

# The Andalusian elections of 2012 in the national press: Analysis of the coverage of *Abc*, *El Mundo* and *El País*

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## Abstract

**Introduction.** This article analyses the coverage of the Andalusian elections campaign of 25 March, 2012, by the Andalusian editions of three Spanish national newspapers: *Abc*, *El Mundo* and *El País*. **Objectives.** To determine the similarities and differences in the treatment given to the elections by these newspapers; to establish the degree of convergence between the agenda of these newspapers and the agenda of the contending parties; to characterise the presence of the political leaders; and to identify the predominant frames. **Methods.** Content analysis focused on sixteen items related to the location, production features and content of the 497 election news items published by the sample of newspapers. **Conclusions.** There was a predominance of regional issues in the coverage of the elections campaign; there was a low presence of interpretive and analytical elements; and there was a predominance of strategic and game frames in the coverage of the elections campaign.

## Keywords

Election campaigns; Andalusia; daily press; agenda-setting; framing.

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## 1. Introduction

On 25 March, 2012, the Autonomous Community of Andalusia held elections which, according to all the opinion polls, could mean the exit of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE according to its initials in Spanish) from the Presidency of the Andalusian Autonomous Government (*Junta de Andalucía*) after thirty years of uninterrupted ruling. For the first time since 1994, the regional

elections were not held on the same day as the national elections, because the current President of the autonomous community, José Antonio Griñán, wanted to prevent the victory of the People's Party (PP, according to its initials in Spanish) in the national elections of November 2011 from having a contagion effect on the Community of Andalusia (see Rivera, 2012).

There were great expectations of change, and the political and journalistic media were predicting the triumph of the PP candidate, Javier Arenas, who was facing his fourth Presidential nomination after having been defeated in 1994, 1996 and 2008.

As noted by Colmenarejo (2012), the elections took place in a time when the PSOE was considerably worn out, pressed by several corruption scandals whose preliminary investigation coincided with the development of the campaign. The major scandal was the misuse of the benefits of the Collective Dismissal Programme (*Expediente de Regulación de Empleo*, ERE), which is an instrument of the Spanish labour legislation that allows companies in bad economic situations to lay off a high percentage of workers and to receive special compensation rights and economic help from the government. The corruption scandal was that the ERE benefits were given to many companies that did not lay off workers and to ghost companies, set up by fake businessmen connected to the government authorities. The ERE misuse scandal had inevitable political repercussions and involved several former senior members of the Andalusian Autonomous Government.

Eventually, the PP achieved its first victory in the Andalusian elections but the number of seats won, 50, was not enough to achieve the absolute majority needed to form a government.

The PSOE, which was defeated by a small margin (as it won 47 seats), was given the option to continue in power through a pact with the third force in the Chamber, the United Left party (IU, according to its initials in Spanish), which doubled its representation, from 6 to 12 seats, and multiplied its influence so much that it managed to be part of the Andalusian regional government two months after the elections [1].

The relative novelty of these solitary elections and the possibility of change, which seemed real according to the polls and the prevailing political cycle in Spain, gave the campaign an unusual protagonism in the media, and this is what justifies our interest in analysing the coverage of these elections by the quality national press.

### **1.1. Study of the media coverage of the election campaigns**

Since McCombs and Shaw proposed the agenda-setting theory in 1972 to explain how the media shapes public opinion, its application to the study of the press has been intense and productive, especially in relation to the coverage of politics and electoral processes. As Kavanag (1995: 40) points out, political parties do not only compete for votes, but also compete to impose the issues that will be discussed during the campaign: this is what Norris called the “battle for the campaign agenda” (1999: 54).

During the establishment of the issues that will attract the audience's attention, each medium plays a distinct role. We agree with Almaguer (2010: 204) when he says that “newspapers are the main players in the agenda setting and in broadly defining the public's areas of interest”.

However, according to Benton and Frazier (in Paniagua and Gómez, 2006: 283), in an election campaign newspapers are more effective during the first few days, but as the election day

approaches, television is the medium that manages to impose its repertoire of issues. Even so, in deep levels of knowledge, the press is the decisive channel, because citizens remember more the issues that have been addressed in writing than those that have only been transmitted through the audiovisual media.

Although research has enriched the concept of agenda-setting with elements that go beyond the mere thematic analysis and attend the mode in which the thematic priorities are transmitted, the so-called “second level” of the agenda-setting (see Rodríguez 2004: 15), in recent decades the analysis of the journalistic discourse has incorporated a very productive theory that complements that of McCombs and Shaw: framing.

Framing focuses not on the number of issues covered by the media, but on their attributes, the concrete aspects that are highlighted from them, and the assessments that underline the content of the news stories (Martín and Berganza, 2001: 60; Novo, 2007: 45). In this study, frame is understood as “the central organising idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration” (Tankard, in Berganza 2008: 26). As Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007: 12) point out, framing “is a necessary tool to reduce the complexity of an issue, given the constraints of their respective media related to news holes and airtime” [2].

In the field of electoral information, there are some dominant frames (Jackson, 2011). The main one is the strategic frame, which “focuses the coverage on who wins and who loses; is directed by the language of war and games; it predominantly mentions the actors, the criticisms and the audiences; it emphasises the candidate’s style and perceptions; and gives great importance to the opinion polls”, according to the definition of Capella and Jamieson (in Berganza, 2008a: 124). Closely related to this frame, is the game frame, which some authors consider to be the same as the strategic frame. The game frame sees politics as a competition between candidates. In both frames the idea of conflict is very present, as confirmed by numerous analyses of the coverage of electoral processes (e.g., Berganza, 2008a).

In contrast to the previous frames, the thematic frame focuses on the content of the discourse transmitted by the public actors, instead of focusing on their attitudes and activities. This is an “informative frame, which gives knowledge to audiences to form their own attitudes and political opinions” (Berganza, 2008a: 124). As one can imagine, the implications of the adoption of the strategic frame instead of the thematic frame is important for those audiences who decide the direction of their vote only based on the information provided by the media.

In Spain, the most recent studies on the media coverage of electoral processes have examined, in their first phase, the agenda-setting. These studies include those carried out by Farré (1999), about the behaviour of regional newspapers during the Basque elections; Semetko and Canel (1997) and Martín and Berganza (2001), about the treatment of the general elections of 1996; Canel, Benavides and Echart (2003) and Benavides and Canel (2003), about the general elections of 2000; and Paniagua and Gómez (2006) about the general elections of 2004. All of these studies have found that there was a convergence between the agenda promoted by the political parties and the press agenda.

Along the same lines, but integrating elements of the second level of the agenda-setting, are the studies carried out by Zugasti and Lafuente (2010) and Zurutuza and García (2012) about the 2009 European Parliamentary elections campaign, with a focus on the protagonism of the leaders.

Moreover, following the popularisation of framing analysis in English-speaking countries, in recent years some authors have addressed the prevailing news frames in the Spanish media: Berganza (2008a, 2008b), based on the news items published about the last two European elections; and Berganza, De Miguel and Chaparro (2011), who offer a detailed comparison of the frames used by paid-for and free newspapers in the 2008 general elections.

## 1.2. Objectives and hypotheses

This study has several objectives of varying significance:

-First, to examine the type of coverage given by the national newspapers *Abc*, *El Mundo* and *El País*, in their Andalusian editions, to the campaign for the elections of 25 March, in order to determine their similarities and differences.

-Second, to analyse the agenda of the different newspaper in order to establish their degree of convergence with the agenda of the competing parties. Not in vain, in all election campaigns candidates emphasise certain issues to “try to convey their political priorities to citizens by carefully selecting the topics they want to be discussed” (Novo, 2007: 46).

-Third, to characterise the media presence of the election’s protagonists and in particular of the leaders of the main parties, as well as the mechanisms through which the media expressed their position towards them. As Zurutuza and García (2012) point out, contemporary electoral processes are characterised by a “high degree of personalisation”, prompted by the influence of American politics. News coverage increasingly focuses on the potential winners and their attributes, which is both the cause and effect of the abundance of media events centred on candidates.

-Fourth, to identify the predominant frames used in the coverage of the campaign, differentiating between strategic and game frames, which can be considered complementary, and the thematic (informative) frame.

In line with these objectives, the study aimed to test the following three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Given that the autonomous elections of 2012 were not held on the same day than the national elections, which broke with what had been the tradition in Andalusia during the last two decades, we expected the media’s agenda to include much more regional than national issues.

Hypothesis 2: Following the trend of competitive reductionism that characterises political news during elections periods (see, Berganza, 2008a and 2008b; Berganza, De Miguel and Chaparro, 2009; and Jackson, 2011, among others), we expected the coverage provided by the press to be poor in interpretive and analytical elements that can provide guidance to readers.

Hypothesis 3: Also based on the previous reason, we expected the most common frames in the coverage of the campaign to be the strategic and game frames; and the thematic frame to be relegated to a marginal position.

## 2. Methods

The study is based on the analysis of three national newspapers which have a regional edition for Andalusia: *Abc*, *El Mundo* and *El País*. From these newspapers we examined all the news items that

were related to the autonomous elections and were published from 9 March –the beginning of the campaign– to 25 March–the elections day. The final sample of analysis was composed of 497 units, which were subjected to content analysis.

This method was chosen due to its suitability to deal with quantitative research on written texts, a practice with a long tradition in journalism. Content analysis allows the establishment of reliable inferences about the context of news (Krippendorff, 2002: 28) and their production and reception conditions. Moreover, content analysis is the most appropriate method for our study because it is very useful to compile, process and evaluate large amounts of information (Sánchez, 2005: 214) and to describe the components of the media's messages (Igartua, 2006: 194).

The content analysis focused on formal and content categories, divided in three areas:

- a) Location: section, position and length.
- b) Production features: author, genre, use of graphic elements, font types, and events motivating the news stories.
- c) Characterisation of content: types of headlines, content, topics, protagonists in headlines and graphic elements, highlighted activities of the protagonists, frames, and position of the newspaper or author.

The three selected newspapers enjoy of wide circulation in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia. According to the data provided by the Spanish Broadcast and Circulation Control Office (*Oficina de Control de la Difusión*, OJD) [3], between July 2011 and June 2012, the regional edition of *Abc* sold in average 47,309 copies per day, *El País* 33,917 copies, and *El Mundo* 31,952 copies. None of the local or provincial newspapers in the region exceeds these sales: the papers with the closest sales are *Ideal*, from Granada (with 26,527 copies), and *Sur*, from Malaga (with 23,481). These sales figures give us an idea of the importance of the national newspapers in media diet of the Andalusian people, and justifies our interest in analysing their coverage of the regional elections of 2012.

### 3. Results

Obviously, the elections of 25 March captured the interest of the regional editions of the selected newspapers, but there were differences, of varying significance, in terms of the location, production features and coverage given to this event.

*Abc* was the newspaper that published the largest number of election news items, 197, followed, in second place, by *El Mundo* with 155, and, in third place, by *El País* with 140. In the three newspapers, the news about the campaign opened the regional section, which was completed with different elements: *El País* tends to include feature articles about outstanding aspects of the Andalusian reality (education, culture, environment, tourism, etc.), opinion columns, and interviews with experts not related to politics. *El Mundo* also publishes analyses of the situation of the autonomous community, but incorporates more opinion articles. Finally, *Abc* offers daily reports that emphasise the metacoverage of the campaign [4], particularly the activity of the candidates on the social networks, and includes articles written by its director, Fernando del Valle, and interviews with business and cultural personalities.



### 3.1. Location

Most of the analysed units, 85.2%, appeared in the Andalusia section, with rates ranging from 79.4% (*El Mundo*) to 97.9% (*El País*) [table 1]. However, in the case of *El Mundo*, 7.7% of the news items were presented in the section titled *Otras voces* (“Other voices”), which presents the opinion of the different regional editions of the newspaper.

*Abc* was the medium that most frequently dealt with the Andalusian elections outside the regional section, specifically in the *Opinion* section. National commentators paid considerable attention to the regional elections, whose discussion increased as the 25<sup>th</sup> of March approached.

	<i>Abc</i>		<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>El País</i>		3 newspapers	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
<b>Andalusia</b>	159	80.7	123	79.4	137	97.9	419	85.2
<b>Opinion</b>	33	16.8	12	7.7	1	0.7	46	9.3
<b>Opinion Andalusia</b>			18	11.6			18	3.7
<b>National</b>	5	2.5	1	0.6	2	1.4	8	1.6
<b>Last page</b>			1	0.6			1	0.2
<b>Total</b>	197	100.0	155	100.0	140	100.0	492	100.0

There are noticeable differences in the location of the texts. *El País*, which had an independent booklet for Andalusia, placed the election news items at the beginning of the section every day, as well as *Abc*, while *El Mundo* almost always opened the regional section with news about the corruption scandals that implicated the Andalusian Autonomous Government, such as the *Invercaria* case (in which this public entity of the Andalusian Government, in charge of distributing economic help to private companies, helped many companies that did not meet the requirements to receive the help) and, above all, the ERE misuse scandal [5].

The developments in the investigation of Judge Mercedes Alaya and the revelations of the allegations -with the former general director of Employment, Francisco José Guerrero, as the mastermind of the conspiracy- opened the *Andalusia* section every day in *El Mundo* under the heading “Politicians under suspicion”. The generosity of the newspaper to treat the cases of corruption was evidenced by the number of articles dedicated to them, 85 (on twelve occasions), and the revelations which appeared on the front page. Moreover, any hint of unethical behaviour that affected the members of the PSOE occupied a more prominent place than the campaign (e.g., “The Vélez-Málaga Food and Beverage Technology Park paid for the master’s degree of the daughter of the Culture Counsellor, Paulino Plata”, 23/03/2012).

In similar parameters but without reducing the protagonism of the electoral contest, *Abc* provided abundant information about the scandals of the Andalusian government in up to 50 election news items that often opened the National section and the news pictures section called *Enfoque*.

These figures contrast with those of *El País*, which was much more restrained in the coverage of the judicial proceedings of the ERE misuse scandal, about which only 23 news items were published throughout the period.

Elections news rarely appeared on the front page (only 2.8%) and almost all of them were published by *El Mundo* [table 2]. And as for the odd-numbered pages, which are the most important from an informative point of view, they were the dominant place for elections news only in *Abc* (64.5% of texts).

	<i>Abc</i>		<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>El País</i>		3 newspapers	
	Total (n=197)	%	Total (n=155)	%	Total (n=140)	%	Total (n=492)	%
<b>Odd page</b>	127	64.5	63	40.6	67	47.9	257	52.2
<b>Even page</b>	77	39.1	94	60.6	71	50.7	242	49.2
<b>Right</b>	77	39.1	15	9.7	17	12.1	109	22.2
<b>Left</b>	51	25.9	12	7.7	5	3.6	68	13.8
<b>Top</b>	102	51.8	103	66.5	100	71.4	305	62.0
<b>Bottom</b>	47	23.9	41	26.5	40	28.6	128	26.0
<b>Front page</b>	3	1.5	9	5.8	2	1.4	14	2.8
<b>Section's first page</b>	25	12.7	4	2.6	32	22.9	61	12.4

Finally, the space occupied by the elections news items was larger in *El Mundo* and *El País*, in which about 50% of their election news items are five-column long [table 3].

	<i>Abc</i>		<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>El País</i>		3 newspapers	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
<b>1</b>	42	21.3	32	20.6	15	10.7	89	18.1
<b>2</b>	45	22.8	10	6.5	1	0.7	56	11.4
<b>3</b>	33	16.8	17	11.0	6	4.3	56	11.4
<b>4</b>	38	19.3	21	13.5	30	21.4	89	18.1
<b>5</b>	12	6.1	70	45.2	72	51.4	55 °	31.3
<b>6</b>	19	9.6	2	1.3	6	4.3	27	5.5
<b>7</b>					2	1.4	2	0.4
<b>8</b>	7	3.6					7	1.4
<b>10</b>	1	0.5	3	1.9	5	3.6	9	1.8
<b>14</b>					3	2.1	3	0.6
<b>Total</b>	197	100.0	155	100.0	140	100.0	492	100.0

### 3.2. Production features

The coverage of election campaigns requires the deployment of correspondents to the candidates' campaign centre and convoys so that they can report, on time and with first-hand experience, the candidates' activities on a daily basis. The three selected newspapers deployed special correspondents to exclusively follow José Antonio Griñán and Javier Arenas. Only *El Mundo* deployed a journalist to follow Diego Valderas, the candidate of the *Izquierda Unida* (IU), and that is why this newspaper, directed by Pedro J. Ramírez, offered the largest number of texts written by correspondents [table 4].

The office-based writing staff were responsible for most of the election news items on *Abc* (42.6%) and *El País* (56.4%).

	<i>Abc</i>		<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>El País</i>		3 newspapers	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
<b>Writers</b>	84	42.6	30	19.4	79	56.4	193	39.2
<b>Correspondents</b>	25	12.7	46	29.7	26	18.6	97	19.7
<b>Columnists</b>	37	18.8	44	28.4	12	8.6	93	18.9
<b>Newspaper</b>	30	15.2	19	12.3	15	10.7	64	13.0
<b>Unsigned</b>	21	10.7	16	10.3	1	0.7	38	7.7
<b>News agencies</b>					7	5.0	7	1.4
<b>Total</b>	197	100.0	155	100.0	140	100.0	492	100.0

In terms of journalistic genres, there were important differences between the newspapers [table 5]. An outstanding finding was the abundance of short-opinion-pieces and editorials –up to 15– dedicated by *El Mundo* to the Andalusian elections, as well as a large number of columns (58, or 37.5% of the total of election news items), mostly written by regional commentators, including José Antonio Gómez Marín, Agapito Maestre, Luis Miguel Fuentes, Rafael Porras and Juan Antonio Rodríguez Tous.

*Abc* provided 20.3% of the opinion articles, which were mostly written by national commentators: Ignacio Camacho, Antonio Burgos, José María Carrascal, Gabriel Albiac and Manuel Martín Ferrand.

In contrast, *El País* only dedicated 12 columns to the elections. Its Opinion section neither offered a significant number of pieces about this event, since the only article published during the period under analysis was a minor short-opinion-piece about Javier Arenas’s refusal to participate in the debate organised by Canal Sur Televisión.

The most outstanding texts of each edition, in any case, were the chronicle reports. Both in *El País* and *El Mundo*, the correspondents offered more analysis and personal assessments than information; they reflected on the development of the campaign and the mood of the candidates, as well as on their expectations about the results. In this sense, there was a continuous metacoverage and the usual adoption of the strategic and game frames, as we will see in section 3.3.

*Abc* and *El País* used the interview to a greater extent than *El Mundo*, alternating politicians and cultural and business personalities, who offered their personal views on the situation of Andalusia. Moreover, both *El Mundo* and *El País* published sectoral assessments of the past four years of the PSOE government in the form of reports, although with a different editorial perspective: *El Mundo* criticised the performance of Griñán and his advisors, while *El País* clearly attempted to highlight, along with glaring errors, the positive aspects of the exiting administration.



**Table 5. Genre of texts**

	<i>Abc</i>		<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>El País</i>		3 newspapers	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
<b>Chronological report</b>	71	36.0	45	29.0	32	22.9	148	30.1
<b>News</b>	24	12.2	35	22.6	51	36.4	110	22.4
<b>Column</b>	36	18.3	39	25.2	12	8.6	87	17.7
<b>Interview</b>	17	8.6	6	3.9	17	12.1	40	8.1
<b>Informative report</b>	21	10.7	4	2.5	18	12.9	40	8.1
<b>Photographic report</b>	18	9.1	1	0.6			19	3.9
<b>In-depth report</b>	3	1.5	6	3.9	5	3.6	17	3.5
<b>Brief comments</b>			10	6.5	1	0.7	11	2.2
<b>Editorial</b>	3	1.5	5	3.2			8	1.6
<b>Profile</b>	2	1.0			3	2.1	5	1.0
<b><i>Tribuna</i></b>	1	0.5	4	2.6			5	1.0
<b>Analysis</b>	1	0.5			1	0.7	2	0.4
<b>Total</b>	197	100.0	155	100.0	140	100.0	492	100.0

Election news items are suitable to include graphic elements [table 6], in particular photographs of the candidates, whose presence in the total of election texts ranged from 67.5% (*Abc*) to 78.6% (*El País*). The latter newspaper also used graphs and tables in 13.6% of its election news reports, when the content was focused on the analysis of the situation of the autonomous community.

**Table 6. Presence and type of graphic elements**

	<i>Abc</i>		<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>El País</i>		3 newspapers	
	Total (n=197)	%	Total (n=155)	%	Total (n=140)	%	Total (n=492)	%
<b>Photograph</b>	121	61.4	83	53.5	91	65.0	295	60.0
<b>Political cartoon</b>	7	3.6	14	9.0	16	11.4	37	7.5
<b>Graphic</b>	4	2.0	5	3.2	13	9.3	22	4.5
<b>Table</b>			3	1.9	6	4.3	9	1.8
<b>Total</b>	103	67.5	101	65.2	110	78.6	314	69.9

The analysis of the information sources used throughout the campaign [table 7] showed a well-defined profile: most of them were politicians (in 47.4% of cases), and most were fully identified people (55.9%). The minimal use of confidential sources is striking: in only 2.8% of the election news items. In a contexts with little dissonances, the interests of *El País* in presenting the opinion of professionals and experts was outstanding (in 15% of cases).

While the activities of the candidates were the centre of attention of the campaign [table 8], 42.9% of the election news items do not talk about them, including the analytical and opinion articles, as well as the articles about the eventual outcome of the elections, the strategy of the leaders and their electoral expectations. Although the mass rallies were the most common news reference (in 29.9% of cases), attention was also given to the meetings with targeted audiences (13%). Other activities, such as walk about and press conferences, were covered only sporadically.

**Table 7. Sources**

	<i>Abc</i>		<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>El País</i>		3 newspapers	
	Total (n=197)	%	Total (n=155)	%	Total (n=140)	%	Total (n=492)	%
<b>One</b>	78	39.6	42	27.1	61	43.6	181	36.8
<b>Multiple</b>	47	23.9	19	12.3	45	32.1	111	22.6
<b>Disclosed</b>	115	58.4	57	36.8	103	73.6	275	55.9
<b>Confidential</b>	8	4.1	2	1.3	4	2.9	14	2.8
<b>Politician</b>	101	51.3	51	32.9	81	57.9	233	47.4
<b>Expert</b>	16	8.1	8	5.2	21	15.0	45	9.1
<b>Non-qualified</b>	5	2.5	1	0.6	6	4.3	12	2.4
<b>None</b>	4	2.0	7	4.5	5	3.6	16	3.3

A separate mention should be given to the well-known televised debate, which tends to energise the campaign before and immediately after its broadcast. In this case the debate was organised by Canal Sur and only had the participation of the PSOE and IU candidates, since Javier Arenas refused to participate because according to him this TV channel was very partial in its informative treatment of the PP.

**Table 8. Activities of the protagonists**

	<i>Abc</i>		<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>El País</i>		3 newspapers	
	Total (n=197)	%	Total (n=155)	%	Total (n=140)	%	Total (n=492)	%
<b>Rally</b>	58	29.4	44	28.4	45	32.1	147	29.9
<b>Meeting</b>	31	15.7	25	16.1	8	5.7	64	13.0
<b>Walkabout</b>	15	7.6	8	5.2	4	2.9	27	5.5
<b>Press conference</b>	4	2.0	10	6.5	9	6.4	23	4.7
<b>Televised debate</b>	3	1.5	7	4.5	3	2.1	13	2.6
<b>Survey</b>	6	3.0	6	3.9	1	0.7	13	2.6
<b>Official act</b>	2	1.0	5	3.2	1	0.7	8	1.6
<b>Activity on social networks</b>	1	0.5	6	3.9			7	1.4
<b>Canvassing</b>	4	2.0	1	0.6			5	1.0
<b>Letter</b>	1	0.5	1	0.6			2	0.4
<b>Interview</b>			2	1.3			2	0.4
<b>Statements</b>	1	0.5					1	0.2
<b>Leaks</b>			1	0.6			1	0.2
<b>None</b>	79	40.1	60	38.7	72	51.4	211	42.9

### 3.3. Characterisation of content

The biggest differences between the selected newspapers can be seen in the content. The predominant frame in all cases was the strategic one, but the orientation of the headlines, the body of the texts, and the graphic treatment of the campaign's protagonists diverge significantly. There were also differences in the range of issues discussed, as the three newspapers emphasised those themes best fitted for their editorial line, and ignored those matters that were less beneficial for the parties they explicitly or implicitly supported.

The approach of the headlines shows important differences: while *Abc* maintained the informative style in 50.8% of its articles, *El País* often chose the interpretative approach (30.7% of its articles have sensationalist headlines). Opinion headlines, however, were more frequently used by *Abc* and *El Mundo*, in over 20% of the texts, which were not only argumentative, but also interpretative and even informative.

**Table 9. Type of headlines**

	<i>Abc</i>		<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>El País</i>		3 newspapers	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
<b>Informative</b>	100	50.8	61	39.4	50	35.7	211	42.9
<b>Interpretative</b>	24	12.2	30	19.4	43	30.7	97	19.7
<b>Opinion</b>	41	20.8	32	20.6	6	4.3	79	16.1
<b>Quotation</b>	23	11.7	14	9.0	26	18.6	63	12.8
<b>Thematic</b>	9	4.6	18	11.6	15	10.7	42	8.5
<b>Total</b>	197	100.0	155	100.0	140	100.0	492	100.0

Precisely due to their sensationalist style, the headlines of *El País* revealed the predominance of the strategic and game frames in the creation of the election news items: e.g. “La campaña más reñida” (“The toughest campaign”, 9/03/2012), “Subidos en el carrusel de las encuestas” (“Up in the carousel of the polls”, 10/03/2012), “De la mano para frenar al PP” (“Together to stop the PP”, 14/03/2012) and “Todos contra la mayoría de Arenas” (“All against the majority of Arenas”, 20/03/2012). *El Mundo* adopted the same frame in headlines such as “El PSOE ‘reinicia’ la campaña electoral para recortar distancias” (“The PSOE ‘will restart’ the election campaign to close the gap”, 12/03/2012), “Griñán se resiste a verse perdedor en las encuestas” (“Griñán refuses to lose at the polls”, 17/03/2012) and “Griñán apura la recta final de la campaña con ‘todo el pescado vendido’” (“Griñán rushes to the final stage of the campaign with nothing else left to do”, 22/03/2012).

The sports or horse race metaphor, so commonly used in the chronological report of political confrontations (Almazán and Villarejo, 1998: 106; Humanes, 2009: 108), was strongly used to situate the reader in a known scenario: the sprint scenario in which contestants fight to reach the leader, but in which ultimately there will be more losers.

*El Mundo* used the informative frame to report the electoral activity of Javier Arenas, but opted for an interpretative and even an opinion style to report about the PSOE: “Canal Sur, erre que erre: ahora mete al PP en el caso Malaya” (“Canal Sur, stubbornly: now involves the PP in the Malaysian case”, 9/03/2012), “Los sondeos hacen mella en la campaña del PSOE pese al forzado optimismo de Griñán” (“Polls damage the campaign of the PSOE despite the forced optimism of Griñán” 19/03/2012). This tone contrasted with that of the chronological reports of the PP’s campaign, usually presented by thematic headlines: “Arenas quiere estrenarse en la Junta exigiendo a Rajoy otra financiación” (“Arenas wants to lead the Andalusian government and demands more funding from Rajoy”, 13/03/2012), “Arenas persevera en la denuncia de la corrupción del PSOE” (“Arenas persists in denouncing the corruption of the PSOE”, 15/03/2012), “Arenas convoca al cambio frente al ‘inmovilismo suicida de Andalucía’” (“Arenas advocates for change in view of the ‘suicidal stagnation of Andalusia’”, 16/03/2012), “Arenas promete el Gobierno más austero y reformista del país” (“Arenas promises the most austere and reformist government in the country”, 20/03/2012).

For its part, *Abc* generally converged with the agenda and arguments of the PP in its headlines: “Arenas se planta ante los abusos de la RTVA y renuncia al debate” (“Arenas challenges the abuses

of RTVA and rejects the debate”, 10/03/2012), “Arenas reducirá de 200 a 56 la cifra de delegados provinciales” (“Arenas will reduce the number of provincial delegates from 200 to 56”, 14/03/2012), “Empleo y austeridad, ejes de las primeras 100 medidas de Arenas” (“Employment and austerity, the axes of Arenas’s first 100 measures”, 18/03/2012) and “Arenas anuncia que suprimirá 10.000 teléfonos móviles de la Junta” (“Arenas announces that he will eliminate 10,000 mobile phones in the government”, 20/03/2012). In contrast, *Abc* offered clearly biased headlines against Griñán: “Un hombre solo” (“A lonely man”, 20/03/2012) and “Contra las encuestas, golpes bajos” (“Against the polls and low blows”, 22/03/2012)

There were also important differences in the content of the election news items [table 10]. Obviously, the information was more predominant in *El País* (in 75% of the articles) and *Abc* (74.1%) than in *El Mundo* (54.2%). However, the proportion of opinion pieces was larger in these last two papers (21.3% and 37.4%, respectively), which tended to assess the development of the campaign much more intensely than the *Prisa* group’s newspaper.

With regards to the analytical content –which can be very useful to influence votes, as they encourage reflection– *El País* offered the largest number of texts with this type of content (15.7% of its election news items).

**Table 10. Type of content**

	<i>Abc</i>		<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>El País</i>		3 newspapers	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
<b>Information</b>	146	74.1	84	54.2	105	75.0	335	68.1
<b>Opinion</b>	42	21.3	58	37.4	13	9.3	113	23.0
<b>Analysis</b>	9	4.6	13	8.4	22	15.7	44	8.9
<b>Total</b>	197	100.0	155	100.0	140	100.0	492	100.0

The issues addressed by the three newspapers [table 11] reflected both the acceptance of the parties’ agenda, in some cases, and the eventual resistance to incorporate it, in others, as well as the tendency to reduce the focus of the debate to few issues. In the 2012 elections, the campaign was focused on two issues that were promoted by the People’s Party and took precedence over those issues promoted by its main opponent: the ERE misuse scandal –which had been investigated since 2010 and continued in the courts after the elections, but with much less impact on the media– and the inevitable change –which finally did not take place–.

*Abc* and *El Mundo* put the ERE misuse scandal on the headlines and the summary leads of 16.2% and 14.2% of their election news items, respectively, usually motivated by the statements of the PP leaders but also moved by their own initiative, which contrasted with the insignificant 5% dedicated to this scandal by *El País*. The convenience and proximity of the change in the Presidency of the Andalusian Autonomous Government captured the attention of the first two papers in similar proportions (14.7% and 12.3%), while *El País* once again resisted the trend (only mentioned these topics in 4.3% of its election news items).

The newspaper directed by Javier Moreno challenged the leading motifs of the PP’s campaign with positive assessments of the PSOE government (in 7.9% of the election news items) and criticisms to the policy of the central government (5%), in an unsuccessful attempt to shift the territorial focus of elections beyond the Andalusian area.

However, this was a marginal strategy in quantitative terms, since in the elections of March 2012 the regional approach predominated very clearly over the national one. Not even the crisis and unemployment, the two issues that worry Spanish people the most [6], managed to find a relevant place in the coverage of the campaign.

On the other hand, the electoral platforms occupied a clearly relegated position on the agenda of the three newspapers. Just 5% of the selected texts included the electoral platforms, and rarely as the main topic, which demonstrates that the thematic approach was, on this occasion, surpassed by the strategic one.

In a political scenario with a strong tendency to polarisation -we must not forget that only three political parties enjoy representation in Andalusia’s autonomous chamber since 2008-, the presence of the minority parties in the media was low, and that is why only 1.8% of the election news items dealt with them. This phenomenon, however, has also been noticed in elections in which the number of contenders with the possibility of winning seats is higher (see Farré, 1999; Sampedro and Seoane, 2008), which may suggest that the reduction of pluralism is an inherent quality of the coverage model that the press applies to any electoral process.

**Table 11. Main theme\***

	<i>Abc</i>		<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>El País</i>		3 newspapers	
	Total (n=197)	%	Total (n=155)	%	Total (n=140)	%	Total (n=492)	%
<b>ERE case</b>	32	16.2	22	14.2	7	5.0	61	12.4
<b>Change</b>	29	14.7	19	12.3	6	4.3	54	11.0
<b>Canal Sur TV</b>	17	8.6	12	7.7	9	6.4	38	7.7
<b>Campaign development</b>	20	10.2	9	5.8			29	5.9
<b>Opinion polls</b>	8	4.1	7	4.5	4	2.9	19	3.9
<b>Sectoral balances</b>			6	3.9	11	7.9	17	3.5
<b>PSOE-IU pact</b>	8	4.1	5	3.2	1	0.7	14	2.8
<b>Social policies</b>	12	6.1	1	0.6			13	2.6
<b>Violations to Electoral law</b>	4	2.0	7	4.5	2	1.4	13	2.6
<b>The PP election proposals</b>	5	2.5	4	2.6	3	2.1	12	2.4
<b>Crisis</b>	6	3.0			5	3.6	11	2.2
<b>Unemployment</b>	4	2.0	2	1.3	5	3.6	11	2.2
<b>Criticism to central government</b>			3	1.9	7	5.0	10	2.0

\* The table only includes those topics with more than 2% of mentions.

*Abc* and *El Mundo* often dealt with the hidden aspects of the campaign -the so-called “meta coverage”-, particularly *Abc*, which dedicated 10.2% of its election texts to these aspects, often with very expressive headlines: “Argucias electorales que no vemos” (“Hidden electoral tricks”, 10/03/2012), “Cuando el discurso también se enreda” (“When the discourse is also entangled”, 11/03/2012), “El armario de los candidatos” (“The closet of the candidates”, 13/03/2012), “Movilizando a los ‘ejércitos’” (“Mobilising the ‘armies’”, 16/03/2012) and “Caravanas. De viaje... hasta San Telmo” (“Caravans. On the move... all the way to San Telmo”, 18/03/2012).



*El Mundo* used the metacoverage mostly to negatively depict the Socialist leader: “Griñán, el reciclador de discursos” (“Griñán, the recycler of discourses”, 15/03/2012), “Candidato nuevo, campaña antigua” (“New candidate, old campaign”, 16/03/2012). This phenomenon, of biased analysis of the parties’ strategies, has already been detected in the informative treatment of other elections (cf. Humanes, 2009).

The degree of personalisation in the campaign coverage was high, since 30.9% of the election news items included the name of the candidates in the headlines [table 12], particularly of José Antonio Griñán and Javier Arenas (with 11% and 10.8%, respectively). Beyond the media predominance of the candidates over the political groups or platforms, the argumentative implications of their inclusion in the news headlines were not clear. In fact, the unflattering remarks usually made about the PSOE candidate (due to his weak electoral expectations, for bearing the shadow of corruption of its Government, and even due to his questionable performance as a Secretary General) explain why this candidate was much more cited in *Abc* and *El Mundo* than in *El País*.

The eminently regional frame of the campaign coverage was also reflected in the limited presence of national politicians: the only ones that appeared on more than one occasion were the president Mariano Rajoy –presented by some papers as the guarantee for victory, and by others as a warning about the austerity policies that can be implemented in Andalusia if the PP wins an absolute majority– and Manuel Chaves –always associated to the scandals that affected him or his party–.

Table 12. Protagonists in headlines								
	<i>Abc</i>		<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>El País</i>		3 newspapers	
	Total (n=197)	%	Total (n=155)	%	Total (n=140)	%	Total (n=492)	%
José Antonio Griñán	26	13.2	22	14.2	6	4.3	54	11.0
Javier Arenas	20	10.2	17	11.0	16	11.4	53	10.8
Diego Valderas	9	4.6	11	7.1	7	5.0	27	5.5
Mariano Rajoy	5	2.5	4	2.6	2	1.4	11	2.2
Manuel Chaves	3	1.5	3	1.9			6	1.2
Alfonso Guerra	1	0.5	1	0.6			2	0.4
Cristóbal Montoro			1	0.6	1	0.7	2	0.4
J. M. Sánchez Gordillo			1	0.6	1	0.7	2	0.4
Martín de la Herrán	1	0.5	1	0.6			2	0.4
Pilar González	1	0.5			1	0.7	2	0.4
Rafael Escuredo			2	1.3			2	0.4
Rosa Díez	1	0.5	1	0.6			2	0.4
Cayo Lara			1	0.6			1	0.2
Fátima Báñez			1	0.6			1	0.2
Felipe González	1	0.5					1	0.2
Gaspar Zarrías			1	0.6			1	0.2
M. Dolores de Cospedal			1	0.6			1	0.2
Carme Chacón					1	0.7	1	0.2
Alfredo. P. Rubalcaba			1	0.6			1	0.2
Mar Moreno					1	0.7	1	0.2
Micaela Navarro			1	0.6			1	0.2
None	133	67.5	99	63.9	108	77.1	340	69.1

Similar results were obtained from the analysis of the graphic elements that accompanied the elections news stories [table 13]. Griñán and Arenas share 70.8% of all the photographs, while the presence of other regional and national leaders was marginal, with the exception of Diego Valderas, whose photograph appeared in 16.1% of the sample of texts.

The connotations of the images tend to reinforce the predominant discourse of each headline. *Abc* frequently offered pictures of Arenas surrounded by militants and PP sympathisers or in full auditoriums (e.g. the front page of 9 March, and the photographs that illustrate the chronicle reports of 13, 15, 20, and 24 of March), while Griñán usually appeared alone or only accompanied by one of the leaders of his party (e.g. the picture published the first day of the campaign, in which the candidate awaits alone next to a bus, and the photographs published on the 10, 19, 20 and 21 of March).



Figure 1. Front page and inside page of *Abc*, published on 9 March, 2012.

The photographs of the two leaders offered an identical profile in *El Mundo*: Arenas surrounded by numerous followers (see the news published on 9, 10, 13, 14 and 22 of March) in contrast to Griñán who appeared more solitary (images published on 14, 15, 17 and 22 of March) and with a worried face (March 11).



Figure 2. Inside pages of *El Mundo*, published on 10 and 14 March, 2012

The contrast was less obvious in the case of *El País*, which published pictures of the candidates alone or accompanied almost in identical proportions.

	Abc		El Mundo		El País		3 newspapers	
	Total (n=197)	%	Total (n=155)	%	Total (n=140)	%	Total (n=492)	%
José Antonio Griñán	39	19.8	29	18.7	26	18.6	94	19.1
Javier Arenas	41	20.8	24	15.5	25	17.9	90	18.3
Diego Valderas	9	4.6	17	11.0	16	11.4	42	8.5
Other politicians	1	0.5	23	14.8			24	4.9
Columnists			8	5.2	7	5.0	15	3.0
Experts	1	0.5			10	7.1	11	2.2
Martín de la Herrán	6	3.0	2	1.3	3	2.1	11	2.2
Mariano Rajoy	6	3.0	3	1.9	1	0.7	10	2.0
Pilar González	3	1.5	2	1.3	3	2.1	8	1.6
Manuel Chaves	2	1.0	3	1.9			5	1.0
Cayo Lara			2	1.3	3	2.1	5	1.0
Non-qualified people					5	3.6	5	1.0
Felipe González	1	0.5	2	1.3	1	0.7	4	0.8
J. M. Sánchez Gordillo			1	0.6	2	1.4	3	0.6
Alfredo. P. Rubalcaba			1	0.6	2	1.4	3	0.6
M. Dolores de Cospedal	1	0.5	1	0.6	1	0.7	3	0.6
Esteban de Manuel					3	2.1	3	0.6
None	111	56.3	67	43.2	54	38.6	232	47.2



The most common frames in the three newspapers were the strategic and the game frames [table 14], because they emphasised the criticism exerted by the leaders and their tricks to gain advantage over their opponents, which is characteristic of the election news (Herrero and Benoit, 2009). Of the election news items, 42.2% focused on the dialectical confrontation between the candidates, on their mutual attacks and on their competition in the polls and the televised debates.

In contrast, only 19.4% of the election news items had a thematic frame. The electoral platforms, one of the theoretical pillars of the campaign, were highlighted in 18.3% of the texts, and always in relation to the Government programme of the People’s Party, which reflected the clear disinterest of the newspapers in this part of the political agenda.

Of the three newspapers, *Abc* used the strategic and game frames to the greatest extent in its texts (46.7%), while *El País* only used this frame them in 37.8 of its election news items.

**Table 14. Predominant frames and highlighted activities of the protagonists**

	<i>Abc</i>		<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>El País</i>		Total	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
<b>Game and strategic frames</b>	88	46.7	55	40.7	50	37.8	193	42.2
Response/criticism to adversary	77	39.1	50	32.3	42	30.0	169	34.3
Response to the media	11	5.6	5	3.2	8	5.7	24	4.9
Position in opinion polls	3	1.5	8	5.2	2	1.4	13	2.6
Televised debate	1	0.5			1	0.7	2	0.4
<b>Thematic frame</b>	40	18.3	40	20.6	29	19.3	110	19.4
Electoral platform	31	15.7	32	20.6	27	19.3	90	18.3
Candidate’s activities with Party members	5	2.5					5	1.0
<b>None</b>	69	35.0	60	38.7	61	42.9	189	38.4
<b>Total</b>	197	100.0	155	100.0	140	100.0	492	100.0

The editorial line of the selected newspapers—as it is widely known, *Abc* and *El Mundo* supported the PP, while *El País* was more supportive of the PSOE (Canel, 1999)—was reflected in the attitude adopted by their writers, correspondents and columnists in the treatment of the campaign [table 15], which should not be surprising given the sharp politicisation of the Spanish media system (Hallin and Mancini, 2008: 104) [7].

There are, however, interesting differences in this widespread practice. The analysis has allowed us to verify that 63.2% of the election news items maintained an appearance of neutrality, as they did not explicitly defend any candidate nor refuted their proposals without arguments, nor uncritically accepted the statements made in the heat of the campaign. In this sense, *El País* presented the highest proportion of neutral texts (81.4%), followed by *El Mundo* (with 43.9). The fact that the latter offered a high number of columns—whose argumentative nature forced them to take a position—helps to explain this difference in the proportions.

However, it is striking that the criticisms of the three newspapers were mostly directed at the parties as collective entities rather than at the candidates [table 16]. Thus, in *El Mundo* the election news items that criticise the PSOE were more common (53) than the texts that called into question the

qualities or honesty of Griñán (10). The same occurred with *Abc*, in which the proportion was 36-8. Meanwhile, *El País* expressed reservations towards the PP more frequently than towards Arenas (15-6). Similarly, when it comes to defend one or another option, *El Mundo* and *El País* tended to refer more to the political parties than to their leaders, unlike *Abc*, which was more individualistic in its discourse.

**Table 15. Position of the journalist/newspaper**

	<i>Abc</i>		<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>El País</i>		3 newspapers	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
<b>Supportive</b>	18	9.1	17	11.0	8	5.7	43	8.7
<b>Unsupportive</b>	50	25.4	70	45.2	18	12.9	138	28.0
<b>Neutral</b>	129	65.5	68	43.9	114	81.4	311	63.2
<b>Total</b>	197	100.0	155	100.0	140	100.0	492	100.0

In the Prisa group’s newspaper, the biased treatment was manifested in the uncritical acceptance of the PSOE promises (e.g. “La enseñanza, un valor refugio” [“Teaching, a wealth reserve”, 16/03/2012]) and the desire to highlight the troubles Arenas went through to defend his social programme from the cuts of the central government (e.g. “El escudo del ‘legado terrible’” [“The shield of the ‘terrible legacy’”, 16/03/2012]).

Conversely, *El Mundo* and *Abc* openly expressed their support for the PP, especially in their opinion articles, which promoted the favourite *mantra* of Arenas throughout the campaign, change: “El cambio es imprescindible en Andalucía” (“Change is essential in Andalusia”, *El Mundo*, 24/03/2012), “Los andaluces piden cambio” (“Andalusian people call for change”, *Abc*, 18/03/2012), “El cambio que necesita Andalucía” (“The change that Andalusia needs”, *Abc*, 24/03/2012).

**Table 16. Position of the journalist/newspaper with respect to parties and candidates**

	<i>Abc</i>		<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>El País</i>		3 newspapers	
	Total (n=197)	%	Total (n=155)	%	Total (n=140)	%	Total (n=492)	%
<b>Supportive</b>	18	100.0	17	100.0	8	100.0	43	100.0
PP	5	27.8	15	88.2			20	46.5
Javier Arenas	13	72.2	4	23.5			17	39.5
PSOE					7	87.5	6	14.0
IU					1	12.5	1	2.3
<b>Unsupportive</b>	50	100.0	70	100.0	18	100.0	138	100.0
PSOE	36	72.0	53	75.7			89	64.5
José A. Griñán	8	16.0	10	14.3			18	13.0
PP			2	2.9	15	83.3	17	12.3
IU	6	12.0	6	8.6			12	8.7
Javier Arenas					6	33.3	6	4.3
Manuel Chaves	2	4.0					2	1.4
Diego Valderas	2	4.0					2	1.4
Felipe González	1	2.0					1	0.7
PA			1	1.4			1	0.7

#### 4. Conclusions and discussion

1. With respect to the coverage of the campaign given by the newspapers, the largest number of texts was provided by *Abc*, followed by *El Mundo*. Moreover, these two papers also offered more opinion



articles about the Andalusian elections than *El País*, which demonstrates that *Abc* and *El Mundo* had a greater editorial commitment, i.e., a greater desire to inform and, above all, to transmit their assessments to readers to shape their perception of reality and to influence their behaviour.

2. Both *Abc* and *El Mundo* tended to highlight the *leitmotifs* of the PP's campaign: the ERE misuse scandal and the need for political change in the Andalusian Government. Even *El País* was forced to incorporate these *leitmotifs*, although it preferred to emphasise the issues of national scope. In this sense, the three newspapers practiced what Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) have referred to as “non-reactive coverage”, in which political parties easily introduce their message in the media, either by imposition or by convergence of agendas.

3. This campaign was dominated by a limited and poorly-nuanced repertoire of themes. The newspapers themselves recognised this simplification in the assessments of the election day: “Una campaña condicionada por los ERE” (“A campaign conditioned by the ERE misuse scandal”, *El Mundo*), “Los ERE marcan una campaña baja en proteínas” (“The ERE misuse scandal mark campaign a low in proteins”, *El País*).

4. Overall, the regional approach was imposed throughout the process, thanks to the absence of national elections. This confirmed, therefore, the first hypothesis of our study. However, the campaign coverage did not pay attention to the problems affecting the autonomous community (here it is important to remark that Andalusia has the highest rate of unemployment in Spain [8], to mention but one of the most worrying indicators); instead the political discourse-and the discourse of the media that appropriate this discourse- mainly addressed the judicial affairs, clearly with electioneering purposes.

5. The provision of evidence was limited on the three selected newspapers: only a small number of texts provided impartial assessments of the performance of the Andalusian Government during the past four years. This confirms our second hypothesis.

6. As expected, the news coverage focused on the candidates of the major parties, and paid little attention to the candidates of the parties with limited chances to win the elections and to the national leaders, particularly in terms of the chronological reporting of the campaign. The opinion articles, however, tended to direct their criticism more towards the political parties than to the presidential candidates.

7. Throughout the analysed period, the ideological orientation of each newspaper was reflected clearly but with different degrees of intensity: *Abc* explicitly defended its preferred candidate, Javier Arenas, on more occasions than the rest, while *El País* and *El Mundo* chose to criticise the party they did not support. The newspaper directed by Javier Moreno was the most neutral in the treatment of the campaign.

8. In three newspapers the strategic and game frames were more predominant than the thematic frame. These papers focused on the mutual attacks among the candidates, on the clash between leaders and on the competitive elements rather than on the concrete electoral platforms. In this sense, *Abc* was once again the most outstanding newspaper in comparison to *El País*. These findings confirmed our third hypothesis.

Regarding the possible effect of the information strategy of the selected newspaper on the electorate, we must be cautious due to several reasons. The first reason is that, against all expectations, the party

expected to win by a landslide eventually did not win enough votes to take the presidency, despite it clearly managed to impose its agenda. The second is that the exposure to the press by the Andalusian people was limited. As revealed by the survey carried out by the Centre for Sociological Research (CIS) a month after the elections [9], the campaign aroused little interest among 29.5% of the population, and no interest at all among 24%, while only 12.1% followed the campaign regularly through the printed press. Moreover, although 22.2% of voters waited until the election day to decide which party they would support, it is likely that most of them obtained from the TV news programmes the information based on which they decided their vote, because 72.7% of the survey participants stated that they only received electoral information from television during the last week of the campaign.

Finally, and as a complement to this study, we consider that it would be interesting to analyse the coverage given to the Andalusian election campaign of 2008, which was held on the same day as the general national elections, as it is likely that there would be important differences between those elections and the ones examined here.

Another revealing line of research would be to examine the campaign coverage carried out by the audiovisual media, particularly television, in order to determine whether their agendas and frames were similar to those used by the press.

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## 6. Notes

[1] For a detailed analysis of the development of the Andalusian election campaign and the results see Colmenarejo (2012).

[2] There are many similarities between the second level of agenda-setting and framing, which can lead to confusion between these concepts. Both are fundamentally interested in the way in which topics are approached. However, as Weaver (2007: 145-146) points out, framing “does seem to include a broader range of cognitive processes -such as moral evaluations, casual reasoning, appeals to principle, and recommendations for treatment of problems- than does the second-level agenda-setting (the salience of attributes of an object)”.

[3] Source: [www.ojd.es](http://www.ojd.es). Consulted on 20 December, 2012.

[4] In themetacoverage, the media try to reveal the back rooms of politics, by deconstructing the discourse of the political parties, reflecting on the electoral process, and drawing attention to the manipulation of information (Humanes, 2009: 108).

[5] Only on four occasions *El Mundo* opens the regional section with the elections news: at the beginning and end of the campaign, and in the dissemination of two opinion polls.

[6] According to the barometer of the Centre for Sociological Research (CIS) corresponding to the month in which the elections were held (March, 2012), unemployment was the main cause for concern for 89.3% of Spaniards, followed by the economic situation (49.2%). Source: [http://www.cis.es/cis/openm/ES/1\\_encuestas/estudios/ver.jsp?estudio=12684](http://www.cis.es/cis/openm/ES/1_encuestas/estudios/ver.jsp?estudio=12684). Consulted on 3 November, 2012.

[7] On the politicisation of the Spanish media when it comes to election information see Canel, 1997.

[8] The latest Survey on Active Population made public before the elections, corresponding to the fourth quarter of 2011, indicated that the unemployment rate in the Community of Andalusia was 31.23%, well above the national rate (22.85%). Source:

<http://www.ine.es/daco/daco42/daco4211/epapro0411.pdf>. Consulted on 14 November, 2012.

[9] Source: [http://www.cis.es/cis/openm/ES/1\\_encuestas/estudios/ver.jsp?estudio=12844](http://www.cis.es/cis/openm/ES/1_encuestas/estudios/ver.jsp?estudio=12844). Consulted on 29 October, 2012.

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