

# Standing of journalistic sources in the Argentinean media policy (2009 and 2016)

## *Standing de las fuentes periodísticas en la política de medios argentina (2009 y 2016)*

### Standing de fontes jornalísticas na política de mídia argentina (2009 e 2016)

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#### ABSTRACT

This work comparatively analyzes the treatment of the information sources that the Argentinean newspapers *Ámbito Financiero* and *El Cronista Comercial* made in 2009 of the Law N° 26,522 of Audiovisual Communication Services and of the decrees that modified it after the assumption, in 2016, of Mauricio Macri as President of the Nation. We conducted a content analysis of all the published information on this subject, whose results show –in both cases– a predominance of governmental sources. However, in the second, they present a differential capacity to influence the framing of the regulation, reflected in the coverage.

**Keywords:** economic press; regulation; audiovisual media; Argentina; standing; journalistic sources; communication.

#### RESUMEN

*Este trabajo analiza comparativamente el tratamiento de las fuentes informativas que los diarios argentinos *Ámbito Financiero* y *El Cronista Comercial* hicieron en 2009 de la Ley N° 26.522 de Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual y de los decretos que la modificaron tras la asunción, en 2016, de Mauricio Macri como Presidente de la Nación. Se realiza un análisis de contenido de toda la información publicada sobre esta materia, cuyos resultados arrojan – en ambos casos– un predominio de fuentes gubernamentales. Sin embargo, en el segundo, estas presentan una capacidad diferencial de influir en el encuadre de la regulación plasmada en las coberturas.*

**Palabras clave:** prensa económica; regulación; medios audiovisuales; Argentina; standing; fuentes periodísticas; comunicación.

#### RESUMO

Este trabalho analisa comparativamente o tratamento das fontes de informação que os jornais argentinos *Ámbito Financiero* e *El Cronista Comercial* fizeram da Lei N° 26.522 dos Serviços de Comunicação Audiovisual, em 2009, e dos decretos que a modificaram após a eleição de Mauricio Macri como presidente, em 2016. Realiza-se uma análise de conteúdo de todas as informações publicadas sobre esses assuntos. Os resultados mostram uma predominância de fontes governamentais em ambos os casos. No entanto, no segundo eles apresentam uma capacidade diferencial para influenciar o enquadramento da nova regulação, que se refletiu na cobertura.

**Palavras-chave:** imprensa econômica; regulamentação; mídia audiovisual; Argentina; standing; fontes jornalísticas; comunicação.

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the media has been the subject of debate in the political, media and civil society spheres, where different actors have tried to install their approaches regarding the links between the political, sociocultural and economic criteria that should guide the regulation in the matter.

In this paper, we study two specific and central moments for the Argentinean media system: the first focuses on the year 2009 when, after a long public and parliamentary debate, the National Congress approved Law No. 26,522 on Services of Audiovisual Communication (LSCA). The bill, presented by the National Executive Branch, included the demands of various sectors of civil society, particularly the actors gathered in the Coalition for a Democratic Broadcasting. These actors demanded a new norm to replace the centralist, authoritarian and discriminatory Law No 22,285 on Broadcasting (Mastrini, 2009; Mastrini & Loreti, 2009), created by the military dictatorship that governed the country between 1976 and 1983 and modified by the successive governments through legislative reforms and decrees.

The norm positioned the State as guarantor of the social right to communication in line with international standards on the matter (Loreti & Lozano, 2010). The effective exercise of freedom of expression, respect for pluralism and the promotion of the diversity of voices, as well as the creation and implementation of mechanisms designed to promote, deconcentrate and stimulate competition, gave birth to a political-legal and institutional framework with a renewed conception of what should be understood as the 'public interest' in audiovisual communication in Argentina. In this regard, the LSCA was considered a starting point towards the democratization of communications (Marino, Mastrini, & Becerra, 2012).

However, the advances in the reconfiguration of the media system were very limited. Added to this was the arduous process of judicialization initiated by Grupo Clarín, the most important in the country, which paused the application of the norm for that economic group for several years. Indeed, at the end of the second term of President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2011 and 2011-2015), concentration indicators had remained stable or even increased

in some cases, such as pay television (Becerra & Mastrini, 2017).

The second moment analyzed in this paper took place in December 2015, when Cambiemos took over the government and introduced sudden modifications to the current regulations. Indeed, a few days after assuming the presidency, Mauricio Macri issued Decree No. 236/15 (B.O. 23/12/2015) and the Necessity and Urgency Decrees (NUD) No. 12/15 (B.O. 11/12/2015), 13/15 (B.O. 11/12/2015) and 267/2015 (B.O. 4/01/2016). All of them entailed modifications that, although presented as temporary, had permanent effects on the regulation of the media system (Califano, 2017a), both in the LSCA and in Law No. 27,078 Digital Argentina, enacted in 2014, which regulates the functioning of new information and communication technologies (ICTs), telecommunications and their associated resources.

The argument that supported such modifications was the need to have a convergent norm that would cover both the field of audiovisual media and that of telecommunications and ICT, of accelerated development. In fact, a few months later, the new Ministry of Communications issued Resolution 9/2016 (B.O. 15/04/2016), which created the Commission for the Project of the Bill of Amendment, Update and Unification of Laws 26,522 and 27,078.

Previous works have argued that, during the debate, sanction and judicialization of the LSCA, the regulation of the audiovisual media became a news fact widely covered by the press. Its relevance changed depending on certain critical events, but it remained present in the agendas of most of the country's media (Aruguete & Koziner, 2014; Koziner, 2016).

The rapidity with which the government that took office in December 2015 modified the current regulations, although the issue had been practically absent from the electoral campaign, showed the relevance that the new management awarded to the communication policy and the determination to change it from then on (Becerra, 2016; Califano, 2017a).

In this context, this work seeks to compare the news treatment that *Ámbito Financiero* and *El Cronista Comercial*—two newspapers specialized in economics and finance—made of the approval of the LSCA between September and October 2009, and of the

decrees and NUDs issued by Mauricio Macri during the first two months of his government, in December 2015 and January 2016. Both are measures of public communication policy (McQuail, 2010), with different types of relationship between the values that integrate the “public interest” (Van Cuilenburg & McQuail, 2003).

Specifically, we seek to establish the relevance that regulation acquired in economic newspapers, identify the actors recognized as predominant sources and establish whether they obtained standing, or credit, in the periods analyzed. The choice of this type of press lies in the importance that the different regulatory measures granted to the economic dimension and its relationship with the political and sociocultural dimensions. The analytical empirical work is conceptually supported in framing, understood as a comprehensive program of media communications research (D'Angelo, 2012).

### NEWS FRAMING AND STANDING

The terms frame and framing are key notions of mass media research because of their potential to enable a holistic understanding of the communication process (Matthes, 2010). Indeed, framing can be defined as a comprehensive communications research program (D'Angelo, 2002) that seeks to interpret the definitions of the situation, both in its social and in the individual dimensions (Goffman, 2006).

The completeness of this perspective is understood in a double sense; on the one hand, it gathers in a single analysis all the instances of the communicative process: the elaboration and the treatment of the news, the media contents and the recipients of those texts. On the other hand, it supports the idea that it is possible to stop at one of these phases and integrate it into broader and more complex phenomena (D'Angelo, 2012). Considering this last interpretation, the identification and analysis of the frames that organize the meaning of the informative discourse are considered the starting point of the family of comprehensive research on framing (Van Gorp, 2007).

News frames are abstract principles of interpretation that work through media texts to structure the social sense. Gamson and Modigliani (1989, p. 3), for example, define the frame as a “central organizing idea” of a latent nature that gives meaning to events

and is manifested through symbolic expressions – metaphors, examples, visual images, among others.

In addition to investigating which elements are included and which are discarded in the news text, the purpose of analyzing the frames aims to identify the underlying principles that lead to include or dismiss those aspects, in such a way that this exclusion goes unnoticed (Reese, 2001).

In a very broad sense, it can be affirmed that the analysis of the news frames has the purpose of tracking the structure of interpretation of the reality that underlies the news coverage (Mariño & López Rabadán, 2009). Therefore, in the definitions of the political issues that are reflected in the news we can observe traces of power disputes that exceed those texts and that refer to a process that goes through the development of news, news texts, their reception and culture, where there is a shared repertoire of patterns of cognition, perception and interpretation that allows dialogue between these instances (Aruguete & Koziner, 2014).

According to Entman (1993, 2003), framing involves selecting certain aspects of a perceived reality and making them relevant in order to present a topic, as well as to identify the sources and actors that define and lead it, recognize its causes, issue judgments about it and establish some prognosis or solution. The words and images that make up a frame are differentiated from the rest of the news by their ability to stimulate support or opposition to the different positions present in a political debate.

However, not all actors have the same opportunities to make their voices heard and, even less, to establish their framing of events in the media. The type of attention that information professionals give to individual or collective actors can be related to the characteristics of the actors or to the actions they deploy to obtain media visibility (Gamson, 1992); i.e., their rational decisions aimed at making their demands public and obtaining support. In empirical terms, however, it is the journalists –based on their perceptions about who are the key actors around a certain topic– who give them a standing<sup>1</sup> (Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards, & Rucht, 2002)<sup>2</sup> and translate it in the news.

In general, it is presumed that the frames promoted by official sources, i.e., belonging to one of the three branches of government (Steele, 1997), have a granted

access to journalists and, therefore, to be visibilized in the media. In the same vein, Walter Bennett (2012) introduces the notion of indexing to affirm that the points of view present in a coverage are organized according to the balance of power that journalists perceive as more likely to affect the results of a public policy decision. There lies the predominant visibility that state sources usually have. Thus, the definitions of the situation that the mass media co-produce would be consistent with the interests of the elites.

The notion of standing, as conceived by Ferree et al. (2002), constitutes a novel contribution for framing, since it allows to broaden the idea that the visibility of a source in the coverage is not enough to account for its ability to express its own arguments and, ultimately, achieve some degree of influence when shaping the general interpretation of a case.

#### **THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: FRAMINGS OF MEDIA POLICY AND SOURCES CREDIT**

In a previous work (Koziner, 2016), three specific frames of media policy were proposed, which acted as powerful discursive keys for the understanding of the LSCA, between March and October 2009. The first was called a political-institutional dispute, and it refers specifically to the institutional framework set up for the debate on the audiovisual bill. This appears as the scene of a controversy between antagonistic political forces. It was this dispute and its political-partisan implications that gained prominence, rather than the content of the measure that was debated in Congress.

The other two frames evidenced a dispute in the conceptualization of certain values linked to the notion of public interest underlying the debate about the content of the LSCA. These frames were called public sociocultural interest and public economic-business interest. The first contains the arguments that agree with the norm, held by governmental actors and civil society organizations, since it supports a collective conception of freedom of expression (Loreti & Lozano, 2014), an open diversity of content (Van der Wurff & Van Cuilenburg, 2001) and defends the principles of a competitive market. It also poses that economic values must be subordinated to political and socio-cultural

criteria, given the particularity of the media sector as a symbolic co-producer of social reality.

The second frame shows the opposite position: an individual conception of freedom of expression, a defense of diversity understood in reflective terms (Van der Wurff & Van Cuilenburg, 2001) –i.e., subordinated to the laws of supply and demand– and the enhancement of economies of scale as guarantors of the financial strength that media companies require for investment (Pérez Gómez, 2000); from this perspective, it is the economic strength of the sector that favors the political and socio-cultural well-being of society. Some or all of the ideas that compose it are usually present in an evident or underlying way, depending on the case, in the business sector and in a good part of the political opposition in both houses of the National Congress.

To track the individual or collective actors with the ability to obtain credit, this paper considers four conditions that must be fulfilled: that they are given visibility, that they are quoted, that no negative valuations are made on the discourse they use to talk about the analyzed case and, finally, that their evaluation of the media policy –specifically, the values of the public interest they promote– is not explicitly discredited by the author of the news.

Visibility is achieved with the mere mention in a journalistic story. However, a subject may acquire relevance in the news by being described or even criticized, but without being given the opportunity to provide his/her interpretation of the events in which he/she participates. That is why it is a necessary condition, but not enough, to be recognized as a recognizable actor.

It is the second dimension of standing that turns actors into sources: through the manifestation of declarations –direct or indirect–, they provide information on behalf of certain groups or institutions and somehow participate in the construction of the events reported. In any case, it should be considered that, even when quoted, it is not evident that the coverages are satisfactory for the objectives of the subject or organization quoted (McQuail, 1998), since it can be done to challenge it.

Value judgments about what an individual, group or institution say are the third dimension to establish

the credit that a coverage grants to their position. These are related to attitudes towards behavior, which can be appreciated in terms of admiration-critics and appraisal-condemnation binomials (Martin & White, 2005). Within value judgments, the authors distinguish between those that deal with “social esteem” and those oriented toward “social sanction”. The former refers to the attributes of “normality” –how unusual someone considered-, “capacity” –the abilities someone has– and “tenacity” –how resolute someone is. On the other hand, the judgments of sanction have to do with “veracity” –how truthful someone is– and “propriety” –ethical qualities (Martin & White, 2005, p. 52).

The fourth dimension of standing is directly related to media policy, since it considers the characterization of the regulatory measure made by the sources. Presuming that actors who reach some level of standing actively participate in the exchanges that shape public and media debates (Ferree et al., 2002), it is considered that –if expressed– such consideration should not be explicitly contradictory with the one supported by the news story in global terms.

From the combination of the four dimensions mentioned –visibility, quotation, valuation and framing–, emerge the standing or credit levels that are granted to an individual or collective actor in the media.

## OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The general objective of this work is to compare the treatment that the newspapers *Ambito Financiero* and *El Cronista Comercial* made of the journalistic sources of two communication policy measures carried out under different governments: the LSCA, in 2009, and the decrees and modifying NUDs of that norm, issued by Mauricio Macri (2015- to date) during the first two months of his presidency. In specific terms, 1) describe the formal features of the coverage of the communication policy measures, 2) identify the most relevant sources, and 3) establish the standing dimensions obtained by the predominant sources.

To achieve the specific objectives, we conducted an analysis of the quantitative content of the media coverage of media policy measures; more specifically,

the information published in all sections of the two newspapers over two periods: 1) between September 1 and October 31, 2009, from forty days before and up to twenty days after the approval of the LSCA in Congress and 2) from December 11, 2015, the day after the inauguration of Mauricio Macri, until January 31, 2016.

The analysis universe was made up of a total of 275 units. Of these, 227 news stories were published during the first period, while only 48 were published during the second period.

Since it is an accessible population, we did not consider necessary to take a representative sample of the population and thus avoided exposing the study to the margins of error inherent to sampling techniques (Sautu, Boniolo, Dalle, & Elbert, 2005). As a result, all journalistic stories published on the cases during the indicated periods were coded and processed.

Content analysis is a quantitative technique that allows carrying out a systematic description of the semantic and formal components of all types of messages (Colle, 2011). From the data obtained, it is possible to formulate reproducible and valid inferences that can be applied to the context in which the messages were produced and disseminated (Krippendorff, 1990).

*Ambito Financiero* and *El Cronista Comercial* constitute the context units of this research, that is, they delimit the essential information to interpret in depth the units of analysis (Colle, 2011). The election of these newspapers is based on several reasons: first, the media are, in their majority, companies. As such, they integrate the menu of topics daily covered by the specialized press in economics and finance. Indeed, their most important target audience is made up of those who occupy management positions in different companies, followed by high-rank public servants. Secondly, it is presumed that the audiovisual media policy is of special interest to the economic press, since it involves measures aimed at regulating the functioning of the system that the newspapers themselves integrate, even if they are not directly affected by it.

*Ambito Financiero* was created during the financial boom, in 1976, as an undertaking by Julio Ramos. It grew at the same pace as the influence of the markets in everyday life. With a style similar to that of the British economic press, it tended to mix information



with analysis, commentary and predictions. In 2006, it was acquired by Orlando Vignatti, a businessman from Rosario. At the beginning of 2015, it passed into the hands of the Indalo group, owned by Cristóbal López, who also bought the news channel C5N and Radio 10, among other media, and had parallel business interests in various areas, such as production, food and energy.

*El Cronista Comercial* is a centennial newspaper. Inspired by the American model, it is characterized by a marked separation between the information and argumentative genres. It was owned by several business groups until it was acquired, in 2006, by the Narváez Group (GdN), owned by Francisco de Narváez. In 2009, de Narváez was a national deputy of the opposition to the national government and had a shareholding in the television channel América TV, a situation that placed him in violation of current regulations. This led to a political conflict that gained public visibility during the period in which the LSCA was debated, although it ended up fading.

#### CODE BOOK

A fundamental part of content analysis, the codebook can be defined as “a document that groups together the categories used in research and provides clear, precise and unambiguous instructions” (Frutos Esteban, 2008, p. 270) to collect data.

The code book prepared for this work is divided into two parts: the first is the one corresponding to the formal variables, which aims to know the behavior of some “relevance mechanisms” of the information (Koziner, 2016, p. 275). There, three variables are incorporated: frequency, news genre and section of the newspaper in which it appears published. The second is related to the thematic or content variables (Igartua, 2006), aimed at identifying the predominant sources and the dimensions of standing that they reached.

To track the first two conditions of standing – visibility and quotation–, we analyzed in each of the units of analysis if the words of any person, group or institution that issues any type of statement linked to the subject studied are reproduced.

The third dimension is formed by a variable and analyzes the value judgments made by the author of the news story about the statements or attitudes of the sources. The evaluation is positive when the statements and the behavior of a source are appreciated

as desirable or praiseworthy; ambiguous, when the statements and actions are not explicitly assessed in the journalistic story or when ambiguous contents prevail, in which the negative and positive judgments appear balanced, and negative, when the statements and the behavior of a source are evaluated negatively, judged as not desirable or inconvenient for the whole society or the common good (Martin & White, 2005).

For the fourth dimension of standing, we coded both the evaluation of the regulatory measures that predominates in the story or that is expressed by its author, as well as the one made by the most important source. This dimension is composed of four variables for the author of the story and four for the main source: assessment of the regulatory measure, freedom of expression, diversity and sustainability of the media system.

The first refers to the argument that predominates regarding the measure of communication policy and is computed as positive, undefined or ambiguous and negative. The last three were created according to their importance in the LSCA and on the media texts. Each one is related to the types of functions that Van Cuilenburg & McQuail (2003) recognize in the media: political, sociocultural and economic, and they can appear in the news texts in an evident or underlying way (Igartua, 2006). Table 1 systematizes the operationalization of these three variables. We coded, for each one, the category that predominates in the story or in the declarations of the source of information.

#### RELIABILITY

To establish the reliability of the data collected in the coding, we took a stratified random sample of 55 journalistic stories (20% of the universe), respecting the proportions of the amounts of stories published in the periods analyzed. These were recoded by an analyst different from the original.

The level of agreement of the recoding was measured with the coefficients Cohen's Kappa ( $\kappa$ ) and Krippendorff's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ), according to the preceding literature (David, Atun, Fille, & Monterola, 2011). Both can yield values between 0 –null correspondence– and 1 –total correspondence. The mean value of agreement for the twelve considered variables was 0.89 for Cohen's Kappa ( $\kappa$ ) and 0.91 for Krippendorff's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ), which indicates a significant reliability for the analysis made on the stories (Igartua, 2006; Neuendorf, 2002).

Public interest variables	Categories and definition
Freedom of expression	<p><b>0 = Not coded.</b> This value is computed when no reference is made to the issue of freedom of expression in any of its dimensions.</p>
	<p><b>1 = Individual.</b> This category is computed when the author of the story mentions the possibility or impossibility of certain journalists or specific media to express their ideas and opinions due to the regulatory action of the State or when press freedom is mentioned.</p>
	<p><b>2 = Collective.</b> It is assumed that freedom of expression is addressed in its social or collective character when mention is made of the expansion of the participation of various actors in the media, when it is related to the limitation of market forces (and not only with the State) and when the collective debate on regulation is emphasized.</p>
Diversity	<p><b>0 = Not coded.</b> This value is computed when no reference is made to the issue of diversity in any of its dimensions.</p>
	<p><b>1 = Reflective.</b> States that the media should express the variety of ideas and issues that the audience prefers to consume. This value is computed when the author of the story expresses directly or indirectly that the diversity of products and actors that appear in the media should relate to what is demanded to a greater extent by the audiences or based on the criterion of profitability.</p>
	<p><b>2 = Open.</b> This category is computed when the argument evokes, directly or indirectly, the idea that there should be a greater participation and offer in the media to incorporate the largest number of voices, themes and ideas that circulate in society, regardless of the audience consumption.</p>
Sustainability of the media system	<p><b>0 = Not coded.</b> This value is computed when no type of reference is made to the issue of sustainability in any of its dimensions.</p>
	<p><b>1 = Economies of scale.</b> This notion is hardly evident, given its technical nature. It is computed when the author of the story alludes to the argument that maintains that the processes of limiting the concentration of property affect the profitability or even the sustainability of media companies.</p>
	<p><b>2 = Competitive market.</b> It is unlikely to be expressed in an evident way. It alludes to those economic arguments that see the entry of new actors into the media market as a benefit for its operation. It also appears when the concentration of property is classified as an economic problem that negatively impacts competition and efficiency.</p>

Table 1. Operationalization of public interest values for the LSCA cases (September - October 2009) and the decrees of the first two months Mauricio Macri's government (December 2015- January 2016)

Source: Own elaboration.

## RESULTS: ANALYSIS OF THE NEWSPAPERS

This study seeks to analyze comparatively the treatment of the sources of information that the Argentinean economic press made of two communication policy measures implemented by governments belonging to different political forces: on the one hand, the parliamentary debate and the approval of the LSCA and, on the other, the decrees and NUDs issued by President Mauricio Macri (2015-to date). The first specific objective seeks to know the formal features of the coverages to identify the behavior of the relevant mechanisms that characterized them.

The first finding that emerges from the processing of the data is that the frequency of publication of the first case was three times greater than that of the second. This is represented in figure 1. Considering that the number of stories is one of the variables that constitute the relevance of publication of a case on the media (Amadeo, 2008), it is possible to see a significant difference in both periods and for both newspapers. The abrupt decrease in the amount of information published about public media policy contrasts with the high importance given to it by the government of Cambiemos, considering the early unilateral decision to modify the most important aspects of the LSCA.

If we look at the differences between the media in each period, we notice that the gap widens in terms of frequency. During the debate and approval of the LSCA, *El Cronista* published 55% of the stories and *Ámbito*, 45%. On the other hand, in the case of the decrees issued by President Mauricio Macri, *El Cronista* concentrated 64.6% of the published stories and *Ámbito*, only 35.4%. This difference becomes more important if we consider that the “news hole” (Budd, 1964, p. 41) of both newspapers is similar in the two periods analyzed.

If we consider the evolution of the frequency, we observe a similar behavior of *Ámbito Financiero* and *El Cronista Comercial* throughout the debate of the LSCA and greater divergences between December of 2015 and January of 2016. In fact, the peak of greater frequency of coverage in 2009 was recorded when the bill was partially sanctioned on September 17.

In the second case, the week in which Macri dictated NUD No. 267 was the most relevant for *Ámbito*. The 35.3% of the stories published by this newspaper are concentrated in the week of December 28 to 31, because on January 1 the newspaper was not printed,

since it was a holiday: “The first step towards a change in legislation” (Peco, 2015, p. 6); “By way of NUD, Macri reforms the media law” (*Ámbito Financiero*, 2015, p. 9) “Media: Fourth of Macri’s NUDs accumulate in Congress” (Rudman, 2015, p. 11).

Officially communicated through the Official State Gazette on January 4, NUD 267 included fundamental modifications to the LSCA, with institutional, technological, regulatory and economic implications (Califano, 2017b). The decree unifies the enforcement agencies of the LSCA (the Audiovisual Communication Services Authority, AFSCA) and of the Law 27,078 Digital Argentine (Federal Authority of Information and Communication Technologies, AFTIC). Instead, it creates the National Communications Agency (ENaCom), whose composition and institutional membership increase its subordination to PEN. On the other hand, it creates, under the orbit of the new Ministry of Communications, a Commission for the Preparation of the Bill of Amendment, Update and Unification of Laws 26,522 and 27,078. The argument that supports this action is the need to have a convergent regulatory framework between the audiovisual sectors, telecommunications and ICTs.

On the other hand, the decree extends the limits of audiovisual licenses to which one provider can access, extends the terms of exploitation of the current ones, allows extensions without these being submitted to any type of audit by the citizens, repeals main articles to avoid undue concentration practices, the social tariff for cable television and the obligation for licensees to have as their sole corporate purpose the provision of audiovisual communication services. These modifications present a greater affinity with business criteria than with sociocultural values, thus favoring concentration on few and large players (Becerra, 2016; Califano, 2017a).

In *El Cronista*, on the other hand, the peak with the highest frequency of publication was registered the week of the President’s inauguration, with a series of stories announcing the guiding principles of the new government’s media policy: “Leaving antagonisms behind. The vision of Hernán Lombardi” (Lombardi, 2015, p. II); “The resignation of Bauer paves the way for Macrismo to end the K story” (Hecker, 2015, p. 17); “Macri: ‘No more cobwebs in newsrooms as those found in Olivos’” (*El Cronista Comercial*, 2015, p. 19).



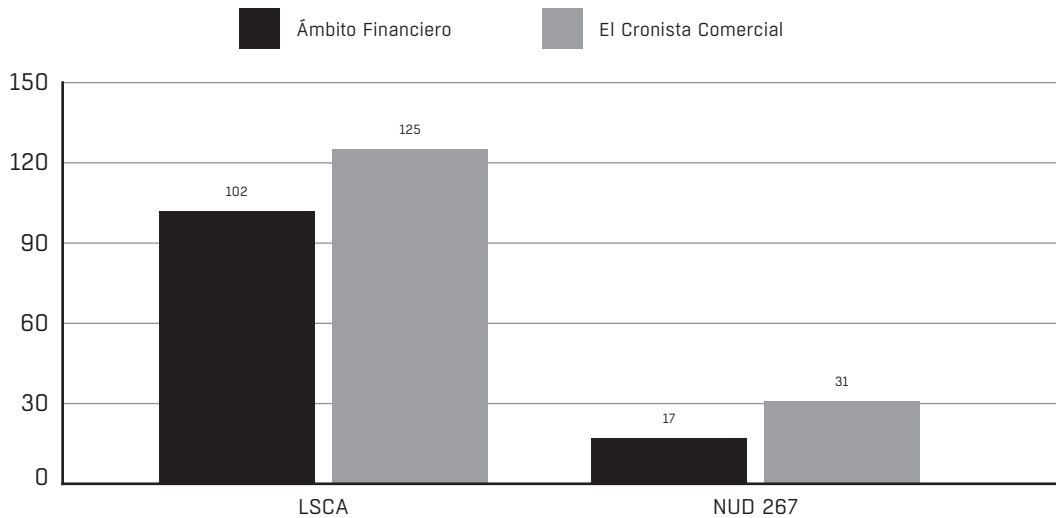


Figure 1. Number of stories published on the subject, by newspaper, during the two periods (September - October 2009 and December 2015 - January 2016). In real numbers.

*Ámbito Financiero and El Cronista Comercial*

Source: Own elaboration.

Two variables of interest, as formal features and relevance mechanisms of the cases on the media, are the journalistic genres used and the section in which the stories are published. Tables 2 and 3 break down this data into global and specific terms for each newspaper. Two findings stand out. In the first place, we observe that, even though in both periods the informative stories—news, callouts and special reports—predominate over those of opinion—opinion or analysis columns, editorials and interviews—, during 2009 there is a greater variety of journalistic genres in both newspapers. On the other hand, opinion stories on the regulation of audiovisual media were absent between December 2015 and January 2016. This reflects a trend towards the more episodic treatment of the Macri decrees, centered mainly on specific events and cases, in prejudice of a thematic one that inserts them in more abstract news contexts. This would make it possible to emphasize the complex processes that surround the issues and thus offer a broader perspective that could also deepen into different aspects of the issues addressed (Iyengar, 1991; 2007).

Secondly, in *El Cronista* there is a shift of the media policy issues from the Economy & Politics section to the Business & Finance section, since seven out of 10

stories on the subject are located there. Considering that the sections in which the stories are published are indicative of the ways in which problems are defined and, therefore, of how they are framed (Koziner, 2016), this displacement suggests that the newspaper assigns greater relevance to the economic and financial components in media policies over institutional and sociocultural aspects.

The second specific objective of the work is to identify the most relevant sources. The first element that emerges from the analysis of the data is that a quarter of the stories published about the LSCA and 19% of those referring to the media policy of President Mauricio Macri do not identify any source as a provider of the published information or, even recognizing the existence of some source, explicitly omits to reveal its identity.<sup>3</sup>

When analyzing the identified sources, we can notice that in both coverages those belonging to the government predominate. In the case of the LSCA, 41.8% of the sources cited in the first place come from there. In the second coverage, this trend is accentuated: six out of 10 stories cite a government representative as the first source. Given that the visibility of a source—its identification— and the quote are the first two

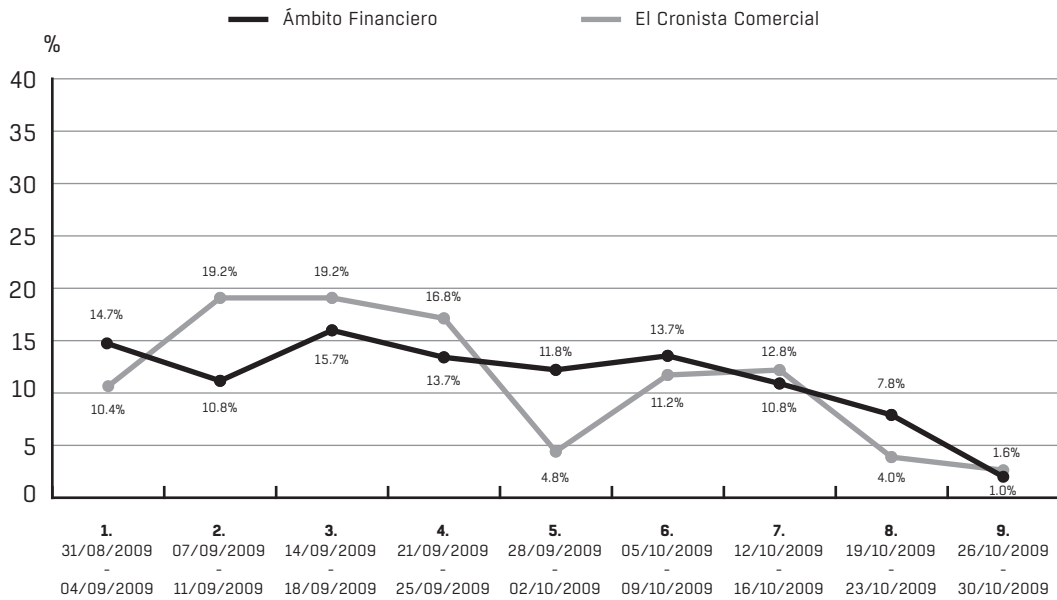


Figure 2. Weekly evolution of stories on the subject by newspaper, first period analyzed

Source: Own elaboration.

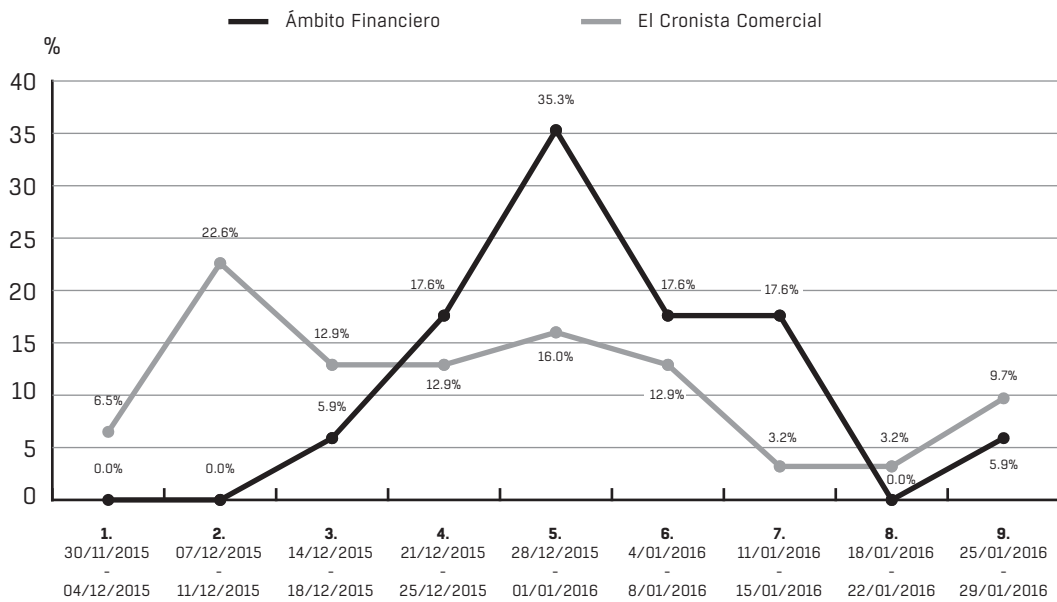


Figure 3. Weekly evolution of stories on the subject by newspaper, second period analyzed

Source: Own elaboration.

Newspaper and section	Journalistic genre							Total	
	News	Callout	Interview	Editorial	Staff opinion	External column	Special reportage		
Ámbito Financiero	Economy and politics	66.7%	57.1%	-	-	60.0%	100%	-	66.7%
	Special section	33.3%	42.9%	-	-	40.0%	-	-	33.3%
	Business and finance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Supplement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100%</b>
El Cronista Comercial	Economy and politics	75.7%	68.4%	50.0%	33.3%	100%	17.6%	-	64.0%
	Special section	8.1%	5.3%	-	33.3%	-	5.9%	-	7.2%
	Business and finance	14.9%	10.5%	-	-	-	-	-	10.4%
	Opinion	-	-	-	33.3%	-	64.7%	-	9.6%
	General info.	1.4%	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.8%
	Supplement	-	15.8%	50.0%	-	-	11.8%	100%	8.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 2. Journalistic genres in the coverage of the LSCA between September 1 and October 31, 2009. *Ámbito Financiero* and *El Cronista Comercial*

Source: Own elaboration

Newspaper and section	Journalistic genre			Total	
	News	Callout	Column		
Ámbito Financiero	Economy and politics	92.3%	100%	-	94.1%
	Special section	-	-	-	-
	Business and finance	7.7%	-	-	5.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100%</b>
El Cronista Comercial	Economy and politics	5.3%	9.1%	-	6.5%
	Special section	5.3%	18.2%	-	9.7%
	Business and finance	78.9%	63.6%	-	71.0%
	Showbusiness	10.5%	9.1%	-	9.7%
	Supplement	-	-	100%	3.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 3. Journalistic genres in the coverage of the decrees of Mauricio Macri between December 1, 2015 and January 31, 2016. *Ámbito Financiero* and *El Cronista Comercial*

Source: Own elaboration.

dimensions of standing, it is convenient to analyze the behavior of the rest of the dimensions in order to know if the predominance of government sources implied that their version of the facts was given credit.

How were government sources valued? In the debate over the approval of the LSCA, in nine out of 10 occasions in which the government or any of its servants were mentioned, the assessment was ambiguous. Only 7% were considered negatively and 3% positively. On the other hand, during Macri's government, in almost 40% of the cases analyzed, the government's declarations were approved and in four out of 10, they were treated ambiguously. In the remaining 20%, they were negatively assessed.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, it is interesting to know if the relevance that the government sources had in both cases has a correlation in the coincidence between the values of the public interest that they promote and those that are promoted in the stories.

During the debate over the LSCA, a curious fact is noted regarding the dimensions of freedom of expression and diversity: the stories tend to adhere to the position of government sources when they argue in favor of freedom of expression in individual terms or in favor of reflective diversity. Instead, they tend to contradict them or not have a trend when a collective view of freedom of expression or an open conception of diversity predominates (Koziner, 2017a).

On the other hand, during the first two months of the government of Cambiemos, there is a greater congruence between government sources and what is said in the stories in favor of the individual conception of freedom of expression. Regarding diversity, a certain heterogeneity is observed, since the open and reflective notions appear balanced in the case of the sources and the stories do not have a clear opinion.

As for the sustainability of the media system, there are some relevant differences between both periods. In the case of the LSCA, in general, the values supported by government sources do not coincide with those expressed in the story: the former tend to express strong criticisms towards the concentration of media ownership –in line with what is proposed by law–, arguing in favor of competition regulation. In these texts, the authors do not express or contradict that view by arguing that divestment would put sustainability at risk. The recurrent use of the term “dismantlement” to characterize the divestment provided by law in a large

part of the stories of *El Cronista Comercial* is consistent with this position.

Throughout the second period studied, there is a very high degree of consistency between government sources and news texts regarding the values of economic wellbeing: in addition to the prevailing conception of economies of scale, the source and author of the story coincide in a same journalistic piece. In addition, in this period a new criterion that appears associated with the economic dimension gains strength: convergence. Indeed, this concept is evoked by government sources as an argument that supports the modification to the LSCA and the creation of a single regulatory body for the audiovisual and telecommunications sectors. In short, it can be stated that, if governmental sources obtained standing, this was “by default” (Koziner, 2017a, p. 51) during the debate on the LSCA, because they were not explicitly discredited, but neither were they supported. On the other hand, during the first months of the government of Cambiemos, this one reached all the dimensions of standing by adhesion to the frame of the policy measures that it promoted.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper aimed at comparing the treatment of the sources of the LSCA and the decrees of the government of Cambiemos in the economic press to contribute to the conceptualization of the notion of standing or credit of the sources. In this regard, it has been asserted that the mere presence of government sources in coverage does not guarantee that they have the capacity to install the framework of the public policy measures they implement. To do this, we investigated the formal features acquired by these measures in the news texts published over two periods and sought to determine which were the most relevant sources and the levels of credit they reached.

We conducted an analysis of the content of the news on media policy published in the newspapers *El Cronista Comercial* and *Ámbito Financiero* during September and October 2009, December 2015 and January 2016. Here we present some provisional conclusions, proposed as trends to consider for future work.

In the first place, the relevance of the debate around media policy measures in the press during both periods was very different, since it was very high during 2009 and relatively low between December

2015 and January 2016, despite that the implications for the media system were very significant in both cases. Secondly, there was a shift from the Economics & Politics section to the Business & Finance section in *El Cronista*, an indication of the business-financial importance attributed to the topic over institutional and socio-cultural implications. At the same time, there is a greater tendency to episodic coverage of the issue during the government of Cambiemos, to the detriment of a thematic or contextualized treatment of the measures.

In the two cases analyzed, there is a high percentage of stories that do not specify their sources. In the cases in which they do, there is a significant predomination of governmental sources. However, this does not result in a similar assessment of their behavior or similar levels of standing. In the LSCA, the level of visibility of government sources is not associated with a positive assessment of their statements or the installation of the public interest values promoted by the LSCA. Instead, there is a greater adherence to the frameworks of the government of Cambiemos, which is manifested in the congruence between the values of economic well-being that they promoted and those that predominate in the stories analyzed. This agreement is reflected in the argument of convergence, considered in economic terms.

## DISCUSSION

In the general objective of the research developed in this work, there is a conceptual concern that exceeds the case analyzed here, although the findings of the analysis contribute to solving it: the need to develop a theoretical-methodological tool that provides elements to establish the ability of journalistic sources to influence the general definition of the situation that predominates in the media treatment of public policy measures. The starting point is that the mere visibility of a source as a provider of information does not guarantee that its framing of the problem is validated on the media. For example, “a high negative valuation of an actor challenges his version of events” (Zunino, 2015, p. 341).

The incorporation of the notion of standing, originally coined by Ferree et al. (2002) is a productive concept due to its operational potential. Understanding

the media as a terrain of disputes, these researchers use the concept to identify the conditions that allow an individual or collective actor to acquire the status of journalistic source, whose interpretations are cited directly or indirectly. But being mentioned is not enough; it is necessary that it be treated as an agent and not only as an object whose actions are valued or criticized. Indeed, having standing in certain media generates power, because it defines for other journalists and for the audience—in a broad sense—the voices that need to be addressed to understand certain issues. The presence of an accredited actor produces an effect of credibility in what is reported (Charaudeau, 2002). For that reason, they are able to exert a strong influence on the contents of the media and on its general interpretation (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) and, even, on occasions they manage to model news with greater power than journalists (Reese, Grant, & Danielian, 1994).

From the proposal of Ferree et al. (2002) and picking up findings from previous works (Koziner, 2016, 2017a, 2017b), this paper proposes an operationalization of standing in four dimensions that allow us to investigate in the texts which journalistic sources are recognized as agents or accredited spokespersons of a certain vision of the news events in the media and, consequently, capable of influencing the construction that is made of them.

Beyond the specific findings that arise from the comparison between the two periods studied, it is interesting to pay attention to some points of the treatment of the spokespersons of the media policy that the standing allows to be discussed. In the first place, the significant use of the off the record should be highlighted, which has also been noticed in other studies focused on the coverage of different political issues (Aruguete, 2011; Díaz & Mellado, 2017; Rey Lennon, 1998; Sánchez, 2005; Zunino, 2015). In general, it is assumed that this type of source comes from official actors or close to them and, therefore, the information delivered is confidential (Martini, 2000). In light of the concepts addressed in this paper, it is possible to affirm that although these sources are recognized as relevant by the journalists who come to them, the fact that they lack visibility prevents them from satisfying the first requirement for obtaining standing in the coverage and, therefore, hinders public

recognition as spokespersons for a frame. In this regard, an interesting way of exploring contents would be to investigate the relationship between the frames that predominate in those journalistic pieces that do not identify any type of source and their coherence with the frames promoted by the different actors involved.

Secondly, it is relevant to point out the greater variety of sources present in the treatment of the LSCA over the measures of President Mauricio Macri, even if in both cases the official sources predominate and, within these, those belonging to the governmental sphere. This difference could be related to the high level of political, media and public controversy that characterized the first period: fundamentally, the political-institutional dispute between the governmental sphere and the political opposition, of greater affinity with the more concentrated media groups. The dispute attracted the greatest use of a variety of sources and journalistic genres, consistent with the idea that as the level of controversy grows, the plurality of sources is greater (Bennett, 1996, 2012). In contrast, the second period was characterized by a greater degree of agreement, specifically between the business sector and the government.

In relation to the above, the divergences in the treatment of government-level sources can be

interpreted in relation to the very high level of controversy observed in the first period and with a significantly higher frequency of publication. Indeed, when there is a dispute between actors that fight for the definition of the same situation, as happened around the LSCA, the government finds greater difficulties to obtain standing and, consequently, to install its frames and attenuate the power of alternative frames (Bennett, 2012; Entman, 2004). On the contrary, when there is a greater degree of agreement around a frame, the coverages appear more homogeneous in terms of sources, with a greater predominance of the governmental ones.

Based on the indicated premises, some questions are opened to investigate future work: What was the degree of standing achieved by business sources – of the media and telecommunications sector– in the coverage? Were the regulatory frameworks promoted by this sector and by government sources similar? In that case, and given the divergences in the treatment of the analyzed issues, a future research line could investigate what kind of relationship can be established between the degree of controversy that the veto players express around a communication policy measure and the news relevance that this has in the media treatment of the matter.

## NOTES

1. The term comes from legal discourse and refers to the right of a person to initiate or participate in a legal action that challenges the conduct of another person.
2. The conceptualization of each of the values that make up the frames of public interest promoted by the LSCA in the news texts is developed in the objectives and methods section, since the variables that are tracked in the units of analysis emerge from there.
3. This type of source is known as off the record. It is one of the mechanisms used by journalists and sources to obtain and provide information by cultivating a relationship. Although the data obtained in this way are not considered publishable unless contrasted with other sources on the record (unrestricted) (Amado, 2010), this is a frequently used modality to cover political issues.
4. An important amount of that percentage is concentrated in the first weeks of the government of Mauricio Macri, when the directors of AFSCA and AFTIC remained in their positions. On December 23, by decree No. 236/2015, the agencies were intervened and said directors were removed, despite having terms of office until 2017 and 2019, respectively.



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