Journalistic treatment of climate change in the Peruvian newspapers El Comercio and La República (2013-2017)

Tratamiento periodístico del cambio climático en los diarios peruanos El Comercio y La República (2013-2017)

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Abstract
The research addresses the behavior of two important Peruvian media (El Comercio and La Republica) on the existence and possible causes or consequences of climate change in the last three years (January 2014 to March 2017). For this purpose, taking as a basis the perspectives of the Agenda-Setting and the framing, we have proposed to identify thematic and framing from which this news is addressed by journalists, in order to show the way in which these printed please this phenomenon According to the results, there are no differences between one and another means in terms of frequency of coverage or space. However, throughout the study period, there is more media concentration on the expectations regarding the organization and implementation of the COP 20 Summit, held in December 2014, than on the possible impacts or consequences of the phenomenon.crime, economy, formal politics and corruption.

Keywords
Climate change, Peruvian press, Agenda-Setting, Framing.

Resumen
La investigación aborda el comportamiento de dos importantes medios peruanos (*El Comercio* y *La República*) sobre la existencia y posibles causas o consecuencias del cambio climático de los últimos tres años (enero 2014 a marzo 2017). Para tal efecto, tomando como base las perspectivas de la *Agenda-Setting* y la del *Framing*, nos hemos propuesto identificar temáticas y encuadres desde las que son abordadas estas noticias por parte de los periodistas, con el fin de mostrar el modo en que estos impresos refieren dicho fenómeno. De acuerdo con los resultados, no existen diferencias significativas entre uno y otro medio en cuanto a frecuencia de cobertura o espacio. Sin embargo, en todo el periodo de estudio, existe mayor concentración mediática en las expectativas sobre la organización y realización de la cumbre COP 20, celebrada en diciembre de 2014, que en los posibles impactos o consecuencias del fenómeno.

Palabras clave
Cambio climático, Prensa peruana, Agenda *Setting*, *Framing*.

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1. Introduction

In the world of media, there is a large presence of journalistic texts and advertising announcements that refer to the existence of climate change. However, due to diverse routine circumstances that overwhelm our life in society, until now we cannot understand and analyze with accuracy what this fact and its consequences on the environment imply (Canziani & Canziani, 2013).

This situation has brought about discussions where emotional thought predominates rational thought (Roger & Buil, 2014). In Peru, for example, socio-environmental conflicts are already part of the national reality, where for many years, key players with different interests, mining companies and local communities, compete for resources that are definitely finite and assigned (Balvín & López, 2002). They are part of the representation of a world, where the market gives, without transparency of the case, value to natural resources in order to satisfy a society, like the current one, that is more and more urbanized and consumption based (Delgado, 2013), thus ignoring its possible social and environmental impacts.

Considering the importance this problem deserves, the research addresses as object of the study, via two important print media of reference in Peru (El Comercio and La República), the constructions and representations that emanate in Peruvian press of the environmental conflict, especially, in terms of climate change.

In the context of this reality caused by man (Ondarza, 2012; Escobar & Flores, 2014), the problem researched proposes the following question: Does Peruvian printed press, with presence and influence in the both the analogue and digital world, disseminate information that contributes, at least in its texts, to elevate the perception of risk and knowledge of the impact on the society's living conditions that climate change causes? In this way, we want to carry out a study on the coverage of the climate change problem with the purpose of identifying topics and frames derived from the news frequency and hierarchy during the period between January 2014 and March 2017. Our hypothesis, that was finally contrasted in this study, reveals that both El Comercio and La República give attention to topics about climate change when certain climatic phenomena occurs or, when extraordinary events occur (COP20 Lima 2014 and Paris 2015), making them more predominant in terms of space and contextual resources, from frames like assignment of responsibility and economic consequence, more oriented towards cause and effect, than effective solutions.

In this type of study, it is also important to identify the protagonists of the information, which allows, as Bennett says (1983) the "personalization of the news" (Aruguete & Amadeo, 2012: 180). However, according to Méndez-Rubio (2008), the risk of creating stories that are focused on the actors of the events, is that communication media can individualize the problem and show more concern for its more dramatic dimension in terms of an official (for example, the president of Peru) that is inserted in terms of a circumstance (climate change). And that is what we are deducing from this work, when the key players with bigger roles in the news on climate change are the heads of state and their ministers, international leaders, and business owners.

For compliance with these objectives, we have carried out an analysis of the content of journalistic texts (n= 460) and the frames were identified in the articles via an analysis of factors following the proposal of Smetko & Valkenburg (2000).

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Framing Theory

The discourses of the journalistic texts have the communicative function to inform via articles that lead to an end result (with what

purpose), social connection (sender-receiver) and context (time and place), in other words, a word, sentence or group of sentences organized for an overall meaning (Peralta & Urtasun, 2007).

Tuchman, for the first time, in his renowned work Making News (1978), proposed news as a frame:

> […] describes news as a window whose frame defines the limits of the reality to which one has access, limiting the perception of another, different reality and centering the attention on this specific fragment. As a consequence of these processes, some aspects of the reality perceived via the news will be more prominent than others (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015: 424).

Given that news makes us aware of a probable or consumed event of interest to society, its informative structure requires a central axis of thought that organizes to optimize the audience's accessibility (Valkenburg, Semetko & De Vreese, 1990).

> News, therefore, is a textual and visual construction carried out around a central axis of thought, of a determined perspective, created by an information specialist (although not always true) that will propose a framework of interpretation for the public to which the message is broadcast. (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015: 424).

For Etnman (1993), whose definition of frame is the most used by the academic community (Valera, 2016), framing is nothing more than selecting some aspects of the reality and emphasizing them more in a text. This way, "the frame stimulates the audience to carry out associations between the topic, a particular definition of its relevance, its causes, its implications and a mode of resolution" (Sánchez-Vilela, 2013: 44).

Although, originally, communication media were seen as media whose journalistic products "constitute a tool of power" (Martini, 2000: 25), that called attention to certain issues and thus setting an agenda. These also "create frames of interpretation of the social events" (D´Adamo, García Beaudoux & Freidenberg, 2007: 135) that derive from the causes and consequences related to the attributes highlighted in the agenda.

2.2. Press and climate change

Tel (2014) states that climate change is currently on the list of top challenges worldwide, proposing a threat to global sustainability, in general, and capitalism, in particular (Postigo & Young, 2016). According to Peruvian government calculations, emergencies caused by natural disasters increased, starting in the 21st century, by six times the amount, 72% of which were caused by climate change (Lanegra, 2017). Taking this basis into account, Toledano (2013) sustains that all communication media should carry out a social function aimed at the service of its target audience. This labor, he says, is especially important in light of determined events of large social impact, such as catastrophes and humanitarian crises.

Nevertheless, investigations like that performed by Hermelin (2007) in Colombia, warn that in Latin America, few studies have been done on the relationship between society and the treatment that communication media have on climate change's existence and effects. On the other hand, similar to what is happening in his homeland, investigation in Peru reveals that national newspapers are more concerned with the magnitude of the events themselves than their causes and consequences from an expert or, for example, scientific standpoint. Explications that when they appear in a publication, as Hermelin states, tend to be limited, or are often even associated with being supernatural.

Other studies, like those of Barrios, Cabrera &Vega-Estarita (2017) show how the journalistic narratives on websites (news and reports) on natural disaster risk management in the Andean Region, Centfal America and Sou-

thern Cone, in addition to prioritizing official sources and institutional press releases, inform of the event without analysis or context. The poor informative quality of print and digital communication media demonstrates that the 'fourth power" is not aware of the importance and effects of climate change, noting that it does not pay attention to, much less contextualize or evaluate by way of expert sources, those topics that could provide knowledge as to the prevention and management of socio-environmental crises such as potential threats, public policy programs, emergency plans, among others.

Some investigators like Park (2017) have tried to explain what causes this problem that is also present in the first world, particularly in the United States, a country considered "quite behind" in terms of collective action (Gibson, Craig, Harper & Alpert, 2016), which makes it, consequently, contrary to high quality news production on climate change.

> Perhaps editors are not interested in climate change, given that they often believe that audiences have problems with the topic and prefer more sensational stories instead that receive higher ratings and approval by advertisers (Park, 2017).

As strange as it seems, these issues on what and how news is presented have presence, more than in additions or occasional environments (like special reports), in the fundamental areas of traditional journalism like the political, economic and social space. Overall, contrary to what is featured in the Society Section (understood as issues of social interest), the first two, that present more information on socio-environmental problems, are characterized by certain particularities that can limit possibilities to exercise better quality journalism. For example, they have a limited number of sources, where the main protagonists often belong to the elites of said areas. In addition, as presented further ahead in the section Results, they have more of a tendency to make its production routine in terms of identifying the responsibilities of its key players (government, individual or group in some event) or consequences that these can cause for a region or country. In contrast, "the social" features other conditions that would provide for better journalistic coverage: the protagonists, in terms of sources, often come from all sectors of society, of any class or culture, their actions belong to the public, private or personal sphere, and are mixed together, the process of making it routine in terms of the production of its messages is more complicated.

> These features make society a large macro-area where all actions and activities are possible, giving it a large number of informative possibilities, although it may imply, at the same time, a lesser homogeneity and a greater difficulty of internal structuring (Gallego & Luengo, 2014).

This macro-area would contain content where expert sources (like scientific ones) and the stories of victims under the focus of human interest, may increase the value of environmental news by promoting a concern more focused on development of plans linked more to prevention and problem solution.

3. Theoretical Framework

To know the news topics and frames used by the main print newspapers, in reference to the existence, causes and consequences of climate change, a content analysis has been performed of all the journalistic production published in two Lima-based newspapers that in Peru are considered to be quite different: El Comercio (founded in 1839), known as "the dean of the national press", which is a medium that targets the upper and upper middle classes, and La República (created in 1981), read by more progressive and leftist sectors.

In order to comply with the investigation's objectives, all the journalistic texts referring to "climate change" during the study period from January 1, 2014 to March 30, 2017 were selected and studied. This led to a corpus of 1,077 texts.

Later, a sample work was performed exclusively for studying frames, in which 460 units (43% of the total) were selected from the 2 media sources. This selection was made basically due to its above average size (310 cm2) corresponding to spaces that range approximately from a fourth of a page to a full page.

Once the selection was made, the priority of the information was measured based on the following variables: frequency, space and distribution per section. Later, we identified the frames of each news, according to the typology proposed by Smetko & Valkenburg (2000).

The data obtained was analyzed with the support of the Scientific Program for Social Sciences - SPSS® for its versatility to carry out exploration, comparison, diagnostic and synthesis of categoric and numeric data (Jiménez & Reinoso, 2016).

4. Results

4.1.Frequency

Of a total of 1,077 journalistic texts related to climate change and published in the Peruvian press during three years, there was an average of 1 unit per day found among the two media outlets. This number is excessively low in regards to the number of informative texts that a print media can publish (40 on average, considering only Section A of El Comercio and La República, except for the Sports and Recreation Section). IN regards to the number of units distributed by medium, there is no significant difference between El Comercio (51 %) and La República (49 %).

Upon observing the distribution of news units per month/year, there is a normal distribution (0.853 < 0). According to the frequency table, November and December 2014 held 33% of all information from both communication media from the period selected from January 2014 to the end of the first quarter of 2017. This is due to the media attention and the expectations that the organization and the holding of the International Conference on Climate Change (COP 20) in Lima caused. Said event was attended by representatives from 195 countries, with the purpose of avoiding man's threatening impact on the climate.

If we disregard these facts related to the event, the months that registered the highest number of appearances in the press were in all cases, except for 2017, those corresponding to the second semester of each year when the country was in winter and spring. Thus, we have in September 2014 (7 %) and December 2015 (8 %), as well as November 2016 and March 2017 the press dedicates 5% of coverage to environmental issues. The difference in the last case was exceptional due to the disasters generated by El Niño Costero, climatic phenomenon that covers the coasts of Peru and Ecuador, produced by the weakening of the cold air currents, causing the ocean to warm in this part of the southern Pacific.

All these units in the months selected add up to 172 notes, representing 16% of total coverage.

4.2. Space

In terms of the space, the sum of all informative coverage reaches approximately 384,907 cm2. The minimum size was 6 cm2 and the maximum was 1,756 cm2. In terms of frequency, 80% of the texts (N = 853) were less than 267 cm2. However, the largest number of notes reached a mode of 33.36 cm2 (approximately 30%), which is reflected in the media studied in the abundance of brief informative notes.

In addition, we found in our study that the distribution of the data is asymmetrical and positively skewed (0 > 1.352) the mean (247 cm2) becomes the most convenient measure of position to describe the main tendency of the distribution of data. This allows us to calculate that less than 50% of the texts measured approximately a quarter of a page.

Particularizing the cases, we have a better understanding in the treatment of the space in El Comercio (N=544, that add up to 216,863.70 cm2) than in La República (N = 533, that adds up to 168,042.87 cm.). In terms of data grouped in cm2, 30% (N=161) of texts of El Comercio is less than 100 cm2, while in La República we found two modes; the first, consists of 152 notes (29%) less than 100 cm2 and, the second, comprised by the same number and percentage, having a size between 100 and 265 cm2.

If we calculate the space according to the mean, due to the coefficient of asymmetry of El Comercio (1.22) and La República (1.39) are higher than 0, we see there are no significant differences between both media, given that while in the first newspaper (Me= 297 cm2), 49% (N= 271) has a size no bigger than a quarter page, we found something similar in terms of the second (Me= 197 cm2) when the notes smaller than said size were 50% (N=533).

4.3. Sections

In the case of El Comercio, various genres predominate (from information to opinion) fundamentally in Corpus A (66%) comprised of the sections Opinion, Politics, Lima, Peru, Economy and International. In the second order, it is followed by the now defunct supplement Economic Portfolio (17%).

The sections of La República where most of the informative units were found were in the news about Politics (21 %), Economy (15%) and Society (11%). As far as supplements, where more attention is given to larger genres (feature and report), Domingo (10%) stands out. It is interesting to note the role of opinion, which in the study obtained 17% comprised of editorials, columns and letters to the editor.

4.4. *Frames*

The generic news frames defined by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000), and which this study uses as reference, are those of attribution of responsibility, that has to do with the work or commitment of an institution or individual to resolve or alleviate an issue; conflict, that refers to the disagreements there are between the different stances of parties, individuals, groups or institutions; human interest, that shows the more emotional side of the protagonists when faced with a problem; economic consequences, that alludes to the profits or losses that an event generates in an institution or individual; and, finally, morality, that contains some type of moral prescription or religious principle.

The results show us that 460 journalistic notes, that stand out for their size being over the average in our sample (310 cm2), are grouped in the frame of attribution of responsibility (52%), which suggests that when the newspaper integrates an issue or environmental problem in its agenda, it requires an immediate solution, or that, generally, some authority (international leaders, the country's president, ministers, business owners) or entity (COP20, Environmental Ministry, European Union, etc.) have the obligation of power to address it. It is followed by the frame of consequences, with 19% of the total sample, whose emphasis is in showing the problematic situations (in a negative sense) generated in the country, the vulnerability of an ecosystem, the releasing of investments (that affect the environment), the shortage of water, the flooding of riverbanks and environmental pollution, among others.

In regards to political or scientific topics that deal with climate change, the frame tends to be that of attribution of responsibility (coefficient of contingency = 0.584; p = 0.000). If the topics are social or economic the frame of consequences suits better. In contrast, the frames of human interest and morality are linked more with cultural issues.

If we analyze each case in particular, in El Comercio, texts are framed related to politics and socio-economic, as well as scientific and technological issues in attribution of responsibility (58%). Cultural content is more focused on morality (40%) closely followed by human

interest (30%). Something similar occurs in La República, where political topics emphasize more attribution (70%), while issues linked to social or economic issues focus more on the consequences (45%). In terms of cultural topics, in contrast to the other newspaper, there is more weight on human interest (50%) that in morality (30%).

5. Discussion

According to our working hypothesis, the one used to carry out our research, the political events, in addition to natural disasters, are those that receive higher informative coverage and space in the media. With the exception of this type of event, climate change becomes a marginal topic on the media agenda (Kitzberger & Pérez, 2009; González, 2012 y González, 2014).

Indeed, newspapers like El Comercio and La República take on the task of covering events like COP20, that are quite far from being a panacea to revert climate change (Tamames, 2010). Outside these conferences, rarely do people seek to give attention to the problem in terms of prevention policies or explications provided by experts on the material, recognized by their efforts to find solutions to sustainable development (Montané, 2015).

The results found indicate the lack of information, sustained and visible over time, supported by expert sources, explains why people, with the exception of professionals with a higher education level (as shown by, although with limits, the study of Marquina, Caballero, Maicelo & Martínez, 2010), are not well informed and do not have more independent standards in order to make more rational judgements, and not just sensationalist or catastrophic perspectives, whose origin comes from the use of sources related to eye-witnesses, survivors, firemen, etc. (Gallego & Luengo, 2014). On the contrary, perhaps this informative void would be filled of believe in audiovisual and digital media's role that satisfies easy, accessible entertainment, but dull in the sense that it does not motivate more conclusive actions (D´Adamo, García Beaudox & Freidenberg, 2007). Meanwhile, there are interesting experiences like Powering a Nation, created by a group of students from the University of North Carolina, that feature attention-getting stories that via a web they can disseminate in-depth knowledge of the subject, personalized stories, interactive applications and visual data on climate change (Ruel, 2014). Could it be the formula needed in order for the reader to be aware of the subject?

If newspapers had a different opinion on climate change, given that these media still hold a lot of credibility in terms of socio-environmental information (Boykoff & Yulsman, 2013), informative priorities would be established on the current situation of animal and plant species, the development of new mechanisms for conservation ex situ (such as the maintaining of components of biological diversity outside their natural habitats), monitoring of changes to diversity in terms of ecosystems, evaluation of ecological differences between relatively large ecosystems that are minimally affected and those highly affected by man and the dissemination of research to establish how the population manages its goods, among others (Ondarza, 2012).

Said perspective today is extremely necessary, given that our country is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. According to calculations by the Ministry of the Environment: "5.5 million Peruvians are vulnerable to intense rain; 2.6 million are exposed to drought and 5.6 million to frosts and cold snaps" (Lanegra, 2017: 39). In fact, phenomena like El Niño, according to a study published in October 2013 by BBC World, and commented on by Nature, it will increase due to global warming (Llosa, 2015). The lack of economic development associated to social equality and in balance with the environment could intensify socio-environmental conflicts, in terms of the struggle for water rights.

6. Conclusions

Despite journalism constituting a primary focus attention, especially when catastrophes strike, it is still not the best communication medium to understand the nature-society binomial due to its lack of depth and frequency (Gess, 2011). This is shown, as Lanegra (2017) states, in that we Peruvians know very little about the climate, weather, and extreme climatic events. We also do not know about climate change, the reason for which we will continue to influence and debilitate the services that provide us with natural ecosystems (Canziani, Ferrati & Milano, 2013).

Within this framework, we have proven in our study that communication media that disseminate excessively low amounts of information of climate change. In addition, this data shows a separation between science and society, by giving more attention, frequency, and important space to politicians and governmental institutions than collaborate on management of possible sensationalist solutions (attribution of responsibility frame), especially when speaking of conferences or international events like the COP20.

El Comercio and La República use the economic or social consequences frame to provide coverage of alarming news or simply catastrophic, that causes an overflow in regards to the appropriate treatment of social information that they should have on socio-environmental problems, that is more prospect than immediate, more linked to causes and solutions than effects. Perhaps the aforementioned is due to the journalistic work existing in an environment characterized by poor cultural and political context. To this, one might add the absence of environmental information journalism associations (like those in other countries like Spain) that promote encounters and debates among members of the press and experts on this topic in order to propose and develop new ideas to better inform on climate change.

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