

Change and continuity in Mexican Journalism

The case of Morelia

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

Since the eighties, the political face of Mexico has been changing gradually. There has been a shift from the hegemony of the official Institutional Revolutionary Party to a more egalitarian distribution of power, in which the other two main parties (National Action Party and Democratic Revolution Party) have gained salience at national, state and local levels (Camp 1999, Eisenstadt 2003, Hiskey 2003, Hiskey and Bowler 2005, Elizondo 2006 and Escalante 2006). Nonetheless, it is still not clear the impact of this reconfiguration on news organizations: in their studies on Mexican journalism, Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2003 and 2006) perceived a general trend towards modernization. By taking certain news outlets located in the most important cities (mainly in Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey), they considered that, indeed, Mexican media are undergoing progressive change. However, looking at other places – like Morelia - makes evident that the situation in the rest of the country is different.

Therefore, this research will argue that, despite the arrival of diverse political parties to the national, state and local administrations, the relationship between reporters and high rank political authorities remains the same. That is, the exchange of favours – economic most of the times – still determines the way news organizations and politicians interact. In short, rather than change, continuity is the rule of the journalistic practice, at least in the provinces of Mexico. For that reason, this study proposes an approach to the problem at two levels: macro and micro. The former is related to the media environment (the way news outlets are organised and operate) and the latter regards the interaction between reporters and their sources. The central argument is that the specific conditions of the media context shape the journalist-politician relationship. In sum, the discussion on change versus continuity of the Mexican journalism requires analysing the interaction between the macro and micro levels.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Table of Contents	v
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 Mexican media and journalism.....	15
1.1 Media and democratization in Mexico	15
1.1.1 The Excelsior effect.....	20
1.1.2 Summary of the section.....	21
1.2 Mexican media's main features	22
1.2.1 Historic partisanship	23
1.2.2 Means of coercion towards the press.....	30
1.2.3 Official advertising as a means of coercion	35
1.2.4 Ownership and coercion.....	42
1.2.5 Development of the Mexican media market	45
1.2.6 The journalist-politician relationship	47
1.2.7 Summary of the section.....	50
1.3 Mexican media in a comparative perspective.....	51
1.3.1 Summary of the section.....	55
1.4 Summary	55
Chapter 2 Media partisanship	56
2.1 Partisanship	56
2.1.1 Summary of the section.....	62
2.2 The myth of objectivity.....	63
2.2.1 Objectivity versus bias.....	68
2.2.2 Objectivity and Americanization	70
2.2.3 Summary of the section.....	72
2.3 Summary	72
Chapter 3 Media and political communication systems	74
3.1 Media system	75
3.1.1 The structure of media markets.....	75
3.1.2 Political parallelism.....	76
3.1.3 Professionalization	78

3.1.4 Role of the State	80
3.1.5 Summary of the section.....	81
3.2 Political communication.....	81
3.2.1 Summary of the section.....	85
3.3 Political communication as a system.....	86
3.3.1 The adversary model.....	89
3.3.2 The exchange model.....	90
3.3.3 Summary of the section.....	90
3.4 Political Communication Culture	91
3.4.1 The dimensions of Political Communication Culture	91
3.4.2 The types of Political Communication Culture.....	92
3.4.3 Summary of the section.....	94
3.5 Summary.....	95
Chapter 4 The research design: Morelia as a case study.....	96
4.1 The research problem	96
4.1.1 Towards an integration.....	100
4.1.2 Links to sociology of journalism.....	103
4.2 Methodological scheme.....	106
4.2.1 Ethical considerations	117
4.3 Morelia as a case study.....	120
4.3.1 Profile of the city.....	124
4.3.2 Mexican democratic transition and its impact on Morelia	125
4.4 Summary.....	128
Chapter 5 Morelian media system	130
5.1 Media market	130
5.1.1 National media market	130
5.1.2 Morelian media market.....	133
5.1.3 Summary of the section.....	137
5.2 Political parallelism.....	138
5.2.1 Sharing ideologies between journalist and politician	138
5.2.1.1 Impact of the shared ideologies on the content of the news.....	143
5.2.2 Newspapers' political alignments	147
5.2.2.1 Partisanship free information.....	148
5.2.2.2 Ideologically-driven media.....	151

5.2.3 Summary of the section.....	154
5.3 Professionalization	155
5.3.1 Investigative journalism	155
5.3.1.1 Frequency of use	158
5.3.1.2 Content analysis.....	159
5.3.1.3 Other actors' opinions	164
5.3.2 Academic background.....	165
5.3.3 Levels of professionalization	171
5.3.4 Summary of the section.....	173
5.4 Role of the State	173
5.4.1 Means of coercion towards the local press	174
5.4.2 Official advertising in Morelian newspapers	179
5.4.2.1 Commercial advertising in the local press	186
5.4.2.2 Opinions of the political communication actors	190
5.4.2.3 Correlating official advertising and coverage.....	195
5.4.3 Summary of the section.....	198
5.5 Summary: Morelian media system	199
Chapter 6 Journalist-politician relationship	200
6.1 Distance between actors	200
6.1.1 Frequency and means of interaction	201
6.1.2 Actors' perceptions of the interaction with one another	202
6.1.2.1 Journalists' opinions of their relationship with politicians	202
6.1.2.2 Personality, the key	205
6.1.2.3 The official link	206
6.1.2.4 Information management	208
6.1.2.5 Underground public relations	209
6.1.2.6 Being on the other side	213
6.1.2.7 Journalists' evaluation of the Social Communications Areas	214
6.1.3 Summary of the section.....	216
6.2 Nature of the relationship	217
6.2.1 Political news coverage	217
6.2.1.1 State government.....	218
6.2.1.2 Local government.....	220
6.2.1.3 State Congress	222

6.2.1.4 Political parties	224
6.2.2 Political news and bias	232
6.2.3 Summary of the section.....	236
6.3 Logic of the relationship	237
6.3.1 Government controls the agenda	239
6.3.2 Media control the agenda.....	240
6.3.3 A combined agenda	243
6.3.4 No agenda, just reaction	244
6.3.5 Content analysis.....	245
6.3.6 Summary of the section.....	247
6.4 Summary: The journalist-politician relationship at the local level.....	247
Chapter 7 Conclusions: Change and continuity.....	250
7.1 Context matters: Media system and journalist-politician relationship.....	251
7.2 Instrumentalization as the result of the political communication process.....	259
7.3 Economically-driven partisanship.....	262
7.4 Contributions	268
Bibliography	271
Appendix A Content analysis coding	290
Official advertising	290
Political news	291
Appendix B Questionnaires for the interviews.....	292
Journalists.....	292
Politicians and communications officers.....	293
Appendix C Examples of official advertising.....	294
Types of official advertising	294
Regular advertisement	294
Paid news story	295
Content of the official advertisements	296
Institutional image	296
Specific activity.....	297
Statement.....	298
Memorial notice.....	299

Appendix D Translation of the invitation email to participate as an interviewee.....	300
Appendix E Consent form for interviewees	301

Introduction

Historically, studies of the press in Mexico have emphasised the dependence of the newspapers on the government. Whether through subsidised newsprint, tax exemptions, bribes and more recently official advertising contracts, printed media have been subject to the State's will (Bohmann 1986, Rodríguez 1993, Torres 1997, Trejo 1992 and 1997). During the seventy years in which the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI) ruled the country (1929-2000), news outlets were deferential towards the head of the administration in turn at every level (federal, state and local). This situation fostered a patron-client relationship between media organizations and party/government elites in which allegiance to the official discourse was rewarded with different favours (Rodríguez 1993, Rodríguez 2007, Santillán 2008).

However, more recent studies conducted by Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2003 and 2006) have proclaimed the emergence of a new civic journalism, characterised by a more balanced political coverage and focused on citizens' needs rather than politicians' interests. Based upon few news outlets located mainly in Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey (the three largest cities of the country), they claimed that the Mexican press as a whole was moving towards a more modern and professional journalistic practice. The modernization of the media, they argued, coincided with the democratic transformation of the political system in Mexico that slowly started in the 1970's and accelerated in the last decade of the twentieth century.

For that reason, the aim of this thesis is to analyse the implications of the arrival of different political parties to the national, state and local administrations for the relationship between journalists and high rank political authorities. That is, the focus is on the extent that the exchange of favours – economic most of the times – determines the way news organizations and politicians interact. In short, the idea is to evaluate the notion of change versus continuity of the Mexican media.

In so doing, this study proposes an approach to the problem at two levels: macro and micro. The former is related to the media environment (the way news outlets are organised and operate) and the latter regards the interaction between reporters and their sources. The central argument is that

the specific conditions of the media context shape the journalist-politician relationship. This means that understanding the lack of change of the news organizations in Mexico requires analysing the interaction between the macro and micro levels. In other words, the continuation of the journalistic practices is the result of the persistence of the old practices of coercion exerted by the government towards the press (and vice versa), which are fostered by the structure of the media context. That is, this kind of practices is promoted by the specific conditions of the environment in which Mexican news outlets operate. As the findings will show, the overall state of journalism in Mexico is a product of the political economy of the media and the practices of journalists and politicians. Therefore,

any attempt to systematically link media system characteristics and news content would be a significant improvement on the all-too-frequent framing study with methodological sophistication to spare but which only obliquely links discursive production to structural characteristics of media systems (Benson 2004:284).

As a result of the macro-micro interdependence, the empirical evidence will show that the Mexican media environment promotes a journalist-politician relationship characterised by a mutual instrumentalization. That is, both actors use each other for their particular interests: revenue for the former and publicity for the latter. Notwithstanding, rather than going to individual news workers, now the economic gains of the interaction go to the publishers. Contrary to what used to happen, especially from the sixties to the eighties, when public servants gave bribes to particular reporters - or were asked for by them - (Bohmann 1986, Rodríguez 1993, Torres 1997), party/government elites currently negotiate a friendly coverage through the official advertising directly with the media owners or directors-general (Villanueva 1996, De León 2009). Of course certain specific reporters are still corrupted by bribes, but the impact on the overall content of the political coverage is not as evident as it is when the agreement is between the authorities of the news outlet and the government or a political party. This is because the price of an official advertising contract allows the advertiser a wider influence on the content of the whole edition, not just on a particular story written by an individual political correspondent. Once again, despite the tension between the interests of the owners and the reporters, the system does not change. This is because the latter was substituted by the former, but the rules of the interaction with the political elites remain untouched.

As previously mentioned, Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2003 and 2006) focused their research mainly on the largest cities of Mexico. Nevertheless, this is also a trend found in the national literature on journalism studies, which shows a clear tendency towards reducing the Mexican reality to Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey, ignoring whatever happens in the rest of the country. Notwithstanding, this is not an exclusive situation of Mexico. On the contrary, at the international level there is also a general neglect of studies with a local approach, as it will be commented later on. For that reason, this thesis is built upon a case study based on Morelia – the capital city of the state of Michoacán – which is representative of the Mexican medium-sized cities. Looking at the Morelian case will provide interesting insights of how the macro and micro levels interact in an economically weak but politically vibrant environment which is, to a certain extent, a reflection of the national situation.

Finally, besides stressing the importance of the local studies, this research also contributes to the Mexican literature on communication studies by offering empirical evidence of its central argument. That is, this thesis reinforces the necessity of systematic, precise and concrete empirical research, rather than merely giving personal opinions or sharing professional anecdotes, just as it is common on much of the literature revised for this study (e.g. Leñero 1978, Rodríguez 1993 and Avilés 1999). As it will also be discussed in the following pages, historically most of the national scholars have based their theoretical claims solely on extensive literature reviews, avoiding the design and conduction of methodologically sustained research.

Based upon these three ideas (lack of change of the Mexican press, neglect of the local studies and lack of empirical research about communication in Mexico), the content of this introduction is organised in the following way: an outline of the design of the study, an overview of the literature on Mexican journalism, a brief discussion of the importance of the approaches to the local communication processes and a description of the content of the thesis.

The design of the study

Although this information will be expanded later on,¹ this section outlines the design of the study. The aim of this thesis is to analyse the concept of

¹ See chapter four *The research design: Morelia as a case study*.

change versus continuity of the Mexican press by explaining it at two levels: macro and micro. That is, understanding the lack of significant change requires analysing the importance of the media environment (macro level) in determining the journalist-politician relationship (micro level). Therefore, two central research questions will lead this study: to what extent does the Mexican media system shape the interaction between reporters and their sources? And, as a result of that, what is its implication for the change or continuity of the journalistic practices? Thus, the hypotheses stress that, on the one hand, the Mexican media system (macro level) shapes the journalist-politician relationship (micro level) in terms of distance (how close they are), nature (how adversarial/collaborative is their interaction) and logic (the imposition of contents and formats). On the other, instead of change, the outcome of the interaction between the macro and micro levels fosters the continuation of the old journalistic practice in Mexico.

Therefore, the argument of change against continuity is supported by the empirical evidence of this research. Chapters five (*Morelian media system*) and six (*Journalist-politician relationship*) will show that, regarding the state government, there is an evident partisanship in the way Morelian newspapers cover the political information. Nevertheless, as the findings will also suggest, rather than ideological, this alignment is economic. This is because it is fostered by the official advertising contracts, and those commercial agreements - in most of the cases - represent media's most important revenues. Even more, the use of this instrument as a means of coercion towards the news outlets boosts the same patron-client relationship which was the hallmark of the PRI regime.

Since the research problem implies two levels, macro and micro, the framework for explaining it requires two approaches as well. The macro level involves the concept of *Media System* (Hallin and Mancini 2004). This notion represents a set of parameters to evaluate a media environment, which includes the following issues: the structure of media markets (development of the media markets, especially of the mass circulation press), the level of political parallelism (partisan stance), journalistic professionalization (autonomy, newsworthiness values, professional norms and public service orientation) and the role of the state (official involvement and intervention in the mass communication production process).

The micro level includes, on the one hand, the ideas proposed by Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) regarding the political communication process (considered by them as a triangular system where media, politicians and

citizens interact) and the adversarial (watchdog) and/or exchange (collaborative) nature of the relationship between journalists and politicians. On the other, this approach is complemented by the work done by Pfetsch (2004) in which she classified those interactions according to the distance (professional and ideological) between the actors and the logic that determines the messages they produce (imposition of content and format).

It is important to mention that this research is based on a case study: Morelia, the capital city of Michoacán, a Middle West state of Mexico. Three reasons supported the decision of focusing the research on this place. Firstly, due to the lack of local studies commented earlier, there is a common mistake in considering as Mexican reality whatever happens only in Mexico City, Monterrey or Guadalajara. In other words, both national and foreign researchers have tended to assume that those cities – the largest and most developed in the country - represent the nation as whole, due to their concentration of population² and political, economic and cultural activities. However, since Mexico is not exactly a small country, there are different contexts, with different actors who interact in different ways. Although those micro processes do not seem to be important for scholars, it does not mean that they do not exist either. They are worth being studied because they represent another reality that could also be used in building more specific trends, rather than the over-generalizations found in the literature. Or as Castañeda (1997:134) puts it: 'in the Mexican media, as in other endeavours, the devil is in the details'.

Secondly, Morelia represents an interesting case study because of its contemporary political history. It is considered the cradle of the left-oriented Democratic Revolution Party (Partido de la Revolución Democrática, PRD), because one of its founders – Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano – governed this state and he received an important support when he participated in the presidential campaigns in 1988, when Carlos Salinas de Gortari won the most questioned elections in Mexico. Morelia is one of the few places in Mexico that has been governed by the three main political parties (PRI, PRD and National Action Party [Partido Acción Nacional], PAN) and its citizens have experienced three apparently different types of public administration. There is also a lot of political effervescence in this city due to social, economic and crime problems. Finally, the capital city of Michoacán is the home town of the current Mexican president Felipe Calderón Hinojosa,

² Excluding their metropolitan areas, the population in those cities is: Mexico City (8,851,080), Guadalajara (1,495,189) and Monterrey (1,135,550) (INEGI 2010).

whose performance is constantly questioned and analysed by the local political elites.

This dynamic political environment has had an impact on journalism too, because local newsrooms are now used to deal with constant junctures, scandals and all types of political actors. Thus, the implications of this situation are the creation of diverse news organizations with different political alignments. Nonetheless, as this thesis will argue, their editorial lines are malleable when economic interests appear. Due to this circumstance, local media outside Mexico City are easy preys of the local authorities who punish or reward them at their will.

Thirdly, although Morelia is a medium-sized city with a population above seven hundred thousand inhabitants (INEGI 2010), it has a large number of media outlets (five newspapers, five television channels and thirteen radio stations). At least ideally, this characteristic may facilitate the political communication process whilst, at the same time, it shows how different news organizations struggle for surviving in an economically adverse environment. This situation is consistent with the strong evidence around the world that quantity of news outlets does not necessarily correspond to plurality of perspectives: 'the so-called diversity of this advertising-funded media system may begin to be seen for what it is: a relatively narrow clustering around a few positions within elite fields of cultural, political and economic power' (Benson 2006:194).

Analysing the lack of significant change of the Mexican press – through the Morelian case - involves two levels and, hence, a twofold methodology. For that reason, the fieldwork was built upon two techniques: content analysis and in-depth interviews. The former was conducted during a six month period (January-June 2010) and it was focused on the political sections of the five local newspapers. On the one hand, the aim was to evaluate the political news coverage in terms of bias, agenda management, sources of information and actors involved. On the other, the official advertising was analysed in terms of the level of investment, advertisers, type and content of the messages. The rationale behind this selection was, firstly, describing how the political coverage is like and, secondly, what the relationship between the political news and official advertising is.

The interviews were conducted among reporters, communications officers and politicians, whose answers were related to their interaction with and their opinions about one another in the local political communication process. Beyond merely collecting their answers, the data from the

interviewees allowed to make comparisons between the opinions of the actors involved in the political information process – either as providers or diffusers – and the messages that were actually published. That is, the aim was to correlate the interviewees' perceptions of the news production and the outcome of that process.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that this thesis has three contributions: the main one is related to the Mexican communication literature which, instead of proper research, traditionally it has been filled mainly with theoretical essays. Those arguments are usually built upon extensive literature reviews, but with a serious lack of empirical evidence. In that sense, this study provides real data for topics widely commented by national scholars, but poorly studied on the field. The second contribution represents the strengthening of the neglected local studies trend, because this research emphasises the importance of individual case studies for explaining the political communication process. And thirdly, this thesis proposes an integrated framework for explaining the role of the media environment in shaping the interaction between reporters and their source, by considering two levels: media system (macro level) and the journalist-politician relationship (micro level).

Mexican journalism as a research object

Even though this information will be presented in more detail in the first chapter (*Mexican media and journalism*), this section offers an overview of the literature related to the news outlets in Mexico and how they have been studied. In general terms, the research panorama in Mexico, as well as in most of Latin America, is not very promising in any field. Communications studies are not the exception then. Rather than proper empirical research, there is an excess of theoretically-oriented debates which are mere normative arguments built upon literature surveys and not upon data collected directly from the field (Lozano 1996 and González 2009).

A lot of communication scholars in our region have tended to be more philosophers, poets or journalists rather than social scientists, being incapable of designing, applying and analysing a concrete empirical research, whether qualitative or quantitative, with methodological and technical precision (Lozano 1996:29-30).

That is the case of the political communication and journalism in Mexico, a phenomenon that has been studied in a more or less regular basis by local scholars and journalists since the late 1970's. Those studies have oscillated

between normative views (Aceves 2000, Sánchez 2004, Lozano 2006, Reyes 2007), academic criticisms about the role of the media in politics (Torres 1997, Trejo 1992 and 1997, Sandoval 2002, Esteinou and Alva 2009), electoral campaign research (Peschard 2000 and Pareja 2008) and journalistic anecdotes and history (Leñero 1978, Rodríguez 1993, Sánchez 1998, Avilés 1999, Jarquez 2001, Rodríguez 2007). Nevertheless, as some exceptions of the rule are the empirical research conducted by Adler-Lomnitz *et al* (2004) who did an exhaustive analysis of the 1988 presidential campaign, Castro (2006) studied the left-orientated press and its framing, Santillán (2008) focused on the participation of the printed media in the democratization process, De León (2009) presented an interesting case study about the transformation of the public communications in the city of Aguascalientes, and Márquez (2010) studied the role of the journalists during the 2006 federal elections.

At the international level, there are several researchers who have also turned their eyes to Mexican media and whose work has been widely referred by both local and foreign studies. The first one is Daniel Hallin, who has written about the TV coverage of the federal electoral campaigns in 1994 (1995), the TV tabloid journalism during the so-called transition to democracy (2000a), and the role of the media in that same political period (2000b). In recent years, Chappell Lawson (2002) and Sallie Hughes (2003 and 2006), both individually and together (Hughes and Lawson 2004), have been tracking down the transition from an 'authoritarian' journalism to a more 'civic' media environment, in which they perceive a stronger engagement between newsrooms and social claims. In addition, they have also paid attention to the presidential campaigns in 2000 (Lawson and McCann 2005) and 2006 (Hughes and Guerrero 2009). In their studies, they analysed how the electorate perceived the candidates through the media messages and the way they voted.

It is worth mentioning that, although their work will be widely cited in this thesis,³ due to its undeniable relevance as information sources, some of their claims will be challenged as well, especially the ones related to the process of change of Mexican journalism from deference towards the authoritarian State to independence. Particularly Hughes and Lawson agree that the press as a whole is moving towards a civic-oriented practice, which boosts detachment from the official version, more balanced electoral

³ See chapter one, sections 1.1 *Media and democratization in Mexico* and 1.2 *Mexican media's main features*.

coverage and focus on citizens' needs. However, despite their awareness of the traits of the historically authoritarian media environment in Mexico,⁴ they claim that the process of modernization is homogeneously overcoming the submission of the press. Nonetheless, as this case study will argue, reality differs from their assumptions and Morelia is just an example. The reason is because their findings are based upon limited cases located in the largest cities, ignoring the rest of the country:

Yet these remain exceptions to the still-prevailing rule of coercion and corruption by officials and the willing collaboration of many editors, publishers and broadcasters... An increasingly urban and angry electorate is demanding real reporting and spurning news services that peddle state propaganda. But the traditional press culture of Mexico and the government apparatus that sustains it are remarkably resilient and will not be reformed overnight (Orme 1997:3).

Several years before these three American scholars, the German academic Karin Bohmann (1986) presented an exhaustive study of the Mexican media and political systems. Her work was based mainly on literature review, official documents and, to a lesser degree, empirical research. Even though the country and its institutions have changed a lot since then, her book offered a complete context that still helps to understanding the public communication in Mexico and its transformation.

In general terms, national and foreign scholars agree that Mexican journalism has been historically constrained by the government. This control, however, was not open and explicit such as in communist regimes. On the contrary, most of the times it was more subtle: physical harassment or imprisonment were not frequent, and neither cancellation of concessions nor blockades to media's facilities. The reason is that the state had - and still has to an important degree - some other means to "persuade" news outlets, such as the official advertising, the control over the newsprint, free service from the government-owned news agency *Notimex*, tax exemptions and, for private broadcast systems, access to concessions. 'In other words, Mexico's system of media control was skewed toward less vicious forms of censorship... While relatively mild – most of the time - these forms of media control in Mexico proved remarkably effective' (Lawson 2004:26).

This situation led news organization's owners and personnel to adopt a self-censorship stance towards the official information, who practically

⁴ See chapter one, section 1.2 *Mexican media's main features*.

reproduced the state discourse. Nevertheless, researchers and journalists also agree that, as a result of several important political, economic and social changes, a process of political transformation started during the 1970's and 1980's that facilitated the rise of a relatively more modern and independent press. The perception of the degree of independence and modernization, however, is an evident disagreement between national and foreign scholars. Whilst the latter (Lawson 2002, Hughes 2003 and 2006) seem very optimistic about it, some of the formers (Rodríguez 1993, Torres 1997, Trejo 1992 and 1997, Santillán 2008) consider that most of the traits which were the hallmark of the journalist-politician relationship during the PRI regime are still in effect, and this thesis raises this issue as well.

For instance, in her analysis of certain newsrooms, Hughes noticed that 'Mexico's civic journalism communicated information between citizens and governors, and monitored government like a watchdog, thus facilitating two political dynamics of central importance to democracy: representation of citizens and government accountability to the public' (Hughes 2006:5). On the contrary, Santillán (2008:208) argued that the relationship between the press and the government still remains at an authoritative stage: 'today as in the past, a system of subordinations and complicities permeates the journalistic practice with the political and economic power centres'. This opposite view of the same phenomenon exemplifies the divergence in perceptions between Mexican and foreign scholars that will be frequently stressed in this thesis. Beyond parochialism and chauvinism, national researchers tend to have a better understanding of the country's reality, because they experience it every day. Hence, they are supposed to know the insights that hide from the foreigners' eye. It does not mean that latter's work is useless, not at all, but they clearly lack of this experience that their inherent outsider stance does not provide them.

Yet the perception emerged – and was filtered through the foreign press – that somehow 1994⁵ was the year the Mexican press finally managed to break free of its dependency on the government and that somehow it was becoming more critical and independent than at any time during the century. This simply was not the case, however (Riva Palacio 1997:27).

⁵ The year 1994 was important for the contemporary Mexican history because that was when the NAFTA officially started, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) arose in the Southern state of Chiapas, it was Ernesto Zedillo's inauguration (the last president of the PRI era) and – at the end of that year - the economy of the country faced one of its worst crises.

Although useful and influential, none of those studies - local or foreign - pays any attention to the process of political news production. The starting point of their analyses is the message as it is: the information that is printed or broadcast every day. Nonetheless, before the transmission of the stories, there is a set of factors that determine the specific shape of the news. That is precisely where this research will focus on, because its aim is to explain the reasons involved in the construction of the messages, based on the media environment and the relationship between journalist and politicians. Even more, despite many of those studies mentioned aspects such as the impact of the official advertising or the way political actors interact, there is hardly any empirical evidence that correlates those variables as a cause of the lack of change of the Mexican media and its implications for the news.

The lack of local communication studies

Studies on Mexican media are focused mostly on the largest cities of the country, which tend to be considered as representatives of the nation as a whole. Thus, processes outside their boundaries tend to be neglected. However, Benavides (2000:100) underlines the importance of research focused on specific regions of Mexico, such as this thesis: 'regional studies that focus on the way in which new governors and mayors from opposition parties are dealing with the press may illuminate what could be the role of the Mexican press in a changing political environment'.

As was mentioned earlier, communication research has historically avoided working on local case studies. There is a plethora of literature focused on explaining processes as a whole, assuming that no matter when and where, things would eventually be homogeneous. Under that logic, there is little or no point worrying about what happens at a specific place since, rather than different, its features would tend to be similar to the rest. Even more, this stance leads to centralist ideas which suggest that the relevant events only take place in the most important and largest urban centres, considered as the only political-economic-cultural-social centres. In that sense, particularities found outside these spaces, which could also represent a trend, are basically neglected or even ignored.

'Academic studies of local political communication are scarce...This omission is part of a more general scholarly neglect of local news media. Local newspapers remain poorly researched, even less well understood and mistakenly assumed to be uncommitted to political reporting' (Franklin and Richardson 2002:35). This situation is derived from a prejudice shared by

the mainstream academy, which considers this type of approach as merely parochial. 'However, scholarly myopia has obscured the particular concerns and sensitivities of local newspapers, as if news agendas formed outside the metropolis add little understanding as to how popular knowledge is formed' (Cross and Lockyer 2006:275). Rouger (2008) explained that this assumption relies on an exaggerated symbolical value conceded to national news organizations, instead of their local or even regional counterparts. This situation has led to an evident misconception of the formers, which tend to be considered as 'lodestones'.

Nonetheless, not only local news organizations have been out of the scope of researchers, but their publics as well. Ekström *et al* (2006) argued that local media outlets have a very important role to play in their communities, because they not only diffuse information, but also critique the local authorities' performance. This kind of news might as well lead their audience members to a better understanding about the particular issues that directly affect them. Despite this idea, 'local publics are neglected entities within the broad scope of communication studies. Our knowledge of how people communicate politically in their local communities is limited. This is a fact not only in regard to underresearched peripheral societies, but also in developed publics of Western democracies' (Lang 2004:151). It is worth mentioning then that, rather than a reduced and closed system, a local public is an open environment where there is a continuous flux of information. Within this context local, regional and national news intersect and create a specific space for political communication.

But beyond the academic realm and all its abstractions is the professional field, where local media demonstrate their vital importance in the political communication process. Whether as marketing vehicles for publicity or as the first step in a journalistic career, these organizations set the ground for wider aims. For instance, Negrine (2005) suggested that, at least in the United Kingdom, several politicians have understood that when election time comes 'local media do matter', because local votes do matter too. The reason is that those news outlets can help candidates in building an adequate profile to appeal their targeted constituencies. But not only politicians and campaigners give local press the importance it deserves, but journalists do it as well. Several reporters who now work for a national newspaper or broadcast company started their careers in a local paper or radio station, which is 'where they learn their trade and, more importantly, where they earn their stripes' (Fletcher 1999:108).

Moreover, if 'all politics is local' (O'Neill quoted in Hiskey and Bowler 2005:58), rather than being a limitation, studying a single case offers an opportunity to maximise the level of detailed data collected from the field. This situation leads not only to a better understanding of the phenomenon, but also to have a more concrete picture of how the political communication process takes place in reality. Therefore, when tested in a specific context, the highly abstract assumptions offered by the large scale comparative studies rapidly start showing inconsistencies or gaps. It happens like that because, in order to reach universal generalizations that could describe the 'big structures' and 'large processes' (Tilly 1984), they simply lose the sight of the particular dynamics that take place in every individual context. Particular cases have their own set of actors and interactions, which very often do not suit in a homogeneous scope. 'It is precisely the historically grounded density of these relationships that tends to be excluded from simplified global accounts, in which theorists survey the universe while never straying far from the international airport' (Curran and Park 2000:12).

Despite the great amount of information they can offer and the wide scope of tendencies, global, multinational and even national analysis can be caught in the trap of 'overgeneralisations and conceptual narrowness' (Hallin and Mancini 2004:4). This also may lead to 'stereotyped simplifications and the fabrication of clichés, which often suit political purposes nicely' (Kleinsteuber 2004:83). On the contrary, 'studies of specific subcultures have the advantage over total analyses of being closer to social reality' (Pfetsch 2004:348). That is, a local approach provides deeper and more precise data about the case, than any large scale could ever do.

Structure of the thesis

This last section outlines the structure of the thesis. In order to present the discussion of the literature review, design of the study and the results, the content is organised in seven chapters. Whilst the first three of them are theoretically-oriented, because they represent the literature review and the frameworks used for building the approach of this study, the rest are related to the findings and their analysis.

In that sense, the first chapter offers an introduction to the Mexican media and journalism, and it emphasises the same issues that were evaluated during the fieldwork (historical partisanship, means of coercion, official advertising...). The second presents a general discussion about partisanship and objectivity. The third one summarises the theoretical frameworks in

which this research draws on: Hallin and Mancini's (2004) *Media systems*, and Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) and Pfetsch's (2004) concepts of public communication and *Political Communication Culture*. The fourth one describes the design of the study (analytical framework, methodology and the city where it took place). Chapters five and six present the results from the field work, regarding the local media system (macro level) and the journalist-politician relationship (micro level) respectively. Finally, the conclusions and contributions of the thesis are discussed on chapter seven.

Chapter 1 Mexican media and journalism

The first chapter of the thesis presents a context of the media and journalism in Mexico. However, the content focuses specifically on the issues that are of interest to this case study, which would be further explained and analysed. As a general panorama of this research, the following information will foster a better understanding of the particularities of the Morelian case. It is also important to stress that, due to the lack of local communication studies in Mexico commented before, there will only be few references to Michoacán and Morelia in this chapter.

Therefore, the content is organised in four sections: firstly, a discussion about the role of the media in the process of democratization in Mexico. Secondly, there will be a revision of some of the main features of the Mexican media and journalistic practices (partisanship, government coercion, especially through official advertising contracts, media market, and the journalist-politician relationship). Thirdly, the case of Mexico will be placed within an international context. Finally, a summary of the overall discussion and its links with the rest of the thesis will close this chapter.

1.1 Media and democratization in Mexico

There is an assumption in part of the literature on Mexican media which considers that news outlets in Mexico have become more modern, because of the process of democratization that started during the 1970's and 1980's (Lawson 1997 and 2002, Hughes 2003 and 2006). Nonetheless, as it will be argued in this thesis (especially in the final three chapters), this so-called modernization is not a general phenomenon in Mexico and Morelia is just an example, which suggests that those authors did not consider the existence of less developed media contexts within Mexican territory. But, before commenting on that issue, this section introduces the discussion about the concept of transformation of Mexican media organizations.

Alongside the process of political transformation in Mexico,⁶ media had its own reorganization process as well. Which one was first is still being debated by researchers and journalists though. Whether it was the former that fostered the latter or vice versa, the fact is that Mexican journalism has been changing. The direction and extent of these changes, however, is also a controversial matter, because scholars – national and foreign - and practitioners have quite different opinions.

Especially before the arrival in 2000 of the first president who came from a political party (National Action Party, PAN) different from the official Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), political communication had been historically monopolised by the State, which allowed only few chances of access to public information and freedom of expression. This situation was supported by a legal system that greatly favoured private publishers and broadcasters, who became docile but privileged lapdogs, instead of critical watchdogs (Reyes 2007). However, direct coercion towards the press became more and more difficult due to a wide political reform, in which opposition parties got more salience in debating policies. This incipient openness was also obliged by a series of electoral and social junctures that started at the end of the sixties and accelerated during the eighties (e.g. constant economic crises and widely questioned elections, like the presidential election in 1988). As a result of that, and thanks to the increasing receptiveness of the public to a different news approach and its inherent economic success, media organizations were supposed to take an important step towards independence from the officialdom (Lawson 2002).

Although opposition parties started getting important electoral triumphs at the local level during the first years of the 1980's, diverse studies considered the 1988 federal campaigns as the political reporting watershed. That was when the foundations of the Mexican political system were shaken up, due to the disputed elections in which the official candidate Carlos Salinas became president (Adler 1993, Hallin 1995 and 2000b, Peschard 2000, Escalante 2006 and Santillán 2008). Therefore, Mexican political and electoral contemporary history was determined by the 1988 campaigns, when authorities were harshly criticised because they could never properly clarify all the impugnation of the irregularities of the elections and, thus, give certainty to the final results. During that time, since news outlets did not offer

⁶ The specific characteristics of the process of political transformation in Mexico will be commented at the end of the third section (*Morelia as a case study*) of the fourth chapter, under the subheading *Mexican democratic transition and its impact on Morelia*.

a balanced coverage to the candidates, they were also subjects of public protests too.

As the political system has changed, the role of the mass media has increasingly moved to the forefront of political attention. This began in 1988, when opposition candidates began to focus on inequality of access to the mass media as a central of political grievance... The PRD [Democratic Revolution Party], after all, generated considerable public support in 1988 in an environment of extreme inequality of media access (Hallin 1995:1-2).

Since 1988, every presidential election has had its particular historical importance and, therefore, relevance for media analysis. In 1994, PRI gained part of its lost legitimacy by clearly winning its last federal run, under the scrutiny of a brand new and balanced journalism. The year 2000 was the long awaited end of the old regime and the arrival of Vicente Fox, the first president who came from an opposition party, and it also brought the boom of the modern media management. Finally, 2006 represented PAN consolidation through the most competitive election, which was happily covered from different open partisan positions, from left to right.

Besides and even prior to the electoral reconfiguration, a series of shocking events left their mark on both society and media, such as the 1968 student massacre at Tlatelolco Square by the army, the devastating earthquake in Mexico City in 1985, the assassination of the official presidential candidate in 1994 (Luis Donaldo Colosio), the rise in Chiapas of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) in the same year, the historic 1982 and 1995 economic crisis, the still unsolved mass female murders in Ciudad Juárez, and more recently the war against organised crime, among many others. Since these political, economic, electoral and social events fostered the awakening of a new civil society that demanded a different approach to the news, an increasing group of well informed and, hence, more active citizens began to develop in the largest cities. This situation greatly favoured the creation of certain independent news outlets, which found in this new audience the market niche they were just looking for (Lawson 2002).

However, not all the media organizations reacted in the same way to the changes. In general terms, newspapers showed more sensitivity and assertiveness towards those events than radio and television (Peschard 2000 and Lawson 2002). Only printed media understood the democratic aspirations of the Mexican public opinion, which demanded their authorities to build a more modern political system, where access should not only be

allowed to politicians. By reflecting its audience's aspirations, in practice, the press was born again (Santillán 2008). 'In doing so, the press began to support the creation of an authentic *public sphere* in Mexico, in which citizens have access to diverse political information that allows them to form political opinions and make demands upon their governors' (Hughes 2003:88).

According to Lawson (2002), Mexican media openness has been supported by three elements: political liberation, commercial competition and journalistic norms. The first one is related to the structural reforms of the political system focused on reducing all kind of coercion towards news organizations (direct censorship, information access, allocation of official advertising...). The second refers to the development of a media market that exerts real commercial pressure on the competitors, by compelling them to offer different information alternatives to the readership, instead of the same press releases or official events coverage. Finally, the third implies concepts of fairness, balance, newsworthiness and public service.

Political liberation is not the sole or even the most important driver of change in the media. Journalistic norms and commercial competition between media outlets also play powerful roles in shaping the behaviour of the press. In Mexico, for instance, journalists' views about their role in society were a decisive factor in the establishment of independent publications. Subsequently, competition for readers proved crucial in strengthening these publications and putting pressure on more traditional dailies to change their coverage (Lawson 2002:4-5).

In widening its scope, Hughes (2003) argued that media transformation took three paths: by implementing new reporting standards, certain owners with an innovative commercial and professional vision pushed the boundaries from above. From below, public service oriented journalists pushed their newsrooms towards a more civic approach to the news. Finally, in a horizontal way, some other reporters with the same inclinations abandoned their organizations when they did not find there the proper forum for their journalistic practice, due to editorial lines incompatibility or overt official intervention.

The entrenchment of the authoritarian Mexican press institution is a result of incentives and long-term legitimacy of the political system that created it; but oppositional political values, information about alternative forms of journalism, and power in the organization setting created a cadre of change

agents who remade a core of civic-oriented newsrooms even before the political system began to lose its legitimacy and coercive powers (Hughes 2003:93).

Prior to the political turmoil, innovative news outlets started challenging the authoritarian model of press operation by covering the opposition, criticising the official discourse and focusing on citizens' needs. In sum, they proved that another way of practicing journalism was possible and begun to work under that logic, which eventually has been followed by other media (Lawson 2002, Hughes 2003 and Castro 2006).

To be sure, independent-minded journalists did not adopt uncompromising stances; they did not invariably stand up to official threats nor systematically avoid all the traditional vices of the Mexican media. But they did consistently attempt to create a new kind of journalism. And in doing so, they pushed out the boundaries of the system (Lawson 2002:85).

Civic-oriented journalism fostered the rise of the Mexican 'Fourth Estate', which was promoted by independent publishers and reporters since the 1970's, who shared a common vision of a journalistic practice very different from the authoritarian model. Those individuals also had in common constant training, exposure to foreign models of news reporting, a solid sense of ethics, and the disenchantment with the political regime (Lawson 2002 and Hughes 2003). In coverage terms, news outlets with a public service orientation tended to give more prominence to issues previously neglected by mainstream media. Civil society and nongovernmental organizations became frequent information sources, authorities and their performance were constant subjects of journalistic investigation, and electoral campaigns were reported in a more balanced way.

In other words, there was a media transformation through institutional transformation (Hughes 2006). In short, the journalistic transformation was possible because there was a deep change inside the newsrooms. Within those places directors-general, editors and reporters created their own standards, despite the political context which was not the ideal. Even though several independent publications somehow passed the test of economic viability, most of them were created as journalistic projects, instead of business enterprises. At their first stages, publishers were more interested in creating a new dynamics of reporting, opposite to the old official schemes, rather than generating massive revenues (Hallin 2000b).

A Fourth Estate emerged not because ruling elites encouraged its emergence, but rather because official responses proved inadequate to prevent it... The

development of Mexico's Fourth Estate was a domestic process, responding more to its own rhythms and patterns than to practices or standards imported from abroad (Lawson 2002:183-192).

In that sense, Orme (1997) considered that this change was a product of the circumstances instead of a conscious effort of the government in facilitating the modernization of the media. That is, certain news outlets were boosted thanks to several official reforms, such as giving opposition parties more salience in the policy-making process, and the increase of US investments in Mexican industry after the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Therefore, 'most Mexican journalists agree that there is a new mood of independence in the news media, though many attribute this more to the perceived political weakness of the government than to a new official respect for press freedom' (Orme 1997:15).

These innovative media organizations proved being commercially attractive to the public, a situation that supposedly created a domino effect which forced their competitors to follow a similar path. 'Newspapers, which were previously dependent to a significant extent on state support, have increasingly either chosen or been compelled to survive on the market' (Hallin 2000a:267). Nevertheless, adopting this new market logic created quite bizarre products which adapted to it by only changing their form and not their content. This means that the change was only at a layout level, because authoritarian traits still remain in those news outlets (partisanship, docility, bias and so on). That is, 'the stylistic flourishes did little to move the publications beyond the authoritarian model' (Hughes 2006:444).

1.1.1 The *Excélsior* effect

One of the key moments of the media transformation in Mexico was the coup at the newspaper *Excélsior* in 1976, which is the quintessential anecdote in the Mexican journalism. It is a legendary episode that belongs to the media collective imaginary, in which Julio Scherer, its former director, has become not only an example, but also some kind of sacred figure worshiped by intellectuals and the so-called independent press. Beyond the myth, reality indicates that under Scherer's leadership this newspaper inaugurated a new journalistic age 'during which Mexican journalism became more vibrant, more investigative and more professional' (Lawson 2002:66). In so doing, 'the then very prestigious newspaper *Excélsior* began to move

towards a bolder, more sophisticated form of journalism, with greater focus on social problems' (Hallin 2000b: 103-104).

By exposing official corruption and wrongdoings, it did not take too long to gain President Luis Echeverría's hate who, prior to a series of harassments, promoted that the editorial board was relieved of the newsroom. In spite of being kicked out the newspaper, Scherer and some of his closest staff founded the magazine *Proceso* on November 1976, which rapidly took back readers' preferences. Notwithstanding, *Proceso* was not the only publication that appeared after the coup, as a result of the *Excélsior effect*. Manuel Becerra, Carlos Payán and Carmen Lira founded the newspaper *Unomásuno* in 1977 and, by 1984, the last two started *La Jornada*, whilst in 1980, the writer Héctor Aguilar founded the magazine *Nexos* (Leñero 1978, Lawson 2002 and Hughes 2006).

Despite their success as promoters of an independent journalism, in which different versions of reality converged, *Excélsior*, *Unomásuno* and *La Jornada* have been over-valuationed and a lot of legendary stories about them have been circulating since their foundation. Left orientated intellectuals and journalists have considered them as the defenders of democracy and freedom of speech, which is not a lie, but neither the whole truth, because some other actors and historic events have also contributed to it. Although *Proceso* used to be one of the few independent publications in Mexico, it is worth mentioning that frequently the magazine takes profit of its openly oppositional editorial line, widely known for its harsh criticism towards PAN and PRI governments and its sympathetic coverage of PRD's activities. This situation appeals to certain kind of left orientated readers, but seriously undermines its objectivity (Trejo 1992 and 1998). The main criticism to these publications has been focused on their contradictory stance: on the one hand, they tend to be over-critical towards federal administrations but, on the other, part of their revenues comes from official advertising. '*La Jornada* is a quintessentially Mexican phenomenon: it is dogmatically anti-government, and lives off the government' (Riva Palacio quoted in Lawson 2002:57).

1.1.2 Summary of the section

There is a perception among Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2003 and 2006) that the journalistic practice in Mexico has been moving towards a more civic stance. They argue that, starting from the 1970's, a series of political, social and economic transformations have fostered a more modern journalistic

practice, focused on the citizens rather than authorities. Even more, they claim that this represents a general trend which the Mexican press as a whole is following. However, as this thesis will prove, the news organizations are still submissive and deferential towards the government, just as they were during the PRI regime. In order to reinforce this idea, the following section offers a review of the characteristics of the relationship between media and political power, which challenges the notion of media transformation in Mexico.

1.2 Mexican media's main features

Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2003 and 2006) share one limitation: they have an over-optimistic view of the development of the civic-oriented journalism in Mexico. They tend to believe that the openness process has been homogeneous across the country and, in their conclusions, there is a sense of over-generalization of their findings which – in spite of being based upon limited cases - they suggest are representative of the Mexican reality. However, 'despite the many highly honourable exceptions, the Mexican press remains the least independent news media of any major country in the Western Hemisphere' (Orme 1997:10).

On the contrary, and due to their closeness to reality, national scholars are inclined towards a more critical perspective of the phenomenon. For instance, Sandoval (2002) argued that, historically, Mexican media have had a limited concept of democracy and, thus, their audience. By reproducing "alternative" discourses, certain reporters have been diffusing the idea that democratic change was solely having fair and clean elections. In that sense, having undisputed electoral rules is by no means enough to build a democratic system. It is definitely necessary, but is not sufficient (Fox 1994, Bailey and Valenzuela 1997, and Elizondo 2006). The problem, as Sandoval commented, relies on the confusion created by those journalists who, in their pursuit of public service, lost track of all the fine details of what democracy is about, reducing it to mere elections.

Therefore, democracy cannot be reached without media democratization, which implies openness and plurality (Esteinou 1999). The problem, once again, is that most of the Mexican news outlets have not moved forwards as they are supposed to: 'I can see the Mexican press as the last institution that will turn democratic in Mexico' (Riva Palacio 1992:3). Contrary to Lawson's

(1997 and 2002) and Hughes' (2003 and 2006) perception, the expansion of the civic consciousness has not been homogeneous across the country and in many regions, such as Michoacán, it is yet to be fully developed. Or, as Peschard (2000) concluded, there is still quite a long way for most of the media to reach the point where they could assume their social responsibility role as privileged sources of political interaction. Carreño (1999) considered that this situation was facilitated by two factors: firstly, an obsolete juridical framework that allows high levels of government involvement in the media operation and, secondly, a protectionist economic model that promoted patron-client relationships.

For that reason, by stressing some of the traits of the interaction between journalists and politicians in Mexico, this section offers a different and less optimistic view of the Mexican media environment, which will also reinforce the core argument of this thesis. It is important to mention that Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2003 and 2006) also mentioned these issues on their studies, but they argued that these are now a matter of the past. It is also worth mentioning that the following pages present a discussion only about the specific characteristics of the Mexican media environment that are of the interest to this thesis. In other words, rather than presenting a review of the generalities of the press in Mexico, the aim is only to comment on the issues that were analysed on the field work,⁷ in order to build a comparative framework between the academic literature and the empirical evidence of the Morelian case. For that reason, the following themes integrate this part of the chapter: historic partisanship, government coercion, official advertising contracts as a means of coercion, ownership and coercion, the existence and development of a media market and the journalist-politician relationship.

1.2.1 Historic partisanship

Partisan media is far from being an extraordinary event in Mexico. On the contrary, instead of the exception, it has been the rule from the very beginning of its existence. Just as the literature about Mexican journalism refers, partisanship is one of its hallmarks. Considering that most of the time newspapers were used as links between interest groups and the causes they were after, the partisan character of those publications turned them into

⁷ As it will be widely discussed on chapters three and four (section 4.1 *The research problem*), the frameworks in which this thesis is built upon are the concepts of *Media System* (Hallin and Mancini 2004), conflict/collaboration between journalists and politicians (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995) and distance/logic of their relationship (Pfetsch 2004).

mere ephemeral instruments, when certain minorities disputed regional power, and their editorial spaces were their political trench. That is, those publications were the forum in which politicians presented and defended their ideologies (Bohman 1986, Pineda and Del Palacio 2003, Pineda 2005).

We can judge the press not only as an information producer, but as a public opinion creator as well; as a limit to power and equally as an expression of that same power. Hence, the history of Mexican press is the history of the circulation of opinions, information, interests and their forms of legitimization (Pineda and Del Palacio 2003:9).

Just as it happened in the rest of the country, news outlets in Michoacán favoured an opinionated journalism with evident ideological alignments related to the way the region should be organised and governed. This kind of information was published and read basically by the regional political class. Therefore, having mediators between government and citizens persisted as an official initiative for several local administrations. Thus, the development of the media was initially supported by the government. For that reason, sponsoring news outlets, by supplying newsprint and absorbing publication expenses, was a constant practice. 'Therefore, the relationship between press and political power cannot be understood only through the journalistic agenda, but also through the financial and material support that newspapers received' (Pineda 2005:209). According to Avilés (1999), the Mexican press was born 'deformed', because it was born attached and subdued to the power of the State. That explains why, historically, media have paid more attention to government than society. In so doing, its role as watchdog for politicians and guide for citizens has never been properly fulfilled.

Opinion press has deep roots in Mexico: prior to the beginning of the Independence war (1810), partisan newspapers started developing with the only goal of diffusing liberal political ideas that were the fuel of the movement. Once the separation from the Spanish crown was consummated in 1821, different papers were published for supporting both conservative and liberal ideologies. 'The typical feature of the newspapers from that time was the fact that they emphasised not only the news, but editorials and partisan comments as well' (Bohman 1986:61). At the end of the nineteenth century *El Imparcial*, considered as the first newspaper with mass circulation, was founded with the idea of providing only information. However, due to the political environment prior to the Revolution (1910-1920), partisanship was present in the rest of the print media. When this new war was over, the factions within the revolutionary army published their own

papers with their own political ideas. From the 1920's until now, diverse media have operated under specific ideological alignments that include all the shades of the political spectrum, from left to right. 'Newspapers were classified according to specific political ideas. Once they achieved their political goal and it was no longer possible to catalogue them within a specific group, they generally became dependent on government or private support' (Bohman 1986:78).

As heirs of the revolutionary legacy, the members of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI) built the "perfect dictatorship" and for seven decades they established a network of alliances with news organizations under an authoritarian veil. 'Journalists in these societies were expected to support authority, not challenge it, because media were viewed as a tool for nation building. Information, or truth, became the property of the State' (Hughes 2006:49). In that same sense, Aceves (2000) considered that the authoritarian features of the Mexican regime which came after the Revolution were fostered by a media system in which news outlets were submissive and disposed to complicity, with scarce heroic cases of confrontation against the government.

As a result of that, Mexican press was docile and reporters were not used to do more than copying press releases or official statements. Media subordination towards the State fostered that, in practice, the news stories were not for the audience, but for the political elites, which became the main producers and consumers of this kind of information (Riva Palacio 1992, Adler-Lomnitz *et al* 2004, Mellado *et al* 2012). In fact, politics were portrayed by news organizations, especially the national broadcast chain *Televisa*, as a fragmented reality: there was the realm of authority and the realm of politics, the former was integrated by the president and ministries, Congress and political parties belonged to the latter (Hallin 1995). This situation implied two different journalistic approaches as well, because top government officials were never touched by any kind of criticism nor judgment. On the contrary, senators, deputies and party members did not have that immunity, but they were not *beaten up*⁸ hard either.

Even though the press was clearly dominated by the government, there was no need to foster corruption, at least not at scandalous level though, because most of the news workers were convinced about the role they were

⁸ *Beating up (golpear)* is a concept widely used in the Mexican journalistic slang, which means making harsh criticism towards someone, especially a politician or government officer.

supposed to adopt. 'Journalists' support for authoritarianism does not have to be coerced. Authoritarianism under the right conditions can be as legitimate to journalists as a more democratic model of news production' (Hughes 2006:51). In that sense, Mexican reporters did not differ much from their international counterparts: 'journalists at mainstream publications everywhere accommodate to the political culture of the regime in which they operate' (Schudson 2005a:184). Thus,

news workers do not intend to frame the news so as to support either private economic or state interests, but, because of their institutional position and organizational practices, they are likely to serve those interests, and to reproduce their structural and power bases (Tuchman 2002:87)

A couple of examples of the docility of the media towards the Mexican government were presented by Molina (1987) and Rodríguez (1993). The former described the routines and newsworthiness values of *Televisa's* newsroom in the early eighties regarding the coverage of the federal government and the local authorities of Mexico City. The reporting at this television station responded to its owner Emilio Azcárraga Milmo's stance towards the regime, who also considered himself as "a soldier of the PRI". On the other hand, Rodríguez (1993) offered a collection of anecdotes related to the cosy relationship between publishers and the president in turn, from Miguel Alemán (1946-1952) to Carlos Salinas (1988-1994). But not only reporters, editors and publishers were deferential towards the government, the PRI regime was also widely accepted by most of the population, a situation which favoured its legitimacy (Camp 1999 and Vogler 2007).

Regarding the coverage of political information, the effective domestication of the media by the PRI regime was evident in three aspects: official control of the public agenda, selective silence on compromising issues related to government and its performance, and a clear partisan bias in support of the official candidates during elections (Lawson 2002). Firstly, since public servants and ruling party members were the main subjects of the news, and basically the only sources of information too, the reported events were framed according to the interests of the government. In so doing, the agenda was set solely by communications officers and uncritically disseminated by Mexican news organizations.

Corruption and manipulation of access were highly effective in producing a captive media that faithfully reported what

government officials said and did. Although the media in Mexico were never converted into purely propagandistic instruments, coverage under the old regime tended to reflect official priorities. Newspapers headlines, for instance, consisted of nothing more than assertions by prominent members of the political elite (Lawson 2002:48-49).

Secondly, during the PRI years in charge of the federal administration, there was a journalistic commonplace: the “three untouchables” of media were the president, the army and Virgin of Guadalupe. It meant that compromising information related to the head of the government and his closest circle was, in practice, not of the reporter’s business. The selective silence on controversial issues, such as corruption or wrongdoings, did not only mean keeping eyes, ears and mouth shut. It also implied presenting only the official responses to them, without any context, alternative voices, follow-up or further analysis. Therefore, far from being mediators or counter-weight of political power, as they are in the supposedly democratic societies, Mexican media used to be a mere accompaniment of the government and its party. Since news outlets hardly did little more than spreading the official message, there was neither need of persuading the audience nor looking for voters’ support then (Peschard 2000 and Adler-Lomnitz *et al* 2004).

Thirdly, in electoral matters, the press was a mere cheerleader of the official candidates and strategist for the ruling party. During the campaigns, coverage was simply biased, partial and uneven in favour of the PRI, and blatantly neglecting opposition. Manipulation of polling results was also a common media practice when adverse results were evident. ‘The establishment print media acted as a sort of royal scribe, accompanying the official candidate on his campaign tour and chronicling the activities of his court’ (Lawson 2002:54-55). Even though voters’ mobilization was minimal, PRI invested a lot of resources in news outlets during elections for a different purpose. They had an important role for the campaign rituals: on the one hand, prior to the campaign, the drama of negotiating who the candidate would be and the following political alliances were portrayed on the media. On the other, the press was the arena where all the actors involved exchanged messages. ‘Print media had an instrumental role in transmitting the political negotiations, whilst television was mainly used for transforming the candidate from negotiator to the president-emperor of the Republic’ (Adler-Lomnitz *et al* 2004:254). Thus, political elites considered that controlling the news organizations was a matter of how capable of exerting

power the future president was, rather than how effective in mobilising the electorate media were.

In general terms, there was an evident similarity among the editorial lines which inclined the news to an official and conservative alignment. However, during the late 1970's and early 1980's several printed media were founded as a reaction to this situation. *Proceso*, *Unomásuno* and *La Jornada* aimed to offer a different approach to the information, detached from the official version and considered as leftist. Being identified with the left, at that time, meant being away from the official version, rather than being aligned with a specific political ideology. Under these circumstances, a different discourse from the official version was considered subversive, a situation that pushed them out of the officialdom and into the realm of conflict and subversion (Castro 2006). Nevertheless, it did not take those publications so long to really incline to the left. By over-criticising PRI and PAN's performance and favourably covering PRD's activities, those news outlets rapidly became the voice of the allegedly Mexican left, which is integrated by intellectuals, youngsters, certain opposition politicians and civil organizations.

In their analysis of television news in Mexico, Hughes and Lawson (2004) concluded that neither private nor State-owned channels were immune to partisanship, because both of them have political preferences. Besides that, for the first case, economic interests clearly shaped the information and, for the second, government authorities considered them as their personal tribune and also as propaganda tools. 'The Mexican experience suggests the limited influence of journalistic norms for broadcasting. Although we have certainly uncovered cases where norms mattered, economic motivations and political pressures typically loomed larger in broadcasters' calculations' (Hughes and Lawson 2004:100). To a higher or lesser degree, this situation was present in both national and regional media. Nonetheless, outside Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey local news outlets were less developed and, thus, weaker towards government. That is why, at that level, they tended to be more docile and collaborative with authorities and political elites (Orme 1997 and Hallin 2000b). Those characteristics are still present in the Morelian press, just as it will be argued in this thesis.

Due to several legal voids, such as broadcast concessions and political advertising contracts, in fact, media in Mexico are some kind of informal shareholders of political power. In so doing, rather than seeking impartiality, balance, fairness and other newsworthiness values, they have been only after a slice of the political pie (Sandoval 2002). Considered by themselves

as whether clients or even peers, historically, news organizations have fostered close relationships with different political actors as a matter of survival. Under these circumstances, there is no news outlet that could exist without having a strategic alliance with a key political actor. However, pledging alignment implies not only getting benefits, it also demands showing partisanship when needed (Fernández cited in Járquez 2001).

The media are deferential to the State, and in many ways are highly dependent on it. The newspaper industry, in particular, is integrated into the clientelist system much as other sectors of society are, receiving benefits from the State in return for political loyalty (Hallin 2000b:100).

Nonetheless, government is not the only actor within the political arena: there are different players with whom news outlets establish relationships (e.g. Church elites, businessmen and interest groups). Since those organizations belong to wealthy and important businessmen with their own interests and connections, then, pressure from different directions other than the State limit journalistic freedom as well (Hallin 2000b). As it will be stressed later on in this section (*Development of the Mexican media market*), Mexican newspapers have a reduced circulation and are dependent on the official advertising contracts, which make them vulnerable to government power. Notwithstanding, Trejo (1992) argued that this situation is also used by the media organizations for their own interest because, rather than information, they are a means of pressure. In other words, media take advantage of their role as clients in order to obtain different benefits from the State. In sum, as Avilés (1999) pointed out, even today Mexican media are still not keen on dialoguing with society, they only talk out loud to political power. Despite their role as mediators between government and citizens, they keep on ignoring the latter and over-estimating the former, because recognition, rewards and even information only come from the State.

From the lowest level officer to the President of the Republic, government offices have assumed the duty of flirting, corrupting and even repressing in their quest for a submissive and unconditional press. On the other hand, a lot of newspapers and journalists have adopted the habit of wooing and being wooed, flattering, corrupting, subduing and serving the government as a whole or a politician in particular (Rodríguez 1993:13).

As commented above, partisanship is one of the common features of the Mexican press because, historically, news organizations have reflected different political ideologies. Nevertheless, during the seventy years of the

PRI regime, the submission and deference towards the government reached higher levels. However, the arrival of new political parties to the government did not foster a different relationship with the media. The Morelian case will demonstrate this assumption, because the political information that is published by the local newspapers shows an open alignment to the state government. This situation is also the result of some of the means of coercion towards the news outlets that will be now described.

1.2.2 Means of coercion towards the press

Corruption between politicians and the press is not new in Mexico. There is a long list of episodes - some of which will be presented here - in which both actors negotiate allegiance in exchange of favours. Whether the politicians or the media promote this practice, there are different means of coercion which have been used since the nineteenth century, but especially during the seventy years of the PRI regime (1929-2000) and until the present moment. Therefore, this section offers an overview of the ample catalogue of techniques that journalists and party/government elites use to exert pressure towards one another.

'For years, the Mexican media were harshly (and justly) criticised for their association with the old regime' (Lawson 2002:7). The PRI years were widely known by the control over news organizations, nonetheless, coercion towards the press is a much older phenomenon. Just as partisanship, pressure has been present from the very beginning of journalism in Mexico. As soon as the independence from Spain was declared in 1821, one of the ephemeral emperor Agustín de Iturbide's first actions was to constrain press freedom. Thus, the opposition voices, the ones which not long ago fought by his side, could not express their disagreement to his plans (Bohmann 1986). The history of Michoacán has several chapters of coercion too: during the early twentieth century, whilst Aristeo Mercado was the state governor, journalists and publishers publicly complained about the unfair treatment that oppositional press received from his administration, when harassment to newspapers personnel was a common practice (Pineda 2005).

By 1917, prior to the end of the Revolution, freedom of speech and press was supposed to be guaranteed by the new Constitution approved by President Venustiano Carranza. Despite the brand new official protection, since then, in practice every single head of federal, state or local administrations has controlled news outlets through different means. An

interesting case was President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), who set the standards of media management that would be applied by basically all of his successors, even the new governments emanated from the opposition. Two key elements fostered the control over news organizations: the Autonomous Department of Press and Advertising (Departamento Autónomo de Prensa y Publicidad), designed for controlling the official information, and Productora e Importadora de Papel S.A. (PIPSA), a monopolist State-owned company created for producing and distributing newsprint (Bohmann 1986 and Lawson 2002).

On the one hand, the new press office set the post-revolutionary State policy regarding the mass communication. This initiative was structured upon centralizing the official information (controlling its access and setting the agenda), impeding the rise of dissident voices (imposition of the official version) and boosting media docility by bribing reporters, editors and directors-general. On the other, PIPSA's aim was to provide newsprint at low cost, which helped the development of the Mexican editorial industry. However, it also facilitated media subjugation by controlling the access to the material only to friendly publications (Bohmann 1986 and Lawson 2002). 'Through control of the production and distribution of newsprint by the State, Cárdenas - and the following governments as well - discovered a potential form of exerting influence over the printed media' (Bohmann 1986:73).

By subsidising the needed material, PIPSA was used more 'as a carrot than as a stick' (Lawson 2002:33), because it sold the newsprint at reduced prices (even lower than the international average), offered newspapers generous terms of credits, and absorbed all the expenses of shipping and storage. Although several newspapers owners harshly criticised this policy of controlling the newsprint, when in 1989 President Carlos Salinas finally decided to terminate PIPSA's life, they were the first ones in raising the voice against the initiative. The reason was that, without it, they knew they inevitably would have to deal by themselves with all of the fluctuations and difficulties of the international market (Trejo 1992 and Lawson 2002).

But PIPSA was just one among many forms of coercion that the State had at its disposal during the PRI hegemony when, in order to keep news organizations docile and domesticated, a remarkably effective authoritarian press concept was institutionalised. This paradigm impeded opposition voices to challenging the regime, prevented exposures of elite government officials and ruling party members, and openly favoured official candidates during electoral campaigns coverage (Lawson 2002 and Hughes 2003). That

is, 'all the essential traits of Mexico's political system were reflected in the country's press. Early on during the period of authoritarian rule, the media were colonised and used as a vehicle for private gain and political legitimization' (Lawson 2002:25).

Pressure towards media was exerted by government through 'refined and soft' instruments (Avilés 1999:7), selectively applied to specific news outlets which proved to be more effective than repression. Official advertising allocation, tax exemptions, free service of the State-owned news agency *Notimex*, low interest loans and cheap newsprint discussed above were some of the subtle means of control. Nonetheless, when the friendly instruments were not persuasive enough, some other mechanisms were activated and government reprisals tended to be noisier and even more threatening. Retributive tax audits, bills for accumulated debts of newsprint and, in very few occasions like the case of the coup to *Excélsior* in the 1970's, overt intervention, were some examples (Bohmann 1986, Avilés 1999 and Lawson 2002).

Besides these institutional tools, a more focussed form of pressure was also widely practiced: the bribe. Known in the Mexican journalistic slang as *chayote*, this form of corruption consisted in offering money to journalists, editors and even photographers (there are even especial payrolls for selected reporters in most of the ministries) or favours (housing credits, especial medical care, meals in fancy restaurants, gifts, paid vacations, posts in the administration, etc) in exchange for friendly coverage. To a different degree, depending on the time and budget, all branches and levels of the government use it all the time. Its effectiveness relied on the fact that, most of the time, reporters' salaries were low and this extra money represented up to one third of their income (Trejo 1992, Lawson 2002 and De León 2009). On the other hand, since more than media's impact, politicians' discretion was basically the main argument for allocating advertising or granting subsidies, then, facilitating information access was another form of control. Documents, interviews and even press releases were frequently used to make aligned journalists' job easier and blocking independent or critical ones.

Coercion was less important than collusion: publishers had become rich as ruling party money insulated them from the realities of the marketplace. Bribery was an institutionalised aspect of the political reporter's trade. Presidential elections were the most lucrative beat of all... Salaries were a minor part of some reporters' incomes (Orme 1997:8).

In sum, sympathetic news organizations were openly rewarded with sponsorships, cheap newsprint, legal concessions and information access, whilst their personnel were spoiled with all kind of *chayote*. In exchange, the State demanded docility and partisanship at all time. Notwithstanding, pressure was not always exerted by an abstract entity called “government” because, individually, political elites (individual politicians, public servants and party members) also coerced news outlets. For that reason, in their pursuit of personal political goals, they all are obsessed for having the press by their side, no matter the cost (Avilés 1999).

Due to the agreements with power holders, partisan journalists were expected to take a passive and noncritical role when they were covering official events. In so doing, they adopted a self-censorship stance towards the authoritarian regime, which determined the issues that should be informed and those to be kept out of the public scrutiny (Molina 1987, Rodríguez 1993 and Hughes 2006). ‘There are no censors in Mexican newspapers, but there is censorship anyway. The tool mostly used for suppression of ideas and thoughts is not government censorship but the greater evil of self-censorship’ (Riva Palacio 1992:1). Even though self-censorship was the common rule during the PRI hegemony, the government also permitted certain dose of ideological criticism, as long as it did not compromise its control over the media. Those limited opposition voices were allowed because they gave legitimacy to the system, which used them only for public relations purposes (Lawson 2002). That is why, ‘the absence of an opposition, the prevalence of economic growth and the adequate functioning of the political system made direct censorship and control largely dispensable’ (Castañeda 1997:133).⁹

Instead of a conflict of interests, the relationship between news organizations and government was determined by a confluence of interests (Riva Palacio 1997, Lawson 2002 and Reig 2010), which dictated the collaborative way they interact with each other. Media owners were after a favourably business environment to make profits from, and political elites needed friendly publicity to legitimise and perpetuate their influence. Thus, both of them were ready to negotiate loyalty for revenues. In the absence of clear rules for the game, both media and politicians use one another and are used by each other too. Therefore, the nature of the journalist-politician

⁹ More recently, and as a result of the war against organised crime, certain Mexican journalists who cover drug related stories very often adopt a self-censorship stance because they work in highly conflictive areas, such as the northern Ciudad Juárez (Gibbons and Spratt 2011).

relationship in Mexico is 'a complex network of mutual benefits, commitments and favours, difficult to penetrate and even more difficult to reform' (Riva Palacio 1997:22).

However, with only a few exceptions, neither the media nor the sources act as a solid and uniform group. On the contrary, individual interests are always above the common good, a situation that fosters mutual instrumentalization and exploitation (Bohmann 1986, Trejo 1992 and Lawson 2002). For that reason, 'as a general rule, the journalistic message responds to the structural interests which are behind the media' (Reig 2010:7). Whether coercion, pressure or instrumentalization, all these terms point out a single concept: corruption, which is 'the abuse of public power for personal gain or for the benefit of a group to which one owes allegiance' (Stapenhurst 2000:1). In the media environment, it means the use of the information power to curry favours or illegally benefit the interests of a government, public servant, political party, politician, enterprise or individual to the detriment of the journalistic principles of balance, detachment and avoidance of bias (López 2001).

Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that journalistic corruption is not a phenomenon that develops in an isolated way; it requires a specific context where it can be fully developed. In that sense, corruption is fostered then by a specific context integrated by a series of pervasive networks, in which illegal treats could freely flourish (López 2001). In a wider context, in Latin America, journalism works and has been developed under certain equilibrium between politics, market and public service which are rarely compatible to one another. Its results integrate a wide range of media profiles: 'between officialdom and independence, between left and right, between professionalism and tabloidization, between truth and lie' (López 2001:1).

In the pathological press-government relation, a series of economic, political and factional - local, regional and national - interests blend; which use the printed media as instruments of influence and pressure. And, of course, particular interests of journalists, politicians and public servants as well. From administration to administration, from president to president, the situation still persists: a government that exerts practically unlimited authoritarianism, a press mostly domesticated, and an audience that does not trust neither the press nor the government (Rodríguez 1993:13).

In sum, corruption between government and news organizations has deep roots in Mexico, where politicians and journalists have used – and still use – one another according to their own interests. In so doing, they have at their disposal a wide range of tools such as bribes, tax exemptions and information access, among others. However, there is still another means of coercion which is highly significant – as the Morelian case will prove – in the relationship between these actors: the official advertising.

1.2.3 Official advertising as a means of coercion

One of the core arguments of this thesis is that the lack of change of the Mexican media is fostered by the official advertising contracts, which represent a renovated form of *chayote* (bribe given to or asked for by journalists). That is, the allocation or withdrawal of government adverts has substituted the old bribe, but its aim remains the same: getting favourable coverage. For that reason, in order to better understand the relevance of the empirical evidence of the Morelian case,¹⁰ this subsection offers an overview of this concept and its implications for the journalistic practice in Mexico.

The literature about Mexican journalism reveals that the use of official advertising as a means of coercion towards the media is not a new phenomenon. On the contrary, government has exerted pressure through it since a long time ago. As a result of that, and at different levels, news outlets have historically been subjects to instrumentalization, not always involuntarily though (Riding 1984, Riva Palacio 1992, Rodríguez 1993, Torres 1997, Adler-Lomnitz *et al* 2004 and De León 2009). Even before the evolution of the concept of official advertising as it is now, Mexican governments have sponsored friendly media and punished oppositional voices. No matter their ideologies, conservative or liberal, presidents and governors have used public money for fostering partisan journalism (Bohmann 1986 and Pineda 2005).

But before going further into the issue of coercion through official advertising, it is important to define this concept: in normative terms, the aim of the official advertising should be to foster communication between government and its constituency, by informing the latter about the performance of the former. This means that people have the right to know and authorities have the obligation to inform about their activities, such as

¹⁰ See chapter five, subsection 5.4.2 *Official advertising in Morelian newspapers*.

implementation of social programmes, use of public budget and law initiatives (Fundar 2011). In so doing, public servants would boost accountability through this kind of publicity.

Therefore, as some of the communications officers interviewed for this thesis explained, the rationale of the authorities for having an official advertising contract is to guarantee that the government, at its three levels and despite the political times, has a permanent presence in media by getting good coverage through news stories and/or by having priority spaces for its advertisements. By a monthly or yearly investment, the newspaper offers certain amount of pages for the government to publish its press releases¹¹ and advertisements. The sum of money that each news outlet gets from the official budget depends on its reach and impact, so the biggest share goes to the most important media organizations.

The introduction of the official advertising contracts and its use as a substitute of the bribes to individual reporters did not happen suddenly. It was a process that can be tracked down in the early 1990's during President Carlos Salinas' administration, when a series of regulations for granting money to news outlets and their staff was approved (Riva Palacio 1992 and 1997, Orme 1997 and Orozco 2007). Among others, the new guidelines prohibited paying journalists' expenses whilst they were covering presidential tours and allocating official advertising only in the most important media. However, this new policy was vague and left a lot of room for authorities' discretion at the moment of deciding with whom and under which terms a contract for publicity should be signed (Villanueva 1996).

The arrival of these formal agreements between political and media power holders was supposed to inaugurate a different logic in the way political communications operate in Mexico, taking it to a renewed and more professional level (De León 2009). However, it has not been without a permanent halo of suspicion though, because this new kind of interaction did not only stay at a commercial level, it had evident implications in the stories that the people receive from the media as well. Since the very beginning, the

¹¹ When a press release is published in its full-length, as a main story and in a preferential place – front/odd page or centre folds - it is currently known in Mexican journalism as *paid news* (*nota pagada* or *publi-reportaje*), but it was also known as *gacetilla* (Keenan 1997 and Benavides 2000). It is usually published without the by-line, sometimes with a different layout and, ideally, with a caption like “paid content” or something similar. Nonetheless, at least in Morelia, this last feature never appears. For that reason, it is quite difficult for the average reader to distinguish a regular news story from a paid one. This situation was also noted at the national level by Riva Palacio (1992 and 1997) and Keenan (1997).

contracts have been used as a means of coercion towards the media and, as a result of that, they have had undeniable impact on the way political actors' activities have been covered (Rodríguez 1993 and Torres 1997).

Government advertising contracts have become the basis of the relationship between news media and institutional political power. This model permeates the relationship that the news outlets have with other political actors, by generating publicity and political legitimacy expectations for the government and economic expectations for the media owners (De León 2009:151).

As it was commented before, President Lázaro Cárdenas inaugurated a new way of interacting with news organizations by creating the Autonomous Department of Press and Advertising, which had the primary goal of controlling media through the budget, information and newsprint. Under different names and with diverse scopes and instruments, the following administrations gave continuity to this idea. Since the very beginning of the press areas, their officers have tried to influence newsrooms by imposing their agenda. In so doing, a lot of money has been spent in government publicity through paid news stories, advertisements and bribes (Bohmann 1986, Lawson 2002, Hughes and Lawson 2004).

Nonetheless, negotiating a favourable coverage has had different media actors along the time. Especially during the PRI regime, politicians used to negotiate coverage directly with reporters, because the latter were able to sell advertising besides reporting (Bohmann 1986, Keenan 1997, Benavides 2000 and Lawson 2002). It means that, since correspondents earned extra money if they could close a deal, they were allowed to act as salesmen as well. Under this system, journalists' income had three sources: regular salary, sales commissions (5-10%) and, very frequently, bribes¹² (Bohmann 1986, Keenan 1997 and Lawson 2002). Since reporters had to complement their incomes by selling advertising, their pens were compromised because their professional values were put at stake whenever they had to write a story about their customers, who only expected to be treated favourably. In other words, money determined newsworthiness and economic interest were more important than journalistic interest (Rodríguez 1993 and Rodríguez 2007).

¹² Skjerdal (2010:387) summarised a series of studies focused on Central African media in which journalists had a similar dilemma: due to their low salaries, and in order to earn extra money, they had to sell advertising to their sources and/or accept bribes from them.

However, as it was explained at the beginning of this chapter, the weakening of the PRI regime and the opposition victories at local and state level brought a different logic for the journalist-politician relationship, when instead of bargaining with the former, the latter started negotiating with their bosses (De León 2009). The political juncture strengthened media owners position by putting them right in front of their customers and letting them set the new conditions for the official advertising contracts. Notwithstanding, these commercial agreements became instruments of control in both directions: on the one hand, politicians might have lost their influence towards individual reporters, but they also gained direct access to directors-general and editors, who actually decide which information is published or not. On the other, media owners may have set advantageous conditions for publicity contracts, but news outlets proved to be economically weak to survive without official advertising revenue too (Trejo 1992, Rodríguez 1993, Lawson 2002, Hughes and Lawson 2004, De León 2009). In sum, these new official advertising contracts have made more sophisticated the interaction between news organizations and government/political parties, because their commitment towards a mutually supportive relationship is built upon a mercantile logic.

Since circulation is not considered important, newspapers neither compete for readers nor for public opinion independently. Instead, they aid the government in forming political opinion, playing a role that both the press and the government acknowledge and accept. Government money keeps them in business, and there is no need to rely on private-sector advertising – even though this arrangement leaves newspapers and journalists extremely vulnerable to government coercion and blackmail... The vast majority of the news magazines, newspapers and journals would disappear if the government were to subject the press to the same free-market policies that have had such widespread impact on other sectors of the economy (Riva Palacio 1997:23).

By selectively¹³ investing in publicity in news organizations which could hardly survive otherwise and which suddenly became friendly towards the official authorities after the injection of public resources, in practice, the government also structured the media market to an important extent (Trejo 1992, Hallin 2000a and Fundar 2011). Nevertheless, being rescued by the

¹³ Since there is not any law or regulation which dictates the criteria for allocating official advertising, the decision of how much and in which news outlets the budget will be invested depends on the authorities' discretion (Fundar 2011).

State was not for free, because it necessarily implied an editorial alignment towards the official discourse. In short terms, exchanging advertising for favourable coverage became the rule for the interaction between news outlets and politicians (Rodríguez 1993, Lawson 2002, Hughes and Lawson 2004, De León 2009). However, this relationship was a matter of power and control mediated by a commercial agreement. 'Control through official advertising means the use of advertisements allocated in a news organization as a powerful instrument for rewarding or punishing its economy, based on its editorial criteria' (Torres 1997:91).

Control towards media was exerted, among other ways, through paid publicity and the government was the main consumer of these vital spaces for many media. The threat, frequently real, of withdrawing this source of finance became a strong limitation to press independence (Adler-Lomnitz *et al* 2004:38).

By trading favourable coverage for business purposes, news outlets renounced to their civic role of providing unbiased information and fostering their audience's better understanding about its historic moment. Under these circumstances, notions of balance, fairness and other newsworthiness values fade away when commercial incentives appear (Hughes and Lawson 2004). Since, to a higher or lesser degree, all of the Mexican media rely on government budget,¹⁴ their newsrooms have started working under a different logic which implies not making harsh criticism towards their advertisers and, thus, not risking contracts. Accepting this kind of intrusions had an evident impact on their freedom to perform their job, which was – and still is - expected to dig into the facts, statements, figures and documents, no matter who might be exposed or affected by revealing the truth (Lawson 2002 and Hughes 2006). Hence, as this case study will prove, the dependence on the official advertising contracts is one of the factors that impedes the change of the Mexican media.

Will the government allow a free press as a rule and not as an exception? If it did, most of the newspapers and magazines currently publishing in Mexico would disappear...
The majority of news organizations – those that fear

¹⁴ Accurate figures regarding the rates of investment of official and commercial advertising in Mexico are scarce and offer quite divergent information. For instance, according to the advertising agency AC Nielsen (2006) in 2005 only 4% of the national media's revenues came from government investment, but IBOPE AGB Mexico (2010) reported that in 2009 this rate was 15%. Regarding the British case, and without providing specific figures, Davis (2000a:47-48) mentioned that 'during the 1980's, the government became the largest purchaser of advertising in the UK'.

competition in a free and independent market – will prevail. In all likelihood, the press will be the last institution in Mexico to undergo the process of democratization (Riva Palacio 1997:30).

Besides the economic limitations, printed media have to survive in a difficult environment, because there is no mass circulation press in Mexico and the readership is reduced, mainly consisting of political, economic and intellectual elites (Trejo 1992 and Hallin 2000a). 'Newspapers had few readers, depended to a significant extent on official payments given in return for favourable publicity, and, with a few exceptions, were written more for the consumption of government press offices than for the reading public' (Hallin 2000a:275). For this reason, no Mexican newspaper can survive only by selling copies, they all depend on their advertising revenues.¹⁵ In spite of being virtually unknown by the readership, some of them have the only goal of making money through the State. Even the so-called independent projects find it hard to exist without a share of the official budget, which in many cases represents covering the payroll, hence a favourable coverage here is more than justified (Trejo 1992). 'Printed press exemplifies the rearrangement of old practices under new conditions. Its reduced readership and the consequential financial dependence on paid publicity make it susceptible of coercion by diverse powers and self-censorship' (Adler-Lomnitz *et al* 2004:291).

Historically, prices of political advertising have been up to 50% more expensive than commercial (Bohmann 1986 and Riva Palacio 1992),¹⁶ a situation which practically impedes that individuals or groups outside the government or political parties could pay for a place in the media. For this reason, it is not a surprise that news outlets share an evident dependence on the State in terms of advertising incomes. During the 1960's and 1980's, government used to spend in this concept at least three times more than any other advertiser (Bohmann 1986). However, as mentioned in the previous page, recent estimations showed that, as a result of the process of privatization of several State-owned enterprises, at the end of the 1990's

¹⁵ This is not an exclusive phenomenon of Mexican newspapers: in the United States, 80% of printed media's revenues came from advertising in 2008. In that same year, British national newspapers relied on this concept up to 41%, and local papers 65% (McAthy 2010).

¹⁶ For instance, according to the proportions, not the amount of money, the current fares in Morelia are way more expensive than in Mexico City. As an example of this, official current rates for local newspapers indicate that the price of a full page for commercial advertising in *La Voz* is \$18,096 Mexican Pesos (£861.71) and for political advertising is \$51,040 Mexican Pesos (£2,430.47), which represents a difference of 282.05%.

and beginning of 2000's private businessmen became important clients of media organizations too.

Due to the lack of independence commented before, which is a result of low levels of copies sales and a significant dependence on official advertising contracts, newspapers editors and publishers have not been a strong group that could confront official authorities, just as broadcasters do (Bohmann 1986).¹⁷ Since most of their needs are satisfied by the State, they have historically been in a weak position to bargain then. Nonetheless, they might be weak as a group, but as individuals they certainly negotiate their own privileges. Related to this point, Riding (1984) also found that most of the editors and publishers in different newsrooms were openly collaborative with the political system, because they were more interested in obtaining a share of the official advertising budget than criticizing the government performance.

In sum, official advertising is a controversial issue for the relationship between media and political power. Both of them are equally co-dependent and need each other for reaching their own goals. That is the reason why, as long as there is a publicity contract, Mexican publishers remain docile (Riva Palacio 1992, Rodríguez 1993, Rodríguez 2007, Orozco 2007 and De León 2009). Even the independent press, such as *Proceso*, become belligerent with the withdrawal of official advertising.¹⁸ 'The strong support that news outlets receive from the State, which demands a friendly journalism in exchange, is still a hallmark of Mexican media' (Bohmann 1986:67) and, in so doing, the government adverts have become a token to trade a favourable coverage. However, this new form of bribe is now negotiated directly between publishers/broadcasters and politicians, leaving individual news workers out of the game.

¹⁷ Mexican broadcasters are organised in the National Chamber of the Industry of Radio and Television (Cámara Nacional de la Industria de la Radio y Televisión, CIRT), which allows them to act as a solid group for lobbying benefits for its members. On the contrary, publishers are a fragmented group and, although they created the Mexican Newspaper Editors Association (Asociación Mexicana de Editores de Periódicos, AME), not all of the printed media owners belong to it (*La Voz* is the only Morelian newspaper that is a member of this group). For that reason, they individually bargain their own interests with the government.

¹⁸ This magazine has complained about the lack of federal investment in its pages. The publication even started a juridical process against some Ministries because they have not explained the reasons why they have not invested in *Proceso* since President Felipe Calderón is in charge of the federal administration (Carrasco 2011).

1.2.4 Ownership and coercion

As commented above, by relegating individual reporters from the negotiations table, media owners in Mexico have become more involved in currying favours from party and government elites, adopting a more active role as businessmen than journalists. Therefore, this section outlines the relationship between the different types of media ownership and coercion.

Although an overview of the journalism in Latin America will be presented in the third section of this chapter (*1.3 Mexican media in a comparative perspective*), it is important to mention that 'the Latin American mass media were never perfect models of private ownership or public service, national expression or transnational culture. They were the product of many different interests: governments, political movements, artists, national and foreign capital and publics' (Fox 1988:10). Just as in the rest of the continent, Mexico shows the same pattern mentioned before: neither kind of ownership has proved being overwhelmingly successful in fostering an informed citizenship, by connecting it with the government through the diffusion of useful information.

Hughes and Lawson (2004) argued that neither private nor State ownership *per se* will immediately produce an open, balanced and fair broadcasting system. Voices that support media privatization consider that official television channels and radio stations are vulnerable to authorities' whims. Therefore, the market should determine their content, because it is supposed to address audiences' preferences. On the contrary, those who favour government-run media stress that commercial news outlets cannot guarantee equal access to its content, because economic resources are the key for coverage. Whilst this fruitless debate has taken place among Mexican intellectuals and scholars, media owners across the country keep on making money under government's complacency and turning their back to the society. 'Those who controlled the airwaves controlled news content, and in so doing they often sought to promote their own economic interests' (González 2009:260). For that reason, they have monopolised the information access, deviated public attention towards irrelevant issues, promoted tabloidization of political debate, and so on (Sandoval 2002).

Despite their individual power, media owners are a fragmented group, especially newspapers publishers, whose selfishness and lack of agreements have impeded the achievement of their common goals (Bohmann 1986). At least in part, due to a less rigid legal framework that determines their operation, printed media exist in a relatively quiet comfort

zone. Thus, they do not need to lobby law initiatives with the Congressmen and government, because the regulation for printed media gives them a wider margin to operate. Furthermore, their readership is significantly less than radio and television audiences, that is why they are usually not under official scrutiny. For that reason, they just focus on negotiating official advertising contracts with the political elites (Bohmann 1986, Trejo 1992 and 1998). That is not the case of the broadcasters, whom have created quite a solid front in defence of their interests as a group. Through their national association (Cámara Nacional de la Industria de la Radio y Televisión), radio and television networks owners have won important battles. An example of this is the so-called *Ley Televisa*, which was a reform of the Federal Law of Radio and Television that clearly grants important benefits to the big national chains and diminishes the role of the State as regulator in these matters (Reyes 2007, Esteinou and Alva 2009). Once again, the Mexican case confirms the rule for the whole continent: 'Latin American broadcasters and newspaper owners, arguing freedom of expression, bitterly resisted what they considered the movement towards new government regulation' (Fox 1988:7).

Whether individually or collectively, and in spite of certain moments of tension, there is a 'cosy relationship between establishment media and political leaders' (Lawson 2002:27). As a result of that warm and close interaction, there is collusion between both of them, which fosters mutual collaboration for achieving their goals: business opportunities for the former and publicity for the latter. Since Mexican news outlets are considered more in terms of business rather than public service (Trejo 1992), it is not surprising then that the collusion grows stronger every day, because none of the participants in this game is keen on changing this mutually beneficial situation. For that reason, publishers and broadcasters in Mexico can be considered as 'cooperative and well-rewarded members of the governing elite' (Orme 1997:2).

Just as the case of the *Ley Televisa*, approved in 2006 but constantly analysed and commented upon ever since, broadcasters proved their negotiation skills also thanks to the reduced number of hands which hold radio and television stations, a situation that facilitates the bargain of individual benefits. On the one hand, the strengthening of this oligopoly is because the vast majority of the media organizations belong to some of the wealthiest businessmen in Mexico, whose commercial priorities greatly diverge from the public service that news outlets are supposed to deliver to

their audiences. On the other, there is an indulgent government that wants to keep owners happy as long as they keep aligned. Thus, the fact that most of the media are private-owned has not necessarily represented a real competition among them, because there are only two national television networks and few groups handle a great number of radio stations. Even more, some of those firms also own related enterprises such as newspapers, magazines, cable companies and even football teams (Trejo 1992, Lozano 1996 and Lawson 2002).

The importance of market competition also underscores the dangers that high levels of media concentration pose for many new democracies. Lack of market competition makes it easier for media owners to introduce their own biases (or those of their political allies) into news coverage. One typical result is a status quo slant to news coverage, which generally discourages civic mobilization, conceals potential scandals, and favour political establishment in election campaigns (Lawson 2002: 6-7).

Under these conditions, Mexican journalism is prey of economic interests and, as a result of that, journalists' press has become managers' press, because newsworthiness values fade away when money values are at stake. This situation leads publishers and broadcasters to act as mere negotiators, instead of journalists, which outcome is the stagnation of media openness to a real competence and access (Trejo 1998). Although it is not necessarily a rule – as noted by Garnham (1979) - due to their economic background as businessmen, in general terms, media owners tend to be aligned to the right and, hence, they usually are politically conservative and supporters of the establishment (Herman and Chomsky 1994, Shoemaker and Reese 1996, McNair 2007 and Mosco 2009). For that reason, their political vision permeates the way news are approached and presented by their personnel (Lawson 2002, Hughes and Lawson 2004, Tuchman 2002, Schudson 2005a and González 2009). That is, 'ideological differences will not be dramatic as long as the journalistic field is produced by and for the wealthiest, most educated class fractions' (Benson 2006:193).

However, not everything related to media owners has to be negative by itself. On the contrary, some of them - especially certain publishers in Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey - and by their own initiative have fostered an innovative way of producing news. Under a more civic approach, they have transformed their newsrooms into a public service oriented centre of reporters, whose work stimulates social mobilization by keeping citizens

informed about what they need to know, in order to keep the government accountable at all time (Hughes 2006). By responding more to their readers than political elites, these news outlets have been gaining economic and ideological independence (Lawson 2002 and Hughes 2006). However, this process of transformation was more the product of individual initiatives of particular publishers rather than a general trend (Orme 1997).

Although several newspapers – mainly located in the largest cities - have decided to follow the civic path, printed media in many parts of the country still operate under the authoritarian veil; such as the case of Morelia, where news outlets are yet to become civic, as it will be argued in the final three chapters of this thesis. The reason, which will be specifically stressed in the conclusions of this study,¹⁹ is that ownership is not the key for understanding the transformation of news organizations (or lack of it), it is their economic capacity to survive in a reduced market like the Mexican.

1.2.5 Development of the Mexican media market

There are two reasons why the concept of media market is important for this research: firstly because it is one of the parameters of the media system (Hallin and Mancini 2004), and secondly because its size and characteristics are directly connected to the idea of partisanship.²⁰ Hence, this section presents a general panorama of the media market in Mexico.

Mexican media market has historically been unevenly developed, because competition has not been homogeneously promoted: there are a lot of newspapers along the country, an important amount of radio stations, but only two national television chains (Trejo 1992 and 1998). Therefore, this situation has fostered different set of relationships between news organizations and political actors.

During President Benito Juárez's administration (1867-1872), Mexican press enjoyed a significant extent of freedom and, due to an educational impulse, printed media's circulation increased the nearly marginal levels it has before. By the end of nineteenth century, *El Imparcial* was founded and a new age for newspapers arrived, because it became the first mass news outlet in the country with a circulation that reached up to 100 thousand copies, and it also

¹⁹ See chapter seven, section 7.3 *Economically-driven partisanship*.

²⁰ See chapters two (section 2.1 *Partisanship*) and three (section 3.1 *Media system*).

represented a transformation from opinion to factual journalism. During the Revolution war (1910-1920), *El Universal* (1916) and *Excélsior* (1917) inaugurated the age of the so-called national press. Both of them are still circulating, and especially the former is one of the most influential printed media in the country (Bohmann 1986 and Benavides 2000).

Both national and foreign scholars (Trejo 1992, Skidmore 1993, Hallin 1995 and 2000a, and Hughes 2006) agreed with the point that, at least from the 1990's to the present moment, Mexican newspapers have had a limited circulation, compared with the population rates. 'Like southern Europe and the rest of Latin America... Mexico has never really had a mass-circulation press. Mexican newspapers have small, mainly elite circulations' (Hallin 2000a: 268). Furthermore, this level is even lower for international standards, which put these news outlets in a weak position within an economically difficult environment. In order to survive, they are openly dependent on official sponsorship (Trejo 1992, Benavides 2000 and Hughes 2006). This situation turned them into means of pressure towards political and government elites, instead of information channels between authorities and citizens. Since printed media's readership is reduced, electronic media – especially television - have a great importance then. The latter have taken advantage of what the former have left undone and, thanks to their undeniable penetration, broadcast companies have reached most of Mexican homes, from the poorest south to the wealthiest north (Trejo 1992 and Hallin 1995).

Mexican press is also 'fragmented and centralised' (Trejo 1992:18). There is no such thing as national press, because the most important newspapers are published in Mexico City and their circulation is basically limited to that place. Even though they distribute copies to each state, their availability there is reduced, as well as their readership. On the other hand, outside the capital city and with few exceptions widely praised by Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2003 and 2006), local news outlets are still 'weak, handicraft-like and, in strict sense, parochial' (Trejo 1998:230). However, they represent the specific political culture in which they operate.

Despite their limited circulation and, therefore, readership, newspapers have managed to survive throughout the PRI regime and beyond. To a large extent, they could have done that through the official advertising revenues, and some other government help, such as newsprint subventions and even bribes (Hallin 2000b). Besides these factors, Trejo (1998) also identified another two reasons why so many printed media could survive with so few

readers: firstly, there are some other official subsidies, such as tax exemptions and relatively easy legal procedures to operate. Secondly, a scarce critical readership, which keep newspapers in a comfort zone where they would hardly move, because they basically do not need to do more than they have already been doing.

In recent years, due to the allegedly arrival of the civic journalism, Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2006) perceived that market competition has been having an increasingly importance among publishers and broadcasters, not to the same extent for all though. This is because newspapers and radio stations face more competition than television channels, which determines the content they offer to their audience. Notwithstanding, the relevance of this discussion will be stressed in the fifth chapter of this thesis (section 5.1 *Media market*), where the particularities of the Morelian market will be connected to the overall analysis of the local media system (macro level) and its role in shaping the interaction between reporters and government/party elites (micro level).

1.2.6 The journalist-politician relationship

Evaluating the change or continuity of the Mexican media requires taking a close look to the way politicians and reporters interact, because it is at the micro level where the traits of the environment (macro level) make sense. That is, the specific conditions of the system determine the relationship between the actors. In order to understand the Morelian case, this section presents a review of this interaction within the national context.

'In recent years, Mexican press has moved from an almost complete subordination to political power towards an uncovering, in which standards for a new and not unhealthy relationship have barely started being built' (Trejo 1998:152). Nonetheless, this development is not a general trend in the whole country because, as this case study will show, authoritarian reminiscences of the journalist-politician relationship such as the described here so far, are still the common rule in places like Morelia. Prior to the discussion about the results of the field work, it is worth mentioning how the interaction between journalists and politicians has historically been in Mexico. Trejo (1998) argued that these actors live in an eternal love/hate relationship, in which feelings such as fear, comradeship, paranoia, collaboration, mistrust, hatred and even solidarity are present at all time. In

short, it is 'a marriage of convenience' in a social context that has 'little tolerance for divorce' (Orme 1997:6).

The rules of engagement between them are determined by a mutual interest of using one another and, in so doing, information is shaded and even determined by this fragile relationship. As a result of that, reporters easily shift from cheerleaders to obsessive mistake hunters. On the other hand, politicians shift from sepulchral silence to attention seekers (Trejo 1998). That is the reason why, more than never before, politicians need news organizations to publicise themselves, diffuse their messages, create and maintain their popularity, and attenuate as much as possible the criticism towards them and their performance. Government authorities and political parties' leaders, then, must be professionals of communications too (Carpizo 1999). It means that current politicians are not merely 'sensitive' to news coverage, they even have a significant knowledge of the news-making process as well (Davis 2007:189). This paradoxical mixture of necessity and rejection has fostered constant overreactions in both sides, and that is exactly when conflicts start: the more journalists behave as judges who can censure anything and politicians act with impunity, the less credibility they have (Trejo 1992). In sum, 'the relationship between press and government is, therefore, versatile and contradictory. It feeds from mutual conveniences and pressures' (Trejo 1992:19).

In order to give sense to their activities, ones are dependent on the others. But, instead of admitting their mutual and inevitable dependence, they repudiate it just as if it was a shameful relationship. They need one another, but they detest each other too (Trejo 1998:154).

Davis (2007:194) found a similar situation at Westminster, where MPs and political correspondents coexist in a sometimes hostile atmosphere. Notwithstanding, their relationship has more sides than mere conflict or collaboration:

Politicians and journalists do have uneasy relations with each other that revolve around an exchange of political information for news coverage. However, the relationships between the two are more multifaceted than that. Politicians use news and their interactions with journalists to get other sorts of information that are relevant to the political process on a day-to-day level. The two also combine, sometimes consciously in alliances, and sometimes by playing off each other, to influence political agendas and the search for policy solutions.

In order to survive, Mexican publishers and broadcasters have been very keen on cultivating protectors among State and political elites. For that reason, they have carefully selected the battles they regularly face, because they understand that perennial and general conflicts are not just useless and eroding, they are not economically convenient either (Riding 1984, Rodríguez 1993 and Lawson 2002). Under that logic, during the PRI regime media showed a clear inclination towards *presidencialismo*, which was a tendency to avoid any kind of criticism to the President (Molina 1987, Rodríguez 1993 and Hallin 1995). Therefore, a patron-client relationship between high rank official and the press was the rule of the interaction between these actors (Rodríguez 1993, Torres 1997, Benavides 2000, Adler-Lomnitz *et al* 2004, Orozco 2007, Davis 2009 and De León 2009). This phenomenon, once again, was a reflection of the social environment, in which Mexicans used to have in high esteem the figure of the head of the federal government, who enjoyed an excessive power and whose decisions were discretionary (Almond and Verba 1963, Philip 1992, Camp 1993 and Blum 1997).

Choosing just certain battles and promoting mutually beneficial relationships becomes clearer at the ground level, where this interaction actually takes place. Boosting personal and direct contact with news workers and political elites is the key for a collaborative relationship. That is, more than the mere press release or interview, reporters are interested on expanding their network of reliable sources, and politicians take advantage of it by getting publicity and branding (Bohmann 1986, Trejo 1992 and 1998, Lawson 2002). Notwithstanding, this situation is not unique at all. Brown (2011:61) explained that British New Labour communications strategy was based on the 'systematic development of relations with the news media', in which a favourable coverage was promoted by positive (access to exclusive information) and negative sanctions (information blockade and frequent complaints).

This thesis about Morelia reinforces the necessity to differentiate national and local realities, because each level involves its own particular sets of interactions between the political communication actors, even though there might be similarities, there are also important divergences. Thus, depending on the context, the relationship between reporters and politicians take different paths:

State media depend more on the information from state governments because of scarcer resources, are less critical of the government's agendas, rely much more heavily on

campaigns to make news from them, and place less emphasis on the adversarial roles. This may decrease state newspapers' initiatives for setting their own agendas and increase the power of state houses in setting the media agenda (Tan and Weaver 2009:457).

Professionalization – understood as the skills, training and code of conduct - is a key that determines the journalist-politician relationship, because there is a correlation between both actors' performance: the more prepared public servants are, the more accurate reporters' work tends to be. In other words, government officials' high performance promotes journalists' awareness of their watchdog role (Tan and Weaver 2009). If this last assumption is right, it means that the Mexican case, or at least the Morelian case, is far from this point because 'press-power relationship does not seem to have had radical changes; today, just as before, a system of subordinations and complicities still permeates the journalistic practice with the political and economic power centres' (Santillán 2008:208).

As it will be argued in the final chapters of this thesis, besides the correspondence between the levels of professionalization of reporters and party/government elites, there is also a tension between the economic strength of the media and the professionalization of their staff. That is, the structure of the media environment determines the journalistic practice, which is the core argument of this study because, in order to understand the lack of change of Mexican media, it is important to analyse the role of the macro level in shaping the actors at the micro level.²¹

1.2.7 Summary of the section

This section presented an overview of some of the Mexican media's main features, which are relevant to this study because these concepts will be used for analysing the case of Morelia. The literature about journalism in Mexico stressed its historic partisanship, a characteristic that has been present since the very beginning of the press, which has been used for supporting specific political ideologies. Besides this feature, historically the government has exerted pressure towards news outlets through different soft means: control of newsprint, information access, tax exemptions, bribes and the allocation of advertising.

²¹ See chapter seven, section 7.1 *Context matters: Media macro level and journalist-politician relationship*.

Although the aim of the official advertising is to foster communication between the government and its constituency, by keeping the latter informed about the activities of the former, these adverts have become the modern and institutional bribe. This is because signing one of these contracts promotes a patron-client relationship, in which media are expected to offer a favourable coverage in return of the allocation of advertising. In that sense, the corruption currently takes place especially at the highest levels. That is, instead of with foot news workers, the coverage negotiations are between publishers/broadcasters and party/government elites. This is of particular interest to newspapers because the printed media market is reduced and the dependence on the official budget is basically their survival strategy. In that sense, the journalist-politician relationship is utilitarian, because it is built upon the exchange of publicity for revenues.

1.3 Mexican media in a comparative perspective

Although this thesis is built upon a single case study, in order to put the Mexican media in an international context, it is worth briefly revising some other countries in which news outlets presented similar characteristics to the ones commented in this chapter. Therefore, the aim is to find the links between this research and a wider scholarship. In so doing, rather than exhaustive, because it is not the goal of this research either, this brief review of other places will show that the Mexican case is not exactly unique. That is, it shares several common features with other media systems around the world. For that reason, this last section offers only a quick glance at certain patterns found in Mexico as well as in South America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002) found that media systems in Latin America and southern Europe (Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal) shared at least five important features: an underdeveloped media market with low levels of newspapers circulation, an evident trend towards instrumentalization of both private and public news organizations by the government in turn, politicization of broadcast laws and regulations, low levels of journalistic autonomy and, as a consequence of that, a poor professionalization of reporters. Besides these traits, Hughes and Lawson (2005) pointed at five 'barriers' to the development of a civic journalism in Latin American countries: violence against reporters without prosecution, authoritarian governments who discourage investigative journalism,

oligarchic practices of television owners, low levels of journalistic professionalization and reduced newspapers circulation.

The ties between the Latin American broadcasters and the government have been a hallmark of the radio and television systems in the region. Due to the monopolistic and/or oligopolistic practices, market forces were never media owners' main concern. On the contrary, negotiating particular business opportunities with high rank authorities was always their priority. Therefore, 'the twin ideas of public service and protectionism were never the organising principles of broadcasting systems, but intervention by the state and political manipulation of the media held back the expansion of market forces' (Fox and Waisbord 2002:1). In that sense, Mexican *Televisa* and Brazilian *Grupo Globo* are the most representative examples of the 'Latin Model' of television (Sinclair 2002 and González 2009). This is because of two reasons: firstly, their dynastic character of ownership and control, which means that they are family-run businesses. Secondly, thanks to their alignment to the ruling elites of those countries, those companies could grow at disproportionate levels, controlling not only TV but several related enterprises too (radio, cable, publications...).

Even though the American model of liberal journalism²² was adopted in many countries and assumed as the standard for the media, in practice it has never been fully and homogeneously successful, as the South American case has proved. In that region it could not be developed under its original cannons because the environment did not allow it. Waisbord (2000a:51) argued that over there 'it was improbable that a liberal press would develop in antiliberal capitalist societies'. This is because despite their public support to market laws, privately media owners continued courting and negotiating with government elites. That is why their commercial interests relied more upon official authorities than upon the market.

However, there is also a sense of modernization of the press in South America, especially in terms of watchdog journalism. Notwithstanding, similar to the Mexican case, the practice of investigative reports usually takes place in the metropolitan news outlets of Argentina, Brazil and Colombia. Just as this thesis will argue, the obstacles to the transformation of journalism in this region are similar: lack of resources, docile editors and publishers, and different pressures from outside the newsrooms (Waisbord

²² See chapter two, section 2.2 *The myth of objectivity*, under the subheading *Objectivity and Americanization*.

2000b). Another interesting similarity between this study and the rest of Latin America is related to the professionalization of journalists. Just as in Morelia,²³ there has been a generational shift within the media personnel, and this new wave of reporters is now mainly integrated by university graduates. Besides their theoretical background, these youngsters tend to be politically detached and, hence, partisanship does not play an important role in their professional life (Waisbord 2000b).

Beyond its southern boundaries, there are also several examples of this argument in Europe, and Russia is one of them. According to McNair (2000), due to its communist past, objective reporting was never fully developed in post-Soviet media because, on the one hand, journalists were used to be ideologically aligned and, on the other, the audience expected an important dose of partisanship as well. For that reason, contemporary Russian press still oscillates between its authoritarian roots and the imported market forces. Turkey is a similar case because, prior to the commercialization process, the government exerted great power over the media and the arrival of private ownership did not bring an immediate change either. In that sense, patron-client networks fostered the instrumentalization of Turkish news organizations (Carkoglu and Yavuz 2010).

Political parallelism is not an uncommon feature in Europe. The phenomenon of pillarization in the Netherlands had an important impact on Dutch journalism during at least half of the twentieth century, because each one of the four religious and secular segments of society (Catholic, Protestant, socialist and liberal) had their own news outlets which represented their own interests and goals (Brown 2011). Another example is the press in the United Kingdom which, by reporting the permanent struggle between Conservative and Labour parties, 'has a reputation of being exceptionally partisan' even for Western standards (Brandenburg 2006:158). However, this ideological alignment has shifted towards a 'less propagandistic practice', in which partisanship and a commitment to balanced coverage coexist (Birks 2010:215).

The carrot and the stick metaphor is also useful for explaining Taiwanese and Korean media systems, in which patron-client relationships distinguished the interaction between journalists and politicians (Lee 2000 and Park *et al* 2000). In both cases, direct government intervention in newsrooms were more the exception than the rule because, through more

²³ See chapter five, subsection 5.3.2 *Academic background*.

subtle means of persuasion (tax exemptions, business opportunities and even bribes), friendly coverage was commonly negotiated. In that sense, the fear of the withdrawal of favours by authorities turned to be much more effective than the fear of punishments. Even more, just as during the PRI regime in Mexico, Taiwanese publishers and broadcasters assumed themselves as defenders of the official ideology.

In addition, biased coverage towards the government is also one of the media's hallmarks in Malaysia. Abbott (2011) explained that news stories were overtly favourable to official discourse due to three reasons: firstly, thanks to the Internal Security Act, authorities could silence any critical voice by arguing that certain specific information might endanger the correct operation and performance of the government or one of its offices. Secondly, clientelism determines the relationship between media owners and political elites, who negotiate favours in exchange of editorial alignment. Thirdly, as a result of these two previous factors, self-censorship has been the common rule for Malay political journalism.

Finally, the Mexican *chayote* - the practice of the bribery towards the press – has its counterpart in several African countries. Generically known as “brown envelope journalism”,²⁴ it represents the action of giving cash or other gifts (freebies) to a journalist who is covering a story (Hasty 2005 and Skjerdal 2010). Granting any of these kinds of reward to a reporter takes place at a personal level (the source directly gives it to him/her),²⁵ it represents an informal contract between the actors involved and, hence, it has certain level of confidentiality (Skjerdal 2010:360). Just as it will be argued in this thesis regarding Morelia and Mexico, despite the increasing level of professionalization, the practice of “brown envelope journalism” is a widespread rule in African news outlets (Hasty 2005 and Skjerdal 2010). Nevertheless, since the amount of money that an individual news worker gets from a source is reduced, but not bargained and, especially, it is considered as a cultural practice, it is hardly seemed as bribe by the actors

²⁴ Although the generic name is “brown envelope journalism”, each country refers to this practice in different ways: “soli” (Ghana), “gombo” (Cameroon) and “keske” (Nigeria), among other names (Skjerdal 2010)

²⁵ The personal feature of the “brown envelope journalism” makes it significantly different from the Mexican official advertising, considered in this thesis as the modern *chayote*. This is because the latter is negotiated between party/government elites and media owners and, hence, it takes place at an institutional level; whilst the former is a personal agreement between an individual reporter and his/her source.

involved. Thus, there is not any implicit ethical concern (Hasty 2005, Wasserman 2008 and Agbanu 2009).

1.3.1 Summary of the section

As this general review presented, the Mexican case is not exactly unique, because it shares a lot of common features with other media systems around the world. Issues such as partisanship are also present in post-Soviet Russia, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The patron-client relationship is a hallmark of the Turkish, Taiwanese and Korean press. The hybrid character of the journalistic practice, in which American standards and authoritarian reminiscences coexist, is also very common in different nations of Latin America and Southern Europe. Furthermore, the Mexican *chayote* has in the practice of the “brown envelope journalism” its African counterpart.

1.4 Summary

Due to a series of political, electoral, economic and social transformations during at least three decades, Mexico has been slowly changing from the authoritarian PRI regime towards a more dynamic democracy. According to Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2003 and 2006), the democratization of the country involved a modernization of the media. However, as it will be discussed in the last three chapters of this thesis, the few signs of transformation that they found do not necessarily represent the Mexican press as a whole. The reason is that the new authorities are still using most of the means of coercion which were the hallmark of the journalist-politician relationship for more than seventy years, especially the official advertising which has become the new and institutional bribe. Even though the government adverts have the democratic function of informing the citizens about the performance of the public servants, the allocation of this paid publicity is also used for buying friendly coverage from the news outlets. However, many of the characteristics found in Mexican media (e.g. bribes, partisanship, patron-client relationships, and etcetera) are also common features in South America, Europe, Asia and Africa. In order to make sense of some of the important concepts mentioned in the last sections, the next chapter will offer a wide discussion about partisanship and objectivity.

Chapter 2 Media partisanship

The aim of this chapter is to open a general discussion about two important concepts: partisanship and objectivity, and the permanent interactions between them. Their relevance for this thesis relies on the fact that they will be constantly referred for analysing the empirical evidence. That is, although the following sections will not be related specifically to Mexico, their content is a key for explaining this case study. In other words, the notions of partisanship and objectivity are present in the Morelian journalism, which is determined by the permanent struggle between the normative cannons taught in the classrooms and the exigencies of the every-day practice of the newsrooms. Therefore, the content of this chapter is divided in three parts: firstly, a general definition of partisanship and its main characteristics. The second is a discussion about the existence of the so-called objectivity as an opposite to partisan information. Thirdly, there will be a general summary.

2.1 Partisanship

As commented in the previous chapter (section 1.2 *Mexican media's main features*), the press in Mexico has historically been partisan because, from its origins, it has been identified with a political ideology. However, as was also mentioned at the end of that chapter (section 1.3 *Mexican media in a comparative perspective*), partisanship is not an unknown phenomenon in many countries. Thus, this section offers a general approach to this topic and its implications for the news making process, which is also an important feature of the concept of *Media System* (Hallin and Mancini 2004) that will be discussed in the next chapter (section 3.1 *Media System*).

Historically, the press and political parties have been interconnected, sometimes closely and others not that much, but their linkages have been there since the very beginning. Thus, as Patterson and Donsbach (1996:456) commented, political advocacy is not an insignificant feature of modern journalism. This is because there are vestiges everywhere of the old-fashion news reporting, related to the ideological alignment in the news stories. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising at all that 'journalists are partisan actors as well as news professionals. Journalists' partisanship

affects their news decisions, even when they operate within organizations committed to the principle of partisan neutrality'. In short terms, media partisanship could be defined as the explicit or implicit alignment towards a political party or ideology. It takes form through formal and informal organizational linkages between news outlets and political institutions (government and parties), daily news stories' content, personal affiliations of the reporters, editors and publishers/broadcasters, and audiences' preferences (Hallin and Mancini 2004, Carkoglu and Yavuz 2011). In practice, the ideological alignment of the media is manifested in the coverage. That is, the stories they publish tend to include or exclude specific issues or actors according to the particular agenda of the party – or faction – that the news outlet supports. In other words, criticism or sympathy is determined by partisanship.

Due to their expected critical view towards the social reality, at least in most of the Western democracies, reporters tend to be more liberal than conservative. Although media owners are generally wealthy businessmen, with clear inclinations to the right corner of the political spectrum, news workers position themselves at the centre-left of the ideologies (Patterson and Donsbach 1996). Even though it depends on each media system, there is a tendency among media personnel to work for a news outlet that shares their political values, hence, they could openly frame the information according to their ideology (Patterson and Donsbach 1996, Gans 2004, Hallin and Mancini 2004). Nonetheless, in more competitive media environments, where market determines media operation, partisanship is reduced and, therefore, the opportunities to freely express it. There are also cases in which ideological conflict between owners and their personnel affects the production of messages, but the latter are the weakest link and are disposable. Thus, the last word is always at the former's side. For instance, in Mexico 'most station owners (whether private entrepreneurs or government officials) held political preferences, and their preferences determined coverage even when news staff at the station favoured greater balance' (Hughes and Lawson 2004:100).

Patterson and Donsbach (1996) questioned the extent political ideologies affect news decisions and how journalists cope with that situation. The scholars argued that partisan beliefs do impact on those decisions, because reporters are partisan actors. Notwithstanding, the extent of the impact is determined by the context in which they operate.

Partisanship in the media, however, is not merely a question of the news organizations within which journalists work. In the final analysis, the issue of journalists' partisanship is a question of it affects their news decisions. If, as news professionals, they make their choices almost entirely in the context of prescribed journalistic norms and practices, their partisan beliefs are largely immaterial (Donsbach and Patterson 2004:257).

Political ideologies shape reporters' visions of their social world. That is, prior and above their involvement in the mass communications industry, they are citizens with their own values. It becomes evident from their approach towards the event to the information they select and the way they write the story. Nevertheless, this situation is hardly accepted by them, because the choices they make are primarily at the unconscious level, making partisan bias hard to detect (Lozano 1996, Avilés 1999 and Marín 2003). 'But in fact they are projecting onto the public their own inclinations and their own views' (Bourdieu 1998:3). In that sense, reporters' dimensions of 'autonomy' and 'positioning' determine their role as political actors. The former is related to a passive-active stance towards news reporting. Whilst passivity represents being instrumentalised by the politicians, activity means being in control of the journalistic investigation and interpretation of the facts. The notion of positioning regards the neutral-advocate position, which means taking sides or not during the news production and diffusion (Donsbach and Patterson 2004).

Since media content is not solely built upon hard facts, because implicitly or explicitly opinions are always present in the news, partisanship is an inherent element in the production of messages. The ideal, then, is that news organizations should offer the best information and opinions possible (Marín 2003). Through its editorial possibilities, the role of the press is not only informing about the social, political, economic or cultural reality, it is also fostering public opinion and participating in the discussion and definition of political issues. This situation could also influence their readers' opinions and knowledge (Santillán 2008).

Journalism, therefore, like any other narrative which is the work of human agency, is essentially ideological – a communicative vehicle for the transmission to an audience (intentionally or otherwise) not just of facts but of the assumptions, attitudes, beliefs and values of its maker(s), drawn from and expressive of a particular world-view (McNair 2007:6).

Thus, every social activity is related to a certain form of knowledge and, hence, ideology (Smith cited in Tuchman 1978). In that sense, the presence of news workers' personal bias in their every-day work is basically inevitable. For that reason, the empire of pure professional values among the journalistic community is just utopia. This is because 'conscious ideological thought is mainly left to intellectuals and political activists. Journalists are neither... Although the news constantly touches on ideological issues of moment, journalists are, for the most part, not even aware of this' (Gans 2004:190). Even more, ideologies become a shield to protect reporters from other alien ideologies, by taking the former as a dogmatic true which does not allow any kind of questioning.

News, like knowledge, imposes a frame for defining and constructing social reality. But, as ideology, news blocks inquiry by preventing an analytic understanding through which social actors can work to understand their own fate. Ultimately, news as ideology prevents... the ascertainment of truths about contemporary society, by limiting access to ideas (Tuchman 1978:180).

Shoemaker and Reese (1996:221-222) considered that ideology exerts a natural influence on media personnel, because it is 'a symbolical mechanism that serves as a cohesive and integrating force in society'. Therefore, since it provides a system of values, meanings and beliefs, it represents a particular way to see and understand the world. Likewise, ideology 'provides a cognitive orientation to the world, which, while it contains lacunae and contradictions, does, nonetheless provide solutions to most practical problems encountered' (Schlesinger 1978:163). Thus, as average persons, journalists are not immune to the power exerted by ideologies on their daily activities.

Besides its inherent presence, partisanship is also fostered by all the different 'complicity links' (Marín 2003:321) that each media organization establishes with diverse social, political, economic and cultural sectors. Therefore, through its diverse genres, the journalistic practice becomes the expression of those interests. Hence, especially editorial pages and columns make evident what news stories, investigative reports and chronicles implicitly suggest. Rather than being explicit, the agreements between owners and political/economic elites are implicit most of the times, and they promote partiality when reporting about the actors involved in them. This is because keeping shared interest safe is way more important than offering balanced information. In that sense, news outlets are stake holders of

political and economic power, which puts them right at the establishment side (Herman and Chomsky 1994, Shoemaker and Reese 1996, Mosco 2009).

Whether ideologically or economically, the general trend in countries like Mexico is that media support the government, by offering it a friendly coverage in return of specific favours (advertising contracts, tax exemptions, broadcast concessions, and etcetera). This situation fosters a patron-client relationship, which tightens the complicity links between them (Sandoval 2002, Hallin and Papathanassopoulos 2002, Hallin and Mancini 2004). According to Hallin (1995), political culture is the key for understanding partisanship, because since news organizations are supposed to reflect the environment in which they operate, its main features remain in the organizational culture of each news outlet then. In other words, authoritarian or democratic regimes boost authoritarian or democratic media systems.

Brown (2011) argued that partisan press reduces the impact of news management, which represents the efforts to shape political information coverage (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999). Whilst political communications is in a process of professionalization, by developing a series of strategies for getting publicity and influencing agenda, partisanship makes those attempts pretty much useless. That is, despite all the journalistic professional values and the efforts of the political actors, partisanship determines reporting about politics, especially in media systems with strong partisan roots. 'A strongly partisan media would always provide favourable coverage to the party it supports and negative coverage to the party that it opposes, making news management unnecessary or pointless' (Brown 2011:63).

Although partisanship is a common phenomenon around the globe, it does not appear in the same way everywhere, because political contexts vary from one place to another. For that reason, there are certain factors that constrain it: firstly, in media systems dominated by a market logic, in spite of their ideological alignments, news outlets prefer to publish a "good story" and sell papers by exposing a fellow politician, instead of ignoring it and letting competitors exploit it. Secondly, at an organizational level, media partisanship depends on the owners' and editors' particular interests, because they are the ones who actually decide what to publish and how. For that reason, if they suddenly decide to switch allegiance, the whole editorial line has to change too. Thirdly, rather than to another party, the shift might be to a specific faction within the same political institution. This would

necessarily narrow the scope of readership and, therefore, party membership identification (Brown 2011).

It has been claimed that thanks to the development of the mass press and broadcast systems, political parallelism has been losing its former power. The reason is crystal clear: selling papers or maintaining the rating levels is now more important than being devoted followers of an ideology. Nevertheless, this assumption cannot be easily generalised, because there are media systems in which partisanship is still the common rule, such as this case study will prove. So, it might have diminished, but it has not disappeared at all. Notwithstanding, Hallin (2009) suggested that with the emergence of new media, like the blogosphere, digital radio and the cable television, partisanship is becoming stronger again, because news organizations are in the middle of a period of crisis and technological transformation. For that reason, 'the idea that commercialization would lead inevitably to political neutrality... is clearly false; depending on the structure of media markets and on the political culture in which they operate, partisanship may be viable or even essential business strategy' (Hallin 2009:333).

Brandenburg (2006) agreed with this idea and emphasised that in a time when audiences tend to shift their political alignments, news outlets tend to adapt their approach to the information according to their public's tastes. Partisanship as a business strategy, however, depends on the size of the market: if it is large enough so different news organizations could survive, it is then a viable way to operate (Brown 2011). Once again, this statement might accurately explain a Western media system, but a rather different environment - such as the Mexican - requires a different approach, like the one proposed in this thesis, in which partisanship, more than a business strategy, is a survival strategy.

In that sense, it could be argued that market and partisanship are interdependent factors, because the size of the former impacts on the shape of the latter. That is, small markets have media that cannot be commercially sustained and, hence, they have to align towards the government in order to get economic support from it. In Mexico, however, government subsidies are employed for sustaining non viable news outlets with the effect of undermining the emergence of a less partisan commercial media. On the contrary, if the market is large enough, partisanship can be a real business strategy, such as among British newspapers.

In other words, the difference between partisanship as a “business strategy” and a “survival strategy” relies on the fact that the former is a decision based upon the readership and its political affinities, whilst for the latter the readers are not important because they are very few and, thus, economically insignificant. Therefore, the first case represents an ideological alignment and the second case represents an allegiance towards the government in turn, no matter the party. That is the reason why, contrary to the Mexican case, in the UK and US ‘probably the most persistent chilling effects come from the audience, whose refusal to view or subscribe is a more direct threat to journalists and their firms than a sponsor’s or politician’s attack’ (Gans 2004:252).

Finally, far from being something wrong *per se*, partisan media could also facilitate political debate among members of the audience, besides merely informing them. In so doing, these news outlets could have a more direct impact on mobilising their public by providing them with useful information. This is because ‘they can inform, enliven, and encourage political discussion that supposedly is at the heart of political democracy’ (Covert and Wasburn 2007:70). To a certain extent, partisan journalism could foster participatory democracy as well, by advocating the interests of vulnerable or subordinate groups, which are merely portrayed by investigating journalism as victims of government wrongdoings. In that sense, watchdog reporters are expected to challenge the existing system through harsh criticism, but partisan media seek to strengthen the correct functioning of the public administration and its personnel (Birks 2010). The existence of partisan media, notwithstanding, contributes to the fragmentation of the audience by offering little chance to hear alternative voices and, thus, social groups separate from one another.

2.1.1 Summary of the section

This section has outlined the concept of partisanship, which represents the political alignment of the media. In other words, it is the extent that the news outlets reflect a specific ideology which is manifested in the coverage (e.g. criticism or sympathy towards certain actors, inclusion or exclusion of particular issues, etc). Whether overt or subtle, a partisan stance is inevitable because reporters, editors and publishers/broadcasters are persons with their own ideologies and interests. The notion of partisanship and market are directly linked, because the shape of the former is determined by the size of the latter. That is, in a reduced market, partisanship is the only way to survive. On the contrary, if it is large enough, offering

partisan news is a business strategy. Finally, partisan media could also foster political debate by providing their audience not only information, but ideological guidance as well.

2.2 The myth of objectivity

The concept of objectivity will be frequently used in the fifth chapter of this thesis (sections 5.2 *Political parallelism* and 5.3 *Professionalization*), when part of the findings from the fieldwork will be commented. This term was constantly brought by several interviewees when, for instance, they were giving their opinions about their disagreement when local printed media published news with a clear political alignment. For that reason, this section presents a general discussion about objectivity and bias.

Closely connected with the idea of partisanship is the discussion about the allegedly media objectivity, considered by some researchers and practitioners as the ultimate goal of journalism. That is, the way to become watchdogs not mere lapdogs, critics not cheerleaders. In sum, it is the antidote to partisanship. Although it is an idea deeply rooted in worldwide news workers' discourse, as it will be argued in this section, its existence is just a myth. The reason is because this concept is a by-product of their own organizational routines, designed to gather and present information apparently without any bias (political, personal, economic and etcetera).

Objectivity, then, is a word that media and journalists love. They do not just love it, it is their battle flag. But, what does it mean? Does it really exist? 'The use of the term *objective* in the phrase *objective news reporting* is unfortunate in that implies theoretical problems regarding the nature of knowledge, problems that philosophers have been disputing for centuries' (Westerstahl 1983:403). In that sense, scholars from different social fields consider that objectivity is only related to objects, and subjectivity to subjects. That is exactly why, for instance, natural sciences are objective and arts are subjective (Guiraud 1984). Notwithstanding, as Marín (2003) argued, journalism is not an exact science, such as mathematics or physics. It is just a form of social expression generated, processed and consumed by individuals and institutions with diverse professional, economic, political and social interests and, thus, it is an activity permanently exposed to the risks of its intrinsic nature: subjectivity.

To journalists, like social scientists, the term objectivity stands as a bulwark between themselves and critics. Attacked for a controversial presentation of facts, newspapermen invoke their objectivity almost the way a Mediterranean peasant might wear a clove of garlic around his neck to ward off evil spirits (Tuchman 1972:660).

Even though, in practice, there is no such thing as “journalistic objectivity”, reporters worldwide still cling to the belief that if they collect and present the information in a ‘detached, unbiased and impersonal manner’, they are being objective (Tuchman 1972:676). Nonetheless, reality points in another direction, because these praised canons are the outcome of internal agreements,²⁶ reached by people with their own interests and guided by their own ideologies, hence, their own subjectivities.

In order to prevent internal and external criticism, news workers are more than keen on following the journalistic standards they have been taught in form of routines, which determine their daily activities: offering more than one side of the story, presenting supplementary facts, using direct quotations from their sources, structuring the story in descending importance order, and clearly separating facts from opinions (Tuchman 1972). Therefore, objectivity demands fulfilling these canons, which could be summarised in two main requirements: on the one hand, factuality which implies the notions of truth and relevance. On the other, impartiality which involves a neutral presentation of the information through balanced and non-partisan news story (Westerstahl 1983).

Nevertheless, fully meeting those standards is by no means guarantee of objectivity. This is because, in practice, personal and organizational ideologies and opinions determine which sides will be included, what kind of extra documents will be used, which quotes will be transcribed, and which fact is more important than the other. Thus, ‘objectivity is itself a value, but journalists try to exclude values in the narrower sense of the term... Value exclusion is therefore accompanied by value inclusion, both through story selection and as opinions expressed in specific stories’ (Gans 2004:182). Avilés (1999) commented that, considering all these conditions, media partisanship is not that serious. Ideological alignments are not dangerous when they are not used for economic interests, or when they accurately represent the values of their audience. As long as journalists work under

²⁶ These agreements are shared at an international level too, as it will be commented further in this section under the subheading *Objectivity and Americanization*.

ethical standards which help them being plural and balanced at the moment of writing the story, their particular ideologies become less important.

There must be journalistic ethics and that is accomplished when the information is attached to the truth. The other thing, the so-called objectivity, is something very arguable. Precise information might have – and actually has – the reporter's vision, his ideology and his particular perception of the world (Avilés 1999:4).

For that reason, the mere action of organising the facts and sources in a hierarchical order makes the writing of a news story a subjective activity. Hence, reporters ought to be very careful in handling the information, because they are expected to tell the “truth” based on facts, figures and quotations. In order to come up with an objective news story, journalists and editors rely on the concept of balance for presenting their ‘preferred meaning via a selected source, but point to a rebuttal or denial as a balancing of *truth claims*’ (Birks 2010:213).

By dispensing with the language of truth, in favour of that objectivity, journalists understood the necessity of discerning how the world out there was being represented from an interested or biased viewpoint. That said, however, even if each and every statement of fact was to be subject to verification, the professionally validated rules and procedures of objective reporting did not directly call into question the existence of absolute truth (Allan 2004:23).

Nevertheless, as Marín (2003) emphasised, there is a huge distance between the “journalistic truth” and the “true truth”. The first one is built upon the reliable information gathered by the reporter (interviews, documents, photographs...), which supports his story. The second represents the reality, what is actually happening outside the newsroom. Even though, at least ideally, both of them are supposed to be the same, in practice there is an important gap between them because one thing is what a journalist claims and another what it is in fact. It does not mean that the news worker is deliberately lying. It means that his job is just presenting information from credible sources, not verifying in reality what they told him. For instance, the governor announced the building of a new hospital in a far region of the state. The official statement is “true”, because he said that in a press conference. He might even have shown the blueprints and the budget. However, it is not media's responsibility to immediately go there and check it, because it would be simply impossible to do that with every single story. Although reporters do verify certain information from specific sources, the

decision is based upon the inherent or perceived credibility of the source. That is why, for example, an official statement from a high rank authority will be hardly subject to a double check process before printing the story.

A journalist would never, by any means or resource, be able to verify with undisputable certitude everything that he informs. The only thing he could do is providing a quotation or document, which could turn into a journalistic truth what, in strict sense, could be a rotund lie (Marín 2003:42).

In that sense, by selecting the events that might become news, choosing the sources that could fit their information requirements and determining the time of exposure, news organizations shape the journalistic truth, which is supposed to be an accurate representation of reality (López 2001). Just as the journalistic truth, the concept of news is also created by media. News is the outcome of a routine process of gathering, evaluation and presentation of information. These routines are learnt by reporters through diverse organizational criteria, which determine their daily activities by giving them a framework to rely on when they are on the field chasing their stories (Tuchman 1978 and De León 2008).

Each news outlet provides a specific framework for its personnel, which represents the rationale for their job. In other words, this some sort of handbook²⁷ helps the reporter in knowing how things are done in the organization he works for. Whether in a formal or informal way, media personnel are prepared to meet their specific deadlines and stories quota. It means that, 'journalists are caught up in structural processes which exert constraints on them such that their choices are totally preconstained' (Bourdieu 2005:45). Even more, there are certain routines shared by the journalistic community, such as the use of reliable sources. In practice, it means mainly government and political party elites, through their official press offices. The reason is simple: they are the ones who fully understand their needs and facilitate their job.

The dispersion of reporters to glean facts generates its own organizational structure replete with assigned responsibilities and priorities. These are the territorial, institutional and topical chains of command. Distinctions between and among these three spheres, which necessarily overlap one another, require

²⁷ Even though not every single news organization has its formal handbook (some examples are *El País* in Spain, or the Mexican newspapers *El Universal* and *Reforma*, and *La Voz* in Michoacán) each one of them has its particular way of getting things done.

ongoing negotiations of responsibility and newsworthiness (Tuchman 1978:211).

As a result of these negotiations, newsworthiness values are determined by mutual agreements between publishers, editors and reporters working together to maintain balance between interpersonal influences and interest, which might have an impact on the news making process. Even though the notion of process is not particularly well accepted among certain sectors of the journalistic community, it is worth underscoring that news does not exist by itself. Thus, it is something that was produced through a series of stages of collection, edition and presentation of facts. That is, once again, a process. Despite there is nothing wrong with this idea, some practitioners regard it as an offense, but 'we didn't say journalists *fake* the news, we said journalists *make* the news' (Schudson 1989:263).

In so doing, as an average worker in a common factory, a journalist must deliver a new product every day. For that reason, he is attached to procedures that become rituals, which help him to do his job in a way that his editor, director and even readers could be satisfied (Tuchman 1972). The rationale behind these rituals is that they help him to find 'the most efficient ways to come up with a satisfactory product on a regular basis at the lowest cost' (Cook 1998:63).

According to this point of view, 'the news is the fact or the event, but the news story is the way the reporter translate and shape it in order to communicate it' (Marin 2003:74). Lozano (1996) added that the journalistic message must be considered as a process, because it is built from several spread pieces or a 'collection of facts' (Tuchman 1972:663). In addition, the reporters not only pick up and publish them, the news is shaped by different micro and macro factors such as the reporters own interests, media partisanship, commercial contracts, and so on (Shoemaker and Reese 1996).

Given everything that has been stressed here about the impossibility of reaching objectivity, it becomes clear that news workers simply can never be impartial. Media are partial, that is a fact, but not all the time in ideological terms. Thomas (2008) argued that, more than political allegiance, their real predisposition is towards conflict, which is what sells copies or increases rating levels.

Politicians accuse the press of being cruel. Sometimes we are... There is a trend among politicians towards blaming the press of all their shames... Of course there are editors and directors-general who would love to appoint kings, or be kings

themselves... Media magnates have sought to leave their personal mark, if not changing the course of history (Thomas 2008:21-22).

Suspensions towards reporters' partiality come from contradictory stances: on the one hand, they are accused of harshly attacking politicians and, on the other, they are also perceived as having a cosy relationship with their sources. Both of them have been their sins, and journalists have historically oscillated between these equally dangerous positions (Thomas 2008). Nonetheless, 'up to now the only commitment that does not exist is with society, on which behalf everyone, absolutely everyone speaks' (Avilés 1999:8).

2.2.1 Objectivity versus bias

The strategic ritual of objectivity is supposed to act as an antidote against biased reporting but, if the former is an unreachable ideal, the latter is a concept no less evasive: 'while bias is easy to charge, it's not so easy to define and measure because bias, as the saying goes about beauty, can often be in the mind of the beholder' (Zeldes *et al* 2008:564). Whether real or perceived, conscious or unconscious, bias is an undeniable feature of the news content by which information is selected, processed and presented to the mass audience.

Above all, bias is a process of selection inherent to the journalistic practice, which not necessarily means offering unbalanced or unfair coverage (Gunter 1997). However, controversy begins when the selected information offers a slanted vision of reality that does not reflect the events as they actually happened. By distorting the facts, misrepresenting the actors or even suppressing certain data, bias reaches its worst facet and becomes 'a consistent tendency to depart from the straight path of objective truth by deviating either to left or right... In news and information it refers to a systematic tendency to favour (in outcome) one side or position over another' (McQuail quoted in Shoemaker and Reese 1996:42).

News does not select itself, but is rather the product of judgements concerning the social relevance of given events and situations based on assumptions concerning their interest and importance. The reality it portrays is always in at least one sense biased, simply in virtue of the inescapable decision to designate an issue or event newsworthy, and then to construct an account of it in a specific framework of interpretation (Schlesinger 1978:164-165).

In simpler terms, bias in news coverage represents the extent media and/or their personnel's partisanship becomes more or less evident in the news they produce. It becomes evident, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in the kind of stories they report about, the actors involved and the facts presented. Schiffer (2006) considered that this variations in the amount and tone between political information found in news outlets are caused by politicians/authorities' communications skills, national/local political context, and market forces. In sum, if 'bias is the measurable manifestation of press partisanship' (Brandenburg 2006:161), it means that a news organization would offer a preferential treatment to the political party which is aligned to, by offering more coverage and friendlier framing than its opponents. For that reason, bias is simultaneously positive and negative: the former is always towards the politicians with whom the news outlet shares ideology, and the former is towards the opponents.

Besides mere partisanship, Fico and Cote (2002) identified at least two more origins of bias which might not necessarily be deliberate from reporters and editors' positions: firstly, when sources had a complete control over the information that media needs, they could shape their coverage to an important extent (e.g. government financial reports tend to be more restricted than others, hence, the official version about this issue would be pretty much the only one). Secondly, newsworthiness values such as impact and proximity may also determine which stories are published/broadcasted and which are not (e.g. state Congressmen's activities would receive more local journalists' attention than their federal peers).

Therefore, bias could also adopt different forms: 'partisan bias' is the most evident, because it represents the political parallelism of the news organizations and their staff. On the other hand, media would present a 'structural bias' when their journalistic routines constrain them only to certain kind of stories, with the same actors and framing (Gunter 1997 and Zeldes *et al* 2008). Regarding the information diffused by the media, there is a 'coverage bias' when certain politician or political party gets a disproportional presence in the news. 'Agenda bias' appears if the coverage actually parallels political actors' own agendas. Finally, 'statement bias' represents the publication of either favourable or unfavourable opinions in editorials and commentary (Brandenburg 2006).

2.2.2 Objectivity and Americanization

During the transition between the nineteenth and the twentieth century, when the American yellow press started losing profits, the printed media changed from an opinionated form of journalism to a more factual and politically detached practice. Therefore, the origin of the global praise of objectivity is related to a phenomenon called Americanization, which stressed the media shift from partisan to commercial. It was when impartial reporting started being expected from reporters, who were supposed to separate objective facts from subjective values at the moment of writing a story. This model of ideal journalism has been widespread around the world, especially at the beginning of the Cold War, when the United States spread the notion of being the leader of the Western democracies (Hallin and Mancini 2004, Allan 2004 and Hallin 2009).

As a result of the so-called cultural imperialism, a homogenization process took place among the news organizations worldwide, yet not in a homogeneous way, as the Mexican and Morelian cases will prove. Notwithstanding, the general belief is that almost without any questions nations across the world imported the processes and values of message production. Those values were related to the personal and ideological detachment from the information, by practicing an objective approach to the news and, therefore, boosting commercial appeal rather than political. At the end, the standardization was not only in the format, but in the content as well (Hallin and Mancini 2004).

News media worldwide are converging towards a single global model of journalism... A liberal system more or less like the system that prevails in the United States, dominated by commercial media and by a professional culture oriented towards information consumers, factual reporting, political independence and the objectivity norm (Hallin 2009:332).

Nonetheless, 'as many of these journalists quickly discovered, however, such a commitment to *value-free* reporting frequently had disturbing implications in professional terms' (Allan 2004:22), because conflicts of interest between media owners and their staff started appearing. For example, the former's reluctance to the latter's union, commercial agreements and political alignments, among others. That is why the Americanization of the media has never been homogeneously accepted everywhere. The reason is that context matters. It means that every system has its own individual characteristics that demands specific news outlets. For instance, countries like France, Italy and Spain – with a historically strong

partisanship - harshly criticised the adoption of this form of journalism because of its lack of ideological debate (Allan 2004, Benson 2004 and Márquez 2010).

Good journalism is defined here [in France] more by a strong and lasting commitment to one's party or ideology. Until the 1970's a political journalist in France meant a journalist with political commitment. Italy, with its political parallelism between the political field and the journalistic field, is another illustration (Neveu 2007:336-337).

The influence exerted by Americans was external, because the new set of cultural values were brought from outside and then imposed to every country. However, Hallin and Mancini (2004) argued that, at least in Europe, there were also some internal political and economic forces that accelerated the appropriation of this view. Those internal factors that boosted this tendency were, firstly, the shift from ideologically rooted mass political parties to catch-all parties, more focused on gaining electoral market share than representing ideologies. Secondly, the development of the news market, which produced a commercial drive among the news organizations and moved them to a new stage, where keeping the audience levels was more important than defending a political doctrine.

This situation produced a shift to a new way of understanding and practicing journalism in those nations, in which the new media discourse differed from the politicians' discourse. Hence, reporters started positioning themselves out of the political circle, in order to have a more detached and unbiased view. Thus, they could provide their audiences with the reliable and useful information they need. In so doing, professionalization was the key to reach this point, but it did not come out of the nothing, it was the product of a formal education and the academic study of the mass communication. Both aspects, together with the market oriented practice, introduced a new and coherent set of journalistic canons, inspired on the liberal concepts of press freedom and neutral approach to political reality.

It is clear that the mass media play an important role in this process of political change; indeed, the increasing centrality of the mass media to the process of political communication is central to the very definition of Americanization or modernization in most discussions on political change (Hallin and Mancini 2004:32).

But the concept of modernization might be ambiguous as well, because it does not involve always the idea of evolution or progress. At least in practice

there are several cases that contradict this optimistic vision of the world, like the one that will be presented in this thesis. This case will prove that, despite the global tendencies and the closeness to the United States, the Mexican journalism has not yet changed, at least not in the terms discussed before. Even more, as was commented at the end of the previous chapter (section *1.3 Mexican media in a comparative perspective*), the liberal concept of the press cannot flourish in an authoritarian environment.

2.2.3 Summary of the section

This section presented a general discussion about the concept of objectivity, which is the ultimate journalistic ideal. However, due to the impossibility of reaching it, a series of routines shared and assumed by journalists have become the 'strategic ritual of objectivity' (e.g. factual, balanced and politically detached reporting). In media terms, being objective means not being biased. Nevertheless, the latter is an inherent condition of men and, hence, it is just impossible to avoid. This is because the very notion of bias is related to selection, an inherent characteristic of this profession. In addition, the canons of the objective reporting have been widespread due to a process of Americanization, in which the US exported this model to the whole planet, not always successfully though.

2.3 Summary

In broad terms, this chapter has explored the notion of partisanship, which is the extent media organizations reflect a specific political alignment in the content they offer to the audience. The origin of this allegiance could be either ideological (when the editorial line of the news outlet reflects the political adherence of its owners and personnel) or economic (as a market or survival strategy, just as the Morelian newspapers). To a different degree, partisanship is a common feature in many media systems. Notwithstanding there has been a trend, known as Americanization, to shift from partisan towards objective reporting. Even though impossible to meet in practice, objectivity is the ultimate goal of journalists worldwide, who created and shared a series of routines supposedly for offering an unbiased news story. However, considering bias as a process of selection, there is no way in which news workers could possibly be unbiased either, because selectivity is inherent to their profession.

The relevance of commenting on these issues is because they are connected to the empirical evidence of this case study: the idea of partisanship in Morelian newspapers will be widely discussed, especially because it is used as a survival strategy.²⁸ Besides this, the concept of objectivity will frequently appear when the editorial lines of those organizations will be analysed.²⁹ In that sense, the next chapter will present the frameworks in which this thesis draws on. On the one hand, the notion of *Media System* (Hallin and Mancini 2004) will be used for explaining the macro level or media environment. On the other, the micro level (journalist-politician relationship) will be analysed through the concepts of adversarial/exchange relationship (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995) and distance/logic of that interaction (Pfetsch 2004).

²⁸ See for instance chapters five (section 5.2 *Political parallelism*) and seven (sections 7.2 *Instrumentalization as the result of the political communication process* and 7.3 *Economically-driven partisanship*).

²⁹ See also chapter five, section 5.2 *Political parallelism*.

Chapter 3 Media and political communication systems

The lack of significant change of the Mexican political journalism will be explained in this thesis through the evaluation of a patron-client relationship between Morelian news outlets and political elites fostered by the official advertising. In so doing, the hypothesis is that the specific characteristics of the context of the local newspapers shape the journalist-politician relationship. Hence, this analysis requires two different approaches: macro level (the media environment) and micro level (the interaction between reporters and government/party leaders). Thus, the study draws on two theoretical frameworks: the first one is the concept of *Media systems* proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004), and its aim is to classify the different media environments according to the specific conditions of the political system they operate in. The second framework includes, on the one hand, the ideas proposed by Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) regarding the political communication process (considered by them as a triangular system where media, politicians and citizens interact) and the adversarial and/or exchange relationships between journalists and politicians. On the other, the work done by Pfetsch (2004) in which she classified those interactions according to the distance between the actors and the logic that determines it.

Although, in theoretical terms this chapter represents the core of this research, it is important to mention that its aim is only to review and summarise the main characteristics of each framework. This is because a critical discussion of their limitations and – especially - the way they will be integrated for the case study will be presented in the following chapter (section 4.1 *The research problem*), where they will make more sense. Therefore, the content of this part of the thesis is organised in five sections: firstly, a general summary of what a media system is and how it is integrated and organised. Secondly, there will be a brief discussion about the concept of political communication and its actors. Thirdly, the idea of political communication as a triangular system will be explained. Fourthly, it is included a review of the different sets of interactions between journalists and politicians. Finally, a general summary of the chapter will close the content.

3.1 Media system

The macro level approach of this research is related to the Morelian media environment. That is, the specific features of the context in which the local news outlets operate. In order to have a better understanding of the journalist-politician relationship, it is important to analyse the arena in which it takes place, because – as it will be argued in this thesis - the latter determines the former. For that reason, this section offers a general review of the concept of *Media System*, considered here as the macro level.

In the field of comparative communications studies, Hallin and Mancini (2004) designed a scheme for classifying news organizations within different political environments in Western Europe and North America. In their influential book *Comparing media systems*, the authors proposed a typology to analyse the extent media and political systems influence and are influenced by each other. In order to make the comparison between the countries selected for their study, they established a set of parameters to evaluate each media system, which could be defined as the environment where news institutions are organised and operate. It is integrated by the structure of media markets, the level of political parallelism, professionalization of journalists and the extent of the state involvement in the political communication process. Therefore, the following subsections will explain each one of them.

3.1.1 The structure of media markets

The development of the media markets, especially of the mass circulation press, is one of the most evident differences among systems. However, 'the distinction here is not only one of quantity. It is also a distinction in the nature of the newspaper, its relation to its audience and its role in the wider process of social and political communication' (Hallin and Mancini 2004:22). Beyond the circulation as a mere number, the level and quality of readership is the differential key. This is because it has to do, on the one hand, with the type of audience the newspapers serve (e.g. well educated elites or regular citizens) and, on the other, with the kind of journalism they practice (e.g. tabloid/sensationalist or serious/professional). Close connected with the printed media phenomenon is the broadcast system's own development, which has an interdependent relation with the former. In other words, if there is a social environment where the newspaper circulation and readership is

relatively low, it means that the people might rely mainly on television and/or radio stations for political information.

Thanks to the market development, news organizations are now considered an important commercial actor as well because, as businesses, they are also shaped by economic factors. The most influential of them is the advertising industry, which has a great control over the mass consumption patterns and represents enormous annual revenue for commercial media. As previously commented on the first chapter (section 1.2 *Mexican media's main features*), selling adverts – not copies - represents the main income of news organizations around the world and especially in Mexico. Thus, by determining their commercial viability, the advertising industry also shapes the media market.

3.1.2 Political parallelism

Although party press,³⁰ in the strict sense of the term, has nearly disappeared in most of the democratic countries,³¹ different political tendencies and ideologies are still very present in diverse media systems. In some of them this is more evident than in others, of course. Despite a global tendency to provide partisanship free information and analysis (Hallin 2009), partisan reminiscences constantly appear everywhere in different shapes and shades.³² As it was discussed on the previous chapter (section 2.2 *The myth of objectivity*), the concept of objective journalism is just an ideal represented by a series of professional routines, because reporters' daily job is permeated by different personal and organizational factors (Tuchman 1972, Schudson 1989, Lozano 1996, Marín 2003 and Thomas 2008). Therefore, the common rule is that, at least to certain extent, some political tendencies might appear in the news stories.

However, when those ideologies go in the same direction as the ones defended by a political party or a government, a political parallelism exists between news and official institutions. This situation can be defined as 'the

³⁰ Party press is the official voice of a political party or ideology, it is addressed to an ideologically committed audience and it is published by whether a political party (or faction) or an *ad hoc* group representing that ideology (Hopkin 1978).

³¹ Nations like Cuba, with communist regimes, still have proper party press, such as the Cuban newspapers *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde*.

³² See chapter two, section 2.1 *Partisanship*.

degree to which the structure of the media system paralleled that of the party system' (Hallin and Mancini 2004:27). The scholars suggested that this phenomenon has different indicators that measure the level of coincidence among these two actors, which are the following:

- Content: this is the more evident and it is simply the ideological orientation that the messages show.
- Organizational connections: news organizations are usually related to other different institutions (political parties, unions, churches and so on) through sponsorship, common ideals, friendship between personnel, among others.
- Tendency of media personnel to be active in political life: even though is not that frequent any more, there are still some persons within news institutions that hold or have held public posts, or vice versa: former journalists leave their newsrooms to work for the government or political parties in their press offices.
- Tendency for the career paths of journalists to be shaped by their political affiliations: reporters tend to work for news organizations that share their political ideologies.
- Partisanship of the audiences: the audience, when they have a more or less clear party identity, follows the information provided by the news outlet that shares their point of view, or acts like an 'editorial guide' (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995).
- Journalistic role orientations and practices: depending on the kind of media, audience and relationship with political actors, reporters adopt different roles such as watchdog, entertainer or publicist (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995), which is related to a set of routines which lead the message production.

Directly linked with these points is a twofold type of media pluralism: 'external' and 'internal'. The first one takes place within the media system as a whole, and it appears when there are different news organizations that represent different political values. An example of this is the pillarization in The Netherlands (Brown 2011), when the diverse political and religious groups had their own news outlets. The second represents the tendency to offer neutral and balanced information which certain newspapers or broadcast stations show in their daily job, such as in American or British tradition.

3.1.3 Professionalization

‘Professionalism connotes the exercise of autonomy, the right of workers to control their own work, frequently by reference to norms developed by professional agencies external to the organizations in which they work’ (Tuchman 1978:65). That is the reason why, in the journalistic practice, professionalism and level of education are not exactly synonymous. That is, a university degree is by no means a guarantee of being able to adequately perform on the field. In other words, having an educational background helps in understanding the social role of the media, but it is not enough to get the job done. The reason is that the journalistic practice demands specific skills and wiles learnt through newsrooms routines, as it was commented in the previous chapter (section 2.2. *The myth of objectivity*).

‘Journalists learn what their organizations want by observation and experience... New journalists quickly learn what the boss likes from more experienced staffers’ (Shoemaker and Reese 1996:92). Since sharing and internalising particular routines within specific news organizations is the most important way of learning the trade, socialization is the key for understanding the journalistic professionalization then. Furthermore, within the newsrooms the concept of a “professional” reporter also means being aware of what the rest of the media are doing. That is, he/she ought to monitor the news presented by other organizations for two reasons: firstly because if a news outlet publishes a story it means that its newsworthiness has already been judged by another journalist and, secondly, that story might as well become a “source” for other news (Schlesinger 1978 and Gans 2004). Being professional, hence, is mainly valued by peers and colleagues rather than the audience. As a result of that, ‘journalists forget that they are supposed to write for the readers and not for one another, which they tend to do more or less unconsciously’ (Champagne 2005:56). For this reason, there is usually a divergence between the interests of the reporters and the interests of the citizenry at large (Schlesinger 1978, Tuchman 2002 and Benson 2006).

Even though ‘the growth of journalism schools has helped solidify and diffuse professional journalistic standards’ (Benson 1999:468), Hallin and Mancini (2004) considered that there is not necessarily a direct correlation between the academic study of the journalism and its practice on the field:

Formal professional training has become increasingly common, and does often play an important role in defining journalism as an occupation and social institution. But it is clearly not essential to the practice of journalism, and there is

not a strong correlation between professionalism... and formal training (Hallin and Mancini 2004:33).

Since there is an evident gap between professionalism and academic background, Hallin and Mancini (2004) proposed three dimensions to evaluate the level of professionalization shown by news organizations personnel:

- **Autonomy:** as someone else's employees, journalists will never have a complete control over their work. Notwithstanding, an important degree of autonomy could be reached when they, as individuals and/or a collegiate group, by self determination conciliate their own interests with the institution they work for.
- **Distinct professional norms:** reporters in a specific media system tend to share similar ethical principles such as the clear separation between advertising and editorial content, the protection of confidential sources or the common standards of newsworthiness.
- **Public service orientation:** it represents the extent journalist are aware of their own role as civil servants, who need to show trustworthiness to their audiences, by providing them with accurate and useful information.

A clear obstacle to journalistic professionalism is the 'instrumentalization', which can be defined as the control that external actors might exert over the media, in order to intervene in the political communication process. Those outsiders can be government institutions, political parties, interests groups, and other kind of organizations which seek political influence. But not only political reasons foster this situation, commercial purposes threaten media as well and even both of them simultaneously. Through the advertising budget pressure, the editorial content may be frequently pushed to certain directions that were not originally planned.

Obviously, to the extent media organizations are instrumentalised in this way, professionalization will be low: journalists will lack autonomy, political rather than distinctively journalistic criteria will guide the practice of journalism, and media will serve particular interests rather than functioning as a public trust (Hallin and Mancini 2004:37).

Another condition that turns journalistic professionalization opaque is political parallelism, because when news and political organizations are strongly tied together, reporters lack enough autonomy to perform their job according to the professional standards mentioned before. In consequence, they become only a means to political actors' ends. The authors argued that,

in order to act as neutral observers and information providers, reporters ought to avoid ideological affinities and remain loyal to their professional canons of balance, objectivity and political detachment. Nonetheless, this is not as easy as it seems because, on the field, journalists need to cope with diverse situations that are not in their hands to control, such as commercial agreements between owners and official authorities.

Under these circumstances, professionalization should also mean the journalists' awareness of their own routines, because most of them are assumed rather than reasoned. They need to keep in mind the impossibility of reaching the pure objectivity and, as a result of that, the inevitable existence of partisanship (both personal and organizational). Finally, there are the interests and agreements beyond their payroll, which are the ones that are negotiated at higher levels between owners and political elites.

3.1.4 Role of the State

As in any public and social issue, the State has an active role in every media system. However, the degree of its participation and the form it takes may differ from one political environment to another. Nonetheless, its presence and influence will be continuous. The link between media and citizens depends on the norms and regulations emanated from the State, which assigns and distributes public resources – such as broadcast concessions for exploiting national air waves - through strict rules, in order to avoid discretionary actions and assure that the country's patrimony is fairly distributed to every social actor (Sánchez 2004).

The most important form of official intervention is the legislation related to media operation. That is, through its different branches, the government is supposed to make sure that all the laws and regulations about this field are properly observed and, if not, to demand the offender to repair any legal violation. The State is also involved in the public broadcast systems which, in the case of Mexico, are entirely managed at every stage of the process by public servants.³³ Furthermore, it is also very often that governments own news agencies, newspapers and other media-related systems, either directly or through State-owned enterprises.

³³ It is important to underline that there are different models of public broadcast systems, like the British which is ostensibly independent from the government.

Very frequently, such as the Morelian case analysed here, the government is a very important advertiser too. It spends an enormous amount of money every year in promoting its institutional image, through the diffusion of every single action, agreement or achievement in which it takes part. There is nothing wrong with investing on publicity, because people have the right to know and authorities the obligation of informing about their activities and performance. The problem, as it will be argued later in this thesis,³⁴ is when these commercial contracts become a means of coercion towards media and public servants too. By using official advertising in exchange of favourable coverage, political elites have a direct impact on newsrooms decisions and, hence, in the production of political news. In sum, 'the State acts as an *enabler* when it literally enables the media to exist or thrive via indirect (technology, distribution networks) or direct financial aid' (Benson 2004:281).

3.1.5 Summary of the section

This section summarised the concept of media system, which is the environment where news outlets operate and it determines the way they are organised. As mentioned above, this term is built upon four parameters: the structure of the media market (levels of readership and audience and the type of journalistic practice, either tabloid or professional), political parallelism (partisan stance), professionalization (autonomy, routines, newsworthiness values and civic orientation), and the role of the State (official involvement in the political communication process as actor and regulator). The relevance for this thesis is that these parameters represent the macro level of this study, which is the analysis of the media environment in Morelia. At the beginning of the next chapter (section 4.1 *The research problem*) it will be explained the specific way in which the concept of media system will be used and its limitations.

3.2 Political communication

This section offers a general approach to the notion of political communication. Since Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) and Pfetsch (2004)

³⁴ See chapters five (subsection 5.4.2 *Official advertising in Morelian newspapers*) and seven (section 7.3 *Economically-driven partisanship*).

considered this concept as a foundation of their ideas about the journalist-politician relationship, then, it is important to understand this term in order to have a context. Therefore, prior to the discussion about their ideas and the way they will be used in this thesis, the following pages present an overview of this concept.

With or without the explicit label, an important amount of messages that the media spread on a daily basis has a clear political orientation (Sánchez 2004, Blumler and Gurevitch 2005). Notwithstanding, only some of them can be considered as political communication in proper terms, because they were produced with the specific aim to disseminate a political idea (e.g. electoral campaigns or government statements). Some other messages might be “about politics” and may directly or indirectly collaborate with this process, for example news about government’s and political parties’ activities. But most of the messages are not political communication, even though some of them might have a certain wink to a political assumption, position or even stereotypes or prejudices (Sánchez 2004). ‘Yet because political communication often blends with a flow of other materials nowadays, people can be exposed to it inadvertently as it crops up in genres and formats not usually designated as *political*’ (Blumler and Gurevitch 2005:110)

In that sense, every single social organization is built upon interactions and agreements, implicit and explicit, as a result of communicational exchanges. Therefore, language is the basic means for the achievement of those social bonds; not the only one though. For that reason, every political organization and government is clearly dependent on a communication process (Sánchez 2004). ‘By nature, communication has a function of its own: politics, which is also public’ (Botero 2006:8). Contemporary democracies, then, require their constituencies to be more informed than before. People are expected to keep their authorities under a strict process of check and balances, but they also demand to be listened. It means that, besides being active receivers of political information, citizens ought to get involved in the public debate and raise their voices (Sánchez 2004 and Botero 2006). Nonetheless, ‘if democracy requires omniscience and omniscience from its citizens, it is a lost cause’ (Schudson 1998:310).

As Sánchez (2004) concluded, communication is fundamental for society and politics as well. Hence, it is also a key component of the public sphere and, as a consequence of this situation, it is a very important feature of modern democracy due to its role as facilitator of interaction between actors.

By becoming a central space for politicians' publicity, news organizations facilitate access to a huge universe of constituents. Under these circumstances, media have set the standards of political communication, because they not only report about political events, they might even create them sometimes (Reyes 2007).

There is a lack of agreement about a definition of political communication, because it has oscillated between politicians', journalists' and marketing experts' ideas. That is why this concept has been explained through philosophical terms of political science, journalistic debates, and practical strategies of electoral marketing (McNair 2003 and De León 2008). Despite this situation, the origins of modern political communication can be tracked down after World War I, when mass press, radio and cinema were developed around the world. Besides their use for the diffusion of current events, artistic information and entertainment, these technologies were widely exploited as propaganda instruments within a polarised global context (Reyes 2007).

According to McNair (2003:4), political communication can be defined as a 'purposeful communication about politics'. This concept involves three main characteristics: firstly, it includes all the different means that politicians and political actors have for the achievement of their communicational goals. Secondly, there is a flux of information addressed to these actors by their constituency, journalists and other members of non-politicians groups. Finally, there is a plethora of messages about politicians and political actors produced by the news media.

Political communication is no longer about just conveying information or persuading people of the merits of an argument through force of Aristotelean rhetoric; it also means capturing the popular imagination and conveying ideas and issues through using media and symbolism that will resonate with meaning and relevance for audiences (Rawnsley 2005:57-58).

Political communication is, then, the arena where politicians and civil servants exchange information with journalists and citizens. However, these messages have a contradictory nature because, on the one hand, media reproduce their own version of what political elites say and what people demand. On the other, constituencies have a little participation in the process, due to a limited interaction with the other two actors (Wolton 1998). Regarding this last point, since in practice citizens are out of this process,

this concept could be understood then as the 'interaction between political actors and media actors' (Pfetsch 2004: 345).

Political communication has an impact on society and on the performance of the State. Therefore, political communication could be defined as the one which makes possible that certain social actors express, in public, their opinions about politics. In the information society, these actors have been reduced to reporters, opinion columns and public opinion analysts (Botero 2006:9).

Cotteret (1977) considered this concept as the information exchange between government and its constituency through formal and informal channels, which might have consequences for the political system as a whole. Botero (2006) added that this interaction mainly takes place within the media scope, because their personnel act as intermediaries between authorities and people. Or, as Norris (quoted in García *et al* 2005:19) put it, this concept is 'an interactive process that involves the transmission of information between politicians, media and voters'.

Historically, the use of political communication has been focused on the conformation and internal strengthening of the nation-States, cohesion of societies, strengthening of the national identity, introduction and/or acceptance of general norms of the State; in sum, the invisible management of public opinion (Pareja 2008:14).

Nevertheless, the idea of a public as a social group with shared concerns, could be out of reach if the news organizations fail to deliver a trustworthy common knowledge. This information should be "useful" (aid or guide to understand something), "reliable" (easily verifiable) and "amusing" (presented in an attractive and entertaining way) (Coleman *et al* 2009). In order to create a solid public, media must become a connection key between current events and its context/background, citizens and policy making institutions, society and the massive amount of on/offline information, and also a community with other communities. 'These are not entirely new tasks, but all entail recognition that both the media ecology and democratic citizenship itself are being reconfigured in ways that reshape the terms of political communication' (Coleman *et al* 2009:43-44).

When, instead of the mere exchange of messages between authorities and constituencies, the aim is to create spaces for public deliberation and, as a result of that, the strengthening of political culture, more than "political" it is the time of "public communication" (Sánchez 2004 and Botero 2006). Since the former is included in the latter, it could be said that this last concept has

a wider scope than the first one then. In that sense, the main goal of public communication is to foster processes of debate and, thanks to the consensus reached, to facilitate social mobilization. Thus, more than an abstract term, it involves a real opportunity for building a democratic society, through strategic communications which could set the ground for community development. If, as a concept, public transcends the limited scope of government, public communication involves a network of social interactions which take place within the public sphere then. Under this system, news organizations operate with a deliberative logic in which citizens and authorities converge, exchange arguments and reach agreements (Botero 2006).

Nevertheless, the transition from political to public communication cannot be possible without the professionalization of the field. A situation like this requires a 'process by which political systems and political actors adapt to the emergence of new media of communication and to the increasing specialization of tasks common in modern societies' (Negrine and Lilleker 2002:307-308). Therefore, 'political communication is an ongoing process, not a means to an end that can be abandoned once the desired objective is realised' (Rawnsley 2005:31).

3.2.1 Summary of the section

Just as a context, this section presented a general discussion about the concept of political communication which, in simple words, is the interaction between media and political elites (government authorities and party leaders). Although in practice only these two actors have a constant relationship, ideally the citizens should also be included in this process, because they are supposed to be the main receivers of this kind of messages. When, more than exchanging information between newsmen and politicians, the constituency is included as well, a deliberative democracy could be reached and, hence, instead of political this communication becomes public. Finally, the relevance of this overview relies on the fact that this is a key for understanding Blumler and Gurevitch's (1995) and Pfetsch's (2004) work, which will be used in building the *micro level* concept of this case study. That is, the journalist-politician relationship in Morelia.

3.3 Political communication as a system

The *micro level* of this thesis represents the journalist-politician relationship that takes place in Morelia. Therefore, the concept of an adversarial or exchange interaction between these actors is one of the key parameters in which this case study is built upon. However, it is necessary to understand where this notion came from. In so doing, this section outlines the Blumler and Gurevitch's (1995 and 2005) concept of political communication, followed by an explanation of the adversarial/exchange model.

For a better understanding about the political communication process, Blumler and Gurevitch (1995 and 2005) designed a triangular scheme formed by politicians, media organizations and audience members. By considering this process as a system, in which its components have an interdependent connection, the authors set a precedent in this research field. According to their studies, the relationship between the three actors is horizontal and vertical as well. For the first case, political and news institutions are involved at a similar level during the message production. Whilst for the second, both components, jointly or separately, interact with mass citizenry by disseminating and processing information to and from it.

These scholars' assumption is that audience roles should be matched by similar attitudes shown by politicians and journalists. In other words, individuals and media personnel are expected to share the same expectations towards the parties and government officials. Notwithstanding, this compatibility is far from being perfect all the time, because there are a lot of conditions that interrupt the flow of messages, like different purposes among the participants, legal constraints for the information access, and etcetera. By assigning a specific communication role, each actor adopts a set of attitudes and expectations that would determine his/her participation in the process, which might be complemented by the others' position. The complementarity of roles in a political communication system could be presented as follows (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995:15):

Audience	Media personnel	Politicians
Partisan	Editorial guide	Gladiator
Liberal citizen	Moderator	Rational persuader
Monitor	Watchdog	Information provider
Spectator	Entertainer	Actor/performer

Table 1 Communication roles.

There are three areas of exploration that come from the table and explain the interaction between each participant (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995:15-17):

- System integration: in a system with a high level of correspondence or integration, audience, media personnel and politicians share the same set of attitudes and expectations. For example, when the individuals already have a strong party identity (partisan), they tend to read a newspaper that reinforces it (editorial guide) and the politicians present themselves as defenders of the people (gladiator). However, very often each actor moves in different ways, which causes that the system starts showing inconsistencies.
- Inter-level distancing: integration and closeness are related to each other in a direct proportion: when the system presents a high degree of consistency, society is closely connected to media and politicians, through credibility and trustworthiness.
- Cross-level influences: the way news organizations and the political institutions are related determines the system's outcome and shape each participant's role definition. In a political system where official authorities give reporters all the information they require, for instance, the roles would tend to be information provider and watchdog respectively.

The degree of professionalization and bureaucratization that media and political institutions have, will also explain the dimensions in which their relationship is established, and they may include the following aspects (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995:17-18):

- Bases of legitimacy: on the one hand, politicians' legitimacy relies on the causes they defend, the consensus among different interests they achieve, and the public acceptance of the procedures by which they were chosen to represent the people. On the other, media are legitimated basically by the fidelity and respect to professional codes.
- The service function: politicians and media serve citizens in different ways: the first ones are concerned about persuading them to accept official or party goals, and the second ones try to keep people informed.
- Autonomy: frequently, partisan communicators (party and official spokesperson) and professional communicators (media personnel) do not share the same codes of conduct. For that reason some conflicts of interest may appear because of the different expectations they may

have. However, a high level of autonomy between them will help them to develop their own job in the best way possible.

It is important to stress that the particular mixture of elements within the system will determine the subordination-autonomy relationship between media and State. This degree is the result of three constraints which condition the way reporters and authorities interact (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995:20-21): firstly legal, represented by the laws and regulations that define news institutions' rights and obligations. Secondly, normative are the expectations of political and public service that media are supposed to provide, without being directly controlled by the government or parties. Finally structural, which are the formal or informal alliances forged among them, like financial aid or ideological support.

In a competitive democracy, the relationship between media and politicians is 'problematic, pivotal and difficult to analyse' (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995:25-26). The first is because, since the State is not expected to exert an open control over the information, journalists are free to choose their sources and authorities cannot prohibit that. The second is a twofold situation: on the one hand, government officials are one of the most recurrent sources and, on the other, reporters might consider themselves as subordinated to power elites. And the third is the result of the last points, because the close connections established among the actors cannot be easily isolated for further explanations, so the phenomenon should be analysed in its own complex form, like in this thesis. Otherwise, the vision about it may turn narrow and incomplete.

In sum, as the scholars pointed out, political messages are the result of a complex process, and understanding it requires a systemic approach that leaves no angle neglected or over-emphasised. In so doing, the analytical framework they propose includes the following key elements (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995:32):

- Two sets of actors (media and politicians) that are mutually dependent and adaptive, with divergent and even overlapping interests.
- Their relationships are role regulating.
- The outcome of their collaboration is a shared culture that implies conduct codes toward each other.
- There is a constant potential for conflict of interests.

- The tension is controlled by formal or informal mechanisms of conflict management.

Blumler and Gurevitch (1995:27-30) proposed two paradigms to analyse the interaction between politicians (as communicators) and media personnel (as observers of the political scene), which are central to this research because they represent one of the specific parameters of the field work. As commented earlier in this section, the micro level of this thesis represents the journalist-politician relationship and one of the parameters for evaluating it is the concept of adversarial/exchange relationship.

3.3.1 The adversary model

For a reporter shaped under this tradition, the real story is always hidden in politicians' words and acts. Thus, his/her professional duty is precisely uncovering the truth that lies behind the official version. By adopting this creed, journalists consider themselves as holders of a special political power that must respond to the audience right to know. In short terms, the adversarial model is the fuel for the watchdog journalism, which main goal is offering a surveillance service to citizens. The people, in their search for reliable information, delegate that responsibility to news organizations. The starting assumption which gives sense to this paradigm is that party and government institutions have a natural propensity to corruption, and since somebody has to watch them carefully, reporters need to be the first in line.

The adversarial viewpoint is primarily ideological, prescribing how journalists should regard leading politicians and government figures: the relationship should pivot on a conflict of interest between themselves and politicians that is assumed to be abiding. Journalists should never be in the pockets of the latter (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995:27).

However, 'perpetual war, hostility and obstruction would only impede each side from the effective pursuit of any constructive political communication task' (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995:29). This is because producing a political message is a shared responsibility between politicians and media. For that reason, a conflictive position could not be sustained for a long period without eroding the roots of the relationship, and a truce and collaborative work will be eventually required. Notwithstanding, it is ought to be mentioned that, by nature, politics is a permanent conflictive process and, very frequently, media outlets take advantage of that situation for selling more newspapers or increasing their audience. That is why, a conflict between these actors,

which usually involves only certain politicians with specific news organizations, turns out to be appealing to the public.

3.3.2 The exchange model

In spite of all the inherent conflicts among them, journalists and politicians benefit from each other. Thus, there is no need to extend a conflict in which both sides lose something. In order to reduce losses, an exchange agreement comes to stage, which *raison d'être* is to serve their separate or joint interests. 'In place of idealised visions of the journalistic St George tracking down the political dragon, then, this injects into the analysis the dimension of self-interest' (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995:29).

By scratching each other's back, news outlets and government institutions start dealing with each other when they perceive that some benefits might come out of the relationship. It definitely does not mean that the ideological distance may disappear, but at least it will not be an obstacle for building a mutually beneficial professional collaboration. It is important to emphasise that this collaboration should be founded on an ethical exchange of information, which helps to develop media's and politicians' professional aims. By no means it implies any agreement to hide or expose certain affairs, in order to serve some selfish interests.

This is precisely the issue on which the adversary model failed. It posits the relationship to be adversarial without suggesting a mechanism for sustaining it through all the built-in conflicts. But such a mechanism lies at the heart of the exchange model (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995:30).

3.3.3 Summary of the section

As a preliminary conclusion of this section, it is worth recalling that Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) considered the political communication as a triangular process, in which media, politicians and citizens are supposed to interact. The first two actors can have either an adversarial (conflictive) or exchange (collaborative) relationship. This kind of interaction is one of the key elements of the micro level approach of this thesis, which will be defined in the next chapter (section *4.1 The research problem*). The other aspects of this level will be explained in the following section.

3.4 Political Communication Culture

Besides the adversarial/exchange interaction between media and political elites, the micro level of the Morelian case study is also based on the parameters of logic and distance of that relationship (Pfetsch 2004). Therefore, this section presents a review of these concepts, preceded by a general discussion about the notion of *Political Communication Culture*, which is where these two parameters came from.

Based, on the one hand, on Almond and Verba's *civic culture* (1963) and, on the other, on Blumler and Gurevitch's political communication system (1995 and 2005), Pfetsch (2004) offered an innovative approach to study the interaction between policy makers and journalists, which is explained through the *Political Communication Culture* (PCC) in which it takes place. With a clear systemic view, which implies that every single element is connected to the others in an interdependent relation, where whatever affects one part will impact on the rest, the author classified the relationship among media and official institutions through the degree of activity/passivity of each actor's role and the proximity/distance between them.

Political communication culture can be defined as the empirically observable orientations of actors in the system of production of political messages toward specific objects of political communication, which determine the manner in which political actors and media actors communicate in relation to their common political public (Pfetsch 2004:348).

3.4.1 The dimensions of Political Communication Culture

Taking as a starting point the dimensions of political orientation from *The Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba 1963), the scholar presented a scheme in which she explained the general concept of the PCC (Pfetsch 2004:349-351):

Dimensions	Objects of orientation
System in general	Political communication system as an interpretation System of media and politics
Input	Public opinion
Output	Political public relations, news management and strategic communication
Self-image	Communication roles and interaction norms

Table 2 The dimensions of Political Communication Culture.

- The political communication system: on the contrary to other societal subsystems, like economy or law, that can be easily distinguished thanks to their specific codes and functions, this system is a particular mixture of two subsystems (politics and media) and it involves two different sets of norms. As a result of this fusion, a unique flux of cross-border information takes place, in order to connect them through an institutionalization of exchange relations.
- The input side: the key element that connects both subsystems is the public. The preferences and demands of the audience/electorate are considered as the public opinion, which is supposed to be the normative factor of the political communication process.
- The output side: the system's outcome is the process of production and dissemination of political messages that basically takes the form of public relations, which daily job is the production and management of issues that might generate public consent.
- The self-image of actors: the specific competences and expectations that each element has of its own role and the other's in the system constitute this fourth dimension. Both reporters and politicians are supposed to follow certain norms of conduct, like watchdog or expert, required to produce political messages.

3.4.2 The types of Political Communication Culture

Focusing on the self-image and output side dimensions, Pfetsch made a classification of PCC in which she analysed: on one hand, the exchange relationship between journalists and official spokespersons and, on the other, the tensions produced through this interaction. In so doing, she evaluated the distance/proximity among them (self-image), which is always difficult to measure because there is not a formal agreement about how close or distant the actors must be from each other. However, as it was stated before, as long as no one interferes with the other or become accomplices, mutual collaboration is expected.

For the output dimension, the scholar suggested that the collaborative interaction might be 'media logic' or 'party-political logic' orientated. If the tendency is towards the first, it means that news organizations determine the format and content of the messages, hence, the political public relations would try to fulfil those requirements. On the contrary, if the balance inclines towards the second case, then journalist would be forced to work under politicians' conditions, related to the agenda and its framing. The possible combinations generated by these interactions produce the following types of PCC (Pfetsch 2004:353-355):

	Great distance between political spokespersons and journalists	Small distance between political spokespersons and journalists
Dominance of media logic (media attention as a primary goal)	<i>Media-oriented PCC</i>	<i>Public relations-oriented PCC</i>
Dominance of political logic (political rule as a primary goal)	<i>Strategic PCC</i>	<i>(Party) PCC</i>

Table 3 The types of Political Communication Culture.

- *Media-oriented PCC*: here, there is a great distance between the actors and the media impose their own parameters. Thus, if politicians want coverage, they have to accept journalists' rules.
- *Public relations-oriented PCC*: when both reporters and politicians are close to each other, but working under media's logic, the outcome is a mutual agreement that leads to the proper diffusion of political messages.
- *Strategic PCC*: if there is a great distance between the actors, but political logic determines the relation, then media become just a means to a political end. It means only spreading official information when required, thanks to the technical knowledge about news production that communications officers have.
- *(Party) PCC*: when a calculated closeness to media and the imposition of the political logic combine, the final result is an adequate diffusion of official communications, with the timing and framing set by party or government spokespersons.

Finally, the last part of this model focuses on the impact that the different kinds of PCC might have on the public discourse on politics (Pfetsch 2004:358-363):

Types of PCC	Structural conditions	Possible consequences for the public discourse on politics
Media-oriented	Commercial, autonomous media/weak parties	Depoliticization
Public relations-oriented	Dual, political media/weak parties	Dominance of symbolic politics and surrogate politics
Strategic	Commercial media/strong parties	Dominance of issue of populist power preservation
(Party) Political	Dual, political media/strong parties	Dominance of party (political) surrogate politics and policy options

Table 4 Impact of the PCC on political discourse.

- *Media-oriented PCC* and its consequences: when news organizations determine the timing and framing of public agenda, politics seems to be just an excuse for the stories that reporters cover. Since the commercial interests are over social, weak parties and its personnel are simple characters in 'dramaturgical infotainment formats', which may lead to the depoliticisation of the audience.
- *Public relations-oriented PCC* and its consequences: here, as the result of highly politicised media in combination with weak parties, public communication would tend to be more symbolically orientated. This is because, more than a real political debate, official spokespersons spread their messages according to reporters' requirements, but at least the former actually have some influence in the content production process.
- *Strategic PCC* and its consequences: in a combination of strong parties with commercially driven and politically strong media, the outcome is a constant battle to attract audience attention. In so doing, journalists and political spokespersons have a strategic alliance in which each one uses the other for their own interests, but the latter are basically in charge of the agenda setting. Here, the audience is considered as politically oriented, that is why the messages are mainly ideological and/or populist and tend to power conservation.
- *(Party) Political PCC*: since the official spokespersons understand the media logic, there is a good chance for the political instrumentalization of journalism. That is, parties and government determine the political agenda. This situation, at least ideally, might lead the public to comprehend the alternatives that the political system offers.

3.4.3 Summary of the section

This section was focused on the concept of *Political Communication Culture* and it represents the diverse orientations in which the political actors interact and produce messages. An important part of this relationship is the distance between them and the logic that determines they work (imposition of content and format). Together with the adversarial/exchange model previously explained, these parameters integrate the micro level approach of this thesis. That is, the analysis of the journalist-politician relationship in Morelia.

3.5 Summary

The aim of this thesis is to explain that, instead of change, the Mexican media is still subsumed in a static environment, due to the coercion towards the press exerted by the political elites through the official advertising contracts. In so doing, a case study conducted in Morelia was designed for proving this hypothesis, which regards this phenomenon at two different levels: macro (media environment) and micro (journalist-politician relationship). The first approach will use the concept of media system (Hallin and Mancini 2004), and the second will require the parameters of adversarial/exchange (Blumberg and Gurevitch 1995), distance and logic of the interaction between news workers and government authorities/party leaders (Pfetsch 2004).

Therefore, this chapter presented a general review of those concepts: on the one hand, the media system is the context where news organizations operate and it is integrated by the development of the media market, political parallelism of the news outlets, journalistic professionalization and the role of the State in the political communication process. On the other, the interaction between journalists and politicians can be inclined either towards conflict (adversarial) or collaboration (exchange). Finally, this relationship is determined by the distance between the actors and, as a result of that, the imposition of contents and formats on the messages they produce (logic).

It is worth stressing that the limitations of these frameworks and the specific way they will be integrated in this research will be widely discussed in the following chapter (section 4.1 *The research problem*), which will also present the methodological approach implemented at the two levels (macro and micro), and a general description of Morelia as a case study.

Chapter 4 The research design: Morelia as a case study

Instead of transformation, as it was claimed by Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2003 and 2006) and presented here in chapter one (section *1.1 Media and democratization in Mexico*), this thesis argues that journalism in Mexico has not significantly distanced from the practices which were common during the seventy years that the official Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI) ruled the country. As commented earlier on the first chapter (section *1.2 Mexican media's main features*), at that time, the interaction between news organizations and politicians was determined by partisanship and several means of coercion such as bribes and the selective allocation of official advertising. Therefore, this research focuses on the political alignments of the Morelian press towards the state government (now in the hands of the Democratic Revolution Party [Partido de la Revolución Democrática], PRD), fostered by economic interests. In order to build an analytical framework for this idea, it is necessary to consider how the media environment (macro level) impacts the journalist-politician relationship (micro level). That is, understanding the extent the specific characteristics of the media system determine the way reporters and party/government elites interact.

For that reason, this chapter offers the rationale of the research problem and how it was approached on the field. In that sense, the content is organised in four sections: firstly, a discussion about how the problem was defined and theoretically addressed, based on the concepts commented in chapter three (media system, conflict/exchange relationship, and distance/logic of the interaction between actors). Secondly, there is the explanation of the methodological approach. Thirdly, a general description of Morelia, the city selected as the case study. Finally, there is a brief summary of the content of the chapter and its links with the rest of the thesis.

4.1 The research problem

The research problem of the thesis is focused on analysing the implications for the media of the reconfigurations of the political structure in Mexico, which was fostered by a series of shifts in the governing parties (at national,

state and local levels). This situation becomes evident by regarding the way reporters and party/government elites interact and the context where it takes place. In order to understand this idea, the study argues that the media environment (macro level) determines the journalist-politician relationship (micro level), and this first section of the chapter unfolds this idea by providing the rationale of this analytical framework. This approach is based on the concepts of *Media System* (Hallin and Mancini 2004), conflict/exchange journalist-politician relationship (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995) and distance and media/party logic of that interaction (Pfetsch 2004) explained in the previous chapter.³⁵

Therefore, the analytical framework of this case study stresses the interactions between macro and micro levels. The core argument underlines the impact of the media system on the reporter-source relationship. That is, due to its complex organization, the macro level imposes the rules of the interaction between the actors at the micro level. In other words, the particular conditions of the media system (market development, political parallelism, journalist professionalization and role of the state) shape the relationship between politicians and reporters in terms of the distance (how close they are), nature (how conflictive or collaborative) and logic (imposition of the agenda). It happens like that because the participants in the production of political communication are constrained by the rules, both formal and informal, that the macro level imposes over them.³⁶ Thus, different media environments promote diverse relationships between journalist and politicians. That is the reason why the interaction between these levels has a top-bottom logic, which means that the most important influence goes down from the structure to the actors.

Under this scheme, the notion of change is strongly linked with the macro level because of its more stable structure. Thus, the strength of the foundations of the media environment allows its permanence for longer periods of time. It means that the cohesion of the system as a whole makes significant modifications less likely. On the contrary of the micro level, whose actors have a limited time to operate (e.g. government authorities are in

³⁵ See sections 3.1 *Media system*, 3.3 *Political communication as a system* and 3.4 *Political Communication Culture*.

³⁶ Some examples that reinforce this idea will be presented by the empirical evidence included in chapters five (subsection 5.4.2 *Official advertising in Morelian newspapers* under the subheading *Opinions of the political communication actors*) and six (subsection 6.2.1 *Political news coverage* under the subheading *Political parties*).

charge of their offices for specific periods of time), the conditions of the context are more solid and, hence, stable. For that reason, the tensions at the micro level do not necessarily involve modifications – at least not structural – at the macro level. In simpler terms, as the Morelian case will prove, the players and teams may change – or rotate – but the game is still the same, because the rules remain the same.

This thesis raises the question of the extent the environment exerts influence on the political communication process, which was superficially mentioned before by different scholars quoted here (Hallin 1995, Blumler and Gurevitch 1995, Shoemaker and Reese 1996, Pfetsch 2001, Hallin and Mancini 2004). Nevertheless, in their work it is only implied, for example, that the culture determines the way journalists and politicians interact, which becomes evident in the expected correlation of roles (e.g. reporter as entertainer and politician as a performer). However, none of those studies stressed the further implications of this key element, they just took for granted its impact on the field. In other words, although they mention the issue of the environment as an important factor, they do not discuss how and by which means the context shapes the actors' behaviour. That is exactly where the originality of this thesis relies upon, because it offers an explanation of the role of the media macro level – through its specific characteristics - as a factor that shapes the relationship between these actors (micro level). In so doing, instead of creating a typology (just as they did), the approach of this study will offer an analysis of the role of the media system in shaping the interaction between news organizations and party/government authorities.

Even though the environment determines the way participants within the political arena interact, someone could argue as well that specific political moments – such as scandals, electoral campaigns, presidents or governors' inaugurations or the mere arrival of new authorities to particular offices - might have an influence on the journalist-politician relationship too. Nonetheless, their impact is the product of the circumstances and, thus, ephemeral. On the contrary, giving importance to the media system allows having a more stable, but not necessarily static, set of parameters for explaining this relationship. Context matters, then, because its specific conditions determine how the political actors interact with each other and, although they are independent to certain extent, their communicational roles are shaped by the environment they are in. Therefore, their interaction could not be entirely explained without contextualising it in a wider scope. 'Knowing the context is likewise the only way to infer the meaning read into

more complex social situation. Such meanings do not exist as *givens*' (Lang and Lang 1991). On the other hand, context by itself lacks of greater sense if it is not connected to concrete situations with concrete players.

Since the political communication process is not fragmented, then, an aspect such as partisanship in the news must not be understood as an isolated phenomenon. On the contrary, partisan stories are the result of a specific set of characteristics found in the media environment (e.g. external pluralism and official advertising pressures) and in the journalist-politician relationship as well (e.g. closeness and collaboration). That is why this research will pay the same attention to both aspects, because the literature revealed a gap in the explanations that consider partisanship as a result of either external (governmental pressures) or internal conditions (particular interests). However, the empirical evidence will show that this phenomenon is not solely triggered by a single element. On the contrary, it is the outcome of a particular combination of multiple causes that vary according to the time and place.

It is worth mentioning that the argument related to the tensions between the macro and micro levels is, to certain extent, close to Bourdieu's (1998 and 2005) ideas of the journalistic and political fields. According to him, a field is an environment and its structure dictates the norms of behaviour of the actors. That is, the interaction between its members is constrained by the rules imposed by the context. However, these 'laws of functioning' allow the individuals within the field certain degree of autonomy. Therefore, when someone establishes a relationship with another subject (within or outside the field) the behaviour reflects the tensions between the norms and the individual freedom. In simpler terms, a field is a microcosm that is part of the social universe and, as such, it shares the universal laws but it also has the chance to develop its own rules. This situation is reflected on its members too, who are constrained by the norms of their context, but they also have some room for developing their own behaviour. The extent of autonomy, nonetheless, depends on each field and, under this scheme, politics is more autonomous than journalism.

In order to explain the characteristics of any field, Bourdieu used the term 'capital' which represents 'the structure and volume of resources owned by different participants in a field' (Neveu 2007:337). There are two main forms of capital which perennial opposition structures the social world: economic and cultural (Benson 1999, 2004 and 2006; Neveu 2007; Davis 2010). The former is referred to the wealth – both money and assets – and the latter is

related to immaterial values such as education, artistic sensibilities or general knowledge (Benson 2006 and Davis 2010).

Bourdieu's notion of field also regards the idea of change, which is analysed in the theoretical framework proposed in this thesis. According to the French author, the internal logic of the field tends to remain despite the external changes. That is, the norms that determine the behaviour of the participants within the field persist, no matter if the actors change. Therefore, fundamental change will only occur if there is a significant 'shock' to the system as a whole (Benson 1999, 2004 and 2006). Bourdieu considered that elections and their subsequent political alignments represent mayor shocks that would generate structural changes (Benson 2006). Nevertheless, this thesis will argue that – at least in Mexico – the mere change of the public servants by electoral triumphs is not enough to transform the whole system. In other words, changes at the micro level do not necessarily represent modifications at the macro level.

Even though Bourdieu's field theory addresses a similar problem to this thesis, it was excluded from this study for two main reasons: firstly, there is an over-emphasis on the binary oppositions between autonomy and heteronomy, cultural and economic capitals, or dominant and dominated classes (Benson 1999 and Neveu 2007), but the specific variables of the news-making process (e.g. the logic behind the reporter-source relationship or the political ideologies reflected on the stories) are not sufficiently discussed. Secondly, as also noted by Benson (2004), his argument cannot be easily operationalised in empirical terms, just as the selected frameworks can (Hallin and Mancini 2004, Blumler and Gurevitch 1995, Pfetsch 2004). For instance, the author mentions the 'invisible power relations' (Bourdieu 1998:40) that determine the interactions between the members of the field, but he does not explicitly define or identify them, which makes them difficult to measure and analyse in a case study.

4.1.1 Towards an integration

The aim of this research is not just to apply the concepts proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004), Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) and Pfetsch (2004) within the Morelian context. On the contrary, the idea is only using them as the base for building an analytical framework for understanding the lack of significant change of the Mexican media and the reasons behind it. Thus, the goal is to take some of the parameters suggested by the authors in order

to design a particular scheme for approaching to the case study. That is, the concepts explained in the previous chapter are used here for structuring this particular framework.

We believe new theory to apply to other media systems will have to arise, as our framework did, out of concrete analysis of those systems... We saw it as a beginning, and we hope that other scholars will try to build on it, and not simply, again, apply it... But we share the concern that an overemphasis on these models and on classification of media systems as an end in itself is a potential danger (Hallin and Mancini 2010:67).

Considering the impossibility of having a 'one-size-fits-all structural analysis' (Migdal 2009:187), this research avoids the mere application of the typologies mentioned before. That is, based upon those scholars' concepts, a new approach to the phenomenon was designed and it involves the interactions between macro and micro levels. In so doing, from the media system framework, the thesis will use the notions of media market, political parallelism, professionalization and role of the state. From Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) and Pfetsch (2004), the ideas of the distance, logic and nature of the journalist-politician relationship will be adopted. Therefore, this new approach, which is one of the originalities of the thesis, allows explaining the extent the media macro level shapes the journalist-politician relationship and how it impacts on the political information that the people get through the printed media.

It is worth noting that the original frameworks are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary they offer two particular approaches of the same phenomenon: the idea of the media system is related to the communicational context or macro level, and the micro level regards the journalist-politician relationship. However, those studies share a couple of evident limitations: firstly, they only focus on one single aspect of the political communication process. Secondly, they do not produce hypotheses because they are not theories - just typologies - and, hence, their main goal is only to describe and classify the phenomenon.

In that sense, Hallin and Mancini (2004) only regard the system – the context in which media operate and the way they are organised - and, therefore, they only have a general view of the situation. That is, they neglect the internal processes and the individual actors involved, which represent the way political communication actually operates. Nonetheless, compared with Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) and Pfetsch (2004), this is also

an advantage, because the latter tend to vaguely imply the idea of the media macro level as a factor which has a role in the political communication: 'the structural conditions of the media influence the norms of professional orientations and modes of behaviour, the way political spokespersons and journalists deal with one another, and the content of media reporting on politics' (Pfetsch 2004:356). However, how this influence happens and by which means remains unknown. These scholars might not pay attention to the specific characteristics of the media environment but, on the other hand, they do analyse the interaction between the involved players, which is absent in the former's work.

Besides this, without explicitly saying it, they all tend to consider that, despite certain differences in shape or intensity, there is an inherent homogenization in the relationship between political actors. By correlating their expected communicational roles, this situation would bring balance to the political communication process: 'behaviour on both sides [reporters and sources] is conditioned by expectations of how each will, because they should, behave towards the other' (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995:35). Furthermore, Pfetsch (2004) implied that since there is a shared and uniform orientation in which journalists and politicians interact, there is then a homogeneous political culture. The scholar's assumption is that the relationship between media organizations and parties/government is the same for all the participants within the system. It can be perceived in her work that every news outlet and every politician interact in the same way, since they all coexist in the same environment: 'depending on the given constellation [characteristics of the journalist-politician relationship], a political communication culture develops that can be dominant for a spatially and culturally definable system' (Pfetsch 2004:363).

This argument is not wrong *per se* because, indeed, the existence of shared customs and practices may lead to similar relationships. Nonetheless, as it will be discussed in the following chapters, neat homogeneity at all levels is far from reality. This is because the existence of diverse news outlets, each one of them with its specific interest and political orientations, sets different parameters of interaction between individual politicians and government authorities as well.

Hence, as the empirical evidence of this thesis will prove and which will be presented in chapters five (*Morelian media system*) and six (*Journalist-politician relationship*), every-day journalistic practice indicates that there are certain media macro level influences that shape the roles and routines of the

actors involved in the political communication process. However, these influences - rather than uniform - are specific for each interaction between key players, even within the same system. That is the reason why an integrated scheme offers further explanations, and not just descriptions or classifications. From a perspective like the one proposed here, a deeper comprehension about the local public communication process is reached by understanding the actors involved (politicians and reporters), the way they interact with each other, and the context where it takes place.

In addition, due to an evident 'Western parochialism' (Curran and Park 2000:3), there is an undeniable domination of the communication literature by Western theories and models, more specifically from the Anglo-Saxon tradition, which might not be that accurate in explaining realities outside their boundaries. But, those other systems – like Mexico and Morelia - are also worth being understood under their particular circumstances, because they represent a completely different environment, with their own actors and dynamics. 'Theories that have shown validity in one cultural context do not necessarily yield equally good results in other cultural contexts' (Van de Vijver and Leung 1997:146). Furthermore,

the English-language literature still focuses heavily on the more stable Western advanced capitalist democracies, frequently building generalizations about the relationship between media and political systems that have not been tested in other more fluid and dynamic contexts... We need to develop inquiry that will advance the field by analysing the interactions between media and politics that take place in the shifting contexts of new democracies (Porto and Hallin 2009:291).

4.1.2 Links to sociology of journalism

Although this study draws mainly on a specific set of frameworks (Hallin and Mancini 2004, Blumler and Gurevitch 1995, Pfetsch 2004), it also shares important similarities with the overall discussion of the sociology of journalism. Therefore, this final part of the section will present a brief account of the general ideas of this academic line that are of interest to this thesis, which include the concepts of news as a constructed reality, routines, control and autonomy.

'The sociology of journalism has consisted largely of efforts to theorise about and/or demonstrate empirically how journalists carry out these functions in

practice' (McNair 2007:26). In so doing, this approach is focused on the 'social determinants of journalistic output' (McNair 2007:3); that is, the news. In other words, the aim is to understand 'how production processes determine content' (Wahl-Jorgensen 2007:56). In that sense, one of the central arguments of the sociology of journalism is that the news is a constructed reality, which is shaped by different micro and macro factors, such as the journalists own interests, media partisanship, commercial contracts, and so on (e.g. Tuchman 1972, 1978 and 2002; Schlesinger 1978; Schudson 1989 and 2005a; Shoemaker and Reese 1996; Lozano 1996; Marín 2003; Schwarz 2006; Becker and Vlad 2009).

For instance, Tuchman (1978:184) argued that news is a 'shared social phenomenon', because instead of mirroring an event, it only represents the view that a group (reporter, editor, publisher, advertiser...) has about it. For that reason, 'news is both an individual product and an organizational product' (Becker and Vlad 2009:59). Thus, 'the fact that news is *constructed* suggests that it is *socially* constructed, elaborated in the interaction of the news-making players with one another' (Schudson 2005a:186).

If a news story is considered a product, rather than fortuitously created, it is the result of a process then. The fact that there is a systematic logic behind it, means that it is produced under certain routines which organise and facilitate the journalistic work (Tuchman 1972 and 1978; Schlesinger 1978; Schudson 1989 and 2005a; Shoemaker and Reese 1996; and Gans 2004). Just as the news is a social construction, the routines that produce the stories are also the result of an agreement among the actors involved in the news-making process. Therefore, 'consensus' is a key concept for the sociology of journalism (Schlesinger 1978 and Gans 2004). Nonetheless, this consensus is mainly internalised through the every-day practice, instead of explicitly stated (Tuchman 1972 and 1978; Schlesinger 1978; Shoemaker and Reese 1996).

The contribution of these routines relies on the framework that guides reporters on the field, which is built upon a set of accepted and repeated activities. This is because 'these practices and forms spin webs of significance' (Wahl-Jorgensen 2007:58) and, hence, they become a sort of 'news philosophy' that shapes the nature of the stories that media publish and broadcast (Becker and Vlad 2009). As a result of that, journalists 'could not reject the central tenet which legitimises their activity because it plays an indispensable role in their belief-system' (Schlesinger 1978:12). In sum, journalistic routines represent

a judgement about the availability and suitability of sources, story importance or interest, as well as novelty, quality, and other product criteria. In addition, every story must be judged for its salience to the medium and format of the television program or newsmagazine. These considerations are necessary not only because they prescribe the essential ingredients of any story, but also because they express and represent the interests of the major participants in story selection and production (Gans 2004:280).

The concept of routines is also related to the notions of objectivity,³⁷ efficiency, deadlines, immediacy and beats. On the one hand, and in journalistic terms, efficiency means that a reporter is expected to deliver a story in a short time, based on reliable sources and without spending a lot of the company's economic and material resources (Gans 2004). On the other, deadlines determine the phases of the news-making process because, as a product, a story is produced by a series of stages (fact-gathering, writing, edition, etcetera). This is the reason why 'in the occupational mythology of the [journalist] time looms large among the wicked beasts to be defeated daily in the battle of production' (Schlesinger 1978:83). Closely connected with these last terms is the idea of immediacy, which is another exigency regarding the time. It is related to shorten the time lapse between the actual occurrence of the event and the publication of the news story, which must also represent an accurate account of the former (Schlesinger 1978). Finally, the beats represent the diversity of themes and, hence, sources that the news workers report on. In other words, 'a beat... is a method of dispersing reporters to organizations associated with the generation of news and holding centralised information' (Becker and Vlad 2009:64).

Control, on the other hand, is a concept widely commented on the literature of sociology of journalism (e.g. Schlesinger 1978, Tuchman 2002, Gans 2004 and McNair 2007). For instance, McNair (2007) identified at least three types of control that dominant groups exert over the media and their messages: firstly economic, both from owners and sources. Whilst the formers impose their particular interests on the news-making production, the latter can negotiate access to the contents through the allocation of advertising or through public relations professionals. But not only that, another financial constraint is imposed on reporters when their job is blocked by economic restrictions, such as lack of resources for doing investigation or reporting overseas (Schlesinger 1978). Secondly, the political pressure

³⁷ This concept was already discussed in chapter two, section 2.2 *The myth of objectivity*.

could be exerted by the State and/or political parties elites whether through the laws and regulations regarding the media operation, or through the news outlets' partisanship. Finally, there is also a cultural control represented by the system of values and beliefs shared by publishers, broadcasters and top editors and journalists. These actors are members of the dominant groups and, thus, they tend to reproduce their ideology in the contents they produce. This last form of control was also discussed by Schlesinger (1978), who conceived it as editorial and corporate ideological constraints.

In spite of the acknowledgement of these constraints, within the journalistic community there is also an inherent aspiration of autonomy which would grant them the freedom to operate according to the news judgements of its members (Gans 2004 and Schudson 2005b). That is, an autonomous journalism would be the one that could be practiced regardless the pressures neither from the State nor market. However, as the scholars also accept, this is an unlikely situation. Nevertheless,

if journalism is sufficiently decentralised and varied in the viewpoints it presents; if journalists are recruited from different walks of life and promote different points of view; if journalism is institutionally self-critical in ways that guarantee variety and change in the news; if, in a word, journalism is a pluralistic institution, then journalistic autonomy may be good not only for journalists, who of course appreciate the freedom to write what they please, but good for a democratic society (Schudson 2005b:221).

4.2 Methodological scheme

Understanding the lack of evident change of the Mexican journalism requires regarding the interactions between the macro and micro levels (media system and journalist-politician relationship, respectively). In more concrete terms, it means that this thesis is focused on the correlations between the impact of political alignment and government support on both the political news and the interaction between reporters and sources. Therefore, explaining this research problem requires a twofold methodology: quantitative and qualitative approaches, through a content analysis and in-depth interviews respectively. Although both of them were used in analysing each level, the former was focused on describing the political news coverage and official advertising published in the five Morelian newspapers during six

months, whilst the latter allowed getting first hand information about the daily interaction between reporters and sources.

It is important to underline that the use of each technique (content analysis and in-depth interviews) was not exclusive for each level. That is, even though the content analysis was more focussed on the macro level, the answers from the interviews also provided information for understanding it. Therefore, the analysis of the micro level involved both instruments too. This is because of the interactions between the levels which involve a permanent connection with one another. For that reason, 'different methodologies may be best suited to examine different aspects of a research question... In the final instance, methodologies and findings can be joined with reference to a common theoretical framework' (Jensen 2002:271).

Based upon Hallin and Mancini's (2004) concept of *Media System*, the macro level was operationalised in the following way: media market represented the description of the Morelian newspapers market and its general characteristics (market share, circulation, content, editorial line, etc). Political parallelism was explained, on the one hand, through the analysis of the shared ideologies between reporters and their sources and, on the other, discussing the notion of "partisanship free" press versus ideological alignment. The concept of professionalization was evaluated through the practice of investigative journalism and academic background of the news workers. Finally, the role of the State was analysed through the allocation of official advertising and the means of coercion towards the news organizations.

Following Blumler and Gurevitch's (1995) and Pfetsch's (2004) ideas, at the micro level the relationship between reporters and government officers/party members was analysed here by three parameters: firstly the distance between them was measured by the frequency and means of their interaction. Secondly, the nature of the relationship represents how collaborative or adversarial is their relationship, and it was measured by the interviewees' evaluation of the coverage that the newspapers gave or the politicians received during the period of study. Thirdly, the logic of the interaction means the imposition of content and formats by one actor over the other, measured here by the agenda management process.

The quantitative face of the field work was a content analysis, which was built upon two units of analysis: official advertisements and political news stories. For the former, the focus was on the amount, frequency and type of the advertisements; and for the latter, attention was paid to the amount of

stories, agenda management and bias. In short, the interest was in the quantity and tone of coverage as a way of evaluating the partisan stance of each publication.

The analysis included the five local newspapers (*Cambio de Michoacán*, *El Sol de Morelia*, *La Jornada Michoacán*, *La Voz de Michoacán* and *Provincia*), and was held from January to June 2010. Each newspaper's political section was revised every single day during the six months. It is worth mentioning that only *La Jornada* and *Cambio* have a specific section with the label *Politics*, the rest include the information regarding this issue in their local information sections. In that case, a story was considered political when it was related to the activities and opinions of the government (federal, state and local), legislative branch (Senators and federal and state Congress) and political parties.

This period was selected for two reasons: firstly, because the interest was revising the published information in which the interviewed actors had certain degree of involvement at that time, either in generating or reporting it. Secondly, the idea was also to evaluate the political news production during a normal time. That is not during an electoral campaign, when this kind of information has an excessive presence on the media and that might incline the results towards inaccurate parameters, which would not represent everyday reality. As Vliegenthart *et al* (2011:98) noted, compared with electoral coverage, research on 'routine news periods' are scarce, even comparisons between both of them. Thus, looking at an ordinary period of time – when there are no elections near - provides useful insights of media routines (Gans 2004).

In that sense, content analysis is a technique widely used for finding tendencies in messages. Thus, it is a tool to study and analyse all kind of communications in a systematic and quantitative way. The information included in every message can be codified and graphically presented for the further interpretation. In so doing, all the aspects of interest (such as words, topics, actors...) are considered as descriptive units, which are measured, described and analysed. These units represent the most concrete expressions of the research problem (Hernández 1998).

Content analysis is a research technique that involves measuring something... in a random sampling of some form of communication... The basic assumption implicit in content analysis is that an investigation of messages and communication will allow some insight into the people who receive these messages (Berger 1998:116).

In the case of the political news, the content analysis was implemented at the level of the stories published during that period on each newspaper's political section. On the other hand, the official advertisements included the party/government paid publicity, either regular ads or paid news stories. Both units of analysis – political news stories and official advertisements - and their specific categories were measured by percentages that represent the frequency in which each one of them appeared. That is, the results emphasise the level of repetition or the amount of times each aspect appeared during the period of study.

As mentioned before, the content analysis was built upon two units of analysis: political news stories and official advertisements.³⁸ The first one is represented by the stories related to politics that were published by the local newspapers during the period of study, and it includes the following categories:

- Type of source: represents the different ways the journalists get the information they use for doing their daily job. In every-day practice, these are basically press releases and conferences, exclusive interviews, official events coverage, unofficial source (leaks, rumours or anonymous informants) and the newspapers' own investigation (the stories which are the product of their own agenda).
- Number of sources: it is related to the different versions included in a news story, which could be single (only one side) or multi (two or more sides of the story). It is worth explaining the concept of single and multi sources in the context of this research: beyond the mere number of persons quoted in the news, the meaning is related to the number of versions presented. In other words, a story might include several voices, but it does not mean that it is actually offering several opinions. For instance: the reporter may interview all the government officials who attend an event, but if he/she does not look for facts or points of view other than the ones collected already there, the story will rely only on one version. That is, only in few cases an official event includes all the actors involved (politicians, researchers, experts, citizens...), or at least the most important. In that sense, when a story solely included either one individual actor (e.g. politician or government officer) or one version (similar actors giving similar opinions, such as a group of Congressmen from the same political party) it was considered as a single source. On the contrary, when it

³⁸ The *Appendix A* includes the coding format used for both units of analysis.

offered different sides of the issue and, thus, opinions, it was taken as a multi source.

- Type of actors: those are defined here as the individuals or groups that have an active participation in the political communication process, as providers of information or as subjects who are referred to by the media. In practice, they are the president, governor, mayor, Congressmen, government officials, party elites, interest groups and citizens.
- Bias: is the way the information was portrayed, whether favouring/criticizing someone or neutral. It is important to define which criteria were used here to determine whether a story was biased or neutral. In so doing, two parameters were selected: 'source bias', represented by the prominence of certain sources to the detriment of others, and 'semantic/discourse bias', which focuses on the language used for presenting the information and, thus, conveying certain interpretations (Gunter 1997). For this content analysis, a news story was considered biased when it included only one source of information (official most of the times), the use of adjectives by the reporter, and the tendency to stress the positive side over the negative or vice versa. Of course the mere use of only one source is neither by itself biased, nor emphasising weaknesses or strengths, but the combination of these factors fosters a clear inclination towards one side. Finally, it was also considered the direction of the bias, which was categorised as favourable or unfavourable.
- Agenda management: it can be defined as the process of placing an issue in the media scope during a period of time and controlling the information related to it. In practice, it represents if the information that was published was the product of an investigation done by the newspaper (own agenda) or the result of the routine coverage – e.g. official events and press conferences - which is quite similar in every news outlet (mainstream coverage). It is necessary to explain that mainstream coverage is referred to the routine reporting. That is, the information related to press conferences and official events reproduced by the media as a whole. On the contrary, newspapers' own agenda is integrated by the exclusive information produced by individual news outlets, as a result of a journalistic investigation.

The second unit of analysis is the official advertisements, which represent the paid publicity of the different branches of the government and political parties. It was constructed through the following categories:

- Advertiser: is the institution which paid for allocating a specific advert in the newspaper. For the specific case of this research, the

advertisers present during the period of study were political parties, government at its three levels (federal, state and local) and the legislative branch (Senators and federal and state deputies).

- Content: represents the information presented by the advertisement and it can be related to institutional image (branding of the institution), specific activity (information regarding a particular event or programme) and labelled as “other” were the memorial notices and specific official statements about a particular issue (e.g. the governor congratulates the mothers in Michoacán because of the mothers’ day).
- Type:³⁹ it could be either a regular advertisement or a paid news story. The former was easily identified because - as an average commercial advertisement - its size and layout are clearly different from the content of the newspaper. However, identifying the latter was more difficult because, on the contrary to the regular advert, this may not be that different from a common news story. The subtle keys to differentiate a paid news from the other were the lack of the by-line⁴⁰ and the exaggerated friendly tone of the content (excessive use of positive adjectives and total absence of different sides of the story). The following extract, published by *La Voz* on April 21, 2010, represents the typical lead of a paid news story of the state government:

To solve the most urgent needs of the citizens of Michoacán, through the construction of infrastructure right in their own communities and which bring important benefits to the people, represents one of the main objectives of the current administration, led by [the governor] Leonel Godoy.

The aim of using the content analysis was to obtain empirical data related to the political messages that were published on a daily basis in the local newspapers. This information represents what actually was portrayed and framed by the media, not what the actors involved might have said about it. The reason of selecting the news stories and advertising responded to the interest in exploring how these news outlets present the political information, how dependent they are on the official advertising (considering it as their main income and also as a means of coercion), and what is the connection between the coverage and the amount of advertisements. In that sense, the following table offers the sample of the content analysis, which represents

³⁹ An example of each type is included in the *Appendix C*.

⁴⁰ In some cases, just as it happened in *Cambio*, the paid news even had a by-line which indicated that the story was written by a member of the newsroom (*Redacción*).

the amount of official advertisements and political news published by each newspaper during the period of study (January-June 2010).

	<i>Cambio</i>	<i>El Sol</i>	<i>La Jornada</i>	<i>La Voz</i>	<i>Provincia</i>	<i>Total</i>
Official ads	515	655	503	740	596	3,009
Political news	1,760	1,534	1,356	1,403	1,400	7,453

Table 5 Sample of the content analysis.

The content analysis conducted for this thesis had two important strengths: firstly, the size of the sample and the inclusion of every local newspaper permitted the accurate measurement of trends. This is because the analysis of 3,009 adverts and 7,453 news stories, published by the Morelian printed press, offered the required scope for understanding local political journalism and its relationship with official advertising. Secondly, as commented by Schwarz (2006:52), ‘when conducting content analysis in foreign countries... cultural competence and knowledge as well as language skills are necessary pre-conditions’. These pre-conditions were successfully met by the researcher, due to his condition of being a Mexican native doing a study in Mexican soil. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that this thesis did not include a second coder and, hence, there was not any intercoder reliability test, which is a limitation.

On the other hand, in order to explain the journalist-politician relationship (micro level), a qualitative approach was used through twenty in-depth interviews with political reporters/editors of each newspaper, state and local government communications officers, and state Congressmen/communications officers of the three main political parties, which have 90% of the state Congress seats (PRD 35%, PAN 30% and PRI 25%), whilst the rest hardly have any presence (Congreso del Estado 2008). The interviews, which lasted an average of forty minutes, were designed in a semi-structured format with a specific set of questions for journalists and another for politicians and communications officers. Even though the questionnaires were different, both of them pointed at the same direction: for the case of the news workers, the questions were focused on their reporting routines, their relationship with the politicians and their newspaper’s political interactions. Regarding the other two actors, the answers sought were about

their relationship with the media personnel and also the newspaper's political interactions.⁴¹

Since each interview involves diverse situations that cannot always be foreseen and each interviewee requires different approaches to the themes, frequently it was necessary to alter the order of the questions and even ask follow-ups, although the core questions remained the same. In that sense, it is important to stress that each question was carefully explained to the informants, especially those that involved concepts such as journalistic "routines" or "collaborative relationship", which might be misunderstood if the person is not familiar with the literature on journalism theory or political communication. Doing this was necessary in order to make sure that both the informant and researcher were clear about the issues that were going to be discussed. For this reason, all the answers were valid because there was a mutual understanding of the nature of the questions. That is, each interviewee knew what he/she was being asked and answered accordingly and freely. This was particularly evident when most of the respondents expanded their answers by sharing their own experiences or providing examples to better illustrate their points.

The information collected from the interviews will be presented in a narrative form in which structure was based upon the trends of the interviewees' perceptions of the issues that were asked. In other words, the answers were systematised according to the opinions they reflected. Therefore, the process of coding aimed to look for 'patterns, classifications, themes and categories in this material' (Berger 2000:121). It is important to mention that all the answers were included, even though some of them led the discussion to paths that were not initially considered in the thesis. That is the case of the generational gap between the news workers or the personality of the politicians as a key for having good relations with media.

Like in this case, in depth interviews are a very useful tool when there is a clear lack of information. It is used to get empirical, qualitative and face to face data, because it comes from people who have crucial information or relevant experiences related to the research topic. The questions should be open and directly connected to the theoretical framework, hence, the answers obtained could be as wide and deep as needed, and they should reinforce the proposed hypotheses. Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that, instead of hard facts, the information obtained through this

⁴¹ The two questionnaires are presented in the *Appendix B*.

technique is only related to the interviewee's perceptions and opinions of the reality (Hernández 1998). Ignoring this last point is a potential risk for the study, because 'the people do not always say what they think, or mean what they say' (Jensen 2002:240).

The sample of the informants was twenty, but initially the idea was to interview only ten: at least one journalist/editor from each newspaper, one politician or communications officer from PAN, PRI and PRD, and the communications officers of the state and local governments. As a group, they all could be representative of the local political communication process and offer the diversity of opinions sought. However, during the field work and as a result of the networking, different communications officers were included because they were basically the only option, since the access to politicians and authorities was very restricted for a non journalist. That is the case of PRD, which Congressmen and party leaders were the most reluctant to be interviewed for an academic research.

The process of recruitment of the informants took two paths: firstly, the journalists were identified by reading the political sections of each newspaper and then they were contacted by phone and email, in which they were informed about the research and invited to participate as interviewees.⁴² As soon as an affirmative response was received, the date and place of the interview was agreed with them. This process was similar for the press officers of PAN, PRI, State Congress and local government, but their contact information was obtained through the websites of the institutions they work for. Secondly, the rest of the respondents (press officers and politicians) were identified as a result of networking. That is, the first interviewees suggested to contact them and, therefore, acted as mediators between the researcher and the new informants. Once they were identified, the process of recruitment was similar to the rest of the participants.

There were two rounds of interviews: The first one was from April to July 2010, when eighteen face to face interviews were conducted in Morelia and the second was during August 2011, when the last two interviews⁴³ were conducted via *MSN Messenger* video chat. Due to a consent form signed by

⁴² A copy of the email is included in the *Appendix D*.

⁴³ The decision of doing two more interviews responded to the necessity of strengthening the journalists' side. Thus these interviewees were all newspapers personnel.

the informants before the interview,⁴⁴ their identities will be kept anonymous and a specific combination of letters (*J* for journalists, *CO* for communications officers and *P* for politicians) and numbers will be used whenever they are quoted. The following table summarises the twenty actors included and their key to identify them:

Journalists	Communications officers	Politicians
<p>J1 and J7: Chief of state correspondents and political correspondent of <i>El Sol de Morelia</i>.</p> <p>J2 and J6: Editor and political correspondent of <i>La Jornada Michoacán</i>.</p> <p>J3: Political correspondent of <i>Cambio de Michoacán</i>.</p> <p>J4: Political correspondent of <i>La Voz de Michoacán</i>.</p> <p>J5: Political correspondent of <i>Provincia</i>.</p>	<p>CO2 and CO1: State Congress Social Communication Coordinator and her assistant.</p> <p>CO3: Press officer of the Coordination of Development and Planning (State Government).</p> <p>CO4: PRI Social Communication Coordinator.</p> <p>CO5: Press officer of the Ministry of the Women (State Government).</p> <p>CO6: Municipal Government Social Communication Coordinator.</p> <p>CO7: PAN Social Communication Coordinator.</p> <p>CO8: Press Officer of State Government.</p> <p>CO9: Press officer of PRD Congressmen.</p>	<p>P1: Former PRI state Congressman.</p> <p>P2 and P3: PAN state Congressmen.</p> <p>P4: Director of the Institute of the Youth (Municipal Government).</p>

Table 6 List of interviewees and the key to identify them.

The rationale behind the decision of using these techniques was that the content analysis provided the evidence needed to reinforce or contradict what reporters and politicians said during the interviews about their daily interactions. In other words, their opinions and perceptions of the political communication process were contrasted with the findings of the content analysis. This is because ‘the sources can be helpful, but they can also imprison [the researcher] and narrow his or her perspective’ (Fenno 1990:30). Furthermore, ‘we must always be cautious about accepting what people tell us as being the truth. Is the information respondents give *the truth* or *their truths*?’ (Berger 2000:124). Therefore, by studying its outcome, the political news coverage, in terms of agenda management and bias, the

⁴⁴ This consent form was approved by the PVAR Faculty Research Ethics Committee of the University of Leeds and it is included in the *Appendix E*.

relationship between the actors was better explained. Together with the official advertising patterns, the role of the media system (macro level) in shaping the journalist-politician relationship (micro level) will help in demonstrating the lack of modernization of the local newspapers.

Finally it is relevant to mention that, besides the content analysis and in-depth interviews, there were two market research reports conducted by *La Voz* (2006 and 2008) which were crucial sources of empirical evidence for this thesis: the first one was a study of the newspaper readership in Morelia, which included information regarding the market share of each printed media. The second offered an analysis of the commercial advertising at the local level, in terms of the profile of the advertisers and their patterns of allocation of adverts.

In sum, thanks to this methodological scheme, two are the specific hypotheses that this thesis will prove: On the one hand, by analysing the correlation between macro and micro levels, it is clear that the patron-client features of the PRI regime era (1929-2000) which determined the organization and operation of the Mexican media, have not been overcome yet and, thus, there is not an evident process of transformation of the news outlets in the country. On the other, studying the specific characteristics of the media environment (media market, political parallelism, professionalization and role of the state) permitted to understand how the interaction between reporters and sources (micro level) is shaped by this macro level. This is possible by looking at how close or distant they are, how conflictive or collaborative is their relationship and which logic (media or party/government) is behind the imposition of contents and formats in the news.

In that sense, the richness of the findings will allow to have empirical evidence for explaining – on the one hand - how certain politicians interact with specific news outlets in different ways, based on the media environment that determines how close and collaborative their relationship is. On the other, how the outcome - the political news - shows an evident instrumentalization exerted by the government and fostered by economic interests. The interactions that will be analysed through this case study are: newspapers with state and local government, with Congress, and with political parties. Each set of interactions will provide enough arguments for explaining the lack of change of the Mexican and Morelian press, due to the persistence of the old practices which still determine the journalist-politician relationship.

Within the Morelian context, the results will show that the specific conditions of the macro level foster a close and collaborative journalist-politician relationship which is determined by the imposition of the official agenda. This is because the homogeneous allocation of official advertising by the state government on the five local printed media promotes an evident political alignment in terms of political news coverage. Furthermore, in spite of the incipient professionalization of local reporters, the interaction between media and high rank political figures has not moved from mutual instrumentalization. However, today the negotiations are between publishers and party/government elites through the official advertising contracts, leaving individual news workers out of this game. This situation reinforces the argument about changes commented on the previous section. That is, reconfigurations at the micro level do not necessarily involve modifications at the macro level.

In short terms, the methodological scheme explained so far was designed for understanding and explaining the fundamental relations that this thesis is looking at. Those are the impact of political alignment and government support, firstly, on the production of political news and, secondly, on the interaction between correspondents and their sources. Studying these relations under the analytical framework proposed here reinforces the central hypothesis: the interactions at the micro level are determined by the structure of the macro level.

4.2.1 Ethical considerations

This part of the section presents some reflections regarding the ethical implications of the research process for the development of this case study, firstly, in terms of the personal involvement of the researcher and, secondly, related to the relationship with the informants. The relevance of discussing these issues relies on the fact that it clarifies how the research problem was approached on the field.

Regarding the first issue, the personal involvement, it is important to explain the professional background of the researcher and its impact on the overall argument of the thesis. Before deciding to study a PhD at the University of Leeds, I combined the journalistic practice with the academia. That is, I was teaching journalism and communication theories in a private University (Universidad Vasco de Quiroga) whilst I was working for *La Voz de Michoacán*, the most important newspaper in the state. During the seven

years that I worked for that news outlet, I performed different roles: I started as an art and culture correspondent, after a year and a half I became the editor of that section and stayed there for nearly three years. The remaining time I was firstly in charge of the market research area and, secondly I became the head of the department of marketing.

Although I was not directly involved in the political journalism, the daily interactions with my fellow journalists and editors – within and outside the newsroom of *La Voz* – provided me an overview of the issues discussed in this thesis. For instance, the argument of the lack of significant change of the journalistic practice was something that I experienced myself. As commented earlier on chapter one (section 1.1 *Media and democratization in Mexico*), there has been a trend towards some kind of media modernization, however the change is very often merely at the layout level, because the content and practices are still the same. In 2003, forced by the arrival of *Provincia*, *La Voz* had a deep restructuration which involved not only its layout, but also the news production process. Among other things, the new routines were supposed to foster the practice of a watchdog and more civic journalism, focused on the citizen's needs rather than politicians' agenda. Despite the introduction of the new canons, the old practices remained untouched. That is, the information continued being shaped according to the agreements between political elites and the authorities of the newspaper, mediated by official advertising contracts. Even as the editor of the art and culture section, I was asked not to cover certain events organised by people connected with politicians who did not want to allocate advertisements there.

Being right there on the field gave me the chance to see and experience the issues analysed in this thesis. Nonetheless, it is important to stress that spending several years in the academic world also provided me a critical distance of my own journalistic background. In other words, even though journalism and social science have a lot in common – such as being close to the actors in their own environment – they are not the same (Fenno 1990 and McNair 2007). There is a boundary that separates both disciplines and it must be acknowledged when being in one side or another. For instance, journalists' attention is 'episodic' instead of 'sustained' as it happens with the social scientists and, therefore, reporters only look for ideological debates whilst academic researchers are after trends or 'regularities' (Fenno 1990).

The affinities between us [journalists and political scientists]... are strong. But when that has been acknowledged, it remains true that political science is not journalism. And it is one of the

crucial tasks of boundary maintenance that political scientists maintain that distinction. The goals, the standards, the audience, the work environments and the work habits of the two occupations, the two professions are different (Fenno 1990:28).

Having this boundary in mind was fundamental during the field work, because this research required a scientific approach to a field that I already knew as a journalist. However, this situation made evident the necessity of dealing with my own subjectivity, which represented a serious issue due to my previous involvement as a journalist. For that reason, rather than as a former news worker, I acted as a social scientist at all time. That is, I collected, evaluated, analysed and presented the data in a scientific manner, ensuring that every single piece of evidence was equally treated in an unbiased and fair way. In other words, the findings that will be presented in the following chapters include all the sides of the research problem, no matter if I personally agree with them or not.

It is worth mentioning that having worked for one of the local newspapers granted me the status of insider, which was crucial for the development of this research. Although the following section will offer the rationale of selecting Morelia as a case study, my previous knowledge of the field reinforced this decision. This is because 'sociologists have no laboratories in which to conduct experiments, and must study living systems of which they are themselves a part' (McNair 2007:32). Besides the relevance of this 'local knowledge' (Thomas 2011), which facilitated the understanding of the processes and routines, another advantage of being an insider was the access to the informants. Even though I did not personally know most of the interviewees, contacting them was not that difficult due to the networks that I already had. Without those networks, it would have required much more time and effort to identify, contact and interview the participants. Furthermore, within a cultural context such as the Mexican, where social relationships are a matter of trust, not being perceived as an outsider boosts the openness of the interviewees.

Nonetheless, an insider stance involves risks as well, such as being too familiar with the environment. This situation could affect the research in at least two ways: firstly, the informants could perceive the researcher more as friend or colleague than an impartial observer, which could introduce some kind of bias in their answers. Secondly and closely connected with this, there is also a serious risk of taking for granted those answers and expecting – or even pushing - the interviewees to respond in a specific way.

I coped with the first issue by considering the participants only as respondents, not friends (Fenno 1990). In so doing, I kept the distance between me and them by adopting an impartial and detached position towards the research problem. Regarding the risk of inducing the answers, the questions were raised in an unbiased way, letting the interviewees speak freely. As a result of that, the thesis included issues that were not initially considered but were repeatedly mentioned by the informants, for instance the generational gap between the journalists.

Finally, it is important to mention that the interview process of this thesis was approved by the PVAR Faculty Research Ethics Committee of the University of Leeds on September 19th 2011. According to the Committee, 'the necessary consent procedures had been put in place and are consistent with the University's guidelines on ethical conduct within research'.

4.3 Morelia as a case study

The aim of this section is to explain the reasons that supported the decision of, firstly, building this thesis upon a case study and, secondly, conducting it in Morelia. First of all, it is worth underlining that this research is about the lack of change of the Mexican journalism. Thus, rather than on Morelia itself, the focus was on 'the problem itself' (González 2009). That is, the interest was in understanding the continuity of the journalistic practices that are still the common rule, especially in the provinces, despite the arrival of political parties different from the hegemonic Institutional Revolutionary Party. In simpler terms, although Morelia offered a set of interesting and convenient aspects, it was just the place where this research was conducted, or a means to an end. This is the reason why the ultimate goal was to analyse the tensions between the macro and micro levels and its implications for the journalism in Mexico, instead of the Morelian journalistic practices *per se*.

Since the aim was to offer an in-depth explanation of the phenomenon, in which different angles could be included, a case study was the natural option. This is because this approach concentrates on only one thing as a whole, looking at in great detail. In other words, this kind of research is focused on 'the uniqueness of the thing and the thing in its completeness' (Thomas 2011:3). In so doing, its goal is to reach a deep understanding of the processes and relationships that characterise the phenomenon, which is

the outcome of looking at its concrete manifestation and its interrelations with other phenomena (Jensen 2002).

Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a *real life* context. It is research-based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence-led. The primary purpose is to generate an in-depth understanding of a specific topic (Thomas 2011:10).

As commented in the introduction, a case study avoids the over-generalisations and simplifications of the large scale and comparative studies (Hallin and Mancini 2004, Kleinsteuber 2004 and Pfetsch 2004). On the contrary, due to its closeness to the social reality, the former overcomes the obstacle of the abstract assumptions by analysing the actors and processes right on the field, where they actually interact. As a result of that, the evidence obtained is detailed and plenty of insights which would be harder to perceive from a wider perspective.

A lot can be achieved by recourse to the concrete. We escape from a tendency too often found in academic writing to obfuscate with abstractions rather than clarify with specificity; to bring a fog over the topic in hand with abstract words and the seeking of generalisation where none is possible and none is helpful (Thomas 2011:7).

Furthermore, the academic literature on media and journalism includes several seminal works built upon a case study approach. For instance, Tuchman (1972) conducted a research based on participant observation at an American daily metropolitan newspaper where she developed her argument of the 'objectivity as a strategic ritual' for the journalists. Also based on participant observation and interviews at the BBC's radio and television newsrooms, Schlesinger (1978) examined the role of ideology in the news making process. More recently, Wahl-Jorgensen (2007) analysed the letters to the editor sections of San Francisco Bay Area newspapers. Mainly through direct observation and interviews, she explored the links between those sections and public participation in the media. In addition, and related to Mexico, the literature survey for this thesis found a couple of dissertations focused on the press-government relationship in Tepic (Orozco 2007) and the transition of political journalism in Aguascalientes (De León 2008).

Therefore, Morelia - the capital city of the state of Michoacán - represents an interesting case study for arguing that, despite the arrival of new political

parties to the government, the Mexican media still present the same features of the supposedly overcome authoritarian age of the country and, hence, explaining how the media environment determines the journalist-politician relationship. Choosing this place responded to a twofold justification. Firstly, as mentioned before, the insider status of the researcher facilitated the data collection in terms of the previous knowledge of the context and, as a result of that, access to key informants. Thus, knowing the field and having access that would hardly be available otherwise represent 'a ready-made strength for conducting a case study' (Thomas 2011:76). Secondly, the decision was made also because of Morelia's particular blend of uniqueness and representativeness: on the one hand, it is one of the few places in Mexico that has been governed by the three main political parties (Institutional Revolutionary Party, National Action Party and Democratic Revolution Party). On the other, it can be considered as an average medium-sized city in terms of population (729,279 inhabitants, INEGI 2010) and media outlets (five newspapers, five television channels and thirteen radio stations).

The city and the state as well share geographical, economic, social, cultural and political characteristics with the rest of the Middle West region of Mexico.⁴⁵ This zone is integrated by nine states: Aguascalientes, Colima, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayarit, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí and Zacatecas. In that sense, the results obtained in this study could also be used to explain the same aspects within this region which is also located between the most developed north and the poorest south of the country, a situation that gives Michoacán a particular strategic position as a bridge between both zones. Morelia could also be considered as a typical case of a medium-sized Mexican city because, as well as the rest of them, it concentrates basically all the state political, economic and cultural activities. This situation leaves the smaller towns, in practice, out of the decision making process, since all the state authorities are gathered in the provincial capitals.

Being the capital city of Michoacán and also having experienced three apparently different approaches to public administration, are strong reasons to consider Morelia as a research object in the communication field. Firstly, this is because the three main parties are equally strong at this level, which sets special characteristics to the political debate. Secondly, related to this point, the media system is constantly forced to adapt to the changing

⁴⁵ Due to its territorial dimensions, Mexico is divided into five regions: Middle, Middle West, North East, North West and South-South East.

political environment, since the instrumentalization is one of its main features. It is important to address that the number of news organizations in Morelia, although apparently high under Western standards, is not unusual in Mexico since the average of newspapers in most of the capital cities is around three or four.

In terms of political communication, this city is also a good example of how local and regional media outlets manage to survive in an economically weak environment, which constantly puts at stake their commercial viability, a situation that opens the door to all kind of manipulation, both political and economic. As a result of this manipulation, the relationship between journalist and politicians tend to be shaped by the factors that foster this instrumentalization. Hence, as the this research will show, the existence of different news organizations aligned to the official discourse, produce messages more related to the political actors, rather than the audience, which reflects the lack of change of the Mexican journalism.

Generally speaking, and as it will be discussed in wider terms in the following chapters, the political information published by the Morelian newspapers is mainly focused on covering the activities of the state and local government authorities (mainly the governor and mayor) and state Congressmen. Political parties and their position towards the latter's performance have also constant media attention. However, only PAN, PRI and PRD – the most important parties – are frequently sought as relevant sources. On the contrary, smaller parties (e.g. Labour Party or Green Ecological Party of Mexico) are scarcely represented because their reduced membership and, thus, political strength within the Congress. To a lesser degree, national and even international agenda is reflected on the local news. Nonetheless, it is always analysed by the local political actors who comment on its implications for Michoacán or Morelia. Another very recurrent topic on the political sections is related to the mutual criticism between political parties (also within the Congress) and between government officials and the opposition.

As the findings will show, state government is the leader of the news management because is the one that sets the pace of the agenda. Local government and, sometimes, state Congress introduce certain issues to the public debate. Most of the times, nevertheless, political parties leaders and Congressmen act as mere opinion providers. That is, rather than imposing a theme, their comments are only complements to the main stories or provide follow-ups.

Finally, in order to position Morelia in the Mexican context and, thus, offer a general background about it, it is necessary to stress some particular aspects of this place. Therefore, the following two subsections offer an overview of the capital city of Michoacán: firstly a profile with a glance of its history and contemporary facts. Secondly, there is a general discussion about the importance of the local politics for the Mexican democratic transition and its impact on Morelian particular process.

4.3.1 Profile of the city

The Colonial process of Mexico started in 1521 when the first ships from Spain arrived at the Gulf of Mexico's coasts. By 1537, several Spanish families and Catholic priests have already settled down in the Guayangareo Valley and asked the Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza and the Spanish crown official permission to found a city there. When it was granted, on May 18th 1541 Nueva Valladolid was founded. Due to its quick development, it became the centre of the economic and political activities of the region and, as a result of that, by 1580 the provincial authorities moved their headquarters from Pátzcuaro to the new town. By the nineteenth century, Nueva Valladolid had become one of the most important cities of the still Nueva España,⁴⁶ where several intellectuals such as Miguel Hidalgo planned the Independence from the Spanish monarchy. Once the war was over, on December 12th 1828 the local authorities decided to change the name of the city to Morelia in honour to José María Morelos, one of the most relevant figures of the rebel movement that broke the Spanish domination (UMSNH 2011).

Thanks to its more than 200 historic monuments and its Colonial architecture, an eclectic blend of Spanish Renaissance and Baroque with Mesoamerican elements all built with pink stone, UNESCO granted it the title of World Heritage Site in 1991 (UNESCO 2011). Its particular cuisine, colourful traditions and being the venue for several artistic and cultural international festivals, reinforced the necessity of putting the city in the eye of the world. This goal has been achieved, not all the time in a positive way though, because of its polarization in political (although PRD has the stronger support, PAN and PRI are not that weak either), social (different unions such as teachers have become a historic problem for government)

⁴⁶ Before the Independence war against Spain, the official name of Mexico was Nueva España.

and economic terms (the gap between rich and poor is getting wider every year), plus the more recent problems related to the organised crime.⁴⁷

As a municipality, Morelia is integrated by its metropolitan area and fourteen *tenencias* (boroughs or suburban communities). It has a population of 729,279 inhabitants (16.76% of the total population of the state), which is basically concentrated in the city (93.3%) whilst the rest live in the rural zones (7.7%). The capital of Michoacán is strategically situated between Mexico City (315 kilometres) and Guadalajara (290 kilometres), the second largest city in the country (H. Ayuntamiento de Morelia 2008 and INEGI 2010).

As a reflection of Michoacán as a whole, Morelia's industrial activity is poorly developed as well. For that reason, the economic activity has taken two paths: Firstly services, because - as the capital city - is the centre of the state government and its branches, which implies that most of its administrative activities take place in this city. There is also an important concentration of university students, because of the several higher education institutions that have campuses there. Secondly tourism, due to its historical and cultural importance, which attract visitors from all over the world during the whole year and who demand the proper infrastructure (Ayuntamiento de Morelia 2008).

4.3.2 Mexican democratic transition and its impact on Morelia

First of all, it is worth briefly explaining the Mexican political system: According to the Federal Constitution (Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos), Mexico is a 'representative, democratic and federal Republic' integrated by 31 states and a Federal District (Mexico City), and each state is divided into *Municipios* (municipalities with their own local governments). The government at the three levels (federal, state and municipal) works through its three branches: Executive (President, state governor or city mayor), legislative (Senators, federal and state deputies, and local councils), and judicial (Supreme Court, District Courts and Electoral Court). The authorities are elected through a democratic process, organised and invigilated by the Federal Electoral Institute (Instituto Federal Electoral, IFE), and the elections take place in specific times: for president,

⁴⁷ Michoacán is the cradle of one of the most violent drug cartels in Mexico: *La familia* (The family), which has recently split in other faction *Los caballeros templarios* (Knights templar).

senators, federal deputies and governors, every six years; for city mayor and state Congressmen, every three years.

Like most of the Latin American countries, Mexico still has a centralised regime, which makes many foreign scholars think that 'politics in Mexico begins and ends in Mexico City' (Hiskey 2003:44). It is very often true, but it is also true that regional and local systems are becoming more important. The clearest example of this is Vicente Fox's victory in the 2000 presidential elections, a historic moment that represented the breakup of the seventy years hegemony of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI). This was possible because of the result of at least two decades of local and regional triumphs along the country that the National Action Party (Partido Acción Nacional, PAN) had been obtaining.

Somewhat subsumed by these national-level changes, however, were significant subnational differences in the extent to which democracy had indeed arrived in Mexico. In some areas of the country, the democratization process was well underway long before the election of Fox, while in others it had barely begun (Hiskey and Bowler 2005:57).

According to these authors, during 1980 and 1990 Mexican people became significantly more committed to democratic values, no matter their social differences like age, gender, income or education. As a result of this social active role, PRI started losing city halls and then state governments. But 'even on the eve of [2000] historic elections, Mexicans were living under distinct subnational electoral regimes' (Hiskey and Bowler 2005:59). Whilst the northern region, the more developed, had been a PAN territory, the poor southern area quickly became the main Democratic Revolution Party (Partido de la Revolución Democrática, PRD) refuge. Klesner (2005) explained that, because of its pro-market ideology and Catholic social philosophy, PAN became PRI's main opponent in the Northern and certain areas of the Middle West zone; and PRD with its economic nationalism and anti-globalization speech appealed to the Southern and Mexico City's voters. Beyond this electoral territory division, PRI regime started conceding more political power to PAN in order to get its support for eventual legislative and government projects, and the left orientated PRD was systematically marginalised from the negotiation table, also in part because of its particular way to do politics (demonstrations, occupation of buildings and even the establishment of parallel governments) (Eisenstadt 2003).

Even though the electoral competition in Mexico has been highly focused on state or local government, it also began to give more importance to pragmatic issues (capacity and experience in public administration) instead of ideology or national politics issues (Klesner 2005). As ideology stopped being the distinctive sign between the parties, opposition candidates - especially from PAN - adopted catch-all strategies in order to obtain as many votes as possible, in spite of the party identity of the electorate. The message they used oscillated among the 'pro-regime and anti-regime cleavage', and it succeeded first in local and regional contests (Klesner 2005:105). Vicente Fox and his campaign team noted this phenomenon and decided to use it in 2000. The result is well known now: his victory 'reflected the emergence over the previous decade-and-a-half of a profound new cleavage in Mexican politics, centred not on socioeconomic differences and social issues but on the issue of the one-party regime's future' (Klesner 2005:105).

Whilst Mexican political map was changing, Michoacán had its own political development as well. In 1988, during the post electoral struggle produced for the apparent fraud that led Carlos Salinas de Gortari to the presidency, in Morelia several followers of the former governor Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano - who was his main opponent in the federal elections - died while they protested the final outcome. As a result of that, Cárdenas, with some PRI dissidents and former communist politicians and intellectuals formed the PRD and considered the city as one of its most important spots. For that reason, it did not take long for the new party to get its first triumph by winning in 1990 the Morelian local government elections with Samuel Maldonado Bautista, who broke the PRI chain at the municipal level.

Six years later, and one more PRI administration in between, the opposition won again the *Ayuntamiento* (city government), but that time was the chance for the PAN through its candidate Salvador López Orduña to make its own debut. Thanks to his performance as mayor, he could win again the local elections in 2005, but it was not enough to become governor in neither the 2001 nor 2007 state elections. At the state level, since 2002 Michoacán has become a PRD territory, because this party has won the last two state elections with Lázaro Cárdenas Batel (2001) and Leonel Godoy Rangel (2007), both with undisputable victory margins over their opponents.

As a curious detail, it is important to say that through the recent history of the state a particular phenomenon has taken place: the rise of the *Cárdenas Dynasty*. This family has been linked to Mexican politics since the years of

the Revolution (1910-1920), because of Lázaro Cárdenas Del Río, a revolutionary general that fought in the line of fire and after the end of the war he became governor (1928-1932) and he also was the last of the Mexican presidents that came out of the army (1934-1940). He is still considered as one of the most popular presidents of the country, because his administration policies had a clear social aim, such as developing the agriculture, giving medical care to everyone and guarantying the public education. He is remembered too for the nationalization of the oil industry in 1938 which was in British and American hands. His brother Dámaso Cárdenas was also governor from 1950 to 1956, and 24 years later Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, son of the General, occupied that office from 1980 to 1986. Finally, the lineage appeared again in 2002 with Lázaro Cárdenas Batel, son of Cuauhtémoc, who was the first PRD governor in Michoacán.

4.4 Summary

As mentioned, the aim of this thesis is to argue that the Mexican media have not changed in the way Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2003 and 2006) perceived, who opined that the journalistic practices in Mexico were moving towards a more civic stance. On the contrary, the empirical evidence that will be presented in the following chapters will prove that, in spite of the changes of governing parties, the interaction between news outlets and politicians has not changed in essence. This is because the government still trades allegiance through the allocation of official advertising. In order to explain this lack of change, the research will focus on the extent the media environment (macro level) shapes the journalist-politician relationship (micro level).

In so doing, two different frameworks were selected: For the macro level, the concept of *Media System* (Hallin and Mancini 2004) and, for the micro level, the ideas of adversarial/collaboration (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995) and distance/logic (Pfetsch 2004). The rationale of using both of them responded to the necessity of having an approach which could include both spheres simultaneously because, individually, these frameworks only focused on one single aspect of the political communication process. Having two levels and using two frameworks involved having a twofold methodology: a quantitative side with a content analysis of the Morelian newspapers, and a qualitative side with in-depth interviews with local journalists, communications officers and politicians.

Morelia, the capital city of the state of Michoacán, was selected as a case study because it is representative of the medium-sized cities in the country, but it also has a not very common particularity: it has been governed by the three main political parties. Besides these reasons, this place offers the chance to see a different perspective from the one presented by most of the scholars – both national and foreign – who tend to consider as the Mexican reality only what happens in Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey, neglecting the rest of the country and its particular set of characteristics. Finally, based on the discussions presented above, the following two chapters will present the findings of the field work: the macro level will be broken down in chapter five (*Morelian media system*) and the micro level will be discussed in chapter six (*Journalist-politician relationship*).

Chapter 5 Morelian media system

As commented in the previous two chapters, explaining the lack of significant change of the Mexican media - through the Morelian case - requires a twofold scope: a macro level approach using the concept of *Media System* (Hallin and Mancini 2004) and a micro level approach taking the notions of conflict/collaboration, distance and logic of the journalist-politician relationship (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995, Pfetsch 2004). Therefore, based upon both the interviews and content analysis, this chapter presents the results of the field work regarding the macro level, which is the Morelian media environment. According to the parameters of the media system explained earlier (chapter three, section 3.1 *Media System*), the content is organised in the following way: media market, political parallelism, professionalization and role of the state, plus a general summary.

5.1 Media market

The first parameter of the media system is related to the development of the media market which is referred, on the one hand, to the size and types of audience and, on the other, to the specific characteristics of the news outlets within this environment. Prior to the description of the Morelian media market, it is important to put it in context in order to make sense of the facts. For that reason, before presenting the specific situation of the case study, it is worth offering an overview of the national structure of the media consumption for establishing a platform in which news outlets in Morelia could be better understood. Whilst in practice there is not a real national press (as commented before in the first chapter, section 1.2 *Mexican media's main features*), media concentrated in Mexico City are still considered to be "national" thanks to their infrastructure and importance. That is why those news organizations will be used here just as a reference.

5.1.1 National media market

According to the *National Survey of Habits, Practices and Cultural Consumption* conducted by the National Council for the Culture and Arts (Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, Conaculta), 60% of the

Mexican population reads newspapers regularly. Nonetheless, only 10% does it five to seven days a week, 11% three to four, and 23% one to two. This means that only 44% are actually frequent readers, who do it at least once a week. This last figure is consistent with the 2006 survey, which showed that 42% were frequent readers. On the other hand, 67% of the readers buy their newspaper, whilst 25% borrow it from someone, 5% read free printed media, 2% reads it on line and only 1% do it on their mobile (Conaculta 2010:110-111). In its yearly review of Mexican media and their audiences, the advertising agency IBOPE AGB México found that 73% of the Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey dwellers are frequent newspapers readers. Notwithstanding, only 32% do it from Monday to Sunday, 24% once a week and 17% on Sunday (IBOPE AGB México 2010:49).

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, in a recent report on newspaper and internet industry, 34% of the Mexican adults were newspaper readers in 2008, a figure which shows certain degree of consistency with the previous ones. Even though Mexico's rank was the fifth lowest, it was above the United Kingdom which readership was 33%.⁴⁸ The document addressed Iceland and Japan as the countries with the highest rates of printed media reach (96% and 92% respectively) and the lowest were Greece with 12% and Russia with 11% (OECD 2010:29).

The *National Register of Printed Media* (Padrón Nacional de Medios Impresos, PNMI), prepared by the federal Ministry of Interior (Secretaría de Gobierno, Segob), included in its records 15 newspapers from the capital city. Ten of them are general information oriented, three are focused on sports, and two offer financial news. Among the former, according to their declared daily circulation,⁴⁹ the most important are:⁵⁰ *La Prensa* (244,299

⁴⁸ There is a lack of consistency regarding newspaper readership in the UK: whilst for OECD it was 33% in 2008, two years later the National Readership Survey reported 49.4% (NRS 2010) and the Newspaper Society (2010) claimed it was 54.1% for national papers and 75.6% for local/regional.

⁴⁹ There is a common practice among most of the Mexican publishers which is inflating or exaggerating their newspapers circulation, in order to appeal to advertisers. For that reason, official figures registered by the government are not exactly the real figures. Trejo (1992) argued that real circulation is about one third or even one quarter of the declared rates.

⁵⁰ *El Universal* is widely considered as one of the most influential and with a high circulation but, according to the official information, its rates are 56,138 (Monday to Saturday) and 117,863 (Sunday).

copies), *Reforma* (146,309 copies) and *La Jornada* (107,666 copies) (PNMI 2010).

Regarding the Mexican television, there are only two national chains: *Televisa* and *TV Azteca*. Although both of them are placed in Mexico City, they have local and regional channels across the country, which combine national and local content and advertising as well. *Televisa* is the biggest and most important company in the Spanish language mass media market. Its operation is focused on diverse business areas, such as production and broadcasting television content (both at national and international level), cable and satellite TV, magazines publication, production and distribution of music and movies, among other activities. It actually operates four television channels (2, 4, 5 and 9), through its 258 affiliated stations, which represents 74.2% of the Mexican free to air television share⁵¹ at prime time – that is, from 20:00 to 23:00 hours - (*Televisa* 2009). On the other hand, *TV Azteca* was founded in 1993 during President Carlos Salinas' privatization project, by which the two public service channels (7 and 13) were bought by the businessman Ricardo Salinas. The chain currently produces and distributes television programmes through its 85 affiliated stations across the country. However, 18 years after its first transmission, it has not moved from the second place in rating and share terms (TV Azteca 2010 and IBOPE AGB México 2010).

At a national level, television reaches 98.9% of the Mexican homes, which have an average of two TV sets per house. Only 38.8% of the homes have a paid television system, whether cable or satellite, whilst 69.2% just receives the signal from the two national chains (IBOPE AGB México 2008:7-8). That is why 76.88% of the share from Monday to Sunday corresponds to free to air television (IBOPE AGB México 2010). In that sense, the *National Survey of Habits, Practices and Cultural Consumption* stated that 90% of the Mexicans watch television on a regular basis, and 40% of them do it more than two hours per day (Conaculta 2010:152-153).

Regarding the content of the programmes that Mexicans prefer, the 2009 top 15 included only *telenovelas* (soap operas), football matches, reality and competition shows, but not even a single news programme (IBOPE AGB México 2010:25). It can be said that television is not considered as an information source, only an entertainment provider. Nevertheless,

⁵¹ Share level represents the percentage of turned on TV sets that are tuned in a specific channel at a particular time (IBOPE AGB México 2010:20).

Conaculta's study (2010:154) showed otherwise: 23% of the audience – the highest rate - watches news programmes, followed by *telenovelas* with 21%.

Finally, according to the National Chamber of Radio and Television Industry (Cámara Nacional de la Industria de la Radio y Televisión, CIRT), there are 1,510 radio stations in the country, 853 are of AM (94 public and 759 commercial) and 657 of FM (267 public and 390 commercial) (CIRT 2010). Recent figures indicate that 86% of the Mexican homes have a radio set (IBOPE AGB México 2008:7), which means that 76% of the country's population is frequently in contact with it by listening to it at least one hour daily (33%). Music (45%) and news programmes (34%) represent the preferred content of these media outlets (Conaculta 2010:149-151). In Mexico City, around ten million listen to radio from Monday to Sunday, the average exposure time is 03:39:24 hours, and 78.1% of the audience prefer FM stations and 29.1% AM. The places where they listen to it are mainly their home (44%), their car or public transportation (38%) and at their job (11%) (IBOPE AGB México 2010:38-40).

5.1.2 Morelian media market

Due to a lack of market research,⁵² local newspapers, television and radio consumption and ratings are nearly nonexistent. This is because national advertisers do not invest that much in Morelia, so advertising agencies basically pay attention to Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey. Besides that, *La Voz de Michoacán* is the only news outlet which has a proper marketing department and, therefore, the only one that has information about the local printed media market. For that reason a recent market research conducted by this publication (*La Voz* 2008) will be used as a source of empirical evidence for this section. In that sense, certain facts regarding the local media market will be inferred by analysing the available information.

As a reflection of the national rates commented in the previous section, the total newspaper readership in Morelia is 40%. Notwithstanding,⁵³ less than a half of the people read it either daily or at least two times a week, the rest

⁵² Local and state government are supposed to have this kind of information, but none of them agreed to share it; in spite of being asked through the official information access procedures.

⁵³ Since there are not general figures of the Morelian readership as a whole, the following averages are only estimations based upon the data from the three main local newspapers, which represent 95% of the market.

does not show any specific frequency. It is interesting noting that around two thirds of the readers personally buy their copy, but only around 10% of them had a subscription, and the rest read it at the library or at their office (*La Voz de Michoacán* 2008).

Although there are five newspapers in the city, the local printed media market is almost a monopoly because it is widely dominated by *La Voz* - which has 83% of the readership - leaving the other competitors with a very reduced share. This publication is also the oldest, it has the highest circulation and, as it will be commented further in this chapter (section 5.1 *The role of the State*), it concentrates most of the commercial advertisers. The following table offers an overview of the Morelian newspapers in terms of their general characteristics:

	Establishment	Format	Number of pages	Circulation ⁵⁴	Market share ⁵⁵
<i>Cambio de Michoacán</i>	6/07/1992	Tabloid	40	8,891	1%
<i>El Sol de Morelia</i>	10/09/1978	Tabloid	64	3,028	5%
<i>La Jornada Michoacán</i>	19/04/2004	Tabloid	24	7,233	2%
<i>La Voz de Michoacán</i>	19/06/1948	Tabloid	108	28,641	83%
<i>Provincia</i>	5/05/2002	Broadsheet	50	16,630	7%

Table 7 General characteristics of the Morelian newspapers.

Besides their market share and their general characteristics, understanding the media market also requires a description of the content of the stories offered by the news outlets. Hence, the next table presents a comparison of the editorial profile of the local newspapers. However, it is important to stress that the following information is based on the notes about each publication taken during the content analysis process and some comments from the interviewees too.

⁵⁴ PNMI (2010).

⁵⁵ The sum is 98%, because the 2% left corresponded to national newspapers (*La Voz de Michoacán* 2008).

	Editorial line ⁵⁶	Sections	Layout	Content	Other comments
Cambio de Michoacán	Left oriented: Its owner and current director-general, and the members of its editorial board, are identified with the PRD (Democratic Revolution Party).	<i>Morelia</i> (local information), <i>Education, Politics, Economy, Opinion, Escenarios</i> (culture and entertainment), <i>Sports, Sucesos</i> (crime and traffic accidents related), <i>National and International</i> .	-Printed entirely in black and white. -Frequent use of photos and graphic tools (charts, maps...)	-Compared with the rest of the papers, it frequently publishes investigative reports, especially in its Sunday edition. -Variety of subsections for specific niches (students, young people...). - <i>Soft news</i> has a limited space, but it does not include showbiz or social gatherings.	-It is currently the only one which is not daily, because it is published from Sunday to Friday. -It also offers a couple of supplements focused on women and regional information.
El Sol de Morelia	Aligned towards the state government in turn.	<i>Morelia</i> (local information), <i>Education, Politics, Economy, Opinion, Tourism, National and International, Encuentros</i> (fashion, gastronomy and social gatherings), <i>Sports, State</i> (news from the different zones of the state) and <i>Policiaca</i> (crime and traffic accidents)	-Printed in colour (front/back page and centrefolds) and black and white. -Most of its sections do not have a specific place, because they constantly swap. -Few photos and lack of graphic tools.	-It gives prominence to crime stories and presents them with gory pictures. Actually the back page is dedicated to this kind of news. -Scarce publication of investigative reports.	-It belongs to the Mexican Editorial Organization (Organización Editorial Mexicana, OEM), which has sixty newspapers in the country. -Frequent typos and clumsy writing.
La Jornada Michoacán	Left oriented: It was founded thanks to the support of the first PRD state	<i>Opinion, Politics, Municipios</i> (news from the different zones of the state), <i>Cultura</i> (culture) and <i>Sports</i> .	-Printed entirely in black and white. -Few photos and lack of graphic	-On the contrary of the local news, the regional information has a reduced coverage. -Politics and culture are its	-With the exception of culture and some sports, other <i>soft news</i> do not have place on its pages.

⁵⁶ As it would be perceived by the average reader, but as also commented by the interviewees.

	government. Besides it is a sister paper of <i>La Jornada</i> , known by its links to PRD.		tools.	more important sections. -Not as much as <i>Cambio</i> , but it has a frequent publication of investigative reports.	-Since its whole content is on only 24 pages and, when buying it, the reader also gets the national edition of <i>La Jornada</i> , in practice the local version of this paper seems a supplement of the latter.
La Voz de Michoacán	Aligned towards the state government in turn.	<i>Morelia</i> (local news, politics, education and opinion), <i>País/Mundo</i> (national and international news), <i>Dinero</i> (economy), <i>O</i> (culture and entertainment), <i>Sports</i> , <i>Facetas</i> (fashion, gastronomy and social gatherings), <i>Regional</i> (news from the different zones of the state) and <i>Seguridad</i> (crime and traffic accidents related).	-Printed in colour (front/back page and centrefolds of each section) and black and white. -Permanent use of photos and graphic tools.	-It is the only one which reaches the whole state and, thus, offers more regional information. -Balance between <i>hard</i> and <i>soft news</i> . -Investigative reports are published at least weekly.	-Besides the regular edition, almost every day it offers a supplement (health, tourism, football...).
Provincia	Aligned towards the state government in turn.	<i>Entidad</i> (local news, politics and education), <i>Opinion</i> , <i>Sucesos</i> (crime and traffic accidents related), <i>Mexico & Mundo</i> (national and international news), <i>113</i> (news from the different zones of the state), <i>Podium</i> (sports), <i>Pasarela</i> (fashion, gastronomy and social gatherings), <i>Show</i> (cinema, music and TV), <i>Artes & Vida</i> (culture) and <i>Capital</i> (economy)	-Printed in colour (front/back page and centrefolds of each section) and black and white. -Permanent use of photos and graphic tools.	- <i>Soft news</i> sections such as sports, showbiz and social gatherings have priority places within the edition. - <i>Hard news</i> , especially politics, gets limited attention. -In spite of its format (it is the only broadsheet) the stories are shorter when compared with the other newspapers.	-Besides the regular edition, it frequently offers a supplement (social gatherings, football...). -The owner of <i>La Voz</i> is also one of the shareholders of this newspaper and his son is the director.

Table 8 Editorial profile of the Morelian newspapers.

Although this thesis is only focused on newspapers, it is worth having a complete scope of the local media system, at least just as a context. Regarding the broadcast media, in Morelia there are thirteen radio stations (eight for AM, three for FM and two *combo*, which simultaneously broadcast in both AM and FM), eleven are commercial and two public. There are five television channels (four are free to air and one by cable), three are affiliated (two to *Televisa* and one to *TV Azteca*), and only one is public. Inferring from the limited available information, it could be said that the three FM radio stations are Morelians favourite, because local advertisers clearly tend to invest in them rather than in AM. Under that logic, local *TV Azteca*, *CB TV* (cable) and local *Televisa* are the most watched channels, since they are the ones which get most of the advertising budget for television (*La Voz de Michoacán* 2006).

Finally, it is important to mention that even though they do have their own news programmes, neither television nor radio has greater impact on political information terms. This is because they tend to give more prominence to other type of contents, such as sports and entertainment. That is the reason why almost all of the scoops and exclusive interviews appear on the printed media and its personnel tend to be perceived by the political actors as “real journalists” not just “press release readers”. Since most of the broadcast reporters tend to be recent university graduates with little or no experience on the field, rather than finding an interesting angle, they simply reproduce the official discourse.⁵⁷ At least that was what some of the politicians and communications officers interviewed here said, which is also the general perception of the newspapers’ reporters too.

5.1.3 Summary of the section

Morelian media market is composed of five newspapers, thirteen radio stations and five television channels. Regarding the printed news outlets, their total readership is 40%, which is consistent with the national average (44%). *La Voz* is the absolute leader with 83% of the local market share, it is also the oldest, it has the highest circulation and its daily edition includes more sections than its competitors’. Related to their editorial lines, only *Cambio* and *La Jornada* have an openly left orientation, the rest are not

⁵⁷ Although this thesis does not offer any empirical evidence of this assumption, because it is out of its scope, during the field work this situation became evident by watching local TV news programmes. Furthermore, in his analysis of the BBC, Schlesinger (1978:80) concluded that ‘rarely does broadcast news present stories which are the product of investigation’.

clear because they have historically been inconsistent in that sense. Nonetheless, the hypothesis that will be argued in the final chapter of this thesis (section 7.3 *Economically-driven partisanship*) is that the money determines their allegiance.

5.2 Political parallelism

The extent news outlets reflect a specific ideology is known as political parallelism, which is the second parameter of the media system. This issue was evaluated through the interviews in two ways, which also represent the two main topics of this section: firstly, the informants were asked to provide their opinions about the impact on the news of the shared ideologies between journalists and politicians, if they actually share them. Secondly, based upon their answers, there is a discussion about the newspapers' political alignments in which the ideas of partisanship free information and ideologically inclined media are debated. As it will be commented, the findings pointed out at two key elements of the central argument of this thesis: the existence and acceptance of partisanship and the hybrid character of the Mexican journalism, in which normative ideals coexist with authoritarian practices.

5.2.1 Sharing ideologies between journalist and politician

This subsection summarises the answers that all the interviewees gave regarding the question of how important is sharing ideologies for the interaction with one another. In that sense, sharing political opinions is not necessary for establishing a professional relationship between journalists and politicians, or at least that was all of the informants' general opinion when asked about this. The common answer was that, even though this coincidence happens on a regular basis, it is not supposed to have an impact on determining the way political actors interact.

According to CO5, press officer of the Ministry of the Women, there is no need of an ideological coincidence to get the job done, neither as a journalist nor as a politician. This is because professional performance and political tendency are independent aspects of a person, and the latter should not shape the former. For that reason, as CO3 – press officer of the Coordination of Development and Planning - said, it is not necessary that a reporter and a government officer have the same political affinity, because

difference fosters discussion and debate between them. Therefore, the less political coincidence they share, the better relationship they could have in the long run. In that sense, CO7 – PAN Social Communication Coordinator - commented that his political party (National Action Party, PAN) is not worried if the journalist has certain ideology. PAN members respect it, but they are not supposed to share it either. They just need that the information related to the party and its views could reach their supporters and society. Regarding the local administration coverage, CO6 – Municipal Government Social Communication Coordinator - accepted that, even having a different political sympathy, none of the reporters who cover the Mayor's activities have ever had any problem with him due to an ideological disagreement, which could have interfered with their work.

More than tolerance, there must be respect towards the ideologies. You do not have to share them though, because you are just doing your job. If both journalists and government officers are professional and they have a respectful relationship, there is no reason why political preferences should affect their interaction (P4, Director of the Institute of the Youth).

Besides reporter's and politician's ideologies, CO9 – press officer of PRD Congressmen - explained that there is still another variable in the equation: newspaper's editorial line. These three variables interact during the news production process, but the journalist's agenda is the most flexible. This is because neither the politician nor the news outlet would easily change their points of view, hence, the journalist is the one who has to constrain or shape his opinions, in order not to affect the agreements between directors-general and government. That is exactly why, as P3 – PAN state Congressman - pointed out, journalist's political ideologies do exert certain influence on the relationship with politicians, but they are not the main factor. That is, since he is just someone else's employee, there are some other interests above his opinions.

We have to be very careful in respecting media's editorial lines at all the time, and especially their political ideologies. We must be very respectful towards the job they are doing, as long as it is done objectively and according to the information provided by their sources (CO4, PRI Social Communication Coordinator).

J6 – political correspondent of *La Jornada* - stated that what it is questioned by the media is the politicians' own ideologies not the journalists', because only the former are public figures and, hence, they are subject to public

accountability. Therefore, sharing points of view is irrelevant because, as *J7* - political correspondent of *El Sol* - added, politicians' ideology is the only one that really matters. 'Obviously, we the journalists have an ideological stance and we might or might not agree with our sources, but our job is not judging them only informing and mediating'.

Sharing political points of view may not be necessary but, for some of the interviewees, objectivity is a key element for the relationship between these actors. But this factor does not come out of the blue, it is directly connected with the reporters' professionalization. *J4* - political correspondent of *La Voz* - explained that when the more radical the ideological gap is between reporters and sources, the former need to be more objective and impartial by seeking extra information, listening to different opinions, and learning more about the politicians they interact with on a regular basis. It means that, prior to writing a story, they need to know the context, the actors involved and their backgrounds (political origins, career, personal agenda...). Regarding the state Congress coverage, *CO2* - state Congress Social Communication Coordinator - insisted on the urgency of journalistic professionalization, which implies a complete understanding about the different political forces which are represented in the legislature, the way commissions are integrated and their aims, and how the laws are proposed, analysed and approved. 'Journalists must understand the legislative process, and that is way more important than only being sympathetic towards a specific political ideology'.

If I support *Chivas* or *America* [Mexican football teams], that is personal, you do not make it public. We have to respect politicians' views, because we are not participants and we are not supposed to wear a party T-shirt and cheer them on. We must be equally respectful to any party or religion, we ought to be objective (*J1*, chief of state correspondents of *El Sol*).

The point, as *J5* - political correspondent of *Provincia* - stated, is not whether sharing political ideologies is desirable or not, it simply happens. There is no mystery around it because media personnel and government officers are both persons. That implies having likes and dislikes related to everything, politics included. 'It is clear for me that political ideology is not something that the reporter could easily suppress from his activities', *P2* - PAN state Congressman - commented. That is the reason why all the questions the reporter asks during the interviews and press conferences are, at least to an important extent, determined by his points of view. 'As a politician, I always expect certain dose of party vision in everything a journalist writes. It is ok, it cannot be avoided', *P3* agreed.

Although this situation is basically inevitable, political opinions are a permanent risk for a political correspondent if he is not aware of them, because they unconsciously lead him to be more aggressive or friendly than necessary. 'Suddenly, when you start getting along with a source you have to be very careful, because sympathy is a traitor; it steals away your objectivity towards that person', J3 – political correspondent of *Cambio* - added. As a former reporter, CO5 experienced this loss of objectivity when she was covering the electoral campaigns for state governor:

There is an ideological identification between journalists and politicians, and it is even more frequent during campaigns when you can easily identify yourself with the candidate you are covering. It is natural. I remember that all of us [reporters] used to believe that the candidate we were covering was "the good one".

'A reporter who shares political affinities with a Congressman will never ask him hard questions, whilst the ones who do not have that ideological connection with him [the journalist] will tend to be frequently *beaten up*⁵⁸ by him', CO2 commented. Notwithstanding, as perceived by P2, 'many professional journalists try not to spatter the stories with their own political judgements. They cannot completely avoid it though, it can still be noticed, but to a lesser degree'. This situation has another approach as well: politicians also react in different ways towards ideologically close or distant journalist. The former get more scoops, exclusive interviews and better information than the latter. In exchange, for the first case, they will get better and more favourable coverage and, for the second, harsh criticism will not be unexpected at all.

These interesting insights reinforce the idea that, to certain extent, there is an inevitable homophilia in the journalistic practice. Media personnel and politicians, as human beings, tend to identify themselves with each other as a result of a constant interaction during long periods of time. After spending many hours together on a regular basis (working, travelling, eating and even having fun), both actors start sharing not only working schedules, but some other issues as well, such as political points of view. Therefore, 'the beat reporters become virtually allies of these sources, either because they develop symbiotic relationships or identify with them in a process that anthropologists call going native' (Gans 2004:144). In addition, 'over time, relationships become more than one of professional exchange of publicity

⁵⁸ As mentioned before, this concept means the criticism towards a public servant.

for inside access as the two sides have found other common objectives' (Davis 2009:211).

Of course having an insider position within the political arena does not necessarily mean being partisan but, as *J5* put it, 'in politics, just as in every single interpersonal relationship, there is empathy. That is why there will always be friendly sources and others not so friendly'. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising at all that, without even thinking about it in some cases, reporters frame their stories based upon their own particular sympathies and antipathies. Although this particular situation is out of the scope of this research, and scholars have widely studied that phenomenon (Schudson 1989 and 2005a; Shoemaker and Reese 1996), it is worth mentioning it just as another factor that fosters partisanship.

J2 – editor of *La Jornada* - suggested that, even though political ideology is a barrier that will always be there, the only way to break it is with the reporter's personal and professional values, which would facilitate a more complete and detached approach to the stories. In so doing, the perception towards him as an individual and his work would be more favourable because, on the journalistic field, it is better being perceived as an honest person than a political friend or enemy. In order to boost and maintain an image of being impartial, some of the interviewees considered that ideally journalists were not supposed to hold any political party affiliation or, at least, not make it evident. *J2* expressed that sources do not have to know the journalist's political ideologies, although by intuition they could guess it because of the news outlet he works for or the personal approach to the stories he writes about. According to *CO7*, objectivity might be at stake if the media personnel openly accept their party membership. Since news is expected to be plural and unbiased, its content ought to be ideologically detached from personal or party interests. In so doing, journalistic professionalization would be reached in Michoacán.

For me, as a political correspondent, the ideal is not being identified with any party. The more I avoid attending social reunions organised by politicians, the better. If it is not for giving me information, I avoid this kind of interactions; because I want them to say "this guy does not have any party orientation" (*J5*).

Nevertheless, ideologies are not the only thing that is shared in the political journalism arena, at least that was *P2*'s perception: 'I have the impression that, as everything else in life, political journalism operates by interests'. In that sense, *P1* added that 'journalists and politicians do not share ideologies,

they share interests. Both of them are looking for something: the former is after the money and the latter seeks publicity'. Once again, personal goals appeared here as a key for understanding the relationship between these political actors. More than visions, then, a perceived mutual benefit is what actually fosters their interaction. Under these circumstances, the journalist-politician relationship is maintained at a mere mercantile level, where political ideologies have little to do with it.

Journalistic principles say that you have to be objective and impartial; but we are subjects, not objects; we are persons, not things. Thus, journalism, and especially political journalism, is subjective by nature. Journalism does not deal with ideologies, it deals with interests instead (CO8, press officer of state government).

5.2.1.1 Impact of the shared ideologies on the content of the news

Accepting the existence of shared ideologies – at least to a certain degree - led the discussion towards the extent this situation has an impact on the content of the news. Since the informants were aware of the frequency in which political sympathies and antipathies became evident in the stories that local newspapers published, certain dose of partisanship is not wholly unexpected. Therefore, the evidence will prove that, despite the normative discourse of objective reporting, the actors on the field understand that there is another logic for their interaction, which is determined by the specific conditions of the context.⁵⁹

In that sense, the communications officers and politicians interviewed for this case study were also asked about whether reporters' political ideologies were reflected or not on the news. The answers pointed at three main directions: on the one hand, some of them considered that, in fact, it happens all the time. On the other, there were some points of view that more than journalists' judgements, news are spattered with media's editorial line. Finally, there was another trend that suggested that, even though it is a common practice, the ideological impact on the stories is not that determinant. For the first case, CO1 – assistant of the state Congress Social Communication Coordinator - and P2 – PAN state Congressman - agreed that, prior to the writing, reporters have a clear idea about the kind of answers they want to obtain from politicians, and they do not rest until they

⁵⁹ See chapter seven, section 7.1 *Context matters: Media macro level and journalist-politician relationship*.

get them. It is a common practice in which reporters induce their interviewees to answer what the former want, and not necessarily what the latter think.

The journalist arrives having in mind the questions he will ask, related to the information he is after. Then, during the interview, obviously his questions will be pointing towards that direction; and, if the politician does not answer in that way, he will try to take the interviewee to that point. There might as well be moments when he even puts his own words in the politician's mouth (CO1).

Notwithstanding, politicians are anything but naive and most of them are perfectly aware of this situation. For P2, there is no problem if the reporters have a specific political alignment and, because of that, they seek particular answers. Nonetheless, it is important to have that in mind in order to reply with the information that better suits the interviewee's interests, and not on the contrary. As the informant explained, it is very convenient that, before the interview, the politicians could be aware of the reporter's ideologies, which are his political thoughts, and which is his editorial line. This is because, at all time, they ought to be very careful when they express their ideas to different media organizations. According to P1, former PRI state Congressman, there is no doubt that journalists' inclinations become evident in the stories they produce. However, it does not happen in all of the news, only in the most important, the ones that they have more time to work on. It happens like that because of their daily quota, which most of the time does not let them do a proper investigation of the issue they are writing about.

Of course there are some fellow reporters who openly say "I am panista" [PAN supporter] or "I am perredista" [PRD supporter]. In fact, sometimes even your mood is reflected on your daily work; it is evident if you woke up angry or if you are depressed (J5, political correspondent of *Provincia*).

Besides the interests, another factor that determines the news is represented by the likes and dislikes of the media personnel. Very frequently, and even without obtaining a specific benefit from it, reporters tend to *beat up*⁶⁰ certain political actors just because they do not like them. Without openly being asked, J5 accepted that, as a journalist, he very often gets into a fight with a politician just for nothing. Simply because there are certain politicians that he does not like, 'but it is not personal'. According to

⁶⁰ As commented earlier on chapter one, this term is related to make harsh criticism towards a politician or public servant.

him, he does not like them simply because they are not doing their job, they are corrupt, or because he knows they did something wrong. 'So, I try to be tough with them, but equal and fair'. There are some other cases in which ideology has little to do with political correspondents' attitude towards their sources, as also argued by Schudson (2007), who commented on the tendency of the journalists to show a distrust of politicians. P4 – Director of the Institute of the Youth - also identify certain individuals that over criticise government officials just for the sake of it, because they are prejudiced against politicians. Therefore, in their opinion, nothing at all that comes from the authorities is right.

It is very hard to admit when a public servant is working well, because media are always after the tabloid information. So, we tend to think that if there is good news, it is a lie for sure. I experienced that myself, and the truth is that I used to dismiss it too; but if there was compromising information, then I even did more investigation (CO5, press officer of the Ministry of the Women).

On the other hand, P3 – PAN state Congressman - considered that there is an evident political tendency in the news indeed, but it is not clear whether it comes from the reporter, editor or director-general. This opinion directs the discussion towards the media as institutions, rather to the individual journalist. Since editors and directors-general are supposed to identify themselves with the organization they work for, they would tend to respect and follow its editorial line. In that sense, instead of personal interests, their involvement in the news production process responds more to institutional aims. Therefore, the editorial line represents the political alignment that all the media have, tacitly or explicitly, and it has a clear impact on their newsworthiness criteria, framing, agenda and reporting routines. As CO8 - press officer of state government - explained, ideological inclination, combined with economic interest, determines the way each news outlet operates and the information it provides to its audience. Having defined its orientation, each news outlet expects from its personal the fulfilment of its institutional goals, by supporting or criticising whatever converges or diverges with its interests. CO3 – press officer of the Coordination of Development and Planning - provided an illustrative local example, which was also mentioned by other interviewees later: 'if you work for *La Jornada* you are obliged to write favourably about PRD [Democratic Revolution Party] and attack the right wing'. However, very often journalists do not need any

coercion at all to accept their media's political inclination,⁶¹ just as CO5 – a former journalist - mentioned:

Frequently, you identify yourself with your newspaper's line. They mark it and you believe in it, share it and convincingly do your job. Then, if the newspaper has a conflict with the government or does not share its ideology, on the field you assume it too and that impacts on your opinions.

Finally, the third trend indicated that, even though political ideologies are an inherent part of both individual reporters and media organizations, their impact on the stories their audience receive is not very significant at all. This is because their social function ought to be beyond their particular partisan sympathies or antipathies. In that sense, reporters must be very careful at the moment of writing news. They need to be aware of and respect their sources' political alignment, and their organization's own interests. But they have to do it in an ethical, objective and critical way, as well. If their journalistic performance is like that, then their political affinities would never taint the messages they produce.

Although this seems to be difficult to achieve, some of the informants perceived that local newspapers are moving towards that direction. 'Of course journalists have their political heart, just like everybody, but it does not mean they openly benefit a politician, they know how to separate one thing from the other', CO9 – press officer of PRD state Congressmen - said. In that sense, as CO6 – Municipal Government Social Communication Coordinator - added, every reporter has his own style, and that is what finally defines him, and also each local news outlet has its specific editorial line that defines it. Notwithstanding when they interview or cover an official event, their attitude is very objective, and professional. CO7 – PAN Social Communication Coordinator - considered that despite some specific cases, in which certain political correspondents have the evident assignment - whether personal or institutional - of *beating* someone *up*, generally speaking, the relationship with most of the reporters is respectful and professional. The reason is because both actors need each other, so they would better coordinate efforts in order to reach their particular goals.

As a rough conclusion that will be stressed further in the thesis, two final comments worth being mentioned: firstly, in spite of the optimistic opinions of

⁶¹ As mentioned earlier in chapter one (section 1.2 *Mexican media's main features* under the subheading *Historic partisanship*), during the PRI regime a lot of reporters assumed that their role was to support the State (Molina 1987, Rodríguez 1993 and Hughes 2006).

these last interviewees, the content analysis will show that their perceptions of a partisanship free journalism is not that accurate at all, because in practice there was an evident ideological bias in the news.⁶² Secondly, the final part of the previous paragraph opened an interesting discussion regarding the importance of public relations in shaping the specific political communication culture that takes place in Morelia, where actors have a close and collaborative interaction, determined by a party/government logic that almost permanently sets the agenda.

5.2.2 Newspapers' political alignments

To offer or not to offer ideology neutral information seems to be the question for the Mexican media, and Morelian as well. However, there is not an easy answer to it because, on the one hand, there is the issue related to the liberal concepts of modern journalism that – among other things - expects news outlets to make a clear separation between comments and news, which should be factual, detached and unbiased. On the other, there is an undeniable historical background in Mexico that has been fostering partisan press for more than 200 years. As a result of that, the journalistic practice in Mexico is hybrid and contradictory (Márquez 2010). That is, in public discourse it praises the canons of objectivity, but practices an overt partisanship on the field.

As mentioned before at the beginning of the first chapter (section *1.1 Media and democratization in Mexico*), there are certain signs of adaptation to the American standards in some national newspapers. Nonetheless, those organizations are more the exception rather than the rule because, for the rest of the media across the country, political ideologies are still dictating the direction of the messages. In that sense, the struggle that takes place at the national level between these two perspectives is also evident in Morelia. Although the empirical evidence provided by the content analysis will show that actually partisanship determines the way politics is covered, opinions of the actors involved in the local political communication process reflected this conflict as well, but only at the discursive level. That is, the empirical evidence gives support to the view that the normative standards have certain degree of acceptance, even if it does not shape the practice. On the contrary of the rest of the issues included in the interviews, which offered a wider

⁶² See subsection *5.3.1 Investigative journalism* in this chapter and also chapter six, subsection *6.2.1 Political news coverage*.

range of positions, this one boosted a debate between two radical points of view and nothing in the middle: a complete agreement or disagreement with the idea of partisan media, which represents the answers of the question related to whether the media should offer partisanship free information or not.

5.2.2.1 Partisanship free information

‘Newspapers should not openly show their political face. Journalism is not supposed to have a political party, it must be neutral’, CO3 – press officer of the Coordination of Development and Planning - said. This opinion summarises the general rejection among nearly half of the interviewees of the possibility that media explicitly supports an ideology, a situation that contravenes the objectivity principles that modern journalism praises. ‘The more viable situation would be that the media did not have any political nuance because, only like that, they could guarantee that their information would be completely attached to reality’, CO9 – press officer of PRD state Congressmen - expressed. Although it is not an easy task, as J4 – political correspondent of *La Voz* - explained, mirroring the world as it is should be the reporter’s ultimate aspiration and this ideal still inspires a lot of journalists, at the local level and worldwide as well:⁶³

If a newspaper shows certain ideology inclination, certain sympathy towards a political party, practically it is depriving itself of its freedom of speech and it will only be a servant, a tool, a communication instrument at the service of the government.

The risk of instrumentalization was also perceived by CO4, PRI Social Communication Coordinator, who argued that media organizations that declare themselves supporters of a specific ideology might misinform their audience, by only offering them partial, unbalanced and biased information; which would not allow them to have a wider scope of reality. For that reason, as the person in charge of the press department of a political party, the interviewee only expected newspapers to publish stories without any shade

⁶³ The opinions included in this part of the section, especially reporter’s points of view, reinforce the findings of a recent analysis of the journalism cultures in Chile, Brazil and Mexico (Mellado *et al* 2012). The authors stressed the agreement among the journalists in those countries regarding the rejection of their personal bias at the moment of doing their job. Therefore, at least at a discursive level, Latin American news workers support the values of neutrality and impartiality. The problem, as it will be discussed in the next section, is the mismatch between their opinions and their actions.

that could benefit a particular actor. When a news organization explicitly accepts its alignment, it is also denying itself the chance to be more politically open and that also impacts on limiting its political scope, because it will tend to over emphasise the virtues of its ideological preferences and undermine those of its opponents.

Media are institutions and each one of them has its own political heart, but obviously you are not supposed to openly show it, because you would lose your credibility and automatically you would be known as *panista*, *perredista* or *priista*.⁶⁴ Besides that, you would be only focusing on the information that may benefit the party you are supporting, and ignoring the rest (CO5, press officer of the Ministry of the Women).

The problem, hence, is that not every newspaper is aware of its ideal social function, which is informing the citizens and fostering their involvement in the public sphere. Or even worse, some of them may know what society expects from them, but they simply remain indifferent and they just mind their own businesses. That is why, despite all the idealism around this profession and its social functions, the informants also noticed that even though news outlets should not have an ideological tendency, in practice they are operated by human beings and, as such, even if journalists try to be objective, it will never happen. It is simply because nobody could ever be a hundred percent objective, whether they like or not, whether they are aware of it or not.

In that sense, it is very difficult to find balance between ideology and objectivity, especially because of the particular interests that determine and shape the information. Or as CO3 pointed out: 'media neutrality is just a myth, because the owners are supporting a specific party all the time. That is undeniable'. Ownership, as the origins of the problem, was a recurrent answer. CO1, assistant of the state Congress Social Communication Coordinator, stressed that, although media are expected to be politically neutral, in practice that goal cannot be achieved. This is because, more than public service organizations, media are businesses and their owners are only interested in obtaining revenues. That explains their reactions towards the political junctures, which constantly determine the alignments of the Morelian newspapers. In most of the cases, their inclinations respond to economic interests rather than ideological. In other words, just as it was

⁶⁴ PAN, PRD and PRI supporter, respectively.

argued before, news organizations and political actors do not share ideologies, only interests. This factor shapes their relationship because, money and favours, more than colours, are the key element for understanding their interaction.

In Mexico and Michoacán, the impartiality and objectivity that is taught at universities has been lost and perverted by the same political ideology that makes a newspaper support certain candidate or politician who will reward it with an official advertising contract (J4).

Since news outlets are supposed to serve as a means of government accountability, exposing corruption and misbehaviours of public administrations and their personnel, when ideologies are shared, the former renounce their duty to be political watchdogs, and docilely become lapdogs instead. In so doing, media selectively start suppressing certain compromising themes and stressing favourable information.

Finally, we understand that a newspaper is a business and, even though reporters do a civic job and do not compromise themselves, as it is meant to be, at the end of the day owners and directors-general regard it as a business, with the solely purpose of obtaining revenues. So, in order to get bigger incomes, they move from one side to another (CO9).

From the interviewee's perspective, it is such a big mistake that media have not yet learned how to separate ideology from interest, because that causes many problems for the journalists on the field. Although political correspondents are ethical, their authorities force them to follow the compromised editorial line, otherwise, their job is at stake. Not only their present post, but the future as well, because they might even be banned from other media outlets too, in retaliation for their rebelliousness. J1 – chief of state correspondents of *El Sol* - and J2 – editor of *La Jornada* - agreed that none of the local newspapers' owners or directors-general is actually a journalist, they are just businessmen whose only aim is to make money. That is the reason they become mere 'official press release publishers', more interested in quantity than quality. This situation has an impact on reporting routines too, because reporters have a daily quota which does not let them do proper investigation. But, even if they could, sometimes it would not be published if it puts commercial contracts at stake. In that sense, as J1 pointed out, if 'a newspaper's value relies on its director', then there is something wrong with Morelian printed media.

Notwithstanding, as commented by the informants, personal political opinions and institutional political alignment are two different things. For that reason, media and their staff have the right to freely express their own particular points of view, whilst they do it based on facts, not just beliefs, and whilst they explicitly differentiate it from the regular news. CO2 - State Congress Social Communication Coordinator - and J7 - political correspondent of *El Sol* - suggested that, whenever reporters want to make their personal views public, they have different journalistic writing genres at their disposal (e.g. chronicles, columns and essays), which allow them to openly give their opinions about any issue, without muddling it up with news stories.

It is valid that a journalist could become an opinion leader and publish his own political analysis, whenever he explicitly says that it is only his opinion, he is doing an analysis and he is not diffusing information; because he is in a position where he could easily deceive his audience, and that is not ethical (P4, Director of the Institute of the Youth).

5.2.2.2 Ideologically-driven media

As commented in the first chapter (section 1.2 *Mexican media's main features*) Mexican media have been historically partisan (Bohman 1986, Trejo 1992, Avilés 1999, Pineda and Del Palacio 2003, and Pineda 2005). Since the very beginning, they have supported and criticised diverse regimes, parties and factions. Despite certain attempts to move towards a more 'civic journalism' (Lawson 2002 and Hughes 2006), reality shows a quite different trend: today, as in the past, an implicit and explicit partisanship determines political news production. The allegedly democratic transition that started in Mexico nearly thirty years ago had an impact on media organizations, especially in newspapers. When the hegemonic Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) started losing its overwhelming power, and as a result of several legal reforms, the press gained more freedom which allowed it to openly show its political orientations.

Whether towards the government or the opposition, news outlets do have a specific political alignment. Nevertheless, its extent, origin and consistency may not be always clear. As the evidence will suggest, there is a thin line between ideology and interest. Under these historical circumstances, it is not surprising at all that certain partisan dose is expected in the news. More than half of the interviewees agreed that media should have an ideological

orientation, which would make sense of their own editorial lines. In so doing, the messages they produce would reflect their political positions without any concealment. The reason is that the stories they diffuse do not only have information, they have ideologies as well.

I do not trust hard facts, because they are meaningless. For the journalistic practice you must have an opinion, it does not mean taking a side; but you ought to have a defined position towards the job you are doing. If a news organization never assumes a position about anything, it is completely pointless then, it becomes a mere informative gazette (*J3*, political correspondent of *Cambio*).

CO8, press officer of state government, agreed with this last idea and also suggested that, in order to differentiate themselves from the informative gazettes or party press organs, media ought to assume an editorial line which gives a sense of direction to their job. Otherwise, in the absence of diversity, there would only be information uniformity.

It is healthy that media have their own political position, otherwise everything would be homogeneous and there would only be the same messages. Hopefully it would be like that, I hope they openly admit their tendency, because most of them only publish the same press releases that you read everywhere (*CO6*, Municipal Government Social Communication Coordinator).

According to *J1*, chief of state correspondents of *El Sol*, there is no news outlet that could be considered completely independent because every single one of them is after something or defends something. Political, economic or religious interests determine media's daily performance, which is why the messages they produce do not only include "pure" information, it is always a mixture with other ideological statements. In that sense, *P2* – PAN state Congressman - also considered that 'it is not only acceptable, it is desirable that each news outlet has its own ideology. Finally, ideologies are always present in the news anyway, so I think it is good. It is even healthier for a democratic plurality'.

Having a clear editorial line helps reporters on the field too, because they are the ones who actually do the "dirty" job: gathering, organising and writing the news. For that reason, as *J2*, *J5* and *J4*⁶⁵ explained, if a news outlet does not have an ideological definition, its staff may not have enough

⁶⁵ Editor of *La Jornada* and political correspondents of *Provincia* and *La Voz*, respectively.

certainty to work on different issues which might compromise agreements between owners and politicians.

I have been working here for several years and nobody has ever told me which our mission, vision and editorial line is. As long as I can see, economic power is what ultimately exerts influence. Even though there is an evident censorship towards certain public servants and political parties, no one explains us why. There is a complete secrecy (J4).

J2 commented that it is acceptable and valid that each news outlet has its own editorial line, but it must not be ambiguous. Once the orientation is defined, the institution is ready to offer information based on facts and documents, instead of anonymous or unofficial sources. J6, political correspondent of *La Jornada*, also stressed the necessity of coherence between the political inclination of the media and the stories they publish, because the former makes sense of the latter. Even more, this interviewee also mentioned that the newspaper must define its editorial line, because its readers have the right to know it and be critical about it, whether they accept it or reject it.

As a news institution, you must have an editorial line. That is one of the problems here in Morelia, not all of the newspapers have it, which is why they constantly sway. With the exception of *La Jornada*, which everybody knows is totally left oriented, the rest have a weather vane for editorial criteria: they just follow whoever has money or power (J5).

Since separating ideologies from facts is not that easy, because reporters make judgements even unconsciously, P3 – PAN state Congressman - considered that the real challenge is trying to be as objective as possible, understanding that pure objectivity is simply out of reach. Thus, it is not wrong that media hold a political position, as long as they offer balanced coverage to everyone.

Having an ideological and political line is not the problem, but you have to be honest. You can even hold a very radical political position and still be honest. As a journalist you have to respect the truth, even if your approach is partial or incomplete, but at least you are not lying (P2, PAN state Congressman).

In sum, the problem is not ideology, it is honesty. P2 also argued that there are certain newspapers which consider themselves neutral, but in practice they distort the information in order to benefit someone or collect favours. For that reason, the existence of politically defined media is preferable, even

though they harshly criticise certain politicians, as long as they base their stories only on reality. According to CO6, despite their political alignments, when local news outlets publish special reports based on ethical and professional norms, they contribute to develop government performance by pointing out the things that need to be done, public servants misconduct and social demands. Part of this ethical approach to the messages depends on the distinction between information and opinion. As it was mentioned before, CO7 – PAN Social Communication Coordinator - also stressed the importance of having specific spaces for news - based on hard facts, figures and documents - and for personal comments. Thus, at the end, audience could easily distinguish one from another.

Having an ideological orientation is also an advantage for marketing purposes. CO8 explained that editorial line is the media's brand, it is what will differentiate them from the rest of their competitors. Besides that, readership is not a homogeneous mass, it is integrated by diverse niches and each one of them has its specific information requirements. That is when politically aligned newspapers jump into stage, by providing the news that fit its audience needs. Since different people buy different newspapers, the latter must be aware of their readers' specific political profile, which drives them to look for certain approach to reality. Once news organizations understand that, they could aim their reporting routines and efforts in that direction. On the contrary, if a news outlet pretends to appeal to everybody by publishing "partisan free" information, there is a good chance that actually no one might be interested in that. This is because there will not be the sense of ideological identification which only an openly aligned news organization could offer.

As a news organization, today you have to explicitly stress your editorial line, you have to assume your identity, because there is also a lot of pressure exerted by social networks and the blogosphere; and if you do not differentiate yourself from the rest, you will be lost among the indie media spectrum, media created by regular people, not necessarily journalists (CO8).

5.2.3 Summary of the section

This section presented the findings related to the political parallelism of the Morelian newspapers, which represents the second parameter of the concept of media system. On the field, it was evaluated by two issues, which were also linked to two questions of the interviews: firstly, the impact of

sharing political ideas between reporters and sources and, secondly, if the media should offer partisanship free information or not. Regarding the first one, the answers pointed at the existence of the coincidence of political points of views, but it was not a requirement for having a professional relationship. Nonetheless, in practice, the ideological coincidence – or the lack of it - was evident on the news stories. For the second question, there was a twofold trend of answers: on the one hand, some interviewees considered that local news outlets should not have a political stance and they ought to offer pure hard facts. On the other, more than half of the informants commented that Morelian media should have a clear editorial line and publish information with an ideological bias, whenever they do it in an ethical way.

5.3 Professionalization

The third parameter of the media system is the concept of journalistic professionalization which, in simple terms, is related to the routines that reporters within a specific newsroom share and assume. Thanks to these norms, implicit most of the time, journalists learn their trade and are evaluated by their peers. Therefore, the professionalization was analysed in this thesis by the practice of investigative journalism which is relevant for measuring the levels of autonomy, professional norms and public service orientation (Hallin and Mancini 2004). However, besides the investigative journalism, the political correspondents' academic background was also used for studying this parameter. It is worth mentioning that, initially, the latter was not included as a topic to be discussed here but, during the interviews, several informants raised that issue. Thus, the content of this section is organised as follows: the evaluation of the investigative reporting in the local media through the interviews and content analysis, an overview of the news workers' academic background (also through the interviewees' opinions) and, based upon these two issues, the final part of this section offers an evaluation of the levels of the local journalistic professionalization.

5.3.1 Investigative journalism

This issue was evaluated through the interviews with the journalists, who defined it in their own terms and explained the frequency in which they practice it. Their opinions were compared with the communications officers'

and politicians' answers, and also with the content analysis. The latter was focused on the number and type of sources that the local newspapers used and the political actors included in the stories.

An important part of the media's public service orientation and civic journalism is the practice, on a regular basis, of the investigative journalism norms. Since 'investigation assumes that some of the information that is important to citizens is not normally visible to them and may be deliberately hidden from them' (Schudson 2007:140), local reporters in Morelia are also aware of its importance for their readership. Nevertheless, as the findings will show, the frequency of its use is not exactly as high as they claimed and, as a consequence of that, newspapers are easy prey of instrumentalization by the political actors. However, as it will be argued further in this chapter (subsection 5.4.2 *Official advertising in Morelian newspapers*), the practice of the investigative reporting – or the lack of it - depends to an important extent on the commercial agreements between media owners and government authorities. In other words, more than a public service tool, it is used as a means of coercion towards politicians. "Pay or get beaten up" might be the message between the lines of an investigative report.

In spite of this shared assumption within the local political arena, *J2* – editor of *La Jornada* - considered that 'investigative journalism means going beyond the daily news. It is grabbing a theme and keeping on following it during a period of time'. Therefore, *J7* – political correspondent of *El Sol* - stressed that this kind of reporting is not solely built upon narrating a current event, it implies presenting a more complete view of the complexity of that event. In so doing, as *J5* - political correspondent of *Provincia* - argued, three main aspects are needed: documents and/or evidence, at least three sources of information or versions, and enough time to gather, organise and write the facts. *J4* and *J6*⁶⁶ added that the documentation required must explain the context of the issue, both historical and present. The investigative story should offer enough testimonies and anecdotes of the actors involved as well. For that reason, it is very important having and contrasting different opinions from specialists, government officers, academics and citizens.

'Investigation comes from our own agenda, it is the information that this newspaper produces and will not be found in the other media. This is what makes us different from the rest', said *J1*, who is the chief of state

⁶⁶ Political correspondents of *La Voz* and *La Jornada*, respectively.

correspondents of *El Sol*. This interviewee also explained that, through press releases or statements, government and companies try to emphasise their virtues or what is important for achieving their own goals. In that sense, investigative journalism promotes a wider vision of reality, where different opinions converge and not only the official version. Notwithstanding, reporters are not supposed to do this just for a personal revenge or because someone is paying them for it. In both cases, their objectivity is at stake: for the former, the information will tend to be unfavourable in excess and, for the latter, very friendly. That is why, *J1* concluded, investigation is not only related to 'what is wrong' (corruption, scandals, crime...), it might as well be about 'what is right' (political achievements, economic development...).⁶⁷ That is, something that has a real social impact, otherwise it is meaningless.

In Michoacán there is a misunderstanding about what investigative journalism is. Many reporters think that it is just writing about the organised crime or drug cartels, but they seem to ignore that it might be about any field they would like to write about (*J2*).

According to the interviewee, editors should not impose the topics for the investigations, it has to be the journalist instead. It is best when the reporter decides about his story, because it is only him who perceives the pulse of the sources, he knows all the underground issues that 'the politicians do not want them to be public'. Even an editor with good connections and with a good relationship with the reporters, would never be fully involved with every single source. Due to the inherent demands of the profession, *J5* explained that this practice should not only be constrained by long term investigations, because reality runs faster than any plan and the reporter needs flexible strategies to cover the stories. For that reason, the suggestion is that investigative journalism ought to be done 'on the go', as the social or political juncture unfolds.

The interviewee also perceived that local investigative journalism is now entering into a new stage, thanks to the internet and the new laws of transparency and information access. Both of them are tools that old journalists did not have, but the problem is that the new ones do not use them as they could either. Especially the latter is not very used because the bureaucratic process of asking and getting official data is long and difficult.

⁶⁷ The tendency to emphasise the "wrong" to the detriment of the "right" is not exclusive of the Morelian press. Patterson (2000:14) concluded that, instead of partisanship, American journalists show 'a pronounced tendency to report what is wrong with politics and politicians rather than what is right'.

Even more, sometimes the information provided is not complete or simply denied without further explanations. However, *J3* – political correspondent of *Cambio* - pointed out that the ideal conditions for practicing it are absent most of the times, because no local newspaper gives its reporters enough time and money to do it:

It does not mean that in your daily work you do not go into the topics in depth, because investigation is inherent to your job. So, doing investigative journalism under the ideal conditions is not possible, because there are not such conditions, but you have to do it anyway. Despite your newspaper's limitations - and yours - you do it, you go there, ask questions and get the information. Finally, the lack of resources makes you find your wiles.

Related to this point, *J2* explained that the difficulties of practicing it are directly linked to the information production chain. Local reporters are expected to submit between three and five news stories every day and their income tends to be low (£250-300 per month), so they can hardly reach their daily quota and they do not feel any motivation to do something that requires an extra effort. Besides the journalists' hard professional conditions, media directors-general have a lot to do with this problem too: 'none of the local newspapers directors-general is actually a journalist. All of them are businessmen and they do not understand how difficult it is getting good information. They are more interested in quantity than quality'. Despite all the limitations, *J5* insisted on the importance of this practice: 'investigative journalism has helped forge my name, because respect and credibility are built up day-by-day'. Even though the readers do not care who wrote the story, it is important for the peers' recognition, since reporters are mainly evaluated in the newsrooms, both theirs and their competitors (e.g. Tuchman 1972, Shoemaker and Reese 1996, Champagne 2005).

5.3.1.1 Frequency of use

Regarding the frequency that local newspapers practice investigative journalism, there is hardly an agreement among the interviewees, because each news outlet works under its own routines and promotes it in a different degree. The following table summarises this issue:

	Frequency	Rationale
<i>Cambio de Michoacán</i>	-Weekly	-Sunday edition is where most of the special stories are published. -Reporters and editor decide the topic and day of publication.
<i>El Sol de Morelia</i>	-No specific frequency	-Depends on the public agenda. -Editor/director-general decides the topic and day of publication.
<i>La Jornada Michoacán</i>	-Weekly or at least every two weeks	-Director-general, reporters and/or editor decide the topic and day of publication.
<i>La Voz de Michoacán</i>	-Weekly	-The newspaper publishes a weekly special story, but from different reporter. -Reporters have three weeks to work on their story, hence, once it is published they are supposed to be preparing the next one. -Reporters and editor decide the topic and day of publication.
<i>Provincia</i>	-No specific frequency	-Most of the times reporters decide the topic and day of publication, but the editor may suggest certain themes.

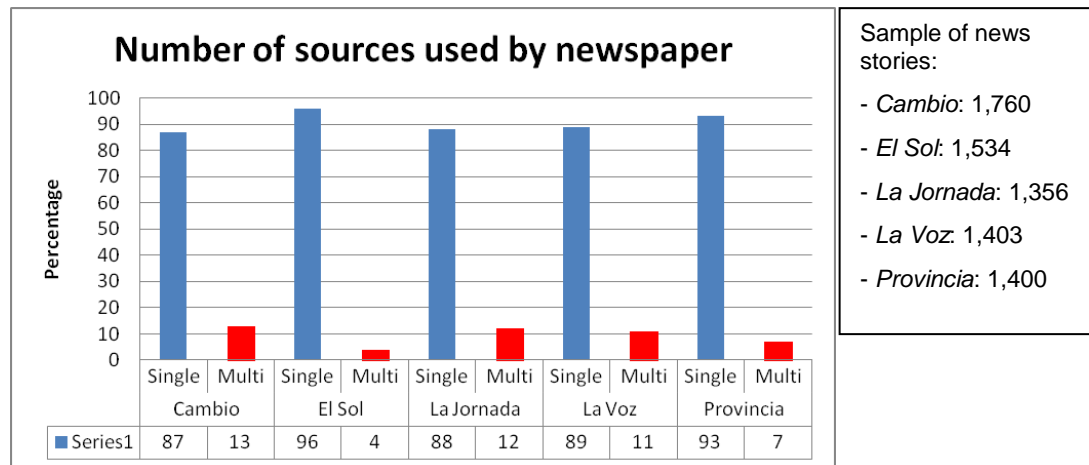
Table 9 Practice of investigative journalism by Morelian newspapers.

5.3.1.2 Content analysis

As explained earlier in the fourth chapter (section 4.2 *Methodological scheme*), in evaluating the levels of investigative journalism of the local printed media, the content analysis measured the number and type of sources they normally use and the political actors whom the news talk about. It is also worth reminding that the figures come from the review of the news stories published in the political sections of the five newspapers during the period of January-June 2010. Contrary to what journalists said about the importance of the investigative journalism and its frequent practice, the findings showed a divergent perspective. As it was commented before, one of the minimal requirements for practicing it is presenting at least two sides of the story, which is having more than one source of information. Nevertheless, this situation is consistent with a recent study on journalism cultures in Mexico, Chile and Brazil, which concluded that ‘several results that turned out to be contradictory could be understood as an internal struggle between what the journalists feel they should do (or want to do), and their everyday practice’ (Mellado *et al* 2012:74).⁶⁸ Therefore, the

⁶⁸ In a similar but wider study, Hanitzch and Mellado (2011:420-421) suggested that ‘prospective studies should address potential gaps between journalists’ perceptions of influences and the objective realities of journalism’s limited autonomy’. This is because ‘we may simply not

following chart offers a rather different version of what the interviewees of this thesis mentioned:



Sample of news stories:
 - *Cambio*: 1,760
 - *El Sol*: 1,534
 - *La Jornada*: 1,356
 - *La Voz*: 1,403
 - *Provincia*: 1,400

Chart 1 Number of sources used by Morelian newspapers.

The chart speaks for itself: there is an evident lack of different opinions and versions in the news that the local printed media offer to their readership. Nearly all of the stories rely only on a single source of information, which means that doing investigation is not exactly the newspapers’ top priority. As explained earlier on chapter four (section 4.2 *Methodological scheme*), number of sources represents the different versions included in a news story, which could be single (only one side) or multi (two or more sides of the story).

As the content analysis proved, a common practice in Morelian media is covering an official event, which is an activity organised by government officials or political parties’ leaders for publicising their achievements (opening new facilities, providing economic resources for peasants, appointing new cabinet members...). Since a lot of important actors attend to this kind of activities, reporters can collect several opinions regarding the central issue of the event or other topic of the public agenda. But all of those voices represent only one version or side, because the attendants belong to the same group (businessmen, high rank officials, members of interest groups and so on). Nonetheless, alternative voices are absent in the news simply because they were absent at the event.

comprehend the discrepancy between *professional values* revealed in surveys and actual journalistic practice’ (Schudson 2005a:184).

For a better understanding of this point, the following chart breaks down the concept of source, which represents the different ways that the local reporters use to obtain information. These sources are basically press releases and conferences, exclusive interviews, official events coverage, unofficial source (leaks, rumours or anonymous informants) and the newspapers' own investigation (the stories which are the product of their own agenda). As these figures will show, the significance of measuring the frequency of use of different sources news workers rely on is that their reporting routines become clearer.

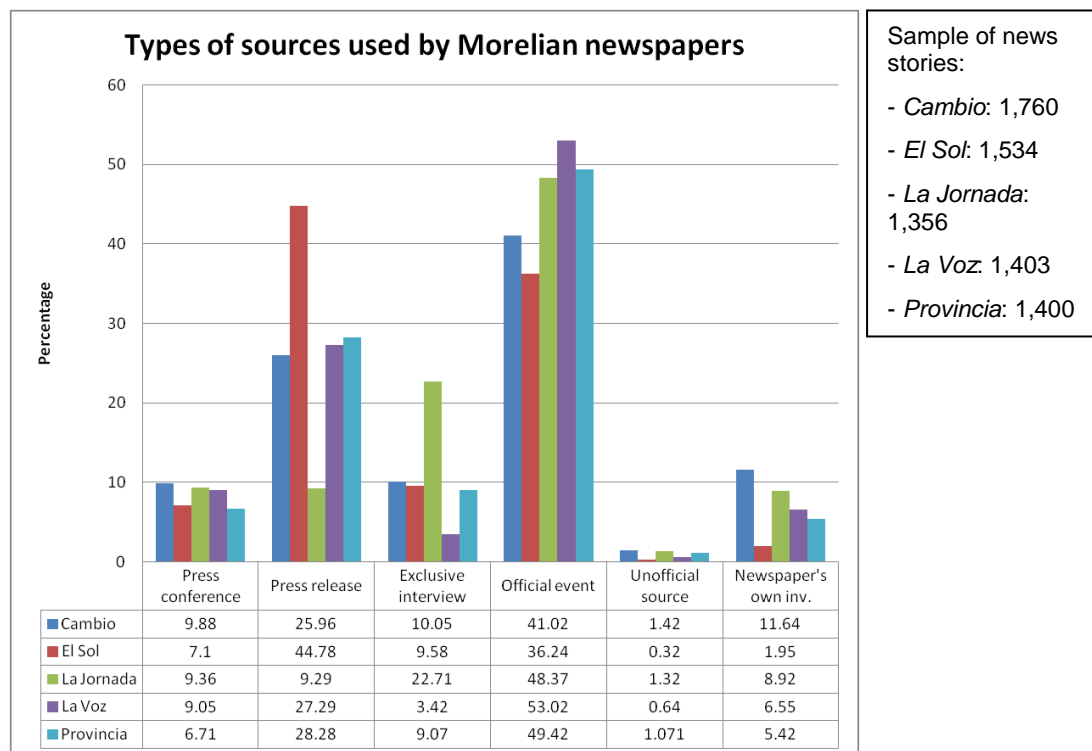


Chart 2 Type of sources used by Morelian newspapers.

As shown on the very first chart (number of sources), *Cambio* is the local newspaper which has the highest rate of different sources of information (13%) and, as a result of that, it has the highest rate of own investigation (11.64%), whilst *El Sol* shows the poorest results in these issues: 4% in multi sources news and 1.95% in own investigation. So, there is a direct correlation between the number of sources and the prominence of the media's investigative work: the wider the diversity of information used for the stories, the more frequent is the practice of the investigative journalism canons.

There is an evident trend in covering press conferences, because the rates for all the media outlets oscillates between 6.71% (*Provincia*) and 9.88% (*Cambio*), having a distance between the highest and lowest of only 3.17%. Another aspect that shows homogeneity is that unofficial sources (leaks, rumours, anonymous informants...), are not widely used by anyone: a little bit above of 1% is the difference between the highest (*Cambio*, 1.42%) and the lowest (*El Sol*, 0.32%). Although the intermediate rates are consistent, the highest and lowest peaks of three issues are very distant from each other: related to the use of press releases, there is a 35.39% gap between *El Sol* (44.78%) and *La Jornada* (9.29%). For the case of the exclusive interviews, the distance between the highest (*La Jornada*, 22.71%) and the lowest (*La Voz*, 3.42%) is 19.29%. Related to the official event coverage, the gap is 16.78%, where *La Voz* has the highest rate (53.02%) and *El Sol* the lowest (36.24%). The fact that the official events get a lot of coverage in Morelia is not an extraordinary finding, since it is a common pattern in media systems such as the American where

sources also gain an advantage in the competition over access to journalists when they are sufficiently able and ingenious to create activities that exist solely, or mainly, to be covered by the news media – which are therefore called media events (Gans 2004:122).

Closely connected with the concept of source is the issue of the actors involved in the news, which are the figures who participate in the political arena and whom the news talk about. Thus, the following chart shows the political actors and their presence during the period of study, measured by the percentage of mentions on the news stories.

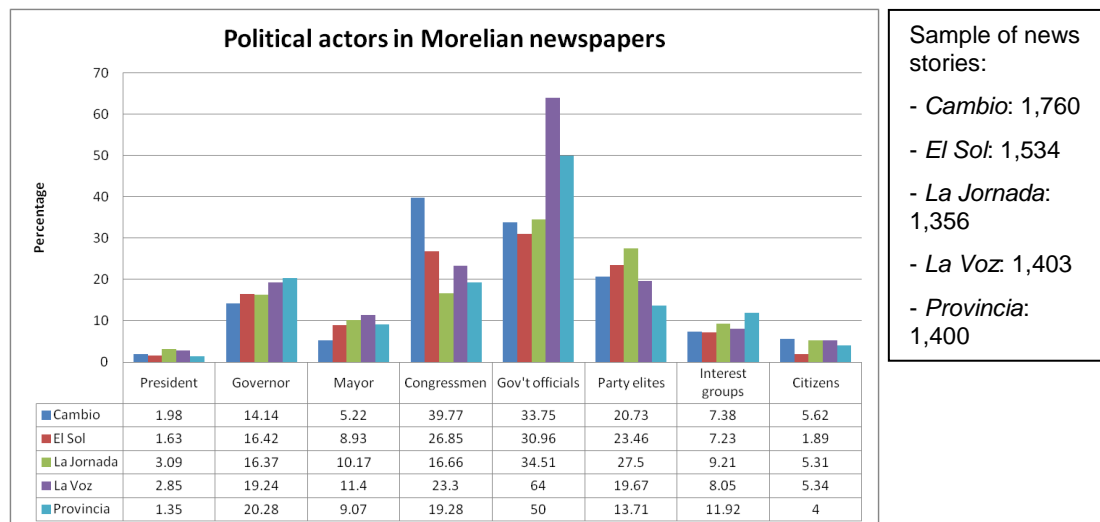


Chart 3 Political actors in Morelian newspapers.

Prior to the explanation of the results, it is important to stress that the percentages indicated in the last chart are individual frequencies, thus their sum is not 100%. The reason is because the news not always include only a single political actor, on the contrary, one story may talk about two or more of them. So, the number refers to the amount of times the actor was mentioned, but it does not mean that he/she was the only one in that particular news. In statistical terms, when more than one item could be accepted as a valid answer in a single question, each item should be measured individually. In addition, the collective categories of Congressmen and party elites will be broken down by political party in the following chapter, at the end of the section *6.2.1 Political news coverage*.

The political actors included in the charts might be organised in three groups: individual actors (president, governor and mayor), groups (Congressmen, government officials – federal, state or local - and party elites) and others (interest groups and citizens). Regarding the individual political actors, there is a neat homogeneity in the way newspapers covered the president, governor and mayor. All the media outlets showed the same trend: the governor had always highest levels of presence in the news, followed by the mayor and, far from them, the president had the lowest coverage. In terms of rates, the governor oscillated between 20.28% (*Provincia*) and 14.14% (*Cambio*), the mayor 11.4% (*La Voz*) and 5.22% (*Cambio*), and the president 3.09% (*La Jornada*) and 1.35% (*Provincia*). Another neat homogeneity appeared in the way interest groups and citizens were covered. All the newspapers presented the same trend: the former got better presence (between 11.92% in *Provincia* and 7.23% in *El Sol*) than the latter (between 5.62% in *Cambio* and 1.89% in *El Sol*).

A different situation appeared when newspapers covered the diverse groups of political actors. *El Sol*, *La Voz* and *Provincia* presented the same trend: government officials had the highest rates, followed by Congressmen and party elites. *Cambio* and *La Jornada* showed different patterns: for the former, the tendency was Congressmen, government officials and party elites and, for the latter, it was government officials, party elites and Congressmen. Despite their ranking in each news organization, government officers got a good coverage: between 64% (*La Voz*) and 30.96% (*El Sol*). Congressmen and party elites had a fair presence: between 39.77% (*Cambio*) and 16.66% (*La Jornada*) for the former, and between 27.5% (*La Jornada*) and 13.71% (*Provincia*) for the latter.

Finally, as will be discussed later in the conclusions of the thesis (section 7.2 *Instrumentalization as the result of the political communication process*), if a journalistic practice is supposed to be 'civic', it needs to have the citizens, their interests and needs, as a central actor of the news (Lawson 2002, and Hughes 2003 and 2006). In that sense, the content analysis findings proved that reaching that stage in Morelia is still far away. This is because the members of society have a very poor presence in the stories that newspapers print on a regular basis. They only become involved in the news just as beneficiaries from government policies or victims of a tragedy, natural or manmade. But not as active participants in developing or, at least, discussing those policies. In sum, this trend showed the domination of the political discourse by the government and party elites.

This situation is also consistent with places like the UK, where 'institutional and government sources consistently outnumber all other types of news source in news texts' (Davis 2000a:45). The American case is also similar, since 'the cumulative pattern that determines availability and suitability makes the public official the most frequent and regular source' (Gans 2004:144-145). In addition,

the consistent finding that official sources dominate the news is invariably presented as a criticism of the media. If the media were to fulfil their democratic role, they would offer a wide variety of opinions and perspectives to encourage citizens to choose among them in evaluating public policies (Schudson 2005a:182).

5.3.1.3 Other actors' opinions

When communications officers and politicians were asked to evaluate local media's performance, they raised the issue of investigative journalism. Their answers pointed at an evident agreement: newspapers in Morelia are not practicing this kind of reporting. 'Journalism is much more than collecting politicians' opinions, there is a lack of investigation here. There is no such thing as investigative journalism in Michoacán, nobody does that', CO3 – press officer of the Coordination of Development and Planning - said. The reason is that reporters are only worried about going to the official events and getting participants' reactions, they do not look for any extra information. CO5, a former journalist and currently the press officer of the Ministry of the Women, insisted on the same point:

Local media need to do more investigation, because that could boost their own agenda and their news might have a deeper impact inside the Congress or state government... Local journalism only runs after current events. Daily news is that: what the politician or public officer said, it is not information sought by reporters.

According to CO4, PRI Social Communication Coordinator, there must be more investigation in the local journalistic job, which means having more documentation. The news should not only rely on a single comment or opinion, nor using unreliable sources. Reporters have to look for more facts or figures, not just depending on the press release. The press release dependence is only one of the main factors that impede the transformation of local media, because their personnel wait until the very last minute to get the official statement from the press office. 'Is not that they want the story or they want to have more details', as P4 – Director of the Institute of the Youth - pointed out.

This interviewee also suggested that sometimes correspondents *beat up* or criticise public servants not just because they were ordered to or for personal reasons, but because of the lack of another version. If they only rely on one side of the story, the other side may become invisible or mute then. Nevertheless, the origin of this poor work is not always the reporters' fault. CO1, another former journalist and currently the assistant of the state Congress Social Communication Coordinator, explained that most of the times media's routines do not allow them to do more than that. Since reporters have a specific news quota, it is impossible for them having the chance to find every actor involved and offering a more complete story, and doing it in a daily basis.

Finally, even though this point will be addressed further in this chapter (subsection 5.4.2 *Official advertising in Morelian newspapers*), CO7 – PAN Social Communication Coordinator - considered that official advertising contracts are also behind the lack of investigative journalism: 'a lot of the information that media in Michoacán publish comes from contracts, the official version, and most of the times they neglect other issues... Only few of them have a clear editorial line and offer balanced information'.

5.3.2 Academic background

Before commenting on the impact of the academic background of the local journalists, it is important to mention that initially this issue was not

considered to be included in this thesis. Nonetheless, without explicitly being asked about it, most of the informants brought it up during the interviews, especially when asked about sharing ideologies and means of coercion towards the press. Due to the pattern found in the answers, it was decided to include it as a question for the last interviews and, thus, as a category to be analysed through the answers from the interviewees.

As commented earlier in chapter three (section 3.1 *Media System*), having a university degree is not the only requirement, even the most important, to practice a professional journalism (Hallin and Mancini 2004), but it certainly helps in understanding the social role of the media. For the case of the Mexican news organizations, Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2006) found certain correlation between academic background and civic responsiveness. They perceived that graduate and postgraduate reporters, editors and publishers had a better performance in responding to society's needs and interests, than journalist who did not have any formal training.

Regarding the development of the academic study of journalism, at the end of the forties in Mexico City was established the first school of journalism *Carlos Septién García* (Bohman 1986:77). In Morelia this topic was included at the beginning of the nineties only as a series of modules in the Communication Sciences bachelor degree program offered by Universidad Vasco de Quiroga and, by the end of that decade, Universidad de Morelia started offering the degree in Journalism. Currently, only in this city, there are four private universities that offer a communications or journalism degree and two other, one public and the other private as well, that include those subjects within their programs of literature and humanities studies.

To a higher or lesser degree, and with divergent opinions towards the issue, most of the interviewees accepted that the rise of communications and journalism degrees had an undeniable impact on the local media. However, the nature of that impact had different interpretations though. For that reason, the collected points of view oscillated between optimistic, cynical and realistic. Before presenting the findings related to this point, it is important to understand the actors' academic background. At least for the sixteen who are directly and professionally involved in the political communication process, as information providers (communications officers) and diffusers (journalists).

Ten of the informants who participated in this research have a BA in Communications Sciences or Journalism, which indicates that - at least in academic terms - there is a tendency towards the professionalization of the

field in Morelia, two studied something not directly related to this practice (e.g. literature or law) and four did not attend university. It is worth explaining that communications and journalism were included in the same category for three reasons: firstly, because one of the former's cores of its academic programme is focused on journalism and media production. Secondly, there is only one university in Morelia which offers the journalism degree so, in quantitative terms, there are lesser graduates from this area. Thirdly, on the field, political actors and other sources do not perceive any significant difference between the degrees.

Just as it was perceived by the informants, there is a generational gap between the *empiricists*, the old reporters who learned their trade directly on the field and without any formal education, and the young journalists who hold a university degree, but lack the experience. This rupture has been causing constant conflict within the local media environment, because frequently both of them harshly criticise each other, not without reason in many cases though.

There is certain journalistic generational rupture in Michoacán: old journalists have more wiles than techniques, and they do more politics than journalism; and the new ones have techniques, but neither the experience nor the basic background to get the job done (CO8, press officer of the state government).

J7, political correspondent of *El Sol*, emphasised that - in ethical terms - *empiricists* have less moral limitations to accept bribes. Even more, sometimes they have the nerve to ask for money or favours. Notwithstanding, the interviewee insisted, university graduates are not exempt from this practice either. However, attending school is an important step towards a more ethical practice of the trade. Following this idea, CO5 - press officer of the Ministry of the Women - also commented that local journalism has been evolving, because today there are more graduate reporters than *empiricists*. Nevertheless, youngsters are still in a formation process and they need to be more mature and aware in finding what the job is about, hence, they could exploit media's social function. This generational clash has led the former to underestimate the latter's abilities for the practice, by mocking their lack of experience on the field. On the other hand, the youngsters accuse their predecessors of being corrupt and ignorant about the social function of their role.

The difference between the new journalists and the empiricists is that at school you really do not learn how to

write a proper news story. Universities, in general, lack the balance of theory and practice, which is fundamental for the students, so they could be prepared to what journalism is really about. However, the major advantage of the graduates are our ethical principles, we do not accept bribes that easily (CO9, press officer of the PRD Congressmen).

As P4 – Director of the Institute of the Youth - suggested, even though there is an evident change in local news outlets, it cannot be said either that the reporters who attended school are more professional and better prepared than the rest. It means that one kind of journalist could be as ethical or corrupt as the other, and a university degree is by no means a guarantee of moral and ethical grounding. According to P1, a former PRI Congressman, there are three types of journalists: the 'pub journalists', who have an old fashioned idea of the job and think that it is only based on personal connections, making friends and having good writing skills. On the contrary, there are some graduate reporters who, besides having a university degree, they keep on studying and perceive their job in a more scientific way, because they do academic research. Just in the middle, because of their inexperience, there are a lot of young graduates who could easily fall into the old journalism vices.

It is true that there is not any book that could actually tell you how to get a good news story from a politician. It only comes with your own journalistic instinct. However, everything that modern journalism has lost in instinct, it has been gained in scientific techniques (P1).

Moving towards a more optimistic point of view, J4 – political correspondent of *La Voz* - considered that the new generation of graduate reporters have left their mark on local media, by inaugurating a new age of journalism in Morelia. These young journalists are more critical, ethical and professional than the old ones. For that reason, a generational relief for editors and directors-general is becoming necessary. CO1, assistant of the state Congress Social Communication Coordinator, explained that journalistic professionalization has been improving in the city thanks to the places that the new generations have been gaining in the last years. Despite all the resistance from the *empiricists*, young reporters have learned how to apply their theoretical knowledge in a sometimes hostile field.

All the youngsters who now cover the Congress are more professional and better prepared than their predecessors. They are a new wave with a lot of stamina... Young reporters, I can testify, are more careful of keeping their independence

and, in that sense, local journalism has a better perspective thanks to this new generation (P3, PAN state Congressman).

On an opposite position, some of the informants were very cynical towards the advent of new journalists. For instance, J3 and J6⁶⁹ argued that fresh graduates are lazy and never show any initiative. Although they have a serious lack of practical experience on the field, they think that they are better than the rest just because they went to school and, for that reason, they do not like to receive orders from anyone. More than a generational rupture, J3 considered that there is a crisis in local media caused by university graduates, because they do not understand what journalism is really about. It also seems that, during the school years, their initiative was 'castrated', because they show high levels of apathy towards the job. A job that, ironically, demands a lot of creativity and being proactive.

Something very funny is now happening here thanks to the communications and journalism degrees boom. I do not know if universities are robbing them or what the hell are they doing to them. I do not have a degree, I am an *empiricist*, and I think that if these kids went to school they were supposed to be very passionate about it; but they simply neither have enough tools nor knowledge, they basically start from scratch (J3).

'I consider that journalism is something that comes by instinct, you just cannot learn it. Reporters are just like carpenters or tailors, either you have it in your blood or not, but you cannot learn it from a book', CO6 – Municipal Government Social Communication Coordinator - said. Even though this requirement is vital for this practice, universities do not care much about it and they keep on sending underprepared people to job the market. Since every year there are more and more graduates, the posts in news organizations have become fewer and fewer. This situation fosters a devaluation of the career, because the salaries tend to be lower due to their urgent need to work.

Besides the instinct, experience and basic journalistic tools, CO6 and J6 stated that these new generations also lack of a solid cultural background, which impedes them to formulate interesting questions during press conferences or official events, and it also makes them gullible to all that the politicians tell them. Even worse, they are easy prey for political instrumentalization, because they do not know the context of the story. Thus,

⁶⁹ Political correspondents of *Cambio* and *La Jornada*, respectively.

instead of analysing the facts, they just reproduce the official discourse and give free publicity to politicians. 'Journalistic trade fell down because of the rise of the communications degree... University graduates ruined my beloved trade', CO6 (who, ironically, also has a journalism degree) concluded.

In a wider context, it is worth mentioning that Riva Palacio (1997) found a similar pattern at the national level during the rise of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) in 1994. At that time, he argued, Mexican journalism showed that neither the young journalists nor the more experienced were prepared to report on an armed conflict such as that. Therefore, the coverage made evident the main flaws of their practice: lack of techniques and ability to develop a story. That is, since most of the correspondents were used to report mere declarations rather than facts, by only reproducing statements from both sides (even without bothering to determine whether the source was reliable or not), they failed in making sense of the information. The reason is that

structural problems, ranging from limited information and lack of training to the poor use of resources and isolationism, have held back the Mexican press. Most publishers and editors were trained in the old school of journalism, in which statements weigh more heavily than actions and rhetoric is more important than information (Riva Palacio 1997:29).

In addition, countries like Argentina, Brazil and Colombia have also experienced this generational shift in which young reporters differ from their older peers due to the academic background. That is, just as in Morelia, the former are university graduates and the latter learnt the trade on the field. Nonetheless, beyond the mere degree, the main difference is that new reporters in those places tend to be less politically aligned and, thus, partisanship is not an important factor of their professional activities (Waisbord 2000b). Furthermore, similar to the answers offered by some of the informants of this thesis, Skjerdal (2010) analysed a series of studies related to African press which concluded that higher levels of education were connected with less sympathy towards bribes.

Although there has been a trend for American and German journalists to have university education (90% in the US and 80.5% in Germany), only a minority has a journalism or communications degree. This is because most of the graduates from those disciplines do not find a job in this field (Josephi 2009). Regarding the British case, Zelizer (2009) commented that news outlets have not been able to accommodate within their newsrooms the increasing number of young graduates. Even more, many experienced

reporters have criticised the concept of professionalization as synonymous of a university degree, because 'this has raised the stakes involved in being a journalist, often to the detriment of those practicing the craft' (Zelizer 2009:34).

5.3.3 Levels of professionalization

Regarding the levels of journalistic professionalization explained in the third chapter (section 3.1 *Media System*), Hallin and Mancini (2004) suggested a set of three parameters for evaluating this issue, which include autonomy (the struggle between freedom and censorship, both self-imposed and exerted by someone else, such as editors, owners or external actors), distinct professional norms (shared newsworthiness values and routines), and public service orientation (practice of the civic journalism standards). According to the data collected from the field, this is Morelian reporters' performance:

- Autonomy: even though this issue will be widely stress further in the following section, official advertising is the main coercion factor that determines how autonomous media and their staff could be. It means that political information coverage and framing is openly shaped by this element. To a lesser degree, some of the interviewees commented off the record that drug cartels also have an impact on news outlets, because they have become a strong power stakeholder which has its particular means of persuasion.
- Distinct professional norms: as the content analysis proved, and reinforced by the interviews too, there is a lack of investigative journalism in Morelia fostered by an evident dependence on press releases and official events coverage. This situation promoted the use of only one version of reality, neglecting the other side of the story.
- Public service orientation: related to the last points, it could be said that the civic orientation that Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2003 and 2006) found in their studies of Mexican news organizations is not the common rule here. In part due to the reasons explained just before, but also because of the lack of citizen presence in the local news which, by the way, reinforces the general absence of the public in the news stories around the world.⁷⁰ In other words, regular people are

⁷⁰ The absence of the regular citizens in the Morelian newspapers is consistent with the Mexican press, which content is produced for the political elites' consumption, rather than for the constituency's interests (Trejo 1992, Hallin 2000a and Adler-Lomnitz *et al* 2004). In that sense, and using Bourdieu's ideas, the process of production and reception of the political news are

nearly nonexistent for local printed media - as the content analysis demonstrated - since they are basically portrayed as victims of a tragedy or recipients of a government programme. On the contrary of Hallin and Mancini (2004), Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2003 and 2006) also perceived a correlation between academic background and a public service journalistic practice. However, the interviews showed otherwise: just as the former argued, holding a university degree is not a guarantee of social-minded performance. That is, even though most of the local journalists have a university degree, their performance is not significantly different from the *empiricists*, at least in the civic orientation.

In sum, the empirical evidence supports the argument of the low levels of professionalization in the local media system. The macro level is characterised by a reduced autonomy towards the government and other political actors (due to a high official advertising dependence), lack of investigative news reports, and an almost invisible citizen representation due to a poor public service reporting orientation. Therefore, these findings challenge previous assumptions regarding a general trend towards media modernization in Mexico. For instance, in her optimistic view of Mexican newspapers, Hughes (2006:51) commented that contemporary reporters and publishers have transcended the authoritarian features of journalism which were the norm during the PRI regime. Nonetheless, as this case study will demonstrate, they are still the common rule and present the same features that she thought they were already history:

Mexican journalists took a passive, noncritical approach to reporting that relied either on the stenographic transferral of speeches and press releases to the news pages, or code-like political columns written for the already initiated. Journalists forged subordinate relationships with sources that would have been considered conflicts of interests if the media have not been in symbiosis with the State.

homologous. This is because there is a predisposition of the audience to look for this kind of content, due to the shared social, cultural and educational background between its members and journalists (Benson 1999 and 2006). Although this is out of the scope of this thesis, and at least for the Mexican case, it is worth mentioning that Bourdieu's assumption regarding the issue of coincidence between the producers' and receivers' profiles was right only if the "real" audience – mainly politicians and public servants - is considered; which fosters 'elite discourse networks' (Davis 2000b:286). However, the situation significantly differs from the "perceived" audience (individuals who do not necessarily belong to the political arena, but whom reporters think they are their actual readers) because the sense of coherence between them is less clear.

5.3.4 Summary of the section

The professionalization of the Morelian newspapers – the third parameter of the media system - was evaluated through two issues: investigative journalism and the academic background of the reporters. On the one hand, the findings regarding the former showed that, although local reporters had a clear idea about this concept and they thought they practiced it on a regular basis, the content analysis proved otherwise: most of the news relied on only one source of information, the facts were collected mainly through official events coverage and press conferences/releases, and the citizens were nearly absent in the stories. Furthermore, communications officers and politicians also considered that the lack of investigation was one of the hallmarks of the journalism in Morelia. On the other, related to the academic background, there is a generational gap between the *empiricists* – old reporters who do not have a degree in communications or journalism - and the new wave of university graduate news workers. Finally, regarding the levels of professionalization proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004), Morelian journalistic practice is poor because there is a limited autonomy towards the government, lack of investigative journalism and a reduced presence of the citizens in the news.

5.4 Role of the State

The fourth parameter of the media system - the role of the State - represents the level of involvement of the government authorities in the political communication process. Nonetheless, beyond its official role as a guardian of the laws and regulations of the media and its operation, in Mexico the State has another way of regulating newsrooms through diverse means of coercion, especially through the official advertising contracts. For that reason, this last section of the chapter – based upon the interviews and content analysis - offers an approach to this situation at the local level, by presenting a review of the catalogue of coercion techniques which the interviewees considered were the most used by authorities in Morelia. Particular attention will be paid to the official advertising which, as it will be argued in this thesis,⁷¹ fosters the patron-client relationship between media and government and, hence, impedes the modernization of the Mexican journalism.

⁷¹ See chapter seven, section 7.3 *Economically-driven partisanship*.

5.4.1 Means of coercion towards the local press

This part of the section summarises the opinions of the interviewees regarding the question if the government – at its three levels - has any means of coercion towards the local press. As a case study, Morelia also reinforces certain trends mentioned before by national and foreign scholars, regarding the coercion that government authorities and politicians exert towards the Mexican media on a regular basis (e.g. Bohmann 1986, Trejo 1992, Avilés 1999, Lawson 2002 and Hughes 2003).⁷² The field work findings offered the following panorama: eleven of the interviewees considered that the main means of coercion are the bribes which journalists get from politicians, eight mentioned that the official advertising contracts exert pressure, four of the answers pointed out at some other reasons (laws and regulations, tax exemptions...), and two found the origin of the problem in the control over the information. Despite the specific means, the aim of coercion towards the media is to exert pressure, which appears as

criticism, organised or unorganised protest, as well as threats against journalists, their organizations, and their firms. Pressure is applied in order to force journalists to change the news (or to omit a story), which constitutes censorship; or pressure is used to create what journalists call a chilling effect, with the hope of inducing journalists to volunteer the change or omission, which becomes self-censorship (Gans 2004:249)

Corruption through bribes is an evident pattern, both in the literature (e.g. Bohmann 1986, Trejo 1992, Rodríguez 1993, Orme 1997, Avilés 1999 and Lawson 2002) and in the opinions collected here. *Chayote*, as Mexican journalistic slang calls it, is the action of offering, accepting or asking for an unofficial payment (favours, cash or any other good) in exchange for a constant and favourable coverage. 'Unfortunately, the bribe is still a common practice here. It is a reality that cannot be hidden. It is so deplorable that there are government officers who offer money, or reporters who ask for it', CO9 – press officer of the PRD Congressmen - said. This point of view stresses the idea that corruption needs two key players, or as CO2 – state Congress Social Communication Coordinator - explained:

Corruption is a twofold problem: reporters who come and ask for money, and politicians who offer it to them. This situation has to be cleansed from both sides. Media say that politicians

⁷² See chapter one, section 1.2 *Mexican media's main features*.

are corrupt, but they forget that they are also part of the problem when they say “I *beat you up*, now you pay me”.

These last two answers pointed out at the same direction as Transparency International (2008:2), which considered that ‘corruption and bribery are complex transactions that involve both someone who offers a benefit, often a bribe, and someone who accepts, as well as a variety of specialists or intermediaries to facilitate the transaction’.⁷³ Notwithstanding, *P1* – former PRI Congressman - offered a rather cynical point of view: ‘corruption is less vicious when the other person shows gratitude towards you’. In other words, there is not much of a problem with the ethical implications of the bribe, as long as both sides respect the agreement and get benefits from it. Despite the gratitude that the political correspondent might show, it does not change the interviewee’s impressions about reporters: ‘I have a bad opinion about journalists, at least most of them. Local journalism is only “give me give me”, but I wonder if that would be the same at the national level, but at a different magnitude’. On the other hand, *P4* – Director of the Institute of the Youth - considered naive thinking that bribes are no longer a connection between journalists and government, because they are still part of their every day interaction. Nevertheless, it is always up to the media accepting or refusing the demands raised by politicians through this practice and vice versa.

Corrupt journalists would advance as far as you let them go, no doubts about it. It is not that you tell them what to publish or not, very often they offer their help if in the future you may do something wrong. These are the customs of the relationship between reporters and politicians.

Once again, the economic strength of the actors determines whether coercion may or may not take place. ‘Government does have means of coercion towards the press. This local administration does not, and that is not an excuse, the thing is that we do not have enough economic resources to do it’, *CO6* – Municipal Government Social Communication Coordinator - confessed. Local government and state Congress might not have enough money, but all the fingers point at state government.⁷⁴ ‘I would dare to say

⁷³ According to its *Bribe Payers Index 2008*, Transparency International considered that Mexico’s rank is the third lowest, just above China and Russia; which means that in these countries the use of bribes is a common rule; whilst Belgium and Canada are on the top of the list, indicating that bribery is not a frequent practice there.

⁷⁴ According to the annual report about the state government’s public wealth, the official budget given to its General Coordination of Social Communication (Coordinación General de Comunicación Social) in 2007 – the final year of the last administration - was \$24,511,803 Mexican Pesos (£1,167,228.71), whilst by 2009 the office received a substantial increase, resulting in \$72,689,877 Mexican Pesos (£3,461,422.71) (Cuenta Pública de la Hacienda Estatal 2007 and 2009). Off the record information provided by some interviewees indicates that, besides this budget, every ministry assigns 10% of their

that, for the case of the state executive, there is certain level of coercion; because some reporters get certain support which could compromise them. This happens especially among the older journalists', *P3* – PAN state Congressman - also commented.

The literature review and interviews also coincided with the idea that, in recent years, this phenomenon has been taking a different shape, because now reporters tend to be out of these underground agreements. This is not just because they suddenly became more ethical, but because directors-general and editors have displaced them from the table. Today the power is no longer in journalists' hands, they have been transformed in mere instruments of coercion towards the government, because they have to do what the authorities of their news outlets tell them to do. If someone is about to be *beaten up*, by investigating and exposing a political actor, they do the dirty job until a contract is signed or another sort of agreement is reached. 'In general terms, reporters are ok; but when we talk about editors and directors-general, well, I think there are all kind of persons', *P2* – PAN state Congressman - said. In that same sense, *P3* added: 'many reporters do a fine job, I would not say excellent though. Some of them lack of professionalism, because they just attack state Congress when we do not invest in their media'.

However, at least at the local level, some of the interviewed journalists and politicians traced the origin of this situation in the generational gap mentioned earlier in this chapter (subsection 5.3.2 *Academic background*). *J5*, political correspondent of *Provincia*, explained that, prior to the new wave of graduate reporters, the members of the "old school" used to blackmail the politicians and government officers. That is why the latter had to negotiate directly with the former. Since the *empiricists* used to move as a pack, politicians were forced to deal with them as a whole, which means that the *chayote* had to be distributed among the journalistic community. But with the rise the official advertising contracts, the situation dramatically changed. This is because instead of dealing with all the political correspondents at the same time, today government officers and politicians interact only with the editors and directors-general of the specific news organizations they are interested in.

Besides the bribes, eight of the respondents pointed out at the official advertising as an important way to exert pressure towards the media outlets.

annual budget to the same purpose. In contrast, state Congress had between \$5-7 millions of Mexican Pesos (£240-333,000) at its disposal each year.

If not completely, at least to an important extent, these kind of commercial agreements have been substituting the old fashion bribes. For that reason, a preliminary conclusion might be raised at this point: official advertising contracts have become the modern, official and institutional *chayote*. Even though this issue will be widely discussed in the following subsection, it is worth momentarily opening the argument with an initial thought:

Of course there are means of coercion, maybe not as brazen as it used to be, but they still exist through the official advertising contracts; and we are not talking about three quid, but about important sums to be spent on publicity. Even if a newspaper sells a lot of copies, advertising revenues are what make it survive, and a big share of them comes from the government (CO1, assistant to the state Congress Social Communication Coordinator).

On the other hand, four of the interviewees offered different explanations about the tricks political actors use to persuade the news organizations or their personnel. Forced dismissals, indirect pressure through different interest groups, tax exemptions and legal procedures for the operation, among others, were the strategies that the interviewees perceived. J6, political correspondent of *La Jornada*, commented the cases of several local journalists who were dismissed from their posts because the state government had explicitly demanded it. Among others, the interviewee reminded the case of a radio presenter who recently was fired because the current PRD state administration forced the station to do it. That journalist, who was in charge of the Communications Office of the last PRI state government from 1996 to 2002, used to harshly criticise the current governor and his closest staff.

Related to the use of interest groups as a means of pressure, J4 – political correspondent of *La Voz* - explained that very often government and political parties build temporary alliances with the church, businessmen or unions, for pushing the media to a particular direction. For instance, since the vast majority of the Morelian population is catholic, no news outlet is interested in starting a conflict with the church leaders. For the case of the businessmen, they could boycott the commercial advertising investments. Finally, the unions could easily make blockades to any newspaper's facilities. Tax exemptions and legal procedures are very similar, because both of them are related to the laws and regulations. At any level, but especially federal and state governments could facilitate media's operation by making certain

concessions regarding administrative and legal bureaucratic processes, which any company ought to accomplish in order to correctly function.

Finally, a couple of the answers suggested that control over the information is used by government authorities to coerce news outlets. 'Information blockade is a common practice: sometimes politicians do not give exclusive interviews or help reporters with press releases. They isolate you, and that is a form of pressure', *J2* – editor of *La Jornada* - explained. Although press offices are supposed to help journalists in getting information, *J3* – political correspondent of *Cambio* - considered that more than a help, they are an obstacle instead. When a political actor is criticised, no matter if it is minimal, after his tantrum the expected reaction is blocking reporters' job by ignoring him, excluding him from the tours, and so on.

The prevailing logic in the political sphere is the logic of secrecy. Politicians are not particularly keen on making things public, then, communications offices have the same task: not sharing information... There is not a culture of transparency, only secrecy and discretionarily information.

In that sense, the use of unofficial sources is a frequent rule in reporting about local politics. Leaks, anonymous informants and internal documents, among others, are recurrent tools in journalism. The reason is because the political sphere is not open to real accountability and the procedures for allowing public access to official information are slow, complicated and bureaucratic. Notwithstanding, as *CO1* and *J5* argued, unofficial sources are neither good nor evil *per se*, but they could foster corruption between political actors and reporters. Through certain rumours, the former might use the latter for over-criticising someone who may be putting their interests at stake. 'When politicians leak information, it is used as a tool for protecting themselves from their peers on the media', *P4* added. Likewise, it is worth emphasising that these 'inter-elite' conflicts exposed by the Morelian press is a well know political tactic in the United Kingdom and the United States too, where 'politicians leak information, raise policy issues and *fly kites* in order to undermine and attack opponents at an individual and policy level' (Davis 2009:207).

Despite the ultimate aim of the unofficial sources, journalists fancy them because they are the origin of many news stories, whether it is openly accepted or not. 'In fact, beyond the laws of information access, for me, the leaks are the mother of all scoops', *J2* commented.

Politics is full of leaks, rumours and anonymous sources. Since political practice is defined by its stinginess and

dishonesty, the only way politicians operate is through them. Nothing is straightforward, direct, transparent. Politicians are very diplomatic, in public they treat each other tactfully; but under the table, even brothers spit in each other's faces (J3).

However, CO2 noticed that 'the problem is that the "real" truth never goes public, because there is not any journalistic investigation which includes all the voices involved in the story'. Once again, the professional values of the local journalists are questioned, since the general perception is that they lack of initiative for going beyond the official statement or single comments. CO7, PAN Social Communication Coordinator, agreed with this idea and added that when reporters get this kind of information, they do not hesitate at all in publishing it. This is because they are more interested in the 'less informative' side of the news, such as political parties' internal conflicts, scandals and tragedies, rather than achievements and contributions. The reason is simple: "bad news" is always "good news", at least under media standards.

Nevertheless, since every story has at least two sides, there is also another version of the control over the information: politicians are often segregated from the media as well, because of the official advertising. According to P2, news organizations use silence as a punishment for not investing in them:

Is not that they lie, but they ignore you, suppress you, because you do not have a contract with them. If, on the one hand, there is a newspaper which has a section exclusively for political information and, on the other, you have a relevant career in local politics and they never say a word about you, it means that they are punishing you. It is their way to tell you "come on, try harder, make an effort".

In sum, the interviews reinforced the issues discussed in the literature about Mexican media regarding the means of coercion exerted by the government. As commented in this subsection, informants perceived very similar techniques used by the state administration to the ones widely documented by scholars and practitioners at the national level. Together with the bribes, the official advertising is an important form of corruption between high rank official authorities and news outlets. Therefore, the following subsection is entirely focused on analysing these contracts in Morelia.

5.4.2 Official advertising in Morelian newspapers

As it has been discussed in this section, beyond its legal role related to the formal norms that determine the legislation and operation of the broadcast

systems, the three levels of the Mexican government (federal, state and municipal) have an active involvement in news organizations through the official advertising. Thanks to this mercantile tie, media and government establish a commercial relation which facilitates the instrumentalization of the former by the latter. The Morelian case study shows that, indeed, there is an evident correlation between official advertising and political news coverage. But before that, it is important to understand how the former appeared in the local printed media. Therefore, this subsection presents a set of charts which explain the institutions involved, content and type of advertisements published by each newspaper from January to June 2010. They will be followed by an overview of the commercial advertising at the local level, the opinions of the interviewees regarding this issue and a correlation between political coverage and official advertising.

It is worth clarifying some aspects of the charts: firstly, the only official advertisers were the three levels of government, legislative branch (Chamber of Senators, federal deputies and state Congress) and political parties. Secondly, quite often an advert included two or three of those levels and that is why the specific chart shows individual frequencies and not a general percentage. Thirdly, the concept of content of the adverts included "institutional image" (governmental branding), "specific activity" (events organised by the advertiser), and "other" included memorial notices and official statements about different issues. Finally the types of messages were either regular advertisements (identified by its layout and content as different from the rest of the information of the newspaper) or paid news stories (full-length press releases identified by the lack of by-line). It is also important to say that the percentages indicate the frequency in which the adverts and press releases were published during the period of study.

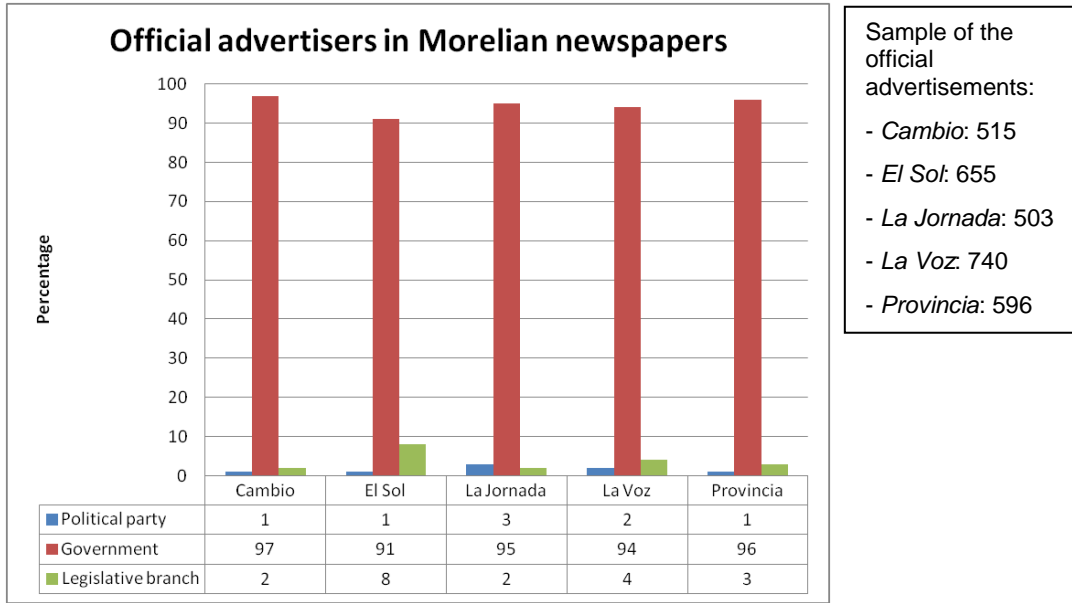


Chart 4 Official advertisers in Morelian newspapers.

Regarding the official advertisers and their level of investment, there is a homogeneous trend in the five local printed media: government at its three levels is, by far, the main investor in every newspaper because nearly all the revenues come from it (between 97% in *Cambio* and 91% in *El Sol*). Legislative branch and political parties had a reduced presence, especially the latter which highest peak was in *La Jornada* (3%), whilst the former's rate was between 8% (*El Sol*) and 2% (*Cambio* and *La Jornada*). The following three charts break down the concept of individual official advertisers.

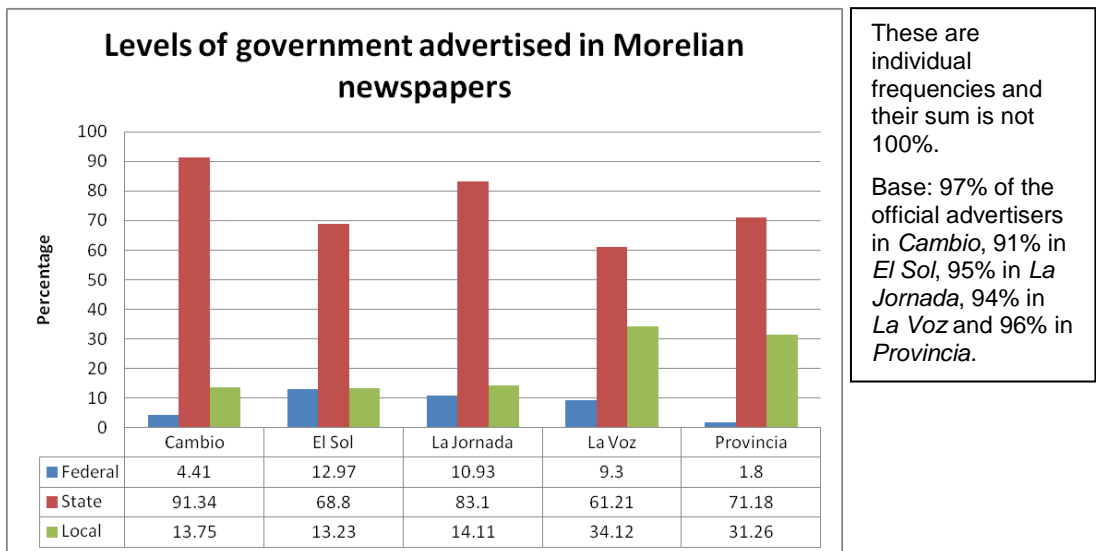


Chart 5 Levels of government advertised in Morelian newspapers.

Even though to a different extent, state government is the most important sponsor of the local newspapers which revenue from official advertising mainly came from it. Their dependence on the state budget oscillated between 91.34% (*Cambio*) and 61.21% (*La Voz*). On the contrary, local government's investment was more selective: whilst *La Voz* and *Provincia* got the biggest slice (34.12% and 31.26%, respectively), the other three received significantly less money but in an equitable way (14.11% *La Jornada*, 13.75% *Cambio* and 13.23% *El Sol*). A more or less similar trend appeared with the federal government which gave more money to *El Sol*, *La Jornada* and *La Voz* (12.97%, 10.93 and 9.3% respectively) than the other two (*Cambio* 4.41% and only 1.8% *Provincia*).

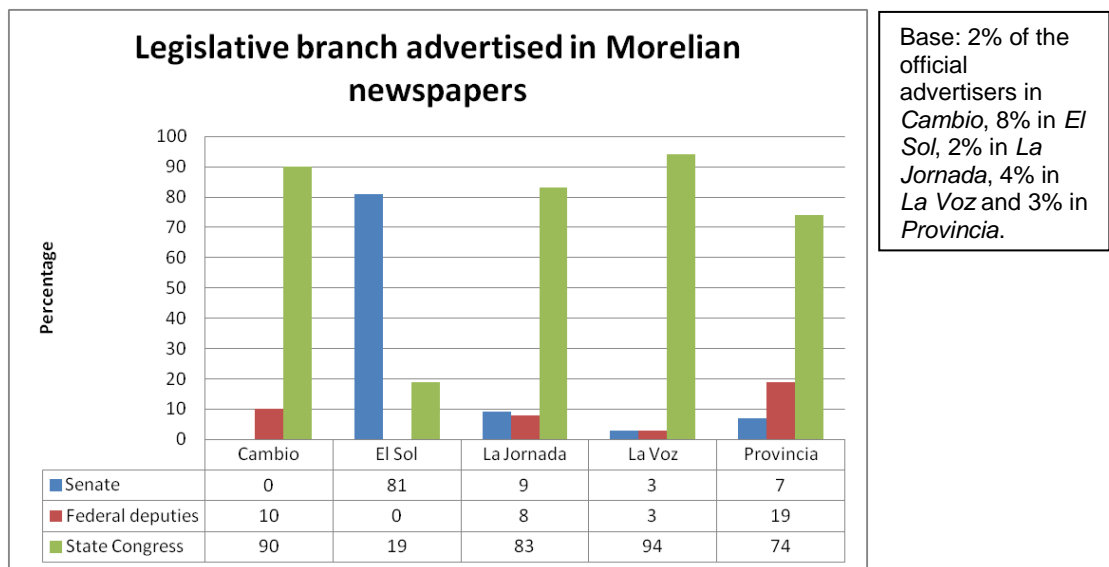


Chart 6 Legislative branch advertised in Morelian newspapers.

On the contrary of the government, the legislative branch showed a rather uneven pattern. Firstly, the state Congress was the only one which had advertisements in the five newspapers. However, its level of investment was very dissimilar (between 94% in *La Voz* and 19% in *El Sol*). Secondly, a completely radical situation was the case of the Senate, which gave more money to *El Sol* (81%) than *La Voz* (3%), but nothing to *Cambio*. Notwithstanding, it is important to mention that, rather than regular advertisements, all of the messages published in *El Sol* were press releases paid by a Senator who was positioning himself as a possible candidate for his party (Democratic Revolution Party, PRD) in the next electoral campaigns for governor. Finally, the federal deputies also had an uneven

investment: between 19% in *Provincia* and 3% in *La Voz*, but nothing in *El Sol*.

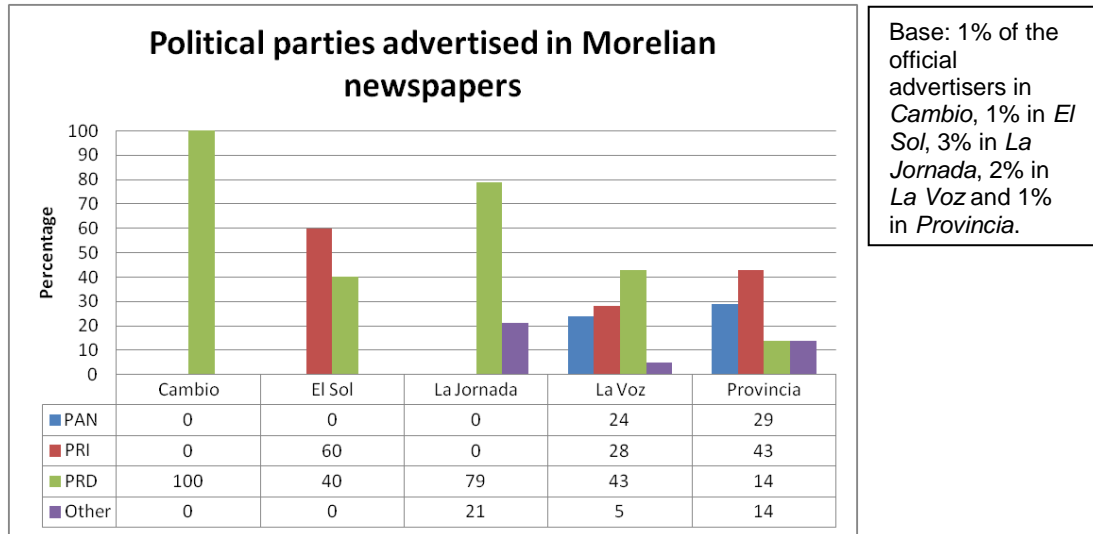


Chart 7 Political parties advertised in Morelian newspapers.

This chart presents several interesting aspects of the official advertising pattern in Morelia: firstly, political parties represent the least important advertisers because their investment is minimal (3% in *La Jornada*, 2% in *La Voz* and 1% the rest). Secondly, whilst PRD was the only one which had adverts in the five newspapers, National Action Party (PAN) only invested in *La Voz* and *Provincia*. Thirdly, the open left orientation of *Cambio* and *La Jornada* became evident here too, because PRD was the only advertiser of the former and the main of the latter (in which also other less important left oriented parties had advertisements). Finally, the fact that all the political parties invested in *La Voz* and *Provincia* is consistent with their market share (83% and 7%, respectively) commented earlier in section 5.1 *Media market*, and with the commercial advertising rates that will be reviewed in the following subsection (*Commercial advertising in the local press*).

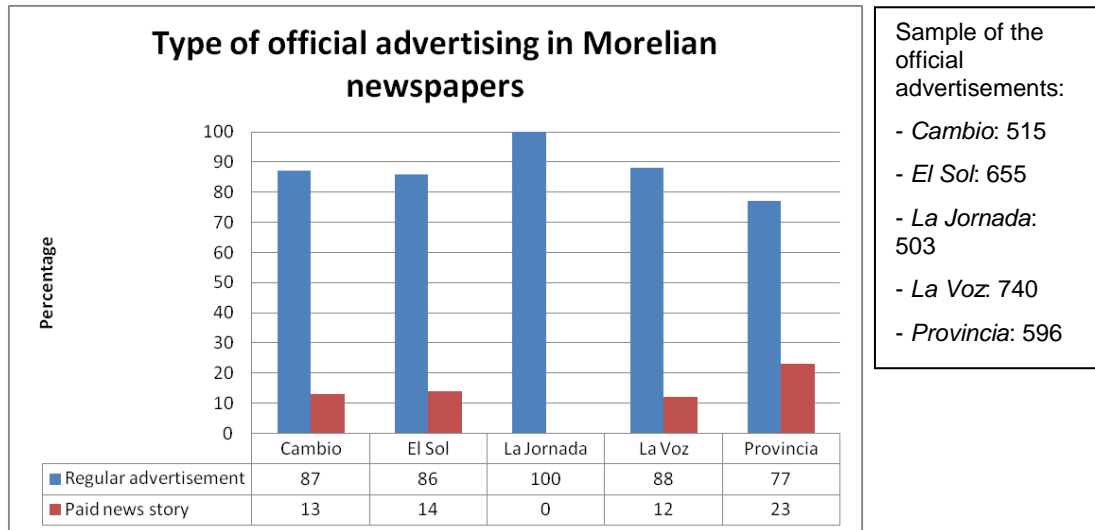


Chart 8 Type of official advertising in Morelian newspapers.

Official advertising in Mexico could adopt two forms: regular adverts and paid news stories. In Morelia, the former was the most frequent type of messages, as the chart showed, because it represented between 77% (*Provincia*) and 100% (*La Jornada*) of the political advertisements published in the local printed media. Paid news stories, however, presented an interesting pattern: although apparently *La Jornada* was the only newspaper which did not have this type of official advertisements, in practice it also published them but they were presented as regular news, even signed by a member of its staff. That is, the same full-length press releases which were published in the rest of the news outlets as paid news stories appeared in this one as average news. This situation reinforces the wide spread assumption in Mexican political journalism – and Morelian too - that the PRD governments have in the left orientated *La Jornada* their official communications organ.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Besides Michoacán, a similar pattern has occurred in other states with current or former PRD governments, like Guerrero and Zacatecas.

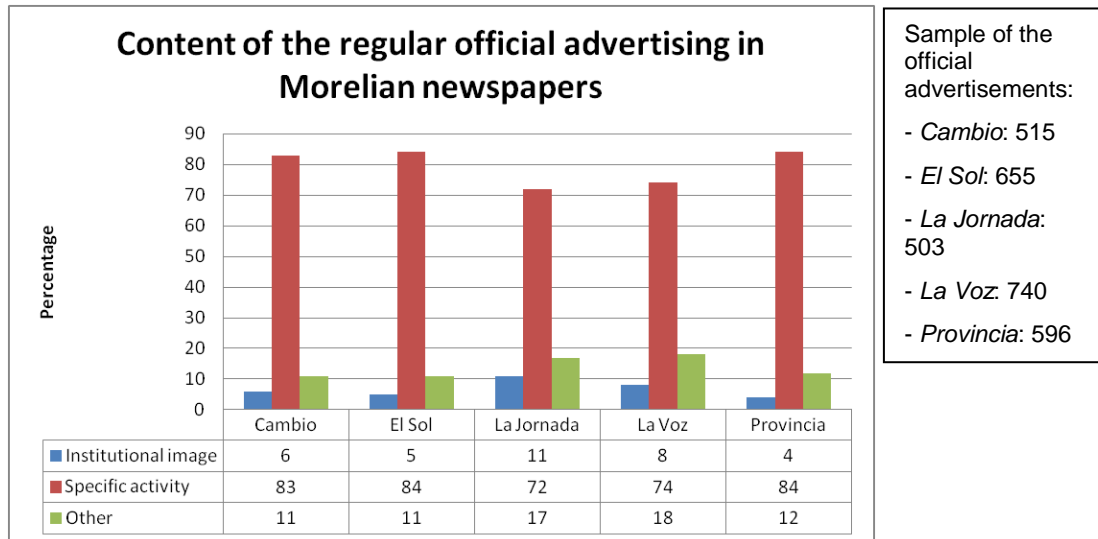


Chart 9 Content of the official advertising in Morelian newspapers.

Finally, the content of the regular official advertisements⁷⁶ presented a homogeneous trend: messages regarding a specific activity - e.g. a reminder for the people to pay the road tax - were the most common (between 84% in *Provincia* and 72% in *La Jornada*). Messages related to memorial notices and official statements -e.g. governor’s opinion about a strike organised by the state government workers’ union - oscillated between 18% (*La Voz*) and 11% (*Cambio* and *El Sol*). The institutional image of the government – e.g. the achievements of the current state administration - represented between 11% (*La Jornada*) and 5% (*El Sol*) of the content of the official adverts. Just as a curious detail, *La Jornada* had the highest rate of messages regarding the institutional image of the state government (11%).

In sum, as the charts showed, government – especially the state administration - is the most important official advertiser and it has a uniform investment in the five local newspapers. Even though the local government also had adverts in every printed media, it selectively invested more money in *La Voz* and *Provincia* (which are actually the most important news outlets in terms of readership and circulation). PRD was the political party that had the highest rate of advertising and it also invested in the five publications. Finally, the regular advertisements regarding specific activities of the government were the most common messages. Just as a context, the following subsection presents an overview of the commercial advertising in Morelia.

⁷⁶ Appendix C also includes an example of each type of content.

5.4.2.1 Commercial advertising in the local press

Although the aim of this research is not to make a comparison between the commercial and the official advertising, because this issue was only one among several others included in the field work, it is worth establishing a context in order to understand the local newspapers' dependence on the government investment. Due to the previously mentioned lack of media market research in Morelia, the following charts offer only a glance at the situation. That is, the content of this part of the subsection was built upon the very limited available information, which entirely came from a market research conducted by *La Voz* (2006), and its aim was to evaluate the commercial advertising market in Morelia, mainly focused on newspapers.

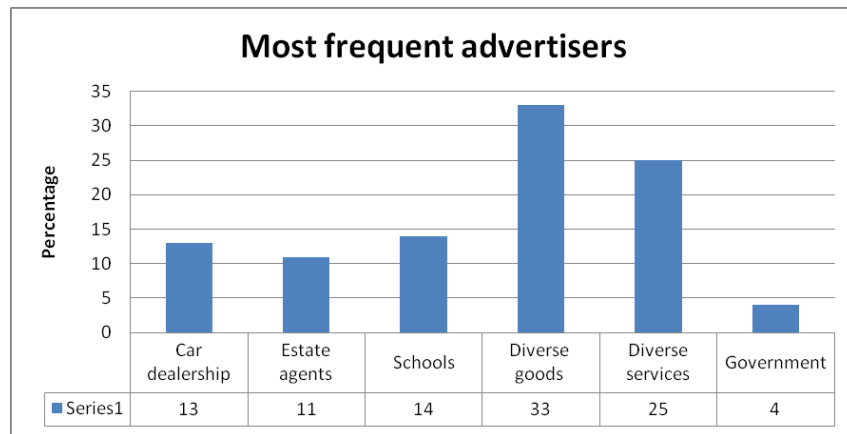


Chart 10 Most frequent advertisers in Morelia.

More than half of the most frequent local advertisers are companies which offer diverse goods – e.g. shoes and clothes - and services – e.g. hotels and restaurants - (33% and 25%, respectively). Different private schools of all levels, from kinder garden to university, are also constantly investing in this issue and they represent 14% of the users. Car dealers (13%) and Estate agents (11%) frequently use advertising for promoting their businesses. Finally government – federal, state and local - represents 4% of the clients. Nonetheless, it is important to stress that this chart only indicates a classification of advertisers, not the revenues from them. In other words, rather than the size of investment, these are just the different categories of local companies and institutions which use advertising on a regular basis.

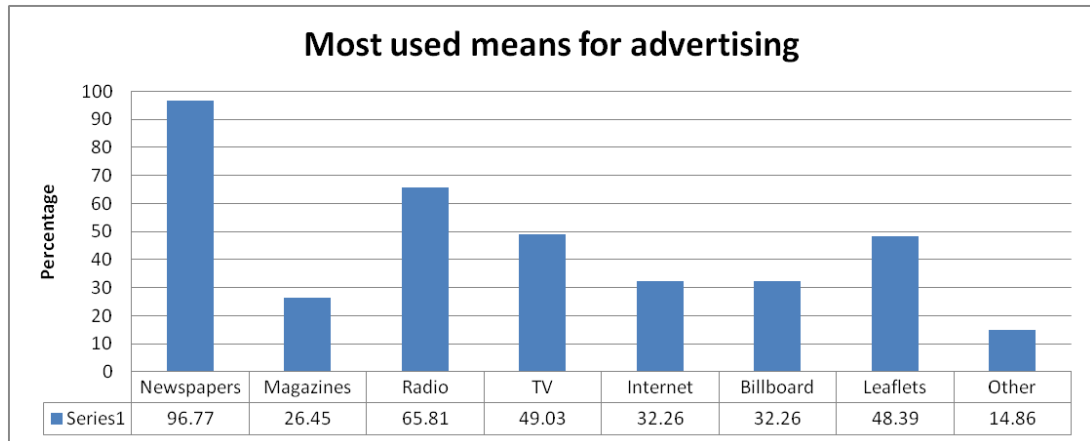


Chart 11 Most used means for advertising in Morelia.

Nearly all of the local advertisers (96.77%) used newspapers for allocating their messages, 65% used radio and 49.03% television. This suggests that traditional mass media were still the most frequent means for reaching the general audience. Nevertheless, more specific techniques such as leaflets (48.39%) and internet (32.26%) were used as well. It is important to explain that these percentages represent individual frequencies, because advertisers tended to use more than one means, hence, the sum of all these figures will never be 100%.

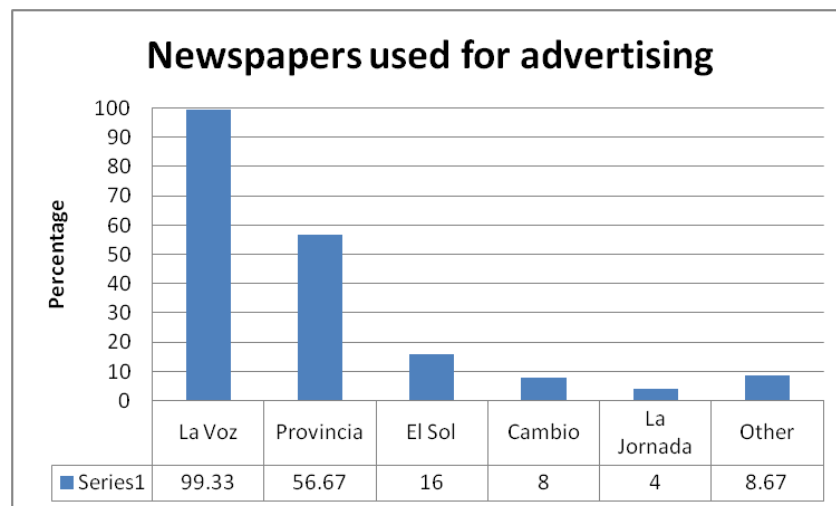


Chart 12 Morelian newspapers used for advertising.

La Voz is the undisputable leader in commercial advertising concentration because, almost every advertiser (99.33%) who used newspapers for allocating his message, chose it, whilst *Provincia* had 56.67% and very far away from them were *El Sol* (16%), *Cambio* (8%) and *La Jornada* (4%).

These figures are consistent with the readership share explained at the beginning of this chapter (section 5.1 *Media market*), which presented almost exactly the same pattern (*La Voz* 83%, *Provincia* 7%, *El Sol* 5%, *La Jornada* 2% and *Cambio* 1%). It is worth mentioning that, just as in the last chart, these percentages are individual frequencies and their sum is not 100%, because very often the advertisers used more than one newspaper.

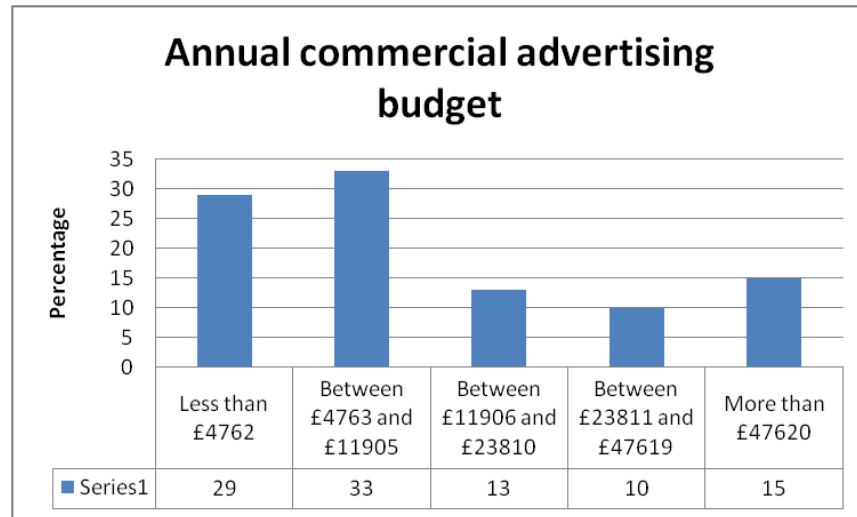


Chart 13 Annual budget for commercial advertising in Morelia.

One third of the local advertisers had by 2006 an advertising budget between £4,763 and £11,905, and for 29% it was less than £4,762. It means that nearly two thirds of them (62%) did not have more than £11, 905 to invest in this issue. There was only 15% which had the highest sums, more than £47,620. However, just as a comparison, it is important to mention that the state government spent £1.16 million on publicity one year later, which represented significant revenues for Morelian media organizations.

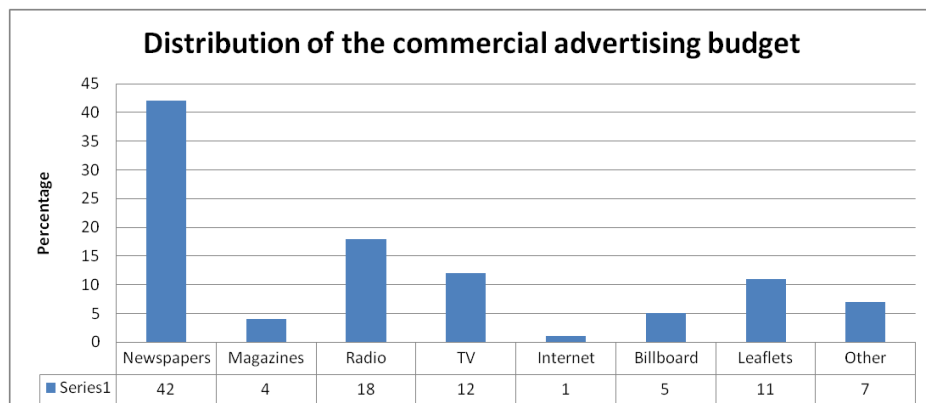


Chart 14 Distribution of the commercial advertising budget in Morelia.

Nearly half of the commercial advertising budget in 2006 was invested in newspapers (42%), whilst radio, television and leaflets had significantly smaller shares of the money (18%, 12% and 11%, respectively). Once again, these figures are consistent with the previously presented chart regarding the most used means of advertising in Morelia, which showed the same pattern.

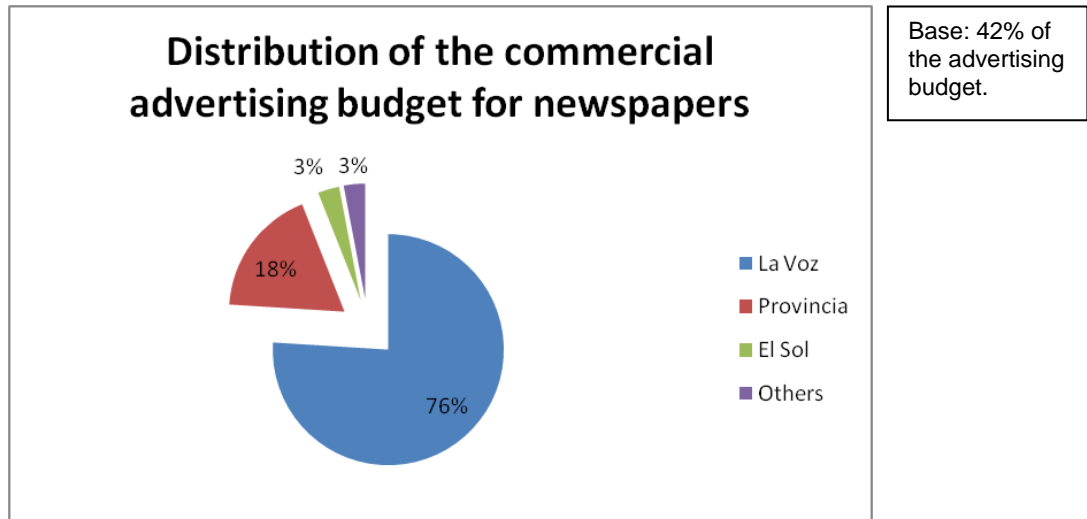


Chart 15 Distribution of the commercial advertising budget for newspapers.

This last chart underscores the leadership of *La Voz* because this publication had in 2006 a little bit more than three quarters of the commercial advertising budget for newspapers (76%), leaving behind *Provincia* with 18% of the share. As it has been the rule, the consistency of the readership and the allocation of commercial advertising become evident one more time.

Finally, a rough conclusion could be addressed from this part of the subsection: without the allocation of official advertising, at least two local printed media (*Cambio* and *La Jornada*) simply would not exist and one more would find it very hard as well (*El Sol*), due to their low readership and commercial advertising revenues. In practice, it means that the state government has a direct impact on the local media market. This situation reinforces Castañeda's (1997:140) assumption: 'as long as private investment in the printed media remains low, little can change in printed journalism'.

5.4.2.2 Opinions of the political communication actors

This part of the subsection presents the answers given by the interviewees when asked about the impact of the official advertising on the Morelian newspapers. As a result of this, an almost complete agreement was found: official advertising does have an impact on local newsrooms. However, who exerts the coercion through this means could be analysed from two opposite points of view. The common reaction to this issue is thinking that politicians are the ones who corrupt media by signing or cancelling advertising contracts. Nevertheless, there is also another side of the story, not very often mentioned in the literature, in which actually the latter blackmail the former through this instrument. Since, as commented earlier on this chapter,⁷⁷ corruption needs two players - the one who gives and the one who takes - the extent official advertising influences editorial decisions depends then on those two actors, none of them more innocent or guilty than the other. For that reason, in order to understand this situation, both perspectives will be presented in the following pages.

In the late 1970's, during an official event with media owners and journalists, and referred to the advertising contracts, José López Portillo (the Mexican president from 1976 to 1982) said 'I do not pay you to beat me up', referring to a complaint about the allegedly harsh criticism he received from the media, in spite of his investment in official advertising. His sadly famous phrase, which in the Mexican journalistic slang simply means exposing or criticising a public servant - with or without reason - is still widely used to explain this technique of coercion. As *J2*, editor of *La Jornada*, pointed out: 'if you print a story *beating X officer up*, he calls you and says: "hey! I am not paying advertisements in your newspaper and then getting *beaten up* by you"'.⁷⁸

Under the logic of whoever pays is in charge, *J6* and *J7*⁷⁸ commented that governments abuse media through the official advertising. By using these contracts as a means of coercion, high rank authorities demand a preferential treatment when reporters cover their activities. This situation has fostered a relationship between news outlets and politicians based on economic interests, in which the former live in a comfort zone built upon the latter's favours. That is, a patron-client relationship.

⁷⁷ See subsection 5.4.1 *Means of coercion towards the local press*.

⁷⁸ Political correspondents of *La Jornada* and *El Sol*, respectively.

According to *J4*, political correspondent of *La Voz*, that is why news organizations are concerned about avoiding their customers' heart feelings with the stories they publish: 'when we try to criticise the government, editors and directors-general suppress certain information which could hurt susceptibilities and risk contracts'. Nevertheless, this situation does not apply for every political actor, because not everyone has enough money: 'parties which do not have that economic power are always front page if they perform corruption acts'. In that sense, CO3 – press officer of the Coordination of Development and Planning - considered that 'by signing a contract, the newspaper is not supposed to *beat up* any politician or officer, not even with a rose petal... Through these commercial agreements, disguised censorship, government exerts control over the media'. This control oscillates between limiting the scope of information, framing it or even censoring it, whilst the media have to accept the terms and conditions set by the one who pays.

The Morelian and, hence, the Mexican case greatly differs from the American national media system in this regard: news outlets in the US have a significant freedom from the pressure exerted by advertisers because their audience is far largest than Mexican newspapers. That is why publishers, editors and journalists will hardly consider altering, or even killing, a story because of advertisers' threats. Of course advertisers can complain, but there is not much they can do about it. Even if they withdraw their adverts, they will eventually need the media's audience (Gans 2004). Nonetheless, just as this thesis emphasises about Mexico, there is also a struggle between national and local contexts in the US:

national news firms can usually replace advertisers who try to interfere too often; besides, the advertisers are restrained by the glare of national publicity that only national journalists can create. Local journalists are, by contrast, in much the same position as academics in small, *local* colleges, who must also submit when their academic freedom threatens local power holders. The freedoms available to professionals in national news organizations, as in *national* universities, do not always trickle down to the local level (Gans 2004:257).

Likewise, at least four of the interviewees - current and former reporters - openly accepted that they had experienced being censored when they presented compromising stories related to government officers or candidates in electoral campaigns. The reason was always the same: official advertising

contracts. *J5's*, political correspondent of *Provincia*, reaction summarises journalist's feelings towards this situation:

It was the first time that I realised that censorship actually does exist, I experienced it. Once I naively believed that it did not exist and I wanted to think that working for the best and most prestigious newspaper in Michoacán implied just that, having the freedom of information... Now I can show off that my head in the newspaper represented a \$200,000 [Mexican Pesos (£10,000)] monthly contract.

For that reason, 'official advertising does not have certain impact on newsrooms, it has a total impact! Media are terrified for their own subsistence, because only very few of them are auto-sufficient', *J3* – political correspondent of *Cambio* - added. The chosen few that have some other sponsors could manage to survive without government investments, not for long though. This is because there is not any other advertiser who could match official budgets, at least at the state level. That is the reason why 'prostitution also exists in journalism: when you are going to decide the edition of the day, you have to reserve the space for the official paid news stories, which take most of your available space', *J1* – chief of state correspondents of *El Sol* - said.⁷⁹ In so doing, most of the information produced by newspaper's own staff comes second in importance order, at least in economic terms. The reason is that none of the published press releases is free, all of them have been already paid.

In short terms, and as it was commented before, the extent of government involvement in local newsrooms depends on media's economic resources. Since most of them are not self-sufficient companies because their daily paper sales are not high, and they have a lot of expenses (payroll, consumables, taxes...), they have to rely on government subsidies. Very frequently, those subsidies represent their most important means of survival. As commented in the previous subsection, news outlets like *Cambio* and *La Jornada* with low circulation rates have, therefore, a limited readership and an evident lack of commercial advertisers. This situation facilitates the dependence on official advertising contracts. Notwithstanding, there is an evident price to pay, because investments are not charities. Thus, advertisers are in a strong position to raising certain demands or asking for

⁷⁹ The concept of journalistic 'prostitution' was also used by Nyamnjoh (1999) as allegory for explaining the effect of accepting bribes on Cameroonian reporters.

special treatment, when they perceive their interests may be at stake because of the media's information.

Every single government wants to have the media on its side and, in so doing, it uses certain instruments which sometimes are unethical... It is natural that the government invests in official advertising to publicise its activities and programmes, but that is also a double edge knife: "if you do not talk favourably about me, I simply stop buying advertisements from you" (*P2*, PAN state Congressman).

According to this interviewee's opinion, those agreements are neither good nor evil by themselves. It all depends on how they are used by the actors, because a contract may be used just for branding, as a regular advertising campaign. But it may also foster an unethical relationship between the politician and the news outlet, facilitating special favours, such as suppressing or framing information, which have an evident impact on the news. From this point of view, money seems to be the key element for determining the relationship between both actors. For the case of the local government, *P4* and *CO6*⁸⁰ considered that at this level it is more difficult to have an impact on newsrooms, because the advertising contracts are way lower than the ones that state government signs on a regular basis. That impedes local authorities exerting greater pressure towards media.

Official advertising contracts do exert influence, I can testify that, because I am member of the Social Communication Committee of the state Congress, and sometimes some fellow Congressmen ask us to call a specific news outlet to make a complaint about a story that they think it is unfair or inaccurate, and they use as an argument the financing for advertisements (*P3*, PAN state Congressman).

Exploiting the advantages of the official advertising is a sweet temptation for every government, no matter the party. Even though the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), during its hegemonic years, developed mastery in media control, whenever the opposition was in charge the same pattern presented itself. 'Whilst we were opposition, we harshly criticised this misconduct, but once we gained power the situation changed; and now, as government, we cannot help ourselves from falling in the same temptation of covering our backs with this contracts', *P2* confessed.

⁸⁰ Director of the Institute of the Youth and Municipal Government Social Communication Coordinator, respectively.

These new so-called left orientated governments that now rule Michoacán are much worse, they are more fascist than the PRI... They are more intrusive and they were supposed to be more liberal. If it was up to them, if they could only decide, they would not hesitate in dictating every single front page; but it is not like that, they still have to deal with us [journalists] (J3, political correspondent of *Cambio*).

However, as previously mentioned, corruption needs two players and their roles are exchangeable. In that sense, official advertising contracts can also be used by the media to exert pressure towards politicians. Although very common as well, this side of the story is usually avoided in the literature about Mexican media. CO7, PAN Social Communication Coordinator, stressed that there is indeed certain pressure when the political party or ministry do not have a contract with a specific news organization. But when they do, their opinion counts in stopping a story or, at least, the editor or director-general warn them about what will be published the next day, and that helps too. However, once again, it only depends on the economic resources they have.

CO1, a former reporter and currently assistant of the state Congress Social Communication Coordinator, explained that local newspapers use their own journalists to *beat up* or criticise certain politician or government officer in order to get a contract from them. The logic is that the reporter is asked to do an investigation about a specific political actor and dig until something comes out, especially something compromising. After the publication of the story or even a series of special reports on the same issue, the director-general and the politician or the communications officer of the government agree to sign a contract, and suddenly the harsh criticism leaves the place to a friendlier coverage. Although very common in Mexico, a situation like this would contravene the professional cannons of other media systems, such as the American, where 'most news media resort to investigative reporting only when they cannot obtain access any other way or, equally often, when they need a circulation or rating booster' (Gans 2004:118-119).

The use of reporters to *beat up* politicians, which was also commented by other interviewees and perceived by scholars (Bohmann 1986, Lawson 2002 and De León 2009), leaves news workers out of the corruption game, at least to certain extent. Since now the agreements are reached by owners and politicians at the higher levels, individual journalists do not have the active participation they use to have several years ago, when they were the ones who directly negotiated coverage with the government officers. Even

though it is now a common practice between news organizations, not all of them do it with the same frequency or intensity. Again, as CO6 pointed out, the newspaper's economic strength determines the ethics of its coverage: 'those which make hard criticism are the smaller ones, which only want your money and they would do anything to expose you'.

It is true that official advertising contracts could be used as means of coercion, both towards media and politicians, but their nature is different. Some of the communications officers interviewed thought that when they are used in a more ethical way, they are actually a very useful tool for their work; because they could be part of a wider institutional image campaign.

More than influencing the newsrooms, you use them for branding. A good official advertising contract helps you getting better spaces on the editions and spreading your message in a more effective way, but they do not help you in shutting media's mouths up (CO8, press officer of the state government).

Regarding the importance of having a well structured communications campaign, rather than just a contract, CO9 – press officer of the PRD Congressmen - considered that the latter is just one among other ways for publicising government's activities, which means something much more elaborated than just sending press releases. Government requires a more ambitious strategy for branding its institutional image, in which public relations and more targeted actions have a critical role. The interviewees agreed that, at least in theory, advertising and news coverage are two different things and should be separated from each other, but in practice the latter is clearly determined by the former, and the empirical findings of this case study reinforced this idea as well.

It definitely should not be like that, because you are not buying pens or editorial lines, only spaces for placing your information. Both actors, media and politicians, must be very clear about it; so everyone should know what is buying and selling (CO4, PRI Social Communication Coordinator).

5.4.2.3 Correlating official advertising and coverage

This final part of the analysis of the official advertising offers a correlation between this issue and the coverage of the state and local governments⁸¹

⁸¹ The coverage of the different political actors was previously commented in the subsection 5.3.1 *Investigative journalism* and it will also be deeply analysed in the next chapter (subsection 6.2.1

which, in comparison with the state Congress and political parties, are the most important advertisers for the Morelian newspapers. The following two charts present the figures related to the presence of the governor, mayor and their staff in the political news sections and their levels of allocation of adverts. Therefore, the percentages for advertising represent the level of investment of the government (state and local) per publication and the coverage that the head and members of the administration received during the period of study.

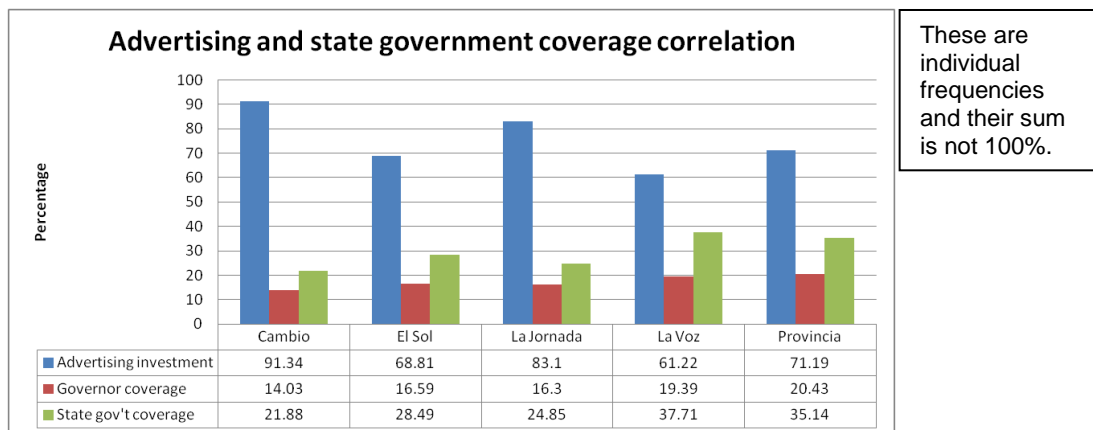


Chart 16 Correlation of the advertising and state government coverage.

In graphical terms, this chart summarises part of the central argument of this research: the old practices of media coercion through bribes have in the official advertising their modern version, because it has the same goal of the *chayote*. That is, fostering constant and friendly coverage, but used as an official and formal contract. Since there was a homogeneous investment in all the five newspapers, there was a homogeneous coverage then. State government advertising rates represented between 91.34% (*Cambio*) and 61.22% (*La Voz*) of the official advertising⁸² revenue. The presence of the governor as an individual actor oscillated between 20.43% (*Provincia*) and 14.03% (*Cambio*); and the different members and offices of state government got between 37.71% (*La Voz*) and 21.88% (*Cambio*). Furthermore, as it will be discussed in the next chapter (subsection 6.2.2 *Political news and bias*), the coverage was not only quantitatively similar

Political news coverage), but it was necessary to bring it here in order to make the correlation with the official advertising rates.

⁸² As it was mentioned earlier on this section, official advertisers are the three levels of government (Federal, state and local), Chamber of Senators, Federal and state Congress, and political parties.

among the local publications, but also in qualitative terms. It means that the news stories about the head of the state government and his staff had an evident trend towards a favourable bias. In other words, they usually received a friendly coverage and the scarce criticism only came from the opposition, never from the media.

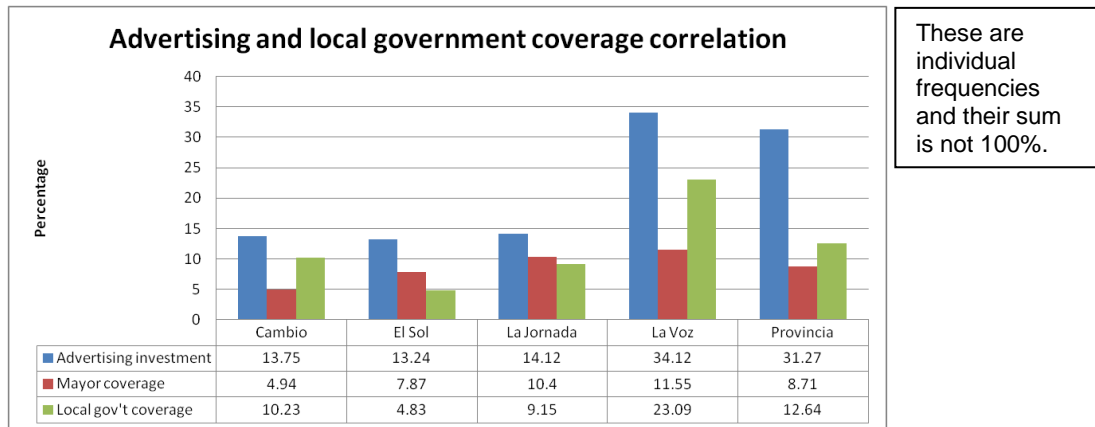


Chart 17 Correlation of the advertising and local government coverage.

The case of the local government is also consistent with the assumption of the role of advertising contracts in determining the news: the more investment, the more coverage. Since *La Voz* and *Provincia* received more money (34.12% and 31.27%, respectively), they offered the best coverage of the local government (23.09% and 12.64%, respectively) then. This tendency was also evident at the moment of analysing the bias of the news stories,⁸³ because the municipal administration had a friendlier coverage in the newspapers in which it allocated more advertisements. However, since the investment was significantly less than the state government, sometimes these publications – and opposition as well – criticised the local government. Nonetheless, the mayor received a rather uniform coverage - both quantitatively and qualitatively - which oscillated between 11.55% (*La Voz*) and 4.94% (*Cambio*), which made him the second most important individual political actor, after the governor. The reason, as it will be commented in the next chapter (subsection 6.2.1 *Political news coverage*), is because he is considered an important local politician and opinion leader.

Finally, besides the empirical evidence from the content analysis presented in these last two charts, the previous part of this section (*Opinions of the*

⁸³ See chapter six, subsection 6.2.2 *Political news and bias*.

political communication actors) also reinforces the argument of the impact of the official advertising on the local media. As the informants mentioned, government paid publicity shapes the coverage that authorities get. This is because the allocation of adverts determines the coverage, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. This situation significantly differs from other political systems such as the British, where 'unlike advertising, news coverage is free' (Davis 2000a:52); or the American, where neither sources nor reporters are expected to pay for the exchange of information (Gans 2004). In addition, and according to the interviewees, these contracts can be used for exerting pressure either towards the news outlets or the politicians. That is, on the one hand, the former might harshly criticise a public servant until he/she signs a commercial agreement with them. On the other, politicians use this kind of adverts as a shield against criticism from the media. Furthermore, even the literature suggested that the government has used the official advertising for punishing or rewarding friendly news organizations (e.g. Bohmann 1986, Trejo 1992, Rodríguez 1993, Torres 1997, Lawson 2002, Hughes and Lawson 2004, Rodríguez 2007 and De León 2009).

5.4.3 Summary of the section

This section analysed the role of the State, the fourth parameter of *Media System*, in Morelia. This concept represents the extent the government is involved in the political communication process. As it has been argued here, beyond its role as a guardian of the laws and regulations related to the media and their operation, Mexican governments exert pressure towards news organizations through different means like bribes or control of information. Nevertheless, both the interviewees and the content analysis, stressed that the official advertising contracts are a coercion tool implemented by high rank authorities against the press and vice versa. The impact of these commercial agreements is evident when correlating the investment in official advertising and political coverage, concepts which have a directly proportional relationship, both quantitatively and qualitatively. That is, an increase of the former results in an increase of the latter, a decrease of one of them is connected to a similar pattern in the other.

5.5 Summary: Morelian media system

This chapter presented the macro level approach of the study, which is the analysis of the media environment in Morelia. It was done following the parameters of the concept of *Media System* (Hallin and Mancini 2004): development of the media market, political parallelism, journalistic professionalization and the role of the State.

According to the empirical evidence, the Morelian newspaper readership is 40% of the population (the national average in Mexico is 42%) and *La Voz* is the undisputable leader with 83% of the local market share. Regarding the political parallelism, the informants mentioned that sharing political ideologies was not necessary for the journalist-politician relationship, but the ideological coincidence between them was evident in the content of the news. There was also a disagreement among the interviewees when asked about the notion of “partisanship free” press, because more than half of them defended the idea of politically committed media, whilst the rest demanded only information without ideological nuances. Related to professionalization, the journalistic practice in Morelia is poor because of low levels of autonomy from the government, a lack of investigative reports and an almost complete absence of citizen representation in the news. Finally, the findings about the role of the State showed a direct involvement of the state government in the news decisions by using the official advertising contracts as the main means of coercion towards the local printed media.

The next chapter will present the analysis of the micro level (the journalist-politician relationship) and chapter seven will offer the final discussion regarding the interaction between the macro and micro levels and its consequences for the Morelian political communication process, which will prove the lack of change of the Mexican media organizations.

Chapter 6 Journalist-politician relationship

For understanding the lack of significant change of the Mexican media, this thesis offers an explanation built upon two levels: macro (media environment) and micro (journalist-politician relationship). The previous chapter presented the findings of the case study regarding the first level and in this one the results of the second will be discussed. As was explained before (chapter four, section 4.1 *The research problem*), the analysis of the interaction between reporters their sources in Morelia is based on three parameters: distance between political communication actors, nature of their relationship and logic of the interaction. These ideas came, on the one hand, from Blumler and Gurevitch's (1995) concept of adversarial/exchange relationship between media and political elites and, on the other, from Pfetsch's (2004) concept of *Political Communication Culture*.⁸⁴ Therefore, the content of this chapter is organised in three sections (each one of them focused on each parameter of the micro level mentioned above) plus a general summary.

6.1 Distance between actors

The first parameter of the micro level analysed on the field is the distance between news workers and party/government elites, which is one of Pfetsch's (2004) concepts selected for designing the analytical framework of this thesis. Hence, understanding the distance or proximity between the actors involved in the political communication process requires analysing how often and by which means they interact. In so doing, this section will present a close approach to the relationships that reporters, politicians and communications officers establish with one other on a regular basis. The content is the result of the interviews and it is organised in the following way: firstly, a description of the frequency in which the three political actors get in touch and the different means they use to do it. Secondly, an extensive revision of how they perceive and evaluate their relationship, focusing on the particular insights found during the interviews.

⁸⁴ Both concepts were explained in the third chapter, sections 3.3 *Political communication as a system* and 3.4 *Political Communication Culture*.

6.1.1 Frequency and means of interaction

This subsection offers an overview of how close the journalist-politician relationship in Morelia is, and by which means it is built upon. Therefore, based on the information provided by the interviewees when questioned about how often and by which means they interact, this part of the section summarises the distance and proximity of the relationship between providers and producers of local political news.

Reporters, politicians and communications officers have a frequent interaction: the first two actors are in contact on a daily basis, thanks to the third who are the link between them and, since they are also information providers, very often reporters do not need to talk directly to the public servant or Congressmen, because they can get the documents or facts from the press office. Despite the communications officer, politicians interact with media personnel frequently. Nevertheless, the relationship is not necessarily with every journalist at the same time. In other words, these two actors are in touch most of the times, but the contact tends to be more focused on individual persons. Besides that, the interaction depends on the political times, because there are weeks in which they see each other every day, and there are others in which the contact is less frequent, but at least once or twice a week. It is worth noting that this situation does not differ much from other international contexts, such as the American:

Sources may be eager, powerful, and ready to supply suitable information, but in order to gain access and overcome the isolation within which story selectors normally function, they must be geographically and socially close to the journalists. Reporters must also be close to sources to which they want to gain access, but they are more mobile, at least physically, than sources (Gans 2004:124).

Regarding the means of interaction, the collected answers pointed in two directions: formal and informal channels. The former are designed for providing and obtaining official information, such as interviews or press conferences. These are open for public accountability, because their aim is precisely informing the society. However, there are other underground ways in which the actors can establish relationships as well. These informal channels are basically used for leaking documents or compromising evidence which, because of their nature, are not supposed to be public. Even though this issue will be commented further in the next subsection, it is worth mentioning that these unofficial means also foster another kind of

interaction between the actors, who frequently use them for building interest-driven relations.

Publicity is what both formal and informal channels seek. Nonetheless, the way to get it is what makes all the difference: whilst formal means regard the official norms, the informal ones are linked to unofficial – and sometimes even unethical - procedures. Therefore, the purpose of the relationship is closely connected to the means of contact, because choosing the latter depends on the former. In other terms, official purposes require formal channels, and unofficial objectives involve the use of informal means. Although in everyday politics both cases are a common practice, only the first one has a specific frequency because of its public nature.

6.1.2 Actors' perceptions of the interaction with one another

This subsection expands the concept of distance between the political actors by presenting the answers provided by the informants regarding their opinions about the closeness of their interaction. In so doing, the content is organised as follows: journalists' perceptions of the relationship with their sources, a review of the importance of the politicians' personality in getting coverage, a description of the local communications officers' work, the information management process in Morelia, the underground public relations used to boost closeness between media and their sources, and an evaluation by the political correspondents of the communications officers' performance.

6.1.2.1 Journalists' opinions of their relationship with politicians

The reporters who participated as informants for this thesis were asked to define the way they perceived their relationship with their sources, and this part of the subsection summarises the answers. 'Every reporter ought to have good relationships with politicians, because a good news story is mainly based on them', *J2* – editor of *La Jornada* - said. In spite of anything else, a newspaper should boost and strengthen favourable relationships with every single political actor (government at its three branches, state and federal Congress, political parties, interest groups, scholars...) because each one of them represents potential information sources. Since, as *J1* – chief of state correspondents of *El Sol* - put it, 'journalists are not mere witnesses, they are active participants within the social reality', they need to be involved in the political sphere dynamic then. Otherwise, the rest of the actors might

regard him distrustfully as a stranger and stop sharing vital information with him. Nevertheless, as *J2* warned:

Your behaviour matters a lot. If you are a corrupt reporter, politicians will not invite you a coffee and tell you “I have this document, if you need it”. No, they will call you and give you three quid and keep you happy, so you will not bother them with uncomfortable questions.

For that reason, *J4* and *J7*⁸⁵ added, journalists must be detached from and critical towards their sources. Only in that way, they can fulfil their social function. In so doing, political correspondents and politicians should establish a permanent and respectful dialogue which facilitates keeping citizens informed about public issues. Notwithstanding, since the nature of their interaction demands closeness, the relationship between them might take diverse paths, as *J5* – political correspondent of *Provincia* - commented:

I have a weird relationship with politicians. There is a symbiosis between a reporter and his sources. Sometimes the coexistence is so close that you become another Congressman, thanks to all the information that you handle. Very often you even know more than they do.⁸⁶

J3, political correspondent of *Cambio*, and *J5* agreed on the idea that the relationship with political actors is also determined by the particular importance of each news outlet. Politicians and government officials treat reporters in different ways, depending on the impact and reach of the newspaper they work for. It means that the bigger the newspaper, the better access its staff gets. Or, as according to his own experience on the field, *J5* put it: ‘just because you work for *La Voz*, even though you are a dumb, they regard you differently and treat you better than the rest’.⁸⁷

J3 also considered that the interaction between reporter and public servants is built upon a mercantile utility level, hence, the latter bear the formers only because they need them. It does not mean that they actually have a good relationship, not at all. Instead of personal sympathies, it is just a matter of

⁸⁵ Political correspondents of *La Voz* and *El Sol*, respectively.

⁸⁶ In his analysis of the journalist-source relationship at Westminster, Davis (2009:214) obtained a similar answer from an MP: ‘the media often know more about what’s going on here than MPs do’.

⁸⁷ During the period of study (January-June 2010) *J5* was working for *Provincia*, but previously he also worked for *La Voz*.

mutual interests: information and publicity. Therefore, the journalist-politician relationship is mediated by the news (Schudson 2005a) because

journalists see people mainly as potential sources, but sources see themselves as people with a chance to provide information that promotes their interests, to publicise their ideas, or in some cases, just to get their names and faces into the news (Gans 2004:117).

Since both actors are aware of this situation, the two of them take advantage of it. Government and political parties understand the urgency of ready to print information, because most of the journalists have a daily quota and do not have the chance to look for extra facts. For that reason, the sources provide them with the information they need, but it is not partisanship free though. On the other hand, reporters know that government officials and politicians need publicity, which means that they need to facilitate reporters the information access. In so doing, political correspondents from important media organizations do not have to wait a long time to get the documents they are after. Otherwise, they would not hesitate publishing a harsh criticism towards those political actors.

Finally, as media personnel, we are just doing our job and it implies that most of the times you turn into an annoying person. That is why, if it was up to them, if it would only be on their hands, politicians would gladly avoid dealing with journalists (J3).

Nonetheless, J6 – political correspondent of *La Jornada* - considered that both the reporter and the source ought to understand that the distance between them is variable, because it depends on the way the former treats the latter in the news: 'politicians must be cuddled, but also *beaten up*'. That is, when the public servant is productive and gives the expected results, he deserves recognition. On the contrary, if he is corrupt or lazy, he must be severely exposed. Related to the *beating ups* (harsh criticism towards politicians) and the closeness of the journalist-politician relationship, J7 concluded:

There are a lot of politicians who take personal the stories in which you expose them and that could foster distance or closeness too. However, I have learned that it is less conflictive when your report is attached to the truth, even if it is about a sensitive issue or you *beat* someone *up*.

6.1.2.2 Personality, the key

Although this was not a specific question, when asked about their opinions about how their interaction with the local reporters was, the politicians who were interviewed - and some of the communications officers as well - agreed that personal characteristics is the key in dealing with news organizations. In that sense, the journalist-politician relationship depends to an important extent on the latter's personality.⁸⁸ That is, as *P3* and *P1*⁸⁹ commented, if the public servant is perceived as friendly and accessible, he probably would not be frequently over-criticised.

I cannot say that everything has been a bed of roses but, at least in my own experience and thanks to my academic background [communications studies], the relationship is quite good, because we are peers. It all depends on your personality (*P4*, Director of the Institute of the Youth).

Working for a charismatic government officer helps his communications staff in obtaining a better coverage, because if he openly answers every question in a smart way, media would tend to look for his opinions. In so doing, both the politician and the office would have enough publicity.

It is simply useless when the person in charge of the office does a great job or has a high performance, if he does not have a direct relationship with journalists. The public servant must approach them and get to know them, so they would eventually say "he is a cool guy, I am going to call him for an interview" (*CO3*, press officer of the Coordination of Development and Planning).

Interpersonal abilities are important, but only as the first step towards building a successful relationship with reporters. Therefore, being friendly and accessible – a "cool guy" - is not enough to become a good source. According to *P2*, PAN state Congressman, a politician can attract media attention through his statements during interviews: when, no matter the criticisms, he firmly and honestly answers each question, he would eventually be considered as a good source and increase his news presence. On the contrary, if his answers tend to be politically traditional, soft or do not

⁸⁸ Shoemaker and Reese (1996:182) summarised a series of studies in which personality also turned to be an interesting variable for understanding certain politicians' coverage. Some results proved that, for instance, extroverted US Presidents appeared more frequently on front pages than their introverted peers. Furthermore, as Davis (2010:216) mentioned, the qualities of the 'charismatic authorities' are connected with 'exceptional' individuals who have not been systematically studied yet.

⁸⁹ PAN state Congressman and former PRI state Congressman, respectively.

confront reality, he would probably be ignored by reporters, unless there are some other hidden interests. For instance, being perceived as a good source is one of the reasons of the favourable coverage that the head of the local government gets most of the times. CO6, Municipal Government Social Communication Coordinator, argued that thanks to his political career and his performance as the head of the municipal government, the mayor is constantly present on the media radar:

The mayor is a person who by himself produces news and, thus, political correspondents are always interested in having his comments about a wide range of issues. So, thanks to his personal charisma, sympathy and the impact of his opinions, it is not very difficult to get coverage.

6.1.2.3 The official link

This part of the subsection offers only an outline of the communications officers' activities. This information came from their answers when asked to explain the routines of their job, which is connecting reporters and public servants. In that sense, the journalist-politician relationship is most of the times mediated by communications officers, whose role is being the link between media and government or political parties. Even though in practice there are some specific differences, in general terms their duties are very similar. Nonetheless, taking a closer look to their job is fundamental for understanding the way political actors interact. Generally speaking, at any level and branch, the press offices of the Mexican government are called *Social Communications Areas*. Their main objective is branding⁹⁰ the administration by permanently informing the public about its programmes, plans and activities. Likewise, the information that comes from those departments has an institutional character, because it is related to the government as an institution rather than particular individuals. It means that, instead of addressing the governor or mayor, messages are supposed to publicise the administration's performance as a whole.

However, as CO3 - press officer of the Coordination of Development and Planning - mentioned, institutions are not the only thing being branded, but

⁹⁰ The brand is considered the personality of a product, service or institution. It is a multidimensional concept because it involves a wide variety of aspects such as image, identity, value system, relationship, and etcetera. Therefore, branding is the process of building a brand. That is, creating its identity and positioning it on the consumers' mind through a marketing strategy (de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo 1998, El-Amir and Burt 2010).

individuals as well. In other words, communications officers are expected to work on the image of the head of the government and their department too, because both of them would eventually be interested in running for another position in the following electoral period. Hence, political times determine the work within the communications areas. Whilst there are no elections near, the aim is publicising government achievements through its secretariats, but right before electoral periods, the focus is on the government officials: 'branding has a different direction in electoral times. The branding shifts from the government to the head of the office when elections are near'.

On the other hand, an important part of their daily activities is the media attention, which could be divided in two lines of action: logistics (organising press conferences, official events and tours) and information (facilitating interviews and providing press releases, documents, speeches, photographs, video...). Both of them have the same aim, which is to help journalists to do their job by facilitating them the means they require to meet their deadlines. In so doing, CO8 – press officer of the state government - added, by providing them with documents, figures and extra facts, correspondents could have a more complete understanding of the events they are covering. Thus, they can complement the statements and opinions which they collected from the field. This situation might boost the government official's image as well, which actually is the ultimate goal of his/her communications staff.

The more you help reporters the more you help yourself, because if you provide them the adequate tools, the information and documents they ask for, that helps you in branding your department and informing about all the activities your boss is doing (CO9, press officer of PRD state Congressmen).

Communications offices of the political parties basically work in the same way, but their messages do not only have an external audience, but also an internal one which is their membership and each one of them requires specific strategies and actions. For the first case, the activities are quite similar to what the government does in this area. For the second, the aim is keeping their supporters informed and mobilising them whenever is necessary.

Finally, according to some of the communications officers interviewed for this thesis, there is a misunderstanding about their role. Certain public servants and journalists tend to consider that their main duty is to write press releases. Notwithstanding, their activities cannot be reduced only to that,

because their job demands more complex strategies. Although media attention is a permanent and very demanding activity, more than mere press departments, social communications areas are now supposed to work on a wider scope of activities such as marketing, advertising, public relations and graphic design. Therefore, all of them are aimed at the proper institutional image branding.

Since this marketing oriented approach is relatively new in Michoacán, there is still a long way towards the professionalization. CO4 – PRI Social Communication Coordinator - argued that communications areas need to be strengthened, not only in terms of equipment, staff or budget, but in vision too. New times imply new problems which demand new solutions, and they are not responding as fast as needed. CO5 – press officer of the Ministry of the Women - also perceived this situation, which is why some of the state government offices are now keen on exploiting new technologies and social networks to get closer to the citizens: ‘as technology develops, we must change and improve the means we use for structuring our campaigns’.

6.1.2.4 Information management

Due to the lack of budget for official advertising contracts, some communications officers have found in their relationship with journalists a window of opportunity. The former are aware of the latter’s constant fear of being used as mere messengers, a situation which makes coverage difficult. For that reason, the interviewees realised that whenever reporters perceive an evident partisan bias in the information they get from them, they immediately tend to neglect it, unless there is a commercial agreement. In that sense, the key is offering interesting arguments based on facts, more than ideology.

For me, getting coverage is not that difficult; the reporters’ response has been favourable. I think that the key is the agenda of the political party, which should actually include important information. Even if you are criticising the government, you must offer alternative solutions, not just opinions. That helps a lot, because even if you do not have a contract, you would be published because media would be interested in what you are saying (CO4, PRI Social Communication Coordinator).

Once the institution starts working under this logic of providing material for good stories, CO9 - press officer of PRD state Congressmen - argued, the

journalists keep on frequently using that source by their own initiative. Thanks to that, whenever the secretariat or office needs publicity, the media will not hesitate in giving coverage to its activities. From a different position because of her role in the political communication process, *P4* - Director of the Institute of the Youth - also noticed this situation: 'when reporters do not perceive any evident political inclination in the information we give them, they publish it just as it is, without editorialising it'.

Besides providing interesting opinions, *CO1* and *CO5*⁹¹ also used the concept of exclusive information for interacting with specific political correspondents. The logic behind this strategy is to know who is interested in what. In other words, communications staff must track down the agenda of particular reporters and help them in getting scoops, which might even be front page. 'The most able sources are organizations that carry out the equivalent of investigative reporting, offer the results of their work as *exclusives*, and can afford to do so anonymously, foregoing the rewards of publicity' (Gans 2004:121). In so doing, communications officers and political correspondents would equally benefit from this: the former would get favourable coverage and publicity for the department they work for, and the latter would boost his career, because his journalistic prestige relies on the exclusive stories he gets.

The most experienced journalists demand better information, with more complete facts, and above all exclusive. Firstly, because he has already gained respect from his colleagues; and secondly, if he has a good story, he would surely get a better place within the edition (*CO5*).

6.1.2.5 Underground public relations

Without openly asked about it, several interviewees (journalists, politicians and communications officers) brought up the issue of going to pubs and strip clubs with each other in order to foster a friendlier relationship. Thus, this part of the subsection presents an overview of the public relations techniques – both official and underground – that the communications officers and politicians use for boosting media's attention.

Public relations are a common practice in politics, especially towards news organizations. Nonetheless, the evolution of the public relations as a

⁹¹ Assistant of the state Congress Social Communication Coordinator and press officer of the Ministry of the Women, respectively.

profession during the 20th century is directly connected with governments and corporations, especially in capitalist democracies (Davis 2000a). Regarding politics, in general terms, the use of public relations towards the media has the aim to 'manage reporters' (Davis 2009:205) mainly in order to get a favourable coverage. In so doing, politicians hire specialists who are in charge of the relationship with the press. Since reporters work under time pressure and are constrained by strict deadlines and daily stories quota, press officers' duty is to facilitate their job by providing the information they require (Davis 2000a).

Establishing professional public relations towards the media involves at least three advantages (Davis 2000a): Firstly, institutions have the power to grant or refuse the access to information, which could facilitate or obstruct reporters' work. Secondly, institutional information has an inherent legitimacy, hence, it represents the official version and grants the source the status of primary definers. Thirdly, news outlets and institutions share bureaucratic routines, thus, the latter understand the needs of the former and help them to meet their deadlines.

However, the journalist-politician relationship is not always a monologue in which one speaks and the other listens. On the contrary, very often news workers become politicians' sources in issues such as what other fellow politicians think about a specific theme, the mood of the political parties and the pulse of the public opinion, among others (Davis 2007). This is because political correspondents tend to have wider vision of politics, due to their variety of sources within and outside the government institutions. Furthermore, although the so-called media power is more a perception than a reality (Bartels 1993 and Sánchez 2004), a lot of politicians still consider that the press has a deep impact on the citizens. Therefore, there is a tendency among the political elites to believe that if something is published or broadcasted it must be true then (Davis 2007).

In sum, whether as a means to get publicity, political insights or fear, politicians are very keen on fostering a friendly relationship with media personnel. In a research about the interaction between MPs and reporters at Westminster, Davis (2007:193) summarised the importance of public relations towards the press:

A majority of MPs, regardless of party or position, appeared to have established relations with national journalists that went beyond the merely functional. Many used terms like *friend* or *colleague* and would meet for social as well as

professional reasons. Other referred to relationships as occasionally taking the form of *alliances* or *coalitions*. In these cases, it seemed clear that journalists were very much part of the policy networks that evolved within Parliament.

Regarding the Morelian case, CO5 - press officer of the Ministry of the Women - emphasised the importance of fostering a friendly interaction with journalists for obtaining favourable coverage. In so doing, the media attention is a permanent concern, which implies diverse sets of strategies and activities. 'We spoil them with good attention and good information'. The interviewee explained that reporters and owners or directors-general require different approaches: for the former, the office tries to provide exclusive information to some of them, so they can get scoops; tours are frequently organised and media personnel are invited to see how programmes are applied in practice; for Christmas, a special party is arranged only for journalists; among other actions. For the latter, the attention is more personalised, because the head of the secretariat routinely interacts directly with them in private meetings or fancy lunches or dinners.

Although politicians' personalities are fundamental in having an adequate coverage, as mentioned earlier in this subsection, CO3 argued that communications officers ought to have connections among political correspondents as well. Otherwise, the department might not have enough media attention. In sum, if the person in charge of the institutional image is not well known and accepted by reporters, then, it would be harder to have a positive response from them. This is because they would tend to perceive him as an outsider who does not understand the way they work.

However, some of the interviewees also mentioned a rather different public relations technique that it is usually practiced for facilitating the relationship between journalists and politicians. This approach consists in taking reporters to pubs or strip clubs and buying them anything they want there. This technique is widely known in the Mexican and Morelian political communication environment, but scarcely researched.⁹² P1 and CO3⁹³ commented that the aim of this ice breaking activity is fostering friendship between both actors. By becoming friends, they reach an agreement in which they "scratch each other's back". That is, providing exclusive

⁹² A couple of mentions of this issue were also made by Riva Palacio (1997) at the national level and by De León (2009) at the local level in Aguascalientes.

⁹³ Former PRI state Congressman and press officer of the Coordination of Development and Planning, respectively.

information in exchange of favourable coverage.⁹⁴ It could be said louder, but not clearer: 'public relations towards journalists is not about having a coffee, it is about having a drink, and sometimes with girls; and then, all the accumulated tensions are liberated and the differences between us are solved', CO3 openly admitted.

Whether they are involved in it or not, journalists are aware of this common practice. For some of them it is an unacceptable behaviour, and for some others it is just the way things are. The former considered that this has to do more with the old *empiricists*, who are easily corrupted, and the latter took it as a means to an end or simply a minor issue. J3, a female political correspondent of *Cambio*, considered that more than inappropriate or unethical, this is a sexist practice: only men can take advantage of this situation, they are the ones who go out at night, get drunk with politicians and obtain information that women simply cannot. 'It is much easier to get insights of the local political sphere if you are in a strip club with a Congressman, than interviewing him in a coffee shop, where you will never obtain that kind of information'.

Although women do not participate in this kind of social engagements with their sources, they have another advantage over their male peers: sex appeal. J6, a female political correspondent of *La Jornada*, explained that since women are implicitly banned from the practice of going to bars with politicians, they need to find different ways to obtain exclusive information. She mentioned that male public servants enjoy flirting with female journalists and the latter understand that weakness. For that reason, the former are usually less defensive and more open when a girl interviews them, especially if she is attractive. Even more, J6 perceived that the reporter's life is symbiotic with the politician's life, because they need each other. Hence, the informant considered that it is not unethical that both of them go out to have a drink since, very frequently, they establish a close relationship and even a friendship.

Nonetheless, according to J5, political correspondent of *Provincia*, it is better to set boundaries between professional and personal life, than mixing them and losing track of both of them. Political correspondents and politicians can get along and there is nothing wrong with that, but they are not supposed to be friends. That is, there must be a limit in their relationship and never go

⁹⁴ Reporters who fancy attending politicians' parties or social gatherings are known within the African and American media environment as 'cocktail journalists' (Skjerdal 2010).

beyond that point. However, as he acknowledged, in everyday journalistic practice a lot of his colleagues openly do it. In that sense, *J2* – editor of *La Jornada* - admitted that sometimes there is no other option than fostering this friendship. Otherwise a lot of information would be simply out of reach for media personnel. Unfortunately, then, both actors have to pretend they like each other in order to satisfy their individual interest. Under this lens, the journalist-politician relationship is nothing but a marriage of convenience.

Since there is not well developed information access legislation, you have to be a friend of the politicians if you want to get an important official document. Well, maybe not exactly their friend, but at least they have to trust you; they have to trust that you will respect their anonymity and you will not reveal the source of the leak. There is no other way (*J5*).

6.1.2.6 Being on the other side

The vast majority⁹⁵ of the communications officers who currently work for the government and political parties are former local reporters. As the informants argued, this situation fosters a closer relationship with the different news outlets, because having been on the other side of the trench has help them in improving their performance as links between politicians and media. ‘As soon as I left the media, I suddenly understood that the only thing that a journalist wants is someone who provides him attention and help him in doing his job, someone who gives him exclusive information and scoops’, *CO5* – press officer of the Ministry of the Women - said. ‘In my previous experience as a reporter, I learned that the guy who is on the other side must help the media in getting all the information they need, and do it as soon as possible’, *CO9* – press officer of PRD state Congressmen - added.

Besides being sensitive towards reporters’ needs and making their work easier, having the experience on the field is important in understanding the logic behind the way media operate. The interviewees accepted that, thanks to that knowledge, they can now design more effective communications strategies for having better coverage of their bosses’ activities. This is possible even without relying on a huge budget for investing in official advertising or buying drinks to the media staff.

⁹⁵ Prior to their current job as communications officers, eight out of nine of the interviewees worked for local media.

CO5 also stressed that there is a lot of information that citizens do not get simply because media do not inform about it. It does not necessarily mean that they do not do their job as they are supposed to though. The problem is the inherent suspicion towards government and its activities, which tend to be harshly judged in advance by reporters. However, this is not an uncommon situation at all. Schudson (2007:137) argued that 'no good deed, it seems, is likely to go unpunished by the media when it is performed by a politician, any politician, whose motives are almost exclusively electoral'. Nevertheless,

once you are on this side, is like taking a big step towards your own journalistic maturity, because you realise that not everything is wrong with the government. Of course there are a lot of good things and many public servants are doing a great job. In spite of all the deficiencies within the public administration, there are a lot of good things to be proud of (CO5).

6.1.2.7 Journalists' evaluation of the Social Communications Areas

The journalists who participated as informants for this research were also asked to evaluate the Social Communications Areas⁹⁶ of the government and political parties. Therefore, the final part of this subsection presents an overview of their answers. In order to obtain more accurate information about government programmes and activities, *J1* – chief of state correspondents of *El Sol* - explained, the local reporters have historically promoted the creation of the press offices within the government, and its staff has become a media auxiliary by providing extra facts, documents and photographs.

Some years ago, communications officers used to be an obstacle for reaching the public servants, but today they are the ones who facilitate the closeness to us. They are always interested in organising interviews for all of us, because most of them are our own former colleagues, people who learned on the field and now they work for the government.

In spite of this favourable opinion, the rest of the reporters interviewed for this research did not agree at all with it. According to their perceptions, communications officers are doing a deficient job, because they lack of

⁹⁶ As previously commented on this subsection (under the subheading *The official link*), the Social Communications Areas are the press offices of the government and political parties.

adequate strategies for managing government image and working along with news organizations.

The only thing Social Communications Areas are good for is hindering the journalistic job. They usually do not solve anything, except in rare occasions. Generally speaking, they just slow down your work, because reaching the public servant implies a bureaucratic process in which they are just in the middle (*J3*, political correspondent of *Cambio*).

The informant considered that these departments have a poor performance, due to their rudimentary organization. This situation is characterised by a short term vision of their own role in the political communication process, which oscillates between sentimentality and utilitarianism. In sum, there is serious a lack of professionalization and a dangerous excess of improvisation. *J3* also commented that communications officers believe that the only way to work with reporters is buying them meals and drinks, hence, they would be more than happy to write a favourable story. However, this short sight is just a clear sign of the absence of a proper planning, with specific lines of action which indicate how to operate under different conditions.

Everything seems to be at a visceral level, they just react, because they do not have a clear strategy. It takes them a long time to provide the information we ask for, and when they give it to us, they do it reluctantly and being pissed off. Hence, it is just as if nobody had an idea of anything, everything is so improvised.

J5, political correspondent of *Provincia*, shared this point of view about them and stressed that, due to their archaic routines, their performance is simply deficient. This situation is also caused by their lack of understanding of what political communication is actually about. Thus, since they do not fully understand their role as links between government and society, they hardly know how to work with media. *J2* and *J4*⁹⁷ agreed that, despite its infrastructure, the Social Communications Area of state government is not working as it should, because its staff has a slow reaction to most of the contingencies. Then, after a lot of unofficial information circulation, they come out with an official statement. However, in recent times, its publicity and branding strategies seem to be evolving.

Politicians complain all the time about us, they claim that we only emphasise the negative side and never say good things

⁹⁷ Editor of *La Jornada* and political correspondent of *La Voz*, respectively.

about them but, honestly, they simply do not know how to promote themselves, and their communications advisers are not helping them either (J5).

For the specific case of the political parties, J4 considered that, both as institution and as a group of Congressmen, the leftist Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) is the only one which has an adequate performance, because it produces much more information than the other ones, and facilitates correspondents' job by providing them with enough material for complementing their stories. On the contrary, the right oriented National Action Party (PAN) and the centrist Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) tend to work only with the reporters they perceived as supporters of their ideology. But they do not interact with the editors, who are the ones that mainly decide what is going to be published and what is going to be suppressed from the edition.

6.1.3 Summary of the section

This section presented the findings regarding the first parameter of the micro level (the journalist-politician relationship in Morelia), which is the distance between the actors. Based upon the interviews, this concept was evaluated through the frequency of their interaction and by which means they do it. The data collected from the field pointed at a close relationship between reporters and sources, mediated most of the times by communications officers. The latter are in touch with the political correspondents on a daily basis, but politicians and journalist do not see each other every day. That is, although different politicians regularly interact with diverse reporters, it does not mean that an individual politician interacts with all the political correspondents at the same time or vice versa (except in a press conference or official event).

The three actors (journalists, politicians and communications officers) agreed that having good relationships to one another is vital for their goals: information for political correspondents and publicity for communications officers and politicians. In that sense, reporters argued that they need to have a close interaction with their sources, but they also need to be detached from and critical towards their sources. The latter considered that their personal charisma and their adequate answers are necessary for attracting media's attention. In that sense, as the official link between journalists and politicians, communications officers' duty is getting coverage by facilitating reporters' job through the access to information.

However, fostering the interaction between journalists and politicians is not always done through official channels. As the interviewees also commented, there are certain underground public relations techniques used for this goal. Friendly means such as taking male news workers to strip clubs is a common practice. Although some reporters had no problems with this custom, they also considered that it is just a reflection of the lack of professionalization of the Social Communications Areas in Michoacán. The following section will review the results related to the nature of the journalist-politician relationship, which is the second parameter that integrates the micro level approach of this thesis.

6.2 Nature of the relationship

The second parameter of the micro level analysis is related to the nature of the interaction between political correspondents and their sources. It is important to mention that, for the purposes of this thesis, the concept of nature means how collaborative or conflictive is the journalist-politician relationship. This concept is based on Blumler and Gurevitch's (1995) idea of the adversarial/exchange interaction between these actors. Since different persons, with diverse roles and interests, are involved in the political arena and, thus, in political journalism, understanding the nature of the relationships between them requires specific approaches then. Therefore, on the field this concept was evaluated through the news coverage that Morelian political actors get from the local printed media, which also represent the content of this section.

6.2.1 Political news coverage

The adversarial/exchange interaction between reporters and sources (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995) becomes evident on the stories that local printed media publish. Therefore, the political news coverage represents a measurement of how conflictive or collaborative is the journalist-politician relationship. In order to avoid generalizations that do not consider the diverse sources which daily participate in the news process, this thesis breaks down the political news coverage in four spheres (which also represent the content of this subsection): state government, local government, state Congress and political parties. Each one of them was analysed by combining interviews with the specific actors involved and the

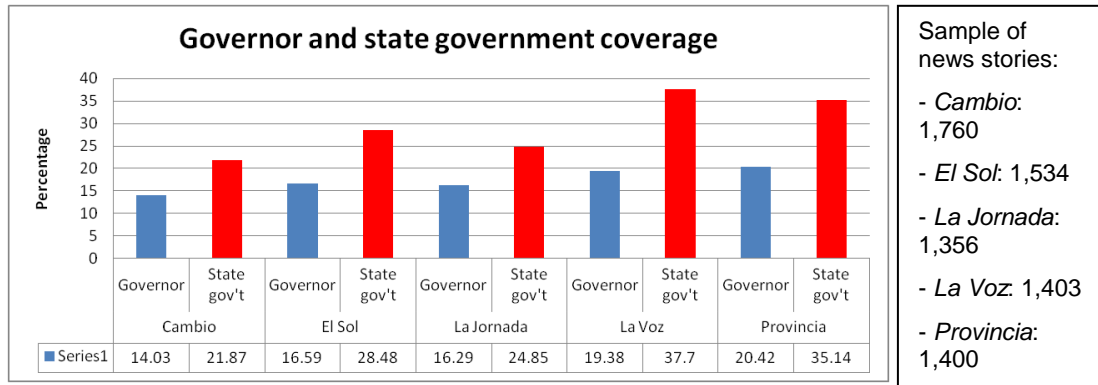
content analysis results. That is, each sphere will be explained, on the one hand, through a chart which summarises the content analysis regarding the coverage it received during the period of study. On the other, through the answers of the communications officers and politicians related to their perceptions about the coverage they get from the Morelian newspapers. In other words, comparing both set of findings fosters a clearer view of how the distance between reporters and politicians is reflected on the news, by determining whether their relationship is conflictive or not.

It is worth explaining that the coverage was measured by the amount of times in which a particular actor was mentioned on the news. For that reason, the figures presented on the following charts summarised the percentages of his appearances. Besides that, it also needs to be stressed that the content analysis was focused only on the political sections of each newspaper,⁹⁸ which had different prominence for each one of them. In that sense, *Cambio*, *La Jornada* and *La Voz* gave an average of 25%-30% of their content to this issue, whilst *El Sol* and *Provincia* only gave around 10%-15%. In general terms, their political sections basically include information related to the activities of the state and local government, Congressmen and political parties, also their opinions about the local, national or regional politics.

6.2.1.1 State government

According to the results of the content analysis, the governor was the individual political actor that got the best coverage, in terms of quantity and quality. Every single newspaper paid a lot of attention to his activities, speeches and opinions. As the following chart illustrates, his presence oscillated between 14.03% (*Cambio*) and 20.42% (*Provincia*), with a percentage distance of only 6.39%. State government officials, as a group, received a friendly and generous coverage as well. However, the difference between the highest and lowest rate was more pronounced here than with the governor: 21.87% (*Cambio*) and 37.7% (*La Voz*), and the gap between them was 15.83%.

⁹⁸ As commented in the fifth chapter (section 5.1 *Media market*), not every Morelian newspaper has a specific section labelled as *Politics*, but this kind of news was included in the section related to the local information.



Sample of news stories:
 - *Cambio*: 1,760
 - *El Sol*: 1,534
 - *La Jornada*: 1,356
 - *La Voz*: 1,403
 - *Provincia*: 1,400

Chart 18 Governor and state government coverage.

The interviewees who work for the state administration agreed that, both the governor and the different state ministries get adequate coverage on a regular basis. Having in mind the quantity and quality of the news about them, that is the high rates of media presence and the practically absence of harsh criticism found in the content analysis, they should be satisfied with their performance as communications officers. For instance, on April 30 2010, *La Voz* published a story related to an environmental project of the state government, and the lead of the news was: ‘the current administration led by Leonel Godoy Rangel has a permanent commitment to the strengthening of each community of Michoacán and, in so doing, the government fosters solidarity among the citizens’. *La Jornada* published a similar story earlier that month (April 7) which headline was: ‘Leonel Godoy reaffirms his commitment towards the strengthening of rural areas in a meeting with the State Committee for the Sustainable Rural Development’.

Nevertheless, as was argued in the previous chapter (subsection 5.4.2 *Official advertising in Morelian newspapers*),⁹⁹ there is a correlation between friendly coverage and official advertising contracts. For that reason, the permanent media attention that the governor and his staff receive is not for free, is not just because the inherent importance of their roles as public servants. It has a lot to do with the commercial agreements with the news organizations too. Despite the contracts, and for the specific cases of ministries, CO3, CO5 and CO8¹⁰⁰ commented that since each institution is different, the coverage they get is not homogeneous. This is because there are certain offices which have permanent attention, such as the secretariats

⁹⁹ See also chapter seven, section 7.3 *Economically-driven partisanship*.

¹⁰⁰ Press officers of the Coordination of Development and Planning, Ministry of the Women and state government, respectively.

of Interior, Economy, Security or Education. On the contrary, Culture and Tourism tend to have a lower profile.

Each newspaper has its own newsworthiness criteria, each one of them gives different importance to different issues; and, it has to be said too, there are journalists who are more professional than others. That is why the coverage we get depends on the reporter and his newspaper (CO5).

The informants also explained that getting a good coverage depends on a twofold situation: on the one hand, the person in charge of the ministry ought to be open and accessible for reporters and, above all, provide them the information they need. On the other, the communications officer must have a good relationship with the journalists who report about his secretariat.

6.2.1.2 Local government

To a lesser extent than the governor, the mayor of Morelia, as the head of the local government, had a rather adequate coverage. His constant but moderate media presence oscillated between 4.94% (*Cambio*) and 11.54% (*La Voz*), with an average percentage difference of 6.6%. Besides his administrative activities, he is considered as a prominent politician by his party (PRI) and the opposition as well. That is why journalists are frequently after his opinions.

On the other hand, local government had a quite imbalanced coverage, in terms of quantity: 4.82% (*El Sol*) and 23.09% (*La Voz*), with a percentage gap between the lowest and highest rate of 18.26%. In qualitative terms, the content analysis showed that contrary to the state government, local authorities were challenged and criticised by political opposition actors, but also by media. Notwithstanding, neutral and favourable bias was the common rule in the stories about them. As an example of this, *La Voz* published a story regarding mayor's efforts in his struggle against poverty, and the headline was 'poor people are my priority: Fausto Vallejo Figueroa [mayor of Morelia]' (April 21, 2010).

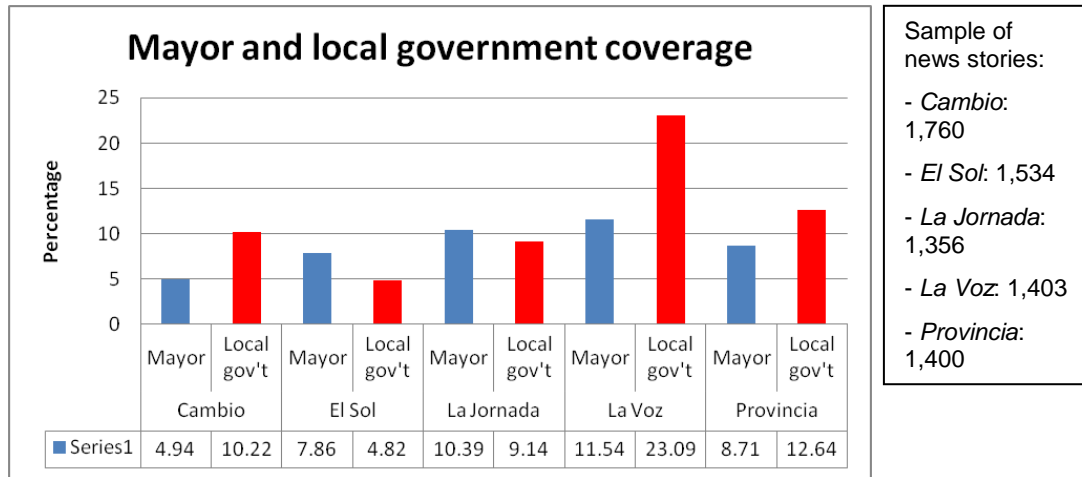


Chart 19 Mayor and local government coverage.

CO6 and P4,¹⁰¹ both related to the municipal administration, considered that the newspapers' attention towards the mayor and his staff is adequate; because they have a constant and fair media presence. It is even better than the previous administration, according to their own studies. 'Each newspaper has its own editorial line and covering the Ayuntamiento [local government] is more interesting for some of them than for the others; but, in general terms, we feel that we have a very good presence', CO6 said. 'Generally speaking, the Ayuntamiento has a good coverage, because we have a very good relationship with media. If we check the news, there is information related to at least half of our ministries', P4 added.

Just as the communications officers of the state government also perceived, CO6 also mentioned that due to the mayor's successful political career, but especially thanks to the sympathy to and from the journalists, he can easily get frequent and favourable coverage. As it was discussed before in this chapter (subsection 6.1.2 *Interviewees' perceptions of their interaction with one another*), it is worth noting that an assumption is becoming clearer so far: the importance of the politician's personality in facilitating the interaction with reporters and, as a result of that, boosting a constant and favourable coverage.

¹⁰¹ Municipal Government Social Communication Coordinator and Director of the Institute of the Youth, respectively.

6.2.1.3 State Congress

Although state Congress is an important political information source, the coverage it got was not as homogeneous as it was for the former, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Firstly, there was a significant percentage gap (24.86%) between its lowest (13.93%, *La Jornada*) and highest rates (38.8%, *Cambio*), which indicates an uneven presence of the deputies in the news, compared with the media attention that the governor and mayor obtained.

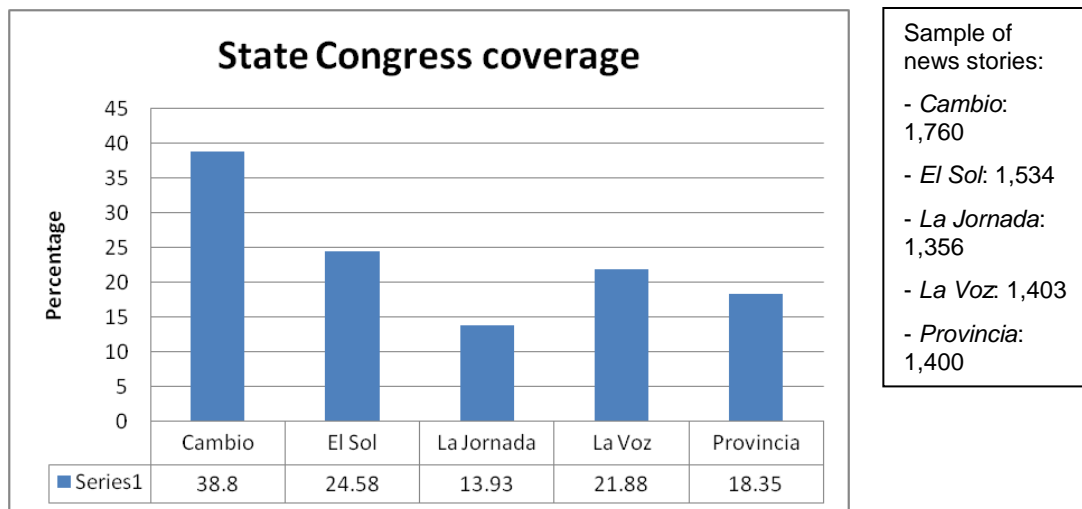


Chart 20 State Congress coverage.

‘We have a fair coverage, maybe media should cover our activities a little bit more; but together with state government and political parties, state Congress is one of the most important political information sources for reporters’, *P3* – PAN state Congressman - said. In his opinion, the three main political parties within it have a fair presence. This is because they have more than 90% of the seats and, thus, they participate in every single commission. In that sense, due to their reduced number of seats and, hence, their participation within the legislative commissions, the smaller political parties – both within the Congress and as political institutions - hardly had any presence.

Secondly, in qualitative terms, Congressmen were not always treated as friendly as the previous actors. Joint with PAN and PRI members,¹⁰² some of the deputies were harshly criticised by different politicians, government

¹⁰² The next part of this subsection will break down the coverage obtained by individual political parties.

officers and newspapers as well. For instance, on April 27 2010, *La Voz* presented an investigative report under the headline 'Congressmen are frequent tourists' regarding the allegedly unclear and expensive "business trips" of the Congressmen. After mentioning that the total expenditure for that concept during 2009 was \$4 million Mexican Pesos (£190,476) and who travelled the most, the tenth paragraph stated: 'justifications, generalizations and lack of explanations are the common rule within the State Congress when it is required information about the destinations, costs and reasons of their trips'.

It is worth stressing that some of those unfavourable stories about them came from unofficial sources.¹⁰³ Actually, the use of leaks, rumours and anonymous informants was almost exclusively for covering legislative activities. Both journalists and state Congress communications officers agreed that, due to the number of its members and wide range of activities, its coverage is more difficult than for other government branches. That is why the use of unofficial sources is more frequent, because it is hard to control the information provided by each one of the forty members.

According to CO2 and CO1,¹⁰⁴ the communications office only provides institutional information. That is, information related to the Congress as a whole - not to individual deputies - and about the legislative activities that each commission does (law proposals, discussions and agreements). In that sense, personal or political party positions are exclusive responsibility of their own press officers.¹⁰⁵ The interviewees also mentioned that most of the Congress members do not understand the official procedure of providing information to journalists, which is only through the Social Communications Area, and they arbitrarily skip the proper channels. This situation fosters what they called the "friendly fire", which is the leak of information for *beating up* their political enemies through harsh criticism. As a result of that, very frequently, instead of just criticising a specific deputy, media use this information for generalising the wrongdoings and low performance of all the members of the Congress. 'How can we help them, if they expose themselves in front of the media', CO1 said.

¹⁰³ An example of this will be presented further in this chapter, see section 6.3 *Logic of the relationship* under the subheading *Media control the agenda*.

¹⁰⁴ State Congress Social Communication Coordinator and her assistant, respectively.

¹⁰⁵ Each political party represented in the state Congress has a press officer, whose role is publicising information exclusively related to the party he works for.

Besides this situation, CO1 also pointed out the official advertising contracts as a cause of the limited coverage: the higher the investment, the better the coverage. Nonetheless, commercial agreements do not guarantee that all the information will be published, but at least the most important events and sessions will have publicity and they will be framed in a more favourable way. Furthermore, the contracts do not provide protection for all deputies, just for the Congress as an institution. In that sense, individual Congressmen have to negotiate directly with the media. For that reason, institutional investment is not the only source of revenue for newspapers from state Congress. P1 and P2¹⁰⁶ also mentioned that several deputies pay from their own pockets for personal publicity,¹⁰⁷ especially if they are interested in running for another post, such as senator, mayor or governor.

There are agreements which might be judged under a different lens: the means that politicians and deputies use for having media presence. Then you get a better coverage from certain news outlets, because you offer them several privileges and prerogatives (P2).

6.2.1.4 Political parties

Just as the state Congress, political parties did not have an exactly homogeneous coverage, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. For the first case, as the following chart shows, those institutions obtained a divergent degree of attention during the period of study. For the second case - the qualitative treatment - the situation was as divergent for the political parties as it was for deputies, because the information from the left oriented Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) was framed in a favourable way most of the times. Notwithstanding, the centrist Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and especially the right oriented National Action Party (PAN) were very often harshly criticised by government officials, politicians and newspapers as well. On the contrary, the few cases of criticism towards PRD rarely came from the media, only from the other political parties. Presumably, the governing party – PRD at the state level - usually has more resources than the rest and, hence, more and better coverage is expected. However, rather

¹⁰⁶ Former PRI state Congressman and PAN state Congressman, respectively.

¹⁰⁷ *Off the record*, P1 commented that some state Congressmen pay between \$20-30,000 Mexican Pesos (£1,000-1,500) a month for personal publicity.

than the expected treatment, this case study stresses the point of economic reasons behind this alignment towards officialdom.

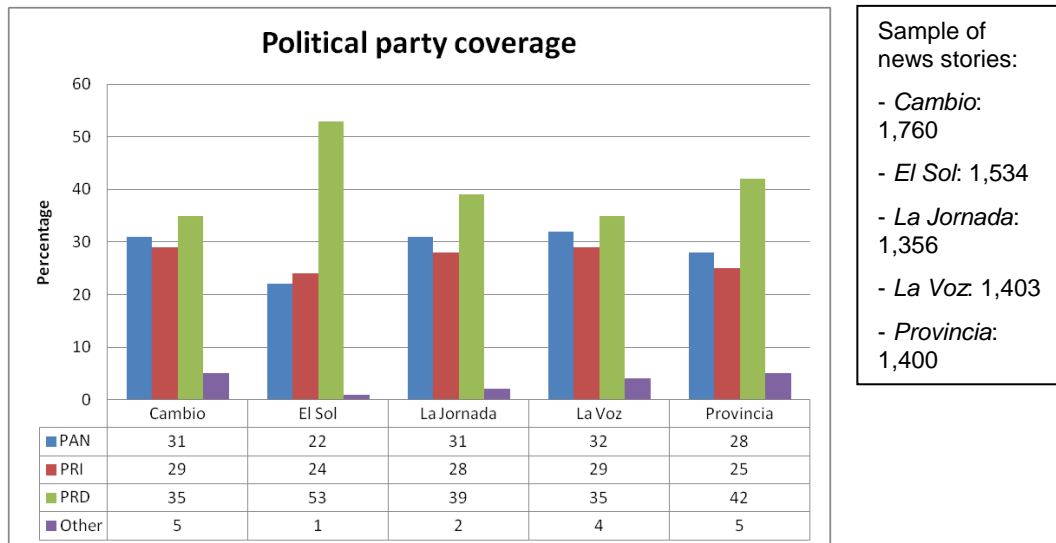


Chart 21 Political party coverage.

In quantitative terms, *Cambio* offered a quite balanced coverage to the three main political parties: PRD 35%, PAN 31% and PRI 29%, so the distance between the highest and lowest rates is just 6%. Besides that, this newspaper also published several stories related to other minor forces within the local political spectrum. Qualitatively speaking, PRD had more favourable framing than the other main political parties, because this is an openly left oriented news organization, as it was previously mentioned (chapter five section 5.1 *Media market*). Despite PAN and PRI were frequently harshly criticised, sometimes they also were neutrally treated.

Our logic is that political parties should have the same coverage, but not all of them, because not all of them have the same importance. Their designated space depends on their political weight, but in *Cambio* we try to provide them similar space within our editions (*J3*, political correspondent of *Cambio*).

The case of *El Sol* is very eloquent: more than half of the political parties' news was related to PRD. The curious situation about it is that this publication is not a left oriented newspaper, such as *Cambio* and *La Jornada*. Nonetheless, as commented in the fifth chapter (subsection 5.4.2 *Official advertising in Morelian newspapers*), the reason is that many of those stories were paid for a state deputy and a senator for publicise themselves. For obvious reasons, then, the framing was favourable towards

this institution. Notwithstanding, the other two political institutions were not *beaten up* that hard either: firstly, because their presence was reduced. Secondly, a lot of the information about them came from press conferences. Thirdly, this newspaper traditionally do not question, judge or criticise almost anybody.

Nonetheless, when questioned about his perceptions of the coverage that *El Sol* gave to the political parties, *J7* - political correspondent of *El Sol* - mentioned that PRI received more attention because several reporters who work there are openly supporters of that party. In that sense, the interviewee argued that PAN was sometimes treated in a negative way, but some others it was fairly treated. Opposite to the content analysis, the informant said that PRD was constantly *beaten up* due to unpaid debts. An explanation for the divergence between his opinion and the empirical evidence is that, rather than the PRD as institution, the paid news stories were bought by individual members of the political party.

Not as numerically drastic as the case of the previous publication, but *La Jornada* offered PRD great coverage too, both in quantity and quality. The reason is simple: it is an open left oriented newspaper. Nevertheless, besides the expected ideological alignment, its partisanship is also encouraged by the amount of investment in official advertising from the state government and its party. As explained before (chapter five, section 5.1 *Media market* and subsection 5.4.2 *Official advertising in Morelian newspapers*), it represents its main income, due to its lack of circulation, readership and commercial impact. Under these circumstances, there is no surprise that PRD had the best places within the edition; opinions of its members were included in most of the stories, even though they add little or nothing; its internal disputes were almost suppressed; and photographs of its local leader were included, even if the news was not about her. For that reason, headlines like the following were common during the period of study: 'in Michoacán, PRD fosters an alliance with the sectors most affected by the crisis' (April 30, 2010).

On the contrary, PAN had its worst coverage here, not in quantitative terms, but qualitatively speaking though: it has the smallest places for its information, but when the story was about PAN wrongdoings, real or alleged, it had a better place, especially if the criticism came from one of its members.¹⁰⁸ It was severely criticised on a regular basis by PRD, state

¹⁰⁸ An example: PAN senator Marko Cortés had a series of disagreements with the leader of his party in Michoacán, Germán Tena, and *La Jornada* quickly exposed them: 'Tena manipulates the

government, other political parties and reporters. In practice, anyone who wanted to criticise PAN had a place here to do it.¹⁰⁹ The bias was so evident that even the photographs¹¹⁰ for illustrating the stories were radically different from each other: whilst PRD members were shot in appropriate and expressive forms, PAN members appeared most of the times doing inappropriate gestures. On the other hand, PRI was treated with certain neutrality, but it always came third in importance order. The few times it got a better place here was when its members criticised PAN or federal government, but a PRD member's opinion was included as well, even if PAN did not have the chance to defend itself in the story.

Once again, there was a divergence between the empirical evidence from the content analysis and the perceptions of the informants: *J6*, a political correspondent of *La Jornada*, argued that this newspaper offers balanced coverage regarding the political parties or, at least, she tries to do it by constantly seeking information from each one of them. The rationale behind this decision is that 'it is necessary that the readers have the panorama of what is happening in each political party and their position towards specific issues'.

As the chart showed, *La Voz* offered the fairest political party coverage of all local newspapers, only in quantitative terms though. Numbers indicate that the three main parties obtained a balanced presence here but, once again, PRD got the biggest share of publicity. In qualitative terms, as usual, PRD was treated in a friendlier way than the other two, but sometimes even the former was criticised. Nevertheless, that criticism was openly less severe than the one PAN and PRI received. *J4*, a political correspondent of this news outlet, considered that the shared interests between the shareholders of the publication and party/government elites – mainly through the official advertising contracts – explain this situation.

As a reporter, I cover all the political parties' events and press conferences, but I do not decide what is going to be published or not, that is up to the editor. Most of the times,

theme of insecurity in order to impose his candidates: Cortés', was the headline of a story published on April 30, 2010, in which the accused did not have the chance to defend himself.

¹⁰⁹ Once again, without offering the other side of the story, *La Jornada* published the following news: 'PRI and PRD criticise Germán Tena's tabloidization of the drug traffic problem' (April 16, 2010).

¹¹⁰ Even though photographs were not considered in the content analysis, for the particular case of *La Jornada* it was relevant to mention the differences in the way the party members were visually portrayed. Since this situation was not found in the other newspapers, it was worth stressing it.

because of the agreements with the owners, the editor determines whether to run or not a story (J4).

Provincia is the local newspaper that less attention paid to political parties. However, when it published information about them, PRD had an evident higher importance (42%) in comparison with PAN (28%) and PRI (25%). The significance of this finding is that this news outlet is supposed to be a little right oriented, because its owners are prominent local businessmen, so PAN was expected to have a better publicity instead of PRD. Nonetheless, this situation reinforces an idea that will be discussed in the final chapter of the thesis (section 7.3 *Economically-driven partisanship*): ownership is not the only key for understanding partisanship, it is the economic resources instead. As it was also mentioned by J5, a political correspondent of this publication, qualitative speaking political parties were more or less equally treated by reporters here. Members of every institution were equally criticised, but the *beating ups* were slightly less frequent towards PRD than the rest.¹¹¹

Another way of reading the information commented in this subsection is offered by the following set of charts, which will present a specific view of the coverage received by each political party. Just as it has been done so far, the results of the content analysis will be contrasted with the opinions of the communications officers who work for PAN, PRI and PRD. They were asked about their perceptions of the coverage that the local newspapers gave to their political parties.

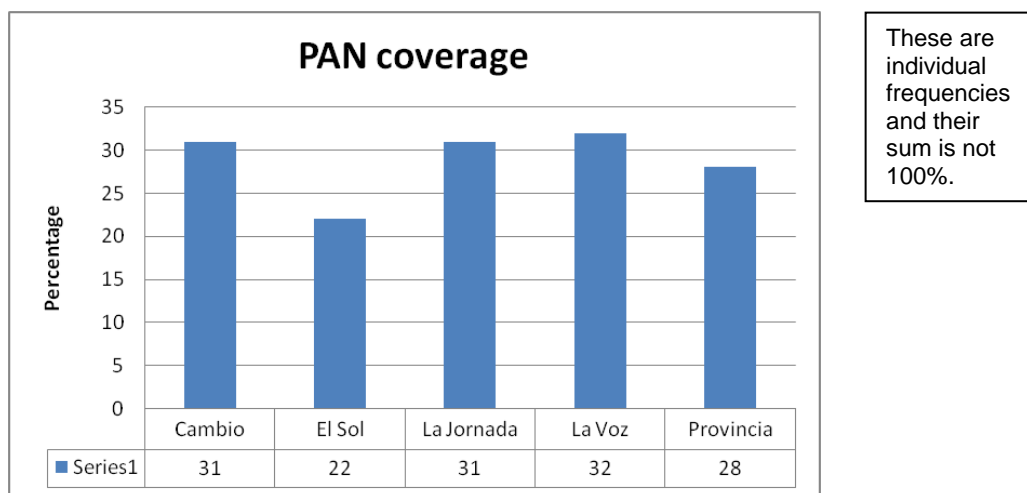


Chart 22 PAN coverage.

¹¹¹ One of the scarce criticisms towards PRD was found in *Provincia* on April 21, 2010, under the headline 'Ambiguities within PRD': 'in the past days, PRD's state leadership has shown a lot of contradictions' regarding a series of disagreements with the electoral authorities in Michoacán.

With the exception of *El Sol* (22%), the rest of the newspapers offered National Action Party (PAN) a similar coverage which oscillated between 28% (*Provincia*) and 32% (*La Voz*). However, more than the figures *per se*, as it was explained before, the frequent unfavourable framing of the news related to this political party is what actually set the difference with the others. The unfriendly coverage has a political explanation: firstly, PAN represents the second biggest political force in Michoacán and the main opposition of the state government. Secondly, since the Mexican President Felipe Calderon was born in Morelia and he is member of this party, all the criticism the federal government gets at the national level it is reflected at the local as well. Thirdly, PAN state leader constantly verbally engage against some journalists and politicians.

Although our coverage is acceptable, it is just not easy to get it. To be honest, media are businesses and, then, most of them want to have a commercial agreement for securing the diffusion of our information; which is normal, but because of our economic limitations, we are not allowed to invest as much as we want (CO7, PAN Social Communication Coordinator).

Earlier in chapter five (subsection 5.4.2 *Official advertising in Morelian newspapers*), it was mentioned that PAN only had advertising contracts with *La Voz* and *Provincia*. That is why, the interviewee added, in order to publicise their activities and opinions, this political institution appeals to newspapers' generosity. However, their generosity is not that big, especially in qualitative terms, because this party received constant *beating ups* from everyone. Nonetheless, beyond this anecdotic comment, there is a serious criticism about the allegedly objectivity and neutrality of the local media. In practice, this concept was basically absent, since there was an evident different treatment and newsworthiness criteria comparing PAN coverage with the received by the other parties. Just as the following extract shows, this situation implies that there are actually two dynamics converging on the field: on the one hand, the collaborative relationship, which suggests the mutual help mediated by an advertising contract (information for publicity). On the other, the ideological alignment, which is the historic hallmark of the Mexican press:

J2 (editor of *La Jornada*): 'The relationship with PAN is friendly, but the institution must keep up appearances. They cannot buy advertising from the newspaper which they already know will eventually *beat them up*'.

Researcher: And do you actually *beat PAN up*?

J2: Well... we try... Finally that is what our readers want, but we just do not *beat them up* for the sake of it, we do it with arguments’.

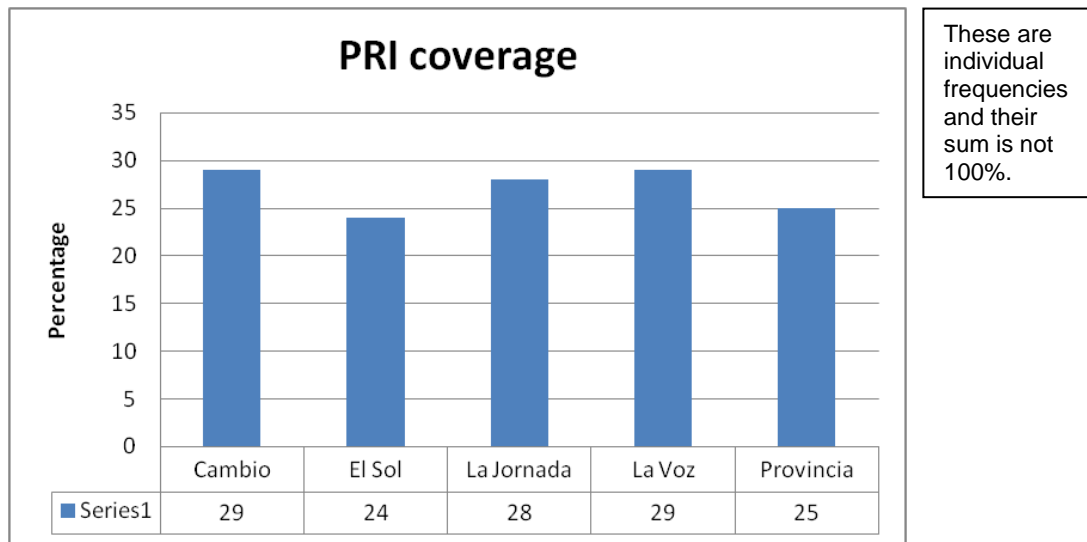


Chart 23 PRI coverage.

As the chart shows, Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) coverage was quite uniform: it oscillated between 24% (El Sol) and 29% (*Cambio* and *La Voz*), with only five percentage points of distance between the lowest and highest rates, a situation that illustrates this trend. In quantitative terms, this political party was frequently framed in an unfavourable way, but not as much as PAN. The reasons are the following: firstly, PRI is the third biggest political force in Michoacán and, for better or for worse, it gets less media attention. Secondly, its state leader is much more moderate than his PAN peer so, in terms of compromising statements, he keeps a low profile. It means that, on the contrary of the latter who easily gets into verbal fights with journalists and other politicians, the former tends to avoid thorny arguments.

According to CO4, who is in charge of the communications office of the PRI, the coverage this political party obtains is good, but not excellent. Since its press office has been trying to influence the agenda management by introducing more interesting issues instead of the same old ideological statements, news outlets have responded favourably. Notwithstanding, once again money appears as a key element for having a better media presence:

You must have a constant relationship with media, if you have enough economic resources to buy spaces for

publicising your activities. We do not work like that, because our budget does not allow us to. We are opposition in Michoacán and at the national level things are not better either (CO4).

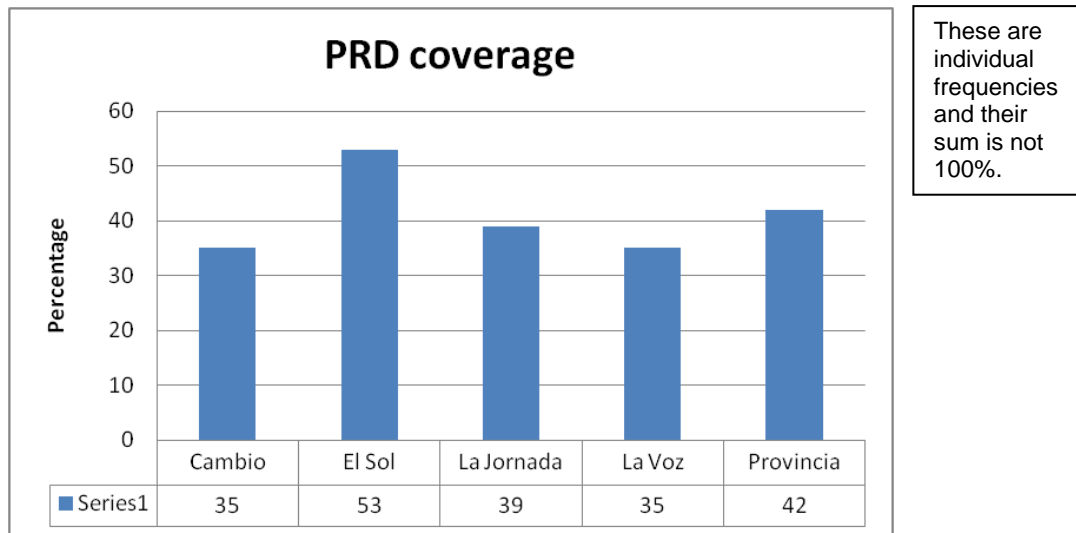


Chart 24 PRD coverage.

As it has been outlined before, Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) is the undisputable star of the local media environment, not for free though. Its news presence was the highest and most favourable of the political parties, as this chart shows. Quantitative speaking, and with the exception of *El Sol* (53%), its coverage tended to be homogeneous as well: *Provincia* 42%, *La Jornada* 39%, and *Cambio* and *La Voz* 35% each one. The qualitative approach to PRD responds to the following logic: since it is the political party that governs Michoacán, and if the state administration is not criticised, there is no reason why this institution would be. This involves a twofold consideration: on the one hand, the state government is the main official advertiser and, on the other, this party represents the biggest political force in the state. Besides that, its state head constantly tries to be a charismatic leader, but very often she overacts and her statements are unfortunate as well. Nevertheless, reporters rarely challenge her and dissident and opposition voices are nearly suppressed.

CO9, who works for the PRD state Congressmen, also mentioned that economic factors facilitate this situation. Thus, considering this issue, it is not surprising then that, according to the interviewee, no less than 80% of the local media attend this party's activities and publish its information on a

regular basis. And even better, the treatment of the information is favourable most of the times.

If you are interested in publicising something, you need to have enough resources to invest. In so doing, at least, you guarantee a place for your information, because if you dare to send a press release and you do not have a contract, it simply will not be published (CO9).

6.2.2 Political news and bias

The nature of the interaction between reporters and their sources is considered in this thesis as how conflictive or collaborative that relationship is. Evaluating this issue involved two approaches: the analysis of the political news coverage and the bias of those stories. The former was explained in the previous subsection and the latter will be discussed in this one.

For many years mass media have been considered as mirrors of reality, but researchers and some practitioners do not necessary agree. They argue that, in their very particular way, news organizations reflect something, but it is not the reality, it is the social environment (culture, politics, economics...). In that sense, those representations affect and are affected by politics and social actors simultaneously. Hence, news institutions do not only declare things to be true, they also make them look like or appear as true. However, 'professional ethics, like notions of fairness, oblige journalists to cover the same story similarly, but they have discretion over their terminology or frame' (McQuail quoted in Simon and Jerit 2007:258). For Hallin and Mancini (1984:829), the main function of media

is primarily to provide a running, day-to-day representation of the life of the community. But how do this, the form of representation they employ, varies greatly, shaped by the structure of those very political and social processes that they attempt in one way or another to reflect and by their own role in those processes.

As a result of this, media become constructors of meaning, because they are not just mirrors, but frames of reality as well. 'Even in mirroring society the media frame it: they reflect back to society not just events, not unmediated reality, but a particular conception of politics embodied in that society's political life' (Hallin and Mancini 1984:833-834). Nevertheless, this framing capacity is neither good nor evil by itself, because it can be used to either reinforce or weaken the political system as well. If the spread message comes only from the preferences of the media's own interests without any

restriction, then democratic values shake. On the contrary, if all the voices, or at least some of them, have an equal chance to be heard, then news organizations contribute to the democratic order (Schudson 2002: 257).

Related to the case study, evaluating the bias of the political news complements the findings about coverage commented before. The following chart summarises the way local newspapers portrayed the information they offered to their readers. However, it is worth mentioning that

it is exceedingly difficult to determine, for example, whether negative coverage of a politician or issue results from partisan bias, adverse circumstances, or other factors. The press's watchdog role also confounds content-analytic judgments about bias; almost no politician or party escapes criticism when personal or policy failings are at issue (Patterson and Donsbach 1996:460).

Bearing that in mind, it is important to mention that in evaluating if a message was biased or not, the concepts of 'source bias' – prominence of certain information sources to the detriment of others - and 'semantic/discourse bias' – language as a means of conveying specific interpretations - (Gunter 1997) were used. Even more, as the following chart shows, bias coverage by local newspapers is not just speculation because source and discourse bias were not only found in one or two isolated stories, which could not be considered representative. On the contrary, the tendency was evident on the content of all the media organizations.

This situation also reinforces the findings commented in the previous chapter (subsection *5.3.1 Investigative journalism*) related to the evident dependence on press releases and official events coverage that the Morelian newspapers presented. For instance, if an average of 27.12% of the political news were mere press releases, it would have been very unusual that the content of those stories did not present any sign of bias. Since the purpose of a press release is, precisely, making public a position towards a particular issue, the excessive reliance on it gives prominence to only one side of the story, in this case the official version.

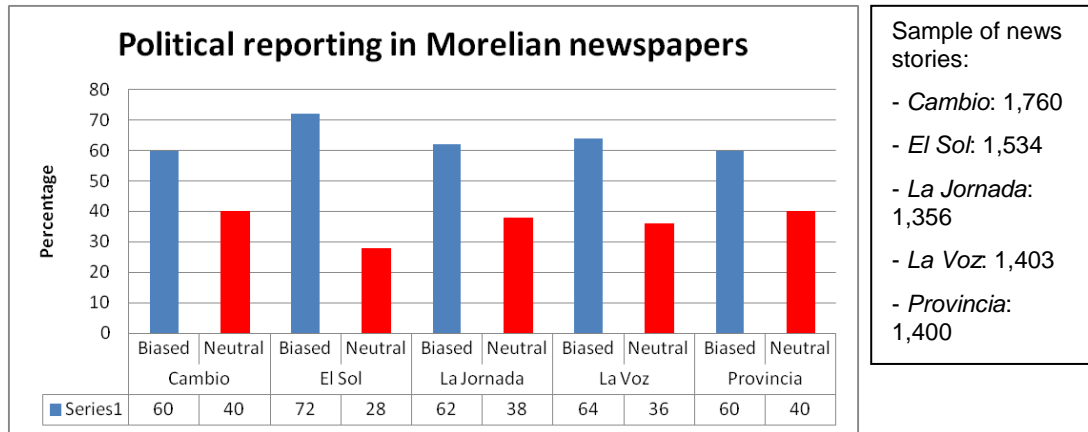


Chart 25 Political reporting in Morelian newspapers.

Once again, the homogeneity found in previous issues became evident here. It is a common practice among local newspapers to offer unbalanced information, just as the chart proves, because more than half of the news presented some kind of bias. Under the lens used in this research, *El Sol* was the least fair of the Morelian media since nearly three quarters of its stories (72%) had an evident inclination. On the other side, but not exactly too far from the former, *Cambio* and *Provincia* reached up to 60% in their bias tendency. In the middle, *La Jornada* (62%) and *La Voz* (64%) followed the pattern.

The next chart breaks down the bias concept into favourable and unfavourable coverage. The former means stressing the positive side by underscoring virtues and achievements, and the latter is related to the negative side by making harsh criticism. It is worth mentioning that the figures presented here correspond only to the segment of the news that had an inclination: *Cambio* (60%), *El Sol* (72%), *La Jornada* (62%), *La Voz* (64%) and *Provincia* (60%).

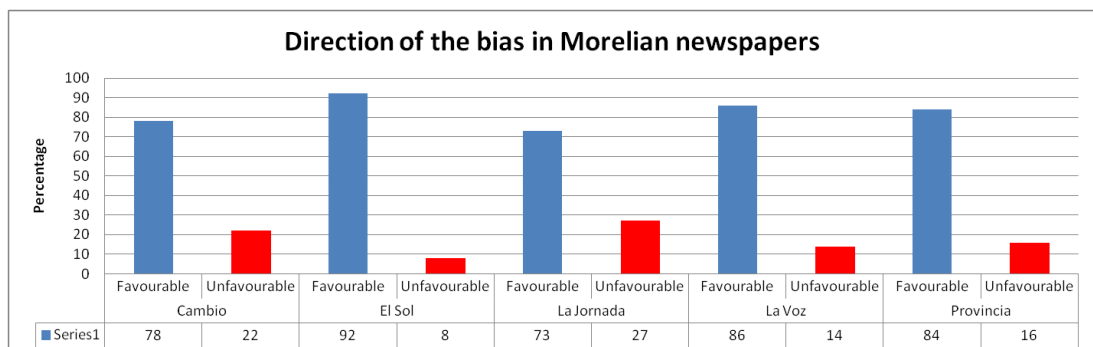


Chart 26 Direction of the bias in Morelian newspapers.

The direction of the bias also presented a trend towards a favourable coverage, which oscillated from 92% (*El Sol*) and 73% (*La Jornada*), with a percentage distance of 19 points between the highest and lowest rate. In other words and under the parameters previously explained, the local newspapers not just mainly offered biased news, those stories stressed the positive and bright side of the political reality. As it was explained before, favourable inclination was clearly selective, because not all of the political actors were treated equally: governor and his staff only received friendly coverage, and the few criticisms towards them came from opposition, never from media. To a lesser degree, the mayor and his staff presented a similar tendency, but sometimes newspapers, as well as opposition, criticised local government. On the other hand, Congressmen and political parties (mainly PAN and PRI) were the focus of most of the criticism, which came from different flanks: state government, opposition and news outlets as well. Thus, the unfavourable rates basically represent the coverage those political actors got.

The following extracts exemplify the favourable and unfavourable bias found during the content analysis. On April 5, 2010, under the headline 'Godoy's administration will surpass 30 million in public investment: Suárez', *La Jornada* published a favourable story about the prospective economic performance of the state government. This is an example of source bias because the content only represents one version and, hence, emphasises the positive side of the story:

By the end of its fourth year, Leonel Godoy's administration will surpass \$30 million Mexican Pesos [£1,428,571] in public investment. "It is about a social battle based upon strategic efforts, rather than random shots. It will be history the one who could judge in its exact dimension what this kind of actions represent", Humberto Suárez López, head of the Ministry of Administration and Finances, reflected on this issue.

The second extract offers an example of semantic/discourse bias, in which the use of the language conveys a specific interpretation of the facts. This unfavourable news story was published by *Provincia* on April 23, 2010, under the slanted headline 'a grey legislative session':

Yesterday's legislative session that took place at the State Congress was one of middle-importance, which was basically used by some Congressmen for showing off. They presented law initiatives that are unlikely to be accepted, but will look good on their personal CV. Not to mention that those who are

also interested in a future candidacy will get publicity within the media as well.

Furthermore, since the number of sources was considered as one of the measurements for bias, then, it is not surprising that the results coincided in both issues: a high rate of single source news (between 96% and 87%) is related to a high rate of bias (between 72% and 60%). But not only that, inclination and limited sources are also connected to the reliance on press releases, press conferences and official events coverage which also local newspapers had. In sum, biased coverage had its origins on the limited range of information sources and, as it will be argued in the next chapter (section 7.2 *Instrumentalization as the result of the political communication process*), it facilitates the instrumentalization of local media by the state government.

Finally, it was mentioned at the beginning of this subsection that reality was framed by the media according to a specific social, political, economic and historical context. In so doing, the images they offer are related to the perceptions that citizens already had in mind, and the findings about local news framing reinforced this idea. Beyond the economic interest that will be stressed in the next chapter,¹¹² favourable coverage has another explanation too: Michoacán has historically been a PRD territory,¹¹³ so a government which came from that political party would tend to be easily accepted and its actions approved. As commented by some of the interviewees, despite his PRI political roots, there is a general favourable perception about the mayor, both among citizens and politicians. On the contrary, Mexicans in general, and Morelians in particular, do not have a positive image of Congressmen and political parties, and are considered as corrupt and useless (SEGOB 2008). Thus, an unfavourable news framing is not unexpected at all.

6.2.3 Summary of the section

This section presented a discussion about the second parameter of the micro level analysis of the Morelian case (the nature of the journalist-politician relationship), which is how adversarial or collaborative is the interaction between reporters and their sources. On the field, this issue was evaluated through two aspects: coverage and framing of the political news.

¹¹² See chapter seven, section 7.3 *Economically-driven partisanship*.

¹¹³ See chapter four, section 4.3 *Morelia as a case study*, under the subheading *Mexican democratic transition and its impact on Morelia*.

Regarding the former, the political information was divided in four spheres: state government, local government, state Congress and political parties. The state and local administrations received constant and favourable coverage, especially the first one which was rarely questioned. Although the state Congress and political parties also had a frequent coverage, they were harshly criticised too. Particularly PAN and PRI deputies and leaders were the subjects of the *beating ups*, whilst PRD – the governing party – had the best treatment from the local printed media.

Related to the political news framing, the content analysis showed that between 72% and 60% of the stories presented a sign of bias (whether source bias, semantic/discourse bias or both of them). Furthermore, between 92% and 73% of the news were framed in a favourable way, mainly towards the state government and its political party. Finally, the next section will present the findings of the third parameter of the micro level, which is the logic of the journalist-politician relationship.

6.3 Logic of the relationship

This section presents the discussion of the third parameter of the micro level analysis, related to the logic of the journalist-politician relationship (Pfetsch 2004). This concept means the imposition of content and format on the political communication process by one of its actors. In order to understand the logic, media or party/government, that determines the interaction between reporters and party/government elites in Morelia, it is required to evaluate the agenda management process in the local newspapers, regarding the everyday political information coverage. Therefore, the content of this section is organised in the following way: firstly, a review of the interviewees' opinions about who sets the agenda at the local level and, secondly, the results of the content analysis related to the agenda management process in the Morelian printed media.

McCombs (2004:59) defined media agenda as 'the amount of news coverage for an issue', which is supposed to facilitate information accessibility to the audience. By giving them publicity, news outlets transfer the salience of certain important topics to the public, who is expected to bear that knowledge in mind for further discussion or action. Since there are a lot of public institutions with their own agendas, there is an intense competition for attracting reporter's attention and getting one of the few places available

in his newspaper (McNair 2007). However, not only institutions struggle among each others to impose their particular themes, news organizations are part of the game as well. This is because they also have their own interests and want them to be public.

Media power is ultimately the power to *consecrate*, that is, name an event, person, or idea as worthy of wider consideration... Only a handful, however, are picked up by the entire press and attract widespread public attention. The extent to which a particular medium or media enterprise is able to exercise such consecrating power is an indicator of its relative weight within the field (Benson 1999:469).

Thus, as *J3* and *J4*¹¹⁴ explained, there are three agendas in everyday journalistic practice: public, media's and reporter's agenda and, on the field, a journalist should deal with them simultaneously. For that reason, sometimes one of them sets the pace, but it does not mean that it will always be the same because actors and their circumstances constantly change. Due to this situation, agenda management is a complex deal with several actors involved and with a variable outcome. Therefore, this concept means the placement of an issue under the media radar and then, controlling the information related to it during a period of time. Most of the times, however, politicians and journalists are responsible for the identification and selection of issues included in the political communication process: 'journalists and politicians, whether in conflict, regular dialogue, or working in coalitions, contribute to issue agendas and policy debate. These often exclude the wider public sphere and considerations of public opinion altogether' (Davis 2007:184). For this reason, 'the source-journalist relationship is therefore a tug of war: while sources attempt to *manage* the news, putting the best light on themselves, journalists concurrently *manage* the sources in order to extract the information they want' (Gans 2004:117).

Nonetheless, the Morelian case regarding the agenda management process involves more factors: 'it is just like putting onion, garlic and pepper in a blender and, after tasting it, guessing which flavour dominates', *J5* – political correspondent of *Provincia* - commented. In other words, the findings from the field work suggested that this issue at the local level is a shapeless phenomenon. At least the interviewees' answers pointed in that direction, because there was not a neat agreement like the one found in other issues evaluated here. Nevertheless, one thing is what the informants said

¹¹⁴ Political correspondents of *Cambio* and *La Voz*, respectively.

according to their own perceptions of reality and, another very different, is what the empirical evidence will show. In other words, as it will be discussed in this section, the content analysis results contradicted the collected answers which pointed at the media as the agenda setters. That is, instead of a diversity of actors setting the agenda, the empirical evidence will prove that the government – especially the state government – is the one who leads the process. Despite the lack of evident trends, the opinions regarding who leads the agenda management were organised in four groups: government, media, both of them, and political events. After summarising the different points of view, a chart will be used for describing newspapers' performance in this issue.

6.3.1 Government controls the agenda

When asked about who leads the agenda management process in Morelia, some of the interviewees considered that the government, through its different levels and branches, controls the agenda. Since they are directly involved in the political process, public servants and Congressmen control the information that the society is supposed to get from the media. However, at the local level, state government leads the agenda management; even though there are some other important actors, such as the Mayor, deputies and political parties. 'It always has a bigger impact a categorical statement from the governor than one from the president of the state Congress', *J2* – editor of *La Jornada* - said. In that sense, *CO3* – press officer of the Coordination of Development and Planning - added that the governor and his staff lead the political information flux, because they basically control its production process. 'State government is the one who sets the agenda for the local journalism, it is the one who dictates the issues that media should talk about every day'. No matter the political, economic or social juncture, 'the governor must be generating news at all time', *CO5* – press officer of the Ministry of the Women - mentioned. In so doing, his press office should provide all the information that media organizations need. Therefore, this area must facilitate their job by making accessible documents, speeches, images, and etcetera.

Since the governor's office is the most important and profitable beat, the correspondent assigned for the job is considered the star of his news outlet then. *J2* and *J5* used the same football metaphor for explaining it: reporters who cover the state Congress are like midfielders, because they are the strong men and their job is crucial, but they never shine. On the contrary,

journalists who report on the governor's activities are the strikers, since they are the most popular and get all the credits. Thus, covering certain offices or actors represents different status, because beats 'also can reflect job differentiation and be used as a reward structure' (Becker and Vlad 2009:67)

Nevertheless, *P1* – former PRI state Congressman - argued that despite the governor's activities get the best coverage, it is not just because of their inherent journalistic value. It is due to the special budget that the state administration has to secure his permanent presence in the news instead. On the contrary, the rest of the politicians have to use their own money if they want to get media's attention. Notwithstanding, the interviewee also commented that 'there are certain politicians who get free coverage because they just say stupidities. Reporters know they will insult, criticise, accuse and judge. They become the stories and they even show it off: "I always get free coverage"'.

To a different degree, local government also works on its own agenda management, as *CO6* – Municipal Government Social Communication Coordinator - explained: generally speaking, the institution sets the agenda. Reporters could sometimes mark the information guidelines, according to their newspapers' interests or what is happening at the state or national level. However, when it is related to the Ayuntamiento (local administration), most of the times municipal government determines the agenda.

In sum, the answers summarised here reinforced the notion that 'the selection and combination of information in familiar news formats normally take place with reference to a relatively small set of institutional agendas, which tend to be reinforced as reporters interact with their institutional sources' (Tuchman 2002:87). Likewise,

the relationship between sources and journalists resembles a dance, for sources seek access to journalists, and journalists seek access to sources. Although it takes two to tango, either sources or journalists can lead, but more often than not, sources do the leading (Gans 2004:116).

6.3.2 Media control the agenda

Another group of informants agreed that, more than the government, media hold the leadership regarding agenda management process. The reason, they argued, is that newspapers decide what the newsworthiness values of any information are. Thus, it is up their personnel which stories will receive coverage and which will be suppressed from the daily edition. *J4* explained

that the newspaper he works for – *La Voz* - controls the agenda, particularly on issues related to government accountability and internal fractures of political parties. In that sense, the interviewee perceived that they operate under their own journalistic guidelines and, for that reason, they do not follow the official line. Although content analysis will point out at an opposite direction and will contradict these opinions, *J1* – chief of state correspondents of *El Sol* - commented that

government agenda is just a guide for us, but we decide whether to follow it or not. It is up to the reporter, because the public servant might try to publicise his activities, but it is the former who decides to cover them or not.

According to *P2*, PAN state Congressman, local newspapers – as institutions - are not particularly keen on controlling the agenda, but some of their journalists are. In that sense, more than media agenda, there is a reporter agenda. However, the latter is not always completely supported by the former, because it might compromise high level agreements between owners and political actors. Because of these weak links between news organizations and their staff, a smart politician could easily induce the agenda in order to benefit his own interests. Otherwise, if he is not aware of this lack of coordination, he would be used as a mere opinion provider (a passive actor whose comments complement journalist's stories), instead of becoming an opinion leader (an active and influential actor whose ideas boost further debates).

I have the impression that, based on different relationships, editors, directors-general and communications officers of the state government stress certain issues and clearly emphasise them through the headlines; which sometimes do not coincide with the content of the story written by the correspondent. It is not unusual, then, the lack of coherence between the editorial line of the newspaper and the work done by its personnel on the field.

P3, *CO2* and *CO1*¹¹⁵ agreed that, regarding the state Congress coverage, media set the agenda. The reasons, they argued, are basically two: firstly, the high number of deputies (forty) diffuses reporters' attention and makes each one of them anonymous. Secondly, its budget for communication activities is not as high as the state government's, hence, legislative coverage may not be that profitable. Even though there are certain issues

¹¹⁵ PAN state Congressman, state Congress Social Communication Coordinator and her assistant, respectively.

that directly come from state Congress and are formally managed by its press office, they are the least in terms of information coverage. In that sense, CO1 perceived that media agenda is determined by the political juncture, and deputies are no more than opinion providers.

As state Congress, we have a lot of the information that we produce, thus we should set the agenda. It is very good that media have their own agenda, but it would be much better if the legislative branch could foster the political debate based on the work that deputies do every day (CO2).

Nevertheless, as CO1 and CO2 stressed, Congressmen are not exactly aware of this situation and they think that being quoted in the news is more than enough. This situation incites what the interviewees called the “friendly fire”, which happens when a deputy leaks certain information without consulting the communication officers. The outcome is that, instead of only exposing his political enemy, the leak would damage every single member of the Congress because the story would be incomplete, as it would only have one version (the one provided by the leak). Besides that, even if the reporter might have documents which prove the allegations, they would be presented out of context and become meaningless. At the end, the reporter may generalise the deputies’ wrongdoings, and even the naive source would be included.

An example of this situation happened on January 2010, when a Congressman leaked incomplete information to *Provincia*, regarding the apparent disappearance of \$3 million of Mexican Pesos (£142,857) from a budget of \$8 million (£380,952) to be used for repairing the state Congress building. ‘Congressmen lose 3 million’ was the headline of the front page on January 22. The truth, as it had to be published the following day (‘Congressmen find 3 million’ was the headline), was that the final cost of the work was only \$5 million and the rest of the money returned to the administration. But the deputy did not know that and he assumed that someone had stolen the money. This incident affected the image of the institution and its members, just because the informant was not actually informed and, in order to *beat up* or criticise the administrator, he was exposed as well.

CO7 – PAN Social Communication Coordinator - considered that, despite all the efforts made by the press officers to set the agenda, ultimately the media have the last word. For instance, press conferences are usually organised for publicising political parties’ stances and achievements. But when the journalists have the chance to raise questions, most of the times they do not

pay attention to the statements and ask about different issues, the ones they are particularly interested in. For that reason, 'the reporter's own agenda is the one he seeks, gets and publishes; the other comes always second'. Finally, *P1* – former PRI state Congressman - accepted that certain media actually have an agenda. It might not be as tough or incisive as they claim it is, but they do have it. However, they mould it very easily, according to how reality unfolds and key players' performance. In practice, this lukewarm position towards political events shows how inconsistent their editorial lines are.

6.3.3 A combined agenda

Pointing at a specific origin of agenda it is not as easy as it seems, at least that is what some of the informants opined. For them, agenda management is a very complex phenomenon in which diverse actors and factors intervene. Thus, more than an individual player, the process includes different sets of relationships, in which participants exchange roles on a regular basis.

It is a give and take game. Sometimes government sets the agenda, sometimes the state Congress does and sometimes media do. There are occasions when media are one step ahead from political power, but there are some others when the latter takes the former by surprise. It is a continuous struggle, because all of the actors want to lead the process (*J5*, political correspondent of *Provincia*).

CO7 – PAN Social Communication Coordinator - considered that, at any level, government tries to impose its particular issues by organising press conferences and official events, which are designed with the purpose of publicising its activities. Notwithstanding, reporters also take those opportunities to get the specific information they are after, because their sources will be right there. As a result of that, some news stories will only reproduce the official message, but others will present different angles. Instead of becoming mere opinion providers, *CO4* and *P4*¹¹⁶ suggested that public institutions should impose their own agendas, because they have the information that the people need to know. In so doing, they ought to have a well defined communications strategy which may allow them to publicise their discourse. However, the interviewees are also aware of the sense of

¹¹⁶ PRI Social Communication Coordinator and Director of the Institute of the Youth, respectively.

balance that there is in practice. That is, no matter how well structured the communications activities are, there is always the unpredictable journalistic nerve, which may put at stake their efforts to spread a specific message and that information might be lost or distorted by the political correspondent's own agenda.

6.3.4 No agenda, just reaction

Despite only few informants mentioned it, the content analysis will show that rather than being proactive, local journalism is reactive. This is because there is a clear tendency to follow the flux of events as they unfold, characteristic that reinforces the lack of investigative routines discussed before.¹¹⁷ Although there are a lot of situations in which government and party elites have little or nothing to do with, such as natural disasters, the vast majority of the political information analysed during the period of the field work was related to political events organised by the political actors (e.g. implementation of programmes or discussion of law initiatives). Therefore, their coverage could also be linked to the official advertising and political alignments of the news organizations. These factors, as it has been stressed here, determine to an important extent the way those events are portrayed.

CO9 – press officer of PRD state Congressmen - summarises local reporters' tendency towards the mainstream coverage like this: 'the event, what happened, is what attracts media's attention. After that, they only look for further opinions'. The reason, as J3 – political correspondent of *Cambio* - explained, is caused by the complexity of political reality where a lot of players - each one of them with their own interests - interact every day. In that sense, as CO5, J6 and J7¹¹⁸ mentioned, political agenda and, thus, media agenda is dependent on political times. In other words, there are certain moments when specific information is produced and required. For instance, electoral campaigns when the news stories are basically focused on what candidates and political parties say or do. On the contrary, when there are no elections near, the news narrates the activities of the government authorities and the debates within the Congress. Under these

¹¹⁷ See chapter five, subsection 5.3.1 *Investigative journalism*.

¹¹⁸ Press officer of the Ministry of the Women and political correspondents of *La Jornada* and *El Sol*, respectively.

constantly changing circumstances, it is very hard for newspapers to impose their own agendas. They have to decide whether to inform about current events, as the readership expects them to, or developing their own investigations which might not be that attractive for the general public.

Today, the agenda is solely set by the political juncture. It is no longer as it used to be several years ago, when state government dictated the line that media should follow and when invariably all of the front pages belonged to the governor... Now everything is related to politics, even football (CO8, press officer of the state government).

Earlier in this section *J4* argued that the newspaper he works for – *La Voz* - was very keen on exposing governmental corruption and political parties' scandals and, in so doing, this news outlet set the agenda. Notwithstanding, CO8 considered that imposing the agenda is much more complex than simply criticising the government, which is what local news outlets do. For that reason, journalism is not part of the country's development, it is out of the political agenda: 'it is just a mere spectator, a weasel, a procurer. It does not assume any determinant position about anything, it only acts as a messenger of the politicians' gossips'.

6.3.5 Content analysis

Despite the opinions collected during the field work, empirical evidence from the content analysis pointed in another direction. According to what actually was published on the newspapers, agenda management is simply not up to them. In other words, those media organizations perform a reactive journalism, because the vast majority of their stories are related to the mainstream coverage of the political sphere. It is important to emphasise that the concept of "reactive journalism" is referred to 'stories discovered relatively passively' rather than 'stories resulting from active discovery' (Becker and Vlad 2009:65). That is, reporters either 'wait for things to happen and then register their occurrence' (Schlesinger 1978:47) or 'they [journalists] wait for sources to make contact with [them]' (Gans 2004:117). Therefore, as the following chart shows, the initiative for setting the pace of the public information relies solely on political actors, not on news outlets. It is worth remaining that the concept of mainstream coverage is related to the information collected through press conferences or official events. That is, the routine reporting. On the other hand, the concept of newspaper's own

agenda means the exclusive information published by each news organization as a product of a journalistic investigation.

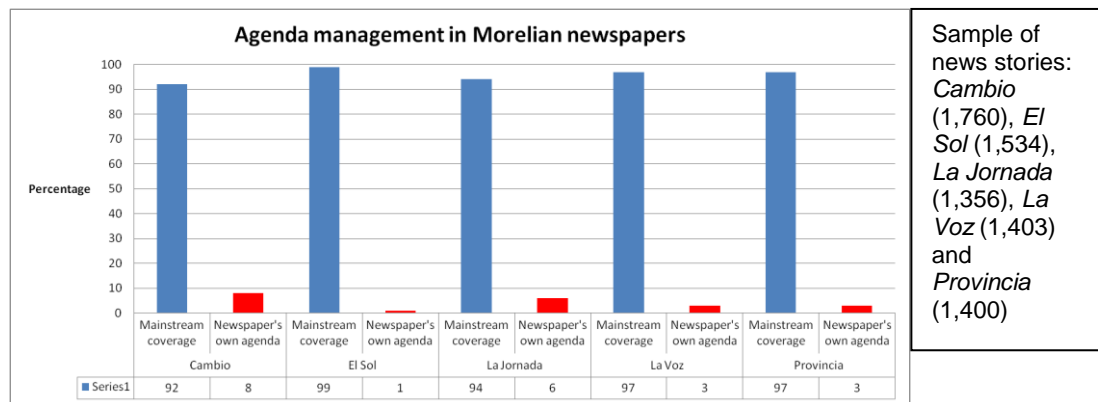


Chart 27 Agenda management in Morelian newspapers.

Even though the chart speaks for itself, it is worth stressing the homogeneity found in local newspapers performance. Once again, a similar journalistic pattern is evident when looking now at the agenda management process, which proved that rather than investigative, juncture journalism is the common practice. That is, instead of imposing or proposing innovative issues, media organizations in Morelia just follow the flow of political events. Only seven percentage points is the difference between the highest rate of newspapers' own agenda (8%, *Cambio*) and the lowest (1%, *El Sol*), which means that very few of the news stories they publish comes from their own initiative. It is not surprising then, as it will be discussed in the next chapter (section 7.2 *Intrumentalization as the result of the political communication process*), that the happily claimed modern journalism (focused on citizens' needs and produced by journalistic investigation) found by Hughes (2003 and 2006) and Lawson (2002) in their studies about Mexican media is still far from being reached in this city. Without openly being asked to, *J3* – political correspondent of *Cambio* – summarised this situation:

There is a lot of uniformity among local media agenda, because they all just cover the public agenda: press conferences and official events. Reporters are not generating anything at all, they simply do not have the impulse to produce their own information.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ The homogeneity found in the Morelian case is also consistent with the large literature on news media research, in which evidence from different studies show a similar trend: 'news is extraordinarily homogeneous... [Because] news is the product of a set of organizational routines that do not vary across time, place or organization' (Becker and Vlad 2009:68). In that sense,

6.3.6 Summary of the section

The third parameter of the micro level, the logic of the journalist-politician relationship, was discussed in this section. The concept is connected to the imposition of contents and formats by one actor over the other. On the field, it was evaluated through the agenda management process in Morelia and the results were divergent. On the one hand, there was a disagreement among the interviewees regarding who sets the agenda. The answers pointed at four directions: government, media, political junctures and a mixture of everything. On the other, the content analysis showed that the local newspapers only follow someone else's agenda (mainly state government's agenda), because very few of the stories they published came from their own initiative.

6.4 Summary: The journalist-politician relationship at the local level

As it was explained in this chapter, in order to understand the particular way Morelian journalists and politicians interact, a set of concepts taken from Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) and Pfetsch (2004) were selected. From the latter, the parameters used were the distance and logic of their relationship and, from the former, the nature of the interaction. These three parameters represent the micro level analysis of this research. Before presenting a final discussion about the findings evaluated in this chapter, it is important to recall an argument stated in the introduction of the thesis, in which it was mentioned that national and cross-national studies have a tendency towards generalizations and, therefore, their lack of detailed data fostered assumptions about neat homogeneity regarding political actors' specific roles and interactions. This case study proved that, on the field, uniformity only reached certain aspects of the phenomenon, the rest responded to different logics.

Firstly, the distance between reporters and party/government officials was measured through the frequency and means of their interaction. In that sense, the findings pointed out that they interacted on a regular basis, most of the times daily. They do it through both formal and informal means, and with official and unofficial purposes as well. Even though it was the general

'given similar news judgements about the same stories there is a tendency to homogeneity' (Schlesinger 1978:80).

tendency, different actors interacted in diverse ways: Congressmen, government ministries and communications officers have a direct interaction with reporters, both through formal and informal means, and with official and unofficial purposes. On the other hand, governor and mayor only have a formal interaction with journalists, mediated by their communications staff. Finally, among the political parties, on the contrary of PAN and PRI, PRD boosted a closer relationship, by interacting directly with political correspondents, editors and directors-general. This situation is facilitated, on the one hand, because journalists accepted that they need to have good relationships with their sources, although at a level of utilitarianism. On the other, communications officers agreed with them and found out that the more they understand media workers' needs, the better coverage they get. Finally, politicians who took advantage of their "charming personality" rapidly discovered that they could easily mingle with correspondents and, therefore, obtain a rather favourable publicity.

Secondly, their interaction was also shaped by a logic determined by either the media or party/government, which represents the operative rules of the message production (format and content) imposed by one of the actors over the other. In practical terms, just as in this research, this issue was evaluated through the agenda management process. In that sense, state government and, to a lesser degree, local administration set the agenda by dictating the main public issues which news outlets ought to report on (which is also the case of PRD). Notwithstanding, this situation is not the same neither for Congress nor for PAN and PRI because, for their cases, media impose the topics they need to follow. However, this last point is a tricky situation, because collecting opinions from deputies and party members is not exactly setting the agenda. In other words, reporters look for these political actors because they considered them opinion providers, whose words are used as follow-up news or just a complement to their stories. For that reason, instead of imposing their issues, media only follow the path determined by the government, PRD or the political juncture. That is why, as the content analysis proved, Morelian news organizations have a weak agenda management process.

Finally, the nature of the journalist-politician relationship might have an adversarial or exchange inclination, which determine the way – conflictive or collaborative - they interact and, as a result of that, the way the latter is portrayed by the former. This situation was broken down in this thesis through analysing the coverage and bias of the political information, both

concepts deeply related to one another. Under this scheme, it could be said that local political correspondents and party/government elites have established a collaborative relationship, built upon economic interest instead of political alignment. Nevertheless, certain dose of conflict was present between specific actors as well. Regarding the empirical evidence, news coverage and framing showed that - in quantitative and qualitative terms - governor, mayor and state government officers were portrayed in a favourable way. The local government received a fair treatment, but sometimes it was also criticised by opposition and media. PRD had a similar situation, because it was friendly treated and it only got some criticism from opposition parties. The state Congress had an uneven coverage and framing, due to an oscillating media presence, characterised by neutral, favourable and negative treatment. Finally, PRI and PAN were the target of harshly criticism from different flanks: government, PRD and media.

In sum, the Morelian case proved that the journalist-politician relationship is, most of the times, close, collaborative and determined by a party/government logic. Nonetheless, there are specific cases in which certain level of conflict is present, especially between *La Jornada* and PAN, or individual Congressmen with particular reporters. In other words, in spite of evident trends, it is always necessary to fragment reality in order to analyse it in a deeper way. In order to explain the lack of change in the Mexican media, the last chapter will present the general conclusions of the thesis, in which the interconnections between the macro and micro levels will be discussed.

Chapter 7 Conclusions: Change and continuity

The aim of this thesis was to evaluate whether Mexican media are immersed in a process of change, or there is a continuation of the journalistic practices of the old PRI regime. Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2003 and 2006) claimed that the press as a whole was moving towards a more civic approach to the news characterised by a more balanced political coverage, the practice of investigative journalism and the reflection of the citizens' needs in the content of the stories. However, reality outside Mexico City and other big cities in Mexico is quite different and Morelia – the case study – is just an example. Therefore, if 'understanding the Mexican press is a key to understanding Mexico' (Orme 1997:4), this research offers an interesting insight of the interactions and tensions between media and political actors.

Understanding the lack of significant change required studying the problem at two different levels: macro and micro. The former represents the context where the news outlets operate and are organised, and the latter is related to the interaction between reporters and their sources. In so doing, this research proposed a framework for analysing how the media environment determined the journalist-politician relationship. On the one hand, this approach was based on the concept of *Media System* (Hallin and Mancini 2004) and, on the other, on the adversarial/exchange interaction between political correspondents and party/government elites (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995) and distance/logic of their relationship (Pfetsch 2004). The central argument was that the interaction between the macro and micro levels shapes the outcome of the political communication process. That is, the political news stories are the result of the journalist-politician relationship, which is also determined by the particular conditions of the media environment.

Thus, this last chapter offers the overall argument of the thesis: in spite of the arrival of new actors to the political arena (members of other political parties different from the hegemonic PRI are in charge of the federal administration and several state and local governments too), the essence of the journalist-politician relationship remains the same. In other words, the players might have changed but the rules of the game have not. Or, as Blum (1997:1) puts it: 'Mexico, despite its history of *revolutions*, has suffered no radical break with the past'. As it will be discussed in the following pages,

three are the foundations of this position which also represent the first three sections of the chapter: firstly, the relevance of the media context (macro level) in shaping the journalist-politician relationship (micro level) will be stressed. Secondly, as a result of that interaction, the information published by the local newspapers showed an evident instrumentalization of the media by the state government. Thirdly, the orientation found in the news is not necessarily ideological, but economic, as the correlation between official advertising and political coverage proved. Finally, the further contributions of this research to the Mexican journalism and political communication literature (and local studies as well) will be underlined, and some thoughts about its theoretical implications as well.

7.1 Context matters: Media system and journalist-politician relationship

By stressing the importance of the media environment in shaping the journalist-politician relationship, this section presents the discussion about the interaction between the macro and micro levels. As commented in the fourth chapter (section *4.1 The research problem*), explaining the lack of change of the Mexican media involved a twofold analytical framework: firstly, the concept of *Media System* (Hallin and Mancini 2004) and, secondly, the notions of adversarial/exchange interaction between reporters and their sources (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995) and distance/logic of that relationship (Pfetsch 2004). Therefore, this part of the chapter underlines the role of the context as a provider of the rules – both formal and informal – that the political communication actors use for interacting with one another.

The media system in Morelia (macro level) is characterised by a high number of organizations (five newspapers, five television channels and thirteen radio stations), but in political information terms, the former have more importance - even though their readership is only 40% - because news programmes in broadcast outlets are not their main features. Although the newspapers give between 10% and 30% of their content to this issue, only the printed media are considered by the political actors as the more important, just as it was mentioned in chapter five (section *5.1 Media market*). Since there are five newspapers, different ideological alignments were expected. However the findings showed that, there is a political inclination indeed, but it is mainly towards state government, the left orientated Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) and, to a lesser degree,

towards local government (especially the mayor as an individual actor). Therefore, as it was discussed, state Congress, the centrist Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the right orientated National Action Party (PAN) are the main targets of criticism, the last one in particular. Related to the journalistic professionalization, the results indicated that this issue is at very low levels, due to the limited autonomy which media has from the governmental authorities and politicians, an evident lack of investigative news reports and, thus, a weak public service reporting tradition. Even though this issue will be stressed further in this chapter (section 7.3 *Economically-driven partisanship*), it is worth mentioning that the State has an active role in the political communication process because of its involvement in the agenda setting through the official advertising contracts which, in practice, exert a real influence on local newsrooms.

On the other hand, the micro level showed that in spite of specific conflicts between individual political actors and journalists, the results indicate that the journalist-politician relationship in Morelia is close, collaborative and determined by a party/government logic. In other words, rather than a thorny interaction, the players establish a relationship based on mutual benefits: money for publicity and branding.

But, what does all of this mean? How does the media macro level impact on the relationship between political communication key players? The answer is quite simple: context matters, because the specific set of conditions of the environment in which news outlets operate determine the way reporters and party/government elites interact. In that sense, if news stories are a constructed reality, it means that several actors are involved in the process then, and the initial part of this process is the reporter-source relationship. Nevertheless, this interaction does not take place in the void, but within a specific context. For that reason, the particular characteristics of the environment define the rules of engagement between the actors.

Hallin (1995) and Adler-Lomnitz *et al* (2004) suggested that Mexican media partisanship is a result of the predominating political culture. In that sense, it is more than viable to rethink the local journalist-politician relationship as a reflection of a wider structure, with its own official and unofficial processes that are imported by the players within a particular environment. In simpler terms, the empirical evidence reinforced the initial hypothesis which argued that the specific conditions of the media system (development of the market, journalistic professionalization, partisanship and the governmental involvement) dictate the formal and informal norms which guide the way

political correspondents and politicians/public servants interact. Those norms are the distance (how close is their relationship), nature (collaborative or conflict oriented) and logic (imposition of contents and formats).

However, as the findings also showed, there is not a neat homogeneity within the media environment and its actors. On the contrary, rather than a permanent and general conflict or collaboration among the players, each one of them interacts in different ways with one another. Of course there are trends, as the ones mentioned on previous chapters, but they only involved specific actors, not all of them (e.g. the alignment towards state government's agenda or the intermittent conflicts with Congress or PAN). Thus, in general terms the content analysis proved that, in fact, there is certain level of homogeneity, but when the macro view is broken down – just as it was done here - the differences start becoming evident.

Since politics is a dynamic process, which involves a constant communication between the persons involved in a permanently changing environment, alliances are built up and cancelled on a regular basis then. Under these circumstances, when interests are at stake due to movements inside the political structures, party and State elites are after particular friendly news organizations for publicising their agendas. On the other hand, and because of the same reason, publishers and broadcasters negotiate their allegiance towards specific politicians. Very often the negotiations are preceded by a series of *beating ups* (harsh criticism to a public servant, with or without reason), the existence of which is instrumental, being mere means to an end.

However, superficial changes in the political context do not necessarily imply changes in the media system and, therefore, the relationship between news workers and their sources would not be modified. In simpler terms, the mere substitution of the political actors (e.g. the arrival of new elected authorities from a former opposition party) only brings readjustments at the level of alliances (which news outlet will support or attack the new public servants), but the structural dynamics of the media system (the patron-client relationship) will not be drastically modified. It means that change is neither homogeneous nor even immediate. This notion of long-term change was perceived by Pfetsch (2001:64) as well: 'if it is true that political communication culture reflects the structure of the political communication system, any change in political communication must be a long-term process, which presupposes structural change in the political system and the communication system'.

Furthermore, as commented in chapter four (section *4.1 The research problem*), macro and micro levels have a top-bottom interaction and the latter is dependent on the former. That is, the macro level exerts influence on the micro level and, hence, the operation of the latter depends on the organization of the former. In that sense, changes at the macro level result in changes at the micro level, but not necessarily in a counter direction. That is because the first element represents the structure and the second represents the actors. Therefore, actors might change, but the rules are more stable.

For instance, Lawson (2002) considered that Mexican media openness was closely connected with the regime's shift from authoritarian PRI regime to a new PAN administration, although it was not the only factor. This change meant a more balanced electoral coverage, greater presence of civil society on the news and stronger watchdog journalism, among other features. According to his opinion, even though still incomplete, this transition to democracy points out towards a greater independence and strengthening of the Fourth Estate, because 'in a sort of cascade effect, the initial success of independent publications encouraged the gradual transformation of the press as a whole' (Lawson 2002:89).

Nonetheless, assuming that it actually exists, this 'cascade effect' has not reached a lot of places within the country yet. Morelia is just an example, because in this city the authoritarian structure is still strong and fosters the same old practices among the participants in the political communication arena. In that sense, the means of coercion towards the press commented in the first chapter (section *1.2 Mexican media's main features*), which were the hallmark of the PRI era during seventy years, coincide with the pressure techniques mentioned by the informants in this thesis (chapter five, subsection *5.4.1 Means of coercion towards the local press*). That is, the illusion of the media modernization collapses in front of the evident absence of change found in this case study which indicates that, indeed, the lack of significant transformation suggests that there is no such cascade effect. Thus, this kind of generalizations are risky, especially for a foreign researcher who is not immersed in the national reality - the one outside Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey - where empirical data proved that

there are other particular cases where things are quite different.¹²⁰ This situation was also noticed by Orme (1997:7):

The consequences for big-city publishers who break free of this pattern are no longer terribly onerous, providing that their newspapers are potentially self-sustained enterprises. But for many publications, reliant as they are on government cash, a declaration of independence would be tantamount to a declaration of bankruptcy.

Since different contexts imply diverse relations and exchanges, Morelian political journalism reflects the specific features of the local political system then. A quick example: political parties' coverage obeys the logic of the general electoral preferences, which is openly dominated by PRD and struggling for the second place are PAN and PRI. Hence, besides being in charge of the state government, PRD's presence in the news is by far greater than the others, also because it enjoys great sympathy among the electorate. The outcome of the last two state elections, which were widely dominated by this party, is evidence of this assumption.¹²¹ Thus, being in charge of the state administration and having more followers than its competitors facilitate that the left oriented party had a better coverage: firstly, because through the state government it has enough money for publicity and, secondly, because a friendly framing might appeal to the readers' preferences.

Furthermore, local journalistic practice is clearly the result of deeply rooted patron-client relationships with the government in turn. For that reason, it is not surprising then that the low levels of professionalization commented in the fifth chapter (subsection 5.3.3 *Levels of professionalization*) have fostered a poorly developed journalism characterised by being reactive

¹²⁰ See for instance Orozco (2007) and De León (2009), whose analysis of the press-government relationship in Tepic and the transition of political journalism in Aguascalientes, respectively, reinforce the findings presented here.

¹²¹ The results of the 2001 elections for the state governor were: Coalition United for Michoacán (Coalición Unidos por Michoacán) integrated by the Democratic Revolution Party (Partido de la Revolución Democrática, PRD), Labour Party (Partido del Trabajo, PT), Green Ecologist Party of Mexico (Partido Verde Ecologista de México), Nationalist Society Party (Partido de la Sociedad Nacionalista), Social Alliance Party (Partido Alianza Social) and National Political Party for the Democratic Convergence (Convergencia por la Democracia Partido Político Nacional) got 41.92% of the votes, whilst Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI) obtained 36.81% and National Action Party (Partido Acción Nacional, PAN) 22.26% (Instituto Electoral de Michoacán 2001). The results of the 2007 elections for the state governor were: Coalition for a better Michoacán (Coalición por un Michoacán mejor) integrated by PRD, PT and Convergence Party (Partido Convergencia) gained 35.75% of the votes, PAN 31.19% and PRI 24.79% (Instituto Electoral de Michoacán 2008).

rather than proactive, with a serious lack of self-criticism and more focused on collecting opinions instead of investigating causes and effects of the events. According to Tan and Weaver's (2009) parameters, this situation coincided with the quality of the political elites and their practices. In other words, as these scholars found in their study related to local coverage about legislative activities of a group of Senators from different US states, professional Congressmen encouraged a more professional performance of the reporters who were covering their activities. That is, senators with higher levels of performance demanded more involvement of the political correspondents. Therefore, if context matters, it would be difficult that in an environment like Morelia which promotes patron-client relationships between the actors and where the exchange of favours is what really counts, both politicians and journalists could have a high performance.

It is important to stress that, historically, one of the hallmarks of the Mexican political system has been its clientelistic structure. To a large extent, politics in Mexico is based upon relations of domination in which political subordination is rewarded with all kind of favours. It represents the use of influence and resources by a superior person (patron) to protect or benefit the inferior (client). By the discretionary allocation of all kind of means to benefit their support groups, not the citizens though, Mexican bureaucracy has perpetuated its permanence in power (Fox 1994, Adler-Lomnitz *et al* 2004, Elizondo 2006 and Vogler 2007).

For that same reason, it is not strange that the Morelian press is openly partisan, whether ideologically or economically, simply because the weight of history and political practices dictates so. In other terms, since national, regional and local media have been historically aligned towards government, of which legitimacy is mainly built upon diverse clientelistic exchanges, it would be extremely difficult that at the ground level the journalist-politician relationship could be otherwise. Even more, as some of the informants commented, a certain dose of partisanship – in the form of editorial lines - is not only expected, but desirable as well. Thus, within this cultural context, the journalistic practice allows reporters to openly express their political sympathies and antipathies without much concern. Although it implies a different research, Mexican and Morelian readers might also be looking after information which could match their ideological preferences. In so doing, they choose one specific newspaper and reject its competitors, just as Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) argued regarding the communication roles

compatibility.¹²² In addition, and even though this thesis is built upon a case study, the empirical evidence contributes to the overall discussion on the influence of political and economic structures on journalists:

The political and economic environments make up the principal forces that drive variations in journalism cultures and media systems around the world... Furthermore, journalists may have internalised these influences through professional socialization even to the extent that they do not appear as external forces any longer but as *natural* aspects of journalistic work (Hanitzch and Mellado 2011:416-417).

Finally, in spite of an increasing wave of university graduate journalists, who have not left their mark yet - at least not as expected - news reporting practice is still at a very rudimentary level, as both the interviews with the communications officers and politicians and the content analysis indicated.¹²³ Therefore, as Hallin and Mancini (2004) explained, holding an academic degree is by no means a warrant of professionalization, because it involves other factors such as civic orientation and a watchdog stance. This is particularly interesting because the Morelian academic programmes of journalism and communications degrees are based upon the American standards, which praise the objectivity ideal and promote political independence, through a detached, non-partisan and factual reporting.¹²⁴ The problem, as some of the interviewees commented, is the lack of coherence between classrooms and newsrooms, where exigencies are radically divergent. This is also indicative of the mismatch between professionalization and the structure of the media market. As a result of that, local journalism is a hybrid product of normative ideals and every day practices, which is consistent with the prevailing situation in the rest of Mexico (Márquez 2010 and Mellado *et al* 2012). The reason is that the journalistic practice has more to do with routines rather than ideas.

This situation reinforces the notion of change commented before. This thesis argues that significant rearrangements take place first at the macro level and then permeate to the micro level, but changes at the bottom do not necessarily impact on the overall structure. In that sense, the fact that at the ground level there is an incipient professionalization of the local reporters, it

¹²² See chapter three, section 3.3 *Political communication as a system*.

¹²³ See chapters five (section 5.3 *Professionalization*) and six (section 6.3 *Logic of the relationship*).

¹²⁴ See chapter two, section 2.2 *The myth of objectivity*.

does not mean that the media environment is becoming more modern. This is because the patron-client system now operates at a higher level, between publishers and high rank government officers, leaving individual news workers as mere pawns in the political news process. In short, whilst the exchange of favours between media and political elites continues to be the rule, Morelian – and Mexican – journalism will not change, despite individual correspondents' efforts.

Due to its inherent complexity, the discussion on professionalization implies a particular research and, hence, it is out of the scope of this study. Although this issue was considered here as one of the parameters of the media system, it might as well be interesting to analyse it at the level of the actors. That is, this thesis included it as a part of the macro level because that was how it was proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Thus, it was evaluated through the overall reporters' performance in terms of autonomy, professional norms and public service orientation. Nonetheless, the field work suggested the possibility of another approach which involves regarding this issue at a personal level, rather than at an organizational level. Under this scope, professionalization could be understood as an individual agency, instead of a structural factor. In that sense, it could also be evaluated – for instance - the role of the academic background in the journalistic practice.

In sum, the empirical evidence reinforced the hypothesis that the specific conditions of the media system determines the way political correspondents and their sources interact. In that sense, context matters because it provides the actors within the political communication arena the rules – formal and informal – which they are expected to follow. That is, the relationship between these actors is mediated by the specific way in which the news outlets operate.

But before closing this section, it is worth mentioning that beyond the Mexican borders, there are some other examples which reinforce the argument of structural persistence in spite of change at the actors level: 'the paradox in the Ugandan case is that liberal media situation does not seem to cultivate ethical journalism practice' (Skjerdal 2010:386). Furthermore, the importance of the context is also evident in the Nigerian media system:

In the case of Nigeria, which has a strong tradition of clientelism, journalism practice adopts a habit of nurturing ties between reporters and sources to the extent that investigative reporting will be subdued because the reporter and the source have a mutual interest in not exposing the scandal;

the reporter for financial reasons, and the source for status reasons (Skjerdal 2010:388).

7.2 Instrumentalization as the result of the political communication process

This section offers the argument regarding the instrumentalization of the Morelian media organizations by the state government, which is the outcome of the interaction between the macro and micro levels of the local political communication process. In spite of the arrival of a different political party to the state and local administrations, the use of the news outlets as the internal mail of the high rank official and party elites is still the hallmark of the media system in Morelia. This situation, which was the main feature of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) regime at the national level,¹²⁵ contradicts Lawson's (1997 and 2002) and Hughes' (2003 and 2006) assumptions of a general modernization of the journalistic practice in Mexico.

'Although studies do give prominence to primary definers as shapers of news content, few have concluded that journalists are mere stenographers of power' (Covert and Washburn 2007:69). Following this assumption and as commented in the fifth chapter (subsection *5.3.1 Investigative journalism*), local reporters in Morelia are not particularly keen on investigative journalism principles, because they actually do not need them in order to do their job. Since most of the government officials and politicians are more than ready to provide information to reinforce their own images or weaken someone else's, political correspondents just have to make phone calls or drop by the press offices to get ready to print statements. As a result of that, this kind of stories will be more than welcome by the aligned newspaper.

In order to explain the Mexican media system, and Morelian as well, an instrumentalist model suits best (Hallin 1995). This is because there is a direct control over the content of the news by government and political elites which, in agreement with owners and editors, shape the information that is going to be published or broadcasted. Under these circumstances, there is a permanent risk of instrumentalization when local media personnel, instead of actually being journalists, willingly or forced they only act as government spokespersons by parroting official statements. As discussed in the previous

¹²⁵ See chapter one, section *1.2 Mexican media's main features*.

chapter (section 6.3 *Logic of the relationship*), this is the sign of a juncture journalism, just as the one practiced in the city where this research was conducted.

Instrumentalization, hence, is one of the key features for understanding Morelian political journalism, which suffers from a “press release-dependence”. By simply reproducing the official version, without presenting different sides of the story¹²⁶ or even giving follow-up, news organizations are frozen in the PRI regime time, when the head of the administration - whether federal or state - used to dictate the headlines. Since ‘the government’s spin is gospel’ (Castañeda 1997:138), then, it is not a surprise that ‘pro-government self-censorship continues to characterise much of the printed press, especially in the provinces’ (Orme 1997:16).

Patterson and Donsbach (1996) alerted about the risk of claiming bias on news coverage by only relying on content analysis, which simply detects patterns and trends, but is less effective in explaining causes. In that sense, the argument about the poor journalistic practice is reinforced here with the interviews with the political communication actors, who did not just agree with the idea - at least most of them - but they also provided relevant insights related to their interaction.

There is a widely spread commonplace about the so-called media influence on society and, thus, in politics: ‘mass communication media influence on politics is so significant that today it is accepted that there is a subduing of the political practice towards media because, firstly, they impose their formats and, secondly, the definition of the agenda’ (Peschard 2000:89). This might be true elsewhere, for instance, the UK and the Netherlands where media have imposed their logic on politics (Brants and Voltmer 2011). Nevertheless, as these findings proved, more than a media influence, in Morelia there is just a media submission instead. This is especially true at the state government level, because it is the main player in the agenda management process, whilst state Congressmen and political party members – mainly PRI and PAN - are considered just as mere opinion providers. Notwithstanding, at first glance, if someone has to pay off the newspapers because of fear of some kind of damage, it could be said that there is an influence indeed. However, due to the instrumentalization – just as Adler-Lomnitz *et al* (2004) noticed during the 1988 elections - Mexican

¹²⁶ See chapters five (subsection 5.3.1 *Investigative journalism*) and six (subsection 6.2.2 *Political news and bias*).

political elites use the media as internal mail to exchange messages with their peers, not to communicate with their constituency. Therefore, due to their limited circulation and readership,¹²⁷ the impact of the local printed media on the public opinion is less threatening than the impact on their bosses and adversaries. In sum, and as a reflection of Mexico, Morelian journalistic practice could be considered as 'loyal and opportunist' because 'it tends to defend authorities, and serves as a messenger for the political and economic elite' (Mellado *et al* 2012:63).

On the other hand, Lawson (1997 and 2002) and Hughes (2003 and 2006) claimed that Mexican journalism was moving towards a more civic orientation. In so doing news outlets and their staff started regarding the society not as victims or recipients of government programmes, but as active citizens who demanded a more balanced coverage and strict scrutiny of authorities' performance. Their assumption is not wrong *per se*, but it is limited and it led them to raise generalizations barely supported in reality. Although both of them studied different newsrooms across the country, their sample was clearly biased, because they only included similar newspapers which shared the specific conditions for reinforcing their hypotheses. For instance Lawson (2002) only used *Proceso* and *La Jornada* (both openly left oriented and anti-regime publications) in his argument about Mexican media's increasingly civic framing coverage, which obviously was high. Nevertheless, he did not include in his content analysis any other organization with a different editorial line, which could have offered a more balanced result. Nonetheless, this is a common mistake that foreign observers usually make:

Foreign correspondents with barely adequate Spanish can read – or have translated – critical editorials in *La Jornada* or damaging investigative reports in *Proceso*. But they cannot follow the nightly newscast's rapid-fire language. As a result, many foreigners have the impression that there is a freewheeling debate taking place in the Mexican media (Castañeda 1997:138).

That is precisely why, in order to avoid such risk, this research included all the local newspapers, no matter their ideological inclinations. Thus the findings could be as representative of the Morelian reality as possible. In so doing, instead of vague generalizations, the results pointed at a trend supported in both quantitative and qualitative ways. If, as these scholars

¹²⁷ See chapter five, section 5.1 *Media market*.

optimistically claimed, civic journalism involves turning media's look towards civil society, just as the ones they worked with, local journalistic practice goes in an opposite direction then. When analysing the actors represented in the political news, the citizens were the least cited by the local printed media, as commented in chapter five (subsection 5.3.1 *Investigative journalism*). On the contrary, when they were not ignored, they were portrayed just as Hallin (2000a:275) found fifteen years ago:

Ordinary citizens played a limited and clearly subordinate role in *Televisa's* representation of Mexican society and politics. Most often they appeared in representations of the clientelist system by which the government delivered benefits to select groups of citizens as a reward for their political loyalty.

Thus, as a conclusion of this section, it can be said that due to pro-government publications with nearly identical political coverage, Morelians do not have reliable and trustworthy information sources, which could help them understand their historical moment and keep public servants accountable. In other words, since there is no such thing as civic journalism, newspapers are mere government messengers, simply because the environment promotes this practice. Therefore the idea of the transformation of media in Mexico is once again challenged by the evidence of the same old journalistic practice, determined by an overt instrumentalization exerted by the government.

7.3 Economically-driven partisanship

As a result of the instrumentalization commented in the previous section, the local newspapers showed an overt allegiance towards the state government. However, this section argues that, rather than ideological, this alignment has economic roots. That is, due to the official advertising contracts, the sale of their editorial lines has fostered the *economically-driven partisanship*.

If Lawson's (2002) assumption about considering the market as the key for building a Mexican Fourth Estate and media opening is right, Morelia seems to be doomed then. Despite the apparent external pluralism (Hallin and Mancini 2004) among the local press, which would involve different approaches to the news fostered by specific political ideologies, the empirical evidence showed that their editorial lines are for sale and, thus, there is an evident alignment towards state government. Therefore, the idyllic image of the reader's interests reflected on the news is still a *guajiro*

dream.¹²⁸ Brown (2011:71) also considered this issue, which was discussed in the second chapter (section 2.1 *Partisanship*) too: 'partisan alignment is a rational business strategy in a market large enough to support multiple competitors'. However, local media market is reduced and it is not capable of maintaining competence among news outlets. For that reason, their only chance to survive is exchanging their allegiance for revenues, but not from selling copies, from selling their pages to the best buyer instead.

Mexican newspapers lag behind those in many other parts of the world. The Mexican government does not confront a critical press, not because it is more determined to silence criticism than other governments, but because it has been so successful with subtle measures. The government can exercise control over what it wants published because the press has no desire to give up its share of the bargain; the press cannot bear the idea of unbridled competition (Riva Palacio 1997:29).

Journalists and politicians do not share ideologies, only interests, said one of the interviewees.¹²⁹ He was right. Whether political or economic, but especially the latter, interest is the key for understanding partisanship. In that sense, the relationship between them is determined by the perception of a mutually beneficial interaction, which could result in revenues for one part and publicity for the other. Since media organizations are considered more as business, rather than public service organizations, customers - not audiences - have the last word. For that reason, editorial lines are flexible and easily adapt to the ever changing political environment. Putting it bluntly, newsrooms decisions are more and more up to the advertisers, but less and less up to journalists.

Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) were right when they said that there is a sense of correspondence between the role of reporters and politicians during the political communication process.¹³⁰ Hence, party and governmental elites are expected to act as information providers in a watchdog press environment. Under this logic, the conflictive or collaborative relationship has an ideological origin. Nonetheless, in the capital city of Michoacán the empirical evidence proved otherwise. The Morelian case showed that

¹²⁸ *Guajiro dream* (sueño guajiro) is a Mexican slang expression which indicates that something is impossible or, at least, far from being reached yet.

¹²⁹ See chapter five, subsection 5.2.1 *Sharing ideologies between journalist and politician*.

¹³⁰ See chapter three, section 3.3. *Political communication as a system*.

instead of ideological, the interaction is mainly shaped by economic factors. Therefore, the former political parallelism has shifted towards the new *economically-driven partisanship*, in which allegiance is now solely determined by the money. In that sense, informants stressed the point that conflicts between media and politicians had most of the times an economic origin. Thus, whenever money stopped flowing, the *beating ups* immediately started, once investments returned, harsh criticism magically went away.¹³¹

State government coverage in Michoacán is an example of this situation, because content analysis showed that when correlating advertising rates and coverage, there is a neat uniformity - both quantitatively and qualitatively - regarding the way this administration was portrayed by newspapers. Due to a homogeneous investment in official advertising in all the publications, the state administration and its personnel were framed in a more than friendly way. On the contrary, since the local government selectively invested more in *La Voz* and *Provincia*, the coverage it received presented that same pattern: higher levels of presence on them than on the rest.¹³²

The situation repeats at a national level too. Sandoval (2002) stated that this phenomenon reaches shameless levels especially during electoral campaigns, when coverage is everything but balanced. Thus, differences in coverage and framing are only explained through differences in advertising investments, which means that the more money, the better the portrayal. The reason, as Champagne (2005:51) puts it, is that 'economic censorship... is stronger and much more merciless'. Hughes and Lawson (2003:82) also found this trend in their study about television news and the 2000 presidential election in Mexico:

For privately owned stations, financial incentives – including both advertising revenues and potential favours from government officials - were most important in shaping coverage. For state-owned television broadcasters, coverage depended straightforwardly on whether or not governors intended to exploit the station for political ends, which they typically did.

That is why Lawson (2002) suggested that, when there is a convergence of journalistic ideals regarding the role of news outlets in society, civic-minded

¹³¹ See chapter five, section 5.4.2 *Official advertising in Morelian newspapers* under the subheading *Opinions of the political communication actors*.

¹³² See chapter five, section 5.4.2 *Official advertising in Morelian newspapers* under the subheading *Correlating official advertising and coverage*.

reporters could change the routines within their own organizations – no matter the ownership - and earn greater levels of independence. Once again, this romantic view reinforces the idea that reality transcends fantasy. Even though neither public nor commercial media are immune to partisan practices, ownership is not the key for understanding partisanship either, it is their financial resources instead which give them their higher or lesser informative freedom. In simpler terms, adopting a watchdog or lapdog position towards political elites depends basically on each news organization's solvency to face economic contingencies, not just on their goodwill. Schudson (2005a:175) also noted that in certain cases 'a link between ownership and market structure on the one hand and news content on the other is not apparent'. Furthermore,

large, profitable media companies have more resources to devote to reporting and for legal defence, thus making them potentially more willing and able to challenge the State, powerful interest groups, or other large corporations. In some cases, then, concentration or even local monopolies may actually contribute to more critical, in-depth political reporting (Benson 2004:282).

Just as the literature review pointed out, official advertising and partisanship are interdependent concepts, deeply rooted in Mexican political journalism.¹³³ The use of the former as a means of coercion towards the media could also be conceived as a reflection of the patron-client structure which, despite the regime change, still determines power relations in the country. Based on this idea, official advertising contracts might as well be considered as the modern times *chayote* (bribe) but, on the contrary of the old one which was received directly by individual news workers, this one is now negotiated at institutional levels and, hence, acquires an official character. Nonetheless, its purpose stays the same: influencing the political news production process.

Although it was not its ultimate goal, the empirical evidence of the Morelian case offered the foundation for explaining the shift of the receivers of the bribe known as *chayote*. In other words, by correlating the information provided by the interviewees, it could be argued that the shift from the old bribes to individual reporters to the use of the official advertising as a means of corruption has a threefold explanation: firstly, it is easier to negotiate a

¹³³ See chapter one, section 1.2 *Mexican media's main features* under the subheading *Official advertising as a means of coercion*.

single contract directly with the media owners or directors-general than with several individual news workers. That is, since ownership is not a shield against instrumentalization, instead of dealing with a group of many reporters, party/government elites negotiate these commercial agreements with their media peers. In other words, journalists are suppressed as intermediaries between politicians and news organizations. Moreover, political correspondents are now mere instruments of their bosses because, in order to sign a contract, the latter use the former for criticising - *beating up* - a political figure. Finally, the fact that these contracts are official and, thus, public accountable, gives them an institutional character.

Secondly, this shift might as well be fostered by some kind of modernization process in which new institutional communication techniques have been adopted by the Social Communication Areas of the government. In other words, these offices have slowly moving towards a marketing oriented performance. That is, instead of mere press releases writers, their staffs have started developing more elaborated campaigns in which public relations, advertising and graphic design tools have been exploited. In so doing, rather than depending only on the coverage, communications officers boost publicity by this means too.¹³⁴

Thirdly, the increasing rate of university graduate reporters who are supposed to be more ethically concerned than their predecessors (the *empiricists*), might have also fostered an incipient professionalization of the Mexican and Morelian media system. Notwithstanding, as commented in the fifth chapter (subsection 5.3.2 *Academic background*), holding a communications or journalism degree is by no means a guarantee of professionalization. Nonetheless, it definitely facilitates it because - at least in theoretical terms - the new reporters were taught about the importance of the ethics in the journalistic practice. But once again, no matter how ethical the new reporters are, they are still the weakest link of the chain and, under the media owners' eyes, they are disposable when their ethical values get in the way of an official advertising contract. In other words, 'the journalists' relative freedom from economic influences may therefore be, in part, a professional illusion' (Hanitzch and Mellado 2011:420).

¹³⁴ Even though further research on this issue is needed, some clues of this assumption were given in chapters one (section 1.1 *Media and democratization in Mexico*) and six (subsection 6.1.2 *Interviewees' perceptions of their interaction with one another*, under the subheadings *The official link* and *Journalists' evaluation of the Social Communications Areas*).

Finally, the existence of this *economically-driven partisanship* also reinforces the general assumptions of the political economy of communication, because it emphasises the concepts of 'control and survival' (Mosco 2009:3). The former is related to a political process of relationships between key actors – reporters and politicians in this thesis - and the latter refers to the economic subsistence of the news organizations. Herman and Chomsky (1994) considered that both the reliance on advertising and government agenda are important factors of the propaganda.¹³⁵ In that sense, whether public or commercial, media messages are mere reproductions of 'the ideology of the paymaster' (Shoemaker and Reese 1996:231). For that reason, as was commented earlier in this section, 'the concern for financial performance has become so dominant that journalism gets neglected for the sake of the company profitability' (Sparrow 1999:103). Furthermore, Wald (1987:16), concluded his analysis of the news marketplace by arguing that the purpose of the news organizations 'is to make money, not to express ideas'.

In sum, the Morelian case demonstrated that the media in Mexico still work under a partisan logic. However, rather than ideological, this partisanship is economically-driven. That is, the alignment is not fostered by political visions, but by economic reasons. In that sense, the official advertising has become the coin to exchange revenues for publicity. Since government authorities' discretion determines the allocation of these adverts, both news outlets and high rank public servants use these contracts as a means of coercion towards one another. This is possible because the specific conditions of the media market boost this phenomenon. In other words, instead of a business strategy, the dependence on the official advertising is a matter of survival. Finally, this situation also proved that, in spite of the arrival of different political parties to the government (federal, state and local), the relationship with the news outlets remains basically the same. In short terms, it means that, rather than change, Mexican media are still frozen in the PRI regime era.

¹³⁵ According to these authors, the propagandistic role of the mass media is generating social support for the particular interests of the ruling elite, integrated by the State and businessmen. Their *Propaganda Model* is based upon a set of 'filters': concentrated media ownership, reliance on advertising, dependence on official agenda, the use of flaks for dealing with journalists and allegiance to the principles of capitalism (Herman and Chomsky 1994).

7.4 Contributions

This section stresses the contributions of this research. Thanks to the data collected from the field and its further analysis, this thesis has a threefold contribution: firstly, it strengthens Mexican research in the area of journalism studies. Secondly, it proposes an innovative approach to the study of the journalist-politician relationship. Thirdly, it emphasises the importance of the local studies as the foundations of political communication processes.

On the one hand, regarding the contribution to the Mexican literature about political communication and journalism, this thesis is aligned towards an underdeveloped tradition which is focused on actually doing research on this area, not just writing about it. In other words, there has been a historical lack of proper methodologically sustained research in this field in Mexico, because most of the locally produced materials are extensive literature reviews, inventories of journalistic anecdotes, or mere “intellectual” speculations with few or no direct links with reality. By providing empirical evidence directly collected from the field, this study surmounts most of its predecessors. For instance, issues like the impact of official advertising on newsrooms, media partisanship or government coercion towards the press, have been widely commented,¹³⁶ but poorly researched on the field.¹³⁷ In that sense, the substance of this study challenged the notion of media modernization in Mexico by stressing the continuance of old practices of coercion, but presented with a new face, such as the official advertising contracts.

On the other hand, this research contributes to the field of political communication by proposing a new framework that explains how the interaction between journalists and party/State authorities is determined by the mass communication environment where it takes place. The central hypothesis verified and sustained by the empirical evidence, stresses the necessity of understanding political actors’ relationship not as something that appears by spontaneous generation, but something that is shaped by the context where it is established. In order to achieve this aim, two frameworks were used here (Hallin and Mancini 2004 and Blumler and Gurevitch 1995/Pfetsch 2004), each one of them focused on different faces of the

¹³⁶ See for instance Torres (1997), Trejo (1992 and 1998), Sandoval (2002), Leñero (1978), Rodríguez (1993), Avilés (1999), Járquez (2001) and Rodríguez (2007).

¹³⁷ Some exceptions are Adler-Lomnitz *et al* (2004), Orozco (2007), Santillán (2008) and De León (2009).

phenomenon. Thus, instead of just merely applying them on the case study, a specific scheme was created based on their parameters. In other words, it took the best of both of them and created a more solid hybrid, which was described in the fourth chapter (section 4.1 *The research problem*).

In so doing, the proposed approach took them a step forward by fostering their capability of raising hypotheses and, hence, transcending their inherent limitations of just classifying reality in predetermined boxes. In sum, this framework's scope is wider than its predecessors, because of its possibility of providing explanations not just classifications and, therefore, proposing hypotheses. It means that, by understanding the specific characteristics of the media system (macro level), the journalist-politician relationship (micro level) could be predicted. In that sense, more than assuming change or continuity *per se*, this thesis emphasises the necessity of regarding each case within its particular context and evaluating it under its own conditions. That is, using different theoretical parameters, but not forcing the reality to fit into them. Of course, further research ought to be done in order to collect more evidence for reinforcing this idea, both within the country and overseas. Nevertheless, the Morelian case provides the initial information for strengthening this framework.

Finally, this research stresses the importance of the local studies in the field of political communications in particular, but also in the general area of communication, historically neglected by scholars everywhere. As it was stated in the introduction, national and cross-national approaches boost over-generalizations that very often fail to explain individual cases. The reason is that at the level of the people, who are in fact the ultimate actors of the communication process, there are a lot of particular characteristics that simply do not receive the proper attention.

Although their appeal to comparative research at international levels, Hallin and Mancini (2010) accepted that including different cases in diverse contexts involves the permanent risk of generalizations, which could never pay proper attention to the specificities of single case studies. 'Even though researchers found that attention to local news enhances political knowledge and promotes political participation, research on local media effects often is overshadowed by a concern with the effects of national media' (Tan and Weaver 2009:455). For that reason, this case study not only explains the research problem from different perspectives (reporters, politicians, communications officers and coverage), and through two methodological

approaches (quantitative and qualitative), it also provides a series of insights which could hardly be perceived in a wider scope project.

One final thought before closing: by taking it as an antecedent - whether in Mexico or overseas - this thesis could foster future research on aspects such as expanding the scope of the study to more cities in the country, testing this framework in another context, comparing the impact of official advertising on different media systems, evaluating the reporters' notion of professionalization, digging into the citizen's perceptions of the political news (the way they receive, evaluate and use them), and comparing *empiricists* and university graduate reporters' performance, among others.

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Appendix A Content analysis coding

Official advertising

Newspaper:						
Date:						
Unit of analysis	Categories	Sub-categories	Sub-subcategories	Frequencies	Total	
Official advertising	1.- Advertiser	1.1.- Political party	1.1.1.- PAN			
			1.1.2.- PRD			
			1.1.3.- PRI			
			1.1.4.- Other			
		1.2.- Government	1.2.1.- Federal			
			1.2.2.- State			
			1.2.3.- Local			
		1.3.- Congress	1.3.1.- Senate			
			1.3.2.- Federal deputies			
			1.3.3.- State Congress			
		2.- Physical characteristics	2.1.- Size	2.1.1.- Full page		
				2.1.2.- 3/4		
				2.1.3.- 1/2		
	2.1.4.- 1/4					
	2.1.5.- 1/8					
	2.1.6.- Strip ad					
	2.2.- Position		2.2.1.- Even page			
		2.2.2.- Odd page				
	3.- Content	3.1.- Institutional image				
3.2.- Specific activity						
3.3.- Other	3.3.1.- Statements					
	3.3.2.- Memorial notice					
4.- Type	4.1.- Regular advertisement					
	4.2.- Paid news story					

Political news

Newspaper:							
Date:							
Unit of analysis	Categories	Sub-categories	Sub-subcategories	Frequencies	Total		
Political news	1- Type of source	1.1- Press conference					
		1.2- Press release					
		1.3- Exclusive interview					
		1.4- Official event coverage					
		1.4- Unofficial source					
		1.5- Media's own investigation					
	2- Number of sources	2.1- Single					
		2.2- Multi					
	3- Type of actors	3.1- President					
		3.2- Governor					
		3.3- Mayor					
		3.4- Congressmen					
		3.5- Government officials					
		3.6- Official spokespersons					
		3.7- Politicians					
		3.8- Interest groups					
		3.9- Citizens					
	4- Framing	4.1- Biased		4.1.1- Favourable			
				4.1.2- Unfavourable			
		4.2- Neutral					
	5- Agenda setting	5.1- Media's own agenda					
		5.2- Mainstream coverage		5.2.1- President			
				5.2.2- Federal government			
				5.2.3- Governor			
				5.2.4- State government			
				5.2.5- Mayor			
			5.2.6- Local government				
			5.2.7- State Congress				
			5.2.8- Interest groups				
			5.2.9- PAN				
			5.2.10- PRI				
	5.2.11- PRD						
6- Context	6.1- Federal						
	6.2- State						
	6.3- Local						

Appendix B Questionnaires for the interviews

Journalists

Reporting routines

- What are your daily routines?
- Does your newspaper have its own institutional routines?
- What do you understand by investigative journalism?
- How often do you practice it?
- How often do you work with your own/your newspaper's agenda?

Interaction with politicians

- How often do you have a personal contact with politicians?
- By which means do you generally interact with them? (press conference, exclusive interview, events coverage)
- Is sharing political opinions with your sources important for your work?
- How do you perceive your relationship with your sources?
- Which are the official channels that you use to interact with your sources?
- How often do you use unofficial channels (leaks, anonymous sources...) to get information?
- Generally speaking, how could you define your relationship with your sources?
- How do you evaluate politicians' communication work?

Newspaper's political interactions

- Should the media always offer only information without political ideology?
- Do they actually do it?
- How do you and your newspaper handle the struggle between partisanship and objectivity?
- Does the government (local, state or federal) have any means of coercion towards the media?
- Have you or your newspaper experienced any form of coercion from the government?
- Do you think that the official advertising might have an editorial impact in your newsroom?

Politicians and communications officers

Interaction with reporters

- How often do you have a personal contact with journalists?
- By which means do you generally interact with them? (press conference, exclusive interview, events coverage)
- Is sharing political opinions with them important?
- To what extent their political ideas become evident in their stories?
- How do you perceive your relationship with the journalist?
- How hard is to get coverage?
- In general terms, who sets the agenda of the political information?
- Which are the official channels that you generally use to interact with the journalists?
- How often do you use unofficial channels (leaks, rumours, anonymous sources...) to spread information?
- Generally speaking, how could you define your relationship with the reporters?
- How do you evaluate journalists' daily work?

Newspapers' political interactions

- Should the media always offer only information without political ideology?
- Do they actually do it?
- Does the government (local, state or federal) have any means of coercion towards the media?
- Do you think that the official advertising might have an editorial impact on newsrooms?

Appendix C Examples of official advertising

Types of official advertising

Regular advertisement

14A Viernes, 28 de enero de 2011 **MORELIA** LA VOZ DE MICHOACÁN

Tintorería
Superlav



La 4ta. prenda
Gratis
(de igual o menor tamaño)

Vigencia al 20 de Febrero.

¡Aceptamos tarjetas de crédito!

Av. Solidaridad #2008
Servicio a domicilio Tel. 3•17•33•48

FELICITO A LOS JÓVENES QUE TAN DIGNAMENTE REPRESENTARON A MICHOACÁN Y A LA UNIVERSIDAD MICHOACANA EN ESTA EDICIÓN DE LA OLIMPIADA NACIONAL DE BIOLOGÍA

Salvador Jara, RECTOR DE LA UMSNH

Michoacán gana oro en Biología

TAMBIÉN SETRAEN PLATA Y BRONCE DE LA JUSTA NACIONAL

REDACCIÓN,
La Voz de Michoacán

La Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo ganó dos medallas de oro en la Vigésima Olimpiada Nacional de Biología, en tanto que los otros cuatro representantes del estado de Michoacán obtuvieron dos galardones de plata y dos de bronce, informó el presidente de la Academia de la Biología de la Máxima Casa de Estudios, Homero Galarza Horrostieta.

Comentó que en la Olimpiada, que inició el pasado 23 de enero en San Luis Potosí,

obtuvieron medalla de oro: Mayra Murillo Villicaña, alumna de la preparatoria "Pascual Ortiz Rubio", de la Universidad Michoacana, y Stephanie Paola Sansón Tino, de la preparatoria "Rector Miguel Hidalgo", incorporada a nuestra Casa de Estudios.

Asimismo, consiguieron medalla de plata: Ramiro Raziel Alcaraz García, del Colegio de Estudios Científicos y Tecnológicos (Cecytem) Morelia, y Víctor Manuel Gudiño Hernández, del Colegio de Bachilleres, plantel Jiquilpan.

Las medallas de bronce fueron para Cristina Alejandre Rojo, del Centro de Bachillerato Tecnológico, Industrial y de Servicios (Cbtis), de La Piedad, y Sandra Hernández Sal-

to, del Colegio de Bachilleres, plantel Antúnez, en el municipio de Parácuaro.

De esa forma, los seis estudiantes que integraron la delegación que representó a Michoacán en la Olimpiada obtuvieron galardones; todos ellos fueron preparados por profesores de la Universidad Michoacana.

Al conocer el resultado, el rector nicolaíta, Salvador Jara Guerrero, externó su felicitación a los jóvenes que, dijo, tan dignamente representaron a Michoacán y a la Universidad, en esta vigésima edición de la Olimpiada Nacional de Biología; asimismo, hizo extensivo su reconocimiento a Homero Galarza y al resto de los profesores que participaron en la preparación de los estudiantes.



¿AÚN NO REVALIDAS TU LICENCIA?

Sólo tienes hasta el 31 de marzo para poner en orden tu

LICENCIA MUNICIPAL DE FUNCIONAMIENTO

DE LOS TRES GÉNEROS ES DECIR, "A", "B" Y "C".

Acude al **DEPARTAMENTO DE TRÁMITE Y CONTROL**
Ubicado en el edificio de Tesorería Municipal, calle Circuito Mintzita #470 del Fraccionamiento Manantiales.

Horario de 8:30 a 15:00 hrs.

¡Evita problemas y revalida!





CORTESÍA, AYUNTAMIENTO

Invitado de honor

El **presidente municipal** Fausto Vallejo Figueroa acudió a la toma de protesta del nuevo Consejo Consultivo de la Cámara Nacional de la Industria de la Radio y la Televisión (CIRT), delegación Michoacán, la cual desde ahora encabezará Juan Luis Treviño Núñez.

Image 1 Example of an advertising of the local government (bottom-left of the page).

Paid news story

6A Lunes, 28 de febrero de 2011

MORELIA

LA VOZ DE MICHOACÁN

ECONOMÍA | EL ESTADO, SEDE DE EVENTOS INTERNACIONALES

Al alza, turismo alternativo

MICHOACÁN ES IDEAL PARA LA PRÁCTICA DE ACTIVIDADES AL AIRE LIBRE Y DE AVENTURA

En el 2010, la Secretaría de Turismo participó en más de 30 eventos de turismo deportivo y de aventura, con una inversión superior a los 3 millones de pesos, alcanzando la cifra de 10 mil participantes entre deportistas y espectadores. La ubicación privilegiada de Michoacán contribuye a que todas estas propuestas tengan mayor alcance, ya que estados como Jalisco, Guanajuato, Querétaro y el Distrito Federal -considerados el mayor mercado emisor de visitantes del país- se encuentran a tan solo unas horas del estado por los turistas logran desplazarse fácilmente no solo a los eventos que año con año se realizan sino también, a disfrutar de las rutas trazadas por los prestadores de servicios de turismo alternativo como el rappel, la es-

Para gustos 'intensos'

Michoacán ha albergado eventos deportivos y de aventura de diversas, incluso a nivel internacional.

- Campeonato Nacional de BMX
- Campeonato estatal de Ciclismo de Montaña 2011
- Torneo Nacional de Surf 2010, en la Costa michoacana
- Race Xtreme 2011
- MG Xtreme Tour
- Bike Marathón 2011
- Olimpiada Nacional Infantil de Motociclismo 2011
- Copa Yuretzio Exrema 2011
- Maraton Internacional de ciclismo de montaña Pico Azul
- Rally Cross Country Michoacán
- 100 % Natural 2011
- 1a. Fecha del Campeonato Nacional de Vehículos 4X4 2011
- 14o. Torneo Internacional de Pesca de pez vela

FUENTE: Sector Estatal

calada, ciclismo de montaña, senderismo, avistamiento de flora y fauna, etc.

Otro segmento importante en cuanto a ecoturismo son los fenómenos de migración de la mariposa Monarca, los pelicanos "boregones" el arribazón de tortuga marina y los parques naturales que representan la iconografía michoacana en cuanto al uso sustentable de los recursos naturales.

En el Michoacán, con el apoyo del Gobierno del Estado a través de las diferentes instancias gubernamentales como la Secre-

taría de Turismo se ubican en las diferentes regiones, aproximadamente 48 centros de turismo que ofrecen actividades de ecoturismo y turismo de aventura, además de 10 operadores especializados, que ofrecen paquetes relacionados con la aventura y visita de sitios para la observación de la naturaleza.

En el 2011, la Secretaría de Turismo pretende mantener los recursos erogados en el año anterior, fortaleciendo la inversión con las aportaciones de los distintos órdenes de gobierno así

como de patrocinadores y de los propios organizadores y algunos de los eventos que están en posibilidad de desarrollarse con diferentes fechas para cada evento son entre otros:

Este tipo de acciones que fortalecen el turismo alternativo son actividades rentables para las comunidades ya que aportan beneficios ambientales, favorecen la cultura ecológica, promueven la participación y organización social de las comunidades, elevan la calidad de vida comunitaria, promueven el arraigo de

las tradiciones, detonan proyectos comunitarios y por ende, crean fuentes de trabajo en las distintas comunidades.

Michoacán tiene en el turismo alternativo una enorme oportunidad para consolidarse como uno de los destinos de mayor importancia en el país debido a los diversos sitios naturales de enorme belleza escénica, la hospitalidad genuina de los pobladores locales, la gastronomía y el rico patrimonio cultural de nuestros pueblos que hacen del estado el lugar ideal para que los deportistas y visitantes puedan realizar su deporte favorito y de paso aprovechen para visitar los magníficos lugares turísticos y culturales que el estado ofrece.

Para el Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán, el turismo continúa siendo una de las principales palancas para el desarrollo y la parte más dinámica de la economía, en este sentido, el turismo ecológico, deportivo y de aventura es uno de los nuevos segmentos con mayor potencial de crecimiento.



DURANTE EL 2010, LA SECRETARÍA DE TURISMO PARTICIPÓ EN MÁS DE 30 EVENTOS DE TURISMO DEPORTIVO Y DE AVENTURA, CON UNA INVERSIÓN TOTAL SUPERIOR A LOS 3 MILLONES DE PESOS.

Image 2 Paid news story related to the promotion of Michoacán as a touristic place.

Content of the official advertisements

Institutional image

VIERNES 12 DE FEBRERO DE 2010 | CAMBIO DE MICHOACÁN

POLÍTICA | 11

OPINIONES

Académicos se dicen «despreciados» por autoridades en el caso de la Loma

► Afirman no haber sido tomados en cuenta

Humberto Castillo | MORELIA

Académicos e investigadores de diversas universidades con sede en Morelia y del país, se dijeron «despreciados y ninguneados» por las autoridades municipales y estatales al ignorar las recomendaciones para no construir una vialidad sobre la Loma de Santa María, que pone en riesgo no sólo el área natural, sino al sur de Morelia y Camelinas, ante los riesgos de inestabilidad y geológicos que tiene la zona.

Para tal efecto, los investigadores con maestrías y doctorados en diversas áreas anunciaron que ya cuentan con 200 firmas de académicos universitarios que se oponen a la construcción de la vialidad, al igual que al cambio del decreto de estatus de la Loma de Santa María, considerada hasta antes del 31 de diciembre pasado, Área Natural Protegida.

Los riesgos, además de sísmicos, pueden ser deslaves a causa de lluvias o contingencias como la ocurrida en el cerro de Anganguaco, a causa del cambio de uso ilegal, el exceso de lluvia y la tala clandestina, entre otros factores.

David Barkin, con maestría por la Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, destacó que en otras ocasiones el Ayuntamiento de Morelia y el gobierno del estado los han llamado y consultado sobre diversos temas ambientales o de desarrollo urbano, pero en esta ocasión hay caso omiso, intolerancia y terquedad para realizar la vialidad que en gran medida beneficiará al empresario Francisco Medina y la clase pudiente de la capital michoacana.

La investigadora del Centro de Investigaciones en Ecosistemas (Cieco) de la UNAM campus Morelia, Patricia Ávila García, destacó no ha existido ningún tipo de acercamiento con las autoridades porque califican a los académicos como «personalidades» con las que no se reunirían a dialogar.

«Después que las autoridades, éstas u otras, no digan que no se los advertimos, en caso de presentarse desgracias o tragedias en el futuro», advirtió el maestro en Ciencias, también del Cieco de la UNAM, Jorge Rodríguez Velázquez.

Los académicos exigieron en una carta abierta la inmediata abrogación del decreto del 31 de diciembre pasado en torno al Área Natural Protegida de la Loma de Santa María.



CAMBIO | DAYANA FONSECA
Académicos manifestaron su rechazo.

Asimismo, el restablecimiento del diálogo con los ciudadanos y con la comunidad académica de Michoacán, que se ponga en marcha el programa de manejo del Área Natural Protegida de la Loma de Santa María acordado en 2006 por ciudadanos y autoridades, y que se reanude la construcción de la vialidad de Las Torres, ya que ésta representa una solución social y ecológicamente viable.

David Barkin señaló que el desarrollo urbano exclusivo en la parte sur de la ciudad es una amenaza para el patrimonio cultural y social de Morelia, pues el centro comercial ubicado a un lado de Altozano es para la clase pudiente, ni siquiera para clase media, lo que significa un remedo de complejos de California en Estados Unidos.

Las firmas de los inconformes son de investigadores y profesores de varios planteles de la Universidad Michoacana, El Colegio de Michoacán, Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo-Centro Regional Universitario Centro Occidente, Instituto Tecnológico de Morelia, Centro de Investigaciones y Desarrollo del Estado de Michoacán (CIDEM), Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana y UNAM campus Morelia.

La carta entregada a los medios de comunicación señala que el Área Natural Protegida de la Loma de Santa María y depresiones aledañas, aún con su reducida superficie, constituye una pieza clave en la dinámica ecología de la ciudad. Dicha área ofrece oxígeno, agua, bosques, biodiversidad, valores escénicos y un sitio de espaciamiento para los habitantes.

Su categoría de protección ecológica evita la construcción de asentamientos humanos en un área declarada como de alto riesgo geológico.

La medida representa un retroceso y atenta contra un área de importancia estratégica para la ciudad, tras los acuerdos logrados en 2006, para la protección ambiental de la citada loma entre académicos y el gobierno estatal.

Nos comprometimos a trabajar en la inversión productiva para el desarrollo de las carreteras del Estado

Hoy, tenemos mejores vías de comunicación

En dos años de gobierno, se invirtieron más de 4 mil 200 millones de pesos en la rehabilitación y mantenimiento de caminos

- Se concluyó la reconstrucción de 160 kilómetros de la carretera Tepalcatepec-Coalcomán-Aquila.
- Se rehabilitó la carretera Tiripetio-Carcuaro-Eréndira que abarca 152 kilómetros, invirtiéndose más de 126 millones y medio de pesos.
- Concluyó la reconstrucción de 106 kilómetros de la carretera Huetamo - Santiago Conguripo - San Gerónimo, en Huetamo.
- Se modernizó a 4 carriles la carretera La Piedad - Numarán.

Nos comprometimos a dar continuidad al programa carretero, que contempla redes primarias y secundarias de Michoacán y CUMPLIMOS.

En desarrollo de infraestructura carretera, Trabajo cumplido

2º INFORME DE GOBIERNO
Leonel Godoy Rangel
Trabajo cumplido

MICHOACÁN TRABAJA

2008-2012 www.michoacan.gob.mx

Image 3 Advertisement related to the branding of the state government prior to the second annual report of the governor.

Specific activity

LA VOZ DE MICHOACÁN

MORELIA

Lunes, 28 de febrero de 2011 **15A**

OBRA | TRASLADAN ÁREAS DE PLANEACIÓN A LA COSTA Y LC

Descentralizan gobierno

EL FIN ES AGILIZAR LOS TRÁMITES DE 10 DEPENDENCIAS

SERGIO LEMUS,
La Voz de Michoacán

Con una de inversión superior a los siete millones de pesos, el titular de la Coordinación de Planeación para el Desarrollo del Estado (Cplade), Erick López Barriga, anunció que se remodelará la nueva Unidad de Gobierno Estatal de esta área en el puerto de Lázaro Cárdenas y en la región Costa.

López Barriga aseguró que el Gobierno de Michoacán busca mantener la descentralización de los servicios y trámites de la administración pública donde se ubicarán 10 dependencias, "pero principalmente quienes acuden a diario a realizar trámi-

tes diversos ante las dependencias de la presente administración de la región Sierra-Costa".

Para esta obra será necesario demoler un 75% de la actual infraestructura, por lo que las dependencias se ubicarán en un espacio que será habilitado provisionalmente, mientras terminan los trabajos de remodelación y reconstrucción.

Las dependencias que estarán participando económicamente para la remodelación y que serán beneficiadas con la misma son: la Comisión Coordinador del Transporte "Cocotra", Comisión de Pesca del Gobierno del Estado, Secretaría de Educación, Procuraduría de Defensa del Menor y la Familia, Registro Civil, Tránsito y Receptoría de Rentas.

En el edificio Uno se inver-

tirán 2.8 millones de pesos; y en el edificio Dos se invertirán 1.4 millones de pesos; 3.7 mdp en el edificio Cuatro, y quedará pendiente el edificio Tres para una segunda etapa, en la cual se estima ser invertirán 3.5 millones de pesos.

7

MDP
inversión de la construcción

El funcionario estatal dijo que una vez realizado el diagnóstico para la rehabilitación de esta unidad de gobierno, se propuso la reubicación de espacios de acuerdo a sus funciones y compatibilidades para que brinden un mejor servicio a la ciudadanía.

Agregó que los edificios presentan un deterioro por falta de mantenimiento, y es del interés del gobernador Leonel Godoy Rangel es "rescatar este espacio físico para los habitantes del municipio", comentó.



ERICK LÓPEZ ANUNCIÓ QUE SE REMODELARÁ LA NUEVA UNIDAD DE GOBIERNO ESTATAL EN LA REGIÓN COSTERA.

El H. Ayuntamiento de Morelia invita a la presentación de la antología

BIFURCACIÓN POÉTICA

del Taller Literario
OMETEOTL

Presentación a cargo del Lic. Daniel Solís Suárez y Mtro. Teodoro Barajas

FECHA: 1 de marzo de 2011.
HORA: 7 p. m.
LUGAR: Patio Principal del Palacio Municipal.



Una estrella brilla con luz propia
adquiere tu Lincoln Mark Lt 2010
36 Meses 0% Interés

Comisión por apertura gratis. Además contamos con 24 meses 0% interés en toda la Línea 2010 y 2011.

*Aplican restricciones. Todos los modelos Lincoln 2010 y 2011 con 36 meses 0% interés, excepto MKZ 2011. Valido hasta el 15 de marzo de 2011. Consulta términos y condiciones.

Av. Camelinas No. 3189, Fracc. Las Américas, Tel: 01 443 113 33 19
Visita: www.lincolnmorelia.com Únete a la conversación en Facebook / Lincoln Morelia




Mark LT 2010 4x2
\$579,600

LINCOLN

Image 4 Advertisement regarding an invitation for the public to attend the presentation of a book sponsored by the local government (right).


Statement

MARTES 2 DE FEBRERO DE 2010 | CAMBIO DE MICHOACÁN | 7



Gobierno
del Estado
de Michoacán

2008 - 2012



MICHOACÁN
TRABAJA

Morelia, Mich., 1 de febrero de 2010.

A la opinión pública:

1. El 26 de mayo de 2009 el Gobierno Federal, a través de la Subprocuraduría de Investigación Especializada en Delincuencia Organizada de la PGR y con apoyo de las fuerzas federales, llevó a cabo un operativo para cumplimentar diversas órdenes de localización y presentación en contra de presidentes municipales, funcionarios estatales y municipales.

Ese mismo día señalamos la conveniencia del operativo, pero también manifestamos nuestra inconformidad con la manera en que se desarrolló y la anticonstitucionalidad de las acciones emprendidas por la autoridad federal.

2. También demandamos "que en los casos en los cuales no se encuentren elementos incriminatorios, el Ministerio Público Federal debe reivindicar la imagen de los servidores públicos libres de responsabilidad".

Hoy con toda energía reclamamos que se desagravie y reivindique la imagen de los michoacanos que fueron injustamente detenidos. Desde el inicio del operativo se les trató como delincuentes, no como ciudadanos y han sido estigmatizados olvidando el principio de presunción de inocencia que establece nuestra Constitución.

A ocho meses de los hechos, la mayoría de los inculpados (15 de 28) han quedado libres, nunca se les comprobó ninguna de las imputaciones, el Gobierno Federal se ha negado a dar una disculpa pública, lo que nos parece inaceptable en un estado de derecho.

Asimismo, el trato mediático ha sido desproporcionado, las detenciones fueron noticia principal de diversos medios de comunicación nacional, ahora que obtienen su libertad por falta de pruebas, son relegados a espacios secundarios. Con excepción de los medios locales de Michoacán.

3. Como Gobernador del Estado y a nombre del pueblo de Michoacán, mediante comunicados oficiales, del 27 de mayo de 2009, dirigido al entonces Procurador General de la República, Eduardo Medina Mora, y del 2 de junio del mismo año enviado a Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, Presidente de la República, manifesté mi más enérgica protesta por la irrupción ilegal al Palacio de Gobierno, sede oficial del Poder Ejecutivo.

Al día de hoy no hay una disculpa pública por la acción violatoria de la soberanía de la entidad.

4. Desde el 26 de agosto de 2009 en mi participación en el Foro Internacional sobre seguridad organizado por la Organización Demócrata Cristiana de América realizado en Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua y en otros foros he planteado la urgente necesidad de revisar las figuras de localización y presentación de personas; el arraigo, cuyo uso denigra tanto derechos humanos como garantías procesales; los testigos protegidos, que no están sometidos a reglas procesales y en muchos casos carecen de calidad moral; las intervenciones telefónicas, que deben de contar con autorización judicial.

5. La recomendación 72/2009 de la Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos, presentada el 29 de octubre del año pasado reconoció y demostró que teníamos razón, documentó el allanamiento de edificios públicos, los cateos ilegales, las detenciones bajo órdenes de localización y presentación, la dilación del proceso, el no permitirseles a los inculcados la defensa adecuada, el desahogo de prueba sin presencia de abogados defensores y las mal sustentadas declaraciones de los testigos protegidos.

El combate a la delincuencia común y al crimen organizado, debe sustentarse en los preceptos y garantías que consagra la Constitución Política del país, esto es respetando los derechos humanos, las garantías procesales y permitiendo procesos debidos y justos. De lo contrario, corremos el riesgo de regresar a un sistema de justicia medieval e inquisitorio que permite la persecución de personas por diferencias de orden político, personal e ideológico, donde se juzga a todos culpable hasta que se demuestra su inocencia.

Reitero: se puede y se debe combatir todo tipo de delincuencia con la Constitución en la mano y aunque resulte difícil, ante la opinión pública, los medios de comunicación y las autoridades debe prevalecer la presunción de inocencia: nadie puede ser condenado sin juicio previo.

Leonel Godoy Rangel
Gobernador Constitucional del Estado de Michoacán

2008-2012www.michoacan.gob.mx

Image 5 Official statement related to a complaint to the federal government regarding the allegedly illegal imprisonment of several public officers of the state administration supposedly connected with the organized crime.

Memorial notice

COMICIOS ANUNCIA CONTRACAMPAÑA 'PARA QUE NO LLEGUE' **Ningún voto al PAN: CNTE**

NO DESCARTA DAR APOYO A PARTIDOS DE IZQUIERDA, DICE

HOMERO LEMUS,
La Voz de Michoacán

"Sería una catástrofe para los movimientos sociales" que el Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) gane la gubernatura en las próximas elecciones del 13 de noviembre, aseguró el secretario general de la Sección XVIII de la Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (CNTE), Jorge Cázares Torres, quien informó que el magisterio que encabeza alistar una serie de acciones para "promocionar" el voto no a favor de algún partido, pero sí en contra de los panistas.

Sin descartar la posibilidad de que la autodenominada fracción democrática apoye a los partidos de izquierda, Cázares Torres señaló que los maestros michoacanos se sumarán en bloque a evitar que el PAN logre triunfar en las elecciones locales.

"No hemos dicho a quien apoyaremos porque aún no son los tiempos electorales, pero de lo que sí estamos conscientes es de que vamos a cerrarle el paso a la derecha, no dejaremos que las políticas federales que tanto han afectado a la clase trabajadora vengán a aplicarse a Michoacán, tendremos que ser muy inteligentes en las elecciones".

Se mostró preocupado de cualquiera que sea el candidato de Acción Nacional en la contienda por el Solio de Ocampo, ya que con ello "la embestida" del Gobierno Federal se dará en una derrama de recursos para favorecer al grupo político a fin al presidente Felipe Calderón.



JORGE CÁZARES DIJO QUE EL MAGISTERIO BUSCARÁ POR TODOS LOS MEDIOS QUE EL PAN NO LLEGUE A LA GUBERNATURA PORQUE SERÍA "CATÁSTRICO".

"Quien sea el abanderado panista es malo, porque como ya lo hemos visto todos operan a favor de la federación, y ahora toda esa fuerza los apoyaría, hemos visto como tienen las delegaciones federales a su disposición, todos esos recursos los beneficiarían".

Dijo que los riesgos de que el PAN gobierne en la entidad serían de "catastróficas consecuencias" para los movimientos sociales de Michoacán, ya que "si de por sí el Gobierno Federal ha golpeado a las corrientes que pedimos lo justo y mejorar la educación, a nivel estatal sería peor porque la represión sería muy grande".

Vistió un escenario de confrontación en caso de que la derecha triunfe en los comicios electorales, toda vez que, dijo, se supondría que los panistas buscarían implementar reformas laborales y educativas a nivel estatal.

Aunado a ello, señaló que la tan rechazada Alianza por la Ca-

lidad de la Educación (ACE) sería otra de las presiones para querer imponer las medidas federales a nivel estatal.

Reveló que la CNTE a nivel estatal plantea para el presente año consolidar un proyecto de una frecuencia radiofónica, misma que sería transmitida desde la

Casa Hotel del maestro del Comité Ejecutivo Seccional el cual ya cuenta con una cabina de radio.

40

MIL
agremiados
tiene la CNTE

Además de una gaceta para promover las acciones a favor del sindicalismo y en contra de las políticas "neoliberales" que promueve el PAN,

no nos vamos a quedar de brazos cruzados, tenemos que evitar que la embestida de las prácticas neoliberales llegue a Michoacán".

El líder de la parte sindical que aglutina a más de 40 mil de los 60 mil trabajadores de la educación estatal, dijo que el voto magisterial no es por un partido sino por un proyecto que consolide acciones a favor de la educación.

2008 - 2012

Leonel Godoy Rangel
Gobernador Constitucional del Estado de Michoacán de Ocampo

y
Magdalena Ojeda Arana
Presidenta del Sistema DIF Michoacán

se unen a la pena que embarga a María de la Luz Bárcenas Bárcenas, por el fallecimiento de su hermana

Araceli Josefina Bárcenas Bárcenas

y externan sus sinceras condolencias a familiares y amigos, esperando encuentren pronta resignación en estos difíciles momentos.

Morelia, Mich., 28 de enero de 2011.

Ciudad Tres Marias te invita a dar un paseo por el nuevo parque

Exclusivos lotes desde 160 m² hasta 400 m²

PRECIO POR M² DE TERRENO Desde \$2,900 pesos

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Image 6 Memorial notice paid by the state government (right).

Appendix D Translation of the invitation email to participate as an interviewee

Dear Sir/Madame (name of the person)

My name is Ruben Arnaldo Gonzalez Macias and I am a PhD candidate at the Institute of Communications Studies, University of Leeds. My doctoral thesis is related to the journalist-politician relationship and the extent it is shaped by the local media environment.

As a part of the fieldwork, I am conducting a series of interviews with journalists, politicians and communications officers of the government (local and state) and political parties. Therefore, I am interested in including you as a possible interviewee, due to your professional experience and your current job as (e.g. communications officer of Partido Acción Nacional).

The interview has an average duration of 45 minutes and will be focused on your interaction with the journalists and your opinions about their performance. The meeting could be at your office or a coffee shop. If you accept, it could be done anytime next week.

I would like to thank you for your attention and I hope I can obtain a favourable answer from you.

Regards,

Ruben Gonzalez

Appendix E Consent form for interviewees

University of Leeds

Institute of Communications Studies

Consent form

- My participation in this study is entirely voluntary and no means of coercion were used to accept, and I am not receiving any kind of payment for this either.
- I agree that the researcher **Ruben Arnoldo Gonzalez Macias** uses the information provided by me in his PhD thesis and further publications, such as articles in academic journals and/or as a book.
- I understand that my identity will remain anonymous everytime the researcher quotes me and, when that happens, I will be referred as a letter and number (e.g. *J1* for a journalist, *CO2* for a communications officer or *P3* for a politician).
- I allow the researcher to use an audio recorder during the whole session.
- I am aware that the researcher will be the only person who has access to my personal data (Name, e-mail, phone number...).
- I understand that I can withdraw at any time without repercussion.

Date:

Name:

Signature: