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Information treatment of young Spanish emigrants in television news programmes and videos produced by emigrants (2009-2015)

Mariona Visa Barbosa [[CV](#)] [ ORCID] [ GS] Professor at the Department of Catalan Philology and Communication. Universitat de Lleida (UdL) / University of Lleida. (Spain).
marionavisa@filcat.udl.cat

Joana Soto Merola [[CV](#)] [ ORCID] [ GS] Researcher at the Department of Catalan Philology and Communication. Universitat de Lleida (UdL) / University of Lleida. (Spain). joana.soto1@gmail.com

Clara Rubio Ros [[CV](#)] [ ORCID] [ GS] Researcher at the Department of Geography and Sociology. Universitat de Lleida (UdL) / University of Lleida. (Spain). clara.ruro@gmail.com

Abstract

Introduction. This article examines the representation of Spanish youth emigration to London offered by mainstream Spanish television programmes and by the emigrants themselves in social networks, based on the study of the construction of identities and framing theory. **Methods.** The study is based on the comparative content analysis of twelve television news items, a documentary and a webseries distributed in social networks, as well as on in-depth interviews with a group of young people who emigrated to London. **Results and conclusions.** The results indicate that youth emigration has not been a predominant theme in the agenda of mainstream television and that its information treatment has been characterised by de-contextualisation and simplification. The sample of documentaries and webseries that have been distributed on social networks by emigrants themselves offer a more accurate portrait of the reality of emigrants, and have become a meeting point for people seeking to share their experiences and a more detailed description of the process.

Keywords

Emigration; framing theory; identity; infotainment; youth

Contents

1. Introduction. 2. Methods. 3. Results. 4. Discussion and conclusions. 5. References.

Translation by **CA Martínez-Arcos**
(PhD in Communication from the University of London, United Kingdom)

1. Introduction

In recent years our society has witnessed multiple migration movements that have affected different territories and mobilised millions of people. In Spain, one of the consequences of the unemployment and precariousness provoked in turn by the economic crisis has been the emigration of young people abroad in search of job opportunities. According the Catalan Youth Observatory, in the second quarter of 2014 the rate of youth emancipation (16-29 years) stood at 24%, almost ten points below the all-time high of 2007.

This article analyses the representation of Spanish youth emigration to London in mainstream television news programmes from 2010 to 2015, and compares it, in narrative and symbolic terms, with the representations offered by the videos created by Spanish emigrants themselves and distributed on the YouTube and other social networks. The objective is to complement the academic discourse about the media representation of migration, because while immigration has been studied in recent years by Spanish researchers (Igartua, Cheng, Muñiz, 2005; Igartua, Otero, Muñiz, 2006; Guardiola, 2006; Ramos *et al.*, 2014), emigration and its representation has not received enough attention so far. Youth has always been an attractive group for the media and has also been the object of several studies (Feixa, 2000; Figueras and Mauri, 2010, Palazzo, 2014; Saintaut, 2014), which have concluded that its treatment is stigmatised and downplayed in news contents.

Based on the concept of identity, we see how this has changed a lot as a result of globalisation. Manuel Castells (2006) defines it as the construction of the individual and collective signification through the use of cultural attributes, ruling out that identity is a natural product, a result of individual introspection or the essence of a particular community. While in modernity the individual turned to solid pillars such as family, work, nationalism and religion to build his or her identity, with globalisation and the loss of territorial membership identity has become more fragile and unstable (Martínez Sahuquillo, 2006: 721). According to Appadurai (2001), the two pillars that enable the in-depth analysis of this change are the media, which have become accessible to all, and the migratory movements. This hybridisation gives rise to mobile representations that are consumed by de-territorialised spectators who can begin to feel and imagine themselves as groups through pieces of information that are no longer tied to a particular spatial context. Therefore, in contrast to the previous phase, identity is no longer ascribed, closed and territorialised, and has become progressively more open, has adopted an acquired character and is increasingly individualised, reflective and differential (Martínez Sahuquillo, 2006: 816).

Therefore, the media, as tools to describe social reality, play a very relevant role in the characterisation of all migration movements and their symbolic construction. As journalist Jean-Paul Marthoz (2011) points out, the informational diversion -or simple misinformation- can have serious consequences for the

people involved. Thus, the news on migration in the 21st century should take into account all of its complexity and variety of causes and avoid reductionism, stereotypes and generalisation.

In addition, the revolution of information and communication technologies at the end of the 20th century has configured the current hyper-connected world in which access to information and contact with the rest of the members of society is quickly and easily available to everyone. Thanks to the digitisation and the emergence of online platforms and networks of socialisation like Blogger, Myspace, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, many users are able to create their own online space to explain and share their experiences. The current society is defined as “mass self-communication” by Manuel Castells (2006), while Dolors Reig (2012) defines it as collaborative since these networks facilitate the participation of citizens in areas where decisions were hitherto almost exclusive made by institutions. In the Internet, citizen participation in the social, political, cultural and media fields increases, enabling the strengthening of the public sphere (García Avilés: 2015: 101).

The analysis of the informative pieces is based on the agenda-setting theory (McCombs and Shaw, 1972), which highlights that the perception of social affairs is largely conditioned by media representations. According to this theory, those issues which are given more visibility in the media are seen as more important by the audience. Similarly, the theory of framing (Bateson, 1972) considers that the media are capable not only of giving more or less visibility to certain topics, but also of providing conceptual frameworks to interpret those issues.

2. Methods

The hypotheses that guide this work are the following:

- 1) During the period under study (2010-2015), the news about Spanish youth emigration to London were scarce on mainstream television.
- 2) Mainstream television news about Spanish youth emigration to London offer a low level of plurality, simplified and de-contextualised information of the reality faced by the young Spaniards who recently emigrated to London.
- 3) The works produced by emigrants and distributed on social networks configure a more realistic imaginary and provide more detailed and useful information about youth emigration to London.

The main methodological strategy used to test these hypotheses is content analysis, since it is useful to describe objectively, systematically and quantitatively the manifest content of the information pieces (Berelson, 1952: 18). This technique has been used extensively in previous media studies and particularly in studies on the treatment of youth (Figueras and Mauri, 2006) and in analysis of the representations of immigration (Igartua, Cheng, Muñiz, 2005; Igartua, Otero, Muñiz, 2006).

The analysis of the content of the audiovisual pieces is both quantitative and qualitative, to be able to explore the stories and extract the latent and manifest content. An Excel spreadsheet was used to record data concerning the technical elements (duration, format, channel, year, day, labels, music), the narrative elements (textual mode, presence of experts, interviews with natives, interviews with young emigrants, main theme, narrative strategy) and the elements relating to emigration and its symbolic imaginaries (definitions of migration, number of cases analysed, reasons for the emigration, time of emigration, allusions to the crisis, age of emigrants, original profession, previous work in London, current work, intention to come back, the evaluation of the experience). This analytical structure is based on the proposals of previous studies on news reporting (Jara, Roel: 2014; Igartua, Muñiz, 2005) based on structural and narrative criteria, to identify proposed framing. This analysis will be the basis to detail the symbolic imaginaries derived from the representations youth emigration, describing and comparing the endogenous and exogenous representations of the phenomenon.

This main method was complemented with in-depth interviews with 18-35-year-old Spaniards who emigrated to London after 2008, the start of the crisis. They were asked whether they had seen audiovisual news contents on the situation in London or on Spanish emigration to London before they started their journey, their opinion on the media representation of Spanish youth emigration, whether they consider the media offer a realistic image and whether they feel identified with that image.

The selection of the information pieces started with the search for news about Spanish emigration to England in the search engines of news websites of the TV channels we considered appropriate for this work: the public television channels TVE and TV3, and the private channel T5.

The search for news items on youth emigration to London in the newscasts or news programmes during 2010 and 2015 in the three aforementioned TV channels produced a total of 12 items: 7 news and 5 feature stories: *Comando actualidad. Life ahead: cleaning kitchens in London; dentists in Lincoln* (TVE. 03-11-2010); *Young Spaniards emigrate again to find jobs* (TVE. 03/02/2012); *Comando actualidad. Emigrating for work* (TVE. 3/9/2012); *London helps young Spaniards to find jobs* (TV3. 04/02/2013); *Opportunities are pouring in London* (T5 2/06/2013); *Spanish artists seek to fulfil their dream in London* (T5. 08/01/2013); *Els matins. Going abroad to find a better future?* (TV3. 17/11/2014); *A foreign construction worker in London can earn up to 1200 euros a week* (TVE. 10/12/2014); *More than 40,000 Spaniards emigrate to London each year in search of employment* (T5. 13/12/2014); *Added value: Young people who do not leave* (TV3. 4-2-2015); *It will not be easy. Leaving home* (TV3. 3-03-2015); and *Spanish women who succeed in London by teaching* (T5. 20/06/2015).

Some feature stories were not taken into consideration for this analysis, like *Callejeros viajeros: Londres* (“Traveling wanderers: London, Cuatro, 2010) and *Espanoles en el mundo: Londres* (“Spaniards in the world: London”, TVE, 2010), due to their scant references to youth emigration, although they are referred in the analysis as examples. The analysis neither took into account the news or interviews with experts that were broadcast in the second channel of the public television networks.

Table 1: List of informative pieces

Name of the piece	Channel	Format	Duration	Year
<i>Comando actualidad. Life ahead: cleaning kitchens in London; dentists in Lincoln</i>	TVE	Feature story	60'	2010
<i>Young Spaniards emigrate again to find jobs</i>	TVE	News	3' 26"	2012
<i>Comando actualidad. Emigrating for work</i>	TVE	Feature story	60'	2012
<i>London helps young Spaniards to find jobs</i>	TV3	News	2' 18"	2013
<i>Opportunities are pouring in London</i>	TeleCinco	News	1' 16"	2013
<i>Spanish artists seek to fulfil their dream in London</i>	TeleCinco	News	1' 15"	2013
<i>Els matins. Going abroad to find a better future?</i>	TV3	Feature story	2' 52"	2014
<i>A foreign construction worker in London can earn up to 1200 euros a week</i>	TVE	News	1' 15"	2014
<i>More than 40,000 Spaniards emigrate to London each year in search of employment</i>	TeleCinco	News	2' 40"	2014
<i>Added value: Young people who do not leave</i>	TVE	Feature story	14' 14"	2015
<i>It will not be easy. Leaving home</i>	TVE	Feature story	40'	2015
<i>Spanish women who succeed in London by teaching</i>	TeleCinco	News	1' 23"	2015

Source: Authors' own creation

With regards to the works produced and distributed on social networks by emigrants themselves, we selected the documentary *One Way ticket to London*, created by Borja Calvín and Cláudia Navarro, in 2014, and the webseries *Spaniards in London*, created by Javier Moreno Caballero, also in 2014. The documentary has 16,000 views and the webseries an average of 60,000 views per episode. The analysis did not take into account the videos posted in YouTube about the work and life of emigrants in London, like the ones created by Carman Cobain, Search McCastro and YOLWorld, since the content of these videos was more specific, and in most cases the number of views achieved in YouTube was much smaller than the selected works.

3. Results

3.1. Results of the analysis of the television news pieces

All the selected informative pieces refer to youth emigration to London, and were taken from the following networks: 4 from Telecinco, 4 from Televisión Española and 4 from the Catalan regional television TV3.

The technical elements provide us with much information about the type of coverage given to this issue. The short duration of the news pieces (1' 15" the shortest and 3' 26" the longest) suggests that daily newscasts are not the most appropriate space to delve into a subject like the emigration of young people to London, which is always treated as secondary. None of the analysed pieces was the main story of the news programmes. As Guardiola (2006) points out, the approximate 30 minutes of duration of the news programmes do not allow for a thoughtful treatment and a clear understanding of the news.

With regards to the visual, graphic and sound codes, there are differences between the news of the private channel Telecinco and those of the public television channels. In the case of Telecinco, two of the four news have musical accompaniment, which gives a more dynamic rhythm to the piece, while in the rest of the news the only sound included is environmental. The information displayed on the screen describe the person talking on camera or briefly explain the news story in 8 of the 12 pieces. The case of TV3 is outstanding, as its news pieces display much more information on the education and origin of the people taking on screen, as in the case of *Els matins de Tv3* (2014), which includes an interview to Benjamín Sierra, author of the book "*Amplly prepared to clean toilets in London*", which displays the following message: *Marxen a Londres sobradament preparats però acaben fent feines poc qualificades* ["They go to London more than qualified but end up doing low-skilled jobs]. Thus, public channels stand out for their regular use of overlaying information (with the exception of one case of TVE) and the non-use of music with expressive purposes.

The analysis of the narrative elements shows that the news focus on explaining the emigration based on individual cases (in 11 of 12 of the news). The textual form of the narrative is descriptive in seven cases, which show the personal experiences of the interviewees, and argumentative in the remaining five cases, with interviews with experts who contribute to the contextualisation of the news story (for examples, the Spanish government delegate in the United Kingdom, the Director General of Research, university professors and entrepreneurs). In this case, public television channels offer more arguments in comparison to Telecinco, whose news do not provide a context or an external reflection on the subject addressed.

With regards to data on migration, the number of personal cases exposed in these 12 informative pieces is 43, of which 33 indicate their education level. Of these 43, only 14 develop qualified works abroad in their sector. In Telecinco, the success rate is the highest since more than half of its 11 examples are currently working on what they wanted, mainly in the arts and services sectors.

The reasons for the emigration are not addressed in the informative pieces of the private channel while the rest generally point out unemployment as the cause, without going into nuances or analysing the Spanish economic context. Only on two occasions two interviewees acknowledge the reason they leaved to London was their adventurous spirit: "*we came for the summer as part of an adventure*" (*Comando actualidad*, TVE, 2010) and "*sóc una mica rodamóns*" [*I'm a little wanderer*] (*Els matins de TV3*, 2014). This reason for emigrating was put forward in November 2012 by the Secretary-General of Immigration and Emigration, Marina del Corral, when she declared that the emigration of young Spaniards abroad was not only due to the economic crisis but also due to other factors like the adventurous spirit of young people.

Despite the association between emigration and "the adventurous impulse of youth" is not abundant in the sample of informative pieces, this association has permeated the public opinion and appears in the

in-depth interviews with young people who emigrated to London. At least two of them commented that part of the reason to leave was the desire to live an adventure, but that this would not be necessary if they were living well off in their country and that there is always a need behind.

The time represented is the stay in England, with the exception of three cases in which the persons have returned and two other cases in which two young women are about to leave.

The attributes associated to emigration are positive in 7 of the 12 cases with descriptions such as “it is a opportunity”, “the British love us”, “If you’re good in a few months you begin to rise” (Opportunities are pouring in London, T5, 2013); “si no hagués vingut m’hagués perdut tot això” (Els matins de TV3. Going abroad to find a better future?, TV3, 2014); and “the boom of the construction sector in the British capital indicates there will be a growth of employment in the sector for 2015” (A foreign construction worker in London can earn up to 1200 euros a week, TVE, 2014). The rest of the news show both positive and negative things about emigration, reflecting the plurality of experiences lived by young people: “You are new there and they think they have the right to mistreat you”, “it is not a comfortable situation at all” (Young Spaniards emigrate again to find jobs, TVE, 2012) and “Life here is not easy. It is not like you are told” (More than 40,000 Spaniards emigrate to London each year in search of employment, T5, 2014).

TVE’s *Comando actualidad* devoted two programmes to emigration to London during the period under study (*Life ahead: cleaning kitchens in London; dentists in Lincoln*, 2010, and *I have a future: emigrating for work*, 2012), which shows the two sides of youth emigration to England. In the first feature story of the first programme none of the interviewees works in the area they study for. “*I live hand to mouth here*”, says a pilot who has been for 20 days in London. “*I have the worst job I’ve ever had in my life*”, says a technical architect who works in a restaurant. On the other hand, the second story shows people working as dentists, earning 6,000 euros a month. “*I’m doing phenomenal here*”, says a young woman who recently emigrated to find an opportunity to work in England. The feature story suggests that if you speak English and leave with a job offer everything is easier. This discourse is repeated in an episode of *Comando actualidad* of 2012, which shows a girl who is about to go to work in London with a permanent contract in the health sector.

TVE (*Comando actualidad*, 2010 and 2012), La Sexta (with an episode of *Salvados* devoted to emigration to Germany in 2012) and TV3 with *It will not be easy* (2015), focused on emigration to Scotland and Germany, are the only channels that have devoted a special programme to the issue in primetime. The other channels have produced serialised programmes about how Spaniards live in other cities, but none of them has addressed the working conditions of young newcomers. These include: *Spanish in the world: London* (2010) and *Traveling wanderers: London* (2010), which do not make any reference to the crisis or unemployment and mostly present testimonies of emigrants who have fulfilled their dream in England. As Carmen Domínguez, director of the *Callejeros*, points out: “*Based on audience ratings, the (characters) who work best are the friendly ones, followed by the fighters. I think we like them because tell us weird things and convey positive values. They have chased their dreams and fulfil them*” (García Avilés, en *Bienvenido León*, 33: 2013). *Traveling wanderers: London* present people who say London is a “*place where anything is possible*”. It does not show the current situation of young people who have recently emigrated and only in one case one of the female emigrants, who works as

city guide for reporters, says that “*What we earn is not enough*” to attend museums, which in spite of being free involve expensive traveling costs in public transport.

The imaginary created by this type of feature stories also appears in the responses given by the young emigrants in the depth interviews, where they recognise that these programmes only show the best part of the city and only interviews people who emigrated many years ago, which does not make them represented.

3.2. Results of the analysis of the documentary and the webseries produced by emigrants

The audiovisual pieces studied in this section are the 30-minute-long documentary titled *One way ticket to London*, which explains the experience of ten young people who emigrated to London to find the work that is so scant in Spain; and *Spaniards in London*, a webseries composed of four 10-minute-long episodes, in which the authors use comedy to explore the problems of emigration.

Therefore, with regards to the technical elements, the outstanding finding are the diversity of formats used by young emigrants in their representation, as well as the platform used by emigrants to distribute their self-produced videos: YouTube.

The analysis of the narrative elements suggests that, despite the formal variability, the two audiovisual productions share the same story: the emigration of young people is seen as a form of forced exile, which is a consequence of the Spanish economic crisis and the poor actions of political representatives. In *One way ticket to London*, in the first few minutes we can hear the phrases: “We are all aware of the difficult economic climate that exists in Europe and we have heard how difficult that is to get a job if you have less than 25 years of age (...) In Spain, more than half of young people do not a job and the situation is so bad that many of them are packing their bags and coming to seek employment here, to Great Britain.”

Spaniards in London is based on the real events experienced by the own filmmakers or their emigrant friends, narrated with humour but including social criticism. Through satire, this webseries show the loneliness, the efforts, the difficulties of job hunting, the learning of the language and the characteristics of the leisure and romantic relationships of emigrants.

With regards to the cases represented, *One way ticket to London* presents 10 cases of emigrants. Practically all of them perform low-skilled jobs, although there is a minority of cases of success. The causes of the emigration are identified with the economic crisis. A woman says that she “decided to come to London because in Spain things are really bad”, while a young man decided to emigrate after not finding work for months. The series also portrays the experience of two adult persons who moved to London years ago and managed to settle down and get a decent job.

However, in total, the positive stories are scarce and are not strictly linked to cases of success in job-searching but to love (“does not matter if it goes well or bad, you get something positive”, *Spaniards in London*), to the learning of the second language, to an increase in self-esteem or to the transition to adulthood. The negative stories remain to be related to the work that young emigrants can find.

Thus, the attributes associated to emigration in these two works configure a common imaginary: the need to learn better English, communication through social networks and the need to establish contacts in order to find work.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The analysis has shown that the emigration of young people, in particular, to England has not been a dominant theme in the news agenda in recent years, nor in public or private networks. Between 2010 and 2015 only seven news stories were found in the three channels under analysis (Telecinco, TVE and TV3) and five stories fully devoted to the theme. Therefore, the first hypothesis is proven.

The frame analysis of these pieces has shown that the conceptual framework applied to emigration in the news is optimistic in more than half of cases and is neutral in the rest. An outstanding case is the private broadcaster Telecinco, which shows the highest level of optimism about the future employment of young people. Likewise, the news of this network contains the characteristics of the so-called infotainment genre, since they have the double objective of informing and entertaining. Experts define infotainment as a hybrid genre for which the who is more important than the what (Monclús, Vicente Bienvenido León, 2009). Thus, human interest and micro approaches lead the de-contextualisation of the events that are being explained. *Callejeros* (Cuatro, 2005-2014) was one of the first news programmes to give priority to dynamic editing, shocking statements and anecdotes above contextualisation and rigor, and later influenced many other programmes such as *Comando actualidad* (TVE, 2008-). In the analysed pieces we have seen that the presence of music, the reduced use of on-screen information and purely-descriptive narratives, and the lack of expert opinions is characteristic of the news offered by the private channel. Therefore, as Gerad Imbert points out, the informative discourse ends up being a polyphonic narrative, which no one is responsible for, with a tone designed to be palatable to everyone (Imbert, 2003:40). The follow up of more than two cases in informative pieces of under one-minute duration indicates that the story aims to show a particular and concrete reality without contributing to any mediation to explain it. While in 2007 García Avilés described infotainment as the boom in mainstream news programmes of news about popular culture (movies, music, video games...), curiosities, human interest, and celebrity gossip; today we see that the no distinction between journalism and entertainment is also present in the treatment of economic and social issues, both in the news pieces and the documentary.

Therefore, on the one hand, the study confirms Ramonet's consideration that journalism had been historically a triangular organisation resulting from the relationship between the event, the mediator (that analysed it) and the citizen; and that now the triangle has become an axis with the citizen and the event at its extremes (Ramonet, 2002: 51-52). This analysis has confirmed that some of the feature stories presented by public television channels, fortunately, represent the optimistic side of the sample since they have been the only ones to systematically turn to experts to contextualise the news about emigration. Anyways, the second hypothesis is corroborated.

The study also confirmed the third hypothesis, which pointed out that the works produced by emigrants themselves configure a more realistic imaginary and provide more detailed and useful information about

youth emigration to London. The presence and the high number of views of the works produced by emigrants show that they have not reacted passively to the external representation of the situation, but have brought their own perspective, with some of them becoming prosumers (Toffler, 1980), creating content to comment critically on what happens in the media platforms. As García Avilés notes, citizens are using social networks as a tool for exercising their power, to express their opinions quickly, and to influence society (García Avilés, 2015: 169).

In conclusion, we believe that, as the 2009 ACC report pointed out about the presence of immigration the news, while the non-stereotyped representation of immigrants is still non-existent, an accurate and complete portrait of emigration is still a pending issue in Spain. Although there are new channels through which the protagonists of the information can express themselves, we believe that matters of general interest as the one analysed here deserve a more rigorous treatment, less tied to entertainment, in a traditional and powerful medium such as television.

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