

Women and the press: why so few women read newspapers

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Abstract

This study employs a two pronged approach in its attempt to discover newspaper attitudes to gender by addressing both the reading public and the internal policies of newspaper publications. To this end the study analyses how gender issues are addressed, their focus on women, and the type of assignments and rank accorded to women journalists. There have been significant political and social developments regarding gender issues in recent years, including measures to ensure parity and to combat domestic violence, along with a spectacular growth in the number of female university students and women entering professions that were previously regarded as a male preserve. At the same time, newspapers have been suffering financially and struggling to maintain their readership and this has led them to concentrate on the female sector of the market. As a result, a study of local newspapers was carried out to discover how much newspaper content was dedicated to gender issues; how often women feature as the main focus of news in articles and photographs; and how often women are used as a source of information; together with the number of newspaper articles written by women in different sections of the paper, while taking into account the fact that female readership varied considerably according to the different newspapers analysed.

Keywords: Women, readership rates, gender issues, news sources, authorship

Aproximación a los porqués del bajo nivel lectura de prensa de las mujeres

Resumen

Este estudio se plantea dos frentes para intentar descubrir la relación existente entre los índices de lectura femeninos y las políticas internas profesionales en la prensa. Con este fin se analiza los periódicos cómo abordan los temas de género, cómo enfocan a las mujeres, que presencia tienen las profesionales en el medio, tanto en las áreas periodísticas como en las de gestión y dirección. En los últimos años se han producido importantes cambios en las cuestiones de género que van desde la atención a la violencia contra la mujer, o el espectacular crecimiento del número de universitarias, hasta la incursión femenina en áreas profesionales antes reservadas a los hombres. Al mismo tiempo los periódicos estudian combatir la pérdida de lectores concentrándose en las posibilidades que ofrece el mercado femenino. Así pues, el estudio realizado en prensa local está orientado a descubrir cuánto contenido dedican a temas de género; con qué frecuencia son mujeres las protagonistas en las noticias, en textos y fotos, con qué frecuencia se usa a mujeres como fuentes de información, al mismo tiempo que se contabilizan las firmas de mujeres periodistas en las diferentes secciones del periódico y la proporción de mujeres directivas. Todo ello teniendo en cuenta que hay importantes diferencias en los índices de lectoras entre los distintos periódicos analizados.

Palabras clave: mujer, tasas de lectura, estudios de género, fuentes de información

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Contents: 1. Introduction. Literature Review. 2. Hypotheses. 3. Method. 4. Results; 4.1. Women as content; 4.2. Women as news sources; 4.3. Women as editors; 4.4. Set of variables. 5. Set of variables. 6. Conclusion. 7. References.

1. Introduction. Literature Review

Until the 1990s, academic literature concerning women and the communications media barely existed, however, the subject has since become extremely relevant and the available literature now covers a wide ranging, yet interrelated spectrum including:

- Sociological aspects: where women's invisibility is considered to be a major issue.
- The political perspective, as democracy remains imperfect when half of the population is effectively excluded from public life.
- Business: there are two aspects to address here: a) internal, where women journalists, despite their numbers, fail to attain management posts; and b) external, female readership rates are much lower than those for men.
- Professional journalism: assignments given to female journalists tend to be less important and distributed according to traditional gender roles. Men deal with public affairs while women are allocated tasks in the private and personal sphere, issues which are generally considered to be less significant and less relevant.

Studies have tended to view media agencies in a very negative light in their role as creators of social reality. How such agencies portray that reality, their choices, and what they leave out points to an ideology designed to consolidate their power (Zoch and VanSlyke, 1998). From a gender perspective, female representation as it stands, tends to be scant, limited and fails to reflect women's real place in society. Women's relationship with the media, shows a considerable lack of interest as newspaper readership rates (the information medium par excellence) for women are far lower than those for men. This is an issue that media businesses are endeavouring to counteract (Harp, 2007); (AEDE, 2010).

Would an analysis of media content help to determine why women appear to be so uninterested in the press? Taking a socially and economically homogeneous region as a reference, it was found that various local newspapers had different readership rates for men and women.

Could those differences be linked to the greater or lesser attention paid to women as news subjects? Women's invisibility in terms of newsworthiness, albeit as the focus or source of the news, has been addressed in a number of academic studies and has also

been criticised by public bodies ¹. The most comprehensive study on the (in)visibility of women in the media worldwide, *Global Media Monitoring Project: Women's Participation in the News*, covering 71 countries and led by M. Gallagher (1995/2005/2010), has been carried out every five years since 1995 and has produced extremely revealing results, such as the fact that for every woman cited in the news, there are three men mentioned, and this is despite the fact that this disparity has slightly altered over the last ten years. The trend has shifted from a proportion of 17% of women mentioned in 1995 to 21% in 2005, and 24% in 2010. These figures coincide with those of Spanish research carried out in 2005 and 2007 on digital media. It would be difficult to conclude anything other than the fact that this invisibility of women is a deliberate strategy to silence them, as Craft maintains, and particularly when that absence is more marked in issues of major importance (national and international matters, or the economy), as Zoch and VanStyke Turk (1998) discovered.

In its Report 9394, "Image of Women in the Media", the European Commission (2002) condemns the fact that despite some progress, the image of women in the media remains negative and sexist, and that women and their specific problems are largely ignored. The report recommends that European governments adopt laws to promote gender equality in the media.

Editorial boards are the product of masculine values and ways of thinking ². For decades journalism was an exclusively male preserve. However, in recent years the number of female journalists has increased and women now account for at least 37% to 40% of the total workforce in journalism ³. Have they managed to reverse the old standards and values to become "just another colleague" in editorial departments? One approach, as put forward by Walsh (2006), considers that: "*one of the effects of women entering areas traditionally dominated by men has been to underline the chauvinist nature of the beliefs, norms, values and practices which in these areas of the profession are falsely shown from the gender perspective as neutral professional norms*". Academic literature is abundant and unanimous on this point, (Van Zoonen (1994 and 1998); Meling- Higgins (2004); Meehan and Riordan (2002), De Bruin and Ross (2004), Mahtani (2005), not to mention the earlier work of Tuchman (1973), and it is equally explicit in its conclusion that journalism is a masculine construct with a predominant culture defined by masculine values. These values "socialise" journalists from the moment they begin their training and are repeated and emphasised in the

¹ UNESCO was the first, in their World Communication Report- Paris, UNESCO 1989- to draw attention to the under representation of women in the media.

² Although this position has been developed in a number of academic works, Lisbeth Van Zoonen, since "Feminist Perspectives on the media" (1991) in J. Curran and M. Gurevitch, *Media and Society* 33-54, M. Djerf-Pierre (2001,) and M. Melin-Higgins have been the most frequently referred to in the focus on the existence and perdurability of masculine values in newsrooms.

³ This is the proportion both in the study of M Gallagher (2005) on global monitoring, and that of Rush, Oukrop and Sakiris (2005) in the U.S.A. or the Annual Report of the Newspaper Profession in Spain (2010).

structure and internal organisation of newsrooms, and as a result, the idiosyncrasies of traditional journalism also affect and influence women.

The question is not merely one of the quantitative exclusion of women in the media, but it also concerns the qualitative aspect, that is, the type of women mentioned. Are they involved in high-status activities and professions? Or are they “people” who are more or less attractive and famous, or are they simply victims? Gender discrimination is thus extremely evident: the media do not count on women as a reference for news, either in number or quality, as they do with men.

Karen Ross considers this to be a decisive issue in that the choice of sources according to gender and status “*will result in maintaining the status quo and the vision that the media give to the world*”. It is worth noting that where women are prominent as a source is in their role as “Mrs Average”, the typical citizen, with no specific qualification or attribute that would place her as a counterpart alongside qualified masculine sources. Gallagher ⁴ draws attention to the clear discrimination suffered by women in terms of status as political, professional or expert sources in any field and how they are not called upon or accorded attention in the media at a level commensurate with their role and position in society. The absence of women as such sources reflects the “*powerlessness, their symbolic annihilation*”, as Zoch and VanSlyke (1998) state. The use of women as sources, compared to men, is one of the chief aspects for determining the image of women created by the media, more so than their presence as such. There is a considerable volume of academic literature devoted to this issue⁵: Ross (2007) and Armstrong (2004 and 2005). As Gans states, journalists choose their sources precisely for their suitability, credibility and relevance. To this end, they turn to the political, professional, economic and scientific elites for their information. Since women do not feature prominently in these elites, it is concluded that they have neither the legitimacy nor the power to occupy such positions. Armstrong (2004) has expressed it as follows: if readers continue to see the same type of people featured as sources in the news on grounds of their “official” capacity, they may well come to associate only a certain type of person with the role of authority. It will be difficult for women, as recipients of the news to identify themselves with the image of the world as presented by the media.

In recent decades the proportion of women in newsrooms has substantially increased, and there has been sufficient time for them to specialise in particular fields. However,

⁴ M. Gallagher, *ibidem*: Discrimination in representing women in the media is shown, for example, when men are identified by their name and job and women are not. When, in spite of the number of women politicians, doctors, business people or government employees, women hardly ever appear as sources and men are 83% of the experts and 86% of the official spokespersons, according to the data of Monitoring 2005.

⁵ As Armstrong and Nelson say: If the readers continually see the same kind of people serving as sources in the news due to their “official” capacity, they can be led to associate only a certain type of person with the role of authority. In their study, Freedman, Fico and Love found that there were fourteen times more male experts than female experts among the experts mentioned in the news and three times more among the non-experts.

are women given “hard” news assignments on a par with their male colleagues or are they more likely to be assigned human interest subjects and “soft” news?⁶ Moreover, are 37%-40% (percentages which correspond to the number of women working in newsrooms) of articles actually signed by female journalists?

As Stephanie Craft reminds us, “it is evident that there is a routine in the assigning of subjects to men and women in the newsroom: women cover news related to women (the famous 4 “f”s: *family, food, fashion and furnishing*). Apart from the other conclusions of her study on the influence of male or female editors on the choice of the agenda, male reporters continue to be responsible for political and more prestigious issues, whereas female journalists are typically assigned to education, fashion, and the home. Craft does, however, point out that women are increasingly gaining access to other sections, such as the economy.

There is no real reason why some subjects should be considered a male or female preserve. However, some studies argue that “news is news and the journalist’s gender does not influence the selection criteria Lavie and Lehman-Wilzig (2003)⁷, while others, such as Ross (2007), and Rodgers and Thorson (2003)⁸ clearly show that at least when the problems concern women, then the approaches may be tackled in very different ways. For example, the study carried out by Altés, Gallego, Bach et al.(2000) on the follow up of information on the Beijing Conference in 1995, showed that unquestionably, the approaches varied according to whether the reports were written by men or women. Neveu (2000) endorses that criterion: feminisation leads to a greater understanding of reality, greater empathy, reflection and contextualization. Altés, Gallego, Bach et al. (2000) extend this notion, and their study found that men tend to highlight conflicts and disputes in their news items whereas women focused on harmony and interrelation. Craft’s study specifically stresses the fact that not all issues show gender-based differentiation and she gives an example of how there may be a difference when writing about childcare, but not in an editorial. However, she also cautions that women journalists tend to be concerned with positive news, or at least they stress its most positive aspects.

⁶ The classification of “hard” or “soft” news refers to the journalistic categories defined by American journalism decades ago. Already in 1940, Hellen MacGill Hughes established the concept in *News and Human Interest Story* which is commonplace in journalistic manuals and which Gaye Tuchman (1978) in *La producción de la noticia* simplified as news about important questions compared to news about interesting questions.

⁷ Aliza Lavie and Sam Lehman -Wilzig, in their biographical review of studies carried out in the 1990s, they show that no notable changes took place in media content despite the enormous numbers of women entering the profession of journalism and working in newsrooms, and the results of an empirical study carried out on the Israeli media clearly showed that the criteria of selecting subjects had not changed irrespective of whether the editors in charge of doing this were male or female.

⁸ Rodgers, and E. Thorson (2003) state that women Lavie Aliza and Lehman -Wilzig, Sam (2003) differ from men in style and tone, that they have a wider vision and also turn to gender, social status and even ethnic sources that are more diverse “A Socialization Perspective on Male and Female Reporting” *Journal of Communication* 53(4): 658-75.

To sum up, could the way in which the media portrays women in society and the professionals involved in providing the news be the reason why women are so disaffected, believing that newspapers do not meet their interests and needs? The fact that there are now so many women in universities and in the workplace at all levels, although they continue to be discriminated against in terms of attaining managerial posts, has nevertheless failed to eradicate their lack of interest in the press in general, from local newspapers to the standard ones of major circulation. In the case of the *New York Times*, only a third of its readers are women. Based on the premise that the media carry out demographical studies of their readership, Armstrong ⁹, raises the question of how little female readership is taken into account, and, in fact, following her extensive study, she expresses doubts as to whether any feminine content whatsoever actually exists.

Commercial attempts at gaining more women readers have not considered changing the model, and instead of viewing the issue from the perspective of reflecting the social reality that half the population is female, with their concomitant specific characteristics of sensitivity and their particular problems, they have been more inclined, as Richard Cook (2000) reports, to focus on advertising designed to satisfy more trivial preferences and interests, supplying special pages or supplements “for women”. However, as Dustin Harp (2007) and AEDE ¹⁰ maintains, the role of the media is unique and its mission is to inform for democracy and, therefore, editors should endeavour to integrate their interests with those of all citizens in all sections of the newspaper. The inclusion of “women”, “fashion” or “lifestyle” pages makes no effort to cater for a more informed female readership, but instead merely targets the female market with specific advertising. Women, whether they be readers or journalists, are thus subjected to a form of “ghettorisation”.

One of the main functions of the media is its capacity for social change. If there has been one significant social transformation in recent decades, it has been the feminist revolution. However, the media cannot take credit for this change. The press takes precedence historically in the mass media and it has been a product designed by men for men, a fact which may have had more meaning in the past when male dominance in public life was unquestionable. However, with the female *revolution* women have gained civil status comparable to that of men in terms of rights, education, and in professional, employment and social situations, and yet in no way has this change even begun to be reflected in the media. Similarly media content has failed to represent the fact that society is 50/50 male and female, and nor has gender equality been applied

⁹ Cory L. Armstrong, (2009) from her study she deduces that there is a great diversity of opinions among journalists, irrespective of their management status, concerning what constitutes content for women. Many entrepreneurs are stressed by the importance of women in the readership target, but, at the same time, they have still failed to resolve the question of a genre category for women.

¹⁰ Another example is the Asociación Española de Editores de Prensa (AEDE) - Spanish Association of Press Editors: in their annual report of 2010, they recommended newspapers to step up their efforts to increase the female readership via publishing supplements dedicated to women and they proposed to carry out studies to apply market strategies with this in mind.

to their organisations: professional women journalists neither write nor hold managerial posts on a par with men. Newspapers continue to be designed with men in mind, or at any rate, they have failed to interest female readership.

As a result, it was considered apposite to study the content of a specific group of newspapers from a gender perspective, examining the workforce, staff, authors of articles and the subjects they addressed, in an effort to compile data that would explain the differences in the female readership rates of these newspapers.

2. Hypotheses

-H1. Women are not considered to be subjects of preferential news for the printed media.

Many researchers have underlined the “symbolic annihilation” of women (over 50% of the world’s population) in the media. Their representation is scant and limited and fails to reflect their place in society. This phenomenon is approached from various perspectives:

H.1.1. The number of texts concerned with women’s issues in news agendas is insignificant with respect to the total number of texts published.

H.1.2. Articles concerned with gender issues mainly appear in the so-called “soft” sections, which demeans the presence of women in numerous professional sectors and renders them invisible.

-H.2. Women are not considered to be a relevant qualified news source according to professional journalists.

A considerable body of research has confirmed that the media do not count on women as a reference in news items or articles, either in terms of quantity or in quality. They tend to be noteworthy as a source for social issues, but are not consulted on politics, the economy, science, or professional matters.

H.2.1. The media very seldom turn to women as a source.

H.2.2. Women are not used as a preferential source in writing on gender issues.

H.2.3. In the “soft” sections, such as gossip and celebrities and show business, women are used as the preferential source.

-H.3. Discrimination against female journalists is noted both qualitatively and quantitatively in the authorship of articles.

H.3.1. Female authors continue to represent a minority in all the published texts.

H.3.2. The distribution of women writers according to sections is unequal; certain areas remain beyond their reach thus reinforcing certain professional and social stereotypes.

-H.4. The absence of women in the media agendas as subjects of news items, and as sources of information or as authors is linked to the low rates of female readership.

3. Method

The sample comprised of six newspapers. These were selected following a study of readership rates according to gender in the 2009 General Study of the Media. The three papers most widely read by women and the three least read by women were chosen in order to discover the reasons for the particular preferences of the female read-

ership. All the newspapers were local Andalusian publications, chosen because of the need to analyse a homogeneous social group with similar habits and customs.

Having selected the newspapers based on female readership rates, their internal structure was studied in order to determine the managerial weight that women carried on the editorial board, thereby establishing who led the management, the percentage of women in the highest positions and decision-making posts, and the overall percentage of women in the newsroom.

Table 1. Description of the media selected. Authors' own

Case	Manager Man/ Woman	% Female Managers	+ 50% Women in the newsroom	Percentage of female readership
<i>La Voz de Cádiz</i>	Woman	50.00%	Yes	44.13%
<i>Málaga Hoy</i>	Man	11.11%	Yes	37.73%
<i>Diario de Sevilla</i>	Man	14.29%	Yes	36.53%
<i>El Correo de Andalucía</i>	Man	31.58%	Yes	29.14%
<i>Huelva Información</i>	Man	20.00%	No	28.51%
<i>Granada Hoy</i>	Woman	55.56%	Yes	33.97%

The method chosen was the false or constructed week. This provides a sufficiently broad sample, free from the influence of any specific event or any contingency. The number of news items randomly generated was 1008, 1003, 1002, 996, 996, 830 and 805 for Monday 16th November, Tuesday 24th November, Wednesday 2nd December, Thursday 10th December, Friday 18th December (all 2009), and Sunday 3rd January (2010), respectively. The probabilistic method used to generate the missing number of news items was the normal distribution with parameters 830 (for the population average) and 5 (for the standard deviation). The estimation values were rounded off to the whole number closest to the estimates of maximum probability obtained from the available data.

Having selected the media and the days of the constructed week, the articles concerning gender were analysed. The total number of news and opinion articles in the newspapers during that week was 6,646, of which 668 were analysed. In the research, the female aspect was considered in the broadest sense of the term. Thus, all those news items which were specifically concerned with women or which featured women either as active subjects in the events, based on their professions, or as passive victims of aggression were included.

For the purpose of analysis, a contents sheet was designed with 21 variables grouped into those that merely described the texts (medium, date, page, size, section) and others that detailed the analysis of the contents. Of the latter, four such variables will be considered for the purposes of this article:

- Text authorship: no author mentioned, female author, male author, medium or agency.
- Subject: politics, current events, health, home life, economy, social life, justice, education, work, science, terrorism, sport, culture, reconciliation, gender vio-

lence, communications media, humanitarian items, prostitution, gender and religion (20 variables).

- News source: no source, male, female and neutral sources (a maximum of three sources per news item were considered, as a fourth source was extremely rare).
- Occupation: no occupation, politician, teacher, sportsperson, artist, health care professional, civil servant, NGO member, housewife, business woman, lawyer, architect, judge, nun, prostitute, criminal, celebrity, scientist, writer, model and journalist - all women (20 variables).

The contents of the data analysis were recorded on spread sheets that, in turn, were transferred to the SPSS program, widely used in social sciences for statistical studies.

We consider that these variables of analysis are fundamental to understanding not only the presence of women in the media but also their social relevance as a news source, based on their professional lives and their presence in the press.

We believe that by establishing a relation between the data obtained from this analysis and the data on managerial staff in the media on the one hand, and their readership according to gender on the other, it will be possible to make a link that would justify the discrepancies noted in female readership preferences.

4. Results

In order to systematically analyse the results obtained, our assessments have been compiled in the logical order of the hypotheses established.

4.1. Women as content

Of the 6,646 texts published in the six dailies selected, it was found that only 668 are concerned with gender or have women as the main component (H 1.1), which leads us to initially establish that women represent 9.44% of media content (as far as news is concerned). That is, articles which feature women as the main subject or which even refer to them account for less than 10% of those published. This effectively means that the information published in newspapers does not meet with any criterion of equity or representativeness of this broad social sector.

Not only do the texts published and their location constitute indicators of the weight accorded by the media to women, but other relevant aspects can also be considered, such as the presence of women in the headlines or the priority given to the text (main news, secondary, tertiary, or news in brief).

When considering the frequency of women in the headlines, it was noted that women were prominent in 58.6% of these, which is a significant percentage. However, if this value is calculated for all the texts and not just for the 9.44% of texts featuring women as the main subject, then the considerably lower figure of 1.046% is obtained. This may be interpreted as an indication that only a derisory percentage of women are actually represented as active subjects in news item. In other words, this data implies that women are socially passive subjects and permanently subject to the actions of others (generally a man). However, moving on, it was found that women feature more frequently in headlines: in 0.138% as passive protagonists, in 0.005% as sec-

ondary protagonists and in 0.0002% as victims. This implies that women are only present in a total of 1.19% of the daily headlines published in the press. It should be remembered that many readers of the media only read the headlines, which unquestionably leads to the presentation of a totally distorted social reality.

In order to gauge the weight of their presence in the press, the level of the news in which women appear was noted and it was found that 50.5% of the news analysed corresponds to main news. In the total amount of published texts this value decreases to 4.76%. Once again this points to an unequal representation of men and women in the pages of newspapers.

With regards to section (H 1.2.), of all the texts analysed, it was found that the highest percentages of women in the media were in the Local News section (16.2%), Fashion (18.8%), National (11.9%) and Society (10.2%). This means that women feature mainly in news items published in the Fashion and Society sections which, given their content, are considered to be “soft”, and in the section of Local News which means that women feature more prominently in news in which there is proximity, which centre on what are close at hand, everyday issues, news which is also regarded as “soft”. In the National section, in which a specific weight is also noted, the possible influence of the law of parity needs to be considered. (see group publications in this respect) The fact that the lowest female presence (2.4%) is in the economy section cannot be overlooked, and it is also worth highlighting the fact that in the “shop front” of the newspaper, ie, the front page and the back page, female presence is insignificant (1.9% and 2.4%, respectively).

These percentages from the texts analysed establish the presence of women in each newspaper section. However, if we look at the percentages from the total number of texts published, we find that only in local news (0.16%), national news (0.11%), the society pages (0.10%), and the fashion pages (0.18%) are women represented on at least one tenth of occasions. In the other sections representativeness varies from 0.08% in culture to 0.02% in the economy, something which clearly speaks for itself.

There was a very strong link here between the presence of women in the sections and their professions. For example, the highest profession indicator is for politicians (35% of the texts analysed), followed by artists (21%). However, when looking at the same data for the total number of published texts, the representation of female politicians appears in only 3.3% of the total number of texts (light years away from the 40% of female presence in management posts that the Spanish Law of Equality demands) and just 1.98% feature female artists. Following closely behind are the 0.5% of sportswomen featured and the 0.3% of female religious representatives. It is therefore possible to state that despite the fact that women are barely represented, even when they are, they remain relegated to the area of politics and “artiness”. Hence, the highest percentage of female presence in texts is found in the local, national, and fashion sections (this last section features many of the sportswomen and other women who have been described as professionals), thus establishing a specific link between sections and professions.

These data can be corroborated by looking at the frequency of themes. When referring to the total number of texts analysed, it was found that 28.5% concern politics,

17% deal with cultural issues and 14.5% with society, which only serves to confirm our earlier findings.

4.2. Women as news sources

When focusing on women's role in the media as the originators of news (H 2), that is, as the source of published news, we note that in 34% of cases, Source 1, that is, the first source used, is female. However, there are more texts in which no source at all appears (36.3%). Moreover, 12.3% involve male sources and 16.6% have neutral sources (institutional sources that have no recognised gender are regarded as neutral). In this case, the data cannot be extrapolated to the total number of texts published, as the sources in all of the texts have not been analysed. However, moving on to Source 2, the number of texts without a second source rises to 78.2 %, and only in 8.8% of these does a second female source appear. At the level of Source 3, the data is devastating: 93.8% do not have a third source at their disposal and in only 2.4% of the cases which do is this source a woman.

Having considered the female sources of the texts analysed, some significant results were obtained which help to understand the frequency of the use of women as sources (H.2.1.). Women are more commonly used as Source 1 in texts concerning gender issues when the authorship is female (27% of cases, against 18% when the articles are written by men). It should be pointed out at this juncture that the two newspapers with the largest female readership also make the most use of women as sources (*La Voz de Cádiz* and *Diario de Sevilla*), while the paper with the lowest female readership scarcely does so (*El Correo de Andalucía*). In Source 2, the differences between genders are comparable, and the use of Source 3 is not significant in any of these publications.

With regard to the use of the female source in the media depending on the subject matter, it is clear that there is a greater concentration of women as Source 1 in political subjects (34%), followed by cultural subjects (23.3%) and gender subjects (10.5%). This leads to the consideration that there is a link between the presence of women in specific sections and their use as a source. The newspaper that made most use of women as news sources of both political and cultural issues was *La Voz de Cádiz*. Where Source 1 is male, this tends to be in terms of political news (44%), followed, in this case, by news related to gender (19.5%). As a result it may be concluded that even in the case of the reporting of gender issues men have priority as a source of information, which inevitably leads to a masculinised perspective on the issue.

If female sources are considered on the basis of the professions consulted in respect of news items, female politicians continue to be the major commentators (in 42% of cases, particularly in that of *La Voz de Cádiz*), followed by female artists (19%, especially in the case of *Diario de Sevilla*), whereas in the remaining professions, the use of a female news source is no more than residual. When Source 1 is male, the results obtained are inconclusive.

In articles concerned with female issues, women continue to be passed over as the preferred source (H.2.2.). As has already been pointed out, they only represent 34% as a first source, 8.8% as Source 2 and 2.4% as Source 3. When considering the sub-

jects addressed, it was found that in political topics dealing with gender issues or in which women featured prominently, women are the first source in 41.9% of the texts, Source 2 in 21% and Source 3 in 3.4%. In articles on the economy, for example, they are Source 1 in 35% of the cases and do not appear as Source 2 or 3 (when this data was crossed with that of authorship of articles, it was found that women were used as a source in those texts in which there was a female author). However, in the case of news items related to social life, women were used as Source 1 in 13% of cases, whereas there was just 1.1% of male sources. In education, women were Source 1 for 70% of articles on this subject, while men had this role in only 10% of cases. This data has an even greater significance when contrasted with the lack of articles on education written by men; that is, it shows that female journalists are more likely to turn to women when seeking information for an article. In sports involving women, their presence as Source 1 is 19% compared to the 69.4% of cases in which no source is used. This is explained by the fact that news about women in this area is barely given any space (or consists of just random items) and therefore there is no need to consult the protagonists or seek out personal accounts of events. In culture there is also a marked difference between men and women, as the latter provide 47.7% of Source 1 material in this subject compared to 8.4% of male informants. In Source 2, however, levels are comparable. There are also considerable differences in gender violence in that females provide 37.8% of Source 1 information, whereas men account for 16.2%. As Source 2 providers of information, the levels of men and women are comparable, and in Source 3, women again stand out (9% compared to 3%).

In some subjects, (such as health, justice, work, science, terrorism, reconciliation, and religion), the presence of female sources is insignificant in comparison with male sources. In other subjects, for example, events and media, there are no female sources. Finally, there are areas for which there is no male source, such as Home Life, humanitarian topics and prostitution.

From the aforementioned it may be assumed that there is a link between the presence of women as a source and the themes and the sections that include their articles and texts (H.2.3).

4.3. Women as editors

Given that the number of women who have a role in active life in general and in journalism in particular (H 3) has rapidly increased in recent decades and that, as previously mentioned, for several years now more than half the number of university graduates have been women, they ought to play an important role both in the newsroom and in management. Nevertheless, having analysed the content and authorship of texts, it was clear that women are still not prominent as writers or reporters (H 3.1). When looking at the frequency of female authorship in the total number of published texts in the media selected, it was found that they were only responsible for 533 of the 6,646 news items published. This represents a derisory 8.61%. Taking into account that in five of the six dailies analysed, over 50% of their newsroom staff are women, the percentage is hardly representative.

Based on the analysis carried out, and the number of articles on gender themes or featuring women, it was found that 21% of these were written by women. It should be

borne in mind that 34% of the texts remain unsigned, followed by those bearing the name of the paper itself (16.2%), or an agency (15.3%), and those written by men (12.4%). It is therefore clear that, despite a notable increase in the general percentage, plurality is still not reflected in the newsrooms. It could be concluded that articles on these subjects are not considered important by the medium as they have not been attributed to any author. Even if they had been written by women, they were not identified.

On the other hand, when the distribution of female writers by sections (H 3.2.) is analysed, it is found to be uneven. Female editors are scarcely present in economy and international politics sections, as explained above. As a result of this exclusion it is either men who give their opinions on women and their activities, or else nobody mentions them. This renders women invisible or relegates them to a secondary level and contributes to reinforcing and confirming social and professional stereotypes. It has already been noted that female authors tend to be found in the fashion, social life, society, and local news pages of the paper. This speaks volumes on the frivolous image accorded to women in the press and, however, it is also indicative of women's pragmatic capacity to cope with everyday issues close at hand.

4.4. Set of variables

H4 is confirmed: there is a relation between the presence of women in the media and readership rates. This presence ranges from the media's management teams to their newsrooms, to the authorship of the texts, to the issues addressed and the sources used.

It is no accident that the daily paper with the highest female readership, *La Voz de Cádiz*, is managed by a woman, has more female managers and a majority of women in the newsroom, it also has more published articles on gender issues, more female writers, and uses more women as news sources. It is followed, at times closely, by *Diario de Sevilla*, which although managed by a man, has high rates of female readership and also boasts a notably female newsroom, with an abundance of female subjects and sources.

At the opposite extremes are *Huelva Información* and *El Correo de Andalucía*. These two dailies have the lowest female readership. In these publications we find a less significant number of texts, few female writers, scant use of female sources in general, and where there is any female input it is insignificant.

Therefore it is possible to make a direct link between the product and its consumption. Women detect the presence of women behind the scenes or, in other words, when reality is expressed by women this has a considerable influence on their choice of newspaper.

5. Conclusion

This study confirms in quantitative terms the data obtained from many studies of the overtly masculine nature of newspapers. These reflect a world in which almost everything is done by men: they feature prominently in what goes on in the world, and in that world they are interested in the issues that concern them, and curiously enough it is these matters which are given prominence. The roles assigned to women, though

they may be crucial or essential, are not sufficient to portray them in the limelight or as the focus of the news. Thus, despite the fact that the domestic economy, professional and family education, health, the care of the elderly, and so many other questions remain largely the responsibility of women, they nevertheless remain in the background or are invisible.

Newspapers continue to reflect the world from the male perspective of strategies, from a depersonalized and abstract angle. The female perspective, (more personal, pragmatic and with greater human empathy), does not fit this model.

It is also a fact that men almost exclusively manage newspapers and although there are many experienced women journalists, it is men who tend to write on the important issues. Despite the vast number of female university professors, judges, business people and scientists, they are hardly ever consulted as experts and are practically non-existent as news sources.

In short, it is significant that women readers perceive when a newspaper reaches a certain degree of “demasculinisation”. The dailies with a wider female readership are those that have more women on their staff, more women writers and which more frequently approach women as the source of their articles. An analysis of the categories of contents (subjects, sources, authors) crossed with aspects of the composition of the staff running the newspapers has led to these results.

Unquestionably, the development of an even more precise methodology and greater precision in the identification of the most significant elements, would provide more conclusive and practical results and enable changes in newspapers to be in accordance with the social changes which have taken place and have now acknowledged that 50% of people are women. As a result, newspapers could considerably increase their female readership.

We believe that this study is relevant and significant in that it provides a key to understanding why men make up the majority of newspaper readership and it also identifies parameters that would make women readers more receptive to the media. As we have verified and demonstrated, those newspapers with more women in managerial posts also have more women in their newsrooms, and these women write more articles, they also consult women as news sources and they have more women readers. We consider that these important points constitute a major contribution towards improving the communications media by advancing further in this direction.

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