Study of the hegemonic discourse about truth and communication in the media's self-referential information, based on the analysis of the Spanish Press

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Abstract: Through the content analysis of the Spanish Press, this article analyses the media discourses that make reference to any other discourse that, once made an agenda item, refers to the activity of the media themselves. The study unveils the logical constraints of the canonical discourse of this reference; and then compares the media's canonical discourse on social communication (extracted from the content analysis) with the discourse produced by the press managers of different types of organisations (companies, governmental agencies, political parties, unions, associations, etc.) in order to reveal the central principles on which their discourses about "truth" and "communication" become hegemonic in the media. The objectives of the study are establishing what changes are appropriate to undertake in order to improve the education of journalists, and setting the quality standards of the public service of journalism. The data presented by this article are the result of the R&D project *The hegemonic disocurse about truth and communication: what themediasays about Social Communication*, (Reference number: SEJ2007-62202-SOCI), which was directed by José Luis Piñuel-Raigada, and whose final report is being prepared.

Keywords: Hegemonic discourse; true communication; self-reference in the media.

Summary: 1. Introduction: Context and objectives of the research. 2. Object of study and methodology. 3. Analysis of the construction of the hegemonic discourses about truth, social communication and the activity of the media in the printed press and in the discourse of the organisations' press managers. 4. Discussion and conclusions. 5. Bibliography.

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1. Introduction: Context and objectives of the research

Any communicative discourse (e.g. an interpersonal conversation, a text book, an academic conference, an email, a postal letter, an online chat, or a television debate, etc.) is constructed by the circulation of expressions whose reliability, relevance and objectivity are questionable, because if they were not it would be impossible for the interlocutors to ever resort to make agreements about communication itself. But precisely, in order to avoid the incessant questioning (and avoid making the constant agreements on communication), the "know-how" of communication (the cognitive heritage of each society) has resources to strengthen confidence in the discourse, beyond the strict conditions of formal and material truth that have preoccupied so much the scholars of knowledge.

Generally, it has been argued that communicating the truth has always been one of the great aspirations of human honesty and integrity, which poses an ethical problem that acquires a major social importance when the truth is demanded to the communication produced by the media (article

20 of the Spanish Constitution). This article explores whether the production of communication by the media industries oriented to meet its public service function, at the moment of selecting current themes that are subjected to the criteria of the agenda (agenda setting theory) and presenting them in accordance to approaches or perspectives of strategic interest to increase the credibility of the discourse and its actors (framing theory). But the social practice of the media also entails the creation of a social discourse that becomes hegemonic, and is responsible for generating a media event that acquires an autonomous existence (independently of the nature of the events that are talked about) which ends up engaging the social actors. The media's communicative practice therefore may be generating a "second reality" that is superimposed to the events that are being discussed (and is legitimised with its discourse) and can supplant the universe that originates the events that are discussed. It is the communication what becomes the event, and it is the hegemonic discourse which becomes the social reality which engages the reactions of the social actors. Then, analysing the media discourses that make reference to the activity of the media themselves constitutes a primary and strategic objective.

Regarding the "thematization" of the *current agendas*, we should firstly address the concept of "public agenda-setting" (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) which is related to a media strategy that helps establishing the nature and public hierarchy of topics with social importance that are covered by such media, through their circulation, dissemination and public discussion. The general hypothesis of the well-known *agenda setting* is that the agenda of the media, sooner or later, can determine a public agenda that tends to be organised in terms of the former. Lang and Lang (1981) have summarised the principles of this conception in this way: "The media enforce the attention towards certain problems (...). They continually suggest the object that people should think about and the ways of feeling and thinking about the objects they present". As noted by Roda (1989): "the most outstanding ability of the media is to rank the importance of the events for the society, although indirectly, by establishing areas towards which the collective reflection should be oriented in a coordinated manner". Thus, as pointed out by Noelle Newman (1974), the agenda setting is based on the perception held by the individual about the state of public opinion: the determining factor is the importance that the individual believes others attribute to the event.

The concept of agenda setting has synthesised a large number of theoretical efforts trying to describe the influence and effects that the instrumentation of the media has on audiences. Beyond the theories that consider that the possible influence of the media depend on the individual's psychosocial conditions or dispositions (McGuire 1969) at the time of consumption (e.g. the theory of *opinion reinforcement* in Hovland *et al*., 1949, 1953; the theory of *uses and emotional gratifications* in Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1973; and the theory of *cognitive incongruity, imbalance or dissonance* in Osgood, Abelson and Festinger, respectively), the thematic agenda foregrounds the media's capacity to shape attitudes when these attitudes have not yet been constituted as such in the individuals. According to David H. Weaver (1981), the hypothesis of the agenda will be confirmed mainly in the case of topics in which the individual does no has the option of contrast (Rogers, Dearing and Bregman, 1992).

David H. Weaver has pointed out the additional research aspects that are most frequently repeated in relation to the public agenda setting:

(a) The previous steps or the *agenda-building*, i.e. those who establish the repertoire of the media (Gilberg, Eyal, McCombs and Nicholas, 1980; Lang and Lang, 1981; Weaver and Elliot, 1985; Turk 1986);

(b) The circumstantial conditions that facilitate or hinder the channelling process of the media (MacKuen and Coombs, 1981; McCombs, 1982; Behr and Iyengar, 1985; McCombs and Weaver, 1985; Smith, 1987-a; and

(c) The consequences generated by such channelling in the public opinion and social performances, which raisesthe "and then what?" question (Weaver, 1984;Iyengar and Kinder, 1987).

The existence of "thematization" process carried out by the public communication presupposes that this is carried out by following those selection criteria that Luhmann, N. (1998) called the "rules of attention". The existence of these rules, which are prior to the thematization, allows this author to affirm that the individuals, in spite of their possible preferences, can only choose between the thematic selections previously laid down by the media: "The rules of selection, which aim to get the public attention, are prior to the communicative process, and are implicitly accepted by the public, and do not correspond with the motivations that govern the conduct, and should be considered as the source of the thematic selection that is pertinent in every social system" (quoted in Böckelmann, 1983). Luhmann has proposed a new conception of the public opinion understood as a thematic structure that tries to reduce the complexity in a society of "structural complexity" as it is the case of our contemporary social environment.

On the other hand, this process of thematization is only viable insofar as the same themes appear in the media (accumulation); insofar as the convergence of these topics occurs in different media (consonance); and insofar as its "omnipresence" creates a climate of opinion (cf. all this in Newmann, 1980). Thus, the topics that are the most discussed, that have the largest share of the audience, and that occupy more time and space in the media (e.g. TV or newspaper), are those that offer the possibility of a expository diet that is more systematic (cultivation) and are the most capable at helping to create a limited view of the world (cf. in this regard, Gerbner, 1976): by sharing images, expectations, definitions, interpretations, values.

Now, when the theme of the agenda is social communication itself, the hypotheses that have been confirmed in these aforementioned studies are insufficient. If social communication becomes a current issue it is because its actors, its discourses, and its events in general (press conferences, statements, leaks "off the record", and even rivalries between media conglomerates) become relevant events. And an event like this ends up engaging both the social actors that compete against each other to occupy the proscenium of the media topicality, and the thematic repertoire of the public agenda which increasingly includes the events of this superimposed reality of communicative clashes.

Finding out how the public agenda is created based on the media agenda (i.e. based on the events of reference revolving around the discourses about the rivalries, scenarios and changes of social communication itself), now acquires a special significance when it becomes evident that increasingly the former (public agenda) replaces the latter (agenda media). It is a process of mediation (Piñuel, 1989; Piñuel and Gaitán, 1995; Piñuel Raigada and Lozano, 2006) over which the so called logics of simulation is superimposed (Baudrillard, 1984), which "no longer has anything to do with the logics of the events. There is a precession [pre-emption] of the model over the fact. It is not about falsely interpreting reality (ideology) but acting as if the (real) reality is no longer necessary" (ibid.). This is therefore making truthful what one see as real and making real what is presented as truthful: truth vs. reality-effect. The reality-effect refers to the truth of the mediated reality. The success of this practice is based largely on offering veracity and credibility, i.e. legitimacy. The truth is said or thought, it is a more a matter of language than ontology (Vilches, 1995). On the other hand, the reality-effect refers to the reality of the mediated truth. This is a super-reality (or superimposed reality), which has

an extraordinary way to produce reality, as Baudrillard (ibid.) would say, this is the simulation that takes away the signifying value from the sign, and the real reference from the reality.

Taking into account the social impact of the "new superimposed reality" offered by the media and of the collective representations and flows of opinion that may arise from the hegemonic discourse disseminated by the media with this purpose, this study discovers the conditions to address the reflection on the new social functions around the media's "production of reality" and on the new "uses" that one can expect the audience to adopt in this regard. For example, as it is already notorious, many organisations (institutions and companies) invest large sums of money on research aimed at identifying the discourse that the media turn into hegemonic when describing their *identitarian* images and the activity (economic, political, cultural, health-related, etc.) they are devoted to. This social practice of the media, does not only involve the creation of a social discourse that becomes hegemonic (with pre-designed thematic agendas), but above all is responsible for generating a media event that acquires an autonomous existence (independent of the nature of the events that are discussed) and eventually manages to engage the social actors.

This approach has a profound epistemological meaning and also entails a wake-up call for communication researchers and theorists. In this sense we want to go beyond the social communication studies that are centred on the referential stereotypy provided by the media and to focus on the mediated ontology and the axiology that the media are founding (Mondelo and Gaitán, 2002); i.e. to pass from the study of the media referents (thematization and hierarchy) as social values, to the study of communicational objects, events and values (ethical and moral discourses) such as the referents of the social occurrences themselves.

2. Object of study and methodology

As indicated, the object of study is the "hegemonic discourse about "truth" and "communication" that appears in the media when they turn their own activity, represented as a social event of reference, into the media reference, or an outstanding item. Besides examining the canonical discourse that the media develop in this way, it is necessary to compare the results of the analysis with the paradigmatic discourse that can be drawn from the press managers (the social agents dedicated to maintaining relations with the media) in order to identify in the media products certain intangibles about the corporate image of the different types of organisations (political, social, economic, etc.) they represent.

To address this object of study we selected and registered in a database a sample of media discourses (articles of any genre published in the press, which here is understood as a representative mass medium) that during the 2008-2009 biennium had as a reference a discourse related to the media activity (their actors, audiences, events, opinions, reactions, etc.) as an agenda item. The sample was constituted by 4176 pieces (press articles) extracted from three surveys comprising all entries that were relevant to the object of study (a self-referential discourse) during 4 full and consecutive weeks, chosen at random throughout the 2008-2009 biennium in the 7 Spanish newspapers that had the largest audience, according to this resulting distribution:

Newspapers	Frequency	%
EL CORREO	457	10.9
LA VOZ DE GALICIA	489	11.7
EL PAIS	593	14.2
ABC	637	15.3
EL MUNDO	660	15.8
LA RAZON	661	15.8
LA VANGUARDIA	679	16.3
Total	4176	100.0

To produce and register the paradigmatic discourse of the diverse organisations' press managers it would have been ideal to use discussion groups, but due to the lack of time and difficulties of these professionals to attend group meetings, as well as the difficulty to manage groups of people with strong personalities and frequent professional tensions among them, it was advisable to replace the focus groups with the application of the DELPHI method.

This study applied a transversal design to the content analysis and the DELPHI groups. This design consisted of selecting samples of the diverse textual body of work (the journalistic discourses of each of the general-information newspapers and the discourses expressed by the social organisations' press managers) around the same thematic area (a discourse focused on social communication). Although the data are representative and the conditions of the news-making were equalised in the same period for all the newspapers and the press managers of the organisations, the observable differences (in the references to a discourse about social communication) must be attributed, respectively, to the various positions of each of the newspapers or each of the organisations' press managers.

The transversal perspective was complemented with a longitudinal design: it aimed to make several measurements (repeated measures) in the successive years in order to be able to assess the trajectory of the phenomenon under study.

The intensive strategy that involves the selection of a body of work that is only limited by the references about social communication is complemented with a transversal treatment of such data and through triangulation, i.e. by comparing the results of the content analysis and the successive rounds of DELHI groups.

Concerning the categories of analysis that are used in this research, it should be emphasised that they are based on a theoretical model that defines the *MDCS* (Dialectic Mediation of Social Communication) research group and prefigures the different social and cognitive dimensions of communication, as an object of study. The MDCS' model formulates a conceptual system that is specialised in the description, explanation, and prediction of historical changes that the communication systems of our societies experience or may experience. Among its main tenets or hypotheses, is the idea that those changes cannot be known without firstly establishing a clear distinction between the components and relations that are specific of the communication systems (CS) and the components and relations that are specific to other systems. Once this differentiation has been established, the model proposes that the historic changes of the communication systems (CS) can only be explained by examining the relations of openness that such system maintains with

other two general systems, the social system of production (SS) and the ecologic-cognitive system (ES), according to the personal conditions of the individuals, and whose specific inventory of generic components and internal relations (structural and functional) is also provided by such model (Cf. Martín Serrano, M., 1981, 1989, but especially Piñuel, J.L. 1989, and Piñuel J.L. and Gaitán, J.A., 1995; and Piñuel J.L. and Lozano, C. 2006).

Chart 1

Field of study: Situations of interaction	Transmission or Exchange of messages Communication System [CS]	Exchange of Stimuli/data Ecological-Cognitive System [ES]	Benefits Exchange Social Relation System [SS]
Performers	*Actors* Emitters Receivers	*Individuals* Ego Alter	*Press Managers* Producers Dealers Consumers
Tools	*Instruments* Signal Producers Signal Receivers Signal Distributors	*Utensils* Assimilation Accommodation	*Media* Capital Work
Productions	*Expressions (messages)* Expressive matters Expressive configurations	*Objects* Perceptible Abstract	*Products* Merchandises Goods Services
Order	*Languages (or codes)* Expressive patterns Signifying codes	*Epistemes* Logics Categories	*Sanctions* Roles/Status Values/norms

According to the MDCS's model, regardless of the Interaction System that is conceptually considered, by observing the human interactions one can verify that there are always some performers involved (actors, for the CS; press managers, for the SS, and individuals, for the ES); some biological or technological «tools» used by the performers (communication instruments, for the CS; production media, for the SS, and natural or artificial utensils of assimilation/accommodation, for the ES); as well as some «products» of exchange (expressions, for the CS; products or goods, for the SS; and objects or references, for the ES); as well as finally some «rules» that are respected or shared (languages, for the CS; sanctions for the SS; and epistemes, for the ES). The objective of this analysis is to identify the cognitive, communicative and social variables that make the interaction possible, and to allocate them to the respective systems that are conceptualised in the model illustrated in table 1.

The transposition of the categories of this model to the subject under study has allowed us to prefigure the categories about social communication that were present in the media representations and the social organisations' press managers when the reference was a media discourse. Thus, for example, we contemplated categories of analysis applied to the socio-economic roles (in the social system, or SS), or to the communicative practice and the communication processes (in the

communication system, or CS) and to the processes of perception, cognition and construction of the collective imaginary that the use of the media images makes possible (in the ecological-cognitive system, or ES), and that each newspaper and each social organisation's press manager implicitly takes into account when in their texts select references to the social communication applied to various themes.

3. Analysis of the construction of the hegemonic discourses about truth, social communication and the activity of the media in the printed press and in the discourse of the organisations' press managers

The following section will first describe the "Plan of variable interpretations" according to some hypotheses that are based on the content analysis of the body of press articles selected, and the central principles of the discourses expressed by the organisations' press managers. These are the hypotheses of this study:

- The news events revolving around social communication as a theme of the media agenda.
- *Hypothesis 1:* The relevance of the event presented by the media is centred on the activity that the media themselves perform when competing with each other to become the official social institution that establishes the public agenda.
- The social practice of the media develops a public discourse that becomes hegemonic
- *Hypothesis 2*: The mediated objects, events and values (the "second reality" superimposed over the narrated events) become social references that acquire an autonomous existence (independent of the nature of the addressed events) and eventually manage to engage the social actors.
- The discourse that the media turn into hegemonic transforms the conditions of truth and reality of the events to which the press managers are linked.
- *Hypothesis 3:* All kinds of organisations (governmental, commercial companies, political parties, trade unions, civil associations, etc.) are forced by the hegemonic discourse of the media to compete against each other to occupy the proscenium of the media's current reality (the occurrences revolving around social communication as an agenda item).

Based on these points we will develop a summarised exposition of the results of this research.

3.1. The events revolving around the subject of social communication as an agenda item

Regarding the first hypothesis, the events revolving around the subject of social communication as an agenda item is the activity developed by the media themselves, according to these data:

- It was confirmed that when the press takes social communication as an object of reference it is because the former considers the latter more as a news object (*News* of events) (43%) than as an object of opinion (opinion articles) (24%), but also that both genres are the most frequently used for this purpose:

TABLE 1

GENRE	FRECUENCY	%
Ombudsman	4	.1
Press Review	8	.2
Other	35	.8
Editorial	42	1.0
Humour	68	1.6
Interview	111	2.7
Article	252	6.0
Letters to Director	359	8.6
Report	529	12.7
Opinion	977	23.4
News	1.791	42.9
Total	**4.176**	**100.0**

- The fact that the news and opinion articles are, in that order, the most frequently used genres, does not seem contradictory with the fact that the preferential author of the communicational self-reference is the *informer* (34%), more than the *columnist* (25%) or the *medium itself* (21%).

TABLE 2

AUTHORSHIP	FRECUENCY	%
N/A	1	.0
Other Media	13	.3
Mixed	37	.9
External Collaborator	149	3.6
News agencies	258	6.2
Audience	389	9.3
Own Media	895	21.4
Columnist	1.037	24.8
Informer	1.397	33.5
Total	**4.176**	**100.0**

- As expected, the news about social communication written by reporters were concentrated in the *TV and COMMUNICATION* section (29%), while the opinion articles about the media's self-referencing that were written by the columnists, editorial writers, and contributors were confined to the opinion section of the newspapers (24%). The *TV and COMMUNICATION* section as universe of media reference is the embodiment of our hypothesis on the invasive occupation of this reference in comparison to others. This section becomes the microcosms where the news events about social communication are presented with their own self-referential sections. The gradual increase of pages devoted to this media environment is combined with the self-referential supplements which the frame of the journalistic section does not reveal, because -as mentioned before- they appear in other sections like the opinion section in the articles, columns, editorials, and collaborations.

TABLE 3

SECTION	FRECUENCY	%
Science and Technology	25	.6
Sports	28	.7
Back cover	44	1.1
People	56	1.3
Unclear	66	1.6
Cover	92	2.2
Economy	93	2.2
Regional and local	166	4.0
Cultural Consumption	301	7.2
National	330	7.9
International	373	8.9
Society	416	10.0
Opinion	983	23.5
TV & Communication	1.203	28.8
Total	**4.176**	**100.0**

- If we take into account the headlines, in table 4 we can see that over half of the total (4176) have been written trying to appealing to the *existential* modality, i.e. giving their referents the condition of news events over any other premise, and also trying to appealing to the *epistemic* condition, highlighting the knowledge they have on the topics addressed; the following modality has to do with the *ambiguous* assertions, since 15.2% of the headlines do not define clearly what logical premise is reflected by the existence, truth, knowledge or obligatory nature of the addressed themes. A clear example is the following headline: "Phones against fusils" (LA RAZÓN, Friday, 23 May 2008).

TABLE 4

HEADLINE MODALITY	FRECUENCY	%
Interrogative	71	1,7
N/A	79	1,9
Exclamatory	112	2,7
Aletic [1]	189	4,5
Deontic	381	9,1
Declarative Ambiguous	635	15,2
Epistemic	1.101	26,4
Existential	1.608	38,5
Total	**4.176**	**100,0**

- As it can be appreciated, by taking into account the emitters that are objects of reference, practically the references are dominated by both the *corporate emitters* (28%), i.e. those sources instituted in the field of media communication (institutional emitters such as newspapers, radio stations or TV networks), and the *professional emitters* (27%), i.e. the media communicators, to the detriment of the *individuals emitters* (12%). And in the last place are the references to the ideal sources (the generic emitters) and the group emitters of

the media group type, whose reference is always secret, under the signature of their companies and/or professionals.

TABLE 5

COMMUNICATORS-EMITTERS (SC)	FRECUENCY	%
Various	32	.8
uncertain	57	1.4
Group Emitters	105	2.5
Generic Emitters	268	6.4
Individual Emitters	520	12.5
N/A	883	21.1
Professional Emitters	1.140	27.3
Corporate Emitters	1.171	28.0
Total	**4.176**	**100.0**

- Undoubtedly, the communicational references are focused in the *Press* (27%) and *Television* (26%) (together exceeded 50% of the total number of references), which are the main protagonists of the specular discourse of social communication in the TV/communication and Opinion sections. In comparison to other traditional media, it is outstanding the rise of the *Internet* as an exchange and transmission channel of self-referential discourses under study.

TABLE 6

COMMUNICATION INSTRUMENT	FRECUENCY	%
Scene	15	.4
Platform	22	.5
Multiplatform	36	.9
Telephony	55	1.3
Cinema	125	3.0
Radio	140	3.4
Book publishing	176	4.2
Various or others	331	7.9
Internet	388	9.3
N/A	703	16.8
TV	1.069	25.6
Press	1.116	26.7
Total	**4.176**	**100.0**

3.2. The social practice of the media develops a public discourse that becomes hegemonic

The self-referential discourse becomes a meta-discourse when people predicate its underlying functions, circumstances, keys of meaning, social regulations or epistemic approaches. And these are the most relevant details:

- Taking into account the self-reference to the social functions attributed to social communication, *informing* (32%) and *entertaining* (18%) are the predominant functions of the self-referential discourse about social communication, while the references to the *educational* or *advertising* functions are irrelevant in the expressions of the discourse:

TABLE 7

EXPRESSIONS OF SOCIAL FUNCTION	FRECUENCY	%
Education	144	3.4
Advertising & propaganda	243	5.8
Various	398	9.5
Entertainment & leisure	743	17.8
N/A	1.296	31.0
Information	1.352	32.4
Total	**4.176**	**100.0**

- The expressions of the press discourse are diversified to refer to various aspects of the communication system that they address. The c*auses and effects* referred to in relation to communicational news events, the *Activities and Processes* linked to the communicational practices, the *norms and guidelines* to be followed by the media professionals, and even the *resources* of the communicative *interaction* have similar prevalence in the Press, when their reference is not ignored.

TABLE 8

EXPRESSIONS OF REFERENCIAL FUNCTION	FRECUENCY	%
Various	74	1.8
To partners	219	5.2
To interaction resources	434	10.4
To regulations (norms and guidelines)	445	10.7
To situations and environments	525	12.6
To activities and processes	559	13.4
To causes and effects	572	13.7
N/A	1.348	32.3
Total	**4.176**	**100.0**

- If we take into account the alternatives that are relative to the keys of meaning in the stories in the press, it is possible to examine the following types, whose frequency of appearance is shown in table 9. However it should be noted that the analysis of the keys of meaning has been based on the body of press articles of the second and third surveys, which cover a total of 2757 discourses. The reason is that the revision of the first two surveys enabled detecting that some analysts only registered the textual discourse of the self-reference, and that they did so for all variables. This practice, which is the general rule assigned in its task, has an exception for the variables that are included in the KEYS OF MEANING and those which follow in this exhibition. Therefore, from the second survey (inclusive) onwards we urged all analysts to identify the keys of meaning of the discourse, and to avoid staying at its

superficial or explicit structure. The intention was that in the variables specified for that purpose, the analysts would identify the discourse underlying the manifest expression, provided the keys of meaning were noticeable -according to the previous training that the analysts received to be able to recognise such categories of analysis. The following table shows the conclusions of the study of the variables and the main categories covering the discourse's most relevant keys of meaning, which is very transcendental for the conclusions.

TABLE 9

THE PRESS TALKS ABOUT…	FRECUENCY	%
N/A	2	.1
… what happens concerning what happens	16	.6
… what happens concerning what is done	78	2.8
…what is being done concerning what has been done	80	2.9
… what happens concerning what is said	106	3.8
… what is done concerning what happens	121	4.4
…what is said	129	4.7
… what is done concerning what has been said	236	8.6
… what is said concerning what has been done	335	12.2
…what is being done	339	12.3
…what is said concerning what happens	380	13.8
...what is said concerning what has been said	382	13.9
…what happens	553	20.1
Total	2.757	100.0

- In principle, the discourse about "what happens" dominates the list (with 20%), and in it we can recognise a typical feature of the journalistic discourse: the information about the current situation. However, if we put together the discourses according to what they say, the predominant discourse is the one talking about what is said (48%), which is over the discourse about what is being done (28%) and about what happens (27%) in the area of self-reference under study: social communication. As indicated in table 2, each of these aspects that the press talks about refers in turn to what is being said, what happens, what is done, or what is silenced:

Chart 2

The press talks about …	**…what is said… (45%)**	… about what is said	(14%)
		… about what happens	(14%)
		… about what is done	(12%)
		… (without specifying the purpose)	(05%)
The press talks about …	**...what is done... (28%)**	… (without specifying the purpose)	(12%)
		… about what is said	(09%)
		… about what happens	(04%)
		… about what is done	(03%)
The press talks about …	**... what happens... (27%)**	… (without specifying the purpose)	(20%)
		… about what is said	(04%)
		… about what is done	(03%)
		…about what happens	(00%)
Self-references	**(100%)**		**(100%)**

- Now, taking into account the *social regulations* implicated by the self-referential discourse, the discourse about *performed actions* (30%) seems outstanding, In it we can recognise the pragmatist approach that is put before the norms or deontological principles, the exemplary casuistry as jurisprudence. But if we put together the discourses that are analysed depending on the social regulations they implicate, we obtain a distribution that makes the previous category comparable with *competences*, *assessments* or *judgments* (30%) and the *absence of reference* to norms and regulations (30%).

Here is the table:

TABLE 10

IMPLICATED SOCIAL REGULATIONS	FRECUENCY	%
Sanctions: punishment	29	1.1
Various / others	44	1.6
Sanctions: awards	50	1.8
Legal norms	127	4.6
Positive assessments and sanctions	239	8.7
Negative assessments and sanctions	265	9.6
Attributes	331	12.0
N/A	833	30.2
Performed actions	839	30.4
Total	**2.757**	**100.0**

- This last fact suggests that the internal criticism maintained between media groups and professionals is no stranger to the competitive nature of the practices in this area of self-reference under study.
- Focusing on the epistemic approaches of the discourse, we can notice how the dominant discourse is one devoid of epistemes (31%), followed, on volume of appearance, by the critical discourse about the correctness of certain journalistic practices (17%). Here is the table:

TABLE 11

EPISTEMIC APPROACHES	FRECUENCY	%
various	57	2.1
Rectitude or deception	139	5.0
useful or useless	234	8.5
expertise or clumsiness	306	11.1
truth or falsehood	320	11.6
reality or fiction	337	12.2
Right or wrong	491	17.8
N/A	873	31.7
Total	**2.757**	**100.0**

- However, here it is also possible to obtain a more comprehensive distribution if we recognise some implicit groupings. For example, by grouping together the discourses about the right or wrong development of the communicative practice with the discourses preaching about the *expertise or clumsiness* of communicators, we can identify an epistemic approach that reaches 29%. The same can be done with one of our main references: the discourse about the *truth or falsehood*, which can bundled with the discourses about *rectitude or deception* and even with the discourses about *reality or fiction*, to obtain a joint epistemic approach that reaches nearly 30% (29%). Thus, it should be noted that the previous discourses would be

comparable with the absence or recognition of epistemes in the discourse (30%) in this field of social communication.

3.3. The normative statute and the virtue epistemology

We have noticed that, although the praxis of the journalists is continuously subjected to the approval and disapproval of their colleagues, this critical attitude is part of the everyday ethics that governs the professional praxis. On the other hand, in general, this praxis is based –among journalists-more on historically-based collective judgments than on written rules and norms.

This majority normative statute is not the only one that can be identified in all the media discourses. As figure 1 shows: "Implicated regulations and epistemic approaches according self-referential discourses", which are the result of making the relevant crossings between the variables, and the *Discourse about what is being said* differs in these respects from the *Discourse about what is being done* or the *Discourse about what is happening*.

The *discourse about what is being said* is a critical discourse that depends on the *implicated social regulations* and is based more on the *powers, valuations, or judgments* that journalists deserve, than on the *performances* that are exemplary of the professional memory. However the *Discourse about what is being done* and the *discourse about what is happening* are characterised by their lack of *regulation* or, in any case, their reference to the *proceeding* exemplary performances. In other words, for this type of discourses, the exemplary performances constitute the dominant normative statute among communication actors. In any of these conceptions we can identify the pragmatist approach of their regulatory statute, which gives preference to the norm or the deontological principles over the exemplary casuistry or the precedents of the professional memory as jurisprudence.

Graph 1
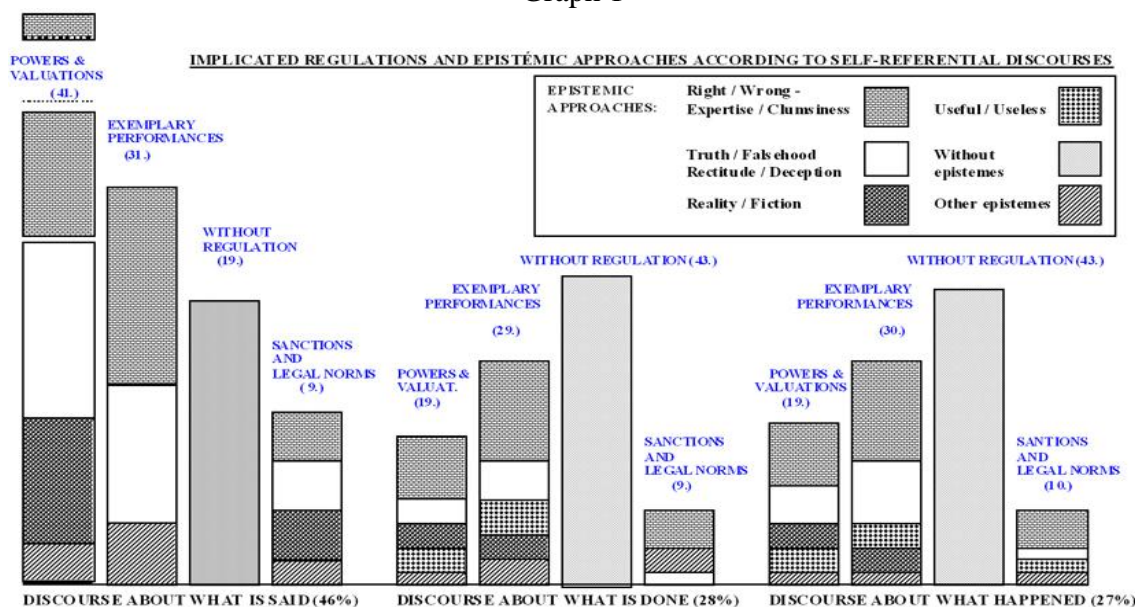
NOTE. - The relative size of the Regulations and Epistemes in the histograms corresponds to their relative incidence in each discourse. However, all the proportions were weighted up in order to be able to compare their relative value across discourses (about what is said, about what is done and about what happens

If we consider the most predominant type of discourses: *discourses about what is being said*, we find that indeed one of the ways that can be adopted to justify or assess the professional acts in the media world is the one deriving from choosing, discarding, or ignoring those epistemic principles which are carried by the communication actors. Such principles are here understood as the powers/competences of the professionals, the virtues that enable their search and transmission of truthful knowledge, which is the objective of their task. This way of proceeding is clearly part of the so-called "virtue epistemology", a concept which was widely developed by Sosa (1995) and which was adopted in this study due to its obvious adequacy for the analysis of the epistemic normativity of the self-referential discourse in the communicational practice. Thus, it is of no use to wonder about the extent to what this "virtue epistemology" is finally a guarantee of truth in the communicational productions because that is not is part of the question. However, the "virtue epistemology" is very important because it is the starting point of any communicational practice of professional nature.

There is no doubt that the media have chosen a way of producing and disseminating knowledge that can only be explained from the adoption of the so-called virtue epistemology. According to it, while the communication actors can be convinced of their own task and the own evidences they have about their data, and can be knowledgeable of Orthodox proceedings (e.g. cross-checking sources), this is not enough to achieve the validity of their communicational task. Above all this are the virtues that make the communication actors reliable as professionals in their task of communicating the truth. The virtues of these professional communicators are seen as inherent capacities, just like the courage that is presupposed in the soldier, without accepting the possibility that beyond the truth of the discourse preached about the professionals, or preached by the professionals about themselves, there is another truth, a truth that is made-up, even the truth that -given any fate or coincidence- can also can identified in the discourse.

We are emphasizing that what is said about a statement, an action or an event in the professional level can also be measured or assessed in terms of competition in the communicational journalistic practice. This is a widespread, corporate vision that is usually used in front of other social institutions (i.e. of political or judicial external nature) but is measured in other terms by the journalists: the competitiveness of some journalists would be proved -in the internal level-with the demonstration of the alleged skills or virtue, which are compared to the skills of virtues of other journalists. In any case, from this virtue epistemology, the justification or validity of the practice would be unnecessary: because it has already been given from the moment the communication actor has been catalogued as such, with all the virtues that -in principle- adorn the profession.

Now, as we have pointed out, the communicators are accustomed to comparatively assess their colleagues by setting their criteria according to certain principles that are regulatory of their activity and the reliability exhibited by the assessed communicators in their discursive productions. Thus, of course, the professional practice can only be the expression of their skills or inherent virtues even if they are unevenly distributed: more abundant and recognisable among our team and more questionable and deficient among those belonging to other media conglomerates. Outside of this internal competition of the profession, any external assessment will conclude that through their works we cannot distinguish the good communicators but, rather, that it is through their good works that we recognise them as communicators. Therefore it can be argued that the evaluative statements about the work of communicators are not based on their actions (*esse sequitur operari*) but rather on the virtues attributed - deliberately or non- to the communication actors (*operari sequitur esse*).

Nevertheless, as Putnan and Habermas (2008: 101) indicate, the problem with a discourse of this kind, which does not differentiate the evaluative and empirical statements to ensure the realistic validity of the former, is that it produces an aberrant result: the equalisation of the difference

between particular values and the universally binding rules of moral action. That is, this kind of discourses take a road that starts in the evasion of the rules that are too constrictive and universal for the professional practices of communication (the practice of journalism as a liberal profession is a prime example), and ends in the relativism of values and the *particularism*. The objectivity that can be demanded to the discourse appears, therefore, as a result of the inter-subjectivity or, in any case, grounded in the indispensability. As Putnam (2008: 22) would say, referring to the pragmatist validity of these evaluative statements: "the notions that are indispensable for our best practices are justified by that same fact".

On the other hand, this adopted epistemic approach is confined to a praxeology on the exercise of the media work. That is, to the extent that the professional task is judged or put to the test in the media universe under a utilitarian or pragmatic key. Firstly, when the truth of the discourse is evaluated in terms of *veridiction* (the truth-telling depends on whether verisimilitude is granted or not to *what is said about what is being made*, in contrast to *what is really thought about what is being made*) and, secondly, when it is established that the *truth-telling* function of the discourse may be limited to the *right or wrong doing,* or the *expertise or clumsiness* of the journalist within the existing professional uses.

In short, the most relevant value of this discourse is its *ethical code*, whose epistemic approach is related to the journalist's consciousness, as an epistemic subject, and to the attribution of *credibility* that it deserves, as a professional communicator. Here the decision capacity of journalists when carrying out their work is assumed, even though they are susceptible to be judged according to their conduct in the continual of value of the legitimate, but temporary, corporate uses, which are current in a given socio-historical juncture.

Now, it is appropriate to note that, in this epistemic conception, the search for the following truth of the discourse does not stop in the repetition of already explored models and involves the search for new evidence: the ethics of research as a founding principle of knowledge also governs the communicational practices of professional nature. This is another alternative or complementary normative source of the weak validating justification based only in the *credibility*, reliability, or *rationality* of the communicator. Regarding the ethics of research as a normative source, Broncazo and Vega (in Quesada, 2009: 90) have made an accurate theoretical development.

It is important to note some differences between this conception of the *Discourse about what is said* and the *discourse about what is done*, or *about what happens*, which is more based on a regulatory statute in which (although aims to be exempt from regulation)the *performed actions* are also seen as exemplary precedent and, to a lesser extent, the individual assessments serve as regulatory alternatives. The *nomothetic* and moral perspective of this discourse is based on the "good professional practices" as a *desideratum* but also in the endorsement –an unwritten but universal norm–of the community that can recognise–with their historical memory- the good practices. As Habermas (2008, op. cit., p. 22) would say, the legitimacy and validity of a normative discourse lies in its universality: "an agreement on the standards or notions that was discursively reached under ideal conditions possesses more than an authorising force; it guarantees the correctness of the moral judgments".

That being said, it is not the law but the tradition what regulates the practices. The same objectivity is recognised here as a normative truth or consensual and canonical principle only within the context of enunciation. This is an epistemic approach that is based on a multiple praxeological approach: from a normative level, in the canons about the *Right or Wrong doing*, and the *Expertise or Clumsiness* of the professional practice, but also from another more empirical level in a complex truth-checking

approach: where the Truth or Falsehood are verified in the correspondence between the objects of reference and the discourse that implicates them, and in the *Rectitude or Deception* dichotomy of the professional communicative practice.

But now it is important to examine the *responsibility* attributed to the light of this virtue epistemology because the sources of the epistemic normativity of the discourse under study are not only found in the virtues and functionality of the communicational practice, and it is possible to also find them in the *duties* (Broncazo and Vega 2009: 77-110). If it seems easy to understand the duty dictated by the utilitarianism or the memory of the community, one should wonder the reason why the *professional responsibility* is derived from the acts evaluated from a *virtue epistemology* and an ethical code. The answer offered to us in the analysed discourse is that the responsibility of communicators is not with society but with themselves, or more precisely, with the community they are part of: this is therefore a clear corporate responsibility. Of course, this unionist responsibility ensures the social responsibility, precisely because the so-called "profession" is a critical collective agent that is the main -and should be the only- judge and guarantor of the individual professional practices.

It is possible to remember that contrary to what happens in the tests overcome by this hero, in Greimas's (1966) structural analysis of the story, specifically in the *glorifying* test, the identity of the antihero did needed to be exposed as the glory of the hero increased. It is possible to propose that this virtue epistemology has, logically, its dark side, because communicators can commit morally reprehensible acts. And it might seem that from this essentialist perspective, any critical evaluation would be placed in the recognition, disapproval, and expulsion from the media Eden of the character of Mister Hyde which the communicator also carries inside. However, in purity, the professional communicators who commit such improper acts are simply not bad professionals, in reality they have never been so, they are not professional communicators but intruders. Here, "the true nature of the traitor" is not revealed (Greimas, 1966) because if the communication actors do not achieve the glory they deserve is because they did not end up being what they intended to be, and therefore they have not stopped being impostors or false communication professionals. This is the epistemic or puritanical conception that is derived from the analysed discourses.

Table 3 illustrates only the most frequent elements of contrast, but not the shared components, of the two general types of discourse that are compared, considering the (*evaluative*, *empirical* and *normative*) content of the statements of the *self-referential* discourses about the media universe. Of course, in each type of discourse it is possible to find the characteristics of the others.

Chart 3

CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SELF-REFERENTIAL DISCOURSES ABOUT THE MEDIA UNIVERSE

Statements with evaluative content	Statements with empirical content		Statements with normative content
To say →	Media events	Professional saying	← Doing
Speak about what is said In the media universe →	About what it happens In the media universe	About what they say (the professionals)	← Speak about what they do (the professionals)
Ethics and pluralism vs. morality and universalism Pragmatism and Relativism of values vs. Formalism and Nomothetic approach			
OBJECTIVITY As INTERSUBJECTIVITY of the press managers or INDISPENSABILITY in the development of the practice	OBJECTIVITY As normative truth or recognized and consensual principle in the institutional context of enunciation		
PRAXEOLOGY Right / Wrong (Subject - Object) Expertise / clumsiness (practices)	PRAXEOLOGY Truth / Falsehood (objects – discourses) Rectitude / Deception (practices)		
VALIDITY Veridiction and credibility of press managers Ethics according to precedents and practices in force	VALIDITY Verification and universality Customs and canons of good practice		

3.4. The concurrence of opinions towards the hegemonic discourses about truth and social communication among the social organisations' press managers.

The DelphiI technique was applied to 17 press managers from various social organisations (large companies, governmental bodies, trade unions and other public and private institutions) over three rounds of communication exchanges, via e-mail, about the relations between the organisations as a source of information, and the media as the disseminators of news.

The results obtained in the first Delphi round on the "Traffic of information between organisations and the media" showed that in such traffic the new tools of communication not only acquire importance, but are also used preferably to sustain the *interpersonal relations* between the journalist and the press manager.

The second Delphi round corroborated that personal relations are considered the most important thing, and established other important factors that are added to those relations, for instance: the importance of the institution that establishes those relations, that such relations reinforce the credibility of the source, and that in this way the media receive differentiated messages. This confirms that the flow of communication between companies and the media occurs preferably in the following ways and order:

1. Personal encounters (mentioned by 14 of 17 experts as the most widely used method: 10 of them claimed to use it a lot and 4 said they used it fairly).
2. Telephone calls (also mentioned by 14 of 17 experts as the most widely used method: 7 of them claimed they use it a lot and 7 said they used it fairly).
3. Email (also mentioned by 13 of 17 experts as the most widely used method: 5 of them claimed they use it a lot and 8 said they used it fairly).

4. Press releases (mentioned by 8 of 17 experts as the most widely used method: although only 2 of them claimed they use it a lot, 6 fairly, and 2 a little).

5. Invitations for group meetings (mentioned by 8 of 17 experts as the most widely used method: although only 3 of them claimed they use it a lot, 7 said they used it fairly, and 1 said he used it a little and considered it useless).

The differences are listed in the following table:

TABLE 12

Means of contact	Intensity of use				
	High	Fair	Low	Not used	Totals
1. Personal meetings	10	4			14
2. Phone calls	7	7			14
3. Email	5	8			13
4. Press releases	2	6	2		10
5. Invitations for group meetings	3	7	1	1	10

In general, in order to achieve a greater presence in the mediate press managers add to the personal relations the relevance of the news, the importance of the subject or the credibility that the source has conquered. However, keeping the best relations with journalists only leads to achieving a greater presence in the media if certain commitments are respected and there a mutual understanding.

In the first round of responses, the experts showed that the commitment of the media with companies or institutions that are providers of information depends on their profile for the publication of their news and that the profile of the medium was decisive when establishing the interest for the sending of information. The greatest commitment was shown by the business press, while the general-information press was the most selective.

In round two the press managers defined with more precision certain aspects about the relevance of the news, the strategic interest of the agenda and the publishing commitment. 13 of 17 experts answered positively to the question "Do you confirm that the profile of the medium is decisive to achieve a greater commitment to publish your news items?" This means that all sources, either corporate or institutional, corroborate that indeed the profile of the medium is crucial to achieve a greater commitment to publish their news items. It is the thematic profile of the medium -not the ideological profile- what determines the interest of the information. The sources believe that the media expects in this way to satisfy their audiences. And in answer to the question "Could you indicate who acquire greater commitment: the mainstream media (a), the news agencies (b), or the specialised press (c)?", 8 of 17 experts said that it was the specialised press, while the answers of the rest were distributed as follows:

CATEGORÍES:	RESPONSES
- a) mainstream media	2/17
- b) news agencies	2/17
- c) specialised press	8/17
- a, b) general media and agencies	0/17
- a, c) general media and specialised press	0/17
- b, c) news agencies and specialised press	0/17
- a, b, c) all	2/17
- Does not apply	2/17

As a result, the sources consider that the specialised press acquires a greater commitment than the mainstream media and the news agencies to publish the news related to their thematic specialisation. The thematic agenda of this specialised press (economical, sports, etc.) is reduced the scope of its specialty in contrast to the mainstream or the various news agencies, which in principle should echo all the news.

On the other hand, the media's commitment to publish may be less guaranteed if the news sources are commercial, depending on the extent to what the media considers that their publication can serve commercial interests. And when asked "Can you confirm whether this commitment varies depending on the information sections of the medium, as far as where you see published most of the news about your organization or company?", 11 of 17 experts said yes. According to the consulted experts, the publication of the news from companies and institutions is conditioned by the thematic sections of the media. In this way, the nature of the sources (e.g. business, political, etc.) will make the media tend to select their news to ascribe them to certain sections (e.g. economics, politics, etc.), but not others. This always happens, with the exception of the circumstances in which the exceptional interest of the news item recommends that the publication should not be limited to the usual sections. In any case, it is understood that the professionalism and sensitivity of the journalists responsible for those sections determine whether the news end up published or not.

The media, on the other hand, see as a more relevant factor the adequacy of the news to the section and consider the interests that the sources will serve with the dissemination of their news. And the media usually opt for not serving private interests.

In the first round it was established that the news selection that the institutions and companies send to the media depends firstly on the credibility of the source and secondly on the impact of the news, although conflicting subjects acquired certain priority. The publishing of the news thus depends mainly on sending the news to the correct section, with a summarised and interesting presentation of content.

In round two we confirmed this and reached the following conclusions regarding the selection of the news to be published by the media:

- The most important thing is the relation between the informer and the medium
- Secondly, the sending of the news to the correct section increases the chances of publication
- Finally, the news should be well written and polished for its publication

The first Delphi round showed us that the media favour some sources or organisations over others, and that the ideological discrimination of the medium does exist. However, the advertising weight of the organization in the medium and the weight of the image or brand that the organization represents

are priorities. Secondly, the experts mentioned the affinity and familiarity existing between the source and the journalist.

Round two confirmed that the assessment of the relations between companies and media depends on factors such as:

- The economic criteria
- The relevance of the news
- The political affinity
- The profile of the source/company

However, the responses were very much divided regarding the influence of the ideological, economic or circumstantial affinities of the medium, since half of the experts answered affirmatively and the other negatively. It is even striking that some of those who responded "No" also added that one should always to take into account these determining factors but did not believe that they are decisive in managing the relation with the media. Specifically, this was the distribution of answers to the question "Do you think that the political affinity is the most important criterion when assessing the relations with the media? Or is it the economic interest?":

- o 5 experts replied that the economic criterion was the most important when assessing the relation with the media
- o 3 experts answered that it is in the relevance of the news
- o 2 experts replied that it was the political criteria
- o 2 experts replied that they depend on the company or institution
- o 1 expert replied that advertising does has an influence, but also the company's reputation and credibility and the relations with the press office
- o 1 expert (from the media) said that it was personal affinity, at least in the political and social news. In the economy section, also have an influence the economic criteria
- o 1 expert (from the media) said that newsworthiness is added to the political and economic criteria.

And finally, this was the distribution of answers to the question, "Does this valuation changes depending on the type of news, the type of media, or the personality of the journalist?"

- o 4 experts replied that it changes depending on the type of media
- o 4 experts replied that it changes depending on the type of news (one from the media)
- o 3 experts replied that it does changes (one media)
- o 3 experts replied that it does not change
- o 3 experts replied that it depends, that it does changes, but is multifactorial

Thus, only 3 experts out of 17 denied this influence.

Finally, in the third round, we addressed the agreements (or disagreements) among the press managers and the media journalists concerning the framing, by *genres*, *sections*, *authors*, and *protagonism*, of the news that are delivered to the media and are eventually published, and the -so relevant to us- views that the press managers hold about the prevalence in the media of discourses about "what is said", "what is done" and "what happens". And these were the most relevant results of the third round.

Specifically, all agreed that the genres are negotiated. However when faced with the question: "How important is for your company or institution that the media selects any of the following genres, regardless of the content of the information that you offer to them? Mark your choice with a cross (X)", the result was that the *opinion article* was very important for 7 of the 11 press managers who answered this question; the *editorial* genre was also *very* important for 8 of the 10 press managers who answered this question; and the *report* was *quite* important for 8 of the 10 press managers that mentioned it.

TABLE 13

	Much	Quite	Little	Nº of respondents
Opinion article	7	4		11
Chronic	3	4	2	9
Editorial	8	2		10
Interview	6	4	1	11
News	3	6	1	10
Report	2	8		10
Another: Photo		1		1
Another: News in brief			1	1

Since the content analysis showed that more than half of the 4176 registered newspaper articles, whose theme was a self-referential discourse about communication, were signed by a columnist or a journalist of the publishing medium, a matter to explore in the Delphi panel was the negotiation of press managers with the media journalists on the election of authors and protagonists of the agreed publications. When faced with the question "How important is for your company or institution who signs the information published?" (Mark your choice with a cross)", there was some shared preference (6/11) to give *much* importance to the *journalist of the medium*, but especially to give *little* importance (9/9) to the information that was signed *without signature.*

TABLE 14

	Much	Quite	Little	Nº of respondents
External collaborator selected by the medium	2	5	4	11
A journalist from the publishing medium	6	1	4	11
Signature of the institution	4	4	3	11
Without signature			9	9

And when faced with the question "How important is for your company or institution who is the protagonist of the published information? (Mark your choice with a cross)", 10 of the 11 press managers who answered this question granted *much* importance to the protagonism of the *Directors of the company or institution* and 7 granted *much* importance to the protagonism of an *opinion leader* in the field:

TABLE 15

	Much	Quite	Little	N. of respondents
Director of the company or institution	10	1		11
Member of the company or institution	6	4	1	11
Opinion leader in the field	7	3	1	11
Public external to the service offered by the company or institution	2	5	4	11

Finally the third Delphi round addressed the views of the press managers on the structure of the media discourse that increasingly integrate the reference to the own institution or company. The answers of the 11 press managers who answered this third round were surprisingly similar to and confirmatory of the results obtained in the content analysis: that in the discourse structure, the news items whose reference was focused on "what is being said" reached 45%, while the rest is distributed almost equally between references to "what has been done" (28%) or to "what happens" (27%). The answers to the question "What is your view on the news routinely published by the media about your company or institution? (Express it in terms of percentages by filling in the table below)" could have not been more illustrative:

TABLA16

The media speak about :	Percentages given by the 11 experts that answered the question											Mean
"What is said"	30%	70%	40%	15%	65%	50%	20%	50%	60%	40%	40%	44%
"What is done"	40%	20%	30%	35%	20%	25%	40%	30%	20%	30%	30%	28%
"What happens"	30%	10%	30%	50%	30%	25%	40%	20%	20%	30%	30%	28%

4. Discussion and conclusions

At the beginning of this article we stated that the objective of our study was to reveal the central principles on which the media discourse becomes hegemonic in relation to their own activity and the conditions of "true communication", in order to learn about the viability of the changes that are worth taking to safeguard human and citizen rights with regards to social communication. Well, the central principles on which the media discourse becomes hegemonic regarding the self-references to their own communication are these:

- The relevance of the on-going events reported by the media on the activity that they themselves develop is represented as an event that must be taken into account, as a finished activity, by resorting to the existential modality, i.e. by giving to their topics and references the condition of being an event over any another premise, and by resorting to an epistemic condition that highlights the knowledge held about the themes or references addressed by the media.
- The information objects, events and values ("second reality" superimposed on the course of the addressed events) that are transformed into social references acquire an autonomous existence that is independent of the nature of the events that are talked about and engages the social protagonists to compete with each other. However, the press stories speak of what has been said, and above all about what has been said or what happens, but not about what is done.

- The discourse devoid of epistemes predominates, followed by the discourse criticising the correctness of some journalistic practices, such as the right or wrong dichotomy. On the contrary, the discourse focused on the truth or falsehood dichotomy is much less common, just like the discourses focused on the reality or fiction dichotomy and -this is most surprising- the discourses focused on the expertise or clumsiness of the communicators.
- Finally, the experts participating in the DELPHI panel confirmed that the relations between the organisations and the media are almost always focused on personal commitments maintained between the professionals that help putting into the scene the events that are talked about, and the other professionals that distribute the images to the public, and that this is a goal guaranteed by some "technical knowledge" and not by a social obligation of "telling the truth".

Our final conclusion is this: the rules of the game for social action and the rules of the discourse for the expression that has just been detected establish a structure for the on-going events, so that the events themselves get to be perceived; are represented and end up regulated in accordance with the dominance of the current historical existence. This is the reason it is very important to analyse the structure of these events, which are collected, represented and regulated according to this dominance of historical existence which, day after day, constructs the accounts of the current state of the world in the media, whose social product is the service offered by journalism. We chose to study the self-references of the media in the press, by extracting from this medium our material of analysis.

The daily discourse of the press is ideal for this purpose because it facilitates the task of revealing the construction of the discourse of social communication. The daily presence of this discourse, due to its repetition, allows obtaining the stereotyped images that are less contingent of the media universe in their multiple references. On the other hand, the press turns out to be a unanimous actor that reproduces the Communication System of which it is part. And it is possible to recognise in the media a field of historical resonance and a temporal arena(intra-communicational)of the processes taking place in companies and the media, with their repeated crossed self-references about the sector. Each newspaper incessantly offers news and opinions –even messages directed to their competitors-about *what is said*, *what is done* and about *what happens* in the media universe, which is like talking about a communicational space, a "neighbourhood playground" where one of the possible worlds that then becomes a privileged reference on the public agenda is created in the most detailed possible way.

The overall result of this investigation on the self-reference is clear and provides an overview of great redundancy, which can be summarized as follows:

- *The confusion of the source with the medium* occurs when the medium becomes the source of the events, so that the medium can only refer to itself when referring to the event and its source.
- *The confusion of the reference that is disseminated with the event of reference that is created* is the result of the media's production of reality, which has social repercussions on the creation of the public agenda since it is the type of reference that tends to be increasingly disseminated in the whole of the social reference.
- *The hypertrophy of the reference in the media groups*. The references about social communication that are continuously poured in the various communicational products of the media, with a feed-back function, produce biased images of the media universe, because a large part of those references do not refer to the whole media universe but instead, in a privileged manner, refer only to that portion of the media universe that belongs to the

business group, media or programmes (e.g. newspapers, networks, broadcasters, publishers, etc.) in which the discourse is inscribed.

Thus it is possible to explore -and this is the main object of this article- more specific issues relating to the structure of the discourses that more frequently integrate the representation of this media universe just like it is referred to by the press. An analysis like the one offered by this article was made possible and may be only epistemologically further developed if it uses a theory of communication that is capable of:

- Establishing the relations between communication and the social interaction, and placing the social interaction in the universe of possibilities and previsions extracted from the conditions that concern us as individuals and citizens and exist in the historical conditions of the social changes

- Linking the evolution of life and society with the historical vicissitudes of communication and the virtualities that communication offers in the construction of social representations (self-references and hetero-references) that are created by the game of reflexivity between discourse and action

- Making this communication theory applicable to journalism, by giving this social practice unknown dimensions that place it in front of its most serious historical responsibility: its cooperation to the construction and reproduction of our social domain of existence

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Notes

[1] Originally a Greek term meaning "truth" or "the unconcealedness of things".

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