

# Concurrences and divergences between Spanish infotainment comedy professionals and audiences

Inmaculada-Concepción Aguilera-García

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**Inmaculada-Concepción  
Aguilera-García**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5084-519X>

Universidad de Málaga  
Facultad de Ciencias de la Comunicación  
León Tolstoi, s/n  
29010 Málaga, Spain  
[inmaaguilera@uma.es](mailto:inmaaguilera@uma.es)

## Abstract

Infotainment comedy is the branch of infotainment that mixes current affairs content with comedy. "Infotainment" is a relatively new term, first cited by Krüger (1988); as a television trend, academics agree that it must have existed much earlier, with English-language examples such as *Saturday Night Live* (NBC, 1975) or *That was the week that was* (BBC, 1962). In Spain, the roots of infotainment lie in *Caiga quien caiga* (Telecinco, 1996), a precursor to satirical pseudojournalism (García-Avilés, 1999). Nowadays, there are programs that present current affairs with comedy, as in the case of *El intermedio* (La Sexta, 2006) or *Todo es mentira* (Cuatro, 2019). Owing to the continuous evolution of formats and their complex definition and classification by academics and professionals, it is worth considering whether audiences also interpret the different programs in different ways depending on their elements, given that they depend on an "intuitive understanding" (Reinemann *et al.*, 2011; Otto *et al.*, 2017) that stems from the habit of repeated consumption. This article presents the results of a reception study contrasting Spanish infotainment comedy professionals and their audiences to assess whether their impressions of these shows are similar or if, on the contrary, their hybrid nature is so changeable that they have come to interpret them in a very different way. The methodology involved ten discussion groups with a total of 87 viewers and 13 interviews with professionals from four programs: *El intermedio*, *Todo es mentira*, *Ese programa del que usted me habla* (La 2, 2019), and *La resistencia* (Movistar+, 2018). According to the statements collected, the results revealed that audiences and content creators show more points of divergence than concurrences, which means that the messages are interpreted differently from how they were intended.

## Keywords

Infohumor; Infocomedy; Infotainment; Humor; Television; TV; Audiences; Programs; Audiovisual experiences; Critical reception; Media studies; Professional ethics.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Spanish audiences and infotainment comedy

Infotainment comedy is a subgenre of infotainment that presents current affairs content with elements typical of comedy, satire, or stand-up comedy. The term “infotainment” was first cited by the German researcher **Krüger** (1988) as the result of the convergence of news and entertainment. Therefore, infotainment comedy is the branch of infotainment that seeks to entertain while offering a critical reflection of current affairs. In Spain, the impact of the economic, political, and health crisis of the past few years has led citizens to become increasingly interested in this format, which translates into television programs that are “closer to entertainment” [*“más cercanas al entretenimiento”*] (**Domínguez-Quintas** and **Arévalo-Iglesias**, 2020, p. 526), as is particularly evident on “new channels” [*“nuevos canales”*] such as *La Sexta* and *Cuatro*, which offer schedules with “their own identity” [*“señas de identidad propia”*] (**Montero-Díaz; Martín-Jiménez**, 2020, p. 423).

Spanish research in the field of infotainment has focused on the analysis of content and professional practices, but not as much on audiences’ motivations for watching these television formulas. Some have focused on the quality of these shows in the eyes of the public (**Guerrero; Etayo**, 2015), while others focus on a context of overall assessment of programming (**Artero et al.**, 2010). Both approaches are interesting for broadcasters, since they can make alterations to their programming from a “fundamentally economic perspective” [*“perspectiva fundamentalmente económica”*] (**De Mateo; Bergés**, 2009, p. 24), to the extent that, “out of the amount of suggestions that viewers send every day, approximately 20% end up becoming content for these shows” [*“del volumen de sugerencias que los espectadores envían cada día, aproximadamente el 20% acaban convirtiéndose en contenidos para estos espacios”*] (**Ortells-Badenes**, 2012, pp. 215-216).

In this way, current Spanish infotainment comedy shows build loyalty among large audiences of all ages. Owing to their multiscreen consumption and active participation, these audiences are considered “citizen-viewers” [*“ciudadanos-teleespectadores”*] (**Rosique-Cedillo**, 2013, p. 221), being “the ‘critical mass’ of the new scene born of the information society” [*“la ‘masa crítica’ del nuevo escenario nacido en la sociedad de la información”*] (**Morera**, 2017, p. 117). This television consumption, in addition, is intertwined with the new information and entertainment practices on the Internet, which “enhance the processes of hybridization in the field of political communication” [*“potencia los procesos de hibridación en el campo de la comunicación política”*] (**Chadwick**, 2013, cited in **Casero-Ripollés et al.**, 2014, p. 45). At the international level, **Gray et al.** (2009) acknowledge that, although satirical television content is intended to give citizens a better “ability to watch the political process at work,” it often achieves the opposite effect and “attract[s] more ridicule than ardent viewers” (p. 3). Similarly, some research corroborates the blurring of the boundaries between fiction and regular news found in shows such as satirical news programs, which has been quantitatively tested both in long-running American programs such as *The Daily Show* (Comedy Central, 1996) and more recent shows such as *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* (HBO, 2014), which are characterized by their hybrid nature and by the inclusion of opinion (**Brugman et al.**, 2021).

These programs have an effect on viewers, giving meaning to the messages according to their personal context (**Alonso-Alonso**, 2011, p. 8), since “the audience is situated on the border of two spheres as important as economics and politics” [*“la audiencia se establece en la frontera de dos ámbitos tan relevantes como el económico y el político”*], and whoever is part of the audience “is, primarily, a consumer of the media, and, secondarily, a potential consumer of everything else” [*“es, en primer lugar, consumidor de medios de comunicación, y, en segundo lugar, potencial consumidor de todo lo demás”*] (**Callejo**, 2001, p. 24), keeping in mind that current affairs may come with a side of social and ideological values that are liable to be internalized by the population. After all, **Igartua** (2021) states that “the study of reception processes involves analyzing the ‘black box’ of psychological processes that explain why media effects occur” [*“el estudio de los procesos de recepción supone analizar la ‘caja negra’ de los procesos psicológicos que explican por qué se producen los efectos mediáticos”*] (pp. 49-50), to which **Carpio** (2008) adds that “humor lends itself very well to being an attractive discourse” [*“el humor se presta muy bien a ser un discurso atractivo”*], because “it is witty, at the same time twisted and direct, it is pleasant and engaging, it is original in its ideas but with the ability to synthesize points, making them easy to understand” [*“es ingenioso, a la vez que retorcido y directo, resulta agradable y simpático, es original en sus planteamientos pero con capacidad de sintetizar sus argumentos, haciendo que sean de fácil comprensión”*] (pp. 13-14).

There are external conditions to these formats that come to alter their reception, such as the “digital divide” [*“brecha digital”*] (**Castells**, 2004), since the age of the viewers and the means they use to consume programs influence effectiveness, tracking, participation, and expectations (**Aguilera-García**, 2021a). Young people, for example, tend to be regular and interactive Internet consumers, following these shows on their social networks (**Zamora-Martínez; González-Neira**, 2022), but are passive when it comes to television (**Fernández-Planells; Figueras-Maz**, 2012, p. 196), whereas “older profiles, especially retirees and those from other spheres, hardly understand the effective possibilities of or have access to second screens or interactive media” [*“los perfiles de más edad, especialmente jubilados y de otros ámbitos, difícilmente conocen las posibilidades efectivas ni acceden a las segundas pantallas o a los medios interactivos”*] (**Alonso et al.**, 2016, p. 188). On the other hand, the act of “viewership” [*“televidencia”*] is not limited to the time one is in front of the screen during the broadcast but rather continues to correspond with a “habit to spend free time and that its meaning

is highly social to the extent that each member of the audience is a participant in a certain culture” [*“práctica para pasar el tiempo libre y a que su significado es altamente social en la medida en que cada miembro de la audiencia es partícipe de una cultura determinada”*] (Orozco, 1996, p. 40). If we add to this concept the current means of multiscreen consumption (Teso-Alonso; Piñuel-Raigada, 2015) or of social networks and digital platforms (Rodríguez-Breijo *et al.*, 2018), we find a continuous audience over time that can reflect, or share their insights, on any program, anytime and anywhere.

## 1.2. Spanish infotainment comedy professionals

Academics trace the roots of infotainment in Spain to *Caiga quien caiga* (Telecinco, 1996), considered the “precursor of satirical pseudojournalism” [*“precursor del pseudoperiodismo satírico”*] (García-Avilés, 1999). In his book on the program, its first director, Edu Arroyo, acknowledges that these “English-language neologisms” [*“neologismos anglosajones”*], referring to the hybrid formats of information and humor, “are created for the use and enjoyment of workers, convinced of their supposed professional competence” [*“son creados para uso y disfrute de los trabajadores, convencidos de su supuesta competencia profesional”*] (Salgado, 2010, p. 60). However, infotainment comedy shows such as *El intermedio* (La Sexta, 2006) emerge upon the appearance of economic and political crisis as a response to the main problems that concern Spaniards (CIS, 2020), and they “have been placed as the reference point for political satire, picking up the baton of another program hosted by ‘El Gran Wyoming,’ *Caiga quien caiga*” [*“se ha colocado como el espacio de referencia de sátira política, recogiendo el testigo de otro programa conducido por El Gran Wyoming, Caiga quien caiga”*] (Capilla, 2015b, p. 9). The study by Valhondo-Crego and Berrocal (2020) compares the content from *El intermedio* and the newspaper *El País* and concludes that, with regard to how news is narrated, “*El intermedio* relies on a group of presenters that allows diverse emotional identification, ranging from empathy with the serious presenter to laughter with the transgressive jokester, within a classic structure” [*“El intermedio se apoya en un grupo de presentadores que permite la identificación emocional diversa, que abarca desde la empatía con la presentadora seria hasta la carcajada con el bufón transgresor, dentro de un esquema clásico”*] (p. 859).

In this type of program, there are different levels of respect for the truth (King; Elliott, 2010), in line with the so-called fictional pact [*“pacto ficcional”*] of Eco (1996): just as readers need to accept the conditions of the narrator to be able to become immersed in the fantasy of the universe about which they are reading, with infotainment comedy, it is necessary to assume that what is being seen belongs to the comic–satirical realm to catch irony and criticism. That is, it shows that the viewer has become accustomed to this “assiduity of blending, to its impunity, and does not ask for explanations, or even clemency, for the psychological nakedness of the characters of the facts” [*“asiduidad de mezclas, a su impunidad, y no pide explicaciones, e incluso clemencia, por el desnudo psicológico de los protagonistas de los hechos”*] (Marín-Lladó, 2012, p. 97).

As some research maintains, “infotainment programs can be presented both by journalists and by regular hosts of entertainment programs” [*“los programas de infotainment pueden ser presentados tanto por periodistas como por conductores habituales de programas de entretenimiento”*] (Pérez-Latorre *et al.*, 2014); this has led to their being seen as “mixed” formulas (Solér, 2013) owing to the contradiction between journalism and television, to the point that there is not consensus among academics as to how to define and classify them (Aguilera, 2021b). Perhaps that is why initially the communicators working in infotainment stirred up some resentment, since “in every public sphere, institutions try to model some minimum levels of consensus and maximum levels of criticism” [*“en toda esfera pública, las instituciones intentan modelar unos niveles mínimos de consenso y máximos de crítica”*] (Valhondo-Crego, 2011a, p. 269). They were branded as clowns and provocateurs, as with *Caiga quien caiga* as a program or Jordi Évole, who has become one of the leading communicators in Spain, as the presenter on the original *Salvados* (La Sexta, 2008). It should not be forgotten that, as assistant director of *Buenafuente* (Antena 3, 2005; La Sexta, 2007), the program that launched him onto the national stage, “Évole was popular with the program’s audience because of his character, ‘The Troublemaker,’ a supposedly unscripted critic who interrupted the program sitting among the audience to stir up trouble” [*“Évole era conocido para la audiencia del programa por su personaje, ‘El Follonero,’ un supuesto crítico espontáneo que interrumpía el programa sentado entre el público para crear polémica”*] (Capilla, 2015a, p. 33). However, over time, revelations such as those made by Évole, and the worsening of the economic and political crisis, have highlighted citizens’ media requirements, both for knowledge and for entertainment, as previously discussed by Kapuscinski (2005, p. 34), much as Alonso *et al.* (2016) argue that “participants with an activist profile propose a utopian image of society in which there are no journalists” [*“los sujetos con perfil activista plantean la imagen utópica de una sociedad sin periodistas”*] (p. 188), or, at least, one that steers clear of classical journalism.

Certainly, some features of satire seem far removed from those of journalism, but they are used in infotainment comedy as methods or tools to transmit useful in-

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formation, produce pop culture (Aguilera, 2019), or simply communicate. In its beginnings, “the label of satire” [*la etiqueta de sátira*] did not have to be humorous: “Furthermore, classical satire was instructive and predicated to its viewers about morality from a higher and somewhat melancholic position” (Keighron, 1998, cited in Valhondo-Crego, 2011a, p. 262). With good reason, “humor serves to create bonds of both closeness and distance [...] by being contextualized and adapted by the participants it works as a negotiation tool, as well as helps to shape the process of social identity” [*el humor sirve para crear lazos tanto de cercanía como de lejanía [...] por lo que contextualizado y adaptado por los participantes funciona como una herramienta de negociación, así como contribuye a configurar el proceso de identidad social*] (Martínez-García, 2009, p. 229). It is this complicity and shared understanding with the viewer that guarantees the success of a joke about an informative fact, assuming that the public is active and intelligent enough to capture it (Valhondo-Crego, 2011b), although, owing to its subjectivity, it is difficult to determine whether this meeting of the minds is always effective. After all, for this to work, it would be necessary to guarantee the comprehension of the joke by anatomizing it, in principle a “disastrous” [*nefasta*] idea since “dissecting humor is an interesting operation in which the patient usually dies” [*disseccionar el humor es una interesante operación en la cual el paciente generalmente muere*] (Asa-Berger, 1976, cited in Carpio, 2008, p. 17).

While newsworthiness is dependent on current affairs, the sensationalism that accompanies an event can last as long as it arouses the curiosity and interest of the population

## 2. Methodology

The data presented in this paper are from a study of audience reception to which a qualitative methodology was applied. In one arm of the study, we conducted discussion groups with viewers of Spanish infotainment comedy programs, selecting participants with diverse socioeconomic profiles, educational backgrounds, and media habits, chosen solely on the basis of their sex and age in regard to “homogeneity criteria” [*criterios de homogeneidad*] (Suárez-Ortega, 2005, p. 77), to determine whether the audience for these programs has different feedback tied to gender ideas and/or prejudices, or their generational perceptions, the latter being related to whether they use new technologies. Both aspects could affect how audiences internalize both the form and content of these television shows in that they feature communicators of both sexes and strive to adapt to current transmedia and multiscreen habits. In this vein, there are similar studies such as those of Rodrigo-Alsina *et al.* (2016) and De-Casas-Moreno *et al.* (2018), which define various age groups, or that of Llanos and Ferré-Pavía (2020), which proposes three axes to determine whether sexist representation of women in programs exists. Regarding the guide applied in the discussion groups, although there was a script indicating the points to be addressed in different dialogs and debates, in contrast to the dynamic of a focus group, we let participants talk instead of directing the conversation (Callejo *et al.*, 2009).

In the other arm of the study, in-depth interviews were conducted with professionals working in this type of program, which provided a contrast when compared with the insights of the audience, to clarify identified trends and delve further into the issues of relevance. In this line, other reference works in the field of professional consultation are also noted, such as those of Gascón-Vera and Marta-Lazo (2018), Pérez-Pereiro (2007), and Meléndez-Malavé (2005), which make tangible the need for qualitative interviews to delve into the nuances of humor, since these communicators are located “halfway between the artist and the informer” [*a caballo entre el artista y el informador*] (p. 365).

The discussion groups were composed of viewers aged 18 years and older, separated into two age groups: one designated as “young” [*joven*], from 18 to 35 years of age, and the other as “mature” [*madura*], 35 years of age and older. Thus, we analyzed the statements of 87 people in ten discussion groups: 42 in the “young” age range, of which 21 were women and 21 were men, and 45 in the “mature” age range, of which 17 were women and 28 were men. The sample size of each discussion group ranged from eight to ten participants, and they were arranged in different combinations depending on the sex and age of the participants so that there were groups of only young participants, mature participants, women, or men, as well as mixed groups.

In-depth interviews were arranged with 13 television professionals, representing four programs:

- from *El intermedio* (*La Sexta*, 2006), director Carmen Aguilera, production coordinator Raúl Mangas, head of production Diego Santos, editor María Avizanda, scriptwriter Paco Páez, presenter El Gran Wyoming, and presenter Sandra Sabatés;
- from *Todo es mentira* (*Cuatro*, 2019), director José-Antonio Lavado and scriptwriter Javier López-Martín;
- from *Ese programa del que usted me habla* (*La 2*, 2019), assistant director Epi Martín and presenter María Gómez; and
- from *La resistencia* (*Movistar +*, 2018), scriptwriter Victoria Martín, and contributor Alberto Casado. It was of particular value that they had work experience in other television formats.

*El intermedio* and *Todo es mentira* were studied in depth, as both are the most noteworthy infotainment comedy shows in the Spanish scene at the moment, *El intermedio* being the oldest, with 16 years on the air, and *Todo es mentira* being the more recent and up-and-coming. In turn, *Ese programa del que usted me habla*, which in 2019 had a time slot competing with *El intermedio* and *El Hormiguero* (*Antena 3*, 2016), stayed on the air for barely a few months, even with outstanding presenters and comedians. *La resistencia* has a format more similar to pure comedy; however, it was taken

into account because it was frequently mentioned by young audiences as a way to learn about contemporary personalities (Gascón-Vera, 2020; Aguilera-García, 2020). At the same time, the two professionals from this program who were interviewed, Victoria Martín and Alberto Casado, have also been on and/or are on infotainment comedy, television, and radio shows, or on *YouTube* channels.

The greater presence of professionals from *El intermedio* in the sample compared with those from the other shows is justified by the fact that the statement of a single expert was considered sufficient for filming, production, and writing, whereas for the other roles, at least two professionals with the same occupation, a man and a woman, were compared to address the gender perspective.



Figure 1. From top to bottom, left to right: *El intermedio*, *Todo es mentira*, *Ese programa del que usted me habla*, and *La resistencia*.

Source: *Atresplayer.com*, *Cuatro.com*, *Rtve.es*, and *Movistar.es*, respectively.

In both discussion groups and interviews, the script questions revolved around four segments: the evolution of infotainment comedy and its presence in audiovisual consumption nowadays; an evaluation of the professional work performed by the communicators on these shows to transmit complex information; the assignment of topics, roles, and leadership, which may be dependent upon the sex of the infotainment comedy professional; and the handling and incitement of controversy regarding boundaries and liberties in humor about topical issues.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Concurrences between viewers and content creators

After analyzing the experiments conducted with the discussion groups of viewers and with the interviews with audiovisual professionals, it is worth drawing attention to some issues on which both parties concurred. Regarding the extent to which the audience's impressions correspond with the intentions of infotainment comedy content creators, one can cite the following results:

- Most of the viewers and professionals consulted believed that an infotainment comedy program cannot inform in the same way as a news program. These formulas are consumed alongside news programs; however, this does not mean that infotainment comedy programs are not sometimes preferred to other informative shows and that, therefore, some audiences use them as news programs, or as a first point of contact with current affairs:

"Actually, I am not really up to date with everything, twenty thousand things happen that I do not know about and then a little ray of sunlight peaks through that makes me see a bit of the outside world, and I would say that might be these two programs, one is that of Risto Mejide, *Todo es mentira*, and that of Wyoming, *El intermedio*" ["Efectivamente no estoy puesto al día de todo, suceden veinte mil cosas de las que no me entero y entonces llega un rayito de luz que me hace percibir un poco de fuera, y digamos que puede ser estos dos programas, uno es el de Risto Mejide, *Todo es mentira*, y el de Wyoming, *El intermedio*"] (Man, 29 years old).

Based on the statements collected, this situation tends to apply when the viewer has a very busy schedule, such as students preparing for state examinations, healthcare workers, or hospitality professionals. Their television consumption usually occurs at the end of the day, which coincides with the broadcasting of infotainment comedy programs since, chronologically, these are aired after news items are broadcast on conventional news channels. News programs are broadcast three times per day, two of these occurring just before the two infotainment comedy programs being studied: *Todo es mentira* airs after the midday news on *Cuatro*, and *El intermedio*, after the nightly news on *La Sexta*. Some of the participants revealed that their first contact with television, and even with the daily news, happens when the news programs have ended or are ending; hence, they might hear about a topical issue for the first time through *Todo es mentira* or *El intermedio*, but this is not the most common situation because they also can also use the Internet:

"As a general rule, he [Risto Mejide] explains things that I have already heard about from Ana Rosa's program or from *24 Horas*, or from the news that I get on my cell phone" ["Por norma general, él [Risto Mejide] desarrolla cosas que yo ya me he enterado por el programa de Ana Rosa o por el *24 Horas*, o por las noticias que me van entrando por el móvil"] (Woman, 60 years old).

“ The remarkable thing is that the skill of the communicator not only comes to be admired by audiences but also can evolve into an ability to convince their audience of certain ideas ”

“What we see [on *El intermedio*] is because we choose the news item and the sketch that makes it attractive, for me, the truth is that the rest of the program ... I heard during the day” [*Lo que vemos [de El intermedio] es porque seleccionamos la noticia y el sketch que hace bonito, a mí la verdad que el resto del programa... Lo demás lo he escuchado durante el día*”] (Man, 51 years old).

The professionals, in the same way, understand that these programs are not able to inform in the same way as a news program, and they do not attempt to do so. However, they recognize that the news component of infotainment comedy has the ability to document an event, synthesize it, and even make it more comprehensible. Thus, infotainment comedy can act as an interpretive genre. This is why content creators are not surprised that some people may first learn about current affairs through shows such as *El intermedio* or *Todo es mentira*:

“For many people our news reporting is the first time they’ve heard about something all day, although we do not expect it to be the first time that people have heard it, we give them greater insight” [*Para mucha gente la noticia que damos es la primera vez que la escucha a lo largo del día, aunque no contamos con que vaya a ser la primera vez que la gente la escucha, nosotros le damos una mayor visión*”] (Javier López-Martín, scriptwriter from *Todo es mentira*).

“We have an impressive journalistic writing team, with a lot of experience. In other words, the journalistic weight of the newsroom is very good, and the level of writing and of the script is splendid. That is, there is no other program where you find scriptwriters who are capable of reading *The New York Times* editorial and then making a joke.” [*Tenemos un equipo de redacción periodística impresionante, con mucha experiencia. O sea, el peso periodístico de la redacción es muy bueno, y el nivel de escritura y de guion que hay es espléndido. Es decir, no hay otro programa donde encuentres guionistas que sean capaces de leerse el editorial del New York Times y luego hacer un chiste*”] (Carmen Aguilera, director of *El intermedio*).

- For audiences and professionals, infotainment comedy programs depend entirely on the news. Viewers and content creators understand that it makes no sense to watch an infotainment comedy show days after its broadcast, unless something very significant happens in a specific episode. Audiences recognize that, in terms of delayed viewing, it is more common to watch excerpts or specific incidences from the infotainment comedy shows because, if they miss a program, it is more practical to follow the news through other channels:

“For example, to watch it in clips it is true that Twitter made a compilation of the best videos from *El intermedio* and I thought it was funny. I said ‘that’s funny.’ But for me to watch maybe a program from three days ago today, I don’t see much sense in that either” [*Por ejemplo, para verlo en fragmentos sí que es verdad que Twitter sacó una recopilación de los mejores videos de El intermedio y me hizo gracia. Dije ‘qué gracioso’. Pero ponerme a ver a lo mejor un programa de hace tres días hoy, pues tampoco le veo mucho sentido*”] (Man, 25 years old).

Content creators understand that their viewers are governed by this principle, which is tied to the idea of immediacy and instant satisfaction from **Rincón** (2011). Thus, communicators assume that, when the audience watches them outside the live broadcast, it will be for other factors related to the comic or controversial aspect of the show, not so much to follow the news, since while newsworthiness is dependent on current affairs, the sensationalism that accompanies an event can last as long as it arouses the curiosity and interest of the population. In this sense, professionals understand that they must play with both aspects to find their niche audience:

“We couldn’t do pure entertainment because you compete against *El Hormiguero* and you’re going to kill yourself, and we couldn’t do a humorous news program as such because you go up against *El intermedio*. So, what we tried to do was to walk a line between both worlds, because then in the end there were sections that were a little more timeless, there were interviews, because collaborators like Javier Cansado, Antonio Resines, did not talk about current affairs. So, we tried to pursue a course that did not clash with either *El intermedio* or *El Hormiguero*” [*Nosotros no podíamos hacer entretenimiento puro porque compites contra El Hormiguero y te vas a matar, y no podíamos hacer un informativo como tal de humor porque ibas contra El intermedio. Entonces, nosotros lo que intentábamos hacer era seguir una línea entre ambos mundos, porque luego al final había secciones un poquito más atemporales, había entrevistas, porque los colaboradores como Javier Cansado, Antonio Resines, no hablaban de actualidad. Entonces, nosotros intentábamos seguir una línea que no chocara ni con El intermedio ni con El Hormiguero*”] (Epi Martín, deputy director of *Ese programa del que usted me habla*).

Additionally, the proliferation of infotainment comedy programs in Spain has an exponential relationship with cases of political corruption, for both audiences and professionals. Viewers state that the success of an infotainment comedy show depends on the political reality and the social tension that may derive from it, since they believe that people require more humor when reality is more complex and dramatic, something that professionals corroborate:

“[Luis] Bárcenas was an incredible turning point, and a point of no return for us. The audience doubled and in the following years, with the scandals that have occurred, well, they have been very good to the program. The people who have started followed us have been loyal, and then, during the second half of its life, the program has enjoyed big audiences and a lot of fame, as well as many awards” [*[Luis] Bárcenas fue un punto de inflexión brutal, y un punto de no retorno para nosotros. Se dobló la audiencia y los siguientes años, con los escándalos que ha habido, pues han venido muy bien al programa. La gente que se ha ido incorporando se ha ido fidelizando, y,*

*entonces, la segunda mitad de vida que lleva el programa es con mucha audiencia y con mucho renombre, con muchos premios también”*] (Raúl Mangas, production coordinator from *El intermedio*).

- Viewers and professionals express similar impressions regarding how infotainment comedy spaces are seen as balanced hybrids between current affairs and comedy content, as well as opinion. In these terms, audiences may come to identify presenters as opinion leaders, to the extent that certain specific political groups, parties, or ideologies may identify with them. Audiences and professionals agree on this issue, with the exception that the former emphasize that this identification occurs mainly with ideologies, and content creators attribute it more to the professional skill of the communicator in question:

“I don’t like [Wyoming] on *El intermedio*. I have seen him for example on *No te metas en política*, which comes out only on *YouTube*, and it was also half comedic, also geared toward the left, but there you hear him talk and I love it, on *El intermedio* I do not like the role he has” [“*[Wyoming] no me gusta en El intermedio. Lo he visto por ejemplo en No te metas en política, un programa que sale solamente por YouTube, y que también era medio cómico, también enfocado a la izquierda, pero ahí lo escuchas hablar y me encanta, en El intermedio es que no me gusta el papel que hace*”] (Man, 56 years old).

“He is a very intelligent guy, a guy who conveys messages, who knows how to communicate well, who has been on screen for many years too, he is well known. Let’s just say that people, a lot of people, trust his judgment. That’s why he’s an opinion leader.” [“*Es un tío muy inteligente, un tío que transmite, que sabe comunicar bien, que lleva muchos años en pantalla también, es conocido. Digamos que, la gente, mucha gente, confía en su criterio. Por eso es un líder de opinión.*”] (Paco Páez, scriptwriter from *El intermedio*).

The only exception was El Gran Wyoming, who stated that he did not see himself as an opinion leader:

“On this program they do really identify us with what we say, in fact, even though the script is not mine, I sometimes have to explain that twenty times –right?– that I do not necessarily agree 100%. In some cases there are things I would not say, in others I would say much more” [“*En este programa sí que nos identifican mucho con lo que contamos, de hecho, aunque el guion no es mío, yo a veces tengo que explicar eso veinte veces, ¿no?, que yo no coincido necesariamente al 100%. En algunos casos hay cosas que no diría, en otros diría muchísimo más*”] (El Gran Wyoming, presenter on *El intermedio*).

- Infotainment comedy addresses different levels, sources, or issues of current affairs, which represents something positive for audiences in that it gives them different perspectives than those voiced in a news program. For professionals, this translates into creative freedom and giving their show an “empathy” [“*empatía*”] factor that classic formats lack:

“If you analyze the running order from a day of program of *El intermedio*, then it will surely be very balanced or will be very similar to the running order of a news program, but the difference is this, that we not only tell the news, but then we give it that twist, right? We give that humor that helps [the viewer] in some way digest the news in a different manner” [“*Si tú analizas la escaleta de un programa de un día de El intermedio, pues seguramente estará muy equilibrado o será muy parecido a la escaleta de un informativo, pero la diferencia es esa, que nosotros no solo contamos la noticia, sino que luego le damos esa vuelta, ¿no?, le metemos ese humor que ayuda a digerir de alguna manera las noticias de otra manera*”] (Sandra Sabatés, presenter on *El intermedio*).

“I’m a journalist, but I don’t look down on entertainment. What happens is that you have to do entertainment well, and you have to make entertainment with values, and you have to make entertainment in which people are not treated badly, are not disrespected, are not yelling. I mean, you can laugh, and you can talk about topics you never thought you’d talk about.” [“*Yo soy periodista, pero no desprecio el entretenimiento. Lo que pasa es que hay que hacer entretenimiento bien, y hay que hacer entretenimiento con valores, y hay que hacer un entretenimiento en el que la gente no se trate mal, no se falte al respeto, no se chille. O sea, se puede uno reír, y se puede hablar de temas que nunca pensaste que hablarías*”] (María Gómez, presenter on *Ese programa del que usted me habla*).

This type of “empathizing” [“*empatizar*”] with programs is continuously highlighted by viewers, who often not only make it a condition for continuously following shows but also, if they find it absent, might make it an excuse to stop watching them entirely:

“[Wyoming] tries to empathize with a person who is watching the show and not just be informative, throwing one news item after another at you” [“*[Wyoming] intenta empatizar con una persona que está viendo el programa y que no sea solamente informativo lanzándote una noticias detrás de otra*”] (Man, 34 years old).

“If you empathize, if you enjoy what you’re watching, and you don’t feel attacked by it. Then you say ‘flip, I like this guy’” [“*Si empatizas, si lo que estás viendo te agrada, y no te agrede. Entonces tú dices ‘contra, me gusta este tío’*”] (Man, 57 years old).

### 3.2. Divergences between audiences and professionals

Just as viewers and content creators concur on various issues when discussing infotainment comedy programs, points of discrepancy between them also arise. These divergences appear not only in the relationship that should exist between the professionals’ intention and the final product that reaches the audiences but primarily in matters expressly related to

the interpretation of the programs and with the reception of their messages. Between the different experiences, aspects stand out that, although acknowledged by audiences and professionals alike, each group explains, expounds upon, and justifies in a different way, as indicated below:

- One of the most striking issues on which audiences and professionals do not usually concur is the perception of improvisation. The viewers consulted often doubted whether presenters like El Gran Wyoming or Risto Mejide improvise or if, instead, are following a script. This is not as much an issue of ignorance about the work routines of television programs, which they suspect are complex, as being influenced by the experience of watching the role played by the presenters and collaborators, recognizing that it is difficult to know when El Gran Wyoming or Risto Mejide is reading, acting, or improvising.

Whenever viewers doubt their own impression of a presenter, they reason that this is a product of the professional's skill, which they consider a talent, regardless of whether or not they identify with that person. The remarkable thing, in any case, is that the aforementioned skill of the communicator not only comes to be admired by audiences but also can evolve into an ability to convince their audience of certain ideas:

"Not to mention he has a gift [Wyoming]. Everyone has a gift and that is his, he is born to be this way, he is ironic, he is funny without having to read the script, which he reads for sure, but he has a different style, he has different manner" ["*Aparte de que tiene un don [Wyoming]. Cada uno tiene un don y él es suyo, le nace ser así, es irónico, es gracioso sin tener que leerse el guion, que se lo lee seguro, pero tiene otras formas, tiene otra manera*] (Woman, 40 years old)

On the other hand, when it comes to viewers doubting whether or not there is a script behind the presenters' speech, professionals were clearly surprised. In the case of El Gran Wyoming, he almost always follows the script prepared by the editors and scriptwriters of *El intermedio*; in that of Risto Mejide, although he also has a script developed by the editorial staff of *Todo es mentira*, the dynamics of the roundtable are governed more by freedom and dialog; and in comedy programs such as *La resistencia*, the ability to improvise is also considered a virtue:

"That is what is intended, that is, that it does not seem scripted, it is really what we are trying to do. Though you also would have to be a little naïve to think that Wyoming improvises all of that, that he improvises so well" ["*Es lo que se pretende, o sea, que no parezca algo escrito, realmente es lo que se intenta. Aunque también hay que ser un poco ingenuo para pensar que Wyoming improvisa todo eso. Que improvisa así de bien*"] (Paco Páez, scriptwriter from *El intermedio*).

"As a scriptwriter that is very gratifying, sometimes when it happens live, when he speaks, well, like a person reading, although Wyoming does it well, sometimes it is still a bit robotic. In *Todo es mentira*, it is true that things are a bit more chaotic [...] These are two ways of working. I think that they are both very good. I don't think one is better than the other" ["*Eso como guionista es muy gratificante, a veces puedes pecar de que luego en directo, cuando habla, pues queda una persona leyendo, aunque Wyoming lo hace bien, a veces queda un poco robótico. En Todo es mentira, es verdad que se vive un poco más en el caos [...] Son dos formas de trabajar. A mí me parece que las dos están muy bien. No creo que haya una por encima de la otra*"] (Javier López-Martín, scriptwriter from *Todo es mentira*).

"David Broncano is not a person who can just read [off a script]. In fact, for me, the monologue on *The Resistance*, even though the scriptwriters are fantastic and they write phenomenally, I think it's the worst. I think when David truly shines is when he improvises, when he is totally free and things seem to come out organically." ["*David Broncano no es una persona que pueda estar leyendo. De hecho, para mí, el monólogo de La resistencia, a pesar de que los guionistas son fantásticos y de que lo escriben fenomenal, creo que es lo peor. Creo que cuando de verdad David brilla es cuando improvisa, cuando es totalmente libre y las cosas parece que surgen orgánicas*"] (Victoria Martín, scriptwriter from *La resistencia*).

- The idea that caused the most discrepancies between viewers and professionals, and even among professionals and among viewers, is the profile of infotainment comedy audiences, or, at least, who might be the target audiences for these shows. According to the statements collected from viewers, the age group that most enjoyed infotainment comedy is between 30 and 50 years old, and young women were the ones who assess and critically analyze it the most. However, the profile of infotainment comedy viewer that we can establish as a result of the discussion groups conducted is one thing and the sensations and impressions that the participants expressed when discussing said profile are another.

The idea that caused the most discrepancies between viewers and professionals, and even among professionals and among viewers, is the profile of infotainment comedy audiences, or, at least, who might be the target audiences for these shows

Some viewers tend to associate this with the political ideology of the program or the network. Other participants hesitated to guess even in terms of age. Either way, to them, the audience profile for infotainment comedy depends on political trends:



“Maybe they also do that to gain an audience that later in a few years will no longer be there. Like now, a colleague said that there are older people who do not watch that program [*El intermedio*], maybe what they are trying to do with that is to capture a younger audience that within, I do not know, seven years, will be more mature and continue watching them. Because maybe they will still have the same ideology” [*“A lo mejor eso lo hacen también para ganarse una audiencia que luego en unos años no sigue habiendo. Igual que ahora, el compañero ha dicho que hay personas más mayores que no ven ese programa [El intermedio], a lo mejor lo que intentan con eso es captar a un público más joven que dentro de, no sé, siete años, sean más maduros y sigan viéndoles. Porque a lo mejor siguen siendo de la misma ideología”*]

 (Woman, 21 years old).

The professionals interviewed also tended not to agree when it came to identifying the profile of their target audience. Even relying on audience share studies, or data from *Kantar Media* and *Barlovento Comunicación*, which indicated that a middle-aged male profile was the primary consumer of these shows, content creators recognized that today it is practically impossible to define their target audience:

“We have studies of who watches us, and who watches us the most, but it is true that depending on the topics there is no exact profile, because depending on the topics we address that profile may vary. [...] We do not have an exact type of viewer who always watches us, but we vary a lot, we have a very wide range, which is also one of the advantages of the program” [*“Tenemos estudios de quién nos ve, y de quién nos ve más, pero es verdad que dependiendo de los temas no hay un perfil exacto, porque dependiendo de los temas que tratemos ese perfil puede variar. [...] No tenemos un espectador tipo exacto que siempre nos ve, sino que variamos mucho, tenemos un abanico muy amplio, que es también una de las ventajas del programa”*]

 (José Antonio Lavado, director of *Todo es mentira*).

- Audiences and professionals also did not concur regarding the level of influence that certain leading figures can have. Audiences believe that loyalty to an infotainment comedy show depends entirely on its presenter –usually one, around whom all the other aspects, be they collaborators and the team in general or the guests or topics addressed, revolve. Their image is the program’s image, and their opinion is the program’s opinion:

“I think the presenter in this case is the essence of the program [*Todo es mentira*], if Risto Mejide or Marta Flich were not there, the program itself would not make much sense to me, because their purpose is to criticize the entire political, economic, and social landscape” [*“Creo que el presentador en este caso es la esencia del programa [Todo es mentira], si no estuviera Risto Mejide o Marta Flich yo no le encontraría mucho sentido al programa en sí, porque es que lo que quieren es criticar todo el panorama político, económico y social”*]

 (Man, 18 years old).

Professionals, in contrast, believe that a program is the product of teamwork. They recognize the influence of their presenters, and when they talk about them, they extoll their virtues to explain why they are the most noteworthy feature of the format, and why they have been for years. However, the daily routines of an infotainment comedy editorial team involve the coordination of so many people that professionals argue that the success of a show lies in its staff:

“The whole team would be around a hundred people. Coordinating all of that is quite complicated, getting all of that to work like clockwork is complicated, getting all of that to produce an internal communication code is complicated, but we have been doing it for many years” [*“El equipo total seremos unas cien personas. Coordinar todo eso es bastante complicado, que todo eso funcione como un engranaje es complicado, que todo eso genere un código de comunicación interno es complicado, pero llevamos muchos años”*]

 (Diego Santos, head of production from *El intermedio*).

This reality does not reach audiences. Viewers assume that there are large teams behind *Todo es mentira* and *El intermedio*, but they still maintain that the entire program revolves around Risto Mejide or El Gran Wyoming, respectively:

“Once in a while I watch *El intermedio* and I am pleasantly surprised that it is still a very fresh program, I mean, so many years, and yet there are like small innovations that make the program always feel current and of a type of humor that is still the same, because, well, in the end the star is always El Gran Wyoming, but it seems that he does not age” [*“De vez en cuando veo El intermedio y me sorprende para bien que sigue siendo un programa muy fresco, o sea, tantos años, y sin embargo hay como pequeñas novedades que hacen que el programa siempre sea actual y de un tipo de humor que es parecido, porque, bueno, al final el protagonista siempre es el Gran Wyoming, pero parece que no envejece”*]

 (Man, 45 years old).

Likewise, the creators acknowledge the draw that their lead presenters have for audiences as long as each person facing the camera plays their assigned role well. This clear awareness of teamwork for professionals comes into contradiction when it is the content creators themselves who set the tone for the topics, the shots, and the script, making the presenters the focal point of the program:

“Viewers assume that there are large teams behind *Todo es mentira* and *El intermedio*, but they still maintain that the entire program revolves around Risto Mejide or El Gran Wyoming, respectively”

“Let’s say it’s a product, a format where there’s a presenter and then a journalist. I’ll call it an ‘infoshow’ because it mixes information with a show. In this case, the ‘show’ is provided by Risto and Wyoming, the information is provided by Sandra Sabatés and Marta Flich. [...] But let’s say the information is given by a journalist, or at least someone in the role of a journalist.” [“*Digamos que es un producto, un formato donde hay un presentador y luego un periodista. Yo lo llamo infoshow porque se mezcla información con show. En este caso el show te lo aportan Risto y Wyoming, la información te la aportan Sandra Sabatés y Marta Flich. [...] Pero digamos que la información la da un periodista, o por lo menos alguien en el papel de periodista*”] (Javier López-Martín, scriptwriter of *Todo es mentira*).

- As for whether there are differences between men and women working in infotainment comedy, most of the viewers consulted remember the image of these professionals more than their professional work, which often results in a highly superficial interpretation of their messages:

“If you watch the entire program of *El intermedio*, or if you watch the entire program of Marta Flich, it is just the opposite, in my opinion, being *La Sexta* in this case, or more progressive, the work that Sandra Sabatés does I think is nominal” [“*Si ves el programa entero de El intermedio, o si ves el programa entero de Marta Flich, justamente es todo lo contrario, para mí, siendo La Sexta en este caso, o más progresista, la labor que hace Sandra Sabatés creo que es testimonial*”] (Man, 49 years old).

In turn, this poses an additional problem with respect to confusing some presenters with others, even when they are performing different tasks, since audiences find it difficult to distinguish their roles:

“I noticed it when there was one who was kind of Asian, who was very cute. [...] Another one who was very beautiful, too, who was not Asian. Beatriz Montañez. But that was a long time ago” [“*Yo lo veía cuando había una que era como oriental, que era monísima. [...] Otra muy guapa también que no era oriental. Beatriz Montañez. Pero esa hace ya tiempo*”] (Woman, 48 years old).

Professionals, on the other hand, think that the roles played by each communicator are clearly differentiated, and often they are not even aware of the perception that audiences have about the presenters themselves:

“Well, I think that, with Beatriz Montañez, of course, the role she had in *El intermedio* back then, compared with the role I have in *El intermedio* now is very different. [...] When I arrived, the role was already much more journalistic, much more serious than what Beatriz could do at the time. Still, I imagine that comparisons have been made. Honestly, I don’t know” [“*Bueno, yo creo que, con Beatriz Montañez, claro, el papel que hacía ella en El intermedio de entonces, con el papel que yo hago en El intermedio a día de hoy es muy diferente. [...] Cuando yo llegué, el rol ya era mucho más periodístico, mucho más serio que el que podía hacer Beatriz en su momento. Aun así, me imagino que habrá habido comparaciones. Sinceramente, lo desconozco*”] (Sandra Sabatés, presenter on *El intermedio*).

Regardless of whether the image perceived by audiences corresponds to that which the content creators have designed for each presenter, professionals and audiences recognize that a considerable part of each communicator’s projected image corresponds as much to what the top brass wishes to assign to that person as to their own personality:

“I don’t like [Sandra Sabatés]. I am very clear about that. Because she doesn’t speak to me. I, for example, am a very passionate and approachable person, so then if I am watching a news story, where really new programs are not usually very accessible, but if what I am watching, does not resonate with me, what difference does it make? What she does bring is the news element that is part of *El intermedio*, but I think she could be very easily replaced by another person. And in fact they have already replaced one with the other” [“*A mí no me gusta [Sandra Sabatés]. Yo es que soy muy clara con esto. Porque a mí no me transmite. Yo por ejemplo soy una persona muy pasional y cercana, entonces si estoy viendo una noticia, que realmente los informativos no suelen ser muy cercanos, pero si a mí lo que estoy viendo, no me llega, ¿en qué se diferencia? Que sí que lo que aporta es la connotación informativa dentro de lo que es El intermedio, pero yo creo que es muy sustituible por otra persona. Y de hecho ya se ha sustituido una por otra*”] (Woman, 21 years old).

“It just so happens that on television there tend to be more men and on social networks there are more women, but that is just it; when you think of *El intermedio*, you think of Wyoming, and when you think of the other, you think of Risto, because they are people who usually say things that cause more controversy, just like if you think of *Zapeando*, for me Cristina Pedroche comes to mind” [“*Se ha dado la coincidencia que en televisión suelen ser más hombres y en redes sociales son más mujeres, pero es eso, cuando tú piensas en El intermedio, piensas en Wyoming, y cuando piensas en el otro, piensas en Risto, porque son personas que suelen decir cosas que causan más controversia, igual que si piensas en Zapeando a mí se me viene a la cabeza Cristina Pedroche*”] (Woman, 19 years).

Viewers can tell when one program is more involved than another in capturing or retaining audiences through platforms and social networks, to create engagement, as compared with others who may use them only to repost content

- The attention paid to social networks by the audience does not correspond in the same way with professionals. The majority of shows have accounts on *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and *Instagram* and constantly post videos and comments. Viewers can tell when one program is more involved than another in capturing or retaining audiences through platforms and social networks, to create engagement, as compared with others who may use them only to repost content:

“I understand that our program can be watched live, it can be watched later, a recording can be watched, it can be watched on a smartphone, it can be watched on a tablet, it can be watched on a computer. We have social networks, where there are also people who post them, in any case you can watch it without extra effort” [*“Entiendo que nuestro programa se puede ver en directo, se puede ver en diferido, se puede ver grabado, se puede ver en el móvil, se puede ver en la tableta, se puede ver en el ordenador. Tenemos redes sociales, que también hay gente que las lleva, en todos los casos se puede ver sin ningún tratamiento adicional extra”*] (Diego Santos, head of production from *El intermedio*).

That being said, some of the participants consulted did affirm the importance of social networks in promoting certain programs or personalities from the media landscape through their accounts, especially when the recipient was a person with a very busy schedule, as in the case of a student preparing for state examinations:

“About the people who share and everything ‘Jordi Évole, and so on’. Recently, the day before yesterday, I saw that someone had shared a video of Jordi Évole, but I don’t even know what it was about because I didn’t even stop to look at it. I have no idea” [*“De la gente que comparte y eso ‘Jordi Évole, tal’. Hace poco, anteayer, vi que alguien había compartido un video de Jordi Évole, pero no sé ni lo que ponía porque ni me paré a seguir. No tengo ni idea”*] (Woman, 29 years old).

This type of viralization, or act of sharing content without contextualizing through social networks, is the main reason why a person who does not usually watch television associates communicators from the news field, such as Jordi Évole, with work more typical of infotainment comedy, to the extent that the videos that reach them can be comic or entertainment and, conversely, why comedians like David Broncano and his colleagues from *La resistencia* trigger debate about current issues. In the latter case, according to the viewers’ statements, this is because *La resistencia*, in particular, has more interactive social media accounts that invite its audience to leave comments:

“The matter of *La resistencia*, which is the one I like the most, or *Late motiv*, because I also like Raúl Cimas a lot, his humor and everything, and on Instagram, from what I have seen so far, they repost short things, and I do like to watch it, but it’s unusual, well yes, sometimes I do comment on the things they post” [*“El tema La resistencia, que es el que más me gusta, o de Late Motiv, porque también me gusta mucho Raúl Cimas, el humor que tiene y tal, y en Instagram, de lo que ya he visto, recuerdan cositas cortas, y sí me gusta verlo, pero es raro, bueno sí, algunas veces sí le pongo algún comentario a las cosas que ponen ellos”*] (Man, 56 years).

Young viewers appreciate the comedy program *La resistencia* mainly because, despite belonging to a pay-TV network, it is openly shared on *YouTube*. These features that the creators of *La resistencia* post for them convey to the audience a sense of wanting to care for them as an audience that goes beyond the social media involvement that infotainment comedy programs such as *El intermedio* and *Todo es mentira* have:

“Broncano draws a lot from modern life, and draws a lot also from having made content that’s super easy to access. But also that a lot of *La resistencia* is uploaded to *YouTube*, that must also really be taken into account, that you then watch the program for 20 minutes on *YouTube* for free, so that is a way to gain a strong audience” [*“Broncano arrastra mucho de la vida moderna, y arrastra mucho también de haber hecho un contenido que llega súper fácil. Pero también que gran parte de La resistencia se sube a YouTube, eso también hay que tenerlo muy en cuenta, de que tú luego te ves el programa en veinte minutos en YouTube en abierto, entonces eso es hay una manera de ganar público brutal”*] (Man, 22 years old).

This idea has been deliberately considered by the professionals from *La resistencia*, who understand that their potential audience is in a young age sector; in contrast, those of *El intermedio* and *Todo es mentira* believe that young people will not follow them as much as older viewers owing to scheduling issues and the difficulties in following current affairs content, whereas entertainment and comedy shows that address current issues put the audience’s comfort, in terms of both access as well as ease of understanding the topics addressed, first:

“Middle-aged people; and then there are younger people who are drawn to the program for its humor and for its relation to Dani Mateo, for example. But yes, I think middle-aged people, from 40 up, watch us. From 40 and I would say even retirees. That is, people, let’s say, who come from analog TV, but who are very interested in politics and news” [*“Gente de mediana edad; y luego hay gente más joven que se acerca al programa por el humor y por lo que tiene que ver con Dani Mateo, por ejemplo. Pero sí, yo creo que nos ve gente de mediana edad, a partir de cuarenta para arriba. De cuarenta y yo diría que incluso jubilados. O sea, gente, digamos, que viene de la tele analógica, pero que está muy interesada en la política y en la información”*] (María Avizanda, editor from *El intermedio*).

“*Sé lo que hicisteis* barely talked about politics, and *Ese programa del que usted me habla* talked about it, but in a very light way. There was never an ugly joke about anyone or anything. It’s not like *El intermedio* [...] I think *Sé*

*lo que hicisteis was pure entertainment and that of La 2 was also intended to be entertainment*” [“Sé lo que hicisteis *casi no hablaba de política* y Ese programa del que usted me habla *hablaba, pero de una manera muy light. Nunca hubo un chiste bestia contra nadie ni nada. No es como El intermedio [...]* Creo que Sé lo que hicisteis *era puro entretenimiento y el de La 2 también pretendía ser de entretenimiento*”] (Alberto Casado, contributor from *La resistencia*).

From the audiences’ point of view, humor serves news by facilitating its understanding and assimilation; in contrast, from the professionals’ point of view, current affairs content would serve as an excuse or pretext to make comedy and, consequently, to attract audiences

With regard to infotainment comedy shows’ use of social networks, two issues can be seen: on the one hand, the interchange, or feedback, can occur between audiences and professionals, in which the space for interaction is on the program’s social network accounts. This issue can be related to expectations towards a program, and we see that, in most cases according to the statements collected, audiences use it more to find out about the program and its team than out of a desire to contribute ideas or talk to the presenters.

The second aspect is related to the impact of what is shared on the Internet. We have mentioned that the ability to empathize with these programs is an idea shared between audiences and professionals, but both differ in the means of expressing it. For content creators, especially the program *Todo es mentira*, social networks are the main vehicle for debate and social mobilization in that they encourage participation through them:

“We initiate open debates partly out of media humility [...] I think it’s also interesting that it is not just us, it’s not unidirectional. And even if we are not going to compile all the opinions expressed later, let people give their opinion, let them record it on paper, or rather, digitally, because they are tweets, and because they are capable of thinking” [“*Nosotros lanzamos debates abiertos un poco por humildad mediática [...]* Creo que también es interesante que no solo seamos nosotros, que no sea unidireccional. Y aunque luego no vayamos a recoger toda esa opinión que se genera, que la gente opine, que la ponga en papel, o sea, en digital, porque son tweets, y que sean capaces de pensar”] (Javier López-Martín, scriptwriter from *Todo es mentira*).

The audiences consulted, on the other hand, do not share this idea, first, because they do not usually participate through them, since, in most cases, they do not even check them to follow the programs, and second, because they are convinced that a program’s ability to have a social impact lies once again in a presenter or collaborator’s ability to convince:

“[Dani Mateo] Sometimes I do like him and sometimes I don’t. There are things he says on social networks and so on that sometimes I do not like, to tell the truth. In addition to my not liking them, they create a lot of controversy” [“[Dani Mateo] *A veces sí me gusta y a veces no. Hay cosas que dice en redes y tal que a veces no me gustan, la verdad. Más que no me gustan, que crean mucha polémica*”] (Woman, 22 years old).

- Another point on which professionals and audiences seem to disagree is about the future of the infotainment comedy format. The viewers consulted believe that humor will remain in the media as people have always needed it in their lives as a society; hence, they believe that infotainment comedy programs will last as long as people need audiovisual content that stimulates their intelligence and critical mind:

“If Wyoming wasn’t on the show it would be, I don’t know, like a news program, right? That just gives you the news items, period, one after another and that’s all. And I don’t know, he brings, in one way, a critical aspect, and also a comic one. So, of course, it engages people more because of that.” [“*Si no estuviese Wyoming en el programa sería, no sé, como un telediario, ¿no? Que simplemente te dan las noticias, punto, una detrás de otra y fin. Y no sé, le aporta, por una parte, un punto crítico, y también cómico. Entonces, claro, engancha más a la gente por eso*”] (Woman, 23 years old)

For this reason, for the viewers consulted, the survival of infotainment comedy depends on the themes and focuses proposed. Depending on how each program evolves regarding its format, sooner or later it will end for audiences and be replaced by another that brings something different:

“[With *El intermedio*] It’s the same base they used in *Caiga quien caiga*. Actually, and what happened to the other program is happening, it’s getting to the point where it no longer has anywhere to go. In fact, that’s why Usun Yoon was taken off and they’ve been taking off personalities.” [“[Con *El intermedio*] *Es la misma base que utilizaban en Caiga quien caiga. En realidad, y está pasando lo que le pasó al otro programa, está llegando un momento que ya no tiene por dónde tirar. De hecho, por eso se quitó a Usun Yoon y han ido quitando personajes*”] (Man, 51 years old).

The professionals, on the other hand, are divided. Some believe that the end of their program’s life will be linked to their host’s tenure. Others prefer to think that the proposed format is more important. And this clash of views can occur within the same program, case of *El intermedio*:

“The future of *El intermedio*? I don’t know. Let’s see, for me there is a determining factor, which is that this program is Wyoming. So, the program is going to last as long as he wants it to last. The day he chooses to stay home, we will have to do another program.” [“¿El futuro de *El intermedio*? No lo sé. A ver, para mí existe un condicionante, que es que este programa es Wyoming. Entonces, el programa va a durar hasta que él quiera que dure. El día que él opte por quedarse en su casa, habrá que hacer otro programa”] (Raúl Mangas, production coordinator from *El intermedio*).

“Wyoming will at some point stop doing it, and when Wyoming is done, well, either someone will replace him or the program will end. I imagine that someone will replace him, and if it works out, he will continue, and if it does not work out, then they will give it a try, but I do not know if the public will accept a new personality who is not Wyoming” [“Wyoming en algún momento dejará de hacerlo, y cuando se acabe Wyoming, pues, o le sustituirá alguien o se acabará el programa. Imagino que le sustituirá alguien, y si funciona, seguirá, y si no funciona, pues se probará, pero no sé si el público aceptará una figura nueva que no sea Wyoming”] (Paco Páez, screenwriter of *El intermedio*).

“I think it’s important that there are programs like this. That, beyond the fact that there is news, that the current affairs can be told and that satire and criticism and denunciation are brought in, which is good for our democratic well-being too, ey, and as citizens” [“Yo creo que es importante que haya programas de este tipo. Que, más allá de que haya informativos, que se pueda contar la actualidad y que se tire de la sátira y de la crítica y de la denuncia, que es bueno para nuestra salud democrática también, eh, y como ciudadanos”] (Sandra Sabatés, presenter on *El intermedio*).

#### 4. Conclusions

From the results obtained based on the statements collected in the discussion groups with audiences and in the interviews with professionals from Spanish infotainment comedy programs, two sets of conclusions were found:

On the one hand, audiences and professionals diverge more than they concur when discussing infotainment comedy. They concur in the way they interpret certain aspects of the infotainment comedy genre, in the same way as both parties clearly identify the two areas that compose it; however, to the extent that content creators develop a product and it reaches their audiences through different channels and platforms, sometimes not associated with the live shows, the implications may be different, as well. In this way, the intentions of infotainment comedy professionals do not always correspond to the impressions made on their audiences, or to what the latter internalize about infotainment comedy.

On the other hand, the concept of infotainment comedy changes significantly depending on whether it is approached from the point of view of content creators or from that of audiences, because, for professionals of this type of formula, information is the basis on which to build entertainment and/or comedy whereas, from the perspective of the receiver, the binomial of information and humor is a matter of its usefulness in informing, understanding, and comprehending current issues while at the same time, acting as entertainment. To put it another way: from the audiences’ point of view, humor serves news by facilitating its understanding and assimilation; in contrast, from the professionals’ point of view, current affairs content would serve as an excuse or pretext to make comedy and, consequently, to attract audiences.

Thus, it can be seen that both audiences and television professionals can talk about the same audiovisual product, in this case, infotainment comedy, insofar as they identify the different combinations of its components, in line with the “intuitive understanding” of Reinemann *et al.* (2011) and Otto *et al.* (2017). However, it has been concluded that certain deontological gaps in the genre (López-Martín, 2020) or the same creative freedom of content creators (Salgado-Losada, 2010) can produce different conceptions about their formulas, which translates into a conflict of expectations (Aguilera-García, 2021a), as well as into contradictory definitions on the different branches of infotainment (Lahva, 2009, cited by Reinemann *et al.*, 2011) that only ongoing research in the field of audiences can clarify, while their impressions reach the professionals of the television medium.

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