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## Media Treatment and analysis of political leadership in the local press during the 2015 regional elections in the Valencian Communiy

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### Abstract

The study of the 15M social movement, and then its transition into a political party like Podemos is of particular interest in different fields such as sociology, politics and also journalism. This is also the case regarding the emergence of Ciudadanos into the political and media arena, or the consolidation of a local political force like Compromís in Valencia. In this context, a study has been made of the media-opinion coverage of these political parties and other traditional parties in Valencia during the election campaign for the 2015 Regional Elections, which led to a change in government after twenty years with the Partido Popular in power. This study has been carried out within the framework of the national R+D Mediaflows project (Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness) and focuses on influence: who influences who, in what way and what are its effects. We focus on the flows that information circulates on, because this enables us to see how messages are translated and how agendas are combined in their attempt to influence the public. We aim to find out which are the most influential and which direction or directions the transmission of information flows in. The methodology includes two methods - quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative aspect is carried out using the framing theory to analyze speeches and contexts, and the qualitative aspect basically uses focus group tools and in-depth interviews. The main objective is to analyze the regional leadership of these parties in the traditional local press in this Community: in the province of

Castellón, the newspaper *Mediterráneo*, from the Zeta group; in Alicante, the newspaper *Información*, from Prensa Ibérica group; and in the province of Valencia, the newspaper *Las Provincias* from Vocento group. This research serves as a means of comparing regional leaders' presence and the analysis of their speeches in these local newspapers. Some are leaders of consolidated parties with years of experience in government, or they are members of the opposition parties; others are newcomers, but they are backed by vigorous political brands with high profile leaders like Pablo Iglesias or Albert Rivera.

### Keywords

Political Journalism, Local Journalism, Valencian Community, leadership, elections

### Contents

1. Introduction. 2. Methodology. 3. Results. 3.1. Case for *Las Provincias*-Valencia (Vocento). 3.2. Case for *Información*-Alicante (Prensa Ibérica). 3.3. Case for *Mediterráneo*-Castellón (Zeta). 4. Conclusions. 5. Bibliography.

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## 1. Introduction

In sociology, political leadership is seen as “exercising power or influence on social collectives such as groups, communities or nations. This exercise of power is mediatized by the personal charisma of the leader, which is an elusive concept and difficult to define, although it is a “characteristic that is intrinsic to the study of political leadership whose analysis cannot be overlooked” (Deusdad Ayala 2001: 212)” (Jiménez-Díaz, 2008).

On 24th May 2015, the Valencian Community experienced an electoral catharsis which would lead to a change in Government after more than two decades under the political governance of the Partido Popular in Les Corts and in the municipal councils of the main cities in this Autonomous Community: Valencia, Alicante, Elche, Castellón, etc. The voters wanted the new Autonomous Parliament to be formed as illustrated in the following graph (1), comparing results for the same elections in 2011, when the PP obtained an overall majority with Francisco Camps as leader of the conservative party.



Illustration1. Source: Newspaper *Información*

The economic crisis that has been dragging on in Spain since 2008 "has produced noticeable changes in the practices and values that both political leaders and the public have to take on in the management and experience of this situation" (Jiménez-Díaz, 2013)

In the May 2015 elections, the leaders of the main political parties who were standing for election with options of gaining a seat in this autonomous parliament were: Alberto Fabra (PP), Ximo Puig (PSPV-PSOE), Mónica Oltra (Compromís), Carolina Punset (Ciudadanos), Antonio Montiel (Podemos), and Ignasi Blanco (EUPV), who finally, and by a narrow margin, did not achieve parliamentary representation. In the words of the political scientist Gutiérrez-Rubi, "being emotional and provoking emotions is the key. Being moved by social change, by new ideas and by new challenges" (Gutiérrez Rubi, 2009). In this sense, and as a means of reflecting on and understanding the election results analyzed in this article, this author adds "the ability that the progressives have to transmit their passion for changes, enthusiasm for ideas and illusion for everything else will become the emotional key that will enable them to connect with the public". In contrast to this, we are reminded of Machiavelli in *The Prince* back in 1513, about those attitudes by governors which caused rejection in the people. "The Prince should avoid all those things which could make him hated or despised. If he does so, he will have fulfilled his part and will find no danger in other reproaches. What makes him hateful above all else is being above all else is being rapacious and a usurper of the property (and the women) of his subjects. (Maquiavelo, 1981).

Leadership in political action is fundamental to achieving objectives, and the media has a unique role in this sense, since "the idea of journalism as a mediating agent between the public and political actors is the third function of the standard model. This notion implies, on the one hand, that the journalistic profession should deal with politically relevant Information, produce it and disseminate it to the public, who otherwise would not be informed" (Casero, 2012).

The media's function as a public service has become a current issue "which took on special relevance in Europe after the closure of the Greek public television and, in Spain, after the recent closure of Valencian Radio and Television (RTVV). In May 2014, a group of international experts met in Valencia in order to debate and propose solutions for this situation, as stated by John Barsby, a BBC journalist for more than 30 years, "the future of the media in Europe is not guaranteed [...] and civil society should do everything they can to defend it as an irreplaceable service" (Muñoz-Guerrero, 2014). For this reason, online media and social networks now play an important role in informing the public.

In this study, we focus on the different levels of leadership. On the one hand, there are the regional leaders who were practically unknown to the public in the Valencian Community at the start of the election campaign: Antonio Montiel (Podemos), Carolina Punset (Ciudadanos), but they were standing for election under rising political brands with well-established and publically supported national leaders: Pablo Iglesias (Podemos) and Albert Rivera (Ciudadanos). On the other hand, there are the well-established regional leaders who are well-known to the public, because they are in Government like Alberto Fabra (PP), in the opposition, or have considerable political experience like Mónica Oltra (Compromís), Ximo Puig (PSPV-PSOE) or Ignasi Blanco (EUPV).

We should also consider the use of online channels where "information often becomes the headline and, the meeting or political arguments are condensed into a slogan, preferably disseminated via the social networks" (López-García *et al.* 2015). The most important social network representing leadership, Twitter, and the parameter of the followers that each leader has is as follows: Mónica Oltra: 98.500; Alberto Fabra: 37.300; Mariano Rajoy: 806.000; Ximo Puig: 12.000; Pedro Sánchez:

158.000; Carolina Punset: 11.800; Albert Rivera: 284.000; Antonio Montiel: 3.256; Pablo Iglesias: 966.000. López Burniol poses a question about the difference between politicians and leaders: “Simply that leaders perceive the country’s situation clearly, create a future project, present it earnestly and people follow them because they have credibility and, consequently identify with them. In contrast, politicians limit their work to conquering and preserving power, using marketing methods” (Lopez Burniol, 2006). What we have here is a clear media personalization (Rodríguez-Virgili, 2014), which is apparent in this study.

Proximity journalism and leadership in the political context of media personalization, and the role of all local-traditional media in processes like the current one are also interesting areas of analysis. As early as 1920, research by Lippmann about *The New York Times* determined that the press was far from adequately fulfilling their task of informing and setting the bases for democracy, creating a well-informed public opinion and generating the necessary social consensus (Rodríguez, 2014). At that time, it was not new for the emerging media to be closer to those in power than to the public, it was even said that “the present democratic crisis is a crisis of journalism” (Lippmann, 1920). Much later, one of the paradigms of media personalization, the leader of Podemos, Pablo Iglesias, assures that “plurality and freedom of expression in the private media has owners who can ultimately exploit their power” (Iglesias, 2014).

## 2. Methodology

The main aim of this article is to study the leadership of the traditional parties (PP, PSOE, Compromis), and emerging parties (Ciudadanos, Podemos) in three of the most important newspapers in the Valencian Community (*Las Provincias*, *Mediterráneo* and *Información*) during the regional election campaign. To do so, an analysis is made of election news items published in the abovementioned papers from 8<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

To achieve our objectives, we use a quantitative and qualitative methodology: firstly, a quantitative analysis for news items; and secondly, an analysis of the opinion pieces (editorials and articles) in the abovementioned local newspapers, paying special attention to the treatment that these leaders are given. With respect to the quantitative analysis, we analyze a total of 1017 items from three newspapers, divided into journalism genres: news, interviews, reports chronicles and some profiles. As the online editions of the three newspapers are limited, on some occasions we have studied certain items from printed editions. The appearance of local and national leaders in these news items are also quantified.

For the qualitative aspects of this research, the *framing* theory is applied to analyze discourse in opinion pieces (editorials and articles), working on the following concepts in the construction of opinion discourse related to political groups and their respective regional and national leaders: change/new scenario, fear/nerves, influence/rise (simple and overall) majorities, campaign/strategy and two- party/multiparty. The text analysis of these concepts leads to three final variables about the content of these texts with respect to the leaders’ interests: favorable, neutral or unfavorable. A total 616 opinion texts were analyzed with some regional leader prevalence, and 96 with national leader prevalence. According to Lakoff, the so-called conceptual frames influence our political perceptions and our voting perceptions. This author considers that these frames can be modified through political discourse. Our political ideas depend on the frames we move in and we change at the same time as they do (Lakoff, 2004). We have also taken advantage of the material gathered from seminars and

focus groups organized by the research group, and carried out by specialist journalists, political scientists and leaders of some of these emerging political parties as a means of gathering ideas and drawing conclusions about the subject of this research.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. The case for *Las Provincias* - Valencia (Vocento)

The newspaper *Las Provincias* of Valencia provides a compilation of news on the internet that only partially covers the contents of the printed paper. In fact, a good part of these contents, and particularly those we could consider as being more varied and higher quality (reports, interviews, opinion articles) are almost restricted to the printed version, and in the majority of cases it is not possible to access them via the web. They are only offered by payment through *Las Provincias, Kiosko y Más*, which curiously publishes little on the web and, for example, we cannot find direct links to the majority of these articles which means they are completely invisible on the internet. These limitations would explain at least partially why the coverage these papers make of the election campaign appears to the reader as being only slight in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

Tables of party appearances per journalism genre:

<i>Las Provincias</i>	NEWS	INTERVIEWS	REPORTS	CHRONICLES	PROFILES
PP (118)	97	2	8	10	1
PSPV (50)	41	1	3	4	1
EUPV (35)	30	1	1	3	0
COMPROMIS (45)	35	1	4	4	1
CDS (47)	38	1	3	5	0
PODEMOS (37)	31	0	1	5	0
<b>TOTAL (332)</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>3</b>

Table 1. Source: Own compilation

<i>Información</i>	NEWS	INTERVIEWS	REPORTS	CHRONICLES	PROFILES
PP	35,6%	33,3%	40,0%	32,5%	33,3%
PSPV	15%	16,6%	15%	12,9%	33,3%

EUPV	11%	16,6%	5%	9,6%	0,0%
COMPROMIS	12,8%	16,6%	20%	12,9%	33,3%
CDS	13,9%	16,6%	15%	16,1%	0,0%
PODEMOS	11,3%	0,0%	5%	16,1%	0,0%

Table 2. Source: Own compilation

As inferred from these data, the newspaper *Las Provincias* pays much more attention to information related to the Partido Popular, compared with the others. Obviously, it is possible that this is strictly related to the journalistic criteria of what is newsworthy (information related to the PP arouses more interest because they are in government and are still the most voted party). But we could also argue that there is a second ideological criterion, since the paper gives more information about the parties that in theory are more in tune with the ideological line of *Las Provincias* and the majority of its readership. This perhaps would be the reason for *Las Provincias* treatment of Ciudadanos, which is not always positive since it often reports on the disagreements and problems with candidates. This party is close to PSPV in number of articles and is situated ahead of the others. In contrast, it is clearly evident that Podemos is paid very little attention, although it is a party that should be better represented and to the same extent as Ciudadanos, if we were to follow the logic of journalistic interest for new parties.

Table of regional and national leaders' appearances out of the total number of opinion texts analyzed:

<i>Las Provincias</i>	REGIONAL LEADER	NATIONAL LEADER	REGIONAL LEADER	NATIONAL LEADER
PP	70	10	35%	41,6%
PSPV	32	3	16%	12,5%
EUPV	19	1	9,5%	4,1%
COMPROMIS	29	0	14,5%	0,0%
CDS	20	18	10%	75%
PODEMOS	17	5	8,5%	20,8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>24</b>		

Table 3. Source: Own compilation

As seen in the analysis, the presence of these party leaders is relatively common in the opinion contents of the newspaper during election campaign. The majority of these contents appear in the

special section dedicated to the elections and consist of news items focusing on the statements and actions of a political leader, often focusing on the candidates to the presidency of the Generalitat, or on the vote count itself in the case of 24<sup>th</sup> May (which is the day Las Provincias publishes far more news items and opinions). In the other cases, Las Provincias usually focuses on the figure of the PP candidate, Rita Barberá. Finally, once more Ciudadanos stands out in contrast to other political parties, due to the greater presence of its national leader (proportionally) compared to its candidate to the presidency of the Generalitat; this is probably due to the over exposure and hyper-leadership, also in media terms, of Albert Rivera compared to the local and regional candidates, who are mostly unknown to the public. This, in fact, occurs in similar circumstances (although on a lower scale) in Podemos, with greater presence of the national leader, Pablo Iglesias, compared to the regional leader, Antonio Montiel.

Table of valuations of regional leaders:

<i>Las Provincias</i>	FAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	UNFAVORABLE
FABRA (70)	22	24	24
PUIG (32)	8	10	14
BLANCO (19)	4	4	11
OLTRA (29)	11	9	10
PUNSET (20)	10	6	4
MONTIEL (17)	3	4	10

Table 4. Source: Own compilation

<i>Las Provincias</i>	FAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	UNFAVORABLE
FABRA	31,4%	34,2%	34,2%
PUIG	25%	31,2%	43,7%
BLANCO	21%	21%	57,8%
OLTRA	37,9%	31%	34,4%
PUNSET	50%	30%	20%
MONTIEL	17,6%	23,5%	58,8%

Table 5. Source: Own compilation

Table of valuations of national leaders:

<i>Las Provincias</i>	FAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	UNFAVORABLE
RAJOY (10)	2	4	4
SANCHEZ (3)	0	2	1
GARZON (1)	0	0	1
RIVERA (18)	10	5	3
IGLESIAS (5)	0	2	3

Table 6. Source: Own compilation

<i>Las Provincias</i>	FAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	UNFAVORABLE
RAJOY	20%	40%	40%
SANCHEZ	0,0%	66,6%	33,3%
GARZON	0,0%	0,0%	100%
RIVERA	55%	27,7%	16,6%
IGLESIAS	0,0%	40%	60%

Table 7. Fuente: Own copilation

In line with the limited content that *Las Provincias* offers in its digital version, as discussed previously in the quantitative analysis, the presence of opinion pieces seems limited for a newspaper that covers the third most important city in the country. In general, but not always, the columns focus on the political activity of the Valencian politicians on the internet and social networks. Normally, the tone of the columns and editorials concerning the individuals they focus their attention on is negative. Also, it is unusual for the focus to be on a single party or political leader, since it tends to address the comparison between several politicians, from the same or different parties, although giving more prominence to some rather than to others. In the analysis summarized in the tables above, we have attempted to summarize this situation by associating each item with the most important party or leader.

*Las Provincias* organizes its web cover in a traditional structure of three columns: the left column contains the most prominent news and a bigger typeface, and the right column is always used to cover sports. Sometimes this structure is abridged and a single story covers the horizontal space usually divided into three columns. In the cases analyzed here, this situation occurs only once, to

reflect a sports news item (the league match of Valencia FC). In the analysis of the presence of the election campaign and information related to the campaign itself, the results are almost devastating, particularly in the early days of the campaign. Only six times do we find content related to this topic in the top space of the front page (the first two news items of each column). This is related to 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> May, the night of 24<sup>th</sup> May, and the last days of the election campaign 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> May. It should be remembered that *Las Provincias* has three columns, two without counting the sports information. That is to say, of 72 possible news items (four news items over eighteen days) only six address one issue - the regional and municipal elections - in theory central to the news agenda of any generalist media. In addition, all of them correspond to information about the Partido Popular, except the news about the election day which can be considered as shared with PSPV, and is the only news item occupying the three columns on the front page.

The news in the first two weeks of the campaign deals with issues that are negative for the PP. On the one hand, on the first day of campaigning, 8<sup>th</sup> May, José María Alcón's withdrew from the municipal list of PP in Valencia, after appearing in several recordings that would involve him and the then President of the Provincial Council of Valencia, Alfonso Rus in a case of accepting commissions. On the other hand, the news on 11<sup>th</sup> May, was devoted to Rita Barberá, reporting problems with the Mayor's election campaign, where Barberá experienced how some neighbors or workers from neighborhoods and shops she frequents jeered at her or refused to shake her hand. With respect to the other days, on both 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> May news is related to the PP's main meeting campaign at the 'Plaza de Toros' (note that the same event, held by PSPV a few days earlier did not occupy any important space on the front page). On 20<sup>th</sup> May they report the events prior to the meeting and on 21<sup>st</sup> May (in two columns) they report about the meeting itself and its development. Finally, on 22<sup>nd</sup> May *Las Provincias* highlights the reappearance of Alfonso Rus at the closure of the PP campaign. Generally, the news corresponding to the election campaign always appears in a lower space, in the third or fourth row of news, or rather grouped together -even lower- as a specific section. That is to say, once again the main conclusion to be drawn here is not just to do with the newspaper's reporting preferences in favor of or against some parties (which can also be seen in the quantitative analysis), but *Las Provincias* clear detachment with respect to information related to the election campaign on a whole.

Front page news per party.

<i>Las Provincias</i>	PSPV	PPCV	EUPV	COMPROMIS	CIUDADANOS	PODEMOS
<b>TOTAL: 90</b>	14	38	4	12	13	9

PPCV	PSPV	EUPV	COMPROMIS	CIUDADANOS	PODEMOS
42,2%	15,5%	4,4%	13,3%	14,4%	10%

Table 8. Source: Own compilation

### 3.2. The case for *Información* - Alicante (Prensa Ibérica)

In the quantitative study carried out on the newspaper *Información*, there is generally greater presence of PPCV and Ciudadanos in the pieces analyzed. It is important to point out that there is considerably more information about the PPCV because it includes information related to the Generalitat and is, therefore, more liable to receive greater news coverage because of the public interest in government issues. It is important to emphasize that the online version of this Alicante newspaper differentiates between information which is strictly about the regional campaign and information about the local campaign. However, the pieces that appear in the digital version are practically uploaded from the printed version, except for the opinion blogs. Although it is true that there is plenty of information on subscription even in the opinion section as we already mentioned, these pieces can be accessed from the offline version. We note that most of the information about the PPCV is presented as news items, followed by reports. The PSPV is mostly present in reports and news. The EUPV appears more in chronicles than news and reports, and Compromís appears in chronicles rather than in news. Ciudadanos appears in reports and in chronicles and finally, Podemos is present in reports more than in news items or chronicles.

Tables of party appearances per journalism genre:

<i>Información</i>	NEWS	INTERVIEWS	REPORTS	CHRONICLES	PROFILES
PP (112)	76	2	24	9	1
PSPV (56)	30	2	16	7	1
EUPV (45)	21	1	13	9	1
COMPROMIS (50)	23	1	14	10	2
CDS (47)	22	1	16	8	0
PODEMOS (37)	17	2	13	4	1
<b>TOTAL (347)</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>6</b>

Table 9. Source: Own compilation

<i>Información</i>	NEWS	INTERVIEWS	REPORTS	CHRONICLES	PROFILES
PP	40,2%	22,2%	25,0%	19,1%	16,7%
PSPV	15,9%	22,2%	16,7%	14,9%	16,7%
EUPV	11,1%	11,1%	13,5%	19,1%	16,7%
COMPROMIS	12,2%	11,1%	14,6%	21,3%	33,3%

CDS	11,6%	11,1%	16,7%	17,0%	0,0%
PODEMOS	9,0%	22,2%	13,5%	8,5%	16,7%

Table 10. Source: Own compilation

As already mentioned, the PPCV is the party with most content in news items, followed by PSPV, Compromís, Ciudadanos, EUPV and lastly Podemos. With respect to interviews with party leaders, all of them appear once, although the regional leader of Podemos, Antonio Montiel, also had the opportunity to answer readers’ questions through a live chat on 11<sup>th</sup> May. José Ciscar of the PPCV had the same opportunity on 21st May as did Julián López for the PSPV on 19<sup>th</sup> May. For this reason, the PPCV, PSPV and Podemos have a higher percentage of interviews compared to the others.

The reports about the PPCV occupy the maximum space in the campaign, and this party appears in a quarter of the reports published. Many of them are about the Rus case and election surveys, which include the rest of the political groups. These reports are followed by those about the PSPV and Ciudadanos who have an equal percentage, then Compromís, EUPV and Podemos who have the same presence. Other genre such as chronicles, especially about the meetings that took place during this time, are especially relevant regarding the appearance of Compromís, EUPV and PPCV, Ciudadanos, PSPV and Podemos. Finally, profiles of the regional leaders appear along with the corresponding interviews, and for this reason there is a more even distribution, except for Compromís whose number one on the electoral list for Les Corts representing Alicante also has a profile, and Carolina Punset, regional leader of Ciudadanos, who has no profile with her interview.

Of all the information analyzed, we can say that the regional leader with most presence is Fabra, followed by Ximo Puig, Carolina Punset, Mónica Oltra and finally Ignasi Blanco and Antonio Montiel

Table of regional and national leaders’ appearances out of the total number of texts analyzed:

<i>Información</i>	REGIONAL LEADER	NATIONAL LEADER	REGIONAL LEADER	NATIONAL LEADER
PP	60	13	27,5%	41,9%
PSPV	38	3	17,4%	9,7%
EUPV	27	4	12,4%	12,9%
COMPROMIS	34	0	15,6%	0,0%
CDS	35	11	16,1%	35,5%
PODEMOS	22	3	9,6%	9,6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>31</b>		

Table 11. Source: Own compilation

However, in general the presence of the national leaders is not very significant, except for the president of PP, Mariano Rajoy and the president of Ciudadanos, Albert Rivera, who have more visibility than the rest. Alberto Garzón and Pedro Sánchez can also be included, but in a more anecdotal sense - when they visited Alicante at their respective meetings. The study shows that the presence of Pablo Iglesias, contrary to what we might imagine, is very slight, with the exception of the mass meeting on 15th May in Alicante. With respect to the regional leaders, there is a strong presence of Alberto Fabra, followed by Ximo Puig, Carolina Punset, Mónica Oltra, Ignasi Blanco and Antonio Montiel, who has little presence in the online edition of this Alicante newspaper.

In conclusion, it is clear that the distribution of information referring to the regional leaders continues to be led by the Governing party of the ‘Generalitat Valenciana’ at the time of the campaign, followed by the PSPV. Both of these parties have traditionally been involved in Valencian politics for decades. Nevertheless, the appearance of Ciudadanos is also seen to occupy a large part of the space devoted to the Valencian leaders, as a strongly emerging presence and overtaking Ignasi Blanco of the EUPV who has formed part of a very active opposition in the Generalitat, but who paradoxically after the elections did not win representation in the regional Parliament. Podemos, a party with a lot of force in the national media, has no presence and is situated as the lowest with respect to visibility during the campaign.

Through the application of frames, as previously mentioned, the analysis of the regional leaders shows that the majority of views expressed are unfavorable towards the former president of the Generalitat, Alberto Fabra, whereas Mónica Oltra receives the best views. As in the case of Oltra, Ignasi Blanco is also one of the best valued by the columnists in the newspaper *Información*. However, Ximo Puig and Carolina Punset are at a middle point on the scale, and the worst valued is Antonio Montiel. This candidate has mostly neutral or unfavorable valuations possibly a symptom of not knowing much about him, which consequently demonstrate that either there is little to say about him, or his figure is not newsworthy. He was also unfavorably criticized in the second week of the campaign after the debate on *Información TV*, where theoretically he did not emerge as a strong candidate compared with the others.

Table of valuations of regional leaders:

<i>Información</i>	FAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	UNFAVORABLE
FABRA (60)	8	14	38
PUIG (38)	8	10	20
BLANCO (27)	7	15	5
OLTRA (34)	17	15	2
PUNSET (35)	6	21	8
MONTIEL (24)	2	8	14
TOTAL	48	83	87

Table 12. Source: Own compilation

<i>Información</i>	FAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	UNFAVORABLE
FABRA	13,3%	23,3%	63,3%
PUIG	21%	26,3%	52,6%
BLANCO	25,9%	55,5%	18,5%
OLTRA	50,0%	44,1%	5,8%
PUNSET	17,1%	60%	22,8%
MONTIEL	8,3%	33,3%	58,3%

Table 13. Source: Own compilation

On the other hand, in the valuations for national leaders, the analysis clearly shows a considerable discontent with the traditional parties and their representatives, as none of them receive positive opinions in *Información*. The worst valued is Mariano Rajoy, and not far behind him is the leader of PSOE, Pedro Sánchez, with negative references about his visit to Alicante. In another sense, we find that the leader of IU, Alberto Garzón receives neither negative nor positive opinions, and is situated in neutral territory. Podemos, however, is a special case; although Pablo Iglesias appears in the opinion section of the Alicante newspaper, he arouses as much dislike as esteem in the columnists of *Información*. In this newspaper, the analysis shows that they are far from trusting the proposals by Podemos.

Finally, we should highlight the huge presence that Albert Rivera and Ciudadanos has had in this campaign, and in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Albert Rivera is the only candidate out of all the national leaders whose opinions are mostly favorable. There are a few unfavorable opinions in connection with his controversial declarations about the age for working in politics or comparing his party policies to Adolfo Suárez, Felipe González or José María Aznar, in pursuit of undefined party policies.

Table of valuation of national leaders:

<i>Información</i>	FAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	UNFAVORABLE
RAJOY (16)	0	3	13
SANCHEZ (7)	0	2	5
GARZON (3)	0	3	0
RIVERA (22)	6	8	8
IGLESIAS (14)	0	7	7
TOTAL	2	25	35

Table 14. Source: Own compilation

<i>Información</i>	FAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	UNFAVORABLE
RAJOY	0,0%	18,7%	81,2%
SANCHEZ	0,0%	28,5%	71,4%
GARZON	0,0%	10%	0,0%
RIVERA	27,2%	36,3%	36,3%
IGLESIAS	0,0%	50%	50%

Table 15. Source: Own compilation

During the campaign, *Información*'s front pages are mostly devoted to election surveys, and especially interviews with the Valencian regional leaders, as well as promoting the debate on their channel 'Información TV' with the candidates for mayor of Alicante. It is the PPCV who generally has more presence on the front page or in the headlines in Alicante, followed by PSPV, Ciudadanos, Podemos, EUPV and Compromís. The PPCV appears more because of the information related to the Rus case, such as the management of contracts in Benidorm, or measures by the Generalitat, such as the use of the financial rescue in Health, Social Care, Education and municipalities before 24M. The visibility of the PPCV is undoubtedly beneficial to them as governing party, but not but not so much for their reputation, as can be observed in the valuation of the leaders. The rest of the parties, however, mainly appear in news items related to the debate, but especially about the meetings held by Alberto Garzón, Mónica Oltra, Albert Rivera and Pablo Iglesias in Alicante, as well as the interviews given by each of the regional leaders.

News items appearing on the front page per party:

<i>Información</i>	PSPV	PPCV	EUPV	COMPROMIS	CIUDADANOS	PODEMOS
<b>TOTAL: 94</b>	16	33	9	9	15	12

Table 16. Source: Own compilation

PPCV	PSPV	EUPV	COMPROMIS	CIUDADANOS	PODEMOS
35,1%	17,0%	9,6%	9,6%	16,0%	12,8%

Table 17. Source: Own compilation

### 3.3. The case for *Mediterráneo* - Castellón (Zeta)

There is clearly an imbalance in the treatment of political forces by *Mediterráneo* of Castellón. The quantitative analysis of news published between the start of the campaign and 22<sup>nd</sup> May is conclusive. The PPCV and the PSPV are the parties that dominate the news in *Mediterráneo*, maintaining a two-party model in the distribution of attention it devotes to the campaign. With respect to the rest of the parties, Compromís and Podemos are the groups who receive more coverage, although considerably less than the first two.

Tables of party appearance per journalism genre:

<i>Mediterráneo</i>	NEWS	INTERVIEWS	REPORTS	CHRONICLES	PROFILES
PP (157)	127	2	15	11	2
PSPV (133)	101	1	12	11	2
EUPV (35)	20	1	8	5	1
COMPROMIS (44)	30	1	7	5	1
CIUDADANOS (22)	13	0	5	4	0
PODEMOS (34)	17	0	10	5	2
<b>TOTAL (338)</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>6</b>

Table 18. Source: Own compilation

<i>Mediterráneo</i>	NEWS	INTERVIEWS	REPORTS	CHRONICLES	PROFILES
PP	40,2%	22,2%	25,0%	19,1%	16,7%
PSPV	15,9%	22,2%	16,7%	14,9%	16,7%
EUPV	11,1%	11,1%	13,5%	19,1%	16,7%
COMPROMIS	12,2%	11,1%	14,6%	21,3%	33,3%
CIUDADANOS	11,6%	11,1%	16,7%	17,0%	0,0%
PODEMOS	9,0%	22,2%	13,5%	8,5%	16,7%

Table 19. Source: Own compilation

Despite a detailed qualitative analysis, it is important to highlight the controversial nature of the information related to Pablo Iglesias' party, particularly the internal disagreements within the group and/or the confrontation with other parties. In order of importance, EUPV appears slightly more than Albert Rivera's party. The two-party focus is also evident with respect to the total number of contents related to the leaders from each party. The PPCV candidate, Alberto Fabra, is the main subject of attention, followed closely by Ximo Puig of the PSPV. Then, in order of importance, the leader of Podemos, Antonio Montiel appears slightly more than Ignacio Blanco of EUPV. Mónica Oltra of Compromís is a significant case, as she does not have any relevant presence in this media during the campaign, and Carolina Punset has even less.

The qualitative analysis of the opinion articles published in *Mediterráneo* of Castellón during this election campaign should begin with a general valuation. The newspaper dedicates very few pieces exclusively to a determined leader. In this sense, the first inference that should be emphasized is the lack of opinion texts which analyze the specific candidates or their candidacy. The newspaper publishes different opinion articles, mainly by the director, where general aspects of political communication are analyzed, which are especially in the frame of the results from the last CIS in April, published just before the start of the campaign. In this context, the issues that are of concern in the analysis are the so-called emerging parties, Podemos and Ciudadanos, and the possible change in the government of the Generalitat. Likewise, in the articles up to 10<sup>th</sup> May they compare the case in the Valencian Community with Madrid and other autonomies where a political change could take place.

The language used is mainly descriptive. In all the articles concepts like majorities, number of seats, forecasts are reiterated. Nevertheless, this tone does not minimize the gradual introduction of less descriptive terms like the larger parties fear and nervousness of losing the elections, or the volatility inherent in the predictions. Contrary to the imbalance of the news coverage of the parties, as we have indicated in the quantitative analysis, for *Mediterráneo* these elections imply an end to the two party system in the Valencian Community. It is in relation to the impossibility of making predictions about how this will be determined that the most argumentative language appears.

The newspaper initially points to the cases of corruption as a destabilizing element for the results, as well as the difference with respect to voting intention in the regional and local context, where proximity to the candidate changes many votes. At the opposite end to the analysis about the rise of new parties, the newspaper highlights the stagnation and possible disappearance of EUPV, and the lack of results for UPyD, who could have capitalized on votes gained by Ciudadanos. All these extremes were confirmed to greater or lesser extent after voting. In the early days of the campaign, an article by Javier Abad stands out from the rest, although it is full of the same common place topics: the lack of clear majorities, the rise and stagnation of the previously mentioned parties, and the need for agreements after the elections. The journalist, however, points out the non-ideological strategy used by Ciudadanos as an attempt to grasp votes from the whole ideological spectrum. We do not find any defining references to the leaders of the different parties in any of the texts analyzed, beyond those about their parties, which do receive a valuation. The PSPV and PPCV seen as the description of tactician parties, in the light of their low expectations of reaching a majority. Surprisingly, Podemos and Ciudadanos are beneficiary parties, but not for their qualities nor the quality of their proposals to the discontented public, and EUPV and UPyD are victims of their mistaken strategy of the last few months.

Table of regional and national leaders' appearances out of the total number of opinion texts analyzed:

<i>Mediterráneo</i>	REGIONAL LEADER	NATIONAL LEADER	REGIONAL LEADER	NATIONAL LEADER
PP	62	15	31,3%	36,5%
PSPV	35	4	17,6%	9,7%
EUPV	23	3	11,6%	7,3%
COMPROMIS	30	0	15,1%	0,0%
CIUDADANOS	25	13	12,6%	31,7%
PODEMOS	23	6	11,6%	14,6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>41</b>		

Table 20. Source: Own compilation

As reflected in the quantitative analysis, the regional leaders have an unequal news coverage. This point should be considered again here, since the very few allusions in the opinion texts presents an almost identical imbalance.

Table of valuations of regional leaders:

<i>Mediterráneo</i>	FAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	UNFAVORABLE
FABRA (62)	6	27	29
PUIG (35)	5	14	16
BLANCO (23)	5	11	7
OLTRA (30)	6	15	9
PUNSET (25)	6	15	4
MONTIEL (23)	2	13	8

Table 21. Source: Own compilation

<i>Mediterráneo</i>	FAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	UNFAVORABLE
FABRA	9,6%	43,5%	46,7%
PUIG	14,2%	40% %	45,7%
BLANCO	21,7%	47,8%	30,4%
OLTRA	20%	50%	30%
PUNSET	24%	60%	16%
MONTIEL	8,6%	56,5%	34,7%

Illustration 22. Source: Own compilation

Table of valuations of national leaders:

<i>Mediterráneo</i>	FAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	UNFAVORABLE
RAJOY (15)	1	4	10
SANCHEZ (4)	0	2	2
GARZON (3)	0	2	1
RIVERA (13)	4	6	3
IGLESIAS (6)	1	2	3

Illustration 23. Source: Own compilation

<i>Mediterráneo</i>	FAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	UNFAVORABLE
RAJOY	6,6%	26,6%	66,6%
SANCHEZ	0,0%	50%	50%
GARZON	0,0%	66,6%	33,3%
RIVERA	30,7%	46,1%	23%
IGLESIAS	16,6%	33,3%	50%

Table 24. Fuente: Own copilation

The front page or homepage of the online edition of *Mediterráneo* of Castellón is organized into three main columns, the central one has a different width to the other two. In the column to the left of

the reader, the main news of the day is given, and to the right a mix of adverts, indexed news and other contents like the weather forecast. Throughout the campaign, the central column is occupied by between three and five main headlines, with information about the special section devoted to the elections. In the current affairs column, except for 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> May, the newspaper addresses current affairs unrelated to the elections. To be exact on 14<sup>th</sup> May, they included the controversy related to the republican flag being displayed by an EUPV municipal candidate on the façade of Castellón Town Hall, and on 21<sup>st</sup> May an item about a proposal by the mayor of Castellón from the PP. The newspaper does not treat these news items in the same way as the rest of the contents of the special section.

In general lines, the news items about the elections that are most visible on the front page are the first two topics of the special section. This space almost equally distributes news about the PPCV and PSPV. There are exceptions on 13<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> May when the PPCV shares the spotlight with Compromís; on 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> May, when it shares the spotlight with EUPV and on 21<sup>st</sup> with Ciudadanos. Podemos is not given the minimum attention in this sense, except in general news about the macroanalysis by CIS published on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> May. The presence of party leaders in this main space on the front page is relevant to the objective of this research. The PPCV candidate, Alberto Fabra, appears on four occasions, the candidates for EUPV, Compromís and Ciudadanos appear once each on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> May respectively. The leader of Podemos never appears, and curiously the PSPV leader, Ximo Puig, appears on eight occasions, primarily at the start of the campaign, doubling the appearance of the president of the Generalitat and the PPCV candidate.

Front page news items per party:

<i>Mediterráneo</i>	PSPV	PPCV	EUPV	COMPROMIS	CIUDADANOS	PODEMOS
<b>TOTAL: 86</b>	18	28	7	14	11	8

Table 25. Source: Own compilation

PPCV	PSPV	EUPV	COMPROMIS	CIUDADANOS	PODEMOS
32,5%	20,9%	8,1%	16,2%	12,7%	9,3%

Table 26. Source: Own compilation

The content analysis of the news about the regional party leaders shows Alberto as a proactive and favorable candidate in campaign, which is also the case for the PSPV candidate in comparison to the others. The analysis is not conclusive because of the lack of data about appearances in some cases, or by the lack of appearances in others. Although during the campaign the polls did not predict good results for PSPV, hampered by the perception of the party on a national level and also by the

conditions and keys to this election campaign, it is the party that most benefitted from front page visibility in *Mediterráneo* of Castellón. Also, if the same keys are considered, then the almost total absence of the two forces who have been decisive in the scenario of agreements that took place after the elections is incomprehensible. Finally, we consider it appropriate to make a last consideration regarding Compromís. The very high profile Mónica Oltra does not receive any attention from this newspaper which is in line with the trend of recent years as predecessor to Podemos or Ciudadanos

#### 4. Conclusions

The innovativeness of this research and of the political scenario studied meant it was not possible to draw too many conclusions a priori. Foreseeing how the local traditional media would cover the new parties was an unknown quantity, with local leaders in the process of becoming established, in contrast to the other completely consolidated leaders in this region. The media personalization of politics has been reflected in diverse ways in the target media analyzed in our research, which do support this hypothesis in the figure of Albert Rivera, but not in the case of Pablo Iglesias, and do so mostly in the case of the regional leadership of Monica Oltra. The 24M results in the Valencian Community show that traditional media like those analyzed do not quite connect with reality, since journalistically speaking as news media they are still anchored in the traditional two-party system. For better or worse, the ruling party and its regional leader, Alberto Fabra, are the main focus of the media, with the unfavorable news coverage of Podemos, and especially its regional leader, Antonio Montiel, which is of particular significance. In short, there is no real correlation between the results obtained by the parties and the media treatment they received during the election campaign for the 2105 Regional Elections in Valencia.

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