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EVERYTHING IS UNCERTAIN

Representations of Lapland tourism industry in Helsingin Sanomat during the first Covid-19 pandemic year

University of Lapland

Master's thesis

Northern Tourism, Tourism Research

Spring 2024

University of Lapland, Faculty of Social Sciences
Title: Everything is uncertain – Representations of Lapland tourism industry in Helsingin Sanomat during the first Covid-19 pandemic year
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Degree programme/ subject: Northern Tourism, Tourism Research
The type of the work: Master's thesis
The number of pages: 60 + 2 appendices
Year: 2024

Abstract

When the year 2019 was coming to an end, there were "viral pneumonia cases" in Wuhan, China. As we know now, it was not pneumonia, but something that changed the everyday lives of billions of people. In the beginning of 2020, the disease was named Covid-19, and on March 11th, 2020, it was already declared as a pandemic. The global world is so well-connected that a virus is rapidly spread around the planet. The travelling people transported the Covid-19 everywhere, but it was, however, the tourism industry that was hit very hard when the countries closed their borders, and restrictions and quarantines became a part of everyday life.

The tourism industry in Finland is said to have two locomotives, the first being Helsinki and the second being the region of Lapland. Even though the absolute number of tourists is higher in an urban area, the importance of tourism is more visible and vital in a more peripheric area, like in Lapland in Northern Finland. The tourism industry in the Finnish Lapland grew fast in 2010s, but in 2020, the whole tourism industry in Lapland was seen in a totally different light than in the previous year when it was breaking records. Suddenly, there was not anymore a continuous flow of international tourists, and that also affected the way how Lapland tourism was represented in the news.

The aim of this thesis is to look for how Lapland tourism was represented in the domestic news articles in the first 12 months of the Covid-19 pandemic, and it is done by utilizing qualitative data-based content analysis. The underlying paradigm of this study is social constructionism which challenges the idea of knowledge being objective and argues that our ways of understanding the world are constructed socially. The news media is one of the arenas where the public discussion is taking place.

The research data consists of 27 domestic news articles from Helsingin Sanomat's online version. The analysis highlights four themes related to how the tourism industry in Lapland was represented in the research data: "Foreign–domestic comparisons", "Changed reality", "Complex situation", and "Different future". Through these themes the analysis illustrates how Lapland tourism was represented as an industry which was built for the needs of large numbers of international tourists, but which was not resilient in the time when the flow of foreign visitors suddenly stopped.

Keywords: tourism research, media research, journalism, representation, social constructionism

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The idea for this thesis originated from something I had noticed as a journalist: When the world was closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic in the spring 2020, tourism was suddenly discussed in a different way than in 2010s when the borders remained open. On the one hand, the lay-offs and unemployment rates in the tourism and hospitality industry were in the headlines for a long time, but on the other hand, the domestic travelling was blooming in Finland. The tourism industry in the Finnish Lapland, especially, seemed to be a source of news for a long time. However, these remarks were only something that I made in my work as a journalist, and as a scholar these observations made me think if I could research the topic a bit deeper. That is why this thesis is about how the tourism of the Finnish Lapland was represented in the first twelve months of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A pandemic is a term that appeared everywhere in the early 2020s, but it is, actually, a term with not just one accepted definition (Morens et al. 2009, p. 1018). However, there are features that are included in most of the cases when a pandemic is described, like wide geographic extension, minimal population immunity, disease movement, infectiousness, and severity (Morens et al. 2009, pp. 1019–1020).

As the name of the virus, Covid-*19*, indicates, the virus was first detected in the year 2019. At the end of 2019, there were "viral pneumonia cases" in Wuhan, China, and in the beginning of January 2020, the Chinese media reported the first death connected to a novel coronavirus which was not anymore called pneumonia (WHO, 2022). The virus did not, however, stay in China, but travelled with humans across the globe. On March 11th, 2020, The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) made an assessment that Covid-19 characterizes as a pandemic. The same date also serves as a starting point of my research data (see Chapter 3.2). Already in mid-March, 2020, Europe had become the epicentre of the pandemic, and in early April, there were over a million Covid-19 cases confirmed globally (WHO, 2022).

At the end of 2020, the first sights of light were seen because of the successful, and rapid, development of Covid-19 vaccines (WHO, 2022). In Finland, the biggest concern was the cold-storage capacity, and especially the availability of deep-freezers, but the logistics problems finally got solved on time, and the Covid-19 vaccinations started on the last days of 2020 in Finland (Relander, 2022). After more than three years of Covid-19 pandemic era, in May 2023, WHO declared that Covid-19 was no longer a public health emergency (UN, 2023).

The Covid-19 pandemic was neither the first, nor the last pandemic, but now there is an opportunity to see and evaluate what happened in the early 2020s, and possibly also learn something so that everyone has the opportunity to better prepare before the time of the next global health risk. This thesis is not the one to give an answer what to do better, but, hopefully, it could contribute the understanding on how the media wrote, and, consequently, how we understood the external changes impacting tourism. Tourism was, undoubtedly, one of the industries that the pandemic hit hard.

A central feature of being a tourist is the way to observe the place of visit through the tourist gaze, as Urry (1990, as in Jansson, 2002, p. 431) argues. Jansson (2002, p. 431) adds that "[i]n a historical perspective, the tourist gaze has become more and more intertwined with the consumption of media images". That is why it is necessary to understand the importance of media representations which are one of the factors that alter the tourist behaviour.

This thesis is strongly connected to the media research, not only because of its topic, but also because of my profession as a journalist, and because of my previous master's degree which I took in journalism and media research. I do hope that this thesis could contribute both tourism research, and media research.

1.2 Tourism in times of Covid-19 pandemic

Hall et al. (2020, p. 582) write that, on one hand, tourism is critical for a pandemic because the travelling people can carry pathogens, and, on the other hand, the pandemics impact tourist behaviour because of, for example, the travel limitations and

border controls. The authors add that even though the connection between tourism and pandemics exists, there is only a limited amount of research and literature on the connections and long-term implications of pandemics and tourism.

We know that the Covid-19 pandemic hit the tourism industry, but what is, actually, tourism? Tuulentie (2017, p. 207) writes that even though tourism is often seen and studied through the lenses of business, it is a much wider phenomenon which offers various topics for social scientists to investigate: Who is a tourist, why and how do we move somewhere to be able to be tourists? What is authentic for a tourist? How is tourism both work, and an opposite to work? United Nations' World Tourism Organisation UNWTO (2023) defines tourism as something that

> *entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/ professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure.*

In other words, tourism happens outside of a person's normal geographical surroundings. However, Tuulentie (2017, pp. 208–209) also points out that some long-lasting divisions have been re-though, one example being the idea that a person could only be at home or somewhere else, or that a person is living either their everyday life or having leisure time. Nowadays, there is a problem in those black–and–white divisions of time and space, and a re-thinking has been necessary because of the technological development which allows us to be physically in one place, but being connected to so much data and to so many people that the physical location has lost some of its meaning (Tuulentie 2017, pp. 218–219).

In the context of this thesis, Lapland tourism means tourism inside the borders of the region of Lapland (in Finnish: Lapin maakunta). Naturally, even a person who lives in one spot of Lapland can be a tourist in another point of the region, but because Lapland only has about 175,000 residents (Tilastokeskus, 2022), come to Lapland from another region or country. Actually, the Finnish capital Helsinki and the region of Lapland have been called the locomotives of the Finnish tourism industry because they host the

majority of the incoming international tourists – For example, in 2019, which was the last full year before the Covid-19 pandemic, there were 7 million overnight stays of international tourists registered in Finland, 43 per cent of them happening in the capital area and 25 per cent in Lapland (Business Finland, 2020).

The year 2020 looked very different in the Finnish tourism statistics. According to Tilastokeskus (2021), the number of overnight stays of international tourists registered in Finland decreased by no less than 68 per cent between 2019 and 2020. At the same time, the overnight stays of domestic tourists went down by 25 per cent, and in total, the number of stays was as low as 25 years earlier, in 1995. The domestic leisure-time travelling was the one to mostly keep the tourism infrastructure working in Finland in 2020, but the year was, in general, a hard one for the tourism industry as a whole (Tilastokeskus, 2021).

When the tourism industry faced turbulent times, it, naturally, also affected the way how the industry was spoken about. Suomi (2021) writes in their master's thesis about the discourses related to the domestic travelling during the summer 2020 which was the first Covid-19 pandemic time summer. In that research, the data was collected from both Helsingin Sanomat, and from the Finnish public service media Yle. Suomi's (2021, p. 6, 8) focus is on the travel crisis created by the pandemic, and in the time of their research, the Covid-19 pandemic was, still, a relatively new phenomenon, and such a health-related travel crisis had not occurred earlier in Finland. They write that the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS, epidemic in the early 2000s offers an example of another health-related travel crisis, but in a much smaller scale. Furthermore, most of the research related to any travel crises is connected to economics and business studies (Suomi 2021, p. 54). One of the three domestic travel discourses that appeared in Suomi's (2021, p. 42) research was the renaissance of the domestic travel – When the borders were closed, the people looked rather closer rather than further. The discourse is built on the words like "force" as if travelling is something that must be done, and if it is not allowed to happen abroad, then it is necessary to do it without crossing a border (Suomi 2021, pp. 42–43). Suomi's findings resonated with the thoughts I had as a journalist, and which I explained in the Chapter 1.1, and they offered an interesting point of reflection also with the results of this thesis.

In Lapland, the lack of tourists was visible especially because, as Tuulentie (2017, p. 210) phrases it, the Finnish tourism industry has concentrated in tourism hubs which, especially in Lapland, are located in remote areas, but which, especially during the peak times, resemble towns even though the number of year-round residents remain low. The author continues that if the tourism season brings the seasonal workers, second-home owners, and tourists, to a remote place, the division between the urban and the rural dissolves. Even if the absolute number of tourists is the highest in the major urban areas, the meaning of tourism industry is, often, more vital, and visible in the rural areas and communities (Tuulentie, 2017, pp. 210–211).

Helameri et al. (2023, pp. 27–28) write that the Covid-19 pandemic was neither the first, nor the last, global phenomenon that affected the tourism industry in Lapland. They mention that already before the pandemic there were global megatrends, for example a growing demand for more sustainable ways of travelling, which influenced the behaviour of the customers, and the Covid-19 pandemic was directly followed by another global crisis, the war in Ukraine, and, on the top of everything, at the same time the tourism industry was suffering from a lack of professional workforce because many had changed jobs, or studied something new, during the Covid-19 time. In this thesis, I am focusing on the events of the first Covid-19 pandemic, and not in the events that happened earlier, or later. However, it is important to keep in mind that no event happens in a vacuum, and that the tourism industry had, and has, and will have, also other challenges than only the pandemic and its aftermath. It is also necessary to keep in mind, as Butler (2020, p. 669) phrases it, that the travel restrictions, quarantines, and lockdowns affected mainly mass-tourism which had traditionally brought huge numbers of people to one place for a certain period of time, but small-scale tourism was not as heavily affected.

Naturally, the Covid-19 pandemic respected neither borders of the countries nor the borders of regions within a country so Lapland was not the only region where tourism industry had turbulent times. Here, I am giving a very short overview how the effects of the pandemic were studied in the beginning of the pandemic within the frame of tourism research. For example, the Northern and Central Italy were heavily affected by the pandemic in the beginning of 2020 which affected also the Italian domestic travelling in

2020 (Corbisiero & Monaco 2021, p. 409). There were several strategies on how Covid-19-impacted travel destinations tried to navigate through the restrictions. Ketter and Avraham (2021, pp. 823–824) write that some of the during-lockdown tourism marketing strategies could be called spreading of hope and inspiration, boosting the feeling of the brotherhood, and creating the feeling of nostalgia. In the same context, they write that some of the post-lockdown strategies were welcoming back, Covid-19 safe destinations and restorative experiences. The change from free travelling and even overtourism to lockdowns and to hesitant tourist behaviour was reflected in the tourism marketing campaigns during and after the lockdowns (Ketter & Avraham 2021, p. 828). That supports the theory of "advertising as a society mirror" which, according to Holbrook (1987, as in Ketter & Avraham 2021, p. 820), suggests that the key messages and marketing strategies change as the consumers' values and preferences change. Covid-19 pandemic might be a point when the individuals started to alter their travel habits, but the transformation of travel ecosystems is, however, a longer process (Hall et al. 2020, p. 584). Especially if there is an authoritarian tendency behind a travel destination, it is likely that the focus on post-Covid-19 tourism will be in business-as-usual, not at a possibility to re-think with sustainability in mind (Hall et al. 2020, p. 591).

The future is never clear, but the Covid-19 pandemic was something that pushed the tourism industry into a rapid re-thinking on what they had taken for granted, like the continuous flow of tourists – Suddenly, the medium-term futures of tourism looked different than predicted (Butler 2020, p. 663). Connected to that topic, Harju's (2023, p. 5) master's thesis focuses on the discourses which the media builds about the tourism futures in 2017–2023. Harju (2023, p. 70) points out that especially when the experts are interviewed, the experts are leading the public discussion and telling the actors of tourism how to create new solutions, and how to prepare for a better future. The expert-led public discussion is, also, connected with the news criteria which are explained in Chapter 2.2.

1.3 Previous research on tourism representations in the media

The Covid-19 pandemic began a new era for the Finnish society, and only after the initial shock had subsided, it was time for reflection. In the context of news media itself, the aftermath of the pandemic focused on the complicated balance of communication and journalism especially on the first months of the pandemic. A crisis like pandemic is likely to create also an "infodemic" where the fact-based information gets mixed with disinformation and misinformation of various kinds (Cinelli et al., 2020, as in Väliverronen, 2022, p. 64). Consequently, the overload of information is a challenge for the whole media ecosystem, but especially for journalism (Väliverronen, 2022, p. 64).

Media research allows the use of various kinds of media content as research data. Media is a word which is not only the plural form of the word "medium", but also a collective noun and an umbrella term which covers a lot of ways to communicate messages and meanings: Newspapers, magazines, television, radio, web, music, photographs, and videos are all types of media (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024). Even if we limit the data to the content published on a journalistic context, like in an established news media that follows journalistic principles, the options range from printed newspaper articles to creative combinations of text, audio and visual content on the website of a news media, not to forget audio and audio-visual content published in a linear radio or television, or in a streaming service, or even in social media. If an established news media publishes in a social media platform, it operates in the same level as the private people who do their private updates with the exactly same tools in the same environment (Ruotsalainen, 2016, p. 231). However, professional journalists structure the world according to institutionalized methods which lead to an established way to represent the world (Seppänen & Väliverronen, 2012, p. 72). Like in Finland, nearly all established mass media follow the Journalistic Guidelines which is a self-regulatory ethical code of conduct for journalists and media (Council for Mass Media in Finland, 2024).

To sum up, Herkman (2001, pp. 151–152) pointed out already in the beginning of 2000s that defining strict genres on each piece of media content is sometimes both complicated and unnecessary because the division between the text-based, audio-based, and visual-based media content has diluted, especially due to the technological

development. Furthermore, no technology was born in a vacuum, or only because of the needs of media (Herkman, 2001, p. 207).

Media has been used as a source of data in numerous tourism research books, articles, and theses, which can be demonstrated by, for example, typing keywords "tourism", "media", and "representation" on any international journal database. Here, I am picking just a few examples to show the wide and creative ways of using data collected from media in the context of tourism research.

One example on how tourism representations have been researched is a study of Knowles and Scott (2021) who write about media representations of climate change-related risks to ski tourism. Their data covers major English-language news media worldwide. According to them, between 1988 and 1998, the climate change is regularly questioned as a factor affecting the current and future snow levels, whilst between 2009 and 2019 the media representations of the same issue had adopted a settled science-based framing (Knowles & Scott 2021, pp. 153–154).

Godtman Kling et al. (2020, p. 233–234), in turn, studied gender visibility on recreation and tourism media in the Swedish mountains, and as they point out, outdoor recreation in the wilderness is one of the still-remaining areas of life where the gender-specified roles are in use in Western societies, and, thus, even the marketing of such areas is oriented for the male gaze. Traditional and heteronormative stereotypes were found in visualization of outdoor recreation (Godtman Kling et al. 2020, p. 245). Another example on a study of tourism representation in media is Murti's (2020) study on the representations of Indonesian rural destinations in tourism media and the social reproduction of the on-site experiences of Australian tourists. The representation of the rural Indonesia was framed as something exotic, and, as Murti (2020, p. 251) phrases it, this kind of framing is a result of exoticizing and othering places and people in the tourism media.

Solnet et al. (2022, p. 2) state that considering the meaning of media as a key vector of a public image of an industry, it is, according to the authors, "reasonable to expect that tourism employment narratives might be even more negatively portrayed". Furthermore, as Baum et al. (2016, p. 1–3) point out, tourism employment does not appear in the

research as often as it should even though its importance to the industry is vital. Those thoughts, also, offer an interesting point of reflection considering my research.

There are also master's theses where the tourism representations have been studied within the journalistic context. For example, Haapanen (2014) wrote their thesis about the representations of Lapland in the articles published in Helsingin Sanomat. According to Haapanen's (2014, pp. 60–61) research, Helsingin Sanomat framed Lapland usually either as a periphery, or as a forerunner. Furthermore, Maksimoff's (2017) thesis about the representations of place and locality in Helsingin Sanomat's travel articles. Maksimoff (2017, pp. 77–78) found out, for example, that almost 90 per cent of Helsingin Sanomat's travel articles had included a journalist's visit the place which can be seen as a factor to increase the trustworthy of the representation which the article gives.

1.4 Research approach and question

This is a qualitative study. In Chapter 3.1, I am explaining the qualitative research in a more detailed way, but here I am having a look on how a qualitative research method affects the research approach. The philosophy of science in qualitative research originates from an idealist epistemology which could be summarized as an understanding of the appearance of different realities, and that is why it is typical for qualitative data to offer a rich and complex variety of possible interpretations (Alasuutari, 2011, pp. 64–65). Due to the large number of possibilities to delve into the data, it must be done from a specific point-of-view which is called a theoretical framework (Alasuutari, 2011, p. 60).

In my research, the theoretical framework is interrelated with the term "representation" which I am explaining in Chapter 2.3. To understand what a representation in the context of media research is, it is essential to take one step back and understand the constructionist approach where the world is seen as a social construction. Hall (1997) explains three approaches to understand the representation: Reflective, intentional, and constructionist. My research follows the constructionist approach where, as Hall (1997,

pp. 25–26) describes, a representation constructs the reality through language usage because, in other words, the meanings are built with the help of language.

I chose a constructionism-based approach because "[t]ourism is constructionism in action", as Pernecky (2012, p. 1132) summarizes. The author continues that there are many possibilities to study about how, and why, different people, places and objects become touristic. Tourism is a way to routinely create worlds, like representations of people, and places, as Hollinshead (2003, 2004, 2009, as in Pernecky, 2012, p. 1128) phrases it.

As stated, the purpose of this thesis is to understand the representations of Lapland tourism in the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. That is why my research question is:

How did Helsingin Sanomat represent Lapland tourism in its domestic news in the first twelve months of the pandemic, from 12th March 2020 to 11th March 2021?

I am answering my research question using a qualitative, data-based content analysis method (see Chapter 3.3). To monitor the representations and to answer my research question, I am utilizing this sub-question:

Which were the themes, related to Lapland tourism, which were written about?

My data was collected from the Finnish-language news media Helsingin Sanomat within the timeline of my research question. All news articles were published in Helsingin Sanomat's online version, and in its domestic news section. The total number of articles was 27.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

In Chapter 2, I am explaining the theoretical framework of this thesis, including the social constructionist approach and the term "representation" in the context of media research. The research methodology is explained in Chapter 3, followed by Chapter 4 where I am describing the analysis process.

The conclusions of this research are explained in Chapter 5, where I am combining the previous studies on this topic with my findings from the analysis. Furthermore, I am offering some further research ideas for the future thesis-writers.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Social constructionism

As the aim of my research is to see how Lapland tourism is being represented, it is vital to understand how the representations are built, and this is why one of the key concepts in this thesis is social constructionism: An attempt to make sense of the social world we live and operate in. In short, social constructionism is a theory of knowledge. In social constructionism, the knowledge is seen as constructed, and the reality is seen as shared, not as something appearing in vacuum (Andrews, 2012). Social constructionism appears in various forms and together with a large variety of words (Pernecky, 2012, p. 1117). The core of social constructionism is on how people use language in their everyday interactions, and that usage of language constructs the reality (Andrews, 2012).

However, sometimes the distinction between "constructionism" and "constructivism" is not clear. Crotty (1998, as in Pernecky, 2012, p. 1120) has suggested that constructionism is employed to the studies of collective generation and transmission of meaning, while constructionism refers to epistemological considerations which examine the activity called meaning-making in an individual's mind. My research is deeply rooted to the transmission of meaning, and that is why I am using the term constructionism throughout this research.

Burr (2015, p. 2) writes that social constructionism forces us to have a critical look on our ways of understanding ourselves and the world – the ways which we are likely to take for granted. The author continues that this way of understanding and seeing the world we live in is fundamentally different from the one which is characteristic for the so-called hard sciences, such as physics: "This means that the categories with which we as human beings apprehend to the world do not necessarily refer to real divisions" (Burr, 2015, pp. 2–3).

In the context of tourism research, Pernecky (2012, p. 1127) writes how "constructionism contributes another important dimension to tourism. As a theory of knowledge, it offers an additional perspective, and it also tells us how to approach and present data." In addition, Pernecky (2012, p. 1129) illustrates the wide variety of

possibilities when it comes to constructionist directions in the context of tourism. In the case of my study where the research objective is the representations of Lapland tourism, the constructions appear within the framings of tourism (see Pernecky, 2012, p. 1129). As Pernecky (2012, p. 1130) argues, one of the important constructions within tourism is the fact that tourism is, in many ways, intertwined with various social problems, like sustainability and poverty, which, too, are socially constructed.

To sum up, social constructionism challenges the idea of knowledge being objective, and argues that our ways of understanding the world, actually, are something that come from the other people – the present and past ones (Burr, 2015, pp. 9–10). Consequently, social constructionism is the underlying paradigm of this study. Furthermore, the methodology, which is explained in Chapter 3 and its sub-chapters, is based on the paradigm of social constructionism.

2.2 The power of language and the media

Language and its usage are in the heart of social constructionism, and the language is connected to time, place, and culture, including arbitrary divisions which form our way of seeing the world (Burr, 2015, pp. 59–60). One easy way to digest that is to have a look on an old newspaper: Imagine a hundred-year-old piece of news and how much vocabulary of its time it includes. Maybe it is about a technology which we do not use anymore, and it might also include vocabulary which is considered pejorative nowadays. The text does not, necessarily, need to be very old when it already gives a feeling that the times have changed since its publishing date.

Kunelius and Reunanen (2012, p. 14) point out that a natural language is the medium of our everyday world, but, as the authors continue, the principal medium of the media institutions is attention even though the attention itself means nothing before it is communicated with the use of language. The understanding of the power of words is something that I need, in my profession as a journalist, to consider daily because the content I am producing is going public, and it is doing its modest part in constructing the world we live in.

The media is nowadays, literally, everywhere. Seppänen and Väliverronen (2012, pp. 31–32) mention that the importance of media is the easiest to spot when it is, suddenly, not available, like when there is no internet connection. The authors explain that the phenomenon is called mediatization which can be seen in both micro- and macro-level. They explain that the micro-level mediatization happens in the interaction between individuals, but the macro-level mediatization means that all organizations of a society have become depended on media and the public sphere shaped by media. According to Seppänen and Väliverronen (2012, pp. 31–32), a classic example is the mediatization of the politics: A politician with a strong character and sharp comments is likely to get visibility in the scenery which is built, operated, and directed by the media.

However, the logic of media is not random, especially not if we only consider the media which operates with journalistic values, like an established news media. As I am doing my research on news texts, it is necessary to understand what a piece of news is. Next, I am having a very short overview on how a different news media choose a different proportion of everything that is happening in the world. Different media researchers have had different explanations about news criteria throughout the times, but, since the 1960s, one frequently-cited research is Galtung and Ruge's 12 news factors which explain why an event might become a piece of news (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001, pp. 262, 264). Harcup and O'Neill (2001, pp. 262–264) list Galtung and Ruge's criteria, including frequency, unambiguity, unexpectedness, and a reference to elite nation, or elite people, and the more news factors occur within the same event, the more likely it is to convert to a news story.

However, the world around us has gone through major changes in the past decades, and that has, naturally, also affected what can be considered newsworthiness. That is why Harcup and O'Neill (2017, p. 1482) created a set of 14 contemporary news criteria, some of them being exclusivity, bad news, conflict, surprise, shareability, magnitude, drama, and follow-ups. Different mixes of these news criteria were involved in most of Helsingin Sanomat's Covid-19-related news, too, as can be seen in Chapter 4. As Seppänen and Väliverronen (2012, p. 7) point out, it can be said, or a good reason, that because of the news criteria and mediatization process, not only the media itself, but also the whole society is a trapped in a major news event which is in the headlines at the

same time in all media. That was exactly the case at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.3 Representations in the crossroads of tourism and media

Numerous studies have been done about tourism-related representations in the media, and I took an insight to some of them in Chapter 1.3. Next, I am explaining the concept of representation, and what it has to do with the public image of a travel destination.

Seppänen and Väliverronen (2012, pp. 69–70) state that "representation" is a term which usually refers to both the process and the result. The authors continue that the core of a representation lies in the fact that it is a *re*presentation, in other words, it is a thing, or a thought, which is re-created through verbal, pictorial, or audible symbols. They add that a representation seen in the media, for example in a news article, includes several representations itself, from the title to the body text and to the visual elements. Seppänen and Väliverronen (2012, p. 68) also point out that a media representation is never a random flow of words or visual elements, but the representations were born from conscious decisions, and they, as part of the nature of being representations, build the reality from a certain point-of-view. The authors also state that, in using the terminology of media research, a journalist *frames* a topic by choosing words, pictures, and aspects, and connects the journalistic work with wider society-level ways of speaking, called *discourses* (Seppänen & Väliverronen, 2012, p. 68). I am not digging deeper into the world of frames and discourses, but these terms appear in many previous studies which are relevant to my thesis.

Representations of tourism were, for a long time, something that was not meant for everyone because travelling remained an upper-class activity, as Ljungberg (2017, p. 108) writes. They continue that narratives of masculine, aristocratic and colonial travelling shifted slowly into more comfortable tourism practices, and only since then tourism could have represented as something that concerned everyone. One of the processes that democratized tourism was the invention of package tourism, and the British travel agency Thomas Cook and Son is often credited as the one that

commercialized package tourism in the 1840s, as MacKenzie (2005, p. 26) writes. The author continues that the Cook company also started issuing travel guidebooks.

In addition, like Steward (2005, p. 41) mentions, there was an expansion of the number of volumes of travel literature from mid-19th century onwards, at least in the United Kingdom. At the same time, as the author points out, also the newspapers published a growing number of travel stories. The author adds that many professional or would-be professional writers took advantage of the soft boundary between literature and journalism, and as a result, the readers got an unprecedented number of representations of different places in front of their eyes. Again, it must be added that this was the situation in the English-speaking world, and in Finland, the leisure time travelling was a luxury thing which only the top of the society could afford as long as Finland was an autonomous part of the Russian empire, as Hautajärvi (2023, Matkailua on suunniteltu…) writes. However, as the author adds, the Finnish tourism was promoted in the late 19th century especially through the lenses of Romanticism and with the help of the representations of the untouched nature, and that phenomenon was seen also in the travel brochures which were published.

According to Hautajärvi (2023, Itsenäisen Suomen…), developing the tourism industry was one of the many projects how the Finnish people cemented the national identity in the late 19th and early 20th century. Finland has been an independent country since 1917, and the first decades of the independence were the time to boost especially Lapland as tourism destination, but because the tourism industry and infrastructure in Lapland was not designed for mass tourism, but more for those few who had time and money for top-quality travelling, the tourist numbers in Lapland remained low until 1960s (Hautajärvi, 2023, Itsenäisen Suomen…). The time of mass tourism in Finland started in the 1960s, at the same time with many other social changes, but the destinations of the domestic travellers were, mostly, the same which had been represented in various travel articles, advertisements, and brochures since the time of the autonomy, including Lapland (Hautajärvi, 2023, Matkailun muutos…). As explained in Chapter 1.2, Lapland was one of the two locomotives of the Finnish tourism industry before the Covid-19 pandemic, and it can be said that the success of Lapland tourism was no surprise, but a result of a century-long promoting.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Qualitative research

Social constructionism (see Chapter 2.1) is the underlying paradigm of this study, and understanding it requires understanding what qualitative research is. Next, I am explaining my methodological choices and how the social constructionism as an approach is connected to the methodology.

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in a way that makes it impossible to evaluate qualitative research with the same criteria and terminology as the quantitative research. One of the aspects which are frequently questioned when it comes to qualitative research is the generalisation issue which Decrop (2004, p. 159) summarizes as follows:

> *[F]indings are based on small and non-representative samples stemming from non-random sampling procedures. Addressing this point, it should be argued that a distinction must be made between statistical and analytical generalisation. […] That is why the term transferability is more appropriate than generalisability.*

Alasuutari (2011, p. 62) writes that a research method is needed to distinguish observations from the results of research. According to the author, a method is a set of operations to create observations and a set of rules to edit and understand those observations. Phillimore and Goodson (2004, p. 5), for their part, write that qualitative research can be seen from many different points-of-view, and that one of the questions to be asked is if the qualitative research is a set of methods, an approach, a critique, or a strategy. However, the authors continue that the qualitative research is not only a way to do the actual research, but also a way to conceptualize the social phenomena surrounding us. This is how we get to the heart of social sciences which this thesis also belongs to. One way to define social sciences is done by Lewins (1992, as in Phillimore & Goodson, 2004, p. 6) who summarizes it as an "attempt to explain the social phenomena within the limits of available evidence". The problematic part is, though, the concept of evidence which is not always directly observable in social sciences, and that

is why the weight is placed on a well-documented knowledge production (Phillimore &
Goodson, 2004, p. 6). The need of documentation is something I kept in mind
throughout the research process, making sure that all the steps of the data collection and
of the analysis also appeared clearly written in this thesis (Chapters 3.2–3.3, Chapter 4
and its sub-chapters).

As mentioned earlier (see Chapter 2.1), social constructionism is both the paradigm
behind this research, and, furthermore, the approach which I am using within the frame
of qualitative research. Butowski et al. (2021, p. 53) write that social constructionism, in
the context of tourism research, started to develop in the 1990s, and, according to the
authors, it "has become one of the dominant approaches among qualitative
methodologies in the recent years. Paradoxically, social constructionism, which is based
on the pluralism of perspectives, can also be used as a tool to maintain an advantage".
Butowski et al. (2021, pp. 53, 55) point out that the dominance of social
constructionism as an approach is, somehow, controversial because social
constructionism sees the world as socially constructed, which, in its behalf, requires a
variety of perspectives. I am explaining in Chapter 3.4 how the dominance of social
constructionism might have affected the research approach of this study.

Furthermore, I am explaining my data analysis method, qualitative and data-based
content analysis in Chapter 3.3, but at this point I am mentioning what Tuomi and
Sarajärvi (2017) write about the transferability issue. Namely, Tuomi and Sarajärvi
(2017, p. 81) mention that in a data-based content analysis, the analyse particles are
chosen from the data according to the purpose of the research and its research questions,
without taking the previous knowledge or theories of that phenomenon into account.
Naturally, it can be criticised how objective any researcher can be and if it is humanly
possible to complete an analysis without letting any previous knowledge to touch the
analysis. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2017, p. 81) write that the problem can be solved by
openly writing down which factors can influence the analyse process. That is why, for
example, I am explaining my background as a journalist and how it may influence my
research, in Chapter 3.4.

3.2 Data collection

Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2017, p. 72) write that one of the possible data collection methods is to use written documents which can be divided into two sub-groups, the first one being private documents, like diaries, or messages between people, and the second one being material distributed by the media. The media content which I used was text-based, but Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2017, p. 72) point out that it could also be audio or audio-visual material.

The question when there is enough data can be solved, for example, by thinking about the saturation point. The saturation point can be defined as the point when the data starts to repeat itself, but the moment when it happens varies a lot due to the different aims of research, different data, and different data collection methods (Eskola & Suoranta, 2014, as in Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2017, pp. 73–74).

The purpose of my thesis is to look how Lapland tourism has been represented in the domestic news section of the Finnish-language news media Helsingin Sanomat in the first twelve months of the Covid-19 pandemic. When I was searching for the articles in Helsingin Sanomat's online version, I used the keywords "matkailu", "Lappi" and "korona" (tourism, Lapland, Covid) and set the timeline between 11th March, 2020, and 10th March, 2021, which means starting from the date when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Covid-19 as a pandemic (WHO 2020).

I chose Helsingin Sanomat's online version as the source of my data because the Finnish news media consumption has gone digital. Next, I am having a look on the news media consumption percentages of the year 2020 because my data covers about 9.5 months of the year 2020, and about 2.5 months of the year 2021. In 2020, 11% of the Finns only consumed news media content from traditional media, i.e. from printed newspapers, television, and radio (Reunanen et al., 2023, p. 9). At the same time, 22% of the Finns only used online media as the source of the news content, and 66% of the Finns used both traditional and online news platforms (Reunanen et al., 2023, p. 9). In 2020, Helsingin Sanomat's online version was the fourth most reachable Finnish online news media, reaching 30 per cent of the Finnish population (Reunanen et al., 2023, p. 13). The three most reachable online news media were the online versions of tabloids

Ilta-Sanomat and Iltalehti and the Finnish public service media Yle (Reunanen et al., 2023, p. 13).

My aim is to see how Lapland tourism is represented in the domestic news, so I only chose the section "kotimaa" (domestic news). This limitation is made because my focus is on the texts produced by a journalist, and which are not, for example, letters to the editor which are written by a reader. I am aware that the same keywords could have appeared also in articles placed in other sections of Helsingin Sanomat, but choosing the domestic news targeted the results only in the articles which were relevant to my research topic, and which are not, for example, interviews of a person who is from Lapland, used to work in tourism industry in the past and who is recovering from the Covid-19. That kind of an article would include the right keywords even though the article itself is not at all connected to my research topic.

Another reason to focus on the domestic news section is connected to the findings of Solnet et al. (2022) who, on their behalf, studied ten news media in different languages across the globe and found relevant differences on how tourism employment and workforce themes were covered in 2020, compared to 2019. In 2020, tourism and its employment-related themes were frequently located in the news section of the media, while a year before the same topics are more likely to be found in the lifestyle section of the media (Solnet et al. 2022, p. 12). Even though their research did not cover Finnish-language media, there is no reason to question why the same shift from the lifestyle section to the news section had not happened in Helsingin Sanomat, too.

My analysis only covered the body texts of the articles. That means that I am excluding the titles, introductory paragraphs, photos, other visual elements, hyperlinks, and captions related to the visual elements. That limitation of research data also meant that if Lapland, tourism, or Covid-19 only was mentioned, for example, in the introductory paragraph, or in a caption, the whole article was excluded from the data. Focusing on the body texts was justifiable also because, as Council for Mass Media in Finland (2024) states in the 15th paragraph of its Journalistic guidelines, "[h]eadlines, leads, cover and picture captions, sales-promotion posters and other presentation material must be justified by the substance of the story". In other words, Helsingin Sanomat, or any

other established Finnish news media which follows the Journalistic guidelines, cannot write a title, or a caption, which has no connection to the body text of the article.

Finally, I used these search tools (Figure 1):

● Etsi hakusanalla (Look these words): lappi matkailu korona (Lapland tourism covid)
● Lajittele hakutulokset (Filter the results): Vanhin ensin (The oldest first)
● Julkaisupäivä (Publishing day): Oma aikaväli (Own timeline) i.e. 11th March, 2020, to 10th March, 2021

Figure 1: Search tools used in Helsingin Sanomat.

These filtering tools gave 54 results, but not all of them were relevant for my study. First, I needed to remove 24 results because of a coincidence: At the time of my research timeline, the Chief executive officer of the Finnish Hospitality Association MaRa was named Timo Lappi. Their surname, Lappi, is the same as the Finnish-language name of the region of Lapland. As part of the role as the CEO of the Finnish Hospitality Association, Timo Lappi was regularly commenting the situation of the tourism industry, and sometimes the article included the word "Lappi" as both a surname and as a geographical name. However, I did not consider the articles where the word "Lappi" only appeared because of a surname and not at all as the geographical name of the northernmost region of Finland. After removing those articles, I had a

closer look at the articles, and removed those where the keywords appeared in a context which was not relevant for my thesis. For example, in one case the region of Lapland was mentioned only because the interviewees mentioned that they had done something in Lapland in the past, but the article itself had nothing to do with Lapland tourism.

All in all, the final number of articles in my data was 27. A full list of articles, including their titles, publishing dates, and links leading to the articles, is available as an appendix of this thesis. When I started my actual analysis process, I could see how the Covid-19 pandemic with all its restrictions had affected the work process: Most of the articles included no evidence of the journalist meeting any of the interviewees face-to-face, and only the very last article, published almost a full year after the beginning of the pandemic on March 5th, 2021, also could have qualified as a report because the journalist indicated in many ways that they had been on the spot of which they wrote about. In the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic time, doing the interviews by phone or video calls was often the only option because of the restrictions and because the ways and methods of communication had changed rapidly already before the pandemic (Koivula et al., 2023; Bunce et al., 2028, as in Koivula et al., 2023, p. 47). The pandemic established the remote work as part of journalistic work processes, and if the remote work was earlier an exception, since the pandemic it has been a natural way to work as a journalist (Koivula et al., 2023, pp. 48, 58).

3.3 Data analysis

Hyvärinen et al. (2010, p. 8) write about the moment when the data has been collected, but the actual analysis is just about to start. The focus in their book is in analysing material collected by interviewing, but the principles of the analysis process can be utilized in this research. According to Hyvärinen et al. (2010, pp. 9–10), analysing the data cannot be completed like walking on the stairs – one step after another, directly ahead – but the phases of the analysis process are likely to overlap, and sometimes it is even necessary to take a step backwards.

However, Hyvärinen et al. (2010, p. 10) write that when the research topic and the research question has been set, and the data has been collected, the next step is to familiarize oneself with the data, and to organize it. That is followed by classifying the data, and finding the themes or phenomena which are relevant for the topic, as the authors write. They continue that the actual analysis happens when the themes or phenomena are being compared, as the results are then collected and interpreted in a way that also looks beyond the data. Finally, according to the authors, the theory is taken into a dialog, and the practical use and further research needs are identified, and in my thesis that happens in Chapter 5.

Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2017, p. 78) point out that one basic analysis method that can be utilized in all qualitative research traditions is content analysis. According to them, the content analysis is not only a method, but also a loose theoretical framework. The authors also write that the actual analysis in the qualitative research can be divided into two groups: One where the analysis is directed by a certain theoretical or epistemological framework, and the other where the analysis does not strictly follow any certain theory or epistemology, and examples of that are data-based content analysis or thematic analysis. The theoretical framework of my research is based on social constructionism, as I am explaining in Chapter 2.1. However, my research is not based on some earlier study, but its purpose is to find new information about an issue which was not previously researched, so I am utilizing the methods of data-based content analysis, and looking for themes.

A data-based qualitative content analysis can be described as a three-step process: Firstly, the data is simplified; secondly, it is grouped; and thirdly, the theoretical terms are created (Miles & Huberman, 1994, as in Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2017, p. 91). Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2017, p. 94) point out that that in a data-based content analysis, the researcher is moving from empirical data to a more theoretical understanding of the phenomenon.

What is important in the data requires a strong decision about what is necessary for the research. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2017, p. 78–79) write that when the decision is made, the data is seen through those lenses: What is necessary, is highlighted, and collected in, for example, a separate document, and sorted out according to the chosen method. One

of the possible ways to sort out the data is to look for themes. That requires first a rough grouping of the data, for example according to the gender, or age, which is followed by the actual theme-searching process (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2017, p. 79). In the case of my data, it is all collected from Helsingin Sanomat's domestic news section, and already at the point of collecting the data, I organised it chronologically, from the oldest to the newest piece of news. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2017, p. 79) write that, consequently, looking for themes is about cutting the data into smaller portions, and grouping the findings according to the themes which they represent.

Simplifying of the data can be done, for example, by using high-light colours to find the relevant sentences which, in their behalf, continue to the next steps of the analysis process (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2017, p. 92). In this thesis, I looked for sentences where Lapland tourism was written about within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, because those were the relevant ones considering my research question, after which I collected those original sentences in a separate document. Those original sentences were the ones which told about both Lapland tourism, and Covid-19. The sentence was included if it was about Lapland tourism in general, or if it mentioned a tourism-related and Lapland-based place, or service, or person. In other words, if the sentence talked about tourism in general without a clear connection to Lapland, I excluded it, as well as those parts of the article which only mentioned something outside of the borders of Lapland. As an example: there were several articles which spoke about the situation of skiing centres all around Finland, but I only extracted the sentences which were about Lapland-based places. Furthermore, I was prepared to exclude the sentences which were about Lapland tourism, but had no connection to the Covid-19, but, after all, Lapland tourism was always written in a Covid-19-related context. In the cases where Lapland tourism was first mentioned in general in one sentence, after which the following sentences were more like a list of the tourism-related places to offer further information about the situation all around Lapland, I only included the first sentence.

There were four columns in the document: The one to the left included the publishing date, and the second one the original sentence, sometimes with the previous or the following sentence so that context remained understandable. There were 222 original sentences in total. When I had collected all original sentences, I created a simplified

phrase out of each original sentence, in other words, a phrase to describe the content of the sentence briefly, in the third column. I only considered the body texts, excluding the titles, introductory paragraphs, captions, hyperlinks, photos, and other visual elements, as explained in Chapter 3.2. Already on that phase, the first similarities between the original sentences started appearing because there were about a hundred different simplified phrases instead of the 222 original sentences. As an example, the very first original sentence in my data was: "Ylläksen toimitusjohtajan Janne-Juhani Haarman mukaan tunturissa riittää väkeä, mutta ulkomaalaisia vierailijoita on kehotettu aloittamaan kotimatkan suunnittelu." The sentence could be translated as: "According to Janne-Juhani Haarma, the chief executive officer of Ylläs, there are a lot of people in the fjeld, but foreign visitors have been advised to start planning their trip back home." The simplified version of that sentence was "foreign tourists are asked to travel home".

Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2017, p. 92) write that when the simplified phrases have been created, the grouping is done with the simplified phrases by looking what is similar between them. Basically, the sub-groups are found first, and when the sub-groups are then grouped, the higher groups of the hierarchy are created, and that is continued as long as it is necessary (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2017, pp. 92–93). The grouping is a vital part of the process of finding the theoretical terms because the theoretical terms are created from the grouped data so that there is still a connection to the original data. In addition, the terms also must be relevant to the research topic and research question (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2017, p. 93).

In my research, the grouping required, totally, three steps: Firstly, I squeezed the original sentences into simplified phrases as explained earlier. Secondly, I continued the process by looking for what was similar between the simplified phrases. Already by skimming through them, I could notice that many of the phrases had something to do with, for example, responsibility, or comparisons between the domestic and foreign tourists. The simplified phrases became keywords which summarized the content of the simplified phrase in 1–3 words. For example, if the simplified phrase was "foreign tourists are asked to travel home", as in my previous example in this chapter, the keyword was "foreign and domestic". Finally, the number of different keywords was 13 (Table 1).

Table 1: Keywords and their appearance frequency in a descending order.

keyword	which appeared
responsibility	41 times
consequences	30 times
positive future	27 times
domestic rescuers	26 times
virus hub	21 times
uncertain future	17 times
important foreign tourists	16 times
dependence on tourism	13 times
tourism crisis	12 times
foreign and domestic	8 times
closed tourism	5 times
past and present	5 times
critique	1 time

To guarantee the transparency of the research, readers are provided with a direct vision into the original data by utilizing direct quotation and examples from the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000, as in Solnet, 2022, p. 5) I kept that in mind throughout the analysis process in a simple way: I made sure that the publishing date, original sentences, simplified phrases and keywords stayed all the time in one document. That guaranteed that I could at any time look back to the original sentence, and that I knew all the time in which news article every original sentence, simplified phrase, or keyword had appeared.

Keeping the analysis in a chronological order made sure that I was able to not only find the themes, but also to keep a track on when they appeared for the first time. Direct quotations and examples from the original data are necessary also because the analysis document exceeded 40 pages, and it would have been unpractical to attach such a long document as an appendix of this thesis.

Finally, as the third step of the grouping process, I used the keywords to find the actual themes which I am describing in Chapter 4. Finding the themes requires, again, finding similarities between the keywords. As said, after all the steps of simplifying the data, I had 13 keywords which appeared 1–41 times. The following visualisation (Table 2) presents the names of keywords and the number of their appearances, and as seen, the different keywords appeared 222 times in total – which resembles the number of the original sentences.

When I had listed down the 13 keywords, it was time to convert the keywords into themes. Doing that, I kept an eye on the original data to make sure not to lose connection to what was originally written about. Finally, I found four themes which summarized the content of those aforementioned 13 keywords. The themes appear in the next table in a chronological order, in other words, in the same order as they appear in the original data. However, all themes appeared for the first time already in the two first articles of my research data, published in March 2020, so there is not much difference between the first appearance of each theme, but there are differences between the first appearances of keywords where the themes originate from. That is why I kept a track on the first appearance of each keyword (Table 2).

Table 2: Themes, their appearance frequency, keywords and their first appearance.

Name of the theme	Number of times of appearance in the original data and percentage	Keywords included in the theme	First time of appearance of the keyword
Foreign–domestic comparisons	50 (22.5 %)	foreign and domestic, domestic rescuers, important foreign tourists	March 19th, 2020 May 28th, 2020 July 8th, 2020
Changed reality	73 (32.9%)	virus hub, closed tourism, responsibility, past and present, critique	March 19th, 2020 March 19th, 2020 March 20th, 2020 April 18th, 2020 September 20th, 2020
Complex situation	55 (24.8%)	tourism crisis, consequences dependence on tourism,	March 19th, 2020 May 8th, 2020 September 20th, 2020
Different future	44 (19.8%)	positive future uncertain future	March 20th, 2020 July 8th, 2020

The theme named Foreign–domestic comparisons includes the keywords which are connected to either domestic or foreign tourists or to comparisons between those two groups of tourists. The second theme, Changed reality, includes the keywords which are connected to the fact that the tourism industry in Lapland cannot operate as it was used to do, and the third theme, Complex situation, focuses on the difficulties that the tourism industry is facing in Lapland due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, the fourth theme, Different future, gathers the keywords "uncertain future" and "positive future".

In Chapter 4 and its sub-chapters, I am explaining the themes and their content one by one, and giving examples from the original data so that all the steps of simplifying the data remain visible for the reader.

3.4 Research ethics and limitations of the study

This thesis is a part of my master's degree at the University of Lapland which means that I, as a researcher, followed the ethical principles and guidelines of the University of Lapland and of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK (University of Lapland, 2024; TENK, 2019). Because I have collected my research data from news media, I do not need to consider the ethical code of conduct related to, for example, research interviews, and neither do I need to consider data protection related to living people and their personal data (see University of Lapland, 2024; TENK, 2019). That does not, however, mean that I could have done my research without any ethical framework. Research is cumulative in a way that the new research uses the previous research as a base to build on, and that is why research misconduct never affects only the researcher themself, but, as TENK (2023, p. 16) describes, it, research misconduct "misleads the research community, decision-makers and the general public, decreases the value of research results and outputs, and damages the appreciation of academic research."

Furthermore, I consider it necessary to openly write about my background and connections in the Finnish news media field. I completed my first master's degree in journalism and media research, and I have worked as a journalist since 2012 in various Finnish news media, and as a freelancer. I chose Helsingin Sanomat's online version as the source of my data because it is widely reached, as written in Chapter 3.2, and because I had no professional connections to Helsingin Sanomat at the time which my data covers, or at the time of writing this thesis.

There is a possibility that another researcher, with no connection to journalism, or to the media field in general, could have done the analysis in a different way. However, my professional background also has some benefits to offer: I understand the journalistic

work process and the limitations caused by the hectic tempo of the daily news desk work. As I explained in Chapter 1.3, the Covid-19 pandemic also threw the news media into a turbulent situation where new information was coming from all directions non-stop. That means that if, for example, there was a limited range of interviewees used as experts to comment some Covid-19-related events, it might have happened, simply, because those interviewees were the quickest to answer their phones. Naturally, calling the same expert weekly is not the best option when considering the diversity of media, but sometimes there is no better option at that given time when an article needs to be written. As a journalist, I know that more than well.

It is also beneficial to write down how previous studies might have influenced my research. As Butowski et al. (2021, p. 62) write, according to many scholars, there is a common agreement on the fact that social constructionism as an approach is dominating tourism research. As explained in Chapters 2.1 and 3.1, I am, also, utilizing social constructionism as an approach. It can be asked – for a good reason – how much the dominance of social constructionism as a paradigm and approach affected the theoretical framework and research methodology of my study. Furthermore, the previous research which I found and which I described in Chapters 1.2 and 1.3 are mainly from English-speaking world. According to Bukowski et al. (2021, p. 67), it is no surprise because there is a decades-long Anglo-American dominance in tourism research, and in social sciences in general. The dominance of social constructionism as an approach, combined with the dominance of the English-speaking world has led, according to Bukowski et al. (2021, p. 68), to a situation where some cliques have a global monopoly over the tourism research, and where they operate as gatekeepers of knowledge regarding tourism.

However, considering all the aforementioned limitations, I have explained each step of my data collection and analysis process step-by-step as clearly as possible. I have done it to maximize the transparency of my research, and to make sure that another researcher could understand the choices I made throughout the research process.

4 ANALYSIS

4.1 First theme: Foreign–domestic comparisons

As explained in Chapter 3.3, I concentrated the 222 original sentences first into about a hundred different simplified phrases which then, on their behalf, became 13 keywords which, finally, turned into four themes. I named the four themes as Foreign–domestic comparisons, Changed reality, Complex situation, and Different future. In Chapters 4.1–4.4, I am explaining each theme and in which context it appeared, and in Chapter 4.5, I am giving an overview of the usage of the themes.

The first theme which I am bringing into spotlight is Foreign–domestic comparisons which appeared 50 times in the original data. When there were 222 original sentences, this theme appears in 22.5 per cent of the original sentences. This theme included keywords "foreign and domestic", "domestic rescuers", and "important foreign tourists". The common thing between those keywords is that they focus on either domestic or foreign tourists or in comparisons between those two groups of tourists. As explained in Chapter 1.2, the Covid-19 pandemic time was a period of closed borders, and that is why it is natural that domestic and foreign tourists are seen as opponents because travelling to Finland was restricted although the type of restrictions varied time to time and depended on the arrival point of the traveller.

The first appearances of the keywords "foreign and domestic", "domestic rescuers", and "important foreign tourists" were on March, May, and July, 2020. The common thing between those keywords is a comparison between the domestic and foreign tourists and their different needs. As the list of the first appearance of those keywords reveals, first there was a comparison of the domestic and foreign tourists, after which the domestic tourists were seen as rescuers of the tourism industry in Lapland. Nevertheless, in the summer it was time to describe foreign tourists as a vital part of Lapland tourism.

Next, I am offering some samples of how the themes appeared in the original data (Table 3). The original sentences were in Finnish, but for the sake of clarity in this analysis chapter, I am only utilising sentences which I have translated to English. All translations are mine. However, in the actual analysis process, it was unnecessary to

translate all original sentences to English because Finnish is my mother tongue, and I could write this analysis in English even though the original data was in Finnish. My translations are not done word by word because all metaphors or idioms cannot be translated directly from Finnish to English. However, I translated the samples from the data so that the meaning remains as it was in the original version. For the sake of clarity, I am also mentioning that in the Finnish journalism tradition, people are first referred with both their professional or academic title, first name and surname, and later the reference is done by surname only, but never with gender-based titles, such as Mr or Ms. Due to this writing style, some of the original sentences only include the surname of an interviewee.

Table 3: Samples from the original data related to the theme named Foreign–domestic comparisons.

Publishing date	Original sentence [translations: author]	Simplified phrase	Keyword	Theme
March 19th, 2020	According to Janne-Juhani Haarma, the chief executive officer of Ylläs, there are a lot of people in the fjeld, but foreign visitors have been advised to start planning their trip back home.	foreign tourists are asked to travel home	foreign and domestic	Foreign–domestic comparisons
May 28th, 2020	According to Kärkkäinen, the domestic consumers have found nature in a new way this spring. "We want to get them also here in Lapland because there are excellent services available here."	domestic tourists are seen as rescuers of Lapland tourism	domestic rescuers	Foreign–domestic comparisons
July 8th, 2020	"The starting point and the thing we expect is that we could get more traffic from abroad for the winter season. We have prepared for that", says Hulbekkmo.	Lapland tourism depends on foreign tourists	important foreign tourists	Foreign–domestic comparisons

Next , I am offering a deeper vision to the original data by giving more samples from the original sentences. The samples from the data are differentiated from the body text by writing them *in italics*. The theme Foreign–domestic comparisons was the one that appeared regularly throughout the timeline of my research data. However, the original sentences where the themes originate from offer an interesting aspect on understanding the meaning of both domestic and foreign tourists. The comparisons between the needs of domestic and foreign tourists are made clear in the following examples [all translations: author]:

The Finns travel to Lapland to do cross-country and downhill skiing and to enjoy cottage life especially at the Christmas and Easter time, and during the winter holidays of public schools. The foreign tourists, on their behalf, are looking forward for experiences when travelling to Lapland, and they use a lot of adventure services, hotels, and so-called special accommodations, like glass-roof igloos. (January 3rd, 2021.)

Basically, the Finns survive in the nature on their own. They neither book a cross-country skiing trip, nor a guide. Furthermore, Santa Claus is not so exotic that a family would pay hundreds of euros just to get to meet him. In general, the Finnish tourists are penny-pinchers, unlike the foreign tourists. (February 25th, 2021.)

The aforementioned examples show the major difference between an average domestic and foreign tourist: While a foreign tourist might enjoy a once-in-a-lifetime adventure and experience snow, Northern lights, or some other nature-based speciality for the first time, anyone living in Finland is maximum 1,100 kilometres away from home when they come to Lapland. For example, I grew up and I have lived most of my life in South-West Finland which has the mildest climate which Finland has to offer. Still, even I am familiar with heavy snowstorms, watching Northern lights dancing on the sky, and experiencing temperatures as cold as –30°C, all that done in my home region. Visiting Lapland in the winter might upgrade those experiences, but the weather conditions might as well be the same as home. Taking that as a background, it is understandable that the domestic and foreign tourists might see Lapland through different lenses.

The bloom of domestic travelling was looked forward for already in the spring, and the domestic tourists were seen as valuable ones: *The domestic tourists are wished to rescue Lapland tourism industry. (May 28th, 2020.)* At this point I am mentioning one important thing that did not appear in the data. None of the original sentences of my research data spoke about what Lapland has to offer in the summer, for example the midnight sun [in Finnish: yötön yö], which only can be experienced above the Arctic circle in the Northern hemisphere. None of the articles, not even those which were published in the summer months, was exclusively about the summer-time travel specialities of Lapland, and the only sentence where the summer-time tourism was clearly mentioned was this: *The summer brought a huge number of domestic tourists to Lapland which could be seen in the paths, fireplaces, and visitor centres of the national parks. (September 7th, 2020.)* That does not, naturally, mean that the summer specialities of Lapland were not represented at all in Helsingin Sanomat at the time which my research data covers because my data only included news, and excluded, for example, lifestyle articles.

Naturally, not every single Finn had been to Lapland before the Covid-time renaissance of domestic travelling, and that was also seen in the data: *There are a lot of domestic tourists in Ylläs and Levi, the major tourism hubs of Western Lapland, and nearly everyone has driven there using a car. Finns have, indeed, found Lapland as a tourism destination again, and for some, this is the first-ever there. (September 20th, 2020.)* However, it requires only simple mathematics to understand that the domestic tourists were not enough to replace the foreign ones. When the foreign tourists disappeared in almost an overnight, it made visible how important the foreign tourists were, after all: *Five per cent of the Finnish export is based on tourism. Last three years were the time of giant leaps in Lapland tourism industry, and only in last December [2019], as much as 724 charter flights landed in the airports of Lapland and Kuusamo. (August 27th, 2020.)*

When the pandemic went on and on, any way to get foreign tourists to Lapland started seeming useful: *Foreign tourists, brought to Lapland by foreign tour operators, bring happiness even to the Finnish entrepreneurs because they usually utilize local accommodation and other services. (July 9th, 2020.)* However, the number of foreign

tourists remained low, and the local tourism businesses needed to quickly re-think their business ideas. The key question was how to become attractive in the eyes of the domestic tourists, and those thoughts also had made their way to the research data, like in this sample: *Husky entrepreneur Pauliina Tirkkonen leads tourism business named All Huskies close to Levi. Their customers have, so far, been almost entirely foreigners, and the services are tailored to them. "Now we are re-thinking the repertoire to meet the needs of Finns, and we hope they will find us", tells Tirkkonen. (September 20th, 2020.)*

However, the number of hypothetical Finnish tourists was limited, and many entrepreneurs were struggling with the same business re-thinking process at the same time. Some entrepreneurs had down-to-earth opinions about the tricky situation and expressed them in the interviews. An example of a realistic view is this: *Nearly one hundred per cent of Lapin Safarit's customers came from abroad. "It is hard to replace that with domestic customers even though we are doing absolutely everything to avoid firing people", tells the operative director Rami Korhonen. (September 20th, 2020.)*

All in all, the theme Foreign–domestic comparisons included a lot of hard data and numbers. The last sentence of the theme summarized the situation simply saying *Lapland tourism industry is based on the foreign tourists, and they are not there. (February 25th, 2021.)* The theme appeared like the story on how Covid-19 was made visible: The disappearance of tourists, especially the foreign ones, and the restrictions which throw the hospitality industry into a whole new era. This theme is interconnected with the themes Changed reality, Complex situation, and Different future which I am going to explain in the next sub-chapters.

4.2 Second theme: Changed reality

The second theme, Changed reality, included the keywords "virus hub", "closed tourism", "past and present", "responsibility", and "critique". The first four out of those five keywords appeared for the first time in March and April, 2020, but the keyword "critique" is a special one because it appeared as late as in September, 2020, and it is the

only place in the whole research which includes a clear critique against Lapland tourism industry is expressed. That is why the keyword "critique" only appears once in the data. All in all, the theme Changed reality was, as its name suggests, the theme which describes various changes that had happened due to Covid-19. It differs from the previous theme, Foreign–domestic comparisons, in a fundamental way because this theme does not mention any nationalities. Furthermore, this theme differs from the next one, Complex situation, by not mentioning if something is hard, complex, tricky, stressful, or negative by some other way. This theme, simply, mentions how the reality has changed – and, especially when statistics about the number of tourists are brought into the spotlight, it is easy to see how the pandemic changed the reality in Lapland. The health authorities were the main actors in this theme because the way how the reality changed was due to the restrictions.

This theme appeared in 73 out of the 222 original sentences, or in 32.9 per cent of the sentences, becoming the biggest theme in terms of its appearance frequency. The samples from the original data (Table 4) show, for example, how the behaviour of tourists changed.

Table 4: Samples from the original data related to the theme named Changed reality.

Publishing date	Original sentence [translations: author]	Simplified phrase	Keyword	Theme
March 20th, 2020	On Friday, Krista Kiuru, the Minister of family affairs and social services, told on the Government's press conference that Covid-19 cases have been detected among the tourists who returned from Lapland.	virus is spreading in Lapland	virus hub	Changed reality
March 23rd, 2020	On the other hand, Metsähallitus [the Finnish Forest Administration] said on Monday that it is starting to lock up day- and night-use public cottages close to the tourist hubs of Lapland because they have got too crowded.	tourism spots are being closed in Lapland	closed tourism	Changed reality
April 18th, 2020	At that time, the tourists were not as aware about the severity of the Covid-19 as they are now. Finally, the restrictions forced the [after-ski] parties to end: The slopes of Levi were closed on March 22nd.	tourism in Lapland looks different than before	past and present	Changed reality
May 28th, 2020	In Lapland's healthcare district, the latest intra-provincial infection was detected about six weeks ago. The authorities, companies and citizens of the region are currently preparing guidelines on how to reduce the risk of infection in, for example, restaurants, hotels and excursions.	there are safe ways to travel in Lapland	responsibility	Changed reality
September 20th, 2020	The big and wealthy players in Lapland's tourism industry have also been criticized in online discussions about being greedy in the middle of the Covid-19 crisis. It has been asked why companies do not lower their prices and sell services in large scale to domestic tourists.	critique against Lapland tourism industry	critique	Changed reality

The theme Changed reality is the one which explains the capacity of the health care sector in Lapland in many ways. There is, simply, not enough of resources to test as many tourists in the region as the tourism industry wishes to welcome there: *For example, if there were 50,000 incoming tourists in December, the testing site would be enormous. It would require temporary facilities for airports, personnel for sampling, and a lot of laboratory equipment. (September 20th, 2020.)*

The skiing centres in Lapland were the first virus hubs of the country, but the infections that appeared in the region often had their roots somewhere else throughout the timeline of my research data, as the following samples from the data show:

Broas' words were related to the fear that ski tourists from southern Finland would bring the coronavirus to Lapland. (March 23rd, 2020.)

"Currently, when we look at the origin of infections, 80 percent come from outside the healthcare district. It is a sign that the disease pressure towards Lapland is quite clear", says Broas. (December 23rd, 2020.)

Passenger infections are seen in the total number of infections, i.e. how many infections have been found in the hospital district per 100,000 inhabitants. Without tourist infections, the incidence rate in Lapland was 53.9 last week. When infections of other than locals are included, the incidence rate was 79.6. (March 5th, 2021.)

Lapland, especially the skiing centres of the region, looked different than before, as briefly expressed in this sample: *HS's [Helsingin Sanomat's] photographer Jukka Gröndahl visited Levi at Easter to see how it looks like. There was a complete silence. (April 18th, 2020.)* However, the tourism never totally ended in the region, and the authorities even tried to give tips on how to travel in a responsible way: *According to Broas, the risk of infection is low if you are on vacation using your own car, staying in a cottage, and spending time on cross-country skiing routes, and in nature in general, away from human contacts. (March 20th, 2020.)*

The research data expressed many ways how any actor in tourism, from a single tourist to the whole industry, can act in a responsible way. Tourists needed to either travel solo, or stay in their own bubble, and remember to keep a safe distance to the others. Not to

travel at all was, naturally, the most responsible choice. However, being responsible meant avoiding the virus, not making sustainable and eco-friendly choices. The following samples from the data give an insight on what was considered responsible:

"Restaurant-owners in Saariselkä are also relieved, now tourism can be opened. For example, here on our terrace, people strictly follow the safety distances, there is either one person or one couple per table. No one has had to be advised separately." (June 1st, 2020.)

[The tour operator] TUI, among others, announced at the beginning of November that all package trips from the United Kingdom and Ireland were cancelled due to the pandemic. (November 28th, 2020.)

"I am interpreting this more in the sense that the aim is now to minimize risks in daily life before travelling, in order to get the epidemic under control", says Lapland Hotels' CEO Ari Vuorentaus. (December 4th, 2020.)

This is the theme where experts were regular interviewees, especially Dr. Markku Broas, Chief of infectious diseases department of Lapland healthcare district. Furthermore, people from umbrella organisations of tourism industry appeared often in the research data, as well as CEOs of major tourist sites. The experts could give a comment on various statistical pieces of information, like on the incidence rates, or on the amounts of tourists visiting the region. On the top of that, responsible actions were worth mentioning, like this sample from the data summarizes: "*The background [of these actions] is responsibility and the bearing of responsibility in this unusual situation that is shaking the whole world", says Jouni Palosaari, CEO of Levi Ski Resort. (March 20th, 2020.)*

4.3 Third theme: Complex situation

The third theme, Complex situation, differs from the previous theme, Changed reality, especially by the choices of adjectives and other descriptive words, like "crisis". Instead of just telling facts about how the reality has changed, this theme, as the name Complex

situation suggests, tells the direction towards which the situation had changed: It was complicated, and it had serious consequences. This theme appeared in 55 out of the 222 original sentences which equals 24.8 per cent.

The theme Complex situation included the keywords "tourism crisis", "consequences", and "dependence on tourism" which are connected to each other: Lapland was depended on tourism, and its crisis has, naturally, consequences. Out of those keywords, "tourism crisis" appeared for the first time in March, 2020, "consequences" in May, 2020, and "dependence on tourism" in September, 2020, which might tell something about the way the situation was seen – It was a crisis since the beginning, but only half a year after its beginning it was time to reflect how strongly Lapland was depending on tourism. In the original data, it was expressed, for example, with the words "disaster", and "downhill" (Table 5).

Table 5: Samples from the original data related to the theme named Complex situation.

Publishing date	Original sentence [translations: author]	Simplified phrase	Keyword	Theme
May 8th, 2020	According to Yliniemi, tourism in Lapland needs recovery time in the form of direct financial support, immediately.	Lapland tourism industry is suffering financially	tourism crisis	Complex situation
May 8th, 2020	Tourism in Lapland is facing a disaster, the magnitude of which has not been understood yet. This was the main message of Lapland tourism industry operators when they were asked how the coronavirus situation affects their business.	Lapland tourism crisis has serious consequences	consequences	Complex situation
October 11th, 2020	"If you think about the past ten years, Rovaniemi has perhaps built too much on tourism. Now that sector is going downhill, and it has an extraordinary impact on the municipal economy", says Vainio.	Lapland depends economically on tourism	dependence on tourism	Complex situation

The theme Complex situation reveals the multidimensional and delicate structure behind the tourism industry and the local economy. Tourism is not just something that happens outside everyday life, but it offers long-term and seasonal jobs, customers for hospitality industry, and sales in nearly any local shop. The list could be continued even further: The children of tourism-industry workforce need daycare, the restaurants need ingredient supplies et cetera. This sample from the original data explains the situation: *Tourism has become the most or the second most important source of money for many municipalities in Lapland. In addition to Rovaniemi, this has happened especially in Kittilä, Kolari, Inari, Utsjoki, Enontekiö, Muonio, Pelkosenniemi and Salla where,*

thanks to tourism, they have lived unusually good years before the corona crisis. (October 11th, 2020.)

However, the situation was not a surprise for everyone, as this sample explains: *The situation is tragic with multiple effects, although not a surprise. The corona crisis has only made visible what has always been at the core of the tourism industry, especially in the peak season: uncertainty. (October 21st, 2020.)* The tourism industry in Lapland was built on the needs of masses of foreign tourists, and it was lacking resilience because the industry had put all their eggs in the same basket, and when the situation changed, many entrepreneurs had no alternative plan ready, as the theme Foreign–domestic comparisons revealed. The hypothetical consequences might have been extreme: *An unpleasant question is now shadowing Lapland's sled dog business. The entrepreneurs must seriously consider if euthanasia of the sled dogs is soon the only alternative because the industry and the entire Lapland tourism have been affected by the corona crisis. (September 18th, 2020.)*

Furthermore, the tourism industry, no matter how hard it lobbied, could not always get as mild travel restrictions as it wished for. The next three samples from the data offer an insight to those thoughts:

The return of international tourists to Lapland awaits political decisions. Decisions cannot wait because tourism in Lapland is now in its most sensitive phase. (August 27th, 2020.)

The easing of travel restrictions is receiving moderate praise from Lapland tourism industry, although there are plenty of doubts about the functionality of the new regulations. (September 12th, 2020.)

"Of course this opens up something, but I dare not say that the government's policy would save tourism in Lapland. However, perhaps it will help to avoid the worst disaster. To that extent, we are going in a positive direction", says Satu Luiro, tourism and strategy expert of the Lapland Association, who is on study leave. (September 12th, 2020.)

The big question in this theme was if and when the international tourists could come back. As the theme Foreign–domestic comparisons revealed, Lapland tourism industry is mainly built for the foreign tourists, and the domestic ones could not replace the loss of customers. Even if the comparisons between the nationalities of tourists was not expressed, it was in the air: *Aurinkomatkat has now sold a thousand package trips. However, it will by no means rescue Lapland tourism. "The capacity of Lapland is enormous, the accommodation capacity is more than 100,000 beds. We are saving only what can be saved." (November 12th, 2020.)* If this theme should be summarized in one sample from the original data, it could be this: *At the same time, Lapland became the engine of the Finnish tourism industry, and one of the most significant export products. In the grip of the pandemic and travel restrictions, the fear is if it may fall apart. (September 20th, 2020.)*

4.4 Fourth theme: Different future

The fourth theme, Different future, includes two keywords, "uncertain future", and "positive future". Those keywords might sound conflicting, but the common aspect between them is that nobody knew about the future at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. In other words, all predictions about the future were more or less speculative, and the only certain thing was that the future was going to differ from the pre-pandemic assumptions. This theme appeared in 44 out of the 222 original sentences, or in 19.8 per cent of the sentences, making it the smallest theme in terms of the frequency of its appearance.

Tourism-related entrepreneurs were regular interviewees in this theme, and they gave future-related comments on, for example, when they can operate normally again, or how the pandemic has affected their business, and how they cannot hire or invest in these unpredictable times. One interesting aspect in this theme is that the keyword "positive future" appeared already in the beginning of the research timeline, in March, 2020, but the keyword "uncertain future" awaited itself till July, 2020 – Possibly because in the first Covid-19 time summer, it was beginning to be clear that the pandemic is not over soon (Table 6).

Table 6: Samples from the original data related to the theme named Different future.

Publishing date	Original sentence [translations: author]	Simplified phrase	Keyword	Theme
March 20th, 2020	"We will open the elevators next time on October 9th. We are ending this season now, and starting to fill the snow reservoirs for the next one. After all, we are now having the snowiest winter of the century", says Jouni Palosaari from Levi.	looking for a brighter tourism future in Lapland	positive future	Different future
July 8th, 2020	"There are absolutely no tourists from Central Europe now. The question is when the guests can trust [in safe travelling] again. According to our reservation system, in March 2021 we would probably be back to normal. Of course, the situation will be influenced by when we will get a vaccine, globally. "	Lapland tourism future seems uncertain	uncertain future	Different future

The future-related predictions could be almost anything. Any good sign about the return of the tourists was welcoming, as the following samples reveal:

In Lapland, tourist destinations are starting to open their doors, one by one. By the end of June, according to Kärkkäinen, the services will be widely opened. (May 28th, 2020.)

According to Hulbekkmo, there was a clear spike in bookings when the news about the relaxation of the restrictions came out, especially in their hotel in Rovaniemi. (June 1st, 2020.)

"There are small operators who could bring a few dozen people to Finland, but I also know that one Swiss tour operator plans to decide next week about five charter flights to Lapland", says Posio. "This is a bit of a crazy puzzle about what travel organizers decide to do. But there are good signals, and things look promising for autumn as well." (July 9th, 2020.)

Being optimist in the middle of the turbulent pandemic times required creative ways of thinking, like in this sample: "*When people want to avoid metropoles, Finland has some privileges. In Lapland, if anywhere, it is possible to organize tourism safely. We have space and the number of tourists is low." (August 27th, 2020.)* However, after almost a year of pandemic era, optimism became a harder attitude to find: *"The situation may be that the company's next income is in the beginning of next year", says Forsell. (February 25th, 2020.)*

This theme, Different future, is closely connected to the first theme, Foreign–domestic comparisons, because the predictions about the future of tourism in Lapland were strongly connected to the possible comeback of foreign tourists. Making predictions about that was a tricky task, as these samples reveal:

Many tourism operators wonder if Asians will ever return to Lapland. And will a necessary number of Central Europeans return? (September 20th, 2020.)

The questions are exceptionally relevant right now, as the Covid-19 pandemic has thrown the tourism industry into a crisis, especially in their home region in Lapland. And there is no quick end or solution in sight. (October 21st, 2020.)

This fourth theme, Different future, was a mixture of various feelings and thoughts. It started with a wish that the pandemic will soon be over, but when that was not the case, and there was no flow of money, the companies started being uncertain, worried, and even horrified about the future: *Meeri and Toivo Qvist have not slept much at their home in Ylläs, Lapland, this year. They are awake because of the anxiety and uncertainty about how their business will survive in the future when hundreds of international tourists are starting to e-mail them to cancel their bookings. (September 20th, 2020.)*

4.5 The usage of the themes

The first theme, Foreign–domestic comparisons, included a lot of quantitative data and numbers which made one thing clear – The fact that the tourism industry in Lapland was built on and depended on a huge number of foreign, winter-time tourists. The Covid-19 pandemic changed the situation from record number of foreigners' overnight stays to an almost complete disappearance of them in an overnight, and the domestic tourists were only a cold comfort at that situation because of their limited number and their travel habits: A Finnish tourist is not likely to book an exclusive accommodation and a guided tour, but just a cottage.

The second theme, Changed reality, is the one that explains the situation and tries to keep a track on what is going on. It does not name, for example, domestic and foreign tourists, but tells the infection numbers and mentions how many of them originate from the locals, and how many are from outside the borders of the region. This theme also explains multiple ways how a tourist, or the whole tourism industry, can act in a responsible way. However, responsibility does not mean environmentally-friendly or other sustainable choices, but responsibility in this theme is strongly connected to responsible behaviour in the context of health, and hygiene.

Furthermore, the third theme, Complex situation, shows the depth of the crisis which the tourism industry is facing in Lapland. The industry is not the one to create travel restrictions, but the one to be affected by them, and the consequences are likely to be serious, from the loss of jobs to the euthanasia of sled dogs. The reason for the severity of the situation also gets an explanation: The tourism industry in Lapland had built for the masses of international tourists, and it was, after all, a very fragile and non-resilient structure in the times of crisis.

The fourth theme, Different future, was strongly connected to the first theme, Foreign–domestic comparisons, because the lack of international tourists was the major problem for the tourism industry in Lapland. Predictions about the future were made in a situation when nobody knew to which direction to look, and that affected the thoughts

and feelings which were expressed in this theme: Any sign of something positive was looked forward for.

5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to see how Lapland tourism was represented in the first year of Covid-19 pandemic in the online news of a Finnish-language news media named Helsingin Sanomat. My research question was "*How did Helsingin Sanomat represent Lapland tourism in its domestic news in the first twelve months of the pandemic, from 12th March 2020 to 11th March 2021?*", and I utilized qualitative, data-based content analysis method to find the themes which Helsingin Sanomat wrote about. The articles that became a part of my research data were from the domestic news section, connected to the Covid-19 pandemic, and about the tourism industry in Lapland.

As explained in Chapter 3.3, the analysis process happened step by step so that I first read the whole original data, 27 articles copied from Helsingin Sanomat's online version, and extracted those sentences which included something relevant to my research question, in other words which were about the pandemic and the tourism industry in Lapland. The process continued by squeezing the data into a more compact and more abstract version, and finally, I found four themes that appeared in the articles. I named the themes as Foreign–domestic comparisons, Changed reality, Complex situation, and Different future.

When I am summarizing the results of my analysis, I can see that they resonate with what Butler (2020, p. 663) writes about the future-planning of the tourism industry: The Covid-19 pandemic was something that forced the tourism industry to think what they had taken for granted, like the never-ending flow of tourists. That phenomenon appeared clearly in the themes, especially in the first and fourth theme, Foreign–domestic comparisons and Different future. The pandemic came as a surprise for many tourism-related actors even if, as Hall et al. (2020, p. 582) points out, the travelling people are critical for a pandemic because the people transport the pathogens to new areas, but at the same time pandemics alter tourist behaviour because of fear and restrictions. That paradox between tourism and pandemics was seen especially in the second and third theme, Changed reality and Complex situation, because different actors tried to something understandable in the middle of the unpredictable times in those two themes.

One way to navigate through the new situation was to look at the statistics and other hard data. The tourism numbers looked, indeed, very different between the years 2019 and 2020 because the number of overnight stays of international tourists registered in Finland decreased by 68 per cent, and the total number of stays was as low as in 1995 (Tilastokeskus, 2021). The second theme, Changed reality, brought into spotlight also another aspect related to the statistics – the healthcare capacity in the region of Lapland, and how it would survive a growing number of pandemic-time tourists.

The problem of getting tourists to Lapland was one thing, and the consequences of the lack of tourists was another. The third theme, Complex situation, was the one which expressed the aftermath of the disappearance of the international tourists, from unemployment rates to the destiny of the sled dogs. Lapland is, as said, one out of two locomotives of the Finnish tourism export, the other being the capital, Helsinki (Business Finland, 2020). However, even if the absolute numbers of tourists are highest in the urban areas, the tourism industry might have a higher impact on the local community in a more remote area (Tuulentie, 2017, pp. 210–211). That was clearly seen, for example, in the third theme, Complex situation, which explained how many municipalities of Lapland had enjoyed wealthy years before the Covid-19 pandemic, despite their remote location in the North of Finland. However, as especially the first theme, Foreign–domestic comparisons, made clear, the base of tourism in Lapland was unstable and non-resilient because in the times of closed national borders, the domestic tourists were not enough to replace the international ones.

This, also, relates to what Butler (2020, p. 669) writes about the travel restrictions and how they affect, especially, mass-tourism which brings a huge amount of people to one place for a relatively short period of time. However, when there was something positive happening in the tourism sector during the first pandemic year, it mainly appeared as an opposite to the mass-tourism. In other words, in the first theme, Foreign–domestic comparisons, the domestic tourists were, often, seen as thrifty cottage-renters who did not book exclusive services the same way as the foreign tourists do. That comparison between the nationalities made visible to whom Lapland tourism industry was built for before the pandemic. Consequently, as I assumed in Chapter 1.2, it was interesting to see how my results reflect with Suomi's (2021, pp. 42–43) research where the travelling

was seen as a force of some kind: If it could not happen outside the borders of one's nation, then the choice was domestic travelling. Indeed, the Finnish tourists found their home country, but not by exotifying Lapland like the international tourists, but by enjoying the spacious and virus-free nature.

The lowest common denominator between all the four themes was uncertainty – Even positive assumptions in the fourth theme, Different future, were done in a situation where nobody had a crystal ball from which the future could have been predicted. That was understandable in the times of a pandemic when an overload of information was a challenge for the whole media ecosystem, and especially for journalism (Väliverronen, 2022, p. 64). To sum up, the tourism industry in Lapland was represented in Helsingin Sanomat's news articles as an industry that was unprepared for a major-scale crisis, and non-resilient at the beginning of the crisis. That is, also, an answer to my research question.

The non-resilience of Lapland tourism industry was seen through the lenses of the lack of international tourists. The same focus stayed throughout that entire year that my research timeline covered, and the domestic tourists were seen as something that was not enough to replace the disappearance of the international ones.

At this point I find it necessary to point out that the news of Helsingin Sanomat neither took sides nor tried to find guilty parties, and by doing so they followed the Journalistic Guidelines (Council for Mass Media in Finland, 2024). However, as Solnet et al. (2022, p. 2) point out, media is the key player of creating a public image of an industry, in this case of the tourism industry. It can be asked if the public image of tourism industry took a hit during the Covid-19 pandemic years because of the reasons why the industry was in the news – because of the lack of customers, the unemployment rates, and the side-effects in other walks of life, like in the economies of the small municipalities of Lapland. As Seppänen and Väliverronen (2012, pp. 31–32) state, the phenomenon called macro-level mediatization means that all organizations of a society have become depended on media and the public sphere shaped by media. That leads to a further question which remains outside the frames of this research, but which could be expressed this way: Is the tourism industry in Lapland, or in the whole Finland, less attractive as an employer nowadays than before the Covid-19 pandemic, and how much

did the pandemic-time news affect the possible decrease of attractiveness? Another question is whether the resilience of the tourism industry of Lapland is any better nowadays than in the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This is also the point when the concept of social constructionism comes into play. Burr (2015, p. 2) writes that social constructionism as an attempt to make sense of the social world we live and operate in forces us to have a critical look on our ways of understanding ourselves and the world. If the continuous growth of tourist numbers was considered "normal" before the pandemic, is the uncertainty the new normal, then?

The Covid-19 pandemic was followed by another global-level crisis, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which began on February 24th, 2022. I am not getting deeper into that topic and its various effects on the economy in this thesis. However, maybe a bit surprisingly, the tourism industry in Lapland does not seem to be affected by it, at least not at the time of writing these conclusions in the spring of 2024. The reason is that the international tourists seem to be back as if the year was 2019, not five years later. On January 23rd, 2024, less than three years after the last article which was part of my research data, Helsingin Sanomat published an article on the record number of winter-time tourists in Rovaniemi, the capital of the Finnish Lapland. The tone of voice sounded completely different than in the Covid-19 pandemic time:

> *Rovaniemi can now be reached directly from 24 countries. However, Rovaniemi would not necessarily need to advertise its winter season because the tourists find there from all directions, anyways. Every single indicator of tourism is rising: the number of visitors and nights stayed in registered accommodation places, the amount of money spent by tourists and the income from tourism. The figures for 2023 are just coming in, but they are already known to have gone up again. Still, cooperation with a new airline is something that the city's tourism marketing company Visit Rovaniemi wants to do. "It is important to us that the airline fills the plane, and we are happy to help them doing this", says Sanna Kärkkäinen, CEO of Visit Rovaniemi. (Hovi-Horkan, 2024.) [Translation: author.]*

Hall et al. (2020, p. 584) write that the Covid-19 pandemic might be a point when the individuals started to alter their travel habits, but the transformation of travel ecosystems does not happen in an overnight. Only the future will show if travel habits changed and if the Covid-19 pandemic had something to do with it. Reading about the growth of tourism-related numbers in Rovaniemi (Hovi-Horkan, 2024) does not, however, give a signal of an immediate change of the travel habits of most international tourists in Lapland.

Finally, it is time for self-reflection. Even though this research was a qualitative one, it required counting the original sentences, keywords and themes and finding the frequency of their appearance. The amount of those research particles was, finally, a remarkable one, and as a recommendation for a future thesis-writer I can suggest either choosing a good statistical programme to avoid an overload of manual work, or using a smaller amount of data and focusing, for example, on the dialogue between the text-based and visual elements of the articles. Media research includes a lot of studies to be used as a background, and semiotics offers practical tools for such research.

Now, at the point of writing the conclusions, I also can see that a discourse analysis could have been a better research method. As I explained in Chapter 3.3, I chose the data-based content analysis method because I did not use a previous study as a background of this one, and that is why I wanted to choose a method without presuppositions. However, looking for themes was, possibly, a bit too wide choice, and a discourse analysis as a research method could have offered a more precise toolkit to navigate through the data. When creating the themes from the scratch, there was a lot of aspects to consider continuously: How to keep the original data connected to the results, how to make sure that the themes were relevant to the research questions and not overlapping? Even when I was aware of all those necessary aspects, another person would have got different results. Nevertheless, this is part of the nature of qualitative research, and the way to solve it is to clearly write down the steps and choices of the analysis process and which factors might have influenced it (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2017, p. 81). I kept that in mind throughout the analysis and wrote the whole thesis in as transparent way as possible, explaining choices I made throughout the research process. Now, when the research is completed, it is easier to see what I could have done in a

more effective way, but that is, after all, part of the learning process of a nearly-graduated master's degree student.

One possible idea for a future thesis would be taking one nationwide news media, like Helsingin Sanomat or Yle, and a regional media, like Lapin Kansa, and comparing how they were representing the same phenomenon at the same time. Is, for example, the current situation of Lapland tourism industry represented in the same way in two media who have a different target audience? Another research idea would be an analysis how the Covid-19 pandemic affected travel journalism. My research was about news texts, but when I read them, I noticed that especially the ones published on April 18th, 2020, and February 6th and 27th, 2021, could have qualified as travel reports as well pieces of news. Now we know that journalists needed to adapt to the health risks at the time of Covid-19 pandemic, and a lot of work which was, traditionally, done with face-to-face interviews, became phone and video calls instead (Koivula et al., 2023; Bunce et al., 2028, as in Koivula et al., 2023, p. 47). It would be interesting to see how this chance affected travel journalism, and compare it with Maksimoff's (2017, pp. 77–78) findings that 90 per cent of Helsingin Sanomat's travel articles had included a journalist's visit the place. Is the percentage still as high, is the amount of travel articles still the same, or has the focus of travel articles shifted from foreign destinations to domestic ones?

Finally, as Hall et al. (2020, p. 582) write, the connection between tourism and pandemics exists, but there is only a limited amount of research and literature on the connections and long-term implications of pandemics and tourism. I do, sincerely, hope that my thesis could have contributed the understanding on how the tourism industry was represented in the beginning of the Covid-19 period, and perhaps also how the media worked at that time.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I had absolutely no time to write this thesis – Or so I thought. Thank you, Professor Outi Rantala, for calling me in June 2023, and for telling me that for a journalist, writing a second master's thesis is not an impossible task. Indeed, Outi, you were right.

The others who are worth a *kiitos* know it already.

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF DATA

Publishing date	Online link	Online title
19 March 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006445196.html	Ulkomaiset turistit katoavat hiihto-keskuksista, mutta suomalaiset jatkavat lomailua: "Pääsiäiselle on tullut uusia varauksia", kertoo Ylläksen toimitusjohtaja
20 March 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006446991.html	Lapin virustartunnat saatiin todennäköisesti Levillä – Suuret hiihtokeskukset suljetaan viikon kuluttua
23 March 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006450074.html	"Matkailun täytyy loppua", sanoi lääkäri, ja niin tapahtui – Lappiin suuntaava liikenne on vähentynyt selvästi
18 April 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006477937.html	Levin surmattu sesonki
8 May 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006502029.html	Lapin matkailuyritykset: Ahdingon syvyyttä ei ole ymmärretty
28 May 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006521881.html	Matkailujärjestö hämmästelee STM:n lausuntoa vapaa-ajan matkailusta – kotimaisista asiakkaista odotetaan pelastajaa eri puolilla Suomea
1 June 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006526716.html	Saariselän rinteet avautuivat ensimmäisen kesäpäivän kunniaksi
8 July 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006565408.html	Suomi on avaamassa rajojaan matkailijoille, ja nyt Lapissa toivotaan saksalaisten olevan täsmälääke turismin ahdinkoon
9 July 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006566839.html	Hallitus vapauttaa turistien matkailua Suomeen, mutta yrittäjien mukaan se ei pelasta "raskasta kesää"
27 August 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006615308.html	Turistien karanteenit uhkaavat Lapin talvi-matkailun tilauslentoja – "Siellä mietitään parhaillaan, painetaanko enteriä vai ei"
7 September 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006627731.html	Koronakevät nosti Suomen luonnon uuteen arvoonsa: Kansallispuistoissa 400 000 käyntiä enemmän kuin vuosi sitten
12 September 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006633378.html	Lapin matkailuala huokaisi varovaisesti hallituksen päätöksen jälkeen: "Ehkä tämä auttaa välttymään pahimmalta katastrofilta"
18 September 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006640021.html	Lapin matkailukriisi voi johtaa rekikoirien lopettamiseen: "Viimeiseen saakka yritämme, ettei siihen tarvitsisi mennä"
20 September 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006641868.html	"Palaamme tilanteeseen, joka oli 20 vuotta sitten" – Riittääkö kotimainen matkailu paikkaamaan Lapin yrittäjien ja kuntien ahdinkoa?

2 October 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006656803.html	Ruka ja Levi avasivat hiihtokauden aikaisemmin kuin koskaan, rinteissä lasketellaan viime talven lumella
11 October 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006666085.html	Matkailusta riippuvainen Rovaniemi oli syömävelkainen jo ennen koronavirusta: Lapissa jännitetään, kuinka syvälle kuntien talous rysähtää
21 October 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000006675863.html	"Koronakriisi mahdollistaa matkailun uudelleenajattelun", sanoo professori Soile Veijola
12 November 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000007613046.html	Lomakatseet kääntyvät nyt pohjoiseen, kun etelään ei pääse – Voivatko suomalaiset pelastaa Lapin kituvan matkailun?
28 November 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000007647697.html	Suomesta ei suunnata tänä jouluna perinteisille pakettimatkoille: Tjäreborgin ja Tuin matkat peruttiin, Finnair pyrkii lentämään tietyt reitit etelään
4 December 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000007662831.html	Lapin sairaanhoitopiiri suosittelee matkustamista alueelle vain välttämättömistä syistä – Visit Rovaniemen toimitusjohtaja: Ohjeistus tulee näkymään joulun matkasesongissa
23 December 2020	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000007702930.html	Pohjoisen hiihtokeskukset ovat täyttyneet suomalaisista joulunviettäjistä: "Tautipaine Lappia kohtaan on ihan selkeä"
3 January 2021	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000007716896.html	Valot sammuivat Lapin matkailuyrityksissä
6 February 2021	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000007787150.html	Matkailuihmeen jäljillä
18 February 2021	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000007812219.html	THL:n suositus tuli liian myöhään, sanoo mökkiyhtiön johtaja – Lapissa varaudutaan lomalaisten suureen määrään
25 February 2021	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000007826401.html	Myös Lapissa otetaan käyttöön tiukemmat leviämisvaiheen rajoitukset – Miten se näkyy matkailijoille?
27 February 2021	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000007811188.html	Lapin tyhjä talvi
5 March 2021	https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000007843219.html	Pahimmat pelot etelän hiihtolomien vaikutuksesta epidemiaan eivät ole toteutuneet – Lapin tartuntamäärät pysyneet aisoissa