Television content quality and engagement: Analysis of a private channel in Colombia[1]

Calidad en contenidos televisivos y *engagement*: Análisis de un canal privado en Colombia

Qualidade de conteúdos televisivos e engagement: Análise de um canal privado na Colômbia

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the results of a content analysis and an inquiry into Colombian audiences regarding the concept of 'quality television' and its effect upon engagement. The results show that for the sampled audience the most relevant elements in terms of engagement to television programs are related to the identity of the channel (or brand) that broadcasts the product, the expectations of the viewers, the topics addressed, the inclusion of commercial advertisement, and the programming/scheduling criteria. Likewise, some of those same elements were part of the sampled audiences' definition of 'quality television'.

Keywords: Television, audiences, engagement, content, quality television.

RESUMEN

Este artículo expone los resultados de un proyecto de investigación enfocado en comprender los elementos que intervienen en la generación de engagement por parte de los televidentes colombianos y el aporte del concepto de 'calidad televisiva' a ese proceso. Los resultados muestran que en las audiencias consultadas, los elementos más destacados dentro del proceso de generación de compromiso están relacionados con la identidad del canal que transmite el producto, las expectativas de los televidentes, la temática abordada, la presencia de publicidad y los criterios de programación. Asimismo, se encontró que algunos de esos elementos forman parte del concepto de 'calidad televisiva'.

Palabras clave: *Televisión, audiencias, engagement, contenido, televisión de calidad.*

RESUMO

Este artigo expõe os resultados de um projeto de pesquisa enfocado em compreender os elementos que intervêm na geração de engagement por parte dos telespectadores colombianos e a contribuição do conceito de 'qualidade televisiva' a este processo. Os resultados mostram que nas audiências consultadas, os elementos mais destacados no processo de geração de compromisso estão relacionados com a identidade do canal que transmite o produto, as expectativas dos telespectadores, a temática abordada, a presença de publicidade e os critérios de programação. Além disso, se identificaram alguns destes elementos como parte do conceito de "qualidade televisiva".

**Palavras-chave:** Televisão, audiências, *engagement*, conteúdo, televisão de qualidade.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of fragmentation, both in the offer of content and audience consumption, is more noticeable in the world, and especially in countries that have high penetration rates of television by subscription and Internet. A concrete case of the advance of fragmentation is Colombia, a country that has seen in the last ten years how the *share* and the *rating* of the national channels have decreased in the same proportion that international channels have increased.
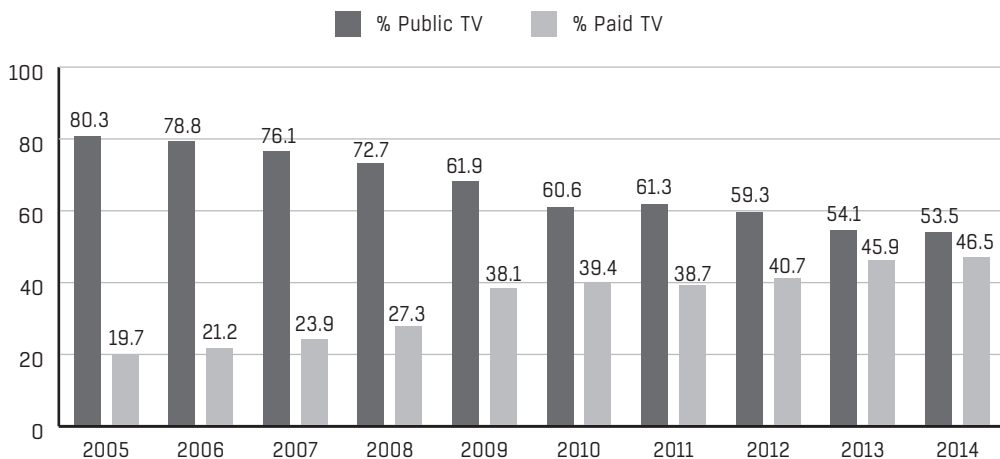
According to the Latin American Multichannel Advertising Council (LAMAC) – entity that links 49 paid television stations from six leading groups in the Latin America industry – the penetration of subscription television in the country went from 50.22% in 2005 to 84.93% in 2014[3]. Also, the average annual *share* of subscription television went from 13.91 percent in 2005 to 46.18% in 2013[4], and the average *rating* from 1.51 to 6.46 percent in the same period[5]. (See graphs 1, 2 and 3).

Graph 1: Penetration of television by subscription in homes, Colombia, 2005-2014
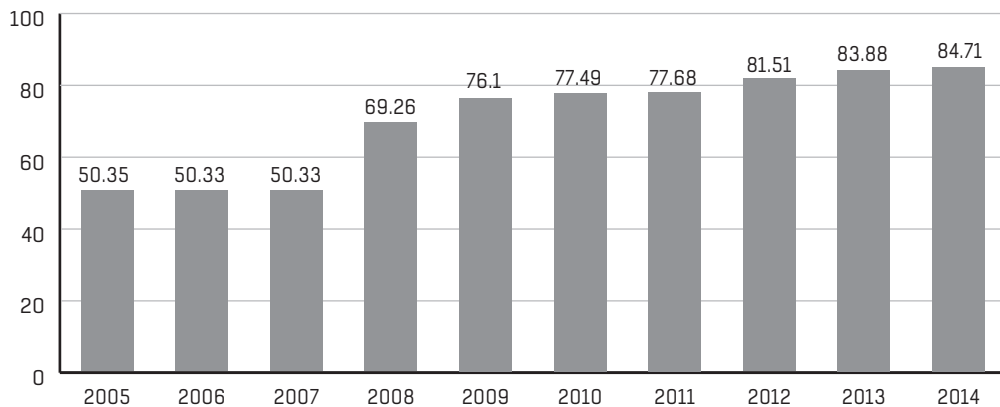
Source: Own elaboration from Latin American Multichannel Advertising Council (LAMAC) and IBOPE, data for the years considered.

Graph 2: Average annual *share* Public TV vs. Paid TV 2005-2014. Total persons

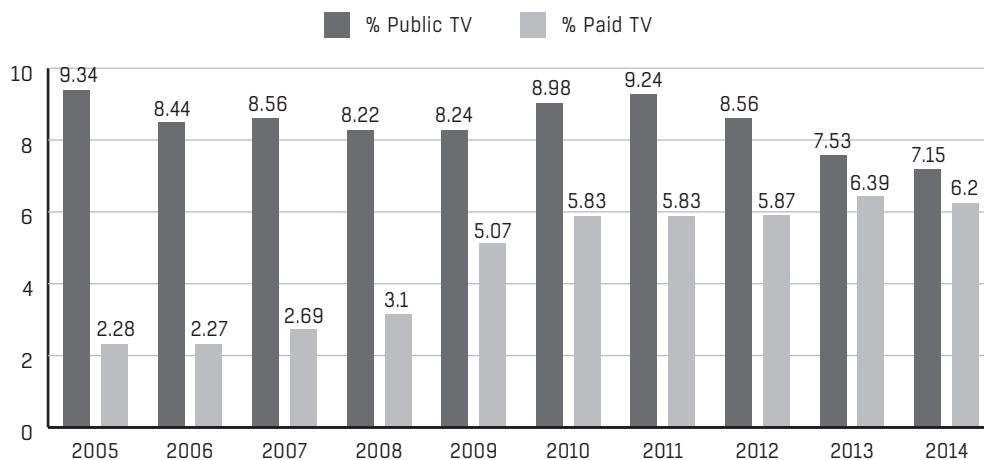*Source: Own elaboration from Latin American Multichannel Advertising Council (LAMAC) and IBOPE, data for the years considered.*

Graph 3: Annual average *Rating* Public TV vs. Private TV 2005-2014. Total persons

Source: Own elaboration from Latin American Multichannel Advertising Council (LAMAC) and IBOPE, data for the years considered.

Fragmentation in the offer brings with it direct consequences in the consumption, as the channels distributed through cable and satellite compose almost all of their programming with foreign products, thus constituting a sort of international offer. This programming enters and coexists with the national offer in the daily consumption that people make, turning them into a transnational audience (Chalaby, 2005; Ekwo, 2011; Moreno, 2009)[6], which presents certain characteristics that are unique to them, different from those of the national audiences (González Bernal & Roncallo-Dow, 2015).

The existence of a local audience with the characteristics of a transnational audience has profound implications in the way people appreciate and relate to national television channels and their products. The increase in the offer and the expansion of consumption (Turrill, 2014) directly impacts on the quantity and quality of references with which the viewers perform their processes of reception (González Bernal & Roncallo-Dow, 2015).

The transformation of consumption habits has been emphasized, in addition to its trans-nationalization, by the growing number of people who access audiovisual content via Internet. In Colombia, the percentage of respondents who consume Internet videos went from 54% to 62% between October 2012 and September 2013 (Ministry of Information Technologies and Communications [Ministerio de Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones] (MinTIC), 2014). Similarly, the number

of subscribers to Netflix services reached 500,000 in the first quarter of 2015, consolidating the country as the third most important market of the company in Latin America, after Brazil and Mexico (Hernández, 2015).

This situation has resulted in a growing interest of the industry participants on the development of information to qualify knowledge on the viewers to whom their efforts must be directed, including how audiences define the quality of television products, and the relationship between perception of quality with exposure and other dimensions of the behavior of audience. This interest has led to the exploration of concepts such as fidelity, attention, appreciation, remembrance and *engagement* or commitment.

CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT: CHANNEL RCN

The interest in information and complementary knowledge to indicators of exposure materialized in 2014 at the conclusion of a research convention between a Colombian University and RCN Television, one of the two private nationwide networks that exist in this country. The aim was the realization of a project that would determine the level of existing coherence between identity, interests and expectations of the channel with the characteristics of its products and the expectations of the audience, all aiming to derive from there action lines that would favor exhibition and generating *engagement* in its viewers.

The objective of the channel was also inspired by the results of the average *share* in 2013 in the prime time slot, from Monday to Friday, which located RCN in third place, after channel Caracol and the sum of subscription channels.

From a corporate perspective, opportunities for expansion and growth that currently offers the television market has allowed RCN Television the creation of brands and business models outside the window of the same channel: Nuestra Tele [Our TV] (International signal), Win Sports (sports channel), NTN24 (International News signal), RCN Novelas [RCN Soap Operas], Canal Mundo Fox [Fox World Television] (Hispanic channel in the United States in association with News Corporation), among others. Venturing into these new businesses has had practical consequences for the logistics of production, marketing and, therefore, for the final products consumed by channel RCN audiences.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
ENGAGEMENT: IMPACT OF TELEVISION PRODUCTS ON AUDIENCES

Commitment or *engagement* is a structural concept that allows the analyst to transcend the perspective focused on audience exposure to contents and settle at the level of the relationship of the viewer with the product consumed. Kobayashi (2008, p. 111) mentions that there are many concepts used as synonym of commitment or *engagement* inside the media industry: involvement, relationship, connection and link, among others. At the same time, Koboyashi affirms that there is not a clear distinction for its use. However, in what everyone agrees is that it allude to the effort by the various players in the industry to establish a deep connection between products (programs or shows), media (channels), brands (advertisers) and consumers (viewers). This allows to say that the implied philosophy of *engagement* is, in essence, a holistic approach to the process of communication and consumption that goes through the connection that viewers establish with the channel as a brand, with the talent that is embodied in different productions (Lis & Post, 2013), until reaching the value that an audience makes regarding the emotional richness of their experience and its connection with the content (Russell & Puto 1999), among other elements.

Perälä (2014) mentions that the *engagement* should be considered a worldly involvement with a medium,

reflected in the frequent, arbitrary and unconscious decisions that people make when they select which contents and brands to follow. Also, Askwith (2007) considers that *engagement*, despite lacking consensus on its definition, is directly related to the content of the products[7]. For this author, the level of *engagement* of viewers with content can be described according to their attitudes toward such content. From this perspective, it is tried to set if viewers have generated feelings about the television content they consume; when there are, how strong they are, and whether they are positive or negative.

Consistent with this perspective, the report *Measures of Engagement* by the Association Research Foundation (ARF) says, from a marked commercial perspective, that commitment is going trough being a possibility, to becoming a brand idea enhanced by the media context that surrounds it (Plummer et al., 2006). This definition presupposes that the way in which viewers receive brand messages is determined by the content of the program in which the commercial is inserted, which has also been demonstrated by academic research (J. Wang & Calder, 2009).

In relation to the media content, Z. Wang, Vang, Lookadoo, Tchernev and Cooper (2015, p. 102) mentioned that greater attention to it and the positive feelings they awaken are a reflection of a consumers' trend of wanting the content; and, on the other hand, the decrease in attention and negative feelings showed a tendency to avoid it. For the authors, this represents a crucial step during processing of the messages, which will have implications on the subsequent behavior of the consumers, their attitudes and knowledge. In this sense, the trend of the consumer towards the content becomes a determinant of subsequent exposure and, therefore, generating *engagement* with a particular product.

The approaches of Z. Wang et al. (2015) are inscribed within the model *message-sensation value (MSV)* (Zuckerman, 1988) that seeks to determine the extent in which the characteristics of the form and the audiovisual content of a television message arouse sensory and affective responses in the viewer. To make this model operational, the researchers identified characteristics of the message involved in the generation of high or low levels of sensitive value in consumers, and then categorized messages based on these characteristics. The results obtained in the most relevant works around this model show that messages with high sensitive value, compared with those with low value, tend to be innovative, unpredictable and

exciting. Additionally, in terms of the characteristics of production, messages with high levels of sensitive value tend to have more changes of camera, close up shots, sound effects and intense music (Donohew, Lorch & Palmgreen, 1991, quoted by Z. Wang et al. 2015, p. 103).

Developments such as those achieved from the MSV model, which have explored in detail the characteristics of audiovisual messages and its impact on viewers, joined with the findings of the advertising industry about *engagement*, allow to launch hypothesis related to the relevance of the content in generating commitment from the audiences. In this regard, taking into account the highly competitive surrounding in which the Colombian television industry is inserted (issue addressed in the introduction), it is relevant to ask about the characteristics of the contents of the local products which have greater influence on generating *engagement* in the Colombian audience.

TELEVISION, CONTENT AND QUALITY

Channels or broadcast networks are characterized, precisely, for broadcasting television programs that define its content. This content is what engages viewers on one way or another, and gives meaning to the emergence of bonds between the channel's brand and its audience. A basic element that show all those who participate in the chain of production and consumption of television is a rapport with those products that are considered to be "of quality".

It has been pointed out that the criteria of quality on television is varied, and includes: i) the opening of spaces for cultural diversity; (ii) the evidence of a closeness with the portrayed reality; (iii) relationship with the context; and (iv) the specific qualities of the audiovisual product defined by their producers (Gutiérrez Gea, 2000). It is common, for example, that debates about quality refer to the form of regulation on the content, with greater emphasis on parameters of legislation instead of aesthetic terms (Geraghty, 2003). Such is the case of the constant debate about quality television and public television, which focuses on the role of television as a civic element rather than as artistic product (Caffarel, 2005; Camacho, 2005).

Similarly, Jaramillo (2002) proposes that

The term *quality* is brandished most often, but with little interest in its disparate meanings, between the popular press and the interest groups on one side, and academics of the television industry on the other. (p. 66)

Looking at it from this perspective, we are facing two aspects that we associate with the quality of the product: the particular qualities which make it narratively and technique definable as an element of quality, and its relationship with the expectations on television and what it has the responsibility to show. To determine the quality of the product, it is important to recognize the technological development that has allowed an image and a sound similar to those of film. Assuming that film has been seen as a more worthy element of aesthetic analysis than television (Geraghty, 2003), this change would support the study of television quality from the same parameters as cinema, both in technical as well as narrative terms. This aesthetic aspect has been the promoter of a new type of American drama series considered of "high quality", including *The Sopranos* (Creeber, 2011; Jaramillo, 2002; Nelson, 2006) and the productions of AMC (Jaramillo, 2012).

Regarding the second characteristic, the expectations on television depend on one side, of legislative and cultural conditions, and on the other, on the interests of audiences. Thus, quality is measured from the perspective of what the viewer determines as their satisfaction requirements. This value is culturally linked to three factors: I) what is expected from television and what is defined in relation t to it (in essence, what television should or should not show); (II) the specific qualities of the products in view of what you can see in other spaces and other audiovisual languages (such as film); and (III) the particular perception of the audiences, which determines how they appreciate the same quality of a product.

When considering the study of quality in a television product and the expectations they awake, it is necessary to consider the indicated components and their interrelations, which involves three different appreciations: one on the construction itself of the product (the TV show); another on the product inserted in particular logics of transmission, related to the social expectation about the product (its transmission characteristics, the relationship of content with the

imaginaries of social representation); and, finally, the review of the product by the audience.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- The appraisal of television products, as of quality or not, does it affect the generation of *engagement* in viewers?
- How do Colombian audiences interpret the concept of television quality?
- The elements that compose the imaginary of the audiences on television quality, are they reflected in the primetime products of the channel RCN?

METHODOLOGY

For the development of the project three separate lines of inquiry were established, and subsequently a stage of intersection of information allowed to generate global conclusions, from a mainly qualitative perspective. Each one of the axes of inquiry was addressed through a specific technique, in accordance with the objectives set and the actors involved in the process, as shown in table 1.

This article will focus on two of the axes of research: the analysis of products and consultation to audiences; the aim is to show the importance of the characteristics of television products and assessment of their quality in generating *engagement*.

ANALYSIS OF PRODUCTS

For the component of analysis of products six fiction and entertainment programs that aired between June 2012 and April 2014 were chosen, in common agreement with RCN Television.

The programs analyzed were:

- Alias el Mexicano [*Alias The Mexican*] (AEM) - Telenovela-serie, Colombia.
- Comando Élite [*Elite command*] (CE) - Telenovela-serie, Colombia.
- Allá the Espero [*I'll wait for you there*] (ATE) - Telenovela, Colombia.
- Avenida Brasil [*Brazil Avenue*] (AvB) - Telenovela, Brazil.
- Protagonistas de Nuestra Tele [*Protagonists of our TV*] (PNT) - Reality, Colombia.
- Doctor Mata [*Doctor Mata*] (DrM) - Telenovela-Serie, Colombia.

Of each of the selected products, a convenience sample was taken of the episodes/emissions, which constituted the corpus. The analysis was performed by eight encoders, which carried out two pilot tests with two programs that would be studied. The categories selected were those that reached 85% agreement after the second pilot.

Twenty-four episodes/emissions were analyzed, taking a minimum of three episodes of different weeks. An analysis in two stages was applied to these episodes, first a quantitative analysis of incidents, followed by a qualitative textual analysis that contextualized the quantitative results.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

The first stage was a quantitative analysis that focused on the scene as the first unit of analysis, and the shot as a second unit. The scene was defined as the narrative sequence consisting of the space and/

Table 1: General Methodology Plan

Axis explored	Technique used	Population / sample
1. The perspective of managers and creative staff	In depth Interview	- Executives with influence in corporate decisions. - Producers / directors. - Scriptwriters
2. The characteristics of the content	Product Analysis	Samples of products selected to be analyzed in two stages: content analysis and textual analysis.
3. The perspectives of audiences	Focus groups	- Conducting focus groups in major cities of the regions: Center, Pacific, Antioquia, Coffee belt, Caribbean and Middle East. - Men and women. - Aged between 18-24 / 25-39 / over 40 years. Housewives.

Source: Own elaboration.

or temporary[8] unit. This first part indicated the aired time of the scenes in relation to other elements of the product that did not make the plot presented progress.

The selected scenes (total: 567) underwent an incident log of various types of factors: i) images/graphics on the screen organized by size and by reference to the same product or to other products; (ii) violence; (iii) consumption of controlled substances; (iv) moral value, in which the action seen on stage, including music, raises positive, neutral or negative emotions regarding to the characters involved; and (v) number of shots.

Five scenes chosen by convenience were then disassembled in their constitutive shots (total: 1,447), to make an aesthetic analysis of the elements of the audiovisual grammar used (Chandler, 1994; Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, & Newbold, 1998). Thus: i) type of shot; (ii) angle; (iii) camera movements; (iv) point of view; (v) type of transition/cut; vi) color saturation; (vii) contrast; and (viii) focal length were studied.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Although the debate on the complexity of aesthetic studies on television continues among scholars, the analysis of narrative discourse or textual analysis remains a recurrent approach in the studies of media (McKee, 2003). This approach allows extrapolating the possible interpretation of the products by the audiences, especially if it manages to overcome the ambiguity represented in thinking about the logic of "quality" (Creeber, 2006). In this case, the integration with content analysis allows to put into context the analyzed products, relating them with expectations that can occur in terms of the narrative genre represented, the time of transmission, the imaginary and the ideologies present in the product, and other qualities that would escape the rawness of the dispersed elements. This goes hand in hand with what Cardwell (2007) proposed to differentiate between quality and value, as

> to determine the quality [of a television program] it is only needed to refer to the details of the program and show that they exhibit certain fundamental characteristics. To determine the actual value - to carry out a critical judgment and try to persuade others about its validity - you must interpret the program and evaluate it against certain criteria. (p 32)

In this way, quality not only refers to the characteristics of construction and their proximity or distance to a set of rules, but it also includes a reflection on its relevance and importance.

FOCUS GROUPS WITH AUDIENCES

From the paradigm of active audiences (Hall, 1973), according to which members of the public are able to account for the decisions that guide their consumption of media products, 42 focus groups in nine cities across the country were conducted, selected by taking into account their affiliation to the six zones defined by IBOPE Colombia for the measurement of *rating* and its population density. Bearing in mind the above criteria, the cities where focus groups were developed were those included in Table 2.

Table 2: Formation of focus groups

City	Number of focus groups made	Number of participants
Bogotá	9	95
Medellín	6	57
Cali	6	67
Barranquilla	6	72
Cartagena	3	33
Cúcuta	3	35
Pereira	3	36
Ibagué	3	32
Bucaramanga	3	30
Total	42	457

Source: Own elaboration.

The participants of each focus group had in common that they were regular consumers of television, both nationally and internationally, regardless of whether or not they consumed products of channel RCN. It was ensured that the composition of the groups included men and women, within the following age ranges: 18-24 / 25-39 / 40 and over. In addition, specific focal groups were done with housewives, because of the importance of this audience segment for commercial television. In total 14 groups were done with men and women between 18 and 24 years; 13 with men and women between 25 and 40; 10 with men and women over 40 years; and 5 with housewives of different ages. The focus groups were developed during the months of August and September 2014 and the recruitment of participants was conducted through a firm specialized in studies of public opinion and marketing.

Each meeting was attended by a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 12 participants, and began with a motto that aimed to install mentally the people consulted on the programs with which they had a high *engagement* level, to specifically explore variables of this strong and stable relationship between viewer and product.

RESULTS

Firstly, the main elements of the product analysis are presented (content and textual analysis will be unified in a single discourse;) they are followed by observations about content and quality collected in the focus groups conducted with audiences.

RESULTS OF PRODUCT ANALYSIS

The general result relating to the number of scenes with new narrative material, is compared to the time dedicated, in transmission, to other type of elements that do not contribute to the narrative of the program, including commercial breaks, headers/introduction, and the like.

Table 3 shows that the programs range between 65% and 80% of new narrative per program aired. For one-hour programs, this represents between 39 and 48 minutes broadcasted per every hour. The presence of commercial breaks was generally around 15% (9 minutes

per hour), except in the *reality show* PNT, where it reached 29% of the time analyzed (17 minutes per hour).

In the analysis from the selected scenes as the unit of analysis, the study focused on four aspects: incidence of graphics in the scene, violence, controlled substances and characteristics of the characters.

Visual pollution: incidental graphics

Table 4 presents the number of scenes in which a graphic element appeared, as a minimum, either promoting the same program (internal graphics), other programs of the channel, or commercial products (external graphic).

Although the incidence of internal graphic elements of the same program is amply higher in the *reality show* than in serialized products (soap operas), it is superior to 6% in all cases of national productions.

On an aesthetic level, the methods of self-promotion are recurrent and visually ineffective: the presence of the channel's logo is maintained which, at times, saturates and does not refresh corporate identity. It is a visual discourse that, by not being renewed, does not represent an added value in visual terms, beyond contributing to a positioning that is already high.

The incidence of graphics with information from other products of the channel, or commercial products, reaches almost to 30% in all cases (except PNT where

Table 3. Analyzed time of scenes by program

	ATE	AEM	PNT	AvB	CE	DrM
Episodes analyzed	5	4	5	3	4	3
Total time analyzed	2:29:16	2:07:14	3:46:32	2:27:59	1:40:32	2:20:13
Number of scenes	113	106	102	79	96	71
Total scene time	2:01:48	1:41:10	2:26:47	1:53:55	1:20:51	1:53:35
Relationship	81.5%	79.5%	64.8%	77.0%	80.4%	81.0%

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 4: Incidence of internal and external graphics

Chart type	Programa											
	ATE		AEM		PNT		AvB		CE		DrM	
	Incidence	%	Incidence	%	Incidence	%	Incidence	%	Incidence	%	Incidence	%
Internal graphics	13	11.5	7	6.6	54	52.9	1	1.3	12	12.5	8	11.3
External graphics	36	31.9	35	33.0	11	10.8	22	27.8	27	28.1	21	29.6

Source: Own elaboration.

self-promotion predominates) and shows that a good portion of the scenes have, as well, a visual invasion. In terms of quality a sort of paradox is configured, in so far as there is a saturation of the screen that makes viewing difficult and obscures the "content", which affects the generation of *engagement*, as we will see in the next section. The quality of the audiovisual product goes beyond the narrative and aesthetic, where it is evidenced that the invasion of the screen produces a deleterious effect on the receiver.

Narrating the morally reprehensible: violence and substances

Regarding the amount of violence within the programs, be it physical or sexual, is observed that the analyzed shows have a low incidence of scenes related to this item (see Table 5). The exception is

AEM, a program with a high incidence of all levels of violence, which in most cases are shown explicitly. Although this kind of violence is not uncommon in certain types of products (police television dramas, for example), it does stray from the norm in TV fiction showed by the other programs.

Because of its intensity, the second most violent program of those analyzed is DrM. The two stories coincide in having a protagonist whose central feature is structured around their criminal behavior. Threats and aggression emerge as the types of violence most present in AEM, while "threat" sets the trend in DrM. It is striking the low incidence of violence in a series as CE, whose theme (human dramas developed in the context of the conflict between the Colombian police, the guerrillas and drug traffickers) would suggest a shift to violent situations.

Table 5: Treatment of violence in the analyzed products

Program	Level of violence	Physical violence		Sexual violence		Total	Percentage
		Implied	Explicit	Implied	Explicit		
Allá te espero [I'll wait for you there] (ATE)	Threat	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Aggression	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Damage	1	0	0	0	1	0.9
	Torture	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Alias El Mexicano [Alias The Mexican] (AEM)	Threat	1	8	0	0	9	8.5
	Aggression	0	3	1	1	5	4.7
	Damage	2	2	0	1	5	4.7
	Torture	0	2	0	0	2	1.9
Protagonistas de Nuestra Tele [Protagonist of our TV] (PNT)	Threat	0	1	0	0	1	1.0
	Aggression	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Damage	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Torture	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Avenida Brasil [Brazil Avenue] (AvB)	Threat	0	2	0	0	2	2.5
	Aggression	0	4	0	0	4	5.1
	Damage	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Torture	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Comando Élite [Elite command] (CE)	Threat	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Aggression	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Damage	0	2	0	0	2	2.1
		0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Doctor Mata [Doctor Mata] (DrM)	Threat	3	0	0	0	3	4.2
	Aggression	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Damage	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Torture	0	0	0	0	0	0.0

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 6: Treatment of substances in the analyzed products

Program	Substances	Explicit	Implicit	Total	Percentage
Allá te espero [I'll wait for you there] (ATE)	Illegal drugs	0	0	0	0
	Alcohol	3	4	7	6.2
	Tobacco	0	0	0	0
	Medications	0	0	0	0
Alias El Mexicano [Alias The Mexican] (AEM)	Illegal drugs	1	2	3	2.8
	Alcohol	10	12	22	20.8
	Tobacco	2	0	2	1.9
	Medications	0	0	0	0.0
Protagonistas de Nuestra Tele [Protagonist of our TV] (PNT)	Illegal drugs	0	0	0	0.0
	Alcohol	1	0	1	1.0
	Tobacco	0	0	0	0.0
	Medications	0	0	0	0.0
Avenida Brasil [Brazil Avenue] (AvB)	Illegal drugs	0	0	0	0.0
	Alcohol	1	0	1	1.3
	Tobacco	0	0	0	0.0
	Medications	0	0	0	0.0
Comando Élite [Elite command] (CE)	Illegal drugs	0	0	0	0.0
	Alcohol	7	0	7	7.3
	Tobacco	0	0	0	0.0
	Medications	0	0	0	0.0
Doctor Mata [Doctor Mata] (DrM)	Illegal drugs	0	0	0	0.0
	Alcohol	5	5	10	14.1
	Tobacco	1	1	2	2.8
		0	0	0	0.0

Source: Own elaboration.

Apart from the purely quantitative results, it is interesting to see that the presence of violence in most of the analyzed products tends to dissolve in the middle of melodramatic situations. This modality is presented clearly in AEM, DrM and CE, programs defined by a narrative and an approach of situations that make their identity oscillate between an action or police series and a soap opera.

On the other hand, in terms of the narrative presence of controlled substances (Table 6), AEM, and to a lesser extent DrM, make them an important element. There is an interesting aspect here: the only program that is not produced in Colombia, *Avenida Brasil [Brazil Avenue]*, is the one that registers the lowest consumption of substances. Although it could be evident that in AEM and DrM this is clearer, there is an element that is disturbing: the recurrence to alcohol as a narrative background in stories that have a more local overtone.

Characteristics of the characters

At this stage of the study, scenes were analyzed and it was determined if the participating characters adopt a positive, negative or neutral stance, being the positive values ones such as friendship, loyalty, support, signs of affection; and the negative ones betrayal, abuse, derision, contempt, among others. The attitude of the characters was taken as neutral if on the scene, being in an important narrative position, it did not carry out any action or adopted any position.

Regarding the characters that appear in the analyzed scenes (Table 7), it is observed that in ATE, the characters tend to present a higher number of positive moral values, contrasted with the negative moral values; and as PNT, AvB and even DrM, negative values presented by some characters are contrasted by almost double of the positive moral values displayed, opposition from which the melodramatic value of

Table 7: Moral position of the characters in the scene

| Position | Program | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ATE | | AEM | | PNT | | AvB | | CE | | DrM | |
	Incid.	%	Incid.	%	Incid.	%	Incid.	%	Incid.	%	Incid.	%
Positive	22	57 9	14	32.6	41	54.7	32	64.0	6	20.0	21	45.7
Neutral	7	18.4	17	39.5	25	33.3	2	4.0	15	50.0	16	34.8
Negative	9	23.7	10	23.3	9	12.0	16	32.0	9	30.0	9	19.6

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 8: Analysis of shots

Element analyzed	ATE	AEM	PNT	AvB	CE	DrM
Total of shots	1.918	1.314	2.803	1.800	1.068	1.315
Total time of scenes	2:01:48	1:41:10	2:26:47	1:53:55	1:20:51	1:53:35
Average time by shot	00:00:04	00:00:05	00:00:03	00:00:04	00:00:05	00:00:05
Number of shots analyzed	310	180	280	221	261	195

Source: Own elaboration.

the story is created. The cases of CE and AEM are surprising, because the sum of neutral (of inaction) and negative values surpasses that of positive values. This also occurs in DrM, making them programs with strong negative emotional loads, not contrasted with positive or hopeful elements.

Audio-Visual construction

The analysis of audio-visual construction, as summarized in Table 8, includes the counting of the shots and, of them, the indication of the amount of shots analyzed, and the measurement of the total time of the scenes and the average time per shot.

The number of shots of all the programs, especially in their early episodes, is evidenced as very extensive. The number of shots per episode is equivalent to the ones of film production, where in the period 1980-2000 was between three and six seconds per shot (Bordwell, 2002). In this aspect there is a strong drop in television language compared with film, which makes the viewer lose certain rhythms and certain routines of repetition that it is used to. In the case of the *reality show* this seems to not be so problematic, insofar as the spectator assumes to being in front of the vertiginous feeling that characterizes the format. It is disturbing, however, the figure registered by the products of fiction, which reflects a very high relationship between number of shots and time analyzed. This phenomenon is interesting,

because it makes present again the hybridization of audiovisual languages: television is made with the beauty and rhythm of cinema (Creeber, 2011).

Details of the shots

Beyond the specific outcomes in terms of shots used and types of camera movements, ATE is shown as the least variable production of the ones analyzed, with 92% of medium shots or close ups, of which less than 15% has camera movements. Although in all the products the amount of medium shots and close ups exceeds that of full shots – except PNT, in which this latter category represents 35% of the total – thus evidencing the priority of the dialogues, there are variations in the amount of camera movements. In this sense, AEM and CE are more variable in their visual design than even *reality show* PNT. On the other hand, DrM and ATE are seen as more controlled, with a more conscious use of camera movements as narrative emphasis.

The details in which the focus was on this phase of the analysis refer to the photographic characteristics of the shots, including color saturation, contrast and depth of field (Table 9).

ATE is shown as a cheerful product, with colors between live and neutral, and DrM appears as a dark story, with color tones between normal and opaque. In most productions, the contrast in the images is light to moderate, with DrM as the one with the greatest intensity.

Table 9: Characteristics of the analyzed products' photography

	ATE		AEM		Protagonists		AvB		CE		DrM	
Color saturation												
Vibrant	18	5.8%	0	0.0%	6	2.1%	2	0.9%	37	14.2%	2	1.0%
Normal	289	93.2%	180	100%	274	97.9%	219	99.1%	223	85.4%	168	86.2%
Opaque	3	1.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.4%	25	12.8%
Contrast												
Strong	4	1.3%	39	21.7%	0	0.0%	22	10.0%	4	1.5%	44	22.6%
Moderate	214	69.0%	91	50.6%	113	40.4%	163	73.8%	105	40.2%	132	67.7%
Light	92	29.7%	50	27.8%	167	59.6%	36	16.3%	152	58.2%	19	9.7%
Null	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Focus												
Depth	41	13.2%	17	9.4%	182	65.0%	25	11.3%	23	8.8%	62	31.8%
Fixed focus	269	86.8%	163	90.6%	98	35.0%	196	88.7%	238	91.2%	133	68.2%

Source: Own elaboration.

In terms of editing cuts, all mostly used direct cuts (more than 95% in all cases), taking advantage of the use of two or three cameras. Most of the programs give priority to an objective camera (more than 98% of the shot), which makes the low use of it by AEM and CE especially curious, as, having elements of adventure/action, they do not resort to this typical tool of the genre. DrM is the product with most visual complexity, with variations in contrast, saturation, and particularly with more specific use of focal distance for narrative emphasis, embedded clearly as a film *noir*[9] type of work.

CONCLUSIONS TO THE AUDIENCES' QUERIES

In the development of the 42 focus groups conducted with 457 viewers during the months of August and September 2014, the characteristics of the act of watching television were explored, to know what allows or facilitates the generation of *engagement* with the observed products. Understanding *engagement* as a comprehensive and multidimensional construct, that is in the process of definition, it was aimed to establish which elements of the process of "watching TV" have special relevance for Colombian audiences, in terms of its contribution to the generation of *engagement*.

The results gathered focus specifically on those elements related to the content and the concept of quality. Later, in the section dedicated to the discussion of results, the findings will be intertwined with those arising from the analysis of the products of channel RCN.

The content was addressed with audiences from different elements: the genres and formats it adopts and through which it is transmitted, the themes that developed it, the narrative used to tell the stories, the construction of related characters, and even elements related to the criteria for programming, as the number of episodes, duration, etc. On the other hand, the enquiry on quality was opened, meaning that participants were asked what is television quality and how is it reflected, which allowed intertwining those answers with others obtained in the development of each session.

In relation to the genres and formats, it was found that all consulted groups mentioned having achieved high levels of *engagement* with soap operas, especially the historical and the biographical ones; the *reality show* and the news. In addition, the younger groups (18 to 24) and adults (25-39) show a high level of *engagement* with products such as series and programs of journalistic reporting.

From the perspective of the issues addressed in programs that achieved a high *engagement*, it stands out the reference to reality; however, said reality takes different forms. Housewives understand it generically and just point out journalistic reporting programs. The 18 to 24 year-olds see reality on the problems of the country, so they also mentioned programs of journalistic reporting; in addition, they related to soap operas and series on drug trafficking, since this has been a long-standing scourge for Colombians. People between 25 and 39 years linked reality with the lives of famous

people who become subject of different programs, especially biographical soap operas; likewise, they find it in programs dealing with everyday issues, interpersonal relationships and couples, and in programs on crime. Over 40 year-olds related reality television with programs of different nature (from documentaries to soap operas) showing the history of the country.

When talking about the way in which the stories enjoyed by most consulted viewers are told, common elements, such as the presence of information and data that make the stories feel real, are found, even if they are actually not so. In addition, an important assessment was given to unpredictable stories, short and with suspense, evidencing full correspondence with the approaches of Zuckerman (1988). Respondents highlighted the structuring of stories by seasons of few episodes, the miniseries, and even the stories developed in unique episodes. Referring to the themes and visual narratives, people of 25 years of age and over valued as a facilitating element of *engagement* that the programs can be seen with the family, with children.

On the characters, in all the consulted segments the common elements were related to those inspired in real people or characters that, although fictional, have a high component of credibility. On this common basis, housewives emphasized that they connected the most with positive characters that embody positive values. Young people related to the characters deemed intelligent, revolutionaries, those who are interested in changing the world and with their attitudes are able to inspire. Adults between 25 and 40 years opted for more controversial characters, with a strong personality. Finally, the people over 40 years old mentioned appreciating in a special way the characters with musical talent.

On quality, defining what it is and how it is reflected within their favorite programs, it was found that in all groups, the concept of quality is directly related to the theme, originality and/or its approach. On this point it is important to remember that the most popular topics were those related to reality in its different manifestations. In the groups of people over 25 years of age, we identified a trend towards linking quality with an un-pessimistic approach towards the country, in which the bandits were not protagonist or heroes. Other elements that were directly related to the quality of a program that creates *engagement* were the credibility and proximity to the actors and presenters; and visual characteristics as those of locations, color, sharpness, etc. In the case of contests or *realities*, it was emphasized as a feature of quality the relevance of the awards, while from the perspective of the effects on the viewer,

that the story and its characters awaken emotions. From the programming criteria, they linked quality to the adequacy between contents and schedules and to the stability of the programming grid on which the program is located.

In all segments, with the exception of housewives, it was mentioned that quality and, therefore, the *engagement*, is affected when the programs are interrupted by many pauses for commercial messages, when they are very long and when advertising invades visually the contents. Finally, in three segments (again, excluding housewives) it was agreed that channel that broadcasts a program is another important factor related to quality and the generation of *engagement*, because the viewer has expectations about the content of different channels, some bad and others good. According to those polled, good expectations on a channel predispose the viewer so that it believes and feels that a program is good, even better than it may actually be.

Specifically on the RCN brand, the audiences surveyed agreed, from a positive assessment of the channel, in relating it to entertainment, showbiz, telenovelas (soap operas) and real stories. From a negative assessment, they mentioned elements such as superficiality, being too focused on the physical beauty of the presenters, too much inclusion of foreign soaps on the screen, and a tabloid and sensationalist tone in news and entertainment programs.

DISCUSSION

Returning to the questions that motivated this research process, it is found that the *engagement* of audiences with television products depends on multiple factors, which coexist in an unstable way in the process of reception. The analysis of focus group makes evident that, in general terms, the elements of the process of television reception that are relevant for the audiences to generate *engagement* are the addressed theme, controlled presence of advertising, programming criteria and effects (especially in the field of emotions). All of them are directly linked to the concept of quality managed by participants. In other words, the attributes that generate quality on a TV product prove to be the same ones that facilitate the generation of commitment. This answered affirmatively the first question of the investigation – does the quality television products affect the generation of *engagement*?- and a hypothesis can be established about the direct and causal relationship between perceived quality and *engagement*, which will be the subject of future investigations.

On the second research question - How do Colombian audiences interpret the concept of television quality? – in the development of the focus groups the issue of programs (its originality or its approach) was found as the predominant element. When inquiring about the themes that generate higher level of commitment, it was found that it is those that are directly related to the reality of the country, shown from different perspectives: journalistic information and report, biographical products, recreation of historical conjunctures; dramatization of everyday family or couple's problems; urban life, educational environment, etc. It seems that the proper recreation of reality becomes an element that defines the perception of quality by the audience and the consequent generation of *engagement* in viewers.

In addition to the theme, quality is associated by the viewers with formal characteristics of the products (color, clarity, credibility of presenters/actors, locations, etc.), with programming criteria and with the channel (the perception of the brand). On the latter issue, the brand becomes a filter of perceptions, as participants mentioned that a channel valued as of high quality, can generate the feeling that a product that is transmitted there also is of high quality, although in objective terms it might not be so.

On the third question – do the *prime time* products of RCN reflect the conception of quality audiences have? – it was found that the analyzed programs portrayed some of the concerns and interests of audiences, which resulted in a an ambiguous validation of the perceptions on the quality of the channel. RCN, the case study discussed with in this text, enjoys a high position among the respondents, but its identity is unstable, due to the high variability of its products in the *prime time* slot. The variability is defined both by the themes present in the analyzed productions as well as the visual aesthetics. This observation takes special relevance if it is considered that the channel is self-proclaimed as storyteller of original stories, that show a positive view of the country, but at the same time the audience interprets it as a sensationalist and tabloid space where violent or controversial issues are present, and as a window where there is a high presence of foreign products, especially telenovelas.

Content analysis showed that of six of the RCN products that were analyzed, three were directly related to the immediate reality of Colombia, by addressing issues such as drug trafficking, the guerrillas and the phenomenon of emigration. Of them, *Comando Élite [Elite Command]* (serial that highlights the work of the anti-guerrilla police) and *Allá te espero [I'll wait for you there]* (telenovela about Colombian emigrants in the United States), were positively valued by different segments of the audience, among other reasons, because they considered that they contributed to the knowledge of the country's problems. The third, titled *Alias el Mexicano [Alias the Mexican]* (the story of Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, one of the most known and feared drug traffickers in the 1980s and 1990s), despite being based on a true story and a persistent problem in the country, did not enjoy the public's acceptance. Analysis of content and discourse of this product showed a melodrama that is saturated with violence (21% of its scenes) and consumption of psychoactive substances, particularly alcohol (25% of its scenes), in which the protagonist is a villain, and whose police-type production in the first few episode is blurred into melodrama as the narrative progresses. This is related to the exhaustion pointed to by consulted audience segments, especially young people and adults, which manifested themselves against television focusing on showing the negative side of Colombia.

Three of four audience segments mentioned that the *engagement* is facilitated when programs not are interrupted excessively by commercials, when these are not too long and when the advertising does not invade the content. On this issue in particular, the analysis of products showed that, on average, 20% of airtime corresponds to advertising, but there are cases in which this figure reaches 30%. In 27% of the scenes analyzed, dedicated to the development of the stories, the presence of graphics or promotional texts of the same program, or other products of the channel or advertisement of brands were found.

Thus, the situation of the channel is ambiguous in its generation of *engagement*, at least from the elements studied so far. An investigation that also connects specifically the same expectations of the direction of the channel and its relationship with these observations will enable to understand its future direction. One thing is clear, and that is that trying to aim, as an open channel, to an audience that is too broad plays against RCN. By choosing a target audience, RCN may get more out of the *engagement* of its audiences. This work is a contribution in that regard.

FOOTNOTES

1. This article presents the results of the research project "Narratives, formats and audiences" [*Narrativas, formatos y audiencias*] for the RCN Channel, registered to the Direction of Research of the La Sabana University [Dirección de Investigación de la Universidad de La Sabana] under code COM 68-2014 and co-financed between the RCN Channel and the School of Communication [Facultad de Comunicaciones] of the La Sabana University [Universidad de La Sabana]

2. Correspondent author [Autor corresponsal].

3. Source: Data revealed by IBOPE in the Establishment Survey 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 for publication of Universes 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014. Penetration of Pay TV on individuals. Regions measured by IBOPE: includes Armenia, Barranquilla, Bello, Bogota, Bucaramanga, Cali, Cartagena, Cúcuta, Dosquebradas, Envigado, Floridablanca, Girón, Itagüí, Manizales, Medellin, Palmira, Los Patios, Pereira, Santa Marta, Soacha, Soledad and Yumbo. Taken from www.lamac.org/colombia

4. Source: IBOPE Media, Colombia. Monthly, quarterly, or annual average Share. Total day, Monday to Sunday. Includes subscription TV and community TV (includes "other channels", the share is calculated manually; the base does not include other "switched on" such as video games, DVD, etc. The base includes visitors). Regions measured by IBOPE: includes Armenia, Barranquilla, Bello, Bogota, Bucaramanga, Cali, Cartagena, Cúcuta, Dosquebradas, Envigado, Floridablanca, Girón, Itagüí, Manizales, Medellin, Palmira, Los Patios, Pereira, Santa Marta, Soacha, Soledad and Yumbo. Taken from www.lamac.org/colombia

5. Source: IBOPE Media, Colombia. Monthly, quarterly, or annual average *rating*. Total day, Monday to Sunday. Includes subscription TV and community TV. (Base includes visitors and "other channels"). Regions measured by IBOPE: includes Armenia, Barranquilla, Bello, Bogota, Bucaramanga, Cali, Cartagena, Cúcuta, Dosquebradas, Envigado, Floridablanca, Girón, Itagüí, Manizales, Medellin, Palmira, Los Patios, Pereira, Santa Marta, Soacha, Soledad and Yumbo. Taken from www.lamac.org/colombia

6. All direct and indirect quotations to original texts in English were translated to the Spanish by the authors of the article.

7. Askwith (2007, p 23) mentions that there is an agreement in that engagement refers to the following process:

1. The viewer decides to watch a TV program.
2. The viewer is "engaged" with the content of the program.
3. Accordingly, the viewer performs one or more of the following:
    a) View full program without changing the channel;
    b) Becomes a regular and loyal viewer of the program;
    c) Is a more attentive viewer when viewing the program.
4. Additionally, the viewer can also:
    a) Become passionate about the program;
    b) Convince others to watch the program.
5. All possible outcomes included in numbers 3 and 4 in turn benefit advertisers because each one of them increases the chances that the viewer is exposed to, aware of, and persuaded by advertising.
6. Moreover, through a transfer process, it is possible that the positive feelings of viewers to the program extend, making them more receptive to advertising that appears during the broadcast.

8. This notion is different from the one used in production, where the location determines the scene; but in terms of the view of the broadcasted product, it is closer to the narrative perception of the spectator.

9. Opaque saturation, high contrast, and main characters with strong ethical dilemmas, which do not allow them to be considered heroic, characterize film noir.

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