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DOI: 10.4185/RLCS-65-2010-883-061-070-EN - ISSN 1138 - 5820 - RLCS # 65 - 2010

Terrorism and Politics Predominate on the Front Pages of the Basque Press. Content and Area Analysis of the Front Pages of the Regional Newspapers

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Abstract: This paper offers the results of research project 08/20 of the University of the Basque Country on the news published on the front pages of the Basque press during the years 1996, 2001 and 2006.

The researchers analyse the front pages of the Basque press to determine if their content matches the demand and interests of their readers. The study shows what are the most relevant topics for these newspapers. The research involved a detailed analysis of 2,448 front pages of the five main Basque newspapers, with a total of 19,156 news items. A specific methodology was developed for this work, enabling both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the news stories to be made. The data shown in this paper are a summary of the more detailed results that emerged in the different fields of the research.

Keywords: Front pages; Basque Press; Page Surface Area; News; Terrorism; Type of Content; Regional Newspapers.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 1.1. Objectives. 1.2. Initial hypothesis. 2. Methodological strategies. 2.1. Technical data and geographical focus. 2.2. Use of colour as a qualitative measurement tool. 2.3. Criteria for time frame. 2.4. Criteria for choosing the sample. 3. Results. 3.1. Main news. 3.2. Front page topics. 3.3. Geographical focus of the main news. 3.4. Page surface area. 4. Comparative analysis of results with public opinion and social studies. 5. Overall conclusion. 6. Bibliography.

Traslated by **Robert Curven**

1. Introduction

Since the publication of Leo Bogart's [\[1\]](#) now classic studies, we have known what citizens read, what most interests them in the content of newspapers and how they approach reading the press. Bogart's study was centred on the U.S. newspapers, but since the 1980s similar works have been realised throughout the world and also in Spain. Other research, such as that of Jacques Kayser [\[2\]](#), has gone more deeply into the methods for determining the significance of what a newspaper publishes. And although modern design tendencies have invalidated many of Kayser's proposals, starting from the fact that reading habits and points of attention on the page have altered with changes in the format of newspapers, his methodology continues to be valid [\[3\]](#), making it possible to determine what is considered truly important by a newspaper and what is of less relevance.

1.1. Objectives

The objective of this work is to determine what the Basque newspapers talk about on their front pages, what the subjects are that fill the greatest area of that limited and prominent space. The front page is obviously composed every day, when a selection is made from amongst the topics contained inside the newspaper, a decision that is not greatly influenced by the previous day or by predictions about the day after. The sum of these daily decisions should provide a fairly clear picture of how each newspaper sees the world and, in all probability, how the editors of the medium understand the demands of its readers. The fact that a front page is always a delicate balance of topics is a different question.

As in a bookshop window, where one finds a more or less determinate mixture of bestsellers and quality literature

(depending on the bookshop, the area where it is located and its type of clients, there will be more quality literature and less bestsellers, or vice versa), on the front page, which is after all a type of shop window, there are also transcendent and more lightweight themes, complex news stories and those of human interest, sports and culture. The proportion of each of these topics is what will enable us to determine exactly what type of newspaper we are dealing with.

1.2. Initial Hypothesis

Do newspapers respond to the readers' needs and demands for news? And, supposing the answer to be affirmative, do they do so on the front page, which is the shop window for the best of what is contained inside?

In planning this study, we set out from the following hypothesis: the topics that the newspapers carry on their front pages are a hybrid between readers' interests and concerns.

Now, we had to start from the supposition that, in general, the interests and the concerns of readers do not even coincide. One only has to analyse the studies that are made periodically on both questions. Readers are concerned about unemployment, terrorism, citizens' security, corruption... They are interested in sports, education, questions related to the family, accident and crime reports, etc. We will be considering this in detail further on when we compare it with the content of the front page. Newspapers are therefore obliged to make a cocktail of what is of concern and what is of interest. And that cocktail is also made on a smaller scale on the front page. Hence an analysis of those pages makes it possible to define the model of newspaper better than anything else. Because inside all of them carry all of that content. None makes do without sports or reports of accidents and crimes. Nor do they even leave out events that in the past seemed reserved for the sensational press or gossip magazines. Whether or not they put them on the front page is another question.

2. Methodological Strategies

In order to carry out the work, achieve the proposed objectives and demonstrate, or refute, the hypothesis proposed, a specific methodological strategy was designed.

2.1. Technical Data and Geographical Focus

In the first place, a file was prepared that was structured in 6 broad thematic sections according to the traditional division found in the practice of virtually all newspapers. These macrosections are: Politics, Society, Economy/Work, Culture, Sports and Accidents and Crimes (it was decided to make an individual classification of Accidents and Crimes and remove them from the Society section). Each section was in its turn subdivided into concrete topics, giving a total of 183 thematic items. (See [attached 1](#))

Besides this, account was taken of the geographical area where the news item took place, as we consider this to be determinant as well. For analysis of this geographical area focus another file was created, which makes measurement in square millimetres possible, structured in four parts: Local, Autonomous Community, National and International. (See [attached 2](#)). Logically enough, a scientific discovery does not have the same front page transcendence if it takes place in a US, a Spanish, or especially a Basque university. And the same holds for a sporting competition or a political dispute. Thus the place where stories occur also has a high degree of relevance when it comes to explaining their being placed on the front page.

One part of the study of the front pages, the quantitative study, is based on measuring the elements employed by each of the stories carried (headlines, texts and photographs), bearing in mind the page area [4] occupied by each and the total space dedicated to that specific information. This is because on many occasions a news item is the topic that opens the newspaper but, even so, there is another less relevant topic that ends up occupying a greater space since it is accompanied by a photograph or some type of illustration. That is why on many occasions one talks of "false main news stories": that is, topics which even though they stand out more on the page in terms of typography, occupy less space than other topics that, on the contrary, have a more discreet typography. This happens often in sports, especially after a day of competitions. A newspaper rarely opens with a sports story but, nonetheless, that news, which is secondary in principle, is accompanied by a photograph of such size that it ends up overshadowing all other stories on the front page.

2.2. The Use of Colour as a Qualitative Measurement Tool

On the other hand, the methodology designed enables us to carry out the qualitative part of the study at the same time. Through the use of colours we can note, in a visual way, the topic to which the space occupied on the front page corresponds. For this reason each front page was subjected to an analysis on the basis of a computer design program (InDesign), colouring each part of the page according to the topic. The following colours were assigned to topic categories: Red (Politics), Blue (Society), Black (Economy/Work), Yellow (Culture), Green (Sports) and Purple (Accidents and Crimes). So that the colour did not impose itself on the information and to keep the latter visible, the tone of the colour was reduced by 60% and an opacity of 40% was applied. (See [attached 3](#))

An approach to this colour methodology was employed by Eduardo Aires, a lecturer at the University of Oporto, in his doctoral thesis [5] on the evolution of the graphic structures used by Portuguese newspapers on their front pages.

In this way, not only do we know what type of stories appear in the shop window of the newspaper and what elements it is made up of, but we can also precisely determine the space occupied by each of them. That double analysis enables

a more rigorous approach to be made to the front pages and, derived from this, to the model of newspaper of each editor or, more precisely perhaps, each company.

2.3. Criteria for Time Frame

To carry out this work it was necessary to establish a time frame. The period chosen was between 1996 and 2006, with three temporal cuts: the initial and final years of the period and the central year, 2001. The choice of those years, besides the fact they are three temporal samples separated by an identical space of time, has an added virtue. Nineteen ninety-six was the first year when a recovery could be glimpsed from the economic crisis that had afflicted the country for half a decade. In 2001, the problem of terrorism in all its crudity was the order of the day, because after a long truce ETA had returned to violence with a high number of armed actions (although less than in the 1980s) and was choosing its victims with the clear intention of reaching all spheres. In 2006, at last, echoes of peace could be heard, although they were not definitive as would later be seen. Discussion moved on to other questions, although the underlying violence remained. That change in the situation, however slight, also permitted a richer panorama to be seen on the front pages, with a greater thematic variety than if we had chosen one year only or several consecutive years.

The newspapers analysed were those that were published, or had their central newsrooms, in the Basque Country and were available in the newsstands in the temporal periods analysed (*Noticias de Álava* and *Noticias de Guipúzcoa* did not then exist). Similarly, we understand that newspapers like *El Mundo* and *El País*, although they have Basque editions, cannot be compared since their front page is highly mediated by what their principal edition is doing. Very rarely do they introduce topics from their Basque editions on the front page (unless it is a topic of national scope). This makes sense because what their readers are looking for is precisely the reference of big national (and international) political information. From this perspective, the inclusion of those two newspapers in the study would only have distorted the results.

2.4. Criteria for Choosing the Sample

Employing a ratio of two weeks for each month in those years, 504 front pages were examined in the cases of *El Correo*, *El Diario Vasco*, *Deia* and *Egin/Gara* and 432 in that of *Egunkaria/Berria*, given that it is not published on Mondays. In total, 2,448 front pages were analysed, which contained a total of 19,156 stories. Such a sample makes it possible to guarantee a reliability of 95.5%, with a margin of error below 1%. We have chosen to consider *Egunkaria* and *Berria* as the same newspaper to all effects, since the latter is the heir of the news philosophy, the ideology, the model and even the greater part of the newsroom of the former, which was closed by a judicial order. The same holds in the case of the newspapers *Egin* and *Gara*. We believe that in both cases identification between their respective projects is total, hence we are not introducing any distortion if we consider them to be the same newspaper to all effects.

3. Results

3.1 Main News

What then are the results obtained from the analysis? In the first place, we will concentrate on the main stories, given that they have top priority. The main news is the topic chosen by the newspaper so that its readers see what it considers must necessarily be read. In the period of ten years studied, the main stories were as follows:

Table 1. Main stories of the Basque newspapers according to topic (% of main news stories)

Newspaper	1.	2.	3.
<i>Egunkaria/Berria</i>	ETA (18%)	Basque and Spanish politics (13%)	Military conflicts (9%)
<i>Deia</i>	Basque and Spanish politics (17%)	ETA (11%)	Spanish politics (5%)
<i>Egin/Gara</i>	ETA (12%)	Basque and Spanish politics (11%)	Military conflicts (7%)
<i>El Correo</i>	ETA (18%)	Basque and Spanish politics (12%)	Negotiation (10%)
<i>Diario Vasco</i>	ETA (20%)	Basque and Spanish politics (13%)	Negotiation (11%)

This table already makes something evident: politics impregnates the Basque newspapers from the first page. Nearly four out of every ten main stories, considering the set of five newspapers, refers to Basque and Spanish politics, and to that specific phenomenon called ETA, which is not only political. And the terrorist organisation occupies the majority of the main stories, except in the case of *Deia*, which is left in second place. The coincidence in the greater part of the main stories is thus very high. In the case of *El Correo* and *El Diario Vasco*, the similarity is even greater. This can only be explained by the fact that both newspapers belong to the same group, which means sharing the same system of ideas, although with shades of difference. It should be noted that the fact of belonging to the same group does not in any way reduce the freedom of their editors when deciding on main news stories.

3.2. Front Page Topics

The remaining topics about which the newspapers speak share out the rest of the main stories. And there are many other topics: local news, accidents and crimes, society affairs, the economy, culture and, exceptionally, sports as well.

We will widen our focus and consider what happens on the rest of the front page. After all, as we said at the beginning, the main stories are important, but a main political story surrounded by topics from other fields is not the same as when it is surrounded by other political news. We will do without hierarchisation and see what topics appear on the front page [6].

Table 2. The presence of topics on the front pages of the newspapers (as a percentage with respect to the total of front pages)

Topic	<i>Egunkaria/Berria</i>	<i>Deia</i>	<i>Egin / Gara</i>	<i>El Correo</i>	<i>Diario Vasco</i>
Basque and Spanish politics	43.7	45.4	41.4	38.6	45.2
ETA	40.7	26	22.6	43.2	47.6
Military conflicts	38.8	21	42.6	25.1	29.7
International politics	23.6	16.9	33.9	16.4	-
ETA prisoners	21.5	-	47.6	-	-
Linguistic policies	20.3	-	-	-	-
Other international terrorism.	20.1	-	-	-	-
Football (local team)	-	34.5	-	51.9	70.2
Cycling	-	21.2	18.8	-	25.3
Politics in rest of Spain	-	17	-	21	30.1
ETA-State negotiation	-	-	20	-	-
Health	-	-	-	30.5	29.1

(In preparing the table account has been taken of only the seven topics that are present to a greater degree in each newspaper, in order to avoid the enormous dispersion that would result if all topics were included)

Table 2 allows a more global approach to the newspapers' vision of what is happening in the world. In the first place the main stories, so markedly political, that were seen in Table 1 are surrounded by even more politics. In the case of *Egunkaria/Berria* that weight of politics becomes asphyxiating since out of the seven topics with greatest weight on the front pages, there is only one (debates on linguistic policy and, even so, in the Basque case this is coloured by party discussion) that is not crudely political.

There are striking aspects in this table, aside from the similarities between *El Diario Vasco* and *El Correo* that we have referred to. For example, the fact that in *Egin/Gara* the ETA prisoners have more presence on the front page than news relating to ETA itself and to negotiation (which the latter has so often demanded) with the state. It is also significant that sports is more relevant in *El Diario Vasco* (where it has an overwhelming presence in spite of the chosen years coinciding with a period of decline by the local team) and in *El Correo* than in the newspapers with a nationalist ideology.

This is in spite of sports having a preferential place in the nationalist imaginary and the fact that even discussion about the problems of football teams usually has a political component not found in other places, with perhaps the exception of Catalonia. The presence of cycling in two of the newspapers published in Guipúzcoa deserves to be born in mind, although the enthusiasm for that sport is similar to that found in Vizcaya. And a relevant question: health occupies a significant place on the front pages of *El Correo* and *El Diario Vasco*, while, on the contrary, it has very little presence in the three remaining newspapers, in spite of the objective importance for society of matters included under this heading.

The examination of the front pages thus shows us newspapers with an enormous political load, which in addition revolves around what has come to be known as the "Basque conflict" and all its aspects: ETA, the prisoners, negotiation, Basque and Spanish politics that so often revolves around it... The scarce attention paid to international politics is striking, except with respect to wars and big conflicts. It is worth recalling that until well into the 1980s, this was the main news topic of the majority of Basque newspapers [7].

It is besides significant that *El Correo* and *El Diario Vasco*, which have a wide network of correspondents that their competitors in the Basque Country do not have, are the newspapers that give least value to such information on their front pages. It seems a contradiction to maintain a very expensive team of correspondents [8] and then make such little use of them on the front pages.

Using the "Wordle" application, we have created this "terminological cloud" that enables us to visually and hierarchically represent the 75 items most employed on the front pages of the Basque newspapers.

3.3. Geographical Focus of the Main News

Where do those stories that fill the front pages of the Basque newspapers take place? As we explained at the outset, the place where an event occurs or a statement is made is also important, and not only because proximity is one of the factors that can make an event into a news story. Table 3 [9] explains the place where the main news occurred.

Table 3. Origin of the main news (%)

Newspaper	Autonomous Community	National	International
Egunkaria/Berria	56.6	16.8	26.6
Deia	55.0	30.7	14.0
Egin/Gara	45.5	30.5	23.4
El Correo	37.5	44.9	14.4
Diario Vasco	32.5	35.7	19.6

But what happens if we look at the whole of the front page and then, given that strictly local topics are rarely main stories, we distinguish between local topics and those of the autonomous community in order to see the newspaper's approach to topics that are closer to the reader? Table 4 explains the spheres from which the stories forming the whole of the front page proceed, but now with a greater nuance than in the previous table.

Table 4 Origin of total front page stories (%)

Newspaper	Local	Autonomous Community	National	International
Egunkaria/Berria	0.1	58.2	12.5	29.3
Deia	0.9	55.3	20.9	22.9
Egin/Gara	1.7	55.8	16.6	25.9
El Correo	25.0	22.5	31.6	20.1
Diario Vasco	35.7	19.5	25.9	18.9

This table is of considerable interest because it shows two perfectly differentiated newspaper models. On the one hand, *El Correo* and *El Diario Vasco* are different with respect to their area of distribution: principally in Guipúzcoa in the case of the former, and above all in Vizcaya and Álava in the case the latter (although it sells an appreciable number of copies in Guipúzcoa, Rioja, Cantabria and the north of Burgos). On the contrary, *Egunkaria/Berria*, *Deia* and *Egin/Gara* have an approach that we could call much more Basque, giving priority to everything that affects this region as a whole over what is strictly local or national.

This is the only explanation for the interest of the former in giving local stories on their front pages, and the eagerness of the latter to restrict the scope of "Spanish" stories, to the point of providing more international topics in the shop windows of their front pages. Thus the most local of the five media is *El Diario Vasco* and the one that most looks beyond the borders of the autonomous community is *El Correo*. This is the medium that provides more stories that take place outside the limits of Euskadi. In any case, it should be recalled that *El Correo* has provincial and local editions, while *El Diario Vasco* has local editions, which also explains the proliferation of local news. Finally, the specific organisational structure of the medium and its way of approaching its potential readers ends up determining the front pages. It is also worth recalling that the strategy of a local newspaper that aims to be fully coherent in this respect is to adapt to its own area stories that emerge as topics in a broader geographical area.

Thus, for example, on the day when the inflation figure is published a national newspaper will always carry the monthly, yearly or year-on-year average as a headline, but at the national level. A local newspaper might use the same topic as a headline with the figure for the rise in prices in its province. In this way a national topic becomes local. This is exactly what is done on many occasions by *El Diario Vasco*, unquestionably the Basque newspaper with the most Guipúzcoan character, although three of the four other newspapers are also published in that province.

3.4. Page surface area

We will now pose the analysis from another angle. Which topics occupy the greater part of the surface area on the front page? Obviously we are referring to useful surface area, what remains of the front page after excluding its masthead and the publicity that the newspaper might be carrying on that day. Given that in this case the highly detailed division by topics that we made in the previous section would lead to an enormous dispersion of data, we have classified all the topics in sections, following the classic criterion: politics, economics, accidents and crimes, society, sports and culture. Besides, this enables us to check the evolution over the whole period, because changes are better observed when topics are grouped under broad headings. We will consider what happens in each newspaper.

In *Egunkaria/Berria*, politics occupies over 40% of the surface area on the front page throughout the period, with a slight upturn towards the middle. The average is 44%. The economy falls in terms of surface area occupied to almost half in the central part of the period and recovers somewhat in the final wave, but without recovering its initial level. One striking fact: in times of economic prosperity, this newspaper dedicates less space to the economy. The average space occupied for the period is 10%. Accidents and crimes show a rising tendency, although there is a slight fall at the end of the period. The average of occupation is 6%.

On the contrary, society news shows a homogeneous tendency to rise. The average for the period is 17%. Sports, on the other hand, remains steady at an identical 11% throughout the period studied, with barely a decimal point of variation between the years. Culture falls in a homogeneous way, to the point of losing one third of its space between the beginning and end of the period studied. The average is 12%.

In *Deia*, politics falls sharply. Together with *El Diario Vasco*, it is the newspaper where this falls most, since it begins by occupying 42% of front page space to end at 29%. The average for the period is 36%. The economy, on the other hand, suffers a notable fall in the first part of the period and recovers in the second part to almost reach the initial level. The average is 12%. Accidents and crimes maintain a significant rising tendency, although smaller percentages of occupation are involved, with an average for the period of 7%. Society topics grow in the first part and then stagnate, giving a final average of 19%. Sport also rises steadily, although the rise is slow, with an average of 21%. Finally, culture undergoes a sharp rise (from very modest figures) but only in the second part of the period. The average space it occupies is 5%.

In *Egin/Gara*, politics falls in the first wave and then remains steady (an average of 48%), the economy falls notably in the final years (an average of 10%), accidents and crimes are present on the front page in a similar form during the ten year period (7%), society undergoes small variations around an average of 15%, sports grows considerably, reaching an average of 13% having started from the lowest figure in all of the Basque press. Finally, culture also undergoes significant rises, but from an even lower level (an average of 7%).

El Correo shows rises in the headings of accidents and crimes, society and sport, while the economy remains steady (in spite of dropping in the first part of the period, it then recovers its levels of presence on the front page in the second part), culture, which already sets out from a low level, falls notably and politics falls sharply. The averages are 33% for politics, 21% for society, 15% for the economy and sports, 9% for accidents and crimes and 7% for culture.

Finally, *El Diario Vasco* is the newspaper that undergoes the greatest changes in this section. The surface area occupied on the front page by topics at the start of the period bears little relation to what is found at the period's end. Only the economy and accidents and crimes, with respective averages of 16% and 8%, retain similar percentages, although with greater oscillations in the case of accidents and crimes. Politics literally collapses, losing half the surface area occupied over the course of the ten year period (its average is 33%). Society, sports and culture grow notably, especially the latter, to reach averages of 15%, 19% and 9% respectively.

With respect to the surface area occupied on the front page, photographs evidently have a decisive influence. An image frequently occupies as much as several lesser headlines on that front page. This doubtless explains not only the presence of some topics in terms of space but also their growth. Because with the improvement in printing techniques and the use of colour, preponderance has been given to spectacular images rather than to other images that simply hold news value, or that simply accompany topics that are themselves spectacular.

Politics and sports are the headings that account for two-thirds of the images on the front page, which increases their average occupation in terms of space. Whereas politics, in particular, and accidents and crimes – which is somewhat surprising – have only a slight graphic presence, which reduces their weight in terms of surface area. The newspapers that use the most political images are, a long way ahead of the others, *Egunkaria/Berria* and *Egin/Gara*, while *El Correo* is the one that gives more images of accidents and crimes and *El Diario Vasco* gives more of sports and culture. In economy and society, all show relatively similar proportions.

4. Comparative Analysis of Results with Public Opinion and Social Studies

We have now examined what the front pages of the Basque press are like from several points of view. How do those front pages – those shop windows for the best that is contained inside the newspapers – respond to the concerns and interests of their readers? To examine concerns, we shall employ the barometers of the Sociological Research Centre (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas - CIS). We must point out that those barometers, the most reliable and longstanding continuous opinion survey of this type realised in Spain, does not break down data by autonomous community, hence we shall be applying percentages to Euskadi that in reality correspond to a broader field [10]. And to discuss interests, we will make use of a work by the Social and Public Opinion Studies Unit of the BBVA Foundation (Unidad de Estudios Sociales y de Opinión Pública de la Fundación BBVA). In this case, too, the data corresponds to Spain as a whole.

Nonetheless, it does not seem methodologically inappropriate to use these references if we consider that there is data which lead us to think that Euskadi is situated very close to the Spanish average in these questions. For example, the habits of television consumption, measured in terms of time and with respect to programs, types of program and channels viewed, are in the case of Euskadi almost exactly identical to the Spanish average. That is, a series of peculiarities with respect to the electoral vote does not correspond to a notable difference with respect to lifestyles, concerns and interests.

In the first place, we will examine the concerns of the citizens. What were these concerns in the period studied? It is well-known that the CIS survey envisages the possibility of a multiple response, so that percentages total more than 100. To establish a comparison with the topics of the front pages of the Basque newspapers, what we have done is to make an average for the period with the topics that are of most concern, in the first place, and then to group those that appear at the start of the list in thematic blocks. The result can be found in tables 5 and 6.

Table 5. The five topics that most concerned the Spanish in the 1996/2006 period

Topic	Average % in the period
Unemployment	60
Terrorism/ETA	38

Immigration	28
Drugs	15
Economic problems	14

(The question on immigration was not included in the CIS barometers at the start of the period. The average is obtained over the waves in which it was included. At their start, the percentage of positive answers was very low. Out of all the sections included, it is the one that undergoes the fastest evolution, even more than drugs, only that this is a heading in which concern clearly falls.)

Table 6. The problems that most concern the Spanish, grouped by typical newspaper sections

Topic
Economy (unemployment, economic problems, housing). Even at the most favourable moments of the economic conjuncture, unemployment was of concern to half the population.
Society (immigration and to a lesser extent health, education, social problems in general, drugs, etc.)
Politics (corruption, political situation in general, international conjuncture, ETA)
Accidents and crimes (delinquency, violence against women...)

(The table is made from careful consideration of all the topics asked about in the CIS surveys, which varied from survey to survey besides. Logically, there are no questions on topics that are typical of the sports and culture sections) [\[11\]](#)

If we now consider the interests of the readers, that is, what they feel a preference for reading, irrespective of whether or not this is an affair that concerns them, the result appears in Table 7 [\[12\]](#).

Table 7. Readers' preferences by topic

Topic	Interest aroused (Scale from 0 to 10)
Health	6.8
Culture	6.4
Environment	6.4
International politics	5.4
Scientific affairs	5.4
Economy	5.3
Sports	5.2
Technology	5.1
Politics	4.6

If we group these topics according to the classic sections of a newspaper, the result is that the Society section is by far the most interesting to the citizens, given that it includes the topics of health, the environment, scientific affairs and technology. After this comes Culture, followed by the International section, then the Economy section, then Sports at almost the same level, and finally Politics.

Comparison between the interests and concerns of the citizens requires grouping some concepts together because questions are not asked about the same topics, nor in the same way, in the two cases. But it seems evident that while what causes most concern is the economy, the citizen's everyday finances, and that is so in any economic conjuncture, whether good or bad, society is what gives rise to most interest. Politics occupies a position somewhat behind, both in concerns and, above all, in interests.

Do the front pages of the Basque newspapers reflect that concern and that interest – which do not always coincide, as we have seen – of the citizens? The answer, in the light of the detailed analysis of the front pages, is no. Politics, which according to the readers' answers is a topic that is largely neither of concern nor of interest (although it gives rise to more concern than interest, which reveals a more than evident deficiency concerning the political activity that takes place in Spain), predominates on the front pages. Its presence is being reduced, it is true, but it still has an enormous weight that is not contemplated in the interest of the readers. Whereas Society is both of considerable interest and of significant concern. In these years it has climbed to second position with respect to its presence on the front pages, measured in terms of the space occupied.

This analysis cannot leave out two things: the first is that the front pages dedicate a lot of space to sports, which is found neither amongst the concerns nor the interests of the citizens. That is, it seems that what is being applied here is a cliché constructed over decades. The interest aroused by sports seems very significant but within a restricted part of the population. For others, the majority, it is just additional content. Not the most relevant, clearly, and not even among the topics that arouse interest, aside from it having such scarce transcendence in people's lives. With the increase in

the number of women who have started reading newspapers, it seems that interest in sports, measured in average terms, will drop. The striking thing is that the presence of sports on the front pages of the Basque newspapers is growing.

The second relevant topic is culture. It does not figure amongst the concerns (the CIS does not include questions on this topic) and it seems evident that, asked to choose between growing unemployment or the polemic over a law on cinema, virtually 100% of the population would choose unemployment as a greater concern. Nonetheless, culture is of interest as a topic that is read about in the newspapers or followed on the audiovisual media. This is shown in the surveys and more concretely in the work of the BBVA Foundation, which we take as a reference and which places culture in second place due to the interest it holds, far above politics.

Its presence on the front pages of the Basque newspapers is, on the contrary, modest. Very modest in some cases. The diagnosis shown by the newspapers is one of culture situated in last place on the front pages, and with a significant evolution: the newspapers that have improved their treatment of cultural topics on the front page set out from very low levels of presence, the very lowest we could say. And those that started the period studied at higher levels have been reducing these

5. Conclusions

By way of conclusion, it therefore seems obvious that the front pages of the newspapers tend to adapt to the concerns and interests of the readers, but there is still a long way to go before a reasonable approximation is reached. It is true that in the mid-1990s the situation was even worse, with an excessive presence of politics that did not in the least correspond to what readers were demanding. It continues to have an excessive presence, if it is measured with those parameters, but it is no longer so excessive. Society is gaining weight, but is far from what readers demand. The economy also figures below the importance it holds for the citizens. Accidents and crimes are present, matching the relevance they have as a concern of the citizens. The same thing occurs with sports as with politics. The data on the citizens does not make it possible to explain why it holds such a presence on the front page. Even the additional fact of the long crisis of the sports newspapers also points towards a decline in this type of information (at least with respect to information in newspapers).

That means to say that the newspapers will have to continue their process of transformation in their treatment of topics if they want to draw closer to the readers. And, given the crisis that the sector is undergoing, they should do so more quickly than in the previous decade. A product that does not serve the needs and tastes of those it is addressed to seems condemned to suffer from grave problems. Some of these problems are already expressing themselves in crude fashion. A review of the front pages enables a very clear diagnosis to be made.

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7. Notas

[1] Bogart, Leo: *La prensa y su público*. Eunsa. Pamplona 1985.

[2] Kayser, Jacques: *El diario francés*. ATE. Barcelona 1974.

[3] For an exhaustive análisis of this methodology, its evaluation and reservations see: Núñez-Romero, Francisco: *La formación de las secciones de deportes en los diarios de información general españoles antes de 1936. Análisis hemerográfico estructural comparado*, doctoral thesis defended in the Universidad Cardenal Herrera-CEU, Valencia, 2009, pages 26 to 43.

[4] For measuring the total news surface of each page the following are excluded: headlines, advertising space, page index, or any other element that is not strictly news related and that has been counted under the epigraph of "others" on the corresponding file.

[5] Cunha Da Silva Aires, Eduardo. *A Estrutura Gráfica das Primeiras Páginas dos Jornais O Comércio do Porto, O Primeiro de Janeiro e Jornal de Notícias. Entre o Início da Publicação e Final do Século XX*. Doctoral Thesis. Universidade do Porto. Porto, 2006, volume II.

[6] In this case, we have altered the position of the topics and the media in terms of rows and columns for a better understanding of the information we wish to contribute.

[7] María Pilar Diezhandino and César Coca. *La nueva información*. Servicio Editorial de la Univ. del País Vasco. Bilbao 1996.

[8] This is the first thing to be subject to cuts in times of crisis. It is worth recalling that in recent years, since the crisis of the traditional daily newspapers, many correspondents have been removed while others have had their area reduced.

[9] For this and the following table we have understood that stories occurring in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country have an autonomous community scope and that stories occurring in Spain are of national scope. International refers to the rest of the world. This assignation is made independent of the fact that *Gara* considers an event in Cuenca to be international news. Each newspaper can understand geographic area as it likes, but it is necessary to unify criteria to know what we are talking about in each case. In this and the following table, the sum of the percentages of each newspaper might not add up to 100%. This is due to rounding off figures and the difficulty in some cases of assigning a concrete field to a story.

[10] To centre the area of the autonomous community better we have taken into account sociological exploration studies made by the Basque Government. Concretely, *Retratos de Juventud*, nº 12 [Portraits of Youth, no.12].

Observatorio Vasco de la Juventud. Gabinete de Prospección Sociológica. Presidencia del Gobierno Vasco. Vitoria, September 2009, pages 36 to 39. Attention paid by Basque youth to political stories through the mass media (press, radio and television): by province and by age.

[11] Opinion barometers of the Sociological Research Centre (CIS) between January 1996 and December 2006. The data reflected here corresponds to our own calculation regarding what is offered by the CIS in each survey, hence responsibility for any error or mistaken interpretation of that body's data is ours alone.

[12] The table forms part of the *Estudio de la Fundación BBVA sobre actitudes sociales de los españoles* (Study of the BBVA Foundation on Social Attitudes of the Spanish). July 2007.

HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE IN BIBLIOGRAPHIES / REFERENCES:

Canga Larequi, J. et al (2010): Terrorism and Politics Predominate on the Front Pages of the Basque Press. Content and Area Analysis of the Front Pages of the Regional Newspapers. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 65, pages 61 to 70. La Laguna (Tenerife, Canary Islands): La Laguna University, retrieved on ____th of ____ of 2____, from http://www.revistalatinacs.org/10/art/883_UPV/05_J_Canga_et_alEN.html
DOI: 10.4185/RLCS-65-2010-883-061-060-EN

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