WHY *SHOWMATCH*? AN APPROACH TO TELEVISION CONSUMPTION OF ONE OF THE MOST WATCHED PROGRAMS IN ARGENTINA

¿Por qué Showmatch*? Un acercamiento al consumo televisivo de uno de los programas más vistos en Argentina*

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ABSTRACT

Showmatch has remained, almost unchanged, on the screen for more than a decade. It is a flagship of Argentine broadcast television. The rest of the programming is organized around and conditioned by it. It creates *ad hoc* programs and generates topics included in the agenda of other media. We are interested in the analysis of *Showmatch* from a double objective. Firstly, we want to study the characteristics of the program. Secondly, we will go in depth into the forms of consumption and the preferences of the audience who watch *Showmatch*. The two objectives are structured around a hypothesis: the constitutive and permanent elements of the program do not necessarily determine the choice of the audience. The methodological design articulates the empirical inquiry on the preferences and forms of consumption with the reflection on the characteristics of the program.

Key words: *Showmatch*; Television; Consumption; Audience; Reception.

RESUMEN

Showmatch se mantiene, casi inalterado, en la pantalla desde hace más de una década. Es un producto faro de la televisión de aire argentina. Alrededor de él se organiza e ilumina el resto de la programación, se producen programas *ad hoc* y genera tema de agenda en los demás medios de comunicación. Nos interesa acercarnos al análisis de *Showmatch* a partir de un doble objetivo. En primer lugar, dar cuenta de las características del programa. En segundo lugar, indagar en las formas de consumos y los gustos de las audiencias que miran *Showmatch*. Los dos objetivos se articulan en la trama argumental sostenida por una hipótesis: los elementos constitutivos y permanentes del programa no conlleva necesariamente a ser motivo de elección por parte de las audiencias. El diseño metodológico de esta investigación articula la indagación empírica sobre los gustos y formas de consumo con la reflexión sobre la las características del programa.

Palabras clave: *Showmatch*; Televisión; Consumo; Audiencia; Recepción.

1. INTRODUCTION

For the past 11 years, the program *Showmatch* and its contest *Bailando por un sueño[1]* [Dancing for a dream] has attracted the attention, promotion and expectation of all the media. It is one of the most watched programs in broadcast television in Argentina, with a large amount of companion shows that create an agenda of topics related to the contest, and the TV schedule of broadcast television in the country is structured around it (Heram, Toledo, Merchert & Bleiz, 2017). The continued presence of Marcelo Tinelli as a conductor dates back to 1990, with the show *Ritmo de la noche* [Rhythm of the night] and *VideoMatch*. From then until now, he has been one of the longest-standing TV hosts. Paradoxically, from the academic field of communication, *Showmatch* has not been an extensive topic of theoretical-analytical research.

This article has a dual objective. First of all, we want to study the characteristics of the program. Secondly, we will go in depth into the forms of consumption and the preferences of the audience who watch *Showmatch*. The two objectives are structured around a hypothesis: the constitutive and permanent elements of the program do not necessarily determine the choice of the audience. Although this work is presented as a case study, it is part of the Argentine tradition of studies on cultural consumption (Wortman: 2015; Grillo, Papalini & Benítez Largui: 2016; Jacks: 2011, Saintout & Ferrante: 2006, Varela & Grimson: 1999; Mata: 1997; García Canclini: 1995, Landi, Quevedo & Vacchieri: 1992; Terrero, 1997, 1999; among others).

The methodological design of this research combines an empirical analysis of the preference and forms of consumption with a reflection on the characteristics of the program. The empirical base of this work, therefore, is both exploratory and descriptive. We worked based on an online survey about preferences and forms of consumption which was carried out in May 2017. The sample included 305 valid cases with people from 15 to 70 years old who live in the city of Buenos Aires and the Greater Buenos Aires area, Argentina. The analysis was complemented with a viewing of the program and a measurement of the advertisements inserted in it.

This work is structured in different sections. In the first chapter we focus on the methodological aspects. In the second one, we present a synthetic overview of the program. The next section shows a case study of the main characteristics of the preferences of the audience and the forms of consumption of the program. Finally, the conclusions show the most relevant results of our analysis

2. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

In order to reach the objectives of this work, the methodological design of this research combines an empirical study of the preferences and forms of consumption with a reflection on the characteristics of the program. We follow a dual route: on the one hand, we watch the program *Showmatch* to identify the core elements of the show, and we are also based on previous studies that allow us to define it and to understand its status within the broader framework of broadcast television. This first definition allows us to link it to the forms of consumption and preferences of audiences, which is another objective of this study, combining a case study with theoretical reflections on the topic of cultural consumption.

In order to carry out our case study we conducted a standardized survey which is the empirical basis of this descriptive and exploratory work. An online questionnaire was shared in different social

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[1] We may point out that the name of the program is *Showmatch* and that *Bailando por un sueño* is just a segment of the show, although currently it occupies the entire program. Hereafter, we will be using both names interchangeably.

networks (Facebook and Twitter) of the members of the research group that prepared this work[2]. That is, the survey followed a convenience and accidental sampling, and in order to prevent the overrepresentation of participants associated to social sciences, different strategies were adopted to reach a population as varied and heterogeneous as possible. For example, the survey was published on Facebook groups about television and, using elements from the snowball sampling method, respondents were asked to share the questionnaire, thus reaching a broader and more heterogeneous audience.

The universe of analysis was composed of individuals from 15 to 70 years old who live in the city of Buenos Aires and the Greater Buenos Aires area. The survey, with a convenience or accidental sampling, included 305 validated cases. The questionnaire was published on different social networks during the month of May 2017. The temporal frame leads to a study with a delimited time and space, unlike the works that study the evolution of changes and trends in the consumption of a specific product. The relevance of this precise case study lies on the hegemonic position of *Showmatch* in the media and the daily life of the Argentine population. Often, the media themselves legitimate and promote the program by claiming that "people watch it". We consider that this research, albeit limited to a specific area and with a specific sample, contributes to questioning those claims and widen the debate on the complex reasons that people have to watch it.

The questionnaire was structured around two axes: forms of consumption and tastes or preferences. First of all, we analyzed —based on a system with closed questions with multiple answers— the forms of consumption of the program, followed by three open questions about their tastes. Two of them addressed the aspects they enjoyed about the program and the ones they disliked. The last question —an open question— was related to their motives to watch *Showmatch*. The purpose of this questionnaire was descriptive, in order to observe the ways in which the program is consumed and to analyze the preferences of the audience. After obtaining that information, we systematized the responses according to the aspects that were repeated in them. The answers were classified into different main categories, and we obtained the information for our analysis[3] based on empirical data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 2002).

3. *SHOWMATCH,* MUCH MORE THAN A SHOW

The landscape of media in Argentina includes privately-managed media, state-owned media and nonprofit media. National broadcast television includes five channels, four of which are privately owned —*Canal 13*, *Canal 9*, *Telefé* and *América*—, plus the public *Televisión Pública*. Broadcast television is characterized by offering general programming based on the competition between the different channels (Di Guglielmo, 2010). According to the data from the National Survey of Cultural Consumption and Digital Media of the year 2013[4], in Argentina 97% of the population watches the television, which is the most commonly chosen audiovisual medium. In addition, over the last decade there has been a migration towards cable television, and the consumption of broadcast television has decreased at a sustained rate from 2006 to 2015. In April 2016, the audience for cable TV outnumbered the viewers of broadcast television. The trend shows an increase of video on demand, with *Netflix* as the leading company for streaming services in Latin America. This platform arrived in Argentina in 2011 and it reached 847,458 subscribers in the country in 2017. It is followed by Cine.arPlay, with 477,944, and then Telefónica Onvideo, with 121,065 subscribers (Baladrón & Rivero, 2017).

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[2] Research project PICT 2015 "Televisión y crítica de medios en el contexto de la Ley de Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual" ["Television and media criticism in the context of the Law of Audiovisual Communication Services".
[3] The responses were processed with the program Atlas Ti.
[4] Survey carried out by the Cultural Information System of Argentina (SInCA), dependent on the National Ministry of Culture.

Although year after year broadcast television witnesses how its viewers migrate to other forms of consumption through multiple screens, services of video on demand and hyperconnectivity[5], *Bailando por un sueño* maintains its position in broadcast television as the great reorganizer of the TV schedule. Hugo Lewin (2015) postulates that Tinelli and his program are the center of gravity of the television system due to the audience it summons and the way in which the program, interpreted as discourse, becomes part of the discursive stream and pervades all the topics of conversation and reference.

The origins of the program date back to the 1st of March 1990, with the name *VideoMatch*[6]. It was intended as a daily late-night sports magazine broadcast in the channel *Telefé*. In its beginnings, the program did not exceed 2 or 3 rating points (Blua, 2011, p. 12), although over time it became one of the products with the highest audience rates. It stayed in *Telefé* until 2004, and in 2005 it moved to *Canal 9* and changed its name to *Showmatch*. In the next year, it was broadcast by *Canal 13*, the channel where it is currently aired. In the year 2006 there was a change in its format in which hidden camera gags were abandoned and the contest *Bailando por un sueño* started[7]. The main premise of this contest is a competition with different dance rhythms among different dance couples —made up of a celebrity and a professional dancer— who are evaluated by a jury composed of people from the world of show business. Each couple champions the cause of a charitable organization, and after the evaluation of the jury and the votes of the audience, the dance couples are successively eliminated until a winner is finally announced.

Bailando por un sueño is structured as a *reality show* (García Fanlo, 2017). The program is constantly appealing to the emotions of the audience, and is structured around a dichotomy —good versus evil, virtuous versus faulty characters, friendly versus unpleasant contestants—. The feuds generally start during the long periods before the start of the dance and/or after the critiques of the jury, and both abuse and mockery are common tools to start an argument. The program is characterized by the appeal to a pumped-up solidarity around a dream that may come true. The mediatization of politics (Verón, 2001; Carlón, 2016) is a constant element. For example, the three presidential candidates with most votes in 2015 participated in the season premiere, in which they danced and interacted with their impersonators. There often are politicians in the recording studio dancing with their wives/girlfriends, and politicians have also performed in the sketches of the season premieres in 2016 and 2017, among other examples. *Showmatch* is also characterized by a strong stigmatization and objectification of women, who are treated as sex objects to be exhibited. Social networks are also used (Twitter, Instagram) to upload images during the live broadcast and direct conversation topics. Another main element of the program is advertising, which is constantly present both inside the show and during commercial breaks. *Showmatch* and its dance contest are characterized by the repetition, year after year, of their structure and contents, although with some discontinuity that may depend on the specific situation of the country and may include more political commentary, the use of social networks, etc. (García Fanlo, 2017). We agree with Alabarces (2011) who explains that: "the main principle of the show is redundancy. Everything happens twice —or even three times. Nothing ever happens in the show without Tinelli shouting it beforehand (…). Tinelli believes his audience to be made up of imbeciles and explains everything before it happens, lest it is not fully understood" (p. 72).

There are many companion shows that contribute to keeping *Showmatch* as a trending topic. The secondary characters of *Showmatch* are the protagonists of these shows that are aired in the afternoons and during the weekends. Sirvén & Ulanovsky (2009), in their latest book about television, offer the following data: "In 2008[7], the appearance of Marcelo Tinelli was a conversation topic in other programs during 226 days out of the 242 days in which the show was aired (…). He was mentioned 1112

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[5] For more information on the debates about the future of television or the end of mass media, see Carlón (2016), Carlón & Scolari (2009), Pérez de Silva (2000) Pscitelli (1998), among others.
[6] For more information, see Mangone (1992).
[7] This program led to similar contests of the same kind: *Cantando por un sueño* [Singing for a dream], *Patinando por un sueño* [Skating for a dream], *El musical de tus sueños* [The musical of your dreams], *Bailando Kids* [Dancing kids] and *Soñando para bailar* [Dreaming to dance].

times, at a rate of almost 5 times per day". (p. 295) The authors provide specific data about the programs that mention Tinelli, divided into the genre they belong to. Gossip news or channel surfing shows: *Ponele la firma, Zapping, Top Ten, TVR, Éste es el show, Resumen de los medios, Intrusos del espectáculo, Los profesionales de siempre, CQC, Pablo y Pachu, Bendita TV, Secretos de colección, Duro de domar, Ran 15, Resumiendo, El último vuelo del día, Infama.* Magazines and general interest shows: *Almorzando con Mirtha Legrand, Mañanas informales, Tardes informales, AM, Impacto Chiche, Mañaneras, La casa de América, Argentinos por su nombre.* Entertainment and fiction shows: *Hoy puede ser, El muro infernal, La mamá del año, Bella y Bestia, Mujeres de nadie.* The program is also featured in news shows: *La cornisa, Arriba Argentinos, Noticiero 13* and *Telenoche.*

The concept of "McTelevision" developed by Sampedro (2002) is interesting to analyze the McDonaldized behavior of television (Ritzer, 1996), with *Showmatch* as a clear example of this trend. "The audience has been fully included as a source of income, and their 'participation' is constantly renewed and commercialized. Contestants, relatives, friends, followers and voters lack any contractual guarantees, and the feedback from new technologies is limited to the corporate interests" (Sampedro, 2002, p. 3). *Showmatch* promotes audience participation with their vote, so that the dance couple can reach their goal. That is, the audience becomes part of a show with a "solidary" purpose that presents an objective at stake which is sublimated as unselfishness (Boito, 2012).

We mentioned early that one of the main elements that structure the program is advertising, which occupies a large portion of the show, both inside it and during commercial breaks. We viewed the program and analyzed the insertion of advertising, and we took the show aired on Tuesday, June 20th 2017 as a case study. On that day, *Bailando por un sueño* started at 10:39 p.m. and ended at 12:11 a.m. Commercial breaks took place from 11:50 p.m. to 11:57 p.m. and from 23:59 p.m. to 12:06 a.m. During the show, 10 products were sponsored within the program from the beginning until the first commercial break. In the second segment, which lasted only two minutes, two other brands were advertised, and after the second commercial break, one brand was sponsored within the show.

The insertion of advertising within the program generally takes place immediately before and/or after the dance of some of the couples, or right before the verdict of the jury. The logos of different brands can also be seen in three columns displayed on the bottom of the screen. In the program of June 20th, 43 brands were mentioned that belonged to the following categories: food (Dushi Sushi, Knorr, Saladix, Ensure Advance, Mostaza, Luchetti); drinks (Speed, Branca, Bon Aqua, Toro Viejo, Estancia Mendoza, Ser); construction materials (Polacrin, Sodimac); stores (Easy, Falabella); personal care (Pantene, Natura, Dove, Cicatricure); electronics (Frávega, Drean Dish, Samsung); cultural industry (Film: *Mamá se fue de viaje*); pharmaceutical products (Pulmosan, Vick; Pharmaron, Centrum, Dulcolax, Tafirol, Ibupirac); restaurants (McDonald's); clothes (Liguria); services (Personal, Emergencias SA, Dr. Fhurmann, Answer, Galeno, Fibertel, Santander Río, Movistar); and tourism (Travel Rock). The results are not promising with regard to the cultural pollution caused by advertising.

In the few references in the literature that have focused on *Showmatch*, we can find two different positions that try to account for the success of the program. On the one hand, there are authors that interpret the show from the perspective of its audience and the charisma of its conductor: "Marcelo Tinelli knew how to give us what we were asking for, what we needed, he understood better than anyone what the quintessence of the soul of TV was" (Fulco, 2007, p. 11), "[Tinelli] manages to become popular with everything he does. He has charm, a natural flair that cannot be produced with a formula" (Notar: 2017, 47). On the other hand, there are authors (Mangone, 1992, 2010; Alabarces, 2011), who adopt a critical position and interpret television and its products as part of a larger scenario, and who frame those products as part of the social and material life of the population.

So far, we have identified some traits of the program, and it is part of broadcast television, which sees every day how its audience migrates towards other types of screens and consumption. *Showmatch* is a clear example of television. It combines entertainment, advertising, politics, social networks, show business, scenes with a high sexual load and fights. It is still a program that structures the rest of the

TV schedule, with a high level of repetition, a strong advertising content, which works with a McDonalized system and with "pumped-up" solidarity.

4. RESULTS

We will focus now on the analysis of the tastes and forms of consumption of *Showmatch* so that we can establish a relation with the characteristics of the program. We can understand that both objectives are part of the same target based on a hypothesis: the constitutive and permanent elements of the show (the dance, the dream they want to make come true, the fights, the advertising) do not necessarily determine that viewers will choose to watch it.

First of all, we present here a short description of consumption habits among the respondents to the survey. Most of them (90%) claim that they watch the show through their television sets while it is being aired, whereas the remaining 10% uses other types of screens (computers, mobile phones, tablets). This finding is interesting, because in the field of cultural consumption, a significant portion of the research —both empirical and theoretical— wonders and reflects about the modifications, migrations and continuity in the ways that television is watched after the predominance of new technologies and multiple screens. For example, Padilla *et al.* mention "the explosion of ICT, the technological and cultural convergence that derives from them, combined with the ever-increasing interactivity of the different screens, which are making it possible to create a new trend in the reception and consumption of media" (2011: 204). A term which is commonly used is that of *prosumers* (Jacks, 2011), which refers to the dual role as a consumer and as a producer. However, in the study case that we present here, the results show that there is a predominance of a more traditional form of consumption, rooted in the live TV broadcast (Carlón, 2009), contrary to the new consumption trends in which multiple screens play the main role. In addition, we may point out that the program itself, in an attempt to move with the times, implemented a new strategy in the year 2011 by which the audience would become the fifth juror of the contest, and they could participate by voting through the website of the channel (Notar, 2017). Afterwards, towards the end of 2014, an attempt was made to include the use of social networks, particularly Twitter, as the fifth member of the jury. The *second screen* (Martel, 2015, p. 295), that is, the second device that the audience use while they watch television, did not yield the expected results in the case of voting via Twitter, and the proposal was removed[8]. The reluctance to implement these innovations may be related to the motives to watch *Showmatch* cited by respondents. We will return to this point later.

The program is watched by viewers on their own in 41% of the cases, as a family in 32% of the cases, and with their partner in 23% of the cases. With regard to the frequency of viewing, most of the respondents watch the show a few times per week. 81% of the respondents state that they have never voted in the contest, which shows a low level of interaction with the program.

We mentioned earlier that *Showmatch* is a leader on the screen, because there is a large number of companion shows and programs that focus daily on repeating clips extracted from it, interviewing the participants, showing the rehearsals, etc. However, 46% of the respondents say that they do not follow the program through other media. 25% of the respondents state that they keep up to date through other television programs and, finally there is a lower percentage that uses social networks as a way of knowing what happens in *Showmatch*. These data match the amount of views that the program or the

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[8] In total, 50,000 tweets were registered as votes, which represent half of a rating point (García Fanlo, 2017).

clips of the program have in the YouTube channel, which is relatively low compared to the audience levels and the popularity of the contest.

However, we may ask ourselves: why do people watch *Showmatch?* Which aspects of the show are most popular and which are least loved? These questions allow us to know the tastes and consumption choices and, consequently, to delve into the complex nature of the motives behind those choices.

Based on the classification and systematization of responses we observe that the aspects of the program that are most liked are: the dance (57%), the entertainment (17%), the humor (14%), the jury (14%), the dresses (13%), the production (11%), the music (10%), nothing (10%), Tinelli (9%). Interestingly, 10% of the respondents gave a negative answer and state that they do not like anything about the show. All other responses refer to different structural aspects of the program which are mainly related to the dancing section as a central point, including dresses, music, production and the jury. Another aspect is associated to entertainment, and consequently, references are made to humor and the figure of the conductor. It is remarkable that aspects related to the "dream" that contestants have and/or solidarity, which is one of the axes of the program, are not mentioned by the respondents to the survey.

With regard to the aspects of the show that are not liked by the audience, the respondents mention: fights (56%), sexism (31%), the jury (17%), the gossip (17%) and the interviews before the dance (9%). All these aspects are also structural parts of the program. Nevertheless, they refer to a moral and/or ideological position with regard to the representation and objectification of women, the level of violence and aggression that is portrayed. In the previous section we mentioned the "advertising pollution" in the program. However, this topic does not appear in the responses to the survey.

Still, what is the relationship between the structural elements of the program and the choice of consumption? Why do people watch *Showmatch*? We are aware that, in order to carry out a better and more comprehensive analysis, the responses to those questions must be part of a larger framework that studies consumption practices, together with the economic, political and social structures in which it takes part. That being said, we believe that this specific case study can contribute to enriching the approaches to the hegemonic position occupied by this program.

After a systematization of the responses, we observe that there are three types of approaches to the consumption of *Showmatch*. For the purposes of this analysis, we will label them: "Guilty consumption", "Distracted consumption" and "Pleasant consumption". Grillo, Papalini & Benítez Largui (2016) explain that, broadly speaking, in the field of research on cultural consumption, conceptual limits are not generally very clear, and this is due to the fact that they deal with diverse practices or groups of practices with a combination of disciplines and approaches. Although there are extensive references on this subject (Wortman, 2015; García Canclini, 1995; Saintout & Ferrante, 2006; Jacks, 2011; Duek, 2014; Orozco Gómez, 2002; Sunkel, 2002; Grimson & Varela, 1999; Focas 2017; Moguillansky & Aliano, 2017; among many others) and the purpose of this study is not to discuss this aspect in detail, we believe that it is important to clarify some concepts.

Different authors refer to the polysemy of meanings with regard to consumption and reception, which means that these two terms are very often used interchangeably (Jacks, 2011; Grillo, Papalini & Benítez Largui, 2016). In this regard, there is an interesting proposal by Checa Montúfar (2011), who reflects about the "insufficient" nature of the term "reception", and wonders whether we should not think in terms of "consumption"[9]. In this regard, it is important to point out that, although they are all

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[9] The proposal is exemplified with the case of Muria fishermen in Sri Lanka, cited by Morley: "In this group, the richer villagers village (…) —says Morley— often buy television sets, which are displayed as the centerpieces of their personal collections of 'wealth signifiers', despite the fact that the lack of electricity supply in the area makes their sets inoperable, in any narrowly

part of the same semantic field, there are nuances to differentiate between "consumption", "reception" "appropriation" and "use". The work by Grillo, Papalini & Benítez Largui (2016) is relevant to understand consumption, reception and appropriation as different stages of the same process that encompasses them. With regard to "consumption", they describe it as "the selection and disposition to contact, dialogue or interaction, oriented by the broader social framework of hierarchies and identifications; in sum, consumption appears within the framework of the conditions imposed by supply and the established social relationships of power. Either as an isolated case or as the outer layer that covers other, more fundamental aspects, consumption is a practice that is not sufficient, but necessary for reception and appropriation" (p. 239). Reception is described "as an act of listening or reading, or as the moment of 'watching' in which appropriation occurs" (p. 239). Finally, appropriation is described as "what is interpreted, heard or seen, which generates an extra element that gives meaning to reception. Appropriation makes it possible to recover different elements, such as applications or uses" (p. 239). These conceptual descriptions make it possible to understand these terms as "spheres that include one another" (p. 239). All these factors led us to use the term "consumption", because this concept includes all the others. It is interesting to note how in some answers from the respondents there are nuances that can be seen in the different semantic fields. Due to the choice of methodology and the questions that motivate this study, we will not focus here on that aspect specifically, although we will refer to it in the cases in which it may be relevant.

4.1 GUILTY CONSUMPTION

With the term "guilty consumption" we refer to the responses that share a factor in common: they attempt to justify the reasons why they watch *Showmatch*. In this category there are two main types of responses: 1) somebody else chose the program, 2) there are no other options on TV.

With regard to the first type: "somebody else chose the program", references are found to a type of consumption associated to the "household daily routine"[10]. The different members of the family must negotiate, give in, choose and adapt themselves to the television show that is tuned in. More than 20 years after the research on audiences carried out by David Morley (1992), it is remarkable that, at least in the case of our analysis, there is still a predominance of a collective consumption marked by the question of power (but not of gender). In a time of multiple screens and segmented consumption, *Showmatch* "is watched as a family". One relevant element is the hour at which the show is aired (10:30 p.m., approximately), which is the time for dinner in many households, which brings families together. We show here some responses that illustrate these findings:

> "Because my family watches it during dinner"
> "Because my family watches it at dinner time, and a program like this often leads to less arguments than one about real life".
> "Because sometimes my family watches it. If they don't, I don't watch it".
> "Because my family watches it".
> "Because my mother watches it and she controls the TV".
> "Because my daughter likes it".
> "Because my wife likes it".
> "Because my family watches it from time to time".

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functional sense. None the less, the objects 'signify' in powerful ways, just as would my own acquisition of a new flat-screen Japanese television, quite independently of whether or not I ever switched it on" (2011, p. 311).
[10] For more information on this subject, see Roger Silverstone and his book *Televisión y vida cotidiana* (1994).

Silverstone (2007) mentions that the space of everyday life is where individuals can be free, but it is also the place where their possibilities are challenged and exploited. For this reason, he focuses on studying the relationship of the media with the field of everyday life. As we can see in the case of our study, *Showmatch* is watched for reasons that are intrinsic to the household sphere, and an ethnographic analysis could cast further light on the power relationships that are established within the household.

While the first axis refers to questions linked to the household daily routine, the second axis, "there are no other options" mentions questions related to television in general terms. The consumption of *Showmatch* is motivated by an impulse of opposition to the rest of the programs, either as a rejection of other programs of reference (Orza, 2002), such as newscasts, or as an opposition to programming at large. It seems that watching *Showmatch* is seen as a "last choice". Some of the answers in this regard are shown here:

> "Because there is nothing else to watch".
> "Because I don't find any other option on the TV".
> "Because there is nothing interesting on the TV and it is my last choice".
> "Because there is nothing on TV, but I rarely do it".
> "Because there is usually nothing good on the other channels".
> "Because there is nothing more entertaining to see at that time".
> "Because the reality shown in the news is dire".
> "Because there is nothing else".
> "When there is nothing more interesting to see I leave it on, but I'd rather sleep than watch it".

It is interesting to see how in this category there is a predominance of negative responses. There is a certain tension between justification and shame with regard to the consumption of *Showmatch*, and in this sense, the decisive element behind the choice that is mentioned is some member of the family who puts it on, or as an opposition to the rest of the programs. That is, the reasons why the contest is watched are not related to the structural elements of the program. This reveals some sort of "forced consumption" that cannot go further in terms of use and appropriation.

4.2 DISTRACTED CONSUMPTION

In this category we refer to a type of consumption in which distracted watching is predominant. In the words of Raymond Williams (1974), television and radio impose a distracted way of watching based on the concept of flow: "it is a widely if often ruefully admitted experience that many of us find television very difficult to switch off; that again and again, even when we have switched on for a particular 'program', we find ourselves watching the one after it and the one after that" (p. 124). Within this category there is a predominance of questions associated to a distracted attitude when watching the show. We can find three types of answers that are often repeated: 1) I tuned into the program by chance, 2) I watch it because it keeps me company, 3) the program is there as background noise.

The last two types refer to a type of consumption linked to the "household daily routine". The responses that claim that the program is there "as background noise" refers, specifically, to the place that the television occupies in everyday life, as a permanent element within the household, a device

which is on and is watched while other activities are being carried out. We can see here some examples:

> "I watch it from time to time, normally as background noise while I do something else".
> "I play it in the back while I wash the dishes, because I don't need to pay attention to it".
> "The TV is on and it is there in the back while I have dinner or I do something else".

Watching the show "because it keeps me company" also refers to questions linked to the household daily routine, in terms of company. These are some examples:

> "Just to watch something at bedtime".
> "Because I come home from work at that time".
> "I watch the program because at dinner time all the programs have already started, and with *Showmatch* you don't need continuity to watch it and understand what's going on".
> "I watch a show for a while before going to bed".

With regard to the respondents that watch the show "by chance", we refer here to questions associated to the inner logic of television, and in these answers we observe channel surfing as the reason why the audience ends up watching the program. We can see here some examples:

> "I get to the show by surfing; I don't choose it straight away".
> "I find it while surfing and I stay there. I only watch it very rarely, but Tinelli makes me laugh".
> "I leave the same channel after I watch my shows".
> "I generally watch fiction, and then there is the program. I watch it until I fall asleep".
> "I am channel surfing and I get there".
> "I don't know. If I turn on the TV and I don't want to see anything in particular and I find this while channel surfing, I watch it".

The three axes share the same nuance of chance and/or indifference with regard to the consumption of *Showmatch*, as well as a certain characterization of the program as a show that is easy to watch. There is also a prevalence of aspects linked to the "household daily routine" and the "logic of television" as a motive for the consumption of the program. We can observe both in this category and in the previous one that the viewers want to somehow distance themselves from the show, they claim that they watch it for reasons that are not related to it, and this may account for the reluctance to interact with it through social networks, as well as for the prevalence of live watching.

4.3 PLEASANT CONSUMPTION

With "pleasant consumption" we refer to the responses that express a certain pleasure and/or positive choice when explaining why they watch *Showmatch*. We can find here two types of answers that are often repeated: 1) entertainment, 2) the program itself. The first one refers to a choice as part

of the available free time of the viewer, which implies distraction and amusement, as can be seen in these responses:

"It is entertaining; it amuses me and keeps me up to date with the gossip of show business".
"It is fun to watch and allows me to relax from my daily life".
"It is fun and lets me unwind".
"I love to see them dance".
"It is entertaining, I like watching the different dances".

On the other hand, we can see some questions that are intrinsic to the show, such as the dance, the conductor, or the dance couples.

"Because I like dancing, in general".
"I like the way many of the couples dance".
"I like the way Marcelo Tinelli conducts the show".
"I follow the program since it began and I got hooked on the dances, the fighting and the interviews".
"Because I like Pedro Alfonso and Laura Chávez, and obviously because of Marcelo".

With these findings, among the responses to the question of why they watch *Showmatch* we can find three types of positions regarding its consumption that explain and justify it. In addition, the consumption is determined by the logic of the household daily routine —they watch it because somebody else in the family does, or to have some company while they do a different activity— and by the logic of television itself —because they were channel surfing, or because nothing better was on—. Only the responses that reveal a frank acceptance and positive choice for consumption refer to the program itself as an element for the choice or the reason behind it.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Showmatch and its contest *Bailando por un sueño* have remained on the screen almost unaltered for over a decade. It is a flagship of broadcast television. It structures and provides content to the rest of the programs; it generates *ad hoc* shows and becomes a topic of discussion in other media. We started from the hypothesis that the structural and permanent elements of the show do not necessarily determine the choice of the audience.

In the responses we observed three different approaches to the consumption of *Showmatch*, which were classified as "guilty consumption", "distracted consumption" and "pleasant consumption". We also observed that this consumption was mostly due to questions related to the household daily routine and to aspects that are intrinsic to the inner logic of television. We understand, therefore, that television in general, and its programs in particular, is part of a wider framework, and that their function and consumption must be interpreted as part of social and material life, that is, as part of the economic, political and social structures in which this consumption takes part.

In the case of *Bailando por un sueño* it is interesting to notice how guilty and distracted consumption are predominant in one of the most watched programs and with the highest impact of television in Argentina. In an era of multiple screens, with services of streaming on demand, fleeting consumption interests and a customization of reception, the findings of this analysis seem to indicate that the oppo-

site is happening with *Showmatch*, which shows a more traditional consumption. It is watched on the television screen, at home, often after a negotiation with another member of the family and as a way of being together; it is watched because somebody left the television on; it is left there as background noise as house activities are being done; it is found through channel surfing, etc. That is, the structural and permanent elements of the show are not the main reason that motivates viewers to watch the program.

Therefore, the analysis presented here shows us an interesting landscape which allows us to keep looking into consumption and to broaden our scope to other research questions. What type of interaction is produced in social networks around this show? How does a traditional broadcast television program like *Showmatch* coexist with the customization of reception? Why did the use of Twitter to vote not turn out as expected? These questions are some relevant axes for future research to identify the new ways in which viewers live and interact with social networks and multiple screens.

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