


Toward a New Informative Agenda in the Coverage of Clime Summits (COP): Issues, Actors and Global Approach

HACIA UNA NUEVA AGENDA INFORMATIVA EN LA COBERTURA DE LAS CUMBRES DEL CLIMA (COP): TEMAS, ACTORES Y ENFOQUE GLOBAL


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Abstract: This article examines the coverage of climate change in Spanish media, employing the last three climate summits (2021-2023) as a case study. Using a content analysis methodology, the study reviews three key elements—topics, actors, and informational spaces—based on a sample of news pieces (n=671) segmented across six media outlets and three professional models. The results show a diversified agenda, predominant with political content, followed by increasing attention to ecological transition and citizen actions. Institutional actors dominate the discussion, although activists and scientists receive outstanding attention. The coverage is framed from a global perspective and concentrates on the Environment section. In summary, a shift in the climate agenda is identified in the post-pandemic context as new thematic priorities emerge and greater prominence is given to social mobilisation, sustainable solutions, and the green economy.

Keywords: Climate Change; Agenda; Digital Media; Theming; Informative Actors; COP.

Resumen: Este artículo examina la cobertura del cambio climático en medios españoles, tomando como caso de estudio las últimas tres cumbres del clima (2021-2023). A partir de una metodología propia de análisis de contenido, se revisan tres elementos clave —temas, actores y espacios informativos— sobre una muestra de piezas informativas (n=671) segmentada en seis medios y tres modelos profesionales. Los resultados muestran una agenda diversificada con un predominio de contenidos políticos, seguido por una atención creciente a la transición ecológica y las acciones ciudadanas. Actores institucionales dominan la discusión, mientras que activistas y científicos también obtienen una presencia notable. La cobertura se aborda, principalmente, desde una dimensión global y se concentra en la sección de Medio Ambiente. En resumen, se detecta una reorientación de la agenda climática en el contexto pospandémico donde se abren paso nuevas prioridades temáticas y un mayor protagonismo de la movilización social, las soluciones sostenibles y la economía verde.

Palabras clave: cambio climático; agenda; medios digitales; tematización; actores informativos; COP.



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1. Introduction

How climate change appears in the media influences the public perception of the issue (Boykoff, 2009). Consequently, if the media covers climate change accurately and rigorously, the public tends to understand the gravity of the situation (ECODES, 2022) and the necessity for immediate action by government authorities. Conversely, poor or biased coverage can lead to misinformation, scepticism, and inaction among civil society (Fernández-Castrillo & Magallón-Rosa, 2023).

In recent decades, the United Nations Climate Change Conferences of the Parties (COP), also known as climate summits, have emerged as events of significant importance on the political agenda, drawing attention from media outlets, institutions, NGOs, and the general public (Boykoff & Roberts, 2007). These events are critical for decision-making processes shaping future environmental policies and the global response to climate change (Sánchez-Calero et al., 2012). Additionally, the summits catalyse media coverage of the climate emergency, fostering awareness and stimulating debate on new measures for mitigating and adapting to global warming.

Considering these key events in the development of the global climate agenda, this study dissects the media agenda of climate summits through the analysis of 671 news pieces published in six Spanish media outlets. The main goal of the article is to analyse the evolution and potential reorientation of journalistic coverage on climate change, particularly during the three COPs held in the post-COVID-19 pandemic context (2021-2023). Given the urgency of the climate crisis, understanding these communicative processes is crucial to improving the effectiveness of media coverage, promoting better reporting, specialisation, and media literacy (Piñuel, 2020), as well as demonstrating the media's commitment to social and environmental justice (Al Najjar Trujillo, 2024).

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Media Coverage of Climate Change in the Post-Pandemic Context

The significant role acquired by environmental activism (Wahlström et al., 2019) has captured media attention after two decades of informational irrelevance regarding climate change (Fernández-Reyes & Jiménez, 2020). Currently, media outlets are contributing to environmental awareness among citizens, who are increasingly aware of the challenges posed by global warming (Pew Research Center, 2019). As a result, the climate emergency has become one of the most prominent topics on the Spanish media agenda (Parratt-Fernández et al., 2020).

Particularly, 2019 was the year with the highest coverage of climate change to date (Teso-Alonso & Lozano-Ascencio, 2020). Media coverage increased by over 70% compared to the previous year, according to data from the Media and Climate Change Observatory at the University of Colorado (Nacu-Schmidt et al., 2019). This media milestone was driven by intense environmental mobilisation, the first global climate strike, and various political events. However, the COVID-19 pandemic overshadowed the debate during its peak period of journalistic attention (Stoddart et al., 2021; Parratt-Fernández & Carvalho, 2022). Consequently, climate change was relegated to a secondary position in the news agenda, as the health crisis shifted citizens' social priorities (Fernández-Reyes, 2021). This unexpected shift posed a significant challenge for climate change communication, which only partially regained media presence in the second half of 2020. In this context, several factors emerged during the pandemic that improved journalistic specialisation and its potential application to climate change coverage:

1. **Commitment to Quality Information.** The pandemic underscored the need for accurate and reliable information. Media outlets were required to quickly adapt to provide truthful coverage of COVID-19, leading to a reassessment of their practices and routines. Besides, this reevaluation benefited climate change coverage, as the media became more aware of the importance of well-founded data and expert sources as a professional standard (Sendra-Duro & López-Rabadán, 2024).
2. **Combatting Misinformation.** The proliferation of false or misleading information, conspiracy theories, and rumours related to the pandemic emphasised the importance of opposing disinformation (Salaverría et al., 2020). In this challenging context, climate denialism and its disinformation strategies have spread (Vicente Torrico et al., 2024). In response, media outlets strengthened their fact-checking strategy and became more proactive in correcting errors and providing verified information (Vu et al., 2022).
3. **Depth of Coverage and Interdisciplinary Connections.** The global health crisis revealed the need for a detailed analysis of causes, consequences, and solutions. This fact expanded to climate change coverage. Scholars such as Stoddart et al. (2021) argue that the pandemic brought a shift in climate change reporting, with new articles linking the environmental, health, and economic dimensions of sustainability and exploring their interconnections.

4. Revaluation of Journalism's Role: The active and public-service role played by journalism during the COVID-19 pandemic (Rodero-Antón & Blanco-Hernández, 2020) helped it overcome new challenges and reinforced awareness of its social function during crises (Casero-Ripollés, 2020; García-Marín, 2020). This commitment to quality has extended to other topics on the international agenda, including climate change (Sendra-Duro & López-Rabadán, 2024).

While warnings from the scientific community about the issue of climate change were frequent and evident, they failed to secure a place on the media agenda until they sparked the interest and action of the political class, pressured by civil society (Carvalho, 2009; Erviti, 2018). In this regard, the COP conferences have become the primary international political forum for negotiating climate adaptation agreements.

These summits can capture public attention, as demonstrated by a longitudinal study by Boykoff and Roberts (2007) on major English-language newspapers from 1987 to 2006. Their research revealed that international events influenced media coverage, such as the publication of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports and the holding of international summits. More recently, a study by Sisco et al. (2021) confirmed that Google searches on climate change increased by more than 40% during the Paris COP21 (2015) and Marrakech COP22 (2016).

The COP conferences have thus strengthened interest in media coverage of climate change, driven by the significance of the agreements reached and the participation of numerous actors from the public sphere (Sánchez-Calero et al., 2012). The purpose of these conferences is twofold: to review the implementation of previously agreed-upon measures to mitigate climate change and to adopt further strategic decisions for developing regulatory instruments.

The Copenhagen Summit (2009) and the Paris Summit (2015) were turning points due to the importance of the agreements reached, with the former representing the highest level of media attention at the time (Erviti, 2018). The Paris Agreement was a milestone, as it represented a global political commitment to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Following these events, the announcement by then-U.S. President Donald Trump of the United States' withdrawal from the agreement marked another milestone in media coverage (Fernández-Reyes, 2018; Parratt-Fernández et al., 2020). This decision emphasised how media attention on the climate emergency concentrated on events within the international political sphere.

In Spain, a mediatic catharsis occurred with the hosting of the COP25 in Madrid (2019). Initially scheduled to take place in Chile, the event was relocated to Spain following the Latin American country's withdrawal. Spain's role as host significantly boosted media coverage in national outlets (de Sola Pueyo, 2020; Teso-Alonso & Fernández-Reyes, 2020). The COP26 in Glasgow (2021), the first to take place in the context of the post-pandemic "new normal", earned substantial attention, partly due to the protests during the Global Day of Action for Climate Justice. Thousands of activists, led by Swedish climate advocate Greta Thunberg, took to the streets demanding greater ambition and criticising political "inaction," with Thunberg gaining considerable media prominence (Hayes & O'Neill, 2021). Similarly, the two most recent summits, COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh (2022) and COP28 in Dubai (2023) have made a significant impact on public opinion. The Egyptian conference offered a broader perspective on the global phenomenon of the Middle East. Meanwhile, the summit in the United Arab Emirates was the most attended, with nearly 85,000 participants, including over 150 heads of state. However, it sparked controversy due to reported restrictions on freedom of expression and the participation of fossil fuel lobbyists.

For all these reasons, the significance of climate summits in the media coverage of climate change and their importance as a subject of study is undeniable. These summits not only capture media attention but also serve as catalysts for public awareness and social debate on climate change.

2.2. Evolution of the Climate Agenda: Emergence of New Topics and Informational Protagonists

"Thematisation" refers to the media's ability to define which topics and subtopics are most relevant for public discourse. This process, aligned with the agenda-setting theory, involves journalistic selection to prioritise issues over others (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). The prominence of a topic on the media agenda depends on the volume of coverage it receives (Schäfer et al., 2014; Ardévol-Abreu et al., 2020). Additionally, this presence establishes thematic priorities about three key questions: subtopics emphasised in the thematisation of the issue, actors that take centre stage in the coverage, and which spatial perspective (local, national, or global) is generally adopted in the reporting (López-Rabadán & Casero-Ripollés, 2012).

In this context, the study of climate change media coverage and its thematisation has generated considerable interest in the international research community (Dotson et al., 2012; Saunders et al., 2018; Hase et al., 2021; Guenter et al., 2023) as well as in Spanish-speaking academia (Arcila-Calderón et al.,

2015; Fernández-Reyes et al., 2015; Gonzales-García, 2018; Parratt-Fernández et al., 2020). In general, research has focused on the extent of coverage, contrasts between media outlets, and the set of most-followed topics. Painter and Schäfer (2018) observe that climate-related issues tend to be similar across different countries due to the international dimension of the phenomenon. However, other scholars argue that local contexts play a critical role, in shaping the discourse and the specific actions undertaken in each region (Harrison & Sundstrom, 2007; Fernández-Reyes et al., 2015; Lück et al., 2016). Local contexts influence the actors involved, the narratives constructed, the competition for prominence, and the media systems in which these dynamics unfold. Furthermore, Kunelius and Eide (2012) highlight how domestic contexts provide journalists with a framework to interpret the topic and make it relatable to citizens. Likewise, Díaz-Echarri et al. (2024) identify geographical proximity and controversy as key elements in the Spanish press's approach to covering climate summits.

Regarding the topics themselves, media coverage has traditionally focused on the environmental consequences and adverse effects of climate change (Painter, 2017; Erviti-Ilundáin & León, 2021), as well as the risks and threats posed by global warming (Sánchez-Calero et al., 2012). However, recent studies highlight an increasing emphasis on political and institutional issues (Parratt-Fernández et al., 2020), particularly on debates surrounding measures to mitigate or adapt to climate change (Radwan & Ayyad, 2024). In addition, constructive or solution-oriented journalism, applied to climate change, has recently gained prominence (Parratt-Fernández et al., 2022). This specialised approach goes beyond merely reporting problems by focusing on proposing and disseminating practical, evidence-based solutions to this challenge (Wallace, 2018). It aims to offer narratives that empower society and motivate action rather than fostering pessimism or catastrophism (McIntyre & Sobel, 2018).

On the opposite end of the spectrum, in recent years, numerous multinational companies have launched campaigns to whitewash their pollution, presenting themselves as allies in the fight against climate change. This phenomenon, known as greenwashing, seeks to mitigate the negative perception of a company to enhance and legitimise its economic activities (Backer, 2019). Consequently, their inclusion in the media agenda may be influenced by paid sponsored content (branded content), a growing business model in the journalism industry (Marín-Sanchiz & Carvajal-Prieto, 2019) rooted in content marketing.

Moreover, the climate agenda is enriched by the participation of multiple informational actors with diverse and often conflicting interests and objectives,

including political leaders, scientists, activists, journalists, corporations, interest groups, and celebrities (Anderson, 2017; Gärtner, 2023). A distinction must be made between those actors who merely feature in journalistic content (López-Rabadán & Casero-Ripollés, 2012) and sources that provide novel data, which are critical to the production process and the assessment of content quality (Sendra-Duro & López-Rabadán, 2024). The involvement of high-profile figures, such as heads of state, along with renowned scientists and representatives of social movements, as well as businesspeople, financiers, and lobbyists, reflects a diversity that enriches media coverage. Similarly, increased public exposure has elevated the media presence of activists like Greta Thunberg (Hayes & O'Neill, 2021), exemplifying the celebrification of social actors within the context of climate change (Jiménez-Morales & Lopera-Mármol, 2022; Duvall, 2023).

3. Methodology

3.1. Objectives

The aim of this article is to broadly examine the media agenda in the coverage of climate summits held in the post-pandemic context—Glasgow (2021), Sharm El-Sheikh (2022), and Dubai (2023)—through the analysis of topics, actors, and informational spaces, with the goal of identifying new trends in their thematisation over the medium and long term. To address this research, the following specific objectives are proposed:

01. Analyse and rank the most relevant topics and subtopics in the media coverage of climate summits.
02. Identify and classify the key actors featured in news pieces, assessing the prominence of each social group.
03. Determine the main informational spaces where coverage occurs, focusing on the geographic scope and editorial sections.
04. Examine the extent to which Spanish media outlets publish sponsored content (branded content) related to climate information that may be susceptible to greenwashing.

3.2. Method

Drawing on studies of thematic agenda-setting, this work adopts a quantitative methodological design through content analysis at three levels: thematisation, actors, and informational spaces. To achieve a comprehensive, cohesive view of

the journalistic study, a custom technique was developed based on prior research of established academic reliability (López-Rabadán & Casero-Ripollés, 2012; González-Alcaraz, 2016; Painter, 2017; Erviti-Ilundain & León, 2021).

At the first level, the study analyses thematisation, understood as the observation of the prominence or relevance of an issue on the media agenda (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). The analysis starts from the premise that climate change is a macro-theme (González-Alcaraz, 2016) encompassing different topics and subtopics, classified into five categories. First, pieces related to political current affairs, both national (Spain) and international, focusing on public discussion and negotiations by governments and administrations. Second, pieces address the consequences of climate change across its three dimensions, according to the European Commission (n.d.): natural, social, and economic. Third, pieces centred on civil society, such as activist mobilisation, scientific findings, or the role of pressure groups. Fourth, pieces related to the ecological transition in various aspects, including energy, mobility, consumption, and other sustainable initiatives. Lastly, pieces categorised as sponsored content (branded content), are distinguished from others due to their funding by corporations, a factor that may influence the informational product.

Table 1. *Typology of Topics for Analysing the Climate Agenda*

Main Theme	Subtheme
Political Current Affairs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. National politics (Spain) 2. International politics 3. Commitments and agreements 4. Others
Consequences of Climate Change	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Natural consequences 2. Social consequences 3. Economic consequences 4. Others
Civil Society	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social mobilization 2. Scientific findings and discoveries 3. Interest groups 4. Others

Ecological Transition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Energy 2. Mobility 3. Consumption 4. Others
Sponsored Content (Branded Content)	

Source: elaborated by the author.

At a second level, the identification of the main actor in each news piece is developed as a key element in the social representation of information (López-Rabadán & Casero-Ripollés, 2012), focusing on the professional or civic domain to which they belong (Table 2). This analysis provides a deeper understanding of which groups are prominent in media narratives and how their presence shapes the communication of events. Identifying the main actors facilitates a critical analysis of diversity and social representation in the media. This is particularly important for observing trends in key actors, the plurality of viewpoints and informational perspectives, and potential inequalities or biases in media coverage.

Table 2. *Typology of Key Actors in the Climate Agenda*

Actor principal
1. Politicians / Institutional officials
2. Activists and NGOs
3. Scientists
4. Economic actors
5. Interest groups
6. Journalists
7. Celebrities
8. Others

Source: elaborated by the author.

At a third level, the analysis focuses on the primary informational space in two dimensions: reference space and news section. First, identifying the geographic focus allows for a detailed examination of the origins of the climate debate and the areas on which the media concentrate to interpret this phenomenon (López-Rabadán & Casero-Ripollés, 2012). This element is crucial for understanding potential domestically framed interpretations within national or regional contexts (Fernández-Reyes et al., 2015; Lück et al., 2016).

Table 3. *Geographic Focus in Informational Space*

Location
1. Spain (national, regional, local)
2. Europe
3. Global / Worldwide
4. Africa
5. Asia
6. Latin America
7. Middle East / Near East
8. United States
9. Otros

Source: elaborated by the author.

Additionally, this section seeks to analyse whether the pieces are predominantly concentrated in specialised sections (e.g., Environment) or distributed across more generalist areas to enhance visibility and reach a broader audience (Parratt-Fernández, 2014). Examining this element allows for an evaluation of how media outlets organise and prioritise their content, reflecting the level of importance assigned to climate change in their informational agenda.

Table 4. *Placement in News Section*

Sección
1. Environment / Specific climate change section
2. National / Politics
3. International
4. Regional / Local
5. Society
6. Economy / Business
7. Science / Technology
8. Lifestyle / Fashion / Celebrities
9. Others (Sports, Events, Courts, Culture...)

Source: elaborated by the author.

3.3. Sample

The sample for this study aims to comprehensively and diversely analyse media coverage in Spain of the climate summits in Glasgow (2021), Sharm El-Sheikh (2022), and Dubai (2023). The selection of media outlets is based on rigorous

criteria that include editorial diversity, plurality of perspectives, and professional models, following the recommendations of scholars such as Boykoff and Luedecke (2016).

In the first group, there are important outlets, such as *El País* and *El Mundo*, to analyse the perspective of Spain's leading media institutions. Both outlets have been the focus of numerous studies on climate change coverage. The second group includes digital-born media, *eldiario.es* and *El Confidencial*, aiming to provide a contemporary perspective that reflects emerging dynamics in online journalism. The third group comprises popular media, *okdiario* and *HuffingtonPost*. These outlets often cover numerous topics, ranging from politics to infotainment (Örnebring & Jönsson, 2004), employing informal and provocative styles, often with elements of sensationalism. This approach offers an intriguing perspective on how climate change is presented in more mainstream and mass-market contexts. Notably, all six selected outlets are included in the prestigious SCImago Media Rankings (SMR), ranking among the top 50, in terms of media reputation and reach.

Table 5. Definition of the Sample by Time Period

Summit	Time Period Analyzed
COP26: Glasgow (Scotland)	19/10/2021 – 19/11/2021
COP27: Sharm El-Sheikh (Egypt)	27/10/2022 – 27/11/2022
COP28: Dubai (United Arab Emirates)	17/11/2023 – 17/12/2023

Source: elaborated by the author.

The sample was collected automatically using the digital archive service MyNews¹ in two stages. First, the keywords “COP26,” “COP27,” and “COP28” were used to search within a one-month period surrounding each summit. Second, a manual filtering process was conducted to exclude pieces unrelated to the climate crisis, opinion columns, and agency reports. After classification, the final sample (n=671 news pieces) was analysed by two coders who conducted a pre-test on 10% of the messages (n=67), achieving high Krippendorff's alpha values (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007) across all variables ($\alpha > 0.90$).

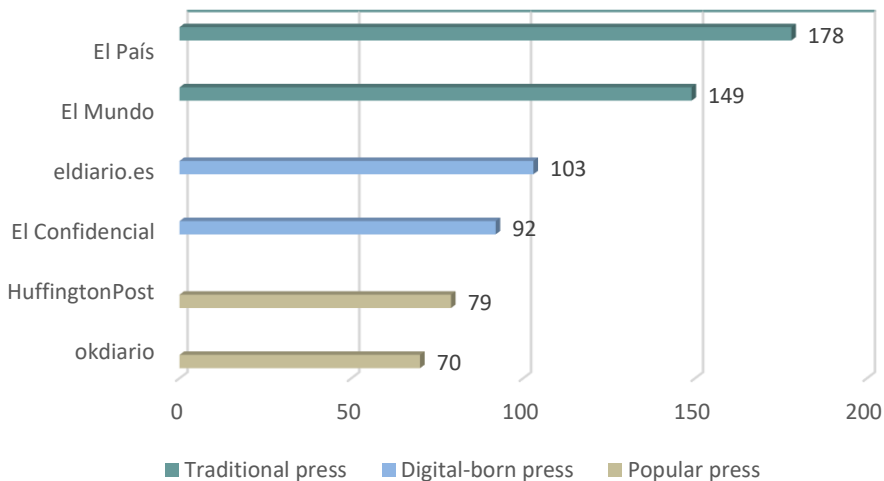
¹ My News. News Searcher – Clipping Tool: <https://mynews.es/>

4. Results

4.1. Significant Coverage of Climate Summits in Spanish Media

Overall, the total sample comprises a corpus of 671 news pieces: 274 corresponding to COP26 in Glasgow, 178 to COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, and 219 to COP28 in Dubai. Notably, the Scottish COP26 received the most coverage in Spanish media (40.8% of the total sample), as it was the first climate conference held after the pandemic. In contrast, the Egyptian COP27 generated the least media interest (26.5%). These figures highlight a significant volume of coverage throughout the post-pandemic period but also suggest a pattern linking reduced coverage to the hosting of summits in countries with notable restrictions on freedom of expression, such as Egypt (2022) and the United Arab Emirates (2023). This trend should be considered in future research.

Figure 1. Volume of news coverage in each professional model (n=671)



Source: elaborated by the author.

The obtained sample indicates a significant level of media coverage of climate summits in Spanish outlets (Figure 1). Traditional or reference newspapers account for nearly half of the pieces (48.7%), while digital-native media represent almost one-third of the sample volume (29.1%). Meanwhile, popular press outlets contribute the smallest share, with 22.2% of the analysed pieces. Overall, three distinct levels of media coverage can be identified based on the

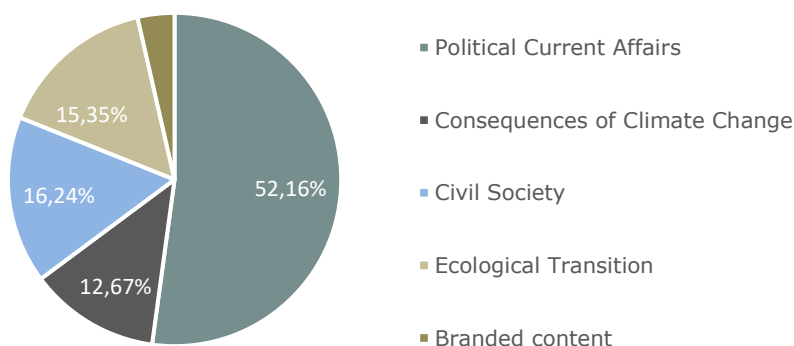
professional model: traditional press (high coverage), digital-born press (moderate coverage), and popular press (light coverage).

2. Transition Towards an Increasingly Diversified Media Agenda

The results indicate an increasingly diversified and balanced media agenda, although it remains clearly dominated by political content.

With 350 pieces, political current affairs account for more than half of the total (52.16%). This highlights the predominant institutional focus of the summits. This topic prevails across all the analysed media outlets, reflecting strong journalistic interest in negotiations, agreements, and announcements of new measures.

Figure 2. Global Composition of the Climate Agenda in Climate Summits (n=671)



Source: elaborated by the author.

Figure 3. Example of a Political Current Affairs Piece from the Summit



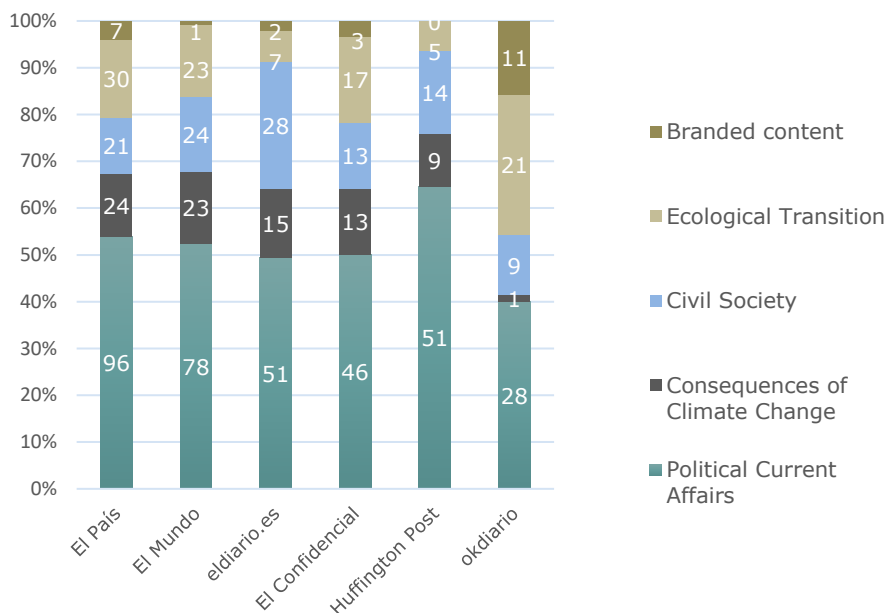
Source: *El País*.

Figure 4. Example of a Sivil Society piece

Source: *El Mundo*.

Representing 16.24% of the sample, coverage of civil society highlights the role of NGOs and activists in the summits. This topic appears particularly significant in the coverage by *eldiario.es* and *Huffington Post*, but it is addressed across all professional models. It emphasises the growing participation of citizens, with protests and actions aimed at influencing political decisions. Similarly, with 103 pieces (15.35%), the ecological transition reached a major place in the media agenda. This topic is notably present in *okdiario* and *El País*. It encompasses actions aimed at transforming the economic model, including renewable energies, emission reductions, and technological innovation. Thus, it is a transversal topic with a broad editorial focus. In contrast, pieces addressing the consequences of climate change (12.67%) are less prioritised, indicating a shift in editorial priorities.

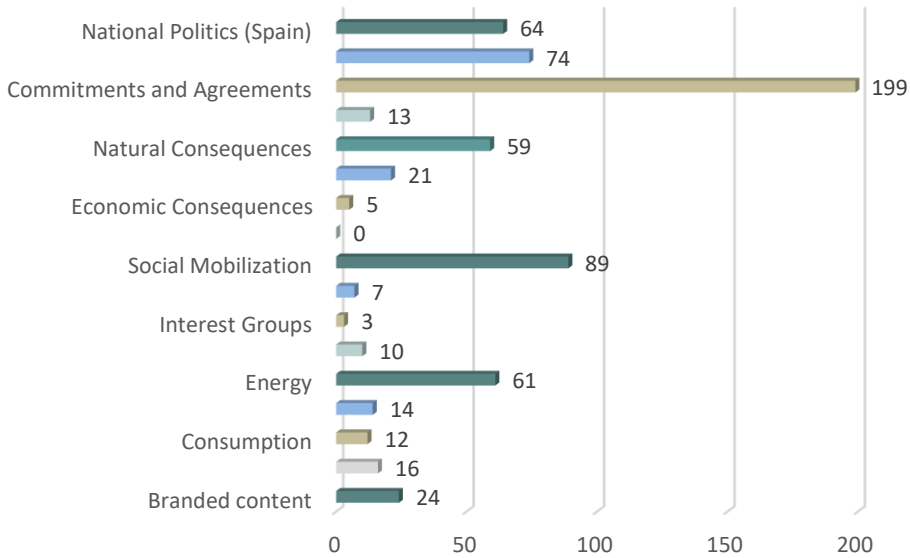
Figure 5. Global Composition of the Climate Agenda by Media Outlet (n=671)



Source: elaborated by the author.

Furthermore, the disaggregated data from the subtopic analysis (Figure 6) provide a more detailed view of the media agenda. With 199 pieces (approximately 29.7% of the total), commitments and agreements emerge as the most relevant subtopic in the climate agenda. Following this, pieces addressing social mobilisation constitute the second-largest group (13.3%), focusing on civil society actions such as protests, demonstrations, and civic awareness activities.

Figure 6. Composition of Subtopics in the Media Coverage of Climate Summits (n=671)



Source: elaborated by the author.

Third, international politics accounts for 11% of the analysed sample. These pieces focus on interactions between different countries and geopolitical dynamics at the summits, emphasising the importance of diplomatic relations within the global community. Similarly, pieces centred on the Spanish context (9.5%) explore how the country manages the climate challenge.

In the area of ecological transition, energy is the most covered topic in the press, representing 9.1% of the media sample. This primarily includes discussions about renewable energy. Close behind are natural consequences (8.8%), which focus on the adverse effects on the environment, such as extreme weather events, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem disruptions.

Figure 7. Example of a Piece on Scientific Findings and Discoveries



Source: eldiario.es.

Lastly, the subtopics with the lowest levels of coverage are social consequences, economic consequences, mobility, and consumption. Scientific findings and discoveries also stand out at the lower end of the coverage spectrum.

Figure 8. Example of a Piece on National Politics (Spain)

Ayuso mezcla cambio climático con comunismo y acaba con esta frase que hace hervir Twitter

"Está mezclando los escaparates con el humo de los coches".

Source: *Huffington Post*.

Figure 9. Example of a Piece on Sponsored Content

CUMBRE DEL CLIMA

Iberdrola reafirma su compromiso con el futuro sostenible del planeta en COP26

✓ La voladura de la térmica Veilla, un paso más de Iberdrola hacia una economía verde y sostenible

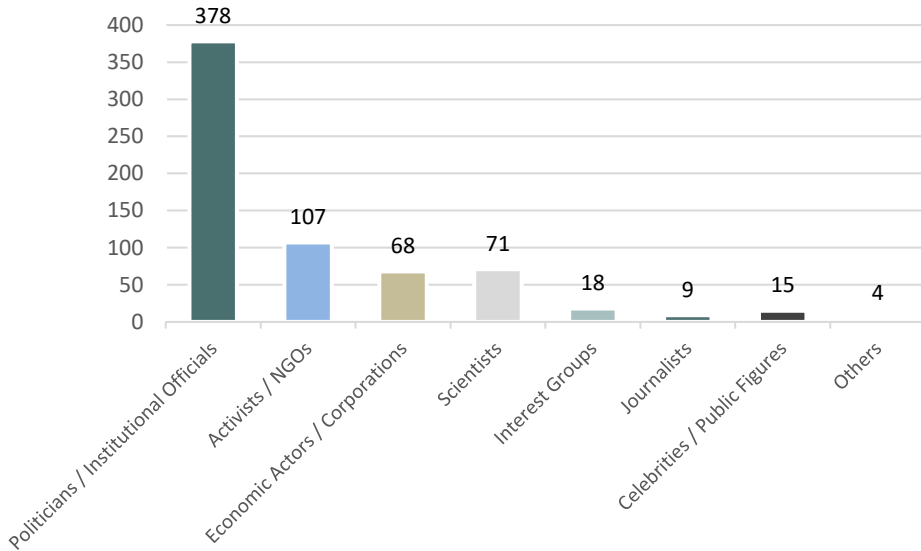
Source: *okdiario*.

Finally, sponsored content related to climate change, representing 3.58% of the analysed news pieces, reflects a key strategy employed by companies and organisations to enhance their public image on a topic that has gained significant media presence. Although this category of content is less prevalent compared to other forms of coverage, the companies financing such publications (e.g., Figure 9) typically aim to portray themselves as responsible and committed to sustainability, leveraging the political momentum of the summits. In this area, *okdiario* stands out as the media outlet featuring the highest number of news pieces funded by major corporations.

3. Between the Traditional Prominence of Political Actors and the Emergence of Activists and Scientists

The results regarding the prominence of informational actors in the coverage of climate summits in Spanish media reveal who are considered the most relevant and authoritative figures in climate events.

Figure 10. *Global Composition of Informational Actors in Climate Summit Coverage (n=671)*



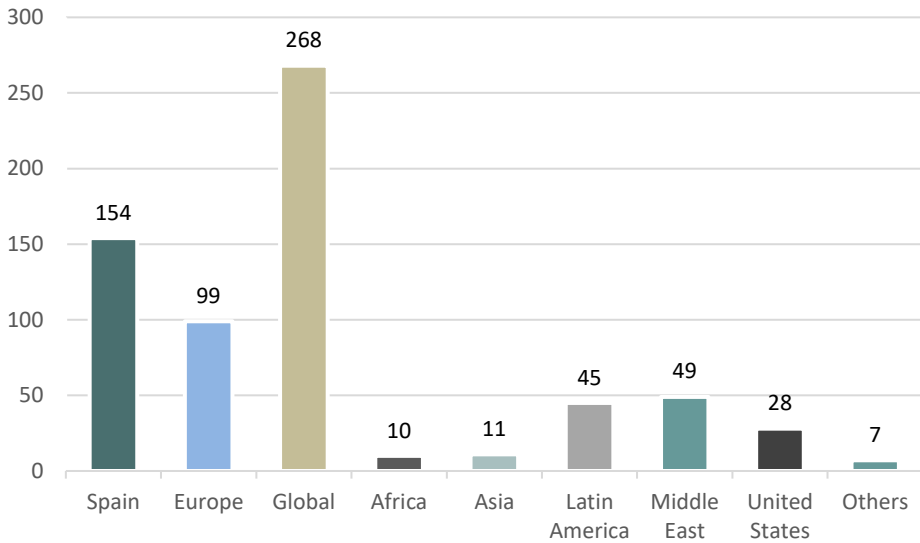
On the one hand, more than half of the analysed sample (56.42%) identifies politicians and institutional officials as the primary actors, making them the main protagonists of climate summits. Activists are featured in 16% of the news pieces, a significant percentage, albeit much smaller than that of politicians. They often serve as voices urging governments and corporations to adopt more ambitious measures. Scientists also occupy a notable share of informational prominence (10.6%), providing knowledge and evidence on climate change. Similarly, economic actors account for a comparable percentage (10.15%), playing a significant role in the ecological transition toward a green economy. At a lower tier are interest groups (2.69%), representing specific interests in the climate discussion, and celebrities (2.24%), whose presence is typically tied to awareness campaigns or support for civic initiatives. Finally, journalists rank lowest as informational actors (1.34%).

At this stage, contrasts between professional models are minimal. Institutional officials dominate the media coverage across all analysed outlets. However, variations are observed within the second group. While *El País*, *El Mundo*, *eldiario.es* and *Huffington Post* prioritise activists, *El Mundo* and *okdiario* grant greater informational prominence to scientists. For its part, *El Confidencial* maintains a balanced focus between these social and professional groups.

4. Predominance of a Global Informational Perspective

The media coverage of climate summits spans various geographical spaces, reflecting the universal importance of these events and the broad journalistic focus on their geographic interpretation. In this context, the global or worldwide scope emerges as the most prominent, highlighting its significance as an informational reference point (39.94%).

Figure 11. Summary of Informational Spaces in Climate Summit Coverage (n=671)



Source: elaborated by the author.

Global media coverage emerges as the most prominent, reflecting the international nature of climate summits. The decisions and agreements reached at these summits have planetary implications, affecting all regions and countries. For this reason, media outlets prioritise reporting from a global perspective, incorporating references to numerous countries. Following this, Spain accounts for a significant share of informational focus (22.95%), which can be attributed to the direct impact that climate policies and international agreements have on the country. Similarly, coverage focusing on Europe (14.75%), particularly within the context of the European Union, underscores the importance of environmental decisions for communitarian policies.

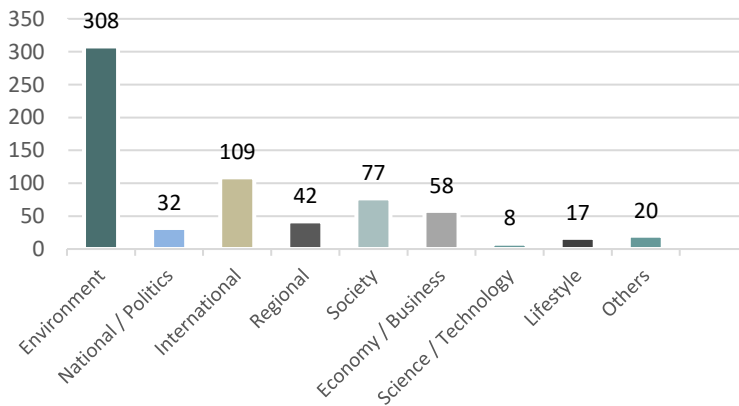
The Middle East and Near East regions hold a significant presence (7.3%), largely due to COP28 in Dubai. Similarly, coverage of Latin America (6.71%) receives moderate attention, as the region faces critical challenges such as deforestation and the impact on indigenous communities. Conversely, the United States, despite being one of the largest greenhouse gas emitters, garners lower levels of media attention (4.17%). Asia (1.64%) and Africa (1.49%) register the least coverage.

Both traditional and digital media exhibit a clear globalist perspective. However, popular press outlets show a stronger focus on their country of origin (Spain) in their coverage. These differences illustrate the informational priorities regarding the territorial perspective of climate change.

5. The Environment Section as the Preferred Informational Space for Climate Change

Regarding news sections, the Environment section captures nearly half of all media coverage (45.9%). This reflects the absolute consolidation of this section and its editorial prominence as the preferred informational space for climate change. International (16.24%) and Society (11.48%) sections rank second and third, respectively. These sections offer broader content scopes, allowing for diverse approaches to the news pieces. The economy section also receives a significant share of coverage (8.64%).

Figure 12. Volume of Pieces Published in Each News Section (n=671)



Source: own elaboration.

Regional and local sections account for a slightly smaller volume of coverage compared to the previous category (6.26%), reflecting moderate interest in domestic interpretations of the climate discussion. The remaining sections register lighter and more uneven proportions of coverage.

Different nuances can be observed across professional models, reflecting the editorial priorities of the media outlets. Traditional press shows a strong preference for the Environment section (68.8%), while digital media divides its coverage between the Environment (36.4%) and Society (30.8%) sections. In contrast, popular press prioritises its climate change coverage within the International (33.6%) and Economy (16.8%) sections, demonstrating a journalistic criterion with a globalist focus.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The findings on the presence of three key components (topics, section, and informational spaces) in the study of the climate summit media agenda allow for several conclusions regarding the orientation of the climate agenda in Spain.

First, the thematisation (O1) is broad and diverse, with a significant dominance of political content. However, the prominence of the ecological transition stands out as an area of growing interest, signalling a more balanced focus that includes pragmatic and solution-oriented perspectives (Parratt-Fernández et al., 2022; Radwan & Ayyad, 2024), while the consequences of climate change have no priority in this context. The results demonstrate a diversified media agenda, with a strong presence of political subtopics and international commitments, reflecting the importance attributed to the decisions and agreements of the COP summits.

Differences among the various professional models can be identified regarding coverage volume and thematic focus. Traditional press outlets, such as *El País* and *El Mundo*, predominantly focus on political discussions. In contrast, digital media like *eldiario.es* and *El Confidencial* offer more balanced coverage that includes solutions and the direct consequences of climate change. Meanwhile, popular outlets such as *okdiario* and *Huffington Post* take a more varied approach; *okdiario* stands out for its greater presence of sponsored content, while *Huffington Post* leans toward coverage oriented to civil society. Overall, the data suggest that Spanish media concentrate on issues of high public interest and those with an immediate and visible impact (hard news). Topics such as political agreements and social mobilisation by groups draw greater attention due to their urgency. Conversely, natural consequences, although crucial, receive less coverage due to their technical complexity and lower visual impact, consistent with other thematic agenda studies (Carvalho & Burgess, 2005;

López-Rabadán & Casero-Ripollés, 2012). At the same time, social mobilisation and energy policies receive significant attention, indicating a growing interest in protests and sustainable solutions. This suggests a trend toward democratising the climate discussion in Spain, where participation and sustainable initiatives are increasingly recognised as crucial elements in the fight against climate change.

Regarding the analysis of informational prominence, the study highlights the power structure and the relative importance of different actors in the climate discussion (O2). Politicians and institutional officials overwhelmingly dominate the coverage due to their roles in decision-making, negotiation, and the implementation of agreements. This trend is consistent across all analysed media outlets and aligns with previous studies, confirming the institutionalist orientation of climate coverage (Parratt-Fernández et al., 2020; Gärtner, 2023). Nevertheless, activists and scientists also hold significant prominence, reflecting their influence in driving social pressure and providing academic knowledge as a foundation for solutions. Additionally, the results underscore the process of celebrification of activists, positioning them as citizen icons for the climate cause (Jiménez-Morales & López-Mármol, 2022; Duvall, 2023).

Considering the analysis of informational spaces (O3), media coverage is mainly concentrated in the global domain (39.9%), followed by significant representation in Spain (23%) and Europe (14.8%). This reflects the importance of global climate decisions and the diplomatic dimension of the issue (Painter & Schäfer, 2018). Although the domestic context remains relevant (Fernández-Reyes et al., 2015; Lück et al., 2016), the international dimension overwhelmingly dominates media coverage. Only the popular press prioritises the national perspective, demonstrating a relatively limited interest in the broader context, driven by internal political debates.

Moreover, most coverage centres on the Environment section, which appears well-established as a specialised domain. However, the regular inclusion of coverage in other sections, such as International, Society, and Economy—particularly in digital and popular media—highlights a broad focus, the cross-cutting nature of the phenomenon, and its adaptability to various informational spaces (Parratt-Fernández, 2014).

Finally, the analysis highlights the limited publication of sponsored content (O4). Although it constitutes a small proportion of the sample (3.6%) and relates to popular press outlets, this type of content can benefit actors with questionable climate interests, such as large energy corporations or industries that have historically contributed to global warming. Moreover, it may impact the credibility of media outlets which, by associating with sponsors practising

greenwashing, risk being perceived as complicit in such strategies. This underscores the need for critical journalism and greater transparency in the relationship between media and their sources of funding (Moreno & Ruiz-Alba, 2021).

In summary, the results highlight a significant evolution in the agenda of Spanish media regarding the treatment of the climate crisis in the post-pandemic context (2021–2023), encapsulated in four overarching traits. First, the agenda has become increasingly diversified, with social action, the green economy, and the ecological transition emerging as key informational priorities for media outlets. Second, new informational actors, particularly experts and activists, complement the dominant presence of political power at the summits. Finally, regarding informational spaces, there is evidence of a consolidated global perspective on the climate crisis, along with the prioritisation of specific editorial sections addressing this critical issue on the international agenda.

It is essential to expand the informational scope, as excessive institutionalisation may distance civil society from the climate cause (Fernández-Castrillo & Magallón-Rosa, 2023). This call for reflection is crucial to fostering more specialized journalism committed to the diversity of perspectives necessary to address the complexity of the climate crisis (Sendra-Duro & López-Rabadán, 2024) in a context threatened by misinformation (Vu et al., 2022). This is even more important following the professional revaluation achieved during the pandemic (Casero-Ripollés, 2020; García-Marín, 2020).

The study on Spanish media may not reflect global trends, suggesting the need for international comparisons in future research. It will be essential to verify the detected trends over time, particularly in terms of thematisation, and to analyse news framing through framing studies for greater depth.

Ethics and Transparency

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Author Contributions

Indicate with an 'X' in the corresponding cell or cells. The heading will not be numbered but must have the same format as the main headings.

Contribution	Author 1	Author 2	Author 3	Author 4
Conceptualization	X	X		
Data curation	X			
Formal Analysis	X	X		
Funding acquisition				
Investigation	X			
Methodology	X	X		
Project administration	X			
Resources	X			
Software	X			
Supervision	X	X		
Validation	X	X		
Visualization	X	X		
Writing – original draft	X	X		
Writing – review & editing	X	X		

Data Availability Statement

Data access is available upon request from the authors.

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