

## **Communication publique et déchets importés au Maroc**

## **Public communication and imported waste in Morocco**

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## Résumé

La décision du gouvernement marocain d'importer les déchets italiens a produit un débat pointant du doigt la stratégie environnementale marocaine. Les activistes marocains n'ont pas hésité à critiquer cette décision d'autant plus que cette dernière mettrait en danger la santé des citoyens marocains et ferait du Maroc une sorte de déchèterie européenne. En effet, cette polémique a été accompagnée d'un large débat numérique qui s'est traduit par la diffusion d'une pétition ainsi que des appels à manifester devant le parlement. Cette étude décrit la nature du discours adopté lors de la polémique sur les déchets importés d'Italie au Maroc. Nous avons analysé des articles de deux journaux marocains rédigés en français *Le Matin du Sahara & du Maghreb* et *La Libération* et les communiqués de presse du Ministère de l'Environnement au Maroc. L'étude applique une méthode d'analyse de contenu pour mettre en évidence les différences qui caractérisent trois types de discours reflétant trois positions différentes. Il analyse les grands thèmes, sous-thèmes, acteurs et positions marquant les deux corpus. L'analyse met en évidence les différences entre le discours médiatique et le discours officiel.

**Mots-clés :** Journal pro-État; journal d'opposition; analyse de contenu; discours; environnement

## Abstract

The Moroccan government's decision to import Italian waste has produced a debate pointing the finger at Morocco's environmental strategy. Moroccan activists did not hesitate to criticize this decision, especially since it would endanger the health of Moroccan citizens and make Morocco a sort of European garbage dump. Indeed, this controversy was accompanied by a broad digital debate that resulted in the dissemination of a petition as well as calls to demonstrate in front of parliament. This study describes the nature of the discourse adopted during the controversy over waste imported from Italy to Morocco. We analyzed articles from two Moroccan newspapers written in French *Le Matin du Sahara & du Maghreb* and *La Libération* and the press releases of the Ministry of the Environment in Morocco. The study applies a content analysis method to highlight the differences that characterize three types of speech reflecting three different positions. It analyzes the main themes, sub-themes, actors and positions marking the three corpora. The analysis highlights the differences between media discourse and the official discourse.

**Keywords :** Pro-state newspaper; opposition newspaper; content analysis; discourse; environment

## Introduction

The importation of 2,500 tonnes of Italian waste in 2016 to be used as fuel for cement kilns in Morocco aroused large-scale public anger. The echo of the event spread quickly and stirred up the anger of Moroccan cyber activists and the civil society. An online petition received more than 10,000 signatures in less than 72 hours. It launched an appeal to the Ministry of the Environment to cancel the operation: *“Let’s mobilize to avoid the burning of the waste and prevent harmful consequences leading to the degradation of agricultural soil and the emergence of chronic diseases and permanent birth defects”* (Bilal, 2016).

The decision that the Moroccan Ministry of the Environment took quickly spread among households in Morocco thanks to social networks. Caricatures, ironic comments and sharp accusations against the government’s decision invaded the web. This was especially so because the importation of Italian waste coincided with the entry into force of the law 77-15 that forbids the exportation, importation, manufacture, sale and use of plastic bags in the country. To this end, the ministry launched *Operation Zero Mika* (Zero Plastic Operation) from June to October 2016. However, the importation of Italian waste was seen as a blatant contradiction between the policy of the ministry prohibiting the use of plastic bags and its practices allowing waste importation.

Accused of turning Morocco into ‘the dustbin of Europe’, the ministry issued a statement to contain the controversy on June 30, 2016. *“The importation and recovery of this type of non-hazardous waste is carried out according to the partnership agreement between the ministry and the Professional Association of Cement Manufacturers,”* states the department of Minister Hakima El Haite. The statement adds, *“The Ministry of the Environment has authorized the importation of only RDF-type waste (Refuse-Derived Fuel) which is a non-hazardous waste used as a substitute for conventional fossil fuel.”*

However, the statement did not seem to be convincing, which indicates a communication failure. In the same vein, Kamal Lahbib, a founding member of the Moroccan Coalition for Climate Justice (CMJC), said, *“The explanations of the Ministry of the Environment are far from reassuring. Beyond the controversy and the 2,500 tonnes of waste, this is an opportunity to open the debate on the importation of waste, its incineration, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, and emissions tests”*. For most political and associative actors, such a decision should involve efficient and transparent communication because it concerns the health of Moroccans.

In the same direction and based on the work of (Amsidder and Bendahane, 2018). The move to a communications company is a turning point in management of public space and opinion. In this reconfiguration, the communication becomes an essential component used to involve, if not make the citizen adhere to decision-making. THE public sector actors (government, local authorities, public companies, political parties, etc.) found themselves, willingly despite, obliged to adopt an attitude of openness towards the media and to through the media, in order to negotiate the acceptability of their speech and adherence to their decisions. This new configuration of public space and service is a complex process involving all stakeholders: the institution, the user and the media. The three actors convey different logics, sometimes opposed, linked to the demands of the moment, to know more transparency, governance and interactivity. Politicians are aware of the place of communication in management of their image and public affairs. For their part, citizens require that statements be accompanied by concrete facts and media, particularly digital, with the speed and efficiency they provide, are in the process of realizing the power of which they could be holders in the new public space.

Furthermore, research by (Zémor, 1995) has shown that in a crisis situation, in fact, communication plays a crucial role, because the very relationship of the institution with the public is in question. The sudden manifestation of the hazard, the realization of a tiny probability and the requirement to find normality in an emergency disrupt the system of references, blur the external image and undermine identity and its internal benchmarks.

It should also be added that the treatment of the scandal triggered by the importation of Italian waste by Morocco at a time when, paradoxically, Morocco was preparing to host COP 22 and launched a broad campaign to fight against the use plastic (zero mika). Thus, our problematics presents itself as follows: how did official institutions as well as press organs, in this case the *MSM* and *La Libération*, deal with the controversy over waste imported from Italy?

In this study, we highlight the characteristics of the discourse regarding the controversy over imported waste by analyzing articles from two Moroccan daily newspapers, *Le Matin du Sahara & du Maghreb (MSM)* and *La Libération* as well as the press releases of the Ministry of the Environment. The two dailies are general-interest newspapers, but differ in circulation and sales<sup>1</sup>. They dealt with the issue in detailed but different ways considering their editorial lines. In this respect, *MSM* is a pro-government newspaper and *La Libération* is the mouthpiece of the Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires (USFP), an opposition left-wing party. As for the

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<sup>1</sup> According to L'Organisme de Justification et de la Diffusion, in 2013-2014 *MSM* printed 20947 copies a day and *La Libération* 2134 copies.

press releases, we consider how the discourse of official institutions converges with or diverges from that of the press. Taking account of each party's background, we assume that their discourse will accordingly be divergent.

Concerning the methodology adopted. We favored a content analysis of the articles relating to this theme. This method is intended to establish the meaning and to enable an informed understanding of the documents analyzed.

In order to provide elements of response to our problematic. We will first present, and in detail, the methodology used to analyze the content of our corpora. As for the second part, it will highlight the fact that the protection of the environment against the decision of the Moroccan government is at the heart of the controversy that shook Morocco. In a third part, we will present the question relating to communication and social networks in the case of imported waste. As for the fourth part, it will be an opportunity to present the leading figures in the debate about waste imports in Morocco. In the last part, we will carry out a comparative analysis of the three corpora.

### **1. Content analysis method**

To consider the treatment of the controversy over imported Italian waste in *MSM* and *La Libération*, we applied a content analysis method to the corpora. Content analysis was initially used in Columbia University in New York in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and then spread with the development of social, political and information and communication sciences. It is a way of processing information. It applies to all forms of communication, discourse and imagery. We use content analysis approach to analyze any text from a transmitter to a receiver (Bardin, 1989). Content analysis is defined as a set of descriptive, objective, systematic and quantitative techniques used for document exploration (Unrug, 1974: 9). The techniques are meant to establish meaning and to provide a sound understanding of documents.

Our method follows Bardin's approach, who suggests that a text be analyzed and divided into main themes, sub-themes, genres, actors and positions that make it up. Thus, we proceeded in three main steps. First, we selected a number of press releases of the Ministry of the Environment and the most relevant newspaper articles that dealt with the imported waste controversy in July 2016. We sorted out the selected texts according to their length (number of characters) as follows:

- The *MSM* published eight articles (two medium-sized articles and six short ones) while *La Libération* published four (three medium-sized and one short).

- The Ministry of the Environment issued a single short press release and a long report of a press conference.

Second, we read the articles, highlighted the general themes and grouped the corresponding keywords under them. For instance, regarding the theme *objects and substances*, we selected *oven, machine components, tires, paper, plastic*, etc. Words grouping took into consideration their frequency in the articles. This would help understand the strategies of public communication adopted. Afterwards, we drew up a table for each article (e.g., Table 1) where we grouped the different components of the articles: themes, sub-themes, actors, article type, etc. We applied the same grouping principle to the characteristics of article type, character and position.

**Fig. 1 Article analysis**

Newspaper	Topic	Notions & frequency	Type (lexis, style, register, etc.)	Actor
Article title: Date: Page: Author: Size: Summary:	Topic 1	- Notion n° 1 - Notion n° 2 - Notion n° 3 - Notion n° 4	- Descriptive Analytics  - Report	-Actor1:  Symbol of X  -Actor2:  Symbol of X
	Topic 2	- Notion n° 1 - Notion n° 2 - Notion n° 3 - Notion n° 4		
	Position (for vs. against)  Classification (priority of topics)			

**Source: Author data**

Third and last, we carried out a comparative study of the *MSM, La Libération*, press releases and the report of the press conference published by the Ministry of the Environment. We found out elements relating to thematic fields, article type, actors and positions. For each event analyzed, we did the comparisons in two steps:

- The first compared the treatment of themes and actors. The differences in size and the interests of the three corpora prompted us to favor a quantitative comparison using word frequency count.

- The second gave importance to the comparison among the definitions of the dominant notions in each corpus.

## 2. The environment at the heart of the controversy

The corpus under analysis reflects the paramount importance of the environment in the case of 2500 tonnes of fuel waste imported for Moroccan cement plants. The environment is the main topic around which other ones turn.

A priori, following the content analysis of the three corpora, the topic of environment would receive an unequal quantitative treatment. As far as *La Libération* is concerned, the question of the environment comes up with 83 times, *MSM* mentions it more than 70 times, and the Ministry of the Environment 32 times.

The *MSM* and *La Libération* capitalized on the issue of the environment to highlight the issue of imported waste. Indeed, the discourse of the two dailies stresses healthy environment for the population, especially that the country had set environmental goals to ban the manufacture, marketing and use of plastic bags. In addition, Morocco was the host country of COP22 on climate change<sup>2</sup>. Last but not least, Morocco has adopted in its development strategy the concept of sustainable development, which seeks balance between environmental, economic and social dimensions to improve the living environment of citizens, strengthen the sustainable management of natural resources, and promote environment-friendly economic activities. The government has laid the basis for this through a number of political, institutional, legal and socio-economic reforms included in the National Charter of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

Nevertheless, the newspaper *La Libération* called into question all these measures. It took advantage of the ministry decision and turned the controversy into a purely political matter, attacking the Moroccan government especially Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane. Additionally, the analysis revealed that *La Libération* amplified the dangerousness of the government's action and highlighted its paradoxes. Browsing the headlines showed that the daily adopted an opposition discourse and took advantage of the controversy to get to stage front and gather support for the left party that owns it, Union des Forces Socialistes Populaires (UFSP). *La Libération's* defence of the environment quickly became an election campaign

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<sup>2</sup> Morocco hosted UN conference of parties to the Convention on climate changes (COP 22) in November 2016



before time, as the following headlines suggested: *Paradoxes of Benkirane government, The right to a healthy environment is an essential part of socialist values, Driss Lachguar [USFP general secretary] regrets Benkirane government's lack of interest in the organization of COP22, Benkirane absent, Hakima El Haite defends the indefensible*. Therefore, we conclude that for *La Libération* the importation of Italian waste is just an alibi to attack Prime Minister Benkirane (10 occurrences) and his government.

On the other hand, the pro-monarchy daily *MSM* adopted more or less a neutral discourse in dealing with the controversy. It faithfully echoed the press releases and press conferences of the state institutions. Furthermore, it tended to minimize the impact of imported Italian waste on the environment. The newspaper mentioned the word *waste* (59 occurrences) combined with the attributive adjective *non-dangerous*, while *La Libération* combined the word (73 occurrences) with the adjective *dangerous*.

As for the Ministry of the Environment, it associated *waste* (20 occurrences) with the adjective non-dangerous and specified the nature of these wastes. According to the minister of the environment Hakima El Haite, Morocco is committed to waste recycling and energy recovery. Refuse-Derived Fuel (RDF), an aspect of waste recovery, allows Morocco to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the cost of its energy bill. The country's dependence on fossil fuels currently reaches 96% of its energy needs. Indeed, the incineration (09 occurrences) of RDF (12 occurrences) is less polluting than that of fossil fuels and generates much less GHG. Using RDF also reduces the country's energy bill.

Even though RDF waste was destined for incineration, the ministry minimized its negative impact (non-hazardous, 07 occurrences) on the environment and the citizen's health (04 occurrences) by referring to the regulations and laws constraining the operation (10 occurrences). This leads us to say that the ministry adopts a discourse seeking to reassure citizens (Tixier, 2000) and appease public anger because of a controversy that quickly turned into a crisis. In the same vein, *MSM* in turn minimized the polluting aspect of waste (12 occurrences of the adjective non-hazardous), even claiming that the Moroccan RDF would be less polluting:

*Les déchets type RDF (Refuse-derived fuels) constituent une source d'énergie moins polluante que les combustibles fossiles et leur importation est une solution*



*logique en attendant le développement d'une filière locale de traitement des déchets [...] La fraction de biomasse dans les RDF produits au Maroc atteint 50%, un pourcentage plus important que celui repéré dans des RDF européens (28%), précise Theulen. Une tonne de RDF au Maroc permettra d'épargner plus de CO<sub>2</sub> qu'une tonne de RDF en Europe, ce qui érige la gestion des déchets en un élément clé pour une économie verte et un développement durable. (Recyclage des déchets, Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb, 31/07/2016)*

As a source of energy, RDF waste is less polluting than fossil fuels and its importation is a logical solution until a local industry for waste treatment is developed [...] "The fraction of biomass in RDF waste produced in Morocco reaches 50%, higher than what is found in European RDF (28%)," says Theulen. One tonne of RDF of Morocco helps save more CO<sub>2</sub> than one tonne of RDF of Europe, which makes waste management a key element for a green economy and sustainable development]

Comparatively, the concept of incineration in *La Libération* (06 occurrences) is associated with negative effects on health and the environment. We can say that the newspaper discourse presents itself as a plea defending the rights of Moroccans to live in a safe environment. However, this also implies an early election campaign.

*Pourquoi le gouvernement a-t-il pris autant de temps pour prendre une telle décision ? Est-elle suffisante pour régler ce problème ? Pourquoi l'Exécutif n'a-t-il pas adopté de loi interdisant une fois pour toutes l'importation de ce genre de déchets ? Ne va-t-elle pas être interprétée comme une tentative de jeter de la poudre aux yeux afin de calmer la colère de l'opinion publique nationale qui, dès le début de cette affaire, s'est opposée farouchement à ce genre d'importations ? Et last but not least, cette décision ne constitue-t-elle pas un cinglant camouflet pour la ministre chargée de l'Environnement qui a mal géré l'affaire et partant ne devra-t-elle pas déposer les armes et jeter l'éponge ? Le seul parti politique qui a pris l'affaire au sérieux dès son déclenchement n'est autre que l'USFP dont le Groupe parlementaire à la Chambre des Représentants a présenté une proposition de loi relative à l'interdiction de toute importation de déchets pour quelque motif que ce soit afin d'éradiquer le mal à sa racine. (Mourad, 2016)*

Why did the government take so long to take that decision? Is the decision enough to solve the problem? Why has the government not passed laws banning the importation of this kind of waste once and for all? Will this not be interpreted as an attempt to make good impression to calm the anger of citizens who, from the beginning of the controversy, fiercely opposed such imports? And finally, is this decision not an insult to the minister of the environment who mismanaged the matter? Moreover, since she is leaving office very soon, should she not give in and call it quits? The only political party that has taken the matter seriously since it broke out is the USFP, whose parliamentary group in the House of Representatives introduced a bill for the prohibition of any import of waste for whatever reason to eradicate the evil at its root. It is clear that the USFP via its mouthpiece *La Libération* tends to arouse angry citizens to take eventually the position of the national hero:

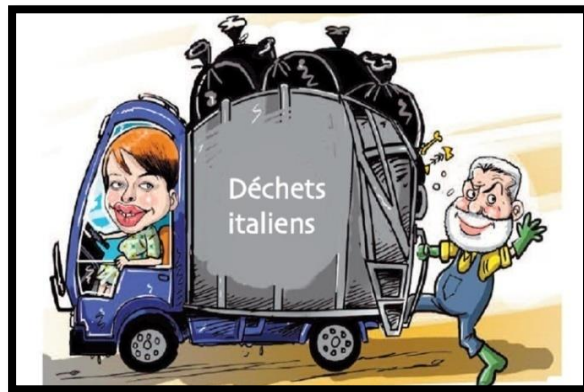
*“La question du climat et le droit à un environnement sain ont toujours fait partie du projet et des valeurs socialistes. Ils sont au centre de notre programme politique. Il s’agit là d’une conviction, qui a été traduite dans les faits par plusieurs mesures et dispositions prises sous le gouvernement d’Alternance. Tout le monde se rappelle le travail effectué par plusieurs cadres Usfpéistes relevant du ministère de l’Environnement pour sortir des textes de loi en matière de préservation de l’environnement ». C’est ainsi que le Premier secrétaire de l’USFP, Driss Lachguar, a inauguré les travaux de la journée d’étude sur le climat et les questions environnementales, organisée, dimanche dernier à Marrakech par le comité national de l’environnement relevant de l’USFP.” (Hassan, 2016)*

“The issues of climate and the right to a safe environment have always been part of the socialist program and values. They are at the center of our political agenda. This is a conviction translated into several measures taken under the Alternation government [led by the USFP figure Abderrahmane Youssefi]. Everyone remembers the work done by several USFP members under the Ministry of the Environment to issue laws to save the environment.” This is how USFP First Secretary Driss Lachguar opened the study day on climate and environmental issues organized by the party’s National Environment Committee last Sunday in Marrakech.”

## TITAMICA

Caricature 1 (*La Libération* 11/07/2016)

## DÉCHETS ITALIENS

Caricature 2 (*La Libération* 16/07/2016)

In short, the issue of the environment during the case of imported Italian waste is strongly present in the three corpora. However, the treatment of the problem is divergent. *La Libération*, the official daily of the opposition party USFP, exaggerates the government's decision and personally attacks Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane. We note the ironic and satirical tone recurrent in the newspaper articles and depicted in caricatures accompanying them. The discourse of *La Libération* has a provocative tone and marginalizes the ethics of journalism and objectivity when covering the controversy. For instance:

“The media release of Hakima El Haite, now dubbed the Waste Minister, on Al Oula TV channel, has not dispelled the fears of Moroccans and the arguments she has put forward have not been reassuring on the ins and outs of this matter”. (Mourad, 2016)

Comparatively, the *MSM* does not give much credit to the case, minimizes the dangers of RDF waste for the health of citizens and the environment, and stresses that all *developed* countries resort to such less polluting practices. Thus, the pro-monarchy newspaper repeats faithfully the statements of official institutions, especially the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of the Interior, whose objective is to contain the anger of citizens and manage the crisis.

### 3. Communication and social networks in the case of imported waste

The cyberspace allowed Moroccan citizens to interact freely about the controversy of the imported waste. It allowed them to express their opinions free of the state restrictions on the freedom of speech. The cyberspace has wiped out the traditional boundaries between the public, the media and sources. An intensive debate was initiated. Every net surfer becomes somehow

a virtual person able to give his opinion and disseminate information related to the imported waste controversy. The advantage they enjoy is the power of self-publishing.

The *MSM* gave more importance to the role of ICT (07 occurrences) in arousing anger among Moroccan citizens against the decision of the Ministry of Environment. The newspaper went back to the source of the controversy and referred to a statement of the Regional Center of the Environment and Sustainable Development in El Jadida condemning “the arrival of 2,500 tonnes of waste comprising tires and dangerous, toxic plastics” at Jorf Lasfer seaport. Taken up by other associations and the media, the statement quickly made the tour of Moroccan households thanks to the internet (04 occurrences), triggering nation-wide outrage. On the other hand, the *MSM* expressed its will to calm public anger of the public and stressed that there were moderate voices, inciting net surfers not to be carried away by hasty judgments, at least until the case was fully investigated (Ayoub, 2016). In addition, the newspaper drew attention to the fact that social networks had given much importance to the controversy by spreading on a large scale the famous motto ‘Morocco is not a dump’. This came up so often as a leitmotiv in conversations on social networks (03 occurrences). Moreover, according to the *MSM*, some political parties not represented in the parliament gave their positions on the matter by press releases but especially by social networks. This was true of the general secretary of the far-left Unified Socialist Party (PSU), Nabila Mounib.

Angry at “turning Morocco into Europe’s garbage dump”, she protested against “the importation of toxic waste, dangerous for the physical and mental health of Moroccans.” (Ayoub, *ibid.*)

Like *MSM*, *La Libération* adopts the same discourse on the topic of ICT (05 occurrences) and their ability to spread the news about the importation of Italian waste. However, regarding the press release as well as the press conference report of the Ministry of Environment, they do not address issues related to the current controversy. Instead, their discourse is meant to reassure the citizen and mitigate the hazards of imported waste.

The Ministry of Environment adopted crisis communication but too late, we think, since the press had unveiled the scandal ahead of the ministry, which shows that government communication failed and that the crisis was out of its control. Indeed, the ministry did not mention at any moment the terms *controversy* or *case*. Moreover, no mention of popular anger or the use of ICT in this debate was made. However, the ministry insisted that incineration respected international standards (06 occurrences) and that the operation was constrained by strict laws (07 occurrences), making public health and the environment protection major

concerns. Thus, based on this analysis, for the Ministry of Environment the management of information in case of crisis is as important as the management of the crisis itself. “The audiences that an organization targets during a crisis recall the organization’s reaction to them more than the event itself.” (Texier, 2000).

#### 4. Leading figures in the debate about waste imports in Morocco

The treatment of various emblematic figures that marked the debate in the three corpora reveals large differences. Content analysis revealed a substantial difference with respect to the actors of the debate. Each newspaper mentioned more or less identical symbols, but with divergent tones.

**Hakima El Haite Sanhaji:** She is Minister of Environment. Her career was entirely in the field of the environment, in the public and private sectors. She was mentioned by the *MSM* (04 occurrences). The daily reported literally the words of the minister during her media interventions. As for *La Libération*, the minister (06 occurrences) was target of accusations and sarcastic remarks. The Ministry of Environment press release mentioned the name of the minister more than seven times.

**Abdelilah Benkirane:** Leader of the Justice and Development Party, he won the legislative elections of 25 November 2011 and those of 07 October 2016 in Morocco. In accordance with the new Constitution of 2011, the king of Morocco appointed him Prime Minister. The *MSM* mentioned his name as Prime Minister once. *La Libération* referred to him more than 10 times, a frequency rate due to the fact that the daily wanted to hold the prime minister as the ultimate cause behind the problems of the country.

**Mohamed Hassad:** Engineer and statesman, Mohamed Hassad is Minister of the Interior. He was named twice by *MSM* in order to reassure the public opinion. On behalf of the environment minister who was on a mission abroad, the interior minister described the information related about the Italian waste to be false. According to Mr. Hassad, the type of waste imported is used in many European countries, including Italy and the importation operation by Morocco complies with the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. On the other hand, the name of the minister did not come up in *La Libération* since his statements did not square with the electoral agenda of the USFP.

**Mustapha El-Khalfi:** He is PJD member and Minister of Communication in the coalition government headed by Mr. Benkirane. His name was mentioned three times in the *MSM* corpus

to say that the government had decided to suspend the use of the current cargo of imported waste, pending completion of the investigations conducted on this matter before taking a final decision. On the other hand, for *La Libération*, the controversy ended just after the minister declared the importation of Italian waste was cancelled. After his statement, the newspaper stopped writing about the issue as of 16 July 2016.

### 5. Comparative analysis of the three corpora

The treatment of the issue of waste importation in the three corpora is significantly different quantitatively and qualitatively. They make of the environment one of their central topics. The *MSM* deals with the issue exhaustively (70 occurrences of the term environment). Moreover, the discourse of the newspaper converges with that of the official institutions blamed for the case. The *MSM* try to calm down, reassure and tended to contain angry public opinion by citing the statements of Moroccan governmental institutions.

On the opposite, *La Libération* makes vehement criticism of the government, especially Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane. The newspaper makes the environment one of its main themes (83 occurrences) only as a Torjan horse for an early election campaign. The daily reminds the reader that the opposition party USFP organized a study day on climate and environmental issues on 03 July 2016 in Marrakech, just after the outbreak of the controversy. This statement leads us to question the objectivity of the discourse that *La Libération* adopted.

On the other hand, the discourse the Ministry of the Environment adopts is argumentative and seeks to convince the citizen of the non-hazardous nature of imported waste on health and the environment. One of the arguments put forward by the ministry is that the incineration operation complies with international standards of safety and environmental protection.

At this point, we tackle the role of cyberspace. Such controversies usually give rise to a form of 'citizen journalism' consisting in the use of ITC tools. It could be seen as a means of sharing information and a means of expression. Thus, internet users move from being passive receivers to active contributors and transmitters and become online journalists. Social media like Twitter and Facebook or blogs are channels that facilitate and promote the emergence of this phenomenon. Generally, internet users want to convey through ITC the reality around them. The role they undertake gives them the name *Citizen reporter*. In addition, the news that internet users posted was taken up by the print media to support reports and highlight the popular anger that resulted from the ministry's decision. This practice confers on citizen journalism, which is amateurish, a touch of professionalism.



Although the two dailies gave importance to the sub-theme of the internet and digital social networks and their role during the controversy, they diverged quantitatively from each other, leading us to deduce that the sub-theme was not treated similarly in the two newspapers. The content analysis we conducted showed that the frequency of the sub-theme *internet* in the columns of the *MSM* (57.14%) is much higher than in those of *La Libération* (40%). Therefore, we claim that the *MSM* highly values the role of the internet during the Italian waste controversy. This may be interpreted to show that the communicative strategy of the Ministry of the Environment is a failure since the web took over the matter.

In another respect, *La Libération* exaggerates the position of the government and criticizes the person of the prime minister, accusing him of failing to manage the controversy properly. The discourse of the newspaper regrets the government lack of interest in the environment management of the country. The ironic and critical tone that *La Libération* adopted promotes the discourse of the opposition, which we describe as subjective though the dominant type of information is in the form of articles (100%). Comparatively, the *MSM* adopted a more or less objective discourse progressing over the course of the events but which echoed the words of the state institutions. This leads us to confirm the complicity between the pro-monarchy newspaper and state institutions. The journalistic discourse of the *MSM* can be described as objective, since the dominant type of information is articles (75%) while agency news represents a percentage of 25%.

Finally, the discourse of the government majority, represented by the *MSM*, is on the defensive and tends to justify itself in the face of growing popular anger by stressing the concerns of the ministry about the environment and the health of Moroccans. However, the ministry's position reveals a flawed institutional communication in that the media and digital social networks unveiled the crisis ahead of the ministry that lost control of the situation.

## Conclusion

To understand the treatment of the controversy over the waste imported from Italy into Morocco, we considered the articles published in the *MSM* and *La Libération*. This allowed us to see how the subject was tackled in different contexts and from different angles. Additionally, it allowed us to compare media discourse to that of political institutions in Morocco.

The two newspapers share the same conception and the main topics of the debate when it comes to reporting on environmental issues. They agree on the subjects to highlight, yet they have



different types of discourse. That is, they focus on the same themes related to the environment (thematic analysis) but treat them differently (position, actors, article type, etc.).

We find two opposing journalistic discourses reflecting two different political positions. While the *MSM* claims that imported waste is not dangerous, *La Libération* exaggerates its danger for health and the environment. Instead of dealing with the controversy objectively and inform the public about what actually happens, *La Libération* takes advantage of the situation to launch an early election campaign. Furthermore, the daily does not attack the decision taken by the minister of the environment but attacks the prime minister, which is a paradox.

During the controversy, the Ministry of Environment resorted to all means to appease the anger of public opinion and found excuses, albeit late, by minimizing the risks of imported waste. This uncovers a faulty governmental communication. Indeed, it was through digital social networks that Moroccan citizens were informed about the ministry's decision, which indicates the absence of communication between official institutions and the citizen. In sum, the discourse of the media and state institutions with regard to the dilemma is not reassuring in that the citizen, who is the ultimate receiver, is torn between divergent, even opposite, discourses on waste hazards for his health and surrounding environment.

At the end of our contribution, we can say that the debate analysis about the Italian waste imported into Morocco opens up to us several avenues for further research. Indeed, our work could well be complemented by other works and press titles which would enable us to pursue comparisons and shed light on the importance of environmental issues in the imagination of the national Moroccan press.

The interdisciplinarity of CIS enables the development of knowledge fields. In our contribution, we focused on one part of the communication pattern (sender/media). We could, in other research work, deal with the other part which concerns the receiver/reader.

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