

# Lobbying and mass media. Analysis of media coverage of lobbying in Spain

*Lobbying y medios de comunicación. Análisis de la cobertura periodística de los lobbies en España*

**Andrea Moreno Cabanillas**

University of Málaga. Spain.

[amorenoc@uma.es](mailto:amorenoc@uma.es)



**Antonio Castillo Esparcia**

University of Málaga. Spain.

[acastilloe@uma.es](mailto:acastilloe@uma.es)



**Elizabet Castellero Ostio**

University of Málaga. Spain.

[ecastillero@uma.es](mailto:ecastillero@uma.es)



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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Political communication is an area of maximum relevance in the construction of spaces for public discussion and is a basis for organisations in the direction of communication strategies and their techniques for an adequate interaction between organisations and their public (Almansa-Martínez and Fernández-Souto, 2020; Castillo-Esparcia et al., 2020). Lobbying is a form of communication that seeks to influence the decision-making

processes of public institutions on issues of interest to organisations (Castillo-Esparcia, 2011). **Methodology:** In this sense, the proposal aims to find out how lobbies are treated in the Spanish press. To this end, a quantitative methodology is carried out by means of a content analysis that will allow us to know the number of news items and the typology most included in the main generic Spanish newspapers such as ABC, El País, El Mundo, and two specialized newspapers such as Cinco Días and Expansión, in the last six years, from 2017-2022. **Results:** It can be established that it is the generalist newspapers that generate the most publications on lobbying. **Discussion:** Based on previous studies (Castillo-Esparcia et al., 2017), the presence of lobbies in the media continues to be evident and constant, as has been observed in the field study carried out. **Conclusions:** Lobbies use the media as a tool to exert indirect influence on public policy decisions, forcing policymakers to listen to the majority opinion of society.

**Keywords:** Public relations; Lobby; Interest group; Communication; Press; Media coverage; Spain.

## RESUMEN

**Introducción:** La comunicación política es un ámbito de máxima relevancia en la construcción de espacios de discusión pública y es un fundamento para las organizaciones en la dirección de estrategias de comunicación y sus técnicas para una adecuada interacción entre organizaciones y sus públicos (Almansa-Martínez y Fernández-Souto, 2020; Castillo-Esparcia et al., 2020). El *lobbying* es una forma de comunicación que busca influir en los procesos de toma de decisión de las instituciones públicas en aquellos temas de interés para las organizaciones. (Castillo-Esparcia, 2011). **Metodología:** En este sentido la propuesta persigue conocer cuál es el tratamiento de los *lobbies* en la prensa española. Para ello se lleva a cabo una metodología cuantitativa mediante un análisis de contenido que permitirá saber el número de noticias y la tipología más incluida en los principales diarios españoles genéricos como ABC, El País, El Mundo, y dos especializados como son Cinco Días y Expansión, en los últimos seis años, desde 2017-2022. **Resultados:** Se puede establecer que son los periódicos generalistas quienes más publicaciones generan sobre *lobbies*. **Discusión:** Atendiendo a estudios anteriores (Castillo-Esparcia et al., 2017), la presencia de los *lobbies* en los medios de comunicación sigue siendo evidente y constante como se ha podido observar en el estudio de campo realizado. **Conclusiones:** se observa que los grupos de presión utilizan los medios de comunicación como herramienta transmisora de presión hacia los gobernantes para ejercer influencia indirecta sobre las decisiones de política pública, obligando a los responsables políticos a escuchar la opinión mayoritaria de la sociedad.

**Palabras clave:** Relaciones públicas; *Lobby*; Grupos de interés; Comunicación; Prensa; Cobertura mediática; España.

## 1. Introduction

The communicative management of the public is fundamental in organizations as they are responsible for designing, coordinating, and implementing communication strategies and techniques to achieve appropriate interaction between the organization and its public (Almansa-Martínez & Fernández-Souto, 2020; Castillo-Esparcia et al., 2020). Its scope covers the entire organization and helps achieve institutional objectives. Currently, one of the most important areas is the relationship with public authorities, which is manifested through lobbying, a communication strategy that seeks to influence and participate in the planning, discussion, and implementation of public policies. Several authors emphasize the role of interest groups in shaping public opinion and their influence on political decisions (Castillo-Esparcia, 2011; Beyers et al., 2018; Binderkrantz & Pedersen, 2019).

Lobbying is one of the professions gaining increasing relevance in political communication, particularly in a context where public authorities have increased their presence in the regulation of social dynamics (Dür et al., 2015; Chari & Hillebrand, 2011; Flöthe, 2019a; Bressanelli et al., 2020; Junk, 2020). In crisis situations, public authorities must participate directly in managing solutions by making decisions that affect social, economic, political, and communicative relationships.

Lobbying plays a crucial role in modern society by connecting citizens with the state and serving as a channel to convey citizens' demands that should be subject to political decision-making. In fact, public institutions themselves require the existence of lobbying to properly channel social demands. Likewise, the state also needs social interlocutors to obtain information that enables it to make precise and necessary decisions in line with the current reality (Austen-Smith, 1993; Hall & Deardorff, 2006; Wratil, 2019; Dinan, 2021). It is a symbiotic relationship in which both associations and public authorities need each other to make decisions that are as closely aligned as possible with the problems at hand. Through this collaboration, the solutions adopted will have the necessary information to be effective and will have social support through the participation of directly affected interest groups.

Communication and lobbying are closely related as they employ various communication techniques to influence decision-making processes in public institutions (Chalmers & Macedo, 2020; Crepez & Hanegraaff, 2020; Flöthe, 2019b). In this sense, lobbying aims to establish a constant dialogue and interaction with public institutions in order to influence the definition and implementation of public policies on issues of interest to the organizations they represent. It allows them to present their arguments and viewpoints in a clear and persuasive manner. It also enables them to establish and maintain lasting and effective relationships with decision-makers. In this context, the use of effective communication techniques is crucial to achieving the goals pursued by interest groups, which include engaging in lobbying activities and developing public and government relations (Heath, 2016; De Bruycker, 2019; Gallagher et al., 2017; Holdo et al., 2019).

Heath (2016) emphasizes the importance of building relationships with decision-makers and using specific messages and framing techniques to appeal to their interests. In this regard, communication is an essential element of lobbying strategy (De Bruycker & Beyers, 2019; Schnakenberg, 2017; Stevens & De Bruycker, 2020).

Thurber (2010) has extensively written about the role of interest groups in the policy-making process and highlights the importance of public relations and lobbying strategies in shaping public opinion and influencing political decisions.

Therefore, the importance of effective communication strategies and ethical conduct in the efforts of interest groups is emphasized, as well as the need for public institutions to be open to diverse voices and interests (Mergeai & Gilain, 2020; Rasmussen et al., 2018; Mykkänen & Ikonen, 2019).

It is worth noting that, although lobbying is legal in many countries, it has also been subject to criticism for its potential undue influence on the decision-making process (Aguilar-Juncosa, 2021). In fact, authors like Buchanan and Tullock (1962), as representatives of the neo-institutionalists, pointed to their role as rent-seekers who tend to present their interests and services as public goods, thereby seeking to obtain funding from the public budget. Therefore, it is important for lobbies to act with transparency, responsibility, and ethics in all their activities, and for public institutions to maintain an appropriate balance between the interests of lobbies and the broader interests of society, being open to diverse voices and interests (Hamilton and Hoch, 1997; Nassar, 2007; Alonso, 2016).

It is essential for every lobbyist to understand how to engage with public authorities because establishing effective communication is crucial in influencing those who will make relevant decisions (Almirón & Xifra, 2016; Chalmers, 2013; Dempsey, 2009; Raknes & Ihlen, 2020; Weiler & Reibmann, 2019). To achieve this, it is necessary to develop various lobbying strategies, which are commonly categorized as direct/inside lobbying or indirect/outside lobbying (Walker, 1991; Kollman, 1998). Moreover, these dynamics are increasingly being transferred to the digital ecosystem as a space for political discussion (Campbell et al., 2019; Hobbs et al., 2020; Vallance et al., 2020).

In this regard, lobbying strategies can be structured into the following modes of operation:

- a) Direct Lobbying. Direct lobbying is carried out directly with public authorities, without resorting to public opinion or political parties. It is based on direct participation in public decision-making processes. Some commonly used techniques include:
- Interviews with government officials.
  - Submission of documentation to government officials.
  - Interviews with parliamentarians.
  - Submission of documentation to parliamentarians.
  - Participation in legislative committees.
  - Participation in government committees.
  - Interviews with executive members.
  - Submission of documentation to executive members.
  - Meetings with political parties.
- b) Indirect Lobbying or Grassroots Mobilization. Although it also targets public decision-makers as the ultimate recipients, its goal is to create a favorable public opinion for the interests being defended by influencing other interest groups such as the media or the general population. In this aspect, communication dynamics can be organized both offline and online (Aron, 2020). The aim is to reinforce the lobbying group's position with public authorities. Some commonly used techniques include:
- Press conferences.
  - Press releases.
  - Media interviews for the organization.
  - Media coverage and features.
  - Use of social media.
  - Mobilization for participation on social media.
  - Mobilization for participation in protests or strikes.
  - Mobilization for sending letters to the media.
  - Mobilization for sending letters to political parties.
  - Mobilization for sending letters to governments.
  - Mobilization for sending letters to government officials.

The tactics not only involve political actors such as institutions, citizens, or interest groups but also encompass the media as key players in the political decision-making framework. According to Borrat (1989), the media not only act as information mediators but can also be considered interest groups and pressure groups. These media outlets tend to support news that aligns with their ideology and rejects those that do not align with their interests. It is important to consider that the media are political actors with their own objectives and are willing to take risks to achieve them. In their efforts to influence power, they may try to persuade decision-makers to take actions that favor their economic interests. In this sense, the media gather, interpret, evaluate, and transmit information from social associations as an expression of societal needs. Similarly, through the information system and other mechanisms, the political system perceives society's requests that are susceptible to being addressed.

"various authors have highlighted the role played by the press within the elite framework and how it influences the conceptualization of social issues through journalistic approaches."

The use of the media allows groups to publicly reflect their demands, thereby creating political existence. Politics is increasingly being manifested as a symbolic struggle in which each association seeks to monopolize and promote its worldview and advance new claims and initiatives that contribute to the achievement of the interest group's objectives.

Lobbying groups rely on the intermediation of the media to convey widespread social support for their demands and claims through a "good and frequent" presence in these media outlets (Castillo-Esparcia, 2011). The relationship between the media and lobbying can be complex and often influenced by factors such as transparency, ethics, and commercial interests.

Analyzing the media exposure to lobbying strategies is crucial for understanding how they influence political and social elites (Farnel, 1994). The presence of lobbies in the media ecosystem is essential because the media is a fundamental element in lobbying actions. Although social media has increased associations' ability to produce communication, mass media outlets remain the primary source of information for political, social, and economic elites. This has been demonstrated in various studies highlighting the centrality of mainstream media (Casero-Ripollés, 2015).

Analyzing which lobbies have access to which media outlets allow us to quantify the number of lobbies with media presence, understand the types of interests they defend, whether they are material or moral, examine their communication campaigns, and identify the media outlets most exposed to these pressure groups. Therefore, understanding the typology of lobbies that have greater access to the media is one of the proposed objectives. This will help us understand how these groups influence elites and to what extent. Studies by Harris and McGrath (2012), Klüver (2012), and Baldi (1990) have addressed this issue.

By knowing which lobbies have access to which media outlets, we can quantify the number of lobbies with media presence, understand the interests they defend (whether material or moral), identify the communication campaigns they employ and determine the media outlets most susceptible to their pressures.

## **2. Objectives**

The present study follows the typical structure of a research investigation, which includes determining the research topic, conducting a theoretical review to support the study, defining objectives and the methodology to achieve them, interpreting and explaining the obtained results, and discussing the conclusions.

The main objective of this research, which delves into the role and perception of lobbies, is to understand the media treatment of pressure groups in leading Spanish newspapers. To achieve this, the following specific objectives have been proposed to guide the research:

- SO1. Determine the level of presence of lobbies in the leading Spanish newspapers.
- SO2. Identify the typologies of lobbies that have greater media presence and in which newspapers.
- SO3. Study the degree of media exposure to lobbying communication actions.
- SO4. Examine if there are differences in the treatment of lobbies by newspapers over the years.

By achieving these objectives, the aim is to gain a better understanding of how lobbies influence the Spanish press and how they impact the public perception of different issues.

### 3. Methodology

To analyze the treatment of lobbies in the Spanish press, a mixed (quantitative-qualitative) approach has been used from an analytical-descriptive perspective, employing content analysis as the technique. In order to delimit the sample, national newspapers considered as reference sources have been selected, as they are one of the main sources of information used by social, political, and economic elites in our country. Regarding the study of lobbies, various authors (Wilson, 1983; Micó and Casero-Ripollés, 2014; Harris and McGrath, 2012) have highlighted the role played by the press within the elite framework and how it influences the conceptualization of social issues through journalistic approaches. Therefore, the chosen sample consists of nationally recognized newspapers, both general and specialized in economic information, in their digital versions: El País, ABC, and El Mundo as general newspapers, and Expansión and Cinco Días as specialized newspapers.

For the collection of this journalistic material, searches were conducted using digital tools such as Mynews, a digital press archive, and the archives of the newspapers themselves. The search terms used were "lobby" and "lobbies," resulting in an initial sample of 2,231 news texts. The sampling was intentional, based on the ranking of national media in Spain and the time period of the last five years. After a screening process that eliminated duplicate texts and others that did not correspond to the topic upon reading, a total sample of 2,170 pieces of information was collected, including news articles, reports, interviews, and opinion pieces published between January 2017 and December 2022.

Furthermore, the use of an analysis form was employed to facilitate data collection and categorization of the variables desired based on the variables and categories investigated in previous studies (Castillo-Esparcia, et al., 2017):

**Table 1.** Analysis Form Title.

Identification Data of the Newspapers	
<b>Newspaper Name:</b> <b>Newspaper Typology:</b> General or specialized information. <b>Year studied:</b>	
Lobbying analysis	
Variables	Categories
Date of publication of the information: Name of the lobby:	
<b>Type/theme addressed by the lobby:</b>	Employers/Industry Associations Public Institutions Companies Pro-Tobacco Anti-Tobacco Pro-Abortion Anti-Abortion Latinos Jews Moroccans Pro-Guns Church Women Trade Unions Banking Electric Utilities Environmentalists Brewery Companies Sports

	Consumers Intellectual Property Farmers/Fishermen Social Issues Anti-Bullfighting Pro-Bullfighting Professional Association Healthcare Employers/Associations Hunters Homosexual/LGTBI+ Pro-Legalization of Marijuana Other Lobbies
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**Source:** Author's own work.

#### 4. Results

The study results show that lobbies have a constant and recurrent presence in the reference media in Spain. These organizations, also known as interest groups or pressure groups, are increasingly present in newspapers, which allows for mapping and identifying which ones are most communicatively active, in which social issues or problems they are involved, or which typology has a greater presence in different media outlets due to the relevance of the topic or political, social, or economic interests.

After collecting and analyzing all the media sources between January 2017 and December 2022, lobby groups maintain a consistently high presence with a total of 2,257 pieces related to lobbies (see Table 2). This indicates the effective strategic planning of public relations carried out by these organizations through lobbying activities directed towards the media, aiming to ensure that their interests reach policy-makers and influence public opinion that can help achieve their objectives. It is worth noting that the results not only include references to specific lobbies but also encompass a considerable number of news articles related to the concept of lobbying, the profession of lobbyists, the registration of interest groups, and legislative regulation regarding lobbying.

During the six-year period analyzed, the newspaper El País devoted the most space to lobby-related content with 30.35% (n=685), followed by ABC with 24.37% (n=550), and El Mundo in third place with 23.70% (n=535). In this case, the specialized press Cinco Días and Expansión showed lower percentages of publications related to lobbies, accounting for 12.94% (n=292) and 8.64% (n=195) respectively.

If we break down the data by year and media outlets, it can be observed that El País is not consistently the newspaper with the highest presence of lobbies. In the years 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2022, it had the highest contributions with 42.13% (n=158), 32.88% (n=122), 26.91% (n=123), and 35.66% (n=153) respectively, of the total sample. In the years 2020 and 2021, it is El Mundo generated the most content related to interest groups with 32.46% (n=87) and 29.41% (n=105) respectively, of the total sample.

On the other hand, Expansión generally has the lowest number of contributions among the studied years, consistently below 10%. However, in the last two years, its percentage of publications on lobbies has notably increased, while Cinco Días generated the least content with 8.96% (n=32) and 5.13% (n=22) respectively, significantly decreasing its percentage of news about lobbies in the last two years. It is worth noting the year 2020, the year of the global pandemic declaration, in which El País had a significant drop in the number of news articles about interest groups, equalizing its percentage with Expansión, making them the two newspapers with the lowest number of contributions compared to the total.



**Table 2.** Distribution of publications on lobbies in Spanish newspapers.

	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2017-2022	
<i>El País</i>	158	42,13%	122	32,88%	123	26,91%	26	9,70%	103	28,85%	153	35,66%	685	30,35%
<i>ABC</i>	87	23,20%	101	27,22%	116	25,38%	67	25,00%	70	19,61%	109	25,41%	550	24,37%
<i>El Mundo</i>	59	15,73%	76	20,49%	112	24,51%	87	32,46%	105	29,41%	96	22,38%	535	23,70%
<i>Cinco Días</i>	51	13,60%	54	14,56%	71	15,54%	62	23,13%	32	8,96%	22	5,13%	292	12,94%
<i>Expansión</i>	20	5,33%	18	4,85%	35	7,66%	26	9,70%	74	13,17%	49	11,42%	195	8,64%
TOTAL	375	100%	371	100%	457	100%	268	100%	357	100%	429	100%	2257	100%

**Source:** Author's own work.

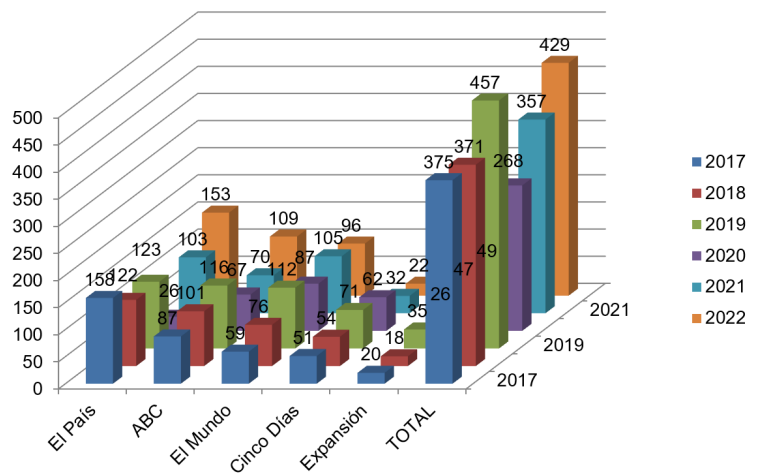
Considering the news articles appeared in the analyzed Spanish press by year, as shown in Graph 1, it can be observed that 2019 has been the year with the highest production on lobbies with 20.25% (n=457), followed by the most recent year with 19.01% (n=429). In third place is 2017 with 16.61% (n=375), followed closely by 2018 with 16.44% (n=371). The year 2021 occupies the fifth position with 15.82% (n=357) of the total news articles about interest groups, and lastly, the year of the pandemic, 2020, in which only 11.87% (n=268) of the total news articles from the last six years were published. However, this decrease in contributions in the press mainly occurred during the months of confinement of the Spanish population due to the COVID-19 state of emergency.

Except for 2020 as an exceptional year, it can be observed that while the generalist newspapers *El País* and *ABC* have maintained a similar percentage throughout the years, *El Mundo* has had a general increase in content about interest groups from the first year analyzed to the present. On the other hand, regarding the specialized newspapers, *Expansión* has experienced considerable growth over the years, while *Cinco Días*, which had a higher number of publications, has reduced its percentage in 2021 and 2022.

Regarding the typologies of lobbies (see Figure 2) that have the most presence in the Spanish press from 2017 to 2022, it can be observed that the highest percentage, much higher than the others, belongs to the category of "patronal" (employers' organizations) with 36% (n=809) of news related to groups of companies that join forces to communicate the interests of a specific sector to policymakers. In this category, the tourism employers' organization "Excetur" stands out, appearing in the news mainly during the summer periods and providing reports and information on tourism-related issues and problems in Spain. The Circle of Economy also stands out in various news related to the events organized by this employers' organization that brings together a large number of entrepreneurs.

In second place are public institutions with 9% (n=194) of the total, where news about lobbying by international institutions or related to the Catalonia region and its independence process can be found. The third position is occupied by companies with 8% (n=181), mainly including large technology companies whose capacity to lobby

**Figure 1:** Distribution of publications on lobbies in Spanish newspapers according to the year of publication.



**Source:** Author's own work.



on their own allows them to do so without joining employers' organizations, such as Google, Amazon, Apple, Meta, among others. The category "proarmas" (pro-gun) accounts for 6% (n=146), with a notable presence of the National Rifle Association (NRA) in many news articles. The category "otros lobbies" (other lobbies) also accounts for 6% (n=140), referring to diverse lobby groups, among which the Alicante-based think tank INECA stands out.

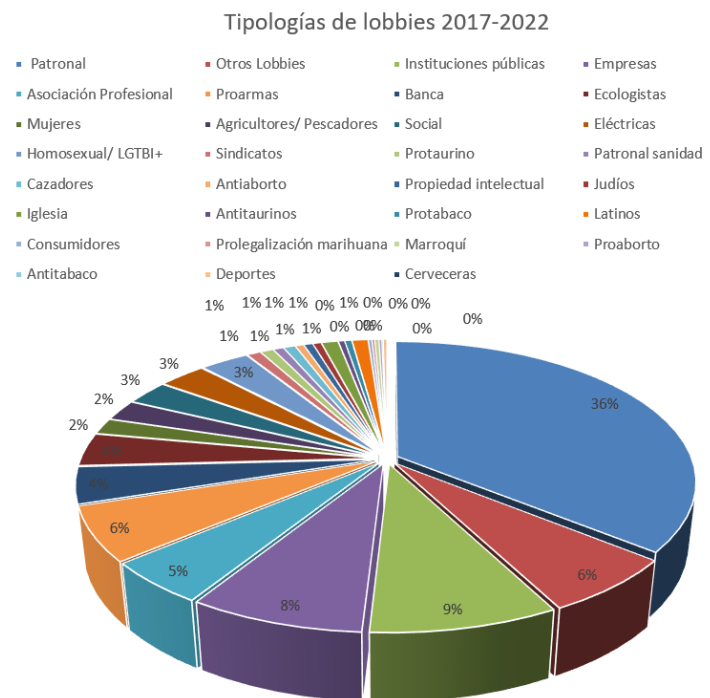
The next group with the highest number of related news articles is professional associations with 5% (n=110), with emphasis on the Valencian Association of Entrepreneurs (AVE). Lobbying groups related to banking and financial topics appear in 4% (n=94) of newspaper contributions, as well as environmental and animal rights lobbies (n=85). The following lobbying groups with a notable presence in the press are "homosexual/LGBTI+" (n=71), electric companies (n=69), and social issues (n=63), all with 3%. The remaining categories are represented between 2%, 1%, and 0%.

Focusing on the typology and selected media outlets (see Table 3), it is evident that *El País* has the highest number of contributions on lobbying, particularly regarding business associations (n=229), which is the most addressed category across all newspapers. In this regard, *Cinco Días* (n=173) also stands out for having a similar number of publications as the generalist newspapers. On the other hand, the category of public institutions has a stronger presence in *ABC* (n=66) and *El Mundo* (n=62) compared to *El País* (n=52). It is worth noting that in 2022, due to the "Texas shooting," the "progun" lobby has a higher presence in Spanish newspapers, except for *El Mundo*, which has a lower number of publications on this topic. It is also interesting to highlight that *El País* has twice as many publications (n=32) on social issues compared to the other two generalist newspapers.

On the other hand, the lobby of breweries has no journalistic contributions in which it appears. Their appearances are sporadic and usually reflect events or press releases defending their interests, such as pro-bullfighting or anti-bullfighting, anti-tobacco, and lobbying groups related to social issues and collectives: pro-abortion, pro-legalization of marijuana, consumerism, and sports. Finally, it is observed that, unlike generalist outlets, specialized newspapers in economics do not cover topics such as pro-gun, women's issues, social issues, farmers/fishermen, LGTBI+, or the church.

In the following table, you can see the publications by typology and newspaper, along with the total number of publications, ordered from highest to lowest, on those lobbies during the six analyzed years.

Figure 2: Distribution of publications about lobbies in Spanish newspapers according to their typology.



Source: Author's own work.

**Table 3.** Distribution of lobbying publications in the Spanish press by newspaper and lobby typology.

	<i>El País</i>	<i>ABC</i>	<i>El Mundo</i>	<i>Cinco Días</i>	<i>Expansión</i>	TOTAL
<b>Employers' Organizations</b>	229	147	189	173	71	809
<b>Public Institutions</b>	52	66	62	6	8	194
<b>Companies</b>	53	27	45	26	30	181
<b>Other Lobbies</b>	49	47	33	11	6	146
<b>Pro-gun</b>	53	56	27	0	4	140
<b>Professional Associations</b>	25	37	30	8	10	110
<b>Banking</b>	16	13	7	29	29	94
<b>Environmentalists</b>	24	29	14	11	7	85
<b>Homosexual/LGTBI+</b>	32	17	19	1	2	71
<b>Electric Companies</b>	9	15	19	10	16	69
<b>Social</b>	32	12	17	1	1	63
<b>Farmers/Fishermen</b>	14	19	18	0	3	54
<b>Women</b>	17	10	13	0	1	41
<b>Church</b>	13	7	3	0	1	24
<b>Latinos</b>	10	7	6	0	0	23
<b>Trade Unions</b>	7	5	4	4	0	20
<b>Pro-Bullfighting</b>	4	7	7	0	1	19
<b>Hunters</b>	6	6	4	1	0	17
<b>Healthcare Employers' Organizations</b>	7	1	1	6	0	15
<b>Intellectual Property</b>	5	3	4	0	1	13
<b>Anti-Abortion</b>	7	1	4	0	0	12
<b>Jewish</b>	5	6	1	0	0	12
<b>Pro-Tobacco</b>	3	1	3	2	1	10
<b>Anti-Bullfighting</b>	2	4	3	0	0	9
<b>Moroccan</b>	0	4	2	0	0	6
<b>Consumers</b>	2	0	0	2	1	5
<b>Sports</b>	4	0	0	0	1	5
<b>Pro-Marijuana Legalization</b>	3	0	0	1	0	4
<b>Pro-Abortion</b>	0	3	0	0	1	4
<b>Anti-Tobacco</b>	2	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Breweries</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	685	550	535	292	195	2257

Source: Author's own work.

## 5. Conclusions

The involvement of interest groups in the process of formulating, debating, and implementing public policies acknowledges their role as political actors, as they seek to engage in issues that directly affect them. These actions benefit both the lobbying groups and the established power, as they allow policymakers to understand the needs

of the organizations that make up society at any given time. The lobbying's capacity for influence depends on factors such as the ability to mobilize public opinion, financial resources, access to public authorities, alignment with social values, having a good social image, and occupying a strategic position in society or the economy (Almansa-Martínez et al., 2021). The latter two can be achieved through a strong and recurring presence in the media.

As Wilson (1983) pointed out, the typology of lobbies influences their communication strategies, as confirmed in this research, which shows a predominant presence of business lobbies in the content of the analyzed newspapers (Chalmers, 2013; Dür et al., 2015).

According to previous studies (Castillo-Esparcia et al., 2017), the presence of lobbies in the media remains evident and consistent, as observed in the conducted field study, which analyzed a total of 2,257 news articles over a six-year period from 2017 to 2022. It is noticeable that the term "lobby" is increasingly common in the media, not only to refer to a specific type but also to provide information about the concept, the profession explained by members of the Association of Professionals of Institutional Relations, and even its regulation.

There are a variety of topics and social issues in which lobbies are involved, as well as a different typology depending on the analyzed media.

Lobbies are a topic of interest and relevance for the analyzed Spanish press, especially for generalist media, which show a greater interest and sensitivity in reporting on lobbying activity in Spain compared to specialized media in the economic field. *El País* is the newspaper with the highest number of news articles about lobbies, closely followed by *El Mundo* and *ABC*. However, the difference between them is minimal, indicating a similar presence of information about lobbies.

The presence of lobbies in the media is influenced by contextual and conjunctural factors such as the global pandemic or political elections. The most active year in terms of the appearance of these groups in the media was 2019, while the year 2020, especially during the home confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, recorded a lower number of appearances. The most notable difference was found in the newspaper *El País*. However, after this period, an increase in demands from groups and their exposure in the media has been observed, with the exception of the newspaper *Cinco Días*, which has decreased its contributions on lobbies in the last two years.

There is diversity and heterogeneity of topics and sectors related to lobbies depending on the analyzed media and year. The media have different criteria and priorities when reporting on lobbies, based on their editorial profile and target audience. Patronal lobbies, public institutions, and businesses are the most predominant and recognized in the Spanish lobbying landscape, as they have the highest presence in the five analyzed newspapers during the years 2017-2022, followed by the pro-arms lobby, the National Rifle Association. In the analysis of their presence, it is observed that economic interests have a constant activity and focus on business associations through employers' associations or through the companies themselves, surpassing lobbies that defend immaterial or social interests.

Social, political, and economic aspects shape the media agenda, and in this case, the news about related interest groups. Thus, situations such as the Catalan independence process, the global pandemic, or the issue of gun use in the United States, among others, generate a greater amount of lobby-related news.

Lobbying is an activity that exhibits a great deal of diversity and heterogeneity, as it encompasses different topics and sectors that affect various interests and groups. However, it also demonstrates significant inequality and asymmetry, as certain typologies and issues have a greater presence and recognition than others. This activity is influenced by historical and geographical context, as some topics and sectors gain more prominence or relevance depending on the time or location. Additionally, it is also influenced by the editorial profile and

"On the other hand, the lobby of breweries has no journalistic contributions in which it appears"

target audience of the media, as certain topics and sectors receive more attention or priority based on the type of media outlet.

Lobbies are significant actors in the political, social, and economic sphere of Spain, and the media plays a crucial role in disseminating and legitimizing lobby interests. It is evident that lobbies frequently employ strategic public relations planning. Lobbying is fundamentally an act of building relationships with the public that an organization interacts with. Therefore, in addition to directly exerting pressure on public officials, lobbies employ communication strategies directed at the general public through media coverage provided by media outlets. By utilizing these channels as tools to transmit pressure towards decision-makers, interest groups exert indirect influence over public policy decisions, compelling policymakers to listen to the majority opinion of society, as pointed out by Xifra (2000) and Castillo-Esparcia (2020). Thus, it can be affirmed that lobbies are connected to current and publicly interesting topics that may vary depending on the time and place.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS, FUNDING, AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Contributions of the authors:

**Conceptualization:** Moreno Cabanillas, Andrea, Castillo Esparcia, Antonio and Castellero Ostio, Elizabet. **Validation:** Moreno Cabanillas, Andrea, Castillo Esparcia, Antonio and Castellero Ostio, Elizabet. **Formal analysis:** Moreno Cabanillas, Andrea, Castillo Esparcia, Antonio and Castellero Ostio, Elizabet. **Data curation:** Moreno Cabanillas, Andrea, Castillo Esparcia, Antonio and Castellero Ostio, Elizabet. **Writing-Preparation of the original draft:** Moreno Cabanillas, Andrea, Castillo Esparcia, Antonio and Castellero Ostio, Elizabet. **Writing-Revision and Editing:** Moreno Cabanillas, Andrea, Castillo Esparcia, Antonio and Castellero Ostio, Elizabet. **Visualization:** Moreno Cabanillas, Andrea, Castillo Esparcia, Antonio and Castellero Ostio, Elizabet. **Project management:** Moreno Cabanillas, Andrea, Castillo Esparcia, Antonio and Castellero Ostio, Elizabet. **All the authors have read and accepted the published version of the manuscript:** Moreno Cabanillas, Andrea, Castillo Esparcia, Antonio and Castellero Ostio, Elizabet.

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## AUTHORS:

### **Andrea Moreno Cabanillas**

University of Malaga. Spain.

Research trainee in the Department of Advertising and Audiovisual Communication at the University of Málaga, contracted research trainee (FPU 2019). Ph.D. candidate in the Interuniversity Doctoral Program in Communication at the Universities of Cádiz, Huelva, Málaga, and Seville, specializing in Advertising and Public Relations. Graduated in Advertising and Public Relations from the University of Málaga and holds a Master's degree in Teacher Training for Secondary Education and Vocational Training from the University of Murcia. Research focused on interest groups, lobbying in the European Union, with a funded research stay at the University of São Paulo (Brazil) and RMIT University (Australia).

[amorenoc@uma.es](mailto:amorenoc@uma.es)

**H-index:** 1

**Orcid ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1169-1607>

**Google Scholar:** <https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=sz766msAAAAJ&hl=es&oi=ao>

**ResearchGate:** <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Andrea-Moreno-Cabanillas>

**Academia.edu:** <https://concepta-net.academia.edu/AndreaMorenoCabanillas>

### **Antonio Castillo Esparcia**

University of Malaga. Spain.

Professor at the University of Málaga. Bachelor's and Ph.D. degrees in Communication from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). Director of the Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising at the University of Málaga. Coordinator of the Master's program in Strategic Management and Innovation in Communication. Director of the Research Group "Public Relations in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises." President of the Association of Researchers in Public Relations (AIRP). Author of over 170 publications including articles in journals, books, and book chapters published by national and international publishers. Additionally, he serves as an evaluator for ANECA (National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain), Agencia per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya (AQU), the Basque University System Quality Agency (UNIBASQ), and the State Research Agency.

[acastilloe@uma.es](mailto:acastilloe@uma.es)

**H-index:** 29

**Orcid ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9751-8628>

**Scopus ID:** <https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=55618587500>

**Google Scholar:** <https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=b541fg8AAAAJ&hl=es>

**ResearchGate:** <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Antonio-Castillo-Esparcia>

**Academia.edu:** <https://independent.academia.edu/AntonioCastilloEsparcia>

### **Elizabet Castellero Ostio**

University of Malaga. Spain.

Ph.D. in Communication Sciences from the University of Málaga, Bachelor's degree in Advertising and Public Relations, and Master's degree in Strategic Management and Innovation in Communication. Professor and researcher at the Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising at the Faculty of Communication Sciences (UMA). Currently, she is involved in the following competitive research projects: "Observatory of Communication Offices in Andalusia," "Lobbying and Communication in the European Union: Analysis of Communication Strategies," and "Communication and Interest Groups in Andalusia: Communication Strategies for Citizen Participation in Inclusive Societies." Her main current research focuses on Public Relations and Political and Institutional Communication.

[ecastillero@uma.es](mailto:ecastillero@uma.es)

**H-index:** 5

**Orcid ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0546-7262>

**ScopusID:** <http://www.scopus.com/inward/authorDetails.url?authorID=57190065360&partnerID=MN8TOARS>

**Google Scholar:** <https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=iSBFgbEAAAAJ&hl=es>

**ResearchGate:** <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Elizabet-Castillero-Ostio>

**Academia.edu:** <https://independent.academia.edu/CastilleroOstios>