

Factors associated with the Chilean public's interest in foreign news on TV

Fatores associados com o interesse do público chileno por notícias estrangeiras na TV

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the interest shown by the Chilean public in foreign news events broadcasted by local newscasts. The analysis is based on the results of a survey carried out in 2009 in the context of the *Foreign TV News Around the World* international project. A regression analysis was conducted in order to identify which variables are the most associated to that interest, concluding that, in general terms, the most relevant factor is the proximity the audience might feel to those events. These results, in accordance to what the literature proposes, suggest that domestication – the linking of foreign news with the local – must be a central consideration in the construction of foreign news by editors and journalists.

Keywords: Foreign news, television, newscasts, public

RESUMO

O artigo analisa o interesse que o público chileno manifesta pelos eventos noticiosos acontecidos fora do país veiculados nos telejornais nacionais. A análise é baseada nos resultados de pesquisa realizada em 2009 no contexto da *Foreign TV News Around the World*. A partir destes dados, é realizada uma análise de regressão para identificar quais variáveis são mais associadas com esse interesse. A conclusão é que, em geral, o fator mais importante é a proximidade sentida pelo público com ditos eventos. Estes resultados, em coincidência com a literatura científica, sugerem que a *domesticação*, ou seja, a vinculação da política externa com as notícias locais deve ser um fator central na construção das notícias estrangeiras para os jornalistas e editores.

Palavras-chave: Notícias estrangeiras, televisão, telejornais, público

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WE CAN SAY that there is an abundance of studies on the content of international news, both in the written press and in television, that covers more than a single nation, and of studies on how different organizations in different countries produce and control these news items (for a general review of these, see Hjarvard, 2002). However, there are far fewer studies on the public's perception of the subject, and especially of research that compares the attitudes of audiences in different countries.

This work on the subject is part of the Foreign TV News Around the World project, that includes researchers from 16 countries headed by Dr. Akiba Cohen, of the University of Tel Aviv, Israel¹. In the case of Chile, the study was carried out by the authors of this article, who received financing from the National Fund for Scientific and Technological Development, FONDECYT (Project N° 1080047). The objective of this global study is to analyze the presence of foreign news in television newscasts, and the value given to them by the societies of the different participating countries. In order to do this, the subject was researched considering three dimensions: the effective content of foreign news on television; the expectations of the public, and the decision-making process in the media (along the lines of Gurevitch et al, 1991). In other words, the three basic elements of mass communication – issuer, message and receptor – a model which is not usual in research on media in general, and on news in particular (Braman and Cohen, 1990).

The choice of television as the focus of the study is justified in view of its massive nature: both at national and international level and in Chile, the public tends to recognize it as the main source of information (cf. Consejo Nacional de Televisión, 2011). Furthermore, television newscasts, which are all very similar in nature, are broadcasted virtually the world over, which makes them a focus for a global study (cf. Van Ginneken, 1998).

This article analyzes the subject from the point of view of the audience, and according to the results of a survey carried out in 2009. The public's perceptions of foreign news will be identified considering the fact that of the 16 countries involved in the project, Chile is the second with the lowest coverage of foreign news that does not involve Chileans: 8.2% of their newscast time (Porath, Mujica and Maldonado, 2009). In this case, we are not so interested in learning about the audience's attitude towards foreign news – in comparison with their attitude towards national news² – but are rather looking for the variables significantly associated to this interest, and in this way come to discuss the characteristics of the audience that would explain it.

1. The rest of the participants in this project are: Knut De Swert (Belgium), Paolo Mancini and Marco Mazzoni (Italy), Agnieszka Stepinska (Poland), Thomas Hanitzsch and Angie Vu (Switzerland), Joseph Chan and Baohua Zhou (China), Christine Heimprecht, Thorsten Quandt, Thilo von Pape and Jürgen Wilke (Germany), Francis Lee (Hong Kong), Eddie Kuo and Xiaoge Xu (Singapore), Ven-hwei Lo and Tai-Li Wang (Taiwan), Jacques Alkalai Wainberg (Brazil), Abby Goodrum and Elizabeth Godo (Canada), Lars Willnat and David Weaver (U.S.A.), Antonio Belo (Portugal) and Youichi Ito (Japan).

2. A first analysis of these aspects, comparing the results of the survey and a focus group study, was published by the authors of this paper (see Porath and Mujica 2010).

THE PUBLIC AND FOREIGN NEWS

In general, studies on the perception and attitudes of the audience have concluded that citizens, in their capacity as consumers of news, naturally express less interest in foreign news than they do in domestic news (Sande, 1971; Sparks and Winter, 1980; Tai and Chang, 2002). According to Jensen (1998), at an international level, television newscast audiences unanimously emphasize that the difference between “here” and “there” is an important dimension in the reception and interpretation of television newscasts (quoted by Roessler 2003, p. 5). This disposition on the part of the audience would then correspond, according to Roessler, to the tendency seen in all newscasts: to focus on their own territory for coverage so that they predominantly cover subjects that are relevant for their region. Sreberny-Mohammadi et al. (1985) call this trend “universal localism”.

Nonetheless, studies have shown that exposure to foreign news has an impact on at least part of the public’s agenda: the way in which the media cover international news affects the audience’s perceptions on these international issues (Wanta and Hu, 1993) and their attitudes and opinions regarding foreign countries (Perry, 1990; Semetko et al., 1992).

A previous investigation in Israel (Cohen 1993), showed the significant interest and concern of the audience about the way in which foreign news was presented in public television broadcasts, a phenomenon which is not the trend in other countries and that could be explained by the exceptional situation of that country (which has a large immigrant population and is always a source of foreign news for other countries), as the author points out. This research focused on establishing the audience’s interest in foreign news, the perception of its relevance, and the factors that determine it, together with the function of international news on television (i.e. the reason for television showing news from other countries).

Regarding the public’s perception of news and its relationship with the attitudes of news producers, a study by Shoemaker and Cohen (2006) proved that both journalists and audiences tended to agree that deviance and social significance were the essence of their definition of news. The focus groups organized in Santiago and Concepción by the Chilean chapter of the Shoemaker and Cohen team (Puente and Mujica, 2004 and 2006), also showed a congruence between the values considered in the definition of what the audience, editors and journalists consider to be news: novelty (described as what is unknown, strange or unexpected), social relevance (understood as that which affects community life and has long-term consequences) and nearness (defined as events that occur near to the audience or that have been directly experienced

by it). In the case of Chile, the distance between the hierarchization of news on the part of the audience, journalists and editors was especially distinctive in the Santiago media and their audiences. An explanation of these results, as proposed by Puente and Mujica (2004 and 2006), is that the national objective of the media in the capital – which among other things, implies the inclusion of foreign news – might foster a distance with their local audiences. On the other hand, the regional media would emphasize their own identity and encourage it. In short, although audience and editors share newsworthiness values, both groups have different criteria when it comes to organizing the relevance of the published material.

On another dimension of the analysis of audience reception in terms of news in general, the literature shows that television news is quite difficult to process and understand (Gunter, 1987). In order to explain this, diverse reasons are invoked, such as the varied nature of contents, the presentation format and the limited knowledge of many viewers (Cohen, 1998). The process is even further complicated by the fact that in general, television journalists tend to be unaware of the cognitive problems that their audiences might experience vis-a-vis television newscasts.

The “limited capacity” model of Lang et al (2000) on the reception of televised messages indicates that viewers should decode the information contained in the message, recover the data stored in their long term memory to give a meaning to recently received messages, and store them in their long term memory. These three information processing sub-stages (decoding, storage and data recovery) occur continuously and simultaneously while the viewer watches television. According to this model, the distribution of resources for processing the message is determined both by automatic processes (triggered by the content and the structural effects of the message), and by controlled processes (interests, needs, targets and motivations of the receivers). On the basis of this analysis, the authors argue that the characteristics of the edition of the message can affect the process that leads to its comprehension.

Indeed, foreign news would represent an even greater difficulty for the public, especially, as we have pointed out, because the public lacks the background and previous information which are indispensable for the comprehension of these reports and because, in general, international news dispatches are far too short (cf. Philo, 2004).

These difficulties might explain the fact that in focus groups applied in the context of the project “Establishment, Validation and Analysis of criteria to measure information quality: ‘Journalistic Added Value’ in a compared perspective of Chilean newspapers and television newscasts”, financed by FONDECYT

(Project N° 1030996), the Chilean public expressed that it valued attempts to connect or relate foreign news with elements that were near to domestic audiences. In the study, proximity – both emotional and geographic – was understood as a desirable characteristic in the processing of the journalistic product (“It happened in the United States, but I liked the fact that they mentioned the consequences of the event in Chile”) (cf. School of Journalism Team, UC, 2004). In the literature, this is known as “domestication”, and refers to the fact that foreign news items are “domesticated” or “localized”, or framed and presented in a way that makes them more relevant for the audience of the country in which they are being aired (Cohen et al., 1996).

“Domestication” is defined on the basis of the verification that the media maintain orientations which are both global and attached to local culture. Therefore, foreign events are presented in frameworks that make them understandable, attractive and relevant for local audiences; and the meanings of these events are constructed in ways that are compatible with the culture and ideologies that prevail in the societies in which they are broadcasted (Gurevitch et al., 1991). According to the authors, for an event to be considered newsworthy it should be embedded in a narrative framework that is familiar and recognizable to both journalists and audiences. So, in the field of global communication, framing events in a special way is relevant, as it helps the audiences receiving the news to understand it (Gurevitch et al 1991, quoted by Clausen 2004).

Ever since the end of the past century, over fifty studies have aimed to establish which are the determining factors of media coverage of events that occur beyond national frontiers (see Golan, 2006), focusing on the decision-making processes of journalists and editors (for example, Chang and Lee 1992; Westerståhl and Johansson, 1994; Wu, 2000). They all coincide in that the election of local and foreign news on the part of the media follows certain relatively similar journalistic criteria and standards, which have different intensities: for a foreign event to be broadcasted, its newsworthiness should be greater than that of the local events, (Cohen, 2001).

Newsworthiness factors tend to move between those described by Gatung and Ruge in their 1965 study (reviewed by Harcup and O’Neill 2001), and despite being based the study of newspapers, the distinction of the twelve factors that would justify the appearance of foreign news in the media is also useful in the case of a study on television. The categories suggested by the authors are: similar frequencies between the flow of the event and the medium; that the event goes beyond the intensity threshold required by the medium; clarity; social significance for the community in which it is broadcast; agreement with the prejudices of the medium; influence of the event; duration of the consequences of the

event; theme balance inside the medium; references to elite individuals and countries; the human factor, and the negative character of the event (Galtung and Ruge, 1965). We intend to determine through the analysis of the results of the survey carried out, if these factors are correlated to the characteristics and opinions of the public.

Heinderyckx (1993) – who compared and contrasted the way in which foreign news was treated and presented in various European countries, and Wilke (1998) – who focused specifically on the situation in Germany – in addition to large scale studies of television news in dozens of countries in the course of a same “normal” night (for example, Malik, 1992; and above all Wu 2004) suggest that different social values, journalistic interest criteria, and the differences in the interest perceived by the members of the national audience probably have an impact on the policy and practice of a station regarding foreign news. In other words, there is no consensus on which criteria and to what extent are more or less common in most nations. The project in which this piece of research is embedded, aims precisely at looking for answers to this concern.

Golan (2006), nonetheless maintains that it is possible to identify some news factors (which are also called news values) of foreign countries and of international events that explain why they were selected by the media of the countries studied. They are:

Deviance and social significance of the events: deviance, defined as the characteristic that makes an event different from others that occur in a same community; and the social significance of the events, understood as the political social, economic or public impact of an event in the social system of a given community. Both were studied by Shoemaker and Cohen (2006) in television, radio and newspapers in ten countries. Although the study did not make a separate analysis of foreign and domestic news, it showed that both factors are important to the news selection process. Prior to this, Shoemaker, and other researchers (1987 and 1991) had analyzed these factors and demonstrated their application as an explanation of the newsworthiness of foreign news, but only in US media.

Prominence (economic or military) of the country of origin within a hierarchy of nations. This factor corresponds to the Galtung and Ruge (1965) reference to elite nations. Galtung (1971), Kim and Barnett (1996), Chang (1998) and Golan (2003)³ confirmed the validity of this criterion.

This factor, on its part, has a subtype which we could define as the *Prominence or Relevance of the country of origin for the country in which the news is aired*. For example, during the Cold War, in the United States certain countries were perceived as more newsworthy than others, as was the case of

3. Quoted by Golan (2006) p. 325. More examples and operationalizations in p. 326 of the Golan text.

the Soviet Union, Israel, Great Britain and South Vietnam (Weaver et al 1984; Larson 1982)⁴. In this case, the focus of interest was strongly influenced by the bipolar scheme of international relations, where in addition to the main contenders, the territories that were a real or probable scenario for the proxy wars between the superpowers gained relevance. This resulted in little or no coverage of the rest of the Third World countries, as they are called. But this criterion was not discarded after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Riffe and Budianto (2001)⁵ found evidence that twenty nations monopolized the international coverage of the great American news chains, generating an evident imbalance with a large number of Third World nations which receive minimum coverage, or are simply not mentioned in the news.

4. Quoted by Golan (2006).

5. Quoted by Golan (2006).

On its part, a category related to the prominence that the broadcasting country gives to the country of origin of the news, would be the *geographical proximity* described by Wu (1998), who maintains that the countries that are nearest to the broadcasting country will receive more news coverage than those which are more distant from it. It is foreseeable that both criteria (prominence for the emitting country and geographical proximity) can turn out to be a complement to the idea of a world hierarchy where elite nations receive more media coverage, especially western industrialized nations. But this can be contradictory for developing nations, because neighboring or more prominent countries can be far down on the world military or economic hierarchy. In this sense, our study will contribute to understand which of the two criteria – the importance or proximity for the country that airs the event, or its importance in the world hierarchy – has a greater impact on the participating countries, especially in the case of periphery nations.

Cultural Affinity. Corresponds to the fourth criterion defined by Golan (2006). Factors like religion (Shoemaker et al. 1991), language (Kariel and Rosenvall 1995), migration and ethnic matrix (Golan and Wanta, 2003) and freedom of the press (Van Belle, 2000), will influence the coverage of foreign news. In the 1970s, Hester (1973) suggested that communications media would give more coverage to those nations that share cultural characteristics with the broadcasting country, with which they have greater affinity.

To these criteria we must add another consideration: the *threshold of intensity required* by the media for an event to become news (cf Galtung and Ruge, 1965). In this sense, Cohen et al. (1990) establish a difference between the thresholds of national and foreign news. In their study of five countries, using social conflict as their subject – as in general most news is based on this issue – which can be analyzed and described according to levels of severity (based on their complexity, intensity and difficulty to solve), they found that foreign

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conflicts most often appear as more severe in the news than local conflicts because in general, these must be more complex and/or more intense and/or more difficult to solve than internal conflicts, if they are to cross the threshold of journalistic interest.

METHODOLOGY

A probabilistic telephone survey to men and women between the ages of 18 and 19 living in 18 Chilean cities (including the capital, Santiago)⁶ was carried out in urban centers to analyze the public's perception of the news coming from abroad. The interviews took place between 22 September and 9 October 2009, with the application of a questionnaire approved by the international team working on the project. The final sample had 1,128 cases (with a margin of error of +/- 2.9 points, for a level of confidence of 0.95 and under the assumption of maximum likelihood). The data analyzed are weighted according to gender, age socio-economic level, and city of residence.

As regards the broadcasts by the television channels studied, the global study concluded that the foreign news agenda on the stations of the different participating countries varies significantly; that there are not many events and issues that capture global attention; and that the most important countries in terms of news coverage vary considerably depending on the broadcasting country. The final conclusion of this research is that globalization has not led to a homogenization of news contents in the different countries.

As regards the public, the question was aimed at learning which factors could best predict the interest of the audience in foreign news. In order to achieve this, it included questions on the perception of the time spent on foreign news; the amount of time that should be given to foreign news, in the opinion of the audience; general interest in foreign news on a series of specific subjects, and the countries (apart from Chile) which were more interesting to the audience in terms of information.

The specific question on interest in foreign events was as follows: "In general, to what degree are you interested in news from other countries?" and the replies were graded on a five point scale ranging from 1, "very interested" to 5, "not in the least interested" in news from other countries.

In general, in comparative terms, on a world level the study showed that in all countries interest in foreign news depends principally on education, exposure to TV newscasts, and involvement with domestic issues. On the other hand, it showed that people are less interested in foreign news if they feel that the events that have occurred in other countries do not affect them, and if they lack sufficient background information to follow this news.

6. They are all cities with more than 95000 inhabitants, the population of which represents almost 50% of the country's overall population. 403 surveys were carried out in Santiago; 406 in the cities of Antofagasta, Concepción, Coquimbo, La Serena, Puerto Montt, Temuco, Valparaíso and Viña del Mar; and 411 in the remaining cities.

RESULTS FOR CHILE

Exposure to news: relative supremacy of television

The study showed that television offers a high exposure to news. In fact, the subjects interviewed stated that, on average, they watch newscasts practically six days of the week. But, on analyzing the set of questions referring to time of exposure to different news channels on a working day (Monday to Friday) “yesterday”, we concluded that the percentage of the public with no exposure whatsoever to any medium totaled 14.3% of the sample; that 17% was exposed to some type of information media apart from television (radio, newspapers, the Internet), and that 26.1% only watched TV newscasts (without using other media). This means that 42.7% used TV in combination with other media for information. In other words although on an average working day 68.8% of the public is exposed to TV newscasts (albeit for a few minutes only), only one in four of the interviewees depends exclusively on TV for information.

Valuation of foreign news on television

The general public shows little interest in news from other countries: only 34% of the subjects interviewed expressed “a lot of” or “quite a lot” of interest, against 52.5% that expressed “some interest” in foreign news (the rest shows even less interest). In fact, when the public was asked to express its interest in seven different subjects (See Figure 1⁷), it always showed significantly more interest in events when they take place in Chile rather than abroad. This tendency of the public to value the nearness or proximity of an event matches the tendency that newscasts have in giving priority to local news over foreign news, ratifying the “universal localism” described by Sreberny-Mohammadi et al. (1985).

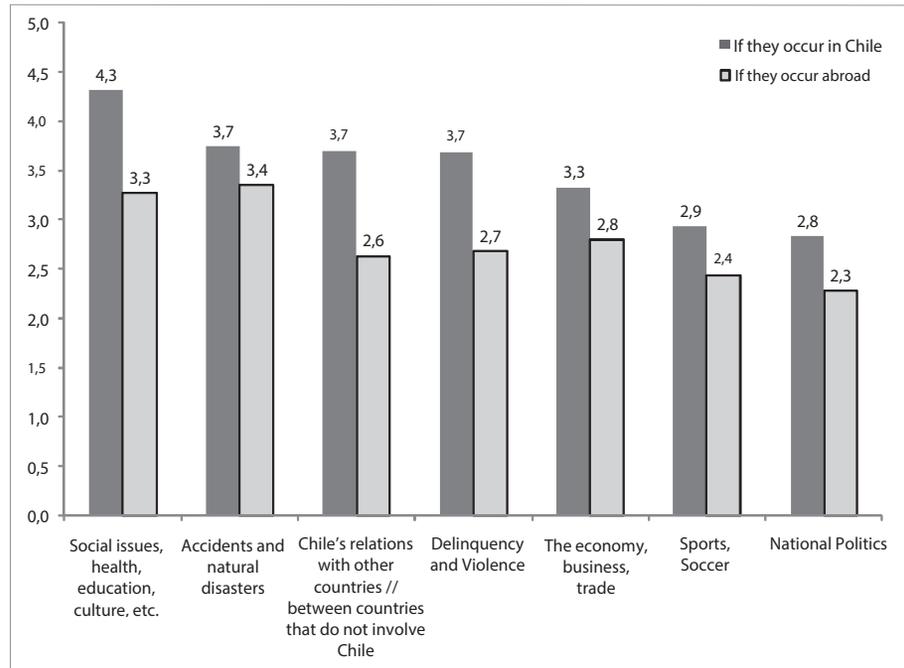
Factors related to interest in foreign news⁸

For a better understanding of the factors that determine the interest in foreign news, we carried out a regression analysis, which enables us to observe the effect of different variables and at the same time isolate the specific effect of each on an independent variable controlled by the rest of these variables. We carried out a stepwise linear regression and, for each case, the method used was to introduce all the selected variables (using the SPSS 14.0 program). As regards lost cases, which in the formal education variable reached 4.2%, values were reassigned, taking into specific account age groups and socio-economic level of the lost cases. In the rest of the other 29 variables tested, only three presented lost cases which never exceeded 1%. The substitution according to sample mean was used in this case.

7. Interest in a subject is based on an index, where 5 is “very interested”, 1 is “not in the least interested” and 0 is no reply or a total lack of interest in news from abroad as this question was filtered to apply only to those subjects that showed some degree of interest in news from other countries.

8. A first analysis of these aspects, comparing the results of the survey and of a focus group study, was published by the authors of this paper (see Porath and Mujica 2010).

Figure 1: INTEREST IN SUBJECTS DEPENDING ON WHETHER THEY OCCUR IN CHILE OR ABROAD



In a first step (see Table 1), the predictor variables used included certain habitual socio-demographic variables like gender, age, socio-economic level (in five levels, taking the average of the housing cluster where the interview was carried out), the number of years of formal education of the subject, and the size of the city of residence of the subject (divided into three categories: the capital, Santiago, large cities and medium cities). Two additional variables were added regarding the interviewee and his/her relationship with foreign countries: having lived abroad for more than six consecutive months or the cases of resident foreigners (13 cases), and the frequency with which the subject travelled abroad (measured in six levels).

The results of this first model show that when all the predictor variables are controlled, only the number of years of formal education and the fact of having lived abroad (or of being a resident foreigner) affect interest in foreign news. It is interesting to note that it is definitely the years of formal education and not other associated variables, like socio-economic level, that show a greater association with foreign news. On the other hand, it is interesting that foreign travel does not have a significant association with this interest, which indicates that Chileans that travel abroad more frequently for pleasure or work are not interested in receiving news from these countries. This process also discards

gender as a factor of more or less interest in this type of news, as could be inferred from a bivaried analysis.

The limitation of this group of variables to predict interest in foreign news is evident given that R^2 indicates that the model is incapable of explaining more than 6% of this variance.

TABLE 1: STEPWISE REGRESSION, FIRST THREE MODELS

MODEL	MODEL 1		MODEL 2		MODEL 3	
	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
Variables						
(Constant)	2,632	0,000	2,405	0,000	2,360	0,000
Gender (female = 1)	-0,021	0,482	-0,018	0,545	-0,020	0,498
Socio-economic level	0,041	0,196	0,040	0,206	0,042	0,178
Age	0,034	0,268	0,017	0,582	0,014	0,662
YEARS OF FORMAL EDUCATION	0,187	0,000	0,179	0,000	0,178	0,000
Living abroad for more than 6 months	0,090	0,002	0,085	0,004	0,079	0,008
Frequency of foreign travel	0,035	0,264	0,026	0,395	0,030	0,340
Size of city	0,025	0,400	0,025	0,401	0,028	0,351
Days on which s/he watched television in a week			0,095	0,002	0,097	0,002
time watching TV, yesterday			-0,019	0,531	-0,018	0,554
time reading the newspaper, yesterday			0,015	0,612	0,011	0,704
time watching new son the Internet, yesterday			0,043	0,170	0,043	0,168
time listening to news on the radio, yesterday			0,006	0,842	0,006	0,828
Reasons for watching news on TV:						
They provide something to talk about with others					0,028	0,373
They help to keep up with current events and affairs in Chile					0,040	0,205
They can be amusing					-0,068	0,027
Adjusted R squared		0,053		0,059		0,062
Change in R squared				0,011		0,005
Sig. F change				0,027		0,089
Dependent variable: In general, ¿To what a degree are you interested in news from other countries?						
		Significant value, 0,05 or less				
		Is coefficient B				

In a second step, the model includes variables that measure the number of minutes destined to exposure to news from any type of media (watching news on TV, reading the newspaper, listening to news on the radio and reading news on the Internet), considering their reported experience for the day before (only for working days). In the case of television newscasts, it also includes the exposure frequency for an average week, measured in days (1 to 7).

Although it might be expected that information seekers, people who are most exposed to news and search for it on different platforms, might also be associated with people with a greater interest in international news, this is not the case in Chile. Only the self-admission of watching news on TV more days a week gives a statistically significant value to the dependent variable, but it is quite interesting to note the negative value regarding the effective behavior of watching newscasts on the previous day. Once again, this new model which now has twelve variables, attains low predictive value.

A third step included the addition of variables regarding the motivations for exposition to TV news in general (not specifically foreign news). Three reasons are tested: the social reason (they provide topics for discussion), information (to be up to date with events) and entertainment. In these three cases, the public had to show its level of agreement with these reasons on a five level Likert scale. In this case, a single variable resulted statistically significant: the rejection to watch news because they “can be amusing” as indicated by the negative sign of the beta coefficient, in other words, the greater support of this statement, the lesser interest in foreign news. And yet again, the predictive value of this mode, which now has 15 independent variables, continues to be low.

A fourth step looked for an association between the subjects that interest interviewees when they watch TV newscasts and their interest in foreign news. The seven subjects were tested here, measured on a five level interest scale (see Table 2) in the assumption that these events take place in Chile.

With these 21 variables, the model has already taken an important step forward regarding its predictive capacity, with R^2 at 14%. The variables of this new package, which made a significant contribution to the model were interest in national politics but more significantly interest in Chile's relations with other countries. The latter is congruent with the aspects we had mentioned in our theoretical framework: that the proximity (physical or emotional) of a news item gives it value, not only in the eyes of the media and their editors, but also in the eyes of the public. This is something that journalists have always suspected or known for a fact.

Please note that, contrary to what was believed, there are other subjects that do not weigh specifically on the model. For example, interest in violence,

the only case in which the declared interest in the subject approached the interest for the same type of news if the events occurred in the country (see Table 1). Interest in local delinquency and violence does not transfer to its counterparts abroad. This same absence would be applicable in the case of the economy, since an interest in the local economy would not increase interest in foreign economies. Similarly, this fact would refute the suspicion that the great global interdependence of the Chilean economy would increase the interest in following foreign news. In this sense, a globalized economy does not mean that public interest will follow this same trend.

It is also important to point out that when controlling the above model with this new group of variables, the importance of two variables which were relevant before disappears: days of exposure to newscasts and rejection of news as a source of entertainment. So neither the frequency of exposure to news nor the reasons for watching the news affect interest in foreign news.

Table 2: STEPWISE REGRESSION FOLLOWING MODELS

MODEL	MODEL 4		MODEL 5		MODEL 6	
	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
(Constant)	1,678	0,000	1,802	0,000	2,097	0,000
Gender (female = 1)	0,008	0,805	0,007	0,831	-0,034	0,276
Socio-economic level	0,032	0,284	0,036	0,241	0,019	0,531
Age	-0,013	0,674	-0,011	0,722	0,000	0,993
Years of formal education	0,125	0,000	0,127	0,000	0,074	0,027
LIVING ABROAD FOR MORE THAN 6 MONTHS	0,073	0,011	0,074	0,010	0,069	0,014
Frequency of foreign travel	0,024	0,420	0,026	0,392	0,033	0,257
Size of city	0,041	0,158	0,041	0,157	0,041	0,147
Days on which s/he watched television in a week	0,056	0,068	0,053	0,085	0,039	0,195
time watching TV, yesterday	-0,034	0,260	-0,037	0,220	-0,033	0,263
time reading the newspaper, yesterday	0,011	0,697	0,013	0,658	0,021	0,461
time watching new son the Internet, yesterday	0,039	0,192	0,037	0,222	0,047	0,108
time listening to news on the radio, yesterday	-0,009	0,757	-0,007	0,809	-0,006	0,840

Table 2: STEPWISE REGRESSION FOLLOWING MODELS (continuation)

MODEL	MODEL 4		MODEL 5		MODEL 6	
Variables	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
Reasons for watching news on TV:						
They provide something to talk about with others	0,001	0,981	0,004	0,903	-0,010	0,723
They help to keep up with current events and affairs in Chile	0,021	0,492	0,024	0,436	0,028	0,344
They can be amusing	-0,051	0,087	-0,054	0,072	-0,040	0,165
Subjects of interest:						
National politics	0,079	0,009	0,082	0,007	0,050	0,088
Delinquency and violence in Chile	-0,024	0,435	-0,021	0,497	-0,021	0,485
Local sports and soccer	0,018	0,556	0,019	0,548	-0,012	0,697
Chile's relations with other countries	0,241	0,000	0,244	0,000	0,212	0,000
The economy, business, trade in Chile	0,044	0,149	0,041	0,177	0,017	0,566
Accidents and natural disasters (Chile)	0,029	0,340	0,026	0,380	0,021	0,468
Social issues like health, education, culture	0,039	0,190	0,037	0,222	0,020	0,485
The world is dominated by a few powerful countries			-0,033	0,286	-0,054	0,079
The world is full of conflict and violence			-0,030	0,330	-0,026	0,388
International organizations like the United Nations play a very important role in world affairs			0,028	0,337	0,027	0,352
Common man has no possibility of influencing World affairs			-0,011	0,714	0,043	0,158
News or events from other countries do not affect me					-0,115	0,000
There's too much news on wars, violence and disasters					0,042	0,151
Lack of background information to understand Foreign affairs					-0,104	0,000
The same things seem to happen all the time and nothing seems to change					-0,028	0,358
Interest in foreign affairs provided that Chileans appear					0,173	0,000
Adjusted R squared		0,140		0,140		0,198
Change in R squared		0,082		0,003		0,060
Sig. F change		0,000		0,380		0,000
Dependent variable: In general, to what a degree are you interested in foreign news?						
		Valor significativo de 0,05 ou inferior				
		Is coefficient B				

The fifth step added the variables that described a cynical view of international politics on the part of the audience. Four opinions of international news were tested, which indicated a vision of removal from this subject, given the unimportant role that the common man might play in them. Interviewees expressed their agreement on a five level Likert scale. It is significant that none of these plays an important role with regard to the dependent variable. A cynical view of international politics does not remove (or increase) interest in news from abroad.

In the last step, five variables that measured a subjective relationship between the public and events that take place in other countries were tested. In this case, statements were presented that aimed to assess the subjective impact of these events or the ability to understand them; the perception of a certain routinization of these news items in the media; its preference for sensationalist news and finally, their interest in these events if they include a Chilean participant (always on a five level Likert scale).

Significantly, in this case, the model with 30 independent variables reaches important levels in terms of its capacity to predict interest in foreign news, explaining almost 20% of the variance. And not because of the two variables that measured the vision of routinization of these events, but because of the three that established a personal connection between the subject and events occurring abroad. In this way, the rejection of the statement that these events “do not affect me” and the feeling of lacking background information to understand them, and an interest in events affecting Chileans abroad, significantly increase the probability of showing an interest in news coming from abroad. No less interesting is the fact that when including these variables in the model, interest in national news lost importance when compared with interest in foreign news.

This reaffirms the vision that it is the subject’s internal factors (psychological, cognitive or experiential) that explain the interest in this kind of news, making him feel an increased proximity with events that take place abroad. This, to the detriment of interest in news in general, or for specific subjects (with the exception of the country’s foreign affairs), or by his vision of international politics and their correlation with what is broadcasted by the media.

The final model

In a last stage, we tested a regression model for our dependent variable in which we only included those variables which had had a certain weighting in the linear equation in the previous six steps (Table 3)

Table 3: FINAL MODEL TO EXPLAIN INTEREST IN FOREIGN NEWS

MODEL	FINAL MODEL	
	Beta	Sig.
Variables		
(Constante)	1,969	0,000
Subjects of interest: Chile's relations with other countries	0,225	0,000
Interest in news from other countries, if Chileans appear in them	0,165	0,000
Events or news from other countries do not interest me (Rejection)	0,113	0,000
Years of formal education	0,108	0,000
Lack of background information to understand news from other countries (Rejection)	0,103	0,000
Has lived abroad for more than 6 months	0,082	0,002
Subjects of interests: National politics	0,050	0,079
Days on which TV is watched in normal times	0,044	0,106
They can be entertaining (Rejection)	0,041	0,126
Adjusted R squared		0,199
Dependent variable: In general, to what a degree are you interested in foreign news?		

Finally, the variable with the greatest explanatory power in the final model is the interest in Chile's relations with other countries. There is only one socio-demographic variable that is relevant: years of formal education or level of education. But it is significant that at least three important variables in this model are related to the factor of emotional proximity with events occurring abroad: that the news items involve Chileans, that they do affect them to some extent, and having lived abroad for a long time. In fact, the first variable mentioned is not only a matter of subject, but is also related to Chile's participation in the events, in this case public officials in charge of the political and/or economic relations of the country. The other variable that reaches an adequate statistical significance is the rejection of the assertion that they do not have sufficient background information to understand these events.

The central factor: proximity and its corresponding domestication

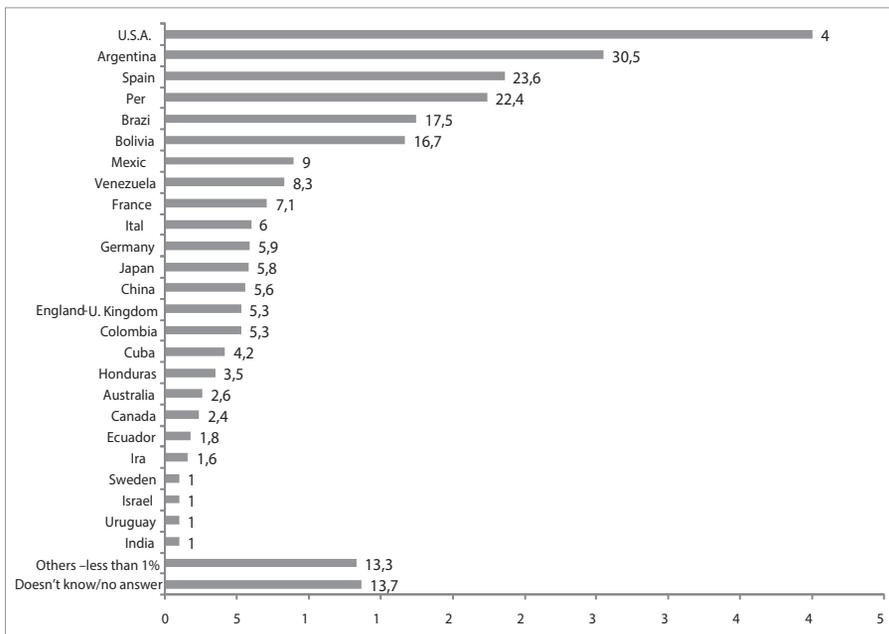
This interest in what affects countrymen and Chilean interests abroad is related to other replies given by the interviewees, for example when asked about which were the countries that interested them most. In connection with the question regarding which country they were more interested in in terms of news (Figure 2), the six that appear as the most interesting (in five spontaneous references) are the U.S.A. (ranking first) – an economic, political and military superpower – our three border countries – Argentina (second place), Peru (fourth place) and Bolivia (sixth place); the former colonial authority – Spain (third place), and Brazil (fifth place).

The result is relatively congruent with the countries that receive more television coverage, according to our content analysis (see Porath, Mujica and Maldonado 2009), where the U.S.A. and Argentina also appear in the first and second place, Brazil in the third, and Spain in the fourth place. The other two border countries, Peru and Bolivia, are further down, holding the 15th and 20th place respectively.

As we have already pointed out, the literature gives three explanations for news coverage of foreign events: the above mentioned geographical proximity (border countries); the hypothesis of the economic and military weight of countries in the international arena, which would explain the clear first place of the U.S.A. (we could also add explanatory elements based on dependence theories); and cultural proximity, which would explain why Spain is the European country that heads the list.

Coincidence with the news priorities of the different channels is also interesting from the point of view of the circular relationship between media and receptors. We could say that television adapts to the needs and requirements of the public, but it is also easy to assume that the public defines its priorities and expectations on the basis of its ample experience with television.

Figure 2: COUNTRIES THAT THE PUBLIC IS INTERESTED IN BEING INFORMED ABOUT (FIVE SPONTANEOUS REFERENCES)



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In this context we can understand the impact of a news item on the audience because there are Chilean citizens taking part in events beyond our national frontiers. The content analysis clearly showed that Chilean television makes extremely frequent reports on the presence of Chilean soccer players scoring goals in foreign soccer leagues or winning tennis tournaments throughout the world. Foreign news with the participation of Chileans in sports are clearly the most important, using up 50% of the time devoted to this category (see Porath, Mujica and Maldonado 2009). Therefore, geographical or cultural proximity would not be the central factor in preference for foreign news; another type of proximity – created by Chileans feeling that other Chileans are “making history” beyond their frontiers – is also a factor of preference.

This factor can be understood as an element of emotional proximity, which facilitates the “domestication” work that journalists must do when facing the dilemma of broadcasting news about events abroad which, as we have already said, tend to be less valued by the public in most cultures. A very easy way of domesticating these events is provided by the mere fact that Chileans are taking part in them. Another is what is defined as the “Aberdeen Effect”, which refers to the fact that a newspaper of this Scottish city referred to the Titanic tragedy as “an Aberdeen man lost at sea” (Weischenberg, 1995: 152, quoted by Roessler, 2003:7).

The “limited capacities” model referred to by Lang et al, (2000) says that the distribution of message processing resources is determined, on the one hand, by automatic processes triggered by the content and structural effects of the message; and on the other hand, by a series of controlled processes, like the interests, needs, targets and motivations of the audience. As journalists cannot influence the interests, abilities and tastes of the public, they would only be able to facilitate the understanding of the messages that they construct through the structure of that journalistic message. Reporters and editors should be aware of this, and consider that they should produce messages that can be well received by the public. (cf. Liepins, Porath and Puente, 2010).

This is even more complex in the case of foreign news, which owing to its nature, the general local public finds more difficult to decode, which might influence the high level of incidence of local news in all these countries (Roessler, 2003). For this reason, the existence of a multistage information reception process like the one described, can explain the motives put forward in this paper to prioritize certain foreign news items over others. The proximity and international prominence of certain countries with higher levels of visibility, will for example, enable them to decode the news about those countries more easily. In this context, the domestication of events occurring abroad would be a way of favoring

this decoding process, as it contributes to give meaning to new information received on the basis of information stored in the long term memory.

CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen up to now, this study confirms the supremacy of local news over its foreign counterparts in terms of public interest, which coincides with what is described in the literature. As regards the variables that determine the degree of interest in foreign news items, the interest of the Chilean public is influenced by the factor of proximity (in this case, psychological), which explains the phenomenon of the need to domesticate this international news, which journalists throughout the world have always sought.

Although the level of education of the receivers is not a factor that can be altered by the producers of information, journalists can incorporate into these messages certain elements that facilitate decoding and thus, comprehension on the part of the public. To provide news items in a given context, give background information for the understanding of these events, follow international news regularly and explain why and how they might affect the general public and the interests of Chile, even when there are no Chileans involved in the news, are some of the aspects contemplated in the concept of “domestication”, which might facilitate decoding on the part of the audience.

Finally, we can add a reflection that affects the sub-area of international politics and not necessarily all the news coming from abroad. As we have said, this aspect tends to disappear from the contents of Chilean newscasts. Although the data collected would not indicate that television channels should devote much more time to news on international politics to satisfy the expectations of the public, they do appear to be compatible with a manifest need for better quality information gathering, which gives news with a better perspective and/or background and above all, which transmits to the audiences the importance or transcendence of those events for local citizens and realities. **M**

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