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Mexican elections coverage in the European media

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Abstract.

This paper presents empirical research about the impact of the Mexican presidential election of July 2nd. and how the European media approached it. The period analyzed is from July 3rd. to September 6th., 2006. The research was done using as methodology the technique of content analysis in four main Italian newspapers (Corriere della Sera, Stampa, Il Messaggero, La Repubblica); three top European newspapers (El País, Le Monde and The Times) and the seven main channels of TV news (Tg1, Tg2, Tg3, Tg4, Tg5, Studio Aperto, Tg La 7) in Italy.

Keywords: press, television, content analysis, European journalism.

To Dan Hallin (UCSD) with my gratitude, for
connecting me with the world of investigation in Italy
and to Paolo Mancini (UNIP), for showing me how to investigate
political communication in Italy.

1.- The context of the investigation

Because of the electoral results in México in 2000 when Vicente Fox won the presidency to head a government from Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party) with its change of the ruling party, the next elections to vote for the new President of the Republic gained considerable expectation, due to its importance, but also because of the repercussions inherent to the process.

In July of 2006, Mexico held elections to choose the president of the country for the 2006-2010 period, and the topic regained importance because of the competitiveness of the elections, the political actors involved, the uncertainty of the results, the political stance of the two main contenders (Calderón and López Obrador) and the consequences for the governability and democracy of the country.

But the elections in Mexico not only had and have consequences in the national context, because of the current global economies, and the close link between political process and the interdependency of political-economic leadership. The designation of the next president of Mexico got front page coverage in the principal newspapers and television news programs of different countries, and it also got the attention of financial world markets, the

same as in 1994 with the famous “*tequila effect*”. Nowadays Mexico is considered among the 10 strongest economies in the world and belongs to the **Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCDE)**, and international organism that reunites 30 countries with the biggest economies in the world. Europe is one of the continents with greater development in economic, political, social and cultural areas. Its integration in one market reunites 350 million persons, represents a fourth part of PIB and the third part of world commerce.

Surrounding the election, one of the main actions supported in recent history by the mexican government is the image of a democratic country, made possible by the use of mass media to promote the country in other nations to encourage future foreign investment in Mexico. Because of this, it becomes apparent the importance of an investigation of this kind, due to the very few works of analysis of european media and mexican election process, and generally they tend to deal with american press (Lawson, 2000; Lozano, 2001; Hallin, 2004).

2.- Enunciation of the problem and objectives of the investigation

The investigation’s problem was expressed as:

To verify the journalistic coverage that the main european newspapers, and especially italian press and television, gave to the results of the election in Mexico in 2006.

The two main proposed hypotheses were the following:

- The main european newspapers gave little attention to the elections in Mexico and its repercussions in international political-economic areas because of its limited presence in world markets.
- Italian press and television news programs gave significant attention to the repercussions of the elections in Mexico, because of the political-economic impact that affects big international capitals.

And the objective of the investigation were:

- Analyze the frequency of news of the results of the election in Mexico in 2006 in italian press and television news programs and certain european newspapers.

3. Theoretical approach from the Agenda Setting

Addressing the media condition of the election campaigns allows its explanation from several theories, one of the most representatives is Agenda Setting already developed several decades ago by McCombs and Shaw (1972) and continued by specialists as Rogers and Dearing (1988); Shaw and Martin (1992) and Scheufelen (2000), among others.

The central tenet of Agenda Setting is that "the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the outgoing of attitudes toward the political issues" (McCombs and Shaw, 1972: 177), hence it is apparent that the media, whether electronic or print, from thematic and propaganda of their own characters who visualize politics, assume their positions according to the prospects of items that promote.

Moreover, the agendas of the media can consist of a set of equally broad political activity itself launched during election campaigns. However, it is well known that the emphasis of studies related to agenda setting, show the preference of the media for highlighting the major public issues. Evidence of this emphasis is given to the extent that these issues are sufficiently egregious media, the possibility exists that they are prioritized by the hearings (McCombs and Bell, 1996 and McCombs and Reynolds, 2002). The same is true for stressed the political candidates themselves, whose values they represent tend to be over with the aim of highlighting its virtues or defects, as the case may be.

Another significant feature of the theory of Agenda Setting occurs when the means to present an object often increase, either positively or negatively, the same attributes. For the purposes of election campaigns, is notorious how to emphasize the attributes of the candidates and / or political parties and advocacy strategy, but also critic political adversary.

In these two areas, the most representative of the theory of Agenda Setting, is evidence the two levels at which it operates. The first level occurs through the prominence of the object (candidate or political institution). The second level is the prominence of the attribute of such an object (Shaw and McCombs, 1977). The latter level of agenda setting, has been strongly linked with another concept of theoretical analysis of the media, it is the "framing" proposed by McCombs and Evatt, 1995, Scheufelen, 1999 and Reese, 2001.

For purposes of the study is being proposed, the level used will be addressed by the most outstanding along with other components such as gender analysis journalistic preferably used, the authorship of the wording of the note, the value assigned to it and the frequency of the notes attributed to the personal coverage in every newspaper had during the period of occurrence of the event.

4. Proposed methodology for the investigation

The first step was to establish a framework that covered the principal characteristics of european newspapers and italian television channels to be used in the journalistic analysis. The second step was to apply the methodology of content analysis (Krippendorff, 1990) to the news notes of the international section (esteri) of four italian newspapers (Corriere della Sera, Stampa, Il Messaggero, La Repubblica); to three european newspapers in spanish, french and english (El País, Le Monde y The Times) and seven of the principal channels in italian television (Tg1, Tg2, Tg3, Tg4, Tg5, Studio Aperto, Tg La 7) that covered the electoral process in Mexico, from july 3rd. to the 6th. of september.

This period of little more than two months represents the time between the announcement of the results of the election made through the mass media by the Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE), an official organ of the government, and the moment when the media gave the news that the Tribunal Federal de Justicia Electoral (TRIFE) declared a winner among the presidential candidates.

For the development of the investigation an academic stay was carried out in the Centro Interuniversitario di Comunicazione Política (CICOP) of the Università degli Studi di Perugia, Italia (www.unipg.it/scipol) with the purpose of first analyzing italian television and press, and second, different newspapers from other countries about the news treatment of the results of the mexican election. As with every investigation process, and more so when the country is different from the country of the investigator, different circumstances arise that are beyond control, both positive and negative.

Among those in the first case, positive, was that the ISIMM makes a daily register of the news broadcasted by the news programs *-telegiornali-* of the main italian television channels for political communication analysis. Because of the intervention of Profr. Paolo Mancini I was given the information dealing with the instances when the news programs dealt with the elections in Mexico, specifically the times when the seven main television channels mentioned Felipe Calderón and Andrés Manuel López Obrador. To obtain such information in a direct manner would have implied being in Italy all that time, doing the register of news and making a tally of the seconds and minutes when the candidates were mentioned.

It is important to note that due to the fact that an investigation of this kind was not contemplated in the center, I was only given the register of those two candidates, the times that they were mentioned and the cumulative time of each one, and the one they already had identified as Elections in Mexico. Even with the this restrictions it was important to have this information to complement the one from the newspapers.

The other circumstance was that at first, it was contemplated to also analyze other newspapers from Europe, but both the library of the Università degli Studi di Perugia, and the main city library, Biblioteca Augusta, didn't have the July, August and September issues of Spanish, French and English newspapers. Because of this, I could only consult the four main Italian newspapers: *Corriere della Sera*¹, *La Repubblica*, *La Stampa* e *Il Messaggero*. Also, a precaution was taken to photograph each of the news published to facilitate the revision and comparison of the information, because it was impossible to consult again the print versions.

After this process to obtain information, I consulted the library of La Camera di Deputati in Roma, to revise the newspapers originally selected. Thus, a register was made about the published news about the Mexican elections in *El País* from Spain, *Le Monde* from France and *The Times* from England², that provided a sufficient base to expand the universe of the analysis.

To recapitulate, the field of content analysis of news published about the results of the election in Mexico, between July 3rd and September 6th of 2006, was obtained because of the revision in situ of four Italian newspapers, three European newspapers and the segments broadcasted by the seven *telegiornali* of Italian television. Owing to this, the information was rich, but not very homogeneous as is the approach characteristic of content analysis (Berelson, s/f). As very few things in the world are homogeneous, an exercise was made to find interesting regularities in the content analysis of the results of the elections in Mexico.

To that effect a codifying format was made to register the principal data, and a list of categories and items was designed to realize an adequate codification of each one of the revised news to make possible the systematization of the journalistic information.

5. The context of Italian press and television

The information obtained from the three elements of analysis, four Italian newspapers, three European newspapers and the television programs -“telegiornale”- of the main Italian television channels are next presented in a brief review of the mentioned mass media:

5.1. Italian newspapers.

Mancini (2004) mentions that in order to understand the context of communication media in Italy, in particular the ones that interest us, one has to be aware that mass

¹ This newspaper was among the first chosen from the European newspapers.

² It was possible to consult the electronic versions in Internet of the newspapers selected in the original sample (*Corriere della Sera*, *The Times*, *Le Monde* y *El País*), but they represented a considerable difference with the printed versions in number of notes published. Particularly, this was the case in two cases: *Corriere della Sera* y *El País*. Also, for the access to the information from certain dates some newspapers, like *El País* from Spain, demanded a subscription code that put limits to the information necessary to the codification and other kinds of measures.

communications in the country, “didn’t have an independent growth from other social systems” (p.11). In this sense, it isn’t possible to apply a functionalist model to recognize its characteristics, and adds that because of multiple historical, political and cultural factors mass communication doesn’t enjoy from autonomy from other powers, and has an identity and functions accordingly to the Italian context.

As for the emergence of Italian newspapers, Castronovo says “that the end of the 1800s marks the rise of the **Corriere della Sera**, in 1876 from a thick (sic) editorial house from the brothers Civelli, owners of other newspapers in Firenze and Verona” (1979: 17); but the daily was established by Eugenio Torelli-Viollier. Also the author states that it was a Milanian daily “that represented the conservative position of the liberal order” (Castronovo, 1987, p128). According to Gaeta, *Il Corriere della Sera* in “a beginning (1876) had 3 thousand issues, in 1880 9 thousand, in 1886 20 thousand and in 1918 400 thousand issues” (1966: 725).

La Stampa was born as the “Gazzetta piemontese” in 1814 (Gaeta, 1966) and it would adopt the name of *La Stampa* February 9th, 1867. In a few years it could publish between 20 and 25 thousand issues. Castronovo says that “to reconstruct the history of *La Stampa* implies referring to the history of a city like Torino (Turin) and the era of Italian democratic liberalism as a post-unity period after the crisis of the liberal state” (1987: 9). This diary represents “an important voice of secular culture” (1987: 46).

Talamo points out that “in December 16th, 1878 appears the first issue of **Il Messaggero**, with Luigi Cesana as its founder” (1978: 31). Its characteristics make it a daily of all issues, is the “giornale di giornali” (Talamo, 1978: 35). The author adds that it gives special importance to “political events, the academy, issues from the Senate and House, and public reunions with an spirit of information detached from any political tendency” (36). Murialdi confirms that *Il Messaggero* is the most important newspaper in Rome, and places it in 1880 among newspapers with leftist leanings, with “20 thousand issues, which are exceptional” (1976: 470).

Murialdi (1978) says that **La Repubblica** appears as a novelty among Italian newspapers on a tabloid format in January of 1976, with twenty pages at the beginning edited by Mondadori and Eugenio Scalfari as owner. Its principal themes are economy, culture and entertainment, and it’s placed among the left (Tranfaglia, Levi y Nevra, 1978). The author’s adds that one of its characteristics is “to offer an explanation, an interpretation, commentary to actual facts and problems and the opinion of the own newspaper or people outside of it” (1978: 42). Murialdi points out that it has reached “up to 5 million eight hundred thousand daily issues” (1984: 43).

5.2. European newspapers

El País is the most influential and well known Spanish newspaper. Its first issue appeared May 4th, 1976, at the moment when Spain began its transition to democracy. Its vigorous defense of human liberties and its support of the social and political changes soon made it a symbol of modern Spain. Its first editorials define it as an independent quality newspaper, of European vocation and a defender of democracy. It was the first in adopting journalistic practices as *el Libro de Estilo* (Style Manual), the defense of the reader and *el Estatuto de la Redacción* (Statute of writing), approved in 1980 and which regulates professional relationships among the editorial staff, the management of the newspaper and the editorial group. Its actual president is Jesús de Polanco and Jesús Ceberio y Pedro García Guillén are its editors in chief (<http://www.elpais.com/corporativos/elpais/elpais.html>).

El País has its headquarters in Madrid, a city that also houses the editorial and administrative departments, and one of its printing facilities. It has a similar structure in Barcelona, where it edits and prints the Catalan edition of the newspaper, and has offices in Bilbao, Sevilla y Valencia. The newspaper also prints different regional editions in Spain and Germany, Belgium, Italy, Mexico and Argentina.

Le Monde is published in Paris, France, but it has national circulation and is one of the most read newspapers in Europe, although it doesn't have the biggest circulation; it appeared almost at the end of World War II, the 10th of December of 1944 (Pérez del Toro, 1984). Its founder and director until 1969 was Hebert Beuve-Méry and its actual director is Jean Marie Colombani.

Pérez Del Toro notes that "is one of the few French newspapers that in its front page stays away from references to any political ideology" (1984: 39). In that sense it can be called liberal and it also devotes many of its pages to international information.

Le Monde, besides being an evening newspaper, has become an important reference for those who study international and modern journalism. Also, the workers of Le Monde are involved in its management through the *Société civile Les Rédacteurs du Monde* (Civil association of writers from Le Monde).

It publishes more than 400 thousand issues for more than two million readers and it's available in more than 120 countries in both its print and electronic editions and its circulation is certified by the Office de Justification de la diffusion (OJD) (www.lemonde.fr/med/article/0,1-0@2-3386,36-261404,0.html December 15th, 2006).

The Times was founded in London, England in 1785, with only a few pages and with the name of Daily Universal Register, and it was its founder John Walter who three years later

changed its name to its actual denomination. The English newspaper is a clear example of a free press that deals with diverse political criteria, interests and levels of education, but it doesn't respond to any form of control from the government or censorship.

The Times has more than 200 years of journalistic experience and is managed by News International, and has maintained an image of community spirit, dignity and credibility, and capable of having an influence on the government, royalty and strong ties with financial institutions (Pérez Del Toro, 1984). It is a newspaper with a cultural section that receives a great deal of attention, as well as in its economic, political and international sections.

5.3. Italian television

Grasso (1992) affirms that for many years Italian television was best identified with the network Radio Televisione Italiana, better known as Rai, and whose purpose was to offer a public service of information and entertainment. But Italian television has its origins in 1929 in Milan, in the Unione Radiofonica Italiana (URI) studios, and with engineers Alessandro Banfi and Sergio Bertolotti who conducted the first experiments. In 1952, Rai began its first broadcasts in Milan and its first transmission was "the inaugural ceremony of the Feira Campionaria" (30). In the beginning the Rai was identified with the Christian Democracy party and its administrator was Amintore Fanfani.

The law of April 14th, 1975 is fundamental to understand Italian television, its later changes and defines three important nodes: a) Recognizes the Rai as the principal network of the Italian State to broadcast in radio and television, with the characteristic of having a high degree of "plural aperture and all the political-cultural components of Italian society" (Monteleone, 1992: 389), and an administration council is created to regulate it. b) The creation of local public networks to permit the participation of citizens in the production of radio and television programs, and c) The repetition in all the territory of foreign television programs. Up to this point, all Italian television was public, but with different components and key players.

Because of this the different channels of Italian television in the seventies were identified with political parties, the Rai assigned channel Rai 1 to the Christian Democracy party; Rai 2 to the Socialist party and Rai 3 to the Communist party. Nonetheless, "with the Constitutional Court sentence in 1976 - la legge 103-, the history of commercial television begins in Italy" (Mancini, 2004: 76). Monteleone defines it as the savage privatization -"la privatizzazione selvaggia"-, and represents the reconstruction of radio and television production (1992: 391).

Monteleone (1992) defines the eighties era of Italian radio and television in a few words as “a public television (Rai) of cultural tradition, that seeks its own identity in front of the changes brought by different constitutional laws and a private network, with rapid growth and oriented to the logic of market development in Italy” (395). Since the mid eighties Mancini (1982) remarked that Italian television information had its peculiarities and pointed to a model of news with context, that allowed a professional journalist to have a “complessivi modelli giornaliastici in cui i singoli individui trovano una collocazione organica” (42)³ and in that respect he added that news program should promote interaction transmitter-receptor.

Grasso notes that in 1982, “channel 1 borns and its director is Rusconi, and Rete quattro borns in January 4th, 1982 with Mondadori capital and its president is Mario Formenton” (1992: 384). On March 30th, 1991 the first television program is broadcasted in Tele+1 (545).

In the mid eighties Berlusconi buys the main television network channels from their owners Rizzoli, Rusconi y Mandadori, through his company Fininvest (later it would become Mediaset) and becomes the main stock holder of Rete quattro, Italia 1, marking the beginning of the Berlusconi empire.

Mancini (2004) states that the presence of Silvio Berlusconi⁴ in Italian television signals the emergence of commercial television, due to the drive and vision of this businessman who supported closed circuit private television with channel Milano2. To name this process, the author uses an expression from Jay Blumer and define the beginning of this introduction period of commercial television as “the commercial flood” (87). But it also implies a duality, because “mass communication begins in Italy through television, but it also marks a proximity with the political system, and this is an anomaly for certain sectors, but especially for leftist parties” (96).

Mancini (2004) defines the characteristics of the public from the main Italian television channels as:

Rai 1 and Canale 5: General and aimed to the family.

Rete quattro: Aimed to an elderly public, women and housewives.

Italia 1: Aimed to a teen public.

Rai 3: Aimed to a diverse public.

Rai2: Broadcasts cultural themes and entertainment.

³ “a complex journalistic model in which individual singularities take an organic position”

⁴ Silvio Berlusconi, “in 1974 was a dynamic building constructor in Milan” (Monteleone, 1992, p.388). There are similarities between him and Emilio Azcarraga Vidaurrueta, grandfather of the current president of Televisa, who was a prosperous seller of electrodomestics in Monterrey before entering into the electronic media business.

In 1992 the Council of ministers to this important channels and others, and after a lengthy controversy, “grants them the concession to broadcast nationally radio and television programs” (Monteleone, 1992: 529). Thus, from the beginning of the 90s there are two main television systems in Italy, the Rai supported by the government and political parties and Mediaset (formerly Fininvest) of Berlusconi⁵.

The Rai is represented by an administration council that has as member’s five representatives from political parties, three from the majority that rules the house of representatives y two from the opposition. Nonetheless, they are not political figures or representatives, but people close to each of the political parties. Today, the Rai o ReTe, as is known in academic circles, is the most important network of electronic media in Italy. Another of the characteristics of the current italian television is that 50% of its programming must include programs from the European community, according to Law 122 from 1998, and that doesn’t include news programs, sports or talk shows (Mancini, 2004).

However various well known italian authors define its television as transgressive, very close to being pornographic, with a lot of comedies and too many sports. The italian fabric of television generates a new kind of taste and the collective behavior shows itself in a consumer’s market. (Cfr.: Monteleone 1992; Mancini 2004; Sartori 1999; Ecco 2001, etc.).

6. The data and its expression

6.1. European newspapers

6.1.1. Published notes in italian newspapers

In the shown period of july 3rd. to september 6th. there were 26 published notes by four of the principal italian newspapers analyzed. (See table No. 1. Summary of notes from italian newspapers). **La Repubblica** devoted to it eight notes. Four of them between the 3rd. and the 7th. of july, two were of july, 10th. about the massive gathering promoted by Lopez Obrador, one note was from the july, 17th. and another is from september, 6th.

For its part, the **Corriere della Sera**, one of the principal newspapers in the world and Italy, only devoted four notes to the postelectoral conflict, three are from july 4th. when the results of the election were first known, and one more note from the 10th. of the same month, when Lopez Obrador held a massive gathering of his followers in the Zocalo in Mexico city.

The newspaper that gave more importance to the postelectoral conflict and the controversy involving Lopez Obrador y Calderon was **La Stampa**, with 10 notes. On the 4th.

⁵ Mancini makes a reference about this, because until april of 2006, Silvio Berlusconi was the president of the Council of Italy, the president of the country, and at the same time the owner of one of the main television networks. Also, as the leader of the country, he had at his disposal the other network, the Rai.

and 10th of July and the 24th of August, there were two notes each day. There was one note each day on the 3rd., 5th. and 7th. of July and the 6th. of September.

Il Messaggero only devoted space to four notes. Two the 4th. of July, one on the 6th. and one more on the 13th. of the same month. That is to say that the issue of the controversy surrounding the Mexican elections for the Italian newspapers was resolved on the first three days, between the results given on July 2nd. and the 6th. of the same month, this late date being the one when the Instituto Federal Electoral announced its decision. Only two newspapers gave space to the news about the decision of the TRIFE that confirmed Calderon, **Il Messaggero** y **La Repubblica**.

Also, of the sum of 26 notes, the person most referred to by the Italian newspapers is Lopez Obrador with 12 mentions, the genre most used is the news note, mostly written by correspondents⁶ and the most frequent theme was the results of the election, given the characteristics of the coverage that corresponds with the uncertainty about who was declared as the winner.

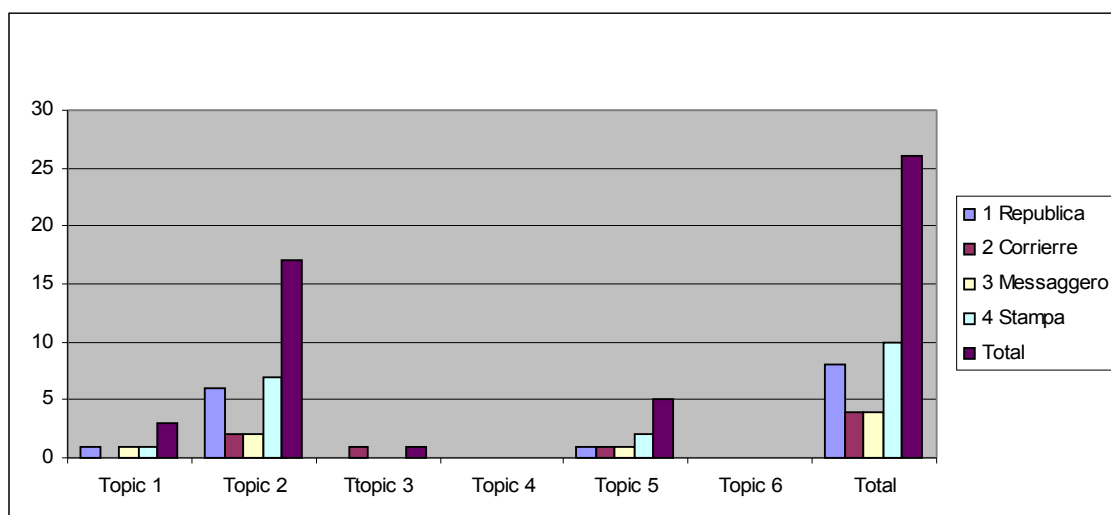
Table No. 1. Summary of notes from Italian newspapers

Newspaper/ Categories.	La Repubblica	Corriere della Sera	La Stampa	Il Messaggero	Total
Number of notes	8	4	10	4	26
Lopez Obrador	3	2	7	0	12
Calderon	3	2	2	3	10

One aspect that concerns just the agenda setting, is dealing with issues in this regard the following table lists the preeminence the issue of the election results given the importance that element characterized the conflict post-electoral.

Table no. 2 Topics in the Italian press.

⁶There is a note from newspaper Corriere della Sera, identifying the origin of the information as Rio de Janeiro, Brasil instead of Mexico city (Corriere della Sera, July 10th., 2006, page 26).



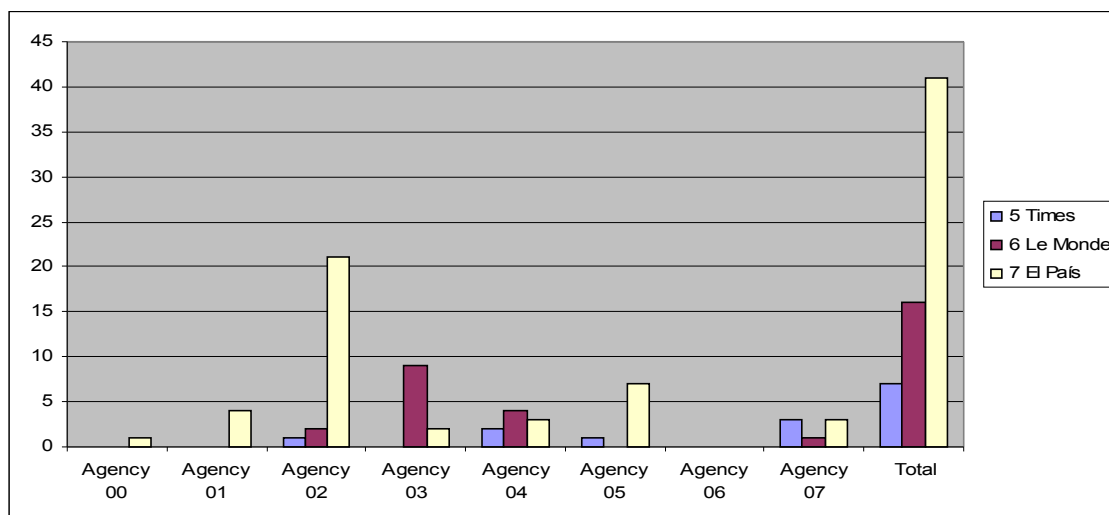
Topics: 1) Marcos in campaign 2) Results of elections 3) Profile candidates 4) Campaign policy 5) Demonstrations or peaceful resistance 6) Campaign Mayor of the Mexico City.

As is well known the subject of greater importance were the election results with 17 registered notes (65%) of the total 26 that the event appropriated by the four Italian newspapers. This figure is explained by the interest around the expectation regarding the election results, but it is also significant that in a second time on another topic of interest were demonstrations and peaceful resistance to which AMLO convened several times in July and August 2006. For the first case, there is a great similarity between the minimal attention devoted by the Corriere and Il Messaggero (two each), is not the case with La Repubblica and La Stampa with six seven notes, respectively.

In what has been published around the demonstrations is the minimum amount of notes (five total), with La Stampa newspaper which published just two notes. Two aspects, the lowest interest for referring the profile of the candidates, just a note dedicated to AMLO and if not, the interest aroused by the presence of “sub-comandante Marcos”, in its announced ‘the other campaign’ which he devoted a newspaper each note (three total), except for Corriere della Sera that he gave no further attention to this event, which would coincide with his conservative politics surrounding the conflict post-electoral Mexican.

An important aspect, particularly when it comes to foreign publications that relate data from another country, who represents the signing the note. This agency described as a means to identify the strategy by which the newspaper covered the event news. The following table defines authorship of who wrote the note on the Mexican political event.

Table no. 3. Development of the note

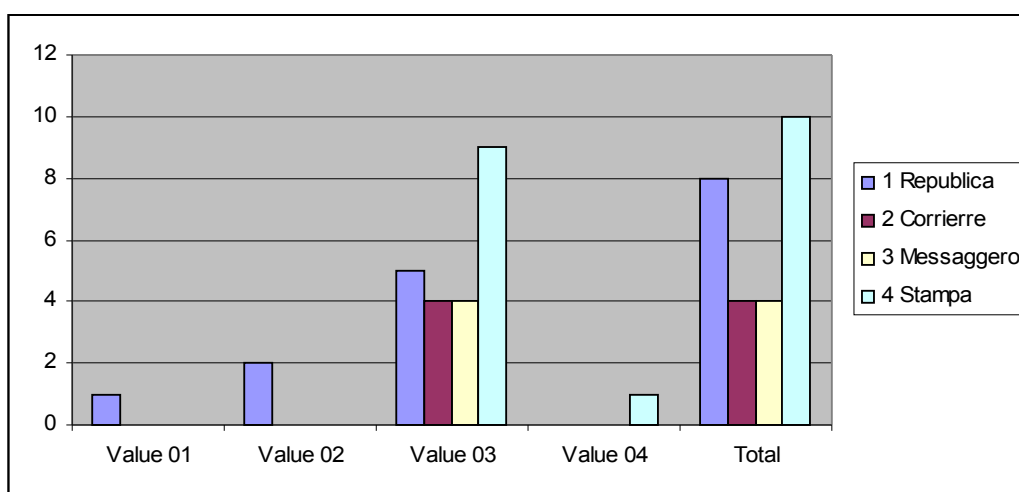


Identifying who drafted the news: 00) no data; 01) reporter house; 02) envoy, 03) correspondent, 04) agency; 05) articulista, 06) copyright; 07) editor.

It is worth noting that of the 26 notes issued by Italian newspapers, 11 of them had not the author of the development of the same (42%), which may show a lack of appropriate authorship of the information or it seems that this authorship came from another source. Also evident is that newspapers used preferentially (eight notes) to his correspondent for this event. And only La Repubblica and Il Messaggero, stressed to an envoy to cover the news of the conflict post electoral of Mexico, which could match that interest with his leftist political position as indicated Murialdi (1978).

Another important feature of content analysis, it represents the valuation given to the character which the note. The following table shows how the Italian newspapers valued the main characters of the political 2006.

Table No.4 Value of the news



Value: 1) High positive 2) Positive 3) Neutral 4) Negative 5) High negative.

This figure shows that of the 26 notes issued by Italian newspapers around the event, 22 of them (85%) had a neutral rating, with very similar records between *Corriere* and *Il Messaggero* with four each; it all notes which had published that value. Moreover stresses that unless the newspaper *La Repubblica* gave a note of highly positive and two more from positive to the person of AMLO. And *La Stampa* appropriated only a negative value to a press release for this candidate, which corresponds to an interview by the newspaper correspondent said the president of Latin American studies program of the Council for Foreign Affairs of the United States in New York, which refers political and financial instability resulting AMLO with its demands for electoral fraud and vote count.

Taken together this assessment of the news cut into the political event of a conflict post-electoral in a foreign country, could prove the neutral position assumed by the Italian journalism to treat such news. However, given the scarcity of the same news, this assertion is too fragile and should take greater empirical basis to support the assertion in a more categorical.

6.1.2. Notes published in spanish, french and english newspapers

The spanish newspaper **El País** was the european newspaper that gave more coverage to the results of the election in Mexico (See Table No. 5. Summary of notes published in european newspapers). It assigned 41 notes, with the higher number (3) corresponding to september 6th, the day when the TRIFE declared that Calderon was the next president of Mexico. It is also notable that 17 of the 41 notes were published in july, 18 on august and six on september.

For its part **Le Monde** from France published 16 notes. In this case is notable the balance in the notes, with 6 about Lopez Obrador and seven for Calderon, and the highest number of notes (two) was registered on july 8th, august 24th. and september 7th..⁷

The english newspaper **The Times** published seven notes, two on july 4th., one on the 6th. and 7th of july, two on the 1st. and 7th. of august, and the last one on september 6th. Of all of this notes is notable that the theme given more importance was the results of the election with 5 notes and Calderón was the key character on 6 notes.

Table No. 5. Summary of notes published in european newspapers

Newspapers/ Categories.	El País	Le Monde	The Times	Total
Number of notes	41	16	7	64

⁷ It's important to remember the difference in hours for the publication of notes in european newspapers.

Lopez Obrador	29	6	1	36
Calderon	4	7	6	17

6.2. News in the *telegiornales* of italian television

The Istituto per lo Studio dell' Innovazione nei Media e per la Multimedialita⁸ (ISIMM Ricerche S.R.L.), in Perugia conducts a daily computerized registry of seven news programs – *telegiornali*- (Tg1, Tg2, Tg3, Tg4, Tg5, Studio Aperto, Tg La 7) that belong to television channels Rai1, Rai2, Rai3, Rete4, Canale 5, Italian 1, La7 and MTV Italy. Its registry is part of a government action whose purpose is to reveal the way that italian television shows the different political actors and themes in Italy in the *telegiornali*.

From the general daily computerized registry of the news, the information about the results of the mexican election was selected and organized, in particular news dealing with the postelection conflict.⁹ The only limit was the fact that the analitical category only offered two elements of data, the name of the main contenders and the denomination of the presidential elections in México.

Nonetheless, the data that follows is significant because it represents the presence, or better yet, the absence of mexican politics in Italy, of one of the most important events in the last 20 years after the controversial results of 1988, and that is the post election incidents that took place in México, in the period from july 3rd. to September 6th.

According to the data shown in Table No. 6 post election results of Mexico in italian television, the character that got the most coverage in terms of time in the italian *telegiornale* was Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, with a total time of 12 minutes 52 seconds, in contrast Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa received a total of 10 minutes 16 seconds. That is to say, that in terms of audience, the biggest political conflict that Mexico has had, only got a litte more than 23 minutes in 66 days from both contenders, which means that between the two of them they had a daily exposure of almost three minutes. And we are talking about all the news gathered from the seven *telegiornale* with the biggest audiences in Italy, in the main channels and the complete daily schedule. That is, the result is a lack of interest from those that determine the daily news agenda.

Now let's see which *telegiornal* and channel gave more attention to each candidate. Tg 5 (Canale 5-private) gave Lopez Obrador the fabulous amount of 3 minutes and 43 seconds. It

⁸ The ISIMM (www.isimm.it) is an official organization that belongs to the italian government and it operates under the italian laws through the Authority for the guarantee of Public Communication ([AGCOM- www.agcom.it](http://www.agcom.it))

⁹ I'm grateful for the collaboration for this investigation of the personnel of ISSMM, especially Simona and Marina Moretti.

was also Tg 5 (Canale 5) which gave Calderon 3 minutes y 09 seconds. It is very meaningful that this *telegiornale* only gave its attention to the news between July 3rd. and 6th., when the results of the election were uncertain. After the last date, neither candidate is mentioned again, even when Calderon is declared as the winner by the TRIFE.

Table No. 6. Post election results from Mexico in Italian television networks.

NETWORK	CHANNEL	NEWS PROGRAM	TIME	TIME
			AMLO	Calderon
Rai	Rai 1	Tg 1	1' 37''	1' 28''
	Rai 2	Tg 2	0' 09''	0' 08''
	Rai 3	Tg 3	1' 29''	0. 42''
		Rai News 24 ¹⁰	2'45''	2' 42''
Mediaset	Rete 4	Tg 4	0' 00''	0' 00''
	Canale 5	Tg 5	3' 43''	3' 09''
	Italia 1	Studio Aperto	0' 00''	0' 00''
MTV Italia	La 7	Tg L 7 and MTV FLASH	3' 09'	2' 07''
Total coverage time			12' 52''	10' 16''

In this sense, the news about Calderon becoming the next president of Mexico, on September 6th. was only broadcasted by Rai News24 (Rai 3) with seven seconds in four segments -28 seconds all day-. That is to say only the mention of Felipe Calderon being officially the new president of Mexico plus a couple of words. Also it must be admitted that in terms of news both electronic and in print, for Italy the war on Lebanon was more important in the period covered, because there are bigger concerns for geopolitical, cultural and ethnic reasons. News of the conflict in Lebanon, Israel's involvement in the conflict and the statements of the main political leaders of Italy, took a lot of pages and time in the chosen newspapers and *telegiornale*.

7. Discussion.

As various authors point out (Cfr: Wolton, 1998; Gauthier, 1998; Martín Serrano, 1986, among others), electoral processes are the thermometer of the political life of a country and have a reflective impact on mass media. Even more when globalization brings countries closer and the important events of a nation are immediately spread to the world public sphere.

Thus the effects of political, economical and social movements of certain Latin American countries have generated diverse reactions in international financial markets, as was the case

¹⁰ RaiNew24 has few newscasts with the characteristics of a story or article and its main broadcasts are musical.

of the so-called effect Tequila from Mexico, the political-economical problems of Argentina, or the financial imbalance in Brazil and the speculations that generated the arrival to power of “Lula” or his recent reelection.

If we compare this canvas with the “news downpour” of the different newspapers and newsprograms of mexican television, it largely explains why for the italians the political life of Mexico is as distant as the knowledge that they have of our soccer or food, to use a cultural element that both countries feel so passionate about. Being judicious we have to admit that there is little proximity between both countries in political, economical and cultural terms, even though the political and media models of both countries have certain similarities.

This is shown in the fact that the segment of the *telegiornali* with more time for either of the two candidates was of 20 seconds for Lopez Obrador in ‘**MVS Flash**’ on july 2nd. and the 3rd. (five news between both days with that length). And for Calderon the longest length of a newsnote was of 17 seconds and was broadcasted on channel ‘**La 7**’ the 5th of september when he was announced as the winner; it could be concluded that the italian viewers had little chance to be informed about the events related to the political-electoral outcome in Mexico even if he was interested, but the data also shows that in the marketing logic of public or private television, this event (the postelectoral conflict) was deemed of little interest for the italian audiences after the first results of the election (september 3rd. to 6th.). So it is important to emphasize that television as a mass media instrument influences in a decisive manner the constructions of the collective imaginary, even more for its particular technological aspect, because television creates a more different and open field vision about the daily vision of the individuals (Wolton, 1998).

This confirms that for news organization, both in print and television, european and italian, the expectations that the candidacy of Lopez Obrador for president had raised were the reason for the attention to the election results, because the attention was focused, in particular in the *telegiornali*, in the dates closest to the results offered by the IFE. Also it is necessary to point out that a private channel from the **Mediaset** network, belonging to the Berlusconi group, was the one that devoted more attention to both characters, Lopez Obrador and Calderon.

Any conclusion that could be given in this respect would be mere speculation, because it would imply having a deeper knowledge of the context of the political agenda of that television network. What it is evident is the lack of interest of the government network (**Rai**) in the follow up to the news after the announcement of the initial results; that is, the period after the 6th of july when there was uncertainty about the results and both candidates had declared themselves as the winner and next president of Mexico. This is in contrast with the scarce

attention given by newspapers, particularly **La Repubblica**, to the massive gatherings carried out by Lopez Obrador in Zocalo in Mexico City.

Of all the other European newspapers, **El País** stands out with the biggest number of published notes (41). The former could be explained given the commercial, political and cultural relations between the two countries, as well as the historical ones. Another notorious aspect in the notes published by the prestigious Spanish newspaper occurred toward the end of the process, when on September 3rd. an editorial appeared with a clear criticism toward López Obrador and his last actions by which he condemned the electoral process and the corresponding institutions.

In the case of **Le Monde**, it is important to emphasize that this newspaper gathered the opinions of various Mexican citizens about the post-electoral theme, thus the higher number of notes (with three and two notes with four and five sources respectively). It is notorious that the theme that was considered as important in the case of the Spanish, French and English newspapers was the electoral results with five notes and the main character with six notes was Calderón.

Despite Mexico's efforts to gain a better position in the international context, the presence of political events in the international pages of newspapers and television screens is still very weak. For the case of the present investigation, there is a possible discussion of the notion that the stereotypes of Latin American politics still prevail in the imagination of the Italian public. This demonstrates the validity of Thompson's concept, that states that "mass communications is always a contextualized social phenomenon: it is always part of social contexts in different forms of structures that also have a structural impact on communicative acts" (1993, p. 26).

As such, for Italian audiences the political Mexican scene is very foreign to their immediate context, and for the common Italian, French, English, and in a sense Spanish citizen, Mexico is an exotic and far away country and only very dramatic or unusual events deserve space in the pages of the newspapers; a confirmation of this judgement would be the attention given in an Italian newspaper to the rescue of Mexican castaways.¹¹

In this sense the Mexican political system is still very unfamiliar with global mass strategies. Its exercise as a political act has circumscribed itself to the local territory, when the condition of political communications implies the construction of messages that can transcend geographical borders (Lujambio, 2000). This corroborates the importance of electronic media,

¹¹ An example of this would be the three quarters of a page given to the account of the rescue of Mexican castaways in *La Repubblica*, when this same newspaper only gave half a page to the post-electoral events in Mexico in the analyzed period. But still it must be taken into account that it was also the newspaper that gave more coverage in general to the event.

its immediacy, coverage and high impact in captive audiences that can convert the scene of political communications in the main tool for developing long term political strategies in processes such as elections, no matter the nationalities or ubication of the audience (Lazzeri, 1992).

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