

Atom Propaganda in Newsreels during the Spanish Dictatorship

Maria Elena Aramendia-Muneta

Department of Economics, Universidad Pública de Navarra, Pamplona, Spain

The purpose of this paper is to identify the marketing activities that both Spanish leaders and foreign lobbies used in the 1950s to spread the idea that there was a need for nuclear energy generation in Spain, and how this information was modified from 1945 until 1977, when the last news about a Spanish Nuclear facilities was provided. This research tries to describe the connection between propaganda and nuclear energy in the case of Spain. While there are several studies about nuclear energy and history from an economic or political point of view (e.g. De La Torre and Rubio-Varas, 2016; Presas i Puig, 2005), there is a gap about how to approach the way nuclear energy was made known to the public through newsreels. Above all, the use of videos as a resource has been underutilized by researchers (Belk, 2011).

Spanish newsreels could be considered means of propaganda or marketing strategy from the Spanish dictatorship under USA influence. While the terms propaganda and marketing have been used sometimes with the same meaning, these two terms refer to two very different activities. Propaganda is said to be a tool of marketing (O'Shaughnessy, 1996). In the book of Jowett and O'Donnell (2015) propaganda is defined as "*the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist*" (p. 6). Taylor (2003) considered propaganda as "*the deliberate attempt to persuade people to think and behave in a desired way*" (p. 13). From both definitions, it can be asserted that propaganda is a persuasive technique in communication. Marková (2008) showed that propaganda and persuasion are two forms of communication, which often coexist and determined that social marketing is achieved through cultural-historical processes.

At the end of the 1940s, Spain was struggling to recover from a dark and complicated period where Spanish people had been living under harsh conditions (food rationing, military dictatorship and international isolation, among others). Under these circumstances, Spain was looking for a solution to its energy shortage. Moreover, Spain was widely influenced by the government of the United States of America at that time, as USA was its main and almost only ally in the beginning of the 1950s. Therefore, the media was used as a market mirror of the wishes of USA and the Spanish dictatorship. In fact, newspapers, television and cinema were tools to create and implement an image of demand and need of nuclear energy among the Spanish public (Rodríguez Jiménez, 2010).

In the mid-1950s, over 30 percent of the Spanish population had no formal education (just 45 percent of the Spanish population had completed primary education). Due to these circumstances, the best means of reaching the public was through visual images. The first visual image media used was *Noticiarios y Documentales Cinematográficos* commonly known as NO-DO. Franco's (head of the state in Spain after the Spanish war from 1936 until his death in 1975) regime had created NO-DO in November 1942 with the purpose of overseeing all non-fiction film productions. Until 1976, broadcasts were mandatory at the beginning of all films in the cinemas nationwide (Ramírez Martínez, 2008). From 1943 until 1981, NO-DO accumulated more than 4,000 newsreels. Its broadcasts were mandatory in cinemas nationwide before any film. It is worth emphasising the importance of going to the cinema as the principal leisure activity in the 1950s in Spanish cities. It was relatively cheap (the price, equivalent to a tramway ticket); plus, the cinemas offered a comfortable and warm venue for many hours (in contrast to the cold houses of the post-war). Cinemas turned into a kind of second home for many families (De Riquer, 2010).

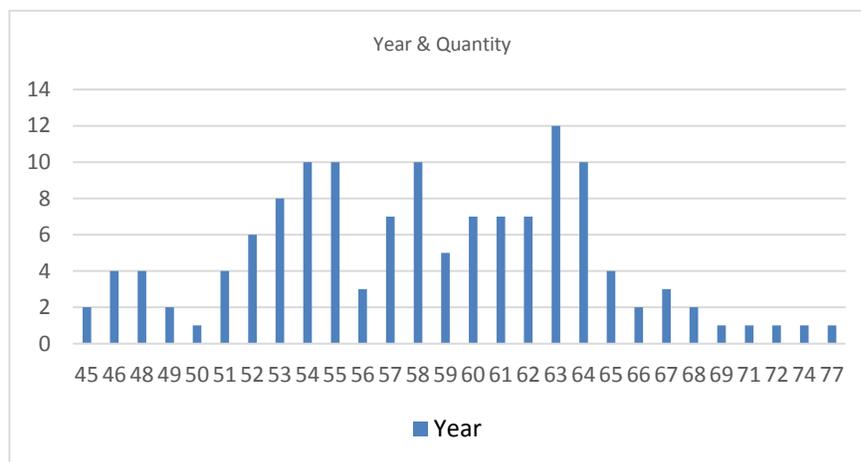
The fear and paranoid climate in the USA (Fullerton, 2010) launched new ways of expanding USA's political horizons in Europe. NO-DO was an extraordinary tool for promoting nuclear energy, as it can be seen in the first decade of NO-DO, Universal News from USA were broadcasted. It is recognized that during the Cold War, there was a trend of provoking specific emotions into the consumers (Samuel, 2016) as a means of influencing them in order to react positively towards some government's policies.

All NO-DO videos were a source of information (socio-cultural product) and served as a platform for the regime (Anta Féliz, 2018). This source of information could be a reflexion of promotion and it could also help consumers to be cultured and educated about anything new to them (Castillo, 2005). As it was mandatory to watch NO-DO videos before each film, Franco's government tried to force Spanish people,

to view the kind of information they wanted and they thought that the population needed to know as not the whole truth was shown and most of the controversial points were concealed or disguised.

Research findings are often visually more engaging and make it possible to obtain more results than only focusing on words (Belk, 2011). 135 newsreels were found to contain nuclear energy information and lent themselves to content analysis as a method used for visual investigating purposes (Rose, 2001). In a preliminary study, NO-DO videos' content presented nuclear energy as an application to the field of medicine, which was one of the most worrying issues in the decade from 1950 to 1960 throughout the country to prevent illness and improve Spanish people's well-being. After 1968 there was a trend of reducing content about nuclear energy, when the anti-nuclear movement gained momentum in Spain (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Nuclear Energy NO-DO videos



In the videos, the USA was presented as the future saviour of the country. For the USA, it was also important to befriend Spain to gain another ally in Europe against the Soviet Union (the enemy at the time) (Schwartz, 1997). The Cold War was a period where the USA helped European countries to attract more allies through money rewards (Tadajewski and Stole, 2016), just to promote the American style of leadership. As an example, there is a newsreel where an American submarine powered by nuclear energy arrived at the port of Barcelona and where the Spanish people welcomed it with open arms. Embracing nuclear energy was embracing the USA, symbolizing a promising future. Another key strategy was presenting other countries which were already using nuclear energy, such as Cuba or France. These countries could be role models for Spain as implementation of nuclear facilities, Cuba was a former Spanish colony and France a close neighbour.

In general, the given information about nuclear energy was really positive and only three videos showed a slight negativity. On the whole, the propaganda under Franco's dictatorship was pro-nuclear energy, forced by the USA government and the companies promoting the construction of nuclear facilities. The investigation of the promotion and communication of nuclear energy is an attempt to show that government influencers could change the frame of mind of the public and include in their ideals the need of expecting a promising future and raising their expectations through new technologies like nuclear energy to improve their health or quality of life.

References

- Anta Fález, J.L. (2018), “El no-do como mal de archivo. De locución propagandística a imaginario social”, *Antropología Experimental*, Vol. 18, pp. 53–60.
- Belk, R. (2011), “Examining Markets, Marketing, Consumers, and Society through Documentary Films”, *Journal of Macromarketing*, Vol. 1 No. 4, pp. 403–409.
- Castillo, G. (2005), “Domesticating the Cold War: Household Consumption as Propaganda in Marshall Plan Germany”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 40 No. 2, pp. 261–288.
- De La Torre, J., and Rubio-Varas, M.d.M. (2016), “Nuclear Power for a Dictatorship: State and Business involvement in the Spanish Atomic Program, 1950-85”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 51 No. 2, pp. 385–411.
- De Riquer, B. (2010), *La dictadura de Franco*, Ed. Crítica, Madrid.
- Fullerton, R.A. (2010), ““A virtual social H-bomb”: the late 1950s controversy over subliminal advertising”, *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 2 No. 2, pp. 166–173.
- Jowett, G.S. and O’Donnell, V. (2015), *Propaganda & Persuasion*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Marková, I. (2008), “Persuasion and Propaganda”, *Diogenes*, Vol. 55 No.1, pp. 37–51.
- O’Shaughnessy, N. (1996), “Social propaganda and social marketing: a critical difference?”, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 30 No. 10-11, pp. 54–67.
- Presas i Puig, A. (2005), “Science on the periphery. The Spanish reception of nuclear energy: An attempt at modernity?”, *Minerva*, Vol. 43 No. 2, pp. 197–218.
- Ramírez Martínez, F.E. (2008), “Ciencia, tecnología y propaganda: el NO-DO, un instrumento de popularización de la ciencia al servicio del Estado (1943-1964)”, *Actes d’historia de la Ciència u de la Técnica, Nova Època*, Vol. 1 No. 2, pp. 201–226.
- Rodríguez Jiménez, F. J. (2010), *¿Antídoto contra el Antiamericanismo?. American Studies en España, 1945-1969*, Publidisa, Valencia.
- Rose, G. (2001), *Visual Methodologies*, Sage, London.
- Samuel, L.R. (2016), “Distinctly un-American: subliminal advertising and the Cold War”, *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 8 No. 1, 99–119.
- Schwartz, R.A. (1997), *The Cold War Reference Guide*, McFarland, Jefferson, NC.
- Tadajewski, M. and Stole, I.L. (2016), “Marketing and the Cold War: an overview”, *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 2–16.
- Taylor, P.M. (2003), *Munitions of the Mind: a History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Day*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.