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The precursors of infotainment? Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

Abstract

The theory formulated to date indicates that political infotainment programs arrived in Spain in a widespread manner in the 1990s with the rise of private television channels. But were there spaces in public television that shared the traits of this novel television genre before that time? This article is aimed at analyzing debate and talk shows, as well as hybrid format shows combining both genres, broadcasted on Televisión Española (TVE-1 and TVE-2) during the '80s, in order to determine whether or not these programs present the emblematic style characteristic of infotainment. The methodology consists of a content analysis of a total of 31 television programs, each of which was viewed on the RTVE archive using different multimedia platforms. The results of this research reveal that Televisión Española incorporated into its debate shows, talk shows, and hybrid format shows, features typical of infotainment prior to the '90s. Among the most recurrent stylistic features of these programs are the tendency to dramatization, polemic and emotionality (achieved through different techniques and strategies), an increase of soft content, a greater presence of satire, humor and close-ups, and the use of music.

Keywords
Infotainment, television, paleo-television, debate show, talk show, television programming.

1. Introduction and research approach

The arrival of private channels in Spain in 1990 meant a paradigm shift in the television realm, moving from a monopolistic television model at the state level to a competition regime. Throughout this decade in Spain (Berrocal, 2017), and previously in the '80s in the international scene (Postman, 1985), the pressure exerted by audience ratings on current affairs spaces in all their formats grew. This happened as a result of the multiplication of television offerings, caused by an increase in the number of channels and the resulting competition between them. Information began to be subjected to direct profitability criteria such as those that already marked the development of entertainment content (García–Avilés, 2007). With this came the triumph of a new hybrid genre: infotainment –attractive for the audience and, as a consequence, profitable in economic and advertising terms–, "which brings together two traditionally distant, and even opposed, functionalities of media: information and entertainment" (Berrocal, 2017, p. 37).

Martín Jiménez, V., Berdón Prieto, P. & Reguero Sanz, I.
The precursors of infotainment?
Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

With the advent of media competition and the need to attract advertisers, the tendency to represent informative reality as a spectacle, already practiced in other Western countries, was consolidated in Spanish television in the '90s: "Information on today's television, rather than providing a better understanding of a citizen's environment, seeks to entertain, to impact, to seduce the viewer into sitting in front of the screen as long as possible" (Cebrián Herreros, 2007, p. 12). Thus, whatever the medium or format, "the contents and narrative forms are selected under the supreme criterion of their potential impact on audiences, rather than their ability to provide relevant information in the most rigorous way possible" (García-Avilés, 2007, p. 51).

The arrival of private channels gave rise to neo-television in Spain (Eco, 1986). Hence, it was assumed that the '90s were the starting point of infotainment. However, no studies of Televisión Española (TVE) were carried out to explore the possibility of there being previous bets on this genre earlier on, in the '80s. Despite TVE's media monopoly during that decade, the television context did seem conducive to it. During the decade prior to the birth of the private channels, public opinion was mostly in favor of privatizing the small screen, thus supporting the interests of business owners in the communications field as well as the conservative political opposition (Mateos Pérez, 2010, p. 569). During the decade prior to the birth of the private channels, public opinion was mostly in favor of privatizing the small screen, thus supporting the interests of business owners in the communications field as well as the conservative political opposition (Mateos Pérez, 2010, p. 569). In July 1983, the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS)[1] asked this very question in its usual barometer, to which 67% of respondents answered that they were "in favor of the existence of private channels in Spain," compared to 18% who claimed to be "in favor of the existence of only one State public TV" and 15% who marked the option "Don't know/No opinion." However, the technical conditions and the political debate surrounding this audiovisual liberalization slowed down the emergence of the first three privately owned channels (Antena 3, Tele5 and Canal+) until 1990. In spite of the public ownership of Televisión Española and its status as a public service acquired in the Radio and Television Statute of 1980, its funding stemmed mainly from the commercialization of its advertising spaces. This became especially true after 1983; the year in which the Minister of Economy and Finance, Miguel Boyer, decided to withdraw the 7 billion pesetas earmarked for RTVE from the General State Budget. TVE's programming strategy thus turned towards goals of advertising profitability, even if it did not yet compete with other channels. This was reflected in its programming, which was aimed at maximizing revenue to cover RTVE's high expenses, including Radio Nacional Española (RNE)'s, which did not broadcast any kind of commercial advertising.

The commercial and competitive nature of television was therefore not totally alien to Spanish public channels, TVE-1 and TVE-2, which were familiar with the programming styles of other Western television channels, many of which had been committed to offering information combined with entertainment since the '80s (Postman, 1985). An example of this is the show *Los Pepones*, directed by Lolo Rico Oliver. Los Pepones was the Spanish version of the well-known British show *Spitting Image*, which offered viewers satirical sketches starring puppets that caricatured politicians and public figures. This show is closely related to the Spanish pioneer of infotainment *Las noticias del Guiñol*, which was first broadcast in 1995 by Canal + (Martín Jiménez, Vázquez & Cebrián, 2017). In April 1990, Lolo Rico resigned and requested a leave of absence from TVE, following their decision to stop the production of *Los Pepones* the previous month[2].

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[1] Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (1983). Study 1361. Question 25.
[2] Diario de Sesiones del Congreso de los Diputados, Comisiones, No. 476, May 30th, 1989. Retrieved from https://www.congreso.es/public_oficiales/L3/CONG/DS/CO/CO_476.PDF.

Martín Jiménez, V., Berdón Prieto, P. & Reguero Sanz, I.
The precursors of infotainment?
Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

Far from attempting to reformulate the theoretical framework that has constituted to date the existing bibliography on the origins of infotainment in Spain, this study seeks to investigate whether some of the most notorious characteristics of this hybrid genre were already present in the decade prior to the arrival of the first infotainment programs. This research paper is aimed at finding direct antecedents of infotainment before the '90s.

1.1. *State of the art*

With the birth of infotainment on television, a new area of study began to develop in the academic field; a field in constant growth, given the increasing weight of this genre in television. From an international perspective, infotainment has aroused great interest among researchers all over the world: in Europe (Brants, 1998; Brants & Neijens, 1998), in the United States (Patterson, 2000; Baum, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2005; Hollander, 2005; Moy, Xenos & Hess, 2006), in Asia (Shirk, 2007), in the Arab world (Bahry, 2001; Lynch 2004a, 2004b), and, using an international comparative framework in Canada, USA and Mexico (Lozano, 2004).

In the Spanish context, a number of publications can be highlighted, such as the collection of essays on infotainment edited by Carme Ferré (2013); García-Avilés' (2007) contribution from a European perspective; Luzón and Ferrer's work (2008), focused on society and current affairs news; or Segado's (2015) approach to economic information. It is also worth noting Berrocal *et al*. (2001 and 2014), Dader (2003), Gómez (2006), Carpio (2008), Arroyo (2008), Ferré and Gayà (2009), Valhondo (2011) and Berrocal's (2017) work, which have mainly focused on the study of political satire and infotainment, and pay special attention to the genre known as Politainment. These studies provide analyses both of the existing media content in television programming at the time the research processes were undertaken, as well as of the ways in which current affairs and politicians were represented in these spaces. On the other hand it is also worth mentioning authors from inside and outside Spain, such as Früh and Wirth (1997), Gordillo *et al*. (2011), Ortells (2011 and 2015), Díaz (2011), Casero and Marzal (2011), Carrillo (2013), García-Avilés and Del Campo (2013) or Pelliser and Pineda (2014), whose research revolves around the study of the stylistic and thematic features that characterize infotainment, as well as authors such as Mercado-Sáez (2018), who have focused on delineating the genre's format.

However, there has been less scientific contribution to the study of the origins of this genre in Spain. Prado's work investigates the presence and weight of this new format during the '90s (Prado, 1992; Prado *et al.*, 1999). Among those contributions of a more informative nature, we must highlight Sangro and Salgado's (2008) work, which gathers information on the pioneering programs provided by the very members of the production and direction teams.

From an academic point of view, the history of infotainment in Spain has been thoroughly researched by few, among which Cebrián and Berrocal (2013), Martín Jiménez and Berrocal, (2017) and Martín Jiménez, Vázquez and Cebrián (2017) stand out. However, the aforementioned works have analyzed the first instances of this hybrid genre based on the premise that the arrival of private television in the '90s marked the origin of this shift in television programming. None of them take into consideration programming that preceded the programs labeled as pioneers in the scholarly work published so far, hence the novelty of this research. We pose the question of whether infotainment had already started to make its way into TVE's programming years earlier, by introducing features typically associated with the genre, and subsequently becoming consolidated in television programming after breaking into the scene in the 1990s as a new genre.

1.2. *Objectives and hypothesis*

All scientific approaches to the origins of infotainment in Spain have focused on studying this phenomenon at the moment in which it burst onto the airwaves and consolidated itself as a

Martín Jiménez, V., Berdón Prieto, P. & Reguero Sanz, I.
The precursors of infotainment?
Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

growing trend in the spectacularization of content. This study seeks to investigate the Spanish public television (Televisión Española, TVE) –which, at that time, had a monopoly of Spanish media– during the decade prior to the birth of infotainment. The goal is to examine whether, along the lines of what was happening in the '80s in Western television (Postman, 1985), the Spanish state channel incorporated styles typical of infotainment into its debate and current affairs interview slots (Ortells, 2011). The purpose of this strategy, consisting of the introduction of spectacularizing elements into television content, would be to further attract audiences, and, therefore, to achieve higher profits in a context where television was financed through advertising.

Through the use of content analysis, we will study debate and talk shows on TVE from 1980 to 1989. The objective is to trace an approach to the history and fundamental features of these programs, and to determine whether the stylistic features of infotainment began to appear in these spaces during those years, giving rise to a genre that, ten years later, arrived on the small screen to stay. Therefore, the starting hypothesis is that this new hybrid genre was born in the '90s from a previous seed that had been planted by different current affairs programs. Through these programs, public television was able to experience the impact that a greater dose of spectacle could have on the audiences, ten years before infotainment burst in as a distinct genre in television programming.

1.3. *Methodology*

This research falls into the category of *TV Studies* with a historical perspective. As Montero (2014, p. 11) points out, the absence of studies based on television viewing is an important shortcoming in this field in the Spanish context. The methodology of this study aims to remedy this academic insufficiency. The research is thus based on the study of debate shows, talk shows, and hybrid format shows, having previously viewed them; the use of a content analysis coding sheet in search of infotainment-related styles; and a literature review of the general press. This methodology is consistent with Hartley's idea of making *TV Studies* more flexible in order to adapt to the "unparalleled continuous mutation" of the small screen (1992, p. 4).

A total of 31 titles were analyzed. The selection was made based on the scanning of TVE's programming during the '80s, selecting those programs based on current affairs interviews or debates, exclusively focusing on these types of programs, or on those where these contents had a very significant weight (Annex 1). Thus, any project unrelated to the informative genre –such as the opinion specialty– or from any of the three selected sub-genres –interviews, debates or interview-debate– was discarded. The sample consists of four complete weeks (from Monday to Sunday) of television programs from each year (from 1980 to 1989), broadcast in the months of March, July, September, and December. The months selected seek to represent the programming at different times of the year: March and September represent the start of new seasons (spring and fall, respectively), July marks the beginning of the summer schedule, and December represents the content broadcasted during the Christmas season (García-Mirón, 2014). The time frame does not go beyond 1990, the year in which private channels began to operate, and the date commonly considered as the starting point of infotainment in Spain (Berrocal, 2016, p. 39). The list of programs contains several titles with a broadcasting start date prior to 1980. These programs were included in the research because at the beginning of the research process they remained on screen. For the purpose of this study, a selection of episodes from the timeframe laid down were viewed.

For each of the titles studied, three episodes were reviewed, resulting in a total of 93 visualizations. This allowed for a deeper and more exhaustive study of their formal features. From among those programs with beginning and closing dates within the period of study (1980-1989), we viewed the first and last episodes, plus a randomly selected one. The programs broadcasted outside of the beginning or end limits of the period of study were selected

Martín Jiménez, V., Berdón Prieto, P. & Reguero Sanz, I.
The precursors of infotainment?
Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

randomly, ensuring that they fell within the established timeframe. The content was accessed through TVE's documentary collection (ARCA), the RTVE a la carta website, and other online platforms such as Youtube.

The different titles were viewed in order to determine whether a series of inputs –typified as stylistic features– typical of infotainment programs could be identified in the corpus of analysis. In order to identify which of those features are characteristic of infotainment, this study took into account the list of features typical of this hybrid genre gathered in Ortells' 2011 research. This classification has been used in other works that have analyzed the presence of infotainment in the most current television grids, demonstrating its methodological feasibility (Berrocal *et al.*, 2014).

This compilation of features, together with a series of formal characteristics of the programs (broadcast channel, year of premiere, time slot, subgenre, etc.), make up the content analysis sheet used to examine each title (Appendix II). In order to confirm that the features are characteristic of these programs, they must be present in the three viewed episodes, thus ensuring that the identified features are recurrent and, therefore, considered as part of a program's formal aspects all throughout the broadcasting period.

Three researchers were involved in the coding process, and three random tests were conducted to calculate its reliability through Krippendorff's Alpha coefficient. More specifically, a pretest was carried out for three different titles (which entailed the viewing of nine episodes). The first pretest was conducted on the program *Si yo fuera presidente*, and it obtained a Krippendorff's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.855; the second, on *Esta noche* (0.735); and the third, on *La clave* (0.838). None of the three tests had an index lower than 0.667, which confirms that all three coders followed the same criteria.
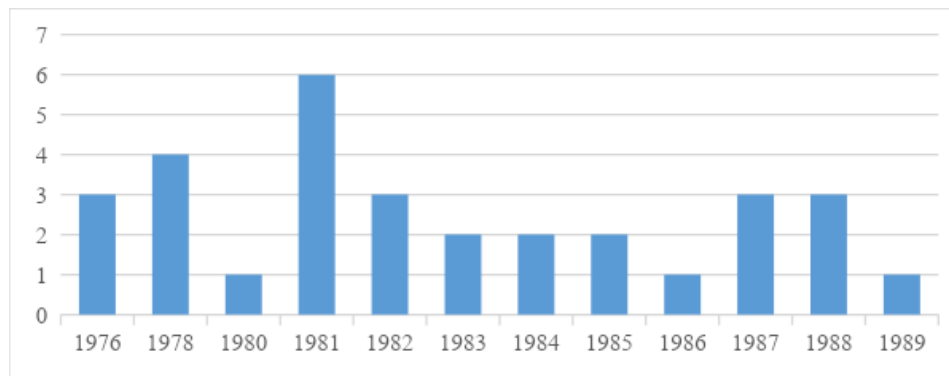
Lastly, a literature review of general newspapers, such as *ABC*, *El País* or *La Vanguardia*, was undertaken in order to identify both the criticisms of the time with regard to these television programs, and the opinions of television executives expressed in interviews granted to the media. Thus, the results obtained from the content analysis were evaluated taking into account the context of the studied time period, which facilitates the understanding of this subject matter by contributing a historical perspective.

2. Results

2.1. *Debate and talk shows on TVE: characteristics and evolution (1980-1989)*

The 31 selected programs were broadcast by the two television channels that belonged to RTVE (TVE-1 and TVE-2), which had a monopoly on Spanish television during the period of study. However, the programming offered by the two channels was not evenly distributed (Palacio & Ciller, 2018). The main channel (TVE-1) broadcast 21 programs with the studied features during the selected timeframe, while the one known as UHF (TVE-2) broadcast a total of 10 programs containing debates and interviews. From the two, TVE-1 obtained better audience and coverage data. In order to take advantage of this, TVE made it so that the most important titles were programmed on this main channel (Roel & Gradío, 2018). The fact that 67.75% of the programs of this type were destined to TVE-1 leads us to believe that RTVE made a clear bet on the studied sub-genres.

Martín Jiménez, V., Berdón Prieto, P. & Reguero Sanz, I.
The precursors of infotainment?
Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

Figure 1. Debate and talk shows premiered on TVE organized by year.

Source: Own elaboration.

As Figure 1 shows, the programming policy of these formats varied throughout the studied decade. There are three distinct stages that reflect the state of television in Spain. The first stage covers from the beginning of the research in 1976 until 1982. During this period, characterized by a lack of stability within the entity, television managers were appointed by the Spanish political party Unión de Centro Democrático. As shown in Figure 1, the programming policy of these formats varied throughout the studied decade. There are three distinct stages that reflect the state of television in Spain. The first stage covers from the beginning of the research in 1976 until 1982. During this period, characterized by a lack of stability in the entity, television managers were appointed by the Spanish political party Unión de Centro Democrático (Union of the Democratic Centre). RTVE had six general directors in six years –Gabriel Peña Aranda (1975-1976), Rafael Ansón (1976-1977), Fernando Arias-Salgado (1977-1981), Fernando Castedo (1981), Carlos Robles Piquer (1981-1982) and Eugenio Nasarre (1982)–. As a result, the importance attached to this type of television program varied depending on who was in power. In 1981, the three top managers of RTVE approved the premiere of six programs of this kind –*Esta noche*, *Mano a mano*, *El testigo*, *La víspera de nuestro tiempo*, *Su turno*, and *Tertulia con*–, reaching the highest number in one same year of the entire period of study. With the exception of *El testigo* (1981), all of them were broadcast on the main channel. However, in the previous year, only *De cerca* (1980) was premiered. These variations were constant during this first stage.

From 1982 to 1986, the General Director of RTVE was José María Calviño. Having been appointed by the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) after its electoral victory on October 28, 1982, Calviño brought greater stability with regard to the number of these premieres. In 1983, 1984 and 1985, two new programs per year arrived to TVE's grid. All the programs of Calviño's period, except for *Encuentros en libertad: economía* (1982) and *Fin de siglo* (1985), were broadcasted by TVE's main channel.

The last stage of this study corresponds to filmmaker Pilar Miró's leadership of TVE (1986-1989). In addition to continuing the path of stability that Calviño had started –in terms of the number of debate and talk shows premiered– she gave greater emphasis to these programs within TVE's programming schedule. While Calviño decided that there should be a maximum of two premieres per year, his successor increased the number by one more. During Miró's time, all talk shows and debates were broadcast by TVE-1.

The studied programs were, in most cases, targeted towards an adult audience. Of these, 54.84% were broadcast during the prime-time slot, while only 3.22% were broadcast during the after-dinner time slot. Despite the increase of broadcasting hours after January 1986, with the arrival of morning television, no programs of these characteristics were broadcast in the morning time slot.

Martín Jiménez, V., Berdón Prieto, P. & Reguero Sanz, I.
The precursors of infotainment?
Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

As for the different sub-genres, there is no clear inclination for one or another. Interviews account for 41.93% of the studied programs, while 38.71% are debates. The emergence of a number of programs with diffuse characteristics, such as the alternation of debates and interviews or the inclusion of magazine-like content, is also worth mentioning. This type of program accounted for 19.35% of the total number of programs studied.

Despite the appearance of a significant number of programs that did not follow the classic structure of the selected sub-genres, there was a certain homogenization in terms of the duration of all the studied programs. 54.84% of the total sample ranged from 31 minutes to an hour, and 25.81% exceeded the hour but did not reach an hour and a half. It should be noted that only three programs of this type exceeded this duration. Among them, *La clave* stands out as an example, with a duration of over 180 minutes. José Luis Balbín's program would occasionally exceed the four-hour mark. However, it must be borne in mind that the total duration of the program included the film used to spur debate.

The debate and talk show sub-genres broadcasted during the study period were not successful enough to remain in the grids over the years. 35.48% of the total did not make it past the first season, 25.81% were renewed for a second year, and 22.58% were not renewed for a third year. *A fondo* (1976), *Punto y aparte* (1985) and *La clave* (1976) were the three longest-running programs of this type on television at the time and managed to remain in the television grid for over four years.

2.2. *The gradual arrival of the spectacularization of current affairs in the 1980s*

As shown by the analysis of the 31 selected programs, before "infotainment" had been introduced in Spanish television as a genre, a large number of programs already presented stylistic features typical of this hybrid genre, which was still unknown in the country[3].
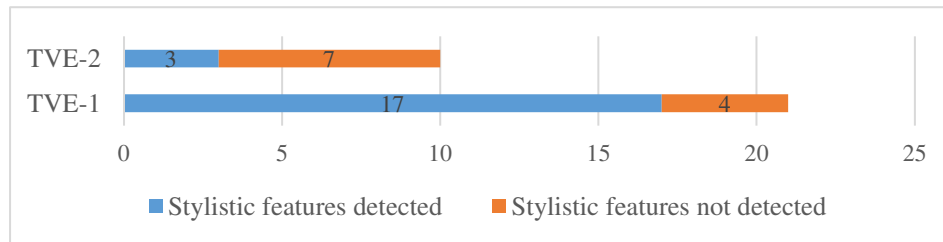
It is worth noting that, out of TVE-2's programming during the established timeframe, 63.63% of the programs lacked the desired characteristics (Figure 2). This is directly related to the target audience and coverage differences between the two channels, as explained above. The type of funding provided by the public broadcaster is also important in this regard. Unlike most European countries, television in Spain had a markedly commercial character since its inception. This caused its economic policy to be based on advertising and public subsidies, thereby discarding the levy system (Quintana Paz, 2007, p. 51). This lucrative tendency of the state-owned public monopoly was intensified in 1983, when the state withdrew its annual subsidy of 7 billion pesetas, and a decision was made to increase advertising rates[4]. TVE aspired to maintain its high audience figures; an attainable goal, given TVE-1's spectacle-filled programs destined towards a wide target audience. This commercial strategy was evident in the distribution of ad revenues (Montero, 2018). In 1983, 70% of TVE's revenue came from spots broadcast on its main channel[5]. TVE-2 focused on segmented cultural content for different target audiences, moving away from more relaxed formats.

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[3] See Annex 1 for the list of programs that contained features associated with "infotainment."

[4] "Renfe has embarked on a drastic cost-cutting plan, according to its president." (May 29, 1983). *ABC*, p. 9.

[5] "Nearly sixty billion, advertising revenues for 1984." (December 30, 1983). *ABC,* p. 65.

Martín Jiménez, V., Berdón Prieto, P. & Reguero Sanz, I.
The precursors of infotainment?
Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

Figure 2. Distribution of programs presenting features commonly associated with infotainment, classified by channel.

Source: Own elaboration.

The findings show that it was not until the arrival of the 1980s that television programs started to include features typical of "infotainment;" with the exception of *A fondo* (1976), in which we observed a propensity for close-ups and a classic narrative structure, with a beginning, a climax and a *dénouement*.

De cerca (1980), a program hosted and directed by Jesús Hermida, added more drama to his interviews. But it was not until a year later, with the arrival of the debates of *Su turno*, when the famous TV presenter became more interested in a new way of making television that would take more than a decade to consolidate itself in Spanish television. His program was structured around heated debates on soft topics, such as current affairs, gossip, fashion or personal relationships, which dominated the show at the expense of politics or economics (García-Avilés, 2007). In addition, anonymous citizens participated alongside experts (Guerrero Pérez & Moreno Díaz, 2018). The construction of the program itself seemed to seek polemic and confrontation over an agreement between different parties involved; a style diametrically opposed to other programs belonging to the same sub-genre, as is the case of *La clave* (1976).

With PSOE already in power, having obtained an absolute majority the previous year, 1983 brought programs, such as *Usted*, or *Si yo fuera presidente*. The latter was broadcasted on TVE-2, and, out of the 31 programs in the sample, it has the second greatest number of detected stylistic features. Shortly before the premier of *Si yo fuera presidente*, its director and host, Fernando García Tola, claimed to have accepted this new challenge "with a panic attack;" his goal being to create an atmosphere that could not be achieved by solely "respecting the script [sic]"[6]. The program was described in the television schedule as follows: "A political and musical program, aimed at finding out whether it is possible for politics to represent sincere coexistence and the struggle for human happiness"[7].

The program was based on the personality of the presenter, who started the broadcast with a short speech, followed by a band playing covers of great orchestras. Music was also a key element in the selection of the program's two permanent guests: Spanish singer-songwriters Javier Krahe and Joaquín Sabina, who –along with the host– made use of "several television tricks" to capture the audience's attention. One of the great controversies brought about by *Si yo fuera presidente* was a collective backlit nude performed by a group of guests at the end of the program[8].

In *De jueves a jueves* (1986), host Mercedes Milá interviewed prominent personalities, such as former Spanish Prime Minister, Adolfo Suárez. In addition to Milá's journalistic work, the cartoonist José María Pérez González, also known as, "Peridis," was in charge of *Brujos Animados*: animated sketches that parodied the program's guests.

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[6] "Tola accepts the risk of presenting *Si yo fuera presidente* 'with a panic attack.'" (October 11, 1983). *El País*. Retrieved from https://elpais.com/diario/1983/10/11/radiotv/434674804_850215.html.

[7] "Television / radio" (October 11, 1983). *La Vanguardia*, p. 62.

[8] "A collective backlit nude closed the show *Si yo fuera presidente*" (January 25, 1984). *El País*. Retrieved from https://elpais.com/diario/1984/01/25/radiotv/443833203_850215.html.

Martín Jiménez, V., Berdón Prieto, P. & Reguero Sanz, I.
The precursors of infotainment?
Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

With the following season came *En familia* (1987), the program where we have detected the most stylistic features typical of the infotainment genre. The public network, directed by Pilar Miró, chose a day and time of maximum audience for its broadcasting: Fridays during prime time. Each of the episodes featured a group of guests belonging to a particular field, such as the Church or the Army. At the start of every episode, the program host, Iñaki Gabilondo, would already state that, in order to reach a wider audience, the language and general tone of the program would be "not very formalistic"[9].

In turn, musical performances –another common characteristic of this hybrid genre– would only appear when the situation required it and the main purpose of the program was none other than to learn about the positions of different sectors of society.[10] This was the case in *De Jueves a jueves*, or *Fin de siglo*[11]. What seems indisputable is that, with these programs, TVE-1 sought to achieve a "greater looseness" than is usual in these spaces by using surprise videos and recordings, showing what goes on in the studio, etc. "It is not your typical current affairs program [...] We are not going to compete for the same characters as those in news programs, like Hermida's morning show, or many others. We're just looking to satisfy curiosity. Starting with my own," said Gabilondo himself in an announcement of *En Familia*'s transgressive format, considered by many ahead of its time.

Querido Pirulí (1988), hosted by García Tola, was a politicized magazine that opened with a children's newscast in which we detected several stylistic features. That same year came *Viaje con nosotros* (1988), moderated by Javier Gurruchaga. The program was a political infoshow which included not only interviews, but also a fake newscast with a distinctively humorous tone.

There were other cases in which programs were nourished to a lesser extent by features associated with infotainment. However, something we observed during the research process, is that in several programs there are tactics that, while not classified as pure stylistic features of the genre, could be considered in future research in this field, and included as features of this genre. These tactics include an inclination to verbal confrontation over reasoning, the use of animated sections, or the delegitimization of the news format through parody; all of which could constitute potential new stylistic features of infotainment programs.

Out of the 20 programs in which infotainment traits were observed, 55% contain between two and three stylistic features, 20% contain four, 15% contain five, and 5% contain six and seven stylistic features, respectively.

The most frequent stylistic feature in the studied programs is the use of close-ups, present in 65% of the sample. This trait is followed by the use of music and the integration of heavy use of drama and emotiveness, a feature that appears in 50% of the analyzed programs. The high prominence of soft news and the presence of humor and satire appears in 35% of the sample.
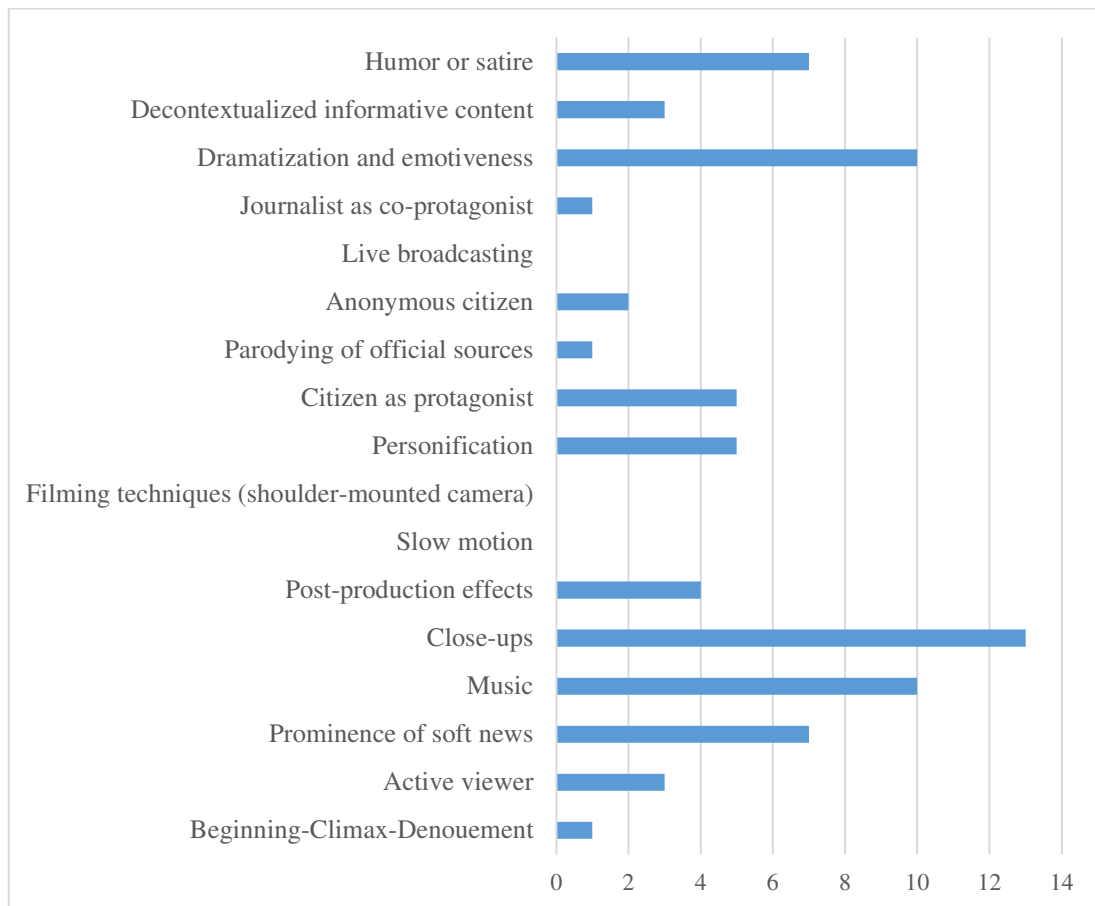
In addition to these, the following features have been identified in the sample, although to a lesser extent: the use of personification and the figure of the protagonist citizen (present in 25% of the sample); post-production (20%); active viewers and informative contents (15%); the participation of anonymous citizens (10%); and the beginning, climax and denouement structure, the parodying of official sources, and the co-protagonist journalist (5%, respectively). It is worth noting that there are three infotainment stylistic features that have not been found in any of the studied programs: the use of slow motion, new filming techniques (such as the use of shoulder-mounted cameras), and live broadcasting.

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[9] Cañas, G. (April 10, 1987). Gabilondo returns to TVE with a talk show. *El País*. Retrieved from https://elpais.com/diario/1987/04/10/radiotv/545004003_850215.html.
[10] On the bet on informative newscasts for children, see Paz Rebollo, 2018.
[11] Iñaki Gabilondo premieres his program *En familia* (April 10, 1987). *La Vanguardia*. Retrieved from http://hemeroteca-paginas.lavanguardia.com/LVE08/HEM/1987/04/10/LVG19870410-068.pdf.

Martín Jiménez, V., Berdón Prieto, P. & Reguero Sanz, I.
The precursors of infotainment?
Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

Figure 3. Frequency of stylistic features found in the sample.

Source: Own elaboration.

3. Conclusions

This study shows that almost 65% of the debate and interview programs on Spanish public television in the '80s incorporated stylistic features typical of infotainment programs, a genre that began to dominate Spanish television programming in the '90s, with the emergence of private channels. The people behind these programs made a conscious decision to bet on a new way of making television, seeking to offer viewers more attractive content that could be consumed at different times of the day and by a very diverse audience. They saw the small screen as a medium aimed at entertainment and leisure. It should not be forgotten that the infotainment phenomenon already existed outside the Spanish borders in the '80s, and that TVE professionals were not blind to the reality of other Western countries. Quite the opposite, they were influenced by it.

However, the occasional use of stylistic features characteristic of infotainment in specific episodes is not sufficient to classify a program as a precursor of this hybrid genre. Nor is it possible to establish a scale to rigorously determine the number of stylistic features a program would have to contain in order to be considered a precursor. We should bear in mind, however, that the objective of this research is not to find a predecessor of infotainment in Spain, but to verify whether this new way of making and conceiving television began to crystallize before the conditions of competition further encouraged it. We argue that the study of stylistic features is the most rigorous research technique to achieve this purpose.

The emergence of these "infotainment" features is particularly noticeable in TVE-1, the channel with the highest audience ratings, and the most profitable in terms of advertising revenues in public television. TVE-2, with a more cultural, sports, and minority centered

Martín Jiménez, V., Berdón Prieto, P. & Reguero Sanz, I.
The precursors of infotainment?
Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

focus, continued to rely on classic formats. Its content was more information oriented and further away from entertainment. Only 26.37% of the programs with no hybridization traits were broadcast on TVE-1; a surprising finding, considering that more than two thirds of the analyzed programs belong to this channel. Out of the 11 programs found to not share any characteristics with infotainment, 91% were premiered before 1986. This reveals that, as the decade progressed and the privatization of Spanish television gained momentum, the information and entertainment genres began to merge, causing Spanish television to lean towards the use of more and more stylistic features that would later be categorized as typical of infotainment.

Among the most common stylistic features present in those programs committed to developing a new way of making television, we found that, above all, they had a tendency towards dramatization, polemic and emotiveness, which they achieved by implementing a series of techniques and strategies. We also detected an emphasis of soft content, a greater presence of satire and humor, the use of close-ups, and music. The absence of three other stylistic features considered typical of infotainment which have not been detected in the sample –the use of slow motion, new filming techniques (such as the use of shoulder-mounted cameras), and live broadcasting– is directly related to the evolution of the audiovisual techniques employed in the genre.

On the other hand, certain programs in the sample present traits that, although not considered infotainment stylistic features in previous scientific work on this field, could be valuable for future research, as they reflect a tendency towards the spectacularization of television news. The studied programs can be considered precursors of this new genre, since the features they present are the same that became prevalent in infotainment programs in the 90's with the advent of private television channels.

The study, therefore, raises the need to consider new areas of research in sub-genres such as magazines or news programs. It is also relevant to study the autonomous channels that emerged after 1983, to determine whether this first avant-garde of infotainment was present only in debates and interviews or if, instead, it was a more prevalent trend. If the latter were to be the case, it would be necessary to reformulate part of the existing theory on the origins of this television genre in Spain.

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Martín Jiménez, V., Berdón Prieto, P. & Reguero Sanz, I.
The precursors of infotainment?
Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

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The precursors of infotainment?
Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

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The precursors of infotainment?
Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

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Martín Jiménez, V., Berdón Prieto, P. & Reguero Sanz, I.
The precursors of infotainment?
Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

ANNEX 1 (PROGRAM TABLE)[12]

Title	Channel	Director	Host	Premier	Time slot	Sub-genre	Duration	Years aired
A fondo	TVE-2	Joaquín Soler Serrano	Joaquín Soler Serrano	1976	Evening	Talk show	31'-1h.	More than 4 years
Encuentro con las letras	TVE-2	Carlos Vélez	Elena Escobar & Roberto Llamas	1976	Prime Time	Mixed	1h.-1h.30'	3 to 4 years
La clave	TVE-2	José Luis Balbín	José Luis Balbín	1976	Prime Time	Debate show	More than 3h.	More than 4 years
Tribuna de cultura	TVE-2		Joaquín Castro Beraza	1978	Prime Time	Debate show	31'-1h.	2 to 3 years
Tribuna económica	TVE-2		Rafael Romero San José	1978	Prime Time	Debate show	31'-1h.	2 to 3 years
Tribuna de historia	TVE-2	Luis Ignacio Seco	José Antonio Silva	1978	Prime Time	Debate show	31'-1h.	2 to 3 years
Tribuna internacional	TVE-2		Álvaro de Arce & José Javaloyes	1978	Late Night	Debate show	31'-1h.	1 to 2 years
De cerca	TVE-1	Jesús Hermida	Jesús Hermida	1980	Afternoon	Talk show	Less than 30'	1 to 2 years
Esta noche	TVE-1	Fernando García Tola	Carmen Maura	1981	Prime Time	Talk show	31'-1h.	1 to 2 years
Mano a mano	TVE-1	Joaquín María Puyal	Joaquín María Puyal	1981	Evening	Talk show	31'-1h.	6 months to a year
El testigo	TVE-2	Tristán de la Rosa	Joaquín Ruiz Jiménez	1981	Prime Time	Debate show	1h.-1h.30'	6 months to a year
La víspera de nuestro tiempo. Diálogos con la Historia	TVE-1	Luis Ignacio Seco	José Antonio Silva & Cristina Ramos	1981	Late Night	Debate show	1h.-1h.30'	3 to 4 years
Su turno	TVE-1	Jesús Hermida	Jesús Hermida	1981	Prime Time	Debate show	31'-1h.	2 to 3 years
Tertulia con	TVE-1	Javier Vázquez	Fernando Fernan Gómez	1981	Prime Time	Debate show	31'-1h.	6 months to a year
Rasgos	TVE-1	Antonio Giménez-Rico	Mónica Randall	1982	Evening	Talk show	31'-1h.	6 months to a year
Buenas noches	TVE-1	Juan José González	Mercedes Milá	1982	Prime Time	Talk show	31'-1h.	2 to 3 years
Encuentros en libertad: Economía	TVE-1	Fernando Navarrete	Sibely Valle	1982	Evening	Debate show	1h.-1h.30'	1 to 2 years
Usted, por ejemplo	TVE-1	Manuel Torreiglesias	Manuel Torreiglesias	1983	Evening	Mixed	31'-1h.	1 to 2 years
Si yo fuera presidente	TVE-2	Fernando García Tola	Fernando García Tola	1983	Late Night	Talk show	1h.31'-2h.	1 to 2 years

[12] Seven programs included in the analysis premiered years before 1980, but their broadcasting extends to the study period. These programs are: *A fondo* (1976), *Encuentro con las letras* (1976), *La clave* (1976), *Tribuna histórica* (1978), *Tribuna de cultura* (1978), *Tribuna económica* (1978), and *Tribuna internacional* (1978).

Martín Jiménez, V., Berdón Prieto, P. & Reguero Sanz, I.
The precursors of infotainment?
Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

Dentro de un orden	TVE-1	Cristina García Ramos	Cristina García Ramos	1984	Prime Time	Talk show	Less than 30'	2 to 3 years
Autorretrato	TVE-1	José Luis Jover	Pablo Lizcano	1984	Late Night	Talk show	31'-1h.	1 to 2 years
Fin de siglo	TVE-2	Pablo Lizcano	Pablo Lizcano	1985	Prime Time	Mixed	1h.31'-2h.	2 to 3 years
Punto y aparte	TVE-1	Manuel Campo Vidal	Manuel Campo Vidal	1985	Prime Time	Talk show	Less than 30'	More than 4 years
De jueves a jueves	TVE-1	José Sámano	Mercedes Milá	1986	Late Night	Mixed	1h.-1h.30'	6 months to a year
Debate	TVE-1	Victoria Prego	Victoria Prego	1987	Late Night	Debate show	1h.-1h.30'	6 months to a year
…Y usted qué opina?	TVE-1	Francisco Caparrós	Francisco Caparrós	1987	Late Night	Debate show	31'-1h.	6 months to a year
En familia	TVE-1	Iñaki Gabilondo	Iñaki Gabilondo	1987	Prime Time	Mixed	31'-1h.	1 to 2 years
Querido Pirulí	TVE-1	Fernando García Tola	Fernando García Tola	1988	Prime Time	Mixed	31'-1h.	6 months to a year
Viaje con nosotros	TVE-1	Javier Gurruchaga	Javier Gurruchaga	1988	Prime Time	Talk show	1h.-1h.30'	6 months to a year
El perro verde	TVE-1	Jesús Quintero	Jesús Quintero	1988	Late Night	Talk show	31'-1h.	6 months to a year
La luna	TVE-1	Sergi Schaaf	Julia Otero	1989	Prime Time	Talk show	1h.-1h.30'	6 months to a year

Martín Jiménez, V., Berdón Prieto, P. & Reguero Sanz, I.
The precursors of infotainment?
Debate and talk shows on Televisión Española (1980-1989)

ANNEX 2 (CODING SHEET)

Title of the program

Television channel

Director

Host

Premiere (year)

Time slot

(07:00-13:30)	(13:30-15:30)	(15:30-18:00)	(18:00-20:30)	(20:30-22:30)	(22:30-01:00)
Morning	Daytime	Afternoon	Evening	Prime Time	Late Night

Sub-genre (Talk show/Debate show/Mixed)

Duration

Less than 31'	31'-1h.	1h. 1'-1h. 30'	1h. 31'-2h.	2h. 1'-2h. 30'	2h. 31'-3h.	More than 3h.

Years aired

Less than 6 months	6 months to 1 year	1 to 2 years	2 to 3 years	3 to 4 years	More than 4 years

Predominant stylistic features typical of infotainment:
Presence of humor and/or satire 1-Yes 2-No
Dissemination of decontextualized informative content 1-Yes 2-No
Prevailing dramatization and emotiveness 1-Yes 2-No
The journalist is co-protagonist of the broadcasted pieces 1-Yes 2-No
Predominance of live broadcasting 1-Yes 2-No
The anonymous citizen as a primary source as opposed to official sources 1-Yes 2-No
The official source is parodied 1-Yes 2-No
The citizen as the protagonist of the news piece 1-Yes 2-No
Regular use of content personification 1-Yes 2-No
Use of filming techniques such as continuous motion and shoulder-mounted camera 1-Yes 2-No
Use of slow motion 1-Yes 2-No
Use of post-production effects 1-Yes 2-No
Tendency to close-ups and detail shots 1-Yes 2-No
Use of music in the pieces 1-Yes 2-No
Preference for soft news over hard news 1-Yes 2-No
The viewer plays an active role 1-Yes 2-No
Narrative discourse follows the following scheme: beginning, climax, and denouement 1-Yes 2-No

Comments about the detected stylistic features

Potential future genres

Spectacularized political program	Politicized magazine	Political infoshow