

# El podcast true crime en la consolidación de un destino de turismo oscuro en una zona rural

## The True crime podcast and the consolidation of a dark tourism destination in a rural area

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### Resumen

Los medios de comunicación juegan un papel importante en la consolidación del turismo oscuro; suelen ser los encargados de difundir los hechos y lugares que luego serán objeto de una visita turística. Este artículo estudia el caso de un pequeño pueblo de los Pirineos (Tor) donde se produjeron tres asesinatos que fueron relatados primero en un libro y después como contenido sonoro difundido en un medio de comunicación tradicional y disponible también en formato podcast. El objetivo es comprobar si existe una correlación entre la emisión del podcast y el aumento de visitantes a la zona, a la vez que observar si la imagen proyectada en los medios puede cambiar la imagen percibida de un área rural, a través del análisis de las publicaciones de Instagram localizadas en el núcleo. Los resultados muestran

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una correlación positiva entre la difusión del podcast y el aumento del número de visitas a la zona. Los resultados también muestran el potencial del turismo oscuro para complementar la imagen turística de una zona rural.

**Palabras clave:** Turismo oscuro; true crime; Turismo rural; análisis de contenido; Instagram

**Abstract:**

The media play an important role in the consolidation of dark tourism; They are usually in charge of disseminating the facts and places that will later be the object of a tourist visit. This article studies the case of a small town in the Pyrenees (Tor) where three murders took place that were reported first in a book and later as content broadcast in a traditional radio and also available in podcast format. The objective is to verify if there is a correlation between the broadcast of the podcast and the increase in visitors to the area, as well as to observe if the image projected in the media can change the perceived image of a rural area, through the analysis of the Instagram posts located on the site. The results show a positive correlation between the diffusion of sound content and the increase in the number of visits to the area. The results also show the potential of dark tourism to complement the tourist image of a rural area.

**Key words:** Dark tourism; true crime; rural tourism; content analysis; Instagram

## 1 Introduction

In recent years there has been an increase in the consumption of true crime genres (Hartmann et al., 2018; Garrido, 2021), involving audiovisual documentaries, podcasts, fiction series or detective stories in literature. This is a practice which is related to travel literature, which is promoted via the Internet and which conceptualises “dark tourism” as an educational and leisure practice, but without losing sight of the attraction for violence in its many and diverse forms (Robb, 2009). As a tourism niche, dark tourism includes any tourism phenomenon “related to death, suffering, atrocity, tragedy or crime” (Light, 2017, 277).

Despite this argument concerning interest in dark tourism, certain questions remain which have so far received little attention. One of them is the lack of studies that quantify the relationship between the content broadcast by the media and the visits to an area. This is a

fundamental question for knowing and understanding why tourists travel to certain places and also for analysing the extent to which the projected image and perceived image coincide. When tourists visit an area, they have normally acquired a series of information (projected image) (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997). However, these images remain uncertain until they are verified by experience (Almeida-García, et al. 2020). When the tourist moves to a place, they personally verify the degree of similarity between the projected image and experience (perceived image). At the same time, with their experience, the tourist contributes to the diffusion of a new image of the destination that is visited. Although some actors question the role of the tourist in creating the image of the destination (Govers & Go, 2005), the majority of authors accept the image of the destination as a multidimensional concept (Gallarza, Saura, & García, 2002).

One aspect that has been particularly lacking in analysis is that of the relationship between the projected and perceived images of phenomena related to dark tourism in rural settings. Among existing studies, we find references to Snowtown, an Australian rural community (Rofe, 2013); Jeju Island, in Korea (Brian et al., 2011 and Kang et al., 2012); and cemeteries in rural areas (Mionel, 2020 and Plibersek and Vrban, 2018). However, the majority of dark tourism studies have so far focused on urban areas. The few studies examining rural areas have tended to refer to conflicts (usually battlefields) or disasters (including traffic accidents) which bear little relationship with the actions of the inhabitants and the history of the place, although these events can then be associated to the area. A good example of this can be found in Light (2017), whose critical review of articles devoted to dark tourism and thanatourism between 1996 and 2016 mentions only one article devoted to a rural area. Mileva (2018) similarly pointed out that in an inventory of destinations associated with dark tourism, where most studies focused on urban areas.

Thus, the first objective of this article is to contribute to quantify the relationship between the dissemination of a true crime podcast and the visits to an area, quantified through the number of geolocated Instagram publications. To date, this is an aspect that has been little analysed in the academic literature (Anta Felez & Crespo Guerrero, 2018). The second objective is to notice whether the perceived image of a rural area can be influenced by the

projected image relating to a true crime format that relates to a criminal event that happened in a small town or village.

The present article therefore helps to expand on our knowledge of the interrelationships that exist between dark tourism and tourism understood in a wider sense. First, by quantifying the effects of the content broadcast by the media in tourists. And secondly, incorporating different types of area (the rural areas) into the existing analyses focused on dark tourism.

## **2 Theoretical framework**

### **2.1 The evolution of dark tourism**

Although what we now know as dark tourism has a long tradition within the field of tourism, its academic description is relatively recent; dark tourism could therefore be regarded as an old concept in a new world (Powell & Kennell, 2016). Some authors have identified the precursors of dark tourism activities in a Michelin guide published in 1917. This helped people to visit World War One battlefields, while the conflict was still raging (Galant, 2020).

However, the most important new feature of dark tourism, in its contemporary form, is that there is now a tourism industry capable of commercialising these events and offering them to a wider public. In this order of things, Carrasco, Padilla & Melgar (2015) consider that the different focuses adopted in literature on this theme are supported by the perspectives of supply and demand, with both forming part of an integrated process. Thus, from the 1990s the analysis of these areas as possible tourist attractions began in earnest. Rojek (1993) referred to tourist sites related to crimes or violent events as 'black spots' or 'fatal attractions'. This was, however, seen as too general, which led authors such as Foley & Lennon (1996) to seek a more specific definition. They included locations associated with disasters, individual deaths or genocides, holocausts, crimes, reclusion, and the reconstruction and interpretation of death in dark tourism, providing that they attract visitors.

Several similar concepts also appeared in these initial definitions of dark tourism. Most notable amongst these was 'thanatourism' (Seaton, 1996), referring to making visits, without any sinister connotations, in the form of literary pilgrimages, to the tombs of famous authors, or visiting battlefields with groups of relatives. Another term also used for areas attracting this type of activity is 'dissonant heritage' (Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005).

The novelty of the concept has generated various debates, which are still on-going in academic literature. For one product of this interest, when it comes to providing a definition, it is necessary to refer to the previously cited article by Light (2017). In it, he provides an in-depth revision of the evolution of the different definitions associated with “dark tourism” (used as an umbrella term) and of “thanatourism” (defined as a more specific concept, as it refers to certain specific types of travel). The author also establishes different categories of definitions: based on determined practices related to the visit (Foley & Lennon, 1997; Tarlow, 2005; Preece & Price, 2005; Stone, 2006; Robb, 2009; Johnston, 2015); focusing on tourism in specific types of places (Foley & Lennon, 1996; Knudsen, 2011; Johnston & Mandelartz, 2016); relating to motivations (Seaton, 1996; Millor, 2007); based on the type of experience (Ashworth, 2008); and, finally, those that centre on heritage (Dann & Seaton, 2001).

Several authors have focused criticism on the definition of the term, questioning whether there really are ‘dark’ destinations (Bowman & Pezzullo, 2009), pointing out that the definition is eclectic and that there could be various ‘shades of darkness’ (Stone, 2006), noting an excess of theory based on the Western context (Light, 2017), and even perceiving an excessive relation between dark tourism and neoliberal practices (Nhlabathi & Maharaj, 2019).

Motivation is another aspect for debate. Carrasco, Padilla & Melgar (2015), referring to the classification made by Sharpley (2009), consider three groups of tourists, distinguished by their different types of motivation: those with little interest in the theme, who are there as a result of a trip made for other purposes; committed tourism, which seeks authenticity and goes to places that are not specifically seen as attractions; and groups of tourists who travel to places conceived of as attractions from the very start. However, one of the most habitual criticisms made relates to the difficulty involved in finding a common motivation applicable to all forms of dark tourism (Seaton, 2018). This has repercussions for the definition of dark tourism, the differentiation of ‘thanatourism’, and the recognition of various other similar concepts that appear in the academic literature, such as those identified by Mileva (2018), which include: ‘morbid tourism’, ‘black-spot tourism’, ‘milking the macabre’, ‘grief tourism’, ‘horror tourism’, ‘hardship tourism’, ‘tragedy tourism’, ‘genocide tourism’ or ‘death tourism’.

Parallel to its definition, the concept of dark tourism, and the very notion of this tourist practice, has been the subject of some criticism in academia. Light (2017) concludes that it is a controversial term and that, furthermore, many researchers do not see the need to use it in their research. Many authors prefer to speak of 'dissonant inheritance' or 'difficult inheritance', because now, after efforts to delimit dark tourism, or thanatourism, as different types of tourism, there is a tendency to consider this type of tourism as a branch of heritage tourism. At present, there is also an on-going debate as to whether dark tourism is a different form of tourism or simply a new tool for understanding current trends and the diversification of modern-day tourism (Mionel, 2019). This debate has raised several other questions: whether dark tourism could be driven by different motives to other types of tourism (Seaton, 2018); if there is a motive prior to embarking upon dark tourism, or whether this is a purely accidental phenomenon and the result of the majority of attractions being located in places where it is difficult to avoid tourists; or whether it being related to, or associated with, events in a particular region could lead local people to fear the potential stigmatisation of their destinations when they are associated with dramatic stories (Bowman & Pezzullo, 2009). Similarly, there is an on-going ethical debate concerning the politics of remembrance and whether areas where there have been victims should indeed have tourist uses, or whether they should have the right to be forgotten (Singh, 2014). A number of such themes have been highlighted in current debates and studies relating to dark tourism.

## **2.2 Is Dark tourism a purely urban phenomenon?**

Although dark tourism tends to focus on aspects that can occur in a wide variety of areas, its territorial distribution is not homogeneous. Tourist attractions related to dark tourism tend to be found in urban areas, thereby reinforcing their central role in contemporary tourism (Powell & Kennell, 2015). A number of cities have used dark tourism to offer supposedly innovative and unique experiences (Kennell & Powell, 2016). In this way, the brand image of the city can be reinforced; this helps to increase the attractiveness of some cities and their visitor numbers (Biran & Hyde, 2013). As a consequence of this, a significant part of the existing literature has tended to analyse tourism products linked to dark tourism by associating them with a city's global offer (Lennon, Powell, 2018; Powell and Kennell, 2016).

Some authors point to the possible reason for the scant presence of rural areas being the fact that, both in their production and consumption, dark tourism is largely influenced by cultural tradition (Sharpley, 2018): the 'cultural bubble' (Cohen, 1974) in which tourists tend to travel and which has an influence on the way in which they understand and experience different tourist sites (Urry, 1990). This cultural influence can also affect local communities, determine how they react to visits, and affect how they explain their region and how they interpret their past (Sharpley, 2018). We find an illustrative example of this in the case of the Channel Islands, where heritage related to the German occupation of the islands during the Second World War has either been ignored or manipulated to remove the 'darkness' of the experience. Instead, the visitor encounters a culturally constructed heritage based more on myth than on history (Carr, 2017). This age-old vision of an idyllic area, associated with agricultural activities, tranquillity, and/or certain bucolic elements, is an obstacle to the viability of promoting these rural areas as destinations associated with dark tourism.

The image conveyed by rural areas, which has been influenced by a long historical tradition, is traditionally one which involves the idealisation of the setting. This tends to stand in stark contrast to the current re-evaluation of rurality and the redefinition of these areas and their uses, most notably for tourism-related uses. This is something we can relate to the construction of rural areas that occurs in post-modern societies (referred to by Urry 1990), where emphasis is placed on the healthiness and tranquillity of these areas in contrast to the traffic and stress of urban life.

### **2.3 The true crime genre: Tor's case study**

An interest in criminal acts has always been present in Western culture, in its journalism, literature and cinema. The moment at which an interest in the true crime genre really began could be linked to the publication of the novel by Truman Capote called *In cold blood*, in 1965. This work relates a criminal event using a highly dramatic narrative that is half-way between literature and journalism. The genre normally follows this structure: a disruption of the social order due to a crime, an investigation to identify the culprit, and the delivery of justice through the punishment of the culprit. Even so, at times, this structure may incorporate variations, whether because the culprit is not found, or because the investigation raises certain doubts.

In recent years, the rise of digital formats has favoured an increase in true crime works. On audiovisual platforms, it is possible to highlight the cases of *The jinx* (HBO 2015-) *Making a Murderer* (Netflix, 2015-) and *Muerte en León* (Movistar +. 2016), while in terms of sound, the podcast *Serial* (This American life, 2014) particularly stands out. The success of these works has also led to their presence on more traditional channels. In Spain, the journalist Carles Porta has been the main exponent of this genre, through his radio programmes *Tor, tretze cases i tres morts* (Catalunya Radio, 2018) and *Crimis* (Catalunya Radio. 2018-), and television programme of the same name (TV3, 2020-).

The case of Tor is especially relevant due to its repeated presence in the media for over two decades. The events that took place at Tor were originally covered by news programmes. However, a significant change occurred following the broadcasting, on TV3 (Catalan public television), of an extensive documentary in the programme *Trenta Minuts* [Thirty Minutes], entitled *La muntanya maleïda* [The cursed mountain] (CCMA, 1997). This documentary, which included interviews with a large number of the protagonists, was first broadcast on 20 April 1997 and was a major success (with 900,000 viewers), which resulted in a repeat broadcast.

Interest in Tor subsequently continued. In 2005, the documentary's creator, Carles Porta, published the book *Tor, tretze cases i tres morts* [Tor, thirteen houses and three deaths] (which was subsequently translated into Spanish, in 2006, with the title: *Tor, la montaña maldita* [Tor, the cursed mountain]). The book took up the case again, explaining the filming of the documentary and providing additional material. The book was an immediate success: over 50,000 copies were sold in its multiple editions in Catalan.

Finally, on 25 June 2018, Catalunya Ràdio (Catalan public radio) broadcast a non-fiction radio series, which was also available via Internet as a podcast, which used the title of the book, *Tor, tretze cases i tres morts*, as well as its content (CCMA, 2018). This podcast, which was also by Carles Porta, was broadcast in 25 chapters which were each between 20 and 30 minutes long. The audio versions were also made available via a website, accompanied by complementary information: pictures of the people involved, legal documents, maps, videos of the news programmes of the time, and a competition in which viewers could win the book on which the series was based. This was a significant success, both in terms of the number



of plays achieved and its critical reviews; it won a number of awards, showing the continued interest aroused by the case, even over a period of more than two decades.

The events related on these non-fiction genres explain a property dispute involving an extensive area of land that took place at the small hamlet of Tor. After a number of court cases, dating back to the 1940s, considerable enmity resulted from the subsequent division of the land whose ownership had been contested. This, combined with various accusations of smuggling, associated with Tor's proximity to the border with Andorra, and a number of failed business projects, culminated in three murders which occurred between 1980 and 1995.

Tor is a small hamlet in the Catalan Pyrenees (located in the local district of l Pallars Sobirà). In administrative terms, it forms part of the village of Alins (276 inhabitants in 2019). This is an area which the majority of the population associate with largely idyllic and harmonious settings; a place where nothing ever happens (Paül i Agustí, 2016). In 2019, the official population of the hamlet, according to the electoral roll, was 17. However, the majority of these inhabitants had permanent residences elsewhere. The principal characteristic of the area is its isolation. The hamlet stands at an altitude of 1,648 metres, is 12 km from Alins, and is 7 km from the border with Andorra.

### 3 Methodology

To quantify the relationship between the dissemination of a true crime podcast and the visits to an area, we will analyse the correlation between the number of potential listeners to the *Tor, tretze cases i tres morts* podcast (projected image) and the number of geolocated Instagram images posted by tourists (perceived image). It is important to note that, apart from a podcast in 2018, the other times when the hamlet of Tor appeared in the media (in 1997 and 2005) were prior to the existence of social networks, as we know them today. It is particularly important to underline this situation, which is unique to our case study, because in the present context, content generated by users, and which is spread via social networks, is the one of the sources most consulted by tourists when they travel (Simms, 2012), even to rather outlying areas (Usui, Wei, & Funck, 2017).

### 3.1 The image projected by the media: podcast

Information about the number of downloads of the podcast broadcast by Catalunya Ràdio was obtained from the organisation responsible for managing the programme. The data were grouped on a weekly basis and included how many times the programme was listened to. By 1 March 2020, the programme had been listened to 228,662 times.

The programme exhibited a significant capacity to remain of interest over time. The peak number of listenings coincided with the première, when as many as 18,000 listenings a week were registered. After this initial moment, the programme continued to be downloaded. In January and February 2020, over a year and a half after the première, there were more than 1,500 listenings per week. On a somewhat curious note, in the week of 4 to 11 November 2019, which coincided with the death of Palanca, one of the main protagonists, by natural causes, the number of listenings rose to nearly 5,000 a week. This is another example of the interest in these events.

### 3.2 The image perceived by the users: Instagram

To analyse the image that users had, we used the Instagram social media platform. Instagram provides a semi-automatic tool with which it is possible to localise images. Images and comments corresponding to 'Tor, Catalonia, Spain' were localised and downloaded. The first image found corresponded to 30 August 2013 and the last, in our survey, to 1 March 2020, with a total of 626 entries in all.

This initial information was manually processed to purge any potential errors. The automatic localisation tool on Instagram poses several problems of reliability; it is therefore advisable to carefully conduct a manual review any data obtained from it (Paül i Agustí, 2020). In our case, the main problem was the existence of another village with the same name. Their clear geographical differentiation: a hamlet high in the mountains, for our case study, and a village on the coast, for the other case, aided their identification. In the event of any doubt, the register was deleted.

Once we had purged all the posts that made no reference to the study area, we downloaded all the images posted by users, and also any comments that accompanied these images. This information was then analysed in a way that constituted a: 'careful, detailed, systematic

examination and interpretation of a particular body of material to identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings' (Berg 2007: 304). This type of analysis, which allows the identification of inter-related subjects and ideas from among those surveyed, has also been used to analyse dark tourism in previous studies (Powell & Kennell, 2015).

The comments were analysed to identify direct references to events linked to dark tourism. To ensure the reliability of the sample, and avoid subjectivity, two different coders reviewed all the comments.

Despite its strengths, Instagram also has some limitations (Paül i Agustí, 2021). The main one is that some of its profiles are private. This study must therefore be understood as an analysis of public Instagram profiles. Similarly, we must bear in mind the fact that the images posted by tourists are usually the result of prior selection. Tourists only share a few images from all the photographs that they take. This can have a significant influence on the types of image shown (Bauder, 2016).

Another limitation of Instagram is that it offers little user profile information. For this reason, we conducted a survey of users who had actually visited Tor. Each user was contacted once, irrespective of the number of images that they had posted. We did not, however, contact any profiles associated with private businesses (hotels, tour guide companies, vehicle rental companies, etc.) or public institutions (town councils and tourist boards).

The survey was sent by private messaging, with a link to a Google form. The survey, that has three versions with different languages (Catalan, Spanish and English) included thirteen questions which were organised into three blocks: 1) questions referring to the visit (date of the visit, who it was with, its length, the places visited, etc.); 2) the degree of knowledge of the crimes that had been committed in the area (information source, opinion); and 3) the poster's personal profile (age, town of origin).

A total of 399 users were contacted. They were then put into three groups according to the language used to contact them: Catalan (209), Spanish (106) and English (84). We received a total of 72 replies: 52 in Catalan, 16 in Spanish and 4 in English.

The results of the survey were then grouped into two types of tourist origin: local tourists, who resided within a 200-km radius of Tor (answers in Catalan and Spanish); and medium

and long-range tourists (answers in English). Due to their scant presence, the latter group was not used for further analysis.

Local tourists produced 68 replies, with a margin of error of 10.54% (confidence level of 95%). This was a sample that, although not representative, was in line with those obtained in other studies, such as one focusing on dark tourism sites in Bulgaria, about which 60 surveys were conducted (Mileva, 2018), and research into how tourists obtain information about Okunoshima Island (Usui, Wei & Funck, 2017).

The survey made it possible to clearly show that the main reason for Instagram users visiting Tor was touristic (What was your reason for visiting Tor?). None of those interviewed lived near Tor nor had friends or family there. What is more, the questionnaire provided information about the level of knowledge that those surveyed had about the crimes committed at Tor (Have you heard of the Tor crimes?) and how they had come to know about them (If you have heard of them, where was this). In this way, it was possible to correlate the Instagram images of those surveyed with those who had listened to the podcast.

## **4 Analysis of the results**

### **4.1 The perceived image of Tor on Instagram**

An analysis of Instagram enabled us to identify 627 posts related to the hamlet of Tor (Table 1). The first post analysed was dated 30 August 2013 and the last 1 March 2020. In the first few years, the use of Instagram was limited. Consequently, we only identified one post corresponding to 2013, whereas in the last year with complete information: 2019, there were 213. The majority of the posts were made in summer. In contrast, during the winter months, when Tor was rather inaccessible, visitor numbers fell (just 4.1% of the images were from January, February and March).

**Table 1. Posts identified**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Quarter 1	0	0	0	0	2	6	1	17
Quarter 2	0	2	3	13	17	34	39	-
Quarter 3	1	4	15	44	59	115	113	-
Quarter 4	0	1	5	19	17	40	60	-
Total	1	7	23	76	95	195	213	17

Source: Own elaboration

The majority of users: 459, only made one post about their visit to Tor, while 92 users posted between two and nine. One person made a total of 20 posts.

With regard to the accompanying text, we identified 95 posts (15%) making direct references to the events that occurred at Tor. However, since a given post can contain multiple comments, including those submitted by friends or followers, the total number of references to the events at Tor was higher. We identified 131 comments: 63 (48.1%) with a direct reference to the crimes, 60 referring to smuggling (45.8%), and 4 in which both subjects were mentioned (6.1%).

One aspect that pointed to the importance of the media in the dissemination of tourist information about Tor was the language of the comments. When we only analysed references to the crimes (67 cases), which was the element given most coverage by the Catalan media (we need only remember that the title of the podcast placed the emphasis on the three deaths that occurred there), we noted a higher volume of Catalan-speaking users (67.2%). The percentage of such comments in Spanish was 25.4%, while those in other languages was only 7.4%. In contrast, when we analysed messages that alluded to smuggling (64), the respective mentions were more evenly balanced: 44.3% in Catalan, 36% in Spanish, and 19.7% in other languages.

Generally speaking, the comments included single words and often hashtags (#rutacontrabandistas or #contrabandistas, in Catalan, Spanish or English). There were also some direct allusions to the crimes in phrases such as '*Tor, la muntanya maleïda*' and '*Un poble de controvèrsies*' [A hamlet of controversies], or more sporadically, via some hashtags, with little else and no clear pattern: lamuntanyamaleida (3) or tortretzecasesitresmorts, with several different wordings (3). In all, these mentions generally used the titles of the different media that had covered the subject. Considering texts describing publications with the same title, or with only some minor variations: *Tor, la muntanya maleïda*: the name of the documentary (11), and *Tor, tretze cases i tres morts* (10): the book and subsequent podcast by Carles Porta, the number of references to the coverage given by the media clearly rose. In one case, there was even a photo of one of the visitors to the public area showing him standing next to a sign showing the name of the hamlet and holding a copy of the book *Tor, tretze cases i tres morts*. This is a demonstration of how dissemination of the crimes in different media has had a strong impact on public knowledge of the area.

#### 4.2 Correlation between the podcast dissemination and the number of Instagram posts

We were able to observe a link between the image projected by the media and that perceived by potential tourists by comparing the dissemination of the Catalunya Ràdio podcast and the visits made to the site by Instagram users.

The relationship between the podcast and the visits were particularly illustrative when we analysed their evolution (Figure 1). We observed a positive statistical correlation (of 0.672) between the number of listeners and the citations of the event in different comments on Instagram (Table 2). This is a high correlation, and even more so if we consider that the correlation between the number of listeners and the Instagram messages in which no reference was made to the crime was scant (0.274). In all cases, this calculation produced a level of confidence of 95%, a margin of error of 5% and a significant correlation at 99.9% ( $p < 0.01$ ). This allowed us to establish a direct relationship between the dissemination of the event via the podcast programme and visits to the area publicised via Instagram. This is a demonstration of Tor's potential to attract a public that is potentially interested in dark tourism.

Table 2. Correlation matrix

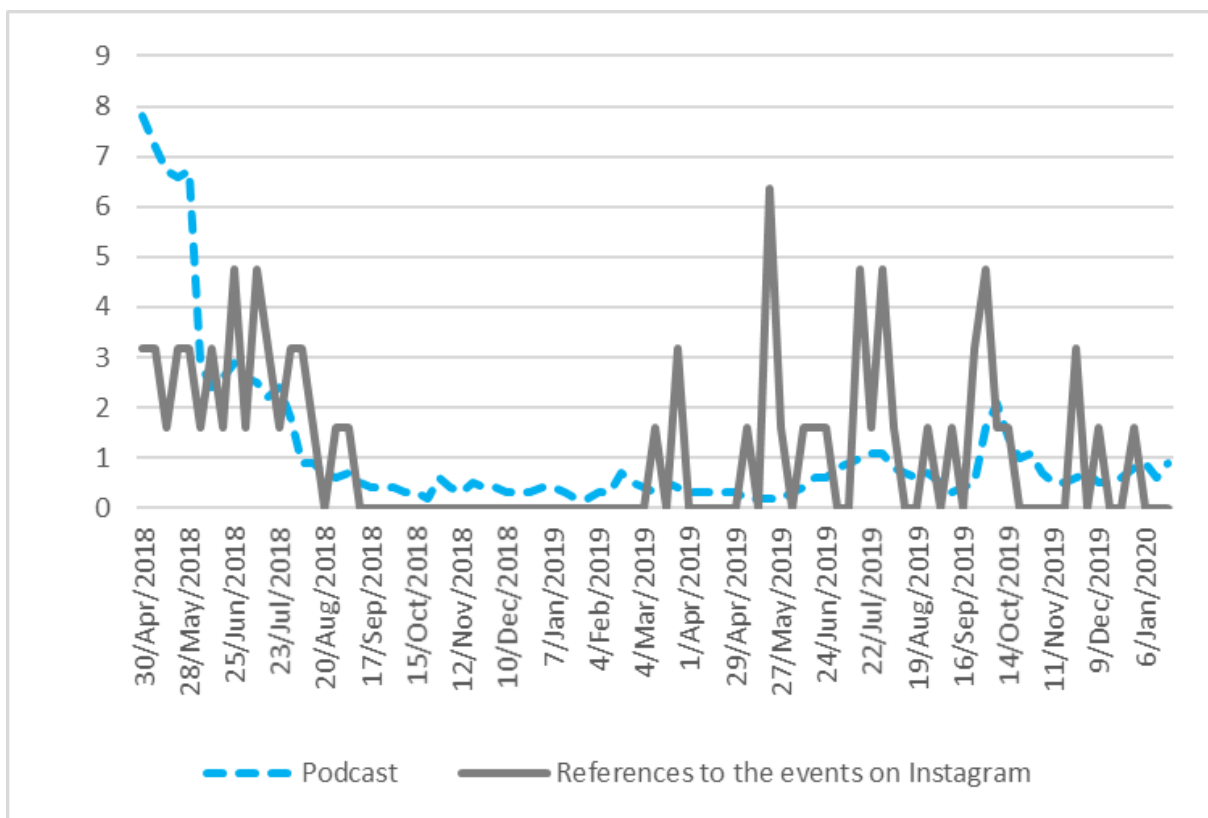
		Podcast listeners	Total messages on Instagram	Likes on Instagram	Citations of the book on Instagram	Citations of the protagonist on Instagram	References to the crimes on Instagram	Posts on Instagram without reference to the crimes
Podcast listeners	Pearson correlation	1	0.356**	0.115	0.417**	0.346**	0.468**	0.295**
	Sig. (bilateral)		0.000	0.266	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.003
Total messages on Instagram	Pearson correlation	0.356**	1	0.642**	0.585**	0.553**	0.681**	0.984**
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Likes on Instagram	Pearson correlation	0.115	0.642**	1	0.316**	0.276**	0.360**	0.651**
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.266	0.000		0.002	0.007	0.000	0.000
Citations of the book on Instagram	Pearson correlation	0.417**	0.585**	0.316**	1	0.322**	0.939**	0.444**
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.000	0.000	0.002		0.001	0.000	0.000
Citations of the protagonist on Instagram	Pearson correlation	0.346**	0.553**	0.276**	0.322**	1	0.627**	0.484**
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.001	0.000	0.007	0.001		0.000	0.000

References to the crimes on Instagram	Pearson correlation	0.468**	0.681**	0.360**	0.939**	0.627**	1	0.541**
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
Posts on Instagram without references to the crimes	Pearson correlation	0.274**	0.984**	0.651**	0.444**	0.484**	0.541**	1
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.003	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	

\*\* The correlation is significant at the level 0.01 (bilateral).

Source: Own elaboration

Figure 1. Comparison between the listeners to the podcast and references to the event on Instagram (%)



Source: Own elaboration



This correlation was reinforced by the content of the surveys. The hashtags showed that the surveys clearly signalled prior visitor knowledge of not only the crime of Tor, but also its media coverage. This coincided with the link that Lennon (2017) made between dark tourism and post-modernity. Society can access a mediatised image of events that occur in different places; in this case, these were the crimes committed in a small hamlet in the Pyrenees.

The survey showed that 60 tourists (89.6% of the replies obtained from the local public) knew of the events in the area prior to their visit. In the majority of these cases: 47 (78.3%), the tourists in question said that they had consumed one or more of the media items related to the facts: seen the television programme (63.3%), read the book (53.3%) or followed the podcast (30%). There were even 13 people (21.7%) who had consumed all three media items. Another significant piece of data that showed the knowledge that society had of these crimes was obtained from the fact that 41.7% of the tourists had discussed the crimes that occurred at Tor with friends or family.

### **4.3 The ability of dark tourism to attract tourists**

Based on the above information, we can state that the image associated with dark tourism can help to strengthen tourist flows in a given area. However, events commented on are not sufficient, in themselves, to attract tourists. This was shown by the results of the survey. In answer to the question: 'What was your reason for visiting Tor?', only 11 visitors (16.4%) answered that it was to know the place where the crimes of Tor had been committed.

The same information was extracted from the question, using a scale from 1 to 9: 'To what extent did you want to visit Tor in order to see the place where the crimes occurred?', with a score of 1 indicating no interest and of 9 indicating that this was the visitor's only interest in the area. The average score was 3.42, which was within the lower part of the range. Moreover, 32 tourists (47.8%) gave a score of 1. At the other extreme, there were 13 (19.4%) tourists who replied with values equal to, or greater than, 7, while 25 (37.3%) gave scores of 5 or more. These last two scores could be considered to correspond to members of the public who were really motivated by dark tourism in their visit to the area.

Given the limited tourism infrastructure in the area, this all seems to suggest that the crimes of Tor are now a cornerstone of the area's tourism image. The hamlet has no monumental or

cultural facilities open to the public, its main point of access is barely transitable at certain times of the year, and the local tourism infrastructure is limited to a single restaurant (Casa Sisqueta, which appears repeatedly in different formats that refer to the crime) which is only occasionally open. There is also only one source of accommodation: Tor experience (situated in the house where one of the dead bodies was found), which appears to have been closed since 2020. This probably also explains why 10 of those surveyed said that they had not slept in the area, or consumed anything, while another 21 said that they had eaten at other settlements in the local area, or in Andorra. However, it also highlights that 30 of those surveyed said that they had eaten at the local restaurant. In addition, whereas those who were surveyed who said they had little interest in the crimes as a reason for their visit mainly ate outside the hamlet, those who gave higher scores did eat at Casa Sisqueta. This finding was in line with a statement made by the author Carles Porta: 'Because of the book, thousands of people have been to Tor. Pili [the owner of Casa Sisqueta] can also vouch for this. She says that she used to serve 90 lunches all summer, but that since the publication of Porta's book, she now often serves 90 lunches per day' (Bäbler, 2017).

The data show that the majority of the tourists who visited Tor without any interest in the crimes did so as part of more extensive routes through the local area. The survey showed that, in general, these visitors spent several nights in the local area. Tor has also served as a destination for visits mainly motivated by questions linked to the area's natural or cultural heritage. In contrast, for those who associated their trips with visiting the scene of the crimes, Tor was the main reason for their visit and the durations of their visits were notably shorter. In fact, in 15 cases (22.4% of those surveyed) the visitor did not spend a night away from home and visiting Tor was the only reason for their excursion. This is an example of how the media dissemination of crimes can contribute to tourist mobility associated with dark tourism and, more specifically, with the events that occurred in places like Tor.

## 5 Conclusions

The relationship between dark tourism and media representations has been the subject of a number of analyses. However, the majority of them have focused on contents, leaving aside any attempt at quantification of the effects generated in terms of tourism (Light, 2017). In this context, this article contributes to quantify the extent to which media dissemination

helps to bring dark tourism to a particular destination and may also help improve our knowledge of the economic and social impact of dark tourism.

The data obtained show a clear correlation between the content projected by the media and the number of visitors attracted by an event related to dark tourism. This is something that was observed in the correlation obtained between the dissemination of information about the crimes and visitor numbers: 0.672. This work consequently allowed us to quantify the increase in the number of tourists visiting Tor motivated by dark tourism at between 19.4% and 37.3%. This value allows us to quantify the effects, in terms of new tourist arrivals, that the content projected by the media can have.

The data also shows the relation between the projected image by the media and the images perceived by tourism. Although only 15 % of the posts make direct references to the events related by the media, the total number of references to the events is higher if we consider also the comments of the photographs (131). These data are illustrative, if we take into account the fact that they all come from individual users. The accounts of media, companies and institutions have not been analysed. However, future studies will also need to look at the negative effects of the media; that is, tourists who do not visit an area because of the content projected by the media.

The article also shows how dark tourism can be analysed in rural areas. It therefore adds a new area of analysis to the repercussions of this type of tourism, which takes place away from the traditionally urban areas studied in the academic literature (Friedrich & Johnston, 2013). In this way, the inclusion of rural areas, which until now had received little analysis in the academic literature, has made it possible to reinforce a vision of dark tourism which distances itself from other types of tourism. These results have direct repercussions for some perceptions that have traditionally been associated with dark tourism. Dark tourism is not usually the only tourist attraction in an area (Galant, 2020). Studies like the one presented can help destination marketing organizations to identify how important dark tourism is for tourist visiting an area. They can also help to find complementarities with others existing attractions and provide some diversification. An aspect that recent studies had already shown (Light, 2017) and that this work has managed to quantify. The study also shows the importance that dark tourism can have in rural areas. A topic that is rarely addressed in the

academic literature (Anta Felez & Crespo Guerrero, 2018) but which can be of great importance for certain specific areas.

This research opens up potential future lines for research in quantifying the relationship between media and dark tourism. These results are based on tourist who resided within a 200-km radius of Tor, leaving international tourism aside. In light of the results obtained, there would appear to be a clear link between the sphere of influence of the media and the origin of the tourists interested in the subject. A quantification of this link would help to reinforce our knowledge of the relationship between the content broadcasted by the media and the number of visitors attracted in an area and improve our understanding of the dark tourism phenomenon.

The results also highlight the role of Instagram as an element that can help identify the number of visitors to a specific area. This is something that can help to better characterize the behaviour of tourists in a more agile way than more traditional methods.

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