

LEXICAL CHOICES OF THE CONTEMPORARY FRENCH PRESS AND THE REPRESENTATION OF MONTENEGRO: A LEXICOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF JOURNALISTIC DISCOURSE

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Abstract. The aim of this paper is to analyze how the contemporary French press used language to present Montenegro, through a corpus-based study of articles from five notable journals (*Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *Le Point*, *L'Obs*, *L'Express*), published over a period of fifteen years, from 2006 to 2021. Lexicometric analysis performed with open source software *IRaMuTeQ* enabled us to determine the structure of the vocabulary, as well as the salient themes and “lexical worlds” shaped by the French media about Montenegro, since the restoration of its independence in 2006. Fifteen years of reporting revealed three main centers of interest: politics, tourism and sports. The study also revealed how the most common toponyms in the corpus are characterized, how adjectives participate in the intensification of media content and what specificities distinguish the five analyzed journals, regarding the treatment of particular topics and over-use or under-use of some lexical units.

Keywords: French press, representation of Montenegro, lexicometric analysis, toponyms, metaphors, intensifying adjectives.

1. INTRODUCTION

The media have a significant role in creating images and perceptions of various social, economic, political and cultural processes in modern society. They represent the first filter through which information passes and because of their ubiquity, they inevitably participate in shaping values, identities and attitudes toward the world around us. In the context of examining journalistic discourse from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (hereinafter CDA), Richardson (2007: 12) states that “language use should be regarded as an activity or as a *social action*”. Hence, CDA is interested in “linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures” (Titscher et al. 2000 in Richardson 2007: 26). The way the media use language also has the power to influence how entire countries are portrayed to readers.

According to Richardson (2004: 64), journalistic discourse is best approached as an argumentative discourse genre. Chaudeau (2006) affirms that it slides into a persuasive one

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and asserts that the discourse of the journalist enunciator “goes from an aim to “let people know” to an aim to “make people think”². Kieran (1998: 27, in Richardson 2004: 64) also points out that “a journalist’s news report should aim to persuade the audience that his or her description and interpretation is the rational and appropriate one”. In order to persuade readers of their point of view, journalists use different *rhetorical strategies* (Thomson 1996) and *predicational strategies* (Reisigl, Wodak 2001) which shall be examined in the following lines.

The aim of this paper is to conduct a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the French media discourse on Montenegro. Our corpus consists of online articles from five journals (*Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *Le Point*, *L’Obs*, *L’Express*), published in the period of fifteen years, between January 1st 2006 and January 1st 2021. Our intention is to discover “recurring themes” (Condamines 2005) and “lexical worlds” (Reinert 1993) mobilized by the French media, in order to seize the way they shape representation of Montenegro in recent history, more precisely, since the regain of its independence, through the 2006 referendum.

In accordance with the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis – CDA (Van Dijk 1993), our aim is to analyze “semantic macrostructures”, that is, “global topics” (Van Dijk 2005) and to identify the most salient themes covered by the French media, as well as to answer the following questions: Which newspapers wrote the most about Montenegro? What topics were of particular interest to the French media? How does choice of lexical units and their organization influence representations? Whether and how the topics vary from one newspaper to another? All in all, what is the portrayal of Montenegro built in the French media in the period of fifteen years?

In the first place, we will present the analyzed corpus and the methods used in our study. In the second place, we will show and discuss the results of our lexicometric analysis through four stages:

- 1) Presentation of the results of clustering (descending hierarchical classification – DHC) and correspondence factor analysis (CFA). To this end, we will look at the profiles of clusters emerged on the basis of the criterion of lexical proximity and their statistical significance;
- 2) Contextualization and characterization of some of the most frequent Montenegrin toponyms;
- 3) Review of subclass of adjectives, through distribution of qualifying and relational adjectives per clusters, and the use of intensifying adjectives;
- 4) Observation of specificities of each journal, i.e. over-use or under-use of particular lexical units.

2. CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY

Our corpus is composed of 480 online articles, published between January 1st 2006 and January 1st 2021, written about Montenegro in five French journals:

- 1) *Le Figaro* – daily newspaper, the oldest in France, center-right;
- 2) *Le Monde* – daily newspaper, center-left;

² « [P]asse d’une visée de *faire savoir* à une visée de *faire penser*, <https://journals.openedition.org/semen/2793>, last access 20/2/2023 (translated by author).

- 3) *Le Point* – weekly magazine, center-right;
- 4) *L’Obs* (*Le Nouvel Observateur* until 2014) – weekly magazine, left ;
- 5) *L’Express* – weekly news magazine, political center.

The totality of corpus is composed of 173249 occurrences and the distribution of journal articles throughout the corpus is shown in the following diagram:

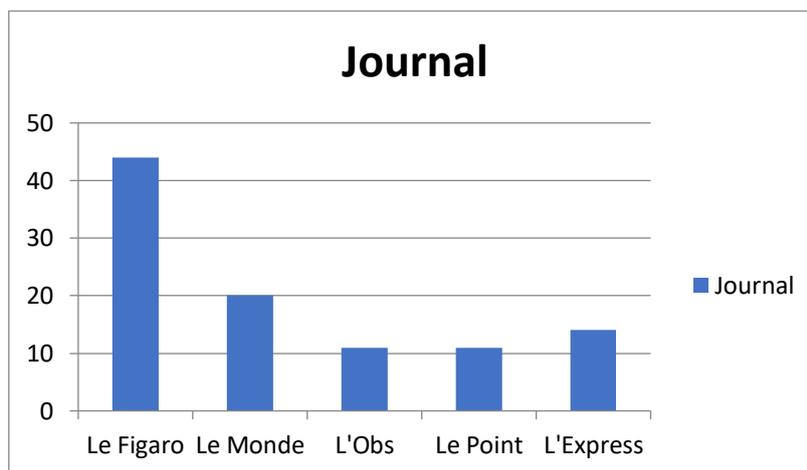


Diagram 1.
Distribution of articles per journal

In descending order, the distribution of the analyzed articles takes the following form: *Le Figaro* 44%, *Le Monde* 20%, *L’Express* 14%, *L’Obs* 11% and *Le Point* 11%. As we can see, from 2006 to 2021, *Le Figaro* wrote the most about Montenegro and it makes up almost half of the entire corpus. It is followed by *Le Monde*, with half as many articles, while the remaining three journals participate with similar proportions.

The methodological framework used in this study is developed by the French school of textual data analysis (Salem 1982; Reinert 1993; Ratinaud 2009; Garnier, Guérin-Pace 2010; Lebart et al. 2019; Pincemin 2020). Unlike “the traditional approaches, often judged too subjective”, lexicometry “proposes to bring to the texts a new light based on counting and locating the forms they contain”³(Salem 1982: 148).

For the purposes of this research, statistical analysis is undertaken by open source software *IRaMuTeQ* (Interface de R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires/ R interface for Multidimensional Analysis of Texts and Questionnaires), created by Pierre Ratinaud, within the research unit REPERE (Représentations et Engagements Professionnels, leurs Evolutions: Recherche et Expertise) at University of Toulouse 2 Le Mirail.

³ « [L]es approches traditionnelles, jugées souvent trop subjectives, elle se propose d’apporter sur les textes un éclairage nouveau fondé sur le décompte et la localisation des formes qu’ils contiennent » (translated by author).

IRaMuTeQ is based on the statistical method of speech analysis ALCESTE (Analyse des Lexèmes Co-occurents dans les Enoncés Simples d'un Texte/Analysis of Co-occurring Lexemes in Simple Text Statements), initially developed by Max Reinert. It has already proven to be a useful tool in studies of various fields, such as political discourse (Marchand, Ratinaud 2012), legal discourse (Vušović 2019; Fuentevilla et al. 2022), medical literature (Zorretto-Pinheiro et al. 2020), mathematics education (Taise Hoffmann et al. 2020), Twitter discourse (Smyrnaio, Ratinaud 2014; Longhi 2020) etc.

Descending hierarchical classification (clustering) analyzes text segments based on the criterion of lexical closeness and generates clusters that contain a similar vocabulary. Clustering results in bringing together forms that tend to be found in close contexts (Habert et al. 1997) and each cluster is considered as a “lexical world, a cognitive-perceptive framework” (Reinert 1993, in Camargo, Justo 2013).

A distinction is made between *active forms* – nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs, on the one hand, and *additional forms* – prepositions, pronouns, articles and conjunctions, on the other hand (Garnier, Guérin-Pace 2010).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Descending Hierarchical Classification (Clustering) and Correspondence Factor Analysis (CFA)

As a first step, the basic statistical analysis gave a global overview of the corpus by indicating the number of occurrences (total number of words), the number of forms and the number of hapax (words that appear only one time in the corpus).

Number of texts: 480

Number of text segments: 4821

Number of forms (different words): 14191

Number of occurrences (total number of words): 173249

Number of lemmas: 9590

Number of active forms: 8914

Number of additional forms: 676

Number of hapax: 3620

Number of clusters: 5

Lemmatization reduced verbs to the infinitive, nouns to the singular and adjectives to the masculine singular. Secondly, descending hierarchical classification resulted in five terminal clusters, represented in the form of the following dendrogram:

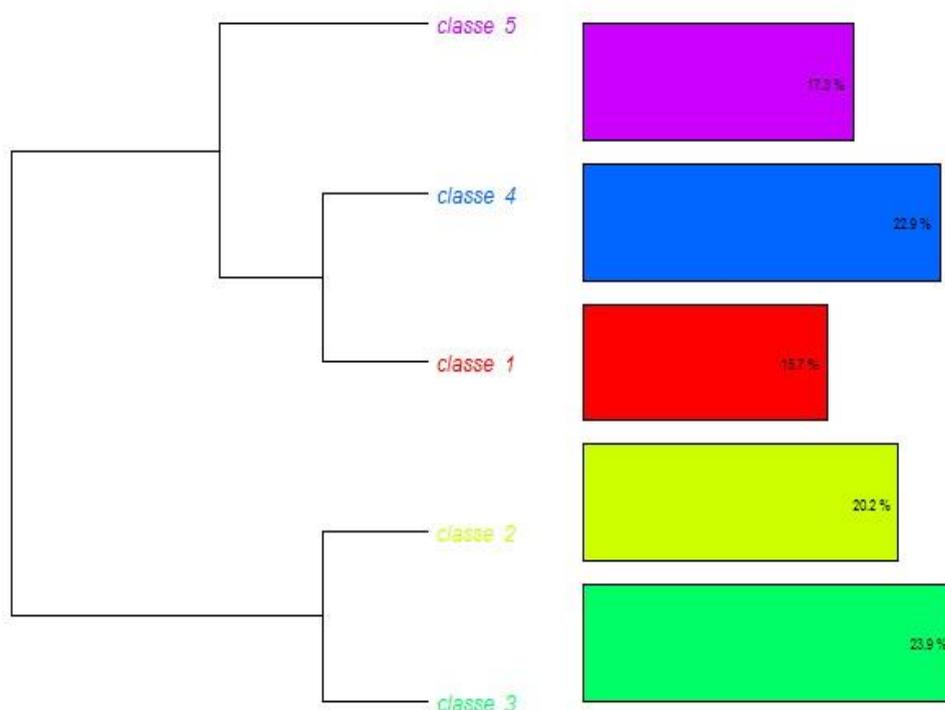


Figure 1
Dendrogram with 5 final clusters

As we can see, firstly, the software split the corpus in two parts: clusters 2 and 3, on the one hand, and clusters 5, 4, and 1, on the other hand, which indicates that this is the very first opposition within the vocabulary used in the articles. Secondly, the software established the distinction between the remaining clusters.

By looking more closely at the profiles of the five clusters provided by the software, it is possible to see different “lexical worlds” or themes arising.

Cluster 1 comprises the least part of the classified text segments (15.7%). Based on the criterion of lexical proximity, this cluster grouped the vocabulary related to the Euro-Atlantic integrations of Montenegro, namely its accession to the European Union and NATO. With regard to the most frequent common nouns (*adhésion, union, négociation, intégration, élargissement, rapport, candidature, réforme* – *adhesion, union, negotiation, integration, enlargement, report, candidacy, reform*), we can find repetitive terms related to the accession process, the evaluation of progress, the institutions and actors involved, the obstacles to overcome in the process as well as the perspectives. Proper names (*EU, Brussels, NATO, Juncker*) refer to Montenegro’s Euro-Atlantic partners and their representatives. The most commonly used verbs in this cluster (*souligner, aspirer, inviter, renforcer, estimer, rejoindre* – *to emphasize, to aspire, to invite, to reinforce, to estimate, to join*) are supporting verbs with an important diplomatic dimension, which reflects the benevolent positions of international partners towards Montenegro.

Cluster 2 includes 20.2% of classified text segments and contains vocabulary related to sport (*match, équipe, but, champion, défaite, victoire* - *match, team, goal, champion, defeat, victory*), to the different stages of sports competitions (*qualification, demi-finales* - *qualification, semi-finals*), as well as to the participants (*joueur, coéquipier, sélectionneur* - *player, teammate, coach*). The French press mainly covered the sports that faced the national teams of France and Montenegro. We find that handball is the most mentioned sport in the corpus. Even if in Montenegro, water polo is as successful as handball (title of European champion 2006, world champion 2009, vice-world champion 2013, 4th place at the 2008, 2012 and 2016 Olympics), we note its almost total absence from the analyzed journalistic corpus. The reasons can be found in the fact that water polo seems to be a rather marginal sport in France, compared to handball, basketball and football. This implies that the importance of an event to readers is the criterion to be met in order to be reported by the press.

Cluster 3 contains 23.9% of classified text segments and is dominated by vocabulary related to tourism, environment, nature, different types of accommodation, means of transport, activities and attractions. Among the most mentioned proper names we find the Montenegrin toponyms of the south (*Kotor, Sveti Stefan*) and the north of the country (*Kolasin*), as well as UNESCO, the institution who protects the Montenegrin city of Kotor.

Cluster 4 comprises 22.9% of the classified text segments and contains vocabulary related to regional politics, the referendum on the restoration of independence of Montenegro, as well as relations between Serbia and Montenegro. The most frequent lexical units are *indépendance* (*independence*) and *reconnaître* (*to recognize*). The regional context includes the countries of the former Yugoslavia, the dissolution of the common state, conflicting circumstances and the recognition of independence. Apart from the names of the countries of the former Yugoslavia, the most frequent proper names are those of the Serbian (*Milosevic, Kostunica, Tadic*) and Yugoslav leaders (*Tito*).

Cluster 5 includes 17.3% of classified text segments and is dominated by vocabulary related to national politics, parliamentary democracy and electoral processes. We also notice the frequent use of the names of Montenegrin politicians and parties from two opposing poles: the pro-Western DPS (Democratic Party of Socialists) and the pro-Russian DF (Democratic Front). The cluster also includes vocabulary related to criminal and legal issues, charges, court proceedings and attempted coup.

We can see that most of the corpus (55.9%) deals with political subjects, divided into three sub-fields: national (17.3%), regional (22.9%) and international politics (15.7%). Besides, 20.2% of the analyzed articles relate to sport, while 23.9% deal with tourism. Main topics per clusters can be summarized in the following table:

Table 1

Summary of main themes per clusters

Cluster	Themes
1	International politics, Euro-Atlantic integrations, EU, NATO
2	Sports
3	Tourism
4	Regional politics, referendum on the renewal of independence, relations between Serbia and Montenegro
5	National politics, pro-Western and pro-Russian poles

Besides clustering, another way to visualize global lexical structure of the corpus and main dimensions of contrast is provided by correspondence factor analysis (CFA). Developed in France by Jean-Paul Benzécri (1973), this multivariate statistical technique, integrated in *IRaMuTeQ* is:

[E]xtremely effective [...], particularly suitable when it comes to comparing the distributional stock of the vocabulary of several addressers. Starting from the count of the occurrences of each of the forms in each of the subparts of the analyzed corpus, the CFA provides a typology of the subparts of the corpus, which aims to bring together those which use the same words in the same proportions (Salem 1982: 148).⁴

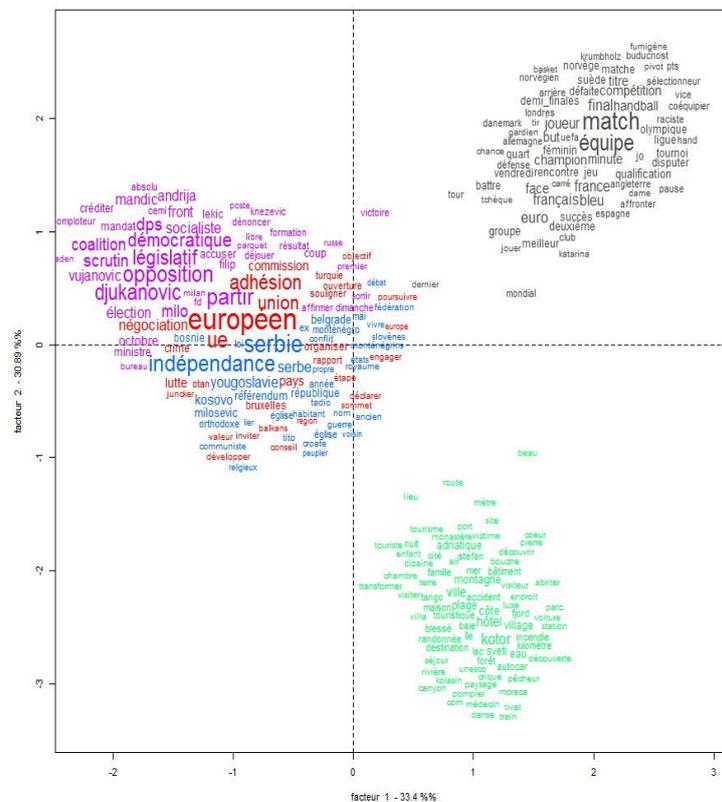


Figure 2
Correspondence factor analysis (CFA) results

⁴ « [E]xtremement efficace [...], particulièrement adaptée lorsqu'il s'agit de comparer le stock distributionnel du vocabulaire de plusieurs émetteurs. Partant du décompte des occurrences de chacune des formes dans chacune des sous-parties du corpus analysé, l'AFC fournit une typologie des sous-parties du corpus, qui vise à rapprocher entre elles celles qui emploient les mêmes mots dans les mêmes proportions» (translated by author).

The graphical representation of correspondence factor analysis (CFA) identifies three macrostructures and demonstrates three main subsets of media reporting on Montenegro in a period of fifteen years: politics, sports (cluster 2) and tourism (cluster 3). The biggest set devoted to politics is subdivided into three intertwined subsets (different colors represent clusters 1, 4 and 5), which corresponds to the profiles of the clusters that we have just reviewed (national, regional and international politics).

3.2. Contextualization and characterization of toponyms

The second segment of the analysis concerns the characterization of the most common Montenegrin toponyms. According to Richardson (2007), “words convey the imprint of society and of value judgments in particular” (2007: 47). Therefore, the choice of lexical units and the context of their use are of great importance in the way we perceive and interpret an expression. Reisigl and Wodak (2001 in Richardson 2007) call this way of attributing different values and qualities to people, places, objects, events etc. – *predicational strategies*.

Thus we examine which proper names of geographical entities attract the most attention from the French press and in what context they appear, in order to detect how they are characterized and what qualities are attributed to them.

As *rhetorical strategies*, tropes appear in journalistic discourse as “non-obligatory additional structures [...] that may draw attention and may therefore indirectly emphasise specific meanings” (Van Dijk 1991 in Richardson 2007: 65). By following this principle, we shall examine the presence of potential metaphors which can relate to underlying ideology (Charteris-Black 2004).

For this purpose, we used the option “concordancier/concordance” provided by *IRaMuTeQ*, which enabled us to explore the contextual realization of the units, combining all five journals. The three most mentioned toponyms in our media corpus are *Montenegro*, *Kotor* (a coastal town in Boka Bay) and *Sveti Stefan* (an islet and 5-star hotel resort on the Adriatic coast).

3.2.1. Montenegro

The most used toponym in the corpus is, as expected, *Montenegro*. In the following lines, we provide an overview of some of its contextual realizations, accompanied by our English translation:

- (1) *petit pays majoritairement slave de 660 000 habitants* (small predominantly Slavic country of 660,000 inhabitants) (Le Figaro 2018)
- (2) *ce petit pays multiculturel de 660 000 habitants* (this small multicultural country of 660,000 inhabitants) (Le Figaro 2017)
- (3) *ce petit pays majoritairement slave et orthodoxe* (this small predominantly Slavic and Orthodox country) (Le Monde 2017)
- (4) *petit état balkanique* (small Balkan state) (Le Figaro 2018)
- (5) *cette république lilliputienne de l'ex-Yougoslavie* (this Lilliputian republic of the former Yugoslavia) (Le Figaro 2012)
- (6) *ce tout petit pays montagneux de 650 000 habitants* (this very small mountainous country of 650,000 inhabitants) (Le Monde 2008)

- (7) *ce petit pays adriatique de quelque 650 000 habitants* (this small Adriatic country of some 650,000 inhabitants) (Le Figaro 2013)
- (8) *ce petit poucet européen* (this little European thumb) (Le Figaro 2018)
- (9) *Monténégro, le petit poucet viticole européen, aussi petit que charmant aussi sauvage qu'accueillant et aussi montagneux que verdoyant* (Montenegro, the little European wine thumb, as small as it is charming, as wild as it is welcoming and as mountainous as it is verdant) (Le Figaro 2018)
- (10) *la beauté de ce pays n'est pas une fable* (the beauty of this country is not a fable) (L'Obs 2019)
- (11) *[...] le poète Lord Byron qui voyait dans ce pays « la plus belle rencontre entre la terre et la mer »* (the poet Lord Byron who saw in this country “the most beautiful encounter between land and sea”) (L'Obs 2019)
- (12) *Monténégro: le trésor noir des Balkans [...] Sur l'Adriatique, ce confetti sauvageon cultive les images fortes: côtes en dentelle, mer saphir, canyons, lacs...* (Montenegro: the black treasure of the Balkans [...] On the Adriatic, this savage confetti cultivates strong images: lacy coasts, sapphire sea, canyons, lakes) (L'Express 2013)
- (13) *Reste que l'un des principaux atouts de la « Montagne noire » -ou Monténégro- est paradoxalement sa (petite) taille. Dans ce pays mouchoir de poche, on combine facilement farniente sur le sable, vue sur des monastères qui flottent comme des lotus et activités de montagne. Le tout en un minimum de temps dans la même journée!* (Still, one of the main assets of the “Black Mountain” – or Montenegro – is paradoxically its (small) size. In this pocket-sized country, it is easy to combine lazing on the sand, a view of monasteries that float like lotuses and mountain activities. All in a minimum of time in the same day) (L'Express 2013).

We can detect that the main characterization of Montenegro is related to size (*small, very small, pocket-sized, Lilliputian*), religion (*Orthodox country*), ethnicity (*predominantly Slavic country*), relief (*mountainous*), geographical position (*Adriatic, European*), hospitality (*charming, welcoming*), multicultural character, as well as to the beauty of nature.

Since “metaphors are powerful means to make abstract mental models more concrete” (Van Dijk 2005: 473), it is possible to notice that this *rhetorical* (Thomson 1996) and *predicational strategy* (Reisigl, Wodak 2001) is often used to bring Montenegro closer to French readers, emphasizing its beauty and size.

In this sense, we notice two main directions of metaphorical expression. One is associated with jewelry, great value and underlines the precious dimension, e.g. *black treasure* and *sapphire sea*. The other one engages the world of literature and brings out two interesting metaphors, both related to size. The first one (*little European thumb*) originates from Charles Perrault's famous fairytale *Le petit Poucet* (*Little Thumb*) about a tiny boy and highlights the small size of the country. The second one (*this Lilliputian republic*) is in reference to Lilliput, a fictional island in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and is also associated with the small surface of the country (about 13,812 km²).

Another appealing connection with literature, mobilized by the French media, is provided by the citation of Lord Byron, English poet who wrote back in 19th century: “*At the birth of the planet the most beautiful encounter between land and sea must have been on the Montenegrin coast*” (L'Obs 2019).

Lastly, another interesting way to describe Montenegro is the use of phrase *savage confetti*. According to Cambridge Dictionary⁵, *confetti* is defined as “small pieces of colored paper that you throw at a celebration”. Similarity with Montenegro is established in small size and vivid color, in the way that *savage confetti* highlights the combination of its wild nature and vividness.

3.2.2. Kotor

The second most used toponym in the corpus is *Kotor*, a coastal town in Montenegro located in the Bay of Kotor. Again, option “concordancier” provided by *IRaMuTeQ*, enabled us to find its most salient contextual realizations.

- (1) *la cité médiévale de Kotor, véritable musée à ciel ouvert* (the medieval city of Kotor, a veritable open-air museum) (Le Figaro 2020)
- (2) *Kotor, la ville numéro 1 selon Lonely Planet [...] appelée la petite Dubrovnik, a remporté les suffrages des experts du guide de voyages* (Kotor, the number 1 city according to Lonely Planet, [...] called the little Dubrovnik, won the votes of the experts of the travel guide) (Le Figaro 2015)
- (3) *les Bouches de Kotor reflètent toute la beauté des lieux avec ses vieilles pierres et paysage [...] l'entrée de ces replis rocheux entre les montagnes est tout simplement éblouissante* (the Bay of Kotor reflects all the beauty of the place with its old stones and landscape [...] the entrance to these rocky recesses between the mountains is simply dazzling) (Le Figaro 2015)
- (4) *la ville de Kotor située dans le fjord le plus méridional d'Europe [...] un bijou architectural de l'époque vénitienne* (the city of Kotor located in the southernmost fjord of Europe [...] an architectural jewel of the Venetian era) (Le Figaro 2012)
- (5) *Kotor, joyau baroque, reconstruit à l'identique après le tremblement de terre de 1979* (Kotor, a baroque jewel, rebuilt identically after the 1979 earthquake) (Le Figaro 2012)
- (6) *les Bouches de Kotor et ses baies enchanteresses* (the Bay of Kotor and its enchanting bays) (Le Figaro 2012)
- (7) *... offrent un panorama éblouissant sur les Bouches de Kotor* (...offer a dazzling panorama of the Bay of Kotor) (Le Figaro 2012)
- (8) *Tout au fond du fjord, Kotor: sous cet échafaudage de roches grises, la vieille ville a des dimensions lilliputiennes* (At the bottom of the fjord, Kotor: under this scaffolding of gray rocks, the old town has Lilliputian dimensions) (Le Figaro 2008)
- (9) *Avec sa voisine croate Dubrovnik, Kotor est en effet l'une des perles antiques de la côte adriatique* (With its Croatian neighbor Dubrovnik, Kotor is indeed one of the ancient pearls of the Adriatic coast) (L'Obs 2019)
- (10) *Moins connue que la Croatie Dubrovnik à une centaine de kilomètres, Kotor s'impose comme une nouvelle perle de l'Adriatique* (Less known than the Croatian Dubrovnik a hundred kilometers away, Kotor stands out as a new pearl of the Adriatic) (L'Obs 2016)

⁵ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org>, last access 27/2/2023

- (11) *Perle de l'Adriatique nichée au fond d'un golfe spectaculaire, la cité médiévale de Kotor au Monténégro a survécu des siècles durant aux caprices du temps et aux guerres* (Pearl of the Adriatic nestled at the bottom of a spectacular gulf, the medieval city of Kotor in Montenegro has survived the vagaries of time and wars for centuries) (Le Point 2018)
- (12) *Joyau monténégrin, classé par l'Unesco, la vieille ville de Kotor mérite sans conteste le détour* (A Montenegrin jewel, classified by Unesco, the old town of Kotor is undoubtedly worth a detour) (Le Point 2016)
- (13) *le joyau du Monténégro: les bouches de Kotor* (the jewel of Montenegro: the Bay of Kotor) (L'Express 2010)
- (14) *On commence le périple par les bouches de Kotor, sorte de fjord à la profondeur insondable, que l'on décrit souvent comme l'un des plus beaux sites de la Méditerranée* (We begin the journey by the Bay of Kotor, a kind of fjord with unfathomable depth, which is often described as one of the most beautiful sites in the Mediterranean) (L'Express 2008).

Once more, we find repetitive metaphors that accentuate the precious dimension, great rarity and worth (*architectural jewel, baroque jewel, ancient pearls, Pearl of the Adriatic, Montenegrin jewel*). Formulation *open-air museum* implies keeping of permanent values and entities of great cultural and historical importance. Use of superlatives (*one of the most beautiful sites in the Mediterranean, number 1 by Lonely Planet*) and epithets such as *enchanting* and *dazzling* testifies to the strong impression of the French journalists about this Montenegrin coastal town. The small dimensions, this time of the city of Kotor, are again evoked by metaphor emerged from the world of literature (*Lilliputian dimensions*).

3.2.3. Sveti Stefan

The third most used toponym in the corpus is *Sveti Stefan*, an islet and 5-star hotel resort on the Adriatic coast. In the following lines, we review some of its contextual realizations from the five analyzed journals.

- (1) *Sveti Stefan, maintes fois représentée sur les cartes postales, reste l'icône locale en matière de tourisme. [...] Le summum du luxe. [...] Bâti sur une presqu'île du littoral adriatique, ce village fortifié du XV^e siècle, transformé en hôtel de luxe par le maréchal Tito dans les années 50, appartient à la légende.* (Sveti Stefan, often depicted on postcards, remains the local icon in terms of tourism. [...] The pinnacle of luxury. [...] Built on a peninsula on the Adriatic coast, this 15th century fortified village, transformed into a luxury hotel by Marshal Tito in the 1950s, belongs to the legend) (Le Figaro 2012)
- (2) *Un des derniers bijoux des resorts Aman [...] Face à la presqu'île de Sveti Stefan, où plane le souvenir de ses hôtes célèbres nombreux au siècle dernier, la Villa Milocer une bâtisse néoclassique du XVIII^e siècle s'ouvre majestueusement sur une plage du même nom, considérée comme une des plus belles de l'Adriatique.* (One of the latest jewels of the Aman resorts [...] Facing the peninsula of Sveti Stefan, where the memory of its many famous guests in the last century hovers, the Villa Milocer, a neoclassical building from the 18th century, opens majestically onto a beach in the same name, considered one of the most beautiful in the Adriatic) (Le Figaro 2009)

- (3) *C'est aujourd'hui un hôtel de grand luxe, intégré au complexe Aman Sveti Stefan, qui englobe aussi une île pittoresque d'anciennes maisons de pêcheurs. Pas besoin d'y séjourner pour s'offrir une journée sur l'incroyable plage de sable rose, avec vue sur l'île, véritable icône du Monténégro.* (Today it is a luxury hotel, part of the Aman Sveti Stefan complex, which also encompasses a picturesque island of old fishermen's houses. No need to stay there to treat yourself to a day on the incredible pink sand beach, with a view of the island, a true icon of Montenegro) (Le Monde 2019)
- (4) *Sveti Stefan abrite un village médiéval transformé dans les années 1960 en hôtel de luxe fréquenté par la jet-set et des prestigieux invités du président Tito de la Yougoslavie communiste. Il s'agit de l'une des destinations les plus convoitées par les célébrités du cinéma, les familles royales ou les grands noms du monde des affaires et de la politique internationale. La reine Elizabeth d'Angleterre y a séjourné, de même que la comédienne italienne Monica Vitti ou encore les stars hollywoodiennes Richard Burton, Kirk Douglas et encore Orson Welles.* (Sveti Stefan is home to a medieval village transformed in the 1960s into a luxury hotel frequented by the jet-set and prestigious guests of President Tito of communist Yugoslavia. It is one of the most coveted destinations for movie celebrities, royal families or big names in business and international politics. Queen Elizabeth of England stayed there, as did Italian actress Monica Vitti and Hollywood stars Richard Burton, Kirk Douglas and Orson Welles) (L'Obs 2014)
- (5) *le pays abrite de nombreux trésors, dont la presqu'île Sveti Stefan, sur la côte Adriatique. Un petit coin de paradis. [...] Bienvenue à Sveti Stefan, presqu'île de rêve au destin historique qui, après avoir hébergé un village fortifié bâti au XV^e siècle et incarné l'esprit villégiature à la mode communiste, abrite désormais un hôtel ultraconfidentiel signé Aman.* (the country is home to many treasures, including the Sveti Stefan peninsula, on the Adriatic coast. A little corner of paradise. [...] Welcome to Sveti Stefan, a dreamy peninsula with a historic destiny which, after hosting a fortified village built in the 15th century and embodying the communist-style resort spirit, now houses an ultra-confidential hotel signed Aman) (Le Point 2016)
- (6) *l'icône des cartes postales, Sveti Stefan, complexe hôtelier de grand luxe, est très, très privé (compter 1000 euros la nuit)* (the icon of postcards, Sveti Stefan, a luxury hotel complex, is very, very private (count 1000 euros per night) (L'Express 2013)
- (7) *vue époustouflante sur l'île fortifiée de Sveti Stefan. La plus belle adresse du pays.* (breathtaking view of the fortified island of Sveti Stefan. The most beautiful address in the country) (L'Express 2010)
- (8) *faire une escale à Sveti Stefan, sorte de mini-Mont-Saint-Michel connu pour avoir été une résidence de Tito* (make a stopover at Sveti Stefan, a kind of mini-Mont-Saint-Michel known to have been a residence of Tito) (L'Express 2008)

The third toponym, *Sveti Stefan*, seems to have received the most praise and positive characterization by the French press. We notice the choice of metaphors that point to exceptionality and richness. *Sveti Stefan* is perceived as a representative symbol of Montenegro, described as *pinnacle of luxury, legend, jewel, icon, paradise* and related to numerous celebrities, world jet-set and royal families. It is often presented with epithets as *luxurious, dreamy, breathtaking*, adverb *majestically* and many superlatives (*one of the most*

beautiful in the Adriatic, number 1). In order to bring it closer to French readers, journalists compare it to *Mont-Saint-Michel*, tidal island and one of the most visited places in France, and conceptualize it as *mini-Mont-Saint-Michel*, which again combines, on the one hand, small size and, on the other hand, exceptionality and beauty.

Altogether, we can state very positive media coverage about the three most frequent toponyms in our fifteen year corpus, as well as significant efforts to present Montenegro in a very bright light to French readers.

3.3. Subclass of adjectives

Moreover, we will explore the subclass of adjectives, in order to compare the use of qualifying and relational adjectives. Riegel et al. (2009) point out that qualifying adjectives “refer to properties and states, i.e. exclusively descriptive concepts devoid of referential autonomy”⁶ (2009: 616), while relational adjectives designate a relationship with the referent of the noun from which they derived and constitute “the syntactic and semantic equivalent of a noun complement or of a relative which would explain this relationship”⁷ (2009: 633).

In this context, we investigate if the main function of adjectives in the analyzed corpus is to describe (and how) or to relate. Distribution of qualifying and relational adjectives per cluster can be observed in the following diagram:

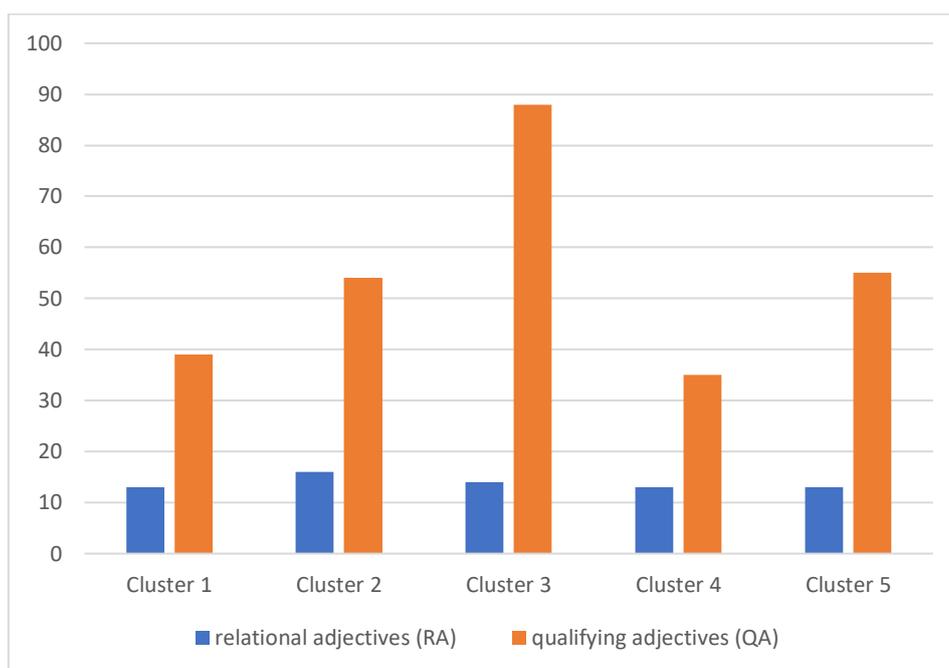


Diagram 2
Distribution of QA and RA per cluster

⁶ « [R]envoient à des propriétés et à des états, c’est-à-dire des concepts exclusivement descriptifs dépourvus d’autonomie référentielle » (translated by author).

⁷ « [L]’équivalent syntaxique et sémantique d’un complément du nom ou d’une relative qui expliciterait cette relation » (translated by author).

As we can see, qualifying adjectives are far more frequently used in the whole corpus than the relative ones. Cluster 3, relating to tourism, is obviously distinguished by the highest number of qualifying adjectives. Therefore, it is dominantly characterized by the descriptive dimension.

Furthermore, it is interesting to examine how adjectives are used to emphasize certain features and to direct the reader's focus, since choice of words and lexical style can "imply positive or negative evaluations" (Van Dyjk 1993: 264). Romero (2001) points out the use of intensifying adjectives among the general mechanisms of intensity.

In order to find out in which cases French media coverage gains in intensity and what is the character of the intensification (negative or positive), we explore the presence of intensifying adjectives and their context of use. For that purpose, we illustrate the choice of adjectives as means of intensification and give an overview of dozen of adjectives, presented per cluster.

Cluster 1 – International politics, Euro-Atlantic integrations

Hostile (hostile)

- (1) *certains pays hostiles à la poursuite du processus d'élargissement de l'Union* (some countries hostile to the continuation of the process of enlargement of the Union) (Le Figaro 2009)
- (2) *modérer sa rhétorique hostile au Kremlin* (moderate its anti-Kremlin rhetoric) (Le Monde 2018, L'Obs 2018, L'Express 2018)

Lourd (heavy, serious)

- (1) *lourd problème de criminalité organisée* (serious problem of organized crime) (Le Figaro 2019, L'Express 2018)
- (2) *adhésion à l'OTAN qui entre dans une phase cruciale et pourrait donner lieu à de nouvelles manifestations lourdes* (accession to NATO which is entering a crucial phase and could give rise to new heavy demonstrations) (L'Express 2017)

Cluster 2 – Sport

Vicieux (vicious)

- (1) *une équipe vicieuse dure à jouer, le Monténégro véhicule l'image d'une équipe qui fait mal à ses adversaires* (a vicious team hard to play, Montenegro conveys the image of a team that hurts its opponents) (Le Monde 2018)
- (2) *les Monténégrines sont vicieuses* (Montenegrins are vicious) (Le Monde 2018)

Agressif (aggressive)

- (1) *cette équipe agressive composée de filles assez lourdes, assez grandes* (this aggressive team made up of pretty heavy, pretty big girls) (Le Monde 2018)
- (2) *c'est une équipe très truqueuse, agressive* (this is a very tricky, aggressive team) (Le Point 2012, L'Express 2012)

Cluster 3 – Tourism

Magnifique (magnificent)

- (1) *une marina et des plages magnifiques* (a marina and magnificent beaches) (Le Figaro 2014)
- (2) *le magnifique canyon de Tara au Monténégro* (the magnificent Tara canyon in Montenegro) (Le Monde 2019)

- (3) *des magnifiques baies* (magnificent bays) (L'Obs 2020)
- (4) *les paysages magnifiques* (the magnificent landscapes) (L'Express 2013)
- (5) *de magnifiques chemins de randonnée* (magnificent hiking trails) (L'Express 2014)
- (6) *la magnifique citadelle* (the magnificent citadel) (L'Express 2010)

Spectaculaire (spectacular)

- (1) *Kotor [...] une ville aux paysages spectaculaires* (Kotor [...] a city with spectacular landscapes) (Le Figaro 2015)
- (2) *spectaculaires Bouches de Kotor* (spectacular Bay of Kotor) (Le Monde 2019)
- (3) *inciter les touristes à revenir sur ses spectaculaires rivages* (encourage tourists to return to its spectacular shores) (L'Obs 2010)
- (4) *perle de l'Adriatique nichée au fond d'un golfe spectaculaire* (pearl of the Adriatic nestled at the bottom of a spectacular gulf) (Le Point 2018)
- (5) *filer au Monténégro des fjords spectaculaires* (go to Montenegro whose fjords are spectacular) (L'Express 2014)
- (6) *la profondeur de ce site spectaculaire rivalise avec celle du Grand canyon du Colorado* (the depth of this spectacular site rivals that of Colorado's Grand Canyon) (L'Express 2014)

Somptueux (sumptuous)

- (1) *de somptueux paysages de montagne* (sumptuous mountain landscapes) (L'Obs 2020)
- (2) *somptueuses fresques et icônes* (sumptuous frescoes and icons) (L'Express 2006)
- (3) *anciennes maisons de pêcheur reconverties en suites somptueuses* (old fisherman's houses converted into sumptuous suites) (L'Express 2008)

Époustouflant (breathtaking)

- (1) *le sud du pays et ses époustouflants paysages de fjords inscrits au patrimoine de l'Unesco* (the south of the country and its breathtaking landscapes of fjords listed as UNESCO heritage) (Le Figaro 2006)
- (2) *Aman Villa Milocer, Ancienne résidence d'été des souverains du Monténégro avec [...] vue époustouflante sur l'île fortifiée de Sveti Stefan* (Aman Villa Milocer, Former summer residence of the rulers of Montenegro with [...] breathtaking view of the fortified island of Sveti Stefan) (L'Express 2010)
- (3) *[...] face au spectacle époustouflant de la nature environnante* (facing the breathtaking spectacle of the surrounding nature) (Le Figaro 2009)

Fabuleux (fabulous)

- (1) *Le second parc national, Skadar, dissimule un fabuleux trésor: un lac de 600 kilomètres carrés* (The second national park, Skadar, conceals a fabulous treasure: a lake of 600 square kilometers) (L'Express 2013)
- (2) *une vue panoramique sur la fabuleuse baie de Kotor* (a panoramic view of the fabulous Bay of Kotor) (Le Figaro 2013)

Cluster 4 – Regional politics

Sanglant (bloody)

- (1) *conflits sanglants qui ont accompagné dans les années 1990* (bloody conflicts that accompanied the 1990s) (Le Figaro 2006)
- (2) *des sanglantes guerres des années 1990* (bloody wars of the 1990s) (Le Monde 2006)
- (3) *siège sanglant de Dubrovnik* (bloody siege of Dubrovnik) (Le Point 2018)

Cluster 5 – National politics

Violent (violent)

- (1) *manifestations anti-gouvernementales parfois violentes* (sometimes violent anti-government demonstrations) (Le Figaro 2016)
- (2) *de violentes manifestations en 2015* (violent protests in 2015) (L’Obs 2016)

The above examples show that all five journals contain intensifying adjectives. It is possible to distinguish three main dimensions that correspond to the previously established semantic macrostructures (Figure 2).

Adjectives with negative connotation are all found in the three clusters devoted to politics. The ones found in the international subfield (*hostile, heavy*) are mainly related to opposition of some EU countries to further enlargement of the Union, as well as to rhetoric of pro-Western Montenegrin political structures towards Kremlin. The regional one (*bloody*) concerns conflicts, war of the 1990s and dissolution of Yugoslavia. Lastly, the national one (*violent*) is associated with protests of pro-Russian opposition due to pro-NATO government politics and accession of Montenegro to this alliance.

Numerous praiseworthy adjectives (*magnificent, spectacular, sumptuous, breathtaking, fabulous*) are present in the field of tourism, which additionally confirms what we already detected in the part devoted to toponyms, i.e. significantly positive reporting of French media in terms of the natural beauty of Montenegro.

The third, strong dimension of competitiveness is related to sport. Although in another context, these adjectives (*vicious, aggressive*) may be perceived as negative, in the field of sports, they rather positively indicate competitiveness and toughness, in a way that they describe Montenegrin women’s handball national team as a tough opponent, worthy of respect.

3.4. Specificities per journal

In the last step of the analysis, we contrasted the data based on the variable “journal”, in order to bring out the specificities of each one of them, i.e. to find out how they differ from each other, which topics dominate and to what extent.

The following table shows the forms ordered by specificity rate, in descending order, meaning that the journal in question uses these lexical units to a greater extent than others.

Table 2
Specificities per journal

Journal	Lexical form (By specificity rate)
L’Express	<i>Kotor, ville (city), tango (tango), fjord (fjord), mer (sea), montagne (mountain), canyon (canyon)</i>
Le Figaro	<i>Concours (competition), Eurovision (Eurovision), éliminatoire (elimination), chanson (song), groupe (group), match (match)</i>
Le Monde	<i>Serbie (Serbia), union (union), résultat (result), indépendantiste (independentist), UE (EU), Lipka, Kostunica, Djukanovic</i>

Journal	Lexical form (By specificity rate)
L'Obs	<i>OTAN (NATO), américain (American), alliance (alliance), Trump, Moscou (Moscow), Mandic, adhésion (accession), prorusse (pro-Russian)</i>
Le Point	<i>Eglise (church), SPC (Serbian orthodox church), orthodoxe (orthodox), soldat (soldier), JO (OG), handball, Tito, religieux (religious)</i>

The table hints at the differences in dominant topics between the journals and shows that, more than the others:

1) *L'Express* uses predominant lexicon of nature, spare-time activities and deals with the subject of tourism;

2) *Le Figaro* touches on the subject of the Eurovision Song Contest and sports;

3) *Le Monde* focuses on the referendum on the restoration of Montenegrin independence, relations with Serbia and the regional context, repeatedly mentions Montenegrin (Djukanovic) and Serbian (Kostunica) politicians, as well as EU representative, Slovak diplomat Lipka, President of the Republic Referendum Commission at the time;

4) *L'Obs* rather concentrates on international dimension, including NATO membership, former Republican president of the United States, Trump, as well as the opposition between pro-Western and pro-Russian political poles in Montenegro;

5) *Le Point* stands out by writing about the religious topics, Serbian Orthodox Church and participation of the Montenegrin women's handball team at the Olympic Games.

For the purpose of a more detailed overview, the following figures illustrate one example per journal and show over-use and under-use of a specific form by a specific journal.

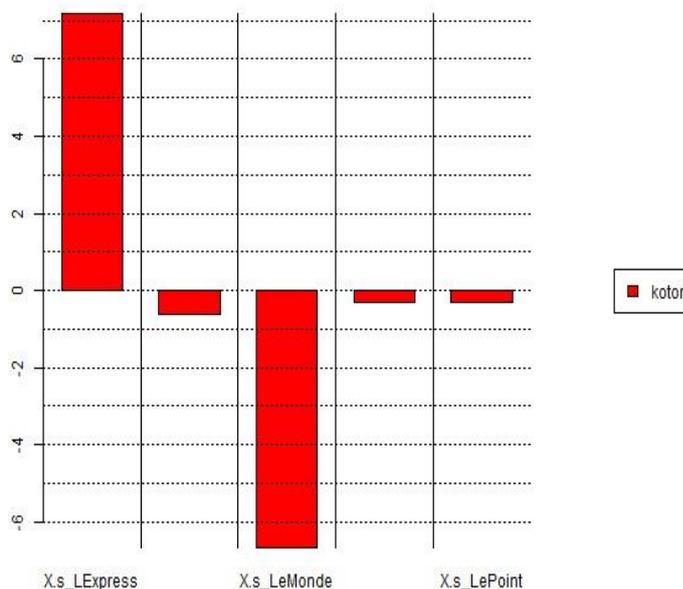


Figure 3
Use of form Kotor per journal

As we can see, toponym *Kotor*, the previously mentioned coastal city, is over-used by the journal *L'Express*, which stands out with the theme of tourism, and highly under-used by *Le Monde*, which prefers political topics.

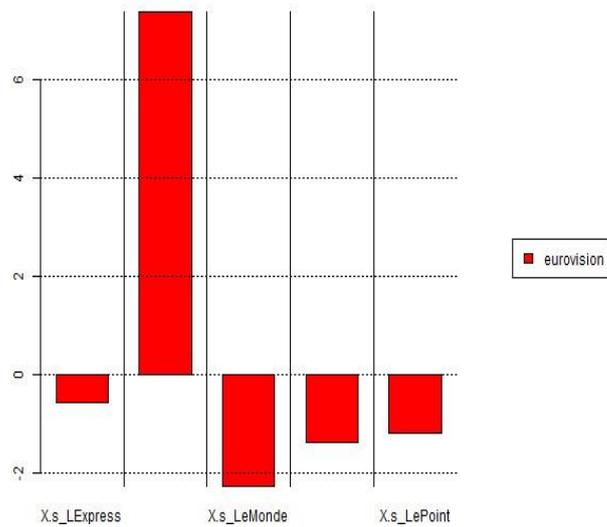


Figure 4
Use of form Eurovision per journal

Theme of Montenegrin participation in *Eurovision Song Contest* is dominantly exploited by *Le Figaro*, while for other journals, apparently, it is not a subject of special interest.

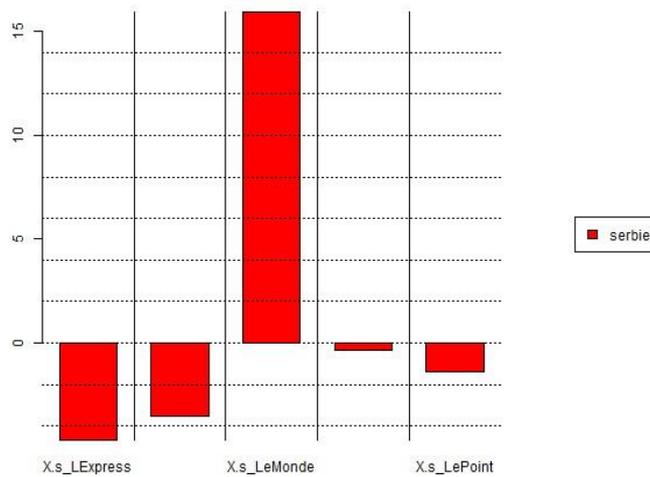


Figure 5
Use of form Serbie (Serbia) per journal

Serbie (Serbia) is by far over-used by *Le Monde*, which stands out for its dominant treatment of the political topics, the regional context of the Western Balkans and the restoration of Montenegrin independence.

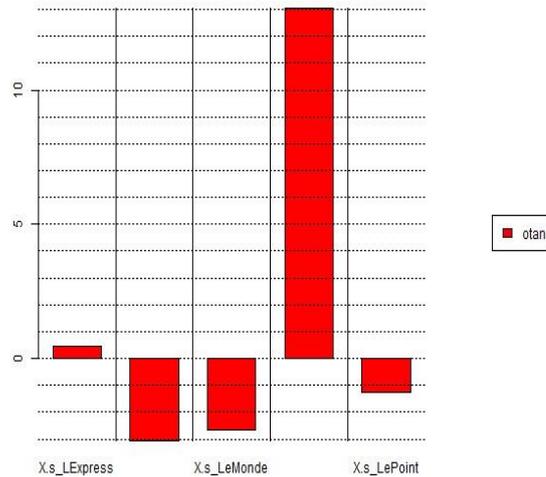


Figure 6.
Use of form OTAN (NATO) per journal

NATO alliance (OTAN in French) is by far over-mentioned by *L'Obs*, which, to a much greater extent than others, deals with the subject of Euro-Atlantic integrations of Montenegro.

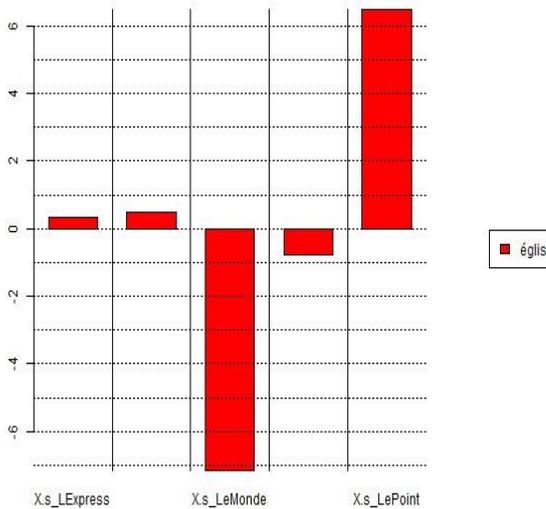


Figure 7
Use of form église (church) per journal

Finally, *église* (church) is over-used by the journal *Le Point*, which treats religious issues in Montenegro more than the others, especially unlike *Le Monde*, where this question is very under-treated.

4. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the French media coverage of Montenegro allowed us to gain an insight into the portrayal that five French newspapers built over fifteen years, from 2006 to 2021. The lexicometric approach, based on the criterion of lexical proximity, implemented in the software *IRaMuTeQ*, proved to be a good methodological “ally” and allowed us to dive into the corpus on several levels.

Fifteen years of reporting on Montenegro revealed three main centers of interest of French media: politics (55.9%), tourism (23.9%) and sports (20.2%). The political domain is divided into three subcategories: national (17.3%), regional (22.9%) and international politics (15.7%).

Contextualization of the most common toponyms (*Montenegro*, *Kotor* and *Sveti Stefan*) revealed very positive media coverage and the use of interesting predicational and rhetorical strategies. As a result, we have detected repetitive praiseworthy metaphorical expressions and attribution of positive semantic features, such as exclusiveness, rarity and worth.

When it comes to the use of adjectives, it is revealed that qualifying adjectives are more frequent than the relative ones, in particular in the cluster devoted to tourism, which testifies to a dominantly descriptive use. Moreover, intensifying adjectives, stylistic means destined to attract attention and highlight certain characteristics, pointed out negative sides of political context in the Western Balkans (manifestations, conflicts of the 1990s), numerous positive sides of Montenegrin tourist offer and beauty of nature, and strong side, in terms of force and adversity, of Montenegrin women’s handball team.

Comparison of journal’s specificities allowed us to seize the differences between them, concerning the treatment of particular topics and over-use or under-use of some lexical units. After the global division into politics, tourism and sports (Figure 2), we established with more precision the differences between journals and their preferences.

Lastly, if we consider what possible social consequences (Richardson 2007) arise from this media coverage, it is convenient to turn to official statistical data published by MONSTAT (the Montenegrin national agency in charge of statistics). According to the data available on their website regarding the number of tourists for the period 2010-2021, it can be noted that French tourists are regularly present in Montenegro. In addition, they are among the most numerous tourists from EU member countries. The positive coverage of the country in the French press would have had the possibility of contributing to this.

As we can conclude from all the above, several research perspectives open up. This study gave us the impulse to expand our research to the press of other (French-speaking) countries. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore possible socio-cultural differences at the national level, as well as to extend the duration of media coverage. All in all, it is certain that the analysis of journalistic discourse combined with the precision of innovative lexicometric methods represents fertile ground and opens up numerous possibilities for interdisciplinary research.

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