

Media Image of Seafarers in the Spanish Printed Press

This paper presents an analysis of the image of seafarers in Spanish newspapers. This is done by a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the news published in six representative newspapers in the days following the shipwrecks of twenty-four oil tankers between 1976 and 2007. A total of 359 news items have been studied analysing the type of language used, its place in the pages of the newspapers, the comments of the journalists who wrote them, etc., arriving at the conclusion that seafarers have a bad image in the Spanish printed press.

KEY WORDS

1. Image. 2. Seafarer. 3. Spanish newspapers.

1. INTRODUCTION. The profession of merchant sailor has, in recent years, gone from being one of the most highly valued by the population of countries with a maritime culture to being ignored by public opinion. Nowadays most people do not think about people who work at sea, and rarely is the profession seen in the mass media unless there has been an unfortunate accident with spectacular consequences, as it shall be shown in the paper.

In recent years there has been a recurring theme among the professionals of our sector, and this theme is none other than the perception of the criminalization of the profession, its bad public image and the consequent lack of merchant sailors prepared to complete the crews of the ships that transport all the products that our society needs all over the world.

This is not just a perception, is a fact studied by professionals of Maritime law, who demonstrate that the current laws regarding maritime pollution in fact criminalize the Captains in the event of disaster with pollutant spillages. This is a result of the fact that, whether they are guilty or not of having caused the accident that results in the spillage, penal responsibility in disasters of an accidental nature is imputed (Del Corte, 2012).

This is a very important problem that some people offer as one of the reasons for the decrease in the number of merchant sailors (Aboli, 2007). Certainly, one of the reasons for this decrease in the number of people willing to work at sea is the fact that nowadays there are many fewer young people of university age than years ago¹. In addition, nowadays a career at sea is not so profitable (in terms of wages) as other similar professions on land, at least in Western Europe (Sulpice, 2011).

But we must not ignore the fact that the increasingly visible criminalization of crews (Del Corte, 2012), whenever there is a maritime disaster with damage to the environment, can act as a great deterrent for anybody who has the idea of starting a degree in the Science of Navigation. The image of a Captain of a recently sunk

¹ According to the Statistics National Institute of Spain (INE) the Spanish population between 15 and 25 years old decreased from 16.5% to 10.6% from 1995 to 2010.

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3 oil tanker going to the police station handcuffed and surrounded by a couple of
4 policemen, as in the case of "Prestige", for example in "La Vanguardia" (Anon.,
5 2002), is not the most attractive scene if we want to encourage young people to
6 sign up at our Schools of Nautical Studies.
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8 Maritime organizations are aware of this, as shown by the fact that a few years
9 ago the International Maritime Organization (IMO) started a campaign to attract
10 young people to nautical studies (Go to Sea!), in which an improvement of the
11 image of shipping in general was called for (IMO, 2008); or the fact that in the
12 Final Act of the Conference of Parties to the International Convention on
13 Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, held in
14 Manila in June, 2010, it is said expressly that (IMO, 2012):
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17 *"It is recommended that Administrations, shipping companies,*
18 *shipowners, ship managers, seafaring organizations and any other entities*
19 *concerned do their utmost to promote a career at sea among young people*
20 *and to retain existing seafarers within the industry by:*
21 *.1 engendering a more favourable public perception, in particular among*
22 *young people, of the maritime industry;*
23 *.2 promoting a greater awareness and knowledge among young people of*
24 *the opportunities offered by a career at sea;"*
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28 The European Transport Workers' Federation mentioned in an article published in
29 his website in June 2010 (ETF, 2010) the bad image associated with maritime
30 professions associated to the retention of sea workers.
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32 In the Annual Review 2012 of the Seafarers' Rights, the international centre for
33 advancing the legal protection of seafarers, we can read this comment about the
34 image of the profession: *"Global shipping has an image problem. It is not seen as*
35 *an obvious career choice for today's talented younger generation. Too frequently*
36 *it has a bad image; perhaps worse, it has no image".*
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38 Also in Spain, the Association of Spanish Shipowners (ANAVE) has expressed
39 publicly that *"the mass media and the administration have helped to spoil the*
40 *public image of the profession"* (Aboli, 2007), and that one of the reasons for this
41 is the *"unattractive image of the merchant navy in the mass media"* (Carlier,
42 2007).
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44 The subject of the image, directly related to the seafarer shortage problem, was
45 also mentioned in another paper in Maritime Police & Management about the
46 situation in Singapore (Thai et al., 2013).
47

48 For some people, and maybe they are right, the social status of the sailor has
49 plummeted in recent times, whereas that of other technical professions (pilots,
50 architects, engineers, etc.) has not suffered this deterioration of their public image.
51 An example can be found in this last paragraph of an article published in the US
52 Coast Guard website in 2008 (Sinclair, 2008):
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55 *"Public perception will tremendously effect future recruitment and*
56 *retention. The better the public perception of the merchant mariner, the*
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3 *easier the recruitment will be, and the better the candidates will be. We*
4 *will know that public's perception of the merchant mariner has changed*
5 *when John Q. Public begins to think that the terms 'flight crew' and 'ship*
6 *crew' express the same level of professionalism, education, skill, and*
7 *training."*
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11 After a serious sea accident, the mass media publish some news and opinions
12 which are clearly groundless and far-removed from reality, but that become part
13 of the public perception of sailors. This is often due to the ignorance of journalists
14 and the general public about something that one scarcely sees, as is the work of
15 the professionals of the sea. In addition, except in the cases of shipwrecks or
16 disasters, news of sailors scarcely appears in the mass media, as anyone can verify
17 by observing what topics are news during a given period of time (table 1).
18

19 As an example of the topics that usually appear in the Economy section in Spanish
20 newspapers, the news published in this section of the El Correo and El Mundo
21 newspapers during the first two weeks of 2010 was analysed obtaining the results
22 shown in table 1.
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25 *Insert table 1 about here*
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28 Given all this facts, the aim of this work is to present an analysis of the public
29 image of merchant sailors in the Spanish printed press from 1976 to 2007,
30 studying the news related with maritime disasters.
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34 2. LITERATURE REVIEW. As it has been shown in the Introduction, the subject
35 of the poor image of the profession is often mentioned as one of the reason of the
36 luck of seafarers. But, however, we have not found until this moment any
37 analytical study that demonstrates if this is true or not. This is the state of the art.
38 There is not any literature about the image of the seafarers in the press.
39

40 **Furthermore, we have not found any similar study about the image in the press of**
41 **other professions, not even in foreign press.**
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43 So, our research opens a new field that could be very useful for the sea
44 professionals and for the shipowners in order to improve the image of the
45 profession.
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48 3. METHOD. We have based our research in a cualitative and a cuantitative
49 analysis of the news published in Spanish printed media about shipwrecks.
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51 As Krippendorff defined, content analysis is "*the use of replicable and valid*
52 *method for making specific inferences from text to other states or properties of its*
53 *source*" (Krippendorff, 1969).
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55 Using the content analysis, in our research we have analysed all the texts with
56 objectivity, sistematically and with a capacity of generalization of the conclusions.
57 This content analysis allows to formulate from data within texts from press,
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3 reproducible and valid inferences that can be applied to context of the image of
4 seafarers.

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6 Of course, all the context of each analysed pieces of news has been considered
7 into the theoretical framework, including the knowledge of the journalist and
8 readers about the subject of each text and the political and social context.

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10 In order to analyse the image of sailor, twenty-four oil tankers disasters were
11 selected for this study. These are presented in table 2.

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14 *Insert table 2 about here*

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17 These shipwrecks were selected as the most important in terms of tons of spillage
18 and repercussion in the press. This made it easier to analyse the type of
19 information that was given in every case with regard to the crew.

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21 As it will be explained later, the scarcity of news published in the general press on
22 topics related to the profession of merchant sailor forced us to choose news
23 related to shipwrecks in order to have a sufficient number of news items to be able
24 to do a quantitative analysis.

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26 Moreover, we saw that the only facts that appeared in newspapers in sufficient
27 quantity to make this analysis were the wrecks of oil tankers, especially when they
28 had occurred near Spain or they had caused a considerable oil spillage.

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30 To study what was written about these shipwrecks in the Spanish press, the main
31 general newspapers were selected, two of which are national (“El Mundo” and “El
32 País”) and the rest of which are regional, but based in important maritime cities,
33 such as Bilbao, La Coruña and Barcelona, respectively (“El Correo”, “Deia”, “La
34 Voz de Galicia” and “La Vanguardia”). The total number of related news items in
35 these newspapers is 359.

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37 These media were chosen as they are among the most widely read in Spain.
38 Between the four national daily newspapers in Spain, "El País" and "El Mundo"
39 are the two most widely read according to the Spanish Media General Study, with
40 78% of the daily newspapers readership of national circulation in Spain (AIMC,
41 2013).

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43 Between the regional newspapers analysed, "El Correo", "La Voz de Galicia" and
44 "La Vanguardia" are among the seven most widely read newspapers in Spain, and
45 "Deia" is, after “El Correo”, the second most read in Bilbao, one of the most
46 important ports in Spain (AIMC, 2013).

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48 Putting together the readers of the selected newspapers, we get more than 52% of
49 the total readership of newspapers throughout Spain (AIMC, 2013). In this sense,
50 the conclusions of our study can be extrapolated to the total of the generalist
51 Spanish press.

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53 We studied the news from the day following the accident until the day in which
54 the newspapers stopped publishing regular news that deals with the topic of the
55 reasons for the shipwreck and the attitude of the crew or of the shipowners. In the
56 following days the newspapers analysed only continued giving information about
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3 the environmental consequences of the shipwrecks and their political or economic
4 repercussions.

5 We tried to corroborate whether the hypothesis of the bad image of the sailors in
6 the Spanish newspapers has a certain basis by analysing the chosen news items.

7
8 To this end, an index card for each news item was created, in which the following
9 was studied:

- 10
- 11 • its authorship,
- 12 • the type of journalistic genre used,
- 13 • whether it was accompanied by graphics or photos,
- 14 • its length,
- 15 • its location on the page,
- 16 • whether it was linked or not to other news,
- 17 • the type of language used,
- 18 • the headline,
- 19 • if it had subheadings,
- 20 • the topic dealt with,
- 21 • the protagonists,
- 22 • the type of verbs and adjectives used,
- 23 • the abundance or otherwise of value judgments in the texts, and
- 24 • if the image of the merchant sailors in each text was positive,
25 negative or neutral.

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Once the index cards were created, a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the news was carried out in order to extract some conclusions about the valuation that was made of merchant sailors in each news item.

It is quite logical that the image of sailors is a bad one if we are only paying attention to news stories of shipwrecks of oil tankers. However, given the low number of general news items published about the world of the Merchant Navy (Table 1) the only way of seeing how events connected with sailors are explained is to analyse how they are described in news stories related to shipwrecks, which is the only thing which is reported in sufficient quantities to enable us to carry out an analysis.

Furthermore, despite the news being negative itself, the journalist does have the option of writing about those involved in a positive, negative or neutral way. For instance, it is not the same to say that the actions of the Captain prevented an even worse situation, as to say that the Captain was unable to avoid the tragedy.

4. RESULTS. After the analysis of the 359 index cards using the methodology already explained, we obtained the data analysed in the next paragraphs.

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3 Regarding the authorship of the news, the majority of the news items analysed
4 were written by newspaper journalists and special correspondents (52.6%),
5 followed by items written by agencies (30.4%) as seen in table 3.
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8 *Insert table 3 about here*
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11 It is necessary to state that neither the newspaper journalist nor the agencies
12 always give very rigorous information in technical aspects and this is obvious
13 from the numerous erroneous comments and incorrect information that appear in
14 the news. For example, "*a length of 1 000 feet*" is translated as "*a length of 1 000*
15 *metres*" (Anon. 1979) or "*a 9-knot wind*" becomes "*a force 9 wind*" (Mercado,
16 2003). This is undoubtedly due to the fact that the media have few journalists
17 specialized in nautical topics.
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20 This suggests that the perception that the information published is too often what
21 journalists receive, without them doing anything other than publishing it, without
22 questioning what comes from the sources (often partial) or without trying to
23 confirm the information or to give different points of view.
24

25 As regards the type of journalistic genre that was published (table 4), most of the
26 news published in the newspapers analysed in the first few days after the accident
27 was "pure news" (55.1%). Brief news also abounded (21.5%), especially in texts
28 published as a complement to the principal news of the day.
29

30 There was also a relative abundance of articles of opinion (13.9%), since the
31 newspapers tried to give different points of view on the accident. However, most
32 of the articles of opinion were not written by experts in maritime topics, and,
33 therefore, their opinion did not contribute new points of view with regard to what
34 had been published in the previous days.
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37 *Insert table 4 about here*
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40 On the graphical accompaniment that was given to the news, little more than half
41 of the news items (195 out of 359, 54.3%) was accompanied by photographs or
42 graphics, which could be considered a high percentage since the majority of the
43 news in the newspapers is not accompanied by a photo. This is an indication of
44 the fact that this type of news of shipwrecks is given quite a lot of informative
45 relevance in the media, as is logical, especially when it happens in Spanish
46 territory. It is also necessary to note that photographs of shipwrecks are
47 spectacular and very interesting for the newspaper readers.
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50 Except for the first few days after the accident, most of the news was published
51 only in the interior pages of the newspaper (318 out of 359, 88.5%). Only on the
52 first few days after the accident, most of the news came on the front page of the
53 newspaper, as is understandable due to its importance.
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55 If we look at what page the news appeared on, we see that there was no great
56 difference between the situation of the news inside the newspaper as regards if it
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3 appeared on an odd or even numbered page. Fractionally more news appeared on
4 even numbered pages (182 out of 359, 50.6%), which, in theory, are less
5 important and less read in a newspaper.
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7 The vast majority of the news analysed (288 out of 359, 80.3%) occupied less
8 than one page. Only during the first few days of the news did information appear
9 that took up more than one page, but it was not common. This can be explained by
10 the fact that a large part of the news was in a brief format.
11

12 We also see that a large part of the news published and analysed was linked to
13 other principal news of the day (212 out of 359, 59.1%). The majority was
14 information in a brief format that gave more details of people's statements about
15 the facts and figures (authorities, casualties, technicians etc.). This also indicates
16 that the media gave importance to this information.
17

18 On the extension of the news in terms of columns, we can say that most of the
19 news analysed was published in three columns (83 out of 359, 23%), followed by
20 items of 5 columns (77 out of 359, 21.5%) or one and four columns (58 out of
21 359, 16.2%). There was a lot of information in a brief format or of declarations
22 printed in one column. Nevertheless, with the exception of these brief items, most
23 reports were published in more columns. There was even an important number of
24 them that were published over more than five columns (28 out of 359, 7.7%)
25 occupying more than one page. Again, it is a sign of relevance of this news among
26 the information of each day.
27

28 With regard to the presence of subheadings, more than half of the news analysed
29 was published without a subheading (182 out of 359, 50.7%). This, in many cases,
30 was due to the layout or typeface of the news published. Among the most
31 important news analysed and published, the majority had one, or more,
32 subheading, in order to extend the information given in the headline. This gives an
33 idea of the importance that the newspaper wants to give to this information in
34 each case.
35

36 As far the contents, when we studied the principal topics dealt with in the news
37 analysed seven principal topics repeated themselves. We see, as is logical, (figure
38 1) that the sinking of the ships and the possible reasons was analysed most ahead
39 of the second topic, which was that of the Captain's responsibility. Then, further
40 back, came the topic of the rescue of the ship (in 4th place) and judicial questions
41 (in 5th place). An important topic like pollution came in 3rd place, but it is
42 necessary to remember that this work is limited to the analysis of the news in
43 which the disaster was the main topic. Newspapers continued dealing with the
44 topic of pollution and its consequences for a long time.
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48 *Insert figure 1 about here*
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52 It's worth noting that a topic which in this type of accidents should be a priority,
53 future actions to prevent these disasters, is the topic which was dealt with least
54 frequency in the news analysed (7th place), and when it did appear it was
55 principally in opinion articles. This indicates that for the media the events of this
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3 type are very interesting for the readers, but that they are not very involved in
4 using them as an educational tool for the public.

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6 Looking at the protagonists who received most attention in the news, we see
7 (figure 2) that the authorities and the Captain were the principal “actors”
8 mentioned in comparison with other protagonists. They were followed by the
9 ship. We can see that much of the news was focused on the Captain, but almost
10 always to emphasize something negative about his action during the accident.
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13 *Insert figure 2 about here*
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17 An important part of the 359 pieces of news analysed (figure 3) contained the
18 journalist’s value judgements, which were not always correctly documented. We
19 can understand that the writer does not possess sufficient knowledge of the world
20 of the profession of merchant sailor to value the information impartially, which
21 sometimes leads him to make these unfounded value judgements. This causes him
22 to unintentionally give an erroneous image of Captains and shipping in general. It
23 is not a good professional practice for a journalist in a news story to make so
24 many value judgements. He should be more neutral (BBC, 2012).
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27 *Insert figure 3 about here*
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31 Though it is rather subjective to determine what image of a topic is offered in the
32 news, from our point of view, and from our study of the news analysed for
33 comments, vocabulary used, photographs etc., we obtained the result that 140 out
34 of 359 (39%) of news gave a negative image of the profession or of the shipping
35 sector, as opposed to 90 out of 359 (25.1%) that gave a positive image and 129
36 out of 359 (35.9%) a neutral image (figure 4).
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38
39 The percentage of news giving a negative image seems to be very high, since
40 more neutrality in the treatment of the information would be expected. It is true
41 that in an accident of the type which this work analyses (oil tanker disasters with
42 serious damage to the environment and with spectacular images) it is difficult to
43 emphasize positive things. However, it is not the same thing to say, for example,
44 that despite the good knowledge of the Captain of the port the ship crashed into an
45 unknown reef, as to say, as in "La Voz de Galicia", that “*The crude-tanker should*
46 *have waited until the tide had risen*” (Anon., 1976), when in this case
47 (“Urquiola”) the tide had nothing to do with the accident.

48
49 Although the event is a negative one, the image given of the Captain can be
50 neutral or positive by, for example, emphasizing the Captain’s efforts to avoid
51 further damage.
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54 *Insert figure 4 about here*
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3 With regard to the type of language used in the news, after analysing the
4 frequency with which words appeared, it is clear that two nouns in particular
5 occurred regularly: "captain" and "oil tanker". "Captain" is the word most often
6 repeated in headlines (including subheadings) on 91 occurrences. We would
7 expect many mentions of the damaged ship to appear in headlines, as is the case
8 ("oil tanker" 87 times, "vessel" 45 times and "ship" 39 times), but the Captain of
9 the ship should not be mentioned so much, unless he, owing to his action or lack
10 of it, was directly responsible for the accident.
11

12 It is also surprising that words such as "shipwreck" (17 times), "fire" (15 times),
13 "explosion" (9 times), etc., did not appear with more frequency.
14

15 It might be deduced by reading the headlines that the Captain was the centre of
16 the news, thus increasing a negative image of the profession by directly
17 associating this figure with that of shipwrecks.
18

19 As for the prevailing nouns and adjectives in the texts of the news, it is clear that
20 negative words were most common: "disaster" (27 times), "old" (13 times),
21 "consequences" (10 times), "ecological" (40 times), "catastrophe" (16 times),
22 "crime" (6 times), "seriously" (14 times), etc. Nouns or adjectives with a positive
23 meaning, such as "professional" (10 times), "hero" (4 times), "veteran" (6 times),
24 etc., were used less. The image that these adjectives and nouns give is quite
25 negative for the professional crew of merchant ships.
26

27 Carrying out a quantitative analysis of the number of positive verbs and the
28 number of negative ones, it is clear that the latter were employed much more
29 frequently. "To avoid" (21 times), "to save" (15 times) and "to rescue" (7 times)
30 were the most frequent positive verbs. But there were many more negative verbs.
31 339 negative verbs were used in comparison with 129 positive ones in the news
32 analysed. Among the negative verbs we can highlight: "to threaten" (20 times), "to
33 spill" (12 times), "to accuse" (10 times), "to denounce" (8 times), and other
34 similar verbs.
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38 5. DISCUSSION. If we carry out a qualitative study of the contents of the news,
39 especially those which, from our point of view, offered a negative image of the
40 Merchant Navy, we see that the journalists who wrote the news added value
41 judgements to the texts. These value judgements in many cases did not correspond
42 to reality and they misinformed, rather than reported, on the reasons for the
43 disasters, and were based on the information that the authorities issued as the
44 events happened. The journalists, undoubtedly as a result of not having any more
45 information, limited themselves to publishing in most cases the notes that they
46 were given. This may be logical, but an attempt to corroborate this information
47 and to give other points of view, for example speaking with Captains of oil
48 tankers trying to give an explanation for the actions of the Captains involved, was
49 missing.
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52 In the majority of opinion articles and editorials published, only the official
53 versions were ratified and the articles were not impartial at all when it came to
54 analysing the facts. This is worrying, especially bearing in mind that at the
55 moment of writing these articles the facts and the reasons for the accidents had not
56 even begun to be investigated officially. It is necessary to remember that in the
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3 majority of maritime disasters the reasons for accidents are not easy to determine,
4 and the investigation normally determines that a series of events (and not just one)
5 lead to the disaster.

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7 Equally, it must be emphasized that the majority of information referring to the
8 owners of the oil tankers involved was quite critical of their activities and
9 generalized the bad practice of some shipowners, extending it to the whole sector.
10 For example, by writing that "*The sea is dominated by the pirates*" (Galíndez,
11 1992).

12 Here are some examples of value judgements and opinions of journalists:

- 14 • *"It is rather curious that such a large ship carrying such a large load was*
15 *captained from one side of the planet to the other by an elderly man with a*
16 *delicate heart, who, furthermore, did not have sufficient knowledge of*
17 *English to manage adequately"* (Ordaz, 2002) on the Captain of the
18 "Prestige", whom in the same news item the journalist labels as
19 "unsociable" and of "bad character";
- 21 • On the reasons for the sinking of ships a Naval Engineer in "El País"
22 points to *"the low qualification and training of the sailors"* (Casal, 2002);
- 24 • *"The veteran 67-year-old sailor, who had undergone heart surgery,*
25 *attended a six-day workshop in July in order to obtain a temporary*
26 *permit"* (Méndez, 2002), in "El Correo" on the Captain of the "Prestige";
- 28 • *"The ship was sailing very close to the coast"* (Anon., 2002), in "El
29 Mundo";
- 31 • *"...the declarations of the captain to 'La Voz de Galicia' do not clarify,*
32 *however, where this container came from, nor how it could have ended up*
33 *in the hull of the ship causing such destruction that, in the end, it led to the*
34 *ship sinking"* (Anon., 2002), in "El País" about the declaration of the
35 Captain of a ship which was struck by a container;

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39 After the study and analysis of the news selected, several ideas can be obtained in
40 relation to the work hypothesis that the image of the Merchant Navy in the press
41 is not good.

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43 It can be seen that, in spite of the presence of subjects related to the maritime
44 sector in the pages of newspapers being scarce, when it is a question of informing
45 about important accidents the frequency of the appearance of news increases,
46 especially in the days following the events, with much of the news linked to the
47 principal news item.

49 It is also significant the fact that this news has a notable presence on the front
50 page and on important inside pages, and a very high percentage is accompanied
51 by a photograph or graphics.

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53 In relation to the most frequently used topics, the reasons for the accident and the
54 Captain's responsibility are the principal topics. This might contribute to make the
55 image of the sailors worse.

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3 The captain is one of the people mentioned most often, but almost always from a
4 negative point of view, ignoring the fact that he might not have been responsible
5 for the accident and that thanks to him the damage was less serious.
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7 This leads to the conclusion that the the press do not normally take any notice of
8 the maritime sector except when catastrophes happen, which does not exactly help
9 people to have a normal impression of the Merchant Navy and of its importance in
10 our life, since the only information that appears it is of sinkings, fires, pollution,
11 etc.
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13 Even though, in the days following the initial accident, the media tries to
14 complement the information that they have been offering with opinion articles,
15 these are written by people who are not experts in the subjects they write about.
16 Furthermore, these articles are very subjective, do not extend beyond points of
17 view of what has happened and do not contribute valid, new or relevant
18 information, being limited to accepting information published on previous days
19 without questioning it.
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21 This can cause the reader to feel that the newspaper informs him widely about the
22 events, with articles written by different experts. But, in fact, the newspaper does
23 no more than repeatedly give the same information, which in many cases is issued
24 by the authorities (an interested party). It does not give any more points of view or
25 a more objective analysis of the facts, as could be, for example, the opinions of
26 real technical personnel on oil tankers, which could give readers clues to the
27 reasons for certain actions taken by the captain and the crew.
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29 It can be observed, equally, that the news that is published is given quite a lot of
30 importance in the newspapers, which means that the readers accept the importance
31 of the fact and receive a lot of information. However, this does not mean that the
32 information is necessarily good and objective, as has been mentioned before.
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34 Also worth noting, when analysing the language used in the media, is the high
35 incidence of negative verbs and adjectives referring to shipowners and crews,
36 much more so than those of a positive nature. This, together with numerous
37 poorly researched value judgements written by journalists is what leads to the
38 confirmation of the initial hypothesis of a bad image that follows the Merchant
39 Navy. It is clear that the reader does not receive impartial and neutral information,
40 but is led (unintentionally, certainly) to thinking negatively about them. To this it
41 is necessary to add the high percentage of published news that gives a negative
42 image in relation to that which offers a neutral or positive stance, as can be seen
43 from the examples included in the analysis.
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47 6. CONCLUSIONS. The analysis of the contents leads to the following
48 conclusions:
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- 50 • Little news on the Merchant Navy is published in Spanish newspapers, and
51 when newspapers do it, most of it is bad news.
- 52 • Bad news is often published in the most important pages.
- 53 • The subjects given most emphasis are the most negative.
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- The Captain and ship are the main protagonists in the news, but normally in a negative sense.
- Journalist and others writing about these events are not experts on maritime questions.
- Journalists often express their own opinion, and often this opinion is not very well researched.
- Negative words are the most used.
- The image given of the profession of merchant sailor is negative.

This seems to point out that journalists, in most cases, do not have the necessary training to evaluate the information that they receive from different sources objectively, and lack of time then obliges them to publish this information without checking it with other sources. What is worse, they often add their own value judgements, which are usually erroneous. In addition, they overuse negative adjectives or clichés with regard to the maritime sector.

For all these reasons, the main conclusion reached after the analysis of the index cards is that, as was suggested in the work hypothesis, it seems that in the newspapers studied the image given of the Merchant Navy in general, and of professionals of the sea, especially, is negative, and this is what is transmitted to the general public, which is informed of these events by the mass media. To sum up, the information that the public receives is incomplete and this is compounded by how little the general public really knows about these technical subjects. The public, therefore, is given a slanted, negative image which, in many cases, does not correspond to the reality of the professional world of the Merchant Navy.

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Table 1: Combined Ranking of topics in the Economy sections in the Spanish newspapers “El Correo” and “El Mundo” in the first 15 days of 2010.

Ranking	Topics	Number of news items
1°	Unemployment	72
2°	Banking	68
3°	Energy	33
4°	Air transport	31
5°	Companies	29
6°	Crisis	23
7°	Local trade	23
8°	European Union	20
9°	Stock exchange	20
10°	Automotion	19
11°	Housing	16
12°	Inflation	10
13°	Savings	9
14°	Tourism	9
15°	Industry	7
16°	Terrestrial transport	7
17°	Taxes	6
18°	Tobacco industry	5
19°	Travel	4
20°	Insurance	4
21°	Telecommunications	4
22°	Salaries	3
23°	Construction	3
24°	Toys	2

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25°	Shows	1
26°	Social Security	1
27°	Research and development and innovation	1
28°	Management	1
29°	Sea transport	1

Table 2: Selected shipwrecks analysed between 1976 and 2007.

Name of ship	Date of shipwreck
“Urquiola”	12 May 1976
“Hawaiian Patriot”	23 Feb 1977
“Andros Patria”	31 Dec 1978
“Amoco Cadiz”	16 Mar 1978
“Team Castor”	28 Apr 1979
“Aegean Captain”	19 Jul 1979
“Independenta”	15 Nov 1979
“Irenes Serenade”	23 Feb 1980
“Castillo de Bellver”	5 Aug 1983
“Nova”	6 Dec 1985
“Odyssey”	11 Nov 1988
“Exxon Valdez”	24 Mar 1989
“Khark 5”	19 Dec 1989
“Aragon”	29 Dec 1989
“Haven”	11 Apr 1991
“Agip Abruzzo”	10 Apr 1991
“ABT Summer”	28 May 1991
“Katine P”	19 Apr 1992
“Aegean Sea”	3 Dec 1992
“Braer”	5 Jan 1993
“Sea Empress”	15 Feb 1996
“Erika”	12 Dec 1999
“Prestige”	13 Nov 2002
“Hebei Spirit”	6 Dec 2007

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Table 3: Authorship of the analysed texts.

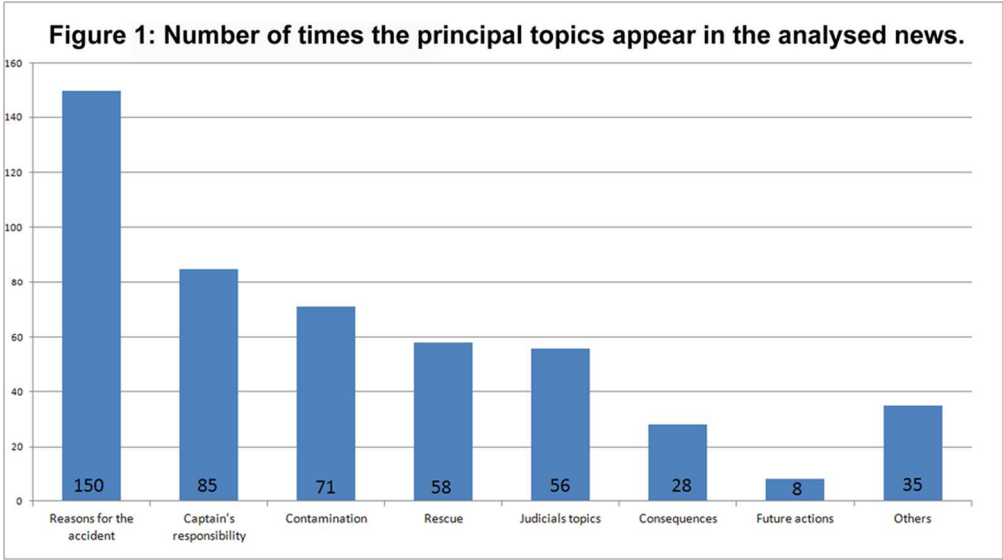
Authorship	Number of news	Percentage
Newspaper journalist	154	42.9%
Special correspondent	35	9.7%
Agencies	109	30.4%
Others	61	17.0%

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Table 4: Type of news in the texts analysed.

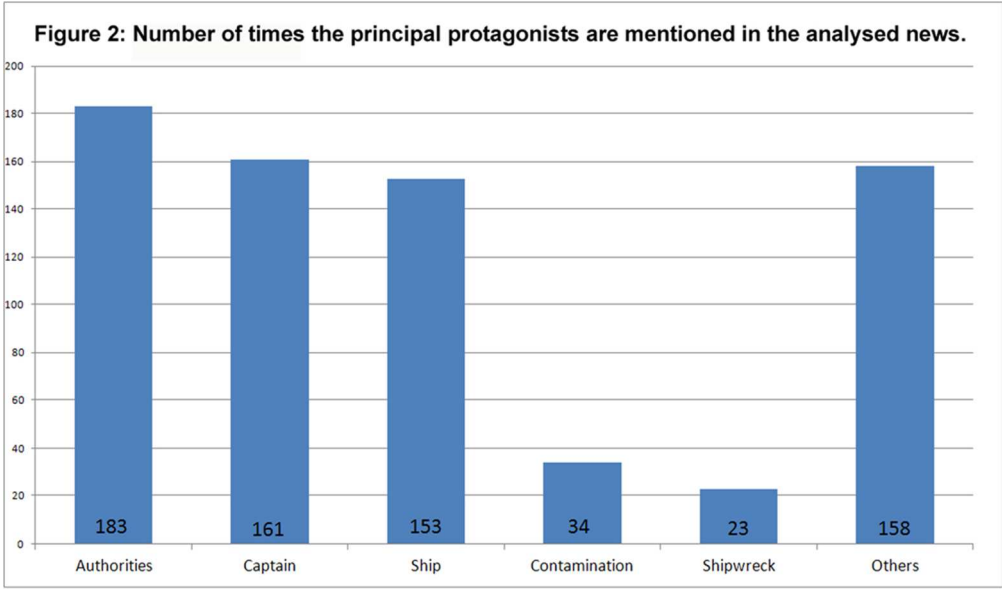
Type of news	Texts analysed	Percentage
News	198	55.1%
Brief news	77	21.5%
Opinion	50	13.9%
Interview	16	4.5%
Feature	14	3.9%
Photo news	4	1.1%

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Number of times the principal topics appear in the analysed news.
160x89mm (180 x 180 DPI)

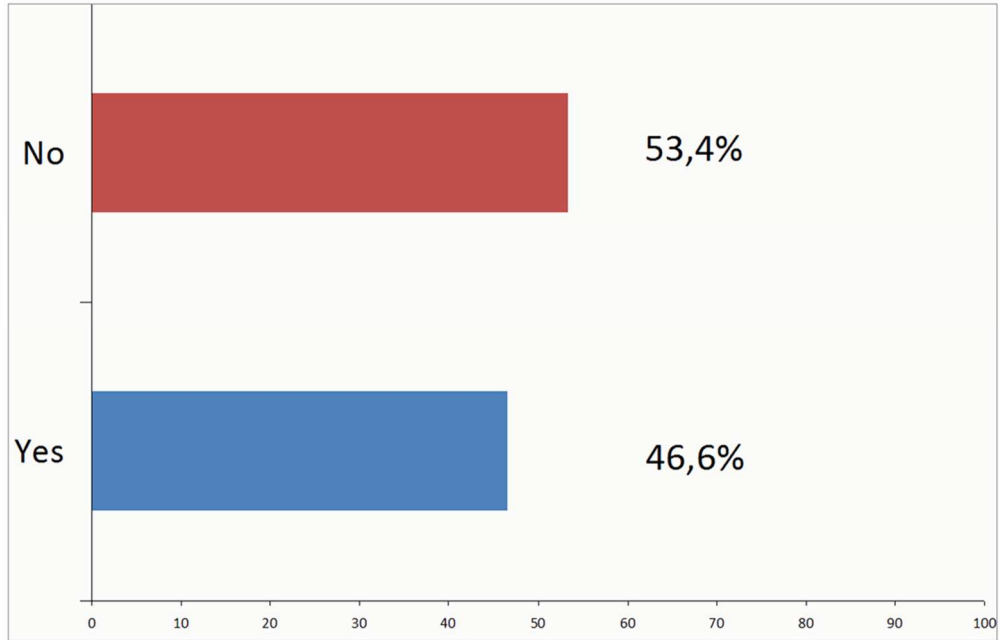
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Number of times the principal protagonists are mentioned in the analysed news.
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Figure 3: Presence of journalist's value judgement in the published news.



Presence of journalist's value judgement in the published news.
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Figure 4: Image of the merchant sailors in the analysed news.

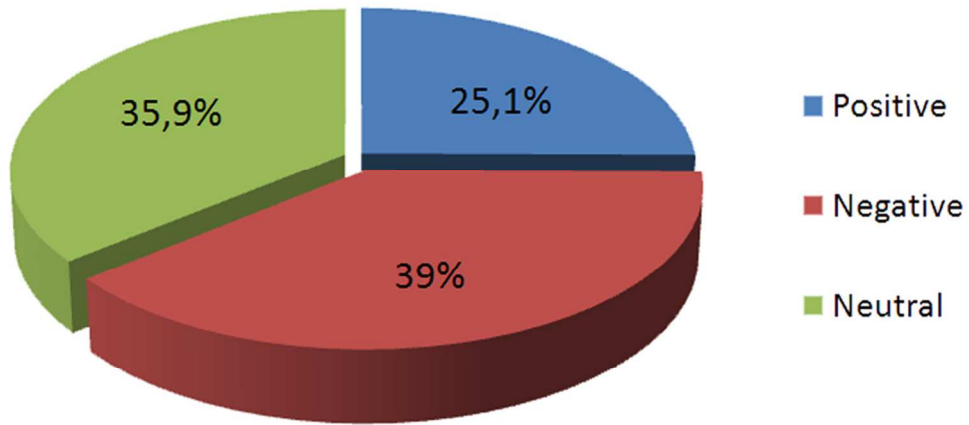


Image of the merchant sailors in the analysed news.
160x95mm (180 x 180 DPI)