

# Xacobeo: the international press' perception of the Way of St James (2009-2017)

## *Xacobeo: la percepción del Camino de Santiago en la prensa internacional (2009-2017)*

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### Abstract

This work studies the international press's perception of the Way of St James in 111,968 articles published in 21 languages during the period 2009-2017. The study performed here on what has been identified as a place branding activity with the collaboration of the public and private sectors is based on three hypotheses: 1) the international press coverage of the Way of St James is seasonal, i.e. directly related to a rise in summer visitor numbers; 2) the Way is a relevant asset in the construction of the image of Spain as an international tourist destination as regards culture, religion, and art; and 3) the Xacobeo brand is recognised and well-placed in the reference press. As to the first assumption, it has been observed that an increase in international press coverage of the Way –generally positive – does indeed coincide with a rise in the number of pilgrims during the summer months, and when this coverage continues in the following months it boosts visitor numbers. The second assumption has also been confirmed. But as regards the Xacobeo brand its perception leaves a lot to be desired: it seems the great managerial challenge to boost tourism in the next years.

**Key words:** pilgrim, place branding, tourism, Twitter.

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### Resumen

Este trabajo estudia la percepción que la prensa internacional tiene del Camino de Santiago mediante el análisis de 111.968 artículos publicados en 21 idiomas durante el período 2009-2017. En el trabajo, que se ha identificado como una actividad de marca con la colaboración de los sectores público y privado, se basa en tres hipótesis: 1) la cobertura de prensa internacional del Camino de Santiago es estacional, es decir, está directamente relacionada con un aumento en verano el número de visitantes; 2) el Camino es un activo relevante en la construcción de la imagen de España como destino turístico internacional en materia de cultura, religión y arte; y 3) la marca Xacobeo es reconocida y está bien posicionada en la prensa de referencia. En cuanto a la primera suposición, se ha observado un aumento en la cobertura de la prensa internacional del Camino –generalmente positivo–, hecho que coincide con un aumento en el número de peregrinos durante los meses de verano, y cuando esta cobertura continúa en los meses siguientes aumenta el número de visitantes. La segunda suposición también ha sido confirmada. Pero con respecto a la marca Xacobeo, su percepción deja mucho que desear: parece el gran desafío empresarial para impulsar el turismo en los próximos años.

**Palabras clave:** peregrino, marca destino, turismo, Twitter.

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### Sumario

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## 1. Introduction

Place branding responds to the need to manage the territory, the city or the environment in the process of globalization as an institution open to the world creating ad hoc communication strategies. This categorization contains activities leading to the promotion of foreign trade, the internationalization of the economy, the projection of the local company and the management of the place brand.

Place branding and destination branding aim to overexpose some attributes for a specific audience: it seeks to capture investments, organize events, increase the number of tourists, renew the image, among others goals. The place or the destination creates a symbolic universe endowed with meanings. The experiences of brand territory are varied and oriented to the creation of value in the field of strategic marketing, with the purpose of projecting an external image. The logo, the institutional design and the signage of the city is classic tools. On these foundations, a permanent image is created. It is a technique that generates greater competitive advantages for the city than for the nation state, since the monuments (the Coliseum in Rome), the cultural traditions (Holy Week in Seville), the objects (the telephone booth in London), gastronomy (Stilton cheese) or intangibles, such as music or orality (central square of Marrakech), are associated with specific and defined territories, not a state in a generic way. In this sense, the city can opt for new techniques, such as a campaign focused on an asset or specific attribute (visit to the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the last exhibition of Picasso in Paris or the largest shopping center in the world in Dubai, a megaconcert in Woodstock, the recovery of heritage in Palmira or in the monumental city of Hatra, the theater festivals in Edinburgh or Mérida), or in a destination experience. In this context, the World Heritage Site is consolidated as a limited opportunity for reputation management that unites public policies with the interests of citizens and private initiative. The analysis of the messages can be targeted, depending on the audience reception. The scientific and professional message concerns the research centers, the universities, the professors and the professionals of the system. These are associated with educational reasons and the promotion of education. The social message reflects the concerns of local associations, groups or representatives of interests in the conservation of cultural assets. Here heritage can be evaluated as a resource of identity, which is linked to education and the defense of certain social values. The administrative message reflects the spirit of public policies, officials and elected officials. Finally, the economic message is of interest to promoters of initiatives, private employers and heritage tourism agents. Both cultural policy and private initiative can be associated with economic resources, cultural industries, tourism activities and other tangible assets.

In this regard, place branding is a growing activity in the field of international political communication that has grown the most in the last decade, as a consequence of the new demographic developments, the transformation of political and economic powers, the impact of climate change in real life and citizen empowerment. The Way of St James is one of the top examples in promoting destination using place branding strategies.

The Way of St James is one of the pillars sustaining the international promotion of Spain and, above all, Galicia, the region where the city of Santiago de Compostela is located. With a traditional international image based on a combination of heritage, culture, and gastronomy, it falls into the category of quality cultural tourism in a rural environment (Bambi and Barbari, 2014), as is borne out by the fact that it was included on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1993 and declared the first European Cultural Route by the Council of Europe in 1987. In short, the Way of St James appeals to people with a certain spiritual restlessness far-removed from the stereotypes of sun and beach tourism.

Along the Way of St James, which is divided into stages totalling 750 km that can be completed on foot, on horseback, or by bike, there are some of the most outstanding historical monuments, religious buildings, and monumental cities (e.g. Leon, Burgos, and Astorga) in Northern Spain. Every year, around 250,000 people – 45% of who are on average foreigners – complete the different stages, July, August, and September being the busiest months. Moreover, the calendar includes a special festivity called the 'Compostela Holy Year' when 25 July – the feast of St James the Apostle – falls on a Sunday. Holy, Jubilee, or Jacobean Years fall every 6, 5, 6, and 11 years during the century, the most recent one being in 2010 and the next in 2021 and coincide with a significant increase in visitor numbers.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Xunta de Galicia (Galician regional government) chose the term 'Xacobeo' as the brand for an ambitious promotional and cultural programme aimed at leveraging the expectations raised by the Holy years, with a view to placing the Way of St James on the international map

and consequently boosting visitor numbers. The brand, which is meant to be all encompassing, often appears in the Spanish print media and institutional press releases, but as will be seen further on not always to refer to the Way itself.

The Way of St James corresponds more to a place branding model than to a city branding campaign focusing solely on the city of Santiago de Compostela, the pilgrims' final destination. Travellers plan their own routes and customise their own experience, deciding how far to walk, where to stop, and what to visit along the way. Aziz (2016: 250) differentiates both categories: "Place branding focuses on a destination's cultural identity, values, people, and social attributes rather than buildings, beautiful landscapes and museums.". This freedom of choice multiplies the experiential and associative options open to them, thus corresponding to the associative model of Zenker and Braun (2010), i.e.:

A network of associations in the consumers' mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design (2010: 33).

The stakeholder approach applies here, as place branding includes residents, tourists, business, public and government officials, urban planners, tourism oriented industries, universities, cities, regional branch and also European institutions. An effective strategy needs common vision on the activity, the brand, the core values and the benefits to connect different stakeholders' interests (Moilanen, 2015). Internal stakeholders include "residents, businesses, and city officials" (Peighambari, 2016: 315), while external stakeholders are non-residents, visitors, and even investors. Such complexity implies two different levels of analysis, according to Cerda-Bertomeu and Sarabia-Sanchez:

The first one, from a managerial standpoint, refers to the need for institutions and associations that create space for discussion and reflection on how stakeholders should approach the place brand developing. It should not be forgotten that this development is supported with a public budget, and getting a good initial alignment among stakeholders may save money, time and effort. The second implication, from the theoretical viewpoint, is that far from place branding discourse being enriched by a diversity of disciplinary approaches, it seems there is little dialogue between the different academic and practitioner place brand visions (2016: 309).

The Way of St James is not a closed circuit, but a 'polysemic' experience (Lois et al., 2015), linked to social functions (Caldwell and Freire, 2004), a territory and identity built on its cathedrals, natural landscapes, and places of historical interest. In essence, its managerial approach needs stakeholder background. Moreover, this experiential approach adapts to the analytic categories of Gnoth (2007), who indicates that the place brand is structured as a functional (hospitality, basic services, etc.), experiential (contact with people, gastronomy, etc.), and symbolic (the human touch, hospitality, etc.) element. In this context, the experience involves images, photos, contact with the locals, gastronomy, and active tourism, i.e. a sort of super brand built on a 'non-geographically bounded image' (Choi and Cai, 2016). For place image is "a sum of beliefs, ideas, impressions that a people have a place, they represent a simplification of a large number of associations connected with the place".

The spiritual connotations, in a broad sense of the word, encompass health, spirituality, and pilgrim status itself:

In this context, the success of The Way comes from the generally frenetic pace of life, resulting in the need to take a moment to reflect and meditate. As a spiritually oriented pilgrimage, it is a form of travel that society is reinterpreting as a post-secular route of therapy, which brings benefits to the three aforementioned aspects of healing: physical, mental and spiritual (López et al., 2017: 227).

In this respect, it has recently been pointed out that spirituality is not limited to the religious fact, but is associated with the very experience of the pilgrimage, the contact with nature, escaping from the routine, and meeting new people (Amaro et al., 2018: 278). According to the official data, this idea of spirituality connects to the place (churches, monasteries, cathedrals) and the performance (the walking experience itself and the everyday ritual). It means a broad scope of subjectivity when defining spirituality as part of the sacred values and structures. Other local elements, as the path, are considered in the long run of artistic and cultural perspective. The cultural and the religious legacies converge in the individual and personal experience. As

stated by Della Dora (2011: 63), "the sacred has increasingly come to permeate the geography debate about identity (...), politics (...), motions (...) and the geographies of everyday life".

The Way of St James is a place branding model involving the collaboration of the public, private, and third sectors (Kavaratzis et al., 2015). In terms of service and consumption, the collaboration is necessary as the products created by multiple companies, the relational experience, the geography and the facilities and physical settings are perceived as unique feature. The visitor is exposed to all of them at the same time, assembling image, identity and personal bias. No one can control the overall process. According to Moilanen and Rainisto (2009: 75) the branding requires coordination among tourism industry, public diplomacy officers, investors, and strong leadership focusing in the long-term. Their model excludes a place branding supported only by politicians and public managers, as that approach repeatedly fails.

It has the active support of the regional government which has drawn up a master plan for coordinating public management at all levels, enhancing heritage values, and promoting environmental sustainability and Santiago de Compostela as a city destination, among other strategic lines. Public sector support, at both state and regional levels, also contributes to attract visitors by offering them information and helping them to organise their trips (hostels, health services, transport, among others), while institutional advertising campaigns often depict the Way of St James as an alternative tourist destination to the traditional sun and beach model (Turespaña, 2015). The importance of the public sector has consequently led to the creation of a governance and public management model (Eshuis and Klijn, 2012) whose aim is to strengthen the Xacobeo brand. Within its territorial scope, the Way corresponds to a model of public diplomacy at a substate level that contributes to nation branding (Wang, 2006).

For their part, the private sector actors involved help to build the tourist destination in such diverse areas as accommodation, tourist services, environmental protection, health, and insurance. While the Catholic Church, through its parishes and the Archdiocese of Santiago itself, also plays a relevant role in the protection of the area's religious and cultural heritage (Tilson, 2005).

## 2. Research objective and hypotheses

The objective of this paper is to identify the evolution of the international press coverage of the Way of St James during the period 2009-2017, which includes the last Holy Year in 2010.

The following hypotheses have been formulated:

- H1 The international press coverage of the Way of St James is seasonal, i.e. directly related to a rise in visitor numbers.
- H2 The Way of St James is a relevant asset in the construction of the image of Spain as an international tourist destination as regards culture, religion, and art.
- H3 The Xacobeo brand is internationally recognised and well placed in the reference press.

Thus, the aim here is to make an empirical contribution to the study of public diplomacy by analysing a benchmark international cultural tourism product. The case study of the Way of St James could contribute to develop this discipline combining academic and professional perspectives (Kavaratzis, 2015; Lucarelli and Berg, 2011). The international reference press has been used to perform a quantitative analysis of new stories relating to the Way of St James, the aspects that they cover, and the sections in which they appear. The press is a public diplomacy tool insofar as it enables the framing of a destination, shapes public opinion, identifies specific audiences, and divulges information with a human side to it. It also facilitates a bilateral relationship between journalists and those responsible for institutional advertising campaigns, for which reason the results of this study are orientated towards the public management of tourism. Since preliminary studies indicate that tourists are not swayed by advertising campaigns, but by reading practical information, news, and literary works on the Way of St James (Andrade and Caamaño, 2016), improvements in institutional communication practices should lead to an increase in visitor numbers.

The coverage of an international event in the reference press is an indicator of impact, the capacity to convey official messages (i.e. institutional communication), and the experience of journalists and visitors alike. Macnamara (2014) describes this environment as 'new hybridized PR/advertising/product placement formats and sites of journalism-PR convergence' (2014: 747). Since the very design of the Way of St James

offers many opportunities not only for news narratives, but also for many other types, this study includes an analysis of tweets relating to the Xacobeo brand posted on Twitter. In short, this paper contributes to the academic literature because (1) it links international press coverage to the arrival of tourists and (2) it analyses the attributes of an experiential activity both in the press and on Twitter.

### 3. Methodology

To gauge the international press' coverage and perception of the Way of St James, Factiva's global database was used. Owned by Dow Jones, this business and information search tool provides access to nearly 33.000 premium sources (such as newspapers, journals, magazines, television and radio transcripts, photos, etc.) from over 200 countries in 28 languages, and searching by free-text, as well as region, subject, author, industry and company metadata, publication, language, and date range. In this case, searches were performed from 1 to 5 October 2017 using a series of indicators – i.e. source, concept, geographical region, indexed company, the sectors of economic activity to which the concept refers, and language – for the period from 1 October 2009 to 30 September 2017. Factiva does not only allow users to fine tune searches and list the full content of a news story, but also to contextualise the global discourse either over time (the yearly evolution of the number of mentions or the high season for pilgrims) or in space (the geographical location of the newspapers referring to one or more concepts). Since the search tool does not identify whether information is positive or negative, but simply lists the total number of search results, it lends itself more to comparative analyses and identifying structural trends than to focusing on the qualitative aspects of news – to study these it would be necessary to read the news stories one by one.

However, it has indeed been possible to identify news topics with negative connotations (robberies, sexual offenses, etc.) in broader contexts (public safety, the economy, consumers, etc.). The search results can vary non-significantly from time to time, since the database is being constantly reorganised, rebuilt, and updated. Since the margin of error is significant – if the intention is to repeat the search and obtain the same number of mentions on each occasion – this study focuses on trends rather than on absolute figures.

Using the descriptor 'Camino de Santiago' and terms such as 'Way of Saint James', 'Way of St James', 'Chemin de Saint-Jacques', 'Jakobsweg', 'Caminho de Santiago', and 'Cammino di Santiago', a total of 111.968 news documents in 21 languages were retrieved for the period 2009-2017. With respect to the last year of this study, 16.804 articles containing references to the Way of St James were identified up until 30 September. Due to the time frame employed here, it was necessary to arrive at an estimate for the last quarter of 2017 (17%) in order to calculate the overall total for the year (20.255). While as regards the second descriptor 'Xacobeo', unique inasmuch as it has been promoted as a static and universal brand and is not translated, 28.519 mentions were found in articles written in 15 languages. Lastly, news pieces referring to both the descriptors 'Xacobeo' and the 'Camino de Santiago' yielded 4.520 results, representing 4% of the total.

At a second level of analysis, the two descriptors were linked to search engine categories or clusters in order to identify the actors with whom they were compared or associated. Infometrics was employed to define the semantic fields, concepts, and areas most related to the object of study. The descriptor 'Camino de Santiago' (and all its international names) appeared above all in four categories, namely, general news, arts and performing arts, religion, and travel. Whereas the 'Xacobeo' brand was associated with sports, especially cycling. Regarding other topics, such as art and performing arts, this descriptor was less frequent and its association with travel and tourism tended to be negligible.

The last element used to gauge perception of the two descriptors was a social media analysis, specifically Twitter. To this end, the tool NodeXL was used to capture data on users, connections, countries of origin, and other relevant aspects. The intention was to measure the centrality of official social networks in order to identify the main connections, opinion leaders, and channels controlling information. Sporadic or anecdotal data (the number of retweets or mentions) was not taken into account in order to focus on identifying the main connectors of the network. This measurement technique appears in the academic literature because it associates the most active users with their motivation to use the network, rather than with their geographical proximity (Himmelboim et al., 2013; Del Fresno et al. 2016).

### 3. Results

In relation to H1, it can be observed that the Holy Year is a milestone in the calendar that does indeed generate a media impact (Figure 1.). As to the increase in coverage in 2015 and 2016, this can be attributed to negative news about the solving of the cases of the robbery of the *Codex Calixtinus* from Santiago de Compostela Cathedral and the disappearance of an American tourist, with no relation whatsoever to cultural tourism or pilgrims. Figure 2. shows that the monthly distribution of articles during the period under study corresponded to the peak tourist season (July, August, and September), while Figure 3. confirms this tendency.

Figure 1. Annual distribution documents per year (N = 111,968)

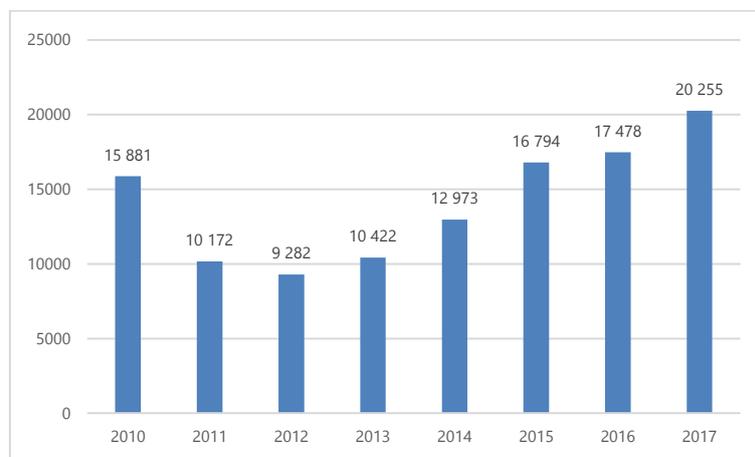


Figure 2. Monthly evolution of articles published 2009-2017

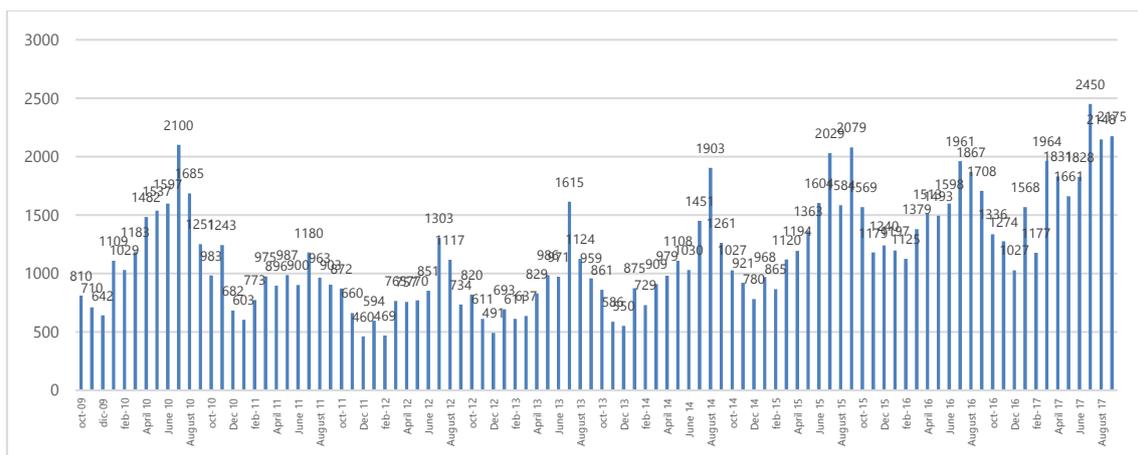
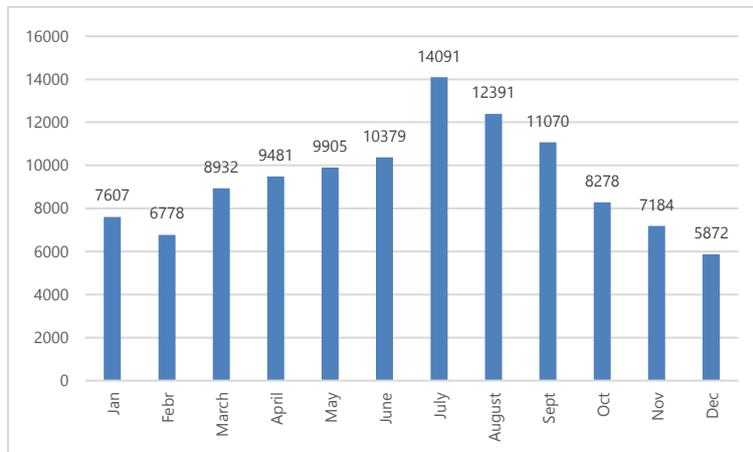
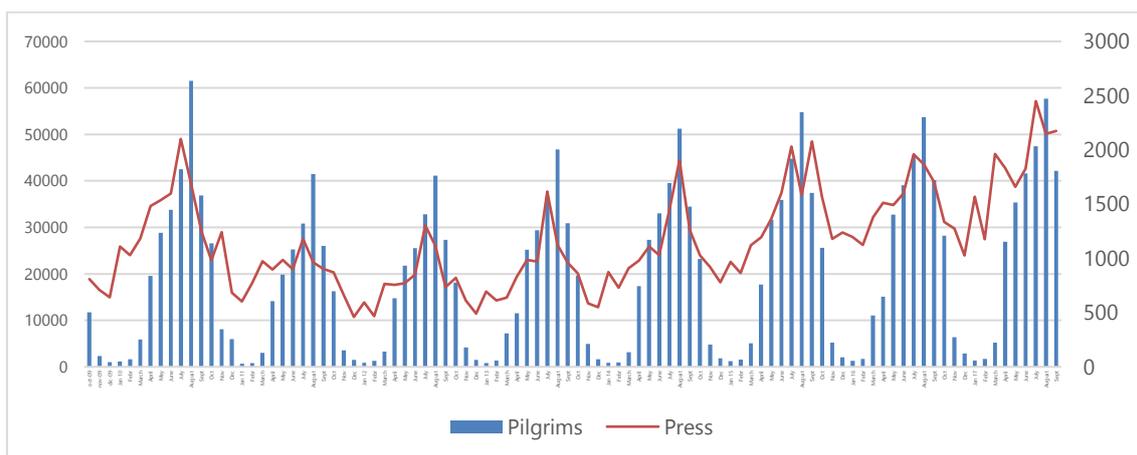


Figure 3. Number of articles published, distributed by months between 2009 and 2017



When the mentions are correlated with the number of official pilgrims, it can be observed that the largest number of visitors and mentions was in 2010, the last Holy Year. Furthermore, the steady growth registered in the following five years is clearly reflected in the increase in press coverage and the number of pilgrims. It should be noted that the increase in the number of pilgrims in the months of good weather coincides with references to the descriptor 'Camino de Santiago' in its different translations in the press. This indicates that diverting resources towards the press could be a communication strategy with a direct impact. It can also be claimed that a small increase in the national and international press coverage of the Way of St James during the low season contributes to a rise in pilgrim numbers during the high season, as can be seen in the dynamics of the past five years (Figure 4.).

Figure 4. Evolution of the number of pilgrims (Official data of the Pilgrim's office)



An analysis of the mentions has made it possible to identify the top 10 categories (Figure 5.). The fact that 'arts and performing arts', including heritage, culture, theatre, architecture, etc., tops the list is due to the number of monuments, buildings, and artistic manifestations to be found along the Way of St James. In second place, 'general news' is a mishmash of all the other categories. Even though the database provides convergent results, this does not mean to say that the Way does not have a solid identity in the news. While the 'religion' category, occupying third place, is consistent with religious-cultural aspects that the Pilgrim's Reception Office at Santiago de Compostela highlights as the main reasons why visitors make the pilgrimage,

beyond solely religious or cultural considerations. The Way of St James encompasses a social dimension widely reflected in the press, above all in the Spanish media. This category not only includes social or general news on the Way itself, but also safety and logistical aspects, beyond those relating to the tourism industry per se, in addition to positive or negative news pertaining to the security forces, begging, lifestyle, and personal stories (Figure 6.). There is now an new category to make room for the first series of unfavourable news. For the 'crimes and courts' category can be understood to have negative connotations insofar as it is associated with the safety of the Way itself, either as regards its facilities or the public in general. As already noted, this was influenced by the robbery of the *Codex Calixtinus* (2011-2015) and the case of the pilgrim Denise Thiem (2015-2017).

Figure 5. 10 first topics

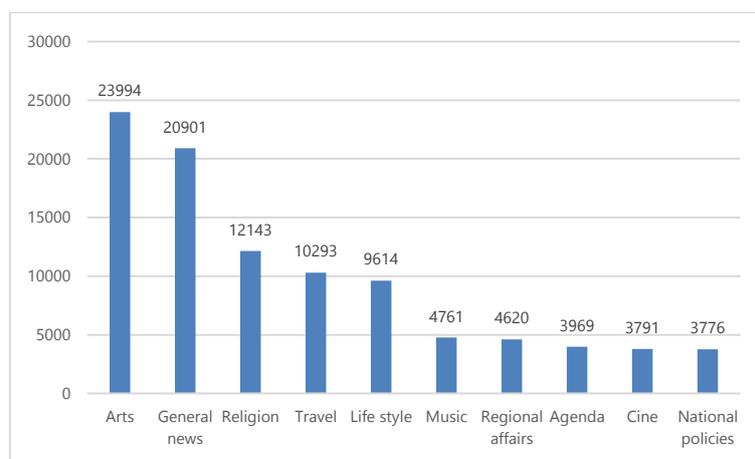
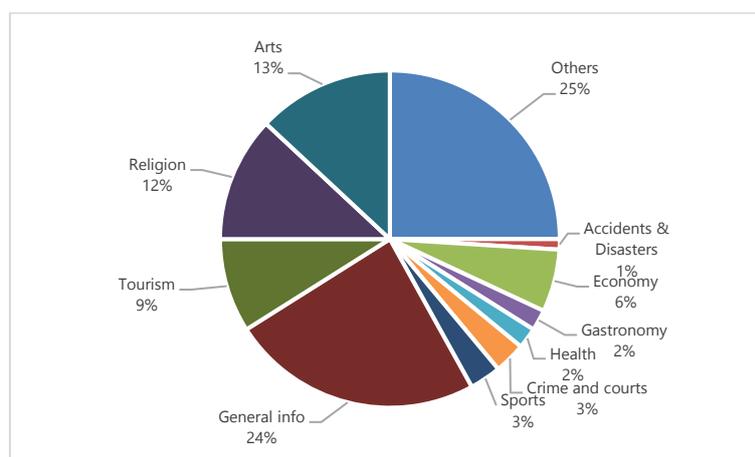


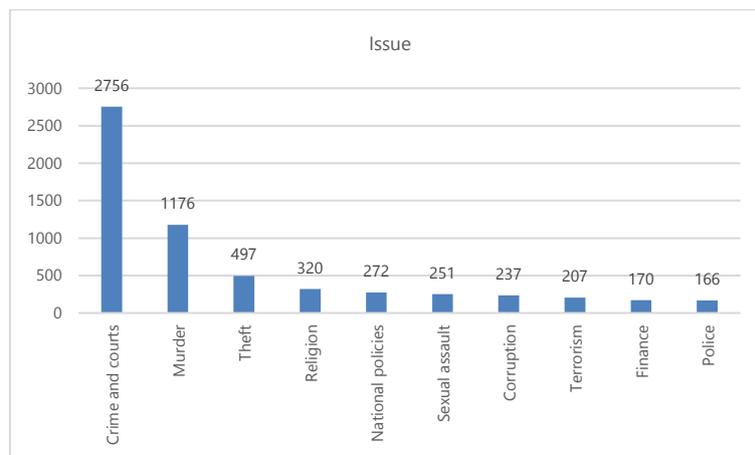
Figure 6. 14 Thematic dimensions related to the Camino de Santiago



Specifically, the negative associations involve those articles containing bad news or approaches that could be detrimental to the future of the Way of St James. Albeit few and far between in the study sample, it is helpful to know which topics are mentioned. The concept of 'religion' associated with the robberies carried out at Santiago de Compostela Cathedral appears among the top 10 mentions. It should be

emphasised that given that Factiva's database performs convergent searches, two concepts – such as 'offenses' and 'corruption' – appearing in the same article can be recorded on two different occasions. Even so, this new category only represents 5.5% of the total (Figure 7.). This message stressing that the Way of St James is a safe and suitable global tourism destination is very positive and can, and should, be exploited, since it would give it a competitive edge in an industry plagued by insecurity. In relation to economic activities, the Way of St James is explicitly associated with the tourism industry in the media, which rarely relate it to other activities such as the service, art, communication, or marketing industry (Figure 8.).

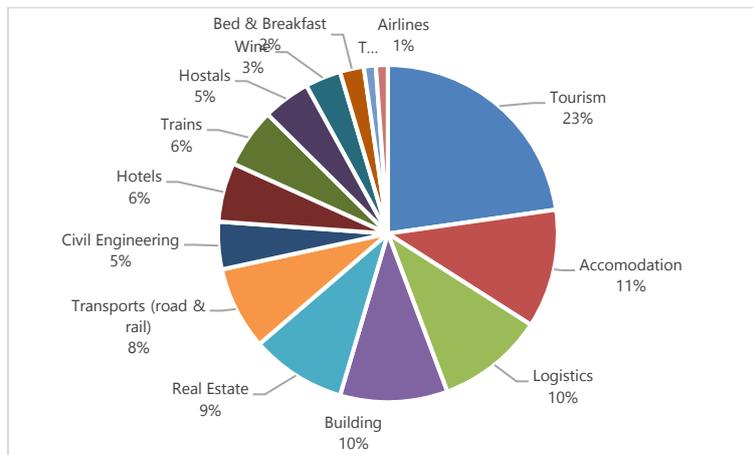
Figure 7. Issues with negative feeling



With respect to languages, the Way of St James is mentioned in articles written in 21 (with the respective translation of its name). Spanish is the main language, which should come as no surprise when bearing in mind the nationality of most of the pilgrims. In 2010, a year which was used here as a benchmark for structural reasons, 189,905 Spanish pilgrims were registered, representing 69.71% of the total, 18.17% of whom came from Galicia. On the other hand, there were 82,512 pilgrims from abroad, mainly Germans (17.26%), Italians (16.93%), French (10.86%), Portuguese (9.29%), Americans (3.93%), Irish (2.73%), Brazilians (2.51%), and Dutch (2.48%). Given their low representation in the sample, the rest of the nationalities have not been itemised here. In Figure 9. it can be observed that language use follows a similar pattern, with Spanish topping the list, followed by German, French, English, Italian, and Portuguese. Given the number of visitors, a greater coverage in the international press would be logical. Both Dutch and Danish figure among the most infrequent European languages in the study sample, to which must be added Korean and Chinese. As to the latter, the articles retrieved were published during 2017, which contrasts with the scant media coverage that the Way of St James received during the last Holy Year in 2010, which coincided with Expo 2010 Shanghai China. China is a critical market and Spain has yet to be included among the main tourist destinations by Chinese tour operators. Besides China and Korea, the Way St James has not had a market presence in Japan over the past eight years. And lastly, returning to the Spanish market, *El Periódico de Catalunya* and *Diari de Girona* have given it scant coverage in Catalan.

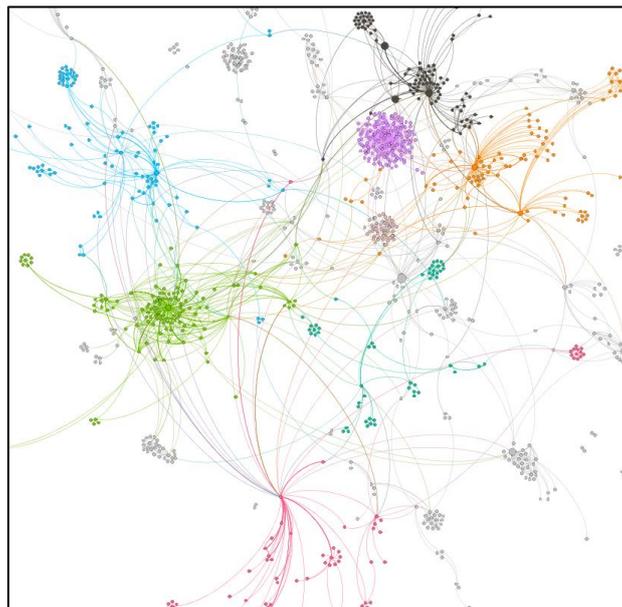
In light of the results, it is possible to claim that the Way of St James is a Spanish news topic in which the international press shows little or no interest, reflected in the fact that the vast majority of the information sources (98%) are Spanish-language newspapers printed in Spain (63%). The news of the three foreign newspapers dedicating most space to this topic has to do with the French Way, that is, with the South of France, the starting point of 69.49% of all the pilgrims. However, they take the French Way through Galicia, not from the Pyrenees.

Figure 8. Industries and economic activities (> 1% of the mentions)



In connection with the impact that the Way of St James has on the social media universe, a study has been performed of tweets containing one of the two descriptors or both. From the results, it can be observed that Spanish is the language most used (63.96%), followed by English (17.14%), German (4.405%), Italian (2.92%), Dutch (1.90%), Portuguese (1.72%), and French (0.32%). However, the number of visitors by country of origin contrasts with these results. User profiles or configurations have revealed some interesting aspects: 64.28% use Spanish as the default language, 21.11% English, and 6.59% German. For its part, Italian represents 1% of the total, while other languages, such as Portuguese, Russian, and Dutch are hardly represented at all in the sample. This finding tallies more with the origin attributed to the tweets: 79.28% from users located in Spain, 5.41% from the USA, 4.05% from Portugal, and 2.25% from the UK, with the rest under 2%. French and Portuguese pilgrims are not therefore represented proportionally.

Graph 1. Networks and followers on Twitter



Although the results should be treated with caution, it has been possible to identify the users with the largest number of followers on Twitter and the most relevant topics. In Graph 1. it can be observed how the network is polarised, to wit, there is a lack of cooperation between the actors in the network and no sustained exchange of tweets. Specifically, they are isolated nodes dealing with basics: (1) climate and weather en route in green; (2) Guardia Civil and Gendarmerie in pink; (3) pilgrim support services in orange; (4) 'Camino\_xacobeo' appears in black with a low level of centrality; and (5) Walk in Spain in blue. In a strict sense of the word, it is neither a network nor does it offer a centralised communication solution. If there have indeed been institutional efforts in this direction, no tangible results can be observed. And in relation to content, there is no unique message on the social media platform. For instance, the keywords 'camino (way)' and 'caminodesantiago' appear in 1.36% and 4.68% of the tweets, respectively, and the rest (Santiago, Galicia, pilgrim, iperegrino, peregrino) in less than 1%.

H3 proposes that the Xacobeo descriptor should be internationally recognised as a cultural and tourism brand value. It is a popular term used to galvanise the cultural and religious activities associated with the Holy Year, and at an institutional level it is employed by the Xunta de Galicia to promote them in their different aspects. The data show that the descriptors 'Camino de Santiago' and 'Xacobeo' are only related in the context of the Holy year in all its religious and cultural facets. In Figure 9. it can be observed that in 2010 the number of mentions employing both terms was much greater than in the rest of the years included in this study's time frame.

Figure 9. Relationship between the Way of St James and Xacobeo

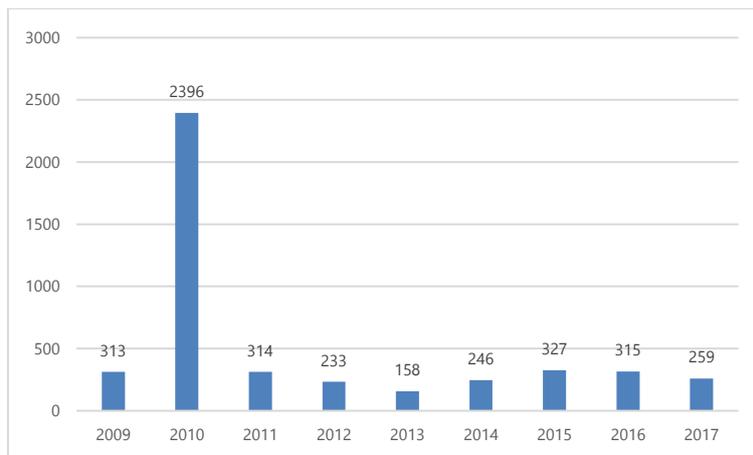
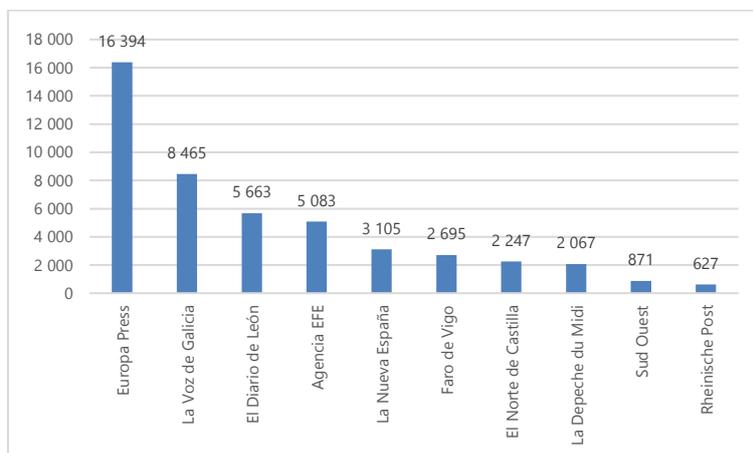
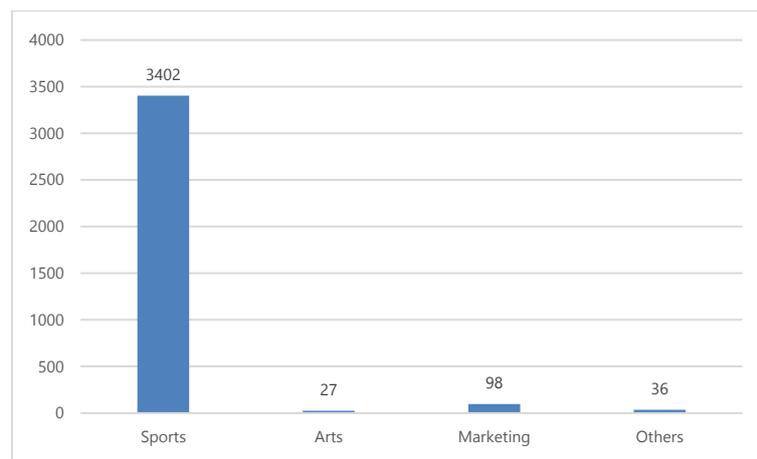


Figure 10. Ten first sources



The Xacobeo brand was mostly used in the context of professional sports (Figure 11.), representing 32.33% of all the mentions, way above any other economic activity. The majority of the mentions refer to a professional cycling team existing from 2007 to 2010, they're being practically no association with religion or gastronomy. As regards languages, as with the term 'Camino de Santiago', the Xacobeo brand is mostly mentioned in Spanish-language articles. This finding is in line with the top 10 newspapers sources and, above all, news agencies (Figure 10.).

Figure 11. Distribution by topics



In contrast with the former, which has a greater geographical reach, the latter does not appear to have crossed the language barrier (see Figure 10.). In both cases, the Spanish news agency Europa Press comes in first place with 7290 mentions, with the EFE Agency trailing far behind with a mere 587. On Twitter, the Xacobeo brand is mentioned very rarely by users, with the term being employed in only 0.38% of all the tweets, regardless of the language in which these are posted, and more often than not as a photo caption. Even 'Galicia' (0.39%) is more represented in the sample. And, as before, most tweets mentioning the term have to do with sports. The brand is not generally used to refer to activities relating to the Way of St James itself, whether in a religious (pilgrimage, faith, etc.) or leisure (nature, gastronomy, heritage, etc.) context.

#### 4. Conclusions

In light of the above, two relevant conclusions can be reached. H1 has been confirmed, inasmuch as there is a direct correlation between international media coverage of the Way of St James and the arrival of pilgrims. Furthermore, the media's perception of the destination is very favourable, i.e. they focuses on its positive aspects which encourages visitors. H2 has also been confirmed. However, the same cannot be said for H3. Neither is the Xacobeo descriptor a recognised brand nor is it associated with cultural tourism activities, and this holds for both the press and Twitter. As Moore (1998) has rightly stated, inaction in the face of a change of information management scenarios reduces the possibility of creating public value.

The two conclusions are as follows:

##### *The information market is national*

The Way of St James has a greater media impact in Spain than abroad and the vast majority of mentions in both the conventional media and on Twitter are in Spanish. Versus the idea that the Way of St James is a consolidated global destination, the figures demonstrate that its international media impact (30%) does not

correspond to the number of foreign pilgrims (nearly 50%) that it receives. On the other hand, the information market is consistent with seasonality, there being a direct correlation between the publications or posting of news and photos and the high season for pilgrims. Furthermore, when press coverage remains high during the following months, this drives visitor numbers.

The history of the Way of St James is local, so the internationalization is a real challenge. The news stories available in the database were published above all in local newspapers. This means that approaches, content, or main actors are of a personal or regional nature. The reference press has little interest in covering this type of news. The use of the local or regional press as a communication strategy appears to have been the right decision. This can be seen in the use of events, an improvement in press relations, and the identification of social media influencers between April and June when people plan their trips. The greater the press coverage, the greater the number of pilgrims. The destination's adequate internationalisation would open a window of opportunity for its development and attracting pilgrims. The scant number of references to the Way of St James in the Portuguese press or in tweets posted by Portuguese users is surprising. Similarly, in France only three regional newspapers in the Pyrenees show a certain degree of interest in the subject. In Asia, for its part, the lack of coverage is more than noteworthy. This is particularly the case with China, notwithstanding the fact the Expo 2010 Shanghai China coincided with the last Holy Year.

#### *The Xacobeo brand is not identified in the public communication strategy*

According to the results, Xacobeo as a brand or promotional instrument leaves a lot to be desired. Neither do pilgrims include it in their tweets, nor do the media often use it as a synonym for the Way of St James, nor do the Galician public institutions seem employ it for information or commercial purposes. The use of this brand peaked in the period 2009-2010 to refer to a professional cycling team that existed at the time. Outside this context, it is never used in the media or on Twitter to refer to tourism, gastronomy, or regional culture. In point of fact, the use of sports as a vehicle for strategic communication has its risks, because it involves associating a set of values with the naturally irregular results of a team of professionals. And if what is involved is professional cycling the risks are greater because of the negative connotations that doping carries. Indeed, some of the news referring to the Xacobeo brand is in this vein. The data fits with previous work, as place branding needs more collaboration and partnership among stakeholders (Cerdeira-Bertomeu and Sarabia-Sánchez, 2016:308). Communication strategy is based on key messages emerging both from public sector, business and other institutional organizations (Sarabia-Sánchez and Cerdeira-Bertomeu, 2017).

The empirical analysis performed here could contribute to develop an institutional communication strategy that boosts visitor numbers and generates wealth. In a global view, the news topic of 'safety' is very important if the tourism and cultural industries are to attract international visitors. The absence of negative news (low-quality services, sexual offenses, thefts, etc.) should be very highly valued. This aspect can be used to convey a much clearer message that what is involved is safe, active tourism for all audiences (families, women, etc.). Finally, gastronomy seems an opportunity to increase local stories. In a counter-intuitive way, the local cuisine, produce, wines, and natural environment do not form part of the news universe. The results show that there is an information gap in this regard in the conventional press, and that Twitter users do not mention these aspects in their posts.

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