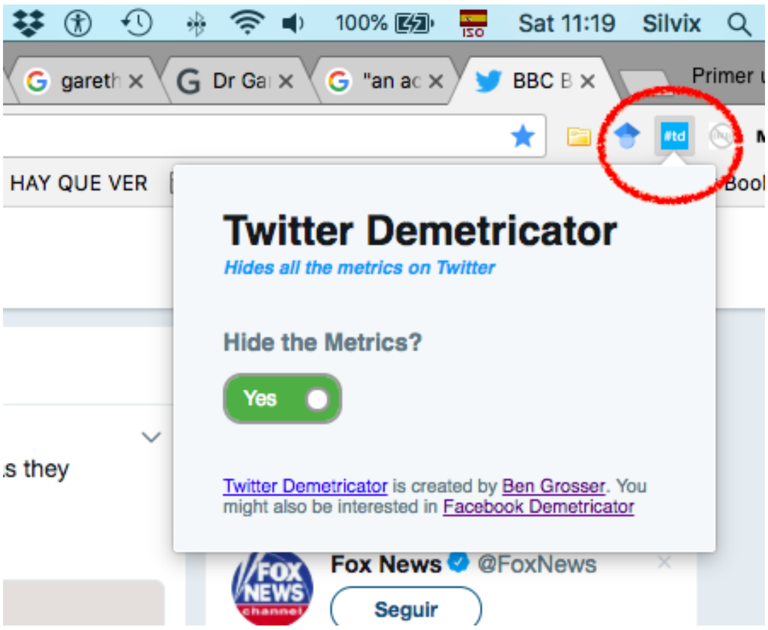
Complementary methods: Think aloud technique and Twitter text analysis

a. The think-aloud method

Besides participant observation, semi-structured interviewing and mapping as primary data collection methods, the research design also included two secondary methods to increase the validity of the data gathered. To enable a more accurate vision of the encounter between journalists and audience data, this research also used the think-aloud method. This method consisted of asking interviewees to perform specific tasks, such as browsing on Twitter while talking aloud about every step of the task, during a conversation with the researcher (Mehlenbacher 1993). It is used in human-computer interaction (HCI) research (Nielsen, Clemmensen, and Yssing 2002), due to its ability to elicit the rational narrative of the first level of consciousness, and also to allow access to the cognitive process and behaviour (2002) of the data consumer.

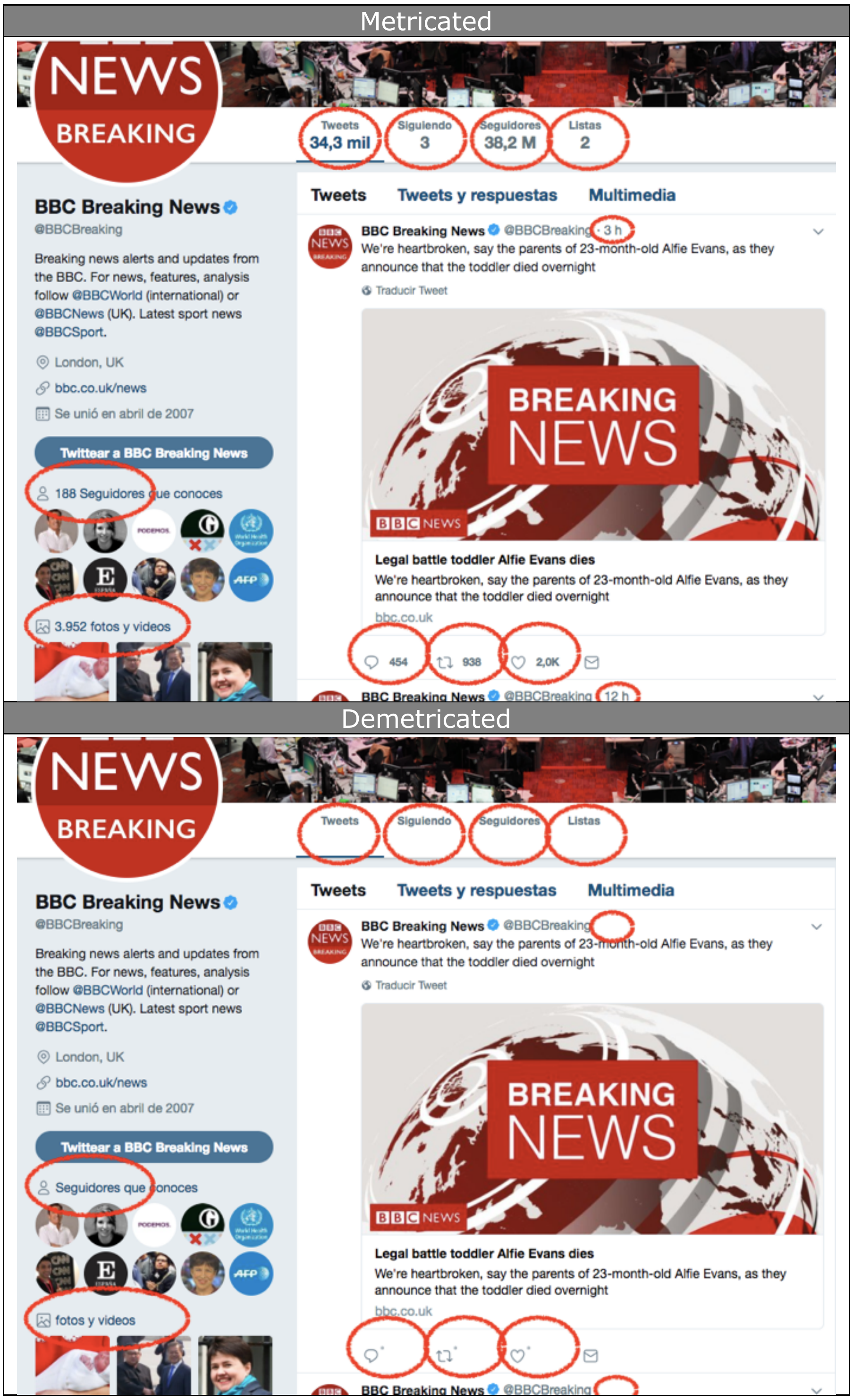
During the research, it became evident that the news workers were reluctant to recognise how much attention they pay to the audience data each day. It was at this juncture that the use of the think-aloud technique became pertinent. I chose to conduct the talk-aloud method asking journalists to first surf their Twitter account as they normally do on their smartphone, and at the end of the interview I asked them to repeat the task, this time on my computer which was previously set up with no metrics at all for Twitter.

Figure 4-5: Twitter demetricator Chrome navigator extension by Ben Grosser



Benjamin Grosser (2014) proposes that the overabundance of metrics presented in social media has turned our social life into a graphopticon (2014) - a wordplay on the concept of panopticon developed by Foucault. According to Grosser, the Web 2.0 environment has transformed people's relationships into a subject of measurement and has given audit culture a strong boost (2014). Strathern (2000) describes audit culture as the widespread use of management practices initially derived from financial accountability procedures, but which are now naturally applied for the general governance of the people, both at work and in their everyday life. The numbers of friends or followers, and those tiny numbers attached to each message and account have turned into an instrument whose worth is translated into social capital. In the context of audit culture and self-surveillance, the attention to the figures of other users continues to soar (Jurgenson 2011). In Grosser's terms, those metrics are produced to be consumed and taken into consideration for user behaviour in a social account (2014).

Figure 4-6: Comparison between a metricated and demetricated Twitter feed



To test his arguments, Grosser developed a demetricator button (Figure 4-5) as a free and open source which works as an extension to any browser (Grosser 2012). Figure 4-6 presents a comparison of what the Twitter browser with and without metrics looks like. My red circles show the figures that the demetricator extension hides.

Usually, journalists do not admit their interest in metrics. I was able to confirm this assumption throughout the fieldwork. However, it does not necessarily reflect a deliberate act of concealment and was instead a sort of naturalisation of metrics as they are ever-present over social media. By asking the interviewees to make journalistic use of Twitter and to talk aloud about what they were doing - while they were using it on my computer pre-settled with the application described above that shows any Twitter account with no metrics at all - I was able to observe their reaction when they face a lack of metrics whether they noticed it or not. For most of the interviewees, acknowledging the lack of metrics triggered a reflection that was not possible before about their trust in metrics to select what to read, share, or follow on Twitter. What I got from this exercise was an awareness of the ever-presence of metrics and that many interviewees were able to elaborate about the relationship with social media metrics after the talk-aloud exercise.

b. Twitter text analysis

The qualitative text analysis applied to Twitter messages was suitable for the purpose of confirming the patterns found in the communicative practices of the media group, such as the scheduled release of Twitter messages informing audience metrics, or tags included in the messages.

A thematic analysis approach guided the analysis of a body of tweets collected from the official account of the Corporate Communication office of Atresmedia (@Atresmediacom). The sample of tweets was collected through the software NCapture of NVivo. I chose a period after the end of the fieldwork, between September 8th, 2018 and Dec 30th, 2018. That was that maximum time that Twitter allows to mine data, and among these dates there were 2,553 tweet messages. From that sample, I selected only those tweets that included the hashtag "#Audiencias" which means "#Audiences” so, by doing the above, the sample was reduced to 1,998 tweets. In other words, 78.26% of Twitter activity from Atresmedia’s Corporate Communications office was devoted to releasing audience data outcomes from the day before. But also, every 1st day of the month, the aggregated data from the month before was released. As the space on Twitter is extremely limited, the release always contains overall numbers, with no detail at all. In order to get a manageable sample for coding purposes, I reduced the volume of tweets by selecting the body of tweets messages tagged #Audiences for the first seven days of October 2018 (1st to 7th October 2018), from 8th to 14th November 2018 and from 15th to 21st December 2018. The result was a sample of 464 tweet messages. This was a random selection of dates. Data was also taken outside of the fieldwork period and in different weeks of each month to check whether the practices had consistency over time.

From the samples of tweets mentioned above, I first analysed the exact time of publication and sequence of release, including whether they chose to publish information on Antena 3 TV or La Sexta TV first, or in alternation, and whether they chose to publish and highlight the audience data for entertainment content or news content or both. Afterwards, I coded the tweets by conducting text analysis, focusing on the wording, the use of adjectives, what were the most common words used, what kind of framing was applied to the data selected to be published, and who was tagged in each tweet.

Figure 4-7: Example of coding for the analysis of tweets

Note: The whole body of each tweet appears on the left and the open codes on the right.

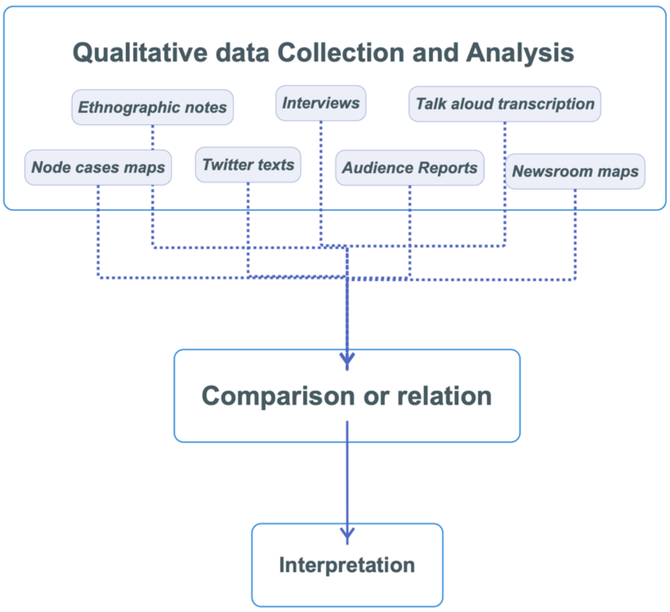
The example above, in Figure 4-7, refers to textual mediated content. Remarkably, the yellow highlighted sentences on the right show the use of superlatives in each tweet message, whose definition was taken from the Oxford English Dictionary as follows: "A superlative adjective or adverb is one which expresses the highest degree of a quality or attribute denoted by an adjective or adverb" (2020). The translations of the example's codes are: (1 and 2) "The most watched broadcasts", (3) "absolute leader" (4) "clearly wins" (5) "the absolute leadership" (6) "it had another great day". The analysis of tweets was conducted with the main codes that were linked with the research questions.

4.5. Analytical strategy

Qualitative coding and data analyses were performed using NVivo 11 software, which manages multimedia data and provides tools for writing comments and coding. Each transcription was uploaded into the application. Likewise, the notes after each interview were scanned and added to each case. Participant observation notes and maps were also scanned and uploaded, creating one case for each node case outside the newsroom. Given the size of the entire newsroom, I organised the notes and maps of the newsroom participant observation by creating one case for each news team responsible for one news programme.

Qualitative data were analysed in a thematic qualitative text analysis process (Kuckartz and McWhertor 2014). The process of data analysis involves making sense out of all data collected. In the case of this research, besides preparing the data for analysis as described above, all data was read to calibrate it and find the links with the research questions. In general terms, the process considered all resources collected for the analysis and interpretation as outlined in Figure 4-8. It is a design that required simultaneous collection of all available qualitative data. After the collection, data was compared and interpreted in the analysis to establish a holistic picture of the social phenomena (Creswell 2003).

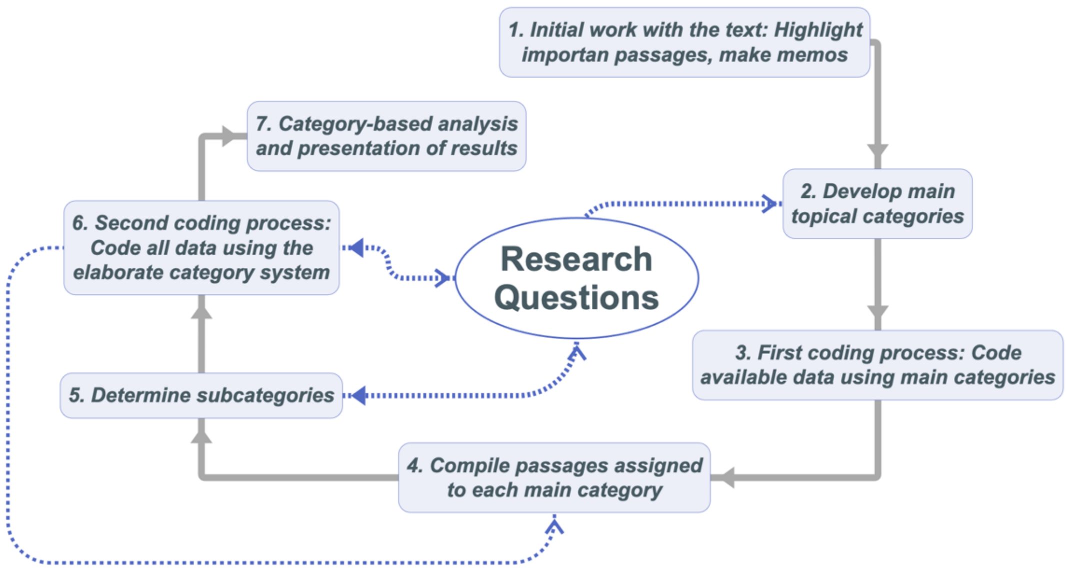
Figure 4-8: Description of ethnographic methods' convergence during the analysis



Note: Adapted from Creswell (2003)

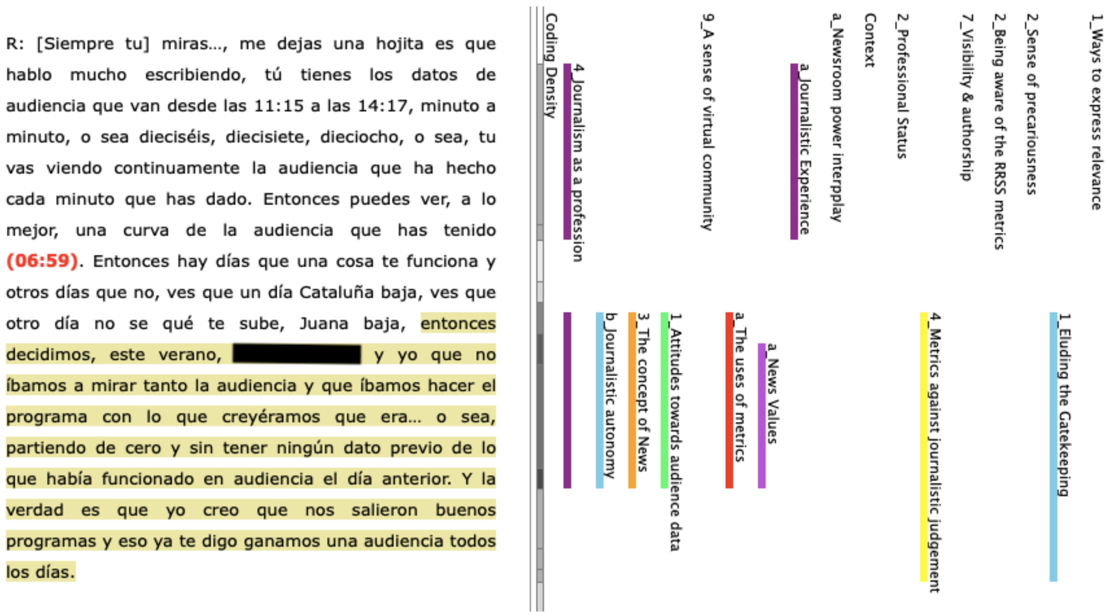
Thomas and Harden (2008) propose an iterative framework and suggest the researcher to survey the text in waves for topical categories and subcategories. At every new phase of coding, themes are recalibrated to the research questions. In this research, I followed the model proposed by Kuckartz and McWhertor (2014), which states that in the thematic qualitative text analysis process, the steps relate at critical points to each other by grouping the codes in categories and subcategories of analysis and systematically going through the research questions to focus on the interpretation of the data (Figure 4-9).

Figure 4-9: The basic process of thematic analysis



Note: Taken from Kuckartz and McWhertor (2014:70)

Figure 4-10: Example of open coding for the analysis of interviews



With the interviews I followed a similar approach described earlier for text messages. Once all the interviews were transcribed and uploaded into NVivo 11, I established open codes. Because the present study sought to make explicit participants' implicit views on quantification and metrics, they were asked to describe the workflow of the news production, in the manner they usually carried out these tasks; the steps followed during an average working day; and in what moments of the day their encounter with quantified data and audience metrics took place. In this way, both participants and the researcher were able to evince the patterns of interaction with quantification and metrics at the individual, team or organisational level (Patton 2002). Therefore, the five first topical categories were defined in this way: new production workflow, encounter with metrics, practices at the individual, news team and media group level. Figure 4-10 shows the transcribed text of the interview on the left and the codes on the right. Names have been anonymised.

After steps 2 and 3 of the Kuckartz and McWhertor (2014) schema (Figure 4-9) the number of codes in both datasets, from Twitter and the interviews, was still too extensive for a clear analysis and interpretation. According to Jacob (1987) ethnographers code their data using as many categories as possible, therefore, the reviewing and sub-categorisation in relation to the research questions help me to narrow down the categories for analysis. The full code book can be found in the appendix section

4.6. Ethical considerations

Participants were free to decline to participate in this study and were told they were free to suspend the interview whenever they wanted. Nobody made that decision, and all of them seemed happy to participate. They were asked for up to 60 minutes of their spare time, usually immediately before or after their shift. There was no financial compensation for participation.

The study posed little risk to participants. The project proposal went through an ethics review in June 2017 – the approved ethics review document is included in Appendix D of this thesis. Research ethics were reviewed on an ongoing basis for the duration of fieldwork and writing. All the participants both signed a letter of consent (see Appendix C) and gave a recorded oral consent before the start of the interview. I maintained participant anonymity by assigning them pseudonyms. The participants were told that their identity would be anonymised, but that it would not be feasible to conceal the name of the TV channel, La Sexta TV, or the name of the media group Atresmedia as they were easily identifiable. Given the small number of senior bosses and anchors, there was a clear risk that they would be easily recognisable. Following consultation with the department's research ethics committee and my supervisor, we agreed to collectively anonymise all news directors as editors and all anchors as news producers.

My complete interview log - a record of participants, names, roles, and contact information - was maintained in an external hard disk which was password-protected, and the interviews were uploaded to NVivo software coded with an alphanumeric code and a fictional name. All names and personal references were omitted from the transcripts. Interviews, transcripts, photos, and notes will remain under password protection in my personal files for ten years before their destruction as the Goldsmiths code of research requires.

4.7. Researcher's Reflexivity: Who is interviewing?

I have been a TV journalist for almost 28 years. Certainly, my extensive experience as a journalist is an advantage insofar as it allows me access the news culture, as well as have an advanced knowledge of it. In addition, there is a shared language, I am familiar with the hierarchical position of members within the news group as well as the set of journalistic routines (Le Gallais 2003). However, the very same advantages could at any time become setbacks for the research if I had not prepared thoroughly for the possible drawbacks which my past training as a news producer may carry.

To minimise the bias in this research, my concerns are related to two areas: firstly, the particularities of interviewing practices, specifically regarding the distinctions between news interviewing and qualitative interviewing; secondly, performing research in familiar settings.

In carrying out any interviews, the asymmetry of power relations is inevitable. In qualitative interviews, while not all are alike, some degree of power imbalance is also unavoidable. The interviewer defines questions, starts and ends the process, all of which already is a signal of that imbalance. The researcher must always remain aware of the need to minimise the asymmetry. In contrast, in news interviews, the asymmetrical power relation between interviewer and interviewee is considered an advantage, always present and systematically pursued. Since I started moving from professional journalism to media researcher, it became critical to ponder what skills from my previous experience are beneficial for qualitative interviewing and should retain them and what other I should unlearn.

In qualitative research, the essence of the knowledge achieved through interviewing lies in the discourses that emerge in the fluid exchanges of questions and answers. The researcher's role is to interpret and clarify the meanings of the relevant aspects of the answers (Kvale 2007b). In journalism, the strength of interviews lies in the craft of asking questions. Journalists have the professional obligation to frame the message to transform the reply into a news product (Schudson 1996). Thus, there is a potential bias in the process of question making. Moreover, the reporter must ask questions that seek an unknown answer and measure the coherence of the interviewee through questions with known answers (Schudson 1996); in other words, by having goals of inquiring and testing, journalists embrace power imbalances. The latter is evident in the documented increased aggressiveness and assertive negative questions (Hall 1973; Hallin 1993; Heritage and Clayman 2013). The biases mentioned above are unacceptable in qualitative interviewing.

Another factor lies in the audience as the third party in an interview. Journalists seek the best-articulated answers and avoid messy responses to draw the largest possible audience. The unseen audience is always kept in mind in news production. The journalistic interview is a performance for an audience, with both the journalist and interviewer performing. It must be acknowledged that all interviews, including research ones, are performative (Goffman 1959). However, the difference lies in that qualitative interviews are not a public performance; instead, they are anonymous and aggregated into a larger pool of data aimed to understand a phenomenon.

In journalism, on the assumption that the newswork is done in the public interest, the latter elaboration about the unseen parties participating in the interview reaches more complex levels if the observer pays attention to those institutions that are represented by each one of the interview's stakeholders: one institution supports the reporter and the other backs the interviewer, resulting in a five-party event, namely: interviewer, interviewee, audience, interviewer institutional support, and interviewee institutional support. In situations in which the power is less asymmetrical, such as elite interviewing, the respondent can negotiate the topics of inquiry and even conceal their identity, thus the outcome of the interview and the knowledge produced are completely different.

The abovementioned power imbalance between journalist and interviewee could lead to a dilemma throughout the research, not merely because of my own training as a question-maker, but also in the context of the research, concerning the way in which the interviewee – in this case, the journalist – expects to be questioned. This scenario - the in-depth interviewing among equals - seems to represent a similar challenge to the elite interviewing. Therefore, the preparation of the questionnaire is highly important, along with planning the interviewing process in order to adopt practices that allow me to re-establish my position as a researcher and avoid being seen as a journalist. I must make clear, though I never worked for La Sexta, nor any Atresmedia outlet, I was previously acquainted with a small group of journalists from La Sexta because we worked in the same team in the past in Television Española, Spanish public television. Therefore, it wasn't long before other staff members started asking about my journalistic experience and why I decided to become a media researcher.

Consequently, conducting research about one's peers (otherwise known as research in familiar settings) is also one of my major concerns. Peer environments are “plagued with taken-for-granted-assumptions (Hockey 1993:199) and “hidden dilemmas such as unintended positioning” (Labaree 2002:122). Nevertheless, insider research has received considerable attention in the literature, not just for its possible pitfalls, but because there are greater expectations when one has privileged access to an environment, as opposed to being a complete stranger.

In order to minimise misunderstandings, I adopted recurring self-disclosure procedures during interviews by approaching topics from several angles, by diligent self-examination (van Heugten 2004), and by dealing with the setbacks of familiar settings through triangulation methods. There were routine situations in which the answers to my questions were "you already know that..." to which I habitually insisted by saying "yeah, maybe... but I need you to describe it on your own words". There were other more conflicting cases, for instance, when I was consulted as a journalist in the process of news production, and I could not refuse to answer. I decided to accept this kind of requests, not avoid them but I had to self-restraint, and rigorously decided never to take the initiative to participate in a news decision making.

There is another self-reflexivity process that triggered during the analysis and writing. As I mentioned above, throughout the fieldwork, I tried to keep alert towards my condition of feeling in familiar settings and the taken-for-granted assumptions. Every day, I wrote down all events or conversation at the end of the day for coding purposes, particularly data related to metrics. Although initially, it was not meant to be one, it became a proper diary. When I looked interviews' coding process with my notes about the interviews, I was astonished how my assumptions were highlighted. In particular, I have entirely naturalised some practices, such as the negotiating language used between journalists and editors and between journalists and the supposed representation of the audience they create from the metrics.

> - *If you don't know how the contents you sell to the audience worked, your work is useless* (Raúl, news editor)
>
> - *We discuss the contents available, and then we decide what to sell to the editor* (Jerónimo, news producer)
>
> - *Lately, the editor is buying many news pieces related to the environment, so, I sell environmental news stories* (Adriana, reporter)

That awareness helped me in the analysis to relate metrics with the market language and the everyday life governance through financial protocols. However, this did not appear in my first level of awareness during the fieldwork, and I should say that this sort of language is used in all journalistic cultures that I know.

Lastly, my peers in the academic field raised questions about the level of access I got in the media group and the practices related to metrics I witnessed and whether I feared the media managers' responses to my findings. I think it is an advantage of my training as a journalist to be aware of the always present power interplay of any interaction and to be prepared to articulate the findings as they appeared to the best of knowledge.

4.8. Summary and Conclusion

During this chapter, I described the methodological choices supporting my thesis, and discussed some challenges the study presented in its first stage when, unusually, the newsmakers were over-stimulated by audience metrics due to specific news events such as the Catalonian independence referendum. I explained the research design that involved the networked ethnography and how a mixed-methods approach includes mapping, participant observation and semi-structured interviews as the primary methods of data collection, along with the think-aloud technique and Twitter text analysis as secondary methods work together in operationalising the research questions. The chapter also described how I conducted the data analysis. I further elaborated on the rationale for this study's explicit focus on one Spanish media group and, more specifically, on the newsroom of one of its TV stations, and particularly, how did I select the media group's nodes in which the audience metrics repackaging took shape.

The methodological approach chosen allowed me to collect data to understand the quantified data circulation outside and within the media group. Likewise, the applied methods were suited to tracing which type of quantified data was embedded in what sort of specific messages and conveyed by what kind of communication technology prevails in the newsroom. More important, those methods helped me to collect evidence of how those metrics are used to create certain messages which are addressed to the newsmakers and what the news team does with those messages.

As I have made clear, the aim of this study is to appraise how the audience metrics are shaping institutional policies and how those meanings that are transmitted by the audience metrics, are normalized in the daily routines and practices of news processing. The methods of data collection are also designed to delve deeper and shed some light on the journalists' professional formation, and to what extent their beliefs and perception are mediated by metric power.

From this point forward, the third block of this thesis displays the empirical analysis (Chapters 5 to 8). The four chapters present the results organised from a macro to a micro-level perspective. Chapter 5 details the data ecosystem map within the Atresmedia group, identifies the agents involved in the vertical production of metrics, meaning their repackaging, dissemination, and final consumption in the newsroom. That is to say, by looking at more structural forces, it focuses on the macro level. Chapter 6 analyses the media group metrics' proceedings, so it is the institutional level. Afterwards, Chapter 7 discusses the newsroom's team practices related to what are the prevailing metrics and how they are intertwined with news production. Finally, Chapter 8 examines the micro-level of individual understanding of data by journalists and how metrics are used to construct and understand professional journalistic autonomy.

5. MAPPING THE DATA CIRCULATION: The Audience Data Ecosystem Explained

5.1. Introduction

This research is about the relationship between journalists and the quantified data that floods the newsroom from stationary computers to their smartphones and from the newsgathering stage to news product delivery. This chapter aims to graphically detail the data lifecycle in a Spanish media group by considering what data streams flow freely and which head towards dead ends.

While conducting the fieldwork and carrying out participant observation, I tried to understand what quantification processes were taking place in the realm of the newsroom. Then, I realised that the news team's reception of a particular set of audience data was prevalent over all other possible quantified data inputs. There is no novelty in saying that audience data reigning media content production, the nuance that this thesis scrutinises is why one set of data overcomes the others and what happens with the news production processes when two or more measuring systems are at stake. Kosterich and Napoli (2016) remark that an audience measurement system must be a single currency, a unique source of value that gives it authority among the market players. Its effectiveness depends on its uniqueness. Andrews and Napoli (2006) add that any change in the audience measuring alters the performance of market players. Moreover, any new audience measurement system produces a "radically different portrait" (2006:34) of the audience preferences in their content consumption. Therefore, the appeal of observing the circulation dynamics of data resides in the uncertainty it produces within the marketplace and in a TV newsroom and the circulation of different competing data sets. Later in the thesis, Chapters 7 and 8 scrutinise where the journalists' thoughts on their audiences' stem from and what place audience data has in building these thoughts.

At the present stage, this first empirical chapter aims to lay the foundation for analysing data usage in La Sexta's newsroom. I will do this by following the data circulation inside the media group to which La Sexta TV belongs to map how, during its cycle, the value chain of the data is created. The purpose is to identify the points of entry at which the meaning formation takes place, the agents through which this occurs, the intended audiences of the data, and the successful recipients or failed targets. Once this is established, in the following chapters it will be possible to analyse the interaction of the media ownership, the news team, and the journalists as individuals with the flow of data which normally pours into the newsroom.

To construct the map of data circulation, I have adopted the media ecology notion that pushes for an expansive approach to studying meaning-making and dissemination (Newton 2008). The visualization of the whole data cycle as an ecosystem helps me to follow the links between humans, devices, messages, and metrics production in the process of data incorporation in the chain of news production. Throughout this chapter I will represent nodes and links of data circulation inside and outside the media conglomerate with maps. Mapping has become a key methodological tool for the networked ethnographic inquiry. As I explained earlier, my decision to take this path of inquiry was based on the work of networked ethnographers (Anderson 2008a; Howard 2002) who set out to analyse a communicative space that surpasses a bounded community – in the case of this research, beyond the boundaries of the newsroom. The aim was to discover the values and beliefs held by people who work together to bring forward a news business, which, on the one hand, produces news content and, on the other, seeks to maximise the volume of people and the time they spend in front of screens. My working hypothesis is that the audience data serves as a disciplining tool that makes possible the two purposes of the news business: to produce news and to produce audiences. For this reason, the data exposed in this chapter will be analysed using the Foucauldian concept of disciplinary power, by revealing the subtle practices or banal procedures through which the instruments of discipline are deployed.

The nodes and links in the data circulation will be mapped in a grid which features two axes. The first axis shows the phases of the data value cycle, following the schema described by OECD (2015), which entails (1) data providers, (2) data analytics providers, and (3) data-driven decision-makers. To this schema, I add a phase called (4) data disseminators. The second axis is comprised by the two market information regimes involved: the traditional system of television audience measurement (audimeter), and the data collected from internet-based media.

5.2. The Ecosystem Approach

It is 20th April 2018, 8h30 am in the meeting room of La Sexta’s newsroom. There are 13 people around the table attending the first editorial meeting of the day. There are no reporters, but editors, news producers from various news programmes, the news anchor, script writer, broadcast director, and graphics artist are present. The session starts by remembering the passing of Dr Luis Montes the day before. Dr Montes was a physician and renowned advocate of euthanasia and palliative care for terminally ill patients. Around the table there is a lively discussion about him and how the society was divided for and against Dr Montes as it is for and against to aid-in-dying laws. However, in this room, nobody speaks out to oppose Dr Montes's public advocacy for euthanasia. A staff member recalls how Dr Montes was legally pursued by the conservative government of Madrid. Another suggests a proper news piece to acknowledge the relevance of Dr Montes' moral principles and his legal fight. Suddenly, the enthusiastic debate stops. At 8h43, a mobile phone on the table sounds and vibrates with a Twitter push notification (Figure 5-1). Someone asks:

- *How did we do?*
- *12.9%*
- *Almost 13%, that is good*[28]

Figure 5-1 Example of the Tweet that triggered the data review

Tweet translation:
#Audiences
@sextaNoticias 14H [newscast name], with @helenaresano [anchor name], yesterday surpassed 1.3 million viewers (12.9%). It was a reference model for news outlets in its timeslot and also in the commercial target (13.5%)

The course of the news debate changes entirely. The big screen in the room – which is connected to one laptop that belongs to the editor in charge of the following newscast – was switched on at the beginning of the meeting, but in these first minutes it only shows an empty rundown.[29] Following the Twitter push notification, the big screen shifts its content to project the web page of GECA, an outsourced company which provides a micro-analysis of audience engagement. The GECA report is structured in intervals of one minute and pairs the numbers representing audience

[28] *Fieldwork notes, 20th April 2018.*

[29] *Rundown is an electronic form, also called line-up, which gives specific details of every element in a newscast, including the order of stories, video, audio, and graphic elements, as well as the timing for each (Tuggle, Carr, and Huffman 2011).*

response with the content aired. It is a table in which rows are minutes of broadcasting and columns are content aired by each nationwide free-to-air TV station.

At this moment, the news team abandons the lively news debate and stares at the big screen that shows the contents of the newscast of the previous day and the numbers associated with each report. The information is organised in a table, with two columns for every TV station – one column details the content, the next expresses the audience data. Each audience data cell contains a number that represents an average number of viewers tuning on the TV station measured by one-minute intervals. Each numbered cell is coloured grey, green, or red, meaning no change, going up, and going down respectively, in other words, every colour represents the changes with regards to the immediately preceding minute. At this stage, the team gathered in the editorial meeting scrutinizes the columns that portray La Sexta's newscast from noon the previous day, which is the same programme they prepare every day.

- *Look at that, the homophobic attacks in the Seville April Fair.*
- *No wonder, people don't want negative stuff.*

- *The story about the autistic boy didn't work well either.*
- *I think that we have followed-up too much on that topic.*[30]

The scene described above occurs every day. The editorial meeting begins at 8:30 sharp. Likewise, every day the conversation about the news of the day is interrupted by a tweet push notification that changes the course of the debate and triggers the audience data analysis of the newscasts of the day before. The latter can last between 12 to 15 minutes until the highest ranked newsroom editor calls everyone's attention back to the news debate.

The big screen shifts its contents again and returns to the rundown, which gradually starts to become filled. However, the new knowledge acquired during the audience review continues to assist the decision-making of what news deserves to be in the newscast for the rest of the editorial meeting. The editorial meeting usually lasts until 10 am. Throughout it is possible to hear phrases such as, "people are getting tired" of a story or, "even though there has been no development in the story, we need to find a new angle, people are keen on this".[31] In each of these cases, it is suggested that there is an underlying assessment on the basis of the audience data seen just beforehand. Even when decisions are made contrary to what the audience data shows, data is taken into account.

> *In my case, there were days in which I said, 'what the hell, again Catalonia [independence news stories], ufff this is a mistake, nobody cares about this*

[30] *Fieldwork notes, 20th April 2018.*

[31] *Fieldwork notes, various days.*

> *topic'. But never mind, we must publish it. When you consider that it is an important topic, you must produce that piece of news. And if it doesn't work, it just does not work.* (Roberto, news producer)[32]

In informal conversations, editors that lead different news meetings throughout the day told me they must take care to avoid diversions from the purpose of the editorial meeting. Being an editor means that they need to find a balance on metrics. Most of them recognize the staff's eagerness to know the audience figures of the day before, and they are aware that such data cannot be ignored, but that limits are necessary.

> *We cannot decide only based on audience data.* (Jimena, editor)

However, editors admit resorting to their smartphones to continue consulting audience data numbers through the meeting. In the subsequent days, I observed that many of the attendees at the editorial meetings did the same. This scene is repeated daily, with the Twitter message always arriving at exactly the same time and involving different devices and applications to convey the metrics into the newsroom. The clock-Twitter mechanism witnessed in the earliest meeting of the day becomes visible only in that news meeting. However, the clock mechanism works for many in the team while everyone is on their own.

The scene above drove me to think about data circulation as a media environment. Media ecology, a multidisciplinary field that pushes for an expansive approach to studying meaning-making and dissemination (Newton 2008), understands that human beings are integrated into a media environment, which in turn affects their perception, their cognition, and thus their behaviour (Postman 1968). Neil Postman was credited with formally introducing the term media ecology (Strate 2006), although the central ideas of media ecology are built on the basis of the theories put forward by McLuhan (Levinson 2005). Postman and Weingartner (1971) described media ecology as "the study of transactions among people, their messages and their message systems" (1971:139). By borrowing the biological metaphor, media ecology applies the idea of connectedness of the natural environment to the media environment. All sorts of media are conceived as real species in the biological world. They interact, provide balance, and even harmonize when the ecosystem is healthy, although they can also be threatened with extinction or have to adapt to the ever-changing environment (Anderson 2013a).

Critics of the media ecology think that overemphasising the mutual effects between human beings, technology, and media, suffers from a hard-line technological determinism (Milberry 2012). By stressing interconnectedness, Slater and Tacchi (2003) proposed a focus shift from the media to users, calling them communicative

[32] *In Chapter 7, discussing the news team practices, I further analyse to what extent the metrics also frames journalistic autonomy; I discuss whether journalists have built a leeway regarding metrics that would mean the journalistic autonomy the team enjoys.*

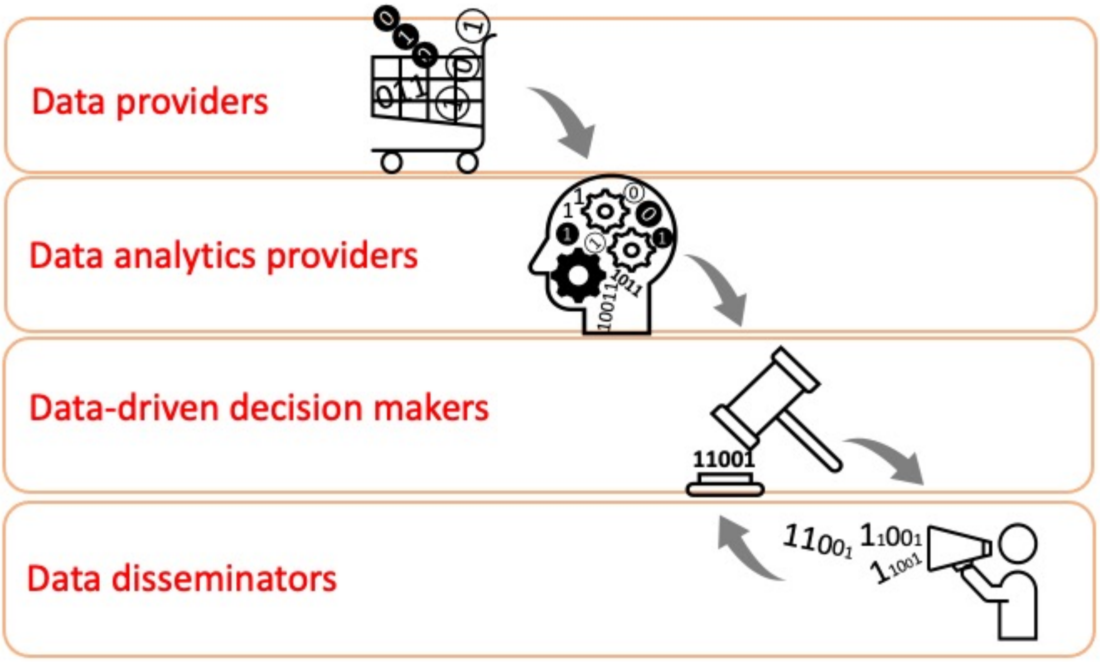
ecologies that entail three aspects: the media repertoires each one uses; who communicates with whom; and the social organisation of media. More user-centred, the theory of polymedia (Madianou and Miller 2013; Madianou 2014) highlights users' agency in choosing specific platforms to take control of their media representation and manage their relationships. This chapter took Slater and Tacchi’s (2003) communicative ecology approach to observe a community that uses different means to keep connected and share, re-signify, interpret, use, or reject messages that convey data. The visualization of the whole as an ecosystem allows me to follow the interconnected links between humans, devices, messages and the production of metrics in the process of data consumption.

I argue that datafication, the process of transforming most of the world into digital or machine-readable data, is a form of mediation (Powell 2019), which Hepp (2020) calls deep mediation, due to the various digital media roles as communication means, as data generators and as reality builders through the data collected. In other words, data conveys an experience of the world shaped by the tools and key actors that collect and process the data and thereby manage the meanings and understandings that journalists – in the case of this research – can make from the data. Consequently, data is part of a complex message system, and it is worth exploring the creation, exchange and dissemination of information and the key actors and technologies involved in the data circulation. From my observation of how audience data arrived into the newsroom, and by following the processes of creation, analysis and dissemination of the data step-by-step, I can determine the general map of the audience data ecosystem of La Sexta TV and the way in which data enters the newsroom.

With the aim of presenting the findings of the audience data circulation within the media conglomerate, I find it useful to resort to the stages model developed by the OECD to classify the key actors in any data value chain: (1) data providers, (2) data analytics providers, and (3) data-driven decision-makers (2015:71) as the first steps in the data ecosystem description. For the sake of better exposure to the processes observed, I decided to expand the three-part model with a fourth stage of data disseminators.

Figure 5-2 outlines the four layers or key actors that intervene in the data ecosystem. First, data providers are responsible for data provision, collection, and storage. Therefore, the first phase contains members of the audience, information technology (IT) service firms, and the data brokers that collect and store data. The second layer refers to the data analytics service. Thirdly, the data-driven decision-makers, meaning businesses or producers that build their products based on data and analytics available in the ecosystem. In this third phase of the research, we find every node within the media conglomerate that makes content decisions considering the data and analytics; one of these nodes contains the decision-makers in La Sexta's newsroom. The added fourth stage involves the data disseminators, referring to the agents that customarily release data by producing tailored messages for targeted audiences.

Figure 5-2 The basic grid of the main phases of the data cycle [33]



I would like to remind the reader that what is shown in Figure 5-2 are the phases of the data cycle. Every one of these phases entails specific roles played to produce an added value to the data. Later, when describing the data ecosystem grid, every phase will be filled with the nodes that are key actors in the data value chain.

The basic grid of the data ecosystem must be complemented with an overlayed division that represents the two market information regimes at work (see blue boxes in Figure 5-3). These market information regimes have different actors in the two first phases of the data cycle. As explained in Chapter 3, the market information regime refers to the shared, consensual knowledge used by those within the television industry – or any field of production – to get a sense of their own and rivals' performance (Anand and Peterson 2000; Napoli 2010; Webster 2010; Buzzard 2015). The traditional market information regime (the blue box on the left in Figure 5-3) that has been used in the television industry throughout most of the world in the last 30 years (Bourdon and Méadel 2014) consists of a system of television audience measurement (TAM) through a device called a people-meter, which measures the viewing habits for TV and cable from a sample of users.

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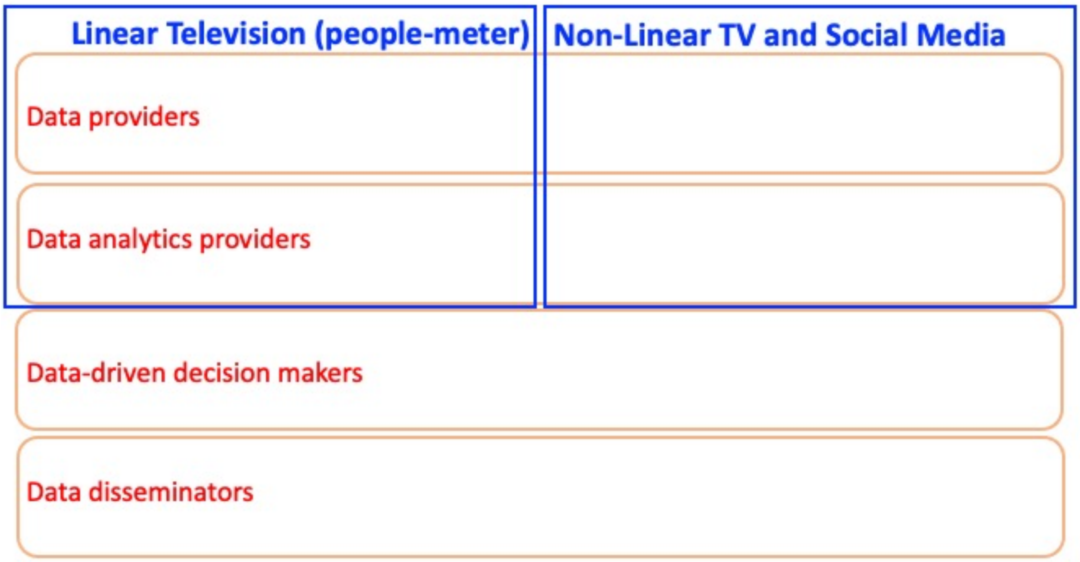
[33] *Graph adapted from the OECD's mapping the global data ecosystem and its points of control (2015:71).*

Figure 5-3: Phases of the data cycle and market information regimes at work



The blue box on the right (Figure 5-3) groups the entities involved in collecting, storing, and processing of data from internet platforms: programme websites, internet streaming services and social media such as Twitter and Facebook. Webster (2010) refers to the information regime that emerges from the real-time metrics of internet-based media as a user information regime because it not only serves to give a sense of the marketplace for the media providers but those metrics also take the shape of recommendations for users. Figure 5-3 depicts the basic grid where the significant nodes and their links will be located.

5.3. When the metrics meet the news: "How did we do?"

One editor recounts the fact that when he wakes up in the mornings, while still in bed, the first thing he does is to see, on his smartphone, a graph that describes the audience metrics outcome for the day before. Moreover, as a sort of superstitious rite, he normally looks at the rivals' audience data outcome before reviewing the La Sexta TV news programmes. As the volume of viewers watching free-to-air television at each timeslot of the day is more or less stable, when he examines the metrics of the competition, he can guess La Sexta's figures.

> *It is not as exact as it sounds, but I like to test my instincts.* (Mateo, news editor)

Usually, he makes screenshots of the highlights both of La Sexta and the rivals, which he sends to the stakeholders with short imperative comments, such as, "look at this", "we need to talk about this", or "what a failure". Another editor receives a Twitter push notification of the audience outcome every day at the same time while walking his kids to school. After dropping them off, he sits on a bench in a park near the school, then goes into the GECA app on his smartphone to review the minute-by-minute report on the programme he heads. Usually, he takes screenshots of certain details of the ups and downs of the audience in the programme to share them with the programme's team through a WhatsApp group.[34] The first shared picture is always of the overall figure of the TV programme and then some points in which the news programme numbers have gone up or down. However, he does not make all the screenshots he shares, some of them are previously received from his bosses or simply forwarded as a cascade of messages coming from the top of the hierarchy of both the newsroom and the media group.

As a rule, reporters in the field receive an audience report from the team editor early in the morning. When it is not sent, many of the reporters told me they seek out this information on Twitter. Every morning, between 8 and 9 am, all TV stations publish a cherry-picking of their most remarkable audience results with the hashtag #audiencias [audiences],[35] but in order to get a full picture they rely on the specialized media publications, which at 9 am release lists of the most viewed programmes in each timeslot. None of the above-mentioned news workers participate in the two-hour editorial meeting at the beginning of the workday, however all are informed of the data audience outcome for the previous day more or less at the same time, through different media.

In sum, by observing the team and through informal conversations, I have identified five ways in which the news workers are informed of the audience metrics obtained the previous day: (1) the Twitter message received during the editorial meeting; (2) the GECA minute-by-minute report's collective reviewing on the big screen during the editorial meeting; (3) data exploration in GECA's mobile phone application, conducted individually through limited subscriptions; (4) the selective data distribution contained in screenshots that circulate among different news teams through WhatsApp groups; and (5) the articles published through specialized TV media. By tracking the separate paths that have followed each of these messages it is possible to outline the map of the audience data circulation. As we will see, each of these methods of getting acquainted with the everyday metrics has different depth and detail and is conveyed by various devices and platforms. Simply put, every journalist in La Sexta newsroom has their procedure to access metrics; however, most of the time, it is a top-down signal that triggers the reviewing process. All these collective action protocols are refer to one set of metrics – the people-metered audience metrics. The user information regime metrics have fewer media business-driven communications protocols, and the news team pays less attention to them,

[34] *WhatsApp groups, as newsroom practice and in its role in journalistic autonomy, is discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.*

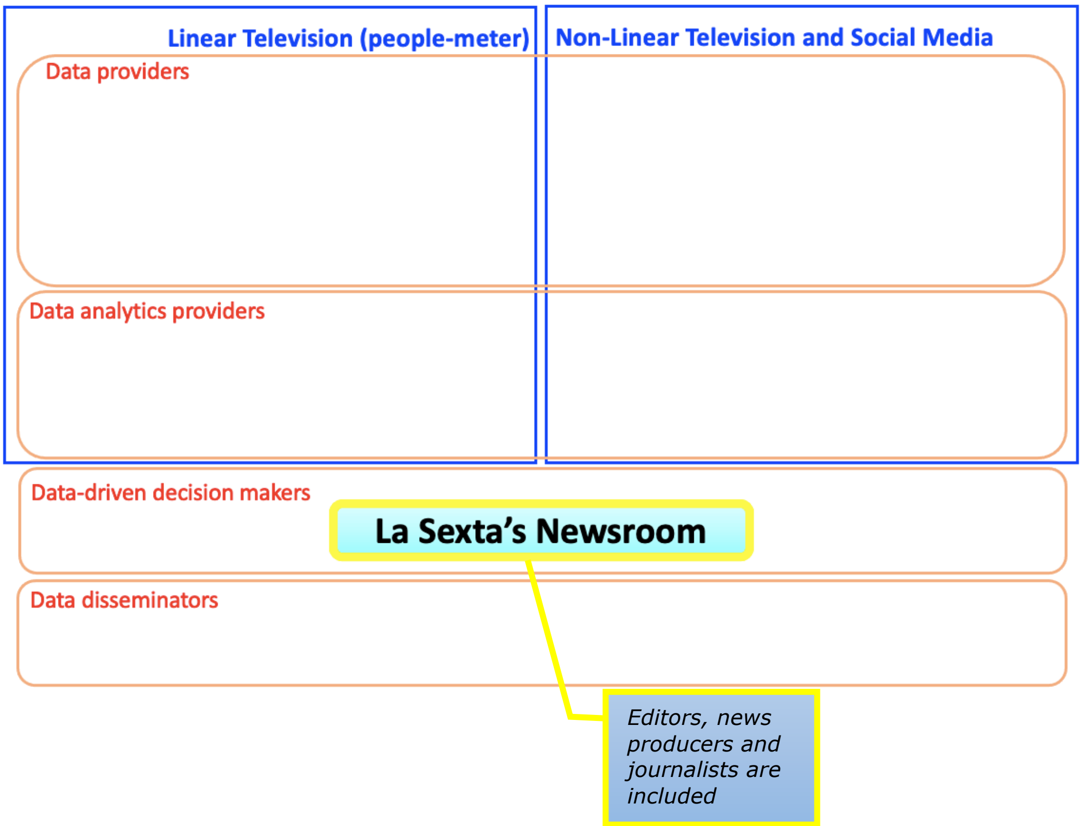
[35] *The systematic nature and suitable timing of these Atresmedia corporate tweets, their content, and their unique wording are all analysed in Chapter 6.*

among other features, as discussed later in the chapter. In the next section, the analysis will focus on the left-hand side of the graph showing the audimeter data circulation.

The Traditional Information Regime: Key nodes and data flows

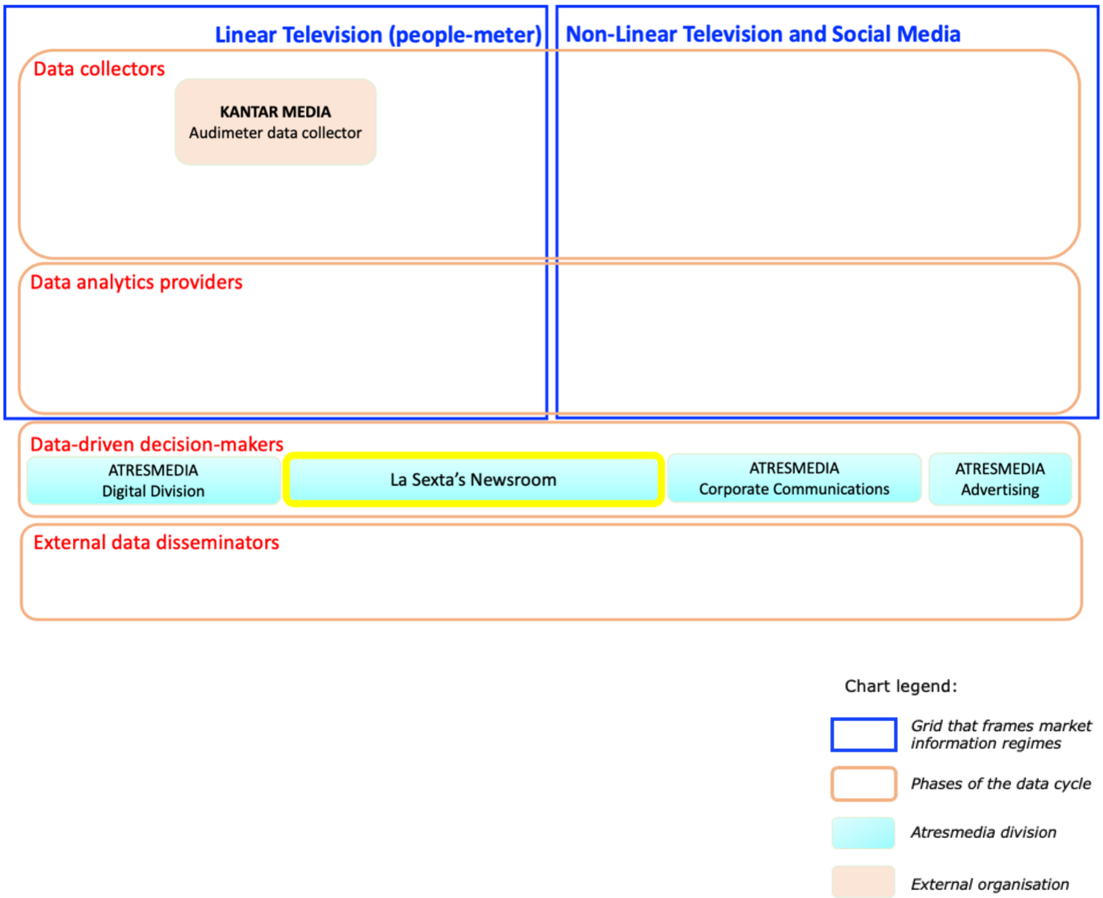
The entire Spanish linear TV system has one data provider, Kantar media. From the moment the audience data enters the data analytics phase, within or outside the media conglomerate, one can identify the nodes inside the media group that transform and frame the audience data into messages for intended audiences. Before going into them, I must first establish the exact position of the newsroom in the grid (Figure 5-4). La Sexta's newsroom place is at the level of data-driven decision-makers. The news team receives the audience data collected and analysed in the previous phases of the data cycle. The ecosystem map will allow us to observe what flows of audience data obtain clearance to enter the news production process and what flows do not. La Sexta's newsroom node includes the whole newsroom as a team and the journalists as individuals.

Figure 5-4 Position of La Sexta’s newsroom in the Data Ecosystem grid



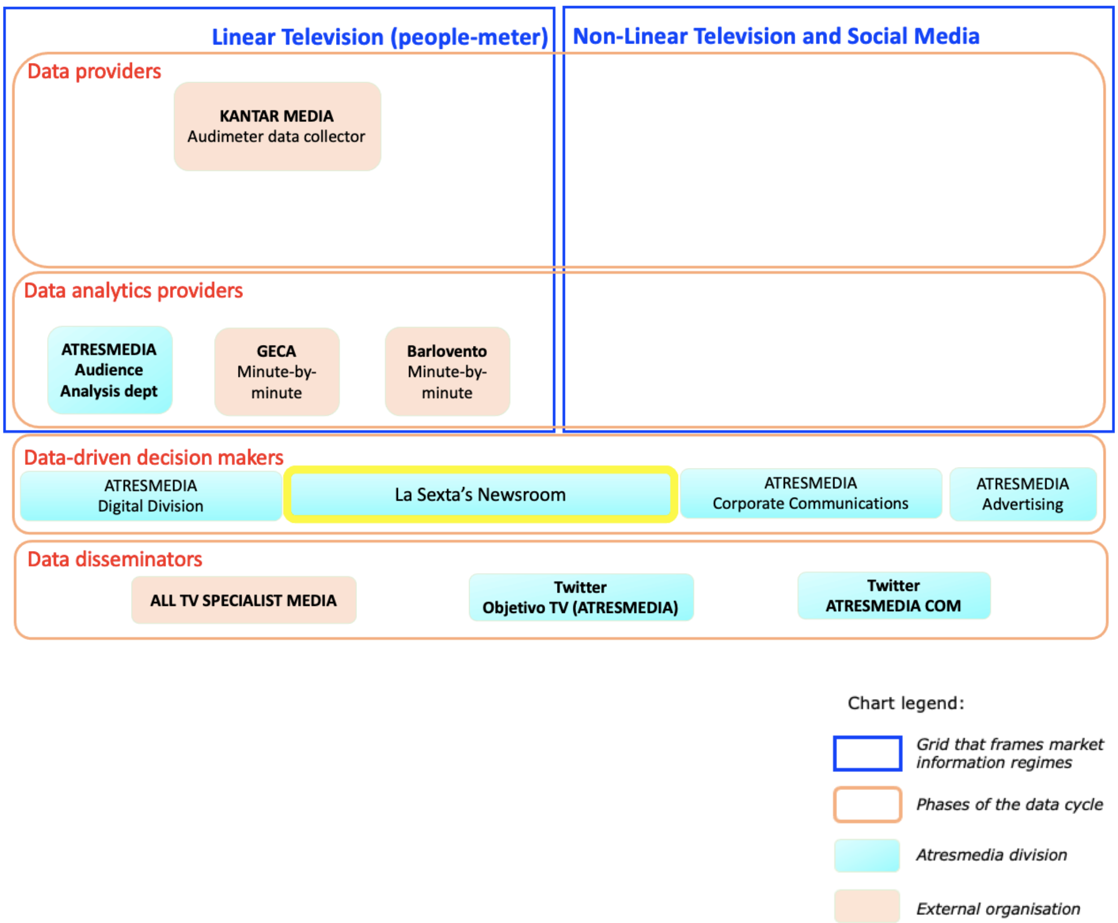
Besides the newsroom, there are other divisions of Atresmedia group in the phase of data-driven decision-makers, such as Atresmedia digital division, in charge of managing the internet-based content delivery on social media, programme websites and streaming television services; and Atresmedia Corporate Communications office, responsible for all public messages related to the media group, messages that are published in any media outlet inside and outside the media group. On a daily basis, the Corporate Communications office publishes the highlights of the audience data on Twitter early in the morning before the other TV stations do the same. The Corporate Communication team also manages Instagram and Facebook accounts, but they are predominantly used for programme promotion. Finally, Atresmedia's advertising department is another node placed among the data-driven decision-makers. Its advertising department uses the television audience measurement system for its original purpose, which is the conversion of the audience gathered in front of the TV into advertising revenues (Figure 5-5).

Figure 5-5: Other Atresmedia sections at the data driven decision-makers level



I will now review the key actors at each other phase of the data cycle. At the first level, Kantar Media is responsible for the process of data collection from linear television. In the Spanish market of linear television, Kantar Media is the only provider of audience data. There is no alternative to this daily, systematic, quantitative measurement, nor is there any other company who can offer the same volume of historic data. In the phase of data analysis provision lie three significant nodes: the Atresmedia audience analysis department, and two other companies that do not belong to Atresmedia: GECA and Barlovento (Figure 5-6), both of whom work with the raw data provided by Kantar with the aim of adding value to the information collected. Both companies offer audience consultancy, and their star product encompasses the minute-by-minute content description with its associated minute-by-minute audience score, which can be disaggregated by age, gender, economic status, and geographic location. Within the Atresmedia group, the audience analysis team studies the raw audience data daily, creating readable messages that convey what was done right and what went wrong. The aim is to improve Atresmedia workers' awareness, regarding the content that should be produced or avoided, in light of the audience metrics of the day before. In the longer term, the audience analysis office must find strategies or patterns to help generate a constant flow of audience throughout the programming. Those analyses are available to the entire media group through standardised reports sent by email or posted on the Atresmedia intranet, but also in the form of live oral presentations, or verbal reports delivered by phone.

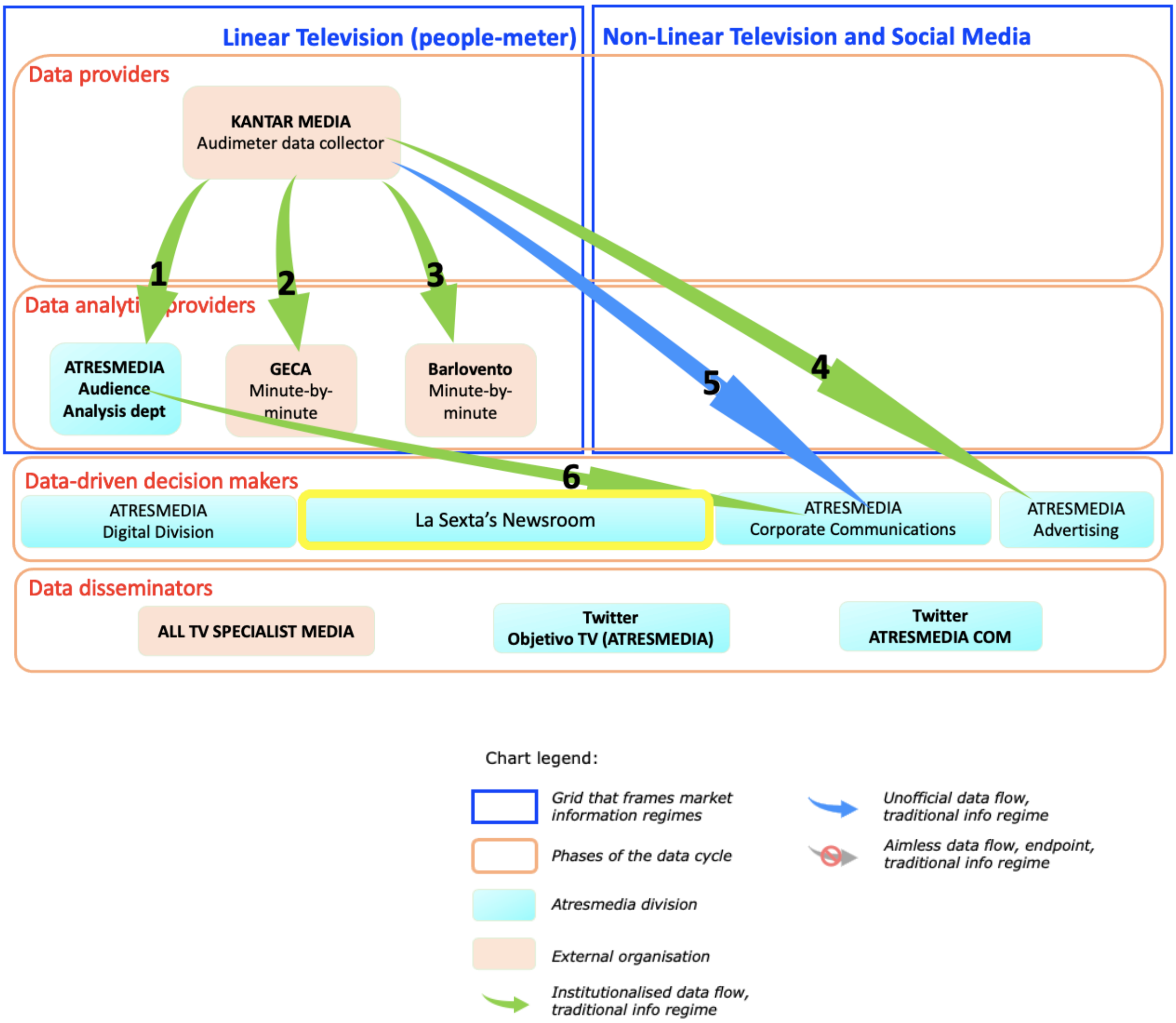
Figure 5-6 :The nodes on the four phases of the linear television data cycle



The grid for the linear television side is completed in the fourth phase of the data disseminators; the main nodes detected in the fourth phase are the Twitter accounts that manage the Atresmedia Corporate Communication office, @Atresmediacom and

@ObjetivoTV. In addition, in the fourth level we can find the press specialized in news about entertainment and television (Figure 5-6).

Figure 5-7: First wave of audience data flow among different nodes of the data ecosystem



What matters now is how and by whom the audience data is put in motion. The audience data is collected from a statistical sample of the Spanish population, which is the same process carried out in at least 89 other countries (Bourdon and Méadel 2014). The two more globally active firms in television audience measurement are Kantar Media, which conducts services measuring TV, radio, and internet audiences in 46 countries (Kantar Media 2019); and Nielsen, which measures TV audiences in 30 countries (Nielsen Company 2018). In Spain, the sample comprises 4,755 audimeters, that is to say, 4,755 households (Martin 2018).[36] The data is remotely collected, once a day, at 2:30 am and arranged into files which are delivered at 8 am. The entire process is organised and conducted by Kantar Media, who sends the

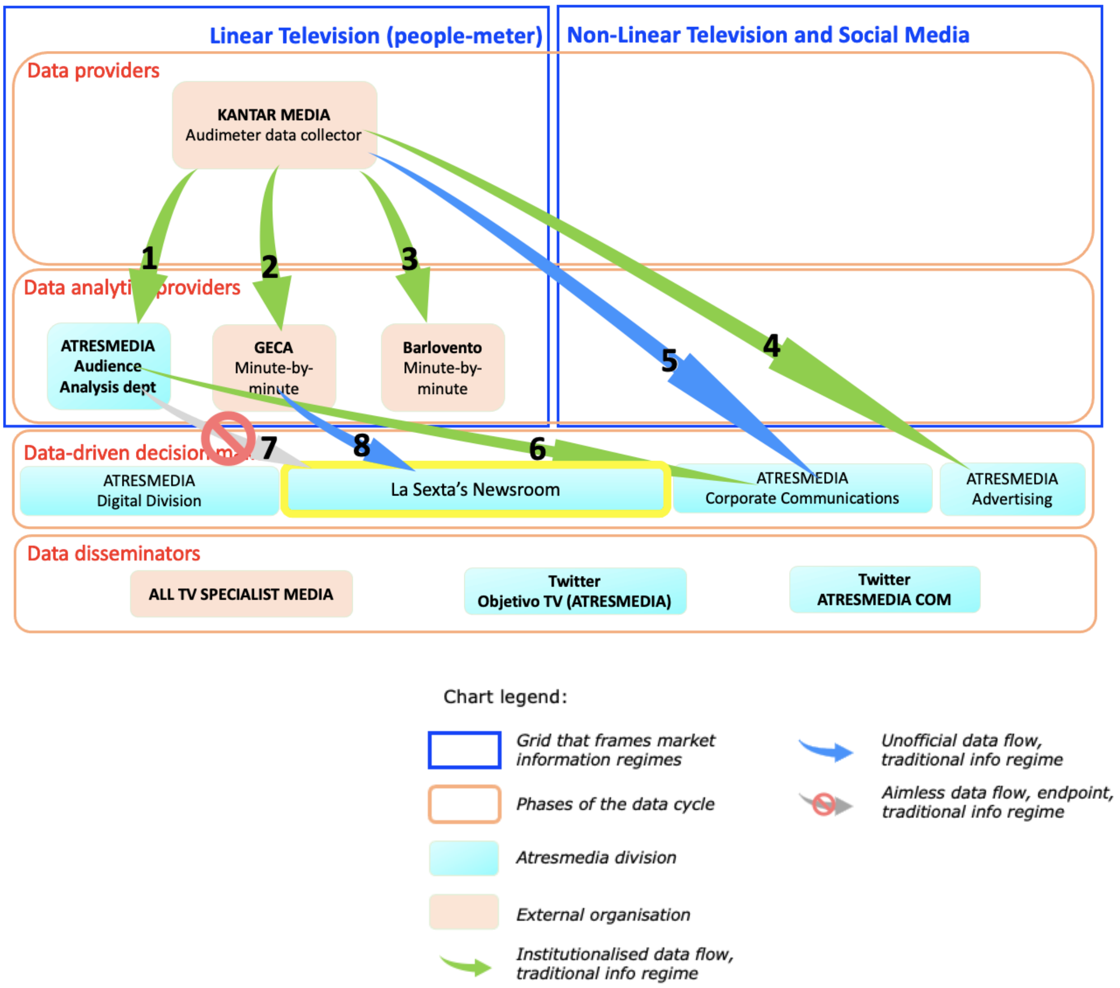
[36] *The sample of 4,755 audimeters measures the TV consumption of 11,500 individuals across 13 out of 17 Spanish autonomous regions (Martin 2018).*

files simultaneously to all the data analytics providers (arrows 1, 2, 3 and 4 in Figure 5-7).

These are official channels of delivery. Notably, throughout the fieldwork I found several offices within Atresmedia that have made special arrangements to receive the audience data directly from Kantar, bypassing the audience analysis department, as is the case with Atresmedia Corporate Communications (blue arrow 5, Figure 5-7) who receive files from both Kantar and the audience analysis office (green arrow 6, Figure 5-7). There is a sort of power interplay among different offices inside Atresmedia. For instance, Corporate Communications pays an extra subscription to Kantar Media to obtain autonomy from the audience analysis department. Corporate Communications staff members start work as early as possible in order to publish audience-leading TV products before the competing TV channels do the same (mainly on Twitter). On one occasion, an executive showed me his special direct access to Kantar data files. When consulted about why he enjoyed such privilege he told me he asked for Kantar Media data access as a condition when he was hired because he was well-trained in reading the data and is convinced that "it is an advantage in having a pair of alternative eyes reviewing the data".

Inside Atresmedia, the files delivered by Kantar are fed into pre-designed Excel macro files, which undergo human analysis for two hours each day at the Atresmedia audience analysis department. A daily 29-page PDF document is sent by email to the people in the top five hierarchical positions in the newsroom; however, during this fieldwork, none of these people opened this document and, I was told, none of them had paid any heed to it for a long time. The flow that does not get access to the newsroom is represented by the grey-coloured arrow, number 7, in Figure 5-8. A variety of reasons can be found for that rejection, but one basic factor is that the PDF format is not easily readable on a mobile screen; moreover, without a special application it is not possible to search for specific data in a PDF file through a smartphone, and the user cannot mine the data or choose the scope of analysis. The daily 29-page PDF audience metrics report includes daily and historical data, and although it is not opened daily by the staff members of the newsroom, these editors instead attend a meeting on a semi-annual or quarterly basis to review it. Therefore, eventually, through oral presentations complemented with qualitative audience studies, the data metrics finally find their way into the newsroom.

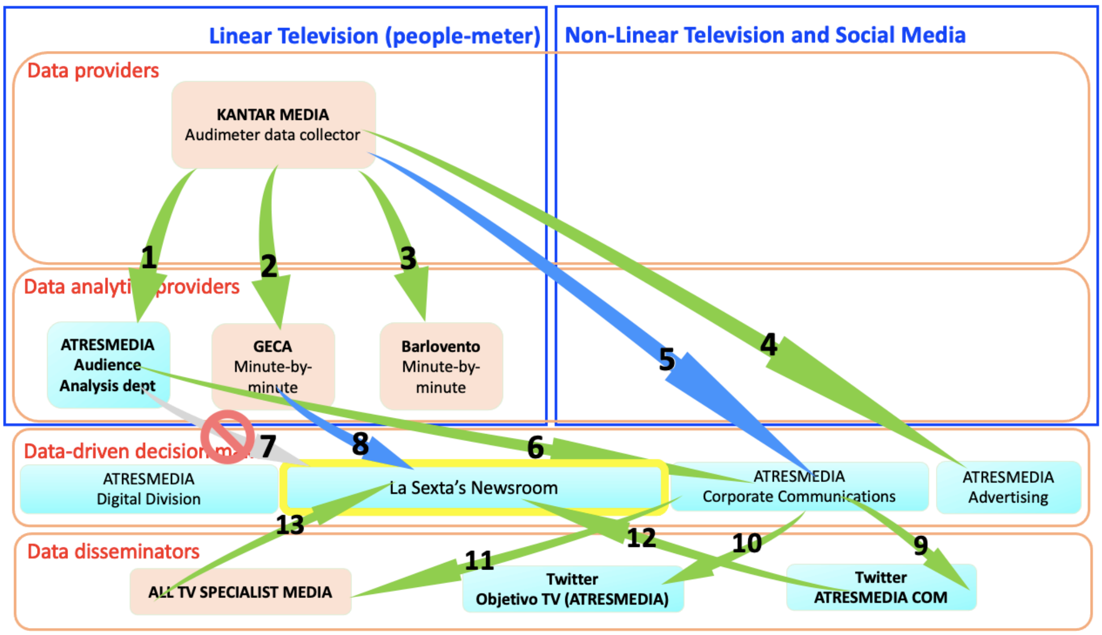
Figure 5-8: Data flows that are targeted to the newsroom

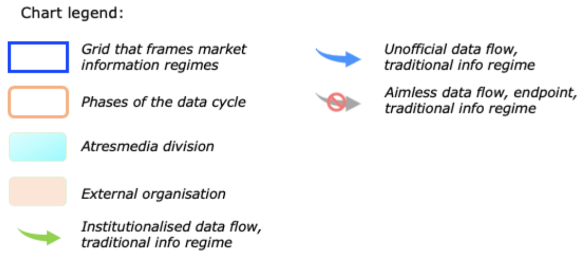


At this point, I would like to highlight again the Twitter message with audience data that breaks into the morning editorial meetings and triggers the collective reviewing of the minute-by-minute audience report prepared daily by the GECA audience analytics firm. In Figure 5-8, the GECA report reading is depicted as a flow (blue arrow 8) that gets access to the newsroom. That flow is depicted as unofficial given that these subscriptions are paid for by some bosses from their personal finances, not from the newsroom budget. For this reason, it was argued that there is limited access to the report. Moreover, the access system allows just one user at a time to log into the GECA site, therefore every programme editor must obtain permission to log in and review the report within a strictly scheduled timeslot, although some news workers – due to their keenness for consuming the micro-content analysis of audience metrics – access the GECA application using unconventional methods which means they avoid the fee payment.

What remains outside the main grid is the Twitter message that triggers the micro-analysis of audience data. This is an important data flow because it is how the data information from the media conglomerate finds its way into the newsroom. Atresmedia's Corporate Communications team has a role in producing, framing and spreading the Twitter message with the metrics embedded. By using Twitter from the early morning, this team manages to breach the newsroom's resistance in consuming everyday audience data, or at least bypassing the newsroom data gatekeeper. Their imagined audience includes three different groups: the personnel of other free-to-air nationwide TV channels; journalists specialised in news about television; and the general public. There is no evidence that the general public cares about or pays attention to audience metrics. However, at least three websites of traditional newspapers publish a version of television audience data daily, as do a dozen specialized media focused on the television industry. Besides, the Atresmedia Twitter accounts, which are mainly devoted to promoting audience metrics, have relatively little sharing activity; for instance, their retweets only ever reach double digits. These tweets always tag the relevant TV presenters, who then retweet the messages to their broader audiences. The team that produces the audience tweets does not seem to be aware of the effects that their tweets have on news workers. During the interviews with the tweets' producers and participant observation of their work, La Sexta's journalists were never identified as their imagined audience. The effects of the Twitter messages on the news team will be discussed in Chapter 8. The metrics re-signifying process that takes place at the Corporate Communication office is discussed in Chapter 6.

Figure 5-9: Other data flows that get access to the newsroom





All Corporate Communications' tweets are worded as messages that show off the success of the media group. The messages are released through two Twitter accounts, one of which is evidently part of the media group @Atresmediacom, the other with a more neutral name: @ObjetivoTV (arrows 9 and 10 in Figure 5-9). The same content fills a press release which is sent to all media specialised in news about television (arrow 11 on Figure 5-9). The tweet that is received in the first 15 minutes of the editorial meeting is depicted by arrow 12 in Figure 5-9. Finally, as stated earlier, journalists find the audience data by seeking headlines on specialised media websites (arrow 13 in Figure 5-9).

The full picture of the audience data ecosystem – note that, so far, I have only reviewed the data collected from linear television viewing – demonstrates the spread of the audience metrics as being far from randomly scattered, but instead it is controlled, intentional and purposeful for the entities inside the media conglomerate. Moreover, in its journey, when the messages carrying the metrics reach social media or the specialised media, it means that access the newsroom occurs outside the media group – the social platform is used as a steppingstone in the message's trajectory towards the newsroom. Another distinctive feature of the traditional information regime is the consensual use of the measurement terms by all parties involved in the TV industry, which facilitates and stimulates competition. In order to map the entire data ecosystem, what remains to be reviewed is the data cycle of the new information regime, also known as the user information regime by Webster (2010). The new information regime refers to the audience metrics collected from internet-based streaming services and from social media interactions, which I analyse here as a non-stop real-time flow, whose data delivery has neither a deadline nor control nor the agreement from TV or news industries.

The New Information Regime: Collective or personalised data reading

As stated earlier, the data collection from linear television is carried out exclusively by Kantar Media. The data collected is used by the entire Spanish linear TV system. These institutional players consensually agreed that the data generated by the sample and collected by the people-meter device is the standard and undisputed tool for measuring the size and composition of the audience gathered by each TV station: one tool, one data provider, one agreement. In the final analysis, this means that there is a notion that "only one source of value in the audience marketplace" exists (Kosterich and Napoli 2016:257).

In the user market information regime, by contrast, the data collected comes from internet streaming services, collected from many devices and a broader range of platforms that convey the content. In the case of La Sexta's news products, they have multiple delivery options, namely: complete news programmes can be watched in linear or on-demand mode through the streaming service of Atresmedia called Atresplayer; news stories or debate segments, detached from the programmes, are posted on Twitter accounts of the TV station, the TV programme Twitter account and, sometimes, through the news anchors' own Twitter accounts; likewise, news reports without the news programme reference are published on Facebook and websites of both the individual programmes and the TV station.

Aiming to control such diffuse news consumption has resulted in the concept of social TV, which is a well-established term in the media and advertising industries to refer to the members of a television audience who use communication technologies to connect with their relatives and friends to talk about television content, even when they are not watching the same screen (Bulkeley 2010; Bellman et al. 2014; Kosterich and Napoli 2016). To monitor this activity, TV programmes create specific hashtags referring to a word or phrase, always preceded by the hash sign (#), and used to identify digital content on a specific topic on social media websites and applications, especially Twitter and Facebook. All internet-based firms collect user data, and the data analytics providers phase of the data cycle is filled with a growing number of companies that produce content consumption reports in terms that have not been agreed to by the market participants. Also, the players measured are far from bounded. In the case of linear television, the measured market players are limited to those TV stations that broadcast free-to-air, by cable or streaming in linear mode, or in VOSDAL mode – "viewed on the same day as live".[37] Conversely, within the user information regime, each user of the data decides the realm to be measured, whether Madrid, across Spain or Europe, with comparisons among the TV stations or with all news outlets. Whatever choice the data user makes for their data reading, it will not be known by the other market players: there is no agreement or public comparison.

Therefore, the audience data gathered from the digital circulation of the news packages that are used by Atresmedia comes from three framed sources: all news media websites in Spain; all Atresmedia websites; and all that is said on Twitter or Facebook that relates to TV content (identified with a hashtag stated by the

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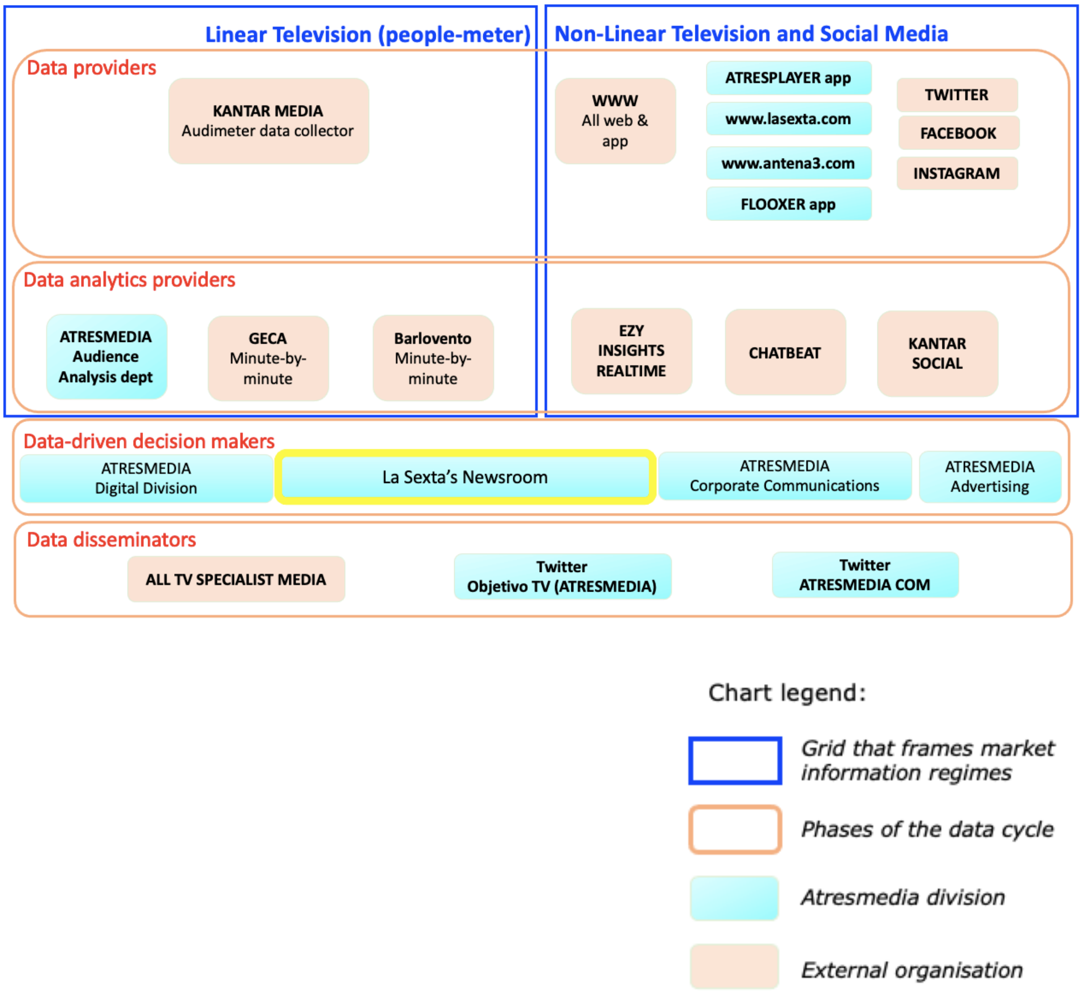
[37] *VOSDAL Definition from BARB website https://www.barb.co.uk/frequently-asked-questions/#:~:text=VOSDAL%20stands%20for%20Viewing%20On,day%20as%20the%20original%20broadcast.*

programme through onscreen text), shown as key nodes in Figure 5-10, on the top right-hand side of the blue box.

Figure 5-10: Key nodes for the user information regime data cycle



The data collected from social media is closely related to the guidelines of the technology corporations that manage social media platforms. The circulation of both the content and revenues by the advertisements placed on the news contents are out of Atresmedia's hands. Throughout the fieldwork, this dependency was observed, in the newsroom, in terms of a news product called Pásalo ("Share It"). The Pásalo news product involved daily posting of two news packages on Facebook's La Sexta TV fan page. Usually, the Pásalo news content reached an average of 80,000 viewers.[38] There was one notable Pásalo news story which reached 5.6 million views: this video showed the reaction of the Spanish singer Alejandro Sanz who halted his performance halfway through a concert to help a woman being attacked by a male audience member (Saldana 2016). Pásalo was the only news content deliberately produced and tailored by La Sexta's newsroom to be delivered over Facebook.

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[38] Data collected by the newsmakers from Facebook metrics.

However, in June 2018, the production of Pásalo packages for all platforms was suspended. On 8th April 2018, Facebook announced the decision to algorithmically downgrade the news media products distribution in the social network in the aftermath of criticism around fake news dissemination; the shift in how the ranking was calculated was explained as an effort "to make the news feed more about connecting with people and less about consuming media in isolation" (Hull 2018). From April 2018 onwards, none of La Sexta's Pásalo news products reached more than 12,000 views.[39]

This example of Facebook's shift in ranking calculation is interesting because it allowed me to observe what data matters in the newsroom realm. In the case mentioned above with Facebook, La Sexta's news team stopped publishing news products on the network. Two reasons were given for cutting ties with Facebook: first, Facebook's lack of historical data continuity – the unilateral changes to the Facebook algorithms left La Sexta without a point of reference to make performance comparisons; secondly, if the Facebook company decides to downgrade the presence of La Sexta content on users' feeds, the news team loses their agency to improve their audience performance. The lack of trust in Facebook metrics made the news team give up on producing tailored news for Facebook, as revealed in the participant observation.

In addition, it must be said that there is also a lack of consensus over what data matters in the aim of measuring the social audience. To put it another way, what the media group means by social audience data does not coincide with what the traditional data collector, Kantar Media, tends to measure on the internet; furthermore, what the journalists use and understand as a social audience also differs. For instance, Kantar Media is keen to produce consolidated figures by adding up cross-device content and offering alternatives for combined media engagement. Conversely, although the media group publishes their social media metric outcomes, behind closed doors Atresmedia executives are reluctant to compare or to equate 10,000 comments on Twitter, or 100,000 likes on Facebook, with two, three or four million viewers gathered for 30 or 60 minutes in front of the linear TV screen at prime time in a measurement system that they know and trust. On the other hand, journalists have their own perspective: they are most interested in their own metrics, such as likes, comments, shares, and profile clicks, among their preferred data forms. And while journalists seek to constantly surpass their own figures from the past, I could not find one journalist who was aware of the metrics of their colleagues. Furthermore, none of my journalist participants knew La Sexta's news programmes metrics on social media.

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[39] Data facilitated by Pásalo producers.

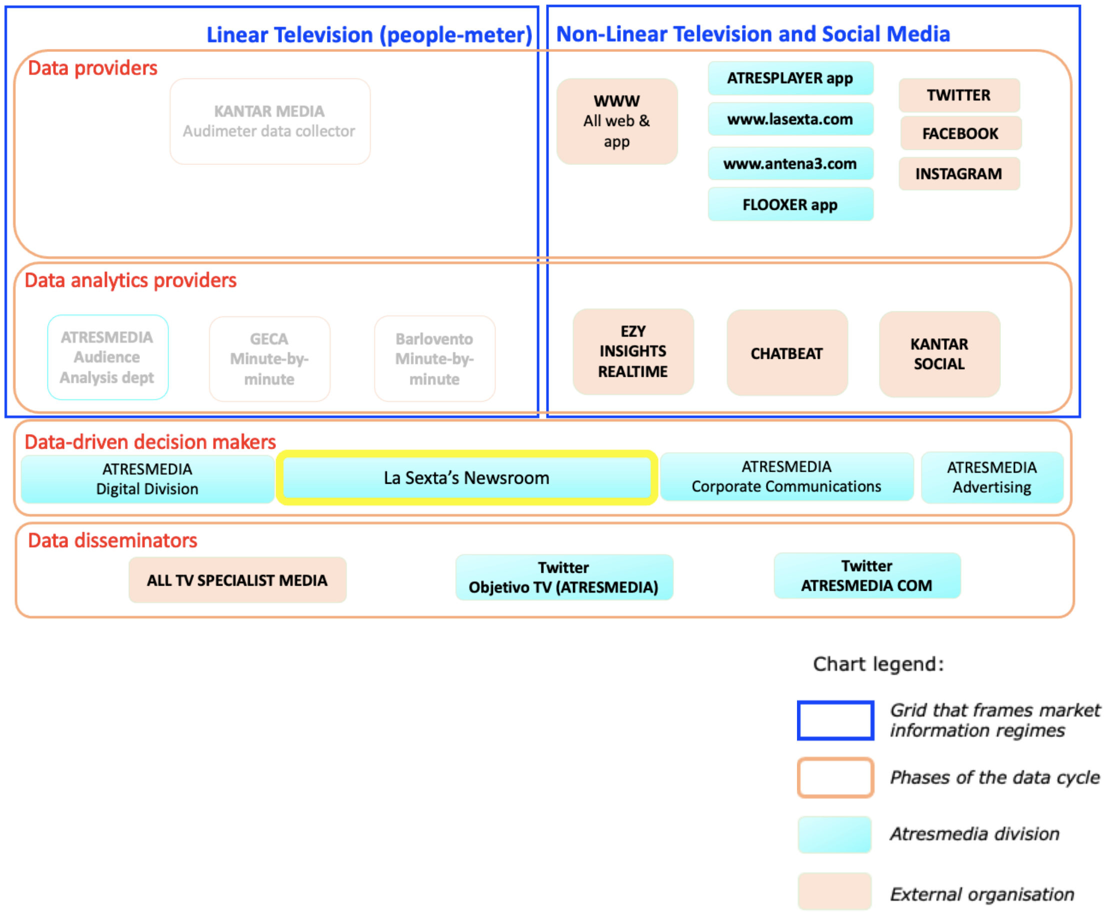
A cursory glance at what matters to each institutional stakeholder – in particular the TV media group – shows that they are concerned with an internet measuring system which does not undermine the traditional market information regime. On one hand, the aggregation model guarantees that Kantar Media maintains and strengthens a measuring system that has operated almost at a global scale for more than 30 years (Bourdon and Méadel 2014). On the other hand, TV media conglomerates such as Atresmedia keep their field of production bounded to a limited number of participants. If they accept a new market regime that involves social media metrics, the set of competitors would increase, including any other media from anywhere. Presently, the participants are bounded locally to the country’s media system.

When describing the third phase of the data cycle, called data-driven decision-makers in the data ecosystem grid, I have included the Atresmedia digital division (Figure 5-5, page 118). This is an umbrella department which hosts all digital sections of all Atresmedia outlets. In other words, all Atresmedia outlets have a digital newsroom separated from their traditional newsroom, meaning independent teams and premises. Moreover, digital and traditional newsrooms have separated hierarchical dependency. All digital newsrooms are integrated into one collective section, called Atresmedia Digital, that groups the teams responsible for the tasks of publishing in social media or programme websites. Until the end of 2018, both newsrooms of La Sexta – its digital news team and the in-person one – were working completely separately and barely communicated, although the digital newsroom’s main tasks were cutting and pasting on social media and TV programme websites content produced by the traditional newsroom. La Sexta’s digital division is a small group of eight news workers that covers all websites and social media accounts of La Sexta TV – not just news programmes.

While the audience data for linear television is published by the media group on Twitter daily, this is not the case with internet metrics. Once a month, Atresmedia Corporate Communications releases a report comparing the number of users for each media group accumulated during the preceding month and depicting the number of unique users for the same period for Atresmedia's two nationwide TV stations, Antena 3 and La Sexta TV, and their respective competitors. It is curious that they consider only two other audiovisual media groups in Spain to be competitors – Mediaset and RTVE, the public media system – when internet-based content consumption is being measured. In private, Atresmedia executives acknowledge that internet content delivery cannot be considered a media group core objective or a budget priority. The reason stated for this decision is that growth in internet traffic cannot easily be converted into revenue.

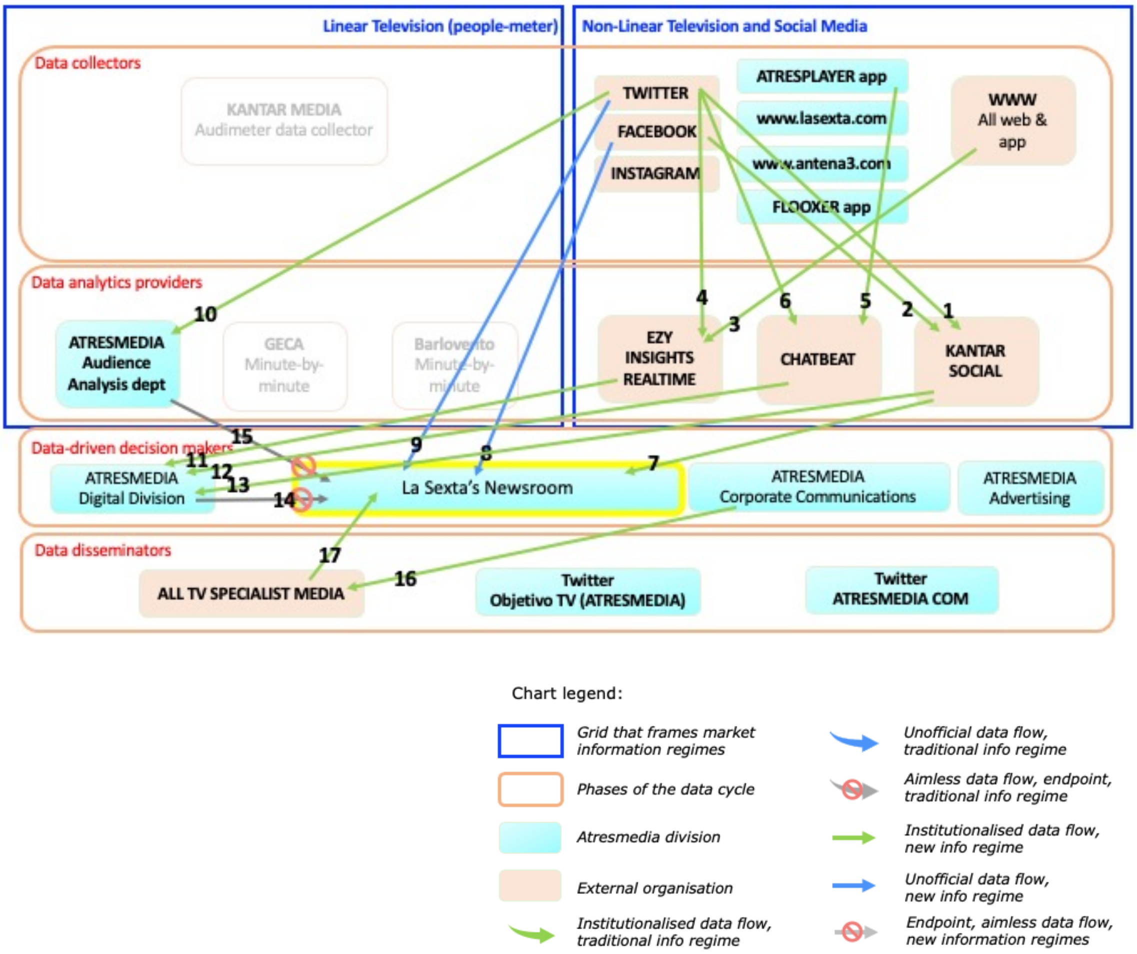
However, the news processes at La Sexta digital are highly data driven. The first phase of the data cycle was described earlier. The second level is filled with nodes that represent automated data analytics providers, which produce software that assists decision making for social media publishing. There are three firms, each of which has its own scope of data analytics: Kantar Social; Chartbeat; and Ezy Insights (Figure 5-11, blue box on the right-hand side, second phase.

Figure 5-11: Data analytics providers for internet-based streaming services, websites, and social media



The first data analytics provider, Kantar Social, belongs to Kantar Media, the same company that manages the audimeters. Briefly, Kantar Social tracks all Twitter and Facebook activity (Figure 5-12, arrows 1 and 2) on all television programmes in Spain in real-time, collecting data related to how many people are talking about television content or using the hashtags proposed by the TV programme; how many messages posted throughout the broadcast; and the trickiest practice of turning the complex emotional tone of viewers' messages into three unrefined terms: positive, negative, or neutral. As Kitchin (2014) states, the richness of qualitative data loss is the actual weakness of big data analysis. The British data company Kantar Media claims that a "symbiotic relationship between Twitter and TV can be harnessed to increase audience engagement and targeting capabilities" (2018:3), reinforcing the idea that social audience data stream should be subsumed into the traditional market information regime.

Figure 5-12: Data flows coming from internet based streaming services, websites, and social media



The tasks are not automated. The digital news team has a frenetic day work cutting and pasting text and videos, clipping material taken from the newsroom's managerial software, and uploading it onto social media. To prioritise what news story is released first or receives greater emphasis, the team uses the three software programmes described above, all of which help to determine which stories are most interesting to social media users. The sequence is always the same and is conducted as quickly as possible: watch the news programme, identify the story, check the Ezy Insight browser to see how that specific story has worked on other media (Figure 5-12, arrow 3 and 4); then check Chartbeat to see how it worked previously on all of the TV channels of the media group, both Antena 3 TV and La Sexta TV (Figure 5-12, arrow 5 and 6); the next step is to find the story in the files of the newsroom, to upload it to the programme website and to create messages for social media. The process entails cutting the introduction of the story from the newsroom software, pasting it to the feed, finding a video or taking a screenshot of the programme, filling out a form with the respective links of the website content and tags, and posting the message on social media. If the story is still being aired, the link guides the audience to watch it live on Atresplayer, Atresmedia's live platform. However, the workflow does not end there.

> *If I see that the story works, I retweet it, with another headline and the webpage's URL, because I'm interested in getting La Sexta's URL to move [be shared] – which is what makes it build up an audience.* (Martina, news producer)

All digital team members are journalists and, because of their assignments, all of them are compulsory users of the automated analytics software, therefore, their journalistic performance is overtly data-driven and, conversely to the newsroom, the team do not reveal signs of resistance. When they were asked about their duties, all mentioned generating traffic for the Atresmedia sites as a primary task.

The reluctance of the traditional newsroom to use real-time software to obtain social audience engagement is not absolute. One tool is used by the newsmakers on one linear TV programme: a live Saturday night programme called *La Sexta Noche* (*The Sixth Night*). On the programme *La Sexta Noche*, Kantar Social is constantly observed throughout the transmission (Figure 5-12, arrow 7), in particular when a live debate gets heated. If, during a debate, the news team detects an increase of hateful messages on social media, then the news editor orders a change of course in the debate or halts it altogether.

This was the bluntest expression of audience data interference observed in news decision-making and the only tool that, despite collecting data from social media, is regularly and directly used during a linear broadcast. Although I witnessed it in only one programme, the participant observation revealed that its use was systematic. Every Saturday night, from the beginning of the broadcast, one of the top members of La Sexta Noche's news team remains in the newsroom with the task of observing the evolution of Kantar Social. During the debate segments of the programme, the editor-in-line – who is in the switch room leading the broadcast – calls or texts the person in the newsroom asking about the audience mood on social media (Twitter and Facebook). At other times, it was the caretaker of Kantar Social who took the initiative to call the switch room when discovering growing negative attitudes on social media. The effect of the Kantar Social report becomes evident when, while observing the operation in the switch room, I overheard a conversation with the programme anchor: "This is becoming nasty; let's move on". While this example relates to one programme I witnessed, given the tool is accessible from the computers in the switch room it can be assumed that it is used more broadly. Although I never observed the same straightforward use of the tool in other programmes, what I did observe was a person from the newsroom staff occasionally visiting the Kantar social website during the broadcast while the news producer was in the switch room.

What the journalists do with the audience metrics from both the audimeter and social media will be discussed in Chapter 7, when describing team news practices, and in Chapter 8 as individuals. However, with regard to the mapping, it was noticed that the filtering process, or the data gatekeeping situation detected in the team, is not iron-clad. It has manifold spaces through which data audience messages reach news makers and are incorporated in the news decision-making processes. The use of Kantar Social throughout the broadcast of *La Sexta Noche* is one example, while the unfiltered consumption of the metrics on their social media accounts is another. In Figure 5-12 (blue arrows 8 and 9) it is possible to observe the direct entry of the audience data messages into the newsroom while the remaining links have been blurred.

While Kantar Social's tool (Figure 5-12, arrow 11) concentrates on collecting and analysing data mainly on one platform, Twitter, and strictly considers only those comments related to TV content, the other two pieces of data analytics software used in Atresmedia's digital division allow alternative focuses when it comes to interpreting what is going on in the wider internet. One tool is Chartbeat (2018), which belongs to a Finnish company based in New York and provides automated analyses of the performance of Atresmedia's digital content on all the websites, applications and platforms belonging to the media group (Figure 5-12, arrow 12). Chartbeat is programmed to analyse, in real-time, the data of users consuming Atresmedia digital content in order to pin down on which sites or platforms specific content works best (Chartbeat 2018). The last analytic tool used in the digital division is Ezy Insights (2018) (Figure 5-12, arrow 11), software designed for audience engagement practices. Ezy Insights detects in real-time the content that has worked best on each news website, within the territorial scope of the client's choice. In the case of La Sexta's digital team, this tool allows them to select the news stories that are working well in Spain, Europe, or throughout the world. Ezy Insights' promise is to make the newsmakers "able to see exactly what contents the World is engaging with as it happens" (Ezy Insights 2018:1). Its browser shows a ranking of the most viewed content and the media outlets which have published this content, a list that is continuously updated. It is worth mentioning that, again, the newsroom does not pay attention to the Twitter metrics reports (Figure 5-12, arrow 10) processed by the audience analytics office (Figure 5-12 arrow 15), nor does it accept the daily report sent by Atresmedia's digital division (Figure 5-12, arrow 14).

The complaints about these reports point out that they provided useless information. In the interviews, newsmakers explained that the categories used to communicate the news products' audience performances were puzzling. The digital reports do not mention the performance of specific news products, instead grouping the news into broader categories such as international news, politics, sports, entertainment or crime. The journalists claimed that if the news relates to a case of political corruption, they do not know whether it was placed among politics or crime categories. These kinds of questions made them rule out using such reports.

As noted earlier, La Sexta Noticias digital —a section within Atresmedia's digital division — is not integrated into the newsroom. When the news broadcast begins, one digital journalist is in charge of it. By keeping 13 tabs open on the web browser and a TV screen tuned in to La Sexta, the task consists of sustaining a parallel account of what is being broadcast and turning it into a story on many platforms at the same time: La Sexta TV's official website, the news programme's official website and the social media accounts of the newscast on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. As each news story has a duration of two or three minutes, the news producer is compelled to decide what news story deserves full deployment on social media, and that process is fully assisted by Ezy Insights, in order to check whether the story is working well on other news internet media in Spain, and Chartbeat to check whether the story is among the most viewed, liked, shared or commented content on the accounts of other Atresmedia programmes. When a news story ranks highly on both Chartbeat and Ezy Insights – inside and outside Atresmedia outlets – then all of La Sexta's team – no matter what task they are involved in at that moment – is asked to like or share the story in all versions published on Twitter and on Facebook. It is feverish and fully metrics-assisted work that lasts as long as the TV programme. The online real-time audience data provided by Ezy Insights and Chartbeat is decisive about whether to publish a news story or not. Journalistic judgement has a marginal effect in the news decision making process.

In sum, the automated data analytics tools neither gather data from all news consumers on the internet nor all internet users in Spain but rather each of these pieces of data analytics software offers the chance for the news media to tailor the list of media it is interested in comparing. This creates a more manageable schema with a known set of competitors, which in turn reproduces on the internet the elite ranking of news media that occurred in the media system in the pre-digital era. When examining which media are considered by Atresmedia group to be compared with La Sexta, the list mostly includes the digital versions of traditional media. The list also includes some native digital media which already were, in 2018, well-established news media.

La Sexta's digital team, the team that makes intensive use of these automated data analytics services is, in turn, the smallest team among those who publish news content under the La Sexta Noticias brand. As noted above, the team made intensive use of automated analytics services and, at the same time, receives little attention because of its small size and its relative small revenues.

Foucauldian overview of the competing market information regimes

What emerges from the graphic representation of the audience data ecosystem is the encounter of two information regimes, each with its data collection procedures and data analysis, its own pace and format of audience data delivery – which consequently create two different representations of the audience performance. These data flows even have a point of encounter and recursiveness, arriving at the newsroom just in time to restrain or give free rein to the newsmakers in their news decision making. Given the power interplay between the information regimes and the multiplicity of agents involved in the data circulation, the audience data ecosystem lends itself well to a Foucauldian analysis of power, resistance, discipline and normalisation. Considering the difference in the performance of the two measurement systems, one which is highly homogenised and works the same for the entire industry and another tailored by every user, allows for analysis of their fit for disciplinary purposes.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Foucauldian analysis of power has been one of the most influential frameworks to study power since the second half of the 20th century. Foucault observes that power arises in any sort of relationship, and understands the exercise of power as emerging from the social fabric that conducts people towards the guiding force of self-governance (Huff 2007). Therefore, the Foucauldian concept of power examines both the organised practices of the state and the individual practices by which the population governs itself. Meanwhile, the Foucauldian concept of resistance is understood as inextricably linked to power. Foucault claims that only by examining resistance practices can the power micro-practices be exposed (1982), not denying the individual agency rather understanding the relationship between dominance and resistance as an ongoing evolving conflict.

Foucault also postulated that dominance is enacted through discipline and identified the disciplinary power as the techniques nested in banal procedures and subtle practices that regulate the thought and behaviour of members of society (1978). Among the disciplinary instruments, he mentioned hierarchical observation and normalizing judgement.

From this point of the data cycle in the traditional market information regime, depicted in Figure 5-5, it is worth examining who has a predominant role in deciding what is measured. In reference to Foucault's conception of power, Merry (2016) stated that those who can measure things effectively can set the agenda by deciding what issues are important enough to be measured and what issues should be ignored. With regard to the Television Audience Measurement (TAM) system, the data collecting firm does not autonomously decide what is measured and what is not. That is the outcome of a multiplicity of force relations which constantly overlap and intersect (Lynch 2011). In terms of the power to decide what is measured, there are different relations of force, not all of which are of the same quality or kind (Foucault 1978) at any decision-making point in the measuring process. Among the identified stakeholders are the TV media conglomerates, the advertising industry, and state regulations.

The TAM has been at work since the early 1990s in Spain and during the last 28 years it has undergone continuous updating; any change must be agreed simultaneously for all those TV stations that have a contract with Kantar Media. For instance, during the period of this research, two significant processes of change took place: one, the incorporation of home visitors into the volume of viewers; the second, which was still under assessment by the TV media conglomerates, consisted of a coding process of all news reports taken from linear television and uploaded onto social media or onto the websites of each media group. The aim of this latter process was to add social media streaming viewers to the people-metered audience on linear television.

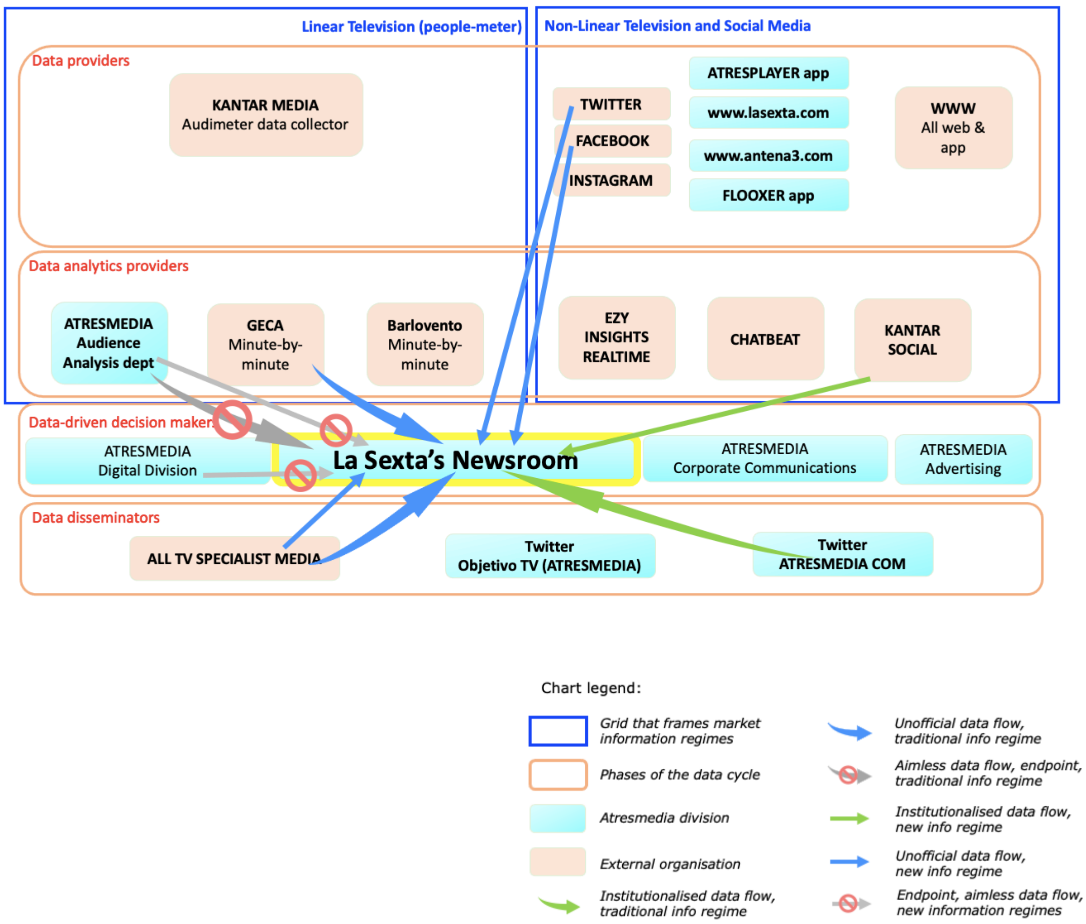
The TAM system was designed with the purpose of allocating advertising rates based on the entire Spanish television system. As noted later, the fluent quantification of what is seen, when, and by whom, inevitably ranks all content that is aired and, by virtue of that stratification, a continuous race is fuelled to reach the top of the ranking or at least climb positions on the scale.

The three consequences of the TAM mentioned above are aligned with what Foucault called the instruments of the discipline of power (1995). According to Foucault, wielding discipline requires hierarchical observation (1995), in this case deployed by the TAM system, in which a standardised gaze is achieved that allows the mutual supervision of one another, that is to say, every channel, every TV station and every news professional is watching all others. The second instrument is the normalised judgement (Foucault 1995), which in the case of the TAM is revealed as a sort of corrective mechanism that rewards those audio-visual products that capture audiences and penalises those who do not. The third instrument of disciplinary power described by Foucault is examination (1995), which is practised daily, turning the body of historical audience data into a compulsory mechanism of continuous evaluation. The installation of a comparative system pushes the content makers to fulfil certain requirements in order to reach the top of the ranking. I would remind the reader that in the current chapter we are envisioning the data circulation. The consequence of hierarchical observation through metrics, normalised judgement, and continuous evaluation is discussed in Chapters 7 and 8. Chapter 7 examines the deployment of this disciplinary power through the audience measurement system, offering a detailed description of how the news teams have developed an ability to cope with this power. Meanwhile, in Chapter 8, the analysis focuses on journalistic authority and consequences for autonomy.

Returning to the Foucauldian conceptual framework previously mentioned, as discussed below, those choices of audience data consumption made by the heads of the newsroom belong to the flipside of the managerial disciplinary power, a sort of resistance which is part of the power, never outside of it (Foucault 1978). Within the newsroom, that resistance takes the form of a data gatekeeper. It is not a resistance to all data but rather to a specific audience data report prepared within the media conglomerate. By reviewing the accepted data flows and those rejected in the data circulation map, it is possible to collate a first hint of the interplay of power and resistance within the newsroom. These early indications allow foreseeing that there is a power relationship to the extent that there is an ongoing battle of two forces pushing against each other, a battle which is ultimately the only way to alter the power relation (Foucault 1978; Lynch 2011) between the media group and the newsroom. The following empirical chapter looks more deeply into the consequences of the power interplay, such as the news team's data filtering process or data gatekeeping. I will not probe further into the journalistic approach to audience data yet, however, as that matter will be fully developed in Chapters 7 and 8.

Conversely, by comparing the metrics collected from social media with the linear television metrics, it appears that the lack of consensus in the metering process is a key difference between the two market information regimes and stopping them becoming equally efficient as disciplinary techniques. It is worth mentioning that there is no agreement that the user information regime has evolved to be a proper market information regime (Méadel 2015), precisely because of the lack of agreement on what matters should be measured. Espeland and Stevens (2008) state that quantification has become a key mechanism of disciplinary power through its capacity to simplify, classify, compare and evaluate those who are subjects of surveillance. Quantified measures facilitate the normalization of patterns. However, the use of automated data analytics tools in which the user can customize what to measure and whom to compare makes the quantification and the comparison a private matter. There is no daily standardised report that is publicly distributed and acknowledged by the market players as with the people-meter metrics. What is achieved through the customization of the automated data analytics tool is self-surveillance, and workers become immersed in competition with their own past records, in the search to achieve better figures every day. These numbers cannot be ignored and they help journalists to comply with their managers' demands without needing to be asked, as shown in Bunce’s (2017) discussion of the introduction of audience metrics in the Reuters newsroom in Kenya. However, I am getting ahead of the empirical analysis of the following chapters. At the moment, what should be borne in mind are some concepts that emerged amidst the mapping of the acceptance or rejection of specific sets of data, namely data historical continuity that allows proper comparison, publicly acknowledged evaluation and systematic daily data delivery. These concepts will be reviewed further to understand the conditions that the data must fulfil to become a disciplinary tool.

Figure 5-13: All data flows which are targeted towards the newsroom and journalists and their respective status of access



At this point, I would like to reflect on Figure 5-13, which does not present new data but summarizes the full extent of data flows that are targeted to the newsroom and their access status. As can be seen, there are 10 data flows trying to gain access, of which only seven are successful: two are official flows from the media conglomerate; five are unofficial. The three rejected flows are all official paths, which can be read as acts of resistance. The use of resistance brings to light the forms of dominance and discipline (Foucault 1982), however, at least in one case, there is a frustrated attempt from the Atresmedia audience analysis department to convey the daily 29-page PDF file whose failure was down to a technical problem: the format is not readable on a smartphone. At first sight in Figure 5-13, the official flows that get access to the newsroom are meaningless or at least trivial. The institutionalised data flows that successfully reach the newsroom are twofold: first, the selective overall figures of audience data embedded in the Twitter messages; second, the Kantar Social real-time audience information offers a snapshot of the social television audience's mood. Neither offers an elaborate representation of the audience. Otherwise, there are other three official reports: the people-meter daily report and the social media official report, both prepared by the Audience Analysis section, and the overall internet metrics report set up daily by Atresmedia digital, none of which are read by the newsroom staff. Therefore, I call these endpoint or aimless dataflows.

As mentioned earlier, this data ecosystem map is merely a point of departure to understand what sorts of data prevail in news production, where that data comes from, and, more importantly, who is involved in making sense of the data. The following chapters are organised from the general vision of the media conglomerate practices and state and market regulations until the data consumption at the individual level and its impact on building professional journalistic identity and autonomy. At the intermediate level, this thesis discusses the newsroom uses of data as a news team.

5.4. Conclusion: Fluid Pathways and Dead-Ends as Signals of Power and Resistance

The first conclusion of the data ecosystem map is that the data flow into the newsroom is not as straightforward as one might think. The heads of the newsroom carry out a set of filtering practices which attempt to halt the tide of data. However, the official practices of the Atresmedia conglomerate that involve the use of Twitter or other media to release nuggets of audience data systematically opens the door to collective reviews of audience reports. The assumption is that the collective immersion in audience data happens because it is in the newsroom’s interest, and it is not because the managers of the company plan for it to happen in that way. Sauder and Espeland (2009) refer to this sort of practice that induces self-government as capillary, continuous and diffuse, a highly efficient form of disciplining. The outcome is that in the newsroom the audience data from the day before is systematically reviewed at the beginning of the editorial meeting. However, not all filtering practices can be explained from the Foucauldian disciplining approach. There is a case of incompatibility between message format and delivery device, which undermines report reading. Besides, the newsroom’s highest ranked editors, the so-called 'commandants' (as the news team calls them) also excuse themselves from attending the daily audience meetings in which all department managers receive an update of the audience data.

> *For the newsroom it is useless to attend daily to those meetings. My colleague from the fiction department can review the ratings and rewrite their script to improve the audience metrics they get. I do not have a script, so I cannot rewrite anything. I just need to be prepared for any news*

coverage and every time, the news team must do it as better as possible. That's the only way. (editor)

The map illustrated my argument about the coexistence of the two market information regimes. At first sight, the main difference between the two sets of data was related to the ability to turn it into revenues. However, there are other considerations to weigh the data value. The linear television audience measurement is historically consistent; it has barely changed throughout its long life; it has an established delivery, once a day; the media group managers heavily back it; and the same items measured work for all the market players. Therefore, comparisons over time and between a selected group of players are possible, and all these comparisons are publicly shared. The user information regime, on the contrary, suffers from a lack of historical continuity either because of algorithm changes or untrustworthy data in relation to users' consumption; internet metrics flow permanently, in an updating mode without a pause, thus it does not allow a reviewing protocol; they do not have the managers support, and since they are personally tailored, it allows self-comparisons over time or private comparison with other market players, therefore, internet metrics does not generate publicly comparable reports. These are the arguments for why linear TV data prevails over internet metrics at a business and news team level. As seen in Chapter 8, there are other considerations at the individual level.

Another issue relates to the paths to convey the data into the newsroom. There are multiple ways to convey the linear television audience data into the newsroom and, in turn, in the news team there is a hierarchical task assignment in order to analyse the data information. With regards to the user information regime, there is a resistance at various levels of the Atresmedia group to accept it as a proper market information regime which can replace the traditional measuring system, as will be discussed in Chapter 6. For Meàdel (2015), the long-lasting use of the people metering system lies in the consensual agreement of just a few players, two conditions that are not given with the user information regime.

Whether or not there are comparable reports comes back to Foucault's idea of the normalizing judgement as a form of disciplinary power in which, instead of from a person, disciplining comes from a standard that is considered normal or average in society (1995). According to Espeland and Stevens (2008) and following Foucault's framework, metrics normalize and create standards. They should also have historical consistency to became credible standards. Chapters 7 and 8 will discuss the standards in La Sexta, referring to reporting practices and journalistic performance.

While this chapter hasn't documented disciplining or resistance, the mapping of the data circulation provides an initial picture of the disciplinary system at work. The glimpse provided here relates to the big picture of the linkages between media ownership and journalism practices in the newsroom. In the next three empirical chapters I will review how the process of news production reveals the ways in which the media accept being assessed and how journalists as teams as well as individuals negotiate and navigate adopting metrics in their routine work life.

6. THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL: The art of crafting metrics

6.1. Introduction

At the beginning of July 2017, while I was in Madrid negotiating access to Atresmedia Group's newsrooms, executives, and facilities to carry out my fieldwork, Spain was going through a strangely peaceful period after several weeks of disruption. A month earlier, on 9th June, the Catalan government had announced preparations for an independence referendum. The central government in Madrid took for granted the referendum's unconstitutionality and the impossibility of carrying it out. But in Catalonia they were determined, and the logistics of the elections were quietly prepared. July and August in Madrid are summer months, and political recess meant that most public institutions work part-time, which is noticeable in the density of the news flow. It was an environment of rare calm that did not presage the outbreak of the referendum day (1st October 2017) or the subsequent disturbances that were going to set Catalonia on fire. Reporters in the main television newsrooms reinforced the sense of calmness, allowing a restricted and partial information flow to reach the newscasts due to the orthodox method of mainly looking for sources in formal institutions, a news gathering practice known as elite sourcing (Tandoc Jr. and Duffy 2019), on the assumption that these sources ensure access to breaking news (Zelizer and Allan 2010). Meanwhile, thousands of anonymous citizens started to flood social media, bringing fresh material from unexpected places, saying that the referendum was in set-up mode. The connection/disconnection between traditional television and social media is a relevant matter for this dissertation and for this chapter.

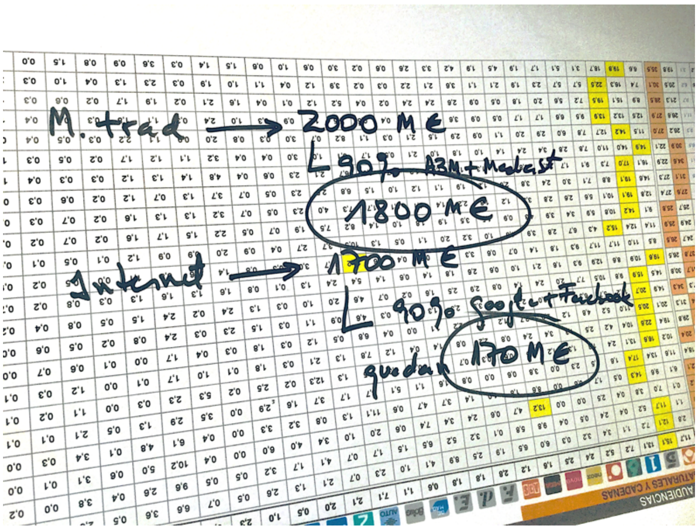
Amidst this environment of apparent calm, I held interviews with five executives of the Atresmedia group. Some belonged to different company television stations, and others to the general headquarters of the group. All the interviewees agreed on the idea that while they did not rule out the need to distribute content on social media, their real business – the source of the bulk of their income – came through the linear television broadcasting mode, no matter whether the content was conveyed by a TV set or an internet platform. Linear TV is the traditional mode of viewing at the time of broadcast in contrast to catch-up, on-demand or non-linear television, characterized as streaming internet television (Kantar and Ofcom 2016). Therefore, the interviewees thought that the use of these networks should work to reinforce the traditional platform and that social networks' main role was only to channel the audience to the live broadcast screen and, secondarily, broadcast news on their own. One of the executives explained the point of view as follows:

> *We are lucky enough that the digitalization of television came 10 years after the newspapers, we learned from their experience, and we are not going to commit*

suicide like newspapers by throwing all our content on the internet for free. (Executive B)

In one of the interviews there was an incident that suggested the need to explore what, until then, seemed like a staunch defence of the traditional market regime. During this interview, to reinforce the message that the advertising seen on the traditional screen was the bulk of the income of the media group, the executive took out his 29-page audience daily report, and began writing on it, as shown in Figure 6-1.[40]

Figure 6-1: Photograph of notes written over the audience chart



According to his notes, the money invested in advertising by companies and institutions in traditional media in Spain was, in 2017, around €2,000 million, 90% of which was invested in the duopoly formed by Atresmedia and Mediaset – €1,800 million was distributed between the two groups. On the other hand, in the same period, the total advertising investment by companies and institutions on the internet in Spain was about €1,700 million, which was mostly destined for Google and Facebook, leaving only 10% – €170 million – for all Spanish media that publish on the internet. The media group said that it was not interested in a fight for that 10% against Facebook and Google.

But despite the institutional discourse and defence of the traditional audience measurement system, the audimetry is being challenged by the proliferation of metrics coming from news consumption on social networks. There is a power interplay between two forms of news consumption, two forms of measurement, and these last two points jeopardize how the news firms are funded.

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[40] *Photograph taken from meeting notes.*

In Chapter 5, I discussed the presence of both information regimes in a power interplay. In that particular ecosystem, the audimetry receives strong support from the company, and the newsroom systematically reviews, uses and resists the statistically sampled representation of the audience performance. Instead, the user information regime receives considerable attention from news workers, but its use is random and non-systematic. In this chapter, I investigate the interplay of both market information regimes in light of the political economy of the news media. Therefore, I explore Atresmedia's understanding of the market logic and state regulations that shape the industry competition. I also explore how the conglomerate creates meaning and discourse from the data they receive; how the media group communicates their metric performance to the advertising industry, the general public and the company's workers; and, finally, the implications for the media groups' metrics discourse.

6.2. The Spanish TV System: Ownership and state regulations in action

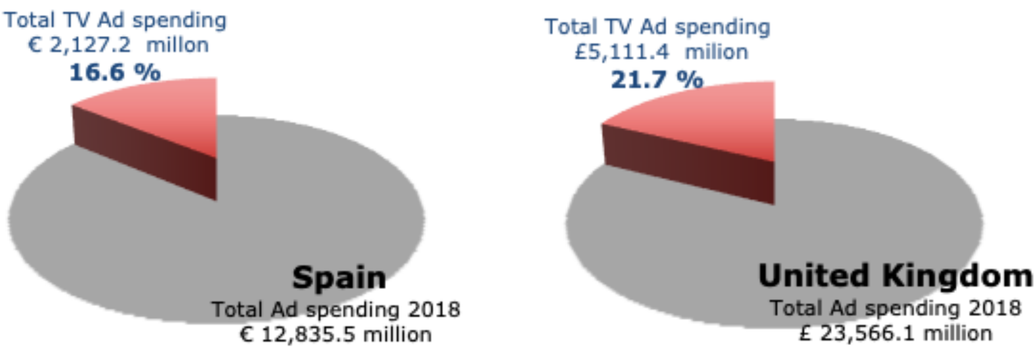
Atresmedia managers aim to protect the audience measurement system for traditional linear TV, which has been at work for almost half a century. If markets are elite groups of producers who observe each other (White 1981), then the tool used for mutual observation — the television audience measurement system — is a market information regime. Anand and Peterson explain that “market information regimes are the medium through which producers observe each other and market participants make sense of their world” (2000:272). Quantification – which gives every player a score in a standard metric that ultimately makes them comparable (Espeland and Stevens 2008) – is how market information regimes' sensemaking works.

The television industry has evolved from having monopolized the means of production to a market of digitized media that allow everybody to access the means of audiovisual content production and delivery; from the industry dictating what and how to measure the audience to a market where all content consumption behaviour is quantified. Therefore, the TV industry evolved into a market in which measurement rules are beyond the control of the industry. La Sexta TV is at that same crossroads, trying to find its way between these two market conceptions.

Born amidst the technological revolution of the media and shortly before the Spanish economy sank into a two-wave crisis during the first decade of the 21st century, La Sexta became part of a changing media landscape. In particular, the television system faced an explosive fragmentation of the audience with the arrival of the digital terrestrial television (DTT) and the creation of satellite channels, cable channels and pay TV (García Santamaría 2013), besides the OTT streaming services.

According to a report from the consulting firm Infoadex, in Spain, television is still the main medium for advertising investment. In 2018, 38.6% of the total investment of the advertising industry went to conventional media, along with 16.6% of total media advertising spending (INFOADEX 2019). That is not an unusually high percentage – Graph 6-1 shows a percentage comparison between Spain and the United Kingdom (Advertising Association/WARC Expenditure Report 2019) and gives a sense of the relative size of the TV industry in each one of these markets.

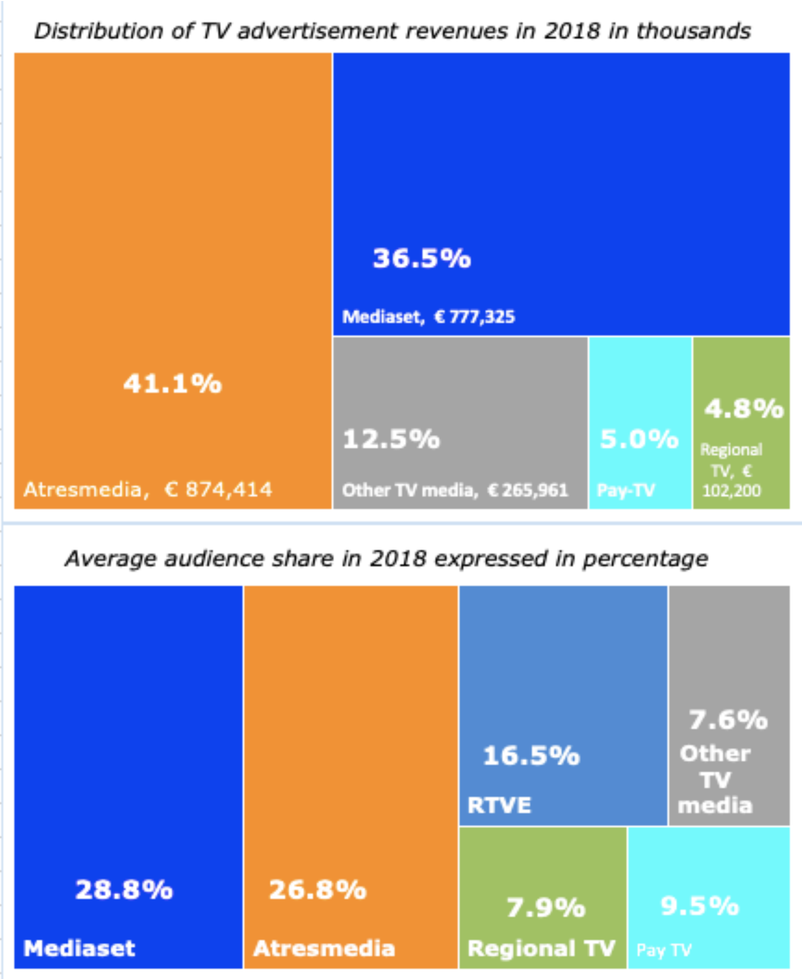
Graph 6-1: Percentage comparison, between Spain and the United Kingdom, of TV industry advertising spending as a proportion of total media advertising investment in 2018[41]



To understand the power of the size of the so-called TV duopoly within the Spanish television system, it should be noted that in 2018 the sum of Atresmedia's and Mediaset's advertising turnover was 77.6% of the entire advertisement investment in the six-category Spanish television system described above (INFOADEX 2019:15). On the other hand, in the same year, both media groups, with their 13 channels, collected 55.6% of the audience share (Barlovento Comunicación 2018:45). A visual comparison of the audience-share and the income from advertising of Atresmedia and Mediaset with their 13 TV stations, and the rest, making up more than 200 TV channels, can be seen in Graph 6-2.

[41] *Source: author's own elaboration with data gathered from Infoadex report (2019) and Advertising Association/WARC Expenditure Report (2019).*

Graph 6-2: Audience share and advertising revenues in 2018 of the main players in the Spanish TV system[42] [43]



The TV duopoly began to be set up in 2009, when an intense concentration of media was initiated in Spain, especially in the television market, as a strategy to control the fragmentation of audiences and also to curb the consequent dilution of advertising investment. In 1999, before the expansion of the television market, the three main channels – Telecinco, Antena 3, and Televisión Española – accounted for 76.5% of the television sets turned on (INFOADEX 2019), whereas in 2018 the same three main chains achieved only 36% (Barlovento Comunicación 2018) of the television sets turned on. It is worth noting that between 1999 and 2018 attention to television actually increased slightly: in 1999 Spaniards spent 222.2 minutes a day watching

[42] *RTVE, state-owned Spanish public media, takes part in the television audience measurement system of the people-meter, but does not participate in the advertising market (Ley General de la Comunicación Audiovisual de España 2010b, Article 43.2).*

[43] *Source: author's own elaboration. Data gathered from the annual financial statements presented by the main Spanish media groups to the regulatory authority (Atresmedia 2018; Mediaset 2018) and from the Infoadex report (2019).*

television (AIMC 2019), while in 2018 consumption was 234 minutes per day (Barlovento Comunicación 2018).

There is a link between the duopoly creation and the audiences' construction and their monetisation. Two decisions from state regulatory institutions facilitated the creation of the duopoly. First, the two main private television networks – Telecinco and Antena 3 – requested permission from the competition and stock market authorities to merge with minor players in the market. Thus, with the prior authorisation of the National Securities Market Commission of Spain and the intervention of the Council of Ministers to soften the conditions imposed by the National Competition Commission, Telecinco absorbed Cuatro in 2009 (García Santamaría 2013), creating Mediaset Spain. Three years later, the same institutions allowed the merging between Antena 3 and La Sexta (2013). Secondly, under the presidency of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, the Spanish government decided to change the commercial nature of public television and withdraw it from the market for advertising (Ley General de Comunicación Audiovisual 2010, article 43.2). Private television companies, gathered at UTECA (Associated Commercial Televisions Union), lobbied for getting TVE out of what they called 'the advertising cake' (see more at Gómez 2009; Albarran 2009:27; García Santamaría 2013). An executive of the Atresmedia conglomerate explained how power is exercised by the duopoly in the advertising market:

> *This has to do with very aggressive commercial policies [...] basically that some are very powerful, and the others do not mean anything, they just offer you some targets so small that the advertiser tells you: "But let's see, I have to sit with Mediaset and with Atresmedia, and then with all the rest, I don't care". So, in the end what he does: he sits with Mediaset and Atresmedia and divides [the advertising budget], "Look, 45% to one, 45% to another and 10% I keep for digital and for other things they want". This is market reality.* (Executive D)

In 2018, television was still the main means of keeping informed for 69% of the Spanish population (APM 2018)[44]. While this preference for television is repeated across all age groups, for those aged 14 to 34 years, the second preferred way to be informed is news links on social networks, and third is websites that belong to print media/newspapers[45] (APM 2018).

6.3. Metrics meaning formation

Zamith (2018) differentiates between audience analytics and audience metrics. Audience analytics involves the software or systems that measure, collect, analyse,

[44] *This is not a particularly high percentage: as a basis for comparison, the Ofcom report (2018) on news consumption in the United Kingdom says that 79% of adults prefer to use TV to access news.*

[45] *Ofcom (2018) in the UK found that in the age group between 16 and 24 years old, 82% chose the internet on any device as their preferred method to search for news.*

and report information about user behaviour. Audience metrics is the output of those analytic systems that involve quantified and aggregated audience data. This distinction also serves as the television audience measurement system in the predigital age. To understand the role of audience metrics in how journalists build their imagined audiences, first we must understand how those audience metrics are constructed.

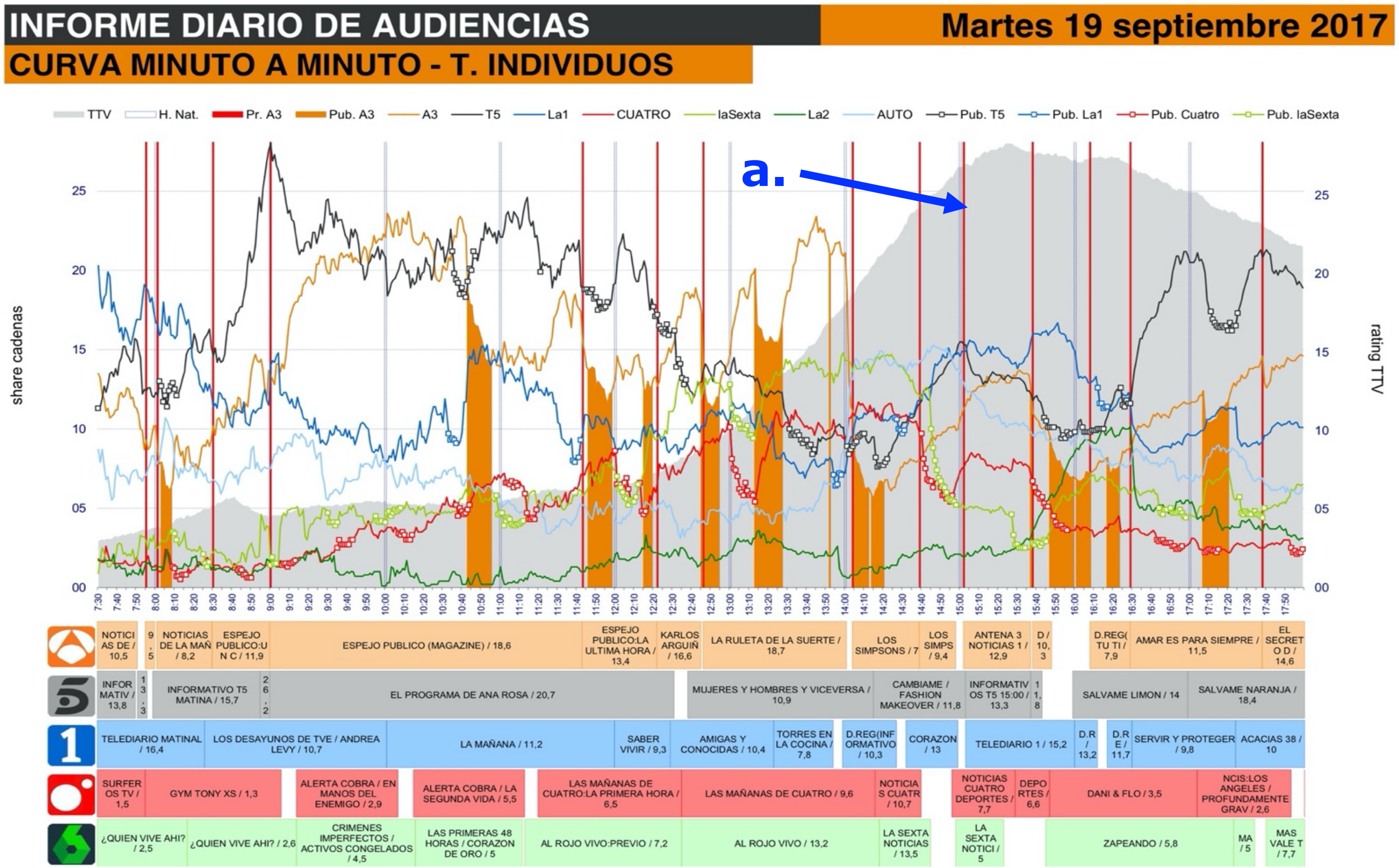
After the data is collected through audimetry, several agents or nodes within the Atresmedia group have the job of creating a readable report. For this research, four nodes were identified as fulfilling the task to make messages from metrics: (1) the marketing department, particularly the audience analysis subunit; (2) the corporate communications team; (3) the digital newsroom; and (4) the editorial team that manages the traditional newsroom. In the following sections, I will show how those messages are re-signified and aligned with the corporate objectives and the preservation of the TV duopoly hegemony. As discussed later in this chapter, the production of the rankings and the reading of all the meanings associated with the position achieved in rankings, are coupled with the Foucauldian (Sauder and Espeland 2009) idea of the disciplinary role played by ranking in two ways: reflecting what is known and indicating what is to be done.

The arbitrary splitting of programmes

The production of audiences is conceived in Atresmedia group as a job that relies on the aggregation of spectators, also known as audience inheritance or lead-in effect (Barwise and Ehrenberg 1988). By relying on the lead-in effect, programming techniques attempt to create a flow of the audience, which means capturing the interest of those consuming the television, keeping them attentive, with the device on, throughout the day. The television flow's concept, first introduced by Raymond Williams (2004 [1975]), refers to how TV contents manages to grip and kept audience members stay glued to the screen and experience difficulty in switching off the TV set. Williams also noted how a newscast's flow has a different logic since it stitches together wholly unrelated stories.

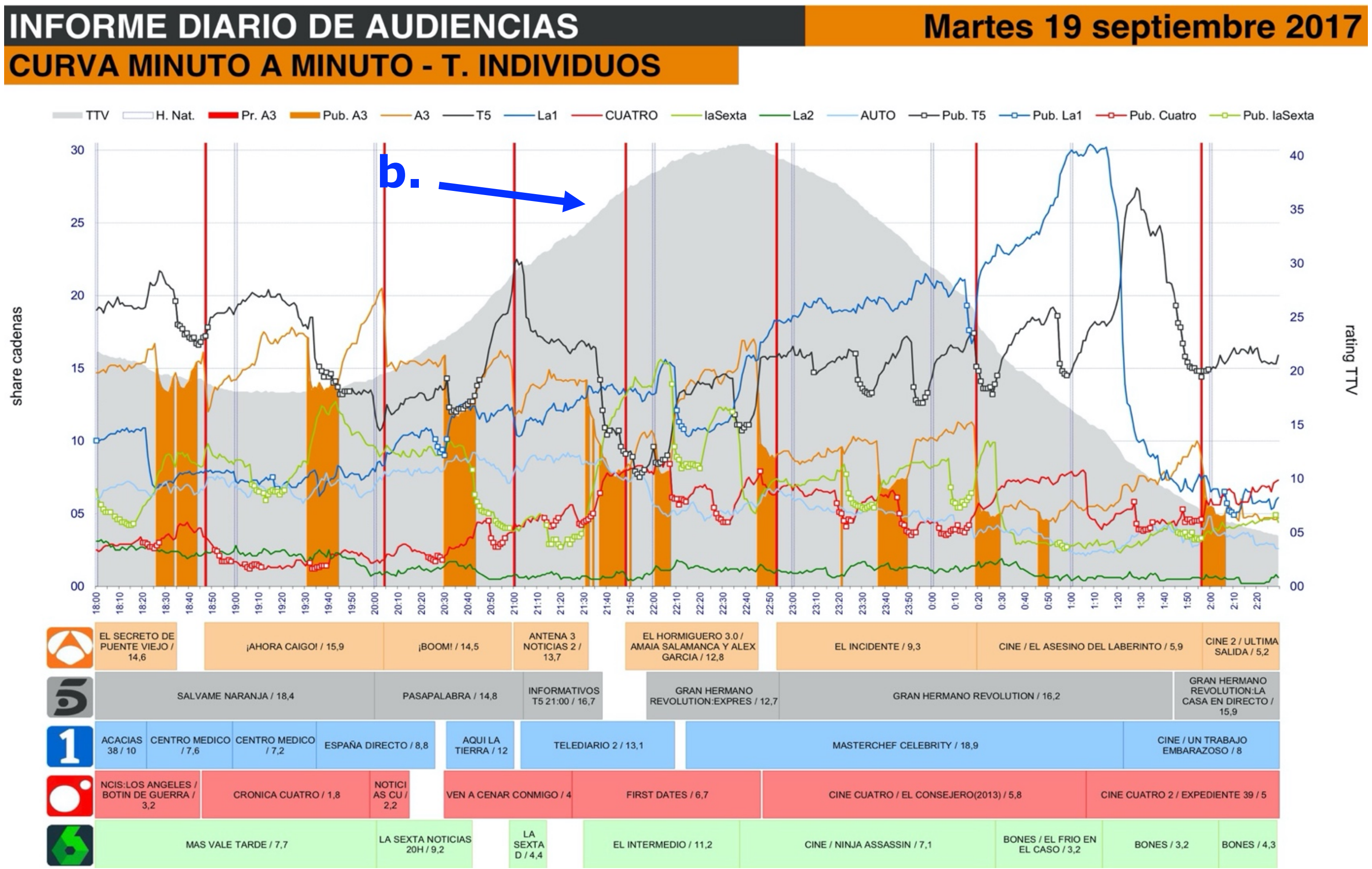
In terms of the industry, the audience flow throughout the day depends on internal and external factors. Among the internal factors, it is necessary not to alter the content or style of the television spaces so as not to surprise the viewer, avoiding audiences suddenly shifting moods and, ultimately, moving to competitor channels (Madianou 2005). According to this approach, La Sexta TV produces all its programmes aligned with up-to-date news content, be they magazines, interviews, informative programmes, debates, or political humour programmes.

Figure 6-2: Evolution of television sets turned on in Spain between 7h30 and 17h50 (19th Sep 2017)[46]



[46] *Source: Audience Report made by the Atresmedia Marketing department, p.26, 19th September 2017. The switch-on curve recurs with regularity on working days; during the weekends the peaks are the same, but the valley in between is less marked. A full copy of the report is found in the appendices.*

Figure 6-3: Evolution of televisions turned on in Spain between 18h00 and 02h30 (19th Sep 2017)[47]

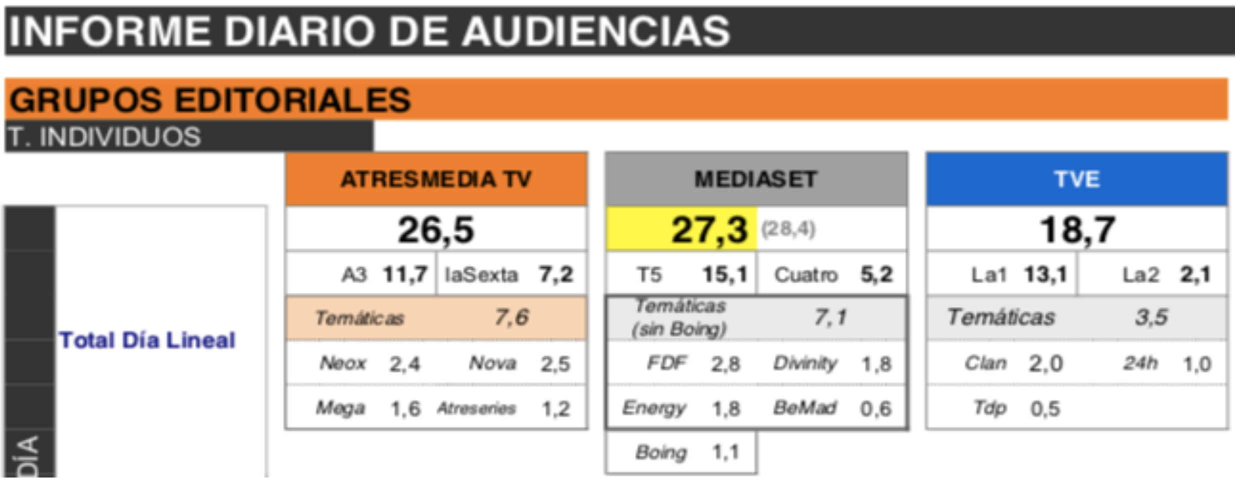


[47] *Ibid.*

An external factor crucial to building an audience flow is being able to identify the times in the day when people turn on their TV sets in great numbers. In Spain, the television switch-on curve is quite stable, and every day shows a cycle with two peaks, which in the Atresmedia's audience reports appear as a grey-filled curve as can be seen in Figure 6-2 and Figure 6-3. The two peaks in the day are: at noon (Figure 6-2, grey curve a.), when the majority of the population is having lunch[48] – usually between 14h30 and 16h00, with a peak at 15h30; and from 19h30 – when the members of the audience return home and have dinner – until 22h40 (Figure 6-3, grey curve b.). On weekends the daily peaks are repeated, but the television sets shut down between lunch and dinner, showing a less pronounced downward curve than on working days. La Sexta TV's programming aim is to attract members of the audience from the moment they switch on their television. Therefore, the programming team carefully plans what to place in the upward curve of lunch and dinner time, when people are turning on their televisions.

To understand what the arbitrary splitting of the programming timeslots is and what it is aimed at, it is necessary to determine the logic of the audience breakdown report.

Figure 6-4: The first section of the daily audience report[49]



Note: The number in the biggest character represents the percentage of the audience reached every day by each media group.

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[48] *Mealtimes, especially lunch, occur quite late in Spain. The late supper is typical of Southern European countries. Some historians argue that the late Spanish mealtimes are a consequence of the dictator Francisco Franco's decision in 1940 to change the Spanish time zone and move clocks one hour forward in solidarity with Nazi Germany* (Compromiso RSE 2015)*. Another theory relates this late meal custom in Spain with the creation of the intensive workday, which lasts from 8h00 to 15h00 and allows an extended lunchtime after work (Fernández-Armesto 2002). Taking a nap after lunch is also a widespread tradition in Spain.*

[49] *Source: Audience Report made by the Atresmedia Marketing department, p.1, 19th September 2017. Translation: The daily audience report. Editorial groups. The three main groups: Atresmedia TV, Mediaset, and the public television TVE, and below each the TV channels that belong to them.*

The report is headed by the single number that aggregates the total audience of all the channels of the media group – called editorial groups (Figure 6-4) – that is, a single number for Atresmedia TV (the total audiences for its six channels aggregated), another for Mediaset (seven channels), and another for public television TVE (five channels). For this research I reviewed 803 reports released between 18th September 2017 and 30th November 2019. The figures shown in this chapter are taken from 19th September, as a representative example of the overall sample.

Every day, the editorial group that achieved the highest single number is considered the winner and this result is highlighted in yellow. The newsmakers call it 'the fried egg', and it is possible to find a winner for every part of the day, timeslot, geographic or demographic area. The report is then broken down by channel, but only the mainstream channels of each group stand out. The sum of the audience obtained by the regional channels is also grouped under the same indicator (in the fourth column on Figure 6-5, under the title AUTO), called FORTA. What I have described so far comes from the first page of the document that the Atresmedia audience analysis unit delivers daily, based on data files sent by Kantar Media. The design of the report has remained the same since 2009, and its structure allows us to deduce the audience competence that Atresmedia values. Of most interest for my research is the way in which the company splits the flow of audience. In broad terms, these segmentations are conducted by time, geographic scope, gender, and age groups.

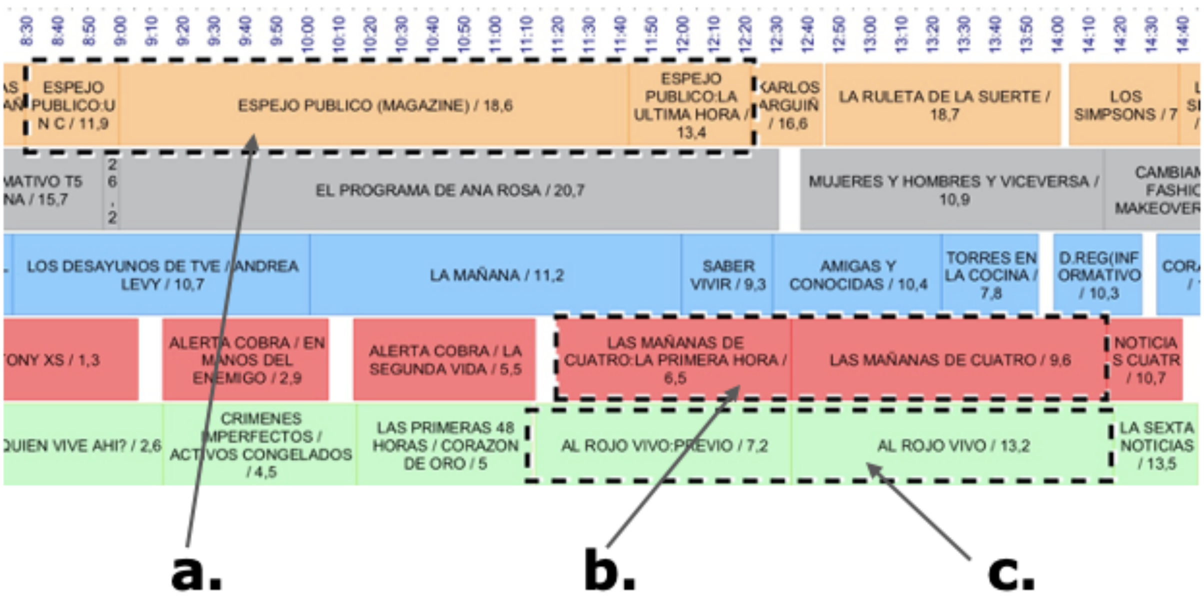
Figure 6-5: Audience outcome for each TV Station[50]

CADENAS T. INDIVIDUOS			5	1	AUTO			temáticas
DÍA	Total Día Lineal	11,7	15,1	13,1	7,1	5,2	7,2	28,0
	Diferido	*10,1*	*9,4*	*11,2*	*3,3*	*3,4*	*5,0*	*17,0*
	Lineal + Diferido	*11,7*	*15,0*	*13,0*	*7,0*	*5,1*	*7,2*	*27,8*
	Prime Time Lineal	11,3	14,2	15,0	6,5	5,8	8,0	25,3
	PT. Diferido	*7,4*	*8,7*	*12,9*	*2,9*	*3,5*	*6,8*	*10,2*
	PT. Lineal + Diferido	*11,3*	*14,1*	*14,9*	*6,4*	*5,8*	*8,0*	*25,0*

[50] *Ibid, p.1. Translation: TV Stations, T. Individuals. The sequence of logos is, from left to right: Antena 3; Telecinco; La1 (TVE); sum of regional public TV channels; Cuatro; La Sexta; and Thematic channels. The heading on each row is, from top to bottom: Total per day on linear TV; pre-recorded, linear + pre-recorded; Linear prime time; PT pre-recorded; PT linear + pre-recorded.*

For the teams that make the programmes, what matters is the audience share for their timeslot. However, when it comes to showing the programmes' audience share in the report, the splits seem quite arbitrary. This segmentation consists of disaggregating some programmes of longer duration into two or three different sections. In the report, each programme's section has a different audience result, but when the company publicly communicates the daily result of that entire programme, only the partition with the highest number is shown. The responsibility for this arbitrary programme splitting lies with the Programming Directorate, which is the Atresmedia unit that surveys content production and monitors the lead-in-effect[51] in the transition. The aim of this office is to take care of the sequential organisation of the content in a way in which the audience overlaps and aggregates from one programme to the next throughout the day. In the period under investigation, the practice of splitting programmes was not detected in public television; however, it was a common practice in all mainstream channels.

Figure 6-6: Detail showing audience data segmented programme by programme



Note: The black boxes with dotted lines (a, b and c) were added by me to group the set of sections in which each entire programme is divided (19th Sep 2017)[52]

51 *A lead-in effect refers to audience overlap between two consecutive programmes. Some research establishes that the overlap is 50% or more, that is to say, more than half of the initial programme's viewers stay tuned for the following programme (Barwise and Ehrenberg 1988; Webster, Phalen and Lichty 2006).*

52 *Source: The Audience Daily Report prepared by the Atresmedia Marketing department, p.27. 19th September 2017. A complete copy of the report is found in the appendices.*

Figure 6-6 (box a.) shows *Public Mirror*, the Antena 3 TV's long morning programme, which runs from 8h30 to 12h30 with the same presenter, studio, and same programme name. However, when segmenting the audience data for that programme in the chart, it is presented as three different consecutive programmes. Table 6-1 displays the sequencing of Public Mirror's partitions: (1) "Public Mirror: A coffee with..."; (2) "Public Mirror: Magazine"; and (3) "Public Mirror: Last-minute". The second section, "Public Mirror: Magazine" was the most successful that day, had a share of 18.6 and an estimated 450,000 TV sets tuned in.

Table 6-1 Espejo Público (Public Mirror) programme segmentation, corresponding to box a. of Figure 6-6 [53]

START	END	RUNING TIME	PROGRAMME	SHARE	VIEWERS IN '000s
8h30	9h00	29 min	"*Public Mirror:* A coffee with..."	11.9	275
9h00	11h43	2 hr 24 min	"*Public Mirror:* Magazine"	18.6	450
11h43	12h22	38 min	"*Public Mirror:* Last-minute"	13.4	392

Figure 6-6, box b, shows that the same practice implemented in the rival media group Mediaset, in the programme *Las Mañanas de Cuatro* (*Channel Four Mornings*). It is split into two sections (Table 6-2).

Table 6-2: Segmentation of Las Mañanas Cuatro (Channel Four's mornings) programme, corresponding to box b. of Figure 6-6[54]

START	END	RUNING TIME	PROGRAMME	SHARE	VIEWERS IN '000s
11h20	12h35	1 hr 15 min	"*Channel Four's Mornings*: Early hours"	6.5	193
12h35	14h16	1 hr 41 min	"*Channel Four's Mornings*"	9.6	581

La Sexta's Al Rojo Vivo (*Red Hot*) programme, which usually lasts over three hours, is also subdivided into two sections: "*Red Hot* previous" and "*Red Hot*" (Table 6-3).

Table 6-3: Al Rojo Vivo (Red Hot) programme segmentation corresponding to box c. of Figure 6-6 [55]

START	END	RUNING TIME	PROGRAMME	SHARE	VIEWERS IN '000s
11h13	12h35	1 hr 22 min	"*Red Hot* previous"	7.2	212
12h35	14h18	1 hr 42 min	"*Red Hot*"	13.2	803

As explained above, this programme partitioning is carried out by the Programming Directorate. These lengthy programmes are designed to occupy the space in the day when the number of television sets switched on is on the rise. For instance, 'Red Hot'

[53] *Source: Own elaboration with data from the Audience Daily Report prepared by the Atresmedia Marketing department, p.10. 19th September 2017. A copy of the report is found in Appendix G.*

[54] *Ibid, p.11.*

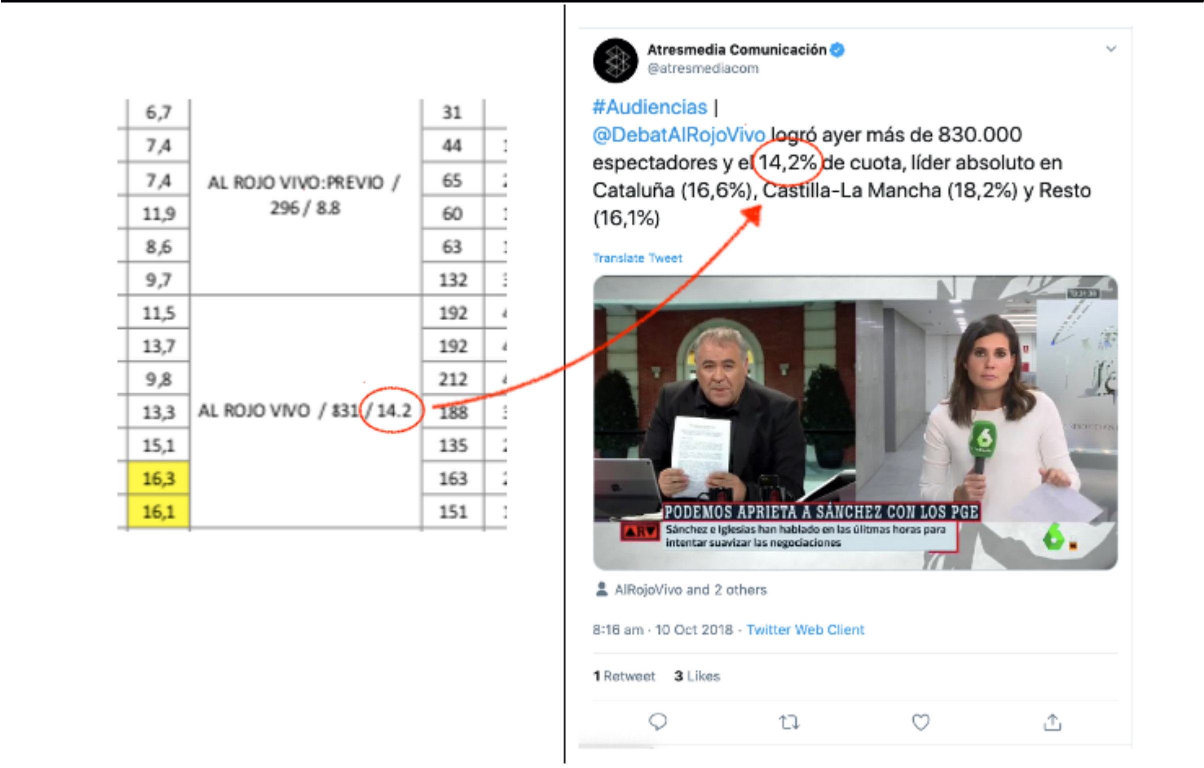
[55] *Ibid, p.11.*

usually starts at 11h00 and runs over lunchtime when the sample registers a massive TV switch on. Executives explained to me that they thought this programme splitting practice was an issue of fairness because the programme should not be punished for the slow start-up of television sets switching on, carrying the cost of starting with a low audience. They added that this practice of segmenting gave the programme the opportunity to reach a good average audience without the initial data that would lower the final average.

But this practice has two consequences. The first is that the Corporate Communications division of Atresmedia, responsible for preparing early morning tweet messages and producing press releases, builds messages about the audience of specific programmes by choosing the highest viewing figures among those segments in which the programme has been split. Thus, the published messages contain a figure relating to one segment of the programme, shown as if it was the audience outcome of the entire news programme (Fig.6-7).

Figure 6-7: Comparison of the outcome on the daily audience report and its representation on Twitter

DATA ON THE AUDIENCE REPORT[56]	***TWITTER MESSAGE***[57]



[56] *The screenshot was taken from p.7 of the Atresmedia daily audience report, 9th October 2018.*

[57] *The screenshot of Twitter was taken from the @Atresmediacom timeline, published on 10th October 2018, available at https://twitter.com/atresmediacom/status/1049921533714595840.*

> *Twitter message translated:*
> *'Atresmedia Communication, @atresmediacom*
> *#Audiences*
> *@DebatAlRojoVivo yesterday achieved more than 830,000 spectators and 14.2% share, absolute leader in Catalonia (16.6%), Castilla-La Mancha (18.2%) and Rest (16.1%)'*

The literature hardly mentions this practice of audience inflation. Bourdon and Méadel (2020), writing about the resilience of the people meter in the age of big data, refer to the practice of partitioning programmes for data communication in Israel:

> *Presentation can inflate (or deflate) measurement of an individual programme, for example, by dividing shows into shorter programmes. (2020:125)*

This practice is probably common throughout national TV systems, but it is an understudied phenomenon. Because television audience measurement companies, such as Kantar Media, operate transnationally, it is likely that the splitting programmes' procedure is used in other countries.

Figure 6-7 shows detail of the Atresmedia audience report, on the left, which states that, on 9th October 2017, the *Al Rojo Vivo* programme had two results: *Al Rojo Vivo* Previous – which runs from 10h45 until 12h15 – had an 8.8% audience share; and *Al Rojo Vivo*'s second section – from 12h15 to 14h00 –had a 14.2% audience share. On the next day, the Atresmedia Corporate Communications office published one single figure for the programme *Al Rojo Vivo* the highest, 14.2%, not specifying either on Twitter or in the press release that the number referred only to the second part of the programme (Fig. 6-7).

The second consequence of this programme splitting practice is related to the news programmes' script organisation strategies. The most relevant and attractive contents are always placed in the last half-hour, when the maximum number of viewers can be reached since this is the moment at which there are increases in the number of sets switched on, according to the grey lines in the graphs described (Figure 6-2 and Figure 6-3, pages 148 and 149).

By analysing how the programmes are partitioned in the Mediaset Group, the other member of the Spanish TV duopoly, they also split programmes when the number of TVs switched on is on the rise. Mediaset applied the same practice to its more successful prime time programmes. In this way, they produce three entries, instead of just one, in the rankings of most watched programmes. For example, the show *Big Brother* is split into Big Brother Express, Big Daily Brother, and Big Brother VIP when announcing results. So, instead of having one show among the most viewed programmes of the day, week, or month, they have three. Since the specialised media in the TV industry publish a ranking that includes the ten most viewed TV programmes daily, by dividing successful programmes into shorter programmes, the media group occupies three ranks of the most viewed programmes and as a result, pushes two other programmes out of the top ten rankings. The aim is to generate the perception of a successful channel and programme performance.

Does this practice create a manipulation of the TV rankings? Strictly speaking, the companies have one form of programme segmentation for the general audience and another for the advertising firms. The company that collects the data (Kantar Media) is told that the TV stations have not one but two or three consecutive programmes in that timeslot, therefore, Kantar Media produces data with these guidelines, and the market takes this data for granted. When the corporate communications office of Atresmedia, for instance, produces audience messages on Twitter that reach the newsroom, they do so under the parameters of the segmentation produced for advertisers. However, the public does not know about the two methods of programme splitting. In the newsroom, instead, only the staff responsible for placing the stories in the programme sequence acknowledge that some segments of the programme are more valued than others (discussed further in Chapter 7).

Through the operationalisation of these practices, it is possible to not only deduce what data matters for the TV companies but also that the position in the ranking matters the most. According to Foucault, a ranking provides a large amount of information about the specific position that one individual has in a series, the interval that separates one from the other; ultimately, a ranking produces hierarchies of qualities, skills and aptitudes (1995 [1977]).

In the case of the Spanish TV duopoly, both Atresmedia and Mediaset protect a market information regime in which they are systematically and historically measured by the audimeter, but also because they know how this measuring system works and the tactics needed to improve their positioning. Each programme's, TV channel's, and media group's rank achieved in the daily updated rating scale carries a complete set of information about the TV station's performance. For instance, it conveys the promise that the media firm knows how to produce audience engagement through which sort of contents. La Sexta TV, as the youngest among the mainstream analogue TV stations in Spain, was born in this context. Since its first broadcast in 2006, their executives have aimed to be part of the measurement system, believing it to be the only way to monetize their audiences.

> *Why do traditional TV channels continue to use audimetry? Because, otherwise, things can only get worse. It is preferred the traditional system that measures the audience through the audimeters which guarantees that nothing else is measured, nothing else is studied nor worked out. That is the real deal. In other words, it consists in retaining an exclusive and select licencing to take part in a club which does not exist anymore*. (Executive B)

Sauder and Espeland (2009) point out that the act of being measured and ranked is a crucial element of the disciplinary efficiency of quantification. The daily audiences report – with detailed classification of results, widely publicized on social networks and in the traditional press, with a strict protocol that mobilizes the expectation and attention of the parties within the media landscape – is a tool of mutual surveillance. The rank of each classified individual within a channel like La Sexta is modified daily and generates temporal sequences that are interpreted as evolutionary behaviours, that can be analysed every day, month, or year. The information is available for all stakeholders; therefore, they all participate in a daily ritual of mutual surveillance – a ritual carried out by editors in the newsroom:

> *I watch the competition, I take a walk through Telecinco's results, I see how Ana Rosa and Espejo Público have been performing, I look at the primetime [audience metrics] of the other TV stations. I take a look at the minor channels, I examine the history to know how we performed on this day compared to the previous day, I look at our monthly average, I check out what was going on last year to compare it with this year.* (Mateo, editor)

According to Foucault (1995 [1977]), the examination and consequent classification is an ongoing process in which every individual receives a category as a result of the inspection at the end of each task. Individuals will internalise this evaluation and categorisation process as a path for advancing through a succession of categories, some of which "attribute knowledge hierarchy, skill hierarchy, or value distribution or merits" (Foucault 1995:147). It should be noted that the arbitrary splitting of programmes and the publishing of audience figures for the most viewed segment provides a sense of everyday success, enhancing the feeling of gratification among the news teams – a point which will be analysed in Chapters 7 and 8. By reviewing a sample of the Corporate Communications office's tweets containing audience data, a Twitter message worded in congratulatory terms for each Atresmedia's news programme was released every day under review. For other entertainment programmes, however, the most systematic flow of tweets is related to the news programmes. Later in this chapter, I discuss how the tweets are produced and worded to seem like there is always a daily success. Chapter 8 reviews journalists' reception of these tweets or the absence of congratulatory tweets.

It should be noted that the disciplining power of such practices also affects the media group's management team. From the political economy perspective, ratings are the only audience that genuinely matters because the metrics are the currency that sustains the business model. However, returning to Graph 6-2, we can see how commercial management enhances the achieved audience share. In Graph 6-2, which shows 2018 audience share and advertising revenues, Atresmedia achieved 26.8% audience share and received 41.1% of total TV advertising revenue. Meanwhile, Mediaset reached a slightly higher audience share of 28.8%, but revenues obtained were significantly lower than Atresmedia at 35.6%. Considering each media firms seeks to construct niche audiences and produce content and news agendas that cultivate niche audience loyalty (Turow 2005), there is a different value for the number and sort of viewers that pay attention to the screen. But it is also worth considering that another reason why the currency exchange of audience metrics is not precise relates to the commercial management aspect (discussed in the next section). Regarding the practice of splitting programmes, it is important to highlight that the management team is also encouraged to maintain the practice of arbitrarily splitting the programmes into shorter segments. The media executive team cannot freely give up on such a practice; they must consider an alternative strategy to avoid falling in the rankings. The task of preserving their place or advancing in the ranks is crucial for the commercial management of enhancing the revenues achieved with their audience share.

Strategy: How the ad break card is played

Figure 6-8: One of the broadcast switch rooms at Atresmedia used by La Sexta News programme[58]

The control room of a newscast is an exciting place in the eyes of a newcomer: it is a large dark room with two rows of desks lit by about 30 screens on the walls, in addition to the lights of the personal computers at each workstation. During the participant observation, at the beginning of the research, I sat at the back of the room where I could obtain an overview, as seen in Fig. 6-8. Over the following days

[58] *This photo was taken in the broadcast switch room with the team in the afternoon news magazine Más Vale Tarde ('Better Late', 3rd Nov 2017).*

I managed to sit in the second row (to the right of the photograph), where the editorial team is located, to observe its procedures and decision-making practices.

The editors and their subordinates arrive in the switch room with a well-defined rundown, which can be altered depending on the succession of news. There are only three members of the editorial team who come into the switch room: the programme's editor, who takes final decisions; a producer, who coordinates the live shots with the teams on the ground; and the news writer, in charge of updating the titles on the screen. The rest of the 'kitchen' team – formed by the news producers who work in-house – stay in the newsroom, which is connected to the switch room by radio signal, to be alerted about issues that arise on social networks or other media. The other television stations are monitored from the same switch room. Someone from the team always observes broadcasts by the rival TV group channels and compares the issues aired, whether they have something better in their news offer for the day, a better video shot or a more interesting interviewee. When it comes to changing the news running order, those responsible for the news discuss the changes and have the autonomy to produce these changes. They also monitor their own and rivals' advertising breaks with special care. The news team does not have the autonomy to move the ad breaks. Every so often two questions are heard related to the rival stations: "Have they gone to adverts yet?" "What should we place before the commercials?"

The position of the ad breaks in the programme's timeline is a decision the news team do not take autonomously. If there is breaking news and cutting to commercials would go against the opportunity to get this content on air quickly, the decision to move it must be authorized by the channel management or by the Atresmedia marketing office, and the news team must operate with absolute discipline. Advertisement breaks are long, at least 15 minutes, thus providing time for relaxation, to go to the bathroom, or to get some food, either for the members of the audience or for the TV team. The break is so long that five minutes before returning to the broadcast, the team meets again, each in their position, and reorders the content to be broadcast. They know there will be no other break for another hour.

The advertising break in the Spanish TV system and in Atresmedia is an institution that deserves to be examined. Media management literature has made the double purpose of the media industry clear: it "produces content for distribution to audiences and audiences for distribution to advertisers" (Napoli 2006:275). At media executive level, on more than one occasion, interviewees clearly expressed how they felt about this matter:

> *This is how it is, let us make no mistake, our job is to produce content to efficiently intersperse between ad breaks. We build content to carry the audience*

> *to the commercial breaks, and then our contents must be attractive enough to keep the audience with us after the break.* (Executive E)

Such a quote perfectly encapsulates Dallas Smythe's famous statement about the audience commodity (2013). The regulatory framework for free-to-air television advertising in Spain – which is in line with European directives (Audiovisual Media Services Directive 2010a: Art. 23.1) and which were maintained in the 2018 reform – states that advertising should not exceed 12 minutes per hour. What is particular about Spain is that the regulatory framework also states that there should not be more than one ad break every 30 minutes (2010 Art. 14.4). These legal restrictions affect television programming in Spain, offering viewers long advertising spaces but with fewer breaks. Usually, Spanish television channels have one advertising break for each hour of transmission. These breaks are even longer when the TV company decides to combine the corresponding advertising minutes from one hour with those of the next hour that is about to start. In such cases, the total commercial break can last up to 30 minutes. On the other side of the coin, this strategy means that the broadcast will then have long periods, of more than one hour, without any break.

As explained in the previous section, the television industry in Spain has been able to withstand mass media crises and maintain a strong defence of its financing model. That has meant the development of an aggressive advertising strategy by Atresmedia. Strategy that, while acknowledging the presence of digital advertising, doubt it will represent a big change to usual television advertising:

> *The ads on television reach a massive audience, and if that audience is maximized, the advertised product gets notoriety and credibility. It is true that digital advertising allows greater target segmentation, allows advertising to be customized, but on the Internet the attention is infinitely more volatile, so the coverage is lower, and it is an advertising system in which it is much more difficult to build attributes such as notoriety or credibility.* (Executive D)

I am extending my explanation of this issue because I want to examine how state regulations, on the one hand, and the media group's management strategies, on the other, have an impact on news production and a role in the understanding of which data counts and how to understand it. As will be seen later, although it was not evident during the fieldwork that the administration permanently instructed the need to comply with the defined advertising strategy, in the reading of the audience metrics, the compliance of this strategy was always evident.

To better understand the context and interplay of the abovementioned aggressive advertising strategy, it is necessary to consider regulation in the television advertising market. In this market, both in Spain as in the rest of Europe and America, the product sold by media is advertising impact, understood as the ability to reach a specific viewer, such as young people or housewives, two targets usually sought in the sector. The impacts are measured through an indicator that reports statistics on how the audience has been exposed to the advertising message. For the marketing and measurement of advertising's impact, the Gross Rating Point (GRP) is used. GRP is an indicator that allows advertising campaign planners to define the general strategy of how many message exposures are ideally needed to reach an objective and within what period (Hallemann 2008). It is an indicator that involves two parameters: emission frequency and coverage. Frequency measures the number of repetitions of the commercial message. Coverage aims to know how many people from the target audience are exposed to the media at the same time. Coverage is usually measured using ratings (2008) – this is different from share. I make a differentiation between ratings and share because – as will be seen in the next section – all the messages about audience figures built by the company are based on shares, which as a net number is greater than ratings. While ratings, in its simplest form, is defined as the percentage of people or households tuned to a station or programme out of the total market population (Webster et al. 2006), share is the percentage of people or households watching a TV station or programme out of all those using TV sets at a particular time (2006).

Television channels can increase the GRP rate by increasing coverage or frequency. However, the expansion of both factors is limited – the frequency has a legal cap, as stated earlier. With regards to coverage, television penetration is very high in Spain, and audiences have been stable over the years. In 2000, Spaniards watched 210 minutes of television daily per person; in 2010 this increased to 234 minutes, and in 2017 to 240 minutes (Barlovento Comunicación 2017:20). With that level of stability, the ratings for a TV channel can only be increased in the short term by removing audiences from another TV channel.[59]

In 2018, the advertising practices of the duopoly – Atresmedia and Mediaset – were legally challenged. FORTA, the regional state-owned television group, and some of the smaller general private channels, such as Intereconomía and DKiss TV, denounced the duopoly before the National Securities Market Commission of Spain for what they considered to be practices that violated free competition, and the regulatory authority agreed with them, fining the members of the duopoly and ordering them to put an end to advertising market distortion practices (Cano 2019; El Periódico 2019; La Vanguardia 2019a, 2019b).

[59] *Explanation provided by employees of the marketing division during the fieldwork.*

Table 6-4: GPRs by adverts over 20 seconds long and audience generated by television operators in Spain 2014-2017 [60]

	2014				2015				2016				2017			
	GRP 20"		AUD	Aud-RTVE	GRP 20"		AUD	Aud-RTVE	GRP 20"		AUD	Aud-RTVE	GRP 20"		AUD	Aud-RTVE
	Number	%	%	%	Number	%	%	%	Number	%	%	%	Number	%	%	%
MEDIASET GROUP	1,001,120.6	43.7	29.7	35.7	1,011,985.7	41.8	30.6	36.7	1,029,458.9	41.3	29.8	35.7	1,003,758.2	41.3	28.4	34.0
ATRESMEDIA GROUP	818,193.7	35.7	26.5	31.8	917,942.8	37.9	27.5	32.9	954,947.9	38.3	27.8	33.3	907,170.4	37.3	27.2	32.6
Remaining free-to-air TV	176,136.1	3.2	6.2	7.3	194,448.4	8.0	7.2	8.7	222,199.8	8.9	7.8	9.3	250,064.0	10.3	9.2	11.0
ATRESMEDIA + MEDIASET	1,819,314.3	79.4	56.2	67.5	1,929,928.5	79.7	58.1	69.6	1,984,406.8	79.6	57.6	69.0	1,910,928.6	78.6	55.6	66.6
Free-to-air, regional scope TV	192,208.9	8.4	9.3	11.2	187,862.1	7.8	8.8	10.6	183,723.3	7.4	8.7	10.4	163,008.5	6.7	8.8	10.5
Pay-TV	74,218.6	3.2	6.1	7.3	80,425.6	3.3	6.7	8.1	83,060.3	3.3	6.9	8.3	87,501.8	3.6	7.6	9.1
RTVE	27,090.3	1.2	16.8		29,480.3	1.2	16.7		20,856.6	0.8	16.8		19,234.8	0.8	16.7	
Remaining TV stations			4.9	5.9		2.6	3.1				2.4	2.9			2.2	2.7
TOTAL	2,288,968.2				2,422,144.9				2,494,246.8				2,430,737.7			

Note: Expressed in net numbers and in market share, the audience – 3rd and 4th column of each year – is calculated considering and then without considering Televisión Española's (TVE) market share, which barely participates in the advertising market.

[60] *Source: Taken from CNMC (RESOLUCIÓN Expte. S/DC/0617/17 ATRESMEDIA/MEDIASET/CNMC 2019:20) Data collected in the trial against Atresmedia and Mediaset for violation of competition law and concentration regulation.*

Table 6-5: Advertising spending on TV between 2013-2017 (expressed in millions of Euros and market-share)[61]

	2013		2014		2015		2016		2017	
	Million €	%	*Million €*	%	*Million €*	%	*Million €*	%	*Million €*	%
MEDIASET GROUP	745.0	43.7	836.0	44.2	873.0	43.4	918.5	43.3	927.0	43.3
ATRESMEDIA GROUP	725.0	42.6	784.0	41.5	846.0	42.1	893.0	42.1	887.0	41.4
Remaining free-to-air, nationwide TV	68.1	4.0	81.1	4.3	86.1	4.3	100.0	4.7	117.4	5.5
Duopoly ATRESMEDIA + MEDIASET	1,470.0	86.3	1,620.0	85.7	1,719.0	85.5	1,811.5	85.4	1,814.0	84.7
Total free-to-air, nationwide TV	1,538.1	90.3	1,701.1	90.0	1,805.1	89.8	1,911.5	9.1	1,931.4	90.2
Total free-to-air, regional scope TV	120.4	7.1	128.7	6.8	132.3	6.6	126.9	6.0	114.2	5.3
Free-to-air, local scope TV stations	1.3	0.1	1.3	0.1	2.0	0.1	2.1	0.1	3.0	0.1
Total Pay-TV	43.6	2.6	59.3	3.1	71.9	3.6	81.4	3.8	94.6	4.4
TOTAL	1,703.4	100.0	1,890.4	100.0	2,011.3	100.0	2,121.9	100.0	2,143.2	100.0

[61] *Source: Own elaboration. Infoadex reports data (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017).*

According to data collected by the Spanish Commission on Markets and Competition, the GRP's indicator of impact on the Spanish television advertising market shows that the degree of market concentration in the Spanish television system is very high. For example, as seen in Table 6-4, in the column for 2017, the two main market operators, Atresmedia and Mediaset, reached a joint share of 78.6% in terms of GRP (Table 6-4, blue row, column 2017) and 84.7% in terms of advertising investment (Table 6-5, blue row, column 2017), with other competitors lagging behind. In 2017, the duopoly made up 55.6% of the total audience market share if Spanish Public Television (RTVE) is considered and 66.7% if it is excluded (Table 6-5, blue row, column 2017). It is thus a market structure characterized by the predominance of two operators regardless of the criterion of measurement of market size, GRPs, net audience, audience discounting public television, and advertising investment volume. In addition, Table 6-4 and Table 6-5 show that this market structure has been stable for at least five years in terms of income quotas, GRPs and audiences.

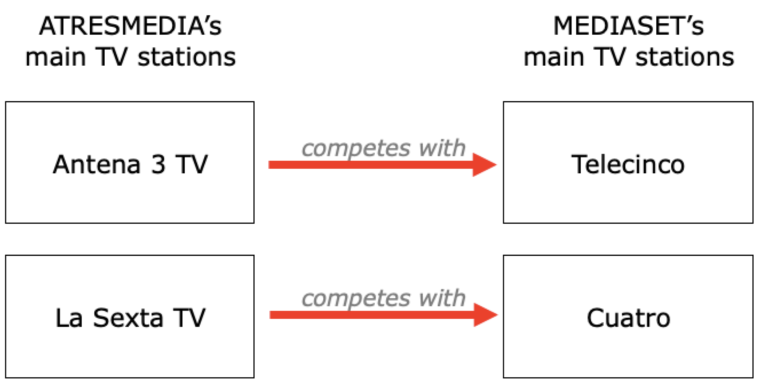
The first business strategy to increase the coverage of advertising messages in the context of fragmented audiences was to concentrate the TV market by acquiring minor rival TV stations. To this was added a series of strategies revealed before the Spanish Competition Court during the trial against the groups that form the duopoly. Three practices contrary to fair competition were exposed: the sale of advertising in packages or modules of channels of the company – selling the channel with the biggest audience that the advertiser is interested in, but then forcing it to simultaneously advertise on channels with lower audiences (RESOLUCIÓN Expte. S/DC/0617/17 ATRESMEDIA/MEDIASET/CNMC 2019:22); the simulcast – the issuance of an advert simultaneously on all group's channels regardless of whether on the channel the advertiser was interested in (2019:58); and the policy of paying extra-premiums – remunerations paid directly to advertising agencies subject to them reaching a certain volume of advertising investment in the media group (2019:42).

As explained in the sentencing trial mentioned above, with every new campaign, the media groups forced advertising agencies to buy package programming, which includes advertising timeslots on the duopoly's minor TV stations, charging fees that were not proportional to the size and target of audiences for those TV channels. This is an example of the market distortions revealed in the trial: two of the plaintiffs' TV channels, DKIss and Trece have similar audiences to Neox (Atresmedia) and FDF (Mediaset). However, Neox and FDF bill eight times more in advertising than Trece and DKiss, thanks to the aforementioned duopoly's package advertising practices (Cano 2018). Such advertising strategies require perfect coordination of the channels involved. For example, the simultaneous transmission of advertising on a group's different TV stations is not a major problem when those channels broadcast packaged programming, since the broadcasting is robotic. However, in the case of live news channels, such as La Sexta TV, compliance with these strategies is in the hands of the journalists responsible for the broadcast. This responsibility not only implies the fulfilment of the broadcast of the scheduled advertising slot, but also adapting the running order of the news in such a way to increase the audience and achieve the maximum number of viewers when it is time for advertisements.

The advertising break was described by a news producer as a hammock hanging between two fixed points, in which the suspended part is the regular loss rate of viewers over the break, thus the task of the news producers is to arrange the news offer in a way that allows it to put the fixed points of the hammock – the start and end of the commercial break – as high as possible in terms of audience attraction. Research has demonstrated that content exposure and advertising exposure differ considerably (Napoli 2012), therefore, Spanish media groups solve the problem with a tacit agreement to go to adverts at the same time. In this way, TV sets remain turned on, with less channel jumping than expected throughout the long commercial breaks.[62]

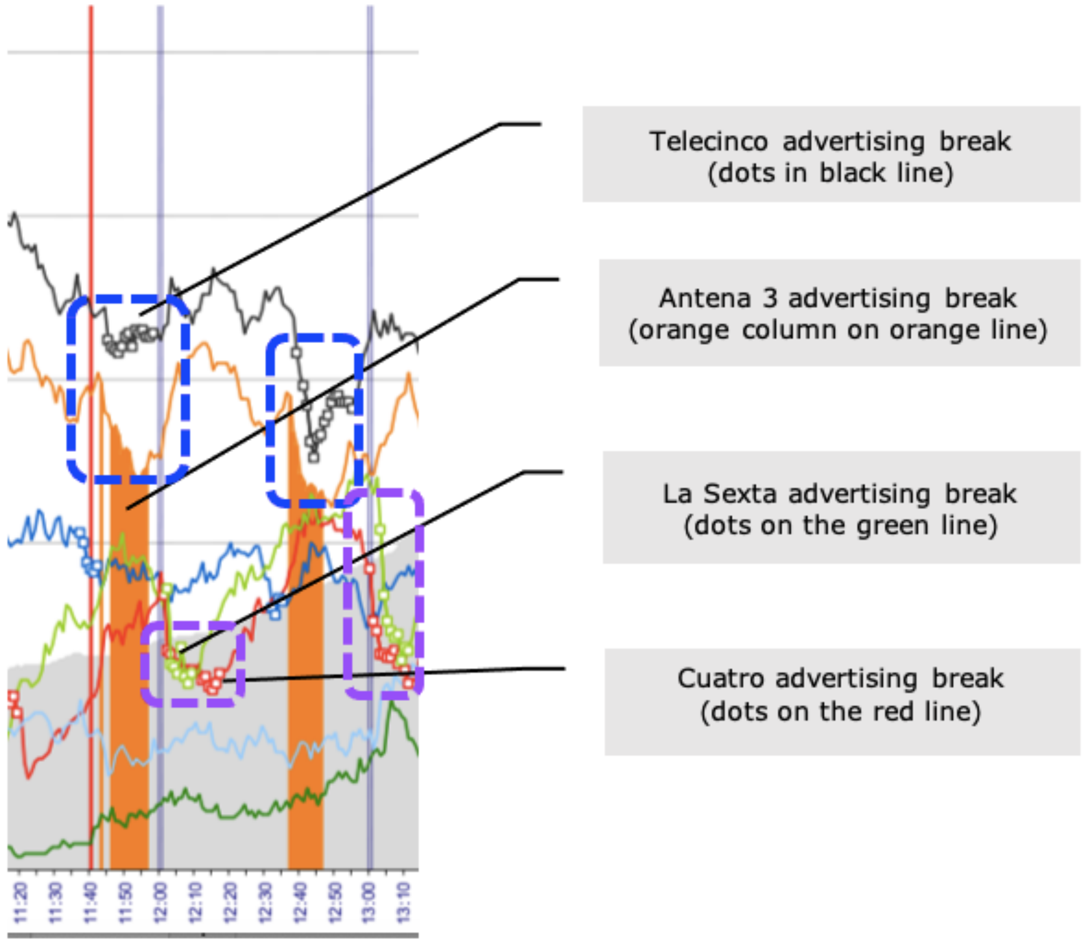
Therefore, the media groups do not compete directly in the commercial breaks and, besides, the newscast are paired (Table 6-6). Antena 3 programmes its newscasts at 15h00 and 21h00 and La Sexta has news bulletins at 14h00 and 20h00. Mediaset, the main competitor, organises the newscasts of its two free-to-air mainstream channels in the same way. The most-viewed (Telecinco) airs at 15h00 and 21h00, while Cuatro – during my fieldwork – scheduled its newscasts at the same time as La Sexta (Table 6-6).

Table 6-6: Paired organisation of competition within the duopoly



[62] *Note taken from a conversation with an executive from Atresmedia.*

Figure 6-9: TV channel pairing: Detail of the evolution of the audience and how the four main nationwide commercial TVs have their advert breaks paired[63]



The distribution of the advertising slots can be seen in the daily audience report (detail in Figure 6-9), where the advertising for Antena 3 is represented by the orange column, while the commercial breaks of the other TV channels can be seen as points along their respective lines. In the system of paired competition, the paired TV channels do not allow the transfer of audiences between rival TV channels set up as direct competitors, thus, the pairs broadcast commercial breaks together. I could not get an explicit acknowledgment of this coordination, but it is a very stable situation that it is of mutual convenience. What the interviewees did recognize was that the placement of the advertising breaks is stable, and I was able to check the above assertion in the daily audience reports.

In Figure 6-9, I added the segmented line boxes to show how the commercial breaks of the paired TV channels match up. During the broadcast, the news team is constantly checking what is airing on the paired channel in order to go to commercial breaks together, but they also look at the channel which is not directly competing,

[63] *Detail taken from the audience curve of the Atresmedia report from 3rd April 2018, p.29.*

to place attractive content when the non-competing channel airs its adverts. The aim is to appeal to those viewers that tend to practice channel-hopping during the breaks.

> *I give you an example: if from 11h10 to 11h20 TV5 Antena 3 is in their advertising break, then you have much more people that at that time can go to your programme to see the content you have. You always try at that time to have powerful content that can make the viewer stay with us.* (Roberto, news producer)

The advert surveillance pattern also works for the news running order, meaning the news producers broadcast the news in a sequence which attempts to minimize their own loss of audience during the broadcast of their own commercials:

> *[a news story that] you know is not going to give you a large audience, you try to place it, for example, around a topic that is quite popular, or try to place it... never just before going to adverts because then the curve falls too low, that is, you try to deliver the journalistic content but [...] you frame that content in a place that is not harmful to the rest of the programme.* (Roberto, news producer)

The interviewed members of La Sexta's news team recognized that the traditional decreasing order of relevance of the news can only be sustained in an ad-free programme. In that case, the order of the news is associated with an order of relevance. In lengthier programmes, with ad breaks, the newsmakers recognize that this order of the news should take into account the newsworthiness of the contents, the scheduled commercial breaks, and the curve of TV sets being switched on.

- *Interviewer: Is one timeslot of the programme more important than others?*
- *Paz: The one at the end because a larger audience is detected after 13h30. And then because it also involves keeping the public engaged for the news. So, it is something to take care of.*
- *Interviewer: What do you mean by to take care of something? What practices do they put in place to take care of this something?*
- *Paz: For example, the most powerful interviews or those contents that can work better that day, are placed towards the end of the programme.* (Paz, news producer)

In the newsroom glossary, the quantified viewers that arrive or leave during certain broadcasts are labelled as gains and losses, respectively. The strategy to gain those viewers must negotiate the news values when structuring the news running order, deciding the position of each segment throughout the programme so that the relevant but less attractive news for the audience is located at points that "do not harm the rest of the programme". The newsmakers assume that their responsibilities cover both the process of informing and the process of building audiences. However, the latter does not seem to be troublesome or in contradiction with journalistic judgement, particularly in the highest levels of the newsroom hierarchy.

During the interviews there were frequent references to the need to contribute to the financing of the company. The news team looks at the audience numbers from the survival perspective and feel that if the viewing figures of their programme are above the average for the TV station, the programme will remain on screen. But this does not mean that they resort to broadcasting ‘clickbait’ or sensational stories – the team continues to verbalize a high commitment to the public duty of journalism. In terms of the variables in which Hanitzsch (2007) deconstructs journalistic culture, La Sexta finds itself in a difficult place, juggling the tension of treating the audience both as citizens and as consumers. On the one hand, it is a highly market-oriented media company whose goals are influenced by the logic of the marketplace (2007:374), therefore it gives prominence to the "news-you-can-use" (Underwood 2001:101). On the other hand, the journalistic culture in the newsroom means ethical idealism, which Hanitzsch defines as a “standard professional approach that stresses the journalists’ commitment to agreed-upon codes of ethics and editorial guidelines” (2007:378). Instead of the media executive culture, the journalistic culture shows a more relativistic approach since it supports the ethical approach of La Sexta's journalistic style, which hardly fits with the policies of journalistic work precarity. In Chapter 8 on journalistic identity, I discuss this issue, however, it remains to be seen to what extent journalists are engaged with the financing goal when they must adjust content to comply with the goal of audience building. In the newsroom, there is a journalistic reasoning for that adjustment. Their commitment to the task of audience building raises not a financial but a journalistic argument: the practice of highlighting the more relevant news by putting it first in the schedule has been exchanged for the practice of placing it in timeslots when there are more people exposed to TV sets.

Marketing tasks: Twitter is the battleground

In Chapter 4, I described how the first input of the quantified audience comes up in the newsroom during the morning editorial meeting when an alarm on one mobile phone announces a tweet with audience data from the previous day. The tweet comes from the Corporate Communications department of Atresmedia – another node observed in the fieldwork – where the computers are turned on at 7h00. There are three modular workstations in this department, with desktops for 18 people, among which different responsibilities are distributed: some work on producing content for social networks, generating communications to send to the press specialized in television; others work on special events for the company. The team is responsible for creating self-promotional content from all the firms that belong to Atresmedia group, on radio and television, both general and thematic channels. The content that this office produces is distributed through messages on social networks and press releases.

The first task of the day is to open the Instar analytics software[64] which allows access to the audience data of linear television collected by Kantar media. This office does not depend on the audience analysis department, because they are trained to put the information in circulation before the communications office of the rival group does so. To conduct an observation of this node, I made contact with those responsible for communications through social networks and for two weeks (in April 2018), I started the day with them, sitting next to one of them to observe the preparation and publication of the tweets. That task was completed in the first two hours of the day, from 7h30 to 9h30. To the fieldwork notes, I added a textual analysis of the tweets of the official account of the Communications office of Atresmedia – @Atresmediacom – for a different period to the observation of participants, between September and December 2018, which allowed me to observe the consistency in the time of the observed practices. The task of writing the Twitter messages always falls to one individual in the office, but also sometimes it becomes a collective task. Relating to this task, it is often possible to hear out loud some exchanges between several workers at the Corporate Communications office:

- *Conquers, leads, who can come up with another synonym?*
- *Win, triumphs…*
- *Accomplishes...*

The task to generate a series of tweets related to easily readable audience metrics is not as straightforward as one might think. Tweet writers find it difficult to differentiate one tweet from another, especially if – in 280 characters – the message must include quantified data such as the number of viewers or audience share. The task developed by this node is to review the audience data for linear television, looking for results to highlight – for each headline, they must add distinctive images for the product, be it the programme logo or a close-up of the presenter. As in the audience analysis department, the search for data begins by analysing Antena 3 audience results, the oldest and most viewed channel within this media group. The daily communication through social networks only considers the data for linear television. Neither in the participant observation nor the tweet analysis, I found a single message related to the quantification of the digital audience. In the same period of tweets analysed, four press releases, one per month, reported quantified results for the platform's Atresmedia digital internet. According to the employees of the Corporate Communications office, the target audiences for Twitter messages are the general public and specialised media – there is no mention of newsrooms. The Twitter account

[64] *Instar analytics is a tool created by Kantar Media, which allows the integration and reading of audience data through access by mobile devices or desktop computers (see https://www.kantarmedia.com/global/our-solutions/audience-measurement/analysis-and-planning-software/instar-analytics).*

had around 110,000 followers in October 2020. When asked why these tweets included the presenters' tags, the explanation was that the presenters are the ones with the most followers; therefore, when they are tagged, their followers see the message. Likewise, if the presenter retweets it, the message achieves a broader audience.

This research carried out text analyses of 464 tweets issued by the @Atresmediacom account. The selected sample corresponds to the Atresmedia Corporate Communications department's Twitter account for three weeks posted between 1st October and 21st December 2018[65]. Twenty-three tweets on average were published every day – 89% (413 tweets out of 464) were devoted to the results of the linear audience data. 100% of the tweets with the #Audience's hashtag included linear television data collected by Kantar Media electronically through the people-meter from a statistical sample. 96.36% of the audience tweets conveyed quantified data embedded in them, which provided evidence of the assertion made in the message. Figure 6-10 described the elements contained in each tweet.

Figure 6-10: An example of the elements that comprise a tweet message related to the audience metrics

Tweet translation:
Atresmedia Comunicacion @atresmediacom 17th Sep 2018
#Audiences
@sextaNoticias 14H, With @helenaresano, was yesterday the leading informative offer of its TV daypart with 1.5 million viewers and 14.5%. It increased to 15.6% in commercial target, where it was the absolute leader

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[65] *The weeks selected were 1-8 October 2018, 8-14 November 2018, and 15-21 December 2018. It was a random selection, taking care to belong to different months and different weeks of the month. Also, the sample chosen belongs to a period outside the fieldwork.*

The frequent use of superlative adjectives is worth mentioning: the words leader or leadership appear in 61% of the tweets that carry the #Audience's label. On the other hand, the superlative term absolute leader or absolute leadership, an adjective that describes leadership as the best possible, appears in 33% of tweets (136 out of 413) labelled with #Audiences. To hold a superlative declaration and keep it uncontested, every assertion is carefully framed, and the language must be explicit concerning the population in which that assertion occurs. In the example in Figure 6-10, when the message says leader, it should be said that leadership happens in bounded time and space. Therefore, in Figure 6-10, the praised newscast is the top-ranking newscast in the timeslot between 14h00 and 14h30, a timeslot in which there are only two newscasts. The tweet refers to leadership in that specific zone. La Sexta's newscast would fall to fourth place if the assessed slot expanded to all midday newscasts.

Another repeatedly used expression in the tweets' wording is "the most-watched...", referring to a programme, broadcast, film, contest, or information. The expression "the most-watched" appeared in 28% of audience tweets. According to the messages' writers, the tweets' phrasing must demonstrate a triumph, a job well done, never a second place. That is why each of these audience tweets must define a framework of analysis, framing that triumph, which can relate to a historical maximum, season, day, timeslots or a particular demographic segment, but it must always communicate a success. Another rule is never to mention competitors. The Twitter message production, which aims to spread Atresmedia's quantified audience data, strives to build a leadership image for the media group by cherry-picking data that places Atresmedia as a leading group for linear audiences.

Regarding the intended audience of these tweets, the Corporate Communications office professionals only mentioned the general public and journalists in Spain, particularly from specialised media on the entertainment and TV industry. Asked if they were aware of whether the staff followed the messages, the answer was negative. However, as noted earlier, from the sample analysed, there was one message for every newscast every single day. Moreover, even though the audience data posting on Twitter lasts two hours daily, newscast messages are consistently among the first to be posted, and always in order of channel seniority, first, noting Antena 3's newscasts results, and after four or five tweets related to Atresmedia or its TV channels' gross audience figures, they always turn their tweets to La Sexta's newscasts audience data outcome. In other words, since these are the first messages to be posted, they arrive just in time for the beginning of the news-editorial meeting; however, Corporate Communication office staff assert that this is not intentional.

As will be seen in Chapter 8 on professional identity of journalists and job precarity, these tweets have an impact both in their presence and in their rare absence: when there is no message, it means that the programme has gone wrong, and it generates concern among the news workers. There is a celebration followed by a sort of anxiety if it goes very well because the data sets an immediate goal: yesterday's audience score must at least be equalled today. This evidence supports Espeland and Sauder's (2007) argument that rankings have reactivity effects. These scholars state that rankings establish an attainable goal and elicit self-fulfilling prophecies, progressively transforming the measured individuals into beings that conform closer to the ranking criteria; therefore, rankings can change behaviours. In the case of La Sexta's newsroom staff, what the messages are inducing is to put in motion the mechanisms needed to maintain a position in the ranking, such as the most viewed programme in a specific timeslot, or to increase the measurable gap to its direct competitor.

discusses what journalists interpret from the messages regarding audience data.

Figure 6-11: Sample of tweet that frames the audience in terms of age and geographic distribution

Tweet translation:
Atresmedia Comunicación @atresmediacom 13th Nov 2018
#Audiences
Yesterday @DebatAlRojoVivo matched its maximum season's share with 17.5%. Antonio García Ferreras' programme led among all viewers over 45 years of age and in [the Spain's autonomous regions of] Catalonia, Valencia, Castilla-La Mancha, Balearic Islands and Murcia

It is quite remarkable to pay attention at what is absent in all those craftily worded messages. The wording always highlights commercial aims, namely the audience Concerning the construction of the audience, Twitter messages introduce a framing effect. Since every tweet needs to be worded positively and mean success, they always refer to a specific scope. In Figure 6-10, the tweet notes the newscast was the absolute leader in the commercial target, which means people living in cities of more than 10,000 people, between 25-59 years of age, and categorised as ABCDE1 purchasing power (encompassing socio-economic classes known as upper, upper-middle, middle and lower-middle). The tweets also mention specific age groups or geographic areas in which the programme became the most viewed. The later framing form is seen in Figure 6-11.

share, their leading position or the typology of the viewers. The tweets hardly ever refer to the fulfilment of journalistic social duty. The tweets are commercially oriented and become part of the disciplining tools, subtly and persistently (Foucault 1995), to fulfil business purposes. The managers do not need to go to the newsroom or give directions to the journalists – all guidelines are contained in the audience metrics that steadily permeate the newsroom (Bunce 2017). Chapter 7 discusses how the audience quantified data sets up achievable but inescapable goals for the newsroom, and Chapter 8 focuses on how the audience outcome serves as gratification or drives continuous performance improvements for the news workers and the role played by metrics in the creation of journalistic professional identity and autonomy.

6.4. Conclusion

At Atresmedia I found a fierce defence of the traditional market information regime (Méadel 2015). The audiometry, as an audience measuring process, is a system that has demonstrated its efficiency in supporting the TV industry financing model of advertising for 30 years (Napoli 2003, 2011; Buzzard 2015; Bourdon and Meadel 2015). Through this measurement system, TV stations agree to quantify the interest of the audience in their products and, on the basis of those measures, create performance rankings. These rankings are fed daily with new data and ensure a fresh daily performance assessment, which tells players what was done better, worse, or similar than the day before. The quantified data allows an assessment breakdown that goes from 24-hours to one-minute intervals, to precisely examine whether content attracted the attention of members of the audience or not. While executives of the company verbalize no interest in the minute-by-minute breakdown of the audience, in the newsroom there is a systematic consumption of this detailed information that serves as a self-surveillance of the news production performance to comply with the media group's managerial interests (Bunce 2017). This theme will be further developed in Chapter 7.

At the institutional level, I observed tactics used for re-packaging the audience metrics and wrangling a better position in the ranking. One tactic is the practice of splitting one news programme into two or three shorter segments, each with its own audience outcome. In this way, the TV station chooses to communicate only the best outcome among the segments as the total programme audience. That is a trick extended in the Spanish TV duopoly that has a disciplinary effect in two directions. On one hand, it generates a system of gratification as part of the disciplinary mechanism of normalization (Foucault 1995 [1977]) – gratification that prevails given that the metrics communication production is always phrased in triumphant terms. Thus, by getting rid of the low-performance segments in terms of audience data, the publicly communicated audience metrics show a performance assessment and a position in the ranking that could never be shown with the full programme audience data. Therefore, data flows are used to support marketing and branding practices. A position in the ranking receives such care and attention because ranking has the ability to set patterns and mark desirable skills (Foucault 1995), for instance, rankings put pressure on matching or raising audience scores, avoiding drops. On the other hand, it is also relevant to see how these tactics to harness audience metrics also discipline the business practices of the company. I did not observe any questioning of the practice of splitting the programme audience, and the explanation to keep this tactic working was that it was not possible to give up on these tactics because the TV channel cannot risk its position in the ranking.

Foucault identifies the disciplinary power as a modern 'capillary' form, as the product and practice of a continuous and diffuse (1995) set of relationships "enacted through subtle practices and banal procedures" (Sauder and Espeland 2009:69). I argue that the Twitter message – which every morning alerts the editorial meeting about the release of audience metrics – is one of these subtle practices that triggers a process of reviewing and inclusion of the audience data in the chain of news production. That message is perfectly worded to produce gratification among the news workers and to establish achievable goals, given that it always shows a bounded space of achievement. However, to arrive at conclusions before seeing how editors and journalists, in a real newsroom, follow, resist, and deal with this quantification of the news production process would miss a key part of the picture. Embracing this part is the purpose of the next chapter.

7. THE METRIC POWER ON JOURNALISM ROUTINES AND PRACTICES: The mindful and the mindless

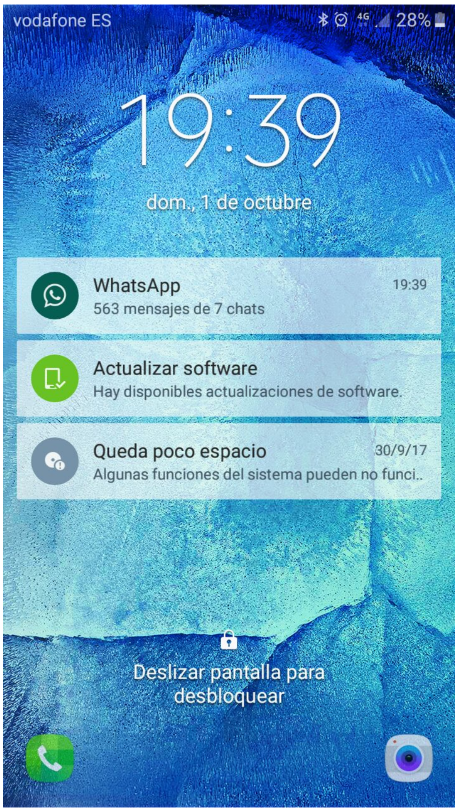
7.1. Introduction

To an external observer, the atmosphere in La Sexta's newsroom is welcoming. Everybody greets one another at first sight and continues with their tasks. There is a constant murmur of chatting and laughter. The dress code is casual, not stylish or formal. Most wear jeans, t-shirts, and trainers. Even the journalists who play the role of news anchors do not change their outfits for more formal ones until minutes before the newscast. The desks are full of scattered pens, notes, newspapers and sticky memos. This informality contrasts sharply with the routine practices that are rigorously carried out daily which, at the same time, are comprised of tightly scheduled repeated micro patterns.

One example of those patterns is TweetDeck, and WhatsApp web being opened on every desktop computer of La Sexta's newsroom each day as soon as the newsroom activity starts. Both have become key newswork applications: TweetDeck is a dashboard application for the management of multiple Twitter accounts or Twitter lists and WhatsApp web is a browser which replicates the conversations taking place on the mobile phone app. As every computer has multiple users, each journalist uses tabs in the browser to access each application. Therefore, those services are constantly logging in and out insofar as journalists come and go from fieldwork. Both the interviews and my observations showed that Twitter and WhatsApp were the first apps consulted by journalists every day. In this chapter, we will see how these two apps are fully integrated into journalistic practice and routine, and how their embedded metrics are inextricably tied to the concept of news that journalists have.

In this research, I have chosen to look at the re-signifying of metrics beyond the newsroom, to understand the political economy of metrics and to what extent these play a disciplinary role (Foucault 1995) in the process of news production. So far, I have focused on the data to which the media business gives priority: audience metrics (Chapters 5 and 6). From here, I concentrate on the journalistic juggling required to deal with two different market information regimes. The news team is permanently stimulated with multiple scattered data flows. For instance, one common claim heard in La Sexta's newsroom relates to how exhausting and time-consuming it is to stay updated with the WhatsApp group feeds. To get a sense of this, I made a special request to a journalist: to take a screenshot when he felt he was unable to keep up with the pace of reading the WhatsApp groups. This happened on the Catalonian referendum day when, amidst permanent broadcasting, his phone ran out of battery. Somebody took his mobile phone to charge it, so he was away from it for 20 minutes. When the mobile was returned to him with some battery charge, he fulfilled my request; there were 563 unread messages accumulated (Figure 7-1).

Figure 7-1 Unread messages on a journalist's mobile phone on a busy day in the field



Translation:
"WhatsApp, 563 messages on seven chats";
"Software update, there are software upgrades available"; and
"There is little space left, some system functions may not work properly"

Afterwards, we had the opportunity to talk about those numbers and how these incoming alerts work, mediating their perception of urgency or relevance. I also got a glimpse of how the life of the newsroom had an extended virtual life on WhatsApp – an observation that leads me to understand that newsroom quantification goes beyond the audience metrics provided by the Atresmedia audience department. It involves the permanent mediation of numbers in as many activities as needed to produce the news, such as putting news gathering in motion, changing the location of a camera team, or selecting or deselecting the news content from the daily news offer.

Throughout this chapter, I will review the way in which the news production workflow unfolds in La Sexta's newsroom. In the first section, I explain the structure and the news production mode of the analogue newsroom. Thereafter, I detail how a sort of virtual newsroom has arisen on smartphone devices, thanks to WhatsApp affordances. Note that this is not a perfect reflection of the structure of the analogue newsroom but is instead a much broader, more complex, and blurred organisation with their own set of power relations. In the second part, I follow the news production based on five of the six stages in the model of news construction created by Domingo and colleagues (2008): access and observation; selection and filtering; processing and editing; distribution; and, finally, interpretation. The sixth stage, interpretation, is embedded in all previous phases, thus it is not analysed separately.

7.2. Newsroom structure: The analogue newsroom goes virtual

The news production team at La Sexta involves 440 workers. That number includes journalists, camera operators, news anchors, TV producers, technicians, and administrators. Most of the staff work in Madrid; however, around 40 news producers have their workstations at one of five provincial bureaus in Galicia, the Basque Country, Valencia, Catalonia, and Andalucía. Of the 400 based in Madrid, just a few are Atresmedia or La Sexta' employees. Only the directing team and the news anchors have a working contract with the corporation. At the time of the research, the rest of the news production team has a contract with an outsourcing enterprise called Liquid Media, short-term renewable contracts.

Subcontracting is a business practice that allows the company to be quickly downsized in cycles of economic contraction and means that employees can be fired at a low cost. Thus, the business risk is transferred from the media firm to the employees (Baines 1999; Gollmitzer 2019). This kind of labour structure –according to my experience is widespread in the Spanish TV system, both public and private – leads to news workers having a double dependence. In all matters related to editorial directions, they must deal with the hierarchy belonging to Atresmedia, but when those same news workers need to discuss their contract, salary or time off, they must do so with the people in charge of Liquid Media. Those working for Liquid Media consider that their colleagues who have contracts with Atresmedia enjoy a better salary and privileges. I was able to observe that people with different contracts have different access to organisational information. Specifically, the few news producers holding a contract with Atresmedia have full access to the Atresmedia intranet. They can see all internal communication grouped by audience reports, training and operational information, and the rights and organisation of the trade union. In contrast, those searching the intranet as Liquid Media employees only have access to the daily menu at Atresmedia's cafeteria, the employee directory, and the system for reporting incidents.

The entire team can be subdivided into those who work in-house, and those who work in the field where the news take place. The first group who work in-house is comprised of, on the one hand, what the news team calls "La cocina" (the kitchen), the team that runs a news programme. There is one kitchen team for every programme (see Figure 7-2).

Figure 7-2: La Sexta newsroom's floor plan and news teams' distribution

On the other hand, the section editors, also in-house news workers, coordinate the newsgathering for all news shows. Each of these professionals has two work shifts. In contrast, the second big group, those who work out-of-house – mainly reporters and camera operators – must work shifts that are referred to as "one shift" and "split shift". One shift means working without a break for nine hours straight, from early in the morning to mid-afternoon, or from noon until the end of the day. Those who undertake a split shift begin early in the morning, take a break of two to three hours in the middle of the day, then start working again in the afternoon. That is how it is officially stated on paper, but in practice – especially during the Catalan crisis – I witnessed reporters working continuously for 12 to 14 hours, including weekends, for more than a month. The whole news team is aware that La Sexta's newsroom is known to have the most flexible news team in Spanish media.

News production structure of the analogue newsroom

From Monday to Friday, La Sexta's newsroom produces around nine hours of news programmes daily: two long-format debate programmes; two newscasts; and two sport programmes. To these can be added a one-hour documentary programme broadcast every Friday evening at prime time; and a five-hour debate aired on Saturdays at 9pm. In addition, there are three seasonal news programmes. These extensive news broadcasts rely greatly on content replication, an issue that I will discuss later in this chapter.

Table 7-1: Long-format news programmes in mainstream Spanish television in April 2018

PROGAMME'S NAME	TV CHANNEL	REGULAR TIMETABLE		DURATION
Espejo Público	Antena 3	9h00-13h15	Monday to Friday	255 min
El Diario de Ana Rosa	Telecinco	9h00-13h15	Monday to Friday	255 min
La Mañana	TVE	10h-13h00	Monday to Friday	180 min
Al Rojo Vivo	La Sexta	11h00-14h20	Monday to Friday	200 min
Más Vale Tarde	La Sexta	17h20-20h00	Monday to Friday	160 min
Liarla Pardo	La Sexta	18h00-20h00	Sunday	120 min
La Sexta Noche	La Sexta	21h00-02h30	Saturday	330 min

All Spain's leading private and public television channels schedule a long-format news debate on weekday mornings (Table 7-1). At La Sexta TV, *Al Rojo Vivo* is the flagship news show and adapts to take over for marathon broadcasts in an open-ended mode for planned and unplanned news events such as general elections, the King's abdication or enthronement, votes of no confidence in Parliament or terrorist attacks in Spain and other European countries. For instance, on Sunday 1st October 2017, the Catalonian referendum day, *Al Rojo Vivo*'s continuous broadcast started at 7h45 in the morning and ended at 1h00 the next day. No other nationwide TV station carried out such a broadcast: the other channels informed viewers about the Catalonian referendum on their regular newscasts and other Sunday programming.

Dayan and Katz (1996) termed this sort of live broadcasts 'media events', referring to social happenings carefully staged by electronic media. They describe those broadcasts as a form of pre-planned public ritual, where state institutions are celebrated in a reverential tone. Liebes (1998) distinguishes a new genre – “disaster marathons” – a close kin of Dayan and Katz's media events since they are also broadcast live but with neither the preparedness nor celebratory nature of media events. Disaster marathons are unplanned prolonged broadcasts that interrupt scheduled programming as soon as disaster hits and brings the audience members together in front of the television screen, eager to understand what is going on. Media events attempt to heal a collective trauma (state funerals, for example, Princess Diana's funeral or after President Kennedy's assassination; Dayan and Katz 1996); marathons, instead, aim to search for someone to blame for large-scale disasters, terrorist attacks or riots. *Al Rojo Vivo*’s long broadcast coverage applies to both genres – media events and disaster marathons.

Strictly speaking, from the most commercial logic, which aims to get the best audience metrics continuously, the decision to build a niche news TV station with significant audience figures does not seem to work as opportunities to cover big news stories are scarce. Both Dayan and Katz's media events or Liebes' disaster marathons are broadcasting modes that result in good audience metrics for La Sexta once in a while. By stating the aim to be the first news media company to report a newsworthy event and to be the one who gets better and deeper factual information, it reveals to what extent Atresmedia participates in market struggles beyond the appropriation of economic power. The Atresmedia group also struggles to gain symbolic power, defined by Bourdieu as "name, renown, prestige, honour, glory, authority, everything which constitutes symbolic power as a recognised power." (2000:251).

> *When something happens, more and more people get informed in La Sexta TV, to the detriment of other options, particularly public television. All the last elections have been led by La Sexta, TV, which is still surprising considering that its size as a channel is what it is, [not much]. La Sexta TV has a 6.8% average share, while the channels lead the market to double it [in audience share]. However, election days are great informative days, extraordinary informative events, and these days La Sexta TV is the channel that the public tuned to. It is the TV station that leads [the audience figures].* (Executive A)

La Sexta news team, which has a chief team that works tightly together since the channel was born and has fluid access to the top executives, builds journalistic recognition as the place to get informed when events happen and uses it in their power interplay with the company's commercial, managerial vision. The news team is in a never-ending negotiation to push the journalistic logic in the newsroom and within the company. However, the limit of that kind of interplay is tested every day by the ratings, with the goal of growing or holding audience metrics, never letting them fall.

To produce content for all La Sexta news’ programmes of approximately 60 hours per week, La Sexta’s newsroom is organised under the concept of one newsroom for everyone, not only in terms of premises, but also human resources. The latter means that the entire team works for all programmes. Regarding the news production chain, each programme constitutes a repackaged product from the news programme broadcast before it. Repackaged content is a term which refers to any content offering that manipulates, re-organises, excerpts, replicates, reuses, repurposes or adapts another show's core content, thus generating new content through variations of pre-existing content (Askwith 2007). A particular La Sexta feature is that the news agenda is set and fed by the first programme of the day, *Al Rojo Vivo* (*Red Hot*), whose team fixes the priorities and allocates the resources. *Al Rojo Vivo*, as the first long-format news show of the day, assigns the coverage of the core team of political journalists and allocates cameras, trucks and backpacks for broadcasting. As it is a fully live programme, all technological resources are devoted to running the programme. The second programming slot belongs to the newscast. There are no intermediary slots between them, thus the journalistic and technical teams are unable to move to another scenario, or story, to collect new information. On the second work shift in the evening, the same situation applies: two consecutive news programmes share professional and technical resources.

- *Elisa: It's true, they do help to give structure overall to the political news reports [...] if we wanna bet and to have five live broadcasting, we can climb on the bandwagon of the five live broadcasts already allocated throughout the morning.*
- *Interviewer: Do you manage to differentiate [content from one programme to another]?*
- *Elisa: Little or not at all. The format of Al Rojo [the previous programme] consists of having as much live-broadcasts as possible where news is occurring, that means the reporter is kidnapped [cannot go around and make a report] in front of the camera throughout the morning.*

WhatsApp groups: the virtual expanded version of the newsroom

Returning to the issue of the 563 unread WhatsApp messages mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, in the past two years media scholars have begun to look at the role played by instant messaging applications in news production (Belair-Gagnon, Agur and Frisch 2017; Mabweazara and Mare 2017; García-Avilés et al. 2018; Bunce, Wright and Scott 2018; Dodds 2019). In this section I will focus on the role of instant messaging applications in structuring the virtual newsroom relationships. From my informal conversation with the journalists, I discovered that they manage a large number of groups in WhatsApp, in most cases in excess of 100, although not all are active. Some are muted, without notifications, just used for sporadic checking, whilst others command all of their attention.

> *Look at this [counting]: one, two, three, […] 20 and 21. I have received messages from 21 groups only in the last hour.* (Roberto, news producer)

We will see the preeminent role acquired by WhatsApp groups in newsroom communications. The news team’s or the chat's participants are in an ongoing dialogue between people who are physically absent but present through mediated real-time interactions. This sort of direct interaction is what Licoppe (2004) called connected presence. For instance, journalists receive news assignments, daily news coverage communications, or report back the fulfilment of their tasks through WhatsApp. Although journalists are not always direct recipients of the messages, they become aware of them most of the time. Madianou (2016) called these kinds of indirect interactions "ambient co-presence" to capture how they give rise to a peripheral awareness of distant others. Journalists constantly acknowledge what the news team is doing or concerned about, without such information directly affecting their activity. From the others' viewpoint in the chat, it could seem that individuals shift back and forth between passive and active social awareness modes (Ling and Lai 2016) which is a sort of self-image journalists manage to exploit in certain virtual relationships. I will later refer to this issue in the journalists-source relationship. However, from the individual's point of view such a passive mode on WhatsApp does not exist. If one receives a message on a group that is not directly addressed to them or the story they are working on, that message still has an effect, creates an awareness of an issue. To this is added the staggering number of messages they constantly receive in their chat rooms that are news-job-related. This bulk of messages puts pressure on keeping up with reading all the comments and conveying a sense of urgency. Moreover, journalists are unable to disconnect. The chats are active throughout all working shifts, and the newsroom bosses use them for job coordination with no respect of work shift boundaries.

Also, in light of metrics, when the news explodes, the WhatsApp groups system has a recursive character that attaches urgency to some content. This can be seen by going back to Figure 7-1, which depicts a locked screen with a warning message regarding the 563 unread text messages. To a lesser extent, what occurs on WhatsApp is similar to what takes place on other social media platforms and the generation of trending topics. When a journalist receives 563 messages in 20 minutes, these are not 563 unique messages. Many are the same message shared multiple times by, for instance, the programme team who want to broadcast the information involved in the message and the production group that is responsible for providing the resources to get the story. Therefore, rather than having 563 unattended messages, journalists have a smaller number of messages circulating. However, the quantified notification applies pressure and a sense of urgency.

Regarding the newsroom organisation in WhatsApp, observing these chat groups completely integrated into journalistic routines and appearing daily on everyone's smartphones as seen in Figure 7-3, some patterns emerged and can be summarized in three axes that allow for an understanding of the chat rooms' internal organisation: instrumental coordination; collaborative content; and sourcing news.

Figure 7-3: Screenshot of the WhatsApp groups' incoming messages

Note: Screenshot of the WhatsApp groups' incoming messages. Due to the anonymisation compromise of the interviewees, all identifying traits are redacted.

Instrumental coordination axis: these chat groups are crucial in getting the team informed over new instructions related to the news production, such as "prepare for a live shot in ten minutes" or "the camera is on its way". Every programme has a group of this kind which gathers the kitchen and the reporters associated with that programme. One example of this is the third group that appears in Fig. 7-3, "ARV redacción", ARV stands for *Al Rojo Vivo*, the morning news programme, so the group refers to the *Al Rojo Vivo* newsmaking team. The instrumental coordination axis can also include transversal teams such as programme producers from different news programmes, like the group in the picture called "Producción/Dirección" (Production/directorate team) or integrate with other newsrooms from the same media group, such as the group "Equipos compartidos" (shared news teams) in Figure 7-3 first row. All have the same purpose - to issue instructions to be implemented immediately.

Collaborative content axis: These virtual groups are created to share updates of ongoing news and are named with the same labels as the news, for instance, "Caso

Lezo" (Lezo case) which refers to a judicial case of political corruption. Every new statement, piece of evidence or data generated by any protagonist of that news story will be uploaded into that group. Anybody can ask to be integrated into those groups as long as it does not exceed the cap of 256 members that WhatsApp stipulates. These groups are appreciated by journalists, and they have strict rules to avoid misunderstanding. Each verbatim quote begins with the name of the person making the statement, who is required to use quotation marks and add the location and hour of the statement.

> *The news feed that I receive through WhatsApp has no parallel with any other news service. I get the verbatim news before it appears on Twitter or in the news agencies, this is amazing!* (Benjamin, editor)

The groups of collaborative content can be divided into two types: in-house, and out-of-house. The groups of the in-house kind include members who are part of the analogue newsroom. Conversely, the out-of-house groups bring together journalists from different media outlets which coincide with beat news, that is journalists who meet regularly while covering a geographic or speciality area. This kind of group is not new in journalistic routines, they represent an informal social structure among journalists who interact on a regular basis (Gieber and Johnson 1961). According to the interviewees in this research, in these out-of-house WhatsApp groups of collaborative content, members share newsworthy tip-offs in a schema of mutual favours. Of course, scoops are not included – they belong to whoever made the discovery. The news team highly valued the information contained in these collaborative content WhatsApp chats. The WhatsApp functionalities allow the information to remain stored and searchable in the chat groups, with the exact posting date. Therefore, reporters prepare their live broadcasts by consulting these collaborative content WhatsApp chats to get a thorough background for the follow-up news.

Sourcing news axis: This third axis did not emerge from conversations with journalists because it is the kind of group that journalists are not willing to report. I am referring to the groups developed between journalists and their sources. Some journalists become guests in a particular type of group in which they are at the same time members and news collectors. They may have access to a political committee WhatsApp group or a police or trade union WhatsApp group. It is difficult to gain access, but once journalists are inside, they can remain silent and unnoticed. Ling and Lai (2016) call this mode passive social awareness. However, it is anything but passive; I would prefer to call it unnoticed active mode.

Another type of group is organised by PR representatives of stakeholders who create WhatsApp groups for journalists as a channel of communication. The membership to these groups is provided as a favour and it is subject to rules to which the journalist must subscribe. I have stated that journalists do not report this kind of group, not even to their bosses. This type of WhatsApp groups managed by the news source represents a shift in power relationships between journalists and sources. One example of this type of chatroom was publicly revealed when two reporters from different media companies were cast out of the WhatsApp group for Vox, a Spanish far right political party because they did not accept silencing of a private newsworthy conversation between two leaders of the party, released in the journalists' chatroom in error. A key point in a WhatsApp group is who gatekeeps the membership, and the group's rules which, in broader terms, reflect the same traditional difficulties that exist between journalists and their sources (Carlson 2009). Chapter 8 will address how these instant messaging platforms rework the relationships between journalists and news sources and journalists and news editors.

When the mobile phone users agree to meet, the deal is not fixed; it can be rearranged multiple times, that is called coordination (Ling and Yttri 2002). Where the coordination's realigning involves the expressive dimension of the self at instrumental and emotional levels, Ling and Yttri employ the notion of hyper-coordination. These two concepts referred to one-to-one communication. For the group instant messaging system, Ling and Lai (2016) deepen the concept of micro-coordination by looking at the dependence that the instant messaging apps created for individuals and their centrality in creating social groups. In the case of La Sexta's newsroom, in terms of the ability to structure social groups, the instrumental coordination chat groups reassert the structure of certain in-person groups, such as the kitchens of the programmes and, at the same time, expand the newsroom boundaries creating a super newsroom by joining together all the Atresmedia newsrooms. Although this is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 8, it is worth adding here that instant messaging applications also alter distances. For example, WhatsApp succeeds in bringing together journalists working for La Sexta from regional offices or as foreign correspondents. However, at the same time, the app draws away people who are not included in the chats, even though such people could be working in the same building.

Similarly, the journalists' permanent checking of the chat messages or group members in building their reports aligns with the meme-based coordination described by Ling and Lai (2016). Meme-based coordination refers to the digital propagation of cultural phenotypes, meaning the group serves as cultural replicators of group behavioural patterns such as mealtimes or celebrations. In task-driven use of instant messaging such as occurs in La Sexta's newsroom, there is a range of professional patterns conveyed and permanently built through the app: the TV station news discourse focused on left-leaning political news (the news team called them "social interest focused news stories"), and – crucial for this research – the newsroom's understanding of metrics. Usually, the daily ritual of group messages exchanges begins with the outcome of the previous day's audience metrics. Congratulations about the results contained in those messages (remembering the continued ability to find triumphs within the data) and the influx of greetings messages that follow are a constant reminder of what must be done. The messages also depict failures throughout the newscasts, such as specific news stories that did not grab audience attention according to the metrics. Through the WhatsApp chats, the news workers discuss whether the failure was due to the news topic not interesting the audience, not being placed in the right newscast section, or not being cushioned between two more popular stories in audience metrics terms (the hammocking practice described later in this chapter). These later sorts of messages reinforce what must not be done.

Drawing on Foucault's analysis of power (1995), the chat groups on WhatsApp and their daily conversation about the audience metrics outcomes, with the added texts that explicitly say the must-dos and don'ts, render a structured disciplining process that works across the entire news team. It is normalised as a daily scheduled routine that is facilitated by instant messaging systems. The disciplining process works by pointing out what the metrics recognise as the most audience-engaging stories and disciplines the news team to produce news items which will be validated by the metrics. Although the power interplay – journalist-source and journalist-news editor – yielded on group messaging will be discussed in Chapter 8, it is worth mentioning one dimension regarding the ability to show presence in messaging apps' multisided interactions.

The use of read receipts can allow users to project an image of responsiveness, a dimension already studied in email interactions (Tyler and Tang 2003). This is an issue of visibility, which is a common topic within La Sexta's instrumental and collaborative newsroom chat groups. Visibility on messaging apps has a positive aspect that allows showing when others are available and has a negative side related to privacy (Church and De Oliveira 2013). It can thus be used for lateral monitoring, which is why it is common to modify privacy settings.

La Sexta's journalists feel encouraged to be visible inside collaborative and instrumental chat groups, especially where they can be detected by other news teams inside the media group. There is no evidence that journalists participate in 'hiding' behaviours. On the contrary, journalists manage their own professional branding within the groups, particularly those who include other newsrooms within the media group. Several La Sexta journalists have specialised in the beat news sectors or, because of their performance on social media, have been paid to participate in radio news programmes that belong to Atresmedia through those task-driven multisided interactions. Journalists share their insights in the groups, or their performance is greeted within the groups. Sometimes someone from another outlet communicates by a backchannel to invite them to participate in a programme or even to create a section outside of La Sexta. It is hard to say that the opportunities emerge because of the WhatsApp group, but it is a channel that supports such connections. Cases are known in the newsroom, but the anonymity pledge prevents me from mentioning specific examples of journalists getting paid extra after sharing their knowledge on WhatsApp groups.

7.3. News production routines and practices

This section's purpose is to describe the main patterns that the newsmakers in La Sexta's newsroom follow to get the work done, from detecting the news story to receiving user feedback throughout four out of five stages of the news production processes described by Domingo and colleagues (2008)[66]. The focus is on those practices that have been put in place in interaction with metrics or pushed by technology that generates data. They might even constitute an unconscious interaction between the news producer and the metrics.

Access and Observation

Figure 7-4 First stage of news production process: access and observation

A normal day job for a journalist starts with checking notifications on their mobile phone and continues with a scan over the media to discover the main news of the day, with social media being a key place to access and observe (Figure 7-4) the hot topics of the moment.

[66] *In adapting the model, the fifth stage – of interpretation of the audience response to the news production – was omitted because the audience response in terms of metrics is integrated into all previous stages.*

a. Something is on the move

> *If I see a hashtag that says #robberyCartagena [#AtracoCartagena] or #breakingnews, usually the traditional media's Twitter accounts have no more information than "there is a bank holdup in Cartagena with hostages", they do not have anything else at that point. But I'm already using it because I now know that there is something happening, so I search 'holdup in Cartagena' in the Twitter search box to find more details, maybe a neighbour recorded a video and has uploaded it on Twitter, you know it's almost like a news agency [he laughs loudly] it alerts me, but also provides images and information.* (Ernesto, editor)

From very early on, research related to the journalistic use of micro-blogging, in particular Twitter, has shown its use as an awareness system (Hermida 2010) which provides official and unofficial fragments of information with zero or limited validity if they are presented in isolation, but if combined, make sense and improve accuracy (2010). That was the intensive use I witnessed in La Sexta's newsroom, and it was also confirmed by the interviews. Journalists were also eager to remark that before publishing anything taken from Twitter, they check and verify the information.

Academic research has burgeoned on the use of Twitter in journalistic practices as an evidence-gathering tool as well as news or opinion delivery conveyor (Hermida 2010; Bossio 2017; Ottovordemgentschenfelde 2017; Coddington 2018; Duffy, Tandoc Jr. and Ling 2018). I suggest, in addition, that the quantitative data provided by the social platform also has a triggering role over the news making process. In Ernesto's words, it becomes clear that he does not witness the robbery, does not receive a phone call or a message from a source. The one thing that grabs Ernesto's attention is a hashtag on his Twitter feed. Recent research suggests that algorithms – which consider the user's previous and current content consumption – curate the trends and the customized timelines (Yang 2016; Lee and Tandoc Jr. 2017). The terms used by the news workers to describe their interest in turning a Twitter message into newscast content are always related to the metrics extracted from the social media interaction around that message, for instance:

> *Today we will air an issue which has had a lot of impact on social media.* (Jimena, editor)

> *It calls my attention to something that has got a bunch of likes.* (Luisa, reporter)

> *Somebody from the team warns me 'this is making a lot of noise on Twitter'. (*Martina*, reporter)*

The social media platform not only conveys the event alert but, by placing the quantitative data of user content consumption in sight, adds another prominent factor to frame the event as one of public interest: data that leads journalists to interpret such events as newsworthy events. Even though the expressions collected above suggest a blunt association between the quantification of social media messages and whether the content is newsworthy, the step to begin the newsgathering process is far from being a case of straightforward and conscious decision-making. When asked about the use of social media metrics in news selection, the news team denied it was directly used.

Gatekeeping has been the traditional concept referring to the forces that can hinder or push information through the control gate of news media (Shoemaker and Vos 2009). Meraz and Papacharissi (2016) refer to information access to social media visibility through algorithmic gate control as networked gatekeeping. Bruns (2005 2017) coined the term ‘gatewatching’, which places emphasis on describing how people utilise internet platforms to monitor, publicise, distribute, and curate news that they are interested in. Bruns' uses the term gatewatching to examine the interaction between the news curation produced by the crowd of social media users with the elite news production of news media. In La Sexta news team's use of social media content, the evidence collected is in line with Bruns’ (2017) findings concerning the use of social media content as a normalised banal practice that makes 'user-generated content' no longer a distinct domain, primarily because the TV station lacks a social media engagement policy. At La Sexta, there are institutionalised practices for liking and sharing, but not for commenting or interacting with followers, not even reading users' comments. Two reasons for the comment’s dismissal coincide with Bruns’ (2017) findings. First, there is no desire to engage or even to get to know the number of hateful or overly belligerent comments that La Sexta receives on its diverse internet platforms. The second reason is that managing and censoring such comment sections implies extra work in which La Sexta TV was unwilling to invest.

Regarding Tuchman's (1978) depiction of newsgathering routines as based on pre-set categories to facilitate journalistic work, it is worth noting that algorithmic crowdsourced news curation is constantly contesting those categories. There is an interplay between the thematic offer on social media and La Sexta's newsworthy focus, which is ultimately resolved or negotiated in the news meeting between news editors.

b. News aggregators

News aggregation is a rooted and institutionalised practice for newsgathering at La Sexta Noticias. It is also a cheap form of news production (Isbell 2010) that entails “taking news from published sources, reshaping it, and republishing it in an abbreviated form within a single place” (Coddington 2018:2). It is acknowledged by the team as a legitimate journalistic practice that is regulated in the way they seek evidence, assess sources to be trustworthy, and verify information. The fulfilment of these stages fuels the confidence in having created a new journalistic product, one which has been moderated and curated by the news workers (Bakker 2012) and is therefore a news product different to the original.

In La Sexta's newsroom, the news aggregation process is triggered the day before with the daily production of an internal document called the "Papela"[67] which assembles all potential news assignments throughout the country. Those next day news events are sourced from the press offices of politicians and authorities of all sorts of institutions. What is interesting in this case is the content of the political personalities' shared agenda, which includes detail about their participation in interviews with any other media outlet in the Spanish news realm. This is about a highly institutionalised reinforcing of the asymmetries between elites and those who have no access to symbolic power – the elite finds a way to prevail in informing the political debate (McChesney 2012). It also bolsters and automates traditional journalistic sourcing routines based on pre-established relationships, such as the beat system (Tandoc Jr. and Duffy 2019). One of the first tasks of the day in the newsroom is to listen, record, cut and reproduce the primary interviews that are taking place in other media.

> *How does this work? In Radio Nacional [public Spanish radio] there is one [interviewee], in Television Española is another, and in SER radio there is a third one. One interview is assigned to each reporter, and afterwards they inform the editor what each politician has said and then the editor decides and says: 'Ok, cut this and this and that'.* (Fernanda, news producer)

Each radio interview or newspaper story extract is processed into an audio-visual news product containing the politician's portrait and the transcribed declaration. The latter is an example of the practice mentioned above of gatewatching (Bruns 2008), a news filtering that harnesses all of a news ecosystem's output and the collective intelligence and publishes the salient topics of the debate.

La Sexta's newsroom team legitimates the newsgathering process on the grounds that there is a noticeable difference between the inputs and the end product, that is to say, the content taken from other media has been moderated and curated by La Sexta's news workers (Bakker 2012). However, there is another view of this newsgathering process. Throughout the fieldwork, the news harvesting carried out through scanning other media, traditional or social media, was reported as a significant shift in the balance of power between journalists and news sources (Broersma and Graham 2012; Paulussen and Harder 2014; Broersma and Eldridge II 2019).

> *A political leader no longer needs to call a press conference to answer a debate. Lately, we have transformed into a TV news company that informs about what a politician thinks of something, on the basis of a Tweet.* (Aníbal, reporter)

[67] Informal way to describe a document.

> *A short clip with a statement downloaded from Twitter, what is that? That is a statement in which the journalist doesn't have the right to ask questions or follow-up questions, the journalist also has no access to the context. We do not decide what is important anymore.* (Laura, news producer)

The institutional tactic to address this issue of losing the strength of questioning in newsgathering is to verbalise during broadcasting the practice of not giving journalists access to the news sources, underlining that it is a non-democratic practice. However, in this line, La Sexta's discourse is less frequent than the use of pre-recorded statements in broadcasting. Furthermore, these remarks are more often related to the Popular Party government's communications practices in Spain, such as summoning a press conference and providing journalists with only a video link and no opportunity to ask questions, something that became customary in pre-pandemic time during the corruption trials against the members of Spain's ruling party at that time. Casero-Ripollés calls this sort of one-sided press conferences without journalistic questioning "soundbite journalism" (2015:100).

One news-making practice that attempts to appropriate the news published in another outlet consists of trying to get the news source to repeat their statement for La Sexta. For instance, if a politician has made a controversial statement in a radio interview, a La Sexta's reporter will try to customise the same statement or use an evolved version of it for the TV station throughout the day.

> *What is important is my presence, while interviewing the guy, the questions I ask the lad, the interviewee, my attitude, the way in which I take a position.* (Aníbal, reporter)

This is an institutional tactic of journalistic empowerment with which most journalists engage. At La Sexta, this practice is a sort of policy that is used both as an attempt to reinforce the media identity and a struggle to discursively legitimate the journalists' professional jurisdiction (Anderson 2008b).

c. Elite sourcing

Political news dominates the newscasts and news programmes of La Sexta TV. That is their niche speciality and, as I was told, is a deliberate business decision which they consider to be modified through looking at audience data, particularly audimeter data observed from a long-term perspective. La Sexta Noticias went through that debate months before the Catalan independence political crisis:

> *We were aware that we were going into a year of audience attention retrenchment, therefore we were building a new information dynamic, in which we all understood that the political information was reaching a distention point […] We said: we must decrease the percentage of political news in the newscast throughout this period, okay? We must downgrade from 80% politics and 20% other news to 60% politics and 40% for the rest.* (Mateo, editor)

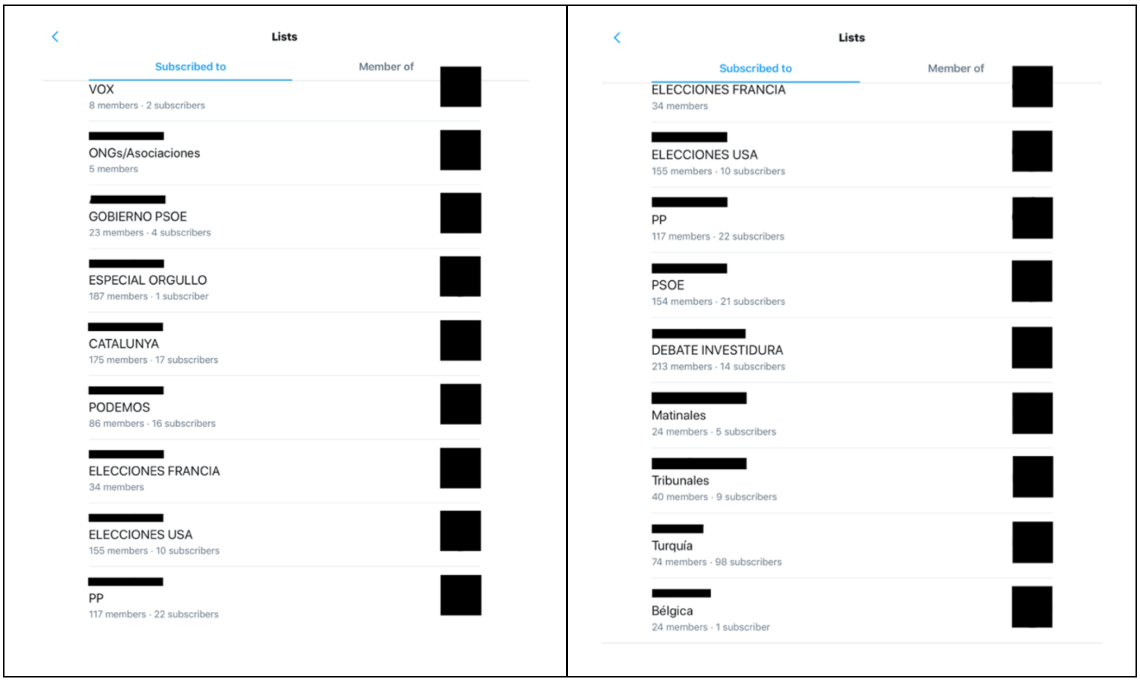
As part of that business model, the news team’s priority has been given to the beat system as a sourcing method, a newsgathering pattern "in which reporters focus on particular institutions or topic areas" (McCluskey 2008). In the newsroom, one of my sites for observation was the editors' desk aisle of one of the news programmes. For several weeks every morning, I spent around 90-120 minutes in that specific position. I was permitted to sit behind the editors at a distance sufficient to scrutinize their screens, to observe how they were using the apps, and eventually to ask them the purpose of one or another action.

Earlier, I described WhatsApp’s significant role in news team coordination. In terms of sourcing, frequently on La Sexta’s screen it was possible to see a reporter broadcasting live, reading a statement from their mobile phone, received from a news source. Usually, this was a news contact cultivated by the journalist, and at other times, the news informant trust was collectively built. I could observe news producers in the newsroom who were working on a specific source through WhatsApp. The information was immediately shared through a chatroom or directly forwarded to a specific journalist before or during a live broadcast. In this manner, the traditional power distance between the journalists and their sources (Singer 2011) has been reformulated, given that the social messaging app helps to build a connection with news sources which is "permanent, direct, but less intrusive, and discrete" (Mabweazara and Mare 2017:342) compared to a phone call or in-person visit.

However, developing that trust requires much more effort because of the need to overcome the fear over WhatsApp's content permanence and the possibility of easy dissemination. It must also be said that La Sexta's news programmes are very appealing to the Spanish political elite. Although the Atresmedia premises are in Madrid’s outskirts, the media group buildings work as an information hub to which political figures constantly converge to attend radio or television programmes. I noticed every day one or two government ministers, members of the parliament or judges, from across the political spectrum, coming into the newsroom and directly heading to the political editor's or news anchors’ desks, everyone fully acquainted with the place. They were coming from other news outlets' programmes, to pass on information, to say hello and, according to the news teams, lobby for a programmes' invitation. The politicians' flow to the newsroom was continuous throughout the fieldwork despite no special welcome being extended to any of them. No-one was conducted to a private office, no courtesies such as coffee or tea were offered, not even a chair. The visitor always remained standing while the host was seated in front of the computer. Usually, the incomer had to lean forward to make the chat more private, putting them in an uncomfortable position among the clustered workstations. To any outside observer, this was derogatory treatment. It was explained to me that the uninvited incomers were handled in this way with the aim of keeping their visit short. So, it is possible to assume that the news sourcing practice through WhatsApp is particularly fruitful because of the eagerness of politicians to get access to La Sexta screen time. It is worth noting that other occasional visitors to the Atresmedia building, namely Atresmedia's board members or senior executives, received better care, private offices, coffee and comfortable seating. The contrast of both situations speaks volumes about the hierarchies between economic and political power.

Regarding news sourcing through WhatsApp, when a journalist announces they have received a message from a specific authority or an anonymous source during broadcasts, they refer to a personal and close relationship. That piece of information can be both an asset and a burden for public trust in the journalist. The nature of the relationship between journalists and their sources remains hidden from others', even for the rest of the news team, including the direct news editor. Regularly, the news team took the opportunity to stage their privileged access to the authority during live broadcasts. Often a reporter alluded to an unnamed news source while recounting an off-camera event; when the news anchor asked the name of the source the repeated answer (and a standard practice globally) was "I cannot reveal it, as a journalist I must protect my news sources".

Figure 7-5: Public Twitter lists taken from a La Sexta journalist's Twitter account

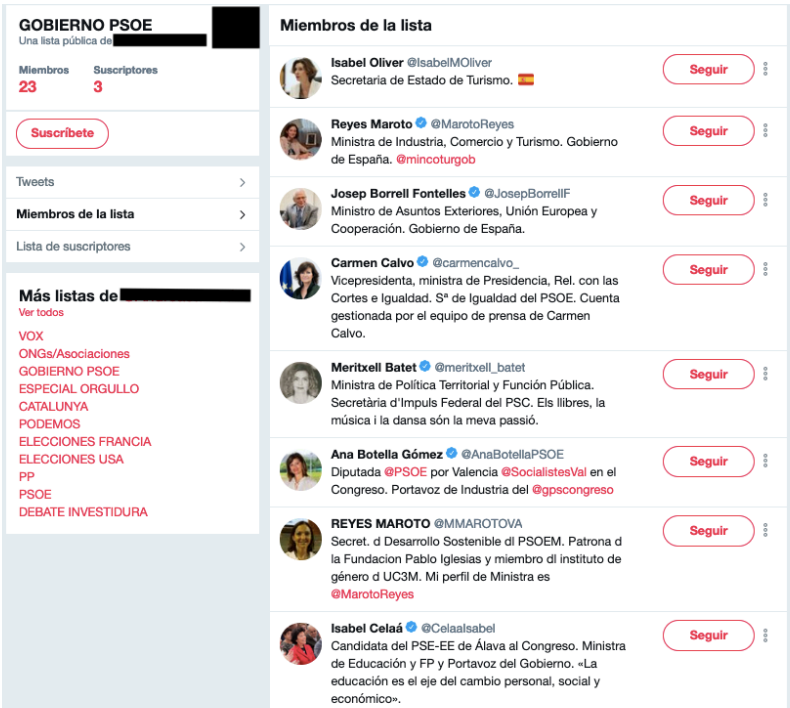


Note: Screenshot of a Twitter app layout on an iPad (20th April 2019). The black patches protect the list author's anonymity

The other app widely used for beat sourcing is Twitter. The news team utilises TweetDeck to narrow down the overwhelming flow that appears in every timeline, also creating lists comprised of newsworthy accounts. A common theme can group these Twitter accounts by the interest group they belong to or the institutions they are part of. Figure 7-5 shows the inventory of Twitter lists of a member of the newsroom. Among the theme lists are the Gay Pride Parade list, the French elections list, and the US Elections; as groups of interest, there are lists for each Spanish nationwide political party; and finally, there are institutional lists, for instance ONGs and the Socialist government.

Each list is comprised of the Twitter accounts of members associated with the list. As an example, by expanding the list for the Socialist Government, the first thing that one sees are the last tweets by the members of the list. As it is a public list, anyone can also review the identity of the 23 members added to the list. Figure 7-6 shows an extract of the members of the "socialist government list", the full list of ministers and the Prime Minister

Figure 7-6: Detail of the members added to a Twitter list



Note: Screenshot of a Twitter app layout on a laptop (accessed on 20th April 2019). The black patches protect the list author's anonymity

Once the list is settled, TweetDeck opens with the pre-set preferred lists, and the user only receives the updates, tweets and retweets from the members of that list. The use of TweetDeck allows a routinisation of Twitter feed reviewing that makes the journalistic job more manageable and efficient, but at the same time it reinforces elite news sourcing (Broersma and Graham 2012), fosters the reproduction of elite views (Cottle 2000) and favours structures of power, such as business and governments (Lewis et al. 2008). The savvy technological elite – eager to deliver information for their own benefit – would know what journalists are looking for in their stories and where they are looking for it (Tandoc Jr. and Duffy 2019).

The public lists created by news workers on Twitter also have metrics attached. Any list configured as public can be subscribed to by any Twitter user (see in Fig.7-6, where the "socialist government" list has three subscribers). Moreover, there is a section that announces how many lists a Twitter user has been added to. This is a public feature that is highly valued by some journalists.

Selection and Filtering

Figure 7-7 Second stage of news production process: selection and filtering

The selection/filtering stage of the news production chain (Figure 7-7) is when the news team decides whether an event or information deserves coverage and which of its aspects should be included or discarded (Tandoc Jr. and Duffy 2019). At La Sexta, this stage involves a paradox around what data they consider as a valid input for decision-making. On one hand, both managerial and newsroom chiefs disprove of internet audience traffic data as a valid input, but editors and journalists use such metrics openly and regularly. On the other hand, the audimeter metrics are hailed by the managerial and newsroom chiefs as valid data to consider, especially because they are the tools used to obtain revenues from the advertising industry (Méadel 2015). However, when the full package of detailed audimeter data is put into play throughout the news production, it is disclosed only among the top hierarchy of the newsroom and kept concealed for the rest of the team. The consequences of this concealment are real and felt by the whole team. In which case, the use of audience metrics becomes an open secret within the newsroom.

In the two-hour news editorial meetings, I witnessed on several occasions, the informative menu of the day was presented to the team and the task of the meeting was to narrow it down or redirect the news selection and filtering. Soon after that editorial meeting, when the coverage of the day was underway, another smaller gathering began. Most of the team members left the room, and programme producers and some editors remained seated. I was also asked to leave the room. In the interviews, I was told that in those meetings the audience metrics were not the only point of discussion, but that it was an issue which was discussed overtly.

> *In accordance with the audience data, they [top level of the newsroom] decide maybe whether or not to air a specific report if the audience feedback has decreased but if that thematic was still newsworthy, probably they would decide to pay a bit less attention to it, just for today and only because yesterday that theme didn't work well.* (Sergio, news producer)

According to attendees of that meeting, it is not only decision-making over newsworthiness or audience engagement that takes place, but also logistics and budgetary discussions. There are a range of factors at play and one of them is the audience metrics – in particular, from data collected by the audimeters.

a. Data gatekeeping: filtering the metrics

It is notable that, although the team is eager to know the audience data figures, the newsroom culture of this organisation dictates that the review of the audience data and the consequent decision-making are tasks for the highest levels of the newsroom hierarchy.

> *Of course, I already know the audience outcome really matters. But it doesn't affect my daily work at all, unless… let me tell you, unless my bosses have something they want to share with me and they want to tell me 'Look at this, in this issue, it is better this way, because some days previously, we have seen the audience is working better by this side or we are addressing this matter'. But only if they are willing to comment on that with me.* (Ernesto, editor)

Therefore, the newsroom splits into two groups: on one side is the audience engagement-oriented editors (Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc Jr. 2018); on the other, the rest of the team could be theoretically labelled as unobligated to review metrics. In practice, everyone is daily acquainted – to varying degrees – with the audience metrics outcomes. The first group has the power, knowledge, criteria and access to the entire audience data provided by the audimeter. The rest of the team has access to single numbers that reflects the performance of the overall Atresmedia Group, the TV station, and every programme. If the journalists want to gain access to more details about their specific news product, they should ask an editor who will tend to give them access to the data.

> *Some of them don't ask because they are shy but, in general, people like to know how their video had worked the day before. For me, if they are able to see this with some caution, and if they can see how I see this stuff, it doesn't matter to me. What frightens me, is that one day if their video sinks, they sink as well.* (Jimena, editor)

Fairly often, editors refer to the audience metrics as an emotional rollercoaster. Earlier in this thesis, I recounted how an editor, while explaining how they felt about the reception of a good score in audience metrics, opted to use the same language that describes the effect of heroin shot – "the data gives you a rush that helps" – a sentence from which it is easy to deduce a turbulent relationship with metrics. We can relate the association with terms such as addiction or emotional dependency. This resembles the research on journalistic jobs and web traffic conducted by Petre (2015) and Christin (2020). Both researchers found that although metrics has multiple meaning for journalists, one effect is standard and refers to the strong influence that it yields over news workers' emotions and morale. However, both Petre and Christin carried out their research at online news outlets supported with real-time fine-grained metrics. The case that concerns this thesis is a TV station that values statistical metrics collected from a sample and delivered daily with a 24-hour delay. Moreover, the emotions belong to a team that mainly interacts with gross figures; the minute-by-minute report is available only for the data gatekeepers.

The observed emotional reaction described above connects anxiety about metrics with journalistic commitment. Prenger and Deuze (2017) emphasise the emotional and affective dimensions of newswork, emotional energy that ranks high among workplaces featured as entrepreneurial or precarious. When an editor mentioned that a good metrics outcome felt like getting high, that editor referred to more variables than just metrics. This happened on Catalan referendum day, when all news team worked an uninterrupted 17-hour shift and tripled their traditional audience metrics for Sundays. In other words, it involved a mixture of journalistic duty, substantial collective effort, good audience figures and, not insignificantly, the Atresmedia top executives' congratulations. Chapter 8 will return to the individual management of emotions triggered by metrics and what it meant for the newswork and the professional journalistic identities and autonomy.

It was possible to detect three main reasons why metrics supported the gatekeeping which operates in the newsroom: (1) to keep the rhetorical discourse of news independence from the business alive; (2) to reinforce the belief that the news team preserves the professional autonomy of producing relevant content and that it is not only or primarily focused on getting better audience metrics; (3) to keep under control external pressures that could undermine the newsroom by attacking their audience outcome. Firstly, the journalistic ideology of news-business boundaries has been widely documented (Lewis 2012; Mellado and Humanes 2012; Coddington 2015). Under the logic of professional control over content, journalists have built a wall between their newsroom and the commercial operations of the media organisations. Presently that boundary is highly eroded. It has even been regarded as fictional due to the difficulties in surviving amidst the media business crises unleashed by the internet and the fragmentation of the audience (Coddington 2015).

> *This [the daily audience outcome] is not something that everybody is asking for, not anymore, but before, during the economic crisis, for instance, at that time we demanded: 'hey, let us know, how much have we got? (Luisa, reporter)*

At La Sexta TV, everybody remembers the days before the acquisition by Atresmedia in 2012 (see García Santamaría 2013) when the company was on the brink of closure due to a lack of finance. The sense of precariousness remains a force behind the patterns of audience monitoring. The current model of data gatekeeping theoretically has the purpose of rebuilding the wall that protects the content. The datafication also has the effect of transferring the responsibility of the business viability of the news media from the managers and owners to the media's and news' workers.

Secondly, according to members of the leading team, the experience has taught them that short-term audience targets undermine their credibility. They believe that relevant journalism and audience engagement are not mutually exclusive alternatives, and that editors oriented to audience-seeking should perform their duties within the boundaries of a journalistic editorial logic (Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc Jr. 2018). Consequently, the power of intervention to tackle a steady fall in audiences is held only within the newsroom's leading elite.

> *[When the audience metrics are bad] they are not conveyed but are known by those who should know them. However, bad audience outcomes are not communicated. If throughout a week bad metrics continue to be the same, maybe the directorate will give due attention to the newscast production in order to check that what is included in the rundown is what is of the most interest to the audience.* (Sergio, news producer)

Lastly, the leeway to keep broadcasting a theme that does not grab public attention is limited and needs to be constantly defended and updated inside the media conglomerate, a permanent negotiation between the newsroom and the media business division. One case that reflects this point is the Catalonian independence movement. I was told that for years the Catalonian debate provoked a leakage of viewers, until the rise of a serious attempt by local politicians to hold a vote on the independence of Catalonia from the Spanish nation-state, which attracted a rise in audience numbers.

> *Two or three months ago, somebody very important inside the media group told us: 'You insist on the issue of [the independence of] Catalonia and the people are getting bored'. And that was true, the people were getting bored, but it doesn't mean that that issue wasn't the most important matter in the country.*

The Catalonian independence debate was so important that nowadays everybody is interested in it. (Maximiliano, editor)

Processing and Editing

Figure 7-8 Third stage of news production process: processing and editing

This third stage – also known as the news packaging stage – is the moment at which a particular case takes the shape of a news product (Singer 2011). The inverted pyramid, the use of verbatim quotes and the rituals of verification are practices used in processing and editing the news that can be found in different journalistic cultures around the globe (Tandoc Jr. and Duffy 2019; Westlund and Ekström 2019). Due to the nature of this research, I focus on TV news production practices, particularly those that deal with getting the audience engaged and the consequent editors' knowledge in this matter and how they apply that know-how in producing news at La Sexta.

Throughout this research I have observed a series of packaging practices aimed at grabbing audience engagement. The following is a depiction of two groups of practices that news editors use to balance the news the audience needs and the news the audience wants: (a) editorial hammocking and (b) the elasticity of news coverage.

a. Editorial Hammocking

I reapply the term hammocking, which is already used in linear television programming, and set it in an editorial context. Hammocking is a term that describes "a scheduling trick which consists of placing a weak or unknown programme between two popular programmes" (Ang 1991:60). The intended effect is to boost the rating of the programme, relying on the inherited audience effect (Webster et al. 2006). In news production, the newscast is built in a similar way, in particular when the editor is struggling to introduce a report that they consider relevant, but one which the audience metrics have reported to be unpopular.

> *Before the actual crisis, Catalonia didn't work well… Then what you try to do – because you consider that it is a newsworthy issue and you must publish it – is to frame it in a place in which – I don't want to say 'a place in which that issue doesn't damage the audience' – but a place in which it doesn't damage the rest of the programme.* (Roberto, news producer).

Throughout the fieldwork period of this research, I collected numerous cases in which the editor was troubled about what would be the least damaging position for a piece of news that was less attractive than other hot topics from an immediate audience metric perspective, but still relevant for the editorial staff. The hammocking strategy is supported by audience metrics. The programme editor is trained to spot the patterns of commercial breaks for the rival TV channels in order to place, in those moments, the most attractive content on the assumption that they can capture the attention of those people who left other TV channels during the advertising break. Likewise, programme editors must be aware of the curve of people who are switching on their television sets (data collected from the people metered sample), for instance, at lunchtime or when the population is returning home after work. These two timeslots are the preferred moments of the day to place the newscast and are sought after by La Sexta editors and journalists.

The editorial hammocking practice, however, has a drawback that cannot be overlooked. In pursuing the best placement for a piece of information which is relevant, but which struggles to engage the audience, the news programme as a product is left stripped of its prerogatives to point out what is most or least relevant. Traditionally, in linear television, the most relevant news of the day is placed at the beginning of the newscast rather than scattered throughout the programme just because it might not attract a big audience. It is also true that under a mode of 'on demand' news consumption, neither of those practices – hammocking or positioning in the first block of news reports – retain their meaning.

Seeking how to grab the audience with tailored content that prevents distractions takes the form of recommendation systems in digital media. According to Melville and Sindhwani (2017), recommendation systems aim to offer a valuable chain of suggestions to users for items or products they might be interested in. This is an algorithmic learning system that works with the users' ratings and is fed by the users' attributes (2017). Machine created knowledge is accumulated and results in content consumption on-demand on a user-by-user basis, whereby the system learns how to avoid the user's attention fading. Among La Sexta's news staff members, instinctive practices point to getting users to find their content. Later in this chapter and the next I discuss those practices, such as multiple retweeting from several accounts or the seeking of influencers – people with many followers who can boost the content.

The search for the point at which news content works better for the audience not only applies to displacements within the news programme; the content is also moved from one programme to another, or a different time. According to the experience of news producers at La Sexta, an audience changes their mood throughout the day, along with their expectations and need for information. Hence, if any content has not worked well at any moment of the day, they consider other options.

> *We do that audience reading, 'we must try to put this next weekend, at La Sexta Noche', 'That these kinds of subjects work better from midnight on'. I mean, yes, we do make adjustments on what we see in the rundown, the point is, from what we see in the news programme, we tend to make modifications.* (Rafael, news producer)

As noted earlier, several news workers mentioned their need to refrain from the daily audience data reviewing while they carried out this news relocation practices; one journalist tried to test his instincts concerning whether he could guess the outcome; another indicated that the programme went well in periods of audience data abstinence. According to Foucault (2000), the internalisation of the standard, the fulfilment of the expectations without paying attention to the ranking and the daily examination, is the expression of the discipline achieving its final aim: individual self-regulation. Discipline’s ultimate concern is how we govern others and ourselves (Huff 2007). Statistics have become the most elusive form of disciplining (Espeland 1997). The highest disciplining achievement becomes to fit the measurement; in this thesis, journalists self-regulate their performance to get the pursued standard. Another example of self-governance emerged from informal conversations with news workers. A handwritten notebook existed, which editors of some news programmes filled with detailed information: date of the show, topics discussed, names of participants and summaries of their interventions, with audience metrics for every participant. That record was consulted every time production thought about inviting some of those participants to take part in an interview. Having a document written by hand meant that the information contained within it was not available for sharing, its access was restricted to a few people, and the material was not considered for large data analysis of the audience, just for internal governance purposes.

b. Elastic news coverage

By elastic news coverage I refer to the act of lengthening raw live broadcasting in order to generate the expectation that something newsworthy will happen. It is both a practice that supposedly seeks audience engagement, and, at the same time, a way to highlight news values such as timeliness and relevance of the broadcast event. For instance, one month after the Catalonian independence referendum, I was observing the team at work in the switch control room. On the wall screens there were videos which were fed with cameras from pre-assigned locations. On 2nd

November 2017, the Audiencia Nacional of Madrid[68] had commanded all Catalan government leaders to show up at the court. Some had abandoned the country the night before. There was the question of whether the remaining leaders were going to show up or not. Nevertheless, from 10 am onwards, La Sexta kept a live camera broadcasting only the court's entrance through a small frame on the screen on the live programmes, for hours. That would be the door through which, some minutes after 1 pm, the Catalonian government members would go before the judge to answer for their unilateral call for an independence referendum. It was a clearly scheduled event, and the news team knew about it beforehand.

Figure 7-9: Four examples of La Sexta's news programmes and the screen arrangement with the small square showing upcoming events

Note: Screen capture description clockwise from top left: 1. Morning news programme Al Rojo Vivo, 2nd Nov 2017; 2. Al Rojo Vivo, 10th Nov 2017; 3. Afternoon news programme Mas Vale Tarde 1st Nov 2017; 4. Al Rojo Vivo 9th Nov 2017; blue circles are mine.

Examples of that screen arrangement can be seen in Figure 7-9. Hours of raw transmission worked on the assumption that something newsworthy would happen and La Sexta TV was going to be there. According to the news workers in the switch control room, the small screen's resource devoted to a potential newsworthy location is a sort of permanent promise made to the audience. This news broadcasting practice is aligned with Grusin's concept of premediation (2010). Grusin contends

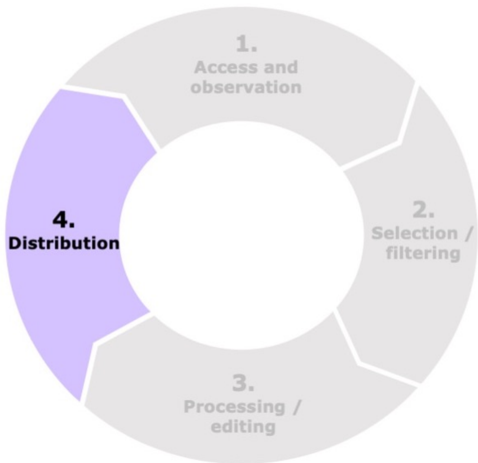
[68] *The Spanish National Court has appellate jurisdiction over the cases of the Criminal Chamber of the National Court. Most of its rulings can ultimately be appealed before the Supreme Court.*

that, at present, news media are predominantly devoted to foreseeing events rather than focusing on present or past events.

La Sexta's news producers have the certainty that through those practices of extended airing of raw video on screen, they reinforce the promise made to the viewers regarding their ability to be first in informing them of breaking stories. A news worker explained this practice as a storekeeper offering products to passers-by. The merchant does not know who will buy something but they increase the likelihood that when somebody needs the products offered, that person comes to the merchant's store. Therefore, the producers believe that they are training the audience to turn on the TV and tune in to La Sexta when there is a need for information. Is it possible to measure the effect of this practice? Nobody knows for sure but believing in the effect ensures that the practice prevails. Consequently, it also reinforces the misleading assumption that the audience is a compact collective of disciplined viewers (Ang 1991).

Distribution

Figure 7-10 Fourth stage of news production: distribution



The policy of 'traditional media first', mentioned earlier, of prioritising the linear screen for news delivery, directly affects the newsroom's range of action. In this research, distribution refers to the phase in which a story is made available to the audience. Traditionally, distribution, particularly in electronic media, is considered to be a media corporations' responsibility rather than a job falling in journalists' hands (Tandoc Jr. and Duffy 2019), although, in the predigital era, journalists had privileged access to news dissemination. Today, the rise of the internet and social media has eroded such separation of duties (Hermida 2011).

Regarding the practices related to distribution and considering the constraints imposed by institutional policies, in this section, I will detail three aspects of news dissemination which were brought to light when scrutinizing the role played by the audience metrics on the news distribution: (a) the desired recursiveness; (b) schedule-driven news products; and (c) the disentangling of time and space.

a. The desired recursiveness

The Atresmedia policy of 'traditional media first' does not mean neglecting internet platforms and social media distribution, but rather the point is that all action must be aimed to enhance the content of linear broadcasting. The digital division of La Sexta Noticias is not part of the newsroom team – it belongs to a larger team which is directly subordinate to the executive directorate of Atresmedia. Their main task consists of copying and pasting all content already broadcast through the traditional screen onto social media and the websites of every programme. They do not work exclusively for the newsroom programmes, but all contents broadcasted by La Sexta TV.

> *I take an issue mentioned in the programme, to sell it on networks, on Twitter and Facebook. To move it [the issue] on social media, we make Tweet messages from the live programme, by linking these tweets with the Atresplayer platform, the only website that live-streams La Sexta' TV's news programmes. However, we also need to get traffic to the [La Sexta] website, to sell the website, then we Tweet twice.* (Martina, reporter)

The aim is to boost the second screen or social television[69] effect and increase the TV audience by getting the programme topic into the conversation of those who use Twitter or Facebook to comment on what they watch on TV (Bellman et al. 2017; Guo 2019). Nevertheless, the intended and the achieved effects do not match because the internet streamed content fades along with the linear broadcasting. Some hours later, La Sexta TV's content is available on-demand through the Atresmedia platform, Atresplayer (as news programmes, not as specific news reports), and with a new URL, so the initially tweeted links are useless.

Other practices that seek to increase the metrics are the routine retweeting of messages posted by La Sexta digital members. Journalists consider that by retweeting messages of colleagues they put in motion the algorithm that recommends that content among users. In La Sexta's traditional newsroom, I observed only the practice of deploying hashtags on the linear screen summarising the main news of the day to boost social television. This practice seeks to increases the metrics in the new market information regime, and the aim is to get the programme listed the next day among the most commented TV content of the day on social media.

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[69] *Both terms, second screen and social TV, are usually used interchangeably, but they are in fact different. Second screen refers to the broader enhancing experience of TV viewing on a computer screen with augmented reality or data added to the content. By contrast, social TV alludes to the discussion of television content on social media (Wolk 2013).*

b. Schedule driven news products

As described earlier, La Sexta newsroom produced video reports – called "Pásalo" ("Share it") – tailored for sharing on Facebook. The project was called off amidst claims of the Facebook algorithm's lack of transparency. The experience left some knowledge about social media distribution. For instance, they could not release more than two videos per day in the interest of accumulating activity on one product and not making the mistake of overlapping two videos and unintentionally fragmenting their audience.

Another failed attempt to distribute news innovatively was a project which contacted the audience through WhatsApp. La Sexta's newsroom sent an hourly bulletin to every WhatsApp user who requested the service. This project was quickly abandoned before my fieldwork began. In the next section, I refer to the tricky relationship between journalists and the time and space experience of their daily work, which could explain the failure of the WhatsApp news bulletin.

c. Disentangling time and space

In this section, besides the time of broadcasting and the permanence of time, I refer to the different content outlets as spaces of content publishing. One informative space is La Sexta’s analogue screen; another is WhatsApp groups; a third space is social media platforms. La Sexta Noticias’ leading team firmly believe that there is, foremost, one quality which distinguishes them in the TV news market, that makes them competitive: their ability to tackle what they call “the radical actuality” by which they mean they must be able to inform on the edge of real-time, while the facts occur. This core purpose is clearly conveyed to all the news team and it is expected that they behave accordingly. If a relevant situation breaks three hours before the programme, and that relevant situation is considered highly newsworthy, the whole schedule of the channel moves to give space to that coverage.

> *What defines us is the concept of live broadcast, live information. This is what makes us more powerful to face future challenges […] The up-to-dateness has a key role in the future of free-to-air television. [The up-to-date news] is not available to be downloaded. There is no Netflix that can broadcast breaking news and explain the ‘procés’.[70] There is no Amazon to tell you about the vehicle-ramming attack in Barcelona.[71] Nor does HBO know how to explain an electricity bill to your neighbour. (Mateo, editor)*

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[70] *Procés, a word in the Catalan language, is the generic term used for the process of independence for Catalonia.*

[71] *The vehicle-ramming attack in Barcelona refers to the terrorist attack that occurred on 17th August 2017, in which a man drove a van through the most tourist-heavy pedestrian area of Barcelona, known as Las Ramblas, running over passers-by and killing 13 people (BBC News 2017).*

This need to be operating at the cutting edge, according to Chris Nash (2016), is essential to success in journalism. With regards to time, Nash states that journalism must fulfil three steps: act in real-time, in an iterative mode, with constantly updated reports (2006). I contend that the reason for the failure in La Sexta's various attempts to deliver news through WhatsApp and other social media is nested in this particular principle, of operating at the cutting edge. Linear television has the ability to wrap every repetition of information in new packaging. In the linear viewing mode, the viewer cannot go over the information, it is consumed in the present time, thus there is more room for updates by repeating the story's core with a little information update at the end or a rewording. In contrast, on the internet and social media the validated content consumption is available in a long-tail mode (Anderson 2010), that is to say, over a long period in which the content is available on-demand. Therefore, the "radical actuality" principle clashes with the fact that on the internet one non-updated version of a news story keeps circulating while the news evolves.

> *[The WhatsApp service] was like a sort of radio bulletin but delivered through the networks. Well, we saw that it was not bad, but it still had an expiration date. Because I can receive it at a certain time but in 10 or 15 minutes there is a nuance that makes it no longer up to date, then it became useless.* (Rafael, news producer)

Internet content permanence is another variable to be considered. Newsmakers who worked in digital products told me that uncomfortable content for the business operations of the corporation could be tolerable for the format of one-time exposure on linear television, but not if the piece of news remains stored in long-tail mode, available for sharing practices at any time. On several occasions the news team received an order to withdraw a report from social media. According to the interviewees, that censorship attitude was less likely to happen with the content broadcast in lineal broadcasting. Therefore, in this respect, there is a perception of greater journalistic autonomy on traditional television compared to social media.

7.4. Conclusion

The discussion of four of the stages of the news production at La Sexta reveals that traditional journalistic practices and routines remain at the core of news production (Zelizer 2019). However, the employment of the technological capabilities of applications like Twitter and WhatsApp to select, filter, edit and spread news immerses journalists in a perennial cycle of data production, feeding back every step of the news work chain. It should be noted that most of these practices existed before social media, however, some have gone through a degree of transformation as a result of datafication and metrics, as explained in the use of the chatrooms and Twitter lists.

This chapter began with the description of the news team's use of chat groups in WhatsApp, which has become a virtual newsroom, as a pop-up space with its own power relations and hierarchies that overcomes but also reinforces the boundaries of the physical newsroom. The fact that the instant messaging applications bring together people who are aligned not necessarily by a task, but rather by news (Mabweazara and Mare 2017; Bunce et al. 2018) is changing the news team power relations, a point that will be further discussed in Chapter 8. However, I also argue that the metrics embedded in the chat groups exacerbate journalistic homogenizing practices. This applies to elite sourcing, which means journalists paying attention to authoritative sources (Lowrey 2008) or pack journalism (Carlson 2009). Notably, I have shown how Twitter facilitates the elite sourcing mode by allowing journalists to narrow down the crowdsourced posts by creating lists that reproduce the beat system and privilege the voice of those in power (Tandoc Jr. and Duffy 2019) but leave out stories from common people (Harcup 1998). That is an example of how digital applications reinforce traditional practices and hence, entrench existing social hierarchies.

One of the findings discussed in this chapter is the emergence of the data gatekeeping practice among editors who debate on a daily basis which metrics should be attended to and which can be overlooked. Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc (2018) have described this specific role as audience-oriented editors, who are news workers "concerned with matching news content to the needs and wants of the audience" (2018:437). However, according to my observations, this balance proves hard to maintain. When it comes to understanding audience engagement, the news producers need to choose between news relevance and viewers' attention. This happens with the editorial hammocking practice, a concept I introduced, drawing on Ang (1991), to describe how news producers organise the newscast by placing the less popular stories among the most engaging ones to maintain a steady viewership through a particular timeslot.

The evidence collected in this chapter shows that metrics are disciplining a new type of editor and a new conception of news production, new forms of storytelling and new news temporality that fits with the Atresmedia business goals in terms of audience figures. The subtlety of the disciplining technique resides in how metrics convey the objective to be accomplished – there is no need for the executives to be in person in the newsroom (Bunce, 2017) to achieve the goals. An issue that will be revisited in Chapter 8 is how this training to go over the metrics from time-to-time transfers to the journalists the responsibility for business viability. However, the other side of the coin shows that the news team must deal with the complex task of processing the feedback provided by two sets of data, which present two different portraits of audience preferences. This competition between audience measuring systems erodes the traditional market information regime's authority and opens the door for the deployment of newsroom metrics resistance practices, which temporarily allows the inclusion of less engaging news in audience terms, but which is considered more relevant by journalists.

This review of the emergent practices and routines in news production has demonstrated that such practices are evolving according to the exploratory attitude of the news team. The development of the audience-oriented editors (Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc Jr. 2018) has been an asset for the media group, but today runs the risk of creating metric-illiterate reporters – this is a great disadvantage for the whole media at a time when the tide of social media metrics seems to provide more information than the single metric number of the audimeter. In the next chapter, related to journalistic autonomy and professional identity, I will discuss how business and individual perceptions help to modify the meaning of the audience metrics and the mismatch between the audience measured and the audience imagined by the news workers.

8. JOURNALISTS: Professional identity and journalistic autonomy

8.1. Introduction: Journalistic authority and professionalism

My home country, Chile, shares a historical parallel with Spain: both experienced a recent dictatorship and long-negotiated transition to democracy. However, in Chile's democracy, no owner would openly declare the political allegiance of their media. Thus, I was surprised the first time I heard a media outlet defining its political position in broad daylight in its launch to the public. This occurred in September 2007 in Madrid, Spain, when I was invited to the launch of the newspaper *Público*. The statement was made at La Riviera nightclub in Madrid by Jaume Roures,[72] one of the owners and controllers of the new enterprise, the same businessman who, a year earlier, had launched La Sexta TV. He said that *Público* would be hard-left media. It was particularly surprising that a leftist newspaper was to be launched in Spain and sponsored by Rolex and Mercedes Benz.

Roures' journalistic projects had an unsteady life and ultimately collapsed with the second wave of the 2008 economic crisis, in 2011. The printed version of the newspaper only existed until 2012, and is now only published online, but still owned by Roures (Tremlett 2012; Público 2012). The television channel, in contrast, changed hands in 2011, but the new owners maintained the political identity of La Sexta TV (Bardají and Robles 2016).[73] Imagina Group – La Sexta's former owner – held 4.23% of Atresmedia's shares in 2017 as a result of the takeover (Atresmedia 2017).

The preceding account is a worthwhile story in analysing journalistic autonomy as a cornerstone of the professional identity of journalists (McDevitt, Gassaway, and Perez 2002; Deuze 2005) or the key element that gives media professionals the capacity to publicly claim they deliver an accurate, authoritative and coercion-free version of

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[72] *French newspaper Liberation calls Jaume Roures the "Spanish Rupert Murdoch", because both are self-made media moguls, although Roures is Catalan and defines himself as a left-wing entrepreneur (Musseau 2009). Roures founded La Sexta TV and Diario Público from his parent company Mediapro, the audiovisual company responsible for broadcasting soccer matches from the main leagues in Europe and Asia. Mediapro belongs to the larger group Imagina Media Audiovisual, also founded by Roures. Today, he holds Imagina's management role, although he only owns 12% of the shares. The Imagina audiovisual group's leading investor is the Chinese Orient Hontai group, which holds 53.5% of the shares (Bassam 2018). Roures is also a producer for film directors Woody Allen and Oliver Stone. In his youth he became involved in the Trotskyist Communist Revolutionary League Trotskista (Palà and Picazo 2016) and was imprisoned during the Francisco Franco regime (EcoDiario 2009; Mallet and Mulligan 2009). When asked whether it being an entrepreneur is compatible with being a Marxist, he often says: "I have read Capital several times, and there never it is said that we should all be poor" (Iglesias Turrión 2020).*

[73] *José Manuel Lara Bosch was the CEO of the Planeta Editorial group founded by his father and CEO of Atresmedia. In this latter position he led the negotiations for the acquisition of La Sexta TV in 2011. He passed away on 31 January 2015 and the interview was published three days later (Ortega Figueiral 2015) (as mentioned in Chapter 4).*

factual events (Anderson 2008b). Although there are other features defining journalism, such as objectivity, immediacy, sense of legitimacy and public service (Deuze 2005), I chose to focus on journalistic autonomy.

Throughout the fieldwork, I looked for hints that revealed the journalistic values that identify journalism as a profession in La Sexta's newsroom. In the preceding chapter, immediacy was discussed as a determining news production value. Briefly, immediacy – for La Sexta's news team – is a business value and a substantial competitive advantage in the current TV media system in which they, as analogue television, should challenge streaming TV services for audience attention. Below I will explain the newsroom stance regarding objectivity as a news value. It is noteworthy that objectivity and the senses of public service and legitimacy, as bedrock journalistic values, are always mentioned – by the news team in formal interviews and informal conversations – as closely linked with the sense of professional journalistic autonomy. None of these can be deployed without the existence of professional autonomy, thus indicating the usefulness of Bourdieu's (2006) concept of the field as an analytical tool. Bourdieu features the fields as autonomous, independent arenas of cultural production (Swartz 2016).

As this chapter shows, La Sexta’s journalists have a robust normative orientation toward their service to society, in particular, giving meaning to their work by highlighting their aspirations to contribute to the proper working of democracy (Aldridge and Evetts 2003). In defining professional journalistic identities, Hanitzsch (2017, 2018) distinguishes two journalistic role classes. Firstly, by role orientation that groups normative and cognitive journalistic roles; then by role performance which encompasses the practiced and narrated journalistic roles. Concisely, the four are explained as “what journalists ought to do, what they want to do, what they really do in practice, and what they think they do” (Hanitzsch 2017:2). Regarding the cognitive role – the sum of individual journalistic ambition and occupational beliefs which are socialized in the institutional values (2018) – La Sexta news workers take its positioning primarily in the power distance variable axis. As discussed later in the chapter, in terms of their narrated journalistic role, journalists of the La Sexta think that their collective mission is to scrutinize the exercise of power and to hold power to account. Thus, La Sexta's journalists define their professional duty nearer to a watchdog journalistic cognitive role rather than a loyal-collaborative positioning with regards to the ruling elite. Bourdieu's fields concept allows for an understanding of how different spheres of social life are related to one another as well as how they differ, particularly if they are competing for the appropriation of symbolic and economic capital, as happens between journalism and the political and economic fields (Bourdieu 1983). In simple terms, by analysing the factors that boost or limit the perception of autonomy of the journalistic field regarding other fields such as political fields and market forces, this chapter aims to obtain a clear picture of how the professional journalistic identity is shaped.

It is worth recalling that the chapter considers the role of continuous datafication and the aggregated metrics on the reporters' performance and the professional autonomy with which they carry out news production processes. Scholars emphasise the passive and imperceptible manner in which data is collected from members of the audience (Zamith 2018). However, today's media environment propels journalists to engage and interact with the audience, and such a relationship also generates passive and unobstructed data collection. Carlson (2018) described measurable journalism as a term that encapsulates the multidimensionality of media audience metrics, from the materiality of data collection and analysis, through the data usage in news production, the creation of a consumption model, the re-signification of the reading of metrics to turn popularity into newsworthiness, to public policy on metrics, such as ensuring fair market competition or data privacy. All the noted measurable journalism dimensions are included when we refer to today's journalism; moreover, there are two measuring systems at work, as in La Sexta's newsroom.

The present chapter aims to examine factors supporting or constraining journalistic autonomy and, consequently, journalistic authority and professional identity – the latter in a scenario of metrics sliding into newsroom practices in unclear ways and a TV news industry puzzled about how audience engagement should be measured. Reich and Hanitzsch (2013) sorted the influences, objective or perceived, that can affect journalistic autonomy into three levels: societal, organisational, and individual. The story of La Sexta TV's original owner ideology points to the organisational level in which ownership patterns can be found; the commercial imperatives and dependence on advertising revenues; and the private vs public-owned media and the coded editorial rules. In this chapter I discuss these three levels of influence that journalists perceive as defining their professional autonomy and what involvement the metrics have in shaping those factors and perceptions. Acknowledging that journalists' practice is a subjective construct which resides in journalists' perceptions (2013), I will contrast the perception that reporters have of their autonomy with their expectations of what journalism should be. Having observed in previous chapters the relationship between audience analytics and metrics at an institutional level, and their influence among the newsroom team, this chapter considers the individual level of professional journalists in their relationship with metrics.

8.2. Newsroom-autonomy: Social and political powers, business stakeholders and professional judgement

From the early days of the fieldwork, it was explicitly stated by La Sexta TV's news editors that objectivity was an unachievable value. They prefer, instead, to talk about pluralism and decency.

> *Objectivity is an impossible task. Do you really believe in journalistic objectivity? Our goal is pluralism, to accommodate all voices, give space to all political ideas.* (Benjamín, editor)

> *Objectivity? What is this? For me, what matters in journalism is credibility and you produce credibility by practising decency over the course of time.* (Mateo, editor)

It has already been stated in comparative studies that objectivity and neutrality are far from universal norms (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Schudson and Anderson 2009). Therefore, the central feature of journalistic culture on which I have focused the analysis of this chapter is autonomy, bearing in mind that Schudson (2005a) states that autonomy is a collective rather than individual characteristic and is not measured by the absence of conditioning but by the way in which the journalistic team deals with pressures. Journalistic autonomy has been simply defined as "a separation of editorial control from owners" (Picard and Van Weezel 2008:25). Sjøvaag (2013) adds that journalistic independence is an outcome of structural factors and individual agency. In comparative survey research across 18 countries, Reich and Hanitzsch (2013) found that organisational and societal forces are interrelated and also that it is not an easy task to separate organisational and individual forces constraining autonomous news judgement. In this vein, the following section reviews La Sexta's newsmakers' professional autonomy in the light of political forces.

The leftist telly: Journalistic autonomy in light of political parallelism

The anecdote told in the introduction, of a businessman launching a newspaper and a TV station publicly labelled as left-wing, serves to understand one of the elements that journalists emphasised during fieldwork: journalists – as a team and individually – openly acknowledging that they work for a left-wing television station aimed at an audience with such political leanings.

> *We work for centre-left or left-wing telly. (Maximiliano, Editor)*

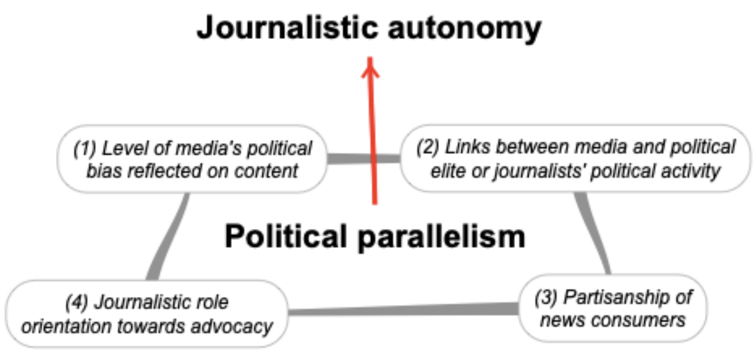
In comparing media markets, Hallin and Mancini (2004) concluded that three media system models exist in Western journalism, each belonging to a specific geographic territory: the Polarised Pluralist Model (Mediterranean countries); the Democratic Corporatist Model (North/Central Europe); and the Liberal Model (North Atlantic).

Almost two decades after their comparitive study, it is hard to say whether Hallin and Mancini's three model typology still reflects contemporary media systems. However, the conceptual framework contains four components that still hold relevance for understanding media systems' development. The four dimensions are: the strength of the news market; the degree of state intervention; the level of journalistic professionalisation; and the degree of political parallelism. In this scheme, Spain sits in the Polarised Pluralist model, alongside other Mediterranean European countries, a model described as weak mass circulation of newspapers, marked by state interventionism, high political parallelism, and a lack of professionalism. This section focuses on aspect: political parallelism. Hallin and Mancini (2004) define political parallelism as an indicator that allows an examination of whether any observer can quickly identify the media's political leaning in a one-to-one connection between each media and each political sector. Brüggemann and colleagues (2014) state that the political parallelism indicator assesses how much political advocacy is considered part of journalism's role in different countries.

Norris (2009) questions whether today's media ecology, which includes social media platforms, suits Hallin and Mancini's model dimensions. Applying indicators such as political parallelism and journalistic professionalism to social networks can result in misleading conceptual classifications that provide useless stereotypes that obstruct rather than help to describe the media phenomenon. From the perspective of this research, since the case study is a traditional television newsroom, the political parallelism dimension remains worthwhile as an analytical tool.

There are four factors to assess political parallelism: (1) level of partisanship/political bias in media reflected in content; (2) links between media and political elite – organisational ties and political activity of journalists; (3) party affiliation of media consumers; and (4) journalistic role orientation towards advocacy (Figure 8-1).

Figure 8-1 Four components of political parallelism (Hallin and Mancini 2004)



I will not address the first component as this research does not employ a content analysis of the news. On the second component regarding journalists' partisanship, although in the interviews none of the journalists acknowledged their own or others in the newsroom's political affiliations, what almost all recognised was a centre-left political orientation, towards progressivism as most of them define it. In this vein, I observed a curious metric relationship with the tech-savvy politicians from the left-wing Podemos party. Several journalists revealed that tagging people with many followers with a tweet's theme that was aligned with the tagged person's thought could help their tweets acquire visibility.

> *Members of Podemos party are always very active on social media, I think they are the most experienced regarding social networks. If I inform on Twitter and on television something related to the Popular party,[74] especially if it is about a corruption case, and Iñigo Errejón retweets my message, I can't handle it.* (Luisa, reporter)

In Luisa's testimony, alluding to one of Podemos' most renowned leaders, we can find a practice already acknowledged in media organisations like *The New York Times* or *The Guardian*. This practice relates to using the in-house real-time metrics system to track the biggest Twitter social influencers to drive traffic to their articles (Edge 2014; Zhang 2018) to create strategies of article-by-article distribution through social media. Another hint at journalists' political affiliation was manifest in their sensibility in carrying out their watchdog duties, while some revealed discomfort in dealing with their political loyalties.

> *We clearly decided that we were going to hit all the parties, regardless of our ideology, we were going to try to slap them all. But when we hit Podemos, or the PSOE, we got angry reactions from people who the day before told us that our work was fine and the next day, they attacked us. It is much more complicated and as a journalist it's a problem for me. We have not failed to do our job, but if there are days when you find something [controversial] from Podemos party, and when I'm about to publish it, I think… pffff, if I'm going to take this out now, they're gonna beat me up in networks, I do not like that at all.* (Claudio, reporter)

The use of technology and its metrics are intertwined in journalism practice, as can be seen in the last two quotes, and most of the time is not possible to separate one from the other. Drawing on Hallin and Mancini's (2004) relevance of political affiliation as a component of party-press parallelism, I suggest that both social media metrics and the content of the post play a role in bringing together journalists and political parties, reinforcing the link created by aligning political ideas. Journalists recognize that, on the one hand, the lure of metrics is a necessary feature to be aware of; and, on the other, it is not specifically the metrics but the interaction with the users that to some extent pushes journalists to stay aligned with the party's interests.

[74] *The Popular Party was the ruling party in Spain and the Podemos Party was in opposition during the period of fieldwork.*

The third component in describing political parallelism is party affiliation of news consumers. Hallin and Mancini's work explains how the Spanish democracy in 2004 came to be bipartisan, with the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) alternating with the Popular Party (PP) and, with each political formation supported by the media. The Socialist government was supported by the PRISA media group, owner of *El País* newspaper, a radio network, and later with interests in cable television. The media supporting the right-wing Popular Party comprised a group including *El Mundo* newspaper, the monarchist paper *ABC*, and church-owned radio COPE. The collapse of Spanish bipartisanship that followed the double economic crisis in 2008 and 2011 and the consequent social unrest (Hernández and Fraile 2014; Fernández-Gracia and Lacasa 2018) brought an increased fragmentation of the political system from which the left-wing Podemos ('We can') and right-wing Ciudadanos ('Citizens') parties emerged (Rodon and Hierro 2016). La Sexta TV found its audience among those "Indignados" ('outraged') citizens that, dissatisfied with the economic crisis and traditional political parties, found hope in a social left-wing force derived from the 15M protests and later embodied in Podemos.

> *The priorities of the news changed with the social movement called 15M. We felt that there was a change of attitude in the newsroom towards the interests of the people who were mobilizing on the streets. The year of the 15M [2011] they sent me to cover it and I was out every night at Puerta del Sol. And it was relevant as people began to associate the La Sexta microphone, our brand, our logo, our house with information, a type of information with more street smarts, more planted in this world, up-to-the-minute. Until that moment, La Sexta TV was not identified with political information.* (Cecilia, reporter)

The political communication literature suggests that the emergence of the "Indignados" movement and the subsequent political formation of Podemos are in part explained in the ability of its members to debate, consult and organise through the use of social networks (Castells 2015). Although Fenton (2016) criticises Castells' account because of its over-emphasis on technology as the motor of social change, she acknowledges the affective dimension of social media engagement in radical political practices. Spanish scholars instead observe how, through the extensive use of social networks, the nascent political group made its way to the mainstream media by dominating the generalist channel La Sexta TV (Sampedro 2015; Villar 2015; Rodríguez-Teruel, Barrio, and Barberà 2016; Casero-Ripollés, Feenstra, and Tormey 2016; Gallardo-Camacho and Lavín 2016). Podemos' strategy was to capture the interest of the national TV stations by offering engaging debates on screen. By analysing 14 programmes on which Pablo Iglesias (Podemos' leader) appeared between 2014 and 2015, Gallardo-Camacho and Lavin (2016) conclude that the broadcasts led to a 62% increase in viewers. La Sexta's journalists are aware of this phenomenon.

> *We detected, through the audience data, that when nobody in this country was thinking that Podemos could enter the European Parliament, we knew that Podemos was going to be a surprise […] No survey predicted they would join the European Parliament. On election night, the only television channel that was at the headquarters of Podemos was La Sexta TV. They got five seats in the European parliament and Podemos became the third political force in terms of votes in the country. PP, PSOE and Podemos. Why were we so convinced that they were going to have a significant result? Because every time we interviewed someone from Podemos, in the minute-by-minute report, the sharp upturn in the audience data was spectacular.* (Maximiliano, News editor)

Despite the evidence, when I asked La Sexta's journalists how the metrics influenced their judgement in news and interviewee selection, their answers pointed to a sort of dialectical relationship between what they called their gut-level instincts and what the public is interested in, as reported in the audience report. In managing this dialectical relationship, the editors exercised the aforementioned data gatekeeping role. This means that editors enabled the use of metrics in the news production process and, at the same time, bore the responsibility to make sense of the metrics as a partial representation of audience behaviour (Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc Jr 2018).

> *The older you are, the more you realize that you get fewer surprises with your audience data. Although there remain some surprises, you generally know what works well. You will never be 100% correct, but you know what may work fine. And you also know that there is a lot of news that you know will not work right but that you have to broadcast them anyway.* (Andrés, Editor)

Based on the fieldwork observations and the journalists' accounts, metrics in the newsroom produce a homogenising disciplinary effect (Espeland and Sauder 2007) historically and on a day-to-day basis. The news product and the journalistic performance become objects of knowledge (Florence 1998), prompting a continued self-examination process thanks to the quantified daily feedback. It is a binary acquisition of knowledge, metrics – thanks to a precise format of communications (Porter 1995) – can classify news products and both TV broadcasting and journalistic practices into those that must be done and those that must not. In other words, metrics fulfil a persistent task of disciplining what news is, what format news should adopt and what journalistic practices must be carried out. Metrics fulfil two fundamental conditions to become a form of socialisation: disciplinary systems; and technologies of control whose end aim is to make the docility achievable (O'Neill 1986). This is analysed in the construction of ranking and the subtle but persistent delivery of metrics in the next section.

It is important to highlight that the disciplining process is wielded in the TV news industry in the long, medium, and short terms. At La Sexta TV, the newscasts evolved from producing youth-targeted news, focused mainly on entertainment and sports news in its first three years, to a politically-focused news channel. Such long-term decision-making is audience metrics-driven, which at the same time reinforces senses of legitimacy and public duty. If the audience metrics have become a full-fledged form of power, then it raises questions about the final purpose of such exertion of power. According to Foucault (1982), the objective of power, as seen throughout history, has been to reach a greater purpose. In Christianity, the church's exercise of power aimed to promise soul salvation, whereas state power turned the understanding of salvation into a commitment to health and well-being. Following Foucault's line, metric power encapsulates the expectation of corporate profit and through enterprise survival, the hope of the continuing provision of media workers' livelihood. A matter was detected throughout the fieldwork: from the economic perspective of personal gain, for journalists good audience metrics mean a guarantee of uninterrupted monthly salary; this is a basic expectation of business non-failure. Under no circumstance are outstanding metrics linked with wage improvement. As seen below, the practical use of metrics also transfers business risk from the top managerial echelons to the rank-and-file news workers (Gollmitzer 2014).

Still referring to the political parallelism dimension of media as a relevant aspect in defining journalistic autonomy, we must review the component of news audiences' partisanship (Figure 8-1). Earlier, I explained that La Sexta TV is a centre-left TV station, a political orientation made explicit through firm statements and journalists' interviews. However, in light of metrics editorial management, the data collected revealed a persistent attempt to push the boundaries of La Sexta newsroom's political audience niche. The evidence for that assertion emerged when asking who their imagined audience was. On the one hand, journalists repeated what the marketing department told them about it:

> *The people who watch us are adults between 20 and 40, or 30 and 40, more 30-40 than 20-30 [years old], people employed and progressive or left-wing leaning ideas* (Cecilia, reporter).

On the other hand, the team that heads the newsroom cares about grabbing audience attention from all over the political spectrum, breaking ties with their assumed political niche audience and they are proud when such an outcome is achieved.

> *The proof is that – being a TV channel with an average audience of 7% throughout the day – when great political or news events happen, great electoral moments, [La Sexta] becomes the reference TV station. In the great events there is a spectator who is not centre left, who is not left, who is not centre, who is on the right, but also positions himself in La Sexta because he considers it as a journalistic reference, isn't it? That is to say, it has broken, let's say, it has expanded the borders of the ideological spectrum for which it was designed.* (Maximiliano, news editor)

There is an acknowledgement that the TV station is aligned with identified partisan news consumers, although its success is also explained by journalists' work to widen their audiences, in an action that combines autonomy and resistance from the news team. According to Hallin and Mancini (2004) even in a media system with a high degree of political parallelism, journalistic autonomy should be manifested regarding political organisations to which the media is associated, but also the newsroom should build an internal autonomy concerning the bigger organisation to which it belongs – in the case of La Sexta newsroom: the TV station and the media group. However, La Sexta's newsroom's resistance to political parallelism reveals the training carried out in improving audience figures collected by the television measurement system. The compulsion to climb in the rankings is a driving force in news production. Even when journalists claim the need to broadcast pieces of news which are relevant but less engaging, they are thinking about mid- or long-term achievement in their audience data. In La Sexta's newsroom culture, it is assumed that they must pay the cost of losing a portion of their audience to fulfilling their professional duty. In the end, the news team will be rewarded and endorsed by the metrics in the medium or long term.

The fourth element that defines political parallelism refers to journalistic role orientation towards advocacy (Hallin and Mancini 2004). In La Sexta's newsroom, when it comes to asking what it means to be a left-wing medium or how a 'left-wing' medium or 'left-wing leaning public' is shaped, the explanations fall within the normative and cognitive dimensions of journalism:

> *People start to respect you when your limits are pushed, [for example] when there are great social movements, as when the 15M arose, when there are elections, or great corruption, when there is a process like the Catalan [independence] process, it is at those moments when people start to see what media companies are on the front line, showing their faces, really saying what is happening, revealing what others want to keep hidden and having a clear attitude, a critical conscience regarding all this.* (Maximiliano, editor)

Through participant observation, it was possible to detect the differences and nuances between the normative role and the role that is actually put into practice (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017). In the case of La Sexta TV, the discourse of the desired values of the journalist, socially and institutionally endorsed, is permanently validated or redirected according to audience data. When audience figures do not increase when a specific news product is broadcast, journalists assume that "the viewers are not interested in this piece of information, but they need to be aware of it"[75] – this rationale has been termed journalism advocacy. It is described by Donsbach (2008) as when journalists assume that members of the audience do not recognize or pursue their interests in society, then journalists understand it as their task to act on behalf of the audience. The assessment that "members of the audience" do not recognize their interests is made by journalists when reviewing audience data, and in response, La Sexta's journalists understand that they must build a newscast including the news that they consider relevant, even if it means poor ratings.

> *In Catalonia's conflict, before the actual mess really started, the audience data used to be quite poor, it didn't work well. When we interviewed Catalonian politicians, and we discussed the issue, usually the audience numbers dropped.*

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[75] *Fieldwork notes.*

> *And we have continued betting on this topic because we believed that it would be one of the most important topics in Spain.* (Leonardo, editor)

It must be said that the inclination to advocacy is not exclusive to La Sexta news team. By surveying more than 700 journalists in Spain, Roses and Farias-Batlle (2013) found that in comparison with U.S. journalists, Spanish reporters are more likely to give importance to motivate people to get involved. Journalists see themselves as "mobilizers of the citizenship of their country" (2013:170). However, in the case of La Sexta, the high inclination towards partisan political information with a left-wing leaning has been questioned when advertising revenues and audience figures are not favourable.

> *In fact, before this happened [the Catalonian claim for independence from Spain], there was indeed a kind of [tendency to agree] 'we have to rethink the model' right? Because when there is no high tension in the news, you know there are no great news events. Then obviously everything went wrong, and audience numbers declined, and we had to ask ourselves whether this station could be only information oriented.* (Martín, reporter)

Hanitzsch (2018) argues that the journalistic roles are excessively (and undemocratically, he asserts) associated with political journalism. He sustains that there is another dimension, parallel to the role of political journalism, in which journalistic roles are applied to daily life. This latter dimension is related to services provided by the reporter in matters of consumption, emotion and identity. Journalists in the domain of everyday life address audiences less in their role as public citizens, but rather in their role as clients and consumers (Hanitzsch and Vos 2018). Hanitzsch's (2018) universal catalogue of journalistic roles, then, proposes two poles, between which the role chosen can vary on a continuum: at one end the roles concerning political life; on the other those related to daily life.

One of the editors explained to me what the internal debate was in times with no critical news events, before the Catalonian independence claim arose, when the audience numbers were low for La Sexta TV news products. His explanation was clearly drawn on a whiteboard, but he did not allow me to photograph it. He called the diagram, "the La Sexta TV’s informative DNA". In the centre was a circle with the word "citizen" with connecting lines to a series of circles surrounding it, including senior citizens, immigration, housing, health, work and education. At the same time, new branches were born from each of the spheres, for example, elderly people were connected with subgroups such as disabilities. He explained that their planned objective was to move from a newscast that focused on partisan political debate to a more citizen focused newscast on basic needs and the emerging needs of the people, adding:

> *It is not to stop being political, because all this is political, it is what people demand from the government and the system.* (Mateo, editor)

In terms of Hanitzsch's bipolar model (2018), and following the quotation above, the news team intends to turn the elements of society into politics, events that affect the identity, consumption and emotion of citizens. The ultimate goal they had in mind was an upturn in audience numbers. Many scholars see these two poles – citizen and consumer journalistic orientations – as antagonistic and exclusive. However, Hindman (2017) sees them as complementary, upholding that newsmakers could use the metrics to "maximize the audience for civically valuable content" (2017:185). In the case of La Sexta, it is possible to draw a continuum between the two poles depending on the factors that predominate: journalistic judgement or pro profit pressures. Whatever the side of a story, editors have a goal: the story needs to peak above the audience average of the TV channel.

Far from rejecting the influence of audience data on news practices, the news workers consider data to be an integral tool for news construction and by no means feel that audience dependence restricts the autonomy of their news judgement. Moreover, La Sexta's journalists consider that audience success is a source of autonomy.

> *We are interested in people-watching on our programmes, we work to make people see us, we want them to see us and also making them see us makes us profitable. And profitability gives us independence. This is fundamental, we surely would have never been able to do what we have done if we had not been successful, that is, success has allowed us to do what we do. Without success, they [media owners] would have cut our heads off.* (Mateo, editor)

The above statement expresses the disciplinary role played by audience metrics. First, it articulates that there is a superior echelon, a managerial hierarchy external to the newsroom culture that sets conditions on journalistic autonomy, which in turn is embodied in the goals of audience metrics (Bunce 2017). Secondly, the metrics rule what fits as proper, what is conceived as normal and, most importantly, what the newsroom team should aspire to stay alive (Espeland and Stevens, 2008).

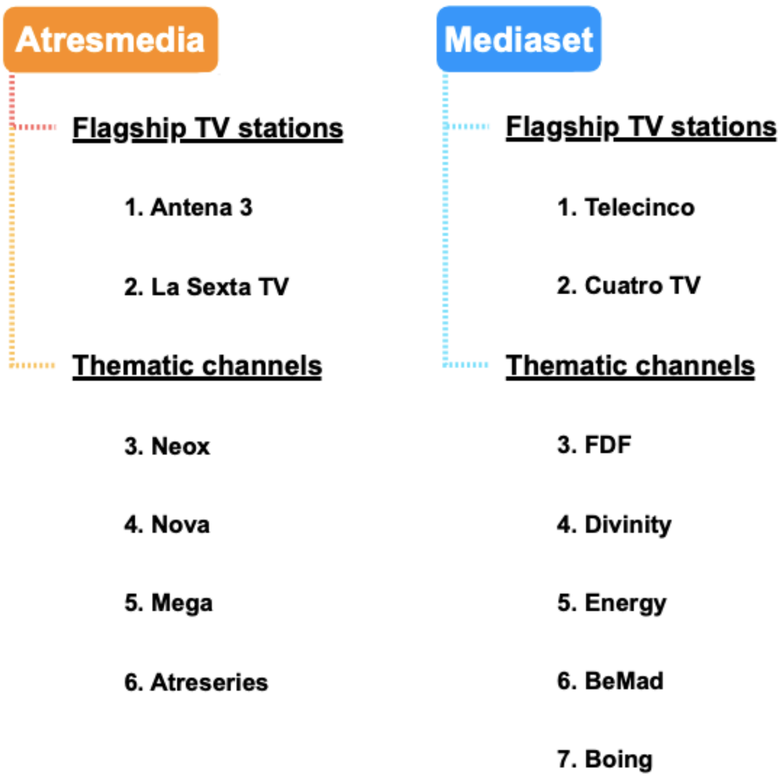
Myths and facts in the construction of journalistic autonomy

Earlier, I discussed how the factors that promote or limit journalistic autonomy can be either structural influences – such as ownership patterns, the existence of codified editorial rules, or state intervention – or subjective influences. In other words, influences are subjective insofar as autonomy is a social construct that resides in journalistic perceptions (Reich and Hanitzsch 2013). Taking into account this assumption, in La Sexta newsroom I observed that there were two collective beliefs, that could potentially either boost or constrain journalistic autonomy. One was the conviction that journalists at La Sexta are distant from government political power, and the media group back such positioning. The other was a constraint on their professional autonomy associated with the scarcity of resources. From my observation, neither belief has any grounds in reality (see below). However, these notions played a role in pushing the limits of journalistic autonomy, which reinforces the idea that professional autonomy is a social construct – this I refer to them as myths. They underpin the perception of the boundaries of journalistic autonomy at La Sexta.

a. First myth: Distance from power

By asking journalists about their professional role, the answers always pointed to taking active participation in scrutinizing political power, even though the TV channel and the media group paid a huge toll for it. Herein lies the first myth: Atresmedia would have been punished for supposedly giving screen time to the left-wing Podemos Party and investigating corruption within the ruling Popular Party. The purported punishment would consist of receiving one fewer TV signal than the rival media group Telecinco when the Spanish government launched a process of TV signals assignment. In fact, Atresmedia has six TV stations and Telecinco has seven (Figure 8-2)

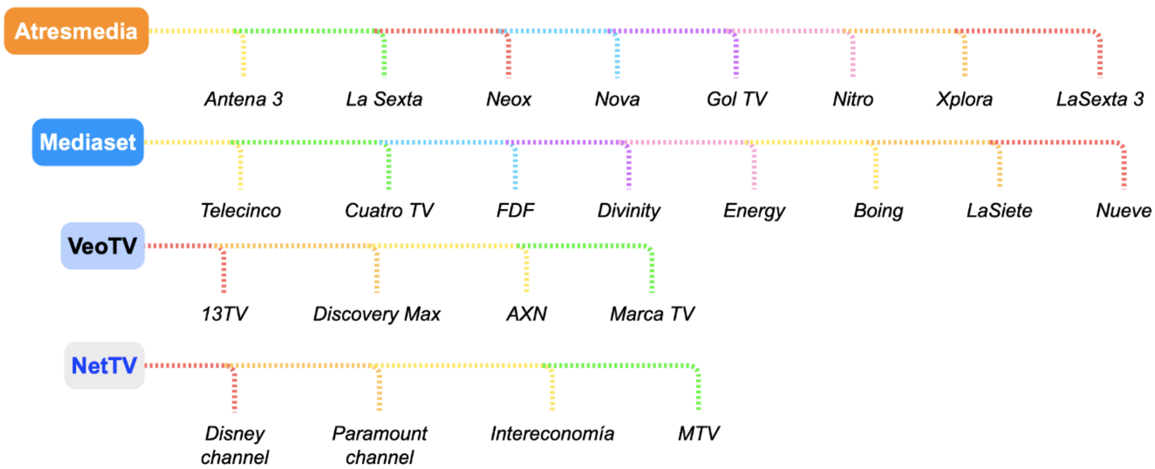
Figure 8-2: List of television signals held for each media group (Dec 2020)



> *It has a simple explanation: it is punishment by the government of Spain for Atresmedia not converting La Sexta into an uncritical channel. During the emergence of the Podemos party, La Sexta did not accept an implicit order to quell the new political formations.* (Maximiliano, editor)

The explanation for why I consider this a myth is as follows: Antena 3 and Telecinco – Atresmedia and Mediaset respectively – were the first commercial TV channels in Spain (Bustamante Ramírez 2013). In the launching of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT), the socialist government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero carried out two processes of direct national DTT licences concessions. Eight TV signals in November 2005 and another nine in July 2010 (Zallo 2010) were allocated. After the merger of Antena 3 and La Sexta on one side, and Telecinco and Cuatro TV on the other, the two main TV media groups Atresmedia and Mediaset emerged, both holding eight TV stations at the beginning of 2014 (Figure 8-3).

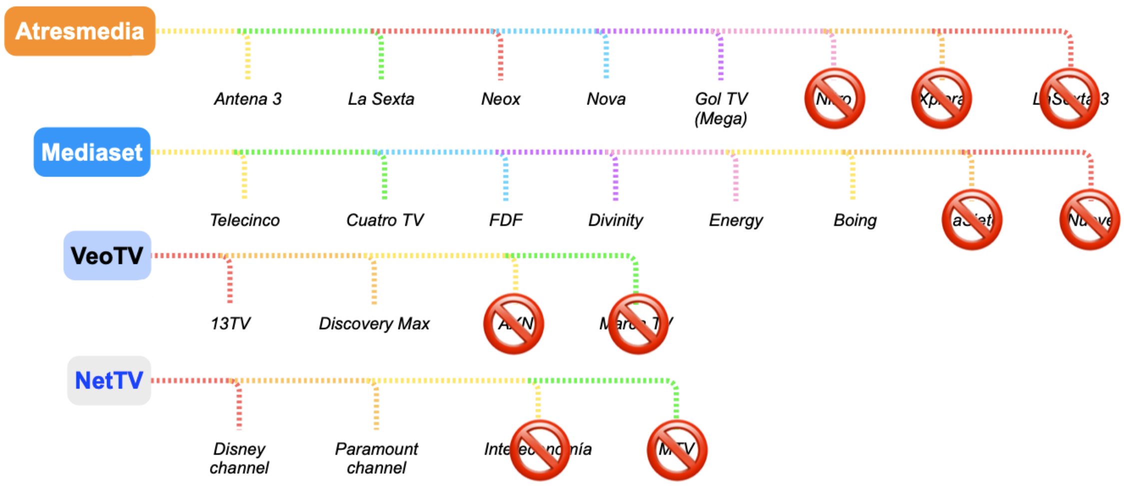
Figure 8-3: List of free-to-air television channels by media group in Spain in March 2014



However, the private company "Infraestructura y Gestión 2002" initiated legal action against the direct concession of nine television signals, claiming that the Spanish government broke the law by granting television licenses without a public tender. In May 2014, the Spanish Supreme Court accepted the contentions of the petitioners, declared invalid the TV signals' direct concession with no competitive bidding, mandating the shutdown of the nine TV stations (Fabra 2014; García García, 2014). Mediaset lost two TV channels; Atresmedia, three; VeoTV and Net TV, two each (Figure 8-4). Atresmedia broadcast a video in 2014 blaming the government for the television signals' shutdown. The video opens with the phrase: "The government forces us to shutdown..." (it is still available on in YouTube).[76]

[76] *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uIS3dYm4ztE*

Figure 8-4: Television channels by media group that the Supreme Court of Spain mandated to shut down in May 2014



Finally, in October 2015, under the Popular Party government headed by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, six more television licences were allocated – one for Atresmedia, one for Mediaset, and the other four for minor television operators – but this time the allocation was made through public tender.[77] Following the trial proceedings and a new licensing, in 2018, Mediaset had seven TV stations and Atresmedia had six (Figure 8-2).[78] In other words, both Socialist and Popular party administrations granted equal television signals for the main two TV media groups in Spain. However, while asking journalists about their experience with the economic crisis and La Sexta TV's transformation process into a political leftist-leaning news-focused channel and what kind of pressures the newsroom receives for its editorial orientation, the issue of 'governmental punishment' arose over and over again as if it was a fact.

> *There were challenging moments; neither the government nor economic powers were happy with La Sexta's editorial orientation, it is clear that the channels were a punishment. But the media group endured [...] despite all the horror, more or less, we have continued to bet on the same, with information committed [with the people]. We didn't renounce to report complicated issues. We haven't given up criticizing certain aspects of power.* (Benjamin, editor)

Journalistic autonomy is a complex matter. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of the field, I hold that full journalistic autonomy, although it would be desirable, is unachievable. The journalistic field exists in "a system of overlapping constraints and controls" (Bourdieu 1998). Thus, it intersects with fields from commercial or political

[77] *Each one of the DTT signals concessions (2005, 2010 and 2015) was contested in court. The first claim was settled with an out-of-court settlement and the third was rejected at trial. Only the challenge against the 2010 TV licenses concession ended in the channels closing down.*

[78] *A timeline of the main television public policies in Spain in the 45 years of democracy can be seen in Appendix E.*

to literary or religious. The overlapping fields involve a permanent interplay of power that aims to preserve or modify each field's structural forces. In addition, strains arise from agents' positioning within the field or their alignment in relation to agents in other fields. For example, when journalists investigate an act of corruption or an ongoing political negotiation, they convert these events and the politicians involved into subjects of observation to make the news story publicly known. That process naturally alters the political field. The journalists' reporting activities also modify the agents' positioning in both fields, journalistic and political, because they make others either aware of or suspicious of what is going on and prompt new position-taking with regards to the facts. It should be noted that the presence of different fields does not mean that a journalist cannot negotiate competing logics with (some) autonomy, but a fully independent press is a tricky prospect to accomplish – Schudson (2005a) asserts that it is not even desirable. It risks driving journalists to pursue personal interests and ignore public concerns.

La Sexta's news team does not deny the existence of constraints but has deployed coping mechanisms that involve case by case negotiations. Many coincide as a sort of pride for the degree of autonomy they have conquered.

> *Of course, we are receiving constant pressures from external forces. Outer powers are at work all the time. However, those demands don't stop what we do. That is the norm. In fact, if we wouldn't receive these kinds of pressures, it would mean that we were doing a bad job.* (Mateo, editor)

The social construction of the professional journalistic autonomy in La Sexta's newsroom sums up two significant inputs – the palpable evidence of the media group backing and the metrics reward – which both encourage the news team to carry out bold journalistic scrutiny. I do not deny that the media group supports La Sexta's investigative reporting. I uphold that the proof of Atresmedia backing journalistic autonomy is shown through the media group's stoicism in tolerating unfair treatment in the Spanish government's public tenders, which is untrue, a myth. Such myths still have significant consequences when they are believed to be true. La Sexta journalists' narrative regarding punishment from political parties has no factual grounds, but it works by reinforcing the perception of journalistic autonomy.

b. Second myth: Resource scarcity

By referring to organisational and procedural forces that shape their professional autonomy, La Sexta's journalists repeatedly claim that resource scarcity, added to the amount of live broadcasting time, leaves little leeway to produce well-crafted stories. By the same token, there is a constant reference to being "the poorer and younger brother" in the media conglomerate in comparison to Antena 3, the other flagship television station of Atresmedia.

> *The resources that we have are not many, we are the smallest in terms of resources, compared to those that other television channels such as Antena 3 may have. The problem is greater now, you know, because we are broadcasting live all day.* (Ernesto, editor)

There is a large array of literature pointing out that resource shortages strongly condition professional autonomy (Altheide 1976; Schlesinger 1978; Gans 1979; Fishman 1980; Weaver 2007; Shoemaker and Reese 2014), a matter acknowledged and reported in different journalistic cultures (Reich and Hanitzsch 2013). In TV news, the resources allocated for news production are technical (means of transportation, cameras, microphones, and live broadcasting means), human resources (TV reporters, camera operators, broadcast equipment operators), budgetary resources (for travel, for keeping the offices running) and broadcasting slot time.

The phenomenon that I identified in La Sexta's newsroom, however, is of a different nature. At Atresmedia, camera operators arrive and prepare their equipment in the same premises no matter what channel they work for – there is one common room for Antena 3 and La Sexta's camera operators. Therefore, they feel as if they belong to the same team, many are friends and field collaboration is guaranteed, so recording resources are often duplicated.

> *I always have to fight to get a camera, cameras are sparse. But when I go to the parliament, we are lucky enough to count on the Antena 3 camera. Otherwise, we could not do what we do […]. If we need to interview a parliamentarian or a minister, each team covers a door and then we share the material, sometimes they [Antena 3TV news team] come with two cameras* (Anibal, reporter)

Nevertheless, camara operators and administrative personnel told me that net numbers of camera operators, cameras and broadcasting trucks were slightly higher on La Sexta's team than in Antena 3. There were 34 camera operators for La Sexta's newsroom and 32 for Antena 3's newsroom at their headquarters in Madrid in November 2017.[79]

In terms of broadcast timeslots, most La Sexta news programmes are live broadcast, which could explain the availability of more resources than Antena 3, but still lead to the perception of scarcity. The number of cameras and operators are in line with the other national free-to-air TV newsrooms in Spain. Other resources concerning correspondents in Spanish regions and foreign bureaus are all the same for Antena 3, and in all cases in shared premises – thus, the myth of the "poor brother" does not hold.

The explanation of these two myths suggests that journalistic autonomy is not only a subjective perception (Hanitzsch et al. 2010; Reich and Hanitzsch 2013) but a constructed subjective notion which takes shape in a peer group dynamics in the newsroom culture (Donsbach 2004). Among this peer group, the limitations and

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[79] Fieldwork notes.

constraints journalists perceive are understood, with a sense of satisfaction, as 'the adversity we all have to overcome' and that belief boosts their sense of a conquered autonomy, which guides their performance accordingly.

> *The investigative reporting that we have done in this newsroom many times altering certain established powers or interests or pressure groups or lobbies, the things we have done against them we could not have done if we had not had a reliable product, solid, profitable, and successful. In other words, prestige gives us freedom. That's how it is.* (Ramiro, editor)

La Sexta's journalists frequently expressed how pride and self-realisation involved a sense of a job carried out by pushing at the limits of professional autonomy. I argue that, to a large extent, journalistic autonomy is in an ongoing process of collective construction not only through the newsroom culture but also by the media group. Bourdieu (1998) states that the journalistic field is considerably more influenced by the market than other fields of cultural production, either through advertisers or through audience ratings. Bourdieu also notes that journalists create their own conception of professional autonomy in the face of financial pressures. Schudson adds that, in the journalistic mindset, "autonomy is constructed as much against the political as against the commercial" (2005a:217). La Sexta's newsroom seems to hold a perception of highly professional autonomy, but within 'cells' or 'bubbles' within which they report independently but acknowledge the existence in some cases of filters in place before the news story is published.

> *If it is a very sensitive news story, we always have a filter from outside the newsroom, above the news director. When it comes to a delicate issue that affects a person with a high position… which may be risky, due to their political position, because of their power or… well, it may affect a company, perhaps, it is a firm that advertised in the house. One should be careful. You should have limits that are set by people who are even above the newsroom's editor-in-chief.* (Anibal, reporter)

In reporters' minds there are two clashing conceptions that seemingly coexist without conflict. Journalists are proud of the independence of the work done within the newsroom, but at the same time, and with no manifestation of conflict, journalists acknowledge that they ought to accept control from the top echelons of the media group in a case-by-case negotiation. The latter suggests that the managerial interest of the media group is boosting journalists' inquiry and producing news in such a manner that it finds a balance between taking controlled risks and ensuring business profitability.

This section examined two myths that the newsroom believed to be true, underpinning a powerful perception of professional autonomy that proves to be reactive. When the news team acknowledges that they count on such professional autonomy, the professional journalistic performance tends to be less self-restrained and more daring. Then the perception of professional autonomy is reinforced. In addition, the daily communication of audience metrics in rewarding terms becomes a tool of reaffirmation, impelled to repeat at least three news production components: the type of professionalism displayed, the news content produced, and audience engagement achieved – in other words, a properly working disciplining technique.

The process of building a sense of professional autonomy and the rewarding function of audience metrics have further labour implications. Both people-metered and social media metrics underpin a form of affective labour. Hardt and Negri (2004) explain that affective labour is the precarious cognitive labour "that produces or manipulates affects such as a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion" (2004:108). Earlier, this thesis discussed how newsmakers compare news about good metrics with the euphoria provoked by a shot of heroin. Editors also mentioned the fear of seeing journalists getting sunk by poor metrics and avoiding that situation. Moreover, the media group takes part in these preventive practices by communicating the audience data outcome constantly in positive wording, finding a triumph to be congratulated every day.

Boosting affective labour, according to Siapera (2019), increases labour precariousness. Good metrics turn into a journalistic target because of the immediate emotional effect and the need to fulfil their public duty to reach the people with the information they need. Siaspera points out that the externalities produced by affective labour cannot be valued, but in media work, it "can be appropriated and commodified by capital" (2019:278). Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011)also found that the sense of satisfaction journalists express towards audience metrics provides them with a measurable value of work appropriately done but not fully paid up as happens in a scenario of job precariousness.

8.3. Professionalisation and individual journalistic autonomy

In this section, I discuss how metrics intervene in defining the professional legitimacy of journalists when facing audiences (Abbott 1988). In addition, it explores the exploitation of the possibilities of WhatsApp groups in the quest for personal autonomy among low-ranking reporters; the personal relationship that journalists have with Twitter metrics; and the complicated relationship between three newsrooms separated by metrics: the traditional in-person newsroom and the digital newsroom, plus the virtual newsroom supported by instant message applications.

Metrics and information asymmetry

Abbott (1988) defines professions as a system in a permanent dispute over jurisprudential territories, referring to journalism as "an occupation of permeable borders" (1988:470). In the historical definition of the profession, Abbott borrows a concept from Talcott Parsons that points to the need for an asymmetry of experience to configure a profession. This asymmetry is needed for "the client to trust the professional and the professional to respect both client and colleagues" (1988:29). In the case of La Sexta, in the newsroom there is a conscious effort and will to seek the truth.

> *We can be the first to tell the truth 100 times, but if you fail to do so the 101st time they will remind you of it for the rest of your life! So, look, I don't know what would be better, whether to be first 100 times and screw up once [in telling a truthful news story], or to be second 101 times, but never screw up! I prefer the latter.* (Eduardo, editor)

Therefore, a quest for reputation defines the profession as much as information asymmetry. Journalists recognize that metrics is a force that tends to alter the trust created with the audience. In simple terms journalists explained information asymmetry, such as that described by Parsons (1939) and Abbott (1991), as meaning that if a story is repeated without new information they lose the interest of the viewer.

> *Man! There are times when you just let yourself go, guided by what did or didn't work well the day before and you suffer a debacle, isn't it? Because it doesn't work like that, one day something works fine, but the next day it doesn't. Or, maybe, you didn't notice that that news starts slacking off and you become a little blindsided and you say 'let's follow-up on this, just follow with this because yesterday it ran smoothly' but what you haven't realized is that you have nothing else to inform people of.* (Jimena, editor)

In professional terms, reporters have the feeling that they have conquered a space of credibility that members of the audience attend to in search of information. The formula to achieve this goal is that the journalists of La Sexta are self-conscious in displaying an asymmetry of information and are aware that delivering content without that information asymmetry violates the pact with the news consumer and fails to grab the audience.

Journalists' autonomy and WhatsApp groups

Being beat journalists, namely, reporters that cover news referring to a geographic site or a specialised area(Zelizer and Allan 2010), have different connotations in America and Europe. In America, working in beats news is a predictor of autonomy (Weaver 2007). In Europe, in turn, beat editors have full administrative command over reporters, with clear boundaries between beats (Reich and Hanitzsch 2013). Thus, being a beat news journalist is not a predictor of professional autonomy.

At La Sexta, some beat editors have a territorial section in the newsroom plan comprising a beat journalist's team under their responsibility. Each of these news beat teams plays the role of service provider for every La Sexta TV news programme. They extensively use a language that resembles a market: journalists sell stories to the beat editors, editors buy stories and resell them to the news producers in charge of a programme, and moreover, the round of editors in the morning editorial meeting usually starts with the question, "today, what do you have to sell?" However, I observed two factors blurring the beat news teams' boundaries and challenging the traditional power of beat editors. First was the newsroom schema of one newsroom for all programmes, as discussed in Chapter 7. Journalists find ways to chat and sell their stories directly to programme editors. Secondly, beat reporters are the main providers in the WhatsApp groups, in particular those that I have termed the collaborative content axis (Chapter 7), in other words, the chat groups which are created to share updates about ongoing news.

> *I have what we call 'The Beast': there are [almost] 500 people working in the generation, in the exhibition, or in providing me information throughout the country, who do not work for one programme for a few hours, but rather work for all programmes. There is an information machine and right now I don't know if there is something similar in this country. For example, we have some WhatsApp groups, […] they are chats where there are many people, and it is machinery for generating information that travels faster than any news agency.* (Ramiro, editor)

Later this chapter discusses how different understandings of the meaning of metrics become the critical element that brings together or separates the newsrooms. Now, I further explore the uses of instant messages applications, bearing in mind how difficult it is to distinguish between the effects of datafication and the wider digital world. Bunce, Wright and Scott (2018) studied the impact in workplace culture and in journalistic practices of the creation of a multi-national virtual newsroom through the use of Slack – online software for collaborative work – which has the potential to create chat rooms with people connecting remotely from all over the world. Following Bunce, Wright and Scott, who drew from Harvey's work on spaces (2006), I considered La Sexta’s WhatsApp chat rooms as specific spaces that exist while people use them.

As explained in Chapter 7, there are single beat chat groups that belong to the instrumental coordination axis category, and there are collaborative content chat rooms in every bit of news appears every day. These latter WhatsApp groups align with the schema of one newsroom for all programmes; everyone provides information. Therefore, beats are no longer entrenched silos. Moreover, with the chat groups emerge new types of power relationships in which rank-and-file journalists become visible. Conversely, editors can also see the work of journalists who are not under their specific responsibility. What also becomes visible is an uninterrupted fruitful cross-beat collaboration between journalists. Zelizer and Allan (2010) highlight that great scoops such as Watergate were made possible thanks to cross-beat reporting.

In La Sexta’s newsroom, the use of instant messaging systems has uneven potential among journalists. Some publish only text, others share videos, pictures, soundbites or pdf files. The application keeps a record of all media transmitted, with date and time stamps, and has a search box inside every chatroom that allows old messages to be found. This affordance fosters accurate quotes during live broadcasts or fieldwork. WhatsApp started to offer video calls during the time of this research, however, I did not observe them at work. According to my follow up conversations, there was an intensive use of WhatsApp video calls during the 2020-2021 pandemic.

Regarding the data that the user can collect from the application, for instance, WhatsApp users can check when another member of the same chat groups has read their message. Given that many newsroom staff are in many chat groups, they can also check when somebody forwards a message from one chat to another, thus understanding what is catching the attention of the bosses. In short, low-ranking journalists can get an idea of the main news team’s preferences, which would usually be hidden from them in the physical newsroom.

The private relationship with Twitter metrics

Each journalist manages their personal social network accounts, mostly Instagram and Facebook for personal purposes. Twitter accounts, conversely, are mainly used as an extension of their professional lives, but with some nuances. They all know the rule imposed by the station about linear screens first, that nobody can post a piece of news on social media before broadcasting it. In addition, there are strict rules for news packaging and live shots on social media: time is quite limited. They cannot broadcast a video longer than 80 seconds, and the content should focus on facts rather than opinions. However, those journalists who are more active on social media prefer to post opinions rather than exclusively news supported by facts.

> *I love to make sharp comments […] I use Twitter a lot to comment on the news if I make a recording in the street, I take a photo, I don't make videos [for social media], but if I take photos I take them of the place where I am and I do a preview of what I'm going to tell [on the telly], but never revealing the news core.* (Teresa, reporter)

> *I had one [tweet] that was very, very re-tweeted, in relation to the Eurovision Song Contest. There, our singer sang notoriously off-key. So, I edited a [fake] video, in which the singer's off-pitch voice appears over a [Prime Minister Mariano] Rajoy image. I realized that in this country any video making fun of our president will be highly commented on and widely shared. Well, they shared it with something like 13,000 or 14,000 people, which was very impressive […] Afterwards, I deleted it. It was not too good to have it in my journalistic Twitter timeline.* (Humberto, reporter)

Notably, some journalists have learned that those sharp political ironies work well on social media in terms of reposts and comments. But it is also of concern that they do not affect their professional reputation. At first sight, it seems a defeat of the effect of metrics; however, journalists acknowledge that, somehow, metrics have an effect over their storytelling – a sort of juvenile slang has impregnated their news packaging style, but they make it clear that it is much more measured than on Twitter. Zamith

(2018) upholds that new technologies have changed the audience metric environment with the potential to impact the journalists' perception of their professional role. Recent research also explains that the orientation of the journalistic role is susceptible to being recreated, reinterpreted or even contested as a consequence of increased precariousness of labour conditions in combination with the emergence of new technologies (Ferrucci 2018; Belair-Gagnon, Nelson, and Lewis 2019). Later in this chapter, I discuss the link between metrics and job precarity.

Reporters tend to equate their Twitter followers with the members of La Sexta's TV audience. Some journalists relate to their followers as if they all belong to a community interested in news stories. In that relationship, the many newsmakers modulate the interaction by looking at the metrics. For example, the decision about whether to reply or not – particularly to a hostile message – is a decision based on data expressed on social media.

> *The problem is that you would want to answer according to your instincts like to give up and to tell them, "get lost". Normally I look [at the metrics], if he has 10 followers, I say 'well, this is a typical provocateur', in contrast, if he has 2,000, 3,000, he is not a provocateur, he is someone who has his own forum in which he is well known. So, I make a decision 'I'm going to answer him', but I know I'm going to get into a controversy.* (Elisa, news producer)

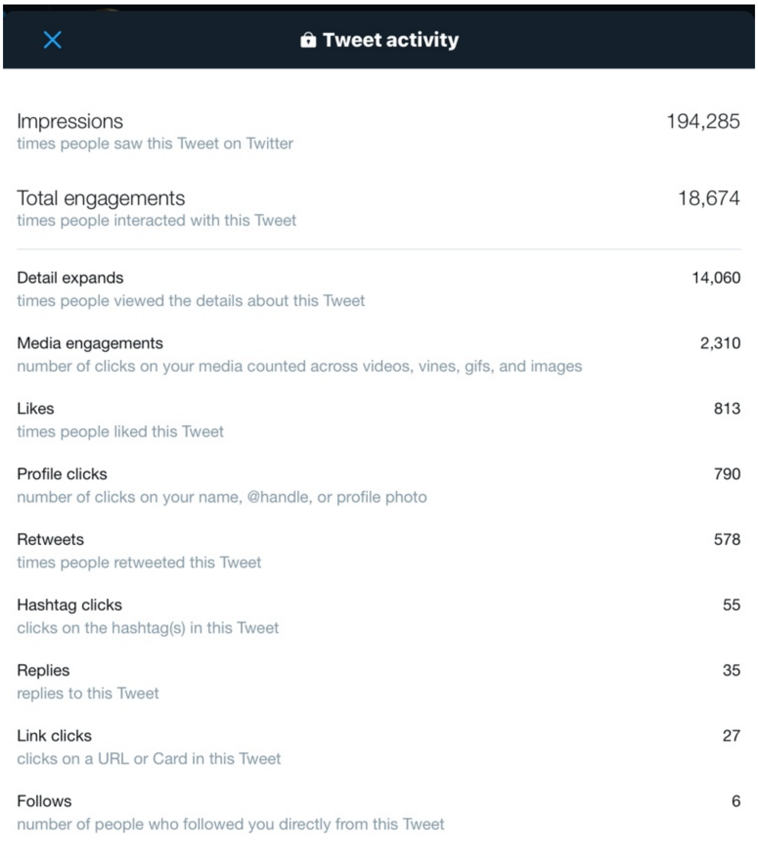
On personal accounts, there is a deeper dive into metric detail. The engagement goes beyond the number of followers, likes or retweets, which are also watched. Reporters from La Sexta pay special attention to their Twitter profile, and they indicate that they are reporters, presenters, producers or editors, who work at La Sexta and also include ventures and their own interests.

Among the most eye-catching statistics are the clicks on their profile (Figure 8-5). Journalists interpret that as a way to validate the information posted.

> *There is an option that allows you to see your tweet, how many clicks it has generated on your profile, and how many people who have read that tweet have clicked on your photo to see who the author is. I imagine this is a manner to check credibility of your information. They click and see that you are a journalist… meaning that you can have more credibility.* (Teresa, Reporter)

Monitoring ever-updating Twitter metrics opens the door to the dynamics of self-surveillance. Foucault (2005, 2008) refers to the modern gaze that implicates the split of the self into the observing subject and the observed object, each linked with mind and body, respectively. Therefore, self-monitoring beings to tie their identities to self-knowledge as a form of subjugation. The excision of the self with the focus on the self-knowledge is for Foucault (2008) a neoliberal being that he calls homo œconomicus, referring to those who abandon the employee role and become entrepreneurs of themselves, being their own capital, producer, and the source of their own earnings (2008:226).

Figure 8-5 Advanced list of data analytics provided by Twitter for free



Numerous studies have described how journalists use Twitter to build their own brand (Brems et al. 2016; Hanusch and Bruns 2016; Hove, Asdourian, and Bourgeois 2018; Molyneux, Holton, and Lewis 2018), promote their work, and engage with audiences without the involvement of their organisations with the final aim to build economic and social capital (Hanusch and Bruns 2016). However, little scholarly attention has been paid to how journalists engage in the self-surveilling mechanisms through Twitter metrics, although "platform metrics are increasingly accepted as legitimate standards to measure and rank people and ideas" (Van Dijck and Poell, 2013:7). Moore and Robinson (2015) pay attention to the psychological and emotional implications of self-surveillance. For instance, when likes, retweets or views reach a new maximum, they also set the next goal to achieve. Thus, the employees are stuck in a loop that can never bridge the gap between their own performance and the target depicted by metrics, turning into a disciplining technique that could unleash workers' anxiety.

In the interviews, journalists mostly stated that they do not care about metrics provided by social media, but within minutes, when discussing specific data, they usually have a clear idea about the number of followers they have (I verified their answers immediately after the interview) and what was their most liked, shared or commented tweet. They can also name who has the most followers in the media group, but they do not know the metrics of their peers. The data gatekeeper editors at La Sexta are sceptical about social media metrics. The data gatekeeper role in traditional TV news production is only related to the audience data from the traditional information market regime.

> *Twitter is an absolutely flawed and sick tool, that is, I am less and less interested in it […] when we started La Sexta Noche we were the first to put hashtags on screen and we also placed four hashtags, one for each topic, and we were a trending topic. I watched La Sexta Noche looking at Twitter because I learned from people, but it was a virgin and wild Twitter. Now there are so many trolls, so many political parties controlling Twitter, so many bots working that it is very complicated and can serve as an observation tool, that is, it is very dirty. Twitter quantitative data is useless.* (Mateo, Editor)

However, this is no monolithic position in the newsroom. There are news producers who compare the two market information regimes: one organised on a statistical sample, and another built with data from all users connected to the application and collected in real-time. For some journalists, the representation of the audience provided by Twitter metrics feels more real.

> *You do not know who is watching you on TV, who they are. In some houses [there is a device] that makes a statistic telling you what audience you have. However, now you have an audience on Twitter that is closer, who are people with real names… a person… who writes to you and who you have a relationship with.* (Roberto, editor)

Finally, it is worth acknowledging that every line producer checks Twitter's trending topics when selecting the news they will pursue or the news that will bypass the filter to be included in the newscast. Twitter trending topics are mainly consulted in case they have missed a story which is generating interest. However, the journalists seem unaware of how this list is built from algorithms that read quantified data collected from users (Meraz and Papacharissi 2016) tailored to the interests of the users and to time and geographical location. In this way, salient data works as a filter for journalistic reasoning, in the sense of leaving journalists with the perception that trending topics, for instance, show what people care about, without knowing whether the trending list shows what is relevant for the user, for us broadly or for a specific societal group (Gillespie 2016).

So close but yet so far: The tale of not two but three newsrooms

In the second week of my fieldwork, I decided to get to know the audience analysis office, the corporate communications office, and the digital newsroom. When I asked for directions to La Sexta Digital's premises, it was a surprise that nobody could tell me how to get there, neither news editors, administrative staff, nor journalists. The only way to find out where the digital newsroom was located was to go to the main entrance of Atresmedia and ask the guards. The next surprise was to discover that the digital newsroom was located just below the traditional newsroom, on the ground floor. In La Sexta's newsroom culture there is a rhetoric that their degree of independence regarding the metrics is greater than it is in the digital newsroom which is identified as a different entity. My experience told me that they are not only differentiated bodies, but that they hardly communicate. They have their own practices, rules and ethical codes. Moreover, they do not share the same newsworthiness criteria. In the case of the main newsroom, the whole team participates in the WhatsApp chats, which works as a tool that reinforces and unites the news discourse. None of the members of the digital team was incorporated into the WhatsApp news groups. This situation does not bother them as the digital news team is not aware of the in-person newsroom organisation in newsgroups on WhatsApp. The digital news team has its own WhatsApp group, and they work only on the practical coordination axis described in Chapter 7.

> *We are different newsrooms. The news on the networks is not produced by this newsroom. In other words, the profile of La Sexta Noticias [in networks] is worked out by another news team that is completely different from us. So, there are times in which we have editorial disagreements about stories that they are releasing, but we have not broadcast them, or we have not presented them in the same way.* (Elisa, news producer)

The discourse of otherness used by the traditional newsroom when journalists refer to the digital newsroom is surprising. They usually highlight the differences between both newsrooms, for instance saying, "they do not belong to our team", "they do not share the same news criteria", and frequently underline its lack of identity as news workers given that the digital team posts content not only from the news programmes but from all of La Sexta's programming content. The discourse of the Other, in anthropological terms, is one that imposes categories, which in turn establishes asymmetries of power (Staszak 2009). The sort of dealings that exist between the two newsrooms is a subject extensively addressed by media studies and is known as the convergence crisis (see, for instance, Deuze 2004; Dailey, Demo, and Spillman 2005; Boczkowski 2005; Colson et al. 2008; Quinn 2005; Robinson 2011a). The most salient feature of convergence is the study of journalists' relationships with audience metrics (Anderson 2011). In La Sexta's traditional newsroom, the discourse points to the digital Other's lack of journalistic judgement.

In the final period of the fieldwork, the possible integration of the digital newsroom with the traditional newsroom was under discussion for a long time and was resisted by the editorial team. To my question about what was delaying it, the answer was:

> *We have created a project, set our conditions and goals, in addition to the budget. We do not want to be responsible for the digital newsroom as it is currently configured; La Sexta Digital is a nonsense, if someone makes a mistake in a live shot, they publish it, because that increases their numbers, but makes them miss the relevant stories. Under these conditions and with those goals, we are not interested in taking control of it.* (Maximiliano, news editor)

The struggle to resist the convergence reveals the team’s concern about the daily task to maintain the fragile balance between journalistic social duty and audience metrics demands (van der Wurff and Schoenbach 2014). Therefore, it also shows the deep fear lodged in newsroom culture about the power of metrics and its effect over the collective conception of journalistic autonomy. As discussed earlier, one of the autonomous achievements of La Sexta's newsroom is the power to engage with content on their own terms. The latter means, for instance, making room in the newscast for content which is less gripping but still relevant. What the newsroom’s main team perceives is that with social media real-time metrics, the newsroom can lose that degree of autonomy.

8.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the construction of perceptions of professional autonomy both at the collective and individual levels, with particular regard to the role of metrics in that process. By employing an ethnographic method, I had the opportunity to dive into an array of components of professional autonomy, inquire into their roots, and then step back to visualize how each of those components has been redefined and what role they play in supporting the collective and individual perception of journalistic autonomy.

The main finding discussed in this chapter is related to the construction of professional autonomy as an endeavour of the whole media group. There are two ideas that support newsroom autonomy that, I have found, are social constructions which are believed to be true but which are actually myths, and the evidence collected shows how powerful they can be. Moreover, at first sight, both can be accounted as constraints of autonomy but have been re-signified to turn them into a belief about the newsroom's ability to overcome adversity. The first myth says that the media group has been punished by the acting government, yet evidence does not support this belief. State intervention and censorship have been largely considered as influences that constrain autonomy at a societal level (Shoemaker and Reese 1996; Preston 2009). The second myth refers to the widespread belief that they work with limited resources and financial scarcity, which is a usual predictor of lack of autonomy (Reich and Hanitzsch 2013).

In this chapter I suggested that these myths help to build two fundamental role perceptions: power distance and the reinforcement of idealism as ethical ideology, in Hanitzsch’s terms (2007). These role perceptions are central in the journalistic identity of the newsroom in the case studied. They generate pride for journalists and boost autonomy since role orientation is a mechanism that serves to make labour meaningful (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017). As discussed in Chapter 7, on a daily basis, journalists get a congratulatory message along with the audience results of the previous day – which is manufactured within the media group. The news team interprets the metrics achieved as the audience's support of a job well done amidst adversity, a duty fulfilled through the exercise of their journalistic autonomy. In a condition of labour precariousness, the sum of their daily effort and the metrics boost their satisfaction, a coping mechanism that allows the journalists to achieve a measurable value for work done properly but not fully recompensed through the salaries (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). Put it in simple words, metrics are able to feed job satisfaction in spite of poor salaries.

I have arrived at the above conclusion by analysing political parallelism that draws on Hallin and Mancini's (2004) comparative study on media systems theory. That study characterised the Spanish media system as 'Polarized Pluralist'. Through this process, I have observed that the news team is self-described as leftist television within a right-wing media group. And this understanding does not fall far from the aim of the media company, who took an audience-oriented, metric-driven business decision to reach a left-wing audience through La Sexta. Lowrey (2012) suggests that the media is increasingly specialised, even with a focus on a partisan audience niche, a pattern that could be a response to media fragmentation. Therefore, the political self-description of the news team and the partisanship of news consumers is an encounter which seems to be consolidated because of the enactment of the professional role of power distance and advocacy framed in idealism. However, what actually brings together journalistic practice, the political tendency of journalists, and the political leanings of the audience are the metrics and the media business.

The data gatekeeper editors – as I have termed those editors who equally and simultaneously are concerned with deciding the content in light of newsworthiness and the outcome of the metrics – are also responsible for filtering the metrics to the rest of the news team and making sense of audience behaviour. This conclusion resembles the study by Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc (2018) on the audience-oriented editor, described as the newest role in the newsroom. The audience-oriented editor is described in relation to the news content and is in charge of negotiating between the guidelines dictated by the metrics and journalistic judgement. Anderson (2011) and Bunce (2017) suggest that metrics are a form of management intervention in the newsroom, and might be the way in which the managerial echelon decides on content. My contribution, through participant observation, was to observe the data gatekeeper editors in action, exercising a leeway of autonomy in deciding to sometimes sacrifice a good audience outcome to include news content which is relevant but not attractive. However, I agree with Bunce (2017) in the idea that autonomy is relative, and the lost audience must be minimized, and the audience sacrifice of today could mean gain in the future. Therefore, metrics are disciplining the data gatekeeping editors to make it possible to match strong professional journalism logics with good audience metrics outcomes, in the short or medium term.

9. CONCLUSION: Summary of thesis, key findings and future research

Today, journalists work in a fully datafied environment. Every piece of content published is quantified, each platform on which content is posted provides a different measurement of popularity, and each of these quantified outcomes assesses the individual professional performance, the news story, the whole news product and even the news organisation. Amidst this storm of ever-updating data, this thesis questioned what data counts in news production and the variables that make it prevail. Using the Foucauldian (1995a) dialectic relationship between power and resistance and the disciplinary techniques of power the thesis asked the following questions: (1) What data is used in news production and why? Do media managers and journalists have similar or different conceptions of what data is and what it represents? (2) How is it decided what data is used in news production and who makes this decision? (3) Do quantified data play a role in forming journalists' identities, with particular attention to professional autonomy? (4) What happens when journalists face competing measurement systems – market information regimes – and how these different systems interplay in their news decision-making and their understanding of the audience's preferences?

This concluding chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, I summarise the three main parts of the thesis: the theoretical framework, the methodological approach, and the empirical analyisis. From this summary, I move on to the main arguments and key findings of the research. I then outline the relevance of this research and discuss some limitations of the study. Afterwards, I present questions and research paths that this thesis has helped to shed light on, which could be taken up by future investigative endeavours. Ultimately, I outline some reflections on the future of the commercial television news industry and some policy recommendations for media organisations and journalists alike.

9.1. Summary of thesis

There were three blocks that shaped the structure of this thesis. The first involves Chapters 2 and 3, where I laid out my theoretical underpinnings for the matter of study. In Chapter 2, I argued for a holistic and multi-dimensional approach to address the encounter between journalism and metrics. I proposed to examine both news and metrics production by considering the structural forces that shape the television and media system and, in parallel, to look at the journalistic understanding of metrics by analysing the ideological context and newsroom culture in which news is produced and metrics are consumed. What I intended with an investigation involving a holistic multi-dimensional approach was to conduct a study that drew mainly on the sociology of news production supported by the critical political economy of media and cultural studies. Such a focus proved advantageous in obtaining a macro perspective over the system of legal norms that rules the media and data ecosystems. It also allowed me to observe and analyse the micro-practices carried out by the news teams and individuals in relation to metrics.

Today, two pairs of terms– journalism and technology, and technology and metrics – are inextricably bonded. Consequently, I observed both the construction of news and professional journalistic identity by focusing on news production through the routines that remain stable regardless of the technological revolution that has been taking place (Zelizer 2019), then examining the ways in which those routines have changed alongside new technology and what data was generated from that interaction or consumed while producing news. Most of the reviewed journalistic studies about the presence of metrics in the newsroom assumed strong metrics effects on news production processes (Anderson 2011; Lee and Tandoc Jr. 2017; Zamith 2018b), either for news selection, news placement, or journalist professional performance (Arenberg and Lowrey 2018). The position of this chapter suggested that although the impact of metrics could be more complex than commonly assumed – for instance, mediated by strong professional journalistic principles (Zamith 2018a; Tandoc Jr. 2019) – current investigations continue to raise concerns that reliance on metrics may undermine journalists' newswork (e.g. Bunce 2017; Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc Jr. 2018).

To understand the reasoning behind the faith in metrics, Chapter 3 questioned the suitability of metrics as a guide for decision-making by reviewing the literature over the construction of trust and authority of numbers (Porter 1995). It also examined the ideological and technological context that fostered the rise of metrics. One form of metrics in television industries is ratings, a measure that entails the percentage of the population watching a television programme, commercial spot or TV channel at a specific time (Barwise and Ehrenberg 1988). Ratings is a type of metrics that is highly and publicly exposed and socially discussed (Bourdon and Méadel 2020). For this research, the differentiation between measures and metrics referred to the distinction between the data in isolation and when put into context by aggregation (Zamith 2018b). By reviewing literature that examined the path between the production of measures and the production of metrics, this chapter looked at how the further creation of rankings has led to market information regimes that rule an entire industry (Bourdon and Méadel 2011; Buzzard 2015). By drawing on Webster's (2010) differentiation between the pre- and post-digital market information regimes, I argued that there is a knowledge gap in relation to the traditional television industry's strategies to tackle competing market information regimes.

I then drew on Foucault's approach (1995a) to power and resistance in order to observe, understand, and identify the subtlest discipline techniques that have emerged from the use of metrics in the newsroom. Foucault's disciplining toolbox helped to clarify the ability of metrics and rankings to govern TV news production. Drawing on Sauder and Espeland (2009), this chapter underlined the creation of rankings and their disciplinary role, for instance, how they are routinely updated, publicly shared, and used as artefacts to set up norms of performance and achievable goals.

Chapter 4 focused on the research methods and the research design used to launch the fieldwork and address the data analysis. It also discusses the rationale and practicalities of the methodological design. This chapter explained the chosen mixed methods to operationalize the research questions, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews and mapping as primary sources of data, as well as the think-aloud technique, Twitter text analysis and document examination (daily linear analogue and digital audience reports and corporate press releases) as supplementary data collection mechanisms. This variety of methods was intended to tackle the complexity of the phenomenon studied. The methods complemented each other in order to deal with, on the one hand, the metrics' pervasiveness from uncountable scattered sources that are poured into news production and, on the other hand, the minimal insight that can be gained into newsroom culture when only analysing news content or what reporters say they do (Paterson 2008).

My immersion in a real newsroom, as well as my interaction with editors, journalists, data analysts and executives, their data and routines, was conducted through a networked ethnography with the aim of delimiting the nodes within the media conglomerate in which the metrics’ messages were re-signified. Mapping helped me to make sense of the flows of metrics by recording when and through whom and which technological devices (Hemmingway 2006) metrics arrived at the newsroom. From the networked ethnography, four observation sites emerged as critical players in re-signifying audience metrics: the traditional newsroom; the digital newsroom; the audience analysis office; and the corporate communications division. The interviews, think-aloud technique, Twitter text analysis and document review, conducted under the umbrella of ethnography, led to a combination of methods that facilitated the study of a multi-layered process of relationships between news production, professional journalistic identity, and the role played by metrics throughout.

Chapters 5 to 8 present the empirical analysis. Here I offered the evidence-based data first from a macro perspective of the structural forces that shape the metrics, then from the micro-practices carried out by the news teams and journalists. In Chapter 5, I mapped all the nodes involved in audience data circulation, which in the participant observation and the interviews emerged as the newsroom's prevalent quantified data. To examine the data flows, I divided the data ecosystem's players into four levels: data providers, data analytics providers, data decision-makers, and data disseminators. The OECD model of the global data ecosystem (2015) inspired the first three layers, to which I added the fourth layer of data disseminators to incorporate the specific feature of audience data as this is a type of data that is publicly debated (Bourdon and Méadel 2020). From the data ecosystem mapping, this chapter inferred some patterns of disciplining and resistance. Chapter 6 focused on the strategies deployed by the media conglomerate to improve its position in the rankings of TV ratings and observed how those practices related to the company's revenues. Chapter 7 discussed the newsroom workflow as it unfolded and considered how metrics infiltrate news practices. The focus of this chapter was also on how the news team dealt with the audience metrics from both the traditional market information regime and the user information regime. Lastly, Chapter 8 addressed journalistic autonomy as a cornerstone of professional identity. I argued that professional autonomy is a constructed perception reinforced by audience figures.

9.2. Key findings: seven points from the field

The main empirical findings of this thesis are summarised in the eight sections below.

a. Emergence of the data gatekeeper role

A first finding is seen in the existence of a power interplay relationship between journalists and media managers in introducing specific metrics in the newsroom and making them prevalent in news decision-making. The data ecosystem map, developed in Chapter 5, shed light on two phenomena: firstly, the direction of the flows of audience data, including the source and destination, points of data re-packaging and the media and devices that conveyed the audience metrics messages. These flows hinted at the direction of the disciplining process. Secondly, the map detected the data flows that succeeded in reaching the intended goal and those data streams that missed the target. This distinction started to bring to light what I have called the data gatekeeping process. The newsroom team put in place a process to filter some specific sets of audience metrics and to show how metrics serve as news production inputs. In charge of the newsroom leading editors' crew, the data gatekeepers' role entails disciplining the news team in a more journalistic-driven use of metrics and filtering some sets of metrics and partially resisting some managerial understandings of metrics' goals.

As seen in the empirical chapters, the media group's managers provide detailed reports daily and prepare face-to-face meetings to discuss audience figures. Those communications attempts are all focused on the people-metered audience, and the reports are elaborated in gross figures from a commercial perspective – providing clear information about audience outcome by media group, TV channel, and programme, among other factors. The news team editors pay little or no attention to these communications, find excuses for not reading the reports, or fail to attend the meetings. However, as a continuing process to convey the corporate understanding of audience metrics, the disciplining reaches the newsroom via other means. For instance, a notification of a short Twitter message, containing some specific metrics, interrupts the beginning of the news meeting every day, when the newsroom is debating what the leading news pieces of the day will be. The same content related to the audience metrics is published daily in specialised media in the television industry. The audience metrics are published in rankings of the most viewed programmes by genre or by timeslots. The audience metrics flow along routes that successfully reach the newsroom and contain the audience outcomes of all free-to-air television channels.

The elite team of editors – which assumes the data gatekeepers' role – claims to have leeway to build news programmes. Therefore, they affirm that they can include news coverage that does not catch viewers' attention but which, in the news producers' understanding, includes news that the audience must know. Nevertheless, this autonomy has its limits. Their position in the ranking and the points gained over their nearest rival defines these limits. The news programmes' ratings cannot fall and cannot lose their rank; journalistic judgment can prevail if the rankings' position remains stable or increases over time. However, it is incontestable that there is a shift in news practices and professional autonomy. Although journalism has always been concerned with the audience (Schudson 1996), today metrics are an integral part of deciding what news is; moreover, audience metrics have become the prevailing portrayal of what the public is and wants.

The preceding observations about how audience metrics are published daily corroborate Sauder and Espeland's (2009) assertions about the disciplinary power of rankings. The primary role of disciplinary power is to train habits and behaviours to obtain an enhanced subject. The television system in Spain daily produces and systematically disseminates the ratings' rankings that convey information about what must be avoided and what must be repeated. In this manner, the disciplining process to get an enhanced version acts upon the news content and format, the journalists' performance and news production practices. All of which echoes Foucault's (1995a) disciplinary techniques, relating to hierarchical observation, normalised judgement and examination.

b. The rising disciplinary power of metrics

The creation and publication of ranks serve as a method of hierarchical observation. The perfect disciplinary mechanism would make it possible to see everything all the time. However, even to watch only the content of the dozen main free-to-air TV channels would be impossible without the measuring system at work. The rankings are a mechanism that allows everyone to monitor everyone's performance systematically and "acts by means of general publicity" (Foucault 1995b:171). The television rankings are posted on social media and traditional media alike. Within the TV system, everyone knows that one's daily assessment is visible for everyone to see. Ranking's discipline works as a calculated gaze, conveying performance information and desired skills, all contained in minimal terms, in numbers and positions on a scale. It fulfils one expected feature of hierarchical surveillance mechanisms: to economise control and checking functions (1995b) through the simplicity of a ranking of programmes and TV stations. The simplicity also works through the scores assigned to every news story in the minute-by-minute report. Audience data analysts and news editors usually seek to identify those pieces of news that produce a jump or a peak in the curve described by the data of audience attention to accumulate knowledge about what deserves to be repeated.

Regarding the means of visibility, the news team is trained to seek information about audience metrics actively and to share it with the crew. Additionally, the mutual surveillance through metrics is demonstrated by some news workers who regularly review rival TV stations' audience outcomes before examining their own. Even those who are more experienced in audience metrics boast of seldom being surprised by the results, claiming to anticipate the metrics by examining the news content. I interpret these accounts as a mechanism of surveillance added to the norm of internalisation. The anticipation of the metrics is usually accompanied by the phrases "we did good" or "we did bad", which reflects the degree of deviation from the norm.

In the Foucauldian approach, assessing the degree of deviation regarding the norm is termed normalised judgement. This disciplining mechanism entails a system of punishment and reward as a sort of "small penal mechanism" (1995b:177). First and foremost, the forward or backward movement in rankings is the basic act of disciplining by reward or punishment. In addition, the triumphantly worded Twitter messages and the congratulatory messages transmitted via WhatsApp contain a range of metrics nuances. Journalists are exposed to different graduations, from the absence of messages to the triumphant Twitter messages that greet a particular niche of audience members for whom the programme was the most viewed. Each of these message variations contains a warning of norm deviation. Silence or a lack of messages happens when their audience figures fall below those of rivals. Repeated days with no messages trigger workers' anxiety and memories of when the TV channel was not viable. A tweet depicting a narrow audience lead implies a non-significant accomplishment. The ultimate aim is to correct the deviation from the norm. To do so, the rewards seek to set what is appropriate in terms of either the news content broadcast, the journalist's performance or the news production practices carried out.

The third disciplining component is examination. By means of examining, the individuality becomes visible and makes it possible to qualify, classify and punish it. Examination also introduces individuality into the field of writing, documentation and archive. In disciplining news practices, the examination process works in two directions: firstly, comparing one's news story/newscast/television channel/media group performance with a respective equal across the television market. The comparison can be made in different time frames: a day, a week, a month, a term or a year among the market players. The second direction is a historical self-examination, looking at how the audience metrics of one news product, or newscast or TV channel, evolves over time. For instance, whether a specific thematic in news content has improved or worsened its ability to grasp the audience's attention. Another example: the live shot duration of reporters informing from the field, or the broadcasting time assigned to the interviewees, should be shortened or lengthened considering the historical evolution of the audience metrics. These are examples of the continuing self-examination that triggers the daily publishing of rankings and audience metrics.

c. The competing market information regimes at work

The answer to the question of which data matters the most when producing news relates to the funding needs and expectation of profit of the media group: the preference over the audience data collected from a statistical sample of the viewers is aligned with the market information regime that guarantees the company's revenues. Newsroom editors and the media group's managers leave no room for doubt: only the people-metered audience can be considered a valid input for news production. In general, reporters and news producers agree and are concerned with the people-meter metrics. The experience of the TV station's near bankruptcy in 2011 and the fear of unemployment both seemed to facilitate support for the traditional television audience measurement system. The news team detects some metrics' issues with the user information regime that has made them rule out web metrics for assessing journalistic performance. For instance, given the continued and nondisclosed changes in Facebook's algorithms settings, Facebook metrics' lack transparency and historical credibility.

Napoli (2005) argues that the traditional television audience measurement is a natural monopoly because it can combine very high costs of entry to the market with the need for a single currency for buying and selling audiences, an essential requirement for the smooth operation of the market information regime. Furthermore, any implementation of a new market information regime can significantly alter organisations' views of market conditions and their performance within it (Kosterich and Napoli 2016). These assertions allow us to understand why media group managers and newsroom heads rule out the use of big data for television or social TV analytics for the broadcasting time's trade. However, the consumption of social media metrics in the traditional newsroom does occur, and journalists simultaneously consume both market information regimes. The research reveals that news workers deal with two depictions of audiences, each involving a different form of news consumption and its own measurement system. While there is some overlap between the two audience portrayals, when deciding who to target the news content to it is the discrepancies and not the similarities that prove troublesome.

It is worth noting that there is no consensus about credibility in any two sets of data in the newsroom. Newsroom heads validate the traditional market information regime and dismiss social media metrics, and rank-and-file journalists accept that they must produce content that fulfils the traditional market information regime's requirements. However, for many of them, the perception of being better informed about their audience comes from the metrics they obtain from Twitter rather than from people-meter data. They use the term 'real' in relation to Twitter metrics, meaning that they feel that people on Twitter are 'more real' than people-metered viewers. This makes sense since people meter data is highly abstract and aggregated, while Twitter followers have profiles, connections, send messages, and much more. The latter observation plays an important role in newsrooms. When discrepancies emerge in news assignments between journalists and editors, Twitter metrics often become a handy argument for including or omitting a story from a newscast. It is a sort of emerging new disciplinary power that challenges the power of the traditional market information regime.

This research found evidence of people-meter data resilience in the Spanish TV System amidst the big data revolution. The adoption of social media metrics as a measuring system by traditional free-to-air television has a long way to go. Internet-based metrics are unaudited and what they are measuring is debatable: whether it is simply exposure to the content or some level of attention or appreciation; whether those metrics are device-centric or user/viewer-centric (Bourdon and Méadel 2020). Also, there are questions about the extent to which internet-platforms metrics are truthfully representative of the general population compared to the sampled audience metrics, which claim to be statistically representative. However, even though social media metrics have not yet replaced the traditional television measuring system for trading audiences in the advertising markets, this does not mean that they do not exist and are at work in newsrooms, giving shape to the journalists' imagined audience.

Traditionally journalists' imagined audience is other journalists, editors, and politicians, an issue which also emerged in this research. However, in the current media environment, that engaged audience takes the form of Twitter accounts to follow and their posted opinions. A considerable difference between the sampled audience and the engaged audience of Twitter is the extent to which they are representative. Twitter followers are not representatives whereas the sample of viewers is.

Nevertheless, the voice of the engaged audience on Twitter carries increased weight compared to aggregate statistics in people-metered audience data. If editors were concerned about reaching engaged audiences, they would follow internet data (including Twitter metrics). But because their real audience is advertisers, they are focused on the people meter data – the system recognised by the advertising industry.

d. When news teams include both metrics-savvy and metrics-untrained journalists

The in-depth observation in the newsroom showed a divide in terms of gatekeeping. On the one hand, an elite group of editors is responsible for making decisions through the lenses of audience metrics. This relates to including or omitting news pieces from newscasts, allocating resources to selected news coverage, or assigning news stories broadcast time. On the other hand, the vast majority of the newsroom's journalists are almost untrained in terms of understanding metrics. The data gatekeeping editor wears two hats: they need to select civic duty-driven news; and they must include the news stories that grip the viewers' attention. Put simply: they decide what the audience must know and what the audience wants to know. These findings expand the audience-oriented journalistic role depicted by Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc Jr. (2018); while the role consists of helping the newsroom navigate the audience data, their practices are not entirely clear among the members of the newsroom. The data gatekeepers struggle to seemingly separate the commercial and journalistic sides of the news business in the eyes of the rest of the news team for the sake of journalistic autonomy. However, in the interviews, the leading team of editors pointed to the need to make the public duty of journalism compatible with the news business. The role is to conceal the metric-driven decision-making and present it as journalistic-driven.

When journalists asked editors for more specific audience metrics, the answer was usually mediated and contextualised. Access to the minute-by-minute audience reports is password-protected. Therefore, journalists can review the metrics in the presence of an editor who explains the audience outcome of a specific news story, in other words, whether the changes in audience scores are due to the newsworthiness of the story or because the rival TV station aired its commercial break at the moment the news story was broadcast. The lack of journalists' autonomous access to detailed audience reports and their only systematic exposure to gross audience figures published on media, Twitter, or through congratulatory messages sent by the bosses have several consequences. Firstly, there is a divide: on the one hand, a vast majority of journalists are untrained in reading audience metrics; on the other, an editorial elite within the newsroom control the audience data information, its access and its interpretation. Secondly, there is a sort of generalised suspicion about people-metered audience data among reporters, with misgivings regarding its source – "are they real people?" – and its use – "Are all editorial decisions made considering audience metrics?" Lastly, in an uncritical manner, some reporters tend to place their trust in social media metrics, which are free to access, always available, and ever updating from the devices they carry in their pockets.

e. The practice of audience figures inflation

The common practice of dividing TV programmes into shorter segments has one precise aim: to present an inflated version of the overall programme's rating. This practice is carried out with long-format live broadcast programmes placed in a timeslot that relies on the massive turning on of television sets – most such programmes are news or current affairs shows. Those programmes usually begin with a low volume of audience inherited by the preceding programme and increase their viewer numbers throughout the broadcast. Where the public only sees one programme, the media group informs the data provider company that the first minutes of the programme are called programme A, and the rest is programme B. In this way, the company cuts out the low audience segment and gets a better average audience figure. The problem is that publicly announced reports for the audience's metrics of segment B are published as if they are the audience of A+B. This practice is not exclusive to the studied media group. It is repeated in other TV stations in Spain, but it is barely mentioned in the literature (Bourdon and Méadel 2020). I argue that this practice's only purpose is to improve the broadcast’s status in the ranking and confirms the assertion of Sauder and Espeland (2009), who explain that the position in the ranking conveys desired skills and attitudes.

Chapter 6 discussed how the communication process of metrics is unique, conducted through social media, with the daily audience data embedded in Twitter messages that are always worded in winning terms. There is rarely an absence of messages, and when this happens, it is significant for the news team. In the Twitter messages, the corporate communications' team regularly uses superlative adjectives and chooses particular realms in which a programme is ranked as being the first of its kind. For example, it could be first in its timeslot, or among viewers over 40 years old, or with professional women. In disciplinary terms (Foucault 1995), such tweets seek to gratify and motivate the news team to continue doing what they have been congratulated for. More importantly, in setting a specific context for the winning position, the corporate message aims to set achievable goals, proposes to keep the gained status, and points out the next space to conquer. For instance, the potential achievements can progressively escalate as follows: "the leading newscast in its timeslot" (which has only two newscasts); "the leading newscast in the lunch timeslots" (among five national newscasts); or "the leading newscast of the day" (among 13 free-to-air country-wide newscasts in Spain).

I suggest that this particular form of crafting the rankings and the metrics communication process aim to set a standard about what the programmes must maintain or enhance. The disciplining process acts upon the news product, news practices and journalists’ professional performance, leading the way in what should be done or avoided in producing news. However, by inflating the metrics, the disciplining process also affects the media group, which is trapped by the practices mentioned above since the option to make the metrics more accurate and truthful would make the TV stations and programmes drop in their position in the rankings and thus lose the prestige of having the skills associated with the rank.

I uphold that the originally intended sampled and statistically representative audience data is perverted in the audience metrics re-packaging process. Data can be exploited for ideological and ulterior motives. The data re-signifying process aims to induce or discipline certain newsroom behaviours. I identified three target areas of disciplining: producing more engaging news content, concerning the theme and format of the news; that the journalists develop attitudes capable of raising interest and confidence from the audience; and highlighting and consolidating those news production practices that make the best news selection and get the best audience outcome by strategically placing the news throughout the newscast.

f. Not one but three newsrooms

The findings in this thesis confirm a rethink is needed about what the newsroom is. While officially the studied television channel has one space called the newsroom, in reality, it has three different spaces devoted to producing news and news workers’ coordination: (1) the traditional in-person newsroom – an open space with desks, chairs and computers; (2) the digital newsroom – an isle of workstations arranged in an open space separated from the traditional newsroom but working with content produced by people in the physical newsroom in order to disseminate it online; and (3) the virtual newsroom – found in chat groups created over the WhatsApp messenger application, which members of the virtual newsroom staff can access through an internet-connected device and only if they are invited by the administrators of each chat room. The virtual newsroom is the primary place of journalistic discussion without the constraints of time and place. Due to the location of Atresmedia premises in the Madrid outskirts, many journalists rarely go to the in-person newsroom and work remotely from the Parliament, La Moncloa government buildings, the political parties' headquarters, or the Courts of Justice. Therefore, the virtual newsroom is the space in which the news content takes shape. WhatsApp groups and person-to-person backchannels are the communication links for news assignment, resource allocation, news stories' focus discussion, and exchanges to set the news package length and broadcasting schedule. Communication through groups prevails over the person-to-person mode. The news team believes journalistic coordination is more manageable if everyone knows everyone else's news assignments. For instance, if two journalists share a camera team, everyone finds out simultaneously via chat group; or when two news stories overlap, the WhatsApp group is used to discuss who will use what audiovisual material in their piece of news. When discrepancies emerge, then usually the discussion relocates to a person-to-person backchannel.

Harvey’s (2019) conceptualisation of relative space shows how metrics play a role in delimiting the newsroom by moving members of the group closer or setting some of them aside. The traditional newsroom's heads have total contempt for how La Sexta's digital newsroom produces click-driven journalism on social networks by posting content produced by the traditional newsroom. La Sexta digital's use of metrics and its consequent stand towards news are the reasons why the internet team is not incorporated into the physical newsroom or invited into the WhatsApp chat groups. Both newsrooms coexist in the same building, however, La Sexta digital's journalists do not have access to the newsroom culture. On the contrary, distance is not an issue for the traditional newsroom. Through the WhatsApp chat rooms, correspondents in Brussels, London or Paris, or those working all over Spain, come closer, in relative terms, to the newsroom culture compared to La Sexta’s digital team.

The activity inside the WhatsApp chat is also highly mediated by metrics. They are used for coordination and newsgathering processes. Every journalist receives an overwhelming number of notifications every hour, adding urgency to their communications tasks. The newsroom datafication can only be understood separately from broader digital environments that are increasingly critical for newswork. It is also worth noting the range of phenomena involved in chat communications through WhatsApp. There is a shift in power relationships that can be summarized in the surpassing of the boundaries of the newsroom's beat subsectors or of each programme. Anyone who posts a message on WhatsApp becomes visible for everyone, no matter their position in the hierarchy. This also allows rank-and-file journalists to access their bosses' preferences, which can be challenging to obtain in the physical newsroom.

g. Journalistic autonomy as a constructed perception

Whereas autonomy is conceived as a cornerstone of the professional identity of journalists (McDevitt, Gassaway, and Perez 2002; Deuze 2005) and acknowledging that journalistic autonomy is a subjective construct that resides in journalists' perceptions (Reich and Hanitzsch 2013), this thesis observed how social construction of the professional autonomy's perception takes shape in La Sexta's newsroom culture.

Schudson (2005) states that journalistic occupational autonomy to judge what can be considered news is a shared collective perception rather than a notion of personal autonomy. Hallin and Mancini (2004) add that journalists claim autonomy against political and market forces. The evidence collected in this investigation confirms these arguments and suggests that the collective perception of autonomy is systematically constructed. Likewise, I argue that metrics partly underpins the notion of newsroom professional autonomy.

When I asked journalists what factors supported their sense of autonomy, a repeated answer suggested that the proof of a job well done is the support gleaned from the people-metered audience, despite being punished by the right-wing government due to La Sexta's audience coverage of the ruling party's corruption trial or because of the screen time given to unconventional left-wing political parties. Journalists also commented that the audience supports their job despite La Sexta's limited resources or lack of budget. Both arguments proved to be myths.

Notable about these shared beliefs is that myths can still have concrete social consequences. In this case, the myths support any possible audience outcome. If metrics report insufficient audience engagement, the explanation will be the lack of budget or the political power of punitive measures. Otherwise, if metrics report a good audience outcome in the face of myths around the hostile scenario, the explanation will fuel the sense of achievement and reinforce confidence in practising independent journalism. In sum, myths indeed support any metric scenario; notwithstanding, I can conclude that it is metrics that ultimate tip the balance in creating or damaging the perception of a robust journalistic professional autonomy.

h. Journalism precarity and metrics

The data reveals that a strong sense of professional autonomy, commitment to social duty, and the emotional boost of metrics are tightly related. Both people-metered and social media metrics underpin a form of affective labour (Hardt and Negri 2004). Editors and the media group are committed to boosting the well-being of good metrics and avoiding the emotional effects of poor metrics among journalists. These efforts are focused on people-metered data. The benefits of these efforts are always rendered in profitability by the well-known audience commodity sold to advertisers. Secondly, the sense of satisfaction expressed by newsmakers towards audience metrics gives them a notion of a work's value that might not be fully paid (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). If that is the case, the capital would be generating profits by seizing and commodifying the not entirely paid media work (Siapera 2019).

9.3. Relevance of this thesis: the metrics’ efficacy in protecting an elitist club

Although this study is about television news production in a Spanish context, its findings are relevant to other empirical contexts, particularly in TV news production in Southern Europe and Spanish-speaking countries (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos 2002; Hallin and Mancini 2004). Its insights can also serve to explore other quantified and datafied fields of cultural production, such as academic publications, radio media work, or cinema production.

While journalism studies have been concerned with the lure of metrics in the last decade, its interest has focused on internet-based metrics. The present work has concentrated on an under-researched area of metrics in journalism, which refers to the coexistence of two market information regimes. Andrews and Napoli (2006) were pioneers in analysing the transition from one market information regime to another in the book publishing industry. However, the television industry involves a different and more complex phenomenon, such as the coexistence of two measuring systems. This thesis has explored the consequences of the aforementioned coexistence. Simply, having two audience measuring systems provides radically different portraits of audience preferences which news producers are compelled to deal with. Cohabitation also debilitates the disciplining power of statistics and rankings by opening the door to alternative measures of the audience.

This research probed the resilience of the people metered audiences in the Spanish TV system. It also acknowledged the pervasive ever-updating real-time feed of social media audience metrics. The continued prevalence of traditional audience metrics is linked to the stickiness between traditional television and advertisers. One wonders what would happen if the advertising focuses shifted in Spain. To date, Spanish TV media is bound up in a process it cannot stop – audience fragmentation and the effectiveness of advertising on internet-based media. Amidst this storm, the Spanish linear TV industry is locked into its measuring system as the tool for revenue distribution. Thus, the television audience measuring system looks like a private club: exclusive members decide who can access the measuring system and what and how it is measured.

In this scenario, the present research paid close attention to metrics and their emergence as a new disciplinary framework (Foucault 1995a). Drawing on the sociology of quantification, I suggest that it is meaningful to research metrics as mediation (Powell 2019) as long as it deals with not only how and what data are collected and measured, but additionally, what the processes of metrics re-packaging and resignification mean as production inputs, particularly in cultural industries.

Journalism studies and digital journalism studies have focused on big data's totalitarian power and aggregated metrics. From a Foucauldian perspective, this research calls attention to the power wielded by metrics, but more significantly, where power is wielded – no matter how totalitarian – hints of resistance emerge. This research provides evidence on how the newsroom culture developed practices of metrics resistance and the limits of these practices. The thesis should also be read from media management studies to understand that the ruling of metrics also constrains managerial decisions. Among the downsides of the extensive use of metrics is job precarity. The research reveals the fragile balance between disciplining through metrics, encouraging journalistic autonomy, and building cultural and economic capital.

9.4. Potential future research

Despite news media navigation in stormy times – facing the end of mass audiences due to their unremitting fragmentation and the triumphant advance of internet-based advertising – the Spanish TV news industry aims to find ways to offer targeted, loyal audiences to specific advertisers. Notably, they have shifted their focus to products that have difficulty selling on the internet and imply lasting investment, such as insurance, real estate, or loans – the advertising industry continues to be their primary funding model. The advertising system has spent decades cultivating media dependency for its funding (Turow 2005), and old habits die hard. Media managers will increasingly push to rely on specific sets of metrics that have historically assured the continuation of revenues. To achieve this, content producers will undergo training, and there will be a development of more sophisticated disciplining techniques.

In terms of the research avenues that this study has opened, metrics and journalism will continue to be a challenging field of research. There are two areas in which I think this research could further develop: (1) individual online traffic targets for journalists in reputational media; (2) news conception amongst different information market regimes.

The first area is a reality that is taking shape beyond the clickbait culture in news media. In 2015, the former British Trinity Mirror media group (now Reach plc) set individual online traffic targets for journalists for one of its regional newspapers with the suggestion that reaching the targets would be rewarded (Higgerson 2016), but this was later retracted (Greenslade 2016). In 2021, also in the UK, a report announced that the Daily Telegraph would link journalists' salaries with their articles' popularity (Bland 2021). The performance assessment would be measured by how many clicks journalists received or how many subscribers their articles drove (2021). This would take the discussion of job precarity to a new level. By linking salary to metrics, how could the media industry fully pay journalists for newswork and, at the same time, become profitable?

Another three media firms, who claim to be driven by journalistic logic, have each put in place their own data analytics system: "Ophan" in *The Guardian* (Edge 2014), "Stela" in *The New York Times* (Zhang 2018) and "RFV" in the *Financial Times* (Georgieva 2020). These three globally distributed newspapers do not subscribe to the policy of linking journalists' income to their articles' popularity. However, it is worth asking how they prevent their journalists' engaging with the mesmerising effect of readership data, as well as taking into account that these metric systems determine the visibility of articles and can ultimately shape the news agenda.

Recently, clickbait journalism has received media scholars' interest (see, for instance, Christin 2018; Karaca 2019; Mukherjee, Dutta, and Mani 2019). However, the encounter between individual online metric targets and reputational journalism is a new research field. Anderson (2009) argues that occupational authority lies in the claim that the professional community embodies unique expertise through work – the primary work of reporting in the case of journalists. In this research, drawing from Abbott's (1988) work on professions, I found evidence that reporters express their unique expertise by providing a significative asymmetry of information. Interestingly, both perspectives point to how metrics restricts the authority to decide what news is. One could also ask whether such practices also lead to conformity or silencing on controversial topics.

A second area of research refers to the audio-visual media left out of traditional measuring systems. It concerns media that choose not to participate in the market information regime that assesses traditional television. Mentioned several times throughout the fieldwork, these are media that produce news but expect content consumption in the long-tail model; that is to say, such media expect that their content grabs the attention of a large volume of the audience not in the specific moment of its broadcasting (as linear media does), but rather over a longer period of time (Anderson 2010). Therefore, the news topics of those media are not obsessed with news contingency or with extreme up-to-date news. Among these media are: Vice News, an audiovisual company that promotes itself as concerned with the under-reported stories[80]; VoxMedia[81] and Mashable.[82] These companies produce news and deliver content through their websites or YouTube. It would be interesting to compare audiovisual media that are ruled by different market information regimes, the differences and similarities in their conception of news, or the understanding of journalistic autonomy and professional authority.

As observed above, the end point of the research I conducted over four years, with a deep immersion in the field and a theoretical awareness of the interrelation between audience, metrics and journalism, is also a point of departure for investigative efforts that might take steps further, beyond this research's conclusions. This can be done as part of a timely discussion around what journalism is and can be, what being a journalist implies, and ultimately about what the chances are for journalism to contribute to values usually attached to its practice, like freedom, democracy, and autonomy (Vos 2018). This might be a formidable task, but it is definitely one that is worth pursuing.

9.5. Final remarks: funding resources, metrics and future of journalism

Anderson, Bell and Shirky (2015) suggest that it is a false dichotomy to discuss whether the news should be self-funded or subsidised, no matter whether their ownership pattern is public or private. The news industry has always been subsidised, they add, directly or indirectly, by public grants, political parties, private contributions or through advertising: "Good journalism has always been subsidised; markets have never supplied as much news as democracy demands" (2015:36). In commercial television, Turow (2005) describes the relationship between the news and advertising as a bond of resource dependency. He explains that in the context of a struggle for scarce resources, organisations are compelled to leverage others' resources for their own benefit, avoiding, in turn, any dependence but instead making the others dependent on themselves (2005). Although that long-standing bond between media and advertisers is in a process of decline, in the TV news industry studied here, managers seemed to believe that they maintain a comparative advantage in providing a meeting point between goods and customers. As I was told during the

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[80] *https://viceguideto.vice.com/*
[81] *https://corp.voxmedia.com/*
[82] *https://mashable.com/?europe=true*

fieldwork, television has built a more loyal audience than internet platforms, supported by credible and systematically collected historical audience data.

For commercial or some public television, the internet and unicast technology has opened the door for paywalled streaming service alternatives, a funding system which was previously reserved for cable networks. In the US in 2020, each viewer averaged 3.4 streaming service subscriptions, and only one newspaper subscription (Hill 2020). This scenario could be promising for video streaming given that in 2021 there are more subscriptions to video streaming services than there are people in the US (Holleran 2021) and the Covid-19 pandemic has created a huge appetite for more subscribers in Europe. The paywall system has successfully been adopted by OTT[83] streaming services but has shown less sustainable results for the news industry. People subscribe massively to film/series providers such as Netflix which have no news content. Among those streaming services that also include news services, they are usually add-ons rather than the primary products of consumption (Ampere Analysis 2019). Therefore, although there must be geographical differences between countries, there is a belief that people are inclined to pay for entertainment streaming but not for news.

As shown in this thesis, Spain's commercial television industry is engaged in finding a new business model, exploring both funding paths mentioned above: one which proposes to produce selective niche audiences supported by big data; in parallel, as other companies have done, Atresmedia has initiated a risky path of developing a paywalled streaming platform that was on track to make at least €22 million in 2020, with an audience of 452,000 paid subscribers and 9 million registered users (Atresmedia 2021).

Video streaming services are focused on the business of big data and can easily collect data from elite groups. Moreover, enclosed media platforms allow the collection, storage and mining of data as practiced by Google, Facebook and Twitter. Therefore, the subscription or accurate niche audience-targeted content production, media, and news media business is due to be trifold product-focused: content, audience, and data. With no content, there is no audience, and with no audience, there is no data, thus the prospective news business and journalism environment is likely to become even more metrics-dependant.

Data illiteracy is no longer an option in the journalistic field, and neither is data invisibility. As posited by Cheney-Lippold (2017), currently, those who reject being measured or remain offline are condemned to not exist in the digital presence of

[83] *OTT or Over-The-Top media services refers to television and film delivery systems streaming by the internet on a one-by-one basis, such as Netflix, YouTube, HBO and others (Telestream 2021). OTT also includes video communication services and video gaming (Bilbil 2018).*

identities. There is a sort of big data public domain in which every participant and every subject of interest must be exactly measured to be entitled to participate. These conditions would be those needed to reach the realm for public debate and make them equals. But instead of being located between the remit of the state and the economic dictates of the marketplace, metrics cause the participants and the debate topics to be visible and directly ruled by the state and the marketplace. Meanwhile, being untrained in terms of data remains a disadvantage in the face of those who wield governance power (Ruppert, Isin, and Bigo 2017). Data illiteracy makes news workers unaware of what is involved when they are provided with deep data support for their performance, with a promise of enhancing skills and productivity (Zuboff and Maxmin 2004). Training in understanding the benefits and disadvantages of using metrics in decision making can help journalists realise when their professional autonomy is at stake. This is a good time to draw attention to the dark forces at work on ever-connected tracking devices that people carry in their pockets without realising that the data collected is put up for sale, in what Zuboff (2019) calls "behavioural futures markets", in other words, data as a commodity which is bought by agents interested in behavioural modifications.

Therefore, ever-growing data dependence will place journalism into a feedback loop. First, everything continue to be meticulously quantified: audience behaviour, journalistic work, and individual professional performance. But the loop will be completed when the journalistic work involves digesting data from selected audience members who are led to a specific frame of mind. In the case of news content, the audience is, at a first level, quantified as usual – by gender, age, purchasing power, level of education. On a second level, they are valued as viewers and define at dramatically more fine-grained, for instance, the degree of agreement with politics or religion, openness to risk, tendency to enjoy or cut leisure time or attitudes towards technology, information or entertainment. In sum, each one is placed on categories for everything.

Building trust is a field that matters when practicing journalism. Journalistic credibility is at stake when the newswork serves for mining data from their audience. There will come a time when journalists must take a stance and publicly declare who is involved in participating in which behavioural market and to what extent. It will be a decisive moment for creating trust and generating sustainable media.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview guide

INTRODUCTION

- Project overview and research aim.
- Information regarding the interview's approach, organisation, and length.
- Detailed explanation concerning conditions of anonymity: how the participants were to be rendered unidentifiable and why it would not be possible to do the same with the company.
- Participants were asked to record their consent besides signing it.

	To Whom the question was addressed		
	Journalists	**Data analysts**	**Media executives**
Topic 1: News production workflow *Goal: Understanding the professional job's place in journalist life, their perceptions of the workplace and context of the journalist's work*			
○ Describe your work background experience. For how long you have been a journalist, for how long in this TV channel.	✅	✅	✅
○ Describe your daily workflow. What sequence of tasks are you required to perform?	✅	✅	✅
○ Who are the people in the newsroom and the media group involved in your daily news production? What are their specific roles?	✅		
○ Where do your news reports ideas come from?	✅		
○ What media sources do you use to get informed? Do you have a preferred reviewing sequence?	✅		
○ What is the role played by social media in your daily job?	✅		
○ What social media applications do you use actively in your work?	✅		
○ Which of these apps are most advantageous to perform your job? Which tasks each of them are best suited for and why?	✅		
First Talk aloud segment *Goal: Observing and understanding step by step the use of mobile apps in their devices, with their regular layout*			

○ Can you review Twitter as you do daily for your work in your mobile phone and express aloud every step of the process?	✅		
○ Can you review together with me your WhatsApp work-related conversations from the last hours? To whom and what kind of information do you exchange through WhatsApp?	✅		

TOPIC 2: DATA AWARENESS

Goal: Detection and identifying the data awareness and data usage in the news production processes

○ What sort of numerical information do you receive throughout your working day?	✅	✅	✅
○ How do you get to know the data daily? Do you receive or search for the data?	✅	✅	✅
○ What data matters the most for news production?	✅	✅	✅
○ At what moment of your working day do you get to know the audience data?	✅	✅	✅
○ What are the uses of data (or should be its uses) in the journalistic job?	✅		✅
○ What do you look at in the audience data reports? What is the sequence that you follow while reviewing the data?	✅	✅	✅
○ What information do you get from the data?	✅	✅	✅
○ How did learn how to use audience data? Did you have any formal training?	✅		
○ What audience app do you have on your mobile?	✅	✅	✅

SECOND TALK ALOUD SEGMENT

Goal: Observing the interaction with Twitter with no visible quantification

○ We already saw how you work on Twitter on your mobile phone. I want to observe between mobile and computer use. Can you repeat your Twitter practices by login into your Twitter account on my computer for some minutes?	✅		
○ If the participant detected the absence of numbers: what do you make of this lack of numbers?	✅		

TOPIC 3: SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND ITS METRICS

Goal: Observing social media metrics grabbing attention

○ How many followers do you (programme/TV station) have? Do you know how many followers your colleagues have or who has the highest number of followers?	✅	✅	✅
○ Which one of your Twitter posts had the longest-lasting circulation in social media, or has worked better? Why do you think it had that effect?	✅		
○ What Twitter users' activity do you care about the most? (comments, retweets, likes?) Why?	✅	✅	✅
○ To what Twitter metrics do you pay attention? Why?	✅	✅	✅
○ How do you decide what to tweet about?	✅		

○ What are the differences, regarding the topic or the tone, between your news reports and your tweets?	✅		
○ In what metrics do you rely the most upon? Television audience metrics or social media metrics? Why?	✅	✅	✅
○ What have you learned from the news stories that work differently on television and social media? What do you make of those differences?	✅		

TOPIC 3: JOURNALISTIC IDENTITY AND AUTONOMY

Goal: Understanding how journalist building their professional identity and autonomy

○ What do you think the most important aspects of journalism are?	✅		✅
○ What are the most important values of a news story to get it broadcasted at La Sexta news programmes?	✅		✅
○ What does mean objective journalism for you?	✅		✅
○ What differentiates the journalism practised at La Sexta from the other TV Stations?	✅	✅	✅
○ What degree of autonomy do you and your colleagues enjoy doing journalism at La Sexta?	✅		✅
○ What makes you feel that you practice independent journalism?	✅		✅

CLOSING QUESTION

○ Is there any reflection on the usage of metrics by news teams in general, anything I might not have thought of asking you and that you would like to add?	✅	✅	✅

CONCLUSION

- Expressed my gratitude for their participation.
- Reiterated the importance and conditions of data anonymity.
- Provided interviewees with my contact information and reminded them that they could contact me at any time.
- Perspective on the next steps in my research.

Appendix B: Coding frames

Code System and Working Definitions for the Analysis of Interviews and Fieldnotes

Category	Code	Constituent sub-code	Codebook definition
Institutional Policies			Mentions of top-down decision-making “we have been told that…”
	Business power interplay		Rivalry mentions between TV stations, lobbying practices and identifying partnerships of equal standing
		Spanish TV System power interplay	Comments that link journalistic performances with both state and market regulations
		Atresmedia power interplay	Mentions that link newsroom practices with policies dictated by media group executives, such as commitment to audience outcome or ideas about the typical viewer
	Business-driven audience metrics		Mentions of uses for metrics that are commercially minded
		For pursuing predictable results	Mentions of policies or instructions given to the newsroom from managerial echelons regarding how to get the best metrics
		Metrics as an indicator of editorial success	Remarks that associate high scores in audience data with high quality journalism
	Audience data delivery policies		Mentions of organisational practices for audience data delivery
		Protocols for audience data delivery	Mentions of scheduled reports regarding both audimeter metrics and social media metrics
		Metrics meaning formation	Mentions of agents that work out an explanation of the metrics
News team practices			Remarks about practices carried out within the newsroom regarding news production and audience engagement
	News production workflow		Practices involving news generation
		News assignment/gathering	Comments made during news selection and collection that involved mentioning metrics to help tip the balance in that decision
		→ Through aggregation	Considering the metrics variable to select a news story that was not initially reported by the media, instead, other media outlets already published it, and it is repackaged, summarised, combined or reorganised

↳ Resources' allocation	When a story is assigned to a skilled storytelling reporter, it ensures a full-day camera team, transport, and news producer support because of its expected performance in terms of audience metrics
News packaging	The practices carried out after the news collection to build the news product and get it ready to be broadcast. These practices involved choosing storytelling mode, writing the script, selecting sections of the interviews and footage, and the video editing process.
↳ Choosing format	Choosing to tell a story as live or recorded broadcast, as interview or news package, with moving images or graphics – these decisions are made mentioning audience engagement priorities
↳ Expressing relevance	Mention of practices to make the relevant news pieces according to newsmakers also seem more salient to the audience
↳ Hammocking strategies	Comments revealing the purpose of cushioning or protecting content that is less engaging in audience metrics terms
↳ Reiterations	Multiple iterations despite the non-existence of new data. It can be within the same programme or in successive days just because the news topic generates a good audience response, is interpreted from metrics
News delivery	The device, platform or social media app selected for releasing news content
↳ Each outlet has different content	Whether journalists make any remark of conscious choice about what content, with what format, and what outlet for releasing their news content
↳ Social media interaction	Mentions of interaction as an added journalistic task and whether it relates to audience engagement and metrics
↳ Social media discomfort	Mentions of unpleasantness with social media's hostile response to journalists, and concern with metrics addiction
↳ Choosing audience	Whether journalists report differences between the audience portrayed by traditional TV metrics

			and the audience depicted by social media metrics
	Uses of audience metrics		Remarks indicating the purpose metrics serve
		Data-driven news selection	Mentions concerning social media trends or previous audimeter data outcomes when deciding what story, how to report it (resources allocation and news format) and when to broadcast it
		Resisting metrics	Comments in news decision making that emphasise the need to inform in spite of knowing the story will report low audience scores: “We must report this…”
	Newsroom interplay of powers		All mentions of hierarchical decision-making within the newsroom
		Audience metrics reviewing as hierarchy duty	Any remark that it is not their duty to study and analyse the audience reports. It is a task for others. Also, the mentions that identify those responsible for the task
		Eluding gatekeeping	Strategies mentioned regarding getting access to the audience metrics or arguing favouring a news story despite its predicted poor performance in audience metrics
Professional identity			Mentions regarding knowledge, skills and values that empower the journalists as professionals
	Attitudes towards metrics		Comments that reveal a settled way of thinking or feeling about metrics insertion in the newsroom
		Getting metrics access	Mentions of passive or active ways to find out audience metrics. Whether journalists are keen to share audience’s metrics reports or not
		Pursuing my audience's metrics	Whether journalists express interest in knowing their or their news product’s performance in audience metrics terms
		Audience engagement mindset	The extent to which the journalists' discourse expresses the usefulness of the metrics as enhancing their professional performance
	News Values		The main criteria mentioned to select a story and turn it into a news product in the context of La Sexta's newsroom culture
		Timeliness	Mentions which demonstrate that events that have only just happened, are ongoing, or are

		about to happen are the most newsworthy
	Relevance	Comments regarding the choosing of a story and publishing it because it matters to the members of the audience
	Pluralism-inclusiveness	The degree to which journalists consider relevant the inclusion of diverse voices in the news, regarding political, cultural and geographical viewpoints
	Visual quality	Comments that highlight the need for appealing images to engage audiences with news consumption. This code also includes mentions regarding the preferences of visuals events over more abstract stories
Journalistic autonomy		Those mentions which refer to external or internal forces that pressure, constrain, or free their journalistic decision-making
	Feeling of precariousness	Remarks related to both labour conditions and resource scarcity to carry out their job satisfactorily
	Autonomy backed by the company	Mentions of how the media company has endured the political and commercial consequences of La Sexta's freedom to report
	Commercial constraints	Comments regarding the need to care for the firm's commercial interests and the newsroom strategies to deal with a news report that affects the advertising
	Team autonomy	Involving the team as a whole to practice professional independence instead of individual professional autonomy
	Metrics as a reward currency	Positive or negative expressions over the feelings stirred by the daily release of metrics. The degree to which journalists relate metrics outcomes with an assessment of their journalistic performance

Coding Framework for the Analysis of Twitter Messages

Identification variables

Type of content

- Release of audience metrics
- Programme promotion

Type of genre

- Newscasts
- Entertainment programmes

Category	Code	Codebook definition
Tweet tone		Looks at the kind of wording used to write the messages
	Congratulatory	Whether the message includes flattering vocabulary with an identified recipient
	Informative	The message is neutral, with no flattering terms
Tweet elements		How the message is formed
	Use of superlatives	Detects the use of adjectives and adverbs to build an exaggerated message of praise
	People tagged	Detail of the persons from the team tagged in the message
	Scoring notation	Whether the message involves different forms of quantification: percentages, net numbers, or places in a ranking
	Achievement framed	The praise worded in the message refers to a specific viewing timeslot or category of viewers shown by gender, age, localisation, or purchasing power
	Repeating the content	Whether the same content is contained in more than one tweet
Tweets protocols		Involves tweet posting patterns
	Releasing schedule	Considers whether the tweets are released following a daily timetable
	Releasing order	Seeks order release pattern: what TV channels, programme genres came first every day

Appendix C: Informed consent form sample [84]

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Please consider this information carefully before deciding to participate in this research.

What is this project about? The core aim of this study is to understand the role played by digital media and its feedback throughout the news production processes.

Why am I doing it? This research is part of my PhD studies in Media and Communications at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Who is funding it? It is funded by myself as part of my PhD studies.

Why am I asking you to participate? I need to understand the new journalistic practices in the light of digital development, and the only way to do this is to speak to people about their experiences, as well as participate in the everyday life of the newsroom, or at their workplace.

What you will do in this research? I would like to speak to you for an hour. I would also like to participate in some meetings or other events at which you will be present. During those activities, you can withdraw at any time, without any need to explain, nor will this have any consequences for you. Your data will be anonymous in the reports of this research. You will not be paid for participating in this project.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact ***Silvia Carrasco*** (scarr012@gold.ac.uk; mobile: +44 7804 666 979)

I,____, accept to participate voluntarily in the research.

____________________ ____________________

Participant signature Date

____

Please add your email address here, if you are willing to view my final work.

Appendix D: Research Ethics application (Approved)

Department of Media & Communications PhD Research Ethical Approval Form CONFIDENTIAL

84 The sample is a translated form. The original consent signed by the participants is in Spanish.

GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE University of London Department of Media & Communications Research Ethics Committee

NAME OF APPLICANT: Silvia CARRASCO ARANCIBIA
Title of undergraduate/PhD/MA Thesis: NEWS PRACTICES IN THE AGE OF METRIC POWER

This form should be completed in typescript and returned to Tim Crook, the Departmental Research Ethics officer. All students should have read the BSA guidelines on ethics (or equivalent ones, such as the AAA or ASA) and the ESRC Research Ethics Framework document. After your form has been signed and approved by your supervisor and submitted if you do not hear anything for a fortnight, you can assume that no issues arising require addressing and you can proceed with your research.

1. **Title of proposed project:**
NEWS PRACTICES IN THE AGE OF METRIC POWER. An ethnographic study of

everyday newswork in a Spanish media

2. **Brief outline of the project, including its purpose:**

The traditional news delivery model of the news media has been shaken by the crowdsourced recommendation systems of social media. Newsmakers are progressively being challenged in their power to decide what news is and through which channels the news stories are distributed.

They have also been stripped of their role as the first point at which consumer goods become known to the consumers.

In this scenario, media have sought to take advantage of the ever-increasing availability of data to produce tailored news contents in order to recover their traditional model of business based on the dependency on the advertising industry.

The aim of this research is to examine the consequences of the rise of metrics in what it means to be a professional journalist. Moreover, it has the objective of outlining what counts as data in the newsroom culture, as well as what it is the role of quantification in journalistic practices, the circulation of metrics in the newsroom and to what degree quantification is rendering new inputs in news production. It also examines how journalists are perceiving their role and how they should do things in the age of metric power.

3. **Description of Methods of Data Collection:**

A set of research methods will be deployed to collect data, namely: Newsroom ethnography, that is to say, a nine-month multi-sited participant observation in three different spaces inside a news media; in-depth elite interviewing, combined with the employment of the think aloud method to understand journalists' interaction with social media and data feedback, and the mapping of data circulation between the three sites.

1

If the research involves human participants (whether living or recently deceased) or animal subjects, please continue. If the research involves historical, textual or aesthetic data or secondary data already in the public realm and does not directly involve the observation or direct engagement with human or animal participants, then please jump to Question 19.

4. **Specify the number of and type of participant(s) likely to be involved.**

While I do not have the exact numbers, according to my experience, the audience department has around 6 or 8 analysts. Each newsroom comprises over one hundred people. Notwithstanding, the focus of the observation will be journalists and editors (both content editors and broadcast editors), as well the top level of the news decision makers, namely, the editors in chief and news directors. I estimate that there are around 80 people in both newsrooms who could potentially be interviewed.

5. **State where the data collection will be undertaken.**

The Spanish media conglomerate Atresmedia will be the case study for this research due to its declared business model of producing tailored contents for ideological niche audiences. The multi-sited participant observation has the purpose of involving three groups within the company, namely Atresmedia's audience department and two of the newsrooms of the nationwide TV networks, "Antena 3 Noticias" and "La Sexta Noticias".

6. **State the potential adverse consequences to the participant(s), or particular groups of people, if any, and what precautions are to be taken.**

Gaining access to the newsroom is not an easy task. Their members perceive the newsroom as an intimate space in which they are free and confident to discuss and exchange ideas, before the final news packaging and delivery. To that end, I am in the process of building trust. Throughout the ethnographic study, it is possible that I will be asked to leave the room at moments of strain or crucial decision making. I should be aware of those moments, in order to avoid betraying their trust, as well as capture the inputs that matter for the research.

The main concern for any journalist is to see their credibility undermined. This could occur for instance, by describing their performance as one in which the news decision is based on the ability of the topic to grasp the attention of the audience, rather than on its public interest. For this reason, my commitment will be to anonymize every interviewee

office.

There may be a second level of concern with regards to the company and its business model developed from the use of big data. This must be discussed in detail with the executives, because the Spanish television market is a duopoly, therefore it is not possible to anonymise the company. This must be made clear from the beginning.

7. **State any procedures which may cause discomfort, distress or harm to the participant(s), or particular groups of people, and the degree of discomfort or distress likely to be entailed.**

2

There is no procedure that could harm any participant. However, the think aloud interview method can create discomfort to the extent that the newsmaker might start to verbalise some professional tricks that they are ultimately not willing to share. It is a method that attempts to gain access to unstructured thought. In order to mitigate the discomfort, it must be made clear to the participants that they can withdraw or suspend their involvement in the research or the interview at any time. Also, they can change their mind with regards to the data collected and its use.

8. **State how the participant(s) will be recruited. (Please attach copies of any recruiting materials if used).**

The participants will be employees from each newsroom and from the audience department. They will be asked for their individual permission to be observed and interviewed.

The recruitment process will aim to obtain professionals from each stage of the newscast production, those who are involved in news gathering, the news assignment, the news packaging, the rundown design and the broadcasting.

Concerning the audience department, it is a clearly-defined, small work team, hence the recruitment will probably involve all the individuals of that department.

9. **State if the participant(s) will be paid, and if so, provide details and state reasons for payment.**

The participants will not be paid.

10. **State the manner in which the participant(s) consent will be obtained (if written, please include a copy of the intended consent form).**

10a. Will the participant(s) be fully informed about the nature of the project and of what they will be required to do?

The news company will be fully informed of the nature of the project and the stages of the research, furthermore, this determines my ability to gain access to it. The participants will be informed at the time their permission is requested..

10b. Is there any deception involved?

This research is planned in such a way that no deception is involved. I will pay close attention so as to identify if any likelihood of deception arises during the course of the ethnographical study.

10c. Will the participant(s) be told they can withdraw from participation at any time, if they wish?

Most certainly. Everyone will be informed from the beginning that they can withdraw from participation at any moment or stage of the research process. It will be stated in the consent form.

10d. Will data be treated confidentially regarding personal information, and what will the participant(s) be told about this?

As stated earlier, the names of the individuals will be anonymised. But in addition, each participant will be asked for their authorisation for the use of the data collected. This includes

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asking them whether or not they agree to be directly quoted, whether their professional position can be disclosed, or whether it should instead be given a general label in order to differentiate levels of responsibility or the type of journalism they practice.

10e. If the participant(s) are young persons under the age of 18 years or 'vulnerable persons' (e.g. with learning difficulties or with severe cognitive disability), how will consent begiven(i.e.fromtheparticipantthemselvesorfromathirdpartysuchas a parent or guardian) and how will assent to the research be asked for?

No person under the age of 18 and no vulnerable person will be taking part in the research.

11. **Will the data be confidential?**
Yes, it will be. As long as I commit to keeping the participants anonymous, the data cannot

be disclosed.

11a. Will the data be anonymous

As stated earlier, yes it will.

11b. How will the data remain confidential? Please explain any training you will be obtaining or steps you will be taking to anonymise and/or embargo sensitive data, or coding data that you intend to share in terms of open access.

I will store and sort the data myself. Each participant will be coded in terms of their identity with labels related to their position – if they agree to this – and the newsroom to which they belong. I will check all their quotations and shall discard all those which could help to identify the author. No names or identities will be shared before, during, or after the research.

11c. How long will the data be stored? [It is recommended that it is retained for a minimum of 5 years and maximum of 10 years in order to defend your research findings following publication by PhD thesis and further academic or media publication.] And how will it be eventually destroyed?

The data will be stored in hard drives with a respective clone. Those hard drives will remain under my care for the time recommended.

11d. How will you ensure that your date is stored 'ethically and safely'?

That is the purpose of having a clone. No one else can access the data,.

11e. Will you be storing your data with the College's data repository system?

No, I will not. I have experience collecting, storing and sorting data, therefore, I will make use of my own resources.

11f. Explain the steps you will be taking to establish a meta data record is created, disclosing what data is being generated, an indication as to where it is stored, and providing an oversight of all the research being done at Goldsmiths, and for reporting purposes to your funder(s) if relevant.

There is no funder involved. I will ask for references in order to allow the oversight of my research without disclosing the identities of the participants. At a preliminary stage, a coding system will be shared with my supervisor and will be stated in the thesis.

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12. **Will the research involve the investigation of illegal conduct? If yes, give details and say how you yourself will be protected from harm or suspicion of illegal conduct?**

No, it will not.

13. **Is it possible that the research might disclose information regarding child sexual abuse or neglect? If yes, indicate how such information will be passed to the relevant authorities (e.g. social workers, police), but also indicate how participants will be informed about the handling of such information were disclosure of this kind to occur. A warning to this effect must be included in the consent form if such disclosure is likely to occur.**

No, this is not the case. No minor will be involved.

14. **State what kind of feedback, if any, will be offered to participants.**
The participants will have access to the thesis once it is published, and I will also offer them a

presentation with the conclusions.

15. **State your expertise for conducting the research proposed.**

I decided to train myself as a Media researcher after an extensive career as a newsmaker. I completed a double Master's degree in Global Media; in both of these I carried out research in newsrooms. First, at LSE, the case studied in my dissertation were the newscasts on Chilean television, and to that end I conducted elite semi-structured interviews. One year later, in the second Master's degree at Fudan University in Shanghai, I conducted a newsroom participant observation and elite interviews in a news media called Pengpai.

16. **In cases of research with young persons under the age of 18 years or 'vulnerable persons' (e.g. with learning difficulties or with severe cognitive disability), or with those in legal custody, will face-to-face interviews or observations or experiments be overseen by a third party (such as a teacher, care worker or prison officer)?**

Non-applicable

17. **If data is collected from an institutional location (such as a school, prison, hospital), has agreement been obtained by the relevant authority (e.g. Head Teacher, Local Education Authority, Home Office)?**

The conditions of my access to Atresmedia are currently under discussion; it will be mandatory to make an agreement with the head of each department involved, as well as with Silvio Gonzalez, the CEO of Atresmedia.

18. **For those conducting research with young persons under the age of 18 years or 'vulnerable persons' (e.g. with learning difficulties or with severe cognitive disability), do you have Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checking/clearance. DBS checks are now being done, via HR. Have you contacted the relevant person in the HR team to seek advice? (Ordinarily unsupervised research with minors would require such DBS checking. Please see http://www.gold.ac.uk/fitness-to-train/). Please provide evidence that DBS checking has been done.**

Non-applicable

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19. **Will the research place you in situations of harm, injury or criminality?** No, it will not.

20. **Might the research cause harm to those represented in it? If so, how?** No, it will not.

21. **Will the research cause harm or damage to bystanders or the immediate environment?** No, it will not.

22. **Are there any conflicts of interest regarding the investigation and dissemination of the research (e.g. with regard to compromising independence or objectivity due to financial gain)?**

No, there are not.

23. **Is the research likely to have any negative impact on the academic status or reputation of the College?**

No, it isn't.

ALL APPLICANTS

Please note that the Committee should be notified of any adverse or unforeseen circumstances arising out of this study. If there are significant changes to the research design regarding research ethics, please notify the committee immediately.

Signature of Applicant Date

______________Silvia Carrasco_________________June 17th, 2017_________________ **TO BE COMPLETED BY PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR**

Please note that the Department Research Ethics Committee should be notified of any adverse or unforeseen circumstances arising out of this study or of any emerging ethical concerns that the Supervisor may have about the research once it has commenced.

Has the student read the BSA guidelines on ethics (or equivalent ones, such as the AAA or ASA) and the ESRC Research Ethics Framework document? [Approval will not be granted unless the student has demonstrated to the supervisor that they have read such documents.]

Yes/No (Please circle)

Has there been appropriate discussion of the ethical implications of the research with yourself as Supervisor?

Yes/No (Please circle)
Are the ethical implications of the proposed research adequately described in this application?

6

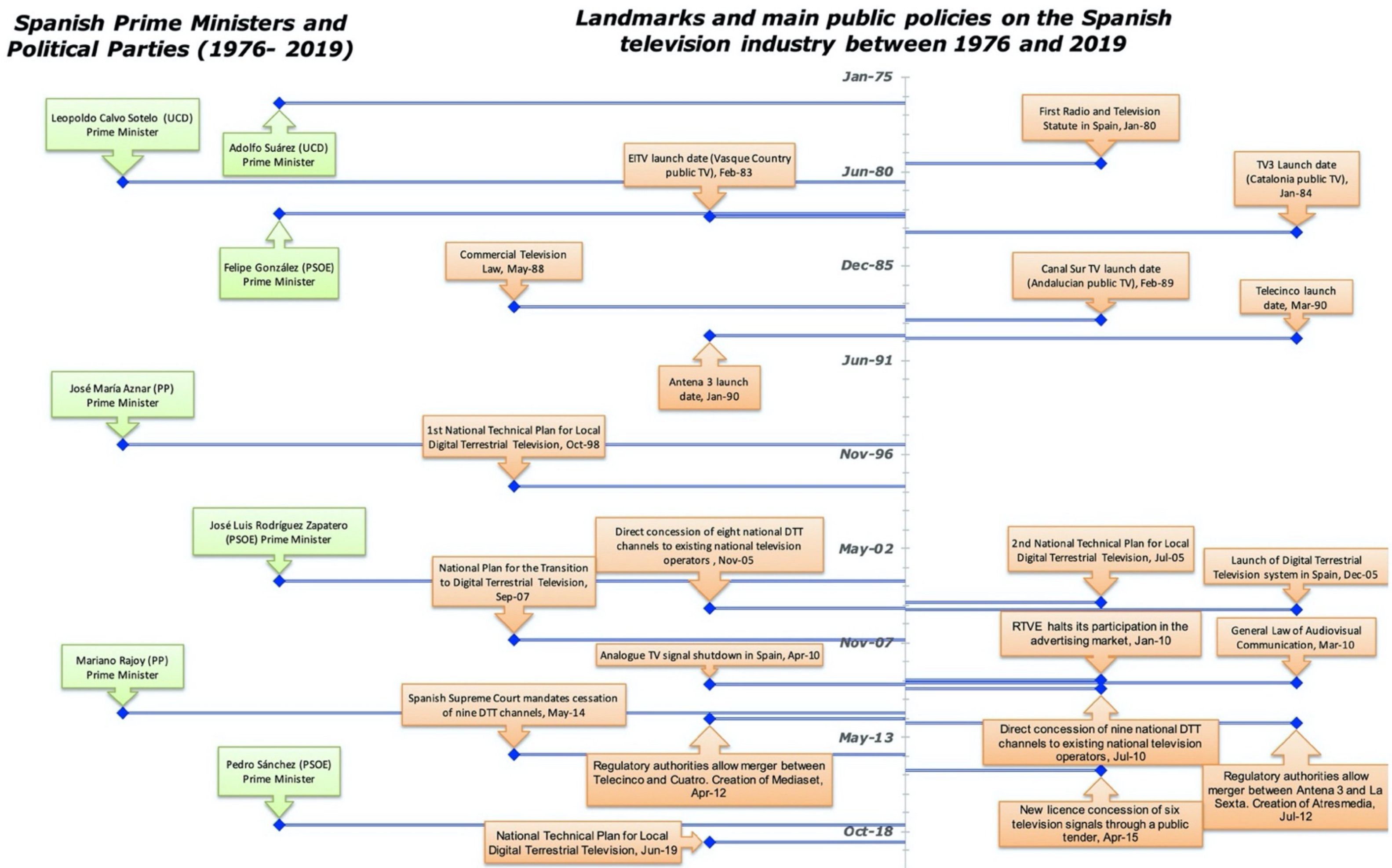
Yes/No (Please circle)
Signature of Principal Supervisor Date Name of Principal Supervisor:

Will you please ensure that this form is word processed/typed and not competed in long hand?

Will you please ensure that you type your name as the principal supervisor rather than leave a handwritten signature?

Will you please ensure that the answers are not completed in capitals and a standard of English that is coherent and grammatically correct?

Appendix E: Timeline of main television public policies in Spain (1976-2018)



Appendix F: Indicators to assess journalistic convergence. Adapted from Domingo et al (2007)

Adapted from Domingo, D., Salaverría, R., Aguado, J. M., Cabrera, M. Á., Edo, C., Masip, P., Meso-Ayerdi, K., Palomo, M. B., Sádaba, C. C., Orihuela-Colliva, J. L., and others. (2007). *Four Dimensions of Journalistic Convergence: A preliminary approach to current media trends at Spain*. http://dadun.unav.edu/handle/10171/5114

INTEGRATED PRODUCTION

- Convergence aims
  - ☐ *Cutting production costs*
  - ☐ *Enhancing news quality*
  - ☐ *Enhancing formats diversity*
- Newsrooms team and premises
  - ☐ *Separated*
  - ☐ *Coordinated*
  - ☐ *Integrated*
- Media outlet delivery preference
  - ☐ *One first, then another*
  - ☐ *Different platforms at the same time*
- News coverage
  - ☐ *Separated planning*
  - ☐ *Common planning*

  - ☐ *Formal coordination*
  - ☐ *Informal coordination*
- Digital content databases and software
  - ☐ *Separated use and management*
  - ☐ *Shared use and management*
- Multimedia news language
  - ☐ *Non-existent*
  - ☐ *Textual, audio-visual and graphic new genres*

MULTISKILLED PROFESSIONALS

- Issue multiskilling
  - ☐ *Journalists report news related to one thematic area*
  - ☐ *Journalists report news related different thematic areas*
- Technical multiskilling
  - ☐ *Journalists perform one or some production tasks*
  - ☐ *Journalists perform most of production tasks*
- Media multiskiling
  - ☐ *Journalists produce contents for one media*
  - ☐ *Journalists produce contents for different media*

MULTIPLATFORM DELIVERY

- Multiplatform delivery management
  - ☐ *Fully automated*
  - ☐ *With human intervention*

  - ☐ *Don't use the demand-focused model*
  - ☐ *Do use the demand-focused model*
- Content exchange and media repurposing technology
  - ☐ *Independent content for each media*
  - ☐ *Scarce content exchanges*
  - ☐ *Cross-posting content from one media to another by non-tech means*
  - ☐ *Automated cross posting content from one media to another*

ACTIVE AUDIENCE

- User-generated content
  - ☐ *Use the user-generated content*
  - ☐ *Do not use the user-generated content*

  - ☐ *Promote user-generated coverage*
  - ☐ *Don't promote user-generated coverage*

  Type of user-generated content:
    - ☐ *Stories*
    - ☐ *Photo*
    - ☐ *Audio*
    - ☐ *Video*
- Audience participation
  - ☐ *Do promote audience participation*
  - ☐ *Do not promote audience participation*

  Forms of participation:
    - ☐ *Forums*
    - ☐ *Polls*
    - ☐ *Audience comments*
    - ☐ *Blogging*
    - ☐ *Hashtag sharing*

Appendix G: Atresmedia's audimetry daily report

This appendix is subject to third-party copyright material. Thus, it might be available upon request.