Tourist information in Spanish and Mexican digital media during Covid-19

Información turística en medios digitales españoles y mexicanos durante la Covid-19

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Abstract: In a context marked by the Covid-19 pandemic, this research focuses on the study of the informative treatment of tourism in Spain and Mexico; countries whose economies are nourished, at a high proportion, by the entertainment industry. For this purpose, a content analysis was conducted based on the observation of three digital media in Spain (*El Mundo*, *El País* and *La Vanguardia*) and another three in Mexico (*El Universal*, *Milenio* and *Expansión*). A sample of 524 news items related to tourism was collected from March 2020 to March 2022. The purpose of this work was to find out, longitudinally, how tourist information has been approached during the health crisis from the perspective of framing. The results indicate that negative economic issues and attribution of responsibility have marked the informative treatment of the press in tourism coverage.

Key words: Covid-19, framing, news, digital press, content analysis.

Resumen: En un contexto marcado por la pandemia de Covid-19, esta investigación se centra en el estudio del tratamiento informativo del turismo en España y México, países cuyas economías se nutren, en una elevada proporción, de la industria de ocio. Para ello, se efectuó un análisis de contenido a partir de la observación de tres medios digitales de España (*El Mundo, El País* y *La Vanguardia*) y otros tres de México (*El Universal, Milenio* y *Expansión*). Se recogió una muestra compuesta por 524 noticias relacionadas con turismo desde marzo de 2020 hasta marzo de 2022. El propósito de este trabajo consistió en conocer, de manera longitudinal, cómo se ha enfocado la información turística durante la crisis sanitaria desde la perspectiva del *framing*. Los resultados señalan que los temas económicos de carácter negativo y de atribución de responsabilidad han marcado el tratamiento informativo de la prensa en la cobertura turística.

Palabras clave: Covid-19, *framing*, noticias, prensa digital, análisis de contenido.

Introduction

By the end of 2019, a global crisis unleashed because of an infectious virus called Sars-CoV-2, whose origin was located in Wuhan, China. This virus mainly affects the respiratory tract, causing an infectious disease known as Covid-19 that shook all of society. A local outbreak turned into a global health care crisis up to the point that World Health Organization (WHO) would soon alert about an unprecedented international pandemic (Yang *et al.*, 2020). Since March 2020, European and later South American countries started to impose severe mobility restrictions and temporary quarantines, social distancing, and lockdowns in most of commercial and business sectors. The decisions to control the outbreak had a heavy impact on all economic spheres; in particular, tourism and leisure instantly felt the harshness of the facts (Mantecón, 2020), as in most of the countries, it implied human mobility restrictions.

The pandemic caused one of the largest crises ever in tourist industry, considered an economic and cultural growth driver, with outcomes hard to assess in the short and middle terms (Villacé-Molinero *et al.*, 2021). The importance of tourist communication has been fundamental since the earliest cases of the dissemination of the virus. Media consumption experienced a sharp increase over the compulsory lockdown (Tejedor *et al.*, 2021), which turned them into the active informers of the citizens during the most critical phases of the lockdown. As the extent of the health crisis was understood, the information circulated by the main media and governmental agencies became the way to ensure credibility and accountability, and in this way, establish communication strategies to build up trust-based relations with the population to ease the concerns and lower the intention to travel of tourists (Cahyanto *et al.*, 2016).

Due to the above, analyzing the news coverage on tourism will allow us to understand its influence as a critical activity in which social, political, and economic elements interact. The framing model applied to tourist information offers the possibility to tourist information offers the possibility to advance in conceptual discussions on their media coverage, and thereby, acknowledging the communication strategies that may produce, in the best of cases, the transformation of the sector. In this way, the general purpose of the study is to analyze the treatment of tourist information during the global Covid-19 pandemic in the main digital newspapers in Spain and Mexico.

Theoretical framework

Tourism in times of pandemic: review of previous studies

As regards health care crisis, the large information volume is due to the global scale of the pandemic. Recent works have analyzed how the cycle of crisis attention is influenced by its severity and the news presented in the media, which modify the perceptions of risk, and this directly affects the travelers' decision making as well as attitudes toward the disease (Villacé-Molinero *et al.*, 2021).

It is worth pointing out that global tourism has been exposed to a wide range of crises in the recent past (Gössling *et al.*, 2020). Despite pandemics entail a grave problem for society and leisure industry, they also offer the chance of studying the coverage of several crises over the years. Downs (1972) speaks of a systematic attention cycle that modifies the attitudes and behaviors of audiences toward most issues; it comes from the way the communication media interact with their audiences. The main stages of the crisis attention cycle (Downs, 1972; Hall, 2002), also applicable to the stages of the recent health care crisis (Villacé-Molinero *et al.*, 2021), are the following:

1. *Pre-problem stage*: still unnoticed by the general public, only a handful of experts is aware of the situation. In the case of the ongoing pandemic, it was located in November and December 2019, when the presence of the disease was in the origin source (Wuhan, China).

2. *Alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm*; the stage comprises the raising of public awareness regarding the problem and comes as a decision-making process to solve the present situation within a deadline. Over this time, the dissemination of the virus toward other counties from Europe to America, as well restriction measures and lockdown management in most of the countries were reported.

3. *Realizing the cost of significant progress*; the third stage starts when people identify the costs, economic and social, to solve the problem. Tourism industry measured the economic losses caused by the pandemic and international travel restrictions. After the Covid-19 crisis, recovery strategies were devised at national and international level in most of the countries.

4. *Gradual decline of intense public interest*: the public interest gradually disappears, it is the stage in which the perception of risk decreases,

and the resuming or reactivation of social and touristic activities is stimulated. Over this term, information on the pandemic decreased, while tourism recovery strategies increased.

5. *Post-problem stage*; in the last stage of the cycle, the global crisis was under control (vaccination and immunization), and the media focused their attention on other topics and limited health care information.

Also, as regards studies on tourism, authors such as Barrientos-Báez *et al.* (2023) analyzed the main publicity campaigns on tourism in a digital Spanish medium, noticing, by and large, that tourist campaigns are a reflection of the citizens' motivations and underscore their patrimonial or environmental values. In like manner, another study analyzed the treatment of the pandemic in the European press and it was verified that it mainly focused on topics related to health care (Vállez and Pérez-Montoro, 2020).

Addressing the agenda setting theory

Agenda setting is one of the most popular theories in communication sciences. According to Ardèvol-Abreu *et al.* (2020), and in line with attention cycles, the underlying concept in this paradigm allows establishing an explanatory model on how communication media define the decision making of the audiences and the way spectators modify their opinion according to the events. McCombs (2006: 107) clarifies that the effects "are modeled to a considerable extent by the characteristics of the media messages, and to a lesser one, by the receivers' characteristics". Therefore, the agenda setting enlists the topics with the most influence or space in the media. That is to say, there is research on the importance the communication media have in society and the way public agenda is fixed in the citizens' discussion.

Over this line, previous studies indicate that the journalists' everyday conceptions regarding the selection and exposure to news coverage influence the public's perception on what the most significant topics are (Protess and McCombs, 1991). This is due, indeed, to the role of the agenda setting and the organization capability of information in the long term. In a context of media conditioned by the impact of the pandemic, these dramatically increased information regarding Covid-19. Hence, the present research study sets off from a clear premise: analyze the information treatment of the media (in short, digital press) when setting the public agenda on tourism in a pandemic context.

Framing model: general overview

The background of the framing theory dates back to the concept of frame put forward by Goffman (1974) from a sociological dimension. Later on, and based on Entman (1993), the concept of framing consolidates in studies on the information media and their relationship with the audiences. Therefore, a great deal of research works has resorted to the framing theory as a very useful tool to study the media (Entman, 1993; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2003; Igartua, 2006; Matthes, 2009; Muñiz, 2020; Piñeiro-Naval and Mangana, 2018, 2019). On the basis of the definition of the framing concept proposed by Hallahan (1999), it is explained that it is a paradigm to examine the messages and possible responses of the audiences via the frames utilized by the transmitters of these messages.

By referring to the definitions of framing theory, Entman (1993: 52) defines the framing process as "selecting some aspects of the perceived reality and make them more salient in the communication text". This author also stresses the fundamental functions of framing, which are defining problems, diagnosing causes, producing possible moral judgements, and finally, suggesting solutions to justify the treatment and foreseeing the outcomes of any given issue. In other order of ideas, the concept of news frame is underscored to refer to the way the producer (journalist) frames a topic and fixes a repertoire of attributes on this. Thus, it is possible to elucidate that:

> A news frame refers to the angle, framing, perspective or treatment of an information item that is expressed in the election, emphasis or importance given to the various elements and, particularly, the way in which these elements covary more or less emphasized in a text. By means of covariation or correlation analysis between emphasis and importance given to each item in information texts, it is possible to extract the news frames as indices that allow grading or qualifying an individual message or a system of messages (Igartua *et al.*, 2005: 158).

In order to identify the frames in the papers, the way the frames in news programs are designed according to the object of study is examined. By and large, academicians have stated their support for the application previously defined and concise operationalization of the frames in content analyses. To do so, following De Vreese (2005), after several studies on news framings, the typology of frames to perform a methodological approach on the news was examined. For instance, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) have studied the general frames commonly utilized to study news programs and are *a-priori*

variables that are of great importance in journalism studies; this is, conflict, responsibility attribution, economic, human-interest, and moral frames.

The notion of framing has gained notability in communication disciplines, oriented to research on media contents such as the studies on the relation between media and public opinion (De Vreese, 2005; Muñiz, 2020; Piñeiro-Naval *et al.*, 2022). In recent years, the framing theory has also been used in research on tourist information, as the media perform an important role in the public perception regarding the dissemination of tourism problems and frame them in specific manners (Dirikx and Gelders, 2010; McComas and Shanahan, 1999). In this way, the study by Dirikx and Gelders (2010) emphasizes the way Dutch and French presses frame climate change via content analysis of the generic frames proposed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), who verify that the conflict frame was resorted to less frequently in the UN Climate Change Conference.

Using this proposal, it is possible to identify some relevant studies on tourism and their implications in media coverage. Among them, noticeable is Huang *et al.* (2016), who examine the tourists' intentions as regards the way environmental action is framed. For their part, Clark and Nyaupane (2020) analyzed the way the communication media frame the phenomenon of *overtourism* (i.e., massification of tourists) via the content analysis of various articles in communication media, demonstrating that these tend to depict tourism negatively and to simplify the implications of its socioeconomic and environmental impacts. In like manner, Wu *et al.* (2012) approached the study of framings to describe, analyze, and explain the creation or tourist policies by means of digital news.

Likewise, Luther and Zhou (2005) identified the news framings in the coverage of SARS-CoV-2 by newspapers in China and the United States. Therefore, the aforementioned research works give an account of the applicability of the framing theory to studies on tourist information, enabling the understanding how the media perform a fundamental role in the public perception of the phenomenon of tourism.

Goals and methodology

The overall purpose of the study consisted in analyzing the treatment of tourist information during the global pandemic caused by Covid-19 in the main digital media in Spain and Mexico. The specific objectives were:

- SO1: Analyze the topic agenda of digital media in Spain and Mexico according to geographic origin, ideology, and news item tone.

- SO2: Contrast the framings detected in the news items analyzed according to geographic origin, ideology, and news item tonality.
- SO3: Identify whether there is correspondence in the health care crisis attention phases and the treatment of tourist information in the news items published over the pandemic.

Once the theoretical background were reviewed and the goals established, the following hypotheses were put forward according to previous empirical evidence:

- H1: over the Covid-19 pandemic, the dominant tourist information agenda was linked to economic aspects, with a negative assessment tone.
- H2: between March 2020 and March 2022, the evolution of tourist information adapted to the intermediate stages of the crisis attention cycle.

The methodology consisted in content analysis (Krippendorff, 1989; Igartua, 2006; Neuendorf, 2017; Piñeiro-Naval, 2020), as it allows observing systematically, objectively, and quantitatively of the news items' textual frames. A longitudinal study was proposed, which lasted from March 30th, 2020, (date decreed in *Diario Oficial de la Federación* [Official Journal of the Federation] as the beginning of the pandemic in Mexico, and soon after the Spanish government declared a State of Alarm on March 14th) to the end of March, 2022; comprising thus the two calendar years over which the pandemic produced a heavier impact. Following, and as described in later sections, in April 2022, the analysis units were selected and in May, their codification was carried out.

In this way, a sample composed of news items disseminated in three digital media from Spain (*El País*, *El Mundo,* and *La Vanguardia*) and three from Mexico (*El Universal*, *Milenio,* and *Expansión*), comprising a total $N = 524$ news items, which are the analysis units. This selection of the countries is because Spain as well as Mexico have made tourism one of the key sectors in their economies. In this regard, data registered by *Instituto Nacional de Estadística* [National Institute for Statistics] (2022) state that Spain received a total of 71.6 million visitors, 129.5% more than the previous year (2021). For its part, Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía [National Institute for Statistics and Geography] pointed out, in 2021, that 55.3 million tourists visited the country (INEGI, 2021). By the same token, the (convenience) sampling in these contexts was because of the geographic reality of the researchers and their keen interest in grasping their surrounding reality. As a selection criterion for the digital

media, it was decided that information sources were nationwide papers, and with different ideologies or political leanings. In this regard, two are center-left (*El País* and *Milenio*), two center (*La Vanguardia* and *El Universal*), and center-right (*El Mundo* and *Expansión*). In like manner, in relation to the selection of Spanish newspapers as object of study, it was fundamentally because they are the generalist papers with the largest readership (Statista, 2022). Conversely, for the mexican media, a study by Reuters Institute (2021) demonstrated that among the most trusted papers by the mexican population, *El Universal*, *Milenio* and *Expansión* are to be found.

As regards the gathering of analysis units, they were chosen at random one day over the 25 months of the analyzed term. For the sampling inclusion criterion, we resorted to the online archive of the digital media selected, in this way, a search was run using the key word: tourism, which had to be in the heading and text of the item. Thereby, the review allowed establishing tourism as main search, consequently, excluding those that did not meet the criteria above as an information item and/or those that did not allow access due to discontinuation or payment overdue.

The book of codes utilized for the analysis includes the following sections:[1]

1. Basic identification and control data of each analyzed item such as codification date, codifier's name, publication date, day of the week, identification in the digital paper, and its territorial scope.

2. The news items' information attributes. The general characteristics of the item are observed, e.g., genre and section of the item.

3. The assessment tone of the news items is based on previous research (Martin and White, 2005; Zunino, 2016). Its importance is because the news items are explicitly presented as negative or positive usually become more relevant. Therefore, elements with a negative, neutral or positive load were detected to later assess the tone of the item.

4. The analysis of the topic agenda of the item, that is to say, the specific topic, the predominant approach of the content of the news. Mutually excluding categories that were considered for this polytomous variable are: 1) politics; 2) economy and business; 3) culture; 4) environment and sustainability; 5) crime and public security; 6) health care; and 7) other.

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1 For extensive and precise information, see the book of codes in full at *Open Science Framework*: https://osf.io/a5my9

5. Finally, the tourist frame is analyzed, in which six approaches are assessed by means of 22 questions that measure the presence or absence (binary or dummy variables) of aspects related to the news items' frames. The 22 questions were produced after a previous research on tourism coverage in the media (Hansen, 2020) and are grouped (as specified in entry 9 of the book of codes; full version available at: https://osf.io/a5my9) in six frames described below.

From a deductive approximation, the typology of generic news frames was clarified to ascertain the reference frameworks used in the study (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000). Therefore, a bibliographic review was carried out on similar studies (Catalán-Matamoros and Peñafiel-Saiz, 2019; Dirikx and Gelders, 2010; Hansen, 2020; Seraphin *et al.*, 2018), considering the six following frames: 1) conflict frame: it emphasizes the frictions between tourists and locals; 2) environmental and climatic: it emphasizes that tourism may relate to environment and nature; 3) economic and commercial: it reports on the economic side of tourism and its impact on individuals, groups, institutions, firms, regions or countries; human interest: it provides the presentation of a tourism-related problem with a personal or emotional vision; 5) accountability: it makes the government, community, an identified group of people or an individual responsible for a tourism-related problem or affair; and finally, 6) social enrichment: it focuses on how tourism may improve the locals' lives. For the codification problem, each item had to be analyzed in function of each of the framings and questions in the book of codes, being it possible to choose more than one framing for the item, since they were not mutually excluding categories.

For the codification process, the $N = 524$ news items within a period from May 21st to June 1st, 2022. The codification of the sample was carried out by the main author, in accordance with the book of codes designed for such end. With a view to assessing the reliability of the study, another codifier analyzed a random subsample of 53 news items (~10% of the unit analysis). In order to do so, this collaborator was previously informed about the work, and she was told about the book of codes. In the end, the mean value of inter-codifier reliability of the 49 variables, excluding those of basic identification data and the constants of the study, displayed a mean $αk = 0.89$, being highly satisfactory in this respect (Hayes and Krippendorff, 2007; Krippendorff, 2011).[2]

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2 For further details, see the value of Krippendorff's alpha for all the study variables at *Open Science Framework*: https://osf.io/r7v63.

Results

General results

The information coverage on tourism during the pandemic is noticed in Graph 1.[3] In August 2020, it had more exposure in the analyzed digital newspapers (7.1%, $n = 37$). This means there was an increase in news on tourism over summer vacation; it was followed by May 2020 (6.5%, $n = 34$), two months after the state of alarm was decreed. Therefore, it had a significant increase in a period of preparation for summer vacation. Conversely, in 2021 there is a higher number of mentions of items related to tourism in February (6.3%, $n = 33$). Later on, there is a slight increase over the vacation term in June (4.8%, $n = 25$), while by the end of October, the coverage previous to Christmas vacation increases (4.2%, $n = 22$). In the early months of 2022, mentions in the press considerably drop; though, there was a slight increase in publications related to tourism in March (3.6%, $n = 19$), exactly two years after the beginning of the pandemic.

On a different note, an analysis of the information attributes of the item within the journalistic converge was run; it was verified that the genre with the most presence was informative with 63.7% of the items on tourism and a lower presence, opinion (13.5%) and interpretative /hybrid (22.7%). As regards genre in function of the country of origin, there was a considerable number of Mexican items encompassed in the informative genre, accounting for 77.8% of the analysis units in the Mexican papers, while 56.6% of the Spanish items. In this regard, Table 1 shows the significant differences between the countries and journalist genre used in the news items [χ^2 (2, $n = 524$) = 22.816; $p < 0,001$].

As for the selection of the news items, economy/enterprise prevails (30,5%), it is followed by national (19.5%); politics (11.8%); tourism and travel (10.3%); cultural (8.4%); opinion (7.6%); society (6.7%); and finally, international (5.2%). Differences defined by country according to the item's section are displayed in Table 2. It is noticed that both in Spain and Mexico the economic section prevailed, though with no significant differences between the countries paying attention to corrected typified results. By contrast, there are differences in national, more frequent in spanish papers, and politics, more common in mexican ones [χ^2 (7, $n = 524$) = 35,51; $p < 0,001$].

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3 All graphs and tables are at the end of the article in Annex (Editor's note).

As regards the territorial scope of the items, national was the most common (31%); then, local (25,4%); international (22,9%); and finally, regional (20,6%). Therefore, revising the differences in the information treatment according to Table 3, in Spain, the local prevailed (28,7%) as compared with Mexico, which had a larger national scope (43,2%) [χ^2 (3, n = 524) = 18,824; p < 0,001]. As regards the editorial line of the newspapers: 48,5% of the items is classified as center political ideology (*La Vanguardia* and *El Universal*), followed by 30,7% of center-right items (*El Mundo* and *Expansión*), and 20,8% center-left (*El País* and *Milenio*).

Assessment tone of the items

In this section, a reference will be made to the affective components that determine the judgement on the emotional variation of the news items, that is to say, the positive or negative load presented by the analyzed items. In this way, it was noticed that 41,4% had a neutral assessment tone, v. 30,2% positive, and 28,4% negative, in which the consequences of the pandemic were referred to.

As for the assessment tone in function of the editorial line of the papers, table 4 shows that news items with center-left political ideology reported on tourism affairs in a positive light (27,2%) v. center-right news items, which narrated the events negatively (34,2%). For their part, center political ideology items focused on tourism issues in a neutral tone (54,4%). In this regard, the differences in the assessment according to the papers' editorial line are merely tendential [χ^2 (4, n = 524) = 8,624; p = 0,071].

Analysis of the topic agenda

As regards the news topic agenda, it was verified that 44,5% (n = 233) resorts to economic and business topic agenda. Secondly, political, with 20% of the items (n = 105); then cultural, 16,6% (n = 87); health care, 8,4% (n = 44); and sustainable and environmental development, 6,9% (n = 36); and finally, crime and public security, 3,4% of the items (n = 18).

According to data in Table 5, it was verified that over the Covid-19 health care crisis there was a larger economic agenda with a negative assessment; that is, the news items with economic content referred to the repercussions and consequences of tourism, derived from the health care crisis. However, news dealing with culture usually reported with a positive assessment, focusing on promoting the identity elements of the

culture. As for politics, the items presented information with no prevailing judgement value [χ^2 (12, n = 524) = 66.244; p < 0.001].

Well now, as a response to the tourist treatment of the digital papers in function of political leanings, the results made tendential differences in the treatment of the topic agenda and the ideological orientation of the item clear [χ^2 (12, n = 524) = 18.557; p = 0.09]. In this way, center-right newspapers frequently present tourism from an economic and business standpoint (51.6%), as compared with center-left (50.5%) and, to an even lower extent, center (37.4%). Table 6 presents the breakdown of each topic agenda according to the papers' political leanings.

Analysis of tourist frame (generic frame)

As a response to H1, it was noticed there is a statistically significant negative correlation [*rho* (524) = -0,28; p < 0,001] between the assessment tone and the indicator of economic frame, which suggests that to the extent the economic approach increases so does the negative assessment tone of the item. In the same line, it was analyzed whether there are statistically significant correlations between assessment tone and the other indicators of tourist frames:

- It was also observed there is a statistically significant negative association with the indicator of conflict [*rho* (524) = -0,65; p < 0,001].
- Positive and statistically significant with the indicator of social enrichment [*rho* (524) = 0,63; p < 0,001], which means that to the extent that social enrichment framing increases, so does the positive assessment tone.
- The environmental indicator had a positive relation, tendential nevertheless [*rho* (524) = 0,08; p = 0,055].
- A new negative and tendential relation with the human indicator [*rho* (524) = -0,07; p = 0,096].
- Finally, there was no statistically significant relation between the responsibility indicator and news assessment tone [*rho* (524) = 0,05; p = 0,18].

In order to compare tourist information according to the papers' country of origin and information treatment on the basis of framings, the Students' t test for independent samples was utilized and it was verified there were only significant differences between the function of social enrichment framing and country of the paper [t (522) = 2,682;

$p = 0,008$]. This fact suggests that the information treatment given to the items in function of the cultural approach, as well as the way by means of which tourism may enrich the life of the autochthonous and tourists differs between Spanish and Mexican newspapers.

Evolution of frames

Upon reaching this point, an analysis of the variance of repeated measurements was carried out to verify the existence of differences regarding the presence of news framing indicators [$\lambda_w = 0,707$; $F (5; 519) = 43,343$; $p = 0,001$]. For their part, indicator means are displayed in Graph 2.

However, as this is a longitudinal study as well, it is important to note the way tourism communication has focused over the pandemic. Thereby, as regards H2, the presence of digital press framings was analyzed during the most critical moments of the pandemic (from March 2020 to March 2022). In Graph 3, what is firstly noticed is the accountability frame, focused on the way governments, health care personnel and institutions managed the situation. The highest accountability peak took place in May 2020 ($M = 0,37$), and the lowest in November 2021 ($M = 0,04$), tendentially increasing in the early months of 2022.

Conversely, the social enrichment approach, which indicates that tourism is capable of improving the people's life quality, reaches a peak in May 2021 ($M = 0,32$), which is associated with the intermediate period of the crisis attention cycle (Realizing the cost of significant progress;), a moment in which the treatment of information focused on the development of communication strategies for the recovery of tourism.

In this same line, the conflict treatment approach had a higher increase at the beginning of the pandemic, pointing at tourism problems from the crisis. In this regard, its culmen is in April 2020 ($M = 0,27$), a month after the first cases of the disease were notified. Therefore, it is stated that conflict framing fits the stage of "Alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm" of the crisis attention cycle (Downs, 1972). Following, the economic framing is presented, it experiences considerable growth over the early months of every year: in April 2020 ($M = 0,31$); January 2021 ($M = 0,25$), and, January 2022 ($M = 0,14$). The information treatment of environmental or climate crisis framing, a topic not as recurrent in the media, a slight increase has been observed in September 2021 ($M = 0,20$); though, it considerably

decreases in the following months of the same year. And finally, the human-interest framing does not reflect a significant treatment over the health care crisis.

Discussions and conclusions

It is possible to affirm that the results of the study give an account of the goals, questions, and hypotheses put forward in the present research. In the first place, the dominant information treatment is related to the accountability approach; that is to say, items in the digital papers published tourism information attributing the responsibility of the problem to the government, authorities and health care personnel, or else, tourism industry (entrepreneurs, lodgers, or tourism organizations). This directly concurs with tourism management in an uncertainty context. However, as a response to the first hypothesis, its expressed that the items analyzed in both countries (Spain and Mexico) referred to tourism information according to the economic framing, influencing on the negative consequences the pandemic entailed for the industry. As for information attributions, it may be stated that information genre prevails in the treatment of tourism. Likewise, the most resorted journalistic subgenre was the news item.

According to the results, the frequency of information coverage of tourism reduces considerably in function of the years, though it is noticed that the treatment of newspapers increases in prevacation periods and key moments for tourism. This associates with the intermediate phases of the crisis attention cycles (Downs, 1972; Hall, 2002; Villacé-Molinero *et al.*, 2021) and verifies the second hypothesis of the study, demonstrating that in the beginning of the health care crisis, digital press was in the second stage of the alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm; that is to say, in the sensitization regarding the problem. Later on, tourism information treatment was located in the third stage: Realizing the cost of significant progress, in which the consequences and conflicts in various sectors were identified. Finally, fourth stage (*Gradual decline of intense public interest*) and relates with the decrease in journalist coverage of tourism in 2022 and the increase in items that refer to social enrichment and the reactivation of ludic and cultural activities. According to Hall and Valentin (2005), the crisis attention cycle is fundamental to explain the relations of the media, political decisions, and public interest level on current topics. This is why the crisis attention cycle dialogues, to a large extent, with the agenda setting theory to underline the power the media hold when underscoring various issues in their coverage.

In other order of ideas, tendential differences were detected in function of the topic agenda and their editorial line or political orientation. The results displayed that newspapers with center editorial line resorted to the agenda on topics such as politics, culture, environment and health care. Conversely, center-right papers resorted to economy and business; and, finally, center-left papers focused on crime and public security. Likewise, it was detected there are significant differences as regards the political leaning of the papers and the assessment tone of tourism: center-right papers underscored the negative aspects, while center-left papers influence cultural and social attributions to promote the destination under the present conditions.

As for the center political orientation and as expected, they took a neutral stance in the treatment of tourism. Furthermore, the present work intended to account for the similarities and differences in the information treatment in the digital Spanish and Mexican press. This way, both focused similarly on the affective components of news items, albeit they did differ in the topic agenda of tourism.

The present work was supported on the contributions of a number of researches, and particularly, studies on the information treatment of Covid-19 (Tejedor *et al.*, 2021; Vállez and Pérez-Montoro, 2020; Casero-Ripollés, 2020; Hall *et al.*, 2020). These pieces of evidence point at the impact of the current health care crisis in the media coverage, identifying the main topics dealt with and the way various sectors and industries have been affected; a goal shared with the present research. As proposed by Gossling *et al.* (2020), the pandemic has produced undeniable changes in the socioeconomic environment, and thereby, in tourism industry. In this way, it is considered crucial to contest some tourism models in view of implementing more sustainable alternatives, an aspect which may contribute to the media by means of their information.

In theoretical, the present study has offered an overview of the theoretical perspectives of the agenda setting (McCombs, 2006) and, very specially, *framing* (Entman, 1993), as well as its application to tourism studies (Hall and Valentin, 2005; Hansen, 2020; Pérez-García and García-Abad, 2018). However, the scarcity of previous empirical evidence in the information treatment of tourism over the Covid-19 pandemic (Gossling *et al.*, 2020) has allowed us to produce this contribution, which sheds light on specific cases in Spain and Mexico.

As a conclusion of the research, the importance of information on tourism in the context of the pandemic. News framings have been

frequently studied in recent decades, since the news coverage has produced lengthy analyses on the effects generated by the audiences' perceptions, or the information presented in the media. Changes in tourism due to Covid-19 are undeniable; in this way, it is worth analyzing the transformation and reactivation of tourism in function of its treatment by the media.

Tourism industry is not alien to the consequences of coronavirus, which undermined the economic fabric at global level, particularly, in those countries with heavy economic dependence on leisure such as Spain and Mexico. However, it has also offered the opportunity to undertake initiatives to promote and preserve the cultural and natural heritage of tourist destination by means of the communication realized by the various information agents

As regards the limitations of this work, accessing digital repositories of Mexican newspapers entailed an effort, as not all the papers keep archives and when they do, some ask for a subscription to access the news items. In order to mitigate this conflict, items of *Expansión* digital media were included, in spite of not being a paper, but a specialized magazine. Likewise, and though the sample is rather large, it is important to point out its lack of representativity. Furthermore, being this a study in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the existence of similar studies is limited, which also posed difficulties to substantiate the research on previous empirical evidence. In future works, it would be highly recommendable broadening the sample with a view to performing a more robust comparison, and eventually of the treatment of tourist communication between a larger number of countries.

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Annex

Graph 1

Tourism coverage from March 2020 to March 2022 (frequency of items = *n*)
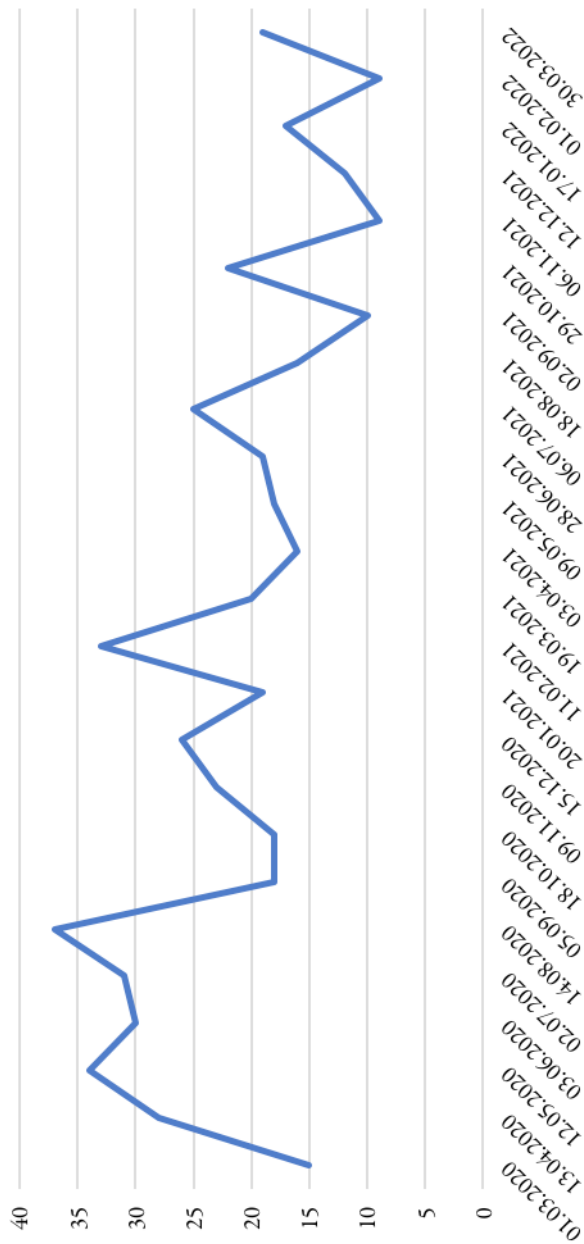
Source: Own elaboration from the study's primary data.

Table 1

Informative Genre in function of country of origin (% column)

Journalistic genre	% Total	Newspaper's origin	
		Spain	Mexico
Informative	63.7	56.6-	77.8+
Opinion	13.5	16.1+	8.5-
Hybrid	22.7	27.3+	13.6-
n	524	348	176

- Statistically lower value (analysis of corrected typified residues)
+ Statistically higher value (analysis of corrected typified residues)
Source: Own elaboration from the study's primary data.

Table 2

Differences in information treatment according to the item selection (% column)

Section of the item	% Total	Newspaper's origin	
		Spain	Mexico
Tourism / travel	10.3	10.3	10.2
Economy	30.5	30.2	31.3
Politics	11.8	6.9-	21.6+
Culture	8.4	8.6	8
Society	6.7	9.2+	1.7-
Opinion	7.6	8.6+	5.7-
National	19.5	21.6+	15.3-
International	5.2	4.6	6.3
n	524	348	176

- Statistically lower value (analysis of corrected typified residues)
+ Statistically higher value (analysis of corrected typified residues)
Source: Own elaboration from the study's primary data.

Table 3

Differences in the items' territorial scope (% column)

Territorial scope of the items	% Total	País del medio	
		Spain	Mexico
Local	25.4	28.7+	18.8-
Regional	20.6	21.8	18.2
National	31.1	25-	43.2+
International	22.9	24.4	19.9
n	524	348	176

- Statistically lower value (analysis of corrected typified residues)
+ Statistically higher value (analysis of corrected typified residues)

Source: Own elaboration from the study's primary data.

Table 4

Assessment tone of the editorial line of the medium over the Covid-19 pandemic (% column)

Medium's editorial line	% Total	Assessment tone to the item		
		Negative	Neutral	Positive
Center-left	20.8	20.1	16.6-	20.8+
Center	48.5	45.6	54.4+	43
Center-right	30.7	34.2	29	29.7
n	524	149	217	158

- Statistically lower value (analysis of corrected typified residues).
+ Statistically higher value (analysis of corrected typified residues).

Source: Own elaboration from the study's primary data.

Table 5

Association of the topic agenda with news items and the assessment topic and evaluation tone of the items (% column)

Thematic agenda	% Total	News items assessment tone		
		Negative	Neutral	Positive
Political	20	12.1-	25.3+	20.3
Economic and finance	44.5	57+	37.3-	42.4
Cultural	16.6	4-	19.4	24.7+
Environment and climate	6.9	7.4	5.5	8.2
Crime and public security	3.4	9.4+	1.8	0-
Health care	8.4	10.1	10.1	4.4-
Other	0.2	0	0.5	0
n	524	149	217	158

- Statistically lower value (analysis of corrected typified residues)
+ Statistically higher value (analysis of corrected typified residues)

Source: Own elaboration from the study's primary data.

Table 6

Differences in the presence of the topic agenda in function of the media's political orientation (% column)

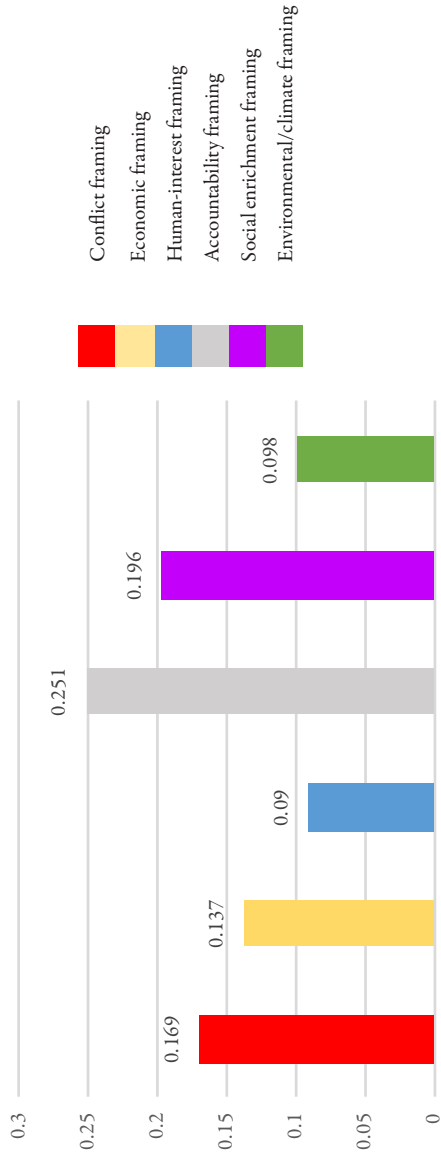| Topic agenda	% Total	Media's political orientation		
		Center-left	Center	Center-right
Political	20	22	21.7	16.1
Economic and finance	44.5	50.5	37.4-	51.6+
Culture	16.6	9.2-	20.1+	16.1
Environment and climate	6.9	5.5	7.5	6.8
Crime and public security	3.4	4.6	3.1	3.1
Health care	8.4	8.3	10.2	5.6
Other	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.3
n	524	109	254	161

- Statistically lower value (analysis of corrected typified residues).
+ Statistically higher value (analysis of corrected typified residues).

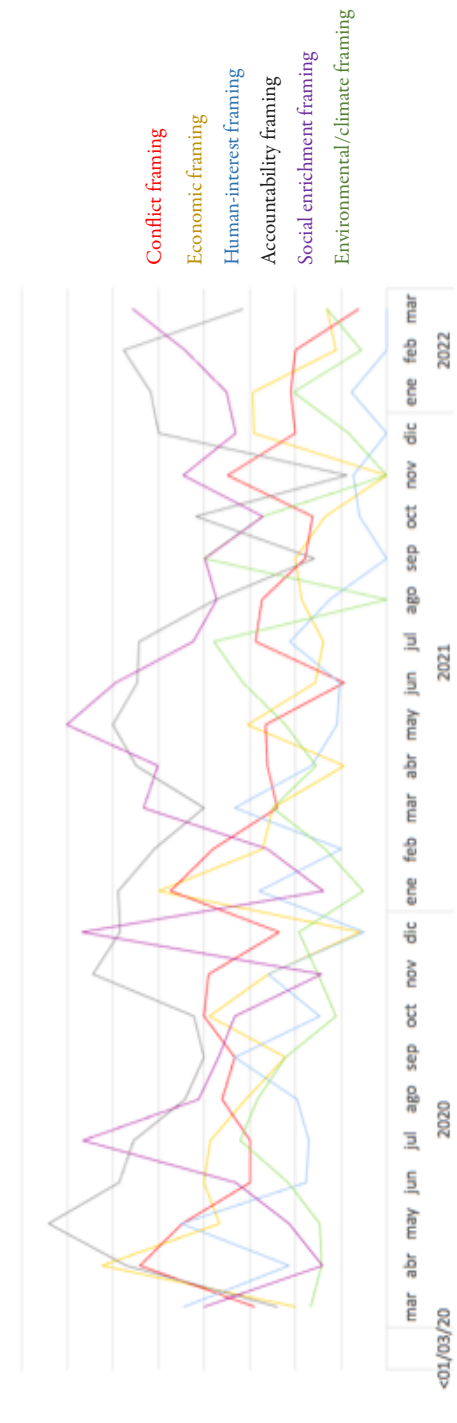Source: Own elaboration from the study's primary data.

Graph 2

Means of the tourist framings' presence

Conflict framing
Economic framing
Human-interest framing
Accountability framing
Social enrichment framing
Environmental/climate framing

0.169
0.137
0.09
0.251
0.196
0.098

0.3
0.25
0.2
0.15
0.1
0.05
0

Source: Own elaboration from the study's primary data.

Graph 3

Longitudinal evolution of the presence of tourist framings' presence
(mean values)

Source: own elaboration from the study's primary data.

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