

Las Vegas en Los Monegros: Evaluating the mass media coverage of the social and economic impact of a business project from a corporate communication perspective

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Abstract

Theme parks (as large-scale business projects) have a major impact on its local and regional context. Mass Media can decisively influence their future development, since it contributes in the formation of their reputation in the eyes of public opinion. This paper aims to evaluate the media coverage and treatment of the economic, social and environmental impact of a business project: the installation of a leisure and gaming city in Los Monegros desert in Aragon. The results show that the project has a good media visibility at the regional level and reveal that the issues linked to its economic contribution are better treated by the media than its social and environmental problems.

Keywords: Mass Media, Media Reputation, Agenda Setting, Corporate Reputation, Corporate Communication, Los Monegros

Las Vegas en Los Monegros: evaluación de la cobertura mediática del impacto económico y social de un proyecto de negocio desde la perspectiva de la comunicación corporativa

Resumen

Los parques temáticos (como proyectos de negocios de grandes dimensiones) tienen un gran impacto en su contexto local y regional. Los medios de comunicación masivos pueden influir decisivamente en su implantación y desarrollo, ya que contribuyen a la formación de su reputación en la opinión pública. Este artículo tiene como objetivo evaluar la cobertura y tratamiento mediático del impacto económico, social y medioambiental de un proyecto de negocio: la instalación de una ciudad de ocio y juego en el desierto de los Monegros en Aragón. Los resultados muestran que el proyecto tiene una buena visibilidad mediática, y revelan que los temas vinculados a su contribución económica son tratados de mejor forma en los medios que los temas relacionados con sus problemas sociales y medioambientales.

Palabras clave: Medios de Comunicación, Reputación Mediática, Agenda Setting, Reputación Corporativa, Comunicación Corporativa, Los Monegros.

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Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. Theoretical Background. 2.1. Media Visibility of Organizations. 2.2. Media Attributes of Organizations. 2.3 Media Favourability towards Organizations. 3. Research Methodology. 4. Results. 4.1. Media Visibility of Gran Scala. 4.2 Media Attributes of Gran Scala. 4.3 Media Favourability towards Gran Scala. 5. Discussion and Conclusions. 6. References.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the number of theme parks has increased considerably around the world. This expansion have generated many debates about their social and economic impact. While some see theme parks as agents of development and progress that create jobs, technological know-how, touristic development, tax incomes and management experience, others argue that they have some social and environmental disadvantages, such as dictating conditions to operate in the country/region/city and exploiting people and natural resources.

The successful development of a large-scale business project (like a theme park) does not merely depend on vast financial investments by its promoters and its business plan being executed properly. This type of business project has a major impact on its local and regional context, economically, socially and environmentally, and for this reason its reputation in the area where the project is to take place may have a positive or negative effect in its social acceptance and economic development.

The media plays a major role in the growth of a favourable or unfavourable current of opinion among local and regional publics, focusing on its advantages and/or disadvantages for the community. Media Reputation can be defined as the exposure and treatment of organizations in the mass media (DEEPHOUSE, 1997 y 2000). The business project's media reputation will be a key value in the formation of its corporate reputation, especially in its public presentation phase, which is the period prior to the business project's effective implementation, and can decisively influence its future development. In this phase, mass media becomes a key player, since the project is not developed yet, and the assessment done by local and regional stakeholders is mainly based on information disseminated through (and by) the means of communication. In this way, EINWILLER et al. (2010) found that public opinion depend more on information provided by mass media to learn aspects that are difficult to have a direct experience and for which the news media are the main source of information.

This paper presents the results of the study of Media Reputation related to the Gran Scala business project: the installation of a leisure and gaming city (similar to Las Vegas) in the Los Monegros desert in Spain.

The Gran Scala project is conceived of as the creation of a destination city of leisure for all ages. It will cost 17 billion Euros approximately, and it is to be considered the largest leisure complex in Europe. Gran Scala will be an entertainment city built on the area of 20 square kilometres in the Aragón desert called "Los Monegros". It will include 32 themed casinos, 5 theme parks, 70 hotels, 232 restaurants, 500 stores, a golf course, a horse race track, a bullring, an opera, museums and residential development. Gran Scala will create 60,000 direct jobs and it is expected to welcome up to 25 million visitors a year.

The Gran Scala project was first announced in Orlando during the IAAPA (International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions) in November 2007. Furthermore, the project was presented to the press and to the public on December 12th in 2007, in Zaragoza.

In this research we analyze the level of visibility of the project in the media, as well as the media treatment of its economic, social and environmental impact (the at-

tributes assigned to it and the media (un)favourability towards it). The two vital questions in our investigation are: 'Is the Gran Scala project visible in the media?' And if the answer is 'yes' - 'How is it presented to the public opinion?'

2. Theoretical Background

Over time and due to social changes, the mass media has gradually become an important part of people's daily life. LUHMANN (2000) pointed out that what we know about society and what we know about the world is learnt through the mass media. More and more individuals use the media as a way of finding out what is happening around them (DUTTON and DUKERICH, 1991; BASKIN et al., 1997). That is to say, the media contributes to the establishing of the social reality of the community (WOLF, 1994; BERGER and LUCKMANN, 1984) as well as the visibility and evaluation of the companies in the eyes of the public opinion, given that a lot of the information about corporations arrives to the public through the mass media.

Since when MCCOMBS and SHAW (1972) carried out the study on the news media influence on the public perception of issues, the agenda setting function of the mass media has been contrasted in more than 300 empirical studies during the last 40 years (MCCOMBS, 2005). This is one of the main theories used by many authors from the field of corporate communication to emphasize the importance of the media in constructing corporate reputation (DEEPHOUSE, 1997 and 2000; FOMBRUN and SHANLEY, 1990; WARTICK, 1992; CARROLL and MCCOMBS, 2003; FOMBRUN and VAN RIEL, 2004; MEIJER and KLEINNIJENHUIS, 2006a and 2006b; KIOUSIS et al., 2007; CAPRIOTTI, 2007 and 2009). Corporate Reputation could be defined as the stakeholder's overall evaluation of an organization over time (FOMBRUN, 1996; FOMBRUN and VAN RIEL, 2004; WALKER, 2010). These authors argue that Media Reputation has a significant influence on public opinion, contributing strongly to forming the Corporate Reputation of organizations. However, very few works have been carried out about how media present business and/or corporations to the public opinion, and the influence of media coverage on corporate reputation (CARROLL and MCCOMBS, 2003; MEIJER and KLEINNIJENHUIS, 2006a and 2006b; KIOUSIS et al., 2007). In Spain, it has been found only two works (CAPRIOTTI, 2007 and 2009) that analyse the media visibility of corporate news about the Social Responsibility of Spanish companies.

The agenda setting theory (MCCOMBS and SHAW, 1993; DEARING and ROGERS, 1996; Mc Combs et al, 2000; MCCOMBS and GHANEM, 2001; MCCOMBS and REYNOLDS, 2002; WEAVER et al., 2004) holds that the issues or subjects which appear as relevant in the media influence the relevance these issues or subjects have on public opinion. In addition, this theory affirms that the importance the media gives to the attributes of the issues and subjects influences the importance these attributes have on the public opinion when evaluating them. This second level of agenda-setting affects comprehension, both at the cognitive and affective levels. Applying the principles of the first and second level agenda-setting to the field of corporate reputation, we can define three basic approaches referring to Media Reputation.

2.1. Media Visibility of Organizations

Many researchers (FOMBRUN, 1996; FOMBRUN et al., 2000; FOMBRUN and VAN RIEL, 1997 and 2004) identify corporate awareness, that is to say, the level of public prominence or visibility that a company reaches, as a key factor in constructing Corporate Reputation. The mass media can play a relevant role in building the corporate public visibility. The agenda setting theory holds that the issues or subjects which appear as relevant in the media influence their relevance for public opinion (MCCOMBS and SHAW, 1972; MCCOMBS, 2005). CARROLL and MCCOMBS (2003) affirm that the first level of agenda-setting affects the attention or the salience given to the organizations. The quantity of information appearing in the media about an organization is positively linked with its public prominence. This proposition concerns the media's effect on the public attention, i.e. it concentrates on which organizations people are aware of and are likely to have an opinion about. FOMBRUN and VAN RIEL (2004) state that Media Presence, or in other words, having a strong presence in the media, is one of the most important factors behind the public prominence of companies. BAKER et al. (1998) hold that the importance of media presence is based on two aspects: it facilitates the distribution of and accessibility to the information about the firm, and it reduces the level of uncertainty about the company. GAINES-ROSS (1997) concludes that the companies with the highest ranking in the Corporate Reputation Index published by *Fortune* are those with more visibility in the media.

Our research takes this approach as a starting point, and aims to analyze the media visibility of the Gran Scala project. The first research question (RQ) is linked with the first level of agenda-setting, and allows us to evaluate the degree of visibility that Gran Scala has in the Spanish mass media.

RQ1: What is the level of visibility or media presence of Gran Scala in the mass media?

2.2. Media Attributes of Organizations

The media can influence the cognitive associations or attributes the individuals assign to organizations. The substantive dimension of the second level of agenda-setting affects cognitive comprehension (MCCOMBS et al., 2000; CARROLL and MCCOMBS, 2003). CARROLL and MCCOMBS (2003) affirm that the quantity of information appearing in the media about the particular attributes of an organization is proportionate to the public that defines and associates it with these attributes. This proposition concerns the effect of the media on the cognitive associations people have of companies (CARROLL and MCCOMBS, 2003). MEIJER and KLEINNIJENHUIS (2006a) found strong support for the second level of the agenda-setting effect in the field of corporate communication.

Most authors (CARROLL, 1979; WARTICK and COCHRAN, 1985; WOOD, 1991; CARROLL, 1999; WADDOCK, 2004; CAPRIOTTI, 2009), investigating the basic roles of organizations in society, differentiate between the economic and social responsibilities of companies. On the one hand, there is the company's Economic Role, in relation to its economic responsibilities (to produce good products and services, obey the law and earn increasing profits). On the other hand, there is the company's Social Role,

which is related to its social responsibilities (to respect human rights, care for the environment and make an economic and social contribution to the community). Thus, people can develop two large different frames of reference or set of attributes in relation to organizations linked to their two basic roles in society: the attributes related to the company's Economic Role (Corporate Ability attributes) and the attributes which refer to the company's Social Role (Corporate Responsibility attributes) (BROWN, 1998; DACIN and BROWN, 2002; BROWN and DACIN, 1997; BERENS and VAN RIEL, 2004; MADRIGAL, 2000; CAPRIOTTI, 2009).

Mass media can influence both Corporate Ability and Corporate Responsibility attributes. The way in which the Corporate Ability issues and the Corporate Responsibility issues are presented by the mass media to the public opinion can influence the mental associations or attributes people have of companies. Hence, the media coverage and treatment of organizations, in both social and economic activities, contributes to identify and associate entities as economic or social actors in the society.

Our research adopts this proposition in order to study how the mass media contribute to identify and associate economic and social attributes to the Gran Scala project. This project clearly offers the opportunity to evaluate the economic and social topics assigned to it, as advantages and/or disadvantages of the project. Our second research question (RQ) is related to the substantive/cognitive dimension of the second level of agenda-setting allowing us to see if the coverage of the project in the newspapers refers to either economic or social attributes.

RQ2: What kind of attributes (economic or social) of the Gran Scala project has more and better media coverage?

2.3. Media Favourability towards Organizations

The third aspect to analyze is to evaluate the tone or valence assigned to the corporate attributes. The second level of agenda-setting does not only imply the substantive dimension, it concerns an evaluative dimension too. The affective dimension refers to the valence dimension of attributes: positive, negative or neutral tone. This evaluative dimension implies that the mass media coverage conveys more than mere facts, it also conveys feeling and tone (MCCOMBS and GHANEM, 2001). The mass media can portray companies in a positive, negative way or using a neutral tone. DEEPCHOUSE (1997) suggests that the media can contribute to evaluate the reputation of a company. This evaluation does not only relate to the association of some attributes with a company, but it is also about a more positive or negative nature of these attributes and about the company in general. The news stories inform people about the attributes of the organizations, but they also include an evaluation of these attributes (CARROLL Y MCCOMBS, 2003). MEIJER and KLEINNIJENHUIS (2006b) show that different types of news (those about success and failure or support and criticism) can influence the attitudes towards the companies. Thus, the media can contribute to shape the positive or negative evaluation the public will have about the economic or social attributes of organizations.

Our research adopts this proposition in order to analyse the media evaluation of the attributes related to the Gran Scala project. The third research question (RQ) hence is

related to the evaluative/affective dimension of the second level of agenda-setting permitting us to see if the media coverage of economic and social issues of the companies is treated in a positive, negative or neutral tone.

RQ3: What is the tone (positive, negative or neutral) applied by the media about the Gran Scala project?

3. Research Methodology

In order to analyze the media coverage and treatment of Gran Scala project, our research was carried out on the information published in Spanish newspapers. We analyzed 13 newspapers (four paid regional -*Heraldo de Aragón*, *Periódico de Aragón*, *Diario de Teruel* and *Diario del Alto Aragón*- four regional editions of free newspapers -*20 minutos*, *Qué!*, *ADN* and *Metro*- and five national ones -*El País*, *El Mundo*, *ABC*, *La Razón* y *Público*). The defined unit of analysis was comprised of any news referring to the Gran Scala project. We selected all news items in any news reporting genre (news, interviews, reports, opinion, leading articles, among others).

The period studied in this paper analyzes the public presentation phase of the Gran Scala project (24 weeks from November 2007 to April 2008), that is to say, the period from its first appearance in the mass media (middle November 2007) to the initial activity of the project: evaluating the possible specific geographical locations in the region (late April 2008). We obtained 908 news items.

In order to analyze the first level of the agenda setting, that is, the level of Media Visibility of the Gran Scala project, we established the “Newspaper layout” category. It allowed us to identify and classify the news items according to their formal characteristics, based on five types of data: the level of presence (which indicates whether the project is quoted in the news only, if it has a dedicated paragraph or the whole article), the size (which measures the size of the news text in cm²), the images (which identifies whether the news has image/graphic or not), the place (to know the place where it is located on the page), and the front page (if the news appears in it). This category lets us establish two drivers of visibility: Exposure (the number of news about the project) and the Relevance (the level of prominence or importance of each piece of news in the media). This last aspect refers to an index developed while combining the five different types of data from the layout category, each of them with their own weight. The relevance index is truly significant since it allows for any news to give it its true value in terms of its possible impact on readers: brief news of 30 cm² compared with a half page of 300 cm² does not have the same level of impact, or a piece of news with or without a photograph, a piece which appears on the front page compared with those which are not published there. Each piece of news is evaluated from zero to ten points of relevance, two points corresponding to the minimum level of visibility for a news item and one point is given for a theme item.

To evaluate the second level of the agenda setting, a content analysis was made. We defined a matrix of analysis based on the model proposed by MCOMBS et al. (2000) who combine substantive and affective dimensions. We established two main categories to classify all the newspapers texts relating to the Gran Scala project: “Media Attributes” and “Media Favourability”.

The “Media Attributes” category refers to the substantive dimension of the second level of agenda setting. It was used to classify the information in relation to the cognitive attributes assigned to Gran Scala in each news item. Two major sub-categories were thus developed (table 1):

(a) “Definition”: focuses on the direct association with the Gran Scala project (through the use of adjectives, adverbs, nouns, set expressions, catchphrases or even metaphors). This sub-category allows us to obtain a media definition of Gran Scala (that is, the typical way in which the mass media define the project). We established five different types of data (table 1): dimension (adverbs describing the size of the project), type of space (nouns that suggest what kind of project it is), activity (nouns describing the business type of the project), geographical range (adjectives which express the range of the business) and metaphors (expressions, catchphrases or metaphors associated with the project).

(b) “Themes”: this aspect concentrates on different topics linked with the project and helps to make an indirect characterization of Gran Scala. We identified 13 themes related to Gran Scala (table 1), and classified them into two main frames of meaning according to the two principal roles of organizations in society defined previously. On the one hand, there are the “Corporate Ability issues” which comprises the themes linked to the information about the economic impact of the Gran Scala project. And on the other, the “Corporate Responsibility issues” relate to the information about the social impact of the project.

Table 1: Media Attributes categories

| Media Attributes | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Definitions</i> | <i>Themes</i> | |
| | <i>Corporate Ability issues</i> | <i>Corporate Responsibility issues</i> |
| Dimension | Gran Scala development & activities | Political Transparency |
| Type of Space | Local & Regional Development impact | Values & Morality impact |
| Activity | Employment impact | Health impact |
| Geographical Reach | Touristic impact | Environmental impact |
| Metaphor | Tax impact | Public Order impact |
| | Real Estate impact | Socio-Cultural impact |
| | | Human/Individual impact (life stories) |

The “Media Favourability” category refers to the affective dimension of the second level of agenda setting. It allowed us to identify and classify the news items according to their valence: the information obtained was analysed and classified as positive (when it revealed data and opinions which were good for the Gran Scala project), negative (when the data and comments were against it), or neutral (data explaining or describing a particular situation only). These categories were applied not only to each piece of news, but also to all the themes identified in each news item.

Finally, we also compared the results from our content analysis with some data obtained from a public opinion survey carried out in January 2008 (45 days after the publication of the first news about Gran Scala) by the regional government, so as to analyze if the media coverage of the Gran Scala project had any kind of impact on the public opinion. The survey was conducted through 2,400 phone interviews with the individuals from the Aragon region ($p=q=0,5$; 95.5%; +/-2.4 margin of error).

Before the definitive compilation of information, we carried out a pre-test on 90 pieces of news, which allowed us to adjust the analysis categories and the information coding system to adapt them correctly to the RQs. We then carried out the content analysis on the definitive sample of news.

4. Results

4.1. Media Visibility of Gran Scala

Table 2: Level of Media Visibility

| Media Visibility | Exposure | | Relevance |
|-------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| | <i>n</i> | % | <i>p</i> |
| TOTAL | 908 | 100 | 3.7 |
| Regional Newspapers | 863 | 95.0 | 3.6 |
| <i>Heraldo de Aragón</i> | 202 | 23.4 | 4.3 |
| <i>El Periódico de Aragón</i> | 258 | 29.9 | 4.4 |
| <i>Diario del Alto Aragón</i> | 134 | 15.5 | 4.1 |
| <i>Diario de Teruel</i> | 50 | 5.7 | 2.6 |
| <i>20 Minutos</i> | 82 | 9.5 | 1.4 |
| <i>Metro</i> | 48 | 5.5 | 1.5 |
| <i>Qué!</i> | 46 | 5.3 | 2.9 |
| <i>ADN</i> | 43 | 4.9 | 3.0 |
| National Newspapers | 45 | 5.0 | 4.5 |
| <i>El País</i> | 3 | 6.6 | 3.5 |
| <i>El Mundo</i> | 1 | 2.2 | 5.7 |
| <i>ABC</i> | 25 | 55.5 | 5.8 |
| <i>La Razón</i> | 14 | 31.1 | 3.0 |
| <i>Público</i> | 2 | 4.4 | 1.1 |

The results gathered in the survey indicate that the Gran Scala project has a high level of visibility in the media (Table 2). The project's exposure in the news is very high. It appeared almost 1,000 times (908 news items to be exact) in 13 newspapers (eight regional and five national ones) during 24 weeks analyzed. This indicates a mean of 69.8 news items per newspaper, with a mean presence of 37.8 news items per week (that is, approximately 2.9 news items in every newspaper each week). The Relevance (or the level of importance) per news obtained is also high for we can see a mean of 3.7 points of relevance per news item (this represents almost one third of a page in a newspaper).

Analyzing the media visibility in detail, the differences between the regional and national newspapers are rather clear. We can observe that the majority of news appeared in the newspapers in the region of Aragon (95%, $n=863$ news items) where the project will be built. In the regional media the Gran Scala project is highly visible, with a mean of 104.5 news items per newspaper (4.3 news items in each newspaper per week) during 24 weeks analyzed. The relevance per news obtained is rather high with a mean of 3.0 points of relevance per news item. In national newspapers, on the other hand, the project is not visible (5%,

n=45 news items): the mean is 6.2 news items per newspaper (with a mean of 0.2 news item in each newspaper per week, that is, one piece of news in 5 weeks). With such a reduced level of exposure, the high mean of relevance (3.8 points per news item) is not significant. This clearly shows that the project has become part of the media agenda at a regional level, but not a national one.

The data obtained from the public opinion survey about the public awareness of Gran Scala shows that 81.1% of the individuals from Aragon (and 90.5% of people from the area of Monegros) became familiar with the existence of the Gran Scala project only one month after the publication of the first news item. Since the mass media was the main (and sometimes, the only one) source of information about the project, we can see that the media visibility had influenced the public visibility of Gran Scala, at least at a regional level.

4.2 Media Attributes of Gran Scala

As we explained in the section on methodology, in order to analyze the media attributes related to the Gran Scala project, we used two categories: definition (the direct relation to an object) and themes (the indirect relation to an object).

In relation to the definition assigned to the Gran Scala project, we have collected 2,834 references approximately (adverbs, nouns, adjectives, descriptors, set expressions, catchphrases, metaphors, among others) during 24 weeks analyzed. As we had already explained, they were classified into five main types of attributes. In the dimension typology, the most quoted adverb was “Macro” (n=367 times, 82.6%). Referring to the type of space, the most frequently cited descriptors in the newspapers were “project” (n=622 times, 48.6%) and “complex” (n=473 times, 37%). In the activity typology, the most often used expressions were “Leisure & Gaming” (n=434 times, 49.8%) and “Leisure” (n=316 times, 36.3%). The total number of the geographical range adjectives was not significant to be considered, however, the most cited ones were “worldwide” (n=26 times, 50%) and “European” (n=24 times, 36.1%). And the metaphor cited most was “Las Vegas” (n=112 times, 59.2%). In this way, the Media Definition proposed by newspapers is clearly observed: Gran Scala is presented as a “Macro Project of Leisure & Gaming”, with a strong point of reference (as a metaphorical place): the American city of “Las Vegas”.

Referring to the Themes category, the results obtained show that in the newspapers studied the information about the 13 different topics (related to the two main frames of reference) linked the Gran Scala project appeared 3,050 times during 24 weeks (Table 3). The topics dealing with the Corporate Ability issues (linked to the themes on the economic impact) appeared 1,852 times (60.7% of the total sum) and the topics associated with the Corporate Responsibility issues (having to do with the social impact) appeared 1,198 times (39.3% of the total sum). If we take into account the period studied in this research, the Corporate Ability issues had a frequency of 77.1 news items per week (and 11.1 news items per day), while the Corporate Responsibility issues had a frequency of 49.9 news items per week (7.2 news items per day). This shows that the mass media focused mainly on the economic impact of the project (which is reflected in two thirds of the total news topics) rather than on its social im-

pact (one third of the news topics) during the analyzed period. If we analyze the level of relevance of both large main frames of reference, we can observe that the Corporate Ability issues has a mean of 2.3 points of relevance per topic and the Corporate Responsibility issues has a mean of 1.5 points of relevance per topic. That is to say, both of them have a good score of relevance to an issue (and this could represent, as a mean, one fourth part of a page dedicated to an issue each time it appears), whereas the economic issues, compared to the social ones, are better spoken of.

Table 3: Types of issues linked to the Gran Scala project

| Themes | Exposure | | Relevance |
|--|--------------|-------------|------------|
| | <i>n</i> | % | <i>p</i> |
| TOTAL | 3,050 | 100 | 2.0 |
| Corporate Ability issues | 1,852 | 60.7 | 2.3 |
| Gran Scala development & activities | 1,000 | 54.0 | 2.7 |
| Local & Regional Development impact | 458 | 24.7 | 2.0 |
| Employment impact | 95 | 5.1 | 1.9 |
| Touristic impact | 77 | 4.1 | 2.0 |
| Tax impact | 44 | 2.3 | 1.4 |
| Real Estate impact | 178 | 9.6 | 2.1 |
| Corporate Responsibility issues | 1,198 | 39.3 | 1.5 |
| Political Transparency | 612 | 51.0 | 1.6 |
| Public Order impact | 27 | 2.2 | 1.1 |
| Values & Morality impact | 49 | 4.0 | 1.1 |
| Health impact | 61 | 5.0 | 1.6 |
| Environmental impact | 344 | 28.7 | 1.3 |
| Socio-Cultural impact | 47 | 3.9 | 1.4 |
| Human/Individual impact (life stories) | 58 | 4.8 | 1.3 |

In relation to the themes on the Corporate Ability issues, we can see that the dominant one is the “Gran Scala development & activities” (54%, $n=1,000$ times; and 2.7 points of relevance, rather high for a theme). And the second important issue is “Local & Regional Development impact” (24.7%, $n=458$ times; and 2.0 point of relevance, a high score too). The remaining four topics are not significant since none of them reaches 10% of the type of issues news, the most important of them being the “Real Estate impact”, with 9.6% ($n=178$, and a relevance of 2.1 points). This evidence shows that the media discourse centred on the economic impact of Gran Scala.

As for the themes related to the Corporate Responsibility issues, the results indicate that the “political transparency” was the main topic (51%, $n=612$ times, and 1.6 points of relevance), followed by the “environmental impact” (28.7%, $n=344$ times, and 1.3 points of relevance). The other five themes have no significant results, since none of them reveals more than 5% of the type of issue exposure. These results suggest that the media discourse related to the social impact of Gran Scala focused mainly on the political debate about the information given to the public opinion by the regional government. Such results might have been influenced by the fact that in March 2008 the general elections were held in Spain which could have altered the media agenda on these kinds of topics within some weeks. It also suggests that the discourse focused on the environmental impact of the project on Los Monegros desert more than on the social problems associated with it.

4.3 Media Favorability towards Gran Scala

Evaluating the evolution of the positive and negative news items during the period of six months, we can see that the positive news items have a clear tendency to gradually diminish, while the number of the negative ones tends to increase gradually every month. The positive news items were prevailing at the beginning of the period (from 75% in November 2007 until 54% in January 2008), but at the end of the period the negative news began to dominate (from 54% in February 2008 until 67% in April 2008).

The results of the research indicate that the tone of voice used with regard to the Gran Scala project varies (Table 4). The general exposure can be considered as balanced since 46.2% of the total news items (n=420) are considered positive for the project, 43.5% (n=395) are defined as negative, and 10.2% (n=93) are neutral. But the relevance scores show that the positive news items have higher prominence compared to the negative ones in the newspapers analyzed. The positive news items have a mean of 4.6 points of relevance and the negative ones 2.8 points of relevance (similar to the neutral ones, with 2.7 points). Thus, the relevance index suggests that the positive news items have received better treatment when contrasted with the negative news (in terms of size, better placement, more graphic support or any other factor) by the newspapers in the period studied.

Table 4: Tone of news of the Gran Scala project: Exposure and Relevance

| TOTAL-NEWS | Positive News | | | Neutral News | | | Negative News | | |
|------------|---------------|------|-----------|--------------|------|-----------|---------------|------|-----------|
| | Exposure | | Relevance | Exposure | | Relevance | Exposure | | Relevance |
| N | n | % | p | n | % | p | n | % | p |
| 908 | 420 | 46.2 | 4.6 | 93 | 10.2 | 2.7 | 395 | 43.5 | 2.8 |

In relation to the news coverage of the Themes identified, 53.6% (n=1,636) are positive, 38.6% (n=1,178) are negative and 7.7% (n=236) are neutral (Table 5). The Relevance index indicates that the positive news items have a mean of 2.3 points and the negative topics have a mean of 1.6 points. We can draw a conclusion that the positive pieces of news are better treated by the newspapers when compared to the negative ones. Furthermore, the topics related to the Corporate Ability issues (the economic impact themes) have a mean of 61.6% (n=1142) of positive news, 28.7% (n=533) of negative news and 9.5% (n=177) of neutral news. The relevance assigned to the positive news is 2.6 points and to the negative ones 1.8 points. Thus, in this type of issues the coverage of positive news is not only more present, it also has better treatment. With regard to the topics associated with the Corporate Responsibility issues (the social impact themes), 41.2% (n=494) are positive, 53.8% (n=645) are negative and 4.9% (n=59) are neutral. The relevance of the positive news is 1.6 points and the negative ones 1.4 points. In this type of issues, in turn, the negative news items are more dominant, although the positive ones have better treatment. Comparing the results of both type of issues, we can see that the mass media give more positive treatment to the economic impact of Gran Scala, and more negative treatment to the social impact of the project.

Table 5: Tone of news of the Gran Scala project by type of issues

| Themes | TOTAL | Positive | | | Neutral | | | Negative | | |
|--|----------|-----------------|---------------|----------|-----------------|---------------|----------|-----------------|---------------|----------|
| | | <i>Exposure</i> | <i>Relev.</i> | | <i>Exposure</i> | <i>Relev.</i> | | <i>Exposure</i> | <i>Relev.</i> | |
| | <i>n</i> | <i>n</i> | % | <i>p</i> | <i>n</i> | % | <i>p</i> | <i>n</i> | % | <i>p</i> |
| TOTAL | 3,050 | 1,636 | 53.6 | 2.3 | 236 | 7.7 | 2.0 | 1,178 | 38.6 | 1.6 |
| Corporate Ability issues | 1,852 | 1,142 | 61.6 | 2.6 | 177 | 9.5 | 2.3 | 533 | 28.7 | 1.8 |
| Corporate Responsibility issues | 1,198 | 494 | 41.2 | 1.6 | 59 | 4.9 | 1.2 | 645 | 53.8 | 1.4 |

Having studied the data obtained from the public opinion survey about the public evaluation of the Gran Scala project, we can see that 73.5% of people interviewed consider the installation of Gran Scala for the region of Aragon as positive, and only 11.9% perceive it as negative. 7.8% of the individuals claim that it is neither positive nor negative. Moreover, 31.2% of the individuals from Los Monegros area consider that the project will benefit them, and only 8.3% believe that it will have a damaging effect. Therefore, we can see that mass media have influenced on the more positive evaluation of the Gran Scala project by the public opinion in Aragon, since the positive news have had a better treatment in the media.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The results of the research lead us to conclude that Gran Scala is highly visible in the regional mass media and this confirms the fact that it clearly affects the public awareness and evaluation of the project at a regional level. The outcomes of the survey also allow us to draw a set of specific conclusions:

As for the first approach (Media Visibility of Organizations), the data makes it possible to notice that the Gran Scala project has a relevant level of coverage, that is to say, it has good media visibility. But such a good level of visibility is limited to the region of Aragon where the project is present in the regional press almost every day. In the national media, Gran Scala has low presence during the period studied. Hence, we can re-affirm that the project forms part of the media agenda at a regional level only. We have also identified a strong level of public visibility of the project at a regional level, since the majority of the individuals identified and recognized it two months after the public presentation of Gran Scala. Therefore, by applying the first level of agenda-setting, we can suggest that the project has a high public prominence and that this prominence could be influenced by a high media visibility.

The second approach (Media Attributes of Organizations) led us to identify two ways to evaluate the media attribution: direct attribution (through definitions using adjectives, set expressions, catchphrases or metaphors) and indirect attribution (through themes organized in two main frames of meaning). Through the analysis of the definitions we recognized a clear general media definition of the Gran Scala project as a “macro project of leisure and gaming” which used a prototype city in the style of Las Vegas as a metaphor. On the other hand, the results we obtained about the cov-

erage of the themes reveal that the topics related to the economic impact of the project (the Corporate Ability issues) have received more attention and better treatment than the themes associated with the social impact of Gran Scala (the Corporate Responsibility issues). In this way, we can infer that the press promotes the economic perspective rather than the social and environmental outlook of the project. The newspapers are presenting mainly the economic attributes of the project rather than its social attributes, as they dedicate a lot more coverage to the project's economic issues rather than its social topics. Thus, taking the cognitive dimension of the attribute agenda-setting as a reference, we can conclude that media coverage is influencing the Gran Scala's set of attributes. Media coverage contributes in associating the project with attributes related to their economic impact (corporate ability attributes) rather than with attributes linked to their social and environmental impact (the corporate responsibility attributes).

The third approach (Media Favourability towards Organizations), in turn, makes it vivid that the level of exposure (quantity of items) of positive and negative news items is rather balanced in the newspapers analyzed (46% of positive news and 43% of negative ones). But the relevance index of positive and negative news indicates that the media treat better and pay more attention to positive news. Therefore, media coverage tends to be mainly positive about Gran Scala. However, it is crucial to remark that the media tends to inform positively about the themes related to the economic impact of the project (the Corporate Ability issues), and negatively about topics linked to its social impact (the Corporate Responsibility issues). Thus, it seems that the Gran Scala project is presented as a two-sided coin; with the good side being the economic contribution and the bad one referring to the social and environmental impact, although the media tends to present the economic impact in much better terms. On the other hand, the public opinion survey concludes that the majority of individuals in Aragon (around 75%) evaluate the Gran Scala project as positive for the region. Thus, taking into account the affective dimension of the second level of agenda-setting, we can point out that the positive media coverage of the project could influence a favourable public evaluation of it. Media coverage thus could contribute to influence the public evaluation of Gran Scala hence it contributes to define its positive and negative attributes.

Finally, this study presents some limitations too. The results presented derive from the printed newspapers, other kinds of media such as the radio, TV or electronic newspapers were not analyzed. In this way, we studied a very important type of mass media, but we know that the attributes and associations can also be influenced by other types of media, especially the online ones, which have been gaining greater relevance in the last decade. Nevertheless, despite of these limitations, the methodology used could be useful to other researchers when studying the way in which the information of businesses is tailored by mass media.

6. References

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