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A framing theory empirical approach to the image of elderly population in the digital press of Castilla y León

Abstract: A framing theory empirical approach to the image of elderly population in the digital press of Castilla y León

The present paper shows the results of content analysis research conducted on media framing related to the third age population published by the most widespread online media in Castilla y León. This paper focuses on the analysis of the role of regional press when framing one of the oldest age groups both in Spain and in Europe; for this purpose, 799 pieces of news about the third age population were analyzed in several genres within the most widespread online formats throughout the region. For our goal Semetko and Valkenburg's five news frames were analyzed in order to identify the latency and subjectivity of discourse in each of the pieces of news.

Keywords: mass media, news framing, content analysis, third-age populations.

Geographical setting of Castilla y León

Castilla y León is an administrative entity, a region, located on the northern half of the Iberian Peninsula. It is considered as the Douro River region, as several of its provinces are watered by this river; the same river gives name to one of the most relevant wine-making regions in Spain, Ribera del Duero. Castilla y León comprises nine provinces: Ávila, Burgos, León,

Palencia, Segovia, Salamanca, Soria, Valladolid and Zamora. It reached its administrative identity as a regional entity on February, 25, 1983. Its capital city is Valladolid and the official language is Spanish.

Several settlements of human ancestors prove that this land was already populated in prehistoric times; in fact, the oldest human remains in Europe were found at an excavation site in Atapuerca, Burgos. At the beginning of 2013, the population in Castilla y León reached 2,519,875; 1,246,377 men and 1,273,498 women.

Introduction

We are witnessing a silent demographical revolution that involves not only individuals or families, but society as a whole. Past-time fertility rates, an accelerated demographic escalation, and the increasing numbers within the third-age group are defining the twenty-first century societies.

Global ageing affects and redefines family profiles and, consequently, relationships among its members; it also affects and redefines urban development and running; housing; modes of production and of provision of services; and, of course, it affects and redefines consumption behavior.

Such changes are already taking place in Castilla y León, one of the most markedly ageing populations in Spain,[1] along with Aragón, Asturias and Galicia; it is even one of the most significant ageing populations at the European level.[2] The percentage increase in the third age populations with regard to that of younger groups has been already observable since 1991; more specifically, in 2000 a 22% of the population in Castilla y León was 65 years old or older, whereas just a meagre 12% represented those under the age of 15 or younger. This outbalance/phenomenon is expected to be increasing in the future. According to the short-term forecast data by INE (Spanish National Institute for Statistical Studies) related to the resident population annually on January 1, the outbalance in 2000 was of 10%, whereas in 2018 it will increase until 11.33% (see Table 1).

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[1] J.M. Gómez García, F.J. Pelaez Fermoso, A. García González: „Los costes económicos de la evolución de la población anciana dependiente en Castilla y León." *XXI Reunión anual ASEPELT*. Valladolid (España), Junio 2007, p. 1.

[2] A. Abellán García, A. Ayala García: „Un perfil de las personas mayores en España, 2012. Indicadores estadísticos básicos." In: *Informes Portal Mayores* [http://ww.imsersomayores.csic.es/documentos/documentos/pm-indicadoresbasicos12.pdf (accessed: 1.06.2012)], p. 3.

Table 1

Percentage of the young and the third-age population groups
in Castilla y León

Population	YEARS		
	2000*	2008	2018
14 and younger	12%	11.62%	12.23%
65 and older	22%	22.32%	23.56%
Difference	10%	10.70%	11.33%

* This column portrays the research by J.M. Gómez García, F.J. Pelaez Fermoso, A. García González: "Los costes económicos…," p.1.

Source: Own formulation based on the short-term forecast data by INE (Spanish National Institute for Statistical Studies) related to resident population as 1st January for each year.

This situation will persist in the future, considering that life expectancy in Castilla y León is one of the highest not only in Spain but also in Europe.[3] The data in this regard are conclusive: according to the report by F. Goerlich,[4] for Instituto Valenciano de Investigaciones Económicas (IVIE; Valencian Institute for Economic Research), life expectancy in Castilla y León reached 82.7 years in 2010 for men and 85.9 for women. If this is to be compared with similar data from other Spanish regions, it would come fourth, only after Navarre (83.6), Madrid (83.4) and La Rioja (82.9).

Yet, even when statistical data clearly indicate that a demographic revolution is present in Europe, in Spain and in Castilla y León, the mass media do not seem to tackle effectively this new demographic layout regarding their publications and station programs. And, indeed, media professionals do have an essential social responsibility in disseminating this new social and demographic reality and the consequences thereof to make the whole society aware of it. Dissemination is a key element to help policy-makers implement appropriate and efficient measures, thus contributing to using this demographic change as a tool for social development. This would certainly turn the challenge of ageing populations into an opportunity to develop both better life conditions and lifestyles.

Along with this, the use of the Internet as a new means to provide faster news dissemination is steadily increasing among the third-age populations; therefore, since they constitute a larger population group, news framing should mirror their reality rather than stereotypes from the past related to this age group.

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[3] Ibidem.

[4] F. Goerlich: "Tablas de Mortalidad de España y sus Regionem." In: *Instituto Valenciano de Investigaciones Económicas (IVIE)* [http://www.ivie.es/es/banco/tabmor/tabmor.php (accessed: 5.01.2013)], p. 58.

For all these reasons, the present paper focuses primarily on media framing related to the third age population published by the most widespread online media in one of the most considerably ageing regions in Europe and in Spain: Castilla y León. But it also aims at assessing how that age group and their life conditions are portrayed in the selected media, in order to define precisely the borders of the construed image.

Framing Theory and Third-age reality representations

The number of theoretical paradigms and approaches in Media processes and Effects research is vast; however, in order to attain our goal, the present paper focuses on those that will not only provide facts but also hints for explanations of such facts. In this sense, in the last decades, and as a result of the use of the cognitive effect approach in mass media, a new research line has been developed for journalistic coverage — framing or media framing, which is certainly yielding interesting analytical frameworks for mass media coverage. "Frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world."[5] In other words, framing structures reality, what seems close to those principles social movements sustained as aids to arrange collective action, on the one hand, and to those patterns journalist stock up on to structure the reality they are describing, on the other hand. Therefore, journalists embody a key function, as they compile piecemeal reality to present it as an intelligible and meaningful construction.[6]

Although there is a tendency to admit the third-age group representations convey, by and large, a negative and passive portrait of that group, several studies show those portraits are changing. More than 40 years ago, Butler[7] coined the term ageism to talk about prejudiced and discriminating behaviors towards a specific age group, in this case, the third-age population. Elderly people were assumed to be portrayed as unattractive, not very smart, asexual,

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[5] *Framing Public Life. Perspective on Media and Our understanding of the social world.* Eds. D. Reese, S.H.O. Gandy, O.A. Grant. Mahwah, NJ. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates 2001, p. 11.

[6] T. Sádaba: "Origen, aplicación y límites de la »teoría del encuadre (framing) en comunicación«." *Comunicación y Sociedad*, XIV, 2001, p. 143—175.

[7] R.N. Butler: "Age-ism: another form of bigotry." *The Gerontologist* 1969, No 9, pp. 243—246.

unproductive and senile.[8] However, Buchholz and Bynum,[9] basing on a content analysis research of over 2000 messages related to people 65 or older in two American journals (The New York Times and The Daily Oklahoma), came to the conclusion that those representations were neither as negative nor as passive, thus supporting Atkins's hypothesis.[10] Atkins had stated that with the passing of time representations of the third-age populations in newspapers had become less negative; the third-age roles were gradually presented as more active, and news coverage concerning third-age in newspapers was increasing along the years.

However, in a more recent lecture at the Seminario para los medios (Seminar for Mass Media) held in Madrid in 2002, Butler noted that ageism had not disappeared and claimed that public visibility and private understanding, along with a better and more loving understanding of ourselves, would indeed be necessary to overcome it. Hence the mass media should undertake their role as transmitters of those changes in order to improve the living conditions not only of this third-age group, but of society as a whole.

News framing has been adopted, therefore, as a relevant theoretical perspective to understand how information related to the third-age population is arranged in the media of Castilla y León; then, the media processes in representing the role of that population within the whole social construct will also be analyzed, as framing describes those processes involved in the approach of the media to social events. By doing so, the media do not only set the agenda for the public opinion, but they also set the framework for an interpretation of the pieces of news they have covered.

In fact, Valkenburg, Semetko and de Vreese define media frame as "a particular way in which journalists compose a news story to optimize the audience accessibility."[11] Media frames would, in turn, be used to simplify the information, as time and space are very limited to convey all the data related to the topic that has been covered. This, however, might bring about the occurrence of stereotypes.

Since the results of the experimental research on the effects of framing demonstrated that the approach to a piece of news (independent variable) influences the audience perception of it (dependent variable),[12] framing has

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[8] Ibidem, p. 243.

[9] M. Buchholz, J.E. Bynum: "Newspaper presentation of America's aged: a content analysis of image and role." *The Gerontologist* 1982, No 2, p. 87.

[10] C.K. Atkins: "Mass media and the aging." In: *Aging and Communication*. Eds. H.J. Oyer, E.J. Oyer. *Baltimore*, MD 1976, pp. 99—119.

[11] Valkenburg, Semetko and De Vreese define media frame as "a particular way. See: P.M. Valkenburg, H.A. Semetko, C.H. De Vreese: "The Effects of News Frames on Reader's Thoughts and Recall." Communication Research 1999, Vol 26, No 5, pp. 550—551

[12] S. Iyengar: *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues*. Chicago 1991, p. 19.

been adopted to study how opinions and attitudes related to the elderly are modified because of social and demographic change.

Methodology

For the purpose of the present paper, a triangulation method was adopted, comprising both quantitative and qualitative analyses of variables applied to a content analysis of online media news.

Content analysis allows a scientific examination both of meanings (theme analysis) and of forms (procedural analysis, convention analysis, formal analysis) of the unit of analysis (message).[13] According to Wimmer y Dominick,[14] content analysis is the appropriate procedure when (a) describing the elements comprised in a given piece of information, (b) assessing hypothesis about the characteristics of a message, (c) contrasting media contents with "the real world," and (d) assessing the portrayed representation of a given social group, as it is the case in this research.

One of the canonical definitions of content analysis encompasses it as "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.[15] This definition helps establish the bases for the present research: first, the "objectivity" provided by the use of analytical procedures that allowed non-biased descriptions and explanations, rigorously controlling reliability at each step; second, "systematization" allowing an objective follow-up of the content after the analysis under explicit rules[16]; third, and last, "quantification" providing numeric data for a statistical analysis that would yield verifiable and reliable conclusions or inferences that would eventually help interpret the latent component.

As content analysis is a singular method of the scientific method, the steps indicated for research in the social sciences as a body of research have been followed; thus, the aim of our research is "the study of the media coverage of

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[13] J. Igartua, M. Humanes: "El método científico aplicado a la investigación en comunicación social." In: *Portal de la comunicación. Aula abierta, lecciones básicas.* (2009) [http://es.scribd.com/doc/50670815/Metodo-Cientifico-en-comunicacion-social (accesed: 2.08.2013)], p. 11.

[14] R.D. Wimmer, J.R. Dominick: *La investigación científica de los medios de comunicación. Una introducción a sus métodos.* Barcelona 1996, p. 281.

[15] B. Berelson: *Content Analysis in Comunication Research.* Glencoe 1952, p. 18.

[16] J. Andréu Abela: *Los españoles: Opinión sobre sí mismo, España y el Mundo. Análisis Longitudinal Escala de Cantril.* Granada 1998, p. 3; J.J. Igartua: *Métodos cuantitativos de investigación en comunicación.* Barcelona 2006, p. 182.

the news related to the third-age group in the regional online media in Castilla y León"; in order to attain that goal, our general hypothesis claims that the journals in Castilla y León provide a biased portrait of the third-age group by using approaches that are consistent neither with the steady increase of that group nor with its heterogeneous nature.

A detailed description of a sample group, of the media subject of the analysis, conceptualization, operationalization and categorization of variables, coding procedure and intercoder reliability is presented below.

Samples

As far as samples is concerned, they have been selected according to the following criteria:

Communication channel and time spam

Daily online journals with specific sections for each of the nine provinces in Castilla y León. Those covering a smaller geographical spectrum or demanding subscription were discarded. Then, according to the data provided by the OJD (Oficina de Justificación de la Difusión), a single journal was selected in each province, so, in alphabetical order, the journals comprised in the sample according to this parameter are *Diario de Ávila.es*, *Diario de Burgos.es*; *Diario de León.es*, *Diario Palentino.es*, *Heraldo de Soria.es*, *El Adelantado.com*, *El Norte de Castilla.es*, *La Gaceta de Salamanca.es*, *La opinión de Zamora.es*. This sample was further increased by the addition of those national online journals with specific Castilla y León sections; they become, therefore, dominant framers because of their dissemination and representation: *El Mundo.es/ Castilla y León*, *ABC.es/CYL y La Razón.es/local/castilla-y-leon*.

Data collection period

Online journals were compiled for eight months (1st November 2012— 30th June 2012). The samples compiled in November, December and Janu-

ary served as a pilot study to better refine the variables in use; the samples compiled from January until June are the sample units for the present paper.

As online information is heavily dynamic, the data collection was conducted daily from 21 to 23.

Sampling and thematic agenda

The precise days for sampling were selected out of a twelve week collection from the first six months of 2012; therefore, two weeks were sampled per month. Those weeks were randomly built following a systematic simple random sampling method with the "select cases" procedure in SPSS v.21.

This implies that only 1008 online journals — out of 2172 in the sample, were eventually analyzed; although this does not seem to be a good solution, the resulting situation would be as follows: p=q=0.5 and a 95% reliability yields +/− 2.26% error, substantially lower than the admissible 5% for this type of studies.

In the analysis of the 1008 online journals, feature articles, news, brief notes or interviews that included as a main topic the elderly as a group or an elderly person as the leading role in a piece of news (either in the heading, or in the subheading or even in the lead of the piece of news). Every section in the paper but that of opinion was analyzed with this intent. A thorough revision of the sampled journals provided the analysis with those samples where an explicit reference was made in a piece of news to an elderly person who was identified as such (either by theme or age criteria). Therefore, those pieces of news where an elderly person was identified as a celebrity instead of an elderly, and obituaries were discarded. All the supporting graphics and pictures were also collected.

The total number of publications compiled and analyzed at this step is 799.

Sampling sheet

Sampling sheets comprised the following contents:
Basic ID data. This number of variables allows identification of each unit of the analysis.

Number of the unit of the analysis (ID). Each of the information units was associated with a number to identify it along the study.

Header. This variable identifies the sample.

Coder name. Key variable to identify the coder and proceed with coder reliability.

Hyperlink. Hyperlink to the news is compiled to gain easier access to the content.

Date of publication. Date (dd/mm/yyyy) was also compiled.

Journal. Name of the journal where the piece of news was published.

Descriptive variables related to quality and interest. These variables were aimed at compiling quality in information processing and interest attracted by the online journal.

Day of the week. News released on Saturday, Sunday and even Monday journals awaken a greater interest on the side of the publisher than those released on any other day of the week. This is due to the fact that Saturday and Sunday paper readers devote more time to the news, and the number of newspapers pages is also increased those days. The relevance of Monday newspaper is associated with the news related to Sunday sports events.

Section. According to Nuñez Ladevéze, the fact that newspaper offices are split into different sections [the newspaper] "is governed by the selection of the most important news. As a rule of thumb, it can be stated that different sections are related to criteria classification of the information by theme."[17] However "not every newspaper is organized into the same sections, although all of them assemble their information in different sections which, in turn, become because of their own personality essential pieces of the newspaper as a visual framework. Editorial policy, the relation with the nearest environment, and the notion of contrast become key criteria in order to define the order and continuity of such sections."[18]

Provincial. In relation with the previous element, and for the purpose of the present research, the closer the information published to the reader, the higher its quality, as it will portray more efficiently the neighbouring reality, which is, again for the sake of the present research, an indication of the quality of a local newspaper. Thus, whenever the news occur in the provincial section, the specifics of that section will also be included.

Genre. According to Martínez Albertos,[19] journalism genres could be defined as "constructions of literary creativity to be disseminated by any mass media." Several studies have also come to the conclusion that journal-

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[17] L. Núñez Ladevéze: *Manual para periodismo.* Barcelona 1991, p. 182.

[18] J.A. Martín Aguado: *Proyecto y diseño de un diario.* Madrid 1991, Ciencia 3, pp. 169—170.

[19] J.L. Martínez Albertos: *Redacción Periodística. Los Estilos y los Géneros en la Prensa Escrita.* Barcelona 1974.

ists prioritize the informative and persuasive functions over those of enter-tainment or education,[20]). Thus, although there is no clear-cut distinction among them, four informative genres may be distinguished: news articles, news feature, chronicle and opinion.[21]

As for the first one, it is certainly remarkable when a newspaper publishes just news articles (as the journalistic genre *per se*), or chronicles, when trying to reach a more thorough perspective, or news features (with a deeper and more detailed information), or interviews (a very appealing genre because of its magazine-like look, where the interviewee gains presence). In this regard, according to Cheng et al. (2009) distinctions have been established among "news article" (1), "news feature" (2), "brief" (3), and "interview" (4).[22]

The term "news" has comprised any description of a particular event that contains an explanation of its surrounding circumstances and is divided into a heading, sometimes even a lead, and a body. Information in such pieces is not iterated and has been written with a sense of objectivity. "News feature" covers a thorough explanation of the facts and circumstances surrounding any present event that otherwise, and, strictly speaking, should no longer hit the news. "Brief" comprises any news whose format is reduced to that of the lead. "Interview," in turn, covers information resulting from a sole informa-tion source: the interviewee.

Information sources. Sources, along with journalists and audience, are responsible for any event reaching the status of a public event.[23] Sources have a dramatic importance; in fact, "any sourceless media is a dead media."[24] Quantity, however, should be matched with quality when discussing infor-mation sources, as it is quality that defines the reliability and influence of a newspaper.[25] This is so because information sources do not only provide news, but pertinent knowledge and a number of points of view.[26] Hence, it is very relevant to know who says what in the piece of news. Official sources (public administration, politicians, law enforcement sources, sources within the judiciary) usually echo the voice they represent in order to guide the

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[20] F. Ortega, Humanes M.L.: *Algo más que periodistas. Sociología de una profesión*. Barcelona 2000, p. 164.

[21] Fontcuberta M.: *La noticia: pistas para percibir el mundo*. Barcelona 1993; Gutiér-rez Palacio J.: *Periodismo de opinión*. Madrid 1984, p. 99.

[22] We are aware that online journalism has brought along new journalism genres such as forums, citizens' interviews, or breaking news. However, they have not been included in the present paper as they are very rarely used to cover news related to the third-age group.

[23] H. Gans: *Deciding what's News. A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time*. New York 1979, p. 117.

[24] M. Fontcuberta: *La noticia…*, p. 58.

[25] H. Borrat: *El periódico, actor político*. Barcelona 1989, p. 54.

[26] F. Martínez Vallvey : *Herramientas periodísticas*. Salamanca 1996, pp. 60—61.

public opinion; therefore, and for the goal of the present paper, priority will be attributed to spokespeople who are related to the daily activities of the third-age group (elderly and associations).

Signature. As proof of the information having been obtained by the newspaper own means, the signature is a guarantee of the newspaper's independence.[27]. According to González Polo: "in decreasing order, the byline should ideally be there (name and surname); if not, the initials; as a third option, the newspaper publishing the information; as a less preferred option, a mixed signature (journalist-press agency; newspaper-press agency…); press agency; and as a last resort, texts without any signature at all (anonymity is unwise and frequently conceals external interests)."[28]

Air allotted to the news. The interest of the journal for a particular topic is another measurable variable. According to this quantitative relation, the larger the air allotted, the higher the interest.

Number of visual elements. Thanks to the new technologies over the Internet, there's a vast spectrum of communicative modes available for the journalist. Different elements may now be combined within a single platform: text, pictures, audio and video. Thus, each piece of news, news feature, each event may be portrayed in a non-linear sequence, highly hypertextual and with multimedia elements of more direct response. Communication researchers unanimously agree about the fact that images enhance any information they support, in various degrees and with varying purposes. According to Berrocal and Rodríguez-Maribona,[29] almost an 80% of the readers first focus their attention on the supporting photographs and illustrations. Accordingly, videos, as it is the case with TV, show a higher degree of reliability than any other supporting element.

Number of copies. This was the last variable to be included for the study, as a larger number of copies shows a higher interest in a particular topic. Journals enhance and credit both individuals and collectivities by legitimizing their status. Status assigned by the press, the radio, magazines or newscasts signals an individual over the anonymous collectivity.[30] Such interest does not necessarily imply a plus for the collectivity, but it does imply a higher attention.

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[27] S. Berrocal Gonzalo, C. Rodríguez-Maribona: *Análisis básico de la prensa diaria. Manual para aprender a leer periódicos.* Madrid 1998, p. 71.

[28] M.E. Polo González: "La prensa y los mayores en Castilla y León." *Revista de Ciencia y orientación familiar* 2005, No. 30, pp. 73—89.

[29] S. Gonzalo Berrocal, C. Rodríguez-Maribona: *Análisis básico de la prensa diaria…*, p. 117.

[30] P.F. Lazarsfeld, R.K. Merton: "Los medios de comunicación de masas, el gusto popular y la acción social organizada." In: *La comunicación de masas.* Comp. Heriberto Muraro. Buenos Aires 1977, p. 105.

Evaluative variables. From the standpoint of the main event and from the actants' perspective.

Evaluative nature of the main event. This variable refers to the evaluative nature of the approach to the event, this approach being that of the elderly, but always within the global context of the news. For a better understanding of the news, explanations and interpretations are provided by the media; that is media do not only attempt at providing information, but also understanding. Brief news provide information, but interpretation or correlation goes well beyond that, reaching for a full understanding of the event and its context.[31] In this regard, whenever opinions and interpretations favour the public image of the elderly, this will bring about a better projection of the elderly as a group.

For the purpose of the present research, news dealing with social integration, special attention and care of senior citizens, the valuable contribution of this group to society, improvements in their living conditions, and, in general, any rewarding policy for these citizens was marked as positive within this variable. On the other hand, news dealing with discrimination, with any worsening in the living conditions of senior citizens, assault or violence against the elderly was marked as negative.

Evaluative nature of the actant. This variable refers to the evaluative nature of the senior citizen as an individual in the global context of the news. It may be the case they are portrayed in certain events as participating autonomously, so the resulting image for the whole group of senior citizens will be positive. However, if they hit the news just as inactive or isolated passive actants, this portrait will certainly perpetuate negative stereotypes about them.

Variables defining news frames. For the purpose of the present research, a deductive approach has been undertaken in order to create a scale defining the third-age question; more specifically, the most elaborate approach to consistently assess (through content analysis) the different types of news frames. Such approach was developed by Semetko and Valkenburg[32] in a 20 variable scale to frame European politics of Dutch press and television news. Each of those variables dichotomically assessed the presence or absence of each of the elements under analysis (e.g., do the news show the human side of the event or problem?). The results of their paper were highly satisfactory, as they identified through both factor analysis and cluster analysis five basic news frames:

1. Attribution of responsibility. (Resp_1, Resp_2, Resp_3, Resp_4, Resp_5). The news analyze and emphasize responsibilities (government, individual, group, or of specific organizations) in creating or solving a given problem.

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[31] H.D. Lasswell: "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society." In: *The Communication of Ideas*. Ed. L. Bryson. New York 1948.

[32] H.A. Semetko, P.M. Valkenburg: "Framing European Politics: a content analysis of press and television news." *Journal of Communication* 2000, No 50 (2), pp. 93—109.

2. Human interest. (Int_hum_1, Int_hum_2, Int_hum_3, Int_hum_4, Int_hum_5). The human side to the story is under scrutiny in this variable; the story is tackled from an emotional perspective, scaling up drama to grasp the audience attention.
3. Conflict. (Atrib_confli_1, Atrib_confli_2, Atrib_confli_3, Atrib_confli_4). Conflict among individuals, groups, and institutions is highlighted to gain the audience attention.
4. Morality. (Atrib_moral_1, Atrib_moral_2, Atrib_moral_3). The ethical, moral or religious side to the story is zoomed in. The story prescribes on how to deal with a certain situation from a particular ethos.
5. Economic consequences. (Consec_eco_1, Consec_eco_2, Consec_eco_3). The story is approached through highlighting the economic consequences for individuals, groups, institutions, regions or countries.

To Semetko and Valkenburg's[33] items, three extra ones have been added (Resp_6, Int_hum_6 and Conse_eco_4), as they were understood to be relevant once the pilot study was finished. Thus, Semetko and Valkenburg's study has been adapted for the present research, first, by establishing the items in the news framing scale, and then, testing through factor analysis whether the original factor structure is replicated. The items were measured on a three-point ordinal scale to determine the intensity of the word use by the word frequency (1 = once — not very intense; 2 = twice — moderate intensity; 3 = three or more times — rather or very intense). Finally, reliability or internal consistency of the empirical variables was measured for the configuration of a dimension or news frame through Cronbach's α coefficient. The items for each of the news frames are found in Table 2.

Coding and intercoder testing. According to Kripperdorf,[34] data reliability shows that at least two coders independently describe a possibly large cluster of registry units in a natural language, for example, a classification pattern for codes and categories. Coding was therefore conducted by attributing at random a series of sample news to two of the intercoders according to the reliability principle.

Reliability is expressed as a function of the agreement reached by the coders about assigning different units to several categories. If such agreement comprises all the units, then reliability is fully guaranteed; however, if reliability was higher than that achieved randomly, there is no reliability at all. In the present research, the data obtained helped to create a matrix, and Scout's phi coefficient was determined for each of the variables. This calculation rendered a 0.71 mean value, which proves, according to existing standards, intercoder reliability as appropriate.

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[33] Ibidem, p. 100.
[34] K. KRIPPERDORF: *Metodología de análisis de contenido. Teoría y práctica*. Barcelona 1990, p. 91.

"Framing ítems"

Attribution of responsability	Human interest frame	Conflict frame	Morality frame	Economic frame
Does the story suggest that some level of gov't has the ability to alleviate the problem?	Does the story provide a human example or "human face" on the issue?	Does the story reflect disagreement between parties-individuals—groups—countries?	Does the story contain any moral message?	Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future?
Does the story suggest that some level of the government is responsible for the issue/problem?	Does the story employ adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?	Does one party-individuals-groups-country reproach another?	Does the story make reference to morality, God, and other religious tenets?	Is there a mention of the cost/degree of expense involved?
Does the story suggest solutions to the problem/issue?	Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?	Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problema or issue?	Does the story offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?	Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?
Does the story suggest that an individual (or group of people in society) is responsible the issues-problem?	Does the story go into the private or personal lives of the actors?	Does the story refer to winners and losers?		Is there any mention to the need of making economical policies?
Does the story suggest the problema requires urgent actions?	Does the story contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?			
Does the story suggest the social context or situation (abstract causes) are the reason for the topic or problem?	Does the story suggest interviews with witnesses involved in the event?			

Results

General profile of news under analysis (quality and interest)

Out of the 779 identified units at this stage of the research, a 21.2% of them were published by **nortedecastilla.es**; this is a significantly high percentage, as none of the remaining online journals under study reached half of it. Only a 10.3% were published by **laopiniondezamora.com**, a 9.6% by **diariodeburgos.es**, a 9.5% by **diariopalentino.es**, a 9.3% by **gacetadesalamanca.com**, a 9.1 % by **abc.es**, and around a 6.0% by **diariodeavila.es** (6.0%), **elmundo.es** (6.3%), **eladelantado.com** (5.3%), and **diariodeleon.es** (5.1%) and substantially lower percentages by **larazon.es** (3.8%) y **heraldodesoria.es** (3.5%).

News (91%) was mainly published; this clearly shows published information about senior citizens is restricted to information related to a particular event, without any further analysis, neither a deeper perspective, nor a contextualization that might be obtained *via* some other more reflective genres.[35] Air allotted to these news averages 435 words, slightly over the words contained in a DIN-A 4 paper sheet, which provides no room to award it any status, either because of the topic itself or because of the journalist's synthetic writing.

Almost half of the news occur in the local, provincial and regional sections of the newspaper; the notion of proximity is, therefore, of a maximal importance when addressing information about the third-age group. In fact, this criterion of proximity, as "a referent to provide added value to the information, as it focuses on bringing the closest information to the reader," could also be related to the frequency of the occurrence of this news in the current events section (12%), mostly dealing with regional events.

The evidence of news about senior citizens not being assigned any prevalence in Castilla y León online journals: 75% of such news were published Monday to Friday, whereas only a meagre 25% of them were released during the weekend. It is noteworthy, however, that Monday shows the higher number of the occurrences among the samples (17.9%). These data should not, however, obscure the fact that an abundance of the news during the weekends (mainly sports-related news) displaces any news concerned with social issues to Mondays.[36]

The main source of the published information was also covered for this research; it has come to prove a lack of quality in the news regarding senior

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[35] M.E. Polo González: "La prensa y los mayores…", p. 267.

[36] C. Egea García, S. Mira Albert, A.J. Ripoll Spiteri: „La imagen de las personas con discapacidad en la prensa de la Región de Murcia." *Revista Intervención Psicosocial* 1995, No 11, pp. 71—72.

citizens. Over 25% of the published news are sourceless; this implies the information cannot be verified, and, as a result, it gives the impression of poor information or information composed with an obvious lack of interest on the part of the journalist.

Source-cited information relies mainly on agency news (16.8%) (an obvious absence of exclusivity), followed by news coming from the press office either of a politician (12%) or of an institution (10.9%). These two are reliable but biased sources. As for the remaining cases, the percentages can be discarded. It is worth noting that senior citizens are not usually a source (only in a 4.1% of the cases), nor are senior associations and senior unions (2.5%).

Signatures in the news are a mark for independent and quality information; however, in the samples of this research, as previously stated, the high percentage of agency news (28.7%), without any signature (17.5%) or with a mixed signature (2.5%) determines that in almost 50% of the cases quality can be termed as poor.

Finally, only 56.3% of the published news include any graphical element, either photograph or video; this is especially surprising as the samples are extracted from online journals.

In view of these results, it can be stated that media show little interest in information related to senior citizens and low quality; a biased perspective about both the reality of the living conditions of the elderly and the importance of their contribution in society is portrayed.

Actants and circumstances

As for the senior citizens, it is important to find out whether their role in the news is positive, that is if they are portrayed as active participants in the events, or as passive recipients of the events. According to our data, in 44.8% of all instances, the third-age citizens are portrayed negatively, that is as passive recipients of the events, whereas in 40.2% of the cases they are pictured as active participants in the piece of news related to their role. The remaining 15% has been considered as a neutral perception of their role. This proves that, even when the stereotype of the senior citizen lacking proactivity and receiving more than they deserve still prevails, a new portrait of a more active and leading role of senior citizens is pacing up.

When attention is drawn towards the news context, in other words, the evaluative approach to the event, 51.4% of the instances report a negative side to the story, whereas 44.3% of the times the focus lies on a positive side to it; just 4.3% of the news or events can be considered as neutral. This shows that

despite the fact that most of the news imply a negative approach that might, in turn, either contribute to the exclusion of this group or taint its role as negative, there is also a large number of news that reveal a positive approach when presenting news about senior citizens.

Keeping this in mind, it is worth pointing out that there seems to be a change in the trend with regard to the literature on this topic. As aforesaid, there is only 4% gap between the number of the news where senior citizens are portrayed negatively and those where they are presented in a positive fashion. A parallel situation arises from the analysis of the context of the information. In this case, the distance between negative and positive events is only 7%.

News framing of senior citizens

News framing of senior citizens and ageing is also reflected by their different coverage in Castilla y León media.

Orthogonal rotation exploratory factor analysis (Varimax) was carried out on the 23 news framing items contained in the present research in order to test the potential replicability of Semetko & Valkenburg's[37] five-frame structure. The same pattern was used but for the emergency occurrence of the sixth factor, relating to two items included in the original version as responsibility and human interest ("the information suggests that a certain individual or group of individuals is responsible for the topic or event" therefore "the information highlights to which extent a certain individual, or group of individuals, is affected by the topic or event." Similarly, the item "the information suggests that an institution is responsible for the topic or event" is included within the parameter for economic consequences. These three items were included in every analysis (See Table 3).

Once factors delivering incorrect figures were discarded (Resp_2, Resp_3, Int_hum_3) exploratory factor analysis was carried out again. The results proved highly satisfactory for the items in each of the variables (See Table 4).

This factor analysis seems appropriate with 0,840 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy, 11746,268 Bartlett's test value and 0% error probability for the null hypothesis of the correlation matrix being equivalent to the identity matrix. Furthermore, the percentage variance explained by the five extracted factors is 75,018%, very high for this kind of studies.

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[37] H.A. Semetko, P.M. Valkenburg: "Framing European Politics…"

Exploratory factor analysis (Varimax rotation) of the main news framing items
Rotated Items Matrix(a)

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Concec_eco_3	.916	−.086	.217	.086	.040	.017
Consec_eco_2	.910	−.090	.144	.146	.038	-.010
Consec_eco_4	.896	−.084	.151	.137	.011	-.032
Consec_eco_1	.893	−.072	.257	.092	−.008	.010
Resp_2	.567	−.004	.233	.339	−.106	.092
Int_hum_2	−.162	.845	−.150	−.138	.063	.058
Int_hum_4	−.080	.809	.008	−.263	.034	.167
Int_hum_1	−.086	.806	−.086	.019	.046	.053
Int_hum_5	.017	.784	−.048	.049	.002	.185
Int_hum_6	−.056	.745	.044	−.052	.253	−.019
Atrib_confli_2	.283	−.084	.894	.126	.064	−.056
Atrib_confli_1	.274	−.096	.855	.099	.077	−.027
Atrib_confli_4	.223	.079	.815	.092	−.043	−.130
Atrib_confli_3	.174	−.230	.777	−.078	−.048	.381
Resp_1	.025	−.067	.051	.890	.076	.010
Resp_4	.155	−.126	.008	.869	−.051	−.016
Resp_5	.372	−.072	.094	.770	.101	.129
Resp_6	.485	−.084	.175	.554	−.033	−.119
Atrib_moral_1	−.015	.129	−.031	−.020	.847	.064
Atrib_moral_3	.098	.117	−.034	.167	.844	.142
Atrib_moral_2	−.107	.099	.198	−.095	.503	−.356
Resp_3	−.083	.280	.107	.114	.015	.757
Int_hum_3	.083	.451	−.127	−.153	.169	.592

Extraction method: Main component analysis.
Rotation method: Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization.
A Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

S o u r c e: Compiled by the authors with SPSS v. 21

To conclude, the results can be considered as highly satisfactory with this model, which perfectly replicates Semetko and Valkenburg[38] five-factor structure, although, as in Igartúa et al,[39] several items need to be discarded and some others need to be included.

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[38] Ibidem.
[39] J.A. IGARTUA, M.L. HUMANES, L. CHENG, C. MUÑIZ, M. GARCIA, A.R. GARCIA: "Imágenes de Latinoamérica en la prensa española. Una aproximación empírica desde la Teoría del Encuadre." *Comunicación y Sociedad* 2004, No 17 (1), p. 61.

Table 4

Exploratory factor analysis (Varimax rotation) of the main news framing items
Rotated Items Matrix(a)

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Consec_eco_2	.912	−.086	.168	.174	.016
Concec_eco_3	.909	−.083	.243	.111	.024
Consec_eco_1	.889	−.066	.283	.119	−.026
Consec_eco_4	.885	−.083	.184	.173	−.017
Int_hum_2	−.149	.851	−.163	−.143	.065
Int_hum_4	−.069	.829	.003	−.261	.034
Int_hum_1	−.083	.812	−.094	.017	.044
Int_hum_5	.016	.796	−.051	.045	.001
Int_hum_6	−.056	.731	.031	−.049	.261
Atrib_confli_2	.245	−.082	.905	.143	.082
Atrib_confli_1	.237	−.094	.867	.114	.095
Atrib_confli_4	.206	.071	,809	.085	−,008
Atrib_confli_3	.153	−.169	.802	-.051	-.059
Resp_1	.000	−.058	.049	.894	.059
Resp_4	.125	−.131	.018	.878	−,074
Resp_5	.347	−.051	.108	.790	.070
Resp_6	.460	−.106	.190	.569	−.045
Atrib_moral_1	.008	.151	−.054	.002	.833
Atrib_moral_3	.125	.149	−.060	.186	.828
Atrib_moral_2	−.101	.003	.155	−.119	.559

Extraction method: Main component analysis.
Rotation method: Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization.
A Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Source: Compiled by the authors with SPSS v. 21

Then, in order to go further in the description of news frames, results for each of the news frame have been obtained by adding the items included for each dimension (then, dividing the resulting amount into the total number of items within each factor); five markers or news frames where obtained, each of them with a relevant internal consistency for the items included in each of the scales:
— Attribution of responsibility (four items; 0.852 Cronbach's α coefficient).
— Human interest (four items; 0.866 Cronbach's α coefficient).
— Conflict (four items; 0.899 Cronbach's α coefficient).

— Morality (three items; 0.643 Cronbach's α coefficient).
— Economic consequences (three items; 0,958 Cronbach's α coefficient).

The data show that, at a global level, the third-age news coverage lies predominantly within the responsibility frame (M=1.72), followed by Human interest (M=1.62), economic consequences (M=1.35), and at a distance, conflict (M=1.22), and Morality (M=1.11).

It can be, therefore, inferred, that Semetko and Valkenburg's[40] five news frames is present in Castilla y León online journals when covering news about senior citizens; however, the dominant frames are those of responsibility, human interest, and economic consequences.

Discussion

1. Demographic ageing, quantitative and qualitative development of the group, changes inrecent policies, and the profile of journal readers, increasingly older, makes the online journals in the present research more aware of the importance of the third age group; their response is paying more attention to such group with larger pieces of information, although these are relatively scarce, regarding the demographic value of the senior citizens in Castilla y León. More specifically, the online journal with the highest readership figures, "El Norte de Castilla," also shows the highest number of news related to senior citizens; these news are covered in a standard size and show no significant differences during the week.
2. News articles, over any other genre, do not cover in depth, nor do they provide any explanation about the information. Most of them do not relate sources or provide agency news; this suggests the information is elaborated in almost no time. Considering the online support of the journals in this research, what is noticeable is the scarce use of photographs or videos to support the information.

All this suggests that the relevance of senior citizens, as a key demographic group in Castilla y León, does not seem to be paralleled with the limited attention paid by the regional online media.

3. News framing of senior citizens is another important element in this research, as it had never been studied before, neither at the regional nor at the national level. This research puts forward, therefore, a genuinely innovative approach. The research has shown that the news coverage of senior citizens is mainly undertaken from the economic consequences

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[40] H.A. SEMETKO, P.M. VALKENBURG: "Framing European Politics…," p. 100.

frame, then that of human interest, and responsibility. The predominant use of these frames places the news addressee within an emotional context, regarding senior citizens as feeble people, in need (human interest frame), with certain physical features that make them economically vulnerable (economic consequences frame), making it necessary to shed light on those who are responsible and can sort out those situations (attribution of responsibility frame). Thus, the prevalence of the responsibility and human interest frames may underlie a certain tabloid feeling when online journals publish news about senior citizens.

In conclusion, it can be stated that media are in a transition stage, where negative stereotypes about senior citizens still prevail, along with a political use of this group. Besides, there is a lack of specialized professionals. The journalists still use negative clichés, highlighting ageism or discrimination of this group, regardless of the increasing involvement in active social political and family matters of this highly heterogeneous social group.

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