

# STRATEGIES AND PROPOSALS IN THE RADIO AND TELEVISION COVERAGE OF LOCAL ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS: WHICH FEATURES OF THE CANDIDATES, THE MEDIA AND THE POLITICAL CONTEXT PREDICT THE MEDIA FRAMING OF CAMPAIGNS?

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## **Abstract**

A recurring lament from observers during election campaigns has been the predominance of messages and political commentary about the motivations, behaviors and strategies of the candidates over substantive issues such as proposals and public problems. This talk manifests itself primarily in the coverage given by different media organizations during the electoral processes. Research into which factors in the media coverage are associated with the issue frame (characterized by allusion to proposals) and which with the strategic game frame can help with understanding what has caused a proliferation of this style of reporting, as well as facilitating the detection of biases that imply forms of discrimination against social groups, and making it possible to evaluate media organizations. This article will determine the levels of use of strategic game and issue frames in the radio and television coverage of electoral campaigns, and their association with variables related to candidate traits, media organizations and the particular context of the election. To achieve this aim, a secondary analysis was made of the data obtained from the monitoring of radio and television coverage of the 2018 electoral campaigns in the state of Jalisco. The results show a greater presence of the issue frame in comparison with the strategic game frame, and confirm that the concession regime and the sector of the media organization, the type of election, the candidate's gender, and several temporal-contextual variables, predict the use of both news frames significantly.

**Keywords:** framing, political campaigns, political communication, news frames.

## **Introduction**

The social problem from which this investigation arises is concern by the public and commentators about the quality of electoral campaigns and also of the media coverage of these in Latin American democracies. In a video published on May 5th 2018, the then-candidate to the Mexican Senate, Pedro Kumamoto, distinguished between a speech with "reasons" and "proposals" and one containing "lying accusations, rude criticism and verbal violence", and demanded that his political opponents "stop the dirty war" against him (Kumamoto, 2018). Similarly, an important view in Political Communication studies holds that the predominance in media coverage of both strategic framing and negative tone

messages (the “dirty war”), is problematic. Essentially these predominate over the issue frame, which includes discourse on proposals and public problems (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997, Aalberg, Strömbäck & De Vreese, 2012: 174, Muñiz, 2015).

Media coverage of electoral campaigns is relevant in modern democracies because (1) voters need timely information on accurately and reliably reported public issues, and the media organizations, even with their many limitations (Lippmann, 1922; Graber, 2003), are the institutions best equipped to provide this. In addition, (2) the media function as a communicative space for public debate and dialogue, which is usually construed as a public sphere (Habermas, 1974) and is essential for different social actors to be able to express their ideas and for these to get to be known by the public.

The term framing is used in Communication studies to refer to the object produced after the packaging of information in a way that emphasizes a particular element (Entman, 1993). It is known that the strategic game frame—which emphasizes who wins the election and the strategy followed—predominates in most of the countries where media coverage of electoral campaigns has been analyzed (which, coincidentally, are mostly Western countries) (Aalberg, Strömbäck & De Vreese, 2012). However, not much is yet known about the factors that influence media organizations to produce this type of coverage in preference to issue coverage (Dimitrova & Kostadinova, 2013; Dunaway & Lawrence, 2015).

The strategic game frame tends to appear mainly during electoral campaigns, but it can also appear in the media coverage of any political issue (Aalberg, Strömbäck & De Vreese, 2012). According to Aalberg, Strömbäck & De Vreese (2012), its main determinants are temporal factors, such as the public policy phase. In the present study we propose the relevance of variables related to the media organization, such as the media sector it belongs to and the regime it operates under (i. e., the type of license it holds); variables related to the candidates (such as their gender, the popularity of the political force that backs them, and the type of election they are in); and temporal-contextual variables.

Enormous political and technological changes in the Mexican context make it doubly interesting to investigate the role of candidate traits, media organizations and temporality in relation to the presence of strategic game and issue frames. The changes referred to have allowed new actors to participate in elections under conditions of greater equality: the historical reform of the Mexican constitution in 2014 opened the way to the figure of independent candidates (that is, candidates without the backing of a political party), in addition to raising the gender quota in the legislative elections to parity (fifty percent for each gender). The regulatory framework for broadcasting in Mexico has also seen transformations in recent years, in particular, a modification made after the 2007 political reform to the political communication regime that prohibits the sale of electoral spots during campaigns, and afterwards, in the 2013 telecommunications reform, the prohibition of the selling of advertising disguised as content.

In the face of such developments, measuring the impact of candidate traits allows us to understand the reasons behind the observed patterns of coverage. In the case of gender, measurements make it possible to identify biases and detect unwanted discrimination. Also, measuring the impact of the factors related to media organizations allows us to identify trends and predispositions, which provides us with a useful element for evaluating media organizations and predicting the way in which they can be expected to fulfill their role of informing the public through the two media sectors most used by

Mexicans to get political information: radio and television (Secretaría de Gobernación, 2013). Finally, the study of temporal-contextual factors will allow us to understand the role of proximity to elections, and proximity to the most important media events.

Therefore, our research objectives are, first, to determine the levels, in the radio and television coverage of local electoral campaigns, of the strategic game and issue frames. Second, to explain the presence of the strategic game and issue frames based on variables related to media organizations: the media sector (radio, television), the type of concession (commercial use, social use); variables related to political actors: candidate gender, membership in a leading party and position aspired to (governorship or other position); and temporal-contextual variables: moment of the campaign (days remaining before the election), electoral debate, start and end of electoral campaigns and celebration of matches of the national soccer team. In other words, do the candidate's traits and media events invite the use of certain frames in media coverage? Do the media sector of the news outlet and the media organization's concession regime influence the selection of news frames?

Dimitrova & Kostadinova (2013) raised the need to conduct media framing research for countries other than the United States and Western European countries to find out if the patterns that have been found so far occur in other parts of the world. This makes the present study relevant theoretically, because although in the Latin American context frame-building factors have recently begun to be researched (Rodelo & Muñiz, 2016; Rodelo & Muñiz, 2019), we have no news yet of studies that account for the factors that influence the construction of frames in the context of elections. Our case study, the 2018 local elections in the Mexican state of Jalisco, included three types of position (head of the state government, municipal mayors and local legislators). This enabled the collection of a large sample of news coverage, which gives the statistical results of parametric tests greater strength. Likewise, it establishes the relevance of the media sector and the concession regime as variables predicting news frames. The analyzed sample includes the most relevant and popular radio and television news programs in the state of Jalisco, which ensures the representativeness of the data.

## **Theoretical framework**

Theories of framing and agenda-setting have been the most successful in explaining the nature of journalistic coverage of public affairs and its effects. Agenda-setting theory posits that the distribution of issues on the media agenda influences the distribution of issues on the citizens' agenda (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009). For its part, framing theory posits that the form and emphasis of news messages has an impact on the formation or reinforcement of people's mental frames and, therefore, on social debates (Entman, 1993).

Framing theory encompasses both the processes of building news frames (frame-building), and the processes through which these frames are set in people's minds (frame-setting). For the study of both processes it is also essential to identify and document the frames used in the different journalistic cultures of the world.

The most important frames identified in media coverage of electoral processes have been the strategic game frame and the issue frame. News articles with a strategic game frame are those

centered on describing the candidates' viability and their strategies, such as their use of campaign resources (Aalberg, Strömbäck & De Vreese, 2012). In contrast, news articles with issue framing present "proposals for the problems, information about who is advocating which policy alternative, and consequences of the problems and proposals" (Rhee, 1997: 30).

Predominance of the strategic game frame over the issue frame in the media coverage of electoral campaigns has been documented mainly in the United States and Western European countries (Aalberg, Strömbäck & De Vreese, 2012; Dimitrova & Kostadinova, 2013), possibly associated with the prevalence of majority political systems in these regions. In a study conducted in Mexico—with an electoral system that can be categorized as mixed because of its combination of relative majority and popular representation posts—Muñiz (2015) also found that the strategic game frame prevailed. However, the differences in the terminology, operationalization and methodological approaches of the published studies make it difficult to contrast the evidence that supports the proliferation of this style of news reporting (Aalberg, Strömbäck & De Vreese, 2012: 171). Echeverría & González (2018), for example, report that the strategic macro frame predominated over the political macro frame in the coverage of the last four Mexican presidential elections (with the exception of 2006) by newspapers with national reach. The strategic macro frame consisted of the game, human interest, conflict and strategy frames; while the political macro frame agglutinated frames that emphasize substantive issues: political issues, political processes and leadership frames.

The predominance of the strategic game frame has been considered problematic because it takes attention away from the candidates' proposals and platforms (Aalberg, Strömbäck & De Vreese, 2012: 165). Cappella & Jamieson (1997: 147) provided evidence that news articles focused entirely on strategy activate political cynicism in people, a condition characterized mainly as an "absence of trust", based on beliefs about the actors' motivations, and suspicions about "the lack of honesty of [political] actors and groups" (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997: 141, 166). Despite the latter, other researchers have pointed out that treating elections as sports competitions can make them more interesting and attractive for the electorate (Aalberg, Strömbäck & De Vreese, 2012) and, in this sense, have proposed distinguishing between the concept of a horse race frame (the treatment of elections as sports competitions, also known as a *game frame*) and the concept of a strategic game frame (emphasizing the motivations and strategy of political actors), arguing that the latter is the frame responsible for activating political cynicism among voters (De Vreese & Elenbaas, 2008).

In addition to discussion of the effects of the most common frames during the electoral season, it has been considered relevant to investigate which factors are associated with the presence of the strategic game and which are associated with the issue frame. In this way, we assume that the issue frame is essential to promoting the understanding of public affairs by the public, and that it is necessary during electoral campaigns, if the electorate is to be in a position to cast an informed and reasoned vote.

In the categorization of factors explaining frame-building processes in news content, Dimitrova & Kostadinova (2013) have noted that factors can be classified in two levels of analysis: systemic (features of the country's media and political system) and organizational (characteristics of the media organization). Temporal-contextual factors and factors related to political actors are two additional sets of determinants featured in frame-building studies. Although they are two very important groups of

factors, country features —which include characteristics of the electoral and political system— and media system features have been examined in very few comparative studies. These were conducted with large samples covering several countries, mainly on the European continent, for the purpose of monitoring media coverage of the elections to the European Parliament (Dimitrova & Strömback, 2012; Schuck et al., 2013).

In the next pages, we will focus on three types of factors: attributes of the media organization (identified in the literature as organizational factors), factors related to political actors, and temporal-contextual factors.

#### *Variables related to features of the media organization*

Many factors that influence the production of media content have been identified at the organizational level (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). In quantitative frame-building studies, the media sector in which the organization operates and its concession regime are particularly relevant, as they are factors with discrete values, and they have generated interesting results: comparing one media sector with another it was found in a study on poverty coverage that television coverage is more oriented toward reporting episodically than thematically as distinct from newspaper coverage (Kim et al., 2010). In this comparison it is interesting to note that of the two media, the newspaper is the one most inclined to address a complex topic —poverty— in a substantive way.

Turning to strategic framing studies, the comparative study by Schuck et al. (2013), conducted with data from European Union countries, did not find that the origin of the news item —whether it came from television or a printed newspaper— explained the presence of conflict and horse race frames. Conducted in a non-electoral period, a study by Schmuck et al. (2016) found a greater presence of the strategic game frame in online newspapers compared to print newspapers. This evidence makes it clear that the sector of the medium can have an influence on the types of frame used within the media coverage, due to the predisposition of different sectors towards particular formats and reporting styles. Now, in terms of a specific distinction between radio and television, there are no studies that have compared frames in one sector with frames in the other; although there are differences between the two sectors that may be relevant for the frame-building. For example, radio content on politics tends to be dialogic, which is seen in the frequent interviewing and reading of comments from the public, whereas television content on politics, on the other hand, tends rather to be monological, which is seen in television's preference for the news story. This may be due to the fact that the costs of production are higher and that television tends to have a greater audience reach, which makes it more important for producers to exercise strict control over aired contents (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). A growing trend that can attenuate this condition is media convergence, particularly that of “traditional” media sectors, with some form of transmission over the Internet (either live or by podcast), but also in the existence of cross-platform media —radio-television and even radio-television-internet. This phenomenon could blur the differences between these media sectors. On the basis of which, we consider that:

H1. In the explanation of the strategic game frame, it is not significant that the news item comes from television.

H2. In the explanation of the issue frame, it is not significant that the news item comes from television.

In a study that included media from the United States and Sweden, Dimitrova & Strömback (2012) reported that public service channels tend to offer issue coverage to a greater extent compared to commercial channels. In contrast, in a comparative study of European Union countries, the concession regime of television channels (public or private) did not explain the presence of conflict and horse race frames (Schuck et al., 2013). Likewise, a study on coverage in Austria and Switzerland during a non-electoral period reported that there was no evidence of more strategic game framing in commercial media than in public media (Schmuck et al., 2016). The available evidence is, therefore, inconsistent. But this may be due to the fact that the contents analyzed in the studies reviewed come from different media organizations, which implies variations in the professional standards and cultures within the public and private media analyzed, rather than a difference between public and private broadcasting services. For our study, we propose that:

H3. News items from public media systems are less likely to present a strategic game frame compared to those from private media.

H4. News items from public media systems are more likely to present an issue frame compared to those from private media.

#### *Variables related to political actors*

Among the scarce research that reports findings for factors of this type, the study by Dunaway & Lawrence (2015), working with data from the United States, found that high levels of competitiveness are associated with greater use of the game frame. However, the same study found no evidence that the candidate's gender, their status as an incumbent seeking re-election or the type of position aspired to had an effect on the frames used in the media coverage. In a study conducted in the context of Mexico, comparing the two genders, Rodelo (2016) indicates that male candidates obtain on average a greater share of media coverage than that given to female candidates. Although there is a lack of evidence associating candidate gender with the use of strategic game and issue frames, there is an extensive literature documenting gender bias in the media coverage of electoral campaigns, which is probably caused by factors related to the media organizations, the political parties, campaign strategies and the electoral system (Atkeson & Krebs, 2008; Rodelo, 2016).

On the other hand, it is to be expected that in a multiparty system such as that of Mexico, larger parties with more electoral support would obtain a greater proportion of strategic game coverage than that given to small parties. Based on the evidence, it is hypothesized that candidate traits related to viability will be among those that can predict the use of the strategic game frame, as follows:

H5. News items on candidates to the state government are more likely to have a strategic game frame compared to news items on legislative and municipal candidates.

H6. News items on candidates from parties with more electoral support are more likely to have a strategic game frame compared to the news items on candidates from non-leading parties.

H7. News items on female candidates are not more likely to have a strategic game frame in comparison with news items on male candidates.

H8. The news items on candidates from parties with more electoral support are more likely to have an issue frame in comparison with news items on candidates from non-leading parties.

#### *Temporal-contextual variables*

As timeliness is one of the most important principles in journalism, it is natural for studies to coincide in finding that media coverage of public issues is greater on the dates closest to the triggering events (Snow, Vliegenthart & Corrigan-Brown, 2007). Similarly, studies have shown that campaign coverage increases as election day approaches (Vliegenthart, Boomgarden, Van Aelst & De Vreese, 2010).

On the other hand, it has been pointed out that the main predictors of strategic game coverage are temporal-contextual variables (Aalberg, Strömbäck & De Vreese, 2012). In effect, it has been found that horse race coverage increases as election day approaches because there are more electoral surveys in the period closest to election day and surveys of this kind trigger this style of reporting (Vliegenthart et al., 2010; Schuck et al., 2013). Likewise, other studies have found that use of the game frame increases as election day approaches (Dunaway et al., 2015; Dekavalla, 2016). From the above, we propose that:

H9. As election day approaches, there are more news items with a strategic game frame.

But what other temporal-contextual factors can trigger strategic game coverage? This may vary depending on the region. For example, the previously mentioned study by Vliegenthart et al. (2010) found that strategic coverage increases in the United States during the Republican and Democratic conventions (Vliegenthart et al., 2010). In the Mexican context, important media events include the mandatory debates of presidential and state government candidates, organized by the electoral authorities. Despite the deficiencies found in these exercises, one would expect them by their nature to cause less strategic game coverage and greater issue framing. Another circumstantial factor that provokes controversy, at least in Mexico, refers to the effect of the programming and broadcasting of important entertainment events in days close to election day. In particular, observers have suggested that the programming of important soccer matches in days close to election days causes a decrease both in interest in electoral campaigns and in voter turnout (Baños, 2018). However, the role of this factor has never been tested empirically. In view of the latter, we propose that:

H10. News items published the day after the mandatory debates of state government candidates are more likely to have a strategic game frame.

H11. News items published during the start and end of campaigns are more likely to have a strategic game frame.

H12. News items published the day after the mandatory debates of state government candidates are more likely to have an issue frame.

H13. News items published the day after important entertainment events are less likely to have an issue frame.

## **Context of study**

In the 2018 local electoral process in Jalisco there were three types of popularly elected positions to be voted for: head of the state government, mayors, and local legislators. The electoral process was concurrent with elections to three federal positions: president of the Mexican republic, senators and federal legislators. The concurrence of federal elections distinguishes this electoral process from the “intermediate” elections: the perception that there is “more at stake” causes greater competition, which is a factor influencing greater horse race coverage (Schuck et al., 2013).

The 2014 Mexican constitutional reform legalized the figure of independent candidates (that is, candidates without the support of a political party). The same constitutional reform turned the gender quota into an obligation of gender parity (fifty percent of each gender) for candidates to the federal legislature. Further, a reform in the state of Jalisco made legislative parity possible at the local level, as well as vertical parity in the lists of candidates to municipal positions. For the next electoral cycle (2018 local elections), gender parity was extended to the municipal candidates heading the municipal lists, a feature known as horizontal parity.

Mexico’s broadcasting regulations have also had important modifications made to them that have impacted the radio and television sectors. The 2017 political-electoral reform prohibited the sale of political advertising during campaigns, while guaranteeing fair access by candidates to the electronic media through the equitable distribution of “State times”. Subsequently, the 2013 telecommunications reform prohibited the sale of advertising disguised as content. Media consumption surveys show that television and radio, in that order, continue to be the most important sources of information about politics in Mexico (IFT, 2016).

## **Method**

A secondary analysis was made of the data produced by the monitoring of radio and television coverage of the campaigns of the 2017-2018 electoral process in Jalisco. The analysis was of the content of a sample of 48 radio and television programs broadcast by thirteen different media organizations, eleven of them operating with private use concessions and two operating with public use concessions. The unit of analysis in this database was the monitored news item. To carry out the analysis, only the items disseminated between March 30 and June 27, 2018 (the official period for electoral campaigns) with a single actor as protagonist were considered; that is to say, for the



purposes of this study, items that contained allusions to candidates in different elections, from different parties or of a different gender were discarded ( $n = 25663$  items).

Studies of this topic have observed different criteria to identify the strategic game frame and its derivatives. Aalberg, Strömbäck & De Vreese (2012) distinguish between studies that seek to code the presence of the frame or its dominance (both through dichotomous variables) and those that seek to estimate the level of presence of the frame (through a metric variable). Measuring the presence of a frame implies that the same unit of analysis can present different frames at the same time, while coding the dominance of frames forces the coder to decide in a reasoned manner which frame predominates within the unit of analysis. For this analysis, coders registered the presence of the strategic game frame and issue frames, in each news item.

In the present study, the strategic game frame subsumes frames that other authors consider separately: the game frame or horse race frame and the strategy frame. The presence of a strategic game frame was coded in news items that alluded to surveys or sport, or used bellicose language, or mentioned resources or campaign strategies. On the other hand, following Dan & Iorgoveanu (2013), the presence of the issue frame was coded in news items with explanations of problems or solutions for public issues, or that mentioned a proposal on how to resolve a particular public issue.

The criterion for coding the public or private nature of the media organization was found in the terms of concession granted by the Federal Telecommunications Institute. The three political forces that obtained the highest percentages of preference in the elections for head of the state government, according to polls published during the campaign period, were coded as parties with a greater political preference. These were MC, the Morena-PT-PES coalition, and PRI, in that order.

For the influence of the debate factor, we coded broadcasts on the working day following the mandatory debates of state government candidates, as these were the debates that enjoyed the highest audience and media interest in the local electoral process. They were held on May 13, May 27 and June 10, 2018. To measure the impact of the beginning and the end of the campaigns, the starting and finishing dates were codified (March 30, April 29 and June 27), as well as a day after these. Each of the three matches of Mexico's male soccer team in the FIFA World Cup, which took place on June 17, 23 and 27, were also included as a temporal factor in this electoral process; in the case of the first two games, which took place at the weekend, the next working day was coded (June 18 and 25, respectively).

Two multiple logistic regressions were performed. As mentioned earlier, the dependent variables were the presence of a strategic game frame in the news item and the presence of an issue frame in the news item.

## **Results**

The sample consisted of 7484 news items with a strategic game frame (29.2 % of the sampled news items), while the number of news items with an issue frame was 11163 (43.5 %). Table 1 shows the results of the multiple logistic regression applied to predict the use of the strategic game frame in

electoral coverage. Table 2 shows the results of a multiple logistic regression applied to predict the use of the issue frame in electoral coverage.

With regard to the variables related to organizations, contrary to what was expected in hypotheses 1 and 2, the results indicate that radio programs are more likely to use the strategic game frame, while television programs are more likely to use the issue frame. On the other hand, we found that public media are less likely to use the strategic game frame, and more likely to use the issue frame, as dictated by hypotheses 3 and 4.

With respect to the variables related to candidate traits, the results support hypotheses 5-8: the news items on state government candidates and candidates from parties with greater electoral preference are more likely to present the strategic game frame. Gender did not help to predict the strategic game frame. On the other hand, news items on candidates of non-leading parties, state government candidates, and male candidates are more likely to present the issue frame.

Regarding the temporal-contextual variables, the results reinforce hypothesis 9, since news items closest to the election day were more likely to have a strategic game frame. News items closest to the election day were also more likely to have an issue frame.

We also found that, contrary to what is specified in hypothesis 10, publication on the day after the mandatory debate of state government candidates does not predict the strategic game frame, but the issue frame, although in a negative way (hypothesis 12). In other words, the news items published on the day following the debate of state government candidates are less likely to have an issue frame. Publication on the first day and the last day of campaigns positively predicts the presence of the strategic game frame, and negatively predicts the presence of the issue frame, so hypothesis 11 is supported. Similarly, the publication on the day after Mexico's match in the FIFA World Cup positively predicts the presence of the strategic game frame, and negatively predicts the presence of thematic framing, which confirms hypothesis 13.

Table 1. Results of the multiple logistic regression with factors predicting the strategic game frame

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Standard error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
<b>Days before the election</b>	-.006	.001	<b>.000</b>	.994
Day after state government debate	.085	.053	.108	1.089
<b>Day of start/end of campaigns</b>	.327	.055	<b>.000</b>	1.387
<b>National soccer team match</b>	.347	.066	<b>.000</b>	1.415
<b>Television program</b>	-.399	.028	<b>.000</b>	.671
<b>Public media program</b>	-.581	.032	<b>.000</b>	.559
<b>State government candidate</b>	.288	.030	<b>.000</b>	1.334
<b>Party with greatest preference</b>	.078	.029	<b>.008</b>	1.081
Male candidate	-.052	.041	.205	.949
Constant	-.515	.048	.000	.597
Nagelkerke's R <sup>2</sup> = .042				

Source: author.

Table 2. Results of the multiple logistic regression with factors predicting the issue frame

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Standard error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
<b>Days before the election</b>	-.004	.001	<b>.000</b>	.996
<b>Day after state government debate</b>	-.220	.049	<b>.000</b>	.802
<b>Day of start/end of campaigns</b>	-.273	.051	<b>.000</b>	.761
<b>National soccer team match</b>	-.512	.063	<b>.000</b>	.599
<b>Television program</b>	.257	.026	<b>.000</b>	1.293
<b>Public media program</b>	.161	.028	<b>.000</b>	1.175
<b>State government candidate</b>	.153	.028	<b>.000</b>	1.165
<b>Party with greatest preference</b>	-.139	.027	<b>.000</b>	.871
<b>Male candidate</b>	.241	.037	<b>.000</b>	1.273
Constant	.116	.044	.008	1.123
Nagelkerke's $R^2 = .019$				

Source: author.

## Conclusions

The results obtained indicate predominance of the issue frame over the strategic game frame in the coverage of local elections. Some possible explanations of this finding are referred to in the literature on political communication: for example, that there are fewer public opinion polls at the local level. Likewise, several researchers have opined that the dynamics generated by the strategic game coverage are mostly related to actors and campaigns at the national level (Aalberg, Strömbäck & De Vreese, 2012; Schuck, Boomgarde & De Vreese, 2014) —that is, when there is more at stake. It has been affirmed that at the national level the use of mass media as information channels is more critical (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2012), which increases the probability of finding actors trying to influence public opinion through the use of strategic game coverage. Other possible explanations derive from contextual features of the case study: the most newsworthy local elections were not competitive, as the leading candidate in the Jalisco state government election had a wide advantage. Similarly, in the municipalities of Guadalajara and Zapopan, the officials elected won by a large margin.

The results of this study account for variables that predict the use of strategic game and issue frames in local electoral coverage in radio and television news, significantly. The news items produced by television and public media programs were more likely to have an issue frame. On the other hand, news items from radio and private media programs were more likely to use the strategic game frame. This can be understood as part of the market orientation of private media and confirms the potential of public media to realize a coverage that differs from that made by private media. Moreover, this study provides elements for the first time to suggest that the media sector influences the frames selected by

radio and television programs. The preference for strategic game coverage in radio programs could be explained in part by the greater proclivity of radio news shows to allow spontaneity and public participation in their contents.

The news items about male candidates were more likely to have an issue frame, while gender was not significant for predicting the strategic game frame. The reason that news items about female candidates are less likely to have an issue frame cannot be determined from this study, but the literature hints that gender biases in coverage may originate in the media organizations (due to prejudices about the candidates), as well as in the campaign and in the political parties (due to biases in access to resources, or due to the candidates' undeveloped capacities to communicate their proposals). News items about state government candidates were more likely to have both frames. The news items about candidates from leading parties were more likely to have a strategic game frame and less likely to have an issue frame. In this way, it is confirmed that in the news production process candidate traits can determine the selection of news frames.

This article also supports the significance of the proximity of election day for the selection of both frames under study. The news items published on the first and last days of the campaign were more likely to have a strategic game frame compared to those published on any other day, and less likely to have an issue frame. However, the publication on the day after the state government debate did not produce the expected effect, since the news items broadcast that day were less likely to have an issue frame. This result may be due to the fact that the dates of the state government debates were used in predicting the framing of news content referring to all types of candidacies, a situation that might dissipated the influence of this media event. On the other hand, the news items published on the day after each match of the Mexican soccer team were more likely to have a strategic game frame and less likely to have an issue frame, in this way confirming that this kind of event activates thought patterns that influence the selection of frames in some way. Taken together, these results confirm the influence of temporal-contextual factors in predicting the selection of news frames.

The present study was made from a sample of radio and television news items about candidates competing in a local process that involved elections to multiple positions. A limitation of this study is that, due to the way it was designed, the possibility that the results reflect the idiosyncrasies of the media and political organizations of Jalisco as well as characteristics and processes related to elections of positions at the local and regional levels should be taken into account.

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