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The short life of a concept: tourismphobia in the Spanish media. Narratives, actors and agendas

La corta vida de un concepto: turismofobia en los medios españoles. Narrativas, actores y agendas

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ABSTRACT

This article forms part of a classic social science debate on the role of the media in the construction of social and political narratives.

The object of the paper is to study the rise and fall of the concept of tourismphobia in the Spanish media. The case is analyzed in the light of public policies studies, especially those analyzing agenda-setting, the social construction of the definition of public problems and the struggles of coalitions seeking to impose their public policy narratives in the policy-making process.

With this purpose, a database was used that collected more than 11,000 news items over a substantial period of time. Its analysis reveals that media attention rises sharply after active protest actions against tourist saturation and that the term is mostly linked to specific territories and cities and to certain political figures. It also allows us to observe how some political responses to the problem appear more in the media, while others are minimized.

The conclusions indicate that the “tourismphobia” neologism was capitalized on – which is often the case with terms that circulate in the public sphere – by various groups attempting to highlight some of its semantic dimensions over others. The study also reveals that the media assume an active position in the construction of discourses in relation to tourism also as a political and not just an economic issue. Furthermore, it shows that the use of the term has greatly declined, either because the problem has become dormant or because it has been reformulated into other terms that are more in line with dominant narratives.

Keywords: tourism policy; policy narratives; mass media; definition of public problems; tourismphobia; overtourism.

RESUMEN

El artículo se enmarca en un debate clásico de las ciencias sociales sobre el papel de los medios de comunicación en la construcción de narrativas sociales y políticas.

El objetivo del trabajo es estudiar el ascenso y desaparición del concepto turismofobia en los periódicos españoles. El caso se aborda desde las propuestas del análisis de políticas, en especial considerando aquellas que reflexionan sobre las dinámicas de la agenda política y su construcción, la construcción social de la definición de los problemas públicos y los enfrentamientos entre coaliciones que buscan construir e imponer sus propias narrativas en los procesos de políticas públicas.

Con esta intención se trabajó con una base de datos que recogía más de 11.000 noticias publicadas durante un periodo temporal largo. El análisis muestra que la atención de los medios se dispara tras algunas acciones de protesta activa contra la saturación turística, que el término se vincula mayoritariamente a algunos territorios y ciudades concretas y a determinadas figuras políticas. También permite observar como los medios describen con frecuencia algunas respuestas políticas ante el problema, mientras que minimizan otras.

Las conclusiones señalan que el neologismo turismofobia, como todo término que circula en la esfera pública, fue capitalizado por grupos diversos que trataron de imponer algunas de sus dimensiones semánticas frente a otras. Que los medios asumen una posición activa en la construcción de discursos, también en lo relacionado con el turismo como asunto político y no solo económico. Y que la utilización del término se ha reducido mucho, bien sea porque el problema ha pasado a un estado latente o porque se ha reformulado en otros términos que resultan más acordes con las narrativas dominantes.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has traditionally been perceived as an opportunity. However, it is now also seen as a problem in certain places. This is true of, mainly, European urban centers with diversified economies. In these cities, the focus is now not only on its contribution to the economy and local employment but also on the negative externalities it can generate. The city of Barcelona is a paradigmatic example of this, to such an extent that the problem of tourism is part of the city's public – or systemic – agenda, and at certain points its citizens have ranked it as the most important problem in Barcelona. It is in this urban context where the “tourismphobia” neologism was coined, and it was quickly accepted by the press, especially the Catalan press. As newspapers adopted the term, not only the concerns about the existence of rejectionist attitudes towards tourism were put on the media agenda but also debates were triggered on the undesired effects of this economic activity in the cities. After a series of active protests in 2017 which acted as a trigger mechanism, tourism and tourismphobia moved from the Catalan media agenda to that of all the media in the rest of Spain and also to the political agenda of the different parties, some of which saw in this issue an opportunity to gain an advantage in the political competition with other parties. Social actors with an interest in tourism policy, for their part, saw both threats and opportunities around the question of tourismphobia, and participated in the public debate to try to construct a definition of the problem that would suit their needs.

The object of the paper is to study the approach to the problem of tourismphobia in the Spanish media. Thus, we attempt to describe this issue-attention cycle, the social construction to which it is subject, and to suggest possible solutions.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

From a theoretical viewpoint, the case is analyzed in the light of public policies studies, especially those analyzing agenda-setting (Downs, 1972; Cobb & Elder, 1972; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Kingdon, 1984), the social construction of the definition of public problems (Fischer & Gottweis, 2012), and the struggles of coalitions seeking to impose their public policy narratives in the policy-making process (Jones, McBeth & Shanahan, 2014).

Downs (1972) proposed a public interest model which has been widely used in the literature. His idea is that public attention responds to a five-stage cyclic model. In a first stage the problem exists but has not yet captured public attention. The second stage is usually connected to an alarming event; the evils of a problem are discovered and this “is invariably accompanied by euphoric enthusiasm about society’s ability to ‘solve this problem’ or ‘do something effective’ within a relatively short period of time” (Downs, 1972:39). The third stage consists of a realization of the difficulties involved in solving the problems and the related costs it would entail. Next, the fourth stage involves a gradual decline in terms of public interest. Finally, in the fifth and last stage, the problem “moves into a prolonged limbo, a twilight realm of lesser attention or spasmodic recurrences of interest” (Downs, 1972:40).

Furthermore, Downs claims that any given public problem will be more likely to go through this cycle when three characteristics are observed, namely that the problem does not affect the majority of persons to the same degree as it affects a specific minority, that the situation provides benefits to a majority or to a powerful minority, and that the problem is not exciting enough to maintain public interest over a long period of time. That is, if the benefits of designing and implementing an action are low because it affects a relatively low number of citizens, if costs are high because changing the model would affect a large part of the population or a small powerful group, and if it is not dramatic enough to maintain public attention, a problem is highly likely to go through the cycle proposed by Downs (Gupta & Jenkins-Smith, 2015).

Furthermore, the model highlights the relationship between media attention, public attention and governmental attention. This line of work ties in with the theories in McCombs & Shaw (1972) on the role of the media not only to manage to put a problem onto the public agenda, which collects society’s concerns, but also on governments’ formal agenda, which presents the issues requiring decision making.

The media eventually reflect the public policy narratives of the different actors, who contribute their definitions of a problem and the public policy instruments better adapted to their own interests and preferences, though not all the actors have a fair share of access to the media. In this regard, the analysis of the way the media portrays a problem will also help us perform an anatomy of the problem viewed in terms of the actors involved, in order to identify the way in which they construct the problems by highlighting different variables

and attributes and bypassing others. It will also allow us to define the map of values and public policy tools they present for public debate and aim at promoting. In short, it will help us approach the social construction of the problem in the wake of the studies on policy argumentation (Majone, 1989; Fischer & Gottweis, 2012).

This will be the framework to analyze the next issue, namely whether or not the fact that tourism is reaching saturation levels which will turn it into a serious problem has become an increasingly frequent subject of debate.

The current situation is usually described with terms such as overtourism (Goodwin, 2017; Koens, Postma & Papp, 2018; OMT, 2018, 2019) or overcrowding (McKinsey & WTTC, 2017). In Spain, however, the term “tourismphobia” is widely used both in the media and the academic debate (Huetes & Mantecón, 2018; Milano, 2017 and 2018).

The general use of the term in the Spanish media has not occurred by chance. In fact, each one of the terms in dispute has a certain bias already analyzed: by using the classic noun “phobia”, the concept of tourismphobia implies a certain negative cognitive inference (*tú no sufres turistificación, tú padeces turismofobia, odias al turista* “you don’t suffer from tourism, you suffer from tourismphobia, you hate tourists”) (Sanmartín, 2019).

III. METHODOLOGY

The research is mainly based on articles published on Spanish media featuring the term “tourismphobia” in their headlines or on the body of the text. We have analyzed both printed and digital media, including newspapers, magazines, and news agencies as well as radio and TV stations to the extent they published articles in digital format. Both generalist and specialized media published in Spain were included in the study, covering both local and international news in any language and publication frequency. Information was collected from the MyNews database, which includes more than 1,200 media outlets.

The documentary corpus includes 12,160 headlines, 5,992 of them published in printed media and 6,168 published in digital media between 2008 and 2018. The initial year was selected as this was the first verifiable date of the use of the “tourismphobia” term in the printed press; we have analyzed news from 1996 onwards.

The initial database collected the following data for each information record: publication date, headline, media outlet, issue and section. Based on this information, data related to the media publishing the news was added to each record, with the following classification variables: media outlet publishing group, medium, type of publication, informative topic, territorial scope, publication frequency, and language. The source for these classification variables was the *Plataforma Infoperiodistas* internet platform. All this information has allowed us to analyze the media attention cycle and the dissemination process of a problem.

In the case of the content analysis of the headlines the database was reduced to 6,017 articles as one article could be distributed across different leaders of one media group or in different local editions of a single leader. These headlines were analyzed by means of simple word frequency analysis with NVivo software. This analysis has allowed us to reconstruct the

map of actors involved including also the incumbent authorities, the most relevant problem attributes, their territorial localization, the values promoted by the policies and the main generic instruments of public policy suggested to address the problem.

Finally, to examine whether the media reflects or creates the citizens' worries we have collected information about the Spanish (CIS, 2020), Catalan (CEO, 2020) and Barcelona public agenda (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, 2016, 2017, 2018 y 2019) with the purpose of analyzing the place of the tourism problem in each of them. The problem of tourism was only found in the public agenda of the city of Barcelona. In order to ascertain the influence of interests and values around the priority that the citizens from Barcelona attribute to this problem, we analyzed two surveys carried out in 2017. One is part of the series of citywide opinion polls (referred to as "barometers") that the City Council has been carrying out since 1988, and the other is part of periodic tourism studies that the same City Council has carried out for a number of years. The choice of the year 2017 is due to the fact that this is when the tourism problem reached maximum priority status for Barcelona residents.

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TERM TOURISMPHOBIA IN PRESS HEADLINES

4.1 The emergence of the term

The first time we encountered the use of the term "tourismphobia" in the Spanish printed press was an article published in the summer of 2008 in *Barcelona Metròpolis*, an information and urban ideas magazine published by the Barcelona City Council. This publication devoted its monographic section, *Cuaderno Central*, to the tourism debate, in order to pose an eloquent question: *¿Era esto lo que queríamos? Sobre turistas y turismo*. [Is this what we wanted? On tourists and tourism]. The editor titled one of the sections in the monograph "*Entre el amor y el odio*" [Between love and hate], and included an article by Donaire titled "The effervescence of tourismphobia" (Donaire, 2008). The article made explicit reference to Doxey (1975) and his Irridex theory, described in the following terms, "The relationship between guests and hosts, between tourists and local residents, inexorably passes through four stages: euphoria, apathy, irritation, and antagonism. According to G. Doxey, 'tourismphobia' is in the DNA of the tourism process, which inevitably ends up in antagonism" (Donaire, 2008, p. 75).

The *La Vanguardia* newspaper echoed this magazine and in particular Donaire's term and reflections in two opinion pieces (Monzó, September 19, 2008 and Carol, September 24, 2008). Soon after, on October 13, the *El Periódico* newspaper included the term in the headline of an information piece, *La 'turismofobia' en auge* [Tourismphobia on the rise]. This piece mentioned the complaints related to a strategic sector and added, "Residents of the most popular areas in Barcelona keep demanding actions against overcrowding. Three districts are designing plans to restore balance". This piece of news included a photograph of tourists outside Gaudí's Sagrada Familia. These three pieces represent the beginning of the use of the term tourismphobia in Spanish media. They define tourismphobia as the rejection of tourists

by local residents, especially due to the negative impact of the high number of tourists in certain areas of Barcelona, and their call for actions against its most damaging effects.

Shortly before, Delgado, profusely cited by Donaire, used a similar term in *El País* (July 12, 2008), “Tourist-phobia”. However, even though it is part of the same semantic field as “tourismphobia (and other close ones such as “touristization”, “touristification”, “overtourism”, and “tourist massification”), it has not been as widely adopted in the media. The word “tourismphobia” became so popular that the *Fundación del Español Urgente*, promoted by Agencia EFE and the BBVA Bank, nominated it as word of the year in 2017 (Fundeu, 2019). This implied recognition both of the presence of this term in the social debate and the media and of its linguistic interest.

In short, the term “tourismphobia” was coined in the academic sphere, in the Catalan universities in particular, and was conceptually related to Doxey’s theory. It started circulating in the context of a debate on tourism in which tourism is seen not only as an economic opportunity but also as a problem with ramifications across different areas of economic, social, cultural, and environmental life, among others; the negative externalities of the phenomenon are thus taken into account rather than just the economic benefits it generates. This debate has a well-defined territorial epicenter, an urban environment with a diversified and thriving economy, the city of Barcelona specifically, where the City Council itself is especially interested in reflecting upon the tourism question from a broader perspective than the traditional economic point of view. The two main Catalan newspapers echo and disseminate this debate at the national level through a process which will be described later on.

Table 1. Number of news items published in the Spanish media that include the term “tourismphobia” in the headline or body of the article (2008-2018)

	Number of news items
2008	3
2009	6
2010	1
2011	2
2012	11
2013	15
2014	36
2015	91
2016	246
2017	11.831
2018	4.476
2019	2.223

Source: Authors, based on *My News* newspaper archive.

4.2. The dissemination of the problem in the media

The topic was presented (2008-2011) by newspapers in their printed editions, and in regional newspapers and publications in Catalonia. The newspapers are mainly in Spanish although there is also a significant proportion of newspapers in Catalan or Catalan editions of newspapers published both in Catalan and Spanish. The media groups involved in this stage were Godó and Zeta first, and then Vocento, Prisa and Diari de Ponent.

Through the slow development phase (2012-2015), digital editions began publishing about the tourism problem in addition to printed newspapers, and news agencies started to deliver newswire on this topic in 2015. Now not only regional newspapers but also national and, by 2015, provincial and local publications started to cover the problem. Apart from the Catalan press, still predominant, the Valencia and Balearic Communities press was the first to publish on this topic. The same then happened in Andalusia, the Basque Country and Galicia, and by the end of this period the problem was covered in the Canaries, Cantabria, the two Castilles, Madrid, and Aragon press. The Catalan press remained being highly significant in proportion, though it gradually lost ground as national and regional editions from other Autonomous Communities appeared. Now not only generalist newspapers were covering tourismphobia, but also the press specializing in tourism, accommodation, catering and travel, as well as the financial press. Virtually all media groups covered the topic. In this regard, *Prensa Periòdica Ara*, which has covered the problem every year since 2012, *Hosteltur*, which has been doing it on a permanent basis since 2013, and *Unidad Editorial*, *Vocento* and *Zeta*, with regular coverage since 2014 are worth highlighting.

The upturn prior to the crisis took place in 2016. The radio station websites also appeared in this year. Apart from newspapers, different journals and magazines started to cover tourismphobia. In terms of the specialized press, media specialized in international affairs joined the tourism and economy press in the coverage of the problem. The press from Extremadura, one of the few which had not reported on tourismphobia so far, also covered it in 2016. Virtually all media groups covered the problem.

The problem turned into a crisis in 2017 and was covered by all the media outlets analyzed here. The last ones to report on tourismphobia were the TV stations' websites, the international Spanish press, the Asturias, La Rioja, Navarra, and Murcia Autonomous Communities press, the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, and media published in Basque, Galician, and English. As to the specialized press, publications in fields as diverse as ecology, social matters, culture, communication, sports, and even celebrity, gossip, fashion, and beauty magazines eventually started covering tourismphobia.

An overall analysis of the whole period reveals that the digital and printed media present a similar level of coverage. As to the media outlets' territorial scope, national newspapers are predominant, followed by regional, provincial and finally, local newspapers. National media broadcast 40% of news on this topic; in terms of territorial outlets, Catalan publications stand out as they concentrate close to 17% of the news. 12% of the news is published in Catalan. The daily press is predominant, magazines disseminating around 1% of the information. The bulk of news is presented by the general press (82%) but there are two relevant specialized

press areas, the financial press (11%) and the tourism, hotel trade, catering and travel press (3.5%). In terms of media groups, Vocento (16.9%) and Unidad Editorial (12.5%) are those with the highest coverage of the problem. Europa Press (6.9%), Prisa (6%), Prensa Ibérica (4.8%), EcoPrensa (4.7%), Zeta (4.5%), Joly (3.8%), and Godó (3.3%) are also worth highlighting.

As to sections, the territorial news shows the highest coverage (19.9%), followed by the economy pages (14.9%), Spanish news (14.2%), current affairs-breaking news (12.3%) and opinion pages (12.1%). However, the issue of tourismphobia eventually pervaded all the media segments, including of course the editorials, and even the sports pages.

4.3. Content analysis of headlines

4.3.1. Actors involved

The actors appearing on the news headlines can be grouped in three categories: political parties, institutions, and a variety of civil society actors.

Political parties are featured the most in headlines. All significant Spanish parties are mentioned together with most Catalan parties, except – significantly – ERC. Basque parties are also featured, Bildu and the Basque Country IU specifically. However, two parties stand out from the rest: CUP-Arran, and PP. This potentially reveals the high level of politicization of this issue and to a certain extent, the polarization around it.

As to institutions, the executive powers of all levels of governments are mainly featured. Parliaments and other institutions have a small input. Autonomous communities are the most frequently covered level of government, followed by municipal governments and significantly behind, the national government. This reflects the inter-governmental nature of the problem, although this is an issue involving mainly territorial actors.

In terms of incumbent authorities, four stand out from the rest. The first by far is Ada Colau, the Mayor of Barcelona, followed by the Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, the president of the Autonomous Community of Madrid, Cristina Cifuentes, and the Minister of Energy, Tourism and Digital Agenda, Álvaro Nadal.

Finally, entrepreneurs stand out in terms of the civil society. Residents' associations and trade unions are also featured but they are clearly a minority in relation to the actors in the business sector. As to businesses, the group with the highest coverage is the hotel sector, but there are also references to travel agencies, and to a lesser extent, tour operators. This group also includes Exceltur, a representative body of Spanish large tourism companies.

There is a particular company which is featured on 122 pieces of news, the online marketplace Airbnb. As we will see below, this web platform together with illegal tourist accommodation will play the "evil" part in the dominant narratives of public policy around this problem. The same can be said of the CUP and Arran, due to the "attacks" on the tourist bus and other actions and statements against tourism.

Table 2. Actors mentioned in the headlines of the news published in the Spanish media that include the term “tourismphobia” in the headline or body of the article (2008-2017)

Political Party	Number of items	Government level	Number of items	Social actor	Number of items
CUP-ARRAN	608	Autonomous Community	547	Hotel owners/managers	536
PP	600	Municipal	449	Business people	226
PODEMOS	180	National government	367	Travel agencies	134
CIUDADANOS	139	Deputation	75	Residents	131
PSOE	131	Parliaments	44	Airbnb	122
SORTU-BILDU	74	Others	123	Trade unions	111
PDCAT	38			Exceltur	78
EUIB	15			Experts	23
Others	288			Tourism operators	21
				Others	133
TOTAL	2073	TOTAL	1562	TOTAL	1515

Source: Authors, based on the *My News* newspaper archive.

4.3.2. The definition and the features of the problem

The analysis of the contents of news headlines reveal four dimensions or features of tourismphobia which the media see as problematic.

The most significant one explicitly mentions the attacks on tourists carried out by radical groups, which are violent to varying extents and include vandalism and graffiti attacks. The attack on the tourist bus in Barcelona is the epiphenomenon of this dimension and the one that caused the question of tourismphobia to reach crisis proportions.

Almost as relevant as the first dimension are the references to tourist rentals of property and the collaborative platforms which have allowed for the expansion of this market. There is a strong focus on one of the components of this dimension, which is the problem of illegal or irregular tourist rentals.

Far behind in scale is the question of cities' tourist capacity, especially in summer. Massive tourism and overcrowding are another key aspect of this problem.

On a similar scale in relation to the previous dimension, reference is made of the rejection of tourists and the problems of coexistence between local residents and tourists, the unrest of local residents, and the emergence of intolerant and even xenophobic expressions towards tourists.

Massification and rejection can be seen as the two sides of a coin, which constitutes an implicit assumption of Doxey's model (1975) on the impact of the number of tourists on the evolution of the stages in the relationship between tourists and residents. Thus, a rise in

Table 3. Characteristics of the tourism problem mentioned in the headlines of news items published in the Spanish media that include the term “tourismphobia” in the headline or body of the article (2008-2017)

Dimensions mentioned		Number of news items
Capacity		278
	Massification	82
	Saturation	22
	Summer	172
Rental, collaborative platforms, Airbnb,		1136
	Rentals, renters	271
	Accommodation	70
	Apartments	371
	Homes	163
	Platforms	89
	Illegal, irregular	168
Attacks, violence, vandalism, graffiti		1169
	Attack, Street violence	806
	Bus	221
	Vandalism	65
	graffiti	45
	Radicals	32
Rejection		137
	Xenophobia	52
	Unease	45
	Coexistence	22
	Intolerance	18

Source: Authors, based on *My News* newspaper archives.

the number of tourists would increase the level of rejection of tourism in urban contexts and diversified economies.

4.3.3. *The territorial localization of the problem*

As we have noted before, the problem of tourismphobia has a highly important territorial dimension. We can make a distinction between regional news and those referring to a city. In terms of Autonomous Communities, Catalonia is the most mentioned, and the Community of the Balearic Islands also occupies a prominent place. They are followed by Madrid, the Basque Country, Andalusia, the Autonomous Community of Valencia, and Galicia, in that order. The rest of the Autonomous Communities are featured in less than one hundred headlines.

Table 4. Autonomous Communities mentioned in the headlines of news items published in the Spanish media that include the term “tourismphobia” in the headline or body of the article (2008-2017)

Autonomous Community	Number of items
Cataluña	523
Baleares	412
Madrid	274
País Vasco	168
Andalucía	148
Comunidad Valenciana	132
Galicia	100
Canarias	52
Cantabria	31
Castilla	20

Source: Authors, based on the *My News* newspaper archive.

As to cities, Barcelona gets the highest media attention with close to 900 headlines. Relatively far behind is Madrid, the toponym referring both to the Autonomous Community and the city. Next is Valencia with around 100 headlines and Palma de Mallorca with 73. The list includes highly significant tourist urban destinations such as Malaga, Gerona, San Sebastian, and Santiago de Compostela, and locations like Ibiza, Benidorm and Salou, among others.

Table 5. Cities mentioned in the headlines of news items published in the Spanish media that include the term “tourismphobia” in the headline or body of the article (2008-2017)

Cities	Number of items
Barcelona	70
Valencia	112
Palma	73
Ibiza	56
Málaga	55
Girona	35
San Sebastián	31
Sevilla	29
Castellón	28
Alicante	26
Benidorm	25
Santiago	19
Tenerife	19
Palmas	18
Tarragona	17
Salou	16

Source: Authors, based on the *My News* newspaper archive.

4.4. What appears in the media and residents' worries

4.4.1. The evolution of the tourism problem in the public agenda of the city of Barcelona

One of the most effective ways to analyze the contents of the public agenda is asking citizens which is in their view the most important problem or problems of a political community (Carrillo, Tamayo y Nuño, 2013).

The percentage of mentions that each topic receives in the answers reveals a relation of problems ranked according to citizens' priorities. If this information is accessible in a time series, it is possible to analyze citizens' attention cycle towards the different specific problems.

Each political community has its own agenda. Thus, it is possible to discern a public agenda in the city of Barcelona, a Catalan public agenda, a Spanish one, a European one, and even an international agenda. Some problems are specific to only one public agenda and others can be seen across the public agendas of the different government levels, though with different levels of priority (Carrillo, Tamayo y Nuño, 2013).

When citizens differentiate agendas, they attribute differential responsibility in relation to the various public affairs to each government level. The public agenda can be studied either from a sociotropic or an egocentric perspective. If we analyze an urban context, the sociotropic view would enquire about the main problems in the city and the egocentric view would focus on the problem most affecting the respondent at the personal level.

The problem of tourism is not part of the Spanish public agenda (CIS, 2019) or that of the Catalan Autonomous Community (CEO, 2019). However, it is indeed part of the sociotropic and egocentric public agenda of the city of Barcelona (Barcelona City Council, 2019). Moreover, when Barcelona residents are asked about the most important problems in Spain, Catalonia, and Barcelona, they mention tourism when their reference point is the city of Barcelona (Barcelona City Council, 2019).

The public agenda includes different types of problems. Some of them are chronic i.e. they are part of the public agenda at all times and with a high level of coverage (Erbring, et al., 1980). Others are intermittent, that is, they shift from a cycle of relevant visibility to later vanish or lose relevance, and will reappear in time (McCombs & Zhu, 1995). Finally, there are crises which emerge at any given point in relation to a specific event and that tend to disappear sooner or later (Kasperson et al. 1988).

The priority attributed to public problems varies depending on individuals' interests and values. In the case of our analysis, a series of variables contribute to this problem having high priority, but three are particularly important: place of residence, perception of the economic situation, and the remembered vote. Ciutat Vella (42% of respondents rank tourism as the most important problem) and Les Corts (28%) are the districts where the tourism problem is mentioned most frequently, notably exceeding the mean (19% of the overall Barcelona citizens rank tourism as the main problem in the city). Those who think that the city's economy is in a very good state (33%) are also those who are most concerned over tourism, as the upper social levels tend to be. Finally, those who remember voting for the CUP (41%) and Barcelona en Comú (27%) are the ones most concerned over tourism, as opposed to those who voted

Table 6. Percentage of respondents who mention “tourism” when asked, “What do you think is the biggest problem the city of Barcelona is facing at the moment?” (open-ended question)

Año	Mes	%
2006	March	0,0
2006	June	1,0
2006	September	0,0
2006	December	1,0
2007	September	1,3
2008	June	1,1
2008	December	2,1
2009	June	0,8
2009	December	0,4
2010	June	1,0
2010	December	0,9
2011	December	0,8
2012	June	1,3
2012	December	0,6
2013	June	1,6
2013	December	3,1
2014	June	4,5
2014	December	4,5
2015	June	5,3
2015	December	3,8
2016	mayo	5,8
2016	December	11,0
2017	June	19,0
2017	December	7,1
2018	junio	10,5
2018	December	5,2

Source: *Baròmetre de Barcelona*.

Ciudadanos and PP (5%), who attribute a lower priority to this matter. Furthermore, those who support the municipal government (41% mention this problem) and have a favorable opinion of Mayor Ada Colau are also the most concerned about the tourist problem (Barometer of the city of Barcelona, June 2017).

Unfortunately, most cities do not carry out regular surveys on their most important problems. However, some cities do gather this information, as is the case in Madrid (Madrid City Council, 2019). To this date, tourism has not been ranked as a problem there.

4.4.2. The attitudes of Barcelona residents towards tourism

In view of the relevance of the case of Barcelona, the attitudes of Barcelona residents towards tourist is worth looking at, even if briefly. To this aim, we will refer to the tourism surveys carried out by the City Council in 2017.

First, we should mention the enormous importance that the people of Barcelona attribute to this activity. Thus, 70% of respondents claimed that tourism is the sector that provides the highest revenue to the city and 16% stated to have worked in tourism related activities over the last 12 months. 83% believe that tourism is an asset for the city, especially in terms of its contribution to the economy, income, and employment.

On the other hand, 14% of citizens do not think tourism is good for Barcelona's interests. The main reasons behind this opinion are massification, tourists' uncivil behavior and price increases. Other aspects of the problem are also mentioned though they are not priority issues, namely low buying power tourism, neighbourhoods' loss of identity, local residents' exclusion from their neighbourhoods, inequality in the distribution of tourism profit, noise, tourists' priority in relation to local residents, a decline in the quality of public services, and an excessive number of hotels and tourist apartments.

In terms of massification, 60% of respondents think Barcelona is reaching the limit of its capacity to provide tourism services, while 35% believe it is possible to continue to promote tourism.

15% find tourists' behaviour disturbing due to lack of civility and poor education, alcohol consumption, noise, and dirt.

As to prices, 80% think that tourism causes price rises in the city and 44% also mention price increase in their own neighborhoods. They highlight in particular prices in bars and restaurants, housing rentals, food, property, and cultural and leisure activities, among many others.

13% of respondents state that there is tourist accommodation in their own apartment buildings, and 53% see this as very or rather annoying.

In short, an ambivalent attitude is observed; people are aware of both the advantages and the problems related to tourism. This ambivalence is also seen in other public policy areas. A classic case is that of tax policy, when there is opposition to tax increases, indebtedness, and public expenditure in general, and at the same time higher spending is called for virtually all areas of public policy except for defense (Sears y Citrin, 1985).

4.4.3. Public policy instruments

In relation to public policy instruments, a wide range of tools gets media coverage; a significant diversity of proposals is referred to, some more specific and others rather generic. None of them predominates over the others, though particular emphasis is placed on regulations.

Table 7. Public policy instruments mentioned in the headlines of news items published in the Spanish media that include the term “tourismphobia” in the headline or body of the article (2008-2017)

Variables mentioned		Number of items
Change of tourism model		302
	Model	179
	Quality	105
	Diversification	18
Taxes on demand		297
	Taxes	214
	Environmental tax	43
	Taxes on revenue	40
Regulations		339
	Moratorium	27
	Regulations	275
	Law legalise	188
	Prohibit	26
	Justice	23
	Whistleblowers	15
Other public actions		105
	Expropriation	69
	Outsourcing of services	18
	Promotion	18
Governance		331
	Agreement-dialogue-consensus	105
	Collaboration - cluster	44
	Plan - management	82

Source: Authors, based on *My News* newspaper archive.

One of the recurrent discourses refers to a need to change the tourism model and aim for higher quality tourism, less massive and more diversified.

Tax policies are also highlighted, in particular tax on demand by means of tourism fees or eco-taxes to increase the cost of this activity and promote a drop in demand and number of tourists.

Regulations are the instrument with the most media coverage. We find formulas aiming at regulating the number of goods offered, specifically a hotel moratorium, that is, a temporary hotel ban to put a halt to the construction of new hotels. However, in terms of regulations, the focus is particularly on tourist rentals; in some cases with a call for a ban, or for inspections

and enforcing the current regulations more effectively with the promotion of reporting the people or companies which violate the law to the authorities, prosecuting offenders and revising the existing legislation.

In a few cases, actions that could be carried out by public institutions are pointed out, such as direct market intervention with public funds, either by expropriating hotels, as some actors propose, or with interventions in tourism promotion campaigns.

Finally, procedural questions are noted, such as calls for agreements and dialogue, consensus among institutions, parties, and social actors involved, public-private collaboration, and the design of plans and improvement of tourism policy.

The year after these news articles were published, numerous Autonomous Communities and some cities addressed the problem through tourist rentals' regulations and other actions related to the problem of illegal tourist accommodation.

V. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1. The attention cycle of the tourismphobia problem in the media

The concern about tourismphobia has required a very long introduction process which goes from 2008 to 2016. Since this term was used in the three seminal articles in 2008 the use of this word was found in the media each successive year, but in low numbers. Up to 2012 it did not exceed 10 news pieces a year, and it did not pass the 100 threshold until 2016. As from January of that year the word was used by all media outlets every month of the year, especially during the summer months.

Following this slow introduction, the problem reached maximum coverage in 2017, when it reached almost 12,000 occurrences, 6,000 in August of this year. Arran (a left-wing Catalan independentist youth organization) carried out a series of active protest actions that month, which operated as a triggering mechanism to disseminate the problem as it gained the attention of the mass media. In late July, 2017, four masked activists "attacked" a tourist bus in Barcelona; they got on the bus with two smoke grenades and a placard which read, "Stop tourist massification in the Catalan Countries".

This action forced political actors, institutional authorities, and representatives of the different interest groups involved in and/or affected by tourism to make statements which got media coverage. Thus, a broad public opinion segment became aware of the problem, its causes were debated and a discussion of potential solutions was introduced.

5.2. Public attention on the problem of tourismphobia

The data in this study allows us to define a series of stages in the process of dissemination of the tourismphobia problem. The first stage was the introduction of the topic and goes from 2008 to 2011. Next, there is a stage of slow growth from 2012 to 2015. The third stage was an upturn before the crisis in 2016, and finally, a crisis stage, when the issue gets maximum coverage in 2017.

We can give an account of the moment some of the problems entered the public agenda for the first time, we could call them “new” problems. This is the case of tourism in the city of Barcelona, first in the sociotropic agenda in June of 2006 and in the egocentric one in June of 2008. It was not through a crisis, and there was not a trigger element either, it rather entered the city’s public agenda in a gradual way. It became the main problem in the city in June of 2017. It has been losing importance over time, though it is still significantly included in the sociotropic public agenda. This issue has always been less significant in the egocentric agenda.

The problem of tourism has had a long incubation period. The time that passed since some population sectors become aware of the problem until a significant part of Barcelona residents voiced their demands to the local authorities was significant. When new problems enter the agenda, they can differ in terms of development. In the case of tourism in Barcelona, it is safe to state that it is not a short-term crisis, even when episodes of crisis are evident. It is not yet possible to ascertain whether it will turn into a chronic problem or whether it will evolve into an intermittent one.

This slow incubation process seems to be related to the evolution of the problem. It has been the gradual change in the actual conditions of the problem, that is, an increase in the number of tourists, which has also gradually caught citizens’ attention. Furthermore, we also see that the public agenda precedes the media agenda in this case, in other words, the media has focused more on this issue as the real conditions of the problem gradually changed and residents became more aware of it.

This was what Downs called the *pre-problem* stage, which “prevails when some highly undesirable social condition exists but has not yet captured much public attention, even though some experts or interest groups may already be alarmed by it” (Downs, 1972), as had University teachers, the Barcelona City Hall and residents’ associations.

In Downs’ terms, the attacks carried out by Arran constituted the *alarmed discovery* and *euphoric enthusiasm* stage. “As a result of some dramatic series of events...the public suddenly becomes both aware of and alarmed about the evils of a particular problem. This alarmed discovery is invariably accompanied by euphoric enthusiasm about society’s ability to ‘solve this problem’ or ‘do something effective’ within a relatively short time. The combination of alarm and confidence results in part from the strong public pressure in America for political leaders to claim that every problem can be ‘solved’” (Downs, 1972).

In 2018 the media covered the issue of tourismphobia 4,476 times between January and the first half of September, that is, the level of coverage was notably lower than in 2017. The term is still used in the media in over 100 pieces of news every month and reaching almost 1,000 uses during certain months. Awareness was gradually raised in relation to addressing the problem given that it would have high costs and would involve sacrifices for important segments of the population whose income depend directly or indirectly on tourism, “realizing the cost of progress”, in Downs’ words, which starts the typical “gradual decline of intense public interest”. This is the stage, still uncompleted, that we are currently witnessing as we write this paper.

When interest in the problem becomes very low once again, we will be in the *post-problem stage*. In this stage, “An issue that has been replaced at the center of public concern moves into a prolonged limbo – a twilight realm of lesser attention or spasmodic recurrences of interest” (Downs, 1972). The theory points out that any unresolved issue is likely to capture public interest in the future.

5.3. The media agenda and the citizens’ agenda

Given the volume of coverage that it generates, it is essential to focus our attention on the city of Barcelona in order to compare the media’s issue-attention cycle with that of the city’s public agenda. Residents’ concerns regarding this issue precede those of the media. In fact, the media reflects citizens’ concerns rather than promoting them. The highest peak of attention we have observed in terms of the tourism problem in Barcelona is dated shortly before the attack on the tourist bus. If we had had access to opinion data in synch with these events the level of concern would surely have been even higher due to the media influence. However, regardless of the level of media attention, citizens already saw this as the main problem in the city. In other words, the media agenda was reflecting the city’s public agenda rather than shaping it.

It is also worth noting that although the problem of tourism was in the Barcelona public agenda, that was not the case in relation to the Spanish public agenda. In spite of the high level of media coverage, this problem did not affect the Spanish or the Catalan public agenda. This would have been difficult at it seems to be a local problem, essentially affecting urban centers, where one of the necessary conditions, though not the only one, is the presence of a high number of tourists and a diversified economy.

Finally, it is also worth highlighting that the high media coverage focused on the problem of tourismphobia triggered a public debate which preceded and/or was the driving force behind a series of initiatives from public institutions aiming at addressing some of the dimensions of tourism’s negative externalities, such as the regulations on tourist rentals that different autonomous or local governments have issued.

This would have been difficult at it seems to be a local problem, essentially affecting urban centres, where one of the necessary conditions, though not the only one, is the presence of a high number of tourists and a diversified economy (Mantecón & Velasco, 2020).

5.4. The values underlying policy-making

The definition of public problems is one of the central components of policy analysis. Problems are social constructions which involve highlighting some dimensions and attributes and bypassing others, which means that some principles and values are strengthened over others.

The most frequent principle or value is “sustainability”, mentioned 238 times. This is relevant for two essential reasons.

First, it places tourism policy on the materialist-post-materialist tension point, specifically in the conflict between economic competitiveness and employment on one side, and between environmental sustainability and quality of life on the other side. This tension pervades the whole policy, hence the “between love and hate” reference in the *Barcelona Metròpoli* magazine when describing the attitudes of local residents towards tourists. Thus, ambivalence is one of the traits of the attitudes towards this policy as people want to enjoy the economic and employment advantages offered by this activity and at the same time refuse to assume or at least want to reduce all the costs and externalities that it involves. The point of balance is not an obvious one; each actor places it in a different position according to their interests and values.

Second, the inclusion of the question of sustainability means that the libertarian-authoritarian axis needs to be considered (Flanagan, 1987; Borre, 2003). This is a topic in which social movements and “libertarian” political groups gain traction. It is not coincidental that the CUP, Arran, Sortu, and Bildu are featured rather prominently in the news; this issue fits perfectly within the political sub-culture of these organizations. This axis is clearly a continuum and we can find moderate libertarian positions as well as more radical positions at its authoritarian extreme.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Citizens live their daily lives facing many problematic situations that are not yet considered public problems (Cobb and Elder, 1983). One of the most effective ways of turning these disputes into a public policy problem is to find a way of labelling them that has an impact on political and communication terms (Felstiner, Abel and Sarat, 1980). In Spain, the label “tourismphobia” was used at one point to promote the image of tourism as a problem in particularly saturated urban areas.

The label appeared in academic circles and was spread by the media, but the perception of the problem by the citizens of the city that concentrates most news in this regard, Barcelona, came first and thus we can conclude that the public agenda preceded the media agenda in this case. The media focused more on the issue as the real conditions of the problem gradually changed and residents became more aware of it.

Starting from the widespread use of the term, this neologism, like any concept that circulates in the public sphere, was soon capitalized on by diverse groups that tried to impose some of its semantic dimensions against others (Huete & Mantecón, 2018).

The analysis of the press articles reveals that two political actors, very distant in terms of ideological positions, are the ones who relate to the term most frequently though using diverse attributes.

Social movements and left-wing parties insist on the unsustainability of the tourism development model and on the problems generated by the growth of tourists in the relationship between tourists and city residents.

On the opposite side, business owners and conservative parties' initial discourse was based on identifying acts of protest as "vandalism" and turning the term into a derogatory adjective, and also pointed to a new factor – online accommodation platforms – as the cause of the problem and publicly defended regulation measures and instruments to control them.

Through the different stages of the use of the term in the media (previous stage, appearance and discovery, intensity and enthusiasm, and decline) the concept of tourismphobia is related to diverse ideas. In a previous stage, the term was used by academics and reflects a theoretical position; in a second stage, which coincides with a symbolic attack on a tourist bus, images of violence are exaggerated and the term is linked to reckless attitudes that endanger economic activity; in the phase in which an attempt is made to better understand the problem, the media reflect with different emphasis various attributes and potential solutions, with the relationship established between tourist saturation in urban centers and the extension of unregulated accommodation platforms such as Airbnb gaining prominence.

In the same period through which the news is analyzed, tourist pressure does not appear in the surveys that measure the public's perception of problems, except in the city of Barcelona. And even there it is not a concern of citizens as a whole, it affects a partial sector. The most significant variables are place of residence, perception of the economic situation and ideological stance. This seems to suggest that the tourism overload also depends on the individual perception of each citizen.

The theories generated in the field of public policy analysis to explain the articulation of problems and their incorporation into public policy agendas allow us to understand how finally, out of the different competing narratives, a discourse is imposed that points to a specific problem that a city, Barcelona, particularly suffers from and that could be solved by controlling unregulated housing.

The conclusions suggest that despite the growth in the use of the term across the media, it is possible to observe important nuances: different media highlight different attributes of the problem, it is used more in association with certain territories and the actors press for some solutions to seem more appropriate than others.

Based on the data analyzed, it is difficult to explain why the term has disappeared. Some research suggests that the term itself and its intention to create discredit suffered a boomerang effect that let the promoters of the term to reduce its use (Blanco-Romero et al. 2019). Another hypothesis is that having managed to impose the relationship of the problem with one specific attribute, the actors of the dominant coalition managed to impose a certain narrative that, unless another crisis occurs, seems to have been successful in redirecting the situation. Future research could further investigate this.

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AUTORÍA

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