

Worn but still effective: examining the audience data of the Chilean presidential electoral broadcasting (1999-2017)¹

Desgastada pero aún efectiva: examinando los datos de audiencia de la franja electoral presidencial chilena (1999-2017)

Desgastado, mas ainda eficaz: examinando os dados da audiência do horário eleitoral presidencial chileno (1999-2017)

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ABSTRACT

The Presidential Electoral Broadcasting (PEB) remains as one of the main sources of electoral information. Even with its extensive international use, there is limited research developed on its current state and potential. This study seeks to examine the main characteristics and trends of the consumption of this political TV space in Chile, examining its audience from 1999 to 2017. Results show that although PEB has good audience levels, they significantly lower over time. In addition, the data suggest that younger and more wealthy groups today are particularly distant from this type of television programming.

RESUMEN

La franja electoral presidencial se mantiene como una de las principales fuentes de información electoral en diversos países del mundo, aunque existe escasa investigación sobre su uso y efectividad. Este estudio examina los datos de audiencia de este espacio en Chile, evaluando su sintonía durante el período 1999-2017. Los resultados muestran que la franja electoral presidencial chilena logra niveles de audiencia que, aunque altos, disminuyen en el tiempo (caída) y respecto de los años en los que este espacio no se emite. Los datos sugieren que esta baja es más fuerte entre los más jóvenes y con más recursos.

RESUMO

A Horário Eleitoral Presidencial se mantém em nossos dias como uma das principais fontes de informação eleitoral em diversos países do mundo, tema no qual há escassa pesquisa desenvolvida sobre seu uso e efetividade. O presente estudo analisa os dados de audiência deste espaço no Chile, avaliando as tendências deste formato durante o período 1999-2017. Os resultados mostram que o horário eleitoral presidencial chileno alcança níveis de audiência que, sendo altos, apresentam diferenças significativas no tempo (queda) e na visualização que a TV possui em relação aos anos em que este espaço não é transmitido. Os dados também sugerem que grupos mais jovens e mais acomodados desenvolveram um processo de maior distanciamento deste programa.

Keywords: presidential electoral broadcasting; audience; broadcast television; politics.

Palabras clave: franja electoral presidencial; audiencia; televisión abierta; política.

Palavras-chave: horário eleitoral presidencial; audiência; televisão aberta; política.

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BACKGROUND

A democratic and plural election presupposes that citizens are informed—through various sources—about the different political alternatives. The most recognized and fundamental is the press coverage that the media makes about the different activities and statements of the candidates. This is reflected in journalistic articles, interviews, editorials and commentaries, in which the news professionals transmit and discuss—more or less in-depth—the proposals of the various candidates and their positions regarding the topics that are part of the news agenda (Norris, 2000).

Beyond the utility of press coverage in a democratic election, its actions are not free of relevant distortions (Eberl, Boomgaarden, & Wagner, 2017; D'Alessio & Allen, 2000). In this regard, one of the most important biases is the ideological one (partisan bias), which often happens due to value orientations (editorial line) or directly by the considerations or political preferences of the owners or editors of the most relevant media (Haselmayer, Wagner, & Meyer, 2017; Altschull, 1995). In addition, there are other biases, called structural, that refer to factors typical of journalistic coverage. Among them are the determination of what is news for a given media—news values—(Reich, 2016; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), the adjustment to limited and pre-structured news spaces (Franklin, 1998), and the predominance of certain frames for the different covered contents, such as crisis, conflict or human interest (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

In this context, the complementary role of electoral propaganda as a platform through which candidates directly relate to citizenship is crucial. Although usually seen as negative, political propaganda has the virtue of giving the candidate a greater level of control over the message; i.e., the possibility of pointing out and emphasizing what the candidature deems pertinent, seeking its installation in the public agenda, without the mediation of third parties (such as press professionals or structural media biases). In other words, spaces of political propaganda make it possible to avoid the biases indicated above, which may represent a limitation of pluralism in any modern democratic process (Matarrita, 2014).

Globally, there are two major models of political propaganda: paid advertising (similar to commercial advertising) and free spaces in the media (usually on TV and radio). The first, based on the principle of freedom of expression, allows candidates or their supporters to purchase, in a regulated way, spaces to

deliver their messages. The second, based on equality of access, hands over media spaces—usually at public stations—to the various options for them to display their ideas (Uribe, Hidalgo, Selman, & Albornoz, 2007; Russo, 2017).

In the case of Chile—as in most Latin American countries—there is a mixed model², which allows displaying political advertising (paid by the candidatures) on the streets, the press and the Internet. In the case of TV (and sometimes, radio), the law prohibits the sale of spaces to candidacies, establishing free electoral broadcasting in all free-to-air TV channels³. Those who defend this decision of the regulator do so mainly based on the public function that must be met by those who use spectrum frequencies. There also the argument of the importance of a free space (without the possibility of buying alternative or additional television space) to generate a more balanced electoral scenario: thus, the differences in access to resources (economic or technical) between candidates will not be so evident (Matarrita, 2014; Urcullo & Moya, 2009). Regardless of its relevance, the existence of that free propaganda television format has also been questioned. In the Chilean case, the main criticism is the high cost for the industry: the National Television Association—ANATEL, organism that groups the local televising stations—estimates that it would reach to 10 million dollars only considering the broadcasting time (Urcullo & Moya, 2009)⁴. In addition, according to the television industry, the compulsory nature of an electoral broadcasting violates the freedom of expression and makes the private—owners of the vast majority of free-to-air TV stations in Chile—, and not the State or public TV (as in many countries) finance a relevant part of electoral spending (Ruiz-Tagle, 2001).

In a scenario of growing decreases in electoral participation⁵ (Baeza & Sandoval, 2009; Contreras-Aguirre & Morales-Quiroga, 2014) and of a greater consumption of alternative media, such as social networks (Navia & Ulriksen, 2017), it is fundamental to ask about the effectiveness and efficiency of having a free political propaganda slot on open television. In this vein, several studies developed in countries such as the United Kingdom and Germany have shown a relative effectiveness of this space, which increases attention on politics but has limited effect on participation and change of vote (Spenkuch & Toniatti, 2018; Stephens, Karp, & Hodgson, 2011; Baines, Macdonald, Wilson, & Blades, 2011; Norris, 2006; Pattie & Johnston, 2002). In other words, this type of content, in its current format,

would have a limited impact on its main objective, to collaborate in the promotion of candidates or their parties for electoral purposes.

In fact, all these studies on the effectiveness of the Presidential Electoral Broadcasting (PEB) system have a starting point: they take for granted their ability to attract the citizenship to have some effect on it (Stavitsky, 2000; Napoli, 2011). However, it is interesting that very few analyzes have examined the PEB's audience in terms of size and composition. Moreover, those who have done so have tended to concentrate on a specific election. These studies have pointed out as main findings that the vast majority of citizens watches this space, that they do it occasionally, and that the PEB attracts lower levels of audience than in the same hours in non-electoral years (Consejo Nacional de Televisión (CNTV), 2013; CNTV, 2017a; Uribe et al., 2007; Scammell & Langer, 2006).

This work seeks to contribute in a relevant way to the study of the PEB model, examining what has happened in the last 18 years with citizens when it comes to tune this space. We present a complete picture of the behavior of the audiences for the period 1999-2017, evaluating the PEB tuning not only through its rating figures but also analyzing other variables, both of audience accumulation (reach level) and of fidelity of media consumption (frequency and average time of consumption). The fundamental question of this study is related to the strength of the PEB model in a Latin American country, evaluating its validity through a set of audience indicators, in a context of rapid and profound changes in the media scenario occurred in the last two decades (Nelson & Webster, 2016).

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ASSESS THE PEB AUDIENCE?

Research in communication and political marketing has permanently highlighted the relevance of the PEB model considering three main lines of work (Norris, 2006). The first refers to whether it can influence the creation of the public agenda (agenda-setting or priming). The second one has focused on knowing if this format can have a relevant effect when it comes to persuading the voters in terms of their intention to vote. Finally, the third line has evaluated whether this propaganda format has a relevant role in the discussion on politics and voting attendance (Spenkuch & Toniatti, 2018; Norris, 2006; Scammell & Langer, 2006). A relevant premise of the previous work is that the citizens maintain some level of effective contact with

the content (with a higher or lower level of involvement), so that exposure to the PEB is a necessary condition for these effects to occur, as suggested by the theory of the hierarchy of effects (Barry, 1987).

EVIDENCE ON THE EFFECTS OF EXPOSURE TO A PEB

As noted above, the ability to install an agenda is the first effect analyzed in terms of the relevance of the PEB. These studies are based on the long tradition of agenda-setting research, which seeks to evaluate the potential influence of the media in establishing issues, people and topics of relevance and greater public discussion at a given moment (Roberts & McCombs, 1994; McCombs, 2004; Lopez-Escobar, Llamas, McCombs, & Lennon, 1998). Thus, the electoral scenario is propitious to evaluate possible media influences on the opinions of citizens. In fact, the seminal research of McCombs and Shaw (1972) used the case of the 1968 USA presidential election, showing the relationship between the priority issues of the mass media and the priority issues identified by the public (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2007). More recently, a study by Norris (2006) showed that during the 2005 election period in Great Britain the issues of greatest concern to citizenship changed in general terms. However, there was no evidence that these changes had any association with the consumption of the various campaign supports (e.g. press, PEB), contrary to what the agenda-setting theory predicted. I.e., the agendas of the media, the parties and the citizens seemed to operate independently during that electoral period.

In a study of a similar vein conducted in Latin America, Porath (2009) examined –for the Chilean presidential election of 2005– the incidence in the construction of the news agenda of the media of the issues addressed by the Chilean PEB. To this end, he conducted a content analysis of both the clips produced by the candidates (PEB) and two newspapers of national circulation (La Tercera and El Mercurio), as well as of the four main television newscasts (TVN, Mega, CHV and Canal 13). Consistent with what was observed in the United Kingdom by Norris (2006), the results show the absence of a statistically significant correlation between the topics prioritized by the candidates in the PEB and those addressed by the press, both at a general level and separated by media or by campaign fortnight (Porath, 2009).

The second aspect of why the PEB is relevant refers to its persuasive capacity. In this regard, Stephens et al. (2011) found that the exposure to the PEB was

significantly associated with an improvement in the evaluation of the candidates (in this case, the leaders of the parties, who ran for Prime Minister in Great Britain). Pattie and Johnson (2002) reported very similar results. They observed that there was a positive effect on the evaluations—both of the parties and their leaders—by those who watched the free propaganda. On the other hand, Baines et al. (2011) found that this persuasive effect is not homogeneous across the various political conglomerates: the PEBs of the Labor and Liberal Democrat parties showed to be more related to the perceived leadership of their candidates, compared with those broadcasted by the conservative party. On the other hand, studies in Germany have shown another nuance in this regard: although there is an effect of a change in the perception of the parties and their leaders, it does not always occur in the desired direction (Boomgarden, Boukes, & Iorgoveanu, 2016). Finally, a third line of study that highlights the relevance of the PEB is the capacity of this propaganda space to encourage citizens to vote or at least discuss the election process with friends, family or neighbors. Evidence from the United Kingdom shows that exposure to the PEB of some parties generated a significant increase in attention to the electoral process, but it was not associated with attending to vote on the day of the election (Norris, 2006). Subsequently, in the same British context, other studies have shown a slight increase—not statistically significant—in the intention to vote associated with the PEBs (Baines et al., 2011).

EVIDENCE ABOUT THE PEB AUDIENCES

As noted, a necessary condition for the desired effects of a PEB to occur is that there is exposure to it. In this regard, there are two major types of methods that allow us to investigate the audience's levels of use: through declarative methods (self report)—in which the person responds in a questionnaire or in a booklet if he/she tuned in a space, if it was useful or if it seems relevant—and passive, in which an electronic device records consumption behavior on each occasion in which the study participants tune into a media space. Evidently, the second methods are more precise, since the results obtained do not depend on the people's memory or on the social desirability of having tuned a certain program (Webster, 2008; Webster, Phalen, & Lichty, 2013; Potts & Seger, 2013).

Among the first, declarative studies have shown that most people say they have tuned in some PEB. In fact,

a study conducted by the British regulator (Ofcom, 2005) found that 62% of respondents reported watching this space in the 2005 election. The scant evidence has shown that people have tended to reduce its declared exposure to political spaces, among which are the PEBs. IPSOS MORI (2001) reports a drop from 71% to 58% in the period 1992–2001 among those who claim to have tuned the English PEB in those elections. The same study showed that, while the declared audience of the PEB falls in time, the interest is constant, since it remains around 35%.

We only have Chilean declarative data regarding the interest and use of the PEB (not declared tuning). In this area, at the beginning of the 2000s, the Center for Public Studies (CEP) noted that respondents rated the PEB as the second most important source of information when deciding their vote, reaching 31% of the total mentions (CEP, 2002). In addition, according to data from the Chilean regulator—CNTV—, almost 80% of those interviewed in the 2013 election period said that this space allowed them to meet the candidates and their proposals, helped them clarify doubts they had about the candidates and collaborated in the decision of their presidential vote (CNTV, 2013). More recent information, derived from telephone surveys developed in 2017, shows a good citizen evaluation, although comparatively less positive than that of 2013. In the first of these surveys—conducted in July—7.6% of the interviewees pointed out that the PEB was the best way to learn about the candidates (debates led with 44% and newscasts followed with 22%). When the interviewees were asked in a dichotomous way (yes/no) about whether the PEB contributes to the knowledge of the candidatures and their proposals, 55% of the people indicated their agreement (CNTV, 2017a). In a second study (December) similar data were observed. For example, 50.6% of the people evaluated the presence of a PEB as very important or important, and 67% evaluated the last PEB saying that they liked it, or they liked it a lot. Finally, 58.9% said that they considered the realization of a PEB (in that case, in the run-off) to be very important (CNTV, 2017b).

On the other hand, studies that use data from passive methods of audience measurement are also scarce. Uribe et al. (2007) develop an analysis of the 2005 Chilean PEB both in terms of their total rating (individuals) and by segments. In addition, other critical indicators were incorporated: scope and frequency and the comparison with a standard year (non-electoral). The results show that, regarding a

standard year, the broadcasting of the PEB marks a statistically significant fall in terms of audience, and that this drop occurs in all the analyzed segments (gender, age, socioeconomic level and possession or not of pay TV). Likewise, in terms of efficiency, the first 14 days (out of a total of 28) account for 90% of the coverage and 66% of the frequency. A more recent study, presented by the Chilean TV regulator (CNTV, 2013), examined the rating (measured at the household level⁶) of the 2013 presidential and parliamentary PEBs. This study shows that there is not a relevant difference between both PEBs in their total audience. Regarding changes during the weeks of broadcasting, the audience level decreases at the household rating level, beginning at 31 points and ending at 27.4. This drop is not linear since there are also differences in the days: Mondays are the days of the highest audience, while Saturdays are the lowest. The tuning profile reproduces the television consumption patterns that exist in Chile's free-to-air TV in a non-electoral year. This means that the PEB audience differs by gender (women have a higher rating), socioeconomic level (decreases as the economic position increases) and age (increases with age, except in the group of 65+).

In this sense, the existing data allow us to project that the Chilean PEB may have diminished its audience over time, but that this is not necessarily linked to a negative attitude towards this space (Scullion & Dermody, 2005). This is relevant since the literature in persuasive communication has profusely mentioned the attitude towards a media space (advertising or program) as one of the determining antecedents to produce an effect on its recipients (Muehling & McCann, 1993).

METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE

This study used aggregate data of television audience, from the syndicated study of television audiences developed in Chile by the company Kantar IBOPE Media through the People Meter system⁷. From the MMW data exploitation system (Kantar IBOPE Media, 2018), provided by the company for these purposes, we obtained the indicators of the audiences of the different PEBs of the years 1999, 2005, 2009, 2013 and 2017, as well as those from the period 1996 to 2016, those years without PEB. The research team built a database with the aggregate figures of the audience for each day and broadcasting of PEB in the periods indicated.

The measurement of television audiences in Chile is a continuous, panel-type longitudinal study, with a sample of approximately 600 households and 2000 people, through an electronic device called an audiometer, installed in the television sets of the households included in the sample and which delivers a record minute by minute of TV on and tuned stations. In the study, TV consumption is reported on a household scale and of individuals characterized by age, gender, socioeconomic level (not including segment E) and pay television ownership. It covers the communes of Greater Santiago, Antofagasta, Valparaíso, Viña del Mar, Concepción, Talcahuano and Temuco (Buzeta & Moyano, 2013; Julio, 2005). Although the study records the behaviors of people of at least four years, for this research the group of interest corresponds to individuals over 18 years, representing 5,792,783 adults in 2017 (table 1).

We examined five PEB issued in the last 18 years. These represent the years 1999 (with spaces of 15 minutes) and 2005, 2009, 2013 and 2017 (with broadcasts of 20 minutes), which were transmitted simultaneously by all the open-signal television channels (free reception) in Chile for four weeks, i.e., 28 consecutive days, and beginning 30 days before the presidential election. As shown in table 2, its broadcast alternates between off-prime time (around noon, at the end of morning programming) and prime time (20:40, before the start of the main newscasts).

It is important to note that the Chilean PEB has preserved its scheme over time, offering a unique opportunity for comparison, since they represent broadcastings made for the same number of weeks (4) and days (28) and –except for 1999– of the same duration.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

As shown in table 1, we used five dependent variables on the television audience measurement panel:

- **Gender:** men and women.
- **Age:** all persons over 18 years old who participate in the measurement were included, as it is the age from which the right to vote can be exercised in Chilean legislation. These groups are divided into five age groups (18-24, 25-34, 35-49, 50-64 and 65+).
- **Socioeconomic group:** divided into four large groups: high, middle-high, middle-low and low.

		1999	2005	2009	2013	2017 ^a
Gender	Man	1,466,484	2,173,084	2,345,720	2,476,746	2,778,647
	Woman	1,662,972	2,439,197	2,598,705	2,711,968	3,014,136
SEG	High	328,184	494,317	540,293	538,301	598,267
	Middle-High	683,656	1,018,935	1,089,172	1,104,589	1,261,882
	Middle-Low	895,559	1,331,261	1,421,605	1,491,574	1,598,714
	Low	1,222,057	1,767,768	1,893,356	2,054,250	2,333,920
Age	18 - 24	389,124	759,663	824,919	821,459	824,154
	25 - 34	802,041	999,580	1,036,577	1,099,628	1,241,453
	35 - 49	1,019,517	1,423,418	1,459,832	1,445,890	1,544,274
	50 - 64	425,146	868,332	992,369	1,113,963	1,320,530
	65 +	493,629	561,288	630,729	707,774	862,372
Pay TV ownership	Yes	N/A	1,539,006	2,362,706	3,509,728	4,478,523
	No	N/A	3,073,275	2,581,720	1,678,986	1,314,260
Universe	Individuals 18+	3,129,456	4,612,281	4,944,425	5,188,714	5,792,783
Measured markets		1	5	5	5	5

Table 1. Universes measured in the study

Source: Kantar IBOPE Media (2018).

		Week 1							Week 2							Week 3							Week 4											
Daypart	Broadcastings	F	S	Sd	M	T	W	Th	F	S	Sd	M	T	W	Th	F	S	Sd	M	T	W	Th	F	S	Sd	M	T	W	Th					
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28					
Off-Prime	Weekend	4																																
Prime	Week	10																																
Prime	Week	14																																

Table 2. Hours and days of PEB in Chile⁹

Source: Own elaboration based on Kantar IBOPE Media data.

- **Payment** TV ownership: if the person owns that service at home, regardless of the provider or if it is an informal connection.
- **Years:** years in which the election took place (1999, 2005, 2009, 2013 and 2017) and non-election years (1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2014, 2015 and 2016).

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

The data were examined at the aggregate level, considering the evolution of the key indicators of audience exposure effectiveness defined by literature in media theory (Eastman & Otteson, 1994; Fulgoni, 2015), described below:

- **Rating:** average percentage of audience exposed to a certain TV program. We specifically examined

	PEB year	Normal year	Difference
Rating (%)	11.57	14.09	-2.52**
Reach (%)	80.28	83.23	-2.95**
Frequency (N)	5.48	5.53	-0.05
GRP (Reach x Freq)	440.68	460.68	-20.00**
Fidelity (%) (time)	70.13	79.72	-9.53**
	14:02	15:21	-1:18

Table 3. Comparison of aggregate indicators of PEB's audience versus a non-electoral year

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Source: Own elaboration based on Kantar IBOPE Media data.

the rating at the individual level, a measure that is more accurate than household rating (used in the regulator's studies in Chile), which provides a more general audience measure (only allows knowing if in a household a television space is or not tuned, which overestimates the viewing behavior and does not allow knowing who is tuning in).

- **Reach (coverage):** percentage of the target group exposed to the space or, in other words, number of different people (net contacts) that tune in a program.
- **Frequency:** average number of times that a space or programmatic event was watched by the effective viewers of the target.
- **Average Time (ATS):** an additional indicator that shows the average time of exposure to the PEB among those effective viewers who tuned in.

In this way, we examined two indicators that measure the whole target in terms of audience accumulation (rating and reach) and that allow determining the PEB's level of viewing. To them we added two indicators that measure intra-PEB behavior, accounting for the level of fidelity of the effective viewers, i.e., only of those who were exposed to this space (frequency and average time).

DATA ANALYSIS

In terms of analysis, we established the possible existence of significant differences between the segments and over time using means comparison tests (t and ANOVA). Thus, it was possible to determine if the levels of exposure to the PEB and the behavior at the total level, in time and by segments, showed significant changes or differences.

RESULTS

PEB AGGREGATE BEHAVIOR (1999-2017)

The column that describes the audience results in the years of the Chilean presidential election in table 3 shows that considering all its broadcastings (1999-2017), this space has good levels of achievement for a media pattern (Belch & Belch, 2004). Thus, when looking at all the channels together and considering the 28 days of broadcast (prime and off-prime), there is an average rating of 11.8 points. In addition, in terms of reach or coverage, more than 80% of those over 18 years old in the sample tuned this space at least once. If the indicators are aggregated in the way that the actual viewers watch the PEB, we can see that they do it on average 5,5 times in the 28 days and that they remain tuned for almost 14 minutes (table 3). This corresponds to a pattern that, initially, could be evaluated as having high achievement and impact on the target (Cannon, Leckenby, & Abernethy, 2002; Papí Gálvez, 2009).

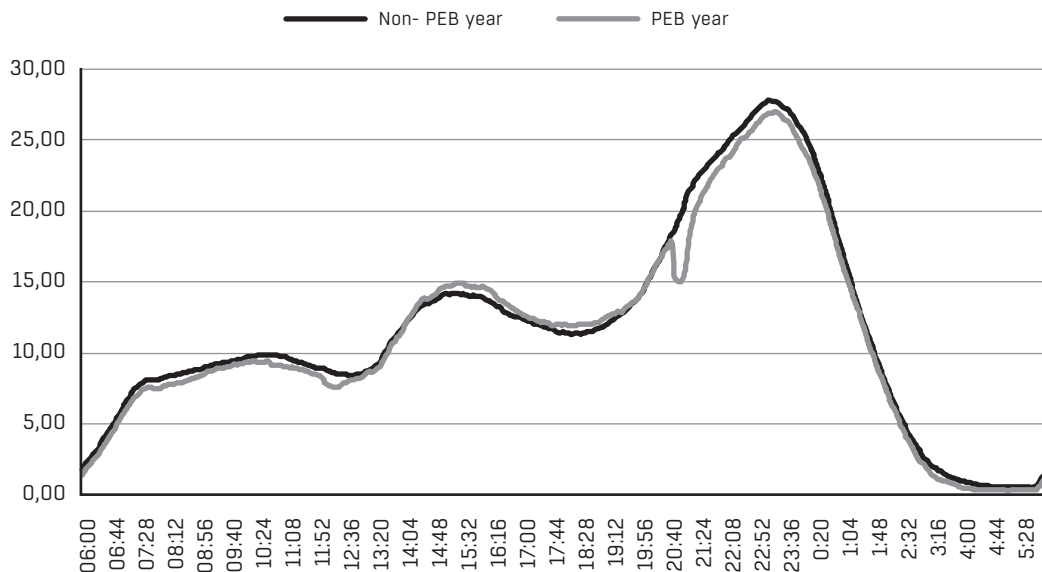


Figure 1. Television consumption curves during the days of PEB in electoral and non-electoral years (grey bars show the PEB schedules)

Source: Own elaboration based on Kantar IBOPE Media data.

However, when comparing these figures with those of the same spaces (in terms of equivalent days and hours) in non-electoral years, it can be seen that in almost all the indicators there are significant drops (table 3, difference column). Therefore, the rating of those time slots in a normal year is higher by more than two points, the reach by almost three points and the tuning time is approximately two minutes higher. Yet, regarding frequency, the PEB levels and those of non-electoral years are equivalent.

When deepening in terms of rating, we can see that the audience drop that occurs during the PEB extends beyond it. When comparing the television consumption curves of the electoral and non-electoral years, we can see that in the different broadcasting time slots there is a relevant decrease in the audience that is prolonged over time; even in prime time, it only goes back to the normal year curve near one in the morning (figure 1).

In turn, the lack of viewers in those hours is mainly related to turning the television off. However, there are some differences regarding time slots. According to the data in table 4, 72% of the people who abandon open channels during off-peak do so by turning off the TV, while at the prime time that figure drops to 64%. On the other hand, during off-peak 22% switches to pay TV, while in prime time that figure rises to 30%. I.e., in

both time slots the abandonment is mainly related to turning the TV off, although during prime time there is a higher percentage that switches to pay TV when the PEB begins.

In perspective, the observed percentages of shutdown and switches towards pay TV are quite stable in the 2005-2013 period. In addition, in those years there is a clear dominance of the turn-off over the change to pay TV. However, when observing the 2017 data we can see that the level of shutdown decreases very strongly (from 80% to 51% in off-peak time and from 72% to 41% in prime time) and the switch to pay TV grows significantly (from 15% to 35% in off-peak and from 24% to 46% in prime time). Also, in prime time the switch to pay TV exceeds the turn-off.

Thus, it is possible to see that the ratings, reach and fidelity drops –as well as the prolongation of the audience loss beyond the PEB– represent the effective cost of a fixed programming on politics (nation-wide PEB during an election year) versus the open programming (programs differentiated by channel) that occurs in a non-electoral year.

When comparing the PEB audience with that of a non-electoral year by segments, we can see some relevant data (table 5). The first is that the significant drops regarding a normal year in rating, reach and

Abandonment	Off-Prime					Prime				
	2005	2009	2013	2017	Average 2005-2017	2005	2009	2013	2017	Average 2005-2017
Turn-off	79%	76%	80%	51% ^b	72%	74%	70%	72%	41% ^b	64% ^a
Pay TV	15%	22% ^b	17%	35% ^b	22%	21%	28% ^b	24%	46% ^b	30% ^a
Others	5%	2%	2%	15% ^b	6%	5%	2%	4%	13% ^b	6% ^a

Table 4. What do audiences switch for during the PEB (percentages)

^a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between average during prime time and off-prime^b significant difference ($p < 0.05$) regarding the previous emission of the PEB

Source: Own elaboration based on Kantar IBOPE Media data.

		Differences: non-electoral year vs electoral year			
		Rating (points)	Reach (%)	Frequency (N)	Average time (%)
Gender	Man	-2.18**	-4.2**	-0.2*	-9.16**
	Woman	-2.82**	-2.7**	-0.1	-9.99**
SEG	High	-1.30**	-2.8**	0	-6.29**
	Middle-high	-1.93**	-4.7**	0.1	-8.32**
	Middle-low	-3.34**	-3.1**	-0.3*	-10.77**
	Low	-2.61**	-1.9**	0.1	-9.91**
Age	18 - 24	-2.64**	-6.1**	-0.1	-9.62**
	25 - 34	-2.50**	-2.1**	-0.1	-10.58**
	35 - 49	-2.09**	-3.3**	0	-9.08**
	50 - 64	-2.68**	-1.8**	-0.1	-9.08**
	65 +	-3.66**	-2.1**	-0.1	-10.37**
Pay TV	Yes	-3.18**	-4.5**	-0.3*	-12.49**
	No	-2.79**	-2.7**	-0.1	-8.13**

Table 5. Comparison, by segments, of audience indicators during PEB year versus a non-electoral year

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Source: Own elaboration based on Kantar IBOPE Media data.

fidelity occur in all the segments studied. These drops are particularly strong in rating in the middle-low group and in those over 65 years (-3.34 and -3.66 points); in reach in men, middle-high SEG and –particularly– in

young people aged 18-24 years (-4.2%, 4.7% and 6.1%), and in average time in the group that has pay TV (-12.5%, equivalent to a consumption of two and a half minutes less on average).

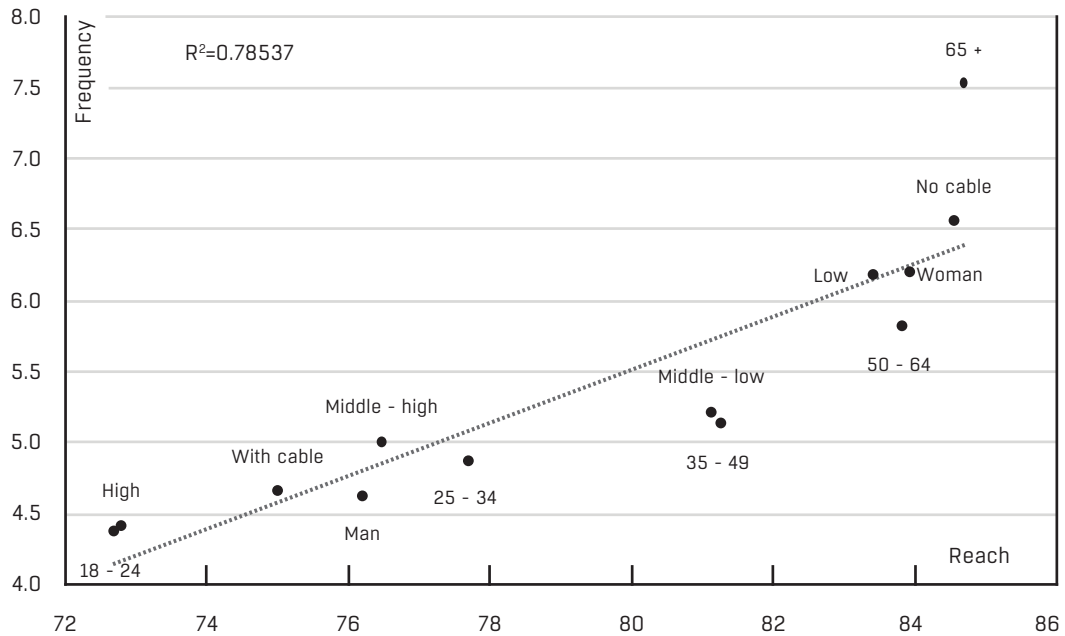


Figure 2. Comparison of PEB's efficiency (reach by frequency)

Source: Own elaboration based on Kantar IBOPE Media data.

The second interesting fact is that there are clearly three groups in which the PEB has very different levels of efficiency and that reproduce the same patterns of exposure to free-to-air TV than during non-electoral years. This can be seen both by observing the average audience data for each variable and by performing a reach versus frequency (GRP¹⁰) test. In this analysis, we find a group of low consumption/efficiency (lower left quadrant) composed of the 18-24-year-old, men, of high socioeconomic level and that have pay TV; at the opposite end (upper right quadrant), there is the group with the highest consumption/comparative efficiency, in which we locate the older than 50 (50-64 and 65+), women, of low socioeconomic status and without pay TV.

PEB'S EVOLUTIONARY BEHAVIOR (1999-2017)

When looking at the data over time, i.e., disaggregated by election year, we can observe that both in terms of rating and reach there are significant drops in time (table 5). In fact, the 1999 PEB's 12.7 rating points of average audience dropped to 10.8 points in 2017. Moreover, the reach fell significantly from 85.0% to 76.4% ($p < 0.01$), which shows that approximately 9% less of the potential voters did not tune the PEB in the period analyzed. It is interesting that, once more,

the frequency remains stable, in this case, 5.6 times (with a steady drop in 2009). In addition, over time, the consumption of the PEB maintained its fidelity around 70% of the broadcasting time (which, in a context of 20 minutes of broadcasting, equals 14 minutes). In other words, although each version of the PEB has been tuned by a smaller number of people on average and has reached a smaller proportion of citizens, among those who do watch it, fidelity has not changed: they do it a similar number of times and of time proportion.

Analyzed by segments, the significant drop in rating occurs in almost all the groups studied, except for those over 65 and those without pay TV, where significant increases are observed. In terms of drops, the high socioeconomic level groups, as well as the youngest, are interesting cases: they show much more noticeable decreases than the rest of the segments, becoming the PEB's lowest audience.

Regarding reach, there are drops in all segments. It is interesting that, in this case, once again the most pronounced significant decreases occur in the highest socioeconomic segment and in the 18-24 group, which triples the average coverage loss. Thus, in the case of the more affluent sector, there is a decrease of almost 20% in reach and, in the youngest segment, 27%.

	1999	2005	2009	2013	2017	Difference 1999-2017
Rating (%)	12.71	12.29	10.96	11.34	10.83	-1.88*
Reach (%)	84.95	83.17	78.59	79.70	76.14	-8.81*
Frequency (N)	5.62	5.62	5.25	5.60	5.36	-0.26
GRP (Reach x Freq)	477.81	467.81	412.62	446.05	408.39	-69.42*
Fidelity (%) (time)	69.78	69.13	71.07	68.59	71.99	2.21
	10:28	13:50	14:13	13:43	14:24	

Table 6. Evolution of PEB's audience indicators in time

* $p < 0.05$

Source: Own elaboration based on Kantar IBOPE Media data.

		Differences 1999-2017			
		Rating (puntos)	Reach (%)	Frequency (N)	Fidelity (%)
Gender	Man	-1.26**	-6.3**	-0.2	1.22*
	Woman	-2.34**	-10.9**	-0.3	3.24*
SEG	High	-3.51**	-18.4**	-0.7	0.29
	Middle-high	-2.24**	-13.8**	-0.3	3.23*
	Middle-low	0.88*	-0.5**	0.1	2.20*
	Low	-3.31**	-9.7**	-0.5	1.17*
Age	18 - 24	-4.66**	-27.0**	-1.4*	9.63**
	25 - 34	-3.24**	-14.3**	-0.7	2.08*
	35 - 49	-3.49**	-3.1**	-1.2*	-1.03*
	50 - 64	-0.68*	-6.8**	0.2	0.82
	65 +	3.26**	-1.1**	1.6*	6.99**
Pay TV	Yes	0.62*	-3.3**	-0.1	10.61**
		2.78**	-4.8**	1.1*	6.59**

Table 7. Changes in PEB's audience indicators by segment (1999-2017)

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Source: Own elaboration based on Kantar IBOPE Media data.

CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to examine the consumption characteristics and trends of the PEB model in a Latin American country (Chile). To do so, we compared its aggregate audience level, one by segments regarding one electoral year, and one of its evolution (1999-2017 period).

The results show that, in the first place, in the Chilean case this format has high levels of audience, reach, frequency and fidelity. This means that, on average, the PEB has more than 11 rating points per episode, is tuned by almost 80% of those over 18 participating in the sample, who watch it 5.5 times on average and that remain for approximately 14 minutes observing each broadcast. It is important to add that the figures of fidelity over time are maintained, which implies that the pattern of consumption has not changed negatively among those who tune in the PEB.

These figures represent a high level of success for any media agenda (Belch & Belch, 2004). This can relate to the previous evidence showing that this propaganda space is generally well evaluated by the citizenship, which means that over time most of the people over 18 years old watch it with some frequency (CNTV, 2013; CNTV 2017a, 2017b). Additionally, it implies that the PEB continues to be a source of important information regarding elections, as various public opinion studies have shown (CNTV, 2017a; OFCOM, 2005; IPSOS MORI, 2001).

Although these figures are lower than those observed in a non-electoral year in the same time slots—both in rating, reach and viewing time (but not in frequency)—both at the aggregate level and in all segments, we should not forget that this is a space of political information versus the entertainment programming of the same periods in non-electoral years. In other words, while the PEB has relevant achievements of tuning, as a program/theme it was less attractive than the standard schedule of midday and, especially, prime time on free-to-air TV, where series and soap operas occupy a privileged space in the channels with a greater audience. The preceding should not strike us, since the world evidence shows that the programmatic spaces of entertainment are the most consumed format on TV, and tend to capture higher levels of audience, superseding information and political programs (Barwise & Ehrenberg, 1987; Comstock & Scharrer, 1999).

Beyond the fact that the PEB maintains—at least for now—a good level of general achievement in terms of tuning, there are a series of indicators that show

clear symptoms of wearing off, at least in its current formulation (space broadcasted on all free-to-air TV channels at the same time). One of them refers to the abandonment behavior observed when the PEB begins (mainly turning off the TV). The biggest complexity of this trend is that the loss of audience of the free-to-air TV channels extends beyond the PEB, which means that, particularly in prime time, people do not watch the news¹¹, generating an additional negative effect, mainly because, despite the progressive advance of social networks, TV remains the main space that people use to inform themselves (Erikson & Tedin, 2015).

A second wearing off symptom refers to how the PEB has evolved over time: the figures show the behavior of less consumption in all segments in the indicators that measure audience accumulation (rating and coverage). This is particularly worrisome in the segment 18-24, of new voters, who were the target of the legal change allowing automatic registration and voluntary voting. It is in this group that there is a strong drop over time. However, this wearing off in audience figures do not occur in those indicators that evaluate the way in which people are exposed to the PEB (frequency and average time). Therefore, it is argued that this space has lost audience, but not its ability to maintain consumption patterns in terms of number of times and average time between those exposed to it, where there are fewer and fewer young people, less people from more affluent segments and fewer individuals who have pay TV (a growing number of people). In that sense, the data from the Chilean regulator offers interesting insights, since they show that—while there is still a good evaluation of this electoral space—the figures for 2013 (around 80% positive evaluation) are higher than those of 2017 (CNTV, 2017b).

A third symptom is that the PEB reproduces the same consumption profiles of free-to-air TV that exist in non-electoral years (greater audience among women, over 65, of low socioeconomic level and without pay TV services), losing in time any difference that could exist. This would show that this space does not break the inertias related to the consumption of free-to-air TV, receiving an influx primarily from the audiences of the programs immediately prior to the PEB.

From an audience theory perspective, this could be interpreted as a symptom that the PEB would have a habitual or ritualized consumption rather than an instrumental use or an active search of the PEB (Rubin, 1984). From a similar perspective, another explanation comes from a possible consumption behavior with

inertial characteristics, where it is relatively unlikely that viewers will change channels unless it is caused by very unattractive programming (Webster et al., 2013).

DISCUSSION

Analyzed as a whole, the findings of this study have two sides. A positive one that shows a quite effective PEB both in its global achievements and in maintaining the pattern of consumption among those who effectively tune it, considering that it is a political-informative space, which has less ability to attract attention than entertainment. The negative relates to its wearing off, considering that its total consumption has dropped over time, that it reaches lower coverage levels, that a particularly affected segment is the youngest (new voters) and that it fails to break the patterns of consumption of free-to-air TV, suggesting that we are facing audiences that “fall in” to this program, rather than actively seek it. The foregoing could be resumed by saying that the PEB’s achievements are littler every day, which speaks of a process of progressive deterioration in its effective consumption in those segments that have greater media alternatives. This is in line with what was proposed by various authors in Chile regarding the distancing of young people from politics and TV.

Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the results only present tuning data, which is one of the indicators for audience analysis. The data of the People

Meter system allow to observe behaviors, but not the motivations or thoughts associated with them. We are also unaware of the real use given to the information delivered by the PEB, a fundamental component to make a full assessment of its usefulness to citizens (Navia & Ulriksen, 2017); in addition, this differs from what the regulator says: that there is a renewed interest in the PEB (CNTV, 2017a).

In this regard, future studies should delve into the causes associated with this drop over time. To do so, it is necessary to examine –in a disaggregated way– the attitudes and behaviors of the people towards the PEB by segments (age, gender, socioeconomic and pay TV subscribers) to establish whether in this space there are attitudinal keys towards the PEB or of substitute consumption of other media that help explain these changes.

In the same way, it is necessary to test whether the behavior of media consumption towards the fringe is ritualistic, as hypothesized in this work. For this, it is essential to examine the role of structural and habit variables (e.g. inheritance, audience availability) as explanatory elements of the PEB’s rating, coverage, frequency and fidelity levels (Webster et al., 2013). Finally, studies are required that provide evidence of the effective use of the PEB’s information (not necessarily if people change their mind), which is related to whether its contents deliver elements to the people’s decision processes (Valenzuela, 2014).

NOTES

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2. For a comparative analysis of the legislation in Latin America, see Aceves González (2009).

3. For example, the last Chilean Presidential Electoral Broadcasting (2017) can be seen on the page of the TV regulator (National Television Council) <https://www.cntv.cl/franja-electoral-2017-del-04-al-16-de-noviembre/cntv/2017-11-04/171053.html>

4. In the Chilean case, the Presidential Electoral Broadcasting includes 20 minutes for presidency candidates and 20 for parliamentarians per day, broadcasted in two blocks (noon and prime time) by six open channels for 28 days (Moke, 2006; Urcullo & Moya, 2009). This totals 6720 hours of transmission, of which 3360 hours are presidential broadcasting.

5. Decrease in participation that intensified after the promulgation of the law of automatic registration and voluntary voting in Chile in 2009 (Contreras-Aguirre & Morales-Quiroga, 2014).

6. The rating measures the consumption of a television space, equivalent to the average number or percentage of individuals or households that stay tuned to a television event during a given period.

7. For this project, we requested access to the database of aggregate television audiences, limited to each electoral period, under confidentiality and only for academic use.
8. In mid-2016 the geographical area of measurement was extended, including the communes of Chiguayante and San Pedro de la Paz (VIII region) and Padre Las Casas (IX region).
9. In 1999, the starting hours of the PEB were 10:45, 12:00 and 20:45. For the years 2005, 2009 and 2013, the starting hours were 10:40, 12:00 and 20:40. The year 2017, the starting hours were 10:40, 13:10 and 20:40.
10. The reach multiplied by the frequency or GRP (Gross Rating Points) is a widely used indicator to evaluate and compare the efficiency of a media agenda (Fulgoni, 2015).
11. In Chile, the most-watched newscasts are broadcasted at 9:00 pm, i.e., immediately after the PEB.

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