



**The Prince and the Pauper: journalistic culture and Paralympic Games in the Spanish Print Press**

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## Abstract

The Paralympic Games are one of the world's most important multisport events, maybe second only to the Olympic Games. However, research conducted to date shows that the media do not devote as much space to them as would accordingly be expected. This article proposes, through a case study, a new way of approaching this hypothetical discrimination by comparing the attention that the London Paralympic Games received from the Spanish print press with the attention that other sports received (football, basketball, tennis, cycling, motor sports and other minority sports) while those Games were being held. The main finding of our study is that, over the period analysed, the Spanish press devoted less space to the Paralympic Games than to any other sport.

**Keywords:** Paralympic Games, journalism, sport, news values, content analysis

## Introduction

The Paralympic Games are apparently one of the world's most important multisport events maybe second only to the Olympic Games (Pappous, Marcellini & Léséleuc, 2011b). An examination of the data on these mega-events is all that is needed to realise this. A total of 204 countries and more than 10,500 athletes and 70,000 volunteers took part in the last edition of the Olympic Games. During the Games, 8 million tickets to attend competitions were sold, more than 21,000 mass media professionals were accredited, and it is estimated that the cumulative television audience exceeded 4 billion people. For their part, the Paralympic Games brought together 164 States, 4,237 athletes and – just like the Olympics – 70,000 volunteers. The organisers sold 2.7 million tickets and accredited more than 6,500 mass media professionals, who worked for a cumulative television audience of 3.8 billion people across the globe (International Olympic Committee, 2015; International Paralympic Committee, 2015).

Thus, in recent years, the Paralympic Games have raised the visibility of people with disabilities and may even be changing the social perception of disability in certain contexts. Although positive effect on the disability community is contested (Gilbert & Schantz, 2015; Kaehne, 2013), in late 2012, for example, the BBC announced that, according to a survey conducted by the firm ComRes for the broadcaster, three quarters of Britons had a more positive feeling towards people with disabilities following the Paralympic Games. Nearly 80% of the respondents without disabilities stated that their perceptions of disability had improved following the Games (BBC, 2012).

These data seem to suggest that the Paralympic Games and many of the athletes that take part in them meet the so-called “news values” criteria and, therefore, are worthy of mass media attention. According to the classic approach of Galtung and Ruge (1965), events happening in society are subject to a selection process in order to choose those that have the quality of being newsworthy in a given social and political context, for a specific community of readers, and in accordance with a concrete editorial and ideological line. The values proposal of Galtung and Ruge (1965) includes aspects such as frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, unexpectedness, continuity, reference to elite people, etc.

## The specificity of Spanish case

In Spain, figures as reliable as the BBC's have yet to be produced, though some signs point to the fact that people's perceptions of these athletes are actually changing. An interesting example is the commercial entitled "*El Currículum de Todos*" (The curriculum of all of us) for a famous Spanish brand of cold meat products (*Campofrío*), in which a famous clown makes a list of the milestones and values of which Spaniards could feel proud. The characters in the commercial cite the seven Nobel prizes awarded to Spaniards, mention the historic novel *Don Quixote* and refer to several typical dishes of Spanish cuisine, to the Spanish national football team (the world champions at that time: 2012)... and to the Paralympics. A particularly striking feature of the commercial is that, among the "distinctive features" about which Spaniards could and should feel pleased and proud, the commercial's scriptwriters specifically and explicitly included Paralympic athletes.

Another significant example is the rise to fame of the swimmer Teresa Perales, who has won 22 Paralympic medals. After recalling that the mass media in Spain had compared her 22 medals to those won by Michael Phelps, Perales stated the following in the December 2012 issue of *The Paralympian*, the magazine published by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC): "I believe that the legacy of these Games [those of 2012] is to have helped to change the way people look at us" (IPC, 2012: p. 32). On 2 November 2012, the Government of Spain awarded her the Grand Cross of the Royal Order of Sports Merit, the highest official recognition for an athlete. Perales was the first Paralympic athlete to receive such an accolade. Later the same month, on the 19<sup>th</sup> to be precise, Perales missed out by just one vote (nine to eight) from being awarded the Prince of Asturias Award or Sport, an award that the Spanish golfer José María Olazábal ultimately won.

At the 2012 Games, the Paralympic Team that represented Spain in London comprised 142 athletes, of whom 127 were athletes with disabilities and 15 were support athletes (guide runners, pilot cyclists, blind football goalkeepers and boccia assistants). They took part in 15 of the 20 disciplines in the programme. In total, they won 42 medals (averaging one medal per 3.3 athletes). For its part, the Olympic Team comprised 263 athletes, who took part in 23 disciplines. In total, they won 17 medals (averaging one medal per 15.4 athletes). So, although the Paralympics were much smaller in terms of the number of participants, the athletes who took part in them achieved a much higher "rate of return" than those taking part in the Olympics did.

Spain's media coverage of the Paralympic Games is a particularly interesting case to analyse because the Paralympic Movement in Spain has a long tradition, mainly due to the existence in Spain of a powerful social movement of people with disabilities, led since the mid-1980s by the National Organisation of Blind (ONCE), as well as the very particular communication strategy of the Spanish Paralympic Committee.

Indeed, the presence of Spanish representatives on the Governing Board of the IPC has been constant since the mid-1990s. For instance, the current CEO of the IPC is Spanish, and Mr Sagarra, who was the Secretary General of the Committee from 1997 to 2005 and Vice President from 2005 to 2009 is also an important member of the Governing Boards of ONCE and its Foundation. It is also important to note that Miguel Carballada, President of ONCE, is also President of the Spanish Paralympic Committee. Thus, the connections and relationship between ONCE and IPC are very important.

Regarding the particularity of the communication strategy of the Spanish Paralympic Committee, it included paying for the travel and accommodation expenses of those reporters who wanted to cover the events on site and financial agreements with

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2  
3 some newspapers in exchange for a good treatment. It is quite clear that this  
4 communication strategy may be a major influence on the communication strategy of the  
5 IPC itself and of many other National Paralympic Committees (NPCs), especially in  
6 Latin America.

7  
8 Moreover in Spain the success of some Paralympic athletes (especially the  
9 swimmer Teresa Perales and the shot putter David Casinos) has attracted extraordinary  
10 media coverage, and they have been portrayed as national athletic heroes. Since the  
11 1992 Paralympic Games that were hosted in Barcelona, the Spanish delegation has been  
12 one of the most numerous ones. In Beijing 2008, 141 Spanish athletes participated and  
13 won a total of 58 medals. In London 2012, 142 athletes took part and Spain obtained a  
14 total of 42 medals. The opening ceremony of the Paralympic Games in London gathered  
15 an audience of more than 552000 spectators.

16  
17 However, the Spanish media coverage of the London Olympic Games involved a  
18 lot more media outlets than the Paralympic Games did. While 86 journalists attended  
19 the 2012 Paralympic Games in representation of 37 mass media outlets – national and  
20 regional television and radio broadcasters, and print and digital press outlets, both  
21 generalist and specialist (in sports news), a total of 273 journalists attended the Olympic  
22 Games in representation of the Spanish media. This does not appear to reflect the  
23 apparent interest that the event deserves. And therefore it seems to be the effect of some  
24 discrimination.

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26 This article proposes a new way of approaching this hypothetical discrimination.  
27 We aim to compare the attention that various sports (football, basketball, tennis,  
28 cycling, motor sports, other minority sports and Paralympic sports) received from the  
29 main Spanish print media while the London Paralympic Games were being held in order  
30 to establish what their coverage of the Games really was, bearing in mind the  
31 importance of the event and, therefore, the news values associated with Paralympic  
32 competitions.

### 33 34 **Football is the prince**

35  
36 It seems clear that football is the sport that always receives more attention from the  
37 media, whatever the circumstances. And there may be good historical and productive  
38 reasons for this. But what about other sports? It does not seem likely that the  
39 Paralympics can catch the football its hegemonic position in media attention. But what  
40 about other competitions such as basketball, cycling, tennis or motor sports? What  
41 about sports that are not competing at the time that the Paralympic Games take place?

42  
43 There are several reasons why football predominates when it comes to the media  
44 attention it receives, beyond its strict newsworthiness. It has been long-standing  
45 historical phenomenon since the so-called mass society became established in  
46 industrialised societies football connected perfectly with this society's popular culture  
47 and new approaches to leisure and spare time (Cross, 1993; Finn, 1993; Rule, 1986;  
48 Thompson, 1967), and it soon became a means of consumption and escape for the  
49 masses.

50  
51 That is why, since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, football has been such an important  
52 media factor. While the European "quality press" was interested in politics and  
53 economics (Weill, 1962), the tabloid press grew in the wake of sensationalism and  
54 entertainment, that is to say, spectacle and sport. Within this context, football gained in  
55 importance, reflecting the growing role of organised sports. This can be explained by  
56 the fact that they defined leisure in an industrialised urban society better than any other  
57 activity (Black, 1993; Rule, 1997; Uría, 2001). Body worship and health concerns were  
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3 also paramount, as was the need to strengthen and train a new generation of young  
4 soldiers within the framework of a colonial Europe that needed a patriotic-nationalistic  
5 spirit more than it had ever done before (Hobsbawm, 1987).

6 That is why, from the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Great Britain and a  
7 little later in France, football became the great spectator sport of industrialised urban  
8 centres (Weber, 1989: 289). This was also helped along by it being a form of escape, in  
9 the sense of helping to replace conventional reality – while the game was being played –  
10 with fiction, of changing the world we did not like with an alternative one (Verdú  
11 Maciá, 2002; Weber, 1989), and by the ease with which it could be turned into a  
12 lucrative business (Durán, García, & Latiesa, 1998; Holt, 1992; Pujadas & Santacana,  
13 1997, 1999 and 2001; Uría, 2003). All of this grew exponentially when, in the 20<sup>th</sup>  
14 century, technological development was placed at the service of the mass media and  
15 their ideological and commercial ends.  
16

17 Today, many of these factors remain unchanged while others have grown, so it  
18 is not hard to explain why football is such a hegemonic phenomenon in the spheres of  
19 sport and communication. It is not simply the fact that football and the mass media –  
20 television in particular – today have such a close relationship (Boyle & Haynes, 2009;  
21 Rowe, 2004), which Miquel de Moragas has described as symbiotic (1994). Rather,  
22 football has actually gained such enormous social importance that many social scientists  
23 consider it to be one of the main forms of identity building, be it personal (Kowalski,  
24 2011), collective (Da Costa Ciampa, Gonçalves Leme, & Ferreira de Souza, 2010;  
25 Feinberg, 2015; Fernández, 2012) or national (Camino, 2014; Magazine, Martinez, &  
26 Ramirez, 2011). They also consider it as a factor that has significant political and  
27 diplomatic influence (Carreño Lara, 2012; Mason, 1995; Shaw, 1985) and, of course, as  
28 an immense business (Bosca, Liern, Martinez, & Sala, 2008; Lucena & Casaca, 2013;  
29 Mayorga Escalada, 2014).  
30

31 The data indicate that this predominance of football extends to many parts of the  
32 world and is undoubtedly the main feature of sports journalism in Europe. According to  
33 reports of the International Sports Press Survey 2011, “A comparison of reporting  
34 according to the content and type of sports illustrates the established dominance of  
35 football (here, soccer) in print media. More than 40 % (7.483) of the items analyzed  
36 concern the sport with the ‘round leather thing’. All other type of sport put together did  
37 not amount to anything more a small share of the reporting” (Horky & Nieland, 2013:  
38 26). But the data show a special prominence of football in the European countries,  
39 occupying the first places in the world rankings. For example, in Romania football  
40 occupies 85 % of the space devoted to sport by the printed press; in Portugal 81 %; in  
41 Greece 69 %; in Germany 58 %; 57 % in Poland and 47 % in France. In Spain,  
42 Gonzalez Ramallal has estimated that about three quarters (70.3% to be precise) of the  
43 sport information contained in the media deal with football. In the case of the printed  
44 press, according to this author, football occupies 60.9% of sports content; 79.1% in the  
45 case of radio and 84.6% in the case of television (2004:275).  
46

47 Thus, historical reasons and productive reasons connected with cost and profit  
48 (television broadcast rights, audience size, etc.) and with the predictability of raw  
49 material (agenda) availability for the media all seem to make football the prince, lord  
50 and master of the media. However, it is necessary to examine in much greater depth the  
51 specific mechanisms that translate the factors we have just presented into professional  
52 criteria and into production routines that lead journalists and the media to give this sport  
53 in particular such overwhelming attention. Moreover these reasons only explain the  
54 prominence of football itself. They would not be useful to explain the prominence of  
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3 other sports on the Paralympic at the time when they occur, if this is what actually  
4 happened.

5 Specifically, our study attempts to answer two research questions:  
6

7 *RQ1*: How much space devoted to Paralympic sports the best-selling Spanish  
8 newspapers while the 2012 Paralympic Games were being held?

9 *RQ2*: What was the position occupied by the Paralympic sports in the ranking of  
10 sports covered in the best-selling Spanish newspapers while the 2012  
11 Paralympic Games were being held?  
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13  
14 To that end, we will count the news items and photos devoted to each sports  
15 discipline over the days and in the media of the sample – the most important Spanish  
16 print newspapers –. Of course, we are aware that this is a limited approach. On the one  
17 hand, because it focuses only on the printed press, not including in our analysis the  
18 online version of these newspapers. As Bruce has showed, the online version of these  
19 newspapers might include more news than the paper version (Bruce, 2015). That is  
20 something we have not considered in our analysis of content. On the other hand, our  
21 research does not include an analysis of the coverage of the Paralympic Games on  
22 Spanish television. We are aware of the importance of this media and that we have to  
23 consider their study in our future approaches.  
24

## 25 26 **Method**

### 27 28 *Sample and units of analysis*

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31 The study sample was formed by sport-related news items published in a total of 11  
32 newspapers. First, the five best-selling generalist newspapers in Spain according to the  
33 *Estudio General de Medios* (EGM), an audience survey conducted by the company  
34 AIMC, which is taken as a benchmark in the Spanish communication sphere as whole.  
35 These were *El País*, *El Mundo*, *La Vanguardia*, *La Razón* and *El Periódico*. Second, the  
36 four sports newspapers with the highest readership also according to the EGM. These  
37 were *Marca*, *AS*, *Mundo Deportivo* and *Sport*. And third, *Superdeporte*, one of the  
38 country's best-selling regional sports newspapers.  
39

40 Regarding the timeframe, news items published over a total of 14 days were  
41 recorded: from 28 August to 10 September 2012, that is to say, from one day before the  
42 opening of the London Paralympic Games to one day after the closing ceremony. The  
43 data were processed using IBM SPSS v12 statistics software, applying contingency  
44 tables, Student's *t*-test and  $X^2$  hypothesis testing.  
45

46 In our study, news items and photos were taken as quantitative variables  
47 indicative of the importance that the media placed on each event, devoting space to it  
48 and including (or not) a visual medium in the form of a photo. We have also included  
49 photos because, if a media outlet decides to accompany a news item with a photo, then  
50 doing so undeniably means that it places greater importance on it.  
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### 52 *Codebook*

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54 The content analysis codebook comprises the following variables: (1) Total number of  
55 pages in the newspaper; (2) Number of pages devoted to sports news; (3) Number of  
56 news items on each sport (football, basketball, tennis, cycling, motor sports, other sports  
57 and the Paralympic Games); (4) Number of photos on each of the aforementioned  
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3 sports; and (5) Number of front-page news items on each sport.  
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## 5 **Results**

6  
7 Let's see what our data indicate about what happened in the Spanish print media at the  
8 time of the London Paralympics Games. After reviewing the previously mentioned  
9 sample of newspapers for the established timeframe, a total of 9,031 sports news items  
10 were obtained. Of these, 8,982 (98.46%) were related to non-Paralympic sports (other  
11 sports) and 139 (1.53%) were news items on Paralympic sports (see Table 1).  
12

13 Specifically, the generalist newspapers published a daily mean of 124 news  
14 items related to non-Paralympic sports and a daily mean of 4.6 news items related to  
15 Paralympic sports. For their part, sports newspapers published a daily mean of 1,672  
16 news items unrelated to the Paralympic Games and a daily mean of 23 news items  
17 related to Paralympic sports. Over the days analysed, the sample of newspapers in our  
18 study published fewer news items on the Paralympic Games (139 in total) than on any  
19 other sport.  
20

21  
22 [Table 1]  
23

24 Regarding the graphic information in the sample analysed, a total of 6,786  
25 photos were found with sports content. Of these 6,636 (97.7%) were related to non-  
26 Paralympic sports and 150 (2.21%) were related to the London Paralympic Games'  
27 competitions (see Table 2). In the period of the London Paralympic Games, the  
28 newspapers analysed devoted the same number of photos to these Games (150) as to  
29 basketball, for which there was no league competition at the time (the first matches  
30 were held on 29-30 September). Tennis was the only sport that had fewer photos. As we  
31 said it is important to note that if a newspaper includes photos in order to complement a  
32 story with, this means that gatekeepers (Galtung & Ruge, 1965) are giving more  
33 importance this news. In addition, include photos usually means that the newspaper  
34 devotes more space to this news. And of course, include photos will produce the news  
35 call the attention of potential readers. All these elements make it so important to analyze  
36 the use of images in the printed press.  
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40 [Table 2]  
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42 Regarding news items appearing on the front pages of the newspapers analysed  
43 (the page that newspapers use to highlight news items that they consider to be the most  
44 important of the day), of all the news items published (471), only 8 (1.67%) reported on  
45 some aspect or competition of the Paralympic Games. Of these 8, 1 (12.5%) appeared in  
46 a generalist newspaper and 7 (87.5%) in sports newspapers. The front pages had the  
47 same number of news items devoted to the Paralympic Games as to basketball.  
48 Compared to the other sports disciplines analysed, basketball actually had the fewest  
49 news items of all (see Table 3).  
50

51  
52 [Table 3]  
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## 54 **Discussion**

55  
56 Most studies conducted on the media treatment of the Paralympic Games suggest that  
57 they do not get the media coverage that a mega-event of such magnitude deserves  
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3 (Gilbert & Schantz, 2008; Hardin & Hardin, 2003; Schantz & Gilbert, 2001, 2008;  
4 2012; Thomas & Smith, 2003). The importance of these studies arises from the fact that  
5 the mass media contribute enormously to the process of constructing social reality  
6 (Klapper, 1960; McCombs, 1994). This places considerable responsibility upon them  
7 because they actually construct and spread the image of sectors and individuals and are,  
8 therefore, able to contribute to processes of social inclusion or, on the contrary, of  
9 stigmatisation and exclusion of these people or sectors. This happens with people with  
10 disabilities, for example. Given that people with disabilities are at risk of exclusion  
11 (Barnes, 1999), in recent years there has been a proliferation of studies that have  
12 attempted to analyse whether or not the media stigmatise this sector (DePauw &  
13 Gavron, 1995; DePauw, 1997; Haller, 2000; Nelson, 1994; Zola, 1985).

14  
15 If it is indeed the case that the media are not covering the Paralympic Games in a  
16 way their importance and newsworthiness deserve, then not only does it mean that the  
17 so-called news values are being ignored, but also – and above all – that a very important  
18 sector of society is being discriminated against. Consequently, the media are shirking a  
19 major responsibility.

20  
21 Since its formulation, Galtung and Ruge's proposal has been subjected to  
22 various checks, from which a not inconsiderable number of criticisms have arisen, as  
23 have proposals for improvement. For example, Gans (1979) made a distinction between  
24 values that make a news story "important" and those that make it "interesting". Among  
25 the former, he highlighted issues such as the rank – in government or other hierarchies –  
26 occupied by the people in the news item, the impact on the nation, the involvement of a  
27 large number of people in the event and its meaning for the past and future of society.  
28 Among those that help to make a news item interesting, he included personal stories,  
29 human-interest stories, anecdotes, hero stories and "gee whiz" stories. To Galtung and  
30 Ruge's proposal, Schlesinger (1987) later added factors related to the organisational ad  
31 professional structure of journalism, especially those concerned with the time  
32 constraints and logistics of news. Finally, after an exhaustive review of the factors that  
33 Galtung and Ruge proposed and their own study that included not only foreign news but  
34 all kinds of other news too, Harcup and O'Neill (2001) proposed a new list of "news  
35 values" in an attempt to make it better suited to new forms of journalism.

36  
37 According to these authors, the news values that Galtung and Ruge proposed  
38 (frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness,  
39 continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, reference to  
40 persons and reference to something negative) could be replaced by the following: the  
41 power elite, celebrity, entertainment, surprise, bad news, good news, magnitude,  
42 relevance, follow-up and newspaper agenda.

43  
44 Regarding to sport, Lee examined whether news value indicators influenced  
45 sports coverage of the 2002 World Cup soccer games by using a newsworthiness model  
46 (2009). And specifically regarding to the newsworthiness in the case of Paralympic  
47 Games, Golden (2003), Howe (2008), Silva and Howe (2012), Bruce (2015), and  
48 Thomas & Smith (2009) points to what news values are associated with this mega-  
49 event.

50  
51 However, whatever the case may be, and whatever classification of news values  
52 we choose to adopt, there appears to be no question that the Paralympic Games meet the  
53 criteria for these values and, therefore, are newsworthy events. These events involve  
54 huge numbers of people; they have aspects of *novelty* and *interest* for large audiences;  
55 they contain high levels of *spectacularity*; and their protagonists are quite well known.  
56 In other words, they combine those aspects that "journalism culture" (Hanitzsch, 2007)  
57 ascribes to events that become news.  
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3 As Golden already said in 2003 that “The Paralympic games have many of those  
4 newsworthy elements, with possible stories of rivalries between competitors from  
5 different countries, blow-by-blow coverage of the sports events, reports on disability  
6 issues, and the human-interest stories of the lives of the Paralympians. Yet the press has  
7 traditionally barely covered the event” (2003).

8 Perhaps what is hidden behind this difference in coverage values are not news, but  
9 the perception journalists have of the Paralympic Games and the interest of the audience  
10 at these events. That is, a certain "journalistic culture". Golden said also that:

11  
12  
13 The Paralympic reporters all stated during their interviews that they felt they were covering a real  
14 competition [...]. The journalists also stated that they felt there was an audience for their coverage  
15 of Paralympic games. They felt that it was smaller, but it existed [...]. In addition, the reporters  
16 covering the Paralympics felt that there were good stories there (Golden, 2003).

17  
18 In fact, Golden concluded that there was a big difference between the Olympic  
19 and Paralympic reporters “journalist culture” because they had “different views of  
20 audience interest and appeal in relation to the Paralympics [...] different sense of news  
21 values and the salience of sports involving those with disabilities [...] different views of  
22 the role of a journalist [and] different feelings about taking cues from larger  
23 newspapers/other news sources” (2003)

24  
25 Howe has deepened the understanding of this difference and, by analysing the  
26 field of the newsroom, he notes that journalists tend to be less critical in the Paralympic  
27 Games than in able bodied sports. As he said: “The bodily hexis of a journalist on the  
28 Paralympic beat is strategically less critical than it would be in mainstream professional  
29 sport. There is an assumption that activities organised for disabled people are a positive  
30 social development” (2008, p. 137).

31 We acknowledge the complexity of the editorial decision-making process (Wolf,  
32 1987). As Tuchman stated, news is not a straightforward reflection of reality, but rather  
33 the result of a process whose logic is productive, ideological and financial and this  
34 process does not therefore depend solely on the journalists’ personal preferences  
35 (Tuchman, 1978, p. 13). It is therefore important to deepen the "journalistic culture" and  
36 the internal perception that journalists, reporters and, above all, gatekeepers, have on the  
37 Paralympics. Because it is probably this "culture" and not the news values what  
38 determines the coverage of this mega-event.

39  
40 It could be also interesting to incorporate the agenda-setting theory here.  
41 Formulated in the simplest of terms, it suggests that people tend to include or exclude  
42 from their knowledge whatever the media include or exclude (McCombs & Shaw, 1972;  
43 Shaw, 1979). This theory does not advocate that the media should tell their audiences  
44 what to think about each news issue, though it does suggest that the media end up  
45 sowing the seeds of issues about which these audiences should think on a daily basis. In  
46 other words, they end up setting the agenda of news topics for most of society. This  
47 means that the media end up planting in the minds of the majorities what they (the  
48 media) consider important or not about everything that is happening. Applied to the  
49 events that constitute the Paralympic Games, this hypothesis means that minimal  
50 coverage of these events leads to an audience that places little importance on the  
51 Games.

52  
53 For our study, this agenda-setting theory can be complemented by the theory of  
54 the functions of mass media formulated by Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton, who, in  
55 1948, claimed that the latter include a status conferral function. In other words, the mass  
56 media confer status on public issues, persons, organizations and social movements  
57 (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1948). According to this theory, the status of subjects is directly  
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3 associated with the attention they receive from the mass media. Thus, in the case of  
4 Paralympic athletes, their status does not derive from their prowess as elite athletes  
5 (their efforts, victories, medals or records), but instead from their presence in the media.

6 As we have seen, the Paralympic Games are a global mega-event; thousands of  
7 people take part in spectacular competitions and it attracts audiences into the billions.  
8 Moreover, the Games are the world's biggest event associated with people with  
9 disabilities. While being held, many of these people take part in the events and expose  
10 themselves to the gaze of huge audiences. However, they do not do so only or  
11 fundamentally as people with disabilities. Rather, Paralympic athletes appear as people  
12 who overcome their difficulties and attain challenging goals through their efforts and  
13 talent.  
14

15 But, neither the efforts made by sports and social organisations that bring  
16 together people with disabilities, nor any of the considerable work done by NPCs or the  
17 IPC will be of much use if the media do not lend their interest and devote space to these  
18 Games. Indeed, as demonstrated by the agenda-setting function theory, this event will  
19 only form part of the social "agenda" if the media include it among their priorities  
20 (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Shaw, 1979). Furthermore, without this media attention, the  
21 Paralympic athletes will not receive the social recognition they deserve because, as  
22 Lazarsfeld and Merton explained, in an industrial society, it is the media that  
23 predominantly confer status on subjects and institutions (1948).  
24

25 The main conclusions of our study are: first, that while the London Paralympic  
26 Games were being held, the most important Spanish daily newspapers (the country's six  
27 generalist newspapers and five sports newspapers with the highest readership) devoted  
28 the 98.46% of its sport information to non-Paralympic sports (other sports) and the  
29 1.53% to news items on Paralympic (RQ1); and second, that this newspapers devoted  
30 less space to these Games than to any other sport, whether competitions were in  
31 progress or not (RQ2).  
32

33 This seems to demonstrate that the media, or the Spanish print media at least, do  
34 not in fact give these Games and the Paralympic athletes the attention they appear to  
35 deserve if account is taken of the underlying logic of news values, that is to say, the  
36 elements that should be considered for an event to stand out from all others, those that  
37 are newsworthy: the power elite, celebrity, entertainment, surprise, bad news, good  
38 news, magnitude, relevance, follow-up and newspaper agenda.  
39

40 It is true to say that the time when the Paralympic Games are held is one of  
41 considerable competition for space because other major sports events coincide with  
42 them. In the period when the London Paralympic Games were held (29 August to 9  
43 September 2012) and within the context that we intend to analyse (Spain), these Games  
44 competed for media attention with other major sports events. Specifically, the latter  
45 were the Spanish Professional Football League (which had started on 19 August); *the*  
46 Tour of Spain cycling race (which had started on 18 August); the Belgian Formula 1  
47 Grand Prix (held from 31 August to 2 September) and the Italian Formula 1 Grand Prix  
48 (held from 7 to 9 September); the US Open Tennis Championships, the last Grand Slam  
49 tournament of 2012 (held from 27 August to 9 September); and the final of the UEFA  
50 Super Cup (held on 31 August between Chelsea [the winner of the UEFA Champions  
51 League] and Atlético de Madrid [the winner of the UEFA Europa League]), which the  
52 Spanish team won. However, it is important to highlight that, no significant events took  
53 place in this period in the field of basketball for example (whose league began on 29  
54 September), a sport to which much more space was devoted than to the Paralympic  
55 Games, as our study has shown.  
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3 Obviously, one can argue that the Paralympics are not so important, that  
4 spectators at the Paralympics are often schoolkids sent to the events in order to fill the  
5 stadium or spectators who couldn't get a ticket for the Olympics. But the question is:  
6 are less important Paralympic Games at the time they were being held than the basket,  
7 although there was no basketball competition during those specific days?

8  
9 From a purely journalistic perspective, that is to say, that of the so-called news  
10 values, all the events held over those weeks of 2012 deserved media attention.  
11 However, our data show that two sets of events stand out for their "special" treatment:  
12 first football, which received an enormous amount of attention, and second the  
13 Paralympic Games, which received a minimal amount of attention. Both events are of  
14 major social relevance and, in many respects, are even comparable, yet they receive  
15 very different treatments: football seems to be the prince on whom all eyes are set and  
16 about whom everyone reviews the slightest of details, whereas the Paralympic Games  
17 appear to be the pauper of whom very few people take any notice, the one looked upon  
18 with benevolence and commiseration, and about whom only the bare minimum said.

19  
20 At the time when the Paralympic Games competitions are being held, when the  
21 media should be paying greater attention to these events, the hegemony of football  
22 cannot explain the social and professional reasons for there being less interest in them  
23 than in any other sport, be it basketball, tennis, cycling or motor sports. In other words,  
24 why does Paralympic sport play the role of pauper in this story of attention from those  
25 media?

26  
27 The predominance of football can help us understand why the media have an  
28 internal logic that leads them to treat sport according to criteria that are not solely news  
29 related, but are connected instead with the eternal economic, cultural and social factors  
30 of news, even though some of the news values suggested by Harcup and O'Neill (2001),  
31 for example, can be found in some of them, namely the power elite, celebrity,  
32 entertainment or the newspaper agenda itself.

33  
34 Finally, in the case of Spain at least, it is important to underscore that this scarce  
35 coverage contrasts with the very aggressive communication strategy of the local  
36 Paralympic Committee, which, for many years, has entered into financial agreements  
37 with the most important media to obtain good coverage in return (Solves, 2013).  
38 Therefore, the poor results found in our study would be even worse without that  
39 strategy.

40  
41 The question is simple: Why, despite their huge sporting, economic and social  
42 importance, and the efforts made by the Spanish Paralympic Committee, do these  
43 Games continue to rouse such little interest among the media? We believe that it may be  
44 due to a journalism "culture", a way of understanding sports news, that does not  
45 consider Paralympic sport to be genuine sport, but rather an activity that is more closely  
46 related to solidarity and good feelings than with competition in the strict sense of the  
47 term. And that, correspondingly, it considers that such activity is of no interest to the  
48 general public, at whom the best-selling and most-watched and listened-to media are  
49 targeted. That is why we believe that research should focus on a detailed analysis of this  
50 journalism culture.

## 51 52 **Funding**

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For Peer Review

## “The Prince and the Pauper: journalistic culture and Paralympic Games in the Spanish Print Press”.

Tables:

**Table 1. Amount of the Olympic and Paralympic coverage: News**

Newspaper	Football	Basket	Tennis	Cycling	Motor	Other	Total	Paralympic Sports
<i>El País</i>	42	0	3	15	6	4	70	1
<i>El Mundo</i>	90	1	6	23	14	6	140	3
<i>La Vanguardia</i>	107	1	10	12	11	7	148	6
<i>La Razón</i>	53	1	3	19	5	6	87	6
<i>El Periódico</i>	111	3	3	15	17	26	175	7
<i>As</i>	1404	15	6	181	89	126	1821	3
<i>Marca</i>	1023	29	10	50	65	65	1242	49
<i>M.Deportivo</i>	1862	122	41	98	122	225	2470	15
<i>Sport</i>	1600	127	62	81	151	95	2116	21
<i>Superdeporte</i>	561	20	10	10	46	67	714	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>6853</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>8982</b>	<b>139</b>

**Table 2. Amount of the Olympic and Paralympic coverage: Photos**

Newspaper	Football	Basket	Tennis	Cycling	Motor	Other	Total	Paralympic Sports
<i>El País</i>	30	0	3	10	3	1	47	1
<i>El Mundo</i>	64	1	6	17	26	6	120	1
<i>La Vanguardia</i>	63	1	4	9	14	9	100	6
<i>La Razón</i>	58	1	3	29	19	3	113	16
<i>El Periódico</i>	143	4	3	10	20	6	186	7
<i>As</i>	924	6	7	104	133	80	1254	10
<i>Marca</i>	1143	15	6	104	70	21	1359	35
<i>M. Deportivo</i>	900	30	26	31	54	70	1111	8
<i>Sport</i>	1039	61	38	27	117	38	1320	6
<i>Superdeporte</i>	718	31	17	60	100	100	1026	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>5082</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>6636</b>	<b>150</b>

**Table 3. News items on the front page**

Newspaper	Football	Basket	Tennis	Cycling	Motor	Other	Total	Paralympic Sports
<i>El País</i>	6	0	0	3	1	0	10	0
<i>El Mundo</i>	12	0	0	3	2	0	17	0
<i>La Vanguardia</i>	6	0	0	1	2	0	9	1
<i>La Razón</i>	3	0	0	1	1	0	5	0
<i>El Periódico</i>	4	0	0	1	2	1	8	0
<i>As</i>	43	0	0	5	2	0	50	0
<i>Marca</i>	71	0	0	9	5	1	86	6
<i>M.Deportivo</i>	67	1	2	8	6	4	88	0
<i>Sport</i>	97	1	3	5	7	6	119	0
<i>Superdeporte</i>	59	6	4	3	2	5	79	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>8</b>

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3 Dear editor,

4 We are grateful to both the reviewers who helped us improve the previous version of our  
5 paper "The Prince and the Pauper: journalistic culture and Paralympic Games in the Spanish  
6 Print Press". We took very seriously into consideration the feedback from the reviewers.  
7

8 To be specific, the reviewer 1 stated that our research "would benefit from being situated  
9 more broadly in the field of journalism". We are in complete agreement and we have  
10 expanded the theoretical context also incorporating references to more specific theoretical  
11 framework, especially classical contribution by Gaye Tuchman on productive routines, but also  
12 other more specific references. We believe that, in fact, in this context our paper has greatly  
13 improved.  
14

15  
16 The first reviewer also noted that "the authors need to be clear throughout that they are only  
17 discussing print media; they provide no evidence from Spain [...] about coverage in television;  
18 it would be helpful to know how television coverage is different from print". And he is  
19 absolutely right. We have incorporated at all times the idea that our study was limited to the  
20 printing press (we have even incorporated a paragraph of limitations of our research in which  
21 we specify this idea).  
22

23  
24 Regarding coverage of the Games on Spanish radio and television, the only studies so far are  
25 made by us, but are not yet published, so we can't cite them properly. Moreover, no studies  
26 allows us to compare the coverage of the Games on TV with coverage of other sports.  
27

28 We have clarified our references to news values and have incorporated the Golden and Howe  
29 researches, especially to highlight the importance of qualitative approaches if we want to  
30 understand the journalistic culture in relation to the news values of the Paralympic Games. We  
31 have expanded the framework for our comparisons by incorporating the data provided by the  
32 reports of "Play the Game" –as the first reviewer suggested–. The truth is that the inclusion of  
33 this data has greatly improved our article.  
34

35  
36 Regarding the second reviewer, we have incorporated the references he or she suggested and  
37 we have adjusted our arguments to the fact that the Paralympics are one of the "multisport"  
38 world's most important events. This reviewer suggested that "The hypotheses sound like  
39 established *a posteriori*. In the theoretical part you argue that the Paralympics are important  
40 for Spain and that they are an important mega event, but you formulate very negative  
41 hypotheses concerning the media coverage of Spanish print media". And he or she is  
42 absolutely right. Our paper has been rewritten from two research questions that establish the  
43 issue much better.  
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46 For all the above modifications that resulted from the comment of the reviewers, we now  
47 believe that the paper has improved and we would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers  
48 for their valuable feedback.  
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